

A
COMMON
SCENT

A Historical Novel
About Thomas Jefferson

by
Steffan Stanford

This book is lovingly dedicated to Our Blessed Divine Mother

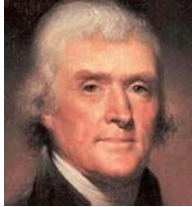
We wish to thank you for supporting the Alukar Heights Sanctuary Animal Foundation (AHSF) or Attas Beethoven Animal Rescue (ATTBAR) Charity by selecting this special edition of *A Common Scent*. The author, Dr. Steffan Stanford, has generously donated all of the proceeds from this special edition of *A Common Scent* to the AHSF and ATTBAR. If you enjoyed the book and wish to make a contribution to AHSF or ATTBAR, you may do so at www.alukarheights.com or by mail to: AHSF or ATTBAR, P.O. Box 901, Atherton, Queensland 4883, Australia.

A Common Scent

By

Steffan Stanford

© 2003 Dr. Steffan Stanford and Alukar Heights Sanctuary Animal Foundation



CHAPTER 1

WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA – 1763

A twenty-year-old college student sat quietly reading David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* in the orange glow from twin candles. As he turned a page, his hand drew a shadow on the wall, casting a silhouette of elongated fingers that danced across the room. He dipped a grimy quill into a bell-bottom inkwell and underscored a word in the book. A few pages later, he squeezed a lengthy note in the margin and continued reading, poised pen in hand, ever ready to mark the book as the need arose. While he underlined another important phrase, someone knocked on the door. The young man finished drawing the line before saying, "It's open."

A ruddy-faced woman in flowing skirts unlatched the door and peered into the study. When she opened the door, a draft sent the candles into a frenzy. In the flickering light, her pink face glowed. "Be you Long Tom what comes from Shadwell?"

Thomas set his quill into the ceramic ink pot on his tiny desk and frowned at the woman. "Yes," he said, while shaking his head toward the door as an implied command for her to depart.

"Oh, that's just grand! I was afeared I'd come to the wrong place," she exclaimed as she ran into the room and curtsied before the young gentleman. "Just grand, it is."

“And who are you?”

“It don’t matter. Not a wit.”

The young man scratched his brick-red bush with his hand and flipped his hair by flicking his head to the right. He closed his eyes momentarily in hopes the old woman would vanish, but when he opened them, there she remained smiling so broadly that her eyes were forced shut, all the while, shaking her head. “I’m studying.” He looked down at his book and his hazel eyes began a rhythmic march across the printed words.

“Begging yur pardon, I should of come to the point straight away.”

Thomas glanced up and squinted at the woman. “Do it.”

She reached into her jacket pocket and removed a book. “I got this here present for you. And there’s a note inside from the author, all personal. And you don’t need worry that I know a word of it cause I ain’t learned to read.”

“Really? I’d never have guessed.”

“Oh, kind sir, imagine a student at William and Mary flattering me by thinking that I was smart enough to read all those letters and make a lick a sense of it all.”

Thomas held the almanac written by Richard Saunders, ran a finger along its embossed spine, and nodded approvingly. He sniffed its cover and took in the aroma of the superb cover modulated with a trace of the delivery woman’s pungent odor, then flipped the pages, rubbing a few to get a feel of the book. A card fell out of the almanac that he stooped down to pick off the floor. He straightened up and held the fallen paper and his new book reverently between his palms. He forced a smile at the delivery lady. “Should you see the author, thank him most graciously for the gift.”

She laughed. “Oh, to be sure, to be sure.”

He turned some pages of the almanac, stopped to read a few lines, then looked up at the woman. “You may go.”

“Thank you, sir.” She waddled out the door and down the street.

He set the present on a table and read the card that had fallen from it:

I am pleased to present you with this poor fellow of a book. Hopefully, its wisdom will be useful to an up-and-coming scholar such as you. I am staying on the top floor of the town’s inn and wish to make your acquaintance. I have a strange request, but humor an old man, will you? The meeting must be surreptitious or be not at all. Come after ten this evening, taking care to climb the back stairs to my room, being ever careful not to be spotted on the landing. Tell nobody how you came to receive the book and burn this card upon digesting its contents.

Richard Saunders

Thomas slammed his hand on the table. “What is the meaning of this?” he called aloud, although the study was empty. His mind rambled. *Was it a joke? Of course it was. Why would the good doctor who authored the book and the note hire such a stupid old lady as his messenger? Why would the distinguished gentleman even be in Williamsburg?*

“Why?” he shouted, hoping that a prankster would leap from the closet and roar with laughter.

Nobody appeared, and his gut began turning loops. Everything struck him as being wrong about this note. First, Thomas saved every scrap of correspondence, even made duplicates of every letter he wrote. He spent many days indexing hundreds of documents and filing them for easy retrieval in case he should ever need them again. It repulsed him to toss out anything written by another, especially if it were from the philosopher who purported to have signed the note. Second, the tone of it was outright weird.

Frustrated, Thomas paced the room with his lanky frame uncharacteristically hunched over and his hands held behind his back. For several minutes he walked in

perfect, equilateral triangles. On a pass by the table, he picked up a quill and ran his thumbnail along the feathers, stripping the instrument of its plume. He threw the pen on the floor, spilling its ink on the wooden planks of his meticulous and orderly study.

As he worried through the problem, he stopped pacing, clapped his hands together, and read the card again and again. Upon finishing with it, he walked over to the table and held a corner of it over the flame from a candle. The paper smoldered, then caught fire before Thomas dropped the burning note into the fireplace.

CHAPTER 2

Reluctantly, and quite uncharacteristically, Thomas crept about the town at quarter of ten, checked the rear landing of the inn, then climbed the stairs. He believed that nobody had seen him. As he reached the landing, he knocked softly on the door, then pushed it open.

“Come in son, do come in,” said the portly man with a knowing smile as his vibrant eyes peeped over wire-rimmed spectacles. He pulled a long strand of silver hair from his head and used it to mark his place before closing a leather-bound book he had been reading. As he set it on the table beside an overstuffed chair he let out a sigh, expanding his stomach until his green vest went taut. To relieve the discomfort, he loosened three brass buttons, although his shirt was still over snug about his waist. With a congenial sweep of his arm, he motioned his guest to take the other chair. The puffy sleeve of his shirt rustled as he offered his hand for shaking without rising. “I figured you to be prompt.”

Thomas’ lower lip drooped in amazement; he had expected this to be one of John Page’s jokes, but it was apparently no prank. Seated in the chair was indeed the Boston-born author of the book he’d been given earlier in the day. He shut the door and pensively entered, taking miniature steps until he reached the second of three small carpets on the floor. A blackened floor plank creaked as Thomas walked across a worn scatter rug that had missed enough sweepings to be regaining in dust what had been lost in nap. With each step another plank groaned from the floor, and two creaks later the young man reached the elder. Through recessed sockets, the youth glared at the older gentleman whose eyes danced to the flickering of twin candles that lit the

room. “I don’t mean to be rude, sir, most especially to one such as you, but Peter Jefferson was my father, not you. It was he who could call me son.”

The elder man gave a hearty roar and removed his glasses. “No offense intended, nor should it be taken. I meant only that you are but a boy, not that you are my offspring.” Under his breath, he mumbled, “Lord knows I don’t wish to claim another.”

The youthful man remained rigid in his stance, ignoring the offered chair, and after a moment, he shook the old fellow’s hand. His voice hesitated as his mind worried through the situation. He couldn’t fathom why he had been called to the inn. “Pardon my bluntness and bewilderment, if you would. I’m most puzzled by your note, doctor, and the cry you made for secrecy. Great respect though I have for you, my father’s reverent place you’ll never earn or take; I’ll not be your son.”

“And I wouldn’t dream of asking you to son . . . I mean Thomas.” The printer slapped a hand on his knee and winked. “You’re as big as your father, or so it seems.”

“You knew my father then?”

“Met him. And you look every bit as strong as he.”

“It’s his brains that I’d rather have than his brawn.” Thomas revered his father, although he always felt a bit guilty that he so esteemed his father, yet he despised his mother, who seemed to scream day and night.

“From what I see and what I’m told, you have both, my boy, both. But moreover, you carry his integrity.”

The youth backed up a couple of steps and with a haughty slur in his voice, he said, “Dr. Franklin, while I’m honored to meet you, the circumstances of this meeting are a bit ridiculous, don’t you think?”

“Where’s my note?”

“Burnt.”

“I trusted Peter . . . and, I figured I could trust you.”

“With what?”

Franklin grunted as he rose from his chair, eased across the room, hobbling a little from a recent battle with the gout. “Never eat meat, so –,” he caught himself. “I mean, young man, it hobbles me dearly when I do.” He pointed to the chair. “Please, have a seat. I know the thing isn’t much for comfort, but it will do.”

The young man ran his hand and long fingers through his hair as his dark eyes jumped to life. “Tell me why I should.” His tone was haughty.

Franklin pointed to the chair again. “To learn some wisdom, and to show a bit of respect.”

Despite the youth’s reluctance, he finally sat in the hardwood chair that his host had pointed at.

Franklin ambled back to his overstuffed chair. As he sat down, he blew out one of the candles, darkening the room considerably.

The young man rose, stretched his seventy-four inch frame, then sat again. “Dr. Franklin, could you come to the point of calling for me? At least tell me what you’re doing in Williamsburg.”

“Mr. Jefferson, I’m here to see you. I’m conducting an interview to see whether I wish to take you into my confidence.”

Thomas’ bright eyes lit. The frown he wore up to this point turned slightly upward. His brain twitched with a flurry of electrical impulses. “You came here only to see me? I’m but a young college student, not even three years into my studies. I’m of no use to someone like you.”

Franklin rang a bell for service and his messenger woman in flowing skirts entered within a few moments. “What be yur bidding, Dr. Franklin?”

“My friend and I would most appreciate a plate of cakes and a pot of tea.”

“In but a stitch of time, yu’ll ave yur cakes times nine.” She curtsayed and left for the inn’s kitchen.

Thomas sneered as the woman left. “It seems that you reach all classes with your wit. And that woman declared herself to be illiterate to me earlier today. How could she read your book?”

“What you see is often not what you get. This is a world of illusions. I would recommend that you not take everything at face value or you’ll be doomed to be everybody’s patsy.”

“Then that ignorant hag can read?”

“Not Greek or Latin like you, but well enough with English. The Americas are blessed with few educated people, but they are teeming with common folks who have common sense. The sage who writes for the man on the street is wise indeed; it is through the common man that words ring, and survive. It is through the common man’s knowledge and the common man’s sense that our land will become great.”

“You talk as though you expect me to be such a writer, to be a sage such as yourself.”

“I do.”

Thomas stood and let out a nervous laugh. “I think far more of the wisdom of John Locke than of my own. My purpose in life is to absorb knowledge, to drink it to intoxication, to overindulge in learning, but I won’t be a scribe for others.”

“And why not?” asked Franklin.

“For one, I’m not too articulate. Nobody would get too excited listening to me speak about my prose.”

“Thousands have played excellent Hamlets, yet only one could pen the lines.”

“Why riddle me?” The young man rose to leave.

“Sit! Humor an old man!” demanded Franklin.

Thomas returned to his seat.

“That’s better. Tis with the pen you’ll make your mark. Speakers are driven by writers. Anyone can sell once they’ve been given the line, but somebody must feed them the gems or there’ll be no buyers. A lad from around here named Patrick Henry is quite a talker, but I’m told he’s not much of a student.”

Thomas chuckled. “Henry’s speeches are wonders to behold. But you’re right. He’s the laziest man I know when it comes to reading.”

“My point precisely; you’ll write words that will outlive his finest speeches.”

“Don’t make sport. I’ll never publish anything important.”

“Nonsense. I’ve spoken with Dr. Small. I asked who might be his most promising student. His answer was clear. He lauded your mind, your study habits, and added that you also exercise your physical body every day. Dr. Small is a man whose opinion I value most highly. Young Thomas, I know exactly how full of energy, ambition, integrity and talent you are. Accept what you are, and be not less.”

Thomas took a deep breath, filling his lungs with smoke from the candle and must from the room. “If you need a writer, you’re quite adept. Why not do it yourself?”

“Two reasons. My age and my wit.”

“Your health seems fine and your wit is sound.”

The old gentleman donned his glasses and cocked his oversized head. “Being born in ‘06 has its disadvantages. I’m getting old. And much older will I be when what must be written, shall be written. Further, the matters that need attention are most serious, and because I use humor in much of my prose, many would think it a lark.”

“But who needs me? What have I to say? What have I to do?”

“Before addressing that, I need to know more about what your political feelings are. Do you lean more strongly with the king or with the people? Are you a Tory or a Whig?”

Thomas scratched his head. “I haven’t thought much about politics. Life is too full of other interests to become ensnared in political drivel. I would rather study culture, science, literature, anything but the struggle for power.”

Franklin chuckled. “So I’ve heard. Pick any subject and you’re its master. Eclectic was the adjective Dr. Small used to describe your interests. Which is one of the main reasons I’m interviewing you.”

The young man nodded and for the first time during the meeting, he flashed his teeth in a smile. “I can’t believe that I am to be flattered by Dr. Franklin.”

“But you are, Thomas --- ” Franklin was interrupted by his servant.

“Ere’s yur cakes un tea.” The portly lady set a platter on a tiny table.

“Thank you. It looks divine,” said Franklin.

She curtseyed, winked at her master, and smiled at Thomas before leaving the room.

“You treat the ignorant wench as though she’s your equal.”

Franklin’s gentle disposition soured immediately. Fire erupted from his mouth. “She *is* my equal, and yours too! Don’t think because you’re attending college and well born that you are better than any other.”

Many tense seconds passed as Thomas closed his eyes and reflected upon this lashing. He wrestled with emotions. Instinct told him to leave the tea in the room and the old man in the chair, but his gut told him that the doctor was right. After a minute or so, Thomas opened his eyes and said, “You’re right, you know, I suppose she’s as good as half of my slaves.”

“And you’re not yet as good as the other half.”

“Dr. Franklin, I’ve had enough of your insults. Good evening, sir.” Thomas stood and turned for the door.

Franklin jumped from his chair and rushed to Thomas, grabbed him, and twisted him about. “I’m not insulting you. I’m imparting wisdom. I’m telling you as it is. One man is no better than another. Don’t you understand that? You must understand nature’s law. Station, color, creed, they’re all irrelevant. Each man is deserving of equal treatment. No man or woman should be slave to another.”

“Not according to our sovereign. He divinely graces us with his rule. He comes from a bloodline that is directly tied to the Almighty.”

“And you’re too smart to buy that rubbish.”

Thomas paused, closed his eyes again, this time for several seconds. One thing the young man could do was change his position abruptly when he saw it was flawed. Franklin’s explosive logic drove through his years of prejudice. “Perhaps you’re right. Your reasoning seems correct regarding nature’s law. I think that I’ll accept your premise, that, people are people.”

“So you believe that she’s as good as you?”

Without hesitation, Thomas answered, “I guess I do.”

“How equal?”

“And what does that mean?”

“Well, would you die for her? Would you give your life for hers?”

“If a gunman were about to do her in, I suppose I would.”

“And if I tell you that there is a gunman about to blast out her guts along with all her children’s. Would you rush to the rescue?”

“Ah, but Dr. Franklin, there’s no menace at the door.”

“Ah, but there is.”

“Do you jest?”

Franklin inhaled deeply. He coughed a bit on the stale air in the windowless room. His mind went into overdrive. The risk of speaking frankly with this hot-headed college student was exceedingly high. He closed his eyes and visualized his body swinging from an oak tree, strangled in a hangman's noose. He shook his head and drove away the frightful image, then whispered. "Can I take you into my confidence?"

"I suppose."

Franklin peered through Thomas. "No guess. Can I trust you?"

Thomas crossed his heart and mockingly rose the pitch of his voice. "Short of treason, you can."

The room was silent for ninety seconds before Franklin's eyes blinked, ending the stare down. "I need your unqualified trust."

"And, didn't I give it?" asked Thomas.

"Almost."

Thomas sat rigid in his chair. Chills rushed from his lower back to his shoulders. His body vibrated, pulsed and he felt his stomach convulsing. For several seconds he evaluated these internal vibrations, sensing that they were coming not from fear, but were signaling a challenge. He nodded at Franklin. "I have a strange feeling that I'm about to grow up today."

Franklin said softly, "Do I have your absolute trust?"

Young Thomas Jefferson closed his eyes and nodded twice.

Franklin sucked in and began. "I recently returned from England. Youthful King George is out of control. Or should I say that his advisors are out of control. They have created a monster in a very short time indeed. The king now wants to extract the entire cost of the seven years' war from the colonies. He wants to bleed us dry. The man's a megalomaniac. He wants us in absolute servitude."

Thomas' forehead was covered in sweat. He rose and danced from foot-to-foot. "You know what you're saying is treason. Why do you trust me? How can you so burden me after securing my promise?"

"I've always been good at judging character."

"So what good does all this do me to know?"

"We must attack the problem from within the system. I need a man inside the court system who is brilliant, loyal, and dedicated."

"*Court system!* I've heard quite enough."

Franklin stared through the youth. "You must study law. You must become the greatest legal mind in the colonies."

"But lawyers tangle their prose with so many 'whereases' and 'therefores' that even they can't make sense of the laws. They butcher the language, kill the truth and saunter about in a profession that is hardly fit for the most odious of predators."

"Insects," said Franklin.

"What?"

"To me, lawyers are like insects. Honest ones are as scarce as justice from the Crown. I wouldn't ask you this if we didn't need you."

"Who are we?"

"The people."

"What people?"

"Of the Americas. We're in great jeopardy."

"Dr. Franklin, why would the British treat us poorly?"

"Because they despise us. To them, we're lower than dung buried in a privy. They want to squash us."

Thomas shook his head. "I don't think so."

“We’re about to be taxed on every piece of paper in the land. And if we don’t pay the tax, we’ll have everything confiscated.”

Thomas’ complexion reddened. “No jury would ever let it happen. They’ll acquit us and return our property. King George wouldn’t dare do as you say as there are jury trials in the colonies.”

“There won’t be.”

“Won’t be what?”

“Jury trials, they will be abolished.”

“How?”

“Some such thing about admiralty and equity. I don’t fully understand it. That’s why I want the best young mind in Virginia working on the law.”

“Why a young mind?”

“The young are idealistic . . . wonderfully, naively idealistic. They’re much harder to bribe, much harder to corrupt than the middle-aged.”

“Then why not go for the elders, who must be the hardest of all to tempt?”

“The elders could be dead before this all comes to pass.”

“You’re serious, aren’t you Dr. Franklin?”

“Absolutely.”

“What does Dr. Small say?”

“He recommends that you begin your legal studies and that your training be so thorough that flashy Crown lawyers will quake when you argue your cases.”

Thomas reflected for several minutes, then said, “I’m going to hate myself, hate wasting my time on legal reasoning, but, out of respect for you and your request, as soon as I graduate, I’ll study law.”

“No time for that! You must quit school today, I’ve arranged your training to be under George Wythe. He’s one of the best in the land.”

“You’ve arranged! How vulgar! How impudent!”

“We’re in deeply troubled times, Thomas. We need your help.”

Thomas shouted, “But why me?”

“Because, you’re a genius. I’d do it myself if I thought I’d be alive when the time comes and I could figure out how to be two bodies at one time.”

“I’m afraid that I’m not going to like our friendship too much, Dr. Franklin.”

“Don’t worry. Deny we ever met. Our paths may cross again in the meanwhile, but hopefully they will intersect and integrate ever so much when the time is ripe.”

Thomas stared incredulously. “You want me to learn the most God-awful profession on earth, to write some kind of Magna Charta, and you’ll deny you know me?”

Franklin cleared his throat. “I’m playing a most dangerous game. The British think I’m at their call. As do the French, and the Freemasons. Anyone could turn on me, and I’ll be dead. You must disassociate from me, for your own good. And beware who you take in your confidence.”

“Will I be able to communicate with you at all?”

“Yes, I will be sending a fellow to call on you. You’ll know his news comes from me by the letter he brings.” Franklin reached into his vest pocket and removed two folded sheets of paper. They contained columns of random numbers, alongside each number was a word.

Thomas stared at the papers. “What are these?”

“Ciphers.”

“For what?”

“I’ll send you an accounting for something. Tobacco purchased or the like. Check the numbers in the ledger against this cipher and you’ll have my message.”

Thomas shook his head. “This is nuts! Where do you think all this is leading?”

“Independence, revolution, hopefully a peaceful one, but I doubt it. The British are stern taskmasters.”

“I’m not so sure.”

“Believe me, they are.”

“Were it anybody but you, Dr. Franklin, I’d call the authorities and have him jailed. But I think you really mean what you say.”

“I do. And Thomas . . .”

“Yes.”

“After we’ve won the revolution, don’t ever turn your back on the British, because they’ll be after us with a vengeance. They’ll try to take the land back by any means, frontal war, civil war, or outright deception. Never, never trust the fate of our land with them.”

“You make them sound like the devil himself.”

“They hate us in London. Hate us so vehemently you couldn’t believe it. You’ve read John Locke. There is no liberty without private property. The British aim to confiscate all our property.”

Thomas hesitated and reflected. *Treason! Franklin is talking treason!* Many moments passed as he reflected upon what direction to go. His mind whirled and generated thoughts and pictures of firing squads and hangmen. His forehead furled before he came to a decision. He reached out his hand to shake the old man’s. “You

just cited one of my favorite philosophers. You have a partner and I do believe that I'll turn radical."

"No!" shouted Franklin. "Your value is that you are totally unsuspected. Don't do anything but study the law until later. The King has his spies snooping everywhere."

Thomas reflected for a moment, shook his head, then whispered hoarsely, "I'll wait for word from your messenger."

"Thank you, and a pleasure meeting you, Thomas Jefferson."

"One thing," said Thomas.

"Yes."

"How will you know that you can trust me?"

Franklin laughed. "If I'm still alive tomorrow, I'll know whose side you're on. And I know that I'll survive tomorrow because I read people well, and I read you to be a Whig, not a Tory."

CHAPTER 3

Thomas lay in his bed, tossing and sweating as he replayed the evening's encounter. If he closed his eyes, Benjamin Franklin's oversized head popped into view. When he opened them, the vision would depart. For two hours, he fought the haunting, wakeful night before giving into the inevitable, and rose from his bed.

Thomas lit a candle and began reading *Poor Richard's Almanac*, the present from Franklin. He wondered momentarily why Franklin had chosen the pseudonym of Richard Saunders to publish the book, but was soon engrossed in its wit and wisdom. After reading for an hour, he returned to bed and while Dr. Franklin's head kept popping into his vision, Thomas finally became accustomed to the sight and was able to sleep for an hour before rising again to pace the floor.

For a few hours, Thomas poured through books and pamphlets that he had on hand, searching for signs of British tyranny. He found few indications, if any, that Franklin was right. When the sun broke the horizon, he concluded that the sage was a bit daft, and decided to continue his studies at William and Mary, disregarding the warnings and advice from the printer.

He dressed and went out for a morning walk when he chanced upon George Wythe in the street. "Hello, sir." He stopped and shook hands with the shorter man.

"Why, Thomas Jefferson. I thought you usually took your walks at night and used the daylight for running down the road for exercise."

"I didn't sleep well last night. So I'm out early to clear my head before plunging back into the books."

"Which books?"

Thomas hesitated. “Mind expansion reading. Heredotus and Xenophon.”

“Still read them in Greek?”

“I find that best. The translations lose the original flavor, often missing the heart of what the ancients were writing about.”

“I was kind of hoping you’d begin reading Lord Coke today.” Wythe stared through the younger man.

Thomas’ mind raced. *Had Franklin been to see Wythe?* He searched for clouds in the clear sky as he pondered the statement that Wythe had just made.

Wythe waited several seconds before asking: “Well, what say you about reading the English jurist?”

Thomas’ gaze remained skyward for a few moments before he stared at Wythe and regained eye contact. “The law interests me not. It is regimented and ordered, not open to liberal application or creative thoughts.”

“I’ve been told of your opinion of the legal profession. You see lawyers as insects crawling about corpses, and sucking out the last morsels.”

“Then, why should I read the ghastly prose from the likes of Lord Coke? I’ve no desire to learn it.”

“A mutual friend, a man of whom I have the greatest respect, indicated that just last night you indicated that you might be interested in becoming a lawyer. If so, I’d be proud to teach you what I know.”

Thomas looked puzzled. “Could I learn it in my spare time?”

Wythe frowned. “You need to learn it inside out, back to front, or not at all.”

“But many lawyers have only a cursory knowledge of the law.”

“If you want to be a hack and try a misdemeanor or draft a will now and then, yes. But if you want to revise legal codes and work on the system to make it more

fair, you must struggle long and hard with the ‘ghastly prose’ as you refer to the writings of Lord Coke. It is in the ‘ghastly prose’ that you discover what remains of Anglo-Saxon liberty.”

Wythe had truly gotten Thomas’ attention with the last statement. “You mean English liberty, don’t you?”

“Not at all. Ever since William the Norman, the esteemed conqueror from the continent arrived on the English shores, liberty has plunged on the island. Most of the freedoms you attribute to the Englishman are but the remnants of the Saxon culture. William the Norman started the English on a dreadful route of wars, conquests and colonizations as England stretched her fingers around the globe and built an empire. When things like that are going on, freedoms get scrunched.”

“But, the English laws protect us and give us liberties unknown in most of the world.”

“The old English laws do. The common law does. But, our legal system is being invaded from within. It’s being attacked by the one thing that can crush liberty.”

“Which is?” asked Thomas.

“Ignorance. We have lawyers with no knowledge practicing at the bar. There are some lawyers who don’t know the difference between a court of law and a court of admiralty.”

Thomas chuckled. “Perhaps they should look at the pleadings to see what court they are in, or they might glance at the door of the courthouse for a clue.”

“I know it seems ridiculous, but I fear that the law will be eaten alive by ignorance of it.”

Thomas enjoyed the interlude but decided to politely decline to study under Mr. Wythe. “After I complete my studies, then I’ll be glad to revisit this conversation.”

Wythe grabbed Thomas’s elbow. “Life is a schoolyard. You never stop learning and you’ll never complete your studies. I would like you for my law clerk now.”

“There are several bright men around Williamsburg. Just choose one. I’m certain he’d be honored to work with you.”

“I don’t want to explain to a certain gentleman that I failed to follow his instructions. I’m supposed to hire you.”

“What? That impudent printer? I’ve had it. I’m writing a letter to the newspaper today to expose that senile old man.”

Wythe opened his vest exposing a sheathed knife. “If I believed you, I’d slit your throat and bury your remains in the bay. Never mention his name, nor threaten to turn on him. I’m passive in most cases, but I’d forfeit my life to protect him. Do you understand?”

Thomas stared at the knife. He wished he had brought along his musket today, and he vowed to keep himself armed when he walked if he survived this encounter. “And would you also kill me if I refused to study law with you?”

“No.” “How could you trust me to keep quiet?”

“I respect your honor. If you tell me you’ll never mention our conversation, or last night’s affair with the printer, we’ll head off on our separate courses.”

A dog walked by and sniffed a tree. Its master was a hundred feet down the road. “This whole idea is bizarre. And bordering upon treason.”

“You and I will be in no danger. We will go about our work, training you to be the top young lawyer in Virginia. It will be others who are in peril, not us, at least not for several years, I hope. Besides, we might win our freedom peacefully.”

Thomas stared. “I’ll let you know in a couple of days. I must think this out fully.” He shook Wythe’s hand and turned to leave.

An arm grabbed his back. “Not so fast, Thomas. You can’t leave this spot unless I have your word you won’t mention our mutual friend to anyone.”

Thomas stared incredulously. “Are you serious?”

“Deadly serious.”

Thomas hesitated a moment. “I promise to say nothing until Wednesday. I’ll come to your house in the morning with my answer. Is that good enough?”

Wythe nodded, turned and walked toward the approaching man. “Why hello Jackson,” he said in a cheerful voice. “I’ll be by this morning for a shave and a haircut.”

Thomas turned and headed for the college while his mind flew in several directions leaving him befuddled, amazed, and distraught.

CHAPTER 4

Thomas sat in his study attempting to relax by reading a favorite book of his, *Don Quixote*. Even the ridiculous antics of the man from La Mancha were unable to clear his head, which spun with intrigue from his introductory meeting with Dr. Franklin and the morning's conversation – accosting was more like it – with George Wythe, a man he greatly respected. Thomas tried to escape reality by diving headlong into the novel and he hoped to laugh at the antics of the would-be knight and his squire, but was unable to enjoy the book.

He thought about Wythe's threat, wondering whether it were real, if his friend would have actually killed him. His nerves tied themselves into corded knots as his mind fed him images of Wythe shoving a knife into his stomach and spilling his entrails onto the street. In the vision, he fell to the gutter and saw Franklin shaking a finger at him and saying, "Poor Thomas, you should have paid heed."

Thomas shook his head in violent jerks, clearing the images from his mind. He sat in sweat-dampened clothing, shivering and confused. After several minutes of contemplation, he closed the novel, and went out for a walk with his musket slung over his shoulder.

As he walked, he sucked in fresh air and loaded his lungs, then released the breath. His blood came alive with the burst of oxygen and invigorated him. He stepped lively until his heart thumped through his jacket. After a few hundred paces, he broke into a run, sped up Duke of Gloucester Street for the west end of town, striding along with his musket in hand. For twenty minutes, he ran, breaking out of the town and into the country, his blood percolating through his system. While he had

frequently run a mile or two for exercise, he was now well beyond his longest trek ever. And he poured on for another ten minutes before turning back to head home, all the while, maintaining the lively pace.

With the town in sight, he felt a strange sensation, a euphoric lightness. His frame seemed to weigh half of what it had earlier in the morning, and his mind cleared, as snatches of insight flowed his way, and he felt invigorated, nearly intoxicated. He increased his pace and caught glimpses of visions.

First, he watched himself turning Wythe and Franklin in to the sheriff. Moments later, he saw them dragged to the gallows and hanged. When both bodies dangled lifeless, void of all bodily fluids, he saw King George III cut them down with a rapier, and gloat: “With these hangings, the cry of liberty is dead! Now, pay the taxes you must. Support my wars, my empire, my ego you must.”

The people watched the hangings, then walked glumly away, and headed for the tax office with their purses open. When a few turned to resist, King George produced a bull whip and thoroughly lashed the hesitant ones, turning them around to dutifully pay their last pieces of silver to the crown.

Then he peered into a grimy window of the tax office; the man collecting the taxes was himself, and for every three hundred pieces of silver he collected, the king granted him thirty. In the tax collection depot, Thomas was smiling greedily, pocketing the silver pieces. He glanced down and noticed that he had no legs and the remaining stumps were nailed into his stool where he sat collecting the taxes.

Thomas blinked hard, continued running, then imagined seeing Franklin and Wythe in a desperate battle against the king, fighting with their fingers while George III hacked at them with a sword. When the king was about to behead them, Thomas heard a gunshot, watched the king grimace, and saw George III run away, leaving

behind his right arm. Thomas strained to see who had been the savior, and he saw himself holding his musket that had just blown away the king's arm.

Thomas stopped running, breathed deeply, closed his eyes, felt a strange peacefulness, and turned toward George Wythe's office. He walked for several hundred yards before reaching the man's door, allowing his body to cool, but he was still a sweaty mess. He climbed the single step to the building, turned the handle, and announced himself to Wythe's clerk.

The clerk hesitated at the awesome sight of 6'2" of Jefferson sweated out like a race horse and standing in the lobby fidgeting with a musket. "I'm sorry, Mr. Jefferson, but Mr. Wythe is seeing an important client. I can't disturb him," said the nervous clerk.

"Tell him it's critical and that I only need a minute." Thomas sighted the musket towards a lamp and pretended to pull the trigger.

The clerk was torn. Should he stay out in the foyer with a youth pointing firearms about, or interrupt his boss. Neither choice suited him, but he finally slid off his stool and muttered to himself. He dragged his hunched-over frame most reluctantly toward the door to Wythe's office. When he reached the door, he knocked with two hesitant raps.

"What is it?" shouted Wythe from within.

The clerk stammered, "S-sorry, sir. B-but young Mr. Jefferson is h-here with an urgent request to see y-you. And, he's armed!"

Wythe ran to the door, flipped the handle, and flung it open. "Well, it's Thomas!" he said, approaching the young man and shaking his hand. "Makes good sense to carry a musket when you run about the woods as you do. I advise you keep

that weapon near by in the wilds. Come, step into the library. I was just finishing up with my client.”

“Pardon my appearance.”

“Running makes one sweat. I used to do it years ago. A most excellent sport.”

“And, I only need a minute,” said Thomas. “Please don’t send your client away on my account.”

“It’s okay.”

Thomas stared at Wythe, locking his eyes on the lawyer’s. After several seconds, he said, “I have decided to study the law. Do you know any good lawyers who might help me?”

Wythe’s face erupted with a wide smile, and he shouted, “One moment!” He walked into his office, removed Lord Coke on Littleton from a shelf, and returned to the corridor. He handed the heavy volume to Thomas. “Read from this tome for a bit. Come into my office at nine tomorrow morning, and we’ll begin your training.”

Thomas opened the book, flipped through a few pages, then closed it. He nodded to Wythe, and departed the office.

CHAPTER 5

For months and months Thomas had been trying to poke his way through Sir Edward Coke's *Commentaries upon Littleton* without completion. Today, like many others, he sat in the law office, scouring the dreadful book for hints into the maze of contract theory when Wythe entered the study chamber. The industrious student peered at his teacher from behind his stack of books on the table.

Wythe scratched his thick chin. "How are things coming?"

Thomas shook his head. "A year into the old goat. I do wish the Devil had old Coke, for I am sure I never was so tired of an old dull scoundrel in my life. Isn't there some easier method of learning the law?"

"Easier, yes, but for a thorough understanding, you need to wrestle with the basics. The man was uncouth, yet cunning, and it's inside Coke's mind that you must get to understand the common law, to grasp the Saxon liberties."

"For what purpose? I've seen many a lawyer with far less training than I've had. Surely I must have satisfied Franklin's requirement of studying the law. This stuff is outright awful to read."

Wythe shut the door. "His name isn't to be spoken amongst us. I offered to show you the law on that condition. Violate it again, and you're out the door."

"I take it that I need to keep hitting these horrid creatures." Thomas pointed to the stack of law books.

Wythe nodded.

"Am I doing anything right?"

“I’ve never seen anyone keep more meticulous records than you. You’ll do wonderfully well when you practice law.”

“I don’t really want to be a lawyer.”

“Well, then, when you revise the Virginia codes.”

“Revise the codes! I don’t understand a half of the common law – why would I take on the codes?”

Wythe laughed, “Keep at the old goat! He’ll show you the way.”

Thomas shut the book. “No more for today. I’m off to the House of Burgesses to see what tricks our legislators are playing with the law.”

Wythe nodded, “Session’s nearly completed. Most of the representatives have gone home and I doubt that much will be going on, but what would you expect in the end of May. You go ahead; I’ll drop in later.”

After Wythe left the study, Thomas put on his coat and left the office. He walked a few blocks to the legislative building, entered it, took a seat and listened as a statesman rambled on about money and British taxes on the colonies. The speech dragged and Thomas stood to fight off sleep when a coarse-looking delegate in breeches took the floor. Thomas opened his eyes and intently listened to his backwoods friend. Thomas had always marveled at the man’s brashness and verve and expected a consummate performance from this newcomer to the House. A special election had been held just ten days ago and he had won his seat. The man on the floor had little formal education, was a lawyer despite only studying the law for six weeks, had failed at several enterprises so that his wife and children were in tough financial circumstances, but the man had such an oratory talent. He used pauses, inflections, and timing to maximum effect; he was clearly a captivating public speaker. His lack of training in the law didn’t matter to local juries, so he won many

trials that he shouldn't have because of his effective delivery. His performances were style based and he opted to play upon emotions to sway jurors rather than arguing with substance or logic. He made his points – quite effectively.

Thomas listened intently as his friend eloquently discussed the abuses of the Stamp Act, then listed several resolutions concerning it. He cited four that were unremarkable, but those four weren't the end of his presentation. The new representative continued speaking after a lengthy pause, then cleared his throat, and boomed that the Parliament in England had no authority to tax Virginians and that Virginia's General Assembly of which the House of Burgesses was the lower chamber possessed: “*the only and sole exclusive right and power to lay taxes and impositions upon the inhabitants of this colony . . .*”

The speaker continued with a couple more resolutions against the Stamp Act, but all Thomas heard reverberating through his head was “sole exclusive right and power to lay taxes.” He scratched his head, stretched, and felt vibrations inside his body that began at his biceps, worked their way down his rib cage, and culminated at his lower spine with great magnitude. He breathed deeply, closed his eyes and saw a vision of Franklin and Wythe taking on a battalion of Redcoats with nothing but brash words and Wythe's knife. As the Redcoats were upon them, the backwoods speaker jumped into the middle and thundered out words that toppled all of the British infantrymen. He opened his eyes and the vision vanished, but the voice of the speaker still cracked through the House.

Chills of anguish and excitement raced through Thomas as the man continued, and eloquently boomed: “Caesar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell and George the Third – ”

The Speaker of the House jumped up to halt the speech by shouting, “Treason!” which was echoed by several others in the building. “Treason! Treason!” screamed the legislators.

Thomas gulped hard, and looked at his friend on the floor, who was surprisingly completely composed. Patrick Henry waited quietly for the din to subside, then continued, “ – may profit by their example. If *this* be treason, make the most of it.”

Thomas realized that his palms were coated with slimy perspiration and felt sweat popping out all over his body. Much as he wanted to run onto the floor and hug his friend, he felt restrained by Franklin’s warnings. Instead of standing up for Patrick, he walked out of the House of Burgesses without speaking to anyone, and went home.

In his own study, he reflected upon the speech by Patrick. It was so invigorating that he decided that he must visit and congratulate him. As he started for the door, he felt a gnawing in his stomach. Franklin’s warnings came upon him again, and made him shiver.

He reasoned that if Patrick Henry was now openly talking against the Crown, then perhaps he should keep his distance. After considering the situation for a few moments, Thomas ran to his desk and removed the cipher Franklin had given him from its folder. He looked at it intently, then sat at the desk and wrote up the following bill.

Dear Patrick:

It has come to my attention that you purchased several items on credit from my estate that are still outstanding in balance. I'm certain that it was probably an oversight since the amounts are trifling, but could you please give this billing your closest attention so that I can close the account.

47	Nails	Due 3p
294	Eggs	Due 18/0
8	Chickens	Due 12/2
194	Seeds	Due 4/5
	Total	Due 1/14/11

Very Truly Yours

Th. Jefferson

Thomas put the cipher away, then called a boy off the street to run the bill to Henry's room. The boy's eyes lit when Thomas handed him two pence for a single errand. "Yes sir. I'll be a carrying this to Mr. Patrick Henry direct."

"Thank you. And deliver it to him personally."

The boy stuffed the letter down his shirt and his feet flew for the destination as either hand clutched a penny and pumped to keep up with his striding legs. When he reached the inn, he opened the door. A woman with low-slung, bulbous hips stared at the tyke. "And what would you be wantin?"

The boy wiped his nose with his sleeve and pulled the bill from inside of his shirt. "To deliver this here letter to Mr. Henry."

"I'll be takin the writin to him." She put out her hand.

"No, ma'am. I need to deliver it to him personal."

The woman shoved both hands on her hips and turned her head in the direction of the library. “He’s in there,” she said, pointing with her chin.

“Thanky, thanky.”

The boy shot through the door, down the hall, and into the library where he found Henry pacing and practicing another speech. “Beggin your pardon, sir, but I have a letter for you.”

Henry stopped pacing, noticed the paper in the boy’s hand, and reached in his pocket. He found a half pence, patted the boy on his head, and slipped the coin into the lad’s hand. “Fine boy,” he said.

“Thanky, sir.” The lad slipped out of the library and past the maid. He waited on the porch in hopes of a return letter that would earn him more money, despite wanting to hustle to the general store for some licorice.

Henry held the note in his hand, read it and shouted: “What! Is ‘Long Tom’ broke? Chickens! And seeds! Why would he dun me for things that I’ve never bought from him?”

The maid waddled into the library. “Did that boy be a bringin bad news?”

Henry didn’t look at her. “And the prices! Where does this man get off?”

“Does you need somethin?” asked the maid.

“No!” Henry waved her away with a hand motion.

As she left the library, he crumpled the bill and tossed it onto his desk, where it merged with several other balls of scrap paper. “I’ve always known Thomas to laugh at jokes, but rarely to make his own. This doesn’t make sense, but it’s just like him to count every seed.”

“Sure don’t make no sense at all, do it?” called the maid over her shoulder from in the hallway.

Henry shook his head and began pacing again, back to rehearsing the speech he was to make the next day. As he walked about the library, something flashed in his mind and he walked to his desk to retrieve the note from Thomas.

He painstakingly opened four balls of paper before he discovered the note, which he stared at for several seconds. Then he opened a desk drawer and removed three cipher sheets. Patrick took up a quill, dipped it into blue ink, and began marking the bill from Jefferson with the words that corresponded to the numbers. Soon, he had scratched out the following words on the bill.

47 – IF	Nails	Due 3p – WE
294 – HAVE	Eggs	Due 18/0 – A COMMON
8 – FRIEND	Chickens	Due 12/2 – OFFER ME
194 – TWELVE	Seeds	Due 4/5 – SHILLINGS
		SETTLEMENT
	Total	Due 1/14/11 – THEN
		DESTROY NOTE

Henry read over the bill twice before accepting that it could not be a coincidence. He read the note:

**IF WE HAVE A COMMON FRIEND OFFER TWELVE
SHILLINGS SETTLEMENT THEN DESTROY NOTE**

He set the note into the fireplace and watched it ignite, then shouted to the maid, “Is that boy still here?”

“I be checkin, mercy, I be checkin,” called the maid as she walked out on the porch and with palms resting on her hips shouted, “Boy! Boy! Is you still bein here?”

The boy wiped his nose with the back of his hand. “Yes’am.”

She jumped at hearing his voice coming from behind her. She tried to compose herself, but her eyes were opened wide enough to show white all around her irises. “Well, be gettin into the library for a response letter. And be doin it fast.”

The boy scooted past her to see Henry again. “You need some fast legs?”

“Indeed I do. Take this to Mr. Jefferson, if you would.” Henry set his quill down, blotted the paper to dry the ink, then folded it several times. He dripped a candle onto the paper and pressed his brass seal onto the soft wax and handed it to the boy.

“You needn’t do that. Heck, I couldn’t read it no way.”

“Be off with you then,” said Henry after giving the boy another half pence.

The boy shot out of the inn carrying the note and raced for Jefferson’s place. When the house was in sight, he sprinted up the stairs to the porch. He banged hard on the door, which Thomas answered. “Well, young man. What have you there?”

The boy proudly presented the sealed document. Thomas invited him in and offered him a cookie, which the boy greedily accepted and ate as they talked. Then Thomas gave him a couple of pennies. The boy looked at him. “You need any more messages run?”

“No thanks,” said Thomas.

“Then, I best be gettin along.”

Thomas smiled and showed his young guest out the door. As he walked back into his study, he broke the seal with his thumb and unfolded the note. He read:

IOU 12 shillings

P. Henry

Thomas burned the letter and paced the room. He was relieved to have finally found someone else in Franklin's web of intrigue, but distraught over what to do next.

CHAPTER 6

His velvet coat and silk shirt stood out in the otherwise casual atmosphere, adding to his inner tension as he stepped onto the platform. Its uneven boards increased his height by several inches, which made him the tallest tree in the tavern by at least a foot. Fearing that he might hit a sour note, and conscious of his being overdressed, Thomas cradled his violin and began stroking the strings with the bow. Far from being sour, the first note was a shrill screech, which raised the hair on everyone's back. He jumped in astonishment, cast an embarrassed smile at the crowd and stammered out a couple of mumbled words of apology, then began anew. After the unpleasant start, the fiddler smoothed out his stroke and produced lively tunes as the bushes and trees intermingled on the floor. Sap flowed energetically, as did the cider.

Thomas played for an hour without taking a break before turning the program over to another, who drew his bow a bit faster, raising the pitch and fervor of the dance by playing crescendos that flew off the strings. While the new fiddler sent the room into a frenzy, Thomas stood in the corner, clapping his hands when he heard, "Are you resting so you can entertain us some more?"

Thomas swiveled to locate the voice, and was taken aback by the sparkling eyes of the young woman addressing him. "Uh, well, I, uh."

She grabbed his hand and shook it gingerly. "I'm Belinda."

Thomas's face reddened and he scooped cider from the nearby bowl and gulped down the contents of his mug. "I'm, uh, I played fiddle, and . . ." He stared into her

eyes for several seconds. Then he laughed. “Excuse me, I’m having, uh, trouble collecting my, uh, thoughts.”

“I listened to you play and play. I watched your legs bounce to the music as your fingers danced up and down the neck of the fiddle. I could have listened to you all night.”

Thomas loosened his collar with an index finger. “You could?”

“Yes,” she caught his eyes and saw a blaze in the hazel irises.

“Well, uh, okay. Excuse me.”

Thomas stepped onto the platform with the other fiddler and they stroked tune after tune until the crowd had too much dancing and too much music, and slowly began thinning as people left the tavern. Belinda had stood at the platform for the entire set watching Thomas coax his fiddle to perfection. After an hour, the other player declared that he needed a break. Thomas nodded and set down his own instrument.

Belinda smiled. “That was invigorating. By the way, what’s your name?”

“Uh, I’m Thomas. They call me “Long Tom” Jefferson.”

“That’s nice. And what brings you to this place?”

Thomas filled his cider mug and gulped. As he was about to answer, a heavy-set man walked across the room. The hefty fellow shouted over the raucous chatter, “Belinda! We best be getting on.”

Belinda gave a look of rejection, then lowered her head. She apologized to Thomas. “That’s my daddy, and I dare not keep him waiting. Maybe I’ll see you again?”

Thomas nodded and stammered something totally unintelligible. Moments later, Belinda was gone. Thomas poured another cup of cider. As he finished it off, he heard, “Thomas!” and turned around to see Patrick Henry strutting across the room.

“Hi Patrick, good to see you.”

“Thomas, I saw you talking to Belinda. She seemed to be captivated by you. Are you going to chase her a bit?”

“We’ll see, Patrick, we’ll see.”

“Did you make any plans?”

“Not many. I still have a full course of law books to digest. I’ll make my move all in good time.”

“Still studying law! Wythe must be some kind of driver. Good God! What’s it been under him, three years?”

“Uh-huh. I’m getting close to grasping the guts of Lord Coke.”

“What a waste! I didn’t study law more than six weeks, and I’m winning nearly all my cases. And as for Sir Edward Coke, I’ve never cracked him open. It’s not necessary. You can win without him. Blackstone digested all of it and made the common law a breeze to understand.”

Thomas nodded, knowing how limited Henry’s legal training actually was. George Wythe had refused to sign Patrick’s license because of it, but now Thomas wondered about the value in spending so much time learning the law. “Patrick, I tend to agree. If the Devil had had old Coke, my life would be bearable. Maybe I should cut out the incessant book work and just practice the law as you do.”

“Why are you studying it with such fervor anyway?”

“Wythe believes that Blackstone is the beginning of the end of legal minds. He says if I don’t get a solid foundation in Coke, that the sweetened digest of Mansfield by Blackstone will fill my head will jelly instead of reason.”

“Ah, just throw out a shingle and take on some cases. Why not just force your way into the law the way I did?”

“Because I’m not as articulate as you; it’s a challenge for me to put three coherent sentences together orally. So I’ll have to win my cases with my knowledge, not my tongue. And besides, our mutual friend asked me to, or rather, told me to.”

“Then you better keep cracking old Coke. Poor Richard is a wise one. He told me not to learn the law, just to learn how to use it with powerful speeches. He wants me to make them as emotion filled as possible. He said it’s my persuasion tactics that he’ll be needing soon, not my reading and writing abilities.”

“Patrick, I still think it would be wise for you to crack a book now and again.”

Henry cleared his throat. “Let’s get back to Belinda. Do you need some pointers on courting? I’ll be glad to instruct you.”

“I do okay by myself.”

“That’s not what John Page told me. He said you write all about love to your friends, but never to the woman you wish to woo. He said that you missed your chances before because you were too timid to let your flame know that you were interested.”

“Page broke our confidence.”

“Is it true?”

Thomas nodded, and blushed slightly.

Henry slapped him on the back. “Remember, I’ll give you pointers.”

“Just keep speaking, and I’ll keep studying, and we’ll keep our mutual friend happy.”

“What do you think the old fellow is up to?”

Thomas shrugged. “Not sure.”

“One thing is for certain.”

“What’s that?”

“If I ever need a lawyer, you’ll be it.”

“But you speak with such eloquence. Why would you want somebody as inarticulate as I?”

“Because you already know the law cold, and you’re still digging into it. There won’t be a lawyer in Virginia able to put one over on you.”

“But I won’t be able to well articulate my arguments verbally.”

“Thomas, you’ve got to identify your talents and run with them. Me, I’m crass, boastful, and a bit lazy. I’m never going to cram the law down somebody’s throat, but give me a floor to speak on and I can sell prunes to dysentery victims. And, you, my good fellow, can reason abstractly and write like the wind.”

“I’m no bard.”

“Shakespeare, no, but Bacon, Swift and Locke all rolled into one, you’ll be. Nobody will be able to touch you in court.”

Thomas flushed again. “Tomorrow they’ll be able to run circles around me. I feel a horrible aftermath brewing in my head already.”

“Why are you quaffing that stuff so greedily?”

“Maybe Belinda made me nervous.”

“So you do want some help after all.”

“Thanks Patrick, but I’ll figure out what to do with Belinda.”

CHAPTER 7

George Wythe opened a drawer, fingered a document, then called his brilliant student into his office. Thomas walked in with a book in his hand, reading from it as he listened to his mentor.

“Look up from that tome, will you now?”

Thomas raised his eyes, but kept reading while listening to Wythe.

“And shut the infernal thing. Just because your mind can track two things at one time doesn’t mean you can be rude about it.”

Thomas snapped the covers together.

“I’ve been thinking,” said Wythe. “It seems that you know the law well enough to go out and make a name of yourself.”

“And what does our mutual friend say? Does he believe me ready?”

“Ready? Are you kidding? Five years under my stern guidance would make a dolt ready. You’re going to turn heads in the courts like those one-piece cartwheels from New Jersey do in Philadelphia. If the old fellow isn’t much pleased with your progress, then he’s daft.”

“What type of cases would you suggest I begin with?”

“I think that I’d work on land patents if I were you, perhaps caveats, you never know, you might break through the landed aristocracy of Virginia and change the law so the common man can own enough to live upon it. I’m recommending you for the General Court.”

“So you think I am a notch above the average lawyer, putting me before that court and all.”

“I’d hire you today as my personal attorney, and that’s saying something.”

Thomas blushed and turned to leave.

“Wait! I got this invoice for books that I never ordered, and I haven’t even seen them in the office for that matter. They must be yours, so you better pay the bill.” He handed Thomas a slip of paper.

Thomas read the bill. “I don’t recall any books coming here from Boston.”

“And, that’s another thing, Thomas. The invoice is signed by John Adams. Don’t ever order anything from that feisty little fat man.”

“Why not?” Thomas asked as his brain jumped into gear and his gut began turning loops. He’d never contacted Adams, nor ordered any books from him.

“The man’s an outright radical. He’s trouble with a bold, capital ‘T’ and you don’t need any involvement with him. You don’t want to make the authorities think you’re an enemy of the Crown.”

“Did you check the bill closely to make certain it wasn’t for you?” asked Thomas.

“Closely, yes, in fact I scrutinized it,” answered Wythe, “and those prices are atrocious. You’re being billed double the value on some of those items. Stay away from Adams. He’s not only a radical, he’s a swindler.”

Thomas fingered the bill. “George, I think I’d like to go to my house for a while, do you mind if I leave?”

“Mind, don’t you understand? You’re too smart for me to help you any longer. Go out and raise Cain in the courts.”

“When Able,” said Thomas, and he left Wythe in the office working on a testament for a client. Thomas hurried out of the office, carrying only the invoice from Adams. Three steps down the street, he broke into a run as adrenaline raced through his system. After a few strides, he broke into a full sprint until he reached his house.

Wythe looked up from his work and dashed for the door hoping to catch Thomas to remind him of the dinner party at a fellow lawyer’s home. When he reached the main door he saw Thomas scurrying down the street. He called out, but Thomas was out of range. Wythe turned to enter the office and nearly collided with Patrick Henry. “Look at that boy run!” he said to Henry while pointing down the street.

“Is there a fire?”

“No, I just told him that I’m recommending him to the General Court. I think he’s ecstatic.”

Henry exclaimed, “The General Court! Just like that? He’s never tried a case.”

“He’s ready to take on the best.”

“Ahem, would you think of recommending me to the same court?”

Wythe patted Henry on the back. “You’re far too good at selling snake oil to juries to want to be in that court.”

“I take that to be a negative.”

“You take it correctly.”

“Mr. Wythe, you refused me a recommendation to practice law, and now, when I am among the best in Virginia, you refuse again to place my name for consideration for the General Court.”

“That’s true.”

“Yet, you move to admit young Thomas, a boy I’ve known most of my life, a smart boy, mind you, but a boy just the same.” Patrick ripped open his vest and pointed towards his left breast. “Shove a hot arrow thence, and twist it until my blood stops spurting, for that is what you have done to me, not once, but twice!”

“Patrick! Stop the play acting! I’m not a juror you need to emotionally manipulate to prove a foul case is fair.”

Patrick’s eyes lit and the corners of his mouth arched upward. “Then, you do think I am good at what I do?”

“The best. The most convincing speaker I have ever heard. You could sell Bibles to the Indians and salt to the fishes of the sea.”

“Then, the General Court, you will recommend me?”

“Patrick! Patrick! Patrick! God, how you labor the point. To practice before the General Court requires that you perform in depth research to present a case adequately. The judges there aren’t easily swayed by emotional antics.”

“I can research with the best of them.”

“But, you don’t. I don’t think that you can change your habits. You’re too lazy at reading. You’d fail in the General Court, while you’re a master before juries. Stay where you are the best.”

Henry frowned at Wythe and stomped down the street without offering any parting salutations. Wythe went back into the office and reviewed his client’s testament while wondering just how hot the blood ran through Patrick Henry’s veins.

Thomas continued his race home, and when he reached his destination, he flung open the door and charged to the desk and removed his cipher sheets from a false bottom he had constructed in a drawer. He hadn't looked at the papers since contacting Patrick Henry via code several years ago. With his heart throbbing both from sprinting and excitement at receiving a "bill" from Adams, he laid out the ciphers. Using his index finger as a guide, he drew an imaginary line down the cipher columns, looking for words to match the numbers on the invoice. A few seconds later, he was scratching with a quill on the paper. He decoded the following:

TROUBLE IN THE RANKS. TRUST NOBODY. REPEAT. TRUST NOBODY. OUR FRIEND OR I WILL CONTACT SOON.

Thomas double-checked his cipher, then shook his head and let out a long stream of air through his nostrils. As he was preparing to burn the papers, he heard a knock at the door, followed by a call from a familiar voice. "Hey, Thomas. Congratulations. Wythe just told me the good news." Patrick Henry let himself into the house and walked towards Thomas' study.

Thomas looked at his friend of many years and thought, *Is he the traitor? I hope not.* He stuffed the bill into his pocket and shoved his cipher sheets into a drawer just as Henry burst through the door wearing an elongated grin.

Henry reached out his hand and grabbed Thomas', shaking it violently. "The General Court! How about that."

"I haven't been accepted yet."

"With a recommendation from George Wythe, you can't be denied."

"I hope not."

“Hope not, come on. Let’s go celebrate.”

Thomas reached into his pocket and felt the bill from Adams. He didn’t know what to do. It had specifically warned him to trust nobody, and here, most coincidentally, was Henry, who all these years was his only contact with Franklin, other than Wythe. And, since Wythe didn’t recognize the bill from John Adams as a ciphered message, George wasn’t into Franklin’s confidence as deeply as Henry. But the note said not to trust anybody, and there it was in his pocket, with enough words and scribbles on it for anyone to be able to read it and break the cipher sheets. A document like that could implicate both him and Adams. Adams had a reputation for being hot headed, radical, and brilliant. Whatever was going on in Boston, or wherever, it must be big trouble. He hesitated and gulped.

“Stop worrying. You’re a lawyer now. Come with me to celebrate.” Henry grabbed his hand and turned him out the door.

Thomas didn’t know what to do with the dangerous slip of paper in his hand, or the man in his study who could well be the turncoat. He stammered, “Patrick, have you . . . heard from our mutual friend lately?”

“Not for a couple of years. Why do you ask?”

“Curious.”

“Forget that old geezer. Let’s go have a party.”

“I guess.”

“Guess! You’ll come, and I’m buying for the whole night.”

“Patrick, what do you think about the Stamp Act?”

“Stop it Thomas! Let’s go quaff some rum.”

Thomas made eye contact. “Really, how do you find the Stamp Act?”

“Uh,” sighed Henry in desperation, “I think that George is going too far and wants the colonies to pay for all his putrid wars with taxes from the colonies. I think taxing every pleading paper in the state is pure insanity. But, God help us, we lawyers closed down the courts in Virginia in protest. What a fine showing of courage. The Stamp Act! The Crown has the audacity to impose a direct tax upon we colonists. Why, it’s more damn invasive and unfair than any tax I could imagine, with the possible exception of directly taxing revenues and incomes.”

“Come now, Patrick, who would ever tax incomes? Why, it would authorize wholesale searches of a person’s records of transactions by the Crown. Nobody would stand for such an illegal invasion of our rights as Englishmen.”

Patrick took a deep breath. He stared at Thomas. “We have no rights, not as Englishmen or otherwise. We’re cattle for the Crown. The British would just as soon shoot us as look at us. But, we’re geographically important to them in their ever growing global empire. And, if they continue taxing us for their stinking wars, we’ll give them the resources to conquer Europe and the world. Their king is a tyrant and needs a good, Virginia whipping.”

“You mean our king, don’t you.”

“He’s not my king. I won’t claim anyone who would impose a direct tax upon Virginians without even giving us a vote on the matter.”

“Careful. Talk like that is deadly dangerous.”

“Not with you.”

Thomas hesitated, then said, “Let’s go to the Raleigh.” He physically turned Patrick around to face the door while fingering the explosive message from Adams in his pocket.

“You got that right.”

“And let’s not talk politics.”

Henry smiled. “My kind of man. Let’s talk women. You need some help with them.”

“I do all right.”

“Sure you do. Write me all those letters about how Belinda is your most treasured item, but you never let her know a word of it. Then she goes and marries Mr. Ambler without the slightest idea that you were a suitor.”

“I let her know.”

“Only if she were clairvoyant would she have any inkling of your interest in her. Before she got married, she told me that she hadn’t heard from you in months and figured you weren’t interested in her.”

“And you never let me know!”

“Remember when you told me that you didn’t need any help with romantic matters? I have a long memory and a deep sense of honor. I didn’t butt in.”

“But, why didn’t you tell me?”

“Thomas, next time you fall in love, make a definitive move. Don’t be tentative.”

“Belinda . . . interested in me; it’s best for me it never went anywhere . . . well, the Lord bless her I say! . . . Many and great are the comforts of a single state.”

“Stop justifying your shyness. Let’s go hit the rum.”

“Only in moderation. I’m not about to pay dearly for your indulgences.”

“My indulgences? You’ll not be inside my head in the morning. Pay attention to your own.”

Henry clapped him on the back. “General Court. You’ve got it made. You’ve got it made.”

Thomas reached into his pocket and felt the explosive document, then laughed.
“Okay. Let’s go.”

“That’s more like it.”

“Oh, Patrick. Have you received any ciphers of late?”

“No politics, remember.”

“Fine.”

“But, if you must know, the only cipher I’ve ever received has been yours and one other from our mutual friend.”

They walked out the door, arm in arm, laughing about Thomas’ upcoming appointment to the General Court. Along the way, they stopped to insult an unseen horse that had ungraciously deposited excrement in their mutual path and soiled Thomas’ right and Patrick’s left boot. They rubbed the fresh dung on the dirt road, but its odor clung to both men’s shoes.

At the tavern, they entered and Thomas spotted a roaring fire. He reached into his pocket and felt the paper from Adams. Henry said, “Let’s take that table, and save me a stool. I’m being called outside for an official visit with the privy.”

Thomas sighed as he watched Henry go out the door. He reached into his pocket, removed the wadded-up letter, and threw it at the fire. As it was flying towards the flames, Henry unexpectedly opened the door to remind Thomas to order rum, causing a draft that sent the paper harmlessly to the floor, where it landed in a puddle of spilled ale. Thomas reached down, picked up the bill and tossed it into the fire.

Henry walked over to the hearth and stared at the crumpled ball, watching it unfold in the flames. “That’s a bill! Who sent it?”

“Nobody.”

“What do you mean, nobody? Damn it.” Henry reached for the sizzling piece of paper that was half burned.

Thomas grabbed his arm before he could seize the document. “Let’s have that rum, and no talk of politics.”

Henry looked hurt for a moment, then watched as the ball of paper fully ignited. “You must have a good reason.” Then Patrick began laughing. “And I thought I was the radical. But, look at you! Quiet in the corner, never speaking a sentence of rebellion, and then . . . Well, okay. It’s rum.”

Thomas raised his hand and whistled for service before shouting: “Rum, two glasses.”

Henry laughed and said, “I must most urgently attend to the privy before we get into that stuff.” He walked out of the tavern quite deliberately.

A few minutes later, Henry returned, and became boisterous and profane as he quaffed one drink after another. Although Thomas actually drank very little, and he was still nursing his first glass, his companion was soon deeply controlled by the spirits he had consumed. After an hour, Henry barely protested when Thomas left him alone at the tavern.

As Thomas left the inn, his mind rambled in several directions. He took his time, and reflected as he walked, and after much deliberation, he went to his house.

At his study, he decided to write Adams a letter in plain text, not daring to cipher back anything. He doubted that the postal service was censoring mail since Franklin was the postmaster, but he wanted to take no chances with sending ciphered messages and compromising the codes. He sat at his desk and wrote:

Dear Mr. Adams:

I must say that I am confused and that I cannot pay the invoice to the office of George Wythe that was recently received from you for books. You see, neither Mr. Wythe nor I received any of the items listed on the bill. Perhaps there was some mistake and they went to another office. Frankly, I must confess that I burned the invoice upon receipt, knowing it was bogus, but after careful reflection I decided to write you to make certain that you would not mistakenly move to collect upon a debt that I do not owe. Could either you or your principal send me a note confirming the mistake and clearing me of any debt?

I trust that this will be no more trouble for your office than it was for Mr. Wythe's. I'm certain that you understand that "A penny saved is two pence clear," so I must be frugal and pay for only those items I receive. However, I will pay special heed to the notice until you remove the blemish of the outstanding bill.

Hopefully this is a trivial matter that needs not the attention of a philosopher to sort through a mistaken invoice.

Very Truly Yours,

Th. Jefferson

Thomas sealed the letter and walked to the post office, where he sent it off to John Adams in Boston. His mind screamed for relief from the Adams' message. Was Patrick a Crown agent? Was Wythe? Was Adams? What had he ventured into by associating with the good doctor?

CHAPTER 8

THREE YEARS LATER, 1770

“Can you win my case for me?” asked an inquisitive Patrick Henry as the pair of men walked down the town’s main street.

Thomas gazed off, and seemed not to hear.

“Thomas! Are you listening to me?”

“You said what?”

“What’s the problem?” asked Henry.

“Sorry, my mind’s not on the law right now.”

“Your mind’s always on the law. What’s going on?”

Thomas smiled, reflected on whether to confide his feelings in Henry, then took a chance. “If you must know, I’ve met the most elegant, beautiful brunette you could imagine. Her eyes are the richest shade of hazel, large and expressive. Her complexion is brilliant and she has luxuriant hair with the finest tinge of auburn. She rides well, plays a delightful harpsichord, dances with grace – and – she loves to read.”

“Good God man! Congratulations! You can put more than three sentences together. Now tell me how old is this fine lass?”

“Six years my junior, she’s one and twenty.”

“And might you share her name with your co-patriot?”

“Martha Wayles Skelton, she is.”

“The widow Skelton?”

“The same.”

Henry took a deep breath. “Have you told her that you’re interested in her?”

Thomas looked at him reprovably. “In good time, Patrick, in good time.”

“Time, time, time! Rubbish! If you want her, you have to let her know, show her you care, nurture the relationship like you would a bud in your garden. Her heart can’t grow for you if you don’t plant some seeds.” Henry gave a crass smile, proud of his double entendre.

“You’re a vulgar dog.”

“But, I’m right.”

“I know how to deal with women.”

“Yeah, that’s why you lost Rebecca, the love of your life. And others. You never even tried for them.”

Thomas thought about the comments while Henry slapped some mud off his rumpled pants. Moments later, he was culling a glob of something off his shirt sleeve. Thomas shook his head disgustedly as the pair ambled down the street.

“You’re the crassest man I know. How could you know a thing about charming a woman?”

“You know that I’m correct, Thomas.”

“Okay, I think that I’ll write her a letter tonight, pouring out my feelings.”

“No, Thomas. Go see her and tell her.”

“You think I should?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Then leave me be. I’ll walk there now and do it straight away.”

Henry saluted, turned an about face, and marched off with his arms swinging in exaggerated sweeps. Thomas chuckled when the mock soldier stopped abruptly, swept dandruff off his collar, and continued down the road.

Thomas walked towards the widow's house with great trepidation. As he passed a bakery, he went inside and purchased a muffin. After eating it on the street, he stopped at the green grocers and bought a pear, which he also consumed as he walked. When her house was in sight, he turned and walked the other direction, deciding that Henry was wrong.

As he ambled down the path, he met with John Wayles on the road, who tipped his hat. "Have you been a courting my daughter?"

Thomas' ruddy complexion glowed crimson. "Why do you ask that?"

"Don't look so guilty. I just figured that since you're walking away from the house that you had been there."

"Actually," Thomas cleared his throat, "I was near there, but I lost my nerve when I approached the house."

"Women make you a little nervous, do they?"

"Only certain women."

"So you are interested in my daughter."

Thomas protested. "I never said that."

Wayles let out a huge, resonating laugh. "For a lawyer who'll take on the Crown straight up in court, and give them your best without ducking a bit, you are quite shy with ladies."

"I guess so. Would you be offended if I let your daughter know of my interest in her?"

“Offended! Certainly not! I’d be honored. In fact, we’re having a feast tonight, and I know there is much more than we can consume by ourselves. Why don’t you join us for dinner at seven.”

Thomas stammered. “W-well, surely. Should I come home with you now?”

“No, Thomas. Why don’t you come over later. I’d like to have a word with my daughter before you arrive. You know, to let her know that you’re a little shy, but awfully interested.”

Thomas shook Wayles’ hand with exceptional vigor. “Thank you, sir. I’ll be over at seven tonight.”

CHAPTER 9

LONDON, 1771

Benjamin Franklin sat on the velvet-tufted seat of his coach contemplating the situation; the cobblestone road jarred him through the padded upholstery. The horses pulled up to Sir Edmund Northborough's residence and stopped. Franklin had requested an audience with the lord, but when the footman knocked upon the door, Sir Northborough's porter sent word that Franklin had been denied access. While sitting a few moments to consolidate his thoughts, a thousand fears raced through the philosopher's brain. There was tension in the colonies, in England, and now, even with his request to enter at Northborough's estate.

In disgust Franklin shouted at his driver to leave, but before the coach could pull away, there was a shout from Northborough's porter to wait. The driver jumped from the conveyance and ran to see why the porter had hollered. After gracefully crossing the cobbled drive, the driver spoke with the porter, who now smiled, quite in contrast to the expression he had worn earlier. The driver tipped his hat and raced back to the coach, stumbling momentarily before grabbing the handle to open the door.

As he flung the door open, he ejaculated: "E's granted you a audience. 'Bout time, too, I say. We been comin 'ere the last three days, and finally, 'Is Lordship gives in. And the porter made it all seem so matter-of-fact, like you'd never been denied yesterday or Monday neither. Like the twit of a knight didn't have you sitting in his ruddy waiting room some four hours last week."

Franklin smiled at his driver. “James, don’t be so angry. It costs years off your life to get so riled. Let thy discontents be secrets.”

James sneered. “Beggin your pardon, but I been readin your Almanacs and I don’t need no sage advice. I can’t see no reason to extend my wretched life in this foul country. Stop twenty people on the street, and you can bet that nineteen of them ain’t had no breakfast today. I’m lucky I got a job and some schoolin, but look around and see what squalor these ignorant louts live in.”

“But you must strive for betterment, work for success, and hope for the future.”

“Like I said, I been readin your books, and your sayin that makes the most sense to me is: ‘He that lives upon hope, dies farting.’ That’s the way I sees it.”

Franklin laughed until his oscillating belly jiggled the coach. “Now, stop it, James . . . surely I never wrote such a thing.”

“You bet you wrote that thing. In ‘36 or ‘37 you did. I ain’t ‘bout to mistake a line that made me roll over in laughter what also told me that youse a man after me own ‘eart, you is.”

Franklin rolled over on his side, chuckling. “James, please just drive me to the door, and make no more sport. I’ve serious business to attend inside.”

“Aye aye, good sir.” James hopped upon the outer seat of the coach and slapped the reins directing the horse to go forward. James steered the carriage to Sir Northborough’s door. The horse halted and James jumped from his seat to open Franklin’s door. “At your service sir, I’m doing double duty ‘cause you don’t never hire no footman.” James winked, indicating that he was speaking in jest.

Franklin laughed and said, “Would you be good enough to wait here until I’ve completed my business?”

“Certainly, sir. There’s a lass what works in the garden I could stare upon for weeks. Take all the time you have a mind to. I’ll be ‘appy a sittin and watchin.”

Franklin was shown into the posh mansion by the porter, then taken directly to the levee room and announced to his lordship. The room was filled with dignitaries, including Governor Barnard. The group sat around an oval shaped table of thick oak as the lord spoke to them. Despite the gravity of the situation, Franklin was still thinking about his coachman and wore the marks of a prankster on his round face as he took a seat at the table.

Northborough glared at Franklin. “I don’t know what you think is so funny.”

“Nothing, my Lord,” said Franklin, hiding a devilish grin behind his right hand that covered his mouth.

“And what is your business, Mr. Franklin?” demanded Sir Northborough.

“Why I’m here at the request of the House of Representatives of the Province of Massachusetts Bay. They’ve appointed me to be their agent.”

Northborough frowned, then sneered. “I must set you right there, Mr. Franklin, you are not their agent.”

“Why my Lord?”

“You are not appointed.”

“I do not understand your Lordship. I have the appointment in my pocket.”

Northborough rose from his chair and boomed. “You are mistaken. I have later and better advices; I have a letter from Governor Hutchinson. He would not give his assent to the bill.”

Franklin loosened his collar with a tug to give his Adam’s apple some liberty from its tight constraint. He coughed, then said, “There was no bill, my Lord; it is a vote of the House.” He reached into a folder and removed a document. “Here is an

authentic copy of the vote of the House appointing me. Will your Lordship please to examine it?" Franklin handed the paper to Northborough, who received it reluctantly, but never looked at it.

"We honor no bills unless they are assented to by the governor. You must know that, Mr. Franklin. Besides, information of this kind is not properly brought to me as Secretary of State. The Board of Trade is the proper place."

"Then I will leave it with your secretary."

Northborough sneered. "To what end would you leave it with him?"

"To be entered on the minutes of that board, as usual."

Northborough clenched his fist and shook it at the American diplomat. "It shall not be entered there while I have anything to do with the business of the board. The House of Representatives has no right to appoint an agent. We shall take no notice of any agents but such as are appointed by acts of assembly to which the governor gives his assent."

"But sire, the people want me as their agent. What difference does the assent of the governor matter?"

"No agent will be recognized who is not approved by the governor."

"I beg your pardon for taking up so much of your time. It is, I believe of no great importance whether the appointment is acknowledged or not, for I have not the least conception that an agent can *at present* be of any use, to any of the colonies. I shall therefore give your Lordship no further trouble." Franklin bowed and after receiving a nod from Sir Northborough, departed the room, walked to the front door, and slipped out to ride away in his coach.

After Franklin left, Northborough erupted. "Those arrogant American colonists. They think they have the right to pass their own laws! To appoint agents to

address issues here in Great Britain! What impudent children we are raising. What fools and idiots!”

Governor Barnard nervously said, “May I interject something, sire?”

“Why not? That deluded Franklin has already ruined my day. You might as well make a total wreck of it.”

“You might be well advised not to be so hard on Dr. Franklin.”

“And why not? The man’s audacious presentment usurps power by claiming that the House of Representatives of the bloody little colony of Massachusetts has the right to appoint an agent. It’s nigh treason, that’s what it is. By God, I’ll have the man arrested and hanged this instant, that’s what I’ll do.” Northborough screamed out the door to get his secretary’s attention. When the man hastened into the room, Northborough shouted, “Summon the King’s Guard to me directly!”

The secretary gave a worried look and said, “The guard?”

“Absolutely, the guard, and immediately.”

The secretary scurried out the door and ran off to perform his duty.

Each of the men at the table sat quietly, a pair of them cowering as best as is possible while seated. Only Governor Barnard dared speak. “Sire.”

“What?” screamed Northborough.

“I think you might be hasty in acting.”

“What! You too will be impudent!”

“But, sire, Dr. Franklin is well respected in the scientific community. His papers on electricity have been accepted in the profession. We would have some trouble if we – ”

“Don’t tell me what I can do. And who gives a wit about public opinion. Do you doubt my power?”

“No, sire.”

“Do you doubt the man’s a traitor to the Crown?”

“I do.”

“What! The man wrote Governor Shirley that the colonies will not be taxed without representation, not once, but three times. Then he published the treacherous things in the London Chronicle. He even compared our just tax system of the ruddy little colonies to tribute. The man has no respect for his mother country.”

“Begging your pardon, sire, but he was born in America.”

“God, I know that. Born in Boston, he was, and that’s another reason not to trust him. He’s from the New Land, and nothing born and bred in that hellhole will amount to anything, nor be a loyal subject of the King. I tell you, we need to purge all American-born people from the continent and start it anew with pure, British blood.”

“But he has done so much good for the Crown.”

Northborough screamed, but the Governor refused to concede. Northborough shouted, “And what of him writing that our sending some of our felons to settle in America should be reciprocated with sacks full of rattlesnakes?”

“The man’s a wit, a true card. You shouldn’t take him so seriously.”

“I’ll have him hanged, that’s how seriously I take him.”

Governor Barnard cleared his throat. “Sire, might we have a moment in private?”

“Very well then, I’m done with the rest of the people in this room for today anyway. You all agree as to the course I should take, don’t you?”

The other men at the table rose in unison, nodded and stumbled over one another to extricate themselves from the room. They bumped and shoved each other

in their hurry to leave the tense meeting. Some worried that the governor would lose his position, but cared more for their own hides than to support Barnard.

As they left, Barnard rose and shut the door. He was glad that none stayed to assist him, or he couldn't have spoken candidly. He glared at Northborough, showing defiance, despite his inferior station. "You must calm down."

"What? You, a mere governor dare to tell me to be calm. I'll have your neck in a sling on the same tree as Franklin's."

Barnard walked over to Northborough and shoved him into a chair. "Now sit down and listen you red-faced blowhard."

"You're a dead man."

"No."

"You've touched a superior, I was knighted by George the Third, I sit on the House of Lords, I govern an American colony, you've challenged me and my authority. You're a traitor to the Crown."

"No, my good fellow. I have much higher authority than you."

"You're an idiot. Know you not my birthright? I'm –"

Barnard cut him off with a wave of his arm. "I am working in my position, and answer only to the King, and you," he sneered, "I could have you crushed like a mite or a flea. So listen to me."

"I'll check out your story. We'll see if you'll live to this sunset. You'll hang before Franklin. At least I'll give him the semblance of a trial. You'll not get that."

"If harm comes to me at your hand, I'm quite certain you would be duly punished."

"You will pay for this insolent act."

Barnard glared for several seconds. “Dr. Franklin is not what you think he is at all. He has been personally recruited as an agent of His Majesty. He is Britain’s most valued agent in America. It is he who is our greatest ear of those upstarts in the New World. It is he who keeps us apprised of the belligerent colonist’s ideas of treason to the Crown.”

“Why do you tell me this, and in this manner?”

“Because, Sir Northborough, if harm came to me, our King might hang you, but if harm came to Franklin, you’d envy those who have been hanged.”

Northborough’s face reddened as he blurted out, “But the king’s crazy as a loon. Six years ago we carried him away bound in straight waistcoats to restrict his movements. I don’t care what a nut says.”

“Now, who’s the traitor?” Barnard slammed his hand on the table. “Never say another thing against my Sovereign. Never.”

CHAPTER 10

Dr. Franklin stared at his pewter mug, shook it a few times to swish the mead about and release its aroma into his nostrils, then quaffed the contents. He waited at the door for soldiers to arrest him, and refilled his mug with mead, which he drank greedily.

After an hour, he rang for James, who came into the study while brushing crumbs from his lips. Franklin's complexion had reddened from indulging in the spirited drink, and his usual cheery smile was cloaked with gloom. He looked at his coachman, then said, "I was quite expecting some company, some rather unwelcome guests."

"Nary a peep at the ruddy door."

"Thanks, James."

"Anything else?"

"Join me for a cup of mead."

"Ain't I a bit 'neath your class to be a drinkin with me?"

"You won't sour my mug, and you might boost my spirits."

James opened his mouth wide, exposing all twelve of his blackened teeth, along with several gaps where others had once taken root. "If you're sure it's a go, I'm 'ere to be a talkin to you."

Franklin poured his mug until it spilled over the brim, then handed the bottle to James. "I can't offer you another mug, but if you don't mind drinking from the container directly, be my guest."

James wiped the top off the bottle and tilted it twenty degrees, then swallowed twice, heightened the angle another five degrees, and gulped several times. As he pulled it away from his mouth, he burped and some spittle shot across the top of the container. “Right good stuff, eh?”

“Yes, yes. But never drink to elevation, only in moderation.” Franklin had sweated and soaked his shirt through this afternoon, but not wanting to show his unusual condition, he rose, and put on his coat to cover the shirt. The added garment heated his body further, and soon beads appeared on his forehead.

Looking toward elevation rather than moderation, James said: “Imagine, me a drinkin with a gentleman. Ah, won’t the misses think I’m spinnin canards when I be a tellin her of this.”

Franklin wiped his face. “James, what do you think about America?”

James quaffed several gulps from the bottle, grinned, and said, “Never gave it a twit of a thought. You’re the only one I knows what’s been born there. But you ‘ad the common good sense to return to England.”

“I certainly did.”

“Eh! What’s the deal? You’re sweating like a sow in ‘eat, you are.”

Franklin hesitated, then answered, “Sometimes it happens when I’m drinking mead. Sets off my gout and heats me inside and out. I really should know better than to indulge.”

“Then, Dr. Franklin, beggin your pardon and all, but you ought to be takin coats off, not puttin them on. ‘Course, you being a professor and all, you probably know better than me that the hotter you get, the fewer wraps you need.”

Franklin laughed, and felt his first relief since his audience with Sir Edmund Northborough earlier in the day. He stood, removed his coat, then his vest, and

loosened his shirt. As he sat down his unneeded clothing, he took James' hand and shook it mightily. Then he slapped James on the back. "Your years have grown you wise."

"I ain't no bright one. I read a bit, but I ain't never been to no school."

"Ah, but James, you have common sense, which is more than many college instructors can say for themselves – or most of their students."

James hefted the bottle, then said, "Ain't much left. Should we share it?"

Franklin waved his hand, indicating that James could have the honors. James tilted the bottle ninety degrees and chugged the remainder. He felt much lighter than before he began drinking the mead, and his head was blossoming into a euphoric splendor. His mind cried for more alcohol, to raise the feeling higher. He sat the bottle down and looked around the room before spotting another bottle. For several moments he contemplated asking Franklin whether they should crack the new vessel, but decided that it would be rude, so he sat quietly, staring at the bottle that contained the coveted potion.

Franklin watched his guest, then smiled. "It appears that the bottle is spent. I suppose we should end this little chat anyway."

James attempted to hide his disappointment at not being offered to share the other bottle. His face drooped. "As you like it."

"Could you do me a favor, James?"

"Anything, Dr. Franklin."

"Could you post this letter on your way home?"

"You got it." James grabbed the letter and grinned.

"Thank you, James."

"Be I dismissed?"

“Please, take the rest of the day off, and tomorrow too, for that matter.” Franklin reached into a purse and removed two guineas. “This makes us current, does it not?”

James fingered the gold coins in his right hand, clinking them with alacrity. “And them some more. You’ve overpaid me frightfully.”

“Take them,” said Franklin as he walked to the bureau and grabbed the other bottle of mead. “And this too.”

“Gracious. Why, most assuredly does I thank thee.”

The coachman grabbed his bottle, and headed for the door. Just as he was releasing the latch, he heard Franklin cough. James turned. “Yes, sir, what is it?”

“Oh, just one other trifle.” Franklin removed his spectacles and wiped their lenses with his cuff. “I might have some unpleasant visitors here. It might be best for your safety to forget that we ever had this meeting.”

“I understand,” said James as he tipped his battered bowler. He winked and departed. “We wouldn’t want somebody a talkin and lowerin your station on account of a drinkin with the likes of me.”

Franklin, hesitated, was about to correct him, then decided that the coachman’s misunderstanding of the problem was fortunate. He knew that if James were interrogated that the authorities would never believe that the coachman had been drinking with Franklin, so he figured the man would be safe from the crown’s wrath.

As James walked away from the house, Franklin sat in his chair and wept. After several minutes, he heard a knock on the door. He started from the chair, rushed to his desk, removed his cipher key, and tossed them into the fireplace. As the pages ignited, he called, “Just a minute.”

“Don’t trouble yourself none on my account,” James called through the door.

Franklin stared at the ashes of the cipher sheets he had burned for no reason. He didn't know whether he should laugh, cry, or scream. "Well, come in then," he said haughtily.

James opened the door, smiled, and declared, "Dr. Franklin, it's been a pleasure. You ain't no stuffed shirt like most of the people I been a slavin for. I'll mail your letter straight away." Then the coachman nodded his head, closed the door and left.

Franklin slammed his fist into his palm as the door shut, and when James was out of earshot, he slammed his hand on the table. "No! No! No!"

Outside, of the house, James walked with spry, springing steps as he patted the unopened bottle on his thigh. "At a baby," he said as he smiled at the bottle of mead.

Behind him, walked an inconspicuous man who had been watching Franklin's house since early this morning. When James ducked into the post office, his tail scurried into a doorway and watched. After James posted the letter, he walked out of the office, cracked the bottle, and began drinking the mead.

The shadow sprang from the doorway and slithered into the post office. Once inside, he addressed the clerk. "What business did that man just transact?"

"Sorry, I can't tell you that."

"Yes, you can."

"It's his private affair, and none of yours."

"But, it's on Lord Northborough's authority that I ask this."

The clerk looked up at the stern-faced man, rolled his eyes to the left, then said, "And if you are?"

"Did the man post a letter?"

"Yes."

“Give it me.”

CHAPTER 11

The Persian cat's tail swished back and forth underneath a desk as the feline napped. Sir Northborough stood near the desk, unconsciously tapping his foot on the floor, unaware that his rhythmic movements narrowly missed the tick-tocking cat's tail as it swept the floor. The nobleman broke the seal and unfolded a letter and spread it on his desk. He read the document, shook his head, then reread it. Puzzled at its contents, he stared, then shifted his weight entirely onto one foot.

As his left foot grew heavy, it trapped the cat's tail, awakening the feline with a start, causing it to howl, hiss and swipe at Northborough's leg. The extended talons snared Northborough's silk stocking before digging into the lord's flesh. The man screamed, still standing upon the tail; the cat screeched and clawed. Northborough grabbed his wounded calf with a hand that was soon bloodied by cat talons. Northborough swore and jumped, freeing the cat which immediately scooted from under the desk.

"Damn you!" he hollered at the cat, which had retreated to a corner and was frantically searching for an escape route, howling and hissing as it looked. Northborough picked a book from his desk top and flung it at the hissing feline; the book's spine struck the cat on the nose, stunning the animal.

Northborough squeezed his leg, holding back spurting blood with his fingers, attempting to halt the bleeding from the gashes. As he probed one of the puncture wounds, he felt a swipe at his knuckle, and saw his cat as it retreated from a hit-and-run attack at its master's hand. Northborough bit his bloody hand as he chased an elusive cat that ran from chair to stool. The lord kicked at the cat without success, and

after several failed attempts, his frustration level grew. He ripped a decorative sword from its wall mounting and resumed chasing the cat. When his pet was finally trapped in a bookcase, the lord tried to run it through with the sword.

The cat jumped free of the slashing sword, running over the top of Sir Northborough, claws extended and screeching. The lord swiped again towards the cat, hitting a book's spine with the sword, which caused the blade to fling back and cut Northborough's shoulder.

The butler raced in to see what was the matter, and as he opened the door, the cat ran out. "Good riddance!" screamed the manically frantic nobleman.

Northborough shook with anger. "I should have killed that damn cat years ago. Get me some bandages!" he demanded.

The butler shot out of the room to acquire medical supplies. As he ran through the kitchen, the cook exclaimed, "What's the screaming about?" The butler pointed toward the lord's study and the cook nodded, acknowledging her understanding about the lord's temper.

With his heart racing, Northborough stomped back to his desk and glared at the intercepted letter from Dr. Benjamin Franklin to John Adams. He stared intently at the document when the door burst open and his butler charged in with bandages to dress the wounds. Northborough waved his hand, spewing globs of blood upon the desk, with a few flecks landing on the letter. Northborough sat fuming while his servant attended to his injuries.

The scrawny butler shivered as he ripped the lord's clothing and dressed the wounds. After several minutes of ripping and tying of cloth, the butler looked at his master and said, "I 'ope that'll do it."

Northborough glared.

The butler hoped that he had been dismissed and raced for door. He snickered gleefully as he relished seeing the cat put one over on the lord.

Northborough angrily read the letter:

Dear Mr. Adams:

Please inform the House of Representatives that there have been some concerns here about me being appointed agent for the people of Massachusetts. Some posturing is being done at this time, as is always the case in delicate negotiations, and I hope that with some careful, thoughtful discussions, I will soon be accepted by the Crown as the people's agent.

By the by, as much as you enjoy logic and numbers, I thought you might find the game I've enclosed entertaining. It was shown me by a Frenchman a score or so years ago. When I marveled at the ingenuity of the magic table, he bragged that the French were always more adapt at solving complex riddles than the English. I listened for some time before declaring that the English were too practical to waste their time with trivia. He countered again with the brilliance of French mathematicians, to which I solemnly asked, "From what country came Sir Isaac Newton?"

National sparring aside, I've reproduced the magic square that he showed me, and leave it for you to solve the properties therein. I'd hate to see you waste too much good time on this square, and declare forthright that either you will see the relationships of the numbers immediately, or you will never see them. Should the square trouble your mind for more than an hour, send me a note of surrender, and I will solve the riddle for you in my next letter.

Very Truly Yours,

Benj. Franklin

Northborough stared at the multitude of numbers on the enclosed page, sixteen columns across and sixteen rows down with a different number from one to 256 in each box. For several minutes Northborough stared and puzzled with the numbers without seeing a relationship. Finally, he slammed his hand down in anger and screamed for his secretary to come in at once.

“Yes, My Lord,” said the immaculately attired attendant who had dashed into the room.

“Do you see any relationship with these numbers in this puzzle?”

The man squinted at the paper, patted his thick eyebrows, then said, “Well, each number seems to be different.”

“I know that, you bloody dolt.”

“Was this contained in the Franklin letter that I retrieved from the post office?”

“The same.”

“Then we can’t very well ask him.”

“I’d say not.”

The secretary looked up. “My Lord.”

“Yes.”

“Do you think that this might be a code?”

Northborough scratched his chin. “Of course I think it’s a code, you idiot!”

“What should we do?”

“Make me a copy of the letter and this infernal box of numbers, then post it to Mr. Adams. You and I will play with the puzzle for a day or two; if we are unable to solve the mystery, we’ll call on a mathematics professor. We’ll break Franklin’s code and have him swinging.”

“Yes, my Lord.”

“Oh, and after you make the copies, I want Franklin’s house searched. There might be a clue inside it to solve this riddle. We’ll expose the ruddy doctor for what he is.”

“My Lord. Why doesn’t Dr. Franklin just have a bad accident?”

“He’s too famous to get away with it. There would surely be inquiry. I want to do away with him under the law – if possible – if not – perhaps otherwise.”

“But, Mr. Franklin is a brother Mason, surely we cannot bring harm down upon him. That is the oath we have sworn.”

“Murder and treason excepted.”

The secretary grabbed his stomach and feigned a belly laugh for his master. After a minute of gratuitous chuckling he said, “My Lord, we have no evidence that he is anything but a loyal subject of the Crown.”

“Except my gut. My gut tells me that Franklin is a seditious wretch.”

“How can I search his house without his knowing?”

“Invite the *fine* doctor to my cottage in the woods where we will have a fox hunt in his honor on the morrow. While I entertain the *fellow*, you will get the proof that will send him to the gallows.”

This caused the secretary to erupt in genuine laughter. “Oh, you’re a brainy one, you are, My Lord.”

CHAPTER 12

BOSTON

John Adams sat in his office with Franklin's latest letter spread out on the desk, ignoring the words written in English, concerning himself only with the table of numbers. He carefully made notes on a separate sheet of paper as he decrypted the message, a word at a time. Adams despised this sneaky activity. He begged the good doctor to deal with matters open and up front, but Franklin convinced him that the colonies were weak and the enemy extraordinarily mighty, so against his conscience, Adams had reluctantly agreed to the use of codes and seemingly idiotic secrecy.

After decoding the numbers, he read the decrypted message:

Big trouble brewing. Northborough is our worst foe, but someone directs him. Unraveling web is complex. I took chances. Maybe compromised. I must lie low. Ignore any public statements I might make for the Crown. I hope to win us true representation in England.

After worrying about the contents for several minutes, Adams read, reread, and twice recited the message until he was certain that he had the contents retained in memory. Then he burned the decrypted sheet. While watching the flames dance, he turned his attention to the one-page letter written in clear text from Dr. Franklin.

Alarming messages shot through Adams' as he stared at the document. The black spatters on the otherwise meticulous document were totally out of character. With great trepidation, Adams poured a couple of drops of water onto the paper, and

the blackened spots showed a hint of crimson. *They were blood!* He checked and rechecked. Blood it was.

Adams slammed a fist upon his desk. “Blast!” he shouted.

A clerk ran into his office. “What is it sir?”

Adams’ face was red and his voice trembled. “N-nothing, Martin . . . nothing at all.”

“Do you need anything, sir?”

“W-well, no . . . er . . . yes.”

“What, sir?”

Adams spotted the cipher key on his desk and slammed a book atop of it. “Blast it, Martin, I’m just out of sorts . . . Could you go to the market and get me something to settle my stomach?”

“Sir?”

“Oh . . . you know . . . mineral water . . . or something like that.”

Martin backed out of the office and said, “Certainly, sir.”

When his clerk departed, Adams rose from his desk and paced the room, circling his desk and chair dozens of times. While taking his fretful walk within his office, he made a fist with his right hand and slapped it repeatedly into his left palm.

After several hundred yards of scurrying nowhere, he stopped, and sat in his chair.

He wrote the following letter to Thomas Jefferson in Virginia:

An old friend passed along a puzzle of numbers, asking me if I could solve the childish riddle. Not being terribly interested in mathematics myself, and you being much more inclined in that direction, I thought you might want to wrestle with the thing yourself.

Very Truly Yours,

John Adams

Then Adams wrestled with the cipher pages and using the number code, he wrote the following encrypted message:

Peaceful settlement impossible. Our London man in terrible trouble. He sent a blood- spattered letter, the agreed signal that we must revolt or die. He may turn against us in public but not in his heart. I am planning for local revolt. I'll solicit my cousin Samuel. God willing, we will prevail. Call upon your countrymen in Virginia. Make ready and support us. I pray Virginia will stand with Massachusetts or all is lost to the tyrants. Destroy all cipher codes or we all risk hanging.

After addressing his letter to Jefferson, he wrote another letter with a similar message that was directed at his contact in New York. Then Adams sealed the letters and ciphers and placed them into his vest pocket.

As he began to leave the office to post both letters, he stopped, then tossed his cipher keys into the fire, rustled through a file folder entitled "BF" and extracted two sheets, which he also burned. With that done, he hustled out of the office to post both letters.

As he hurried down the street, he encountered his clerk. “Hello, Martin. What are you up to this morning?”

“Sir?”

“I’m sorry . . . Martin . . . just making conversation.”

“I have the mineral water you requested. Do you still need it?”

“Oh, of course . . . of course . . . give it me.”

Martin handed him the bottle and shook his head, unable to comprehend what was wrong with his employer. “Are you okay?”

“Fine, fine . . . I-I’m just taking a walk . . . I’ll be out of the office for an hour or so.”

“Very well, sir.” Martin tipped his hat and proceeded to the office.

As Martin walked, he thought about the events of the morning. Everything had been fine. Adams was always feisty and irascible, but this was different. Something grave had taken place. Then he realized what it was. Martin broke into a run and raced for the office.

When he reached the door, he was panting from the thousand-yard sprint. He reached into his pocket, extracted his key, unlocked the office, and entered. Martin’s heart thumped from the run, from excitement, and from fear. He shot into Adams’ office and rifled through documents on the top of the desk until he found the letter from Franklin, which he read once without comprehending because of his fear of being caught snooping in his boss’s office. He patted his chest in hopes that his heart would slow, then read the letter again. He couldn’t see anything too significant in the letter, except for mention of a number puzzle.

Then he shuffled some other papers in search of the magic square, but was unable to locate it. In frustration, he removed the Franklin file from the cabinet and

began reading it through, page by page, searching for the solution. His heart slowed and he began digesting the file. Martin took a seat and became lost in his reading. He glanced at the clock and realized he still had several minutes before he could expect his employer, so he continued reading.

As Martin quietly turned pages, he failed to hear the front door unlatch, and was totally startled when John Adams walked into his office. His boss screamed, “What are you doing in my office?”

“N-nothing, much . . . except I was trying to figure out the probate on this matter.”

“On what matter?” bellowed Adams as he walked up to Martin and snatched the Franklin file from his clerk’s hands. Adams glanced at the cover, then stared hard at his clerk. “Did Dr. Franklin die? Is that the probate you’re working on?”

“No . . . You see, Hector Jones wants to file suit against . . . against Franklin . . . yes, against Franklin . . . and I knew you were in correspondence with the gentleman, but knew not whether we represented him . . . and I was checking the file to see whether we could take on Jones’ case without a conflict of interest.”

“In a probate!”

“Uh, yes! In a probate.”

Adams tried to hide his incredulity. “Very well, Martin. Say, why don’t you just take the day off, go see your mother, she’s feeling poorly isn’t she?”

“That she is. I’ll do it straight away. And thank you sir.” Any excuse to leave was a welcome one.

The clerk sat down the file, went into the corridor, grabbed his coat and hat, and scooted from the office. Martin hustled to his home, asked his mother if she needed anything, and wrote an urgent note to Lord Northborough in London. It read:

My Lord,

Your suspicions of sedition might well be correct. A letter from Dr. Benjamin Franklin arrived at our office today and sent my employer, John Adams into a fretful state, yet after I read the letter, I found nothing troubling in the language to set him off so. I could not locate a puzzle that the letter referred to, which might be the clue to expose a conspiracy. I will thoroughly search his office tomorrow and report all to you.

God Save The King,

Martin O'Rourke

While Martin penned his brief note to London, Adams scoured his own office for incriminating documents, and his fireplace blazed away as any papers that could be remotely dangerous burned to ashes. As he watched the conflagration, he accepted that Franklin was probably right, that the using of codes was not paranoia based, but of necessity, and the enemies of the colonists were everywhere within America, and insidiously planted, ready to strike from everywhere and anywhere.

CHAPTER 13

Thomas Jefferson sat in his swinging chair reading a newspaper and chuckling softly to himself at the inane editorials. A breeze rustled across the paper, sending it a buzz like droning insects. He turned a page, silencing further noise from vibrations and sipped on cool well water as one of his slaves ran up to the porch.

“Masser, I got you some letters.” The boy of sixteen who was inexplicably bald rushed up the stairs.

“Thank you, Rubin.” Thomas held out his hand, smiled, and accepted the mail.

The boy ran down the stairs and called out as he ran, “I’s be a fixing Sall’s foot. She threw a shoe dis morning.”

Thomas nodded silently and opened a letter from the beguiling Martha Skelton. He read it slowly, savoring each word. After completing the letter he was further bewitched; he closed his eyes and envisioned her to have a gleaming smile heightened by her rich eyes and soft hair that highlighted her clear complexion. He watched intently as he saw her brushing her hair, then flipping it back over her head. For several minutes, Thomas sat swinging, thinking, dreaming and wishing before Rubin ran back onto the porch and broke the spell.

Thomas stared at his slave. “What is it?”

“I got it done real good. Shoe’s tighter ‘n oyster shells at ebb. Sall’s fit to fly.” The boy smiled broadly.

“I’m glad to have you, Rubin.”

“You better be, Masser, you owns me.”

“Nobody owns you.”

“I’s your slave.”

“Your mother was a special woman, Rubin. Her father was a noble warrior in line for the Crown. Your nobody’s slave. If you ever want your freedom, just ask.”

“Nah, won’t be nobody a looking after you then.”

Thomas rose and responded. “Then, look after me and get Sall some oats, please.” Jefferson eased himself from the swing and entered his house, leaving his smiling slave on the porch. Inside, he stared at his desk, read Martha’s letter again, closed his eyes, and reflected upon her. Love is said to be blind. Surely it was as he now saw her seated at a harpsichord, playing a tune and heard a melodic voice singing with the music she was producing. Then, he saw himself step into the dream, standing proudly, violin in hand, stroking the bow against the strings and perfectly complimenting Martha’s playing and singing. The picture seemed to fit exactly, and Thomas now believed that this was the woman for him to spend his life with. For several minutes he was lost in a reverie before he sat in a chair and dipped a quill in ink. After struggling considerably, he wrote:

Dear Martha:

Your letter arrived today and sent my head spinning. Things seem to have calmed down politically, at least it has been quiet these last couple of years. Perhaps our king has decided to treat us like people after all. I can only hope this is true because I love tranquility. It gives me time to think about pleasant things, such as you. Upon reflecting on that subject, I have discovered fascination beyond any childish infatuation. Even in my blackest times, a glimmer of a thought of you lightens my load. I wish not to be forward, yet, emotion says I must be. It seems that this is the most peaceful time we will have in this country.

I think it would be wise if we had some serious discussions about marriage, and, at least for me, this coming New Year's Day is most convenient.

In fervent hopes and anticipation, I await your answer,

T. J.

Upon completing his brief note, he blotted it dry and sealed it. After addressing it he ran out to the barn and found Rubin. "Could you do me a great favor?" he asked.

"Anything, masser."

"Rubin, this is the most important letter I've ever written. I need you to post it directly."

Rubin handled the letter carefully. His eyes widened and his bald head wrinkled. "Thanky for trusting in me. You can bet this old thing will be in the mail direct." He turned to run for the post office.

Thomas stopped him. "Why don't you ride Sall, she's your favorite."

Rubin smiled broadly. "Yessur."

As Rubin galloped away on the mare, Thomas thought about the brunette widow Skelton who had so enchanted him. At first, he was euphoric, but then his gut tightened and he balled up a fist, squeezing the blood from his hand. His mind raced as his stomach squirmed. *Please, Martha, please accept my proposal*, he blissfully and foolishly thought.

While nervously pacing the room he decided to read his other correspondence. He opened the letter from Boston and was alarmed to see it was encrypted. Thoughts of Martha faded as he removed the cipher key from his hidden compartment and decoded the message. As he read the note in clear text, sweat formed on his forehead. He paced the room, then screamed, "NO!"

A maid rushed into the room. “Can I be helping you, masser?”

Thomas waved her away with his hand, and she quietly slipped out of the room.

Thomas read the note again, then packed up the letter from John Adams, the decrypted letter, and the cipher key. He ran to the barn and saddled up a sturdy gelding, which he hopped upon and kicked into life. On its back, he scrambled down the path to the main road, then prodded the horse from a canter to a run, which he held it to as he melded into the saddle and clung on as he rode.

A low-hanging branch caught him and lacerated his forehead. The cut went unnoticed as his blood splattered the grey horse. The gelding was never a comfortable mount, even at a canter, but at a run, its gyrating rhythm was positively beating Thomas into submission.

Thomas swore and kicked the horse for more, but it was already giving the rider all there was. For several minutes the horse and rider charged down the road, the horse straining and sweating, and the rider clinging to the reins with white knuckles. The gelding’s right front foot caught in a chuck hole and it stumbled, barely able to recover its cadence. During the six steps of trouble, Thomas banged his head on the horse’s neck, but held on as the gelding continued the run.

Thomas gasped when he spotted Patrick Henry’s house. He urged his horse on the last thousand yards, and when the gelding stopped at the gate it was fully lathered and its rider was spent. Thomas fell off his mount and raced on foot to the door with his last bit of energy. Curious about the commotion, Henry rushed to the door and opened it, spotting Thomas.

A single look at the bloodied visitor was enough to alarm him. He assisted Thomas into the house and sat him in a chair. “Sit still while I get some bandages.”

Thomas protested. “There’s no time. Look at this letter I just got from Boston!”

Henry took the letter from Thomas’s hand. As he grabbed the paper, the cipher key Thomas had ridden with fell onto the floor. Henry stared at it aghast. “What in blazes are you doing riding about with that thing in your possession? Have you lost your senses?”

“What do you mean?”

“Bringing this rubbish into my house!”

Thomas’s mind raced. Adams had written him to trust nobody. It occurred to him that Henry was now that person he should not have trusted. He scooped up the papers hurriedly and said, “Look, I’m certain you saw who the letter was from and know very well that I wouldn’t be here if there wasn’t grave danger. I had been warned not to trust even you, but there comes a time that we must work together.”

“So that’s what has been going on. Who told you not to trust me?”

“Adams.”

“John Adams! That hot-headed maniac from New England?”

“The same.”

“And you’d take his word over a fellow Virginian? How distressing.”

“Patrick, this thing is far larger than just Virginia.”

“Probably.”

“I’m trusting you totally. Read this letter.”

Patrick reviewed the ciphered message that Jefferson had decoded and nodded. Then he said, “Would you mind leaving me alone for a few minutes while I double check this with my cipher?”

Thomas stared angrily and shouted, “Don’t you trust my work?”

“Thomas, of course I do. But what if my cipher is a little different than yours and there is more than one message contained in this paper?”

Thomas said, “Very well,” as he stomped out of the room. “I’ll wait on the porch.” He slammed the front door as he stepped onto the stoop and climbed in Patrick’s swing. Henry’s questioning of his competence stirred every angry emotion he had, churning his stomach and buzzing his head.

Henry walked onto the porch and stonily said, “Get in here! We need to plan.”

Thomas glared. “Did my decoding check out to your satisfaction?”

“Stop it. I hate it when you use that contemptuous tone. This is deadly serious.”

Thomas followed Henry into the study but refused the offered chair.

Henry poured himself a glass of water. “Thomas, we’ve got to act.”

“I think it’s time to form a militia.”

“With who in charge?”

“Me, you, somebody – I don’t know.”

Henry cleared his throat. “Thomas, I’ve known you for a lot of years. Do me a favor and treat me civilly while we discuss this, won’t you.”

Thomas sat down and nodded.

“We can’t form a militia . . . ”

Thomas’s head raced. *Henry is the traitor. And I’ve turned John Adams over to him!*

“ . . . so you understand.”

“Huh?” said Thomas.

Henry shouted, “Do you trust Dr. Franklin?”

“Yes.”

“Did he tell you to study at the military academy?”

“Of course not.”

“Why do you think that?”

“Because he wanted me to know the law.”

“So you could fight on the front lines and be killed with the first charge?”

“If need be.”

“No, Thomas, no. You’re to be our political leader. That was Benjamin’s plan. A good plan. Virginia needs a governor if we’re going to war. One we can trust. One who’s been with us from the beginning. That’s where you’ll fight this war.”

“And your job is?”

“To raise everybody’s conscience. To fire up the populace to follow you.”

“Beginning when?”

“Now.”

“We should wait for the good doctor’s instructions.”

“Thomas, you’re brilliant, but naive. Franklin’s in a jam. It shouldn’t surprise you. After all, he’s been dancing around in the British Parliament for years playing down the resolve of the colonies to go to war with Britain. He’s played down the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act and filled the House of Commons with more duplicity than one could hope to get away with. And, he’s not cajoling novices. The British lords know more about canards than any other ruling class. I think there’s something about the English language that facilitates deceit. They will likely catch him in the game. The British might well have invented spying, and Franklin may well have been trapped by the masters. He’s played out his hand and it might well be over for him.”

Thomas furrowed his forehead and scratched an eyebrow. “So?”

“He’s done his job. He hoped beyond hope that we could have a meaningful agreement with the British. But, the last contingency was that we would revolt. It’s no wonder we have to with George III on the throne. The blood-spattered document tells us we must fight or die. It’s up to us. I know you’ve stayed in this only with the lowest of profiles until now. That’s the way Franklin wanted it. I need to fill you in and bring you up to date.”

“How much do you know?”

“Plenty, but not enough to hang more than a few people. The doctor set about forming a web that couldn’t be destroyed without massive, unrelated capitulations. He’s got us all in place. I must say that knowing he brought in Adams makes sense. I couldn’t figure out how come the hot-blooded Bostonians hadn’t sacked their own town over all the garbage ‘our’ king’s been pulling. Adams must have kept them in check. But after he got this kind of a letter from Franklin, there will be no holding back the New England push.”

“How bad do you think it will get up there?”

“Franklin thought riots in Boston would be a good starting point for a revolution.”

Thomas screamed. “Why not here in Virginia?”

“He thinks we’re too complacent.”

“Not me.”

“So you think that war is inevitable?”

“Unless George III turns us loose.”

“That will never happen.”

Henry sipped his water. “I burned my cipher key. I would have burned yours, but I figured that would be your job.” He pointed at the fireplace.

Thomas wadded up his keys and the letters and threw them into the flames. As the documents blackened and curled, he wondered where he was headed. “Now what?”

“Keep a low profile. I’ll let you know everything that occurs. I’ve got to inform my closest contacts of the trouble. We’ll destroy the trail of ciphers. If George III sends his guards looking for clues of Franklin’s treason, he’ll find them not. Now listen closely, write nothing down, and leave no tracks.”

Thomas sat quietly as Henry revealed Franklin’s plan for independence, his web of deception throughout England, and his complicated network of rebels in America. For an hour Thomas absorbed the situation. Then Henry asked him if he had any questions.

“Who are your contacts?”

“My secrets to keep that would bring you nothing but harm. You’re to keep a low profile. We’re following Franklin’s plan until we know he’s been hanged. And if our king does that, it will just step up the timetable. It would almost assure unification of the colonies if George III is fool enough to murder Franklin.”

“Do you think that the king will hang him?”

“Reams of sedition have been published from his pen.”

“But so much of it has been satire that a man of his wit should be able to stave off the attackers.”

“I hope you’re right, Thomas, I hope you’re right.”

Jefferson rose and shook Henry’s hand. “Then I’m off.”

“To do what?”

“To keep at the law, to revise the archaic Code of Virginia so lay people can read it.”

“What? Do that and you’ll throw a thousand lawyers out of work! Keep the law a mystery and the lawyers will rule the entire band of colonies.”

“Sorry, Patrick, but my dream is that liberty will rule Virginia, and any other provinces that wish to join her.”

Henry smiled slyly. “I’m about to warn all my contacts as you call them. Then I’ll begin stirring up the people of Virginia to treat affronts in Boston as though they were happening in Richmond. We’ll be more strongly united when trouble erupts.”

“I’m not certain that the people in America have a strong enough bond to take on such a powerful tyrant.”

“We do, Thomas, we do. While you’ve been digging in books, I’ve been about the land preaching the virtues of owning property, that through property ownership comes freedom, and the folks are listening.”

Thomas laughed. “You’ve read John Locke.”

“Of course I haven’t. Don’t accuse me of wasting time reading, that’s for bookworms like you.”

The pair shook hands again and Thomas rode away from Henry’s, though not with the briskness which he arrived. As he jogged his horse, he remembered the letter to Martha. He had written it thinking times were smooth enough to marry, but now, it seemed that revolt was in the offing. He kicked his horse into life and fled for his home. While the ride was nothing compared to the break-neck speed with which he dashed to Henry’s, it was a rapid, dangerous pace, but the rested gelding was a match for the road and safely carried him home.

Thomas jumped from the horse and called for Rubin, who ran from the barn. “Yes, masser.”

“Did you post that letter to Miss Skelton?”

“Straight off, I do it. And we be lucky. Just as I arrives at the post office in pulls a carriage what takes away the letters. So your mail is done gone away.” Rubin smiled broadly, wrinkling his bald head.

“Oh, no.”

Then Rubin looked closely at his master and his smile evaporated. “You been beated up bad by your ride. You should git yerself in the house and have Rosie fix you anew.”

Thomas nodded and walked into the house wondering how he would tell Martha Skelton that marriage at this time would be unwise.

CHAPTER 14

Young widow Martha Skelton brushed her lush hair with long, deliberate motions, savoring each stroke when she heard a knock on her bedroom door. She was a woman of great intuition, and she sensed that good news was arriving. She stared into the reflection of her rich eyes in a mirror and felt a tingle in her spine that raced up her backbone and down either arm, confirming her intuitive guess at what awaited her at the door. “Come in,” she called out in a melodious voice that sang the words.

“Martha, you have a letter from that tall man.”

“Thomas! Thomas wrote me! Oh, Daddy, give it me.”

He handed her the envelope and hugged her tightly. “I hope he’s gotten up the nerve to finally ask you. He seemed to be asking my consent one day, but the questioning was so convoluted, I couldn’t tell for certain.”

Martha’s clear skin radiated joy. “What did you tell him?”

“Let’s say that he knows that I approve”

Martha blushed, jumped from her seat and ran to her father. When she arrived at his side she wrapped her arms about him and squeezed. “I love you so much Daddy.”

“I know, my dear, I know,” he said, hugging his petite daughter.

Martha fingered the letter momentarily, her hands trembling. “I sense that this is good news, but I’m apprehensive that it might not be.”

“I’d trust your woman’s intuition, it’s usually right on.”

“I’m afraid to open it, Daddy. Thomas is so musical, so suave, so wealthy, so talented, so strong, so intelligent, so fine a horseman, so learned, that he could have any woman in Virginia.”

“My dear, I’m certain of that, and your Daddy thinks instead of any woman, that Mr. Jefferson is after my little girl, the best woman in the colony. Open it, find out, he might even be asking you to marry.”

“Oh, Daddy. He’d never propose in a letter. He’s too sensitive for that. And yet . . .” She overcame the anxiety and ripped off the seal and tore open the single-page letter. “He didn’t write much . . .” Her eyes danced over the page and after a few seconds, she tossed the paper in the air and jumped off the floor and plopped into her father’s arms exclaiming, “He did it! He did it!”

“What did he do?”

“Daddy, on New Year’s Day he wants to marry me!”

Her father, still holding his bundle of daughter in his arms, twirled several times, became dizzy and lost his balance. The couple tumbled to the floor and giggled.

A servant rushed in to see what was the matter. “May I help?”

Martha looked at him coyly, then said, “Why, yes! Yes!” She leapt to her feet, ran to the writing desk, ripped a piece of paper from a drawer, then wrote furiously:

Thomas:

Yes! Yes! Yes! January 1, 1792 is perfect!

Much Love,

Martha

Upon completing the note and sealing it with wax, she handed it to the servant, “Run this down to Jerry and have him ride pell-mell to Master Thomas Jefferson and deliver this personally.”

The servant said, “Yes, Ma’am,” and scurried from the room.

CHAPTER 15

Jefferson sat at his desk staring blankly at the wall for several minutes before his eyes strayed to the ceiling. It had been two days since his frantic ride to Patrick Henry's. Dr. Franklin was in trouble in London, and now, John Adams and his cousin Samuel were about to begin insurrections in Boston. He, foolishly thinking that it was a quiet time, had dashed off an ill-conceived letter to Martha Skelton and he knew that he had to correct the misguided offer of proposal. He had started the letter five times, written several pages of babble each attempt, then balled up the lot in wads and tossed them into the fireplace.

As he looked back at the wall, he experienced something quite foreign – writer's block. Such a block was something that had never crept into his head, but now he stared blankly, not knowing how to compose a reasonable, heart-felt excuse for delaying the wedding, if not abandoning it entirely. If there was to be a revolution, marriage was ridiculous for him, if not outright obscene.

He rose and paced. Then his eyes caught the trio of portraits that were in his opinion the three greatest men the world had ever produced. He stared appreciatively at Sir Francis Bacon for several minutes before his eyes shifted to Sir Isaac Newton. After long consideration, his eyes fixed on the picture of John Locke. Then Jefferson said aloud, "And you, Mr. Locke, just what would you do in my situation?"

The portrait held its pose, totally mute.

"Can't you but help me?"

The wall, although covered with images of great minds, offered not a whisper of support or wisdom. "Even though you are silent, your presence gives me comfort," he

said, then returned to the writing desk. He dipped a quill in ink and attempted again the labor he so dreaded.

Two pages into his sixth try at the letter he heard a knock on the door. "Enter," he said.

"Masser, you has a visitor," said Rubin.

"Can you take a message for me? I'm struggling with a difficult letter."

"Try like I might, this man won't a be put off no how, no way."

"Very well, send him in." Jefferson scowled, wrinkling his forehead, and feeling another of his headaches beginning. The last one had troubled him for two weeks, he didn't want to have another bout like that.

"He cain't visit you in here."

"And why not?" snapped Thomas.

"He's a darkie. It wouldn't be proper like for him to be in here like white folks."

Jefferson let out a breath of exasperation. "Rubin, show him in here. I don't care if he's got three eyes and six fingers."

"Very well, sur." Rubin shot out of the room and ran to the kitchen where he found Jerry eating a cookie.

"Git that food outta yur mouth. Masser wants you up in the study."

"In the study?" asked Jerry incredulously.

"That's what I be saying. And be careful like cuz the masser seems a bit testy."

Jerry scampered from the kitchen, found a corridor, but stopped and stared down the hall, confused at which way to go. Rubin walked up behind him and slapped his back. "Follow me."

Jerry tagged behind Rubin until they reached a door that his escort rapped upon and said, “Announcing Mr. Jerry – ” He leaned over and whispered in Jerry’s ear, “What’s yur full real name?”

Jerry shrugged. “Don’t know. I come from Masser Jackson’s place before I be sold to the Skeltons. I guess I be Jerry Jackson.”

Rubin cleared his throat. “Ah-hem. Announcing Mr. Jerry Jackson.”

Jefferson said, “Well, show him in then.”

The slave entered the room bent over slightly, with his hat in his hand and shifted his weight from foot to foot before the wealthy man he addressed. Jerry fumbled with his fingers and whistled two notes to relieve his apprehensions.

“Stand up straight,” commanded Jefferson.

“Yessur.” Jerry snapped to attention.

“That’s better. You must be six feet tall. Don’t slump over to hide it. Be proud of your height.”

“Yessur.”

Jefferson stared over at the three portraits hung on the wall. He flipped his head, pointing at them with his nose. “Jerry Jackson, do you happen to recognize any of those three people?”

“Be they portant people to you, Masser Jefferson?”

“They are most definitely.”

“Then the skinny one be Isaac Newton. The other two be Francis Drake – no, no Francis Bacon – and I don’t remember the other.”

“How came you to know any of these men by their pictures?” Jefferson stood and gave a warm smile to the slave.

“My mistress done told me that you have three great men a hung up in yur study, and that they be Newton, Bacon – and Locke! That other guy be Locke, don’t he?”

“And who is your mistress?”

“Why, didn’t yur slave Rubin tell you?”

“No.”

“The widow Martha –”

“Martha,” interrupted Thomas. “You bring me word from Martha?”

“I does.”

Thomas’ headache subsided, although his stomach began to knot. “Well, Mr. Jackson, please have a seat and tell me all from your mistress.”

Jerry squinted hard at Thomas in disbelief, but remained standing.

“Please, sit down.”

“But I be dusty from my ride and all.”

“Please, sit down!”

Jerry knew enough to follow the command, and he complied with Thomas’ demand to take a chair.

“That’s much better. Now, Mr. Jackson, will you please tell me every word that Martha said to relay to me.”

“She don’t tell me nothing to tell you, but she give me this here letter to deliver personal to you.” Jerry reached into the inside of his jacket and pulled a folded paper, dampened with his sweat from the long, arduous ride. “I’m real sorry if it stinks like a darkie.” He rose and handed the letter to Thomas.

“Don’t apologize for working hard to do your job. A man’s sweat is something to be proud of, not to hide from. Indolence is something to be ashamed of, industry, never.”

“But I do stink like a darkie, however that is, cuz white folk be telling me that all the time.”

“You smell like a man. The odor that white folks refer to is simply that a black person’s kidneys are different than a white’s. White folks and black people ooze out something different through their skin as they sweat. So, they don’t smell alike.”

“That’s what I be sayin. I stink like a dirty darkie.”

“No! Don’t put yourself down like that. People of different races sweat differently. If you ever were to work side by side with people from Japan, you’d notice that when they sweat, they often don’t emit any odor. Different races have different smells when they sweat. It’s not bad, it’s not good, it’s just different.”

“Why does you suppose it to be?”

“Maybe we have different ancestors, I really don’t know.” said Thomas as he handled the damp paper. He opened it gingerly and unfolded a single sheet of paper. It read: “Yes! Yes! Yes!” He jumped high and kicked his heels together, then hopped over to Jerry and hugged him. “Mr. Jackson, this is the greatest news you could have brought me.”

Jerry grinned, revealing two missing teeth. “Does you want to write her a response?”

Thomas bounced about the room, picked up his fiddle and began stoking the bow with lively thrusts. The instrument began singing with joy as Thomas tapped his foot to the music. Jerry jumped up and danced to the tune, jerking his back in

movements that seemed like they were destined to dislocate it. Thomas shouted and Rubin came running into the study.

Thomas beamed. "I'm going to be married Rubin. What do you think of that?"

"Mighty fine, masser, mighty fine." Rubin grabbed Jerry's elbow in his and the two circled in unison as Thomas played. They clapped and applauded while Thomas nursed his fiddle into a frenzied crescendo, which climaxed in a raucous screech. Thomas chuckled and set down the Stradivarius. "Thank you two for helping me in this spontaneous celebration. Rubin, would you go down and send news of my joy to all the servants and slaves? We are having a feast tonight. Tell Bessie to invite all my friends, will you?"

Rubin said, "Yessur."

Jerry looked at Thomas. "May I's be excused?"

"Are you headed directly back to Martha?"

"I is."

Thomas strode up to Jerry and gave him a vigorous hug. "Give her this for me."

"With all dues and respects, sur, I don't think I can do that to my mistress."

"Then tell her I'm overjoyed."

Thomas smiled enthusiastically, little suspecting that the knot in his gut was trying to tell him to avoid the trip to the altar.

CHAPTER 16

Sir Edmund Northborough slammed a fist upon his table and screamed at his secretary, “Did you confirm the meeting for ten o’clock today?”

The bald man shook his head in mock reverence, “Yes, sire.”

“Then where is he?”

“Begging your pardon, but it is only a quarter of the hour.”

“Don’t give me excuses, and get your satirical, smirk-ridden face out of here.”

The secretary’s teeth locked into an angry position of warning, but this menacing gesture was difficult to interpret because of his trembling lips, which vibrated with rage. Sir Northborough mistook this for terror. The usually passive man was nearly storming as he departed the study. Sir Northborough rifled through documents before throwing a paperweight at the wall.

The angered secretary opened the door. “Is there another problem, sire?”

“Where’s the marquis?”

“It’s twelve minutes before he is due, sire.”

“Remove your sniveling countenance from my sight, and disturb me not again until my appointment has arrived!”

“Yes, sire.” The bald man retreated to the hall and scowled at the door, then made an obscene gesture at the unseen knight.

As he turned around, he spotted the silver-haired marquis in full regalia of silks, cuffs, ribbons and velvet. The secretary knew he had been caught in his emotional outburst towards his lord, and trembled, but not in anger as before, but from panic. “S-sir E-ed-edmund is awaiting you.”

The elder man pushed him aside with a sneer and walked into Northborough's study. "I have little time, Sir Northborough, little time."

"Thank you for honoring me with your presence, Marquis La Droix."

"Dispense with ceremony today, I have little time, so call me Jacques."

"But my father always said that I should . . ."

The marquis waved his hand abruptly across his face. "Your father and I worked well together. I will miss him greatly, but you must take his place. To him, I was Jacques, as I must now be to you."

"Okay, Jacques, we have a problem," began the young knight. "I recently had a most distressing meeting with an upstart colonist, Benjamin Franklin. I truly think that he is an agent of the colonists working against the King of England, hence, against our cause. I tried to have him hanged."

The marquis took a seat and stroked his Van Dyke, hummed for a few seconds, then asked, "Did you succeed?"

"No, that damnable Governor Barnard was here, and he intervened on behalf of the Crown and threatened me to retreat. Imagine, that snippy man threatened me."

"Barnard has a close tie to your king."

"So he said, but I doubt it."

The marquis stared quietly at the young knight for several seconds. Then shook his head.

"What is it? Why do you test me with silence?"

"You have your father's brains, but not his patience and composure. You must learn these traits if we are to win our objectives."

“Your reputation, title, and age have given you respect in your country and mine, but I would not listen to your insults were it not for my father imploring me from his deathbed to heed your counsel.”

“Your temper is so hot it blinds you.”

Northborough ripped a drawer from his desk and threw it with great force. The drawer crashed into the wall and broke into sections. At the sound, the terrified secretary charged into the study. “Is there anything amiss sire?”

“Nothing, and disturb me no further.”

“Yes sire.” The bald man retreated to his station outside the study.

Through all this, the marquis sat mute, stroking his beard into a point. After several seconds, he said, “Are you finished?”

“No,” shouted the knight as he stood and ripped a book from the top of his desk and flung it at a window, which it crashed through and sailed to the ground.

“Now are you finished?”

“Marquis La Droix, do you not see that you have ired me? How can you sit there quietly?”

“I am being passive, for if I rise, I’ll run my saber through you. It is only my great respect for your father that keeps from doing it now.”

“And you think you could? I am the champion swordsman of England. If we were to duel, it is you, old man, who would be run through.”

The tall marquis fished into his pocket, removed his pipe, loaded it, then lit the bowl of tobacco. The embers glowed bright as he drew on the stem, sucked in the smoke, held it in his lungs, the blew it out in the direction of the young knight. “You have neither the agility nor the fortitude to do so.”

The young knight rose and ran for a wall-mounted sword. As he pulled it down, the marquis called out for the secretary to enter. To this, Sir Northborough shouted, “So we do see who’s the coward! Call for the servant to save you, did you?”

The bald secretary opened the door pensively and peeped into the study. Upon seeing the door ajar, the marquis said, “Come, come! Enter the place at once.” The wizened man swung open the door and took one step into the study where he saw his master unsheathing a sword. Sweat popped out on the secretary’s forehead and he loosened his collar. “Your bidding,” he quivered.

The young knight shouted, “Remove yourself!”

La Droix, still seated in his chair, said quietly to the wide-eyed servant, “Stay.”

The secretary obeyed the older man.

“What,” screamed Sir Northborough, “you follow his orders against mine?” The young knight charged his secretary and brought the sword blade to his servant’s throat. “I said for you to leave.” The blade shook in unison with the bald man’s trembling.

Unnoticed by the knight and servant, La Droix had risen from his chair, slipped to the door, and they both jumped when it slammed shut. The knight glared at the marquis, “Why didn’t you show yourself out instead of locking yourself in for the confrontation? You would have saved me spilling blood.”

The French nobleman chuckled. “No, young Edmund, I shut the door specifically to see the event.”

Sir Northborough cast his servant aside, who folded into a heap on the floor, curling his knees up to his chest, and holding them securely in place with clasped wrists. The knight took an angered step toward the silver-haired marquis and raised his sword.

La Droix said softly, “Run him through.”

Upon hearing this comment Sir Northborough tilted his head several degrees and said, “Huh?”

The marquis’ voice boomed forcefully, “Kill that thing on the floor!”

The servant rolled into a tighter ball and quivered spasmodically.

The knight dropped his sword. “You’re mad, old man, mad as King Lear.”

The marquis moved with speed that defied his appearance, gracefully and swiftly. He fell to the floor, rolled three times, picked up the sword and popped up to his feet with a consummate fencer’s agility. When on his feet, he pointed the blade at the young knight. “Now, must I run both of you through or will you do him?” The marquis pointed his nose in the direction of the fetal ball.

“W-what are you talking about?”

“Are you man enough to kill that pathetic ball on the floor?” He shoved the sword before the knight, then forced the young man to take it.

The knight stared in awe, then, holding the weapon limply, asked of the silver-haired man, “Why?”

“Because he’s a coward.”

“And that’s a reason to kill?”

“He also resents you.”

“I’m still at a loss.”

“He’ll turn on you if the price is right, or the fear is great in him.”

Sir Northborough kicked the quivering ball. “Is that right? Would you turn on me?”

The secretary looked up and shook his head but when he tried to speak his mouth moved and nothing came out of it. The knight smacked him on the left temple with the hilt of the sword; blood gushed from the man's head.

La Droix walked back to his chair, reclined in it, then said in a whisper, "Kill him."

"What? Can't you see that I control him totally? Why would I kill a loyal servant?"

"Two reasons: First, he is anything but loyal to you. Second, if you don't, I'll kill you both."

"You're mad."

"If you're correct, will you be any less dead at the hand of a madman than one who is sane?"

A tremor overtook Sir Northborough's hand and the sword shook. Northborough grabbed his wrist with his other hand and halted the vibrations. "Hah! What a prankster you are, La Droix. You almost had me going there, but Father told me you were always one with a droll sense of humor. Quite good, you know. I salute you." The young knight flung the sword on the floor and ran to shake the marquis hand, hoping that he had exposed a joke.

When he reached La Droix, the marquis was a stone in movements, in appearance, and in warmth. Only the Frenchman's eyes seemed to move as they sent flares of hatred and contempt at Sir Northborough. The young knight recoiled, then exclaimed, "You really mean it?"

The stone glared.

The knight stooped and picked up the sword. He walked to the quivering ball, a ball that said, "Please, sire – spare – " As the secretary opened his eyes and looked up

to complete his plea, he saw the blade high above his master's head, supported by both hands, then watched as the blade swung down toward his nose; he felt the steel slash, felt a horrible pain, and lost consciousness before expiring.

The marquis rose from his chair and the hint of a smile touched the left side of his face. "I'll be going now." He picked up his hat and walked to the door, which he unlatched and opened.

"What!" shouted the young knight. "You'll leave me here with this mess? I need a witness that he attacked me."

"Good-bye."

"I'll call the guard – I'll tell that you did it."

"And I'm quite certain that they'll consider your blood soaked clothing as more evidence against you than for you."

"Wait, what am I to do."

"You'll think of something."

"You are a cold one."

The silver-haired man said softly, "Come to my office tomorrow at ten."

The young knight sneered. "Or what?"

"Or you'll join your pathetic secretary."

CHAPTER 17

La Droix was gone, leaving Sir Edmund Northborough the gory corpse in his study to deal with as best he could. Its eyes were agape and it wore a haunting smile from its nearly severed lower jaw. Sir Northborough shuddered and crawled to his desk, where he passed several minutes in haunting reflection until his appearance slowly transformed. The terror he felt began slipping from his mind, and as he closed his eyes to assist him in visualizing a solution, he felt the beginnings of inner peace.

The peace inside him glowed and warmed his heart and made him tingle. After several moments of basking in the inner warmth of himself, he discovered something he had always lacked. He had purpose, and courage.

He raised himself, then boldly tugged at the rope for a servant. A few moments later a heavy-set woman entered the room. “Yes, sire,” she said, rushing toward his desk. A few steps into the room she saw the corpse, tilted her head for a moment, couldn’t believe her eyes, then nervously exclaimed, “Now I’d say ’es ’ad a bit of a day, what?”

“Take him thence,” shouted Northborough in anger. “The idiot went insane and tried to run me through.”

“Dear me, ’e never liked you, not a wit, but I ’oped ‘e’d never do a thing like that! I ain’t ever, never thought ’e would of. My Lord! ’E’s gone and did a disservice to your ’ouse, ’e ’as . . .”

“Cease, woman, cease. Now, get him hence.”

“Yes, sire!” she said.

The servant rushed out of the study, down a corridor, and to a closet. In a fright, she flung open the door and pulled down linen, spilling several articles as she raced back down the hall. In her arms she carried several sheets that she dropped onto the floor as she entered the study.

She gasped at the sight, and gulped several times, and with absolute will power, kept her breakfast from spewing forth. She choked as she rolled the dead man onto the sheets, bundled him up, and said, "It's done the best I can. I'll need some 'elp to lift it. Before I get 'im a carted off, do we need a copper to come about and see?"

Sir Edmund sneered, "When a servant tries to kill a master, the king needs only my affidavit, which I will produce for him directly."

"Yes, sire," she said, "I'll send for the undertaker, what."

"That would seem appropriate. And see what you can do to clean up this study and draw me a bath."

"Yes, sire."

CHAPTER 18

A rooster gave its morning greeting to dawn and startled Sir Northborough. Although that bird called out every morning, it had never disturbed him before, because his secretary had always drawn the drapes and blocked out the glare from the birds crowing to allow his master to sleep. The young knight held his hands over his ears and attempted a return to slumber, but the racket persisted until he gave up trying to sleep through it and rose from bed.

He pulled on the bell cord for a servant who entered, and dressed him for breakfast. As the servant was leaving the room, Sir Northborough said, "Serve that rooster for supper tonight."

The servant gave a mild protest, "But, sire, e's not our bird."

"It's on my property, it's my bird."

"Very well, sire."

"And have my coach prepared at once."

After the servant left, Northborough sat at his desk and wrote out an affidavit declaring that his secretary had shouted several oaths, pledging allegiance to France, denouncing George the Third, King of Great Britain, as a pretender, and finally, he attempted to kill his master, who, in response to the treasonous statements and in his own self defense, gloriously protected the honor of the Crown and his person by slaying the infidel.

Upon finishing the statement, he blotted it dry and waited for his coachman to hitch up the team and pull the conveyance to the front. He stared at a clock on the wall, and when two minutes had passed, he slammed a fist upon his desk. A servant ran into the study. “Yes sire.”

“Is the coach ready?”

“I’ll see at once, sire.”

Sir Northborough strummed the table when he saw the coach pull up to the front door. He walked from his study, down the stairs, and to the foyer, where he waited impatiently at the door for the footman to open it. When the double door to the residence opened, Northborough passed over the threshold and walked twelve steps to his carriage. The footman closed the house’s door and rushed to the coach and flung its door open before the young knight made it to the vehicle.

As he entered the carriage, Northborough said, “To Marquis La Droix’.”

The springs of the conveyance stretched and sprung as they attempted to absorb the ruts in the road of cobblestones. Inside the coach, the knight bounced around and shouted for the coachman to avoid the bumps.

The coach drew to a stop, and Northborough shouted “Why have you halted?” As he asked the question, he saw an elderly woman dragging her left leg behind her as she painstakingly cleared the coach’s path. The knight opened his door and screamed, “Stay out of the street, old hag, or we’ll run you down the next time.” The old lady tugged at her scarf and lowered her head, not wanting to make eye contact with the man in the carriage. Sir Northborough screamed at his driver, “Don’t stop for trash in the road! Get us moving.”

After receiving such gentle encouragement from the knight, the driver flipped the reins and the horses started anew. The carriage bounced and jerked the knight to

La Droix' house, where it finally halted. The footman jumped from the rear running board and raced to the door, opened it, and released the noble cargo. Northborough walked from the carriage to the door, which was opened by an unseen servant. "My Lord is expecting you," said a voice from behind the opened door.

As Northborough crossed into the foyer, his feet landed on plush carpet, which sucked up his boots. The previously unseen servant closed the door and directed the visitor to the study, where he was given a chair and asked to wait for the marquis, who would be arriving soon. For several minutes, Northborough sat rigidly in the chair, strumming his fingers on the arms of the seat. His patience tested in the wait, he stared at the clock and fidgeted some more. Beads of sweat began to pop out on his forehead.

Behind the wall, the marquis stood, watching every move of his visitor through a peephole. He wore a sly grin on his face as he watched the knight squirm in the chair.

Inside the room, Sir Northborough rose from the chair, wiped his brow with the silk ruffles attached to his left wrist, and stretched. Then he walked over to the servant bell cord, handled it, thought seriously of pulling it, but did not. He walked toward a desk with a drawer ajar and inside there appeared to be some silver coins. Northborough contemplated opening the drawer to see how much wealth sat in it, but stopped himself.

He drifted over to the bookcase, and read the titles of a few books before selecting a thin almanac by Poor Richard, leafing through the pages before taking his chair again. As he read over the short, insightful sayings, some of his apprehension subsided; at times he chuckled. His face reddened when he read: "Mad Kings and mad Bulls, are not to be held by treaties & packthread." And his knuckles whitened

two lines later at finding that, “A true Man will neither trample on a Worm, nor sneak to an Emperor.”

Northborough tossed the book to the floor as the marquis entered the room. “Read my books if you like, but treat them with respect.”

His face ashen, his hands trembling, Northborough stammered, “I-I didn’t mean to ruin your book, but it’s by that pig, Benjamin Franklin.”

“Plenty of wisdom in those little almanacs.”

“He’s a traitor to the crown, not that you’d care, being French and all.”

“You know that my mother was the Duchess of York, that I carry dual titles and lean far more favorably toward my British blood than do I toward my French side, but my father’s line gave me this infernal surname. Sometimes I wish that William the Norman had never landed upon these god-forsaken isles. If William hadn’t played conqueror in 1066, the Saxons would still be parading about the islands and none of you Brits would be carrying surnames.”

“Really?”

“Absolutely. People had just one name before William the Conqueror. He forced everybody to adopt surnames so he could more easily count and number the people.”

“Then, surnames are a good thing. They keep rulers in control of the rabble.”

“Not a surname like La Droix for a British Nobleman such as myself.”

“Then, why not change your name?”

“You dolt. If I changed my name, I’d lose my land.”

“Sacrifices that we of blue blood must endure.”

“But, you have a point. The Bauer clan changed their name to Rothschild. It might be fun to start about with a new name.”

Sir Northborough cleared his throat. "Be a little careful what you choose."

"And what do you mean by that?"

"My father told me that names control destinies."

"How so?"

"Well, have you ever noticed that people named 'Paul' are often unhappy? Or that many 'Johns' are rather bright with slick tongues?"

"Your father was a wise man. I'd never considered anything about names, but he studied the Hebrew Kabala intently. Perhaps he knew something."

"He claimed to have discovered it in his last years, and he wanted me to change my name to what he called a power-name, but I declined his offer."

"Regardless of names, let's deal with Franklin. Yesterday, you were saying that you had proof of him being a spy. Give it me."

Northborough shouted, "My word! You distracted me with the talk of names, but, what about the man you saw die yesterday? Is that of no consequence to you? Don't you even care what happened?"

"No. You showed me that you can be trusted to kill on my command. That is all that happened yesterday."

Northborough's pale complexion reddened and his eyes bulged. "What! You did that as a test? I ought to kill you right here."

The marquis shrugged. "Didn't I show you the folly of trying that yesterday?"

"You are a dark one."

"Come now Northborough. Don't be so affronted. I'm about to take you into my confidence and I need your help. You should be flattered."

"I'd sooner be flogged than join ranks with the likes of you."

"I think that the punishment for murder would be a little greater than that."

“A noble can’t murder a commoner. You don’t scare me.”

“I think the king might charge you if I told him that your servant was working for me and that you attacked me and he died protecting me. I think that you might well find that you faced a murder charge for that.”

“That would be perjury.”

“And your sworn statement of the account isn’t?”

“How do you know what I put in the affidavit? I haven’t even delivered it to the authorities as of yet.”

The marquis stroked his Van Dyke. “I have my ways.”

Northborough rushed to the window and glared at his coachman and footman, wondering if either of them were a spy for the marquis. La Droix let out a roar of laughter, to which Northborough exclaimed, “You’re an evil demon.”

“Sit down in the chair and shut your mouth. My patience is tried to the quick by you. You’re arrogant and hot-headed and I don’t think that you are competent to perform the mission that your father was on when he met his untimely death.”

“How I hate you, Jacques La Droix.”

“Good, I need your hate to get your respect.”

“I’ll never respect you. I’d kill you in a minute if given the chance.”

“I know that, which is why I’ll never give you such an opportunity.”

“I’m leaving,” said Northborough as he rose.

“And if you do, I’ll have you hanged for murder.”

Northborough shook violently and spit as he talked. “Just what is it that you want?”

“To know what you have on Franklin.”

“Why does it always come back to that infernal man?”

“Because, he’s no agent for the American Colonists, but exactly the opposite. We have nurtured his affiliation on behalf of the Crown of England. He’s planted coily, and loved by those on that continent filled with harlots, convicts, and slime. He fills their heads with little sayings, and occasionally lashes at the Mother Country, but just for show. The man is our puppet, and I’m his main contact.”

“You’re insane.”

“Tell me what you have on him.”

The knight stoked his chin, “What is it worth, this information you seek?”

“Your life, for now, but no promises about later.”

Northborough bit into his tongue, bringing forth blood that swirled in his mouth. “How could my father love you so?”

“Because we’re on the same team.” The marquis opened a drawer and removed a sealed letter. He handed it to the younger man. “Here, read this.”

Northborough held the paper before running a finger over the embossed wax seal, which he recognized immediately to be his father’s. He tilted it and viewed it from several angles to make certain it was in tact.

The marquis nodded. “So even under stress, and highly angered, you keep your senses enough to ascertain that it’s authentic? That is good. Perhaps your father was correct and you are up to the task.”

“Why do you have this?” demanded Northborough. He looked at the marquis’ grey eyes and saw some warmth in them, almost rising to affection.

“Because, your father told me to give it to you to confirm my status.”

Northborough picked lightly at the seal, was satisfied that it was unbroken, then ripped open the envelope. Inside was another envelope, also sealed, but this time with

not his father's seal, but with his grandfather's. There was also a slip of paper that was written in Northborough's father's hand:

Son,

This letter was kept in a safe place where only Jacques and I knew it's locale. He must have retrieved it because I am gone. Please do follow the counsel of Jacques La Droix. He and I have worked long and hard together, and you must trust him completely. Inside is a letter from my father, who also worked with the ageless La Droix, which was to be opened in the event that La Droix predeceased me. Our task is difficult, dangerous, and noble. You must not falter.

My greatest Love,

Father

As the knight sat down the note, Jacques reached for his hand and clasped it in a foreign handshake, with his index finger rolled inside of the grip and only three fingers showing on the outside. Northborough asked, "What is this?" in bewilderment.

"The grip of a friend. And should anyone ever grasp your hand in such a manner, you'll know that you have met a trusted brother."

"Are there many of these brothers?"

"Few, very few. No more than twenty in England. A like amount in France."

"And elsewhere?"

"Not now, you don't need to know any more than the grip. If someone greets you with such a handshake, do whatever that person asks."

"Do you know what was inside this envelope?"

"I can guess it's similar to the message that your father wrote you. I worked with your grandfather also."

Northborough put his left hand on the marquis' back and clasped his right hand. Both men's index fingers curled inside the grip, and there was little room for closing the shake. Northborough nodded at the man he had passionately hated only a few minutes earlier.

The marquis stared with kindly eyes that had been so cold earlier. "Now tell me all about Dr. Franklin."

"Not much, except I wanted to hang him but Barnard interfered."

"So I know, which is why I jumped into your life again yesterday."

"Is he a brother?"

The marquis nodded. "And so is George the Third."

"So I'm in a privileged class."

"More than you might ever guess."

"Well, Franklin introduced himself as an agent for the colony of Massachusetts, if you can imagine that, and I countered, challenged his authority, and we parted on terrible terms."

The marquis said, "I know that. Tell me about your tailing him, searching his quarters, and what you learned."

"Well, next to nothing, except he posted a letter to Massachusetts soon thereafter."

"And do you know what the letter said?"

"What do you take me for, a common snoop and a censor?"

"If your father trained you at all, you better be."

"The letter said little, claiming that he would be negotiating for power and acceptance of his right as agent for the colony."

"Who was it addressed to?"

“John Adams of Boston.”

The marquis looked worried. “I must know exactly what it said. Do your best to remember.”

The young knight reached into a folder and produced a copy of the letter, which the marquis read most carefully. Then he said, “What about the puzzle? Where is it?”

Northborough handed a copy of the number game to the marquis, who shook when he saw the numbered squares. “Blast! You might be right.”

“About what?”

“This is a cipher code or I’ll kiss your feet. It appears that the old gentleman’s been stringing us along, but you made him so nervous he just blew it – maybe.”

“Why do you say maybe?”

“Because Franklin is a mathematical genius, and he could well have produced this as a toy. We’ll break it down. We’ll have all the math-types in Cambridge working on this. If there’s no order to the game, we’ll have our man. And he’s one of our brothers.”

“Did I do well?”

“Exceptionally. By the by, did the original letter go to Adams?”

“Yes.”

“No problem, we have a plant inside that feisty man’s office. We’ll get an accounting if there’s anything to it. Please, let’s toast to a glorious success.”

“Do we have men everywhere?”

La Droix smiled. “We keep atop this world with raw power that the people see, and knowledge that they don’t. Do we have spies, oh, do we have spies! So many that it shocks me sometimes.”

“But, shouldn’t we arrest Franklin?”

“Not unless our man in Boston confirms something, or if this little ditty isn’t a game, or the like.”

“Why not now?”

“The colonies are a powder keg. We won’t cause an eruption needlessly.”

CHAPTER 19

The air was heavy and hot, thoroughly soaking Thomas who was already wet from his own perspiration. His sweat stuck to him because of the muggy air. Uncomfortably hot and wrestling with a headache, he walked and reflected. He kept replaying Patrick Henry's speech in the House of Burgesses in his head, over and over hearing his friend boom, "If this be treason, then make the most of it."

His new wife stared at him through dreamy eyes. "You're not thinking about me, are you, my beautiful Long Tom?"

"How do you know that?"

"Your mind is wandering, puzzling with something dangerous."

Thomas focused on his slender Martha. He drank in her form, then, despite the unbearable heat, grasped her in his arms. "What do you mean, dangerous?"

Martha broke free and winked. "Thinking about Patrick Henry is dangerous, deadly dangerous. Why I do believe that man will be hanged someday for what comes out of his mouth." Martha wondered how she might get Thomas to disassociate himself with Henry, and her cunning mind was ever working toward that end.

"How did you know that I was thinking about him?"

Martha closed her eyes and said, "I don't know, but sometimes your thoughts travel straight to me, especially when you have those headaches."

"My dearest, sometimes you spook me. Can you always read my mind?" Being infatuated with her, he was often blind to her motives.

She smiled coyly. While she was unable to read his mind, she had enough clues that she could wager fair guesses at times. She bluffed. “My woman’s intuition is keen, but nowhere near perfect. Of course I can’t always read your mind.”

“Sometimes?”

“Yes.”

“Have you read others?”

“A few,” she lied. “It used to give me nightmares as a child. Once I learned that everybody couldn’t do it, I kept very quiet about it, and after a while stopped using the ability entirely. I wouldn’t do it with you, but it seems like we’re connected, like I’m supposed to do it.”

Thomas grinned. “And what am I thinking right now?”

She chuckled, and raced to him. “If what you’re thinking is true, you are a wonderful man.”

“What is it?”

“Thomas, you’ve ordered me either a harpsichord or a piano forte, I can’t tell which.”

Thomas opened his eyes as wide as possible. “How--how did--how?”

“I am like one with you.” Of course, her “intuition” was aided considerably because she had snooped in his personal effects and discovering a bill of lading.

“I guess I don’t have any secrets from you,” said Thomas blushing.

Martha looked into his eyes. “Please don’t tell anyone about this.”

“Why not?”

“They might burn me as a witch, and scorn you for marrying one.”

“Nobody will scorn me for catching the prettiest little widow in Virginia.”

“Thomas, I sense you have a higher purpose than to be married to me, that I may be here to assist you, but you will do the work. If others think that I go in for supernatural phenomena, then you will lose status and respect.”

“Martha, all you are doing is searching; nobody would condemn another for searching for truth.”

Martha laughed. “You may be brilliant, but you’re certainly naive.”

Thomas took a deep breath, followed by several more, gulped, and finally said, “Is there anything that I can do to help you – educate me – on this . . . specialized intuition you seem to have.”

Martha turned up her mouth slightly and kissed Thomas on the forehead. “Maybe, but not now.”

“Back to Patrick Henry. Why, if I am so naive, did I recognize the despotism of the Stamp Act? How is it that I, well-schooled in John Locke’s revelation of an ‘inalienable’ right – perhaps even a duty – of the people to resist tyranny and oppression; how is it that I am naive? And, how can Henry speak from experience when everything he has attempted has failed? Why do the people follow a man so lacking in couth as Henry?”

Martha looked sternly at Thomas. “Jealous, that’s what you are, jealous of Mr. Patrick Henry.” She didn’t want to move too quickly, but, she saw that Thomas was weakening regarding Henry.

Thomas bit his lip and twisted as though he had been shot by an arrow in the back. “Jealous of him! Come now.”

“He has the one thing that you cherish.”

“Which is?”

“The ability to glibly address people, to speak his mind without preparation or care.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Remember how this conversation started. I am picking up your jealousy without concentrating at all.”

Thomas closed his eyes, took a chair, and pouted for several seconds before Martha approached him and stroked his hair. With a gentle nudge, she forced him to make room for both of them in the chair. “You know me far better than I would ever have guessed. But, still, how come the country bumpkin cut through all the nonsense and brought home such a powerful message to the people?”

Martha hummed a couple of notes, then replied. “Why did God give you such a brain and so much industry, yet no ability to speak the words that Henry gushed forth adroitly? Why is Henry able to speak so cogently without legal training, without research, and without putting forth effort?” The seed was planted. She would wait for another time to work further against the revolutionary ideas of her husband and Henry.

Thomas rose from the chair and laughed. “I must be off.”

Martha nodded. “I know.” If she suspected what Thomas was about to do, she would have made her move against Henry on the spot.

Thomas kissed his wife, and headed for his barn. Though weakened by the humid heat, he broke into a run after taking only a few steps and raced for his stable. When he arrived, he had Rubin saddle Eagle, and then mounted his steed. Once atop, he kicked the beautiful animal into life and they flew, horse and rider as one down a rut-laden path toward Henry’s house.

When he arrived at the tavern where Henry resided, he bounded the stairs two at a time, and reached the door. Sarah opened it before Thomas knocked, and exclaimed,

“Why Thomas Jefferson, whatever brings you here? I see that married life is treating you well. Martha is a dear, but she can’t seem to get you to eat, can she?”

Thomas smiled bashfully, “Well, it’s not Martha’s cooking or anything like that. You see, Sarah, I don’t believe in eating much meat. It’s a beastly tradition brought over here from England to gobble down meat. If a study were done, I am convinced it would prove that there is an absolute correlation between eating meat and making war. I believe it is better when I just eat slivers of it, and I also have this strong belief that if I leave the table wanting just a little more food, that I will always keep my body in top shape. So, we can’t blame Martha, but me.”

Patrick heard the conversation and wiggled around his children and to the door. His hands were stained from ink and his feet were bare. “Come in, Jefferson, come in. I must hear more about your eating habits. War caused by eating meat! Jefferson, you never cease to amaze me.”

“I’ve other things to discuss and I’d rather speak with you outside.”

“Sure, sure,” said Henry, and stepped out the door.

“Don’t you want to wear some shoes?”

“Nah, I’ve never really gotten used to those things. I’d just as soon feel the ground in contact with my body. It feels more like I belong to the planet.”

The pair walked down the stairs and Thomas hemmed a bit, then said, “I’m in.”

“What do you mean by that.”

“I’m in for the works.”

“Of course you are, Franklin had picked you for something or other.”

“Franklin is perhaps impotent in London, possibly he’s already dead. We know what he wants anyway in this dire contingency. George the Third is mad with power.

There's no need to wait further for instructions from across the Atlantic. It's time to act."

Henry straightened up out of his usual stoop and tried to reach Thomas' height, but fell a couple of inches short. His eyes gazed into Thomas' eyes for a long while, then he said, "You're supposed to stay in the background!"

"Why?"

"To save your estate, your slaves, your money, your prestige, your – neck."

"I've read enough of justice and rights, and I know that the 'king' is a despot and a tyrant that must be thrown off, and I need not hide behind the safety of your speeches any longer. How you've inspired me Patrick!"

Henry, never one to shrug off a compliment, nodded and said, "Finally."

"What does that mean?"

"Franklin told me that you were too bright to beat over the head with the truth, that you would have to come to it yourself, but he saw in you the fire necessary to write about our plight to convince the French, the Dutch, and others on the European continent of our desperate situation with Great Britain. He thinks that you are the key. The Europeans are totally ignorant of what is going on in America. We need a voice, an articulate voice."

"Why me?"

"Your age, I guess."

"I'm only a few years younger than Adams, and seven younger than you. Those can't matter much."

"They will. After we've revolted, and won our country, we'll need leaders who are many years from senility. You'll be one of them."

"And why not you?"

“Me! Jefferson, surely you jest. I’m like a sergeant leading a charge to take a hill. I haven’t got the desire to run a country, nor the intelligence for that matter. I’ll get everybody moving in the right direction, set them afire with my speeches, but you, Thomas, you need to put everything down for posterity.”

Thomas stared up and down at his slovenly friend. The buckskin breeches fit him, so did the bare feet. As Thomas examined the thread-worn shirt on his companion, he began to see that money was irrelevant to class, because as uncouth as Henry was, he was a person of true character. “But your speeches are driving; give me some copies and I’ll have them printed. Your words ring thunder through my ears, and they should be saved.”

Henry let out a series of laughs that started out jerky, then smoothed out. “Ha – haw – ha. Nobody wants my words, Thomas, they want yours.”

“Your reputation as a spewer of volcanic lava spans the continent. Put your speeches in a pamphlet and the world will know what you’ve said.”

“I don’t care what the world thinks about what I say. If we put them in writing, they’d never ring true. You see, I have a talent. I can read an audience, can actually feel what will get them moving and what will fall flat. I don’t rehearse my speeches, don’t have them written down, and if somebody read them, they wouldn’t pick up my inflections, my pauses, my timing.”

“Where’d you ever learn all that?”

“From a few ministers when I was growing up. I learned how to sell ideas with words. But, if you were to analyze my speeches, you’d find inconsistencies, weak language, and some utter trash. However, I cover it well with body movements and dynamics. I know that if I say it loud enough, everyone will think it’s true. But, your

words send shivers down me, no matter who reads them. That's why we need you so desperately."

Thomas smiled and wrapped his arm around Henry. "I'm with you all the way. How can I help?"

"I could use a few dramatic phrases for outlining my talks, but I'd like to see you begin writing fire-breathing prose to rock the warped tyrant from his almighty throne in Britain."

Thomas shook his friend's hand. "Thanks, Patrick." He turned to leave, then added, "Give my best to Sarah and your children."

"Will do."

CHAPTER 20

Benjamin Franklin sat in the anteroom, inspecting the gilded frames housing the portraits on the wall. One of the less colorful pictures he recognized as a Michelangelo, and he shook his head. His tastes were certainly more frugal than those of Sir Edmund Northborough, but it was nice to see such fine art even when he was on dreadful business. He wondered how a person like Northborough could have such elegant gardens leading up to his house, splashed with delightful ponds, yet have such gaudy architecture to literally ruin the image. Whoever had assembled the estate had no sense of balance; however, the painting was breathtaking.

The young knight's new secretary walked into the room and coughed, "Mr. Franklin," his tone dripped of superiority, "Sir Northborough will see you now."

Franklin stared at the stubby man for a moment, hoisted himself from the chair by placing both palms on his cane, and rose. "Are you new here?"

"Quite," said the secretary. "My last appointment was with Lord North."

"Oh, dear me," responded Franklin, "you must have done something dreadful to have had your circumstances so thoroughly converted."

The stubby man closed one eye and tilted his head, uncertain whether he had been complimented or offended. "I'll show you in directly." The secretary took several brisk steps toward the doors of the study without looking back at Franklin, then flung both open ceremoniously, and announced, "Mr. Benjamin Franklin is here, sire."

Franklin ambled through the door, chuckling as he poked his cane about the room. “I see you have new help. I’m afraid the new man is going to be a bit servile.”

Northborough ignored the comment, remained silent, and gave the older man a frozen stare that chilled even the unflappable inventor. Several seconds went by before Franklin noticed the silver haired man in the corner, and the doctor’s spine became an iceberg. His left foot ached from gout, and he felt it giving way, but with massive concentration, he willed himself to remain standing. Franklin cleared his throat three times, then said, “Am I to be tarred or quartered?”

Northborough continued with his angry glare, “Is your conscience so black that you know that is what you deserve?”

“Hardly.”

“Then why would you ask such a question? Do I look that dour?”

“Sire, with no offense intended, you are not my concern.”

“So your treason is coming in to haunt you after all this time.”

“What mean you by implying that I have breached my bounds with my ruler?”

“Implying! Doctor Franklin, I’m stating it in real language that even that dolt of a secretary listening at the keyhole could understand. I call you a traitor!”

For the first time since he entered the ominous situation, Franklin cracked a wry smile. “I am ever the servant of the good and kindly George the Third, which he knows all too well. And, Sir Northborough, I don’t believe that you could convince our King otherwise.”

“Franklin, you’re a true study, a piece of work more fitting for Da Vinci to paint than for me to fathom. Moments ago you entered this room shivering with fright of my wrath, and now you taunt me.”

Franklin's gout screamed and throbbed. He bit on his cheek and drew blood, hoping that would distract him from the pain in his foot. "I have no fear of you sire."

"What! What? Cease your riddles and tell me why you were shaking when you entered."

"First, I'm so many years your senior, I don't think you could grasp the pains and maladies that can cover my face with pain and grief. Our Creator lets us know who is boss in time, and he reminds me regularly that I control not my bodily condition. Second, if there is anyone who I fear in this room, it is that henchman in the corner." Franklin pointed to the marquis. "He ever brings sordid news, he is death, he is destruction."

The marquis roared out an oath, followed by resonating laughter at a register so bass that window panes began vibrating. "You honor me, as always, Doctor Franklin."

"I meant not any flattery, sir."

"But you have enhanced my position with the young knight here by your statements. You see, he's not totally convinced that I am a person who should be taken seriously."

Franklin looked over at Northborough. "Sire, do you doubt this man's capacity for grief?"

"Stop diverting me Franklin. I intend to interrogate you, and question you I will," said Northborough.

Franklin laughed, "You can present me with interrogatories stacked upon end with little chance of success."

"What! What? Still you toy with me, Franklin?"

“Sir Northborough, I believe that I am a corpse as we speak, so why would I unleash my tongue to you?”

“To save your life, decrepit as it is.”

“You have no control over my life.”

“What! What? I can have you hanged this very afternoon, that’s the extent of my power, it is.”

Franklin chuckled, “You really don’t understand anything do you?”

Northborough ran to the wall and reached for a hanging saber, but before his hand touched the hilt, a fist crashed into his temple, buckling his knees as he wobbled, and he took two staggering attempts at steps, then tumbled to the floor with his eyes rolled up inside his lids.

“Still as dangerous as always, I see,” said Franklin in a tone of cold admiration.

“I suppose,” said the marquis.

For several seconds the pair of men stood over the fallen knight, who lay motionless. “One punch and he’s out. Why did his father die and leave me with a pantywaist?”

A moan came from the prone man. “What! Ugh. Why did you attack me?” he asked as he climbed to his feet using the support of a velvet-covered chair.

“It was insolent of you to make a move to attack our guest.”

“What! What? I thought we agreed to give him a thorough going over.”

Franklin laughed in spite of his pain and fear. “You are a young one, totally lacking in appreciation for the powers and abilities and ruthlessness of the marquis. You cannot give me a ‘going over’ because I knew when I first spotted your companion that I would probably not leave here.”

Sir Northborough stared quizzically at the marquis. “Father never told me that you were a desperate man.”

“He’s not at all,” said Franklin. “He’s cold, calculating, and deadly. He wouldn’t waste his time here if it were not to make certain that I am out of the way.”

The marquis squinted. “You honor me beyond my humble expectations, Franklin. Now, sit down and tell me what you’re all about.”

Franklin refused the seat and stood on his aching feet, believing this would be the last act of defiance of his well-spent life. “I’m not about anything and I prefer to stand if it’s all the same to you.”

The marquis glared at the old man before him. “I’ll run you through if you don’t talk.”

“You’ll spill my blood even if I do.”

“Blast it Franklin, can’t you see that I’m on my best behavior, that I’m affording you certain . . . luxuries? Can’t you respond in kind?”

“And to what purpose would it serve me to be reasonable with you.”

“Your death, which you seem so certain is near upon you, can be comfortably administered with potion, or savagely extracted. Were you to die today, I would think you might prefer poison to torture.”

“I care not. You see, My Lord has allowed me to be placed into a body that pains me daily. Since I have taken all that just to be of service to the Divine Being of Purity, I am totally prepared to deal with anything from the Evil One.”

The marquis clapped his hands together several times. “Oh, Franklin, you do flatter me so.”

“Well, you might as well do you worst, because I remain mute.”

“You misunderstand the situation, Franklin. There is a high probability that I will let you see the morning’s sun and several others – if you – if you can convince me that you’re not up to some dreadful plots of insurrection.”

Franklin winked at the marquis, and through will alone, remained standing in pain that was climbing his left leg and attacking his pelvis. “A feeble old man such as myself involved in rebellion? Now, who is flattering whom?”

“Don’t return questions and riddles to me. Tell me what you’ve been doing, who all your agents are, and when the revolt is planned, and play not with me or I will make it miserable for you, then one-by-one, to those who you hold dear to your heart.”

“Take me, then, do your work, you will anyway.”

The marquis’ complexion reddened almost imperceptibly from ash to a dull grey, dashed with a trace of mauve. He fingered a quill and ruffled its side. “Each of these barbs represents one of your relatives or friends, and you will cause me to remove them one-by-one if you don’t cooperate now.”

“Begin plucking,” said Franklin. “And I do hope it is I who is at the top of the list.”

“No! I think that will be your loudmouthed nephew who so brazenly printed the Virginia resolutions in the *Mercury Gazette* and spread Patrick Henry’s words against the Stamp Act across the continent to bind the colonies into a cohesive resolve.”

“He’s so young and foolish. Hold not his youth against him.”

The marquis folded over another barb. “And this one is for George Washington.”

“Washington! Whatever for?”

“Because he proved himself a bit too capable in the Seven Years War. I don’t think the Crown needs to face leadership like his if your little conspiracy ever takes effect.”

Franklin strained his intellect attempting to determine whether the marquis had uncovered anything or was fishing for whoppers. “To conspire, one would have to have an agreement with somebody.”

Sir Northborough said, “And well you ha – “

“Shut up!” shouted the marquis.

The young knight bowed slightly and reclined into a chair in mute compliance to the command.

Franklin raised his right eyebrow. “It appears you are finally getting the attention of that young man.”

“Don’t distract me, Franklin.” The marquis folded back another barb. “And this one goes to the impudent Patrick Henry for spouting such nonsense against the realm.”

“That would be a dreadful mistake.”

“And why is that?”

“Well, assuming that there were a conspiracy, and I say this without the least bit of admission of one, but only to state a hypothetical question to you. You understand that I’m not admitting anything with this answer.”

The marquis nodded.

“Were there a conspiracy to revolt against the Crown, would not its resolve be heightened by silencing its most vocal spokesman? Could not you imagine a martyr being made of that uncouth lad from backwater Virginia?”

“Thank you, Dr. Franklin.”

“For what?”

“For showing me that poison would be a better death for that man than the sword. We surely don’t want to make a martyr of that creep.”

Franklin’s brow moistened and he dabbed at it with his floppy shirt cuffs. Time seemed to travel backwards, and he decided to speak no more to the black-hearted marquis. Franklin glared at La Droix, which commenced many minutes of savage, eye-to-eye combat with him.

The marquis broke the heated quiet. “So you’ve decided to remain silent again?”

Franklin stood quietly in defiance, refusing now to even give a gesture.

The marquis picked up a piece of parchment from the desk and walked to Franklin, grabbed the doctor’s hand, and ran the parchment across three of his fingers, instantly spilling blood from the paper cut. Franklin winced, thought about sucking his fingers, but in what he believed to be his last moments of defiance, he stood, dripping onto the young knight’s posh carpet, refusing to acknowledge the injury.

The marquis looked over at Sir Northborough. “Well, it looks like we should start by hanging Adams.”

Franklin’s stomach jumped, but his face showed only a twinge of the quaking going on inside of him as he wondered whether the marquis spoke of Sam or John Adams. Either would be a likely target, but if it were John, then this might not be a fishing exhibition after all. The marquis might know everything.

“Why, Dr. Franklin, you appear worried,” said the knight after finally being given an opportunity to speak. “It seems that you’re getting to him, eh Jacques?” Sir Northborough began to rise from his chair and retake a position of control.

A cold stare from the marquis changed the young knight's mind, and Northborough slumped back into his seat. The marquis raised his voice, shouting for the first time, "Franklin! Talk now or you'll suffer a foul demise."

Franklin was rigid, his gout stopped hurting, and his mind cleared of everything. "Do your worst."

"I want your code broken, and I'm getting quite testy."

Franklin's eyes rolled. "Code?"

"Yes, code, now give it me."

"Do you mean a legal code? Like a booklet of statutes?"

"Stop playing with me, Franklin. You may be wise, but I have other talents that more than balance for your wit." The marquis rushed to Northborough's desk, opened a drawer and extracted a copy of the number puzzle that Franklin had sent to John Adams and shoved it into Franklin's face.

Northborough exclaimed, "I don't think that's a good idea to –"

The marquis waved a fist at the knight and cut him off in mid sentence, then turned to Franklin. "This code. What do all these numbers mean?"

Franklin held the paper at arm's length, smearing it with blood from his cut hand, and adjusted his glasses. Then he tilted his head and he perused the squares, recognizing it at once as a copy of the puzzle he sent John Adams. *So, they intercepted the mails . . . If I live through this . . . I might just be able to use this information. It's pretty lucky that I burned all my ciphers. How can I get information to America now? I'll be watched very closely.* His mind raced with a clarity that astounded him. He sent up a thankful acknowledgement, realizing that he must be getting Divine assistance. He wiped his bloody fingers on the paper, then handed it back to the marquis, feeling that everything weighed on what happened next.

“Well,” said the marquis, “can you enlighten me as to the meaning of it?”

“My word! You are a riddle to me. You threaten my life, my family’s, my friends, draw my blood to show your resolve, and now you give me a child’s puzzle to play with. What are you about anyway?”

“What do you mean, child’s play. We’ve had two professors at Oxford seek the nature of the puzzle, and none can solve it. I think it is a coded message of some sort, and I think that you know well what it means.”

“Code? There we are with that word again. I’ll tell you what, my *dear* man, if you would be good enough to let me sit at a desk, I’ll show you how simple this little number box is to understand.” Franklin took two steps toward the desk, and since the marquis was not objecting, stepped a couple more times, pulled out the chair and seated himself at the desk. He couldn’t believe what a relief it was to get off his aching feet.

“Now explain this foul puzzle, and do it fast.”

Franklin ran a quill along the top row, attempting to spill blood to obscure the markings if possible. “The straight rows, if you take any eight vertical or horizontal, add up to 260, and half of any rows, to 130. The diagonals add up to 260 when read as chevrons. The four corners plus the four centers are 260. It’s quite simple. How could university instructors have missed these obvious properties?”

The marquis grabbed the paper, and his lips moved as he slowly added up the numbers, using his fingers at times, then he said, “Perhaps there is a reason to this puzzle. But how see you the answer so fast, as though you were the author of it?”

Franklin said, “If you would give me a piece of paper, I’ll make you one on the spot. I may have seen that one before, I do similar puzzles regularly for sport. That would have given me an edge on discovering the solution.”

The marquis handed Franklin a piece of parchment and a quill, from which Franklin promptly spilled some ink onto the original puzzle, obscuring a couple more squares. With the quill, he drew patient, straight lines and connected sixteen rows to sixteen columns, making 256 separate squares, and he commenced filling in the squares one at a time in rapid succession, occasionally spilling ink on the copy of the deadly box of numbers, while at the same time, wiping his cut fingers on the paper. By the time he had filled in all 256 squares of the new puzzle, each with a different number from 1 to 256, he had thoroughly obliterated many of the numbers in the ciphered message. Then he blotted the new page with the back of the ciphered message and handed the completed puzzle to the marquis.

“Do you mean to tell me that this box of numbers has properties similar to the smaller one? That seems unlikely since you just wrote down random numbers as fast as you could think of them.”

Franklin chuckled. “Random they are not. These rows add up to 2,056.”

The marquis added up a few rows, then muttered, “Amazing, truly amazing.”

That’s not all, said Franklin. If you would but give me a knife, I’ll cut the dear little fellow into something quite spectacular.

The marquis handed Franklin a knife, and the elderly man set about cutting a hole in the copy of the dangerous square, making a template to lay over the larger square. Franklin carefully pocketed the piece cut from the message to Adams, then declared, “Now, if you place this anywhere over the big square, you’ll expose a box of sixteen squares, the contents of which will add up to 2,056.”

The marquis played with the papers for a while, then shook his head. “You are a wonder Dr. Franklin. I had you pegged for a traitor, a man undercutting the heart of the kingdom. I thought I had some hard evidence against you. But it falls to

nothingness. I apologize deeply.” He extended his hand to shake Franklin’s, and each man curled up his index finger as they shook, sealing the matter with the secret handshake.

The marquis made a mental note that enticements should now be offered to John Adams to bring him fully onto the British team. Perhaps he should be offered an alluringly important position.

“May I be going then?” asked Franklin.

“You may.”

Franklin stood and was ready to run for the door, but held his composure, and sauntered, deliberately examining a bust of J. S. Bach on a table, and finally reached the door. As he grabbed the handle, the marquis boomed, “Franklin!”

Benjamin felt his heart stop as he swallowed, then heard it beat erratically, pounding at his vest. “Yes.”

“You’re tough, you’re smart, and I’m truly proud to have you on the team.”

“God save the King!” responded Franklin, then he left the interrogation room. As he walked down the corridor to the main hall, he felt his bowels giving way, which they did only two steps outside of the house. Franklin laughed in relief, knowing that pants could be changed.

CHAPTER 21

As John Hancock's ship *Victory* steered into the harbor, there was a commotion around town. For the past several months, seemingly random acts of violence were being carried out in the city of Boston. However, when one looked closely at the targets of the squabbles, there was a definite pattern, and British Parliament was beginning to understand just what the terrorist motives were.

Today, there had been a feigned ruckus on the street and three redcoats jumped in to stop the melee. However, a constable collared the three soldiers for public rioting. When they complained that there had been at least ten rowdies in the street who should have been arrested, the peace officer looked up the street and asked them where.

One of the soldiers raised his hand to strike at the policeman, but another stopped him. They had orders to attempt to follow the laws in Massachusetts, no matter how unfairly they might be applied. The British soldiers realized that they had been set up and reluctantly accepted the punishment. "What's the fine?"

"I beg your pardon," answered the constable.

"Ow much of a bribe are ye be needing to not put the nick on us?"

"A guinea would do nicely."

"That's robbery! You ought to be ashamed o' yerself." He reached into his pocket and removed a one pound note.

"In coin, if you don't mind."

"What? You don't trust the king's paper!"

"He don't trust mine, and I don't trust his."

The shortest soldier shouted, "Treason! Ye be spouting the words of a traitor."

The soldier who had offered the note retracted it, reached in his pocket and pulled out some silver coins. "I got sixteen shillings. Take it or not."

"Thank you," said the peace officer, extending his hand and waiting for the silver to drop into it.

"That's outright robbery. You a peace officer and all, you ought to be ashamed o' yerself."

The police officer smiled. "You don't think it's no robbery when my friend Hancock has to pay a pence a gallon bribes on the rum he imports."

One of the guards chuckled, "It's a devil of a time trying to make a living when we ain't paid enough to make it."

While this exchange was underway, the *Victory* docked, and one of the first things removed from it was a mail sack, which was taken directly to the post office. There, the wily clerk awaited its arrival and when the bag was dropped at his feet, he winked. "I guess I won't be takin lunch today, what?"

The delivery boy nodded and waited for a tip, which he did not receive.

While the postal worker was sorting the mail, John Adams' clerk entered the post office. "Morning to you. Got my boss some mail from the real world?"

The clerk shook his head and as the clerk was about to leave, announced, "One here from Dr. Benjamin Franklin. Imagine that, your boss is being entreated once again to some sage wisdom from Poor Richard. Come back in an hour, I'll be done with the bag."

The clerk extended his hand and felt the envelope plop into it. He turned and said as he left the office, "Thank you kindly."

The clerk continued sorting through the mail pouch, hoping to have it done before the rush arrived for the mail from the ship. He found another letter for John Adams, but when he looked up the clerk was long departed and far down the street.

John Adams' law clerk ran to his own house, carefully broke the seal of the envelope, then read the following:

Dear Mr. Adams:

I am hopeful that things will work out here and that we will ultimately get our voice in Parliament. I heard a rousing speech from Sir Edmund Burke and believe that the Americas have many such friends in the House of Commons. And the King has been most kind to me and concerned about the situation in Boston. Duties are falling by the wayside, and soon I would expect them to be a dusty remembrance of the past.

I think it would be wise if we could give our Mother Country an opportunity to show how she loves us, with a nice quiet. I believe that things are really looking up in the Commons, and with some luck, the Lords will follow. Peace sounds so nice to a man of my years, and I think that we're about to enjoy some.

By the way, I understand that we are having a near nuisance of a year with lobsters. Let me advise you that when these creatures are ever plentiful, they sometimes rush the beaches. I would take care not to boil them too often, for the more eaten from the beaches, the more their brethren seem to multiply and continue rushing. I think that left alone on land, the lobsters will eventually retreat to the confines of the sea, where they are far more comfortable, as are we.

Please keep in touch.

Ever the optimist,

B. Franklin

The clerk read the letter twice, scratched his head, then made a copy of it, which he placed into an envelope and would mail to London, unaware that Franklin's mail was read before it ever hit America and that his sleuthing was for naught. Then he heated a knife over a candle flame and held the hot blade on Franklin's letter and re-affixed the seal atop the blade, then pulled the knife out from under the wax. It looked fairly good for a twice broken wax seal.

The clerk pocketed the Franklin letter and bounded off for his office, walking with bouncing steps, happy that he had some news to report to London. The home office had been getting stingy with money, but now that a letter from Franklin had been intercepted, they would realize that his position with John Adams was worth the trouble.

The clerk walked in and shouted, "Good afternoon, sir. I have a letter from London for you."

"Bring it in then," said Adams, reading a legal brief and unconcerned about the comment.

"It's from Dr. Franklin."

Adams jumped from his chair and ran to the door. His great right toe stuck out from a sock that needed mending. "Why didn't you say so?" He held out his hand and was given the letter. Then he walked back to his desk.

"Aren't you going to open it?" asked the clerk, hoping that he would ruin the seal and destroy the evidence of tampering.

"As soon as I finish this brief. By the way, could you run to the cobbler and see if my boots are ready, I don't like stomping about in my stocking feet."

"Certainly," said the clerk, grabbing his hat and heading out the door.

When the clerk was gone, Adams inspected the damaged seal and knew that the letter had been read at least once previously. He opened the envelope and read the letter, and was quite concerned. As nearly as he could tell, Franklin wanted to cool the revolt for two years, then strike like fire in Boston, protesting any and all duties imposed by England. He also warned that the royal ships would be bringing a lot of soldiers to town and that they should be ignored until they returned to England out of boredom.

“Not a bad plan,” said Adams aloud to his mirror, “not at all bad.”

He reflected on the broken seal, and wondered if his clerk had been the censor. He decided to leave the letter open faced upon his desk to test the clerk. As nosey as the clerk was, he’d read the letter from Dr. Franklin over his boss’s shoulder, that is, unless he already knew what it contained.

Several minutes later, the clerk walked in sporting the boots, repaired and ready to wear. Adams walked over to a chair and struggled to pull them on while watching his desk, atop which was only a single paper that he was writing and Franklin’s letter right beside it. The clerk walked by, noticed the Franklin letter, and kept on going without even attempting to sneak a sentence of the letter. Adams had suspected him before, now he was fairly certain that he had a spy in his office.

CHAPTER 22

“How can we sit here while the world is caving in upon our fellow colonists? I think that we must take bold action.” Thomas Jefferson chewed on a strand of straw from Patrick Henry’s field, wiggling it back and forth as he spoke.

Henry sat quietly in a torn shirt and a pair of stained britches. His bare feet dangled from as he swung in a rocker. He took a deep breath. “Thomas, remember that Franklin asked us to keep it calm and wait for his next word.”

“But he’s under scrutiny in London. He won’t be able to get us word. We could lose every liberty we have left if we leave Parliament to its own devices. I say the fire is hot, let’s fuel it now!”

Henry sucked in air through his nose, held it in, then expelled it out his mouth with a loud whoosh. “Thomas, don’t you love your Martha?”

“Both of them, Patrick.” He had yet to learn just what he had married. “You know that I cherish my wife and young daughter.”

“Then enjoy them and their love. The time will come when you will yearn to have these years back, to have and hold your family. I intend to enjoy my Sarah and our children during this period of quiet, for I know that soon there will be such a thunder from New England that we’ll pray for quiet.”

“And that’s another thing,” said Thomas, his mind buzzing as he spoke. “Why can’t we start the rebellion here in Virginia?”

“Franklin says – ”

Thomas held up his hand. “Franklin says . . . Franklin says . . . Oh, Patrick . . . can’t you think for yourself? Who cares what Franklin says. He’s got his rear end in a pickle barrel in London. Who knows what side he’s on right now?”

Henry took a strand of straw and swished it through his mouth, chewing on the stem. “There’s hope for you yet.”

“What does that mean?”

“The pauses.”

“The what?”

“The pauses . . . you know . . . leaving gaps of air between your most . . . important . . . words. You’re learning . . . Someday, young Thomas . . . someday . . . you’ll master the art of public speaking. God help the world when that happens.”

“You’re the speaker, I’m the writer, or did you forget?”

“You could do both, and quite well I’m certain.”

“I don’t think I’ll ever be an accomplished speaker.”

“Why not?”

“Because . . . I have a fear of speaking in public . . . some people are afraid of the dark, others of heights, with me, it’s large crowds.”

“And releasing your feeling, you’re so guarded that I sometimes wonder if I know you at all after all these years.”

“Stop distracting me from my goal. Tell me why we should follow Franklin’s advice when he is practically imprisoned in London and under the strictest censorship.”

“Where would we be without him?”

“I don’t know.”

“I do,” boomed Henry, “you’d be minding your plantation, manufacturing nails, designing buildings, reading David Hume, who in my opinion is a god-awful Tory, and slowly losing your freedoms without even knowing it. I’d still be struggling at the store or the farm, bankrupt and worrying more about how to feed my children than watching the tyrants in London and calling them at their game. Nobody would care and we’d be destined to permanent servitude care of the despots in Great Britain.”

Thomas stood and stretched his elongated frame, then yawned. “You’re putting me to sleep, Patrick. Can’t you be more animated when you talk?”

Henry jumped to his feet and slammed a palm into Thomas’s right shoulder, knocking down the unsuspecting man. Thomas rolled into a stack of freshly cut hay and emerged with stalks sticking out of either ear. “That’s better, Patrick. That time I understood your message.”

Henry dived into Thomas’s midsection, knocking him into the haystack, and they rolled around in it like puppies tearing at one another’s ears. Both tried to outdo the other, while not doing any damage to the opponent.

From under the stack, Thomas shouted, “Adams! He’d knock those lobsterbacks on their rears without us, without Virginia, without Franklin.”

“Sam or John?”

“Either would do nicely, but I was thinking of Sam since I know that Franklin recruited John.”

Henry rubbed Thomas’s hair. “Not Sam Adams, not George Washington, John Hancock, Benjamin Rush or Roger Sherman. Not George Wythe nor Philip Livingston . . . I’ve said too much.”

“They’re all under his wing and tutelage?”

“I said too much.”

“Too much, you’ve said too little for years. Patrick, if you don’t trust me by now, you never will. Now let me have it straight. Has Franklin signed on all these men?”

“Among others.”

“Who?”

“I don’t know, in fact, I’m not positive of all that I named, but of most of them I am certain.”

“Franklin tell you?”

“No.”

“Then how do you know who is on our side?”

“Intuition.”

“You better do a little more than that Patrick.”

“Sarah’s intuition.”

Thomas stared at his friend. “Have you told Sarah about them?”

“No, Thomas, she tells me. She’s got a sixth or a seventh sense, or some such thing. If I’m thinking about something, she butts right into my head and thinks with me. I don’t know how or why, but that woman seems to know everything. Worse yet, I think she’s going crazy from hearing all the voices.”

“Meaning what?”

“She hears John Adams screaming, and I might add that she is a bit suspicious of Adams. Then Franklin laughing, then you stammering, and it’s driving her mad.”

“Is she ever accurate?”

“She told me you were coming here the last two times and in you popped. She claims she can feel your horse’s vibration on the road. When I checked the road it was empty, but thirty minutes later, you came riding in.”

“She gets a thirty minute warning of my arrival?”

“I know it sounds crazy, and, believe me, it troubles her, scares her.”

Thomas stroked his chin and wondered whether he should discuss his Martha’s intuition. He thought for a while and was about to speak when he felt better of it.

Patrick looked at him sadly. “I can see that it troubles you too. I’m afraid I might have to put her in straight coats if this keeps up. But, be a friend and keep it to yourself for now, would you?”

Thomas nodded and scratched his head, as he did so, some dried grass wafted to the ground, evidence of the earlier horseplay. He tried to catch one, but the movement of his hand kept blowing the airborne plant from his grasp. “That’s our freedom,” he said, pointing to the stalk and seemingly giving Patrick a promise that nothing about Sarah would leave his lips. “It’ll last only as long as it is as free as that is in the air, but the British would crush the plants into a pile of rubble, then wet them down with sludge, never to breathe again. I’ll fight today, tomorrow, whenever Franklin directs to bring liberty to this land . . . and even from the grave shall I vigilantly guard it for my grandchildren and theirs.”

“That you will, with that all-powered pen of yours, I’m certain you will. I’ll drive people to a frenzy today with my impassioned speeches. I’ll incite them to rebellion and drive them to victory with my throat. But Thomas, your words will preserve what mine only begin. Your prose will be the sword of freedom for centuries to come.”

“You flatter me, Patrick, please stop swelling my head so.”

“It’s not flattery, but the truth. Now go home and write some powerful essays for the newspapers to print.”

“Never.”

“Never what?”

“I won’t write for the press, they slant things so that I trust them not to print the truth.”

“Well, then, go write to James Madison or somebody. But don’t start a war.”

Thomas smiled broadly. “I’ll wait for word from the sage.”

CHAPTER 23

MASSACHUSETTS, 1773

John Adams sat in his office with his cousin Sam discussing their next move in as quiet of tones as the boisterous pair could employ. While John's eyes widened, Sam grabbed a letter opener from the desk and toyed with the point. "Are you certain that your clerk's working for the British?"

"Absolutely, I caught doing strange things a few months ago, so I watched him closely, which confirmed it."

"Then why is he still –"

"Working for me?" asked John, a sly smile turning upward.

"No!" shouted Sam as he stabbed the knifelike tool into John's desk top. "Alive? Why is the Tory-rat-scum alive?"

John watched the handle quiver and heard it buzz as it oscillated from its new perch. As well as he knew Sam, and as well as he knew his temperament, some of his cousin's actions still shocked him. This went beyond a shocking episode, it frightened him. Sam looked as if he would unleash the fury of hell upon the clerk at this instant.

"Because, a known spy can be quite useful."

"For instance."

"Through judicious use of this 'Tory-rat-scum' I sent word to Lord North that you and I were leaning more toward the British and less toward the 'anarchists.'"

"And did anyone buy it?"

"We're still alive, are we not?"

“You have a point sharper than that stupid letter opener.”

As they spoke, the door opened and the clerk entered carrying a box that he set upon the desk. He appeared astonished by the letter opener that still vibrated in the center of the desk, but not half as much as he would have had he known why Sam stabbed it into the top. “Strange place to keep your knives.”

“We’re playing mumblie peg,” shouted Sam.

“Oh, I should have known that. Got a parcel from London for you,” he said while looking at John and setting the box on the desk. “It’s from Lord North. Please do open it, I’m dying to see what the man has presented you with since you’ve come to your senses.”

John looked sternly at the clerk. “But I haven’t told Lord North anything.”

The clerk beamed, “Begging your pardon, but I did.”

“You did what?” asked John.

“I sent him a dispatch that you and cousin Sam were true Tories and friends of the Crown, and that you’d be available for any service Britain might need you for to quell any insurrection in Boston.”

Sam Adams put both his hands under the table and squeezed them together into fists of fury. He crushed them so tightly that bones popped as two knuckles were dislocated by the vise-grip.

John saw what was going on, and didn’t want blood spilled in his office. He looked at the clerk and said, “Could you ride to the Spencer’s place and pick up the will that her father left so I can begin processing the estate tomorrow?”

The clerk looked hurt; his eyes dropped. “Could you open the package first?”

“You’ll see my present soon enough. Now be off to Spencer’s.”

The clerk walked out the door, dejected for not being allowed to see the packet's contents. He would have screened it first, but he figured that anything from Lord North had to be respected and left in tact. He dragged himself to the livery stable, mounted a mare, and rode slowly out to the farmhouse.

When the clerk was safely out of range, Sam slammed his fist onto the desk. "I'll kill that jerk tonight. Anybody who tells Lord North that I've turned Tory deserves a slow, agonizing death. I think I'll bleed him a drop at a time. I've got a reputation to uphold."

"Don't do it Sam. As repulsive as it is to deal with him, he is an asset, and we must keep our cool until Franklin sends word to move."

"To worry about Franklin now! I'm not waiting any longer for that man. I can taste revolt, can smell blood, I can feel success. If we strike now, we will win!"

John rose and paced the room, stared at a painting on the wall, picked an apple from a bowl and crunched into it, then said, "Do you think that I like being called a Tory any more than you do?"

"Aren't you one?"

John jumped over the desk and shouted in his larger cousin's face, "That isn't funny. If you weren't my blood and twice as tough as me, I'd teach you a lesson."

Sam was now laughing. "You'd end up short a few teeth, you would."

"Well, I'd try to teach you something anyway."

Sam glared at the box. "Are you going to open the package from Lord North while I'm here, or are you afraid there's something inside the box that will prove you a Tory."

John took a wild swing at Sam, who caught his cousin's fist in one hand and squeezed until John screamed. Sam laughed. "When the fighting starts, you better let me throw most of the blows. I don't think you would land too many."

John jerked the letter opener from the desk and began working the blade on the box until it broke open. Inside, he found another box, wrapped and sealed with wax. He checked the seal, and it appeared to be in perfect condition. With the blade, he popped the seal and unwrapped the inner box, only to find another. This one was also sealed, but with Franklin's own mark on it.

John's heart raced and he wanted to rip the box apart to discover its contents, but he needed to inspect the seal. When he was satisfied that it had not been violated, he handed the box to Sam. "Check this seal for signs of tampering."

Sam eyed the edges, then held the box into the light at several different angles. Finally, he picked at the edges of the seal with his fingernails, then set the box upon the desk and pronounced, "It's clean as virgin ivory."

"I'll disregard the absurdity of the comment and assume that you mean it's not been tampered with."

Sam nodded.

John ripped open the parcel and out fell several letters, one being from Benjamin stating that he apologized for masquerading as Lord North, but the censors were into everything that he sent and he had to get by them with these. Then he added that John would know what would be best done with the letters inside and to begin steaming the pot. The doctor said that revolt was inevitable, that the British had hardened in their desire to turn the colonies into serfdoms, and that either independence was on the horizon, or slavery was assured. He added that patience

should be exercised, but that soon there would be a Tea Act from Parliament that would cause an uproar, and hopefully, it would cause open resistance in Boston.

Sam read the letter over John's shoulder, and finished just before his cousin. When he read the line about open resistance, he shouted, "Hallelujah! Lord have mercy! We got the go ahead from the man. Let's get organized right now Johnny!"

John held in his excitement and said dryly, "Don't you want to know what the other letters are about after all this?"

Sam opened one and read. After a couple of minutes he crumpled it in a ball and tossed it on the floor. "That jerk Hutchinson is dead! Dead I tell you!"

John reached down and picked up the crumpled letter and unfolded it. As he read, his eyes widened, then he stomped on the floor. "Damn that man! Damn him!"

The letter was written two years earlier by the Massachusetts Governor, Thomas Hutchinson. For years the people of Massachusetts had passed resolutions and appeals to the Crown asking them to lighten up on the duties, tariffs, and restrictions of freedoms. The people of the colony had dutifully petitioned to the King, hoping for correction of the grievances, yet the Parliament and the Crown had totally ignored their protests. This letter told them why.

Governor Hutchinson had intercepted the petitions, and censored or destroyed them. Any that he did not get to first that chanced to make it to Britain, he informed the Crown and Parliament to disregard because they were the products of a few hot-headed people and that the petitions spoke for the smallest of minorities of views.

"So things are as rotten in Boston as they were in Denmark," said Sam.

John began laughing.

"What's so blasted funny? We got a governor who's withheld our petitions."

“I rather liked the quote from Hutchinson about the ‘hot-heads like Sam Adams, who speaks only for himself, if he is even capable of that’.”

Sam sneered. “Funny man, Johnny, real funny.”

John paced the room, read some more letters, got thoroughly disgusted, then snapped his fingers. “Copies!”

“What?”

“Let’s make copies of these right this instant. Each of these letters must be sent to every newspaper.”

“You mean in Boston?”

“I mean Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Williamsburg, Providence, the works. We’ll tell all the people the plight we’ve had here in Massachusetts. We’ll make these letters the glue to stick the colonies together as a unified band against the despots in London.”

Sam banged his fist on the desk. “Yes, by God! It will.” He headed for the door.

“Where are you going?”

“To get you a present from Lord North for your snoopy clerk to see and to organize a Tea Party! Revolt is on the horizon, Johnny. We’re about to break the tyrant’s bonds and free this whole continent.”

“What about the copies?”

“Your writing is fine. Make a couple of sets and take them to Tucker’s print shop. Nobody would stop him from distributing these little fireballs. That man would stare down a hangman for sport.”

“Okay, you can go, but I need one promise.”

“What’s that John?”

“That you won’t kill my clerk.”

“But I should.”

“Promise me.”

“You’re no fun, John. How are we going to have a revolution if we don’t start killing people?”

“But not yet.”

“All right, he lives – for now.”

CHAPTER 24

LONDON, 1774

Franklin was harried and tired. He'd weathered many storms of recent, not the least of which being accused of having stolen the Hutchinson letters that were deposited into John and Sam Adams' hands. Benjamin had ignored Solicitor General Alexander Wedderburn's accusations before the Privy Council, though it hurt him to have his reputation so sullied. He really didn't know how he could have responded without causing great harm to others and himself, so he chose silence.

And, then there was a severe grilling he took after news of the Boston Tea Party had arrived in London. As close as he was to the hangman's noose over the "puzzle" he sent to John Adams, it was nothing compared to what he endured after the Tea Party. He figured his days were numbered in England, or else the days of his life were quite shortly to end. He'd already had more close calls than Sir Northborough's cat, and, it is said that cats have nine lives. While Franklin was in a small minority of Western people who believed in re-incarnation, he really didn't want to test his beliefs just yet.

Realizing that there was no alternative to revolution, Franklin ploughed ahead. He heard a knock at the door. "Yes," said Benjamin, wondering if it was the man he hoped to meet with this morning.

"It is I, Thomas Paine, kind sir."

"Just a minute," called Franklin as he scurried across the carpet and opened the door for his guest. "Please, come in, please, do come in!"

Paine walked in and bowed, to which Franklin waved his hand to stop him.

Benjamin cleared his throat. "I've been reading some of your works, and I wish to tell you something."

Paine hesitated, then said, "I know you like to write light prose, verse and such, but, I think you can understand from whence I come."

Franklin laughed, "Understand! Understand! Yes, yes, I understand. You're a bit of a rebel, maybe a big chunk of one."

Paine blushed. "I write from my heart. I don't know how to tell you this, or why I should, but, I almost feel as though I write for God. That's how strongly I feel about the things that I write."

"I think that's so. I can feel it in your pen. That's why I've called you here."

"You want me to write something?"

Franklin rose and slapped Paine on the shoulder. "Oh, do I ever want you to write something. But, not here."

Paine looked puzzled. "Not in London?"

"Lord no, not in London."

"But where then?"

"How do you feel about travel to America?"

Paine scratched the back of his hand nervously. *How do I feel about America? How else could I feel but vibrant about it? The colonists are rising against the British King! They are making sounds for independence. There is a movement going on there that I would like very much to be a part of, but, I have no funds or prospects of going to America.* "I don't know what to say."

"Are you concerned that what you tell me might make it back to George III?"

Paine shuffled on his feet. "There are those who say you are employed by the Crown, yes."

Franklin had studied this man's writing enough to believe he was safe to go forward. "Mr. Paine, I love your prose. I find it revolutionary, as a matter of fact." He paused for what seemed a full minute. "But . . . this . . . England . . . is not a country that will well receive such writings."

"Are you telling me to stop writing what I write?"

"No, not at all, just that you should write to a more receptive audience."

Paine's eyes opened wide. "Are you asking me to relocate to America?"

Franklin cleared his throat. "If you think that you could write with such fervor there about the causes of the colonists, yes, that is what I am asking."

"I just can't do that." Paine felt saddened that he was unable to afford such an adventure.

"I'd like to help you get over there, give you some references, and get you started."

"YOU WOULD!!"

"I take that to be a yes."

"YES!! YES!! And another YES!!" he shouted.

"I'll have the documents drawn up for your passage."

"What's the catch?" asked Paine.

"No catch at all. However . . ."

Paine looked askance at the doctor, wondering what was coming next.

Franklin smiled. "If you could continue to write in opposition to slavery, that would please me greatly."

Paine grabbed Franklin's hand and shook it violently. "Oh, will I ever write against slavery. Not as a favor to you, but as a favor to my own heart and as something that I think will please God ever so much."

“If you could stop by tomorrow, I’ll get things prepared for you to take to Philadelphia.”

“What a pleasure meeting you, Dr. Franklin.”

As Thomas Paine departed, Franklin sighed. He believed that in Mr. Paine, he had found the fire to start the revolution. Franklin penned a reference to prospective employer for Paine, and then a quick note to Thomas Jefferson stating that if ever Mr. Paine should be in need anything, to please assist him.

Paine arrived in Philadelphia in late November of 1774, where, true to his word, he wrote *African Slavery in America*, a scathing piece about inhumane treatment of Negroes.

In early 1775, Franklin left England, and not a day too early. When he landed in America he was entreated to a fresh copy of Paine’s piece on slavery. Its first line opened:

That some desperate wretches should be willing to steal and enslave men by violence and murder for gain, is rather lamentable than strange.

Franklin chuckled, believing that he had supported a right proper fuse to ignite the revolution. He would wait less than a year for that explosion; that is when *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine incited the colonists to rebel; the piece walloped the British.

CHAPTER 25

VIRGINIA, APRIL, 1775

Patrick Henry banged on the door at Monticello, and waiting but a second for a reply, he pounded again. After a few moments the massive Rubin opened the door for the flush-faced, dusty and ragged looking man. Henry screamed, “Get your master, now!”

“It might be a – ”

“Don’t waste time, it’s urgent, get him!”

“Yessuh, that I be doin right now.” Rubin gestured for Henry to enter the house before running to the stable just in time to see his master loping down the path on Eagle. He called out, but Jefferson was far beyond earshot. The huge slave reflected momentarily about the visitor’s spent condition and immediately realized that there was no way that Henry could remount and catch such an able horseman as his master. Rubin flipped open a Dolly’s stall and jumped on her without wasting time to bridle her.

The mare was the only horse fast enough to catch Eagle, and she was always fought taking a bit. He couldn’t waste time coaxing her into taking the bit. She danced about, unaccustomed to being mounted in the stall. Rubin grabbed onto her mane and kicked Dolly who stopped dancing and reared, raising her rider and knocking his head into a timber. Despite being conked, Rubin remained on the mare, and he kicked her sides again.

Confused, the mare darted from her stall toward the open barn door. Still inside the stable, Rubin kicked again, and she began to lope, bursting over the barn's threshold. "Ya gotta give me more than that my dear girl. I know you'd like a warmin but we ain't got no time." His voice was mellow and metered. Apologetically, he kicked her sides again and she broke into a full run. The mare's thick hindquarters' pulsed as she drove hard for her rider.

"That's my girl," said Rubin. "We must be catchin masser quickly cuz Eagle can out distance you even when he's covered with blinders. Let's go," he purred with his head down on her neck and his hands holding onto her mane in a vise.

She ran full tilt as her hooves beat the ground and her rider bounced atop her. As they crested a hill, Rubin saw Thomas on Eagle, loping down a trail. He watched as his master was about to kick Eagle into a run and knew all would be lost because the mare could never keep up when that beautiful mount began running.

He dug his legs into Dolly's chest and released his lock on her mane. He cupped his hands to his mouth and shouted, "Masser! Ma . . ." As he attempted the second call, the mare's right front hoof hit a hole and she stumbled forward, breaking her stride, and Rubin was pitched forward into the running horse's path. The mare felt him leave her and instinctively cut to the right and caught her hoof in another hole that put such a strain on her leg that she ripped a tendon on her left side. In pain, she toppled on her side, then struggled to her feet, standing only on three legs.

Down the path, Thomas thought he heard a shout. He pulled Eagle to a halt, and listened carefully, but heard nothing more. As was about to continue on his ride, he heard the mare screaming in pain. Upon hearing the noise, Thomas kicked Eagle and jogged him up the path where he found Rubin lying motionless on the side of the road.

Thomas jumped from Eagle and grasped Rubin's wrist; the pulse was weak. When he placed his left ear to Rubin's chest, the slave's heart thumped irregularly. He took a canteen from his saddle and doused his slave's brow. "Open your eyes, boy, please open those eyes."

As he spoke, he looked up and saw the sweat-covered mare standing on three wobbly legs and went over to her and patted her side. "What's the matter girl? Why are you favoring your leg?" He walked around her and saw the foot swollen so far that it seemed about to burst through the hide. When he touched the foot, she reared, landed on both front feet and crumpled to the ground. Thomas checked the injured foot again as felt the severed tendon. "NO!" he shouted.

Dolly coughed and whined, she tried to rise but couldn't. Her face was torn with pain. Thomas couldn't bare to see her suffering. He knew what must be done.

He ran to Eagle, removed his pistol from the saddle and carried it to the fallen mare. Tears flowed down either cheek and the gun shook violently as he aimed at the mare's forehead. "G-good-bye, Dolly . . ." He stroked her to comfort his precious mare. Then, he pulled the trigger, the flintlock released its spark, ignited the black powder, and shot a ball through his horse's brain. She died quickly and quietly.

Thomas sat atop her bawling when he felt a thick hand on his back. "I knows it be tough, masser. I done had to take old Spirit down last year."

Thomas looked through eyes blurred by rivers, saw Rubin standing on shaky legs, and jumped to his feet, grabbing his slave by the neck. "You killed her! You dumb jackass! You killed Dolly!"

The slave lowered his head. "Sorry, masser."

Adrenaline rushed through his veins as Thomas shook in rage. He released the man's neck and grasped his wrists, squeezing until Rubin's hands turned grey-white.

"Blast you! Blast you!"

"Sorry, masser."

"Don't give me any of your 'sorry masser' garbage. What were you doing riding her so hard without a saddle or a bridle . . ."

"Sorry, masser."

Thomas stared at the horse, then at his slave, then back at the horse. "Rubin, riding Dolly without any reins is the next thing to suicide."

The slave nodded, "I knows it."

Thomas wiped spittle from the corner of his slave's mouth. When he glanced at his hand, he noticed the saliva was mostly blood. "You could have been killed in the fall. Are you okay?"

"This black boy be too tough to die from a little horse fall."

Thomas began to think more clearly. *Why am I screaming at this loyal servant? I'm beginning to sound like my mother, or forbid the thought, like my wife. I am not bigoted like them. I don't scream like they do. I can reason. In fact, I can love, though it is obvious that neither of them can.*

Thomas grabbed his slave in his arms and hugged him tight to his chest. Rubin's spine was stiff, and his arms remained rigid at his side. "What am I doing?" asked Thomas, as he ashamedly broke the embrace.

"Don't be a worrying cuz there ain't nobody never gonna know what you just did."

"Even with no education, you understand people better than most philosophers."

Rubin's mouth erupted in a heartfelt grin. "Like I be saying. I done put Spirit down afore, I knows how it tears at the heart to do it. I ain't never be a holdin it again you to feel for a animal. In fact, I be powerful worried about somebody that don't have no love for a horse."

Thomas fell to his knees and wept. The slave stood over him for several minutes, then laid his thick left hand on his master's back. "Don't be a worrying about Dolly. I be a takin care of her. But you best be getting back home. I rode here banshee-like cuz it were a emergency."

"What is it?" asked Thomas as he rose from the ground.

"It be that Patrick Henry. He rode up on a all-spent horse, dusty and ragged and say he be needing you. You be ridin away on our fastest steed. I knowed Mr. Henry were too spent to catch you on Eagle, and I figured that I didn't have no time to put a bridle in or nothing. You knows Dolly is a tough bit taker. I knowed I had to be a getting or you'd be long gone."

Thomas sniffled back a tear as his entire body oscillated with tingly awareness. "Rubin, thank you."

"For what?"

"For showing me that common sense is more important than William & Mary parchments. For being loyal. For being my friend."

Rubin broke away from Thomas. "You be a good man, and ah loves ya." Tears welled up in the slave's eyes, being held back from streaming only by his massive will.

Thomas wiped his own eyes dry, but soon they were wet again. "Are you certain that you're all right?"

"Like I be saying afore, I be one tough fella."

Thomas nodded, mounted Eagle, and rode back toward Monticello. When he looked over his shoulder, he saw Rubin waving and grinning.

CHAPTER 26

“What do you mean by hugging a darkie? Did you tell anyone else?”

Thomas glared at Patrick. “You.”

“But, anyone with a big mouth? My Lord, Thomas, this will ruin your career.”

“Farming could hardly be destroyed by me recognizing a slave is also a person.”

“Bet me. The people will talk, the people will holler, the people will protest, the people will hate you, the people will strip you of your dignity and your prestige.”

“What people?”

“People from Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, that’s who.”

“But we need to get rid of this insidious business of slavery anyway. I don’t care what it costs me in reputation, I’m an abolitionist.”

Henry scratched his jaw and stretched his elongated frame. His eyes went cold. “Not now.”

“And why not?”

“The war’s started, and if the south and north don’t stick together, the Lobsterbacks will eat us alive.”

Thomas’ eyes widened. “What do you mean – started?”

Henry paced and stared at the ceiling and glumly responded. “In Lexington, and in Concord, British troops fired on our militia, killed some, we fired back, sent them running. It’s time to bring this entire country together, not to break it apart with a slavery discussion. We must support our friends in Boston. They’ve been paying

heavily for a long time, but since the Tea Party they threw, it's been hell up north. Virginia must jump into the fray, and she must jump in immediately."

"What's the worst thing that's happened before Concord and Lexington?"

"I'd say the loss of the jury trial. The people in Boston who get charged with a crime end up in a wartime admiralty court. They have no rights, and nobody from the community to speak as a conscience, the judges do whatever they like."

"Or whatever they're told to do by the Crown," added Thomas. He looked at his friend who was seven years his senior, whose eyes betrayed desperation and depression, then Thomas looked down, buried his head in hands and went into a quaking trance. After several minutes, he looked up and declared, "Washington – we must send them our best commander, but God help Virginia when we disburse our militia to the north. We have borders that are almost impossible to protect, we have little in the means of arms or men to fight, but fight we must, fight we will. I'll send a dispatch to John Adams immediately notifying him that Massachusetts can count on us. And I have a few extra horses that I'll donate to the cause. They will assist mounted troops."

Henry tilted his head to the side. "It's the end, Thomas, don't you see that?"

"Cheer up, Mr. Henry. We were thrown into this mess because of that rotten Stamp Act. The British Parliament has been conspiring to steal our freedom and liberty and now they've been called on their insidious activities."

"It's the end, don't you see?"

Thomas slapped Henry on the back. "End, no Patrick, it's the start of something great, and don't drop into depression, we need your fiery speeches more than ever, so break out of this funk. Let's ride together to George Washington's place

and draft him into service for the pride of Virginia and beat those foul British from Williamsburg to New York.”

“How can you face this with such alacrity? We’re doomed. The British are the most powerful nation on earth. Their navy controls the oceans and they have fortifications north and south of us. Talking of freedom was easy, but now that we must face the words and what they’ve done – I don’t know.”

Thomas grinned broadly. “Sure you do, you gloomy old goat, sure you do. We’re going to beat the British on the backside, on the front side, on the left side, and on the right side. We’re about to claim our natural, God-given rights.”

“An optimist! We’re about to be annihilated and I’m talking to an optimist who can’t see the gloominess of the tunnel.”

“Franklin will get a French support, and when they assist us in a just cause, the roar of the British lion will squeak to silence, its claws will be blunted, and our liberty we’ll secure.”

“Do you really think the French will assist us in this battle?”

“They hate the British.”

“And no wonder, who doesn’t? And what nation on earth is more deserving of hatred? But even with France’s help, I think us doomed.”

Thomas grabbed his friend by the shoulders and shook him violently. “Just last month I listened to you thundering one of the most powerful speeches in history. You better suck in your gut and test your steel like you showed when you declared, ‘I know not what course the others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death.’ Live that speech whenever you’re down, it should power you through any dark moments.”

Henry gave the trace of a smile. “Aren’t you afraid?”

“Scared to death, which is why I know that we’ll win. Fear is a wonderful motivator.”

Henry broke into a broad smile and reached into a pocket with his left hand. “Was that speech really all that good?”

“Patrick, were I to ever to speak before such a group, acting as though my hands were shackled, then gloriously break the imagined bonds, and say ‘give me liberty,’ followed by a long pause, then stab myself with an imaginary dagger while saying, ‘or give me death,’ the people would wonder how much grog I’d quaffed. But when you thunder out such words, you literally own the audience. I could die tomorrow and know that you had made an indelible mark on tyranny’s hold upon men. That speech will drive us to liberty.”

“I have a feeling that my speech will be lost when you write a proclamation of war against the Tory creeps.”

“I’m not going to Congress, to Philadelphia, to anywhere, to write anything.”

“So you’re going to pretend to have a bout of dysentery again so you don’t have to speak to the leaders, the rebels, the brains and drivers of the colonies?”

Thomas’ freckled face went hot and revealed bright blotches of red as he bit his lower lip to contain himself, but unable to hold back, he blurted out, “Why didn’t you read my *Summary View of Rights of British America* at the first Continental Congress like you promised.” He had dysentery that stopped him from attending. The source of the malady was an herbal lacing of his food by his wife Martha, who didn’t want her estate put at risk, so she used the poison to thwart her husband from being too revolutionary. Thomas only realized this after the fact, and he had only hinted to her that he knew of her malicious act.

“It was too long,” said Henry.

“What? I had to set up the wrongs before I could make the proposals, otherwise they would have appeared to be based on the air, but they are well founded.”

Henry looked toward the ground, then fidgeted about, shuffling his feet and kicking the carpet to remove a lump in it. He continued this behavior for several seconds before he said, “I . . . must . . . I think they were too radical for the time.”

Thomas put his hand over his eyes and pressed as he felt another of his headaches coming on and hoped to halt the onslaught. The last time one of these hit him, it lasted two weeks. “You haven’t ever read my paper, have you?”

Henry pulled at his collar and gulped, “No.”

“You went all the way to Philadelphia and didn’t even have the decency to read what I wanted to present there? You are the laziest man in reading that I know.”

“I know what it said.”

“How?”

“Because I know that you stand for liberty and equality and detest all shackles of servitude. I know that you suspect a conspiracy in the British Parliament to purloin our property, then our freedom.”

Thomas slammed a fist into an open palm. “You do! But what of the others? What know they about the color and temperature of the blood flowing through me? I depended on you to let them know.”

“Thomas, I had to be there to speak, because little that I write would inspire anyone. Your pen has carried your name to New York, to Boston, believe me, they know quite a bit about feisty young Jefferson.”

“Was my paper read on the floor, then?”

“No, but a few important people saw it.”

“Like who?”

“Sam Adams for one.”

Thomas closed his eyes and paced, then walked to his desk and removed a letter from Sam’s cousin, John Adams, and skimmed it. “Is Sam really like they say?”

“The man is a dynamo, so full of energy that he glows with an aura of power. He slept little, ate little, drank little, but worked ever so much. And the man is fearless – he’d cut the King’s throat in an instant if given the chance.”

Thomas wrinkled the letter he held in his hand then handed it to Patrick to review. “Is he like John writes here?”

Henry held the eight-page letter in his hands and leafed through them, spending no more than a second or two on each page. “What is it you’re asking?”

“You really don’t like to read, do you Patrick?”

“Sometimes the letters jump around when I try to read them, like they’re bouncing. I know you wouldn’t understand, but I’m afraid that . . . my wife . . .”

“Your Sarah isn’t doing any better, is she?”

“No, and when the letters start jumping, I sometimes think that I’ll catch her malady, so I turn my head from the words. She now claims that the British are sending messages through the air after me, that she is intercepting them, and it’s driving her more insane.”

“Intercepting messages?”

“Yes, she claims that there are evil men attempting to control my mind, but that she blocks the attacks, at the cost of her sanity.”

Thomas gasped. His Martha claimed the same thing, that she was protecting him from a constant bombardment of mental assaults. He didn’t believe her, but, now he understood the source of her invention. Martha had stolen the concept from Sarah Henry. But, unlike Mrs. Henry, Mrs. Jefferson used the information to try to frighten

her husband, claiming a group of people were saying black masses against Thomas. And she pretended to be blocking the energy from getting to Thomas! At last, it was making sense. “Why don’t you put her in the new asylum they built in Williamsburg?”

Henry folded into a chair, and his voice quaked as he let out his whimpered answer. “Have you, have you been there?”

“No.”

“It’s a hellhole of horror, filled with screeching banshees. I’ll not put her there, I’ll not.”

Thomas grinned for a moment, then removed his smile before Henry noticed it. The thought of putting Martha in with screeching banshees seemed proper. They could all screech and howl to their hearts content. “But is she safe to have at home with your children?”

“We’ve strapped her in straight-skirts, and we confine her to the lower level. It’s so horrid, I don’t know what to do about it, and when these letters start jumping about on the page, I think that I might be next.”

It was Thomas’ turn to have a quake in his voice. “I don’t think that you can learn madness from another. Worry not my friend, you’re as sane as all reason. I know not what the bouncing letters mean, but they sound rather harmless, trifling, and actually, if you played it right, they could be downright entertaining.”

Henry sniffed. “Sam Adams is – ”

“Don’t worry about that, forget the matter entirely. You’ve got enough to worry about at home.”

“Home! What home will I have when the Lobsterbacks pound on the door and seize my guns and then me? I can’t worry about Sarah and hide from the revolution, or there will be no home to worry about.”

“Then tell me about Sam. Is he really broke, desperate, and improvident?”

“The man came to Philadelphia in a moth-eaten wig, a tattered cape, and with his toes bulging out of either shoe. He despises money and cares little what anyone thinks about him. He has a driving goal, and that is to rid this continent of the British. He’s a powerhouse, in whose presence you cannot be for long without feeling invigorated yourself.”

“Then Franklin should recruit him, don’t you think Patrick?”

Henry rose from his chair and clapped his hands together while emitting a roar of laughter. “I think the old fellow might just have done that, quite a few years ago would be my guess.”

Thomas walked out of the room, downstairs to the cellar, and removed a bottle of Burgundy, which he carried back upstairs and to the room. There he greeted Patrick with the dusty bottle and opened it. “Let’s toast to our revolution. May this fine French wine bring us many fine French troops to demolish the Lobsterbacks.”

“We’ll do it with our minutemen, I’m going to lead them, I’ve been training them for almost a month, they’ll be tough, you’ll see,” said Henry as he accepted the glass of aged wine.

Thomas stared, his eyes wide open, his mouth hanging down. “Do you mean as a military leader?”

“Why not, I’m a crack shot, know the outdoors, and am a leader.”

“Because you don’t have any military training!”

Henry scratched his chin and let out a chortle. “I don’t have any training in the law, but I do fine at it. I’ll learn as I go and I’ll be great.”

“But you’ll kill a lot of men who follow you as you’re learning. Don’t do it Patrick, leave it to men like Washington who know what they’re doing. Stick with the legislature and lead us in running the government, not the army.”

“Obviously, we disagree,” Henry said, raising his glass, “but we’re on the same side, so let’s find a way to beat the British back to Wales.”

Thomas figured the best he could do is try arguing his case with Henry another day and abandoned it in favor of celebrating the young revolution, born of stamps and tea and tyranny. “We Americans have spunk, courage, and a love for freedom that will keep us going, but we need the French to overthrow the rotters in red. Yet, I have no fear but that Dr. Franklin will land just the treaty necessary to bring us soldiers from Europe who will crush the British.”

The men toasted and readied themselves for the upcoming battles that would be tearing at their homes, their families, their neighbors, and the entire continent full of rebellious colonies. Times would grow bad, then worse, and the horrors of war were about to bathe the country in blood, but the two men who had helped bring the matter to a head we granted this one release before the storm.

CHAPTER 27

Thomas sat at the kitchen table, speaking softly with Martha. “Sarah’s mental problems started when she felt the British saying masses against Patrick. It’s not unlike what you have described to me.”

Martha began to shake nervously, her lower lip quivered. She was pretty certain that Thomas had figured out her scheme of copying the ideas from Sarah Henry. She tried to divert the attention. “Thomas, those British rulers are evil, absolutely evil. I know this, but, all the world is evil. Do you really think you should go along with Patrick Henry? After all, we could lose our farm, our slaves, everything we own.”

“We’ve got to fight them, Martha.”

“I know, I’ve heard it from you a dozen times. Since 1066 all Europe has paid dearly for that group of islands.”

“Whatever it is there must be something to these masses you perceive that are being said against me. It seems to me you’re copying Sarah Henry.”

Martha gulped hard. “So it might seem, Thomas.”

“I don’t believe you, Martha!”

She placed her head in her hands and forced a tear out. “When you are here, they can’t get through. Apparently, the two of us are too much power, as long as I concentrate on protecting you.”

Thomas scratched his leg. “Still acting?”

“I’m not acting. Each time, you complain of ringing in your ears, stuffed up ears, followed by a week or two of headaches, I cry for you. These are real, Mr. Jefferson, and I will protect you from them as long as I am able.”

“Spare me. All you want to do is hold onto this estate. You don’t care if I live in comfort or sanity, as long as you have slaves to scream at and pride to polish and people to show off to.”

“No, Thomas, Stop it. They’ll be worse when the armed conflicts increase into a full revolution. I’m only looking out for you.”

Thomas sat at the table, closed his eyes, and sought answers in silence. For several minutes, he sat thinking before Martha interrupted. “One more thing, Thomas.”

“Now what?”

“I don’t want you to think it crazy.”

“Your motives are anything but crazy. You thirst for wealth, power and control, but that doesn’t make you insane.”

“At least we can come to an understanding. It’s my name.”

“What about your name?”

“I think that Martha is more susceptible to these masses than another name might be.”

“You haven’t convinced me that you can sense these masses.”

“I don’t really care about that. I want a different name. You were discussing that yourself the other day, remember, that it may have something to do with the order of the letters, or some such thing.”

“A theory I have, yes!”

“Well, I think you’re right, that the name Martha, or any name for that matter, vibrates just like a chord on a piano.”

“I’ve said that before. Every letter is in an order, and those letters each must have a subtle note, just like the notes of the scales of music.”

“Well, it’s Martha that I think is the problem.”

“Very well, from now on I’ll call you Patty and we’ll see how that works.”

“Thank you for humoring me, and, there’s one more problem.”

“Yes.”

“Our daughter is named Martha.”

“So, I’ll call her Patsy.”

“Thomas Jefferson, you’re so understanding.”

Thomas glared at her. “You have your new name, but, like it or not, I’m fighting with all that I have in this rebellion. Don’t try any tricks to stop me. And, don’t think that I don’t know that you laced our dinner with herbs that gave me dysentery the last time I was called to give a speech before Congress. I just had a word with Patrick Henry, and he never read my paper to the Congress. Your trick worked then, but, fool me once and it’s your shame, try fooling me again like that and it will be divorce for you. That’s how understanding I am.”

Martha seemed genuinely crushed by the last statement. “Thomas, you can’t mean that.”

Thomas shouted, “And you stop screaming at our servants.”

“You mean slaves.”

“I mean you’ll rue the day if ever I catch you screaming at them again.”

“Oh, you mean like yesterday, when I was reprimanding Rubin?”

“Reprimanding! Screaming and calling him such foul names as I have never heard out of any woman’s mouth in my entire life.”

Martha was sweating. She had never seen Thomas so angry with her. She had to do something quickly to bring him around. “Do you know why I was so angry with Rubin?”

“I have not the slightest knowledge of that.”

“Well, I don’t know whether I should – ”

“Go ahead, you will anyway.”

“He came from behind me and put his arm up my dress and tried to molest me!”

“Liar, liar, liar. I’d never believe that of Rubin.”

“You’d believe a slave over me?”

“I’d believe Rubin over almost anybody, especially you.”

Martha screamed, “You always loved those stupid slaves more than me. You probably have children with them. You awful man.”

“More screaming, more lies, more malice. I can’t stand you, Patty, Martha or whatever. You know full well it’s after your relatives visit that we have a new crop of lighter colored servants. Don’t you accuse me of what your blood has been doing on our farm.”

CHAPTER 28

War flooded the continent with blood, spunk and speeches. In Virginia, the royal governor, Lord Dunmore, had retreated from his palace in Williamsburg to the safety of a British warship. In the north, General George Washington maneuvered his limited forces, planned well, and expertly knifed them into the British flanks for quick assaults, but was not having any wonderful successes.

While the fighting built, and blood spilled, several men gathered in Philadelphia to decide whether the colonies had a chance against the greatest power on earth. The men were torn between spirited speeches and dour predictions. One thing that was agreed for certain: the colonies must fight together as a unit, making a whole that synergistically bound them into a swarming hive, or be picked apart by the unified British while the colonists inflicted only random stings. And while he wasn't present in Philadelphia, Patrick Henry's motto rang through it like a brass bell: "United we stand, divided we fall." Even the men from the obstinate colony of Rhode Island could agree on this issue. The question became: Do we attempt to restore the previous order, or dispose of it by assuming American sovereignty?

After days of debate, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia stood upon the floor of the Continental Congress and proposed a resolution of absolute and total independence from Great Britain. Mr. Lee had no chance to sit before John Adams of Massachusetts seconded the motion. A most spirited debate ensued, with loyalty to the King considered, and the penalties for not being loyal being treason, giving all the attendees a close look at what stakes were on the floor for discussion.

The arguments made it clear that unless all of the colonies fought together, slave-trading northerners along side of slave-holding southerners, the cause was lost. After hearing manic debates that the Americans could readily destroy the Lobsterbacks, the Congress heard from doomsayers of depressed countenances who knew that the fate of the colonies was sealed, and that the perceived shackles would soon be made of iron when the parent disciplined her offspring.

It was finally agreed that if America were to have any chance of beating off the most deadly, powerful, and pernicious naval power on earth, she would need assistance from other European countries. France was a likely target since the French and British seemed to be in continual warfare. Benjamin Franklin, who had returned from London, was thought to be the best possible negotiator to win the colonies support from that country.

John Adams sat fuming in his chair. *How could they seek the aid of the French? We can't trust them! And, we'll win this war by ourselves. I'll show those British up for trying to bribe me with an office. I'll show them.* His arrogance was beginning to take over his thoughts, and his rationality was leaving him on the issue of foreign aid.

"I can do it," smiled Dr. Franklin, "but I need something to show them, something with so much starch in it that the Europeans know that we are resolved to fight for our liberty, for our freedom, for our – independence."

"You mean like that Englishman you've supported tells us to do!" shouted Sam Adams, waving a copy of Thomas Paine's recent pamphlet, *Common Sense* about and stomping as he took giant steps. "If each of you haven't read this book, you better do it now!" When Sam Adams recommended something, most people listened, because

he was overbearing enough that they had better do so, and mean enough to force them if they wanted to do otherwise.

“I am quite proud of Thomas,” said Franklin. “As some of you know, I read one of his pieces in London a couple of years ago and was much impressed by his clearness of thinking and writing. I met with him and convinced him to come to Philadelphia to write, and did he ever write.”

Thomas Paine, an Englishman, did what the Americans could not do themselves. While John and Sam Adams were quick to scream for independence from the mother country, few other colonists would say such heresy. But Franklin had seen the spark of liberty burning in Paine’s eyes. When Paine’s book came out in early 1776, it immediately sold 300,000 copies, and within six months, half-million of them flooded the continent. It showed the colonists that they would never have freedom unless they were independent of Britain. It rallied them behind a concept that had been heretofore the unspeakable – independence.

Sam Adams stomped on the floor then slapped his left knee. “If you want something to take to Europe, why not take this pamphlet?” Again, Sam waved the booklet about the gallery.

Franklin rose with the assistance of his cane, then carefully walked about the floor, staring at each man for a moment or two, and after circling the entire gallery, he said, “We can’t show the French we mean business unless we write our break-away paper ourselves. Paine wrote it in Philadelphia, but he’s still an Englishman. We need our own scribe, our own Shakespeare, our own Hume, our own Locke, to brand a document with such force and clarity that all of Europe will take notice. With such a paper, and the aid of a military victory or two, I know that I can get us support, certainly from the French, and perhaps from the Spanish.”

Sam stomped up to Franklin and with a guttural laugh he said, “You need my cousin John to write your proclamation. There ain’t anybody who has his fire with the pen.” Sam looked at John Adams, who was puffed up by the compliment. John’s mind was turning at that time. *How can I write the document and still keep my options open with the British if this rebellion falls flat?*

Franklin smiled kindly at Sam Adams. “I think it would be wise to have your cousin on the committee.”

“Committee!” boomed Sam. “Who needs a committee? Haven’t you ever seen how forcefully he writes?” Sam pointed to his cousin, John Adams, who turned a little red at receiving the last compliment, and who was now becoming certain that he would avoid having his name as the chief architect of such a document.

“And I propose that I be a member,” said Franklin, “however, I must not be chiefly involved for many reasons.” Most of the men nodded. Even if Franklin were to be a part of the revolution, he was a smooth enough talker to convince the British he had tried to stop the colony from its revolt. Franklin would be needed as a diplomat if the war were won.

“You should have Roger Sherman on your committee,” came a shout from the north corner of the room, which was quickly seconded.

“And Livingston, he must be on it.”

The Franklin paced the room of boisterous men. “I need only one more on the committee, a man from Virginia, a man with a pen as sharp as Paine’s.”

Eyes turned to Thomas Jefferson, who at thirty-three was considered too young to be there by many; Jefferson was busily writing when he suddenly felt the presence of a roomful of stares upon him. He looked up and blushed. “I don’t know that you need me.” His voice was thin and shaky.

“We don’t need him,” boomed Sam Adams. “He hasn’t said a word since we got to Philadelphia. Lord only knows why Virginia would send a sphinx to represent them.”

There was some general laughter in the gallery, which continued for several moments before Franklin cleared his throat and was about to speak when John Adams rose and sucked in his portly stomach and shouted, “Enough! Enough! I admit that he isn’t much of a speaker, but I’ve been in committees with Mr. Jefferson, I know his industry and his abilities, and if something forceful needs to be written, he’s one man that ought to be in there scribbling. I can’t recommend him highly enough to do him justice. And if those of you laughing did any reading, you’d know how right I am.” John was proud of himself. *That will assure that I don’t have to write a document that would surely ruin any chance of me ever cultivating British favor in the event of a failed rebellion.*

“Well, what say you, Mr. Jefferson,” shouted Sam Adams, “my cousin thinks you’re up to it, that you can help this distinguished committee produce a proclamation for our colonies. That’s a powerful recommendation in my eyes, and while I don’t think you have the guts to be a revolutionary, I’ll second your nomination if you think you’re up to it.”

Thomas stared through Sam Adams with ice and raw nerve. His voice stumbled, but not his message. “I may not have a mouth such as others, or the audacity of many,” he said, glaring at Sam Adams in a way nobody else in the room would have dared. “But I can write with feeling, with knowledge, and with power. Not only am I capable of assisting this worthy committee, but it needs my input so the finished product can tear the claws from the Lion. This piece must be a declaration. It must not disclose new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, merely

to say things that have never been said before. Its purpose must be to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent.”

He’d won over Sam, who realized that Jefferson had more resolve and strength than any others he had met, and, more courage. “The stone can talk! And what it says is good enough for me. I second his motion.”

The gathering broke up for lunch, with the newly selected committee lingering behind to discuss when they should meet. Livingston suggested that each write a draft proposal and they would mesh all of the drafts together into a competent document. John Adams shouted, “And rely on a quilt when we need a single fabric?” John was scheming to blame the whole affair on Jefferson, if circumstances forced that in the future.

The five of them argued heatedly, when it was finally agreed that among Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson, the draft document would be written, then reviewed. Sherman and Livingston agreed and left. Then the room contained only John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Now, John Adams had only two to contend with.

Benjamin said, “You two have been staunch in your progress and support of my plan.” While he said this, he knew full well that Adams might have been compromised. At the same time, he could see Adams silently protesting as if to be saying that it was not Franklin’s plan, but John Adams who was igniting the revolution. “I don’t know how to thank you, and I really need not, because your children and their children, and their children’s children will be the recipients of your labors. We’ve come a long way since I conned you both into taking on this game, a

long way, but there's more to go. Now, why don't you two go hide in a room and prepare us some kind of proclamation to be proud of."

John Adams controlled himself, and along with Jefferson nodded approvingly, then the three talked incessantly about how the plan had worked so well and how the colonies were about to grasp their freedom for themselves and posterity. At this point, John declared that it was his work in Boston that had ignited the rebellion, and he wanted those two to agree that was the case. Jefferson and Franklin did, but both wondered just what they were dealing with in John Adams. For an entire hour they spoke on, with Franklin and Jefferson remaining fairly humble, but with John Adams' arrogant pride showing through for both to see. The three remained standing throughout the discussion, stopping only when some of the delegates straggled into the room after eating their lunches.

Franklin laughed, "I guess that we've missed a meal. I don't think it will hurt either John or me, but can you go without one young Thomas?"

"I think I can." He walked to his desk and began writing furiously on the papers he had been working in the morning.

"What are you preparing with such industry?" asked John Adams.

"The Virginia Constitution," said Thomas, "they're in session right now, but I was called to Philadelphia on this business."

"Don't you think our friend Patrick is up to the chore?"

Thomas rolled his eyes, stared at the ceiling and considered how much he should let go. "Patrick is a patriot, a wonderful speaker, but I can't trust him with writing. His grammar is limited and his knowledge of the law abysmal."

"I thought he was your friend."

“I didn’t say that he wasn’t. He doesn’t know his limitations. He thinks that he can do anything. I just wouldn’t want to live under any constitution the man wrote. Perhaps George Mason will keep Henry in line and draft the document instead. Then I could live with it.”

“And you know yours?”

“My what?”

“Your limitations,” smiled John, trying to show up the young man.

“Certainly. You don’t ever hear me speaking before groups, do you?”

A slam from John Hancock’s gavel called the gathering back together, and John Adams shuffled to his chair. Jefferson lowered his head and continued writing while listening intently as several men gave speeches. He suspected that his headaches were brought on by doing two things at the same time. But the draft of the constitution seemed too critical to put aside, so he did both at once. After four hours, he sat down his quill, satisfied that he had a proper draft to send to Williamsburg. He listened to a speech from Samuel Chase and reflected upon all that had been accomplished. Half-way through Chase’s talk, Hancock interrupted him and declared, “We need to adjourn.”

Benjamin Rush yawned a second, followed by a chorus of ayes. Hancock’s gavel pounded the table three times, and men began filing out with Samuel Chase still on the floor in the center, mouth agape. Then he protested, “But I’ve only begun to speak.”

“I know,” said Hancock wryly.

John Adams and Thomas left together, and John quizzed the taller man about what had been discussed during the time the younger man had been furiously writing a constitution in the chamber. John was mystified that Thomas could relate the

proceedings so accurately, despite having been distracted with writing. They headed for Thomas' room with John shaking his head.

When they entered, John said, "Now about this proclamation of independence."

"I think it should be a declaration," said Thomas.

"Fine, fine. Well about this declaration, I believe that you should be the chief architect of it."

Thomas shook his head several times with considerable force. "Absolutely not! I must do a final draft of the Virginia constitution. You will write the independence document."

"I will not," answered Adams.

"You should do it."

"Oh! No." John Adams would make certain that Jefferson did it. *I know that I could do a better job than Jefferson. But, let him stick his neck out with no chance of withdrawing it. I know that there are two sides in a conflict, and I'll play both of those.*

"Why will you not? You ought to do it."

"I will not."

"Why?"

"Reasons enough."

"What can be your reasons?"

"Reason first – you are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of the business. Reason second – I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third – you can write ten times better than I."

"Well, if you are decided, I will do as well as I can."

With that, Adams tipped his tri-cornered hat and left, figuring that Jefferson would sleep tonight and begin the task in the morning. He didn't know the work habits of Thomas, who began writing the first of ten drafts of the Declaration of Independence. After several hours, he fell asleep, awakening to midday heat. He walked about the room for a moment, freshened himself a bit, and began writing on the document, before becoming lost in his work.

A few hours later, he heard a rap on his door, and beckoned the man to enter. Franklin entered and tapped his cane on the floor. "We missed you at Congress today."

"I thought I was supposed to write some kind of barnburner for you to take to France. That's what I've been up to."

"Let me see what you've got."

Thomas resisted. "It's in too rough a form."

"Nonsense. How can a printer like me not be able to see through a draft to tell whether the work has merit?"

Thomas handed over draft number three. Franklin perused it with his spectacles drooping on the end of his nose. He hemmed a couple of times, then handed the papers back to Thomas. "Rough! You call this rough? What power . . . I knew you were the right man when I recruited you so many years ago. Then, I had a broad general plan for independence from England. I didn't imagine anything like this."

"Like what?"

"Like wrapping John Locke and Voltaire into a nice little package of power and stomping it into the face of George the Third with some of his favorite little Tory, David Hume's work. Imagine, 'inherent and inalienable rights; that among these are

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness;’ Would those philosophers ever admire this offspring.”

“Do you think it will be well received?” asked Jefferson, hoping for some further assurance. Before Franklin could answer, he bubbled out: “I was pretty fortunate while writing this. Thomas Paine stopped by and we discussed the use of ‘Life, Liberty and Property’ versus ‘Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness’ for some time.

“During that time, we, Paine and I, were like one mind talking together. It was an amazing experience. We both felt that Locke’s ‘Life, Liberty and Property’ were foundations of freedom on earth, and yet, when we discussed changing ‘Property’ to ‘Pursuit of Happiness,’ it became something transpired in the room. I can’t put it into words, exactly, but, it was so spiritually moving for me, and I could tell for him too. It was almost like God had come down and blessed us with special insight just for the conversation.

“We could see, feel, sense and know how ‘Pursuit of Happiness’ was about spiritual pursuit. It’s about being able to feel your love for the Divine in your heart and pursuing that love with all your might, will and being. It’s about total liberation from earthly restraints.” Jefferson was shaking as tears of joy welled in his eyes.

Franklin was so touched by the explanation, that he too, experienced some of the spiritual energy that was present during Paine’s and Jefferson’s conversation. He too, had tears of joy to cherish from this telling. Franklin brushed his eyes and stared at Thomas. “Oh, thank you for sharing that with me. I can’t explain how moved I am by it.”

Both then remained still, in quiet silence, as they both reveled in the moment, and both silently said a prayer of thanks for being allowed to experience such closeness to the Blessed Divine and such Peace and Joy in their hearts.

After quite a while, Thomas asked again, “So, you think the declaration will be well received?”

Franklin nodded in the affirmative. “Polish it a bit, and I’ll be armed with more vigor in Paris than the Royal Navy could muster. This is exactly what I need to convince them that we are irrevocably committed on the course of independence, never to retreat to the skirts of the mother country. With this, I’ll get Louis XVI to jump into the fray, and we’ll have the British at their knees, Thomas, at their knees.”

“Why do you hate the British so?” asked Thomas.

“Because they are destroyers of freedom, of liberty, of people. They love enslaving people, figuratively and literally. They are so drunk with power and self-aggrandizement that they care not who they enslave, or how they do it. They’ll turn on their own people, just to make a gain at something. They are power corrupted to its worst degree.”

“But we too have slaves. I even have my own, little as I like it.”

“Thanks to the British slave masters, we have slaves, but we’ll free all the slaves. Not today, nor anytime too soon, because we would lose the strength of unity were we to do so. The northern colonies are filled with slave traders, while the southern colonies use the poor slaves to build up their estates. But one day, we’ll treat all men, and if we learn a lesson from the French and Thomas Paine, even women, as equals. That, the British will never do. Look how they sling yokes on their colonists and around the world. Would you like to live under their rule in India, or in China, or Newfoundland, or New York?”

“I’ve been pondering this a long time. You have helped me reach the decision. I’ll free my slaves directly.” He scratched on a sheet of paper, “That all men are created equal.”

“What would Martha say?”

Thomas stared at Franklin. The first two years of the marriage were tolerable, but these last three had been totally unbearable, yet he had not spoken badly of his wife. Today, was different. “Benjamin, confidentially, I don’t care what Martha . . . or Patty as she prefers today . . . thinks about this. She treats our slaves like dirt, shouts at them regularly, falsely accuses them of horrid deeds, and she screams just like my mother. She’s doing all she can to send me off course. Oh, she’s a demon, a real evil harridan.”

Franklin looked at the floor nervously and hemmed a bit. He didn’t want to add anything, however, he had sensed for a long time that there was something quite wrong with Martha Jefferson.

“I’m sorry to tell you that, but, you know, I feel better now. I’ve held it inside for so long. I almost feel as though I’ve released a demon from me.”

Franklin nodded. “Back to the slave issue, I don’t think it prudent to free them at this time. We need support from the south and the north. If you free your slaves, I don’t think either group will follow you. We need you as a political leader in this cause. Why not leave the freeing of the slaves to the likes of Paine and me for now? If you continue as you have, treating them with dignity and with fairness all the while helping them, you’re taking as great a step as is practical toward freeing them. The time is just not right.”

Thomas began laughing uncontrollably, shaking with exhaustion and trembling in convulsive merriment as he anticipated Franklin’s response to what he was handing

to the aged doctor. “You might want to read this paragraph I’ve been playing with and trying to find a place to work it in.” Thomas handed Franklin a scribbled document. The elder gentleman read:

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation hither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of INFIDEL powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce. And that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the people of whom he also obtruded them: thus paying off former crimes committed against LIBERTIES of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the LIVES of another.

“Thomas! Thomas! By God! By God! Let’s keep this anti-slavery clause in this exact form. Find a place to put it, and stick all there. Don’t change a jot or a tittle of it. This is so powerful we have to give it a go in that sacred Continental Congress,” Franklin shouted gleefully.

“You like it then? But I thought you said the time wasn’t right to free the slaves.”

“Like it,” shouted Franklin. “What an understatement. For an old abolitionist like me, this is magic dancing off the paper. It may not be time to free your slaves, but, let’s openly discuss the issue in the Congress, let’s force those bigots to look in their own yards. Let’s stir the pot with this beautiful prose. Oh, I can see them now.

I can't wait for this debate!" Franklin then rose, buttoned his green vest and hobbled out of the room. "Keep it up, young Thomas," he shouted as he closed the door.

After the door shut, Thomas went back to work, this time on the fourth draft of the soon to be famous, *Declaration of Independence*.

CHAPTER 29

JULY, 1776

On the 28th of June, the proposed *Declaration of Independence* was read to the Continental Congress, and thereafter tabled. What would happen thereafter was unknown.

On the 2nd of July, 1776, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia made a motion in the Congress that America ought to be a free and independent country. There was hot debate on the motion, which ultimately carried.

The Congress then began picking apart the proposed *Declaration of Independence* for the most part of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of July. Thomas cringed as he watched his work stripped of much of its strength and power. There was a pusillanimous idea that America had friends in England they should not offend, so censures on the people of England were stuck from the document, which angered Thomas.

Then there was insistence by South Carolina and Georgia, ever open to importing slaves and most desirous of importing more and more slaves, that the anti-slavery clause be stricken. There was little support for the anti-slavery clause from the northern colonies, since it was the northern colonies that were pretty considerable carriers of slaves to the southern colonies. When it became obvious that there was no chance of retaining the anti-slavery clause, Jefferson fumed, got up and was about to storm out the Congress. He was stopped from doing this by Franklin, who whispered

to him, “We can’t get everything at once. Let’s settle for what we can, or we might not get anything.”

While Jefferson quieted himself, he listened to more attacks on the *Declaration* and many other parts of it were altered or expunged. When the document lost the discussion about the tyranny of George III, it amazed Thomas. The language had read:

Future ages will scarcely believe that the hardiness of one man adventured, within the short compass of twelve years only, to lay a foundation so broad and so undisguised for tyranny over a people fostered and fixed in principles of freedom.

Thomas couldn’t believe that the Congress was willing to declare war on Britain, yet apparently afraid to offend that irascible tyrant on the throne. Franklin gave him a wink, and Thomas began to see the absurdity of the debate. He again quieted himself.

Finally, on the 4th of July, 1776, the document was accepted and signed. The *Declaration of Independence* was a living document. The war was now legally justified by the Continental Congress. And, Franklin had what he would need to take to France and solicit support for the war.

The Congress began working on a simple constitution, as recommended by Thomas Paine in *Common Sense*. Paine had demonstrated that a complex constitution, such as the one employed by the British, was a trap that allowed lawyers to get rich debating issues, while those without legal training could hardly fathom what rights belonged to whom. Ultimately, the *Articles of Confederation* were adopted. These articles gave the states many individual rights, and assured that

members of Congress were limited in compensation and terms, so that it was highly unlikely that a despotic Congress could become a tyrant over the American people.

The war was fought with little in the line of supplies or trained troops. The Dutch helped by opening ports to bring in goods, but that help was very little against the mighty British Navy, and its powerful army. Things looked very bleak indeed. Something was needed to spur on the people and the soldiers of America, to give them hope.

The prayer for hope and inspiration was answered by Thomas Paine, who began a series of inspiring articles entitled *The Crisis*. Franklin, who was already in France soliciting support, cried as he read Number I, which was dated 23 December, 1776. It began:

These are the times that try men's souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it NOW, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem to lightly: 'Tis dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated.

With that article, Paine inspired George Washington and his troops, all the Congress, and, most importantly, the American people who were fighting for independence from a terrible tyrant. Truly, Thomas Paine was injecting the revolution with energy and inspiration a plenty.

CHAPTER 30

Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson sat in the Apollo room of the Raleigh Tavern, which was more raucous than usual, Henry quaffing a beer, and Thomas nursing a cup of coffee. Jefferson swirled a spoon, mixing sugar in the cup, then held the lip to his nose and sucked in deeply. “Ah, that’s some aroma. Too bad that coffee, tea and sugar are so addictive, I think they could one day be the ruin of the country.”

“Why don’t you have a beer, it’s a bit more patriotic.”

Thomas smiled at his friend and sipped from the cup. “We’ve come a long way, Patrick, a long way. I think independence is but around the corner.”

“You wrote some kind of draft to declare it to be so, for that piece of work, I commend you most highly.”

“You should have seen how they tore apart the Declaration at the Continental Congress.”

“Thomas, if you let a committee edit a piece of art, it will have one leg and three noses.”

“They were brutal.”

“Pulled out your anti-slavery language, did they?”

“And other things.”

Patrick raised his beer high and said, “It’s still a great work. I’m proud of you.”

“Most appreciated,” said Thomas, hoisting his coffee cup. “To victory.”

“We’ll blow those rotters out of bounds, out of sight, and out of here.”

Thomas snapped his fingers for a waitress, then hit the dark table lightly to indicate that they would like to order something. “Tell me something, will you Patrick?”

“I detect a dire tone in your voice, and I know not whether I wish to give in to it.”

Thomas closed his eyes, contemplated for several moments, then opened them and began speaking, “I need – ”

“You needed something freshened?” asked the waitress.

Thomas twirled the index finger on his right hand. “Bring us another round, if you would.”

“As you wish, sir.”

Thomas stared at Henry for several seconds. “Why did you take a command over soldiers? You might be a crack shot with a rifle, but you’ve got no military background. I’m glad you listened to Washington’s recommendation that you fight this war for us in the legislature.”

“I was a good leader, but they never gave me a chance. If I’d been left to my own devices, I’d have been a hero to Virginia, just like Benedict Arnold was in Montreal and Saratoga. I think it was a mistake for me to have resigned my commission.”

“So you wanted glory and your name to live in the hearts of men just like General Benedict Arnold’s.”

“I have his bravery, his cunning, his – ”

“Your speeches will do you more honor than any military victories would. And as for Arnold, I don’t put much stock in the man.”

“And why not? Jealous maybe?”

The waitress brought the fresh round and Thomas reached in his pocket and pulled out a wad of bills. The waitress protested, “You ain’t gonna do that to me are you?”

Thomas put the packet of notes back into his vest pocket shaking his head. From his purse he removed two small silver coins that the waitress grabbed with alacrity. After she returned to the kitchen, Thomas said, “No wonder they say that it’s not worth a Continental Dollar. Imagine, she wouldn’t even take them for your beer and my coffee.”

Henry laughed uneasily, wanting to bring the conversation back to where it had left off, but feeling a desire to insert his Continental cent’s worth. “And why would anyone want the paper that Congress keeps printing and printing. Paper that’s backed by nothing but air, a promise to pay in the future. It’s disgusting that our legislature is trying to finance a war on the hopes of success and empty promises to pay.”

“Let’s forget the paper money, it’s the biggest fraud since the Stamp Act, and could lead to the same result.”

Henry scratched his chin. “Are you saying we could have a counter-revolution over that insidious excuse we have for currency?”

“Could, but back to the question of military leadership. I think General Arnold is too thin skinned for his own good, and far too avaricious for ours.”

Henry slammed his palm onto the table, then went into a melodramatic pose of mental anguish, grasping his temples in either open hand. “Shame! Call you our war hero a man who’d sell out his country for a few pieces of silver. Have you no sense of what he has done, what he has sacrificed, what victories he has won for us?”

“Franklin trusts him not, and I tend to agree.”

“Franklin! Franklin! What knows he of warfare, of generals, and of military might?”

Thomas’ complexion reddened and his jaw twitched anxiously. He set his coffee on the table and said, “Before we met in Philadelphia to write the *Declaration of Independence*, that man, at seventy years of age, braved the treacherous journey to Montreal to inspect the facilities that General Arnold had acquired and was holding. He brought with him gold for the army and French-language propaganda sheets for the inhabitants. Arnold sought Franklin’s advice on matters military in Montreal.”

“You’re daft. Why would a brilliant general want to take advice from a decrepit old man?”

Jefferson’s annoyance was growing, and Henry’s words were slurring more noticeably. Thomas thought about leaving well enough alone, but he had still more striking points that he had to raise with his old friend. “Know you not that Franklin was on Pennsylvania’s Committee of Safety? Are you not aware that he designed and superintended the construction of a huge *chevaux de frise* in the channel of the Delaware River?”

“A what?”

Thomas had not intended to go over Henry’s head with the use of a French phrase, he knew Patrick would be angry enough before they were done, and he didn’t mean to also insult him for ignorance of language. “A submerged line of pointed timbers designed to impale ships that crossed it. He advised Arnold to install a similar impediment in the St. Lawrence River. And he gave Arnold’s plans to fortify the Richelieu a go ahead. If you haven’t forgotten, it was Franklin who banded together a small group of patriots from all over the continent; the group was not entirely passive in the revolt.”

Henry gripped his pewter mug, squeezing it until it dented from the force of his thumb. “Adams! John Adams backs Arnold. Is that not good enough for you?”

“Adams is a northerner who listens too closely to his cousin, who if he had his way would remove Washington from his command. Would you like that?”

“I have the greatest respect for Washington’s abilities and see no reason to have anybody leading this war but the most competent Virginian general.”

Thomas cleared his throat and decided there would be no better time than now, or none worse. “Patrick, I think it is honorable that you are the Governor of Virginia, and are prosecuting the war so well from the executive’s chair.”

“And . . .”

“And, I think that you are, how can I say this delicately . . .”

“You haven’t worried much about my feelings up to now, so don’t spare me this one if you must.”

“The capital is perilously close to the coast. Do you think it should be moved?”

“No,” answered Patrick before he swallowed a huge gulp of beer.

Thomas closed his eyes and reflected on the years he had known Patrick. The joys and sufferings they had been through. How he watched Patrick eaten from the inside out by having his first wife go insane. Thomas thought about how Patrick and he had plotted and struggled together to get this fledgling group of colonies together against their common enemy, how they had been fighting the war for freedom and liberty as one. But, he wondered just what Patrick was becoming? “Well, you seem to have a strong desire to usurp the powers of the legislature.”

“What say you?”

“That you have become a little tyrant, a dictator. You must lighten your pull on the reins of power, lest you become as drunk from it as from this beer. We’re in a war

to protect our rights, not to shift the power of the oppressor from one shoe to the other.”

Henry took another huge swig from the mug and spit the mouthful toward Thomas’ face. As the spittle hit Jefferson, Henry threw the mug into the fireplace and tipped over the table, spilling Thomas’ coffee on his white breeches. Thomas clenched his fists and trembled in anger, but stood without speaking as Henry stomped from the tavern.

CHAPTER 31

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 1780

In September of 1776, a young schoolmaster crossed the Long Island Sound and crept behind British lines in civilian clothes to deliver secret information to his fellow patriots. When seized by the British, they discovered papers on him that identified him as an American captain, so the man received what was fitting for all spies, he was hanged until dead. Before he met his fate at the gallows he made two requests of General William Howe, both of which were denied. The general deemed the petitions to be unreasonable. The young patriot had asked for a conference with a chaplain and for a Bible to read. He was, however, marched into the engineer's tent, where he was allowed to write two letters. One was to a family member, the other to a fellow patriot officer.

After writing the letters that the British would never deliver, he was taken on his last march to a tree, pinioned, and hanged before a small gathering of British military men. Before dying, the brave spy declared, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." So ended the life of young Nathan Hale.

British General Henry Clinton knew well the mistakes that had been made by Hale, and knew why the man had been caught. He had crossed enemy lines out of uniform and bore incriminating documents on his person. Those factors were enough to seal his fate and humiliate him with a spy's execution. While the death of Nathan Hale troubled the general not – he cared little for any rebels against the Crown – it was the fate Hale suffered that was digging at Clinton.

He paced back and forth nervously, then called for his aide, twenty-six-old Major John André, who entered in proper military style, saluted, and took the proffered seat. The general hesitated, “Are you certain you wish to go through with this nonsense?”

The youthful major smiled and removed a piece of paper from the top of the general’s desk and took a quill from its holder. He scratched the feather’s tip on the paper with a few strokes, and in a minute, he handed the general the document. Clinton roared as he saw the caricature of himself standing with one foot upon the head of General George Washington, the other on the ground, in the British general’s hand was a saber pointed at the American’s neck. Washington was clothed in rags, and his body was contorted into a semblance of a map of the colonies. From his mouth came a balloon that contained the words, “God save the King!”

The young major joined in the revelry, chuckling at his own cartoon, as the general walked around the desk. He stopped when he was beside the junior officer, and he placed a hand on the younger man’s shoulder. “This is dangerous and I’m not keen on sending you.”

The youth grabbed the general’s hand, squeezed it and turned to face his mentor. “It must be done. It could dampen the rebel spirits so violently that it might turn the flow.”

The general released the lad’s hand and dragged his fingers through the major’s pony tail, stopping at its tip, and bending over to whiff its perfumed aroma. His voice quaked as he said, “John, there are others who could do the dirty work.”

“Henry, we are soldiers of the Crown, and we both have missions. You put me in charge of intelligence gathering and this is what I do.”

Clinton's military training told him that the youth was right, but his heart pulled him in the opposite direction. When he had the boy promoted to major and gave him a paper-pushing job, he had hoped to assure André's safety. But, as a result of the major's duties as an intelligence officer, he had become "John Anderson" during his sixteen months of correspondence with "Gustavus," and the letters were about to bear bountiful fruit. It was only to be expected that the major must finish out his role if the prize were to be won.

The British seemed to have more spies in place than they had infantrymen. There were plants in the Congress of the United States, in the post office, in the cities, in every conceivable place. There were so many that it appeared to the general that any of those spies would be able to do the job, but André wanted this mission.

"Blast it all," said Clinton. "I wish we had hanged Franklin when they caught him with that silly puzzle in London. It's plain to see what he was up to, especially since John Adams was the recipient of it. Of course, we might yet have land Adams in the wake of that event. But, we let loose the biggest fish, and now he's gone to Paris and won the support of Louis the Sixteenth. Without those ruddy Frenchmen shooting at us, we'd have made soup of the colonists. And now the Spanish have declared war also. Oh, why didn't we hang Franklin when we had the chance and the proof to do so."

"We had Dr. Franklin caught with the goods? Do tell!"

"Only suspected him, my uncle nearly had him cold, but Franklin is cunning as Delilah and dangerous as a crocodile in wait."

"Hardly would it seem that he could be dangerous. He's an old, old man."

"Franklin was a powerful swimmer in his youth, and from his athletic exercises, he learned strength and power, and courage."

The lad rose from his chair, “You admire him greatly. Was he ever – ”

“You need have no jealousy of that man, but yes, I do admire him. He’s been the heart and guts of the rebels, and we were uncertain of his allegiance before he signed that foul *Declaration of Independence*. We had our suspicions all along, and when one of our insider ‘American’ representatives at Congress, Joseph Galloway, fingered him as favoring independence, we knew we’d been had by a first class spy. We should have hanged him in London.”

“So that’s why you had me raid his home in Philadelphia of books and his portrait.”

“A minor payback, very minor, but yes, that’s why.”

The lad grabbed another piece of paper and began to doodle, and quickly produced a sketch of Franklin dangling with a noose about his neck, hanging from Tower Bridge.

Unlike the laughter evoked by the earlier drawing the boy had produced of Washington surrendering, the Franklin hanging hit a raw nerve and Clinton sniffled; it reminded him of Nathan Hale’s mistakes, and the many of those like him. The general said, “John, you’re not cut out for field work, but remember these things. Under no circumstances shall you cross enemy lines, always remain under the flag of truce during your discussions with ‘Gustavus,’ always wear your regimental uniform, and never, never, never carry any documents relating to your discussions that might incriminate you.”

“I will succeed for Our King.”

“Bravery is something you have; it’s experience that you lack. Your mission is dangerous, and ‘Gustavus’ is not to be trusted at this juncture anymore than is the master of deception, Dr. Franklin.”

“Speaking of Franklin, is his bastard son William for or against us?”

“Don’t know. The man was governor of the colony of New Jersey; he looks, smells, and talks like a loyalist to the Crown, seems to be a good Tory, but how can you favorably judge anything that came from Franklin’s seed?”

The younger officer grasped his mentor and hugged him tightly. The two held the embrace for several moments, then broke it. The major then stood erect, saluted, and departed the general’s office.

Major John André took deliberate steps as he marched to his quarters. Once inside, he donned his best regimental uniform, and covered it with a greatcoat. Then he departed to perform his mission on the Hudson River. Soon, he met a gunboat that transferred him upriver and finally boarded the armed sloop, *Vulture*. From there, he awaited the signal from “Gustavus” to travel ashore under the flag of truce for a parley.

On shore, “Gustavus” was having some problems of his own. General Washington was ignorant of the code name of “Gustavus,” and all the double-dealing that the man using it was doing, however, Washington was deeply troubled that the general in charge of West Point seemed quite anxious to reduce the garrison of such a strategic fort on the Hudson. Washington had received reports of the fort’s commander sending away as many as two hundred troops to cut wood. Washington’s suspicions became acutely aroused when he requested and received a nearly unlimited supply of troops from West Point. To avoid a turnover of the fort by neglect, incompetence, or treachery, Washington had ordered reinforcements to be added to Haverstraw, which lay ten miles downstream of West Point.

“Gustavus” had played both ends too taut, and the pressure was mounting. He knew that he was under suspicion, and he realized that a request of a formal parley

with a British officer might spell his arrest. So “Gustavus” changed the plans and sent a boat to meet the sloop *Vulture* with a message that “John Anderson” and “Gustavus” were to meet in secret.

When Major André received this piece of information, it troubled him, but he donned his greatcoat over his British uniform and went ashore on the west bank of the Hudson River. There he met with “Gustavus,” a thick-set man with a pronounced limp, a man who André knew only by reputation and through correspondence. “Gustavus” was the American general who had taken Montreal against long odds. He was the hero who had rushed in with reckless abandon and set the charge that won the day for the rebels at Saratoga. But, the hero of the rebels had turned after facing a court-martial for petty theft; he was disgruntled with Washington’s leadership, and was quite valuable to the British for stirring up trouble within the rebel ranks, but the man also had the key to the Hudson River. “Gustavus” was the rebel’s ‘guardian’ of West Point.

Negotiations by mail with “Gustavus” had been long and tedious, but an agreement was reached whereby the defector would be given asylum, and £20,000 if he turned over West Point to General Clinton along with 3,000 American troops. If the attack on West Point were unsuccessful, the American general was to receive £10,000 and a £500 annuity.

Now, Major André stood before the rebel’s general who held a key to the war for the British. Young André was apprehensive of the wily man across from him, a man of great avarice if his letters showed any of his character, and André protested when “Gustavus” told him that they would have to ride upriver because things were getting dangerous. But not wanting to miss the opportunity to grasp the prize of West Point, the young major gave in to the American general’s demands.

The two rode silently up a path until they were challenged by American sentries, who immediately recognized General Benedict Arnold and allowed him to pass. When ‘Gustavus’ said that André was with him, the major was likewise passed. The greatcoat covered the youthful officer’s regimentals enough to make him unrecognizable as a British officer. André swallowed hard, realizing that he had already violated two of Henry’s warnings. First, he had not arrived under a flag of truce, and second, he had crossed enemy lines.

The men rode on, further behind the American lines, until they arrived at the home of an American, and were shown upstairs by him. While Arnold and André were talking, the major removed his greatcoat, displaying British regimentals, much to the astonishment of the owner of the house.

“Don’t worry about him,” said Arnold limping as he favored his left leg, which was noticeably shorter than his right; he winced as he walked. “He won this thing at a raffle and wears it occasionally for sport, but he carries not the rank of major in His Majesty’s Service.”

The owner looked to André for confirmation. The British officer hesitated, then nodded and the owner retreated to the downstairs.

When the owner was out of earshot, Arnold said, “I’m ready to move almost immediately. I just need to get my wife out of the fort on some pretense or another. I can’t bear the thought of her hanging as a spy.”

“Is she involved?”

“Deeply, passionately, deceptively, deliciously.” He closed his eyes and envisioned his Peggy and sighed.

“What word have you for me then?”

Arnold reached into his vest and produced a list of names. It contained several American spies, the identity of which would greatly enhance the Crown's chances for success in the war. "Take these back to your sloop and set for the attack on West Point. I will surrender it with but a modicum of resistance, meet for a truce, and defect."

André fingered the list, along with another paper that gave other strategic information about the American forces. He knew not how to carry the documents without violating yet another command of Henry's, which was to never carry incriminating documents. Were he trained as a field spy, André would have memorized the information and destroyed the documents. But, being only a desk-side intelligence officer, he foolishly believed that the actual documents were more important than their contents.

He stared at them, considering the dangerous papers for several seconds before Arnold suggested, "Put them in your boot. That way they'll be totally safe."

Reluctantly, André removed a boot, took off a stocking, then secreted the papers and slipped back on his hose and boot. While he was stretching the leather on the top of his boot, he grimaced, feeling uneasy about how wrong everything was going. "I've got to go!" He rose to leave.

"I too," said Arnold, "but you'll need this." The general wrote on a slip of paper that he dated September 22, 1780. The message was clear and unambiguous, giving André permission as John Anderson to pass the guards to the White Plains or below if he chose, he being on public business by the general's direction. Below the pass, it was signed "B. Arnold, M. General" with the "I" that ended general rolling off under the entire signature and swirling into two broad curly-ques as if to underscore

Arnold's importance and ego. "Wait a moment for me to ride away so we aren't seen together again."

André pocketed the pass and watched his fellow conspirator walk downstairs. As he heard the hooves of Arnold's mount beat a rhythm, André glanced out the window and horror overtook him. The *Vulture* was being fired upon, and it was returning fire. A mast gave way and the sloop turned downstream, soon its mast vanished. The major had no transport in sight.

André called to the owner of the house, and asked what the best way to the east side of the river would be. The owner told André that he might take King's Ferry just a little to the north.

André began to sweat profusely. "I need to go south."

"So that is your uniform, eh?" said the owner, staring at the regimental dress.

André nodded with his eyes cast upon the floor.

"Then you best be taking them off and wearing something different," he said, opening a drawer. He pulled out a claret-colored coat and a beaver hat. "Wear these. You won't pass the first sentry in that uniform. And, I'd advise going north."

Frightened, André slipped out of his regimentals and replaced them with the civilian clothing. Now, he had violated the all of Henry's commands and was head-to-foot a spy behind enemy lines. He walked pensively downstairs and out the door. As he went to mount his horse, the owner protested, and told him to mount the one with a bold "USA" branded on its flank.

The major thanked the owner and vowed not to reveal him to anyone, then headed north for the King's Ferry, which he crossed. He rode almost without incident to Peekskill, then to Crompond, across Pine's Bridge on the Croton River, and south to the Tarrytown Bridge. The circuitous route had spent his strength and his wits as

he rode for nearly thirty miles behind enemy lines. He was almost home free when he was accosted by three men on foot. Had he been alert, or had he been field trained, he would have kicked the horse into a gallop and hoped for the best, but as it was, André tried to bluff his way past them.

The three men were marauders, preying upon whom they could for spoils. These types of men were commonly encountered during the revolution. They had a certain type of loyalty. There were “Cowboys”, who were somewhat loyal to the lower party, or the Crown. Cowboys would generally only rob American patriots of cattle and other property, behaving somewhat like Tories. “Skinners” were of the opposite ilk, having pseudo-loyalty to the American movement, they had some allegiance to the upper party and would accost mainly British loyalists. Skinners were would-be Whigs.

André sized up one of them, John Pauling, who had escaped a British prison wearing a German sharpshooter’s coat. Because German soldiers had been hired by the Crown as mercenaries to put down the revolution, the coat deceived André into thinking the man to be a Cowboy, and he said, “Gentlemen, I hope you belong to our party.”

“What party?” came the gruff response.

“The lower, I am an officer in the British service and have now been on particular business in the country. I hope that you will not detain me.”

As he spoke these words, he realized his mistake, and hastily he produced General Arnold’s pass. The only literate one of the group read the pass and declared that it didn’t matter and asked for money. André protested that he had little, and the three men wrestled him into the brush where they searched him and found two watches, one of gold, the other of silver. When they removed a boot, they found the

papers, and the “learned” marauder read them slowly, then declared, “He’s a spy!” The three would-be robbers then turned André over to American authorities.

When word of André’s capture reached Benedict Arnold, he raced to his wife, exclaiming, “Peggy, our game’s up! You must feign ignorance, act at your best, your very neck so depends upon it.”

She cried a moment, hugged her husband, and said, “That I will do. Worry not about me, dearest.”

Arnold raced down the stairs, ignoring the pain in his withered leg, and ran out the door to a boat. He commanded the oarsmen to row with great haste to the *Vulture*, which had returned upstream to harass the Americans. They rowed him safely to the sloop, which he boarded, then ordered the captain of it to arrest the sailors who had brought him to the British sloop.

Back at West Point, Peggy Arnold put on such an act that Colonel Alexander Hamilton declared that she had to be blameless. She and her conspiring husband had saved their lives by acting and deception.

With the treason game revealed, West Point was fortified to thwart off any plans to attack by General Clinton, however, the traitor, General Arnold escaped and was placed into the service of George the Third. General Washington offered to trade André for Benedict Arnold, and while the offer was most tempting to General Clinton, he feared that no other Americans would defect if they saw Arnold returned to the rebels.

André sat in his quarters. He was confined, yet he was allowed to draw sketches. In little time, he was tried and found guilty of espionage and he now awaited his execution, asking only that he be given a soldier’s death before a firing

squad. As the time neared for his death, the hapless, would-be spy and dandy of General Clinton's continued to draw sketches and amuse his captors.

When the time arrived for his execution, he marched passively until he noticed the gibbet he had been ordered to hang from. André stopped and exclaimed, "Gentlemen, I am disappointed! I am reconciled to my death but not to the mode." When he realized his protest was in vain, he marched toward the gallows. As he reached the hangman, the man attempted to work the noose about André's neck, who snatched it from him and adjusted it himself.

When asked if he had any final words, André stared for a moment. "I have nothing more than this," he said, "that I have you gentlemen to bear me witness that I die like a brave man."

He stood motionless and waited for the driver to pull the wagon out from under his feet, which was done with a single crack of a whip; thus John André earned the dubious honor of reciprocating for Nathan Hale's hanging.

CHAPTER 32

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA DECEMBER, 1780

Thomas Jefferson sat in his chair, glancing about the executive office, wondering why he had ever accepted the challenge and had run for the governor of Virginia last year, and wishing he were home at Monticello instead of running the war-time commonwealth. He fingered the last letter he received from General Washington and read it again:

. . . It is essentially necessary that every measure should be taken to procure supplies of Cloathing for the troops, especially of Shoes, Stockings and linen . . . I hesitate to project the outcome of the war. My command is severely hampered by the shortness of time the soldiers spend in the service of our cause. Short enlistments have subjected Us to such distresses, to such enormous experiences, have so intimately hazarded our liberties that I never reflect upon them, but with a degree of horror.

How he could supply his friend's troops up north with the requests, Thomas knew not. Since the French had entered the war, the British seemed to be looking for soft spots in the colonies, and they were gearing up for what appeared to be an assault on Virginia. Thomas stared at the map of his state, noting the multitude of ports in Chesapeake Bay, and the vast territory to the west. His optimistic outlook about the war had long since departed from his countenance; the last weeks had clouded his being with despair, troubling him so that he was amidst another lengthy bout of continual headaches.

While Patrick Henry had been governor, Thomas had criticized his inept preparation of the state for an invasion. Henry had done little to protect the state. Therefore, Thomas sat in the executive's chair despairing because Virginia was virtually indefensible; given its lack of troops, industries, and supplies, it would be an easy plum for the British.

He wondered in desperation what to do about General Washington's request. Usually, although he was unable to respond with supplies as requested, he could instead send the general a cheerful note full of hope that some materials would be available soon. But now, depressed and discouraged, he could not bring himself to write a comforting message to the commander who was struggling in the field. He finally scribbled a note:

Unable to send the requested garments at this time. Hopefully, some will be available for your troops soon. I know that you are doing your best with the resources you have available, and only wish there were more.

As Thomas considered the desperate situation, he heard a knock and bid the caller to enter. Despite the dire circumstances, his face brightened to see the short legislator who had just entered. "Do come in. Just the man I would like to see."

James Madison walked to the desk and extended his hand, which Jefferson shook, pumping it three times. "Thomas, are the headaches gone?"

"No."

"Should I come back later then?"

"No. The war won't wait for my health to improve. I need some advice, and you are the brightest man in Virginia."

Madison's chest swelled noticeably, but he attempted to set aside the compliment. "What of Patrick Henry?"

Thomas waved his hand and sneered. “He may be a great talker, and he may have been a driving force in starting our break for independence, but a deep thinker, he is not.”

Madison smiled broadly. He knew the foreboding situation that Virginia was in and that Jefferson had too much on his mind to be trifling with idle flattery. He interlocked his fingers and extended the joined hands toward his troubled friend and listened as several of the knuckles popped. “I’m ready,” he announced.

Thomas took a deep breath, held it for several seconds, then released it through his mouth with a burst. “We’re nearly out of money, we have few militia, and those that we have aren’t armed.”

“How many rifles do we have?”

“Not even a quarter of our militia are armed with guns.”

Madison’s face contorted and he exploded. “After we beat the British back, if I ever have anything to say about this country, every house will have a rifle. Those ruddy blokes won’t quickly return if they know that behind every cabin door awaits death to the intruders. We must have a well-armed militia to keep our freedom.”

Thomas smiled despite his ringing head. “Thanks.”

“For what? Exploding at the lunacy of fighting the Lobsterbacks with pitchforks?”

“No, for knowing that we will win this war, for planning to keep the country after our liberty is won.”

Madison scratched his left ear and chewed on his lower lip with rapid, tiny bites. “Why shouldn’t we win?” He knew he was bright, and he was quickly learning about government and politics. He expected to win the war, and, he had ambitions thereafter that would surprise Thomas.

Jefferson pointed to the map on the wall, then walked over to it and pointed at the red dots in Chesapeake Bay. “See these twenty-seven dots? Each one represents a British vessel. I sent General Nelson down the river with urgent instructions to call out the militia, for whatever good it will do. We have no forts, no bullets, no men, virtually no hope. If the British want Virginia, they can walk in and take her without so much as a whimper of protest.”

Madison whistled, then asked, “Who’s in charge of the attacking fleet?”

“Word is that it’s that two-faced Arnold.”

Madison shook his head several times. “That’s not good. He knows how to command ships inland to great effect. He single-handedly stalled the British for a whole year up north with longboats and such. We have great problems if he turns the flotilla upriver.”

“Which river?”

“Thomas, I’m not a military man. Why don’t you ask General Steuben on that matter?”

“Good point,” said Thomas as he scribbled on a piece of paper the word “Steuben.”

Madison’s eyes caught fire as he narrowed them by lowering his lids. “I wish we’d hanged Benedict Arnold instead of John André. How could we have let the pig get away from us?”

“He’s more than a swine, he’s a wild boar, and he’s about to root out all of Virginia.”

“What’s your plan?”

Thomas released a nervous laugh. “Next to none. We don’t have any defenses. Why don’t you put a motion on the floor to adjourn the legislature? We don’t need to

have a sack full of politicians for Arnold to seize if he decides to start with Richmond.”

“I’ll do it right away. And would you like me to stay behind to assist?”

“Thanks, James, but if Arnold’s coming for Richmond, there’s no sense in us both being here to be captured. I’ll stay alone.”

Madison rose, shook Thomas’ hand, and walked out of the office taking abrupt, military steps, which smacked of irony coming from a man who was too sickly to fight with the militia. As Madison left, Thomas scratched out a dispatch to General Steuben for an urgent meeting.

* * * * *

Two days later, the governor met with Steuben and learned that Benedict Arnold was headed up the James River, possibly for Richmond. Jefferson despaired for the defenseless capital, and ordered the citizens to work night and day removing the public stores from the city. While the city was being vacated, he rode to Tuckahoe.

When he arrived, he was greeted by his wife. “Thomas, what a surprise. I’m so glad you’re you came to see me.” She lied. He was the last person she wanted to see now. The feelings were mutual as Thomas wanted to avoid her also.

“Daddy! Daddy!” came a cry from the house.

Thomas broke into a run across the room and grabbed eight-year-old Patsy. He swung her high in the air until she giggled in mock protest. When she did, Thomas set her down. “Go pack you things, sweetheart.” The little girl went dutifully to perform the chore.

“What is it?” asked his wife, her voice betraying her fear. “Do we have problems?”

“Big ones. Benedict Arnold is on the way to Richmond and I don’t want my family to be his prize.”

“I knew that something was wrong. Thomas! How can you continue at this revolution? First you write that god-awful *Declaration of Independence*, and now you’re governor of a colony that’s in full rebellion against Our King.”

“STATE!” he shouted. “Patty! It’s not a colony, it’s a state. We’re free of that tyrant. I don’t care how you want to defame the *Declaration* anymore. I don’t care if you’re meeting with Tories or anything else. But, we will protect our children. In the process, you might just save your precious farm. Now, stop fighting me at every turn. Stop trying to make me despair more than I already do. At least play the part of a supportive wife. Of course, you’re far too selfish to do that.”

Patty rose, showing pain in her face, but daring not to challenge her husband just yet. She’d never seen him so agitated. “Let’s have supper first, it should be ready in half an hour.”

“I don’t think there’s time.”

“What about you, aren’t you hungry?”

“I’ll eat soon enough. Don’t worry about me dropping from starvation.”

She sniffled and tried to dig in again, trying to garner sympathy. “Oh, Thomas, how I hate this war. How did you ever let Dr. Franklin talk you into all this? Why don’t you just quit being governor and let the other Virginians fight this war?”

Thomas was about to scream, but, he looked at his daughter, who was crying. He decided to try to reason with Patty one more time. “Franklin had little trouble convincing me. I must fight for liberty, I just must. I hope that you understand that.”

“And look what it’s done to poor George Wythe. Why he was a wealthy man before he signed your stinking *Declaration of Independence*, and now he’s a pauper.”

“The document is treason to British eyes. They’ll do more than ruin us financially if they catch us.”

“You mean you, don’t you?”

“Catch me then.”

“Will they catch you?” She didn’t want that either, because then her lands might be forfeited. *What a mess Thomas had made of the estate with this revolution.*

“No, I’m certain we’ll be out of here long before they come. But could they ruin us financially?” Thomas sucked in deeply, and looked at her. She really looked sickly. He started to be taken in by her, but, then resisted the impulse. He knew full well what it meant to fall into her traps. He’d had nine years too many of them already. “No, it would take years to break us.”

She smiled, wrongly thinking that she had won him back. She removed her apron and began rushing about packing up some necessities. Before long, Thomas, his sickly wife, and their children were headed for a friend’s house, about eight miles upstream from where they began the journey. As they pulled up to the house, Thomas turned his mount to leave, but Patty protested. “You must eat something –and spend the night.” The last phrase flowed from her lips in lush, melodic tones that begged him to remain. She needed to keep near him to maintain her control over him, but he was so distracted by the war that she had lost her power and control over him.

Thomas jumped from his horse, grasped his daughter and held her, calling to his wife. “I would if I could.” He kissed the little girl and mounted the horse, then sped away at a brisk canter, headed for Richmond. He rode the gelding hard and long, and it maintained a steady pace despite driving itself beyond its capacity. When

Richmond was in sight, the horse's sweat was so lathered that it was soaking through the saddle and onto Thomas' pants. He could see British troops in the city when his horse tumbled over in an exhausted heap.

Thomas had never before ridden a horse so hard, but this was a desperate event. He cried for the horse, then sent a prayer asking Divine Providence to protect it. unstrapped the saddle, slung it onto his back and walked to a farmhouse. A sympathetic farmer lent him a colt that he rode toward Richmond. As he neared the city, he saw that the British had taken it over entirely, and were burning its buildings and supplies. Thomas watched, unable to do a thing to assist. All he could do was cry and wait, which he did for the two days that the English occupied the town. After they had inflicted a severe wound to the heart of Virginia, Arnold's men turned and left the town.

Thomas returned to Richmond, but he was never the same. As governor, he felt it had been his duty to protect the capital, yet he had given it no defense. It was no consolation that Patrick Henry, as governor, had done nothing to protect the state. Nor did it help his mind that Richmond had no supplies, no arms, no men, and no chance of defending against Arnold. It was inevitable that it should fall, but he wished he had at least been there fighting when it fell instead of watching from the outskirts. He questioned his courage, and wanted nothing more to do with government.

CHAPTER 33

PARIS, FRANCE 1780

Franklin sauntered into Comte de Vergennes office and noticed that the man who was usually greeted him enthusiastically wore a sour countenance. Vergennes looked up at Franklin and motioned him to sit down. Franklin tried to read his mood.

“Benjamin, we have a serious problem.”

“Is it about the money we are requesting? Have we asked for too much and stretched our credit too far?”

Ignoring Franklin’s questions, Vergennes sternly asked, “How quickly do you think that the British would have routed your country if we had not intervened so very generously in your behalf? With troops, with naval support, with money and credit? Where do you think you would be now?”

Franklin looked at his friend. “We’d be in dire circumstances, if we were still alive at all.”

“The British are awful, contemptible . . . swine. They tell your black slaves that they will free them, then when your slaves revolt, as well they should anyway, I might add, the British ignore their earlier offers of freeing them. Instead of freeing the slaves that come to them, they inoculated them with small pox, then let them escape back to their original plantations, only to infect everyone in their path along the way, and at their home plantations.”

“I agree with you. The British have been awful. They have raised the Mohawks against us, and destroyed a noble group of six nations of the Iroquois who had lived in harmony until then. They have forced Indians to take scalps, they have given the Indians small pox laden blankets. They have broken so many promises to the colonists, the black slaves, the Indians and so on. They are a rotten bunch, the most evil nation on earth, among the most evil ever to frequent this planet.”

Vergennes was still frowning. “You forgot to mention that they have counterfeited your currency with such adroitness that your Continental dollars are nearly worthless.”

“That too, that too, and many other horrible things.”

“I’m not certain that we can continue to assist your cause.”

“No! Please tell me this is not so!”

Vergennes cleared his throat. “Does John Adams speak for the Americans?”

“Well, yes, he is authorized to negotiate a peace with Britain.”

“Must he be allowed in the French Court?”

“Why? He has spoken to me privately about concerns he has with French support, but I thought that those were only his personal views that would not interfere with his work here. Has he officially offended the Court?”

Vergennes opened a drawer and pulled out several letters from John Adams, all of which were insulting to the French, and many personally attacking Vergennes. He handed the letters to Franklin, who began reading them. As Franklin read, he became filled with horror. *What on earth is that arrogant hothead doing? Is he trying to alienate the French so we will lose the war?*

“What do you think?” asked Vergennes.

“I’ll take care of this, and directly! Congress will not stand for this.”

“Well, I’m not answering his letters, and he is not welcome here.”

“I’ll take care of him the best I can.”

Vergennes finally smiled. “I knew I could count on you. Please, get him out of our hair. If he keeps it up, the French people will begin to think that he speaks for the majority of Americans.”

Franklin fumed as he left the office. When back at Passy, he wrote a letter to Congress severely chastising John Adams. He let Congress know that Adams’ arrogance was unparalleled and that his recent activities were injurious to the war effort.

Franklin was irate. He had worked so arduously to curry the favor of the French, who had amply supported the American Revolution with their army, navy and money. The war against the British would have surely been lost already, but for the tremendous assistance from Louis XVI.

Franklin included in the letter to Sam Huntington:

[Adams] thinks, as he tells me himself, that America has been too free in Expression of Gratitude to France; for that she is more oblig’d to us than we to her . . . M. Vergennes, who appears much offended, told me, yesterday, that he would enter into no further Discussions with Mr. Adams, nor answer any more of his Letters.

This letter included copies of all of the insulting letters that Adams had sent to Vergennes. Franklin knew well the type of reaction he would get from Adams for doing this, but there was no option. Adams’ hatred for the French and love for the British was showing through. If Adams were left to his own devices, he would have caused the French to retreat from their support of the American cause, and, the war

would have been lost. Franklin was glad that Adams had elected to go to Holland at this time.

After this letter was written, Adams became an open and bitter enemy of both Franklin and the French, never again able to separate them in his mind. Prior to this, Franklin had believed that the portly little hothead was an asset to the cause of liberty, despite his arrogant ways and offensive mannerisms. But, now, he was a total liability that had to be contained somehow. Franklin hoped that Congress would dress him down thoroughly and maybe call him back to America.

CHAPTER 34

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA SPRING, 1781

Governor Jefferson stared at the map of Virginia, eyeing the red blotches in the north portion with anger and despair. As governor, he had moved the capital inland to Richmond; the foolish Patrick Henry had left it undefended on the coast. However, the move to Richmond was insufficient to keep it safe from the British, and now the city had to be evacuated. In desperation, the wartime capital was moved to Charlottesville, but Lord Cornwallis was cutting through the state with the ease of a heated knife slicing through lard, and the state wasn't fat; it was very lean. Stripped of guns, men and supplies, the governor had nowhere to turn, no backups to call for aid, and no chance of halting the British general's onslaught.

The transition from thirty-seven to thirty-eight-years of age seemed like moving from manhood to dotage, thanks to the British war, and it appeared as though it happened overnight. He dreaded each coming day, seeking counsel from legislators, from generals, even from people on the street, but he was getting no help. He sat at his desk and wrote out a plaintiff cry to George Washington, who would receive it and respond that he could spare no troops nor change his focus and address the British in the south, not even for the sake of his home state.

Thomas moved the legislature to Charlottesville in hopes of protecting the state's governing body from the British. The move had one consolation, he was now close to his home in Monticello, but that was a backhanded benefit, because the

British were pressing ever closer to his stables and livelihood. Things were beyond bleak, beyond all despair and hope as the sun set, appearing to symbolize the setting of the American experiment in self government before it began.

He rode to Monticello with a few legislators who were staying at his home. The rest of the men were lodging at the Swan Tavern in town. As the horsemen approached his house, he saw Rubin waving wildly from the porch, then watched as his black slave ran pell-mell toward him. “Masser, masser, the Misses, she’s pretty bad sick. I caught her cryin in the kitchen and holdin her gut aplenty.”

Jefferson dismounted from his mount with the swiftness of a startled cat and entered his house. He walked down a corridor in search of Patty. As he search his home, he bumped into a maid, which knocked a teapot from her hand that spilled onto a scatter rug. The search was futile, and he called out, “Patty, where are you?” as he continued looking.

When he opened the door to the study, he found her sitting with a blanket over her knees, peacefully reading Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*. She glanced up as he entered and smiled. “I didn’t hear you come in, I’ve been so involved in this little book, I didn’t hear a thing.”

Something was terribly wrong. She lacked the energy to shout; her voice was limited to whispers. He sat down in anticipation. Patty reached to brush her hair with her left hand, but a pang in her side forced her to retract her arm. Thomas didn’t know whether to feel relief or grief from her debilitated condition. “I’m glad you’re reading that little humor book. It will help keep your spirit healthy.”

She tried to smile, but only a portion of her face could turn upward. The pain was relentless. “Things aren’t going too well with the war?”

“You’ve never cared much about the war, except to tell me to get out of it.”

“I think we ought to move Rubin into the stable with the horses. He gets in too much mischief in the house.”

“Patty, how long have you been ill? Why didn’t you let me know?” Thomas rose, stared blankly at a portrait on the wall, then said, “Please, go up to bed.”

“But, you’ve brought guests.”

“So now they’re guests. It was just this morning that you called them trespassers. Besides, we’ll have them tomorrow, and next month, and next year. I want you to go to bed, won’t you please?”

“I’ll walk you there now, if you want.”

She shook her head. “I want to finish this CHAPTER, then I’ll put myself away for the evening. Why don’t you go see to the visitors.” Patty was quite ill and she wanted Thomas to get out of the room.

“Okay, laugh with that book a little longer. You appear to be about 200 pages into it. Has he been born yet?” he asked.

She shook her head. “Not yet.”

Patty set down *Tristram Shandy* and she struggled to her feet, whimpering as she walked to the bedroom. Once inside her destined place, she fell upon the bed and rolled into a ball, attempting to relieve the pressure from her stomach.

Jefferson entertained his guests until supper was announced, and they sat down at the dining room table for a meal. Conversation touched on topics of how to raise money for the militia to attempt to arm them, whether Lord Cornwallis could be knocked out of the state, and if they should surrender the temporary capital and relocate. Thomas heard all the chatter, but none of it penetrated. He waited patiently for everyone to finish, and when the last plate was cleared, he rose, excused himself, spoke to his children for a few minutes, then joined Patty in the bedroom. That night,

he got little sleep, tossing about, snatching dreams of being alone, fighting a company of Lobsterbacks with a wooden sword and a paper shield. Each time he hoisted the shield, the British troops fired their guns upon it, until it was a tattered mess, resembling a kite that had been caught in a storm. Then the Patty would appear in the distance, laughing menacingly as the British onslaught continued to debilitate him. The dream repeated twice with the same result, but on the third time when the British fired their volley, she laughed no more, as one of the shells hit her.

Sweat covered his legs when he awoke from the dream. He thought he heard hooves beating the ground furiously, then shook his head to clear away the effects of sleep. Listening intently, he heard nothing more of horses, but scanned the room gasping, looking for Patty, who was sleeping in the bed. As he noticed her, he heard a soft tap on the door. “What is it?” whispered Thomas.

Rubin called to Thomas, “Masser, could you please come out?”

Thomas walked into the corridor and observed Rubin hunched over in a submissive pose. “Beggin yer pardon, Masser, but we got a visitor that done rode up here in a powerful big hurry what says he be needin to be a talkin with you.”

“I’ll be right there. Offer him some coffee or Madeira, whichever he wants.”

“Will do, Masser.” Rubin stared toward the bedroom. “I do hope she be a gittin better.”

“I’m not too sure about that,” said Thomas, slipping into a housecoat and tying its belt with a knot. It’s fabric was worn through in the rear, but it would have to do until after the war when personal items could be replenished. Thomas followed Rubin out of the bedroom and into the parlor where he spotted the early-morning messenger dressed in a scarlet coat with a sweat-soaked, plumed hat resting askew on his head.

“How may I help you?” asked Thomas.

“Begging your pardon, your Excellency. Captain John Jouett, sir. Cornwallis is at the River Anna, and pushing west. I was spending the night at the Cuckoo Tavern in Louisa when I heard hooves and saw Colonel Tarleton leading white-coated cavalry west at a gallop. The only place they could be heading is Charlottesville.”

“I’m certain you’re right,” said Thomas noticing his clock said four-thirty. “When did they ride through Louisa?”

“I heard them about eleven last night.”

Rubin came into the room with a large glass of Madeira and handed it to Captain Jouett. After giving the guest his wine, he turned to Thomas. “Would you be needing anything, Masser?”

Thomas shook his head and dismissed his servant. “Eleven! How in the world have you made it here in such a short time?”

“I’ve been riding Prince Charley all night. There’s not a steed in the state that can catch him.”

“And how did you overtake Colonel Tarleton’s troops without them arresting you?”

“Do you think me a spy?”

“I can’t imagine so, otherwise you’d not be here.”

Captain Jouett took a swig of the wine, smacked his lips, and declared, “That’s the finest drink I’ve had in years. Anyway, I rode here using back paths that I doubt any British troops have ever traveled.”

Thomas scratched his head and believed he was fully awake now. “For this valuable information, I thank you Captain Jouett. Would you please ride down to the Swan Tavern and awaken the legislators and let them know of the danger? I hope you don’t think me an awful host, but I must get dressed, so if you will excuse me?”

The captain nodded and shook Thomas' hand. The governor turned and walked toward his bedroom, stopped and told Rubin to awaken all the guests, then went into his bedroom and dressed. As he was pulling on a boot, Patty awakened and asked, "What's going on?"

Thomas looked at her momentarily, then rushed to the bed and knelt beside her. As awful as she was to him, he really had trouble seeing her suffer like this. "How are you feeling?"

"Better, thanks. But what's amiss?"

"The British are riding hard for Charlottesville, they'll probably be here soon. You better get dressed and take the children away in the carriage."

Patty's mouth dropped open. "I won't go! Let them burn the house if they like, but, I'll be in it. They won't get it without a fight."

Thomas tried to smile. "I know you'd battle well, but our children need you. Now, get ready and take care of them. I know you're sick, but you'll have to tough it out. I'll join you as soon as I can."

"Oh Thomas," she exclaimed, "I'm frightened."

"King George has been after my hide since Lexington, I don't think he'll get it this time either."

Patty whimpered, "If the British ever do catch you and hang you as a traitor, I'll . . ." She stopped, then began to realize that if they did, she'd lose everything.

Thomas smiled, "Don't worry." He nodded to her, then rose and left the room. He walked down the hall and began waking his children one at a time, kissing them tenderly, warning each to be brave, and secured promises that they would do whatever their mother asked.

He rang for Rubin, who came at once. "Is the captain gone?"

“Yessuh,” he bubbled.

“And are all the guests awake?”

“Yessuh.”

“Have a breakfast prepared, will you?”

“Been done ordered already, Masser.”

Thomas stared into his slave’s eyes, seeing their black color offset by stark whiteness around them. Thomas believed them to be among the most spiritual looking eyes he’d ever chanced upon. “I need a big favor, Rubin.”

“You got it, Masser, all you needs do is ask.”

“I want you to go with my family, to watch over them until I can join them.”

“Yessuh,” he said almost imperceptibly, lowering his head.

“What is the problem? Have I asked too much of you?”

Rubin’s head remained dropped, his eyes focused on the carpet, and he stammered, “Masser, you never be askin too much of Rubin, but – ”

“What is it?” asked Thomas impatiently, about to order his slave to do the act without further protest.

“It’s my woman, Masser. She be powerful big with child and I don’t want to leave her.”

Thomas shook his head, angered with himself that he’d forgotten that Sally was expecting. Too much was going on for him to recall everything, but he had nearly forced Rubin to do something unthinkable. Other slaves could take the Jefferson family to safety. “Do you think she can travel with my family?”

“She’s real big.”

“Maybe it would be safer for you to chance it. The British are on the way here as we speak.”

“I be knowin that.”

“But they might burn you out!”

“Masser, there ain’t no Lobsterback big enough to be burnin Rubin out of his home. Don’t you worry none about Monticello. If Rubin be livin, it be standin, you got my word on that.”

“Go see to Sally then.”

Rubin left and Thomas entered the dining room. Several of his guests were already seated and eating rolls. Thomas sat down and announced, “Gentlemen, we have cavalry bearing down hard upon us. I suggest that we eat our breakfasts and meet with the rest of the legislature in Charlottesville.” There were no objections, not even from the Speaker of the House, who usually had much to say about everything, but this morning he just gnawed at a hard roll.

The legislators departed from Monticello after eating, and formed a quorum when they were joined in Charlottesville by the lawmakers who had stayed at the Swan Tavern. Thomas explained the peril and a vote was taken to adjourn the legislature, to reassemble it at Staunton, some thirty-five miles west. A voice vote showed no opposition and the Charlottesville capital was officially abandoned.

Thomas returned to Monticello and found Rubin grinning, exposing all his teeth and the gap in the front from a missing incisor. “Masser, I be a papa of the prettiest little girl you never did see. Won’t you come and see my baby?”

“Congratulations, Rubin,” Thomas extended his hand and shook his slave’s. “I need to take care of some things, but I’ll check in on Sally and the little one soon. Could you saddle up Eagle and tether him behind the bushes near the big tree?”

“You be expectin company that we doesn’t want here real soon?”

“Real soon.” Thomas headed for the office as Rubin shot out the door for the barn. In his office, Thomas methodically arranged papers, burning dangerous ones, allowing others to survive. As he was about to leave, he picked up his Franklin file as an afterthought and leafed through it. His hands trembled as he read a damning document that would have exposed his friend who the British still seemed to believe to be Agent 72 on the Royal payroll. He leafed the papers again, and wanted to selectively discard papers, but knew the time was too short. He flung the whole file into the fireplace, then watched the pages slowly ignite and curl.

All that remained was the red file, which was loaded with ciphered messages from all around the continent. He pulled out a paper Franklin had given him and told him not to read except in gravely perilous times, which Thomas knew this was. He held the secret message to a candle, and watched the invisible ink appear. He read, “Last Will and Testament. Philadelphia, July, 1776. If Thomas is reading this, transfer all my property in trust out of your state. Adieu, B.F.” He had little trouble following the advice to dump Patrick Henry; he wanted little to do with the man anyway. The beer Henry had blown in Thomas’ face still smarted, and had cooked up a hatred of the man. Thomas thought for a moment, then flung the red file into the fireplace and watched it smolder, then erupt in flames.

He walked outside, and from the elevated location of Monticello he inspected the town of Charlottesville before he walked slowly toward the brush where he expected Eagle to be waiting for him. He turned for a last look at his house, and hoped that the British would have the decency to leave it standing. He waved to a couple of servants who assured him that they’d keep the British in line. Then he ambled for the brush where he heard Eagle scraping a hoof on the ground.

As he reached his horse, he heard hooves pounding the ground and saw three cavalrymen not more than a hundred yards away. He danced behind the brush before they rode by, hoping he would not be discovered. The price on the head of the author of the *Declaration of Independence* was high. Jefferson was a prize many Lobsterbacks dreamed of seizing.

The trailing soldier had spotted Thomas, and leapt from his mount as he passed the brush. He tumbled into the bushes and grabbed hold of the rebel governor's hair. Thomas let out a howl, and threw an elbow into the man's groin, forcing him to release his hold. Thomas threw three quick punches, and the soldier fell to the ground. Thomas ran for Eagle and mounted him.

The soldier's two companions had turned about and headed their horses for the bushes. Unseen by Thomas, Rubin had been attending to business on the other side of the bushes when he heard the commotion. He dashed at the two passing horsemen who were heading for Thomas. Without hesitation, Rubin leapt at the passing hindquarter of a horse, seized the animal's leg, and wrapped himself around it.

Rubin's lunge caught the horse mid-stride, and the startled animal buckled over, rolling onto its side, then back, and onto its other side before righting itself with its rider still in the saddle, but who soon slipped off, having been knocked unconscious. Rubin had ridden the horse's rear leg on the somersault, and lay on the ground with a huge gash in his forehead.

The other rider turned to assist his friend and charged at Rubin, who was groggily climbing to his feet as he heard Eagle whinny, and turned to see Thomas galloping down the hill. The British horseman, stopped his mount, evaluated how fast Eagle was traveling, and quickly realized that his horse was too spent to give any kind of chase to that swift animal. He stared at Rubin, who wobbled as he took one step.

“You sorry black low life. You risked your useless life for a worthless, traitorous wretch.”

“No suh. Ah protected my friend from rotten scum.” said Rubin, grinning, despite the pain.

The horseman drew his saber and charged Rubin, who was too shaken to move defensively. As the horse drove past him, its rider’s sword plunged deeply in the slave’s chest and toppled Rubin, who writhed for a moment, and died.

CHAPTER 35

Patrick Henry took the floor of the legislature of the Virginia, and paced back and forth for several seconds. Three times, he appeared to want to speak, but each time as his mouth opened, nothing came out of it. He continued to pace, and again opened his mouth before he finally spoke: “My fellow Virginians, we are in a most difficult time, fighting a war, and doing rather poorly, facing the prospect of defeat at the hands of the British at any time. Lord Cornwallis is hard upon us. We need help and guidance and leadership.

“Where do we turn for this, but to the executive, the Governor of Virginia. And where is our governor? I ask you, where is Thomas Jefferson? And what has he done for Virginia?

“After we moved our capital to Richmond, why did he leave that city undefended for Benedict Arnold to take without a whimper? When we fled to establish a capital in Charlottesville, did he set up defenses of that capital or was it also left undefended for Cornwallis to seize as a prize?

“And where did we retreat like hounds ashamedly running from their masters, but to Stratton to hide and cower at the first sign of attack. Did our governor even join us there? Nay, he did not. Perhaps the heat of the battle was too much and his nerves couldn’t take it. Perhaps it is true that his wife was sick and he was attending to her. It doesn’t matter which, because he has a duty to be with the legislature of Virginia in these dire times, or to . . . step down and let another lead us.

“And where is he today? Does anyone see our governor here? I submit that it is time to expose this phantom and install another, another with the fortitude to lead us

in this terrible battle for freedom, one who will not shirk his responsibility and stand strong. One who will defend our capital, not one who will abandon it.

“More than anything, this leader must be instilled with certain powers, powers to act decisively without needing to come to the legislature for every detail. You see, democracies and republics are fine in peace time, but during war, they are unwieldy and impractical. We need to refine our government to put more power into the hands of the executive.”

A plump man rose and shouted, “You’re saying we need a dictator.”

Henry stared at his fellow legislator for several seconds. “That is an indelicate word.”

“But is it not what you are proposing?”

“Well, yes,” said Henry, reluctant to take on that word, but uncertain how to actually avoid it.

“Then, I call for a vote on the issue of whether to give the governor despotic powers,” said the plump man. “Do I have a second?”

“Aye,” said another.

Henry shouted, “I must protest. I have hardly begun my discourse, please allow me to finish.”

The plump man said in a squeaky voice, “We know what you want, and if we give you long enough to speak, you could convince us that black is white and that Cornwallis is our commanding general and that General Washington is our foe, but all of us know whether we want a tyrant installed to fight King George, and the vote has been called and seconded, so Mr. Henry, you are out of order.”

Henry huffed and walked to his seat, angered at being cut short; the vote was by secret ballot. A dictator’s powers would be unheard of in Virginia, except the recent

battles had taken such a toll on her citizens. Until recently, the state had been spared the ravages of war, but now, the horrors of it were at hand. Houses, farms, and whole towns were burned by the British invaders. Lootings, kidnappings and rapes had come home to Virginia, compliments of the British King via his Lobsterbacks, mercenaries hired from Europe, whichever Indians the British could stir up to attack from the west, and the slaves that England offered freedom-for-fighting awards. An irony of the war was that Britain had formed alliances with groups that it had previously enslaved or brutalized, but now, since England had the money, it bought its needed alliances. And, worse, when the war did end, the English allies would soon learn royal oppression, courtesy of King George III.

In 1776, a dictator in Virginia was unthinkable, but the heat of battle opened the door for the move for power. While Henry had been the state's governor for three years of the war, he had done nothing to prepare the state for conflict, primarily because the fighting was hot in the north and the south, but absent from his state. Henry had left the wartime governmental seat at the indefensible coastal town of Williamsburg, as if offering a plum to England at any time. But, now, he took no responsibility for his administration's failure to prepare, and openly criticized the current governor. Despite Henry's antics and moves for centralized power, when the votes were counted on whether a war for liberty needed an absolute dictator, the state of Virginia said 'No' and its government remained republican in form. After the vote was announced, Henry rose, folded his hands behind his back, leaned his head forward and walked to the door. When he reached it, he grabbed the handle, flung it open, walked out, and slammed the door behind him.

Shortly after this display, a young legislator, George Nicholas, asked for an investigation of the governorship of Thomas Jefferson. "Mr. Henry might be wrong

about wanting to have a dictator, but he did raise an interesting point. Did our governor leave the state exposed to attack by Generals Arnold and Cornwallis? I think it bears looking into so that the people of Virginia know the answer.” He proposed, “That at the next session of the Assembly an inquiry be made into the conduct of the Executive of this State for the last twelve months.” Several of Jefferson’s “supporters” considered protesting, but many felt if they did it would appear that they were afraid of facing the truth, so the proposal carried unanimously.

When word of this unprecedented insult reached Thomas, he responded first in anger, throwing a book into the fireplace. Then he sulked in a chair. For several hours he sat motionless, wearing a perpetual sneer. Finally, Patty came into the room. “Thomas, don’t let them bother you so.”

“I can’t help it. I direct a war with no resources, I fight for the people’s freedom, I risk my life and my estate for them, I have a farm sacked by the British, I donate half my horses to the cavalry, I neglect my family, I give and give and give . . . and what do I get in reward for my generous service . . . but a slap across my chin.”

“We are at war Thomas. I don’t like it, as I have let you know. I told you that you would get no thanks for this effort, and that you couldn’t trust these people you were trying to help.”

“The tyrants will never be gone. People are corrupted too quickly by power. If we beat King George away from our shores, another will thirst for control of us. It can come from within or without, it makes no difference. Look at Patrick Henry. A fine fellow, dedicated to liberty and justice, until he earns some money, some fame, some power, and now he’s obsessed with it. He’s nothing but a liberator turned tyrant.”

“I can’t believe that of Patrick,” said Patty.

“Don’t blame him for it, I think it’s just the nature of most men to seek power. Those who understand that must control their urge, discipline themselves, and refuse to become intoxicated by self-importance. Henry may eventually grow out of this phase, at least it is my greatest hope that he does.”

Thomas smiled momentarily.

“Caught you! That’s better. Now, Governor Jefferson, just what do you intend to do?

“I’m going to retreat from public life.”

Patty jumped and shouted, “What? Finally! You’ll stay home!”

Thomas’ eyes hardened. “I must let the people of Virginia and of the United States fight for themselves. I fear that I could become corrupted with power just as Patrick Henry has if I stayed in the public eye and at the reins of government. I will not run for governor again and my term will expire in a few weeks. Someone else must take the lead, and I will remain in the background. I believe the war will be won within a year or two whether I am governor or not. More importantly, I want to sit back and watch politics from a distance, and then I can be more objective.”

“Are you sure this is the right thing to do? What about our liberty?” She could hardly contain herself. She was actually gaining strength watching Thomas go through this agony. She could feel her body glowing, as though it was sucking the life blood directly from Thomas.

“I’m right, I know it. I’m finished with politics, you have my solemn pledge. However, if I see corruption of the men coming to power in such a degree that our liberty is truly at risk, or if I see corrupt men in power, I will rise to the occasion and re-join the body politic.”

Patty looked incredulously at him. “Is that a promise that you’ll stay away as soon as your term expires?”

“Yes.”

Patty turned and chuckled to herself. Try though he might, King George couldn’t do it, and try her best, she couldn’t do it, but the ungrateful people of Virginia were able to reduce Thomas to a state of total despair. *Finally, this idealistic dolt will get his due. I hope that his depression leads to headaches and all manner of malady. What a hell he has put me through. Finally, he will get what is coming to him.*

CHAPTER 36

MONTICELLO, MAY 1782

Thomas held his new daughter with the same pride as he had his first, he bounced her momentarily, then handed her back to Patty. She grasped the infant and smiled as Thomas pulled out his violin and played a lullaby. The little girl closed her eyes.

After the baby was soundly sleeping, Thomas sat the fiddle down and eased himself onto the bed. “Patty, are you feeling any better?”

“I’ll be okay, Thomas.”

“Do you think that you’ll be up and around soon?”

She rolled her head over and wiped sweat from her cheek. “I’m glad you’re not governor anymore. It’s nice to have you around so much.”

“Don’t change the subject, are you feeling stronger?”

She shook her head.

* * * * *

Thomas knew how she felt about him, but it was his duty as a husband and a father, so, he had diligently stayed at her side while she wasted away. The months of unending attendance to Patty’s bedside had taken their toll. Thomas’ eyes were clouded and seemed set back so far as to be touching the rear of his skull. He sat in the chair, two feet from her bedside and watched as Patty caught some sleep. He

began to doze when he heard the door open. As he looked up, he saw Sally carrying a tray with two water glasses on it.

“Masser Jefferson, could I have some words with you?” she asked.

He nodded.

“Could it be outside?”

Thomas rose and groggily followed her out of the room, not wanting to disturb Patty. “Let’s go into my study,” he suggested.

They entered and Thomas sat in his favorite chair while the slave stood awaiting his direction. He waved her to sit.

“Rubin were a good man. He didn’t have no school so he didn’t talk too good, but he were a bright man, a brilliant man. He could fix anything, design anything, build anything.”

“I know.”

“He loved you deeply, Masser Jefferson.”

Thomas nodded, wondering why she was troubling him with reminiscing about the man who had sacrificed his life for him. He was frustrated to have been taken away from Patty’s bedside and he thought that he should return.

“I hope I ain’t oversteppin my place by talkin with you, but you’ve always treated me with dignity so I got to say this to you. If I’m out of place, just send me away, won’t you?”

“I will.”

“How I loved Rubin, but I lost him in one day, snap, just like that. One hour he was holding me and our new baby, strong as a mule and playful as a puppy, the next, I was buryin him.”

Thomas lowered his head. “I know,” he said softly.

“But my man gave me a daughter that I love, a girl that is a part of him,” she laughed and added, “or as Rubin would say, ‘she be a part of him’ or some such thing.”

Thomas looked at her face, its soft lines and friendly eyes reeked of compassion and emotion. He hoped she would find another man who would love her as Rubin had. “So you think I should be glad I have a new daughter even if I lose Patty?” He tried not to let on to others that he and Patty were a rather quarrelsome pair.

“You ain’t moved from that bedside since your child was born. Four months of watching your woman turn poorly and more poorly. What about little Lucy Elizabeth?”

Thomas rose, his face twitched, then he shouted, “You’ve said enough.” He bolted out of the study and made for Patty’s bedside. In spite of his disdain for Patty, he would follow his duty through to the very bitter end.

Despite his anger with Sally, he unlatched the door to the bedroom with soft hands and quietly slipped into the room and resumed his perch in the chair next to the bed. As he looked onto Patty’s face, her eyes opened, and she said, “Thomas, you look distraught.”

“It’s Sally. I’ve just had words with her.”

“Why talk to her? Because she lost her husband and you’re about to lose your wife? Because you both got new daughters in the process? Are you messing around with Sally? You better not be messing with Sally, that would be incest.”

Thomas seethed as he bit his lip. “You know that I don’t abuse slaves. And, I don’t know how her being one of your relatives’ children could ever qualify as incest regarding me.”

“It will be incest in the public’s mind, at least after they learn what I’ve put into the proper hands.”

“And, what might that be?”

“That you’re the father of her child and that she’s your mistress.”

“Woman, I’ve heard so many lies from you, so many horrible things out of your mouth, so many malicious and false accusations, that I shouldn’t be amazed, but, this . . . this . . . is your most vile. And being said on your deathbed. Clearly you care not a wit about God or Justice.”

Thomas swallowed twice, but couldn’t clear his throat, so he let out a light cough. “You’re not dying, you won’t die.”

She had little strength, but was ready to deliver yet another blow to her husband. “I’ve run my course, but I need you to make me some promises before I finish. Can you do that?”

“I’ll try,” he said, holding back his fury.

“First, I want you to take the best care possible of our children.”

“You know I would, no matter what.”

Patty nodded that she understood, but her eyes seemed to say that she wanted to hear it anyway. Dislike him though she did, she knew that he was honest, and that these promises, regardless of how they were extracted, would be honored.

Patty signaled that she wanted something to drink by pointing at a pitcher. Thomas picked it up and poured her a glass of water that he held to her lips and let her sip. “Thanks,” she said, “This is important, Thomas . . . most important. I feel guilty asking . . . but I have to do it.”

Thomas looked at her, wondering what she was about to extort.

“Thomas, you must never marry again.”

“Don’t be silly, I’m not thinking of it.”

“Don’t divert me, do I have your promise to finish your life without another wife?”

“Why ask you this?”

“Will you promise never to marry again?”

“What if I did?”

“Well, first, the information will come out about you and Sally – that I’ve already seen to.”

“Lies, lies and more lies. Woman! Every time one of your relatives visits, we get a crop of lighter hued slaves. It’s your family that has no sense of dignity or honor. How could you plan such a heinous thing from your deathbed?”

She smiled slyly. “Do I have your promise? We wouldn’t want future generations to read such horrible things about the author of the *Declaration of Independence*, even if they are lies, now, would we?”

Thomas shook his head in total exasperation and disbelief. He was being blackmailed by this witch, and even though the matter she threatened to disclose was a total lie, he was powerless. He shook his head in despair. “I will not marry again.”

“Good,” she said, “now go get my children so I can say good-bye to each of them.”

Thomas rose and wondered whether he should let his children see this vile wretch of a woman, but finally decided that they had a right, if not a duty to say good-bye to their mother. He realized he must let them see her and hoped she would not poison them too much in her last hours when he saw Patty’s eyes close and her hand fall down the side of the bed. He checked her limp wrist and felt no pulse. He placed his head to her chest, but heard no breathing. Instantly he put a mirror to her

nose, but saw no fog. He shook her gently, and her head bobbed. One eye opened, but exposed only its white. Thomas called out and Sally came into the room. Thomas looked at her, and softly said, “She’s gone. Gone.”

Sally lowered her head, her lips moved as she silently prayed for both Thomas and Patty Jefferson. Thomas walked by and went to his study, folded himself into the chair, lowered his head into his hands, and bawled. Many would believe that he was grieving over losing his wife. In fact, he was crying in absolute disbelief that there could be such a vile being on this planet. He knew that she would have been a good mate for George III, but couldn’t fathom why he was enticed into her wicked hands. He prayed that being near her hadn’t damaged his or his children’s souls.

CHAPTER 37

PARIS, 1784

Two years of suffering and humiliation passed before Thomas was called by his country to join forces with John Adams in London and Benjamin Franklin in Paris to help negotiate treaties with the various powers of Europe and the new nation of America. What he would discover in Europe was a mystery to him, but he knew that it would be an explosive puzzle. The situation between the two diplomats was tenuous. In 1783, Virginia congressional representative James Madison, a person whom Thomas respected greatly but who would later demonstrate that the respect might not have been justified, had written him that, “Congress yesterday received from Mr. Adams several letters . . . not remarkable for anything unless it be a display of his vanity, his prejudice against the French Court and his venom against Dr. Franklin.”

Thomas would have to wrestle with his head and his heart to deal with the two brilliant representatives of America. In his mind, Benjamin Franklin was the founder of the American revolution, but head-strong John Adams was indeed one of the catalysts that made it a reality. His respect for both ran deep; he dreaded having to choose between them, and hoped that perhaps Franklin would come up with a diplomatic solution to the problem.

On his way to Europe, Thomas traveled through American towns so he would have a flavor of who he was negotiating for. Most of his life had been spent in

Virginia, but, en route to board the *Ceres* for her maiden transatlantic voyage he visited New England to get the pulse of the cradle of the revolution.

Thomas' daughter Patsy along with Rubin's wife Sally and her daughter sailed upon the *Ceres* to France with him. During the crossing of the Atlantic, Thomas read from one of his favorite novels, *Don Quixote*. This time he enjoyed it in Spanish with the help of a newly acquired Spanish-English dictionary, so he could learn yet another language. Upon arrival at Paris, he went to Passy to see Benjamin Franklin for a few minutes, leaving his companions in a carriage.

As he went to knock on the door, he hesitated, reflected at how much he and the aged philosopher had been through, then banged on the brass plate. He expected a butler to answer, and was quite surprised to see Franklin opening the door. Thomas extended his hand and said, "Dr. Franklin, we've come so far, and we've much further to go, I'm at your service."

Franklin raised his glasses and looked quite surprised and passed a wink to Thomas and gestured for him to enter. "Oh, my word, Thomas Jefferson! I knew you were coming but am not quite ready to see you. I've been working on a speech and can't seem to get anything to go correctly. I did hope to have it done before you arrived, but as things would have it, I'm but in the middle of it."

"I only planned on staying a minute or two anyway, but if I should return later, Dr. Franklin, I don't want to trouble you."

Franklin turned and motioned Thomas to follow him into a study, which had papers scattered and crumpled about. Benjamin pointed at the mess and declared, "You see, everything I start falls short, I must be getting old because I've never had such a time writing."

Thomas glanced at the scattered piles of scrapped ideas and nodded. He had been there and known the pains of writer's struggles. How well he remembered laboring over draft after draft of the *Declaration of Independence*. He didn't think he'd ever get it written, and then when he did, Franklin and John Adams offered a couple of minor suggestions, but Congress, oh how it tore that document apart, after he had thought it was nearly perfect. Most troubling of the Congressional suggestions was the gutting of the anti-slavery clause, but that was in the past. The country would have to live with the slavery issue until it matured enough to shed the institution that England had so cavalierly deposited upon American shores. "I know what it's like to draft documents and speeches. I hope for your sake it's not to be reviewed by a committee."

"Much worse than that, it's for the Seven Sisters Lodge. Those Freemasons can be ruggedly tough judges." Franklin believed it was through the Freemasons he would find out who "Cain" was. He knew "Spartacus" was Adam Weisshaupt, but "Cain" was still and elusive mystery to him.

The man who had tagged along behind Franklin since Thomas' arrival cleared his throat. Benjamin said, "Oh, pardon my manners, oh dear, I am getting old. Mr. Bancroft, please, meet Mr. Jefferson."

Thomas shook hands with the immaculately dressed man who sported a pointed nose, and Jefferson felt a cold clam in his grasp, which he released as quickly as he dared without offending Franklin's acquaintance. "I've heard and read much about you, Mr. Jefferson; your pen is sharper than even Thomas Paine's if I may say so."

"Why, thank you, Mr. Bancroft, but I doubt anyone's pen could be more pointed than Paine's."

Franklin waved his hand. "I don't mean to be rude, but I must get back to work. Bancroft has been good enough to find you a place to live at temporarily, or permanently if it suits you. Benjamin reached in his drawer and removed a clean sheet of paper and cleared a spot on his desk to set it down so he could write upon it. "Now, what was that address, Bancroft?"

Bancroft offered the instructions and number of a place on the Champs Elysées which Franklin wrote down, using a quill that was missing its feathers from one side of the spine. "Yes, yes," said Franklin, "that is a good area and there are some good spots all about it, Thomas, some good spots all about it."

Thomas took the paper and nodded his thanks silently to Bancroft and slid the document into his coat. "I guess I should get going if you're busy. Nice to meet you Mr. Bancroft. Dr. Franklin, should I return later today?"

"You'll probably be harried getting settled and all, I have the address of the place you'll be at, perhaps if I stop by at six this evening it would be satisfactory with you. I do apologize that I have been struggling with this speech and haven't completed it."

"I understand how tough writing can be at times, don't even think about it." Thomas shook Franklin's hand, then, most reluctantly, took hold of the clam once again, and shuffled out of the quarters to his awaiting carriage and traveling companions.

As he entered the carriage Thomas gave the driver the address of the apartment Bancroft had secured for him. Then, Thomas said, "But we're awfully hungry, so if we could first stop at an Inn for some bread and cheese." The driver nodded and pulled on the reins. The huge horse stepped out upon the stone road; the wheels clicked.

Thomas looked over the streets of Paris as they drove, taking in the scenery and the humanity. Never had he seen such a contrast of rich and poor. On one street, there would be opulence and carriages, and the next was filled with beggars. On the walkways were elegant ladies with footmen who passed street urchins. Neither class seemed to notice the other, and except for an occasional glance of contempt from one to the other, they seemed invisible to each other.

As the carriage pulled up to an eating establishment, his daughter Patsy asked, "How was Mr. Franklin? He's always so jolly."

"Well, but behind schedule. He found us a place to stay, so we won't spend the day searching, which is a relief. Anyway, let us go eat, shall we?" Thomas exited the carriage and assisted his daughter out of it. When he went to help Sally out, she protested. "Come, come, Sally, you and the little one must eat."

"Mr. Jefferson, I think we'll just grab some bread from that bakery over there. I don't know how troubled these people from Paris would be to see a Negress with you and I sure don't want to cause you no trouble here."

"Thank you, Sally."

"Think nothing of it Mr. Jefferson, I don't want nobody talkin about you."

"I mean for calling me Mr. Jefferson. I can't tell you how much I hate the word 'master' or 'masser.' What a relief."

"You should have told me sooner, I'd never call you somethin you don't like."

Thomas tipped his hat and went into the inn where he and his daughter were shown a table. After motioning to a waiter, he pulled out the paper Franklin had written and read the address. His mind began working, and he wondered why the old fellow had winked when he arrived. He read the address again, memorizing it, then considered the paper.

“What is it Daddy? What is troubling you so?”

“Oh, nothing. I think that I have a kink in my back from traveling and it’s bothering me a bit. Would you be a dear and catch Sally at the bakery and ask her to pick up some liniment for it?”

“Poor Daddy,” she said, rising and walking for the door.

As the girl crossed the street Thomas held the paper to a candle and soon the heat of the flame danced out another message. He recognized Benjamin’s flowing handwriting in the once invisible ink:

Forget the Champs Elysées place. Go to cul-de-sac Têtebout and stop at the last house. Ask for Jean.

B.F.

Thomas crinkled up the note, walked over to a small stove at the inn and threw the paper into the flames. His head was spinning, and he wondered what devilment or danger the good doctor had gotten him into this time, remembering the last code the inventor had given him landed him square into the guts of a revolution. He took his seat as his daughter entered.

“Daddy, is the kink gone? I saw you walking to the stove.”

“Much better, thanks, you know how those things can be.”

They ate quietly and when his daughter said, “I think that was wonderful of you to make Sally free.”

“Patsy, I don’t like having any slaves.”

Her eyes crossed, a habit she had when she wanted to make a point. “Then, why do you?”

“It’s complex, I don’t think I could explain it easily.”

“No it’s not Daddy, just let them free.”

“One day, maybe, dear, one day I pray I can.”

Talk turned to a discussion about painting and other art work that Patsy had done, then shifted to discussion about an embroidery project that she planned on doing. Finally, she exclaimed that she had been teaching Sally’s daughter, Melissa, to read, and it was fun watching the little girl assimilate the letters into words. Their meals came and they ate in between Patsy’s exclamations about how exciting Paris was, then, with a daughter bubbling about wanting to attend a theater, they left the inn.

Inside the carriage, he felt the diamond-tufted upholstery as he gave the driver instructions to the cul-de-sac; the travelers were driven directly to the destination. As the carriage stopped, Thomas noticed a slovenly woman opening a door who walked out briskly and approached the carriage. Her French was fast and broken, so fast that Thomas had to think about what she had said before it registered. “Monsieur Jefferson, I have your rooms, come now.”

Thomas got out of the carriage and bowed, and remembered well that Franklin often employed women who appeared to be something that they were not. Despite her ragged looks, Thomas believed the woman must be clever and discreet, or the Doctor would have nothing to do with her. The woman avoided all pleasantries as she turned and walked rapidly toward the house. Thomas told Sally and Patsy to wait a moment and followed the lady.

As he went through the house, he smelled urine and noticed the black planking on the floor. His mind raced as he wondered why Franklin would send him to such a hovel. He followed her up creaky, unlit stairs, barely able to keep up with her rustling skirts. She flung open the door and said, “I hope you like.” Turning without waiting

for an answer, she brushed by Thomas, spinning him half way around as she rushed toward the stairs.

He looked about the dark room, seeing only two tiny windows, and wondered what kind of a sick joke this was. He heard a distinctive chuckle and turned to see Franklin's outline in the dark room. The old man was seated in a chair. "Sit down, Thomas."

"What's the problem?"

"Spies. We don't have much time to talk. I sent Dr. Edward Bancroft on a goose-chase that he'll soon realize. I need to be back to my office before then. He and I will be stopping at your place on the Champs Elysées, which is thick with British agents. It is there that he and I will attempt to win you over to the service of King George the Third by innuendo. You must play your part well, be unwavering in your opinion that the colonies were wronged, and show no inclination to help the Crown under any circumstances. The two other men who will be with Bancroft and me deserve your closest scrutiny. One is a dangerous marquis, the other a pompous coward from the Crown."

"I'm astonished at what you're saying."

Franklin held up a hand, stopping Thomas. "Time's short, and I must be out of here quickly. We may never be able to talk freely in Paris. Everything I say goes straight to London."

"Through who?"

"Bancroft."

"Then why not fire him?"

"Thomas, it's far better to know who the rogues are and keep them in place than change the guard and have to rediscover who the friends are. Just remember that

you're going to be tested tonight. Don't give in to anything, don't move on any hints, don't show any wavering or hesitation."

"So the battle is ongoing?"

"When we're back in the United States together, I'll tell you just how bad it is. The British are doing anything possible to undermine our new country, you wouldn't be able to conceive of the vile mechanisms they have in place to subvert our country. They are bribing and threatening and stealing loyalty at every turn. They have plans at rigging elections, destroying free speech, infiltrating Congress, or should I say, expanding their infiltration of that body. A second war with them is inevitable. We must only hope that it can be stalled until the United States is strong enough to resist them."

"Is my daughter in danger in Paris?"

"Not as long as they think you can't be turned. They will respect you as a rebel, and put you on their 'special' list, and harass you personally if you ever look like you might get into a position of power, but as long as you're dead-set against the British, they'll probably not harm you, although, you will be spied upon, of that you can be assured."

"Whom can I trust?"

"Not John Adams, who at times seems incorruptible, but at others, well, he's got enough arrogance to fill New York. Now he is in London, so he'll be tested regularly. And, while he might have a pure heart, he can be flattered into doing things that he ought not do. Quite frankly, I detest him. But, oh my, how he hates sharing the limelight, and how he hates the French and how he resents me."

"That's how I read him."

"You have always been perceptive."

“Yet, I’ve tried many times to bribe him and he seems to be unshakable.”

“You!” shouted Thomas. “And why would he take a bribe from you?”

Franklin chuckled. “Oh, Thomas, you are so naive, positively childlike at times. I’ve had agents of mine attempt to bribe the man, I never do things like that personally. However, if the marquis got to him first, he’d never let on to a lower agent, so, maybe he can’t be bribed because his corruption is at such a high level that he can’t be approached by any underlings. Who knows?”

“And me? How can you trust me?”

“Intuition, investigation, and your history, that’s how. Besides, if I can’t, I’ll probably be dead tomorrow.”

“So the British think you their agent?”

“Think, nothing, I’m on their payroll.”

“But your sympathies are in Philadelphia?”

“Nay, Philadelphia is turning into a rat’s nest. If you pardon me stealing from John Locke, my sympathies are with Maid Freedom, the woman who sits upon a three-legged stool, one leg being life, another liberty, and the final one being property. Should any of these legs be removed, Maid Freedom lands on her posterior. Liberty is something that we’ll never have unless our country holds together against the British.” Franklin winked.

Thomas’ head spun as he tried to grasp the significance. He wished that he hadn’t brought Patsy and Sally here. “Who else can I trust?”

“Not many, most men can be bought. Washington is probably safe. Alexander Hamilton, though he has horrible ideas about making our country a monarchy and strong central government, might be a true American. But, his idealism blinds him.”

“What about Patrick Henry?”

“Great talkers should be cropt, for they’ve no need for ears.”

Thomas smiled. “So, you still can quote yourself, or *Poor Richard*, I should say.”

“Yes, I can quote Richard Saunders, even from way back in 1738.”

“So, you don’t trust Henry?”

“Stay clear of him. He’s not with the Crown by any stretch, and he was most important in our fight for freedom, but he’s so involved with earning money that he could be turned for a small fortune.”

“You’re saying there really isn’t anyone to trust but you. What kind of a world is this that none can be trusted? Where all work for vanity or gain? What corruption!”

“He that best understands the World, least likes it.” Franklin winked. “That was ‘52 or ‘53.”

“I’m glad you can keep your humor about you. This looks very dark here indeed. But, if I am gathering correctly what you are saying is that the war hasn’t ended.”

Franklin whispered, “Not really. Thomas, there are many who claim to fight for freedom, many who actually believe that they fight for freedom, but usually, you discover that they are doing for some personal reason. There are so few people like Thomas Paine and you and me. We fight for freedom because of the principle. We do it because slavery of any type is abhorrent to us. We are driven to do it. I don’t want to sound too radical, but, it’s almost as if, as if, we’re special soldiers for the Divine. And Paine seems several levels beyond me in this regard. He’s powerful, gutsy, altruistic, dedicated and devout. Of course, by devout, I don’t mean to the rulers of the Church, who are so murderous.”

Thomas nodded. Oh, how he understood the tyranny of the Church and the multitude of murders it was responsible for. It was the worst enemy of freedom he had ever encountered, with the possible exception of George III. He had also noticed that he and Franklin were fighting for something very different than Adams or Henry were fighting for. “Is Henry dangerous to have out, he can put you and me together.”

Franklin laughed, “Perhaps, but I know his weakness. If he gets antsy, we’ll just send him some difficult cases that pay enormous retainers and keep him too busy to worry about you and me.”

Thomas’ eyes had finally adjusted to the dim light and he could see the gold rim about Franklin’s square spectacles, could see that the man’s eyes showed white under the iris as he gazed, could see the man’s thin lips pursed together. “How did you know I’d discover the invisible ink?”

“Because I trained you.”

“And why don’t I become a double-agent for the United States, if you think I’m so good?”

“Never. Never. First, the country will need you soon to lead them and you can’t have the blemish of possibly being a spy. It would never do. Second, you’re not that good, or you would never have run to Patrick Henry so many years ago. I almost dumped you for that.”

Thomas looked toward the floor, feeling ashamed. “Why don’t you just expose all the spies? Bring them out in the open?”

“As I told you,” said Franklin, “it’s so thick you’d be amazed. And the marquis you’ll meet tonight, a man who would slit his mother’s throat were she alive, is working inside the British network, but for his own purposes, and what they are I

haven't discovered, but they are certainly ugly from the trail of deaths I've followed that lead to him."

"Can you tell me who not to trust in America?"

"Not now, there's no time," Franklin said, looking at his watch. "First, I will be sending a man to you who will apply for a position. He's a dark man, from the South Pacific Islands, named Lee Boo. Do not, I repeat, do not hire him. He is your contact with me for important items. I notice that you brought along a Negro servant. Maybe he and she could appear to be friends so he would have reason to visit your quarters occasionally." Franklin opened his watch again and shook his head. "Not much time, the worst is I'm trying to ferret out two agents, who I presume are deeply planted into America. One is referred to only as agent '94' and the other as 'Solomon' and they must be exposed somehow. I fear these are people who are to be used for long-range plans."

"How long?"

"Twenty years maybe, perhaps many more. These people I'm dealing with don't care about today or tomorrow, they have far-sighted goals."

"What is a 94?"

Franklin laughed as he rose and slapped his cane on the floor. "Meet British agent number 72, also known as Moses, the British like biblical names."

"So 94 and Solomon could be one and the same," said Thomas.

"Good thought, but not the case. Solomon is bright, was an officer for the Americans in the war, and is from Virginia. Number 94 comes from New York. That's all I know about them. I'm trying to find out more, but that's all I know for now." Franklin walked to a door that led to stairs on the alley. "I must go, Thomas,

now you should go rent that place on the Champs Elysées, and I would avoid this house completely.”

Thomas held up his hand to stop the doctor from leaving. “Can you smooth things out between you and Adams?”

“Thomas, how could you doubt my diplomatic abilities?” asked Franklin with a feigned expression of injury to his pride. He smiled broadly as he sauntered out the door.

When Thomas heard Franklin easing down the steps he walked out of the room, down the dingy staircase, and out to the carriage. He gave the driver the address on the Champs Elysées and got into the compartment. “I must have made a mistake.”

Sally gave him a strange look and her black eyes twinkled. She knew something was wrong, really wrong, because Mr. Jefferson didn’t make many mistakes, and when he did, he wasn’t so quick to admit it.

CHAPTER 38

Thomas sat in a velvet chair in his new apartment, admiring its rich, hardwood floors, the plush carpets scattered about the floors, the ornate, delicate furniture, and the paintings on the walls. The cost was considerably more than his allowance as a diplomat would pay, but he felt he had to keep up an image for his new country, so he made up the difference. As with all the other government jobs he had taken, the French position would drain his resources. He had already perused the library, which included French translations of works by Isaac Newton, Shakespeare, Hume, Defoe, and others, but missing from the collection were any books written by Americans. He opened the Defoe book, having never read *Robinson Crusoe* in French.

He had sent Sally and Patsy to the theater, figuring that the upcoming meeting would be best done out of their hearing, and Sally's four-year-old Melissa was so exhausted that he just put her to bed and assumed that she would not awaken. If she did, she certainly wouldn't understand a thing of what was about to be discussed. The tot snored quietly as Thomas read Defoe's classic.

Thomas leafed through the pages and was soon shipwrecked and befriended by the man Friday. He continued through the book, glad that he had chosen some light-reading material, and settled into the chair. Soon, he had forgotten about the upcoming meeting, and was deeply embroiled in the adventure when he heard a rap on the door. He set the book onto the table next to his chair and answered the knock.

As he opened the door, he saw that there were four gentlemen. Franklin was at the front of the pack, followed by his fat secretary, Edward Bancroft. Behind the two elders was a man with long, straight silver hair, and next to him was a puffed and

powdered Englishman. Thomas bid them enter, and three of the men walked directly to the dining room and seated themselves at the table, seeming to know the apartment's layout quite well. Franklin hobbled behind slowly, complaining that his gout was after him again.

"Please," said Franklin, "Thomas, let's sit down. I want you to meet some important people, people who can be of great assistance to the advancement of your career. Of course, you've already met Dr. Bancroft." Thomas walked to the chair and shook the fish's hand yet again. It was colder and slimier than he remembered from earlier in the afternoon.

"And this is Marquis Jacques La Droix," said Franklin, directing Thomas to the silver-haired man. As Thomas looked at him closely, he realized that the man was more youthful than the hair would have indicated. He extended his hand and it was clamped upon by a powerful claw that oddly had its index finger curled into the grip. When the marquis noticed that Thomas' finger did not so curl, he gave a disgusted glance toward Franklin.

Benjamin put his hand around Thomas' shoulder, and directed his attention to the other person, who wore a brilliant red coat dashed with gold trim and black piping. The lobsterman was the only one who did not rise when Thomas approached him, but remained seated in his chair. His age was less than thirty, Thomas guessed, and his height under five and a half feet, but even while seated, his nose nearly reached the ceiling. "This is Sir Edmund Northborough, Sir Northborough, this is Thomas Jefferson." Thomas extended his hand, but dropped it uncomfortably when he realized that it had been refused by the British lord.

"Now that we all know one another, why don't you have a seat, Thomas?" said Franklin.

Thomas took a chair and glanced about the room, catching the marquis' steely eyes for a moment, then watched as the clam's eyes darted about the room, finally Thomas locked his gaze upon Northborough, who seemed to be staring off in the distance, totally disinterested in the proceedings. He swallowed and waited for someone to speak. After some silence, Dr. Bancroft said, "Young Thomas Jefferson, I've been able to locate you the most reliable and competent cook you could ever imagine, and a maid too. They'll be coming to see you tomorrow. I do hope that you find them agreeable. Good help is difficult to find in this city, and to find servants that are likewise honest is nearly impossible."

Thomas tilted his head to the side, looked at Franklin for a clue, but the old man was staring at his fingernails and never glanced toward his nervous protégé. "Well, I brought a servant with me from Virginia so I – "

"I really think that you'll like this pair," said the clam.

"Then, thank you for troubling yourself on my account, Dr. Bancroft," said Thomas, remembering Franklin's advise that it was far better to know who the spies were then to have new ones appointed.

The marquis stared at Thomas for several seconds, then said, "I noticed that you had a book on the table. May I ask what you were reading?"

Thomas excused himself, rose, and went to the adjoining room and retrieved the Defoe book, came back to the dining room and handed it to La Droix. The marquis thumbed through the book and laughed, switching from English to French, “I didn’t know that you were so proficient in the French language.” The remainder of all conversation shifted to French, much to the displeasure of the stuffy lord, whose previously distant eyes began to focus rigidly on every speaker, seeming to need all his powers of concentration to keep up in the new tongue.

Thomas smiled to himself when he saw that Northborough was struggling to follow, so he went into a lengthy, rapid, discussion of his first day in Paris, his impressions, and to keep the lord on his toes, sprinkled in Latin and Greek phrases as he sped through his trip to the big city. Franklin began chuckling, and finally halted Thomas, saying, “We’ve all seen Paris, if you please, Thomas.”

The marquis, still thumbing through *Robinson Crusoe* said, “A lot to be learned from Defoe. His pen seemed too strongly to favor William of Orange, and when his hero and protector died, the new queen wasn’t too enamored with an outspoken critic of the Church of England.”

Thomas took the bait. “I think he was following his conscience, but, in those days, it was quite dangerous to speak against that church, or any church. However, I’m not telling you anything new. I’m certain you’re aware of what foul tyrants have slithered into high seats and pulpits.”

The marquis continued, seemingly ignoring Jefferson’s comments that referred to horrible Inquisitions and the like. “And when he had the good sense to quit writing about politics and deal with fictional adventures, he found himself far less in the pillory and the prison, and quite comfortable.”

Thomas tried to guess his best answer, then asked, “So you think that he should not have pushed for Britain to war with Louis the Fourteenth?”

“I think the man would have been wise not to have criticized our courts and such.”

Thomas took a deep breath, hesitated, then dropped his voice. “I respect any man who will write his own mind, regardless of his politics.”

The clam spoke up in a shrill voice, “And Thomas Paine, what think you of him?”

The glare from the marquis at Bancroft told Thomas that he need not attend to Bancroft’s comment, and the pecking order was totally established in Thomas’ mind. “I know that you are most loyal to the Crown, believing King George to be the rightful ruler of America. But, as you know, Dr. Franklin and I are equally loyal to the United States, with all the same fervor that you have for your sovereign, so have we for our people. Please understand that the political things that I said about your king in various papers were not made to humiliate him or his subjects, but to stir the hearts of my countrymen to rise against him.”

La Droix looked through Thomas. “Various papers! Like that satanic list of lies in the infamous *Declaration of Independence*.”

“Those were said in prelude to war, to justify our cause.”

“So, were they true?”

Thomas gulped. “In my heart, yes, they are true.”

“You have guts. I like that.” La Droix was done interrogating for now.

“But you had so much in America, why were you not be satisfied to be loyal British subjects?” It was the first time the lord spoke, which was in English – an obvious attempt to shift away from French.

Thomas smiled and responded in his delightful French, colored with a Scottish brogue learned from his childhood schoolmaster. “For liberty. Many of us believed that your Parliament was conspiring to steal our right to own property, to keep us impoverished through oppressive taxation. We believe that if a man’s property is taxed, he has a bad year or two, the government will soon own his estate. Just as England is a country filled with Tories, America is loaded with Whigs. As the Tories protect the ruling class in Great Britain, so do our Whigs look out for the people’s rights. Which system is right is a matter of opinion, and because we have common language and heritage, I hope that we can retain some kind of amicable terms of peace. I know that you love your country, as do Dr. Franklin and I love ours. We Americans love freedom, and lean toward Whig principles, like those of Sir Edmund Burke in your Parliament. I hope that you understand this.”

“Does money ever interest you?” asked the marquis.

“I have plenty. I have no desire for more.”

“You never know when you might need a few thousand guineas,” said the marquis, knowing quite well that Thomas Jefferson would not always enjoy financial comforts unless he chose to shift his allegiance. While the American had plenty by his country’s standards, Thomas was not European-class rich. He had been forced to defer publishing his *Notes on Virginia* in his country because of the high cost of printing in the young nation. That book would now be printed because Jefferson could better afford European publishers. The Jefferson resources would not last forever, unless, Mr. Jefferson learned how to play in the new political circle.

“I’m okay.”

“And do you ever fear for your safety?” asked Bancroft.

This question earned such an icy stare from the marquis that Thomas felt sorry for the fat clam. Thomas answered, "Heaven must be a much better place than this awful world."

"I thought I read that you despised the Church," demanded the marquis.

Thomas laughed forcefully, grabbing his belly, and quite relieved to have what he considered a safe question to deal with for once. "A hater of the church I am, but a lover of God need not follow the teachings of the Church of Rome or the Church of England."

Benjamin was proud of his prize pupil. He couldn't have asked for better answers. Jefferson was convincingly showing the marquis that Thomas viewed Franklin as a staunchly loyal American patriot. The elder American statesman relaxed for the first time this evening. This meeting was a life-or-death ordeal for Jefferson. Mixed answers might have sent the marquis at his throat, and Thomas would have been no more. But Jefferson demonstrated a firmness of resolve and idealistic belief in the righteousness of his cause. This showed the marquis how to best use the younger man, and why keeping him alive would be advantageous. He might not be bribable . . . yet.

The marquis believed Franklin to be the greatest field asset of the Crown's in place in America because of his devilish cleverness. While it would have been good to have groomed another Franklin, the marquis was a practical man. If Jefferson could not be turned or bought because of his high stand on the ethical grounds, he could be predictable. The marquis was learning about Americans, learning that they might not all be turned by money or power, but when their true feelings were known, those who were unapproachable could be deceived into assisting in the ultimate goal, which was the return of the colonies to the mother country. Just as he was busy

flattering John Adams into doing the bidding of the Crown, the marquis now decided that he would use deception to lure Thomas into the King's game.

Thomas' life would have been in far greater danger if Sir Northborough had the final say, but for now, the little lord was not a power broker in the espionage trade. Sir Northborough would wait for another time, and would reluctantly be reporting to William Eden, director of the British Secret Service, that Jefferson might be unreachable, as Franklin had warned them he would be. Jefferson seemed to be zealously blinded by love of the colonies and admiration for Franklin, hence predictable.

The marquis rose from the table, with Franklin, Northborough, and Bancroft following him. The silver-haired man reached over the table and grasped Thomas' hand, this time without his index finger curled in, and applied such pressure that it was readily apparent that La Droix could rip off someone's head if he had a mind to, and at times, he certainly did have such a mental disposition. When the grip was released, Thomas massaged some blood back into his whitened hand.

As the guests were leaving, little Melissa walked into the room, palms outward as she rubbed her eyes. "Where's Mommy?"

The clam drew the wrong conclusion and laughed. "So . . ." he said, looking coyly from Jefferson to Melissa.

Thomas clenched a fist. Franklin hoped that Thomas would let the false and malicious innuendo drop without showing his temper tonight, otherwise he might not survive the week. As much as it hurt Franklin to remain silent, he wanted to keep Jefferson alive.

Three of the four men laughed uproariously while leaving the apartment. One cried within. As they walked down the stairs, Thomas heard Northborough's voice

holler, “Can you imagine that? He brought a Negro baby of his to Paris!” It was all Thomas could do to restrain himself from charging out the door after the loud-mouthed knight. While he despised Patty, he had promised to be her husband, which meant to be faithful. When Thomas made a promise, even with a demon like Patty, he took it very seriously. He had no mistress during her life, nor after her death.

Thomas grabbed the little girl and stroked her hair. “Melissa, don’t feel bad about anything that those men said.”

“I don’t Masser.”

“And don’t call me that, please.”

“You don’t need tell me about my Daddy. Mommy already did.”

Thomas hoisted the child in his arms. “Your daddy, Rubin, was a fine man, and he saved my life.”

Melissa’s eyes brightened, “Real true, did he?”

“Uh-huh,” nodded Thomas.

“Mommy never told me that.”

“She’s probably saving it until you’re older, sweetheart.”

CHAPTER 39

The sun radiated through the east windows, heating the room until the broad leafed plants steamed. Sally and Patsy ignored the heat as they raucously played a game with four-year-old Melissa, who giggled so incessantly that soon all three were rolling about the floor laughing. While her mother and friend remained chuckling on the carpet, Melissa jumped up and grabbed napkin to wear around her neck.

Before the merriment began, Sally had braided her daughter's hair into three pigtails, and woven the coarse, black hair so that one tail came down behind either ear, and one down the back. Melissa was jumping about so vigorously that her three stiff tails bounced on her head.

Thomas sauntered into the room, holding *Robinson Crusoe* in his right hand, reading as he walked, and quite oblivious to the uproar. As he entered the morning-sun room and looked up from the Defoe novel and noticed the room in disarray and his daughter and Sally lying on the floor. "Well, how was the theater last night? It appears to have swept you off your feet."

"Fabulous, Daddy, absolutely fabulous."

Sally nodded her approval of Patsy's statement. There was a rap on the door.

Sally ran to answer it and when she opened it, she saw two women, one middle aged, plump, and smiling, the other, young, svelte, and stern. "May I help you?" asked Sally.

The younger of the two looked in disbelief at the black woman. "Who rented this place to an ugly Negro?" she said to her companion.

Sally lowered her eyes and said again, "May I help you?"

The fat woman asked, "Is Thomas Jefferson here?"

"Most certainly, won't you come in?"

The fat woman remained smiling, and the thin one sneered as they entered the apartment. Thomas heard some of the exchange, and not liking it in the slightest, he stormed into the foyer. "What is it that you want?"

The svelte lady now gushed with sparkle, her eyes lit, she curtsied and she said, "I'm Della Koenig. Dr. Bancroft said you might be needing the services of a maid."

The plump woman now curtsied and said, "I'm Rita Baker, and I'm quite a cook, which I understand you need also."

Thomas restrained every impulse to throw the two of them down the stairs, but he held his temper within, at great cost to his stomach, which churned and knotted. On the best of days, he had a sensitive digestive system, worsened tremendously by the insensitive nature of the thin woman. "Well, if Dr. Bancroft recommended you, I guess you should come in for an interview." Thomas glanced at Sally and saw a pained expression that betrayed her deep-felt hurt as she walked from the room with her head bent down and her chin nearly touching her breastbone.

Rita said that perhaps the best thing she could do would be to go to the market and pick up the makings for breakfast to show off her abilities. Thomas agreed that would be a fair method of testing her suitability. Then Rita suggested that she take Thomas' servant with her to show her where the best places were to shop. To this offer, Thomas wasn't so agreeable. However, Sally having overheard it, jumped at the chance to get away from the thin woman who she had learned to hate in only a couple of minutes. She walked into the foyer and volunteered to go.

“Oh, that will be just grand, just grand, and if you bring the little one, there’s a new batch of taffy at the candy shop. It’s great, I know.”

Sally seemed puzzled how this woman could know that she had a child, but presumed that Rita had heard Melissa playing. Sally nodded an acceptance and called to her daughter, “Honey bunch, why don’t you come for a walk with Mommy? We might even find some candy on the street.”

“Oh, oh, oh!” said the little girl.

Rita waited for Sally and Melissa to put on some wraps, and when all three were ready, she led them down the stairs. They walked for a block, past a plush carriage, trimmed in ornate brass, and being pulled by two Arabian geldings that looked prime for racing, not for dragging a cart through town. Inside the carriage sat a young, snobby lord and a silver-haired marquis. When the cook walked by with her two charges, the marquis banged on the roof to notify the driver to get ready to leave.

Rita directed Sally and Melissa to walk yet another block and pointed toward the market. Behind them, the black carriage shot out and was rumbling down the road. Rita pointed at a strange flag flying from a balcony, “See that, that’s the coat of arms of my grandfather’s uncle.”

The little girl looked up and cooed at the colorful banner that waved in the breeze. Behind the girl walked a man weaving from what appeared to be total intoxication. He stumbled as he approached the three gawkers, and fell just before the carriage thundered by them. As he fell, he deftly grabbed Melissa and flung her in front of the rushing horses, then he fell face down in the gutter, passed out drunk to all casual observers.

Melissa screamed as a hoof slapped her wrist, crushing it to the road and shattering several of its tiny bones. The girl cried out as the front wheel of the

carriage crossed her stomach, followed by the back wheel, which ran over her rib cage.

Sally screamed in agony and threw herself upon Melissa, then held her daughter as the girl died in her arms.

Inside the carriage, the riders had felt two lumps in the road as they ran down the young girl. Nothing of the sort to slow down a carriage with royal cargo. The marquis looked out the back window at the fallen girl, turned, and pounded on the roof for the driver to make haste.

Sir Northborough chuckled, “Don’t you think that damn American rebel will make more of those darkie brats?”

“I doubt it’s his,” said La Droix.

The young lord touched his right ear. “Do you hear some animals crying in the street?”

La Droix sneered at Sir Northborough. “Don’t make fun of the black people. They have served the Crown wonderfully over the last centuries.”

“How so?”

“We dumped them in the colonies until they were full of slaves and we forced the Americans to accept them. During the rebellion of the ungrateful colonists, we bribed the darkies to fight against their masters by falsely offering them freedom. And, now, the slave issue is our trump card if we can’t overtake the upstart country from within with our fantastic spy system. Yes, my lad, those darkies are important to our cause, most important. If we can’t enslave them, we’ll use them in other ways. And, running down the brat serves yet another purpose. That vile rebel Jefferson won’t be thinking too clearly now that he’s in trauma. It’s a good time to try to solicit his services.”

CHAPTER 40

Sally and Thomas walked silently from the graveyard, Sally sniffing as she relived how horses had recently been a part in taking both of her loved ones. As they traveled down a stone path, she envisioned first the horse responsible for killing Rubin, then the ones that killed Melissa. Over and over the horses ripped apart her life. Sally breathed shallowly and rapidly, until she nearly lost her balance as she walked. Thomas saw her faltering, and held her up until she had enough strength to be guided to a bench, where he placed her and admonished her to wait until she felt better. Sally smiled through her tears, tasting salt on her tongue as she turned and watched two men shoveling earth over the new grave. The site caused her to drop her head into her hands and bawl. The grave sealed Melissa's life, locked away her only child with Rubin, and closed the door of her prior life. Sally got up and the two walked in silence for several hundred feet before Thomas felt a tap on his back.

He turned and saw a bronzed man of about twenty with fine, straight hair pulled into a tail that drooped down his back. To Thomas, he seemed to resemble American Indians, but his skin was a deeper, much richer in hue. He was dressed in a coat and his neck was adorned with a loose, fluffy bow-tie. The young man looked quite out of place in European garments, although he carried himself upright, almost royally.

"Excuse me," he said, "I know it's a bad-bad time, but good-good Doctor Franklin said this would be a safe day to speak with you."

Sally, though having buried a daughter today and being stricken with grief, still displayed youthful beauty. When the young man caught a glimpse her face, he hoped

to know this woman better, but only when she was feeling better. Sally gave a polite smile to the man, who winked back.

“Please, would you state your business promptly?” said Thomas, “Can’t you see this woman is troubled?”

“It’s okay. He don’t mean no harm, do you?” whispered Sally.

The young man stared silently into Sally’s eyes, and as he stared, he seemed to breathe life into them. It was as though there was a direct conduit from his enthusiastic eyes to her broken and tired ones. After several seconds, Sally’s eyes gushed with new energy, shining almost gaily. He nodded to her, as if to say that everything would work out, then said to both Jefferson and Sally, “I’m Lee Boo, from the Palau Islands. A long-long way from here. I was brought here in a big-big boat, and then I was supposed to work-work for many-many years to pay for my schooling and passage. I did not-not know what was going on when good-good Doctor Franklin paid my indentures. He took me away from the work-work place and said I was very much free.”

Sally took in the man’s eyes again, almost magnetically drawn to their friendly sparkle that perfectly matched his upturned mouth. “I’ve been in much the same place as you.”

Thomas’ eyebrows raised at the thought. It sounded to him that Lee Boo was describing indentured servant status, whereby a person worked for a term of years and was then released of the contract, which he had never considered on a par with outright slavery, but upon reflection, he realized that Sally’s conclusion was not too far from the truth.

“Anyway, I’m to help you find . . .” Lee Boo’s voice dropped off and he motioned for Thomas to bend down and whispered, “Number 94 and Solomon,” into Jefferson’s ear.

Thomas’ attitude toward the man changed immediately. “Where did you say you were from?”

“Palau Islands. I sailed on the *Oroolong*, a big-big boat. My father sent me to England to study. The *Oroolong* was called the *Antelope* by the British, which boat struck a reef near Ulong Island, and my people spent four months helping Captain Wilson rebuild his wrecked boat into the new one. My father, Chief Ibedul, had our people fight-fight with other islanders to protect Captain Wilson’s crew. My father told me that I would go to England, study in a university, and be returned to Palau, but when I arrived in London, I learned that I would have to work-work for many-many years.”

Sally interjected, “So, you thought they were sending you to school, but instead, they sold you into slavery. That’s exactly how the story has been handed down about my great-great grandfather. The shaman of his tribe told him that he would be sent to a far land and be made a king. My great-great grandfather unwittingly went, and ended up a slave on a Virginia plantation.”

Thomas gasped, then said, “You know that I have been doing everything I can to free all the slaves in America, Sally. One day, this vile institution will be abolished if people like Thomas Paine, Dr. Franklin and I have anything to say about it.”

“Masser, if you don’t like no slavery, why are there so many at Monticello?”

“I’d rather not talk about it, but if you must know, I inherited most of the slaves from my father and Patty’s father.”

“Why don’t you just free us all?”

“If I did, I’m afraid of what our neighbors might do to you. I don’t think that we can free Virginia a farm at a time. I’ll keep working at freeing the whole state, the whole country, if it’s possible.”

“Yes, Masser. You treat us good. You wouldn’t believe what I heerd about other farms. And, when the Wales folk come, all the women are in jeopardy, or they were until one day they just stopped coming to visit.”

Thomas cleared his throat. Of course the disgusting rapists from Patty’s sided stopped coming. Thomas finally banned them. What a fight that had led to with Patty! “So, Lee Boo, if I understand correctly, you are a prince in Palau.”

“Prince, yes, that is right.”

“Can you read, son?”

“English, yes, French no.”

“And what can I do for you?”

“If the most pretty-pretty woman would not-not mind too much, I’d like very much-much to call on her sometime.”

Sally dabbed her cheeks with a handkerchief and parted her thick lips, revealing several of her upper teeth. “Well, Mr. Lee Boo, I wouldn’t be offended none at keeping company with you, but give my soul some time to heal from little Melissa’s death first, would you?”

Lee Boo placed one hand behind his back, the other on his stomach, and bowed. “I will be going and hope to see you sometime later, pretty-pretty lady.”

“Sally.”

“What?” asked Lee Boo.

“My name is Sally.”

“Very well, then, pretty-pretty Sally.” Lee Boo bowed again and left Thomas and Sally to venture home on their own. Thomas’ mind raced with grief and worry, confused by desire to discover Number 94 and Solomon with the help of this young prince.

CHAPTER 41

PARIS, SPRING 1785

“We’ve been through an awful lot together, Thomas, and I do know that you will be up to the job here on your own.” Franklin sipped tea from a square cup, and wiped his mouth.

Thomas closed one eye, looking only through his left. “Are you certain you wish to retire then?”

“Want to, my word, Thomas, no, no, no, but have to, yes, yes, yes. Do you know how many times I’ve asked Congress for relief from my public service? After all, I’m rising eighty years old. If I don’t go back home now, I never will be able to make the voyage. My leaves have long since fallen, I’m well past the autumn and deep into the winter years. I know that you can take care of being the American minister to France.”

“If you’re resolved, then I wish you well. Could you do me one favor?”

“Anything, Thomas, anything at all.”

Thomas began the pre-arranged request so that Bancroft would report it back to the British. “Prince Lee Boo has been a great help to me, but could you take him back to America, maybe give him a job?”

Edward Bancroft, Franklin’s ever-present tag-along companion arched his eyebrows. “Give a darkie who can hardly talk pigeon-English a job? He should be glad enough not to be a slave.”

Thomas rubbed his temples, attempting to relieve the pain from an incessant headache he had been carrying about for the last few days. “He’s a good man.”

Franklin exclaimed, “Perhaps nobody would give him a job, but I could use a strong body to assist me on the voyage. I’ll see what I can do. Won’t you miss having him pop over now and again?”

“Probably, but not as much as Sally will.”

Bancroft snickered, wrongly thinking he knew the reason that Jefferson wanted little Lee Boo out of Paris. “Oh, that’s too bad for your little darkie girl.”

Thomas glared at Bancroft and shouted, “Well, one thing I won’t miss when the good doctor departs, is your bigoted company, that is for certain.”

Bancroft took the insult in stride.

“Well, I’m off,” said Franklin rising, “do take care of this precious city for me, won’t you?”

“You can rest assured I will,” said Thomas rising to shake Franklin’s hand, and afterward, to shake the clam of Bancroft’s for the last time. He watched them walk out of his office and into a carriage. As Franklin looked back, Thomas waved his right arm.

After Franklin’s carriage pulled away, Thomas put on a great coat and headed out in the air and grabbed a cab for the palace. On the way, he noticed that there were even more than the usual complement of beggars on the road. He knew that Louis the Sixteenth was in for trouble if he didn’t begin taking care of the class structure in France. There were rich and there were poor, but almost no middle class. Thomas knew that great countries survived either by having a large middle class group, or, by ruling with an iron fist. After watching more squalor from the window than he could bear, he closed his eyes and listened to the clip-clop of hooves on the road.

By the time the cab pulled up to the palace, Thomas had fallen asleep and needed to be awakened by the driver. He stared at the man groggily, then said, “Oh, I must have dozed off.” He shuffled about inside the carriage, paid the driver, and got out of the cab.

He walked to the main door and was admitted immediately, then announced by a portly servant. As he walked into a long room, walled with arch-shaped mirrors, he smiled at the French Foreign Minister. “Good day, Comte de Vergennes.”

“Monsieur Jefferson! What a surprise, and a pleasant one at that, I might add. You really should come over more often.”

“Thank you for inviting me.”

The Frenchman raised his head up as if looking above Thomas, then lowered it swiftly, as if to scan his visitor top to bottom. “It is you who will replace Monsieur Franklin?”

Jefferson tilted his head, smiled without showing a tooth, and said, “No one can replace him, sir: I am only his successor.”

“Oh, very well. What humility, now I begin to understand why the Marquis Lafayette is so enamored with you.”

“Without Lafayette, and your government’s generous support, America would never have won our freedom from the British. I know that well, and I hope that my fellow Americans never forget it.”

“Language.”

“What?”

“Language, Monsieur Jefferson. If we had the same language, you people might always remember France’s integral part in your struggle for liberty. But, I’m afraid as the years go by, Britain will convince your people that there never was a

need for a revolution and that we Frenchmen intervened when we should not have. You see, Britons speak your mother tongue, and eventually, that is all Americans will be able to hear.”

“But don’t I speak French well?”

“Most assuredly, although I must admit, you challenge a few of the words with a severe Scottish Brogue. And, Monsieur Franklin has done a remarkable job, although, I cannot even grasp from whence his accent arrived. But your verbal nuances are delightful, and I mean no offense by pointing them out to you. What I fear is that most Americans will be lazy with language. Consider Silas Deane. Your country sent him over here to negotiate for assistance and the man was ignorant of French. I assume he was one of the best you had to send, yet he couldn’t speak our language. If nobody in America speaks French, nobody will think in French. The best way to imprison a population is to deprive the populace of foreign languages. It is a vile trick of the British. Their government and those people want to colonize and enslave the world while spreading their foul English about the entire planet. Oh, the thought of it. English operas, can you think of a less musical language? I mean, really, can you?”

Jefferson laughed. “German is unsuited for music, don’t you think?”

Comte de Vergennes grabbed his stomach and roared. “Yes, the German language is quite unlikely a vehicle for opera, however, those German speakers think with such precision that their music is quite orderly. Consider J.S. Bach, and that extraordinarily talented fellow, Franz Josef Haydn. I think their language assists their organization of composition. And German is so precise, so mathematical, it fits music, which is nothing but mathematics and vibrational physics. No, I don’t accept that German is unsuited for music, only for vocals.”

Jefferson closed his eyes and thought for a moment, then said, “You might have something. The British do keep their population quite ignorant of foreign languages. In this way they literally screen their people from the rest of the world. While British citizens travel the globe, if they cannot speak the language of where they are visiting, they touch only the surface of the culture, and are destined to be aloof and bigoted because of their ignorance. Devilishly clever. You don’t think the British keep their people ignorant for that reason, do you?”

“Mr. Jefferson, we have been battling the devils from the British Isles for generations. Are they clever enough to imprison their own people without erecting walls? Absolutely they are. The British know more about devious plots carried out with spies and lies than any power in history. I think their language causes much of it.”

“How so, Vergennes, how so?” asked Jefferson quizzically.

The count scratched his forehead, tilted his head to the side, then asked tentatively, “Do you really want to hear my thoughts on this?”

“Absolutely.”

“But, would you think less of me if I were to say something that seems too comical, too stupid, too foolish to be coming from my tongue?”

Jefferson’s eyes twinkled. “My dear friend, I don’t view you or your ideas as stupid. I realize that you have a biased view of the British, and I blame you not for it. I too, am prejudiced against them. After all, my country is fresh out of a revolution to throw off George’s bonds. I trust them not. I believe that America has won round one, but knowing what I do of British tenacity, there will be round two, three, four, all the way to round one hundred. They want America back, make no mistake of that.

So, please, tell me, what is it in your opinion about their language that makes them devious?”

“Mr. Jefferson, what do you know about numerology?”

Thomas held back a smirk. He had promised to hear out the count, and he would with a straight face, regardless of the absurdity of the situation, and Jefferson was quite predisposed to the premise that numerology was a toy for parlor games, but unsuitable for serious political discussions. “Little. It’s based upon mathematics, as the name would imply.”

Vergennes smiled broadly. “At last! I have discovered a subject that my brilliant friend is ignorant of, and I have knowledge to impart. *Oui*, this is sweet!”

“Do inform me, then,” said Jefferson with icy sarcasm.

“Oh, Jefferson, don’t judge so quickly what you are ignorant of.”

“Me?” asked Thomas, trying to cover his smile, yet letting the single-word question drip with cynicism.

“Very well,” said the count, “forget my bringing up the issue.”

Thomas thought for a moment, then offered, “Pardon my skepticism, but, believe it or not I am interested in your opinion. I’ll listen, but understand, I might laugh at times. Is your skin thick enough for that?”

Vergennes began drawing letters on a piece of paper. First he wrote the French alphabet, then the German, and finally, the English. “Examine these letters and tell me what you discover.”

Thomas picked up the paper and examined the neatly printed letters for several seconds. “Well, I see that you’ve arranged all three alphabets into nine columns. Other than that, I see little else.”

“Very good,” said the count.

“What?”

“That you see I broke them into nines. You see, I have discovered that there are really only nine different numbers, or frequencies of numbers. These numbers repeat over and over, emitting their frequencies. Numbers vibrate like the musical notes, however, we can’t hear the numbers vibrations. Therefore a one is the first number, the pioneer, the two is the second, the ultimate blending agent and so on. Well, as the musical notes vibrate, so do numbers and so do the letters, based upon their order in the alphabet.”

Jefferson’s wry smile was gone. His brow furrowed and he held up his hand to stop the statesman. “Are you saying that the letters make the words vibrate?”

“Exactly. You are smart, very fast. I have discovered if we add up the values of the vowels based upon their order in the words, we discover the vibration at which the word thinks.”

“A word thinks?” asked Jefferson, his sarcasm returning to his voice.

“*Oui!* The word thinks, I call it the ‘thinker.’ But that is not all.”

“Do go on,” said Jefferson, sneering slightly.

“When you add up the consonants, based also upon their order, you get a number, that if added to the ‘thinker’ gives you the expression of the word, which I call the ‘doer.’”

Jefferson gave a belly laugh. “So, every word in English can think and do as it pleases?”

“Not as it pleases, as it must do, as it is programmed to do.”

“Certainly, how could I have made such a mistake.”

“And don’t you see? When you add up the letters in français, or French, you get a two thinker and an eight doer.”

Thomas tilted his head, glanced at the clock on the wall, and said, “So?”

“Well, Monsieur Jefferson, this means that people who use the French language think in slick, clever terms and act with expressive organization. But there is more. You see, German or deutsch, has an eight thinker and an eight doer. That makes the use of that language regimented, organized, mathematical and expressive.”

“This is quite curious. But, what has it to do with English?”

“That’s the key, Jefferson. English has a five thinker and a two doer. This is a dangerous combination. The five thinker makes users of the language quick witted, changeable, and volatile. When coupled with a two doer, the English speakers will tell their listeners whatever appears necessary to resolve the situation. I would say it is diplomatic, but I really think the five thinker and the two doer make English the liar’s language.”

“And?”

“Don’t you see? The British, by using the English language, are programmed to lie. Their language is wholly in opposition to the truth. It takes an enormous effort for an English speaking person to break the built-in linguistic programming to deceive others. Only those of strong character can break free of this subtle trap.”

Jefferson chuckled. “Is it your suggestion, then, that America adopt French as the official language?”

“It all depends.”

“On what?”

“Whether you Americans wish to travel the track of the British, running your country with a complex system of spies and lies or not.”

Jefferson laughed and said, “Well, if I were to write a letter to Congress in French, I can assure you that few of our statesmen could read it. I think that we’re stuck with English.”

Vergennes slapped Thomas on the back good naturedly and said, “Your loss.”

Thomas closed his eyes, thought for a moment, and asked, “If words give you so much, tell me how my daughter’s name of Martha thinks and does.”

“Well, Martha has a two thinker and a seven doer. A woman named Martha would be clever, have a sense of intuition that might be uncanny at times, and be deeply spiritual. Martha would be a little insecure, quiet, bright, and perhaps have some lung or heart problems.”

“And Patsy?”

“Patsy has a one thinker and a nine doer. She would be a blunt, witty, pioneering sort who looks out for others with an altruistic streak but who could suffer headaches.”

Jefferson gulped in astonishment. He couldn’t figure out how this French statesman who had never met his daughter could have described her so closely. He not only hit Martha’s underlying personality, but pointed to things that changed in her after she changed her name to Patsy. After thinking about it a while, he concluded that all of those characteristics were quite general and could fit any number of people.

Then, he began reflecting on whether it was a subtle force, a bit like astrology, unseen, easy to scorn, but, difficult to refute when fairly examined. He finally halted his contemplation on metaphysics and shifted back the discussion to what seemed more important. “Well, the French contribution will not be forgotten as long as I have power to remind our people – nor will Britain’s enslavement of her colonists be quashed while I have a pen.”

“Then, that is forever.”

“Pardon?”

“Your pen will never die. When Shakespeare and Homer are names without works, your works will remain filled with vitality.”

“You’re too kind.”

“Just being honest.”

“Even though I write in the liar’s language?”

“Some people have character enough to overcome adversity.”

As they spoke, Lafayette crossed the room in hurried steps. “Jefferson, oh Jefferson!” He wrapped his arms around Thomas and bobbed his head on either side of Jefferson’s. “It’s so good to see you.”

“Likewise, you may be certain.”

“But why are you blushing, my friend?” asked Lafayette.

“The gentleman has been overstating the prowess of my pen and has embarrassed me a little, I guess.”

Lafayette roared, grabbing his belly and laughing so hard he nearly lost his balance. “Who could overstate the power in your words?”

“I think Comte de Vergennes did.”

“Jefferson, your name will forever be tied to ‘Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness’ because of your forceful, honest, driving *Declaration of Independence*. I marvel at that document.”

Thomas reddened and gulped. He was uneasy even though he knew that this was not mere flattery. This was going to be an uncomfortable affair if he didn’t change the subject. “Lafayette, I know I’ve done it before, but let me thank you again for leading French troops and saving Virginia while we faced our blackest hour.”

Lafayette slapped Thomas on the shoulder three times. “Ah, but, what are friends for?”

CHAPTER 42

PARIS, DECEMBER 1787

Cellos rolled out wave after wave of power before quelling their storm, deferring to horns and flutes that danced through his ears, but something was amiss. The violins sang softly in the background before jumping out to run the melody with their strings quivering from bows drawn by expert hands, easing out reverberations from the instruments beyond his capacity to play, but not beyond what he could appreciate.

As a soprano broke into song, the breeze of the orchestra softened. Thomas grabbed Pasty's hand and squeezed it. She interrupted her intense gaze at the stage to smile into her father's eyes and noticed annoyance in them. Then she looked over at the dashing marquis seated next to her.

The music rose over the voices and filled their balcony seats with gay, whimsical farce, courtesy of Mozart's shameless imitation of Paisiello's *The Barber of Seville* and *King Theodore in Venice* by combining a theatre comedy with a clever satire into an opera. The voices rang with the orchestra and the fun-filled mockery ran its final course. Thomas was resistant in seeing a Mozart opera, and now he knew why. It annoyed Thomas that so often Franz Josef Haydn would write a symphony, and shortly thereafter, Mozart would mimic it and pass it off as his own. Now, he could see that Mozart did the same with operas.

Thomas was on his feet shouting, "How could he dare! What think you of that, Lafayette?"

“Who dare?”

“Mozart. How could he steal so much and pretend it to be his?”

Patsy said something that was lost in the gratuitous applause from the audience. She rose and excused herself, leaving her father and the marquis in the box as she went to refresh herself.

Thomas sat in the box stone-faced with Lafayette. He stared at his friend. “Is it true that Louis the Sixteenth suppressed this play for six years in France?”

“Absolutely, he was afraid it would disquiet the proletariats. Little good it did him, when it finally played in ‘84, it was a smashing success. And now, we see that de Beaumarchais’ play is an opera.”

Thomas said, “It doesn’t make sense for a ruler to censor the arts or the press. If ever that happens in America, it will be our ruin.”

Lafayette was one of the few in the audience that had chuckled at the mockery they had just watched. “I know that the *Marriage of Figaro* was a horrible flop in Vienna, and I’d be surprised if it ever shows again in Paris, but I’m just a revolutionary at heart.”

Thomas cleared his throat. “I mean no offense by this, but the theater is one of the few things I will miss if ever I return to Virginia, however, I will certainly not miss Mozart’s operas.”

“I thought we were treating you quite well in Paris, and you’ve traveled to Holland, Germany, and Italy. Isn’t there plenty to miss of Europe?”

“Plenty, yes, plenty of poverty and strife. I fear that your class structure will send France into the throes of a civil war before long.”

Lafayette sucked in air through his mouth. “We’re in a famine, we can’t feed our people, we can’t pay our debts, we broke ourselves aiding America.”

“And we have nothing to pay you with for your good deeds.”

“Won’t you reconsider and speak at Versailles about our constitution, how we can save our government?”

Thomas sighed and shoved both hands into coat pockets and stretched the fabric taut until the outline of his lumpy knuckles showed through. “I would fight by your side, recommend ships and guns be sent you, but I cannot interfere in how you form your politics. I hope you understand.”

“Couldn’t you just write a paper for publishment in our newspapers?”

“I never write such documents for the press.”

“I know. Why is that so, Jefferson?”

“Dr. Franklin warned me never to write for the public because the editor’s slant would always overpower the message intended. Like much of his advice, when I’ve followed it, I’ve been much the better off for it.”

The marquis rose and pointed toward the exit where Patsy awaited them. “I read your proposed constitution. You say it was written by James Madison and he is not a lawyer, is that correct?”

Thomas stretched his lengthy frame and after that exercise, he flicked a fly that had landed in his hair. “He is not a lawyer.”

“That is quite a work considering he is not skilled in the law.”

Thomas laughed, “Madison is well schooled in law, but not a lawyer. That is the beauty of the document, since it is written by a lay person it won’t need to be cluttered up and interpreted by lawyers and judges. Anybody who can read English will understand its clear meaning.”

“I admire Madison for his clarity of thought in political matters, he is as good of thinker as you have in America.”

“There was a time when I would have said that Madison is the greatest man in the United States, period.”

“And now?” asked Lafayette.

“Well, that constitution came to my attention almost void of guarantees of personal rights. I wonder that the time Madison spent writing the *Federalist Papers* with Alexander Hamilton didn’t turn him more toward Tory principles and away from those of the Whigs. I’m about to write him that I am shocked to see the document void of a Bill of Rights. We’ll see what happens and which direction he turns in the ongoing struggle for liberty.”

The marquis let out a whistle and looked toward the ceiling. Thomas and the marquis then walked toward Patsy. Two people who had attended the performance bowed as the diplomatic couple passed them. This made Thomas uncomfortable; he didn’t know if they were bowing to him or the marquis, but he nodded his acknowledgment of their gesture.

As they reached Patsy, Lafayette grabbed Thomas and hugged him. “I enjoyed this evening greatly.” Then he took Patsy’s hand by her fingers, raised them to his lips, and delicately kissed them. “Adieu, mademoiselle.” Lafayette walked to his coach, and the Jeffersons to their carriage.

Thomas helped Patsy in, then climbed in himself. The coachman cracked the whip and the single horse stepped out for the Champs Elysées. “You didn’t like the lark, did you?” asked Patsy. “I wish we’d brought Polly.”

“It’s been nice to have your sister here these last months, but she’s a bit too young for that opera. While the set was humorous, in many ways it was deadly serious.”

“Daddy, do you really think that Mozart stole the ideas from Paisiello?”

“Yes, darling, I do.”

“I know that’s awful. But if you can’t laugh, Daddy, what fun can you ever have?”

“You’re right.”

“Daddy . . . ”

“Yes dear.”

“Would you be upset if I joined a convent?”

“But you’re already there for schooling – or do you mean to be a nun!” he exclaimed in startled disbelief.

“Yes.”

There was a pause in the carriage as the horse drew father and daughter through Paris, traveling almost a mile before Thomas said, “I don’t think that I would stand in your way.”

She grabbed his hand and stroked it. “I knew you’d understand.”

The coach was silent the rest of the way home, with Thomas wondering how he would talk his daughter out of this madness she seemed to have in her young head. *Can I, will I allow it? Could I, would I stop it?* After some thought, he knew what he must do. “Patsy.”

“Yes, Daddy,” she said with hopeful anticipation.

“I don’t think you can stay at the convent.”

“What! Why?”

“Because, I say so.”

“Then you are an atheist, just like they say, you hate God.”

Thomas choked; the blow stung. Being hit so low by his daughter really hurt. “Anyone who suggested that to you is wicked! I love God, love Him more than my

life! The church is an evil institution that has persecuted and murdered any who refused to believe exactly as it says they must believe. Augustine of Hippo attacked the Manichaeans for seeking God in their way. The church has murdered so many, so very many, for similar attempts at worshiping God in unorthodox ways. The church has a horrible history, a murderous history. I believe God is love and Jesus is truth. I most certainly do honor, love and respect God. However, the church does not, at least, that's how I see it."

"Then I can't be a nun?"

"While I honor God, I don't respect the churches. Not the Catholic, Protestant, or Quaker. All Christian churches have corrupted the teachings of Jesus to give them power over the people in the pews. They all say that to honor God you must do this or that in a particular order or you are damned to hell. I don't buy that. If God is running a world where procedure prevails over character, then something is amiss, because I cannot conceive a God of love doing such a thing. But, men would do such a thing, and they have done it throughout history. If the churches had not been so despotic and bigoted in sending out the teachings of Jesus, then the entire world would now be Christian. I cannot, I will not allow my daughter to be a pawn for a church. My answer is no."

"But Daddy, look at all the good the Catholic Church has done."

"Good? Crusades, wars, and when its Society of Jesus enters a nation, all manner of wickedness breaks loose. The Church keeps its people poor of material goods, rich in guilt and hate, and the Jesuits are responsible for drug trade from the Far East. We can only thank Divine Providence that the pope saw fit to abolish that horrid group when you were less than one year old. All the world is better for it. The way I see it, the church is a comforter, but, in exchange, it claims its followers souls."

Silence filled the carriage for several minutes, before Patsy grabbed Thomas around the neck and kissed his cheek. “I love you too much to go against you, and I can’t hold it against you, Daddy. But, Daddy, why do you hate Catholics?”

“One of your father’s failings, sweetheart. I’m a good hater, and once I start to hating, nothing can abate it.”

“Nothing?” asked Patsy.

Thomas stroked his daughter’s hair and wiped a tear from the corner of her eye. “You always could, because you mean the world to me.”

The horse pulled the carriage to the front door and a crying father and daughter exited the conveyance, walked up the pathway, opened the door, and entered their house. Sally was waiting up for them and greeted them with crackers and milk. “I just got Polly to sleep a couple of minutes ago, she insisted on trying to wait up for Daddy, so keep quiet. Now, how did you find the opera?”

“Intriguing,” said Patsy, now accepting that she would not become a nun, “it was wild and raucous.” She smiled at her father. “But perhaps not totally original.”

Thomas declined on the treats and begged to leave them so he could go to work in his study. They understood, having lived with Thomas for so many years, they knew that he would work all hours, indefatigably. They both watched as Thomas left the kitchen, eased open the door to Polly’s room, blew a kiss to his sleeping angel, then strolled down the hall to his office.

Inside the study, he eased himself into his stuffed chair and reviewed the copy of the proposed constitution and read it again. It was far too long on government rights and far too short on citizens’ rights. He really was troubled by the document, but since Franklin was at the constitutional convention, he figured that it must have

been the best compromise available. After making a couple more notes on his copy, he began writing to James Madison:

Dear Sir:

I am now to report on the benefits and detriments of the proposed constitution for your consideration. First, I have written William Smith that the English continue to write that our country is in a state of anarchy because of a single uprising in Massachusetts. I don't find that to be such a bad record, in fact, God forbid we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion. The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots & tyrants. It is its natural manure.

I likewise have written John Adams about some concerns that I have, specifically, that the house of federal representatives will not be adequate to the management of affairs either foreign or federal. Their President seems a bad edition of a Polish king. he may be reelected from four years to four years for life. Reason and experience prove to us that a chief magistrate, so continuable, is an officer for life. I wish that at the end of the four years they had made him for ever ineligible a second time. Indeed I think all the good of this new constitution might have been couched in three or four new articles to be added to the good, old, and venerable fabric, the Articles of Confederation, which should have been preserved even as a religion relic.

And now that you have those pieces of input, here are my words to you about the proposed Constitution by the Philadelphia Convention. First, that it was done in secrecy is inexcusable and undefendable at any rate. The people should always know what is going on with their government, not be screened from it by an opaque veil. I like the organization of the government in Legislative, Judiciary & Executive. I like the power given the Legislature to levy taxes, and for that reason solely approve of the greater house being chosen by the people directly. This preserves inviolate the fundamental principle that the people are not to be taxed by representatives unless chosen immediately by themselves. I like the presidential veto, although I think that it would have been better given the courts.

I will now add what I do not like. First, the omission of a bill of rights providing clearly & without the aid of sophisms for freedom of religion, freedom of the press, protection against standing armies, restriction against monopolies, the eternal & unremitting force of the habeas corpus laws, and trials by jury in all matters of fact triable by the laws of the land & not by the law of nations. Although some states have been so incautious as to abandon trial by jury, the more prudent states have maintained them and avoided calamity, which is certain to come without the jury checking on the government. It must be a general right in all states. Let me add that a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, & what no just government should refuse, or rest on inferences.

The second feature I dislike, and greatly dislike, is the abandonment in every instance of the necessity of rotation in office, and most particularly in the case of the President.

I have thus told you freely what I like & dislike: merely as a matter of curiosity, for I know your own judgment has been formed on all these points. I own I am not a friend to a very energetic government. It is always oppressive.

I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they are chiefly agricultural; and this will be as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America. When they get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, they will become corrupt as in Europe.

Dear Sir your affectionate friend & servant

The letter would soon reach James Madison, who would be unable to change the body of the Constitution because the voting would be too far along at that time, but because of certain ambitions he had, he would follow one piece of advice from his mentor. Although he had been convinced by one of his teammates in writing the Federalist Papers under the pseudonym of Publius, Alexander Hamilton, that a bill of

rights was unnecessary since the Constitution only gave the federal government certain rights and no others, Thomas' letter made him reconsider the position.

Madison agonized over the situation. He had aspirations of being the President of the United States, but being only in his mid thirties, it would be several years away.

Alexander Hamilton was an important friend to have because he had many powerful friends, even though they were mostly tied to British interests. Jefferson was the people's choice, the friend of liberty, who could muster a great many votes. But, on the issue of a bill of rights, Hamilton and Jefferson were at loggerheads. He could not keep the support of both of them, and he would have to make an election.

After considerable thought, Madison realized Jefferson would be the person to follow and decided to abandon Hamilton on the issue. If it could be smoothed out between him and Hamilton later, so much the better his chances for the first chair.

Jefferson was set on a bill of rights because he was ever distrustful of governments, believing them to desire to steal rights from the people. Reluctantly, Madison decided to take Jefferson's advice. From this time forward, there could have been no stronger appearance of an advocate of the Bill of Rights than James Madison.

It would be Madison's new-found determination to have articles of amendment attached to the Constitution. This Bill of Rights spelled out specific rights, such as freedom of speech and religion, right to bear arms, freedom from warrantless searches, guarantees of due process, right to trial by jury in civil cases &c. Because of ambition for the first chair, it became Madison's relentless mission to have those rights spelled out so American rights would be express, never to rest on inference, and forever waving the proof of unalienable rights, such as Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

CHAPTER 43

YARMOUTH, ENGLAND, OCTOBER, 1789

Eleven year old Polly stared, open-mouthed at the tall masts of the sailing ship as she watched a sailor climb toward the top. The ship pitched from a wave and rolled, causing her to squirm as the sailor seemed to stumble above her, but regain his balance and continue his ascent. She felt a hand grab hers, a warm, thick hand that she knew well. Without taking her eyes off the sailor headed for the crow's nest, she said, "Daddy, will we ever be back to England?"

To Thomas, returning to Great Britain would be a nightmare. The only time he met George III, the king snubbed both John Adams and him. Any chance of him ever re-developing a kindred spirit for that country departed with that snubbing. While he wanted to see Paris again, England, to him, was death. Its architecture appalled him, its leaders offended him, and its foreign policy was abominable. Britain's partnership with the Dutch in their shameless production of opium in India, and their open trading of it to China could lead to nothing but horror in the Far East. Obviously, the rulers of England wanted world conquest, be it by war, by peace, by drugs, by slavery, by deception, or whatever other vile means that nation decided upon. But, its drug peddling seemed as low as any nation would stoop, however, Jefferson would no longer be surprised by any new act of depravity coming from England. Through its agent, the East India Company, he feared that China would fall. "I doubt it, sweetheart. Watch over the stern and you can have a last look at her in case we're not back."

Polly turned momentarily, saw the coastline, then returned her gaze upon the sailor just as he climbed into his perch and disappeared from her sight. “Why are we going back to Virginia?”

Thomas wondered whether he should explain that as bad as England was, the rest of Europe also depressed him with its filth and poverty that trapped the masses who wallowed in squalor and ignorance, contrasted with its opulence and extravagance for the few chosen by birth to live in luxury. Should he explain that in Virginia people were at liberty to speak their minds without fear of decapitation, which often happens in France, or of hanging, which often occurs in England. Could he delve into concepts like the enslavement of people’s minds and bodies by the various governments? Or could he explain how sundry European churches enslave people’s souls?. Would she understand that things were so horrible in Europe that he doubted many Americans would voluntarily return to the continent, but that swarms of Europeans would gladly flee their cages and immigrate to the New World? Just what should he tell an eleven-year-old?

“Because it’s our home and where we belong.”

Polly stared up with her head askew and quizzed, “Why did we leave then?”

“I had to work in Paris, sweetheart.”

“Did you need to earn money, is that why?”

Thomas chuckled and squeezed his daughter around the waist. “Not at all, in fact, the United States paid me less than I spent over there. I did it because I was asked to, because our leaders needed me, because it was my duty.”

“Then why aren’t you staying?”

“I wrote George Washington and asked him for a vacation so I could see Monticello again, so I could ride Eagle, so I could touch the Virginia soil once again.”

Polly stooped down, then jumped high into the air, toppling on the deck as she hit it. “Have you tried this, Daddy? It might take your mind off Virginia. The floor moves while you’re in the air and sometimes it’s ever so hard to land on your feet.”

Thomas sprang upward, landed on a loose piece of hemp line, and slipped over backwards. Polly laughed as he rose rubbing his tailbone. “See, Daddy, isn’t it fun?”

Thomas began a hearty laugh then began humming a song as his daughter did her jumping trick again. This time she landed on her feet, and her expression showed how disappointed she was at not being toppled by the rocking ship and swinging lines. “Oh, darn. Well, I’ll try it again.”

“Is it okay if I pass? I’ve already experienced the joy of a fall from that game?”

“Sure Daddy,” Polly said as she fell again, and as she rose she asked, “Will we come back here?”

“I hope not, but if I get called I will go.”

“But Daddy, can’t anybody else do the job?”

“Some not as well, but yes, others could do it just fine.”

“Then I say, it’s to Virginia we go, and in Virginia we’ll stay.” She sprang from a crouch, not into the air, but directly at Thomas, who, unprepared for the occasion, tried to catch her, but succeeded only in falling to the deck. He rubbed her hair with his knuckles while they lay on the deck. “You little rascal.”

While Polly and Thomas wrestled on the deck, Sally and Patsy joined them, coming up from below to swallow some salty air as it blew off the whitecaps. Sally looked concerned. “What is it?” asked Thomas, dusting himself.

“A sailor down below. I saw him in Paris in a coach at the Louvre dressed in velvet and frills, and now I find him on a ship doing menial labor. I knew somethin was strange so I asked him for the time in French. I figured that he would tell me he

didn't have no watch or some such thing. Instead, he told me in a thick brogue, 'I dunnot understand you.' He spoke perfect French in Paris, but he seems to have forgotten it upon boarding the ship."

"You're probably mistaken about him, Sally."

"I don't forget no faces. Names, sure they cause me trouble, but faces, never."

"Well, I'm certain it's unimportant," said Thomas.

"Mr. Jefferson, we're being followed and watched!"

"Nah, that's absurd." Thomas said forcefully, though he knew she was right. He had hoped that the spies would leave him alone in America, but he guessed that they had jobs to do. He knew that Britain was still maneuvering to take back the States, and her design was to do it by force or by intrigue, and which method succeeded mattered not to her. The thought of the spy on board cemented his loathing of England into a perfect hatred.

* * * * *

The ship landed in Norfolk, and shortly after he touched his beloved Virginia's soil, Jefferson opened a newspaper and read to his astonishment that George Washington had offered him the job of Secretary of State of the new country. Several things went through his head, not the least of which was a fervent hope that the report was in error or in jest. He folded the paper under his arm and procured a carrier to begin the move of his family inland to Monticello.

Not being able to find anything suitable for travel, the group went to eat at an Inn, with Sally remaining outside, and "in her place" Negroes wouldn't be able to eat

with the Jeffersons in Virginia. And, Thomas suddenly realized that he was back home to Virginia, warts and all.

After eating, Thomas secured adequate conveyances to move his troupe, and they were off for the Western region of Virginia. Along the way, the family visited relatives and friends. Taking their time, they were within four miles of Monticello on December 23, 1789. On this eve of the eve of Christmas, Thomas' hand contained a dispatch from a special courier confirming that General Washington indeed wanted him on the staff as the Secretary of State. Thomas wondered what to do with the appointment, knowing that it would force him into debt because the post would not pay enough to cover his expenses. A friend had told him to refuse the office, but Thomas felt strongly that it was not for the individual to refuse a position when the public called on him.

The conveyances continued to roll along as he wrestled with the problem of whether to serve. He heard a huge commotion outside the coach, looked out and saw a swarm of Negroes coming down the hill from Monticello shouting and hollering their greetings. The coach continued until stopped by the hoard of slaves, who unhitched the four horses and led them away. With the coach stopped dead, Thomas tried to get out to walk home with his servants, who refused to allow him or his daughters out of the carriage.

With ropes tied to the vehicles, the slaves began pulling the family up the mountain to Monticello. Thomas shouted out protests, which were almost inaudible over the raucous songs the slaves were singing. As the carriage approached the house, Thomas' hands shook, his eyes watered, and his body tingled. When the coach stopped at the front door, Jefferson was finally allowed out of the vehicle, where he

was smothered with hugs and kisses, then carried into the house. The Negroes were kissing his hands and feet as they deposited him in his favorite chair.

Pasty followed them into the study, walked up to her father, stroked his head, and softly said, "I declare, I think someone appreciates you, Daddy."

Thomas sat speechless for many minutes, just drinking in the love from his servants who had shown how they missed him. Then his eyes caught the twin brothers, Caleb and Callow, who were about eighteen years old now. He looked at them closely, noting their green eyes, fair skin, and wavy hair. They had a strong resemblance to a school friend of his, an Irishman with wonderful wit, but they also looked a bit like Patrick Henry, which gave Thomas cause to frown. He motioned to them to come close, which they did.

Then he spoke to the room full of slaves. "I don't know what to say, except I'm overwhelmed by the outpour of emotion you've shown and I thank you. And, as for Caleb and Callow, I think that you can pass for white if you go west far enough that nobody knows you. There you can sit on some land and make yourselves a home. If anyone discovers that you are Negroes, admit you ran from me and they'll bring you back." He reached in his pocket and pulled out several silver coins which he handed to Caleb. "Now, be on your way, won't you two?"

Callow stood shaking his head, looking around the room, attempting to determine why he had been given lighter skin and whether he wanted to leave. After a couple of seconds, he said, "You doesn't have to do it just cause I pulled your wagon."

"It's not for that."

"Then, if you don't be mindin, Masser, I'd like to spend Christmas here afore I go."

“Absolutely,” said Thomas.

Caleb was at his feet, trying to kiss them, “Oh, thanks you Masser.”

“Stop, stop. I’m just acknowledging your God-given unalienable rights. I just wish that the rest of Virginia could understand so I could do the same for your darker friends and relatives.”

CHAPTER 44

LONDON, 1790

The silver-haired marquis paced the floor and Sir Edmund Northborough twiddled with his thumbs. Both were concerned with the content of the letter Northborough had just received from Edward Bancroft. If it were true, things were in a stew in Paris and Philadelphia. A button popped off the marquis coat, which he bent over and picked up, then threw into the fireplace.

The ominous letter sat on the desk, along with its deciphered translation. La Droix picked it up again and read it, cussed, then kicked a chair. “Has William Eden cleared Bancroft? Can we trust the man? Is he on our side?”

The young lord stopped the rolling of his thumbs and gave a wry smile. “So you think you can be wrong sometimes?”

“Don’t toy with me or I’ll rip off your head.”

The smile left Northborough’s face and his stomach rumbled a protest from acid released by the lord’s anxiety. “Throughout the revolution Eden had Carmichael checking on Bancroft, and it appeared that Bancroft was solidly in our court.”

“He could have shifted,” said the marquis.

“Spots of the jaguar don’t go away,” said Northborough.

“Was Carmichael reliable?”

The lord liked having power over La Droix, he savored being the information link to Eden and the British Secret Service. “Lupton checked on Carmichael, he’s clean.”

The marquis clenched his fist. “But Eden checked out Number 72 from front to back, Lord North was certain we had him in our game, even George the Third backed him. If what Bancroft says is true? Then we never had Franklin, but he had us! Where is that man now?”

“Philadelphia.”

“He dies.”

Sir Northborough raised a hand in protest. “But, the man’s long since an octogenarian! What harm can he be?”

“Never believe that because someone is eighty that they are impotent. Send word to our New York connections to get rid of that insidious, traitorous, Dr. Franklin. Look what he was supposed to do with that American Constitution, and see what he did. Make it a monarchy we told him, and he assured us he would, but did he? No way, that document in its current form is dreadful to our interests, and if Jefferson’s blasted bill of rights gets attached to it, well, England will have a devil of a time reclaiming her colony.”

Northborough pulled out a copy of the document from his desk and glanced through it. “Well, it could have been worse.”

La Droix seemed not to hear. “And even with Franklin playing turncoat on us, we still had some zealots, some we’ve never even paid or approached, mind you, but certainly we should. They almost carried the day by excluding any natural rights from the document. I think we should bring that man Hamilton, Alexander Hamilton, into our confidences. With his desire for money and his obstinacy, he could be quite valuable.”

The lord looked about the room. “We don’t need more zealots, they are my greatest concern, it was Franklin’s protégé, that Jefferson chap, who wrote James Madison and instructed him to put in a bill of rights.”

“Nobody got through to Jefferson, did they?”

“We tried whores, both male and female, money, greed, and threats, yet he never moved, perhaps he’s one of the people of principle that we hear about, but we never encounter. We thought we had him hooked with Mrs. Cosway, but that fell apart. Funny thing was, he never hid much from us. He left out papers for reading, making burglaries of his office simple affairs. And he received very few ciphered communications from America, but those were all decoded and found to be dealing with internal affairs of his country. Anything he sent back, he sent in clear, understandable text. From all appearances, he’s as naive as a newborn.”

The marquis’ voice climbed until it reached an hysterical pitch. “Is the man a saint? Have you no dirt on him?”

“Well, he removed a pound or two of rice from Italy under penalty of death and sent it to America for cultivation.”

“Rice! Two pounds of rice! Is that all you have!”

“I think he’s possibly incorruptible. That’s what a close source says.”

“You don’t mean Lee Boo. Why would you trust him? He’s a foul savage and tainted by Franklin.”

“Don’t you remember that he came to you and hinted problems about Franklin in Paris?”

The marquis clenched both fists. He was beginning to cool, but not by much. “And it led us nowhere, although, maybe we quit too quickly on the search.”

Northborough looked at the silver fox. “Obviously we did, and now what do we do?”

“It’s time to recruit another Solomon, if you really think Jefferson is beyond our reach.”

“Eden thinks so, too.”

The marquis bit on his lip. *Why have I broken off with Eden? Were it not for that, I wouldn’t need this pompous little lord, but, such as things were, I am forced into work with Sir Northborough.* “Why don’t you put in a good word for me with Eden?”

Northborough might have been afraid of La Droix, but not to the point of stupidity. He would feed that rift for all it was worth. “I think it would be a wasted effort.”

“And how about Number 94?”

“A rising star and still in place, but flaky as a fallen leaf. Money will buy that man at any time; he’s greedy beyond belief. Give him enough and he’ll assassinate Washington, Adams, or probably his own mother.”

“That’s the kind of reports I like to hear.”

“So, what do we do?”

“Remove Franklin, permanently, keep 94 on the ready, and leave that ruddy Jefferson be. Pity to give up on him, he’d have been a perfect Solomon.” The marquis’ voice modulated with an eerie and ominous reverberation.

Northborough shivered, then said, “We may never need Solomon.”

“Nor 94 or several others, we may just win this thing back straight up in another war, through assassination, debauchery or whatever. It doesn’t matter how we get it back, only that we do.”

“But, Solomon, if we get a Solomon, could take years, even decades to accomplish his goal.”

“Time is irrelevant. We can take centuries if necessary, because we won’t quit. Those trusting Americans will go to sleep, and then we’ll have them back.”

CHAPTER 45

PHILADELPHIA, 1790

Thomas Jefferson was to take over his office as Secretary State in the United States of America's capital in New York, which would soon be moved to Philadelphia. In order to take on the new commitment, he had borrowed \$2,000 and wondered why he kept answering calls from his government that were driving him into debt and forcing him away from his family duties. He really wanted to get back to work as a farmer on Monticello and away from politics, but when George Washington asked for assistance, it was most difficult to refuse, so he was New York bound, but he had an important stop.

In Philadelphia, he called on Benjamin Franklin, who was sick, struggling to breathe, and though he was occasionally showing rebounds, he was in his final days. He would cheat the assassin that La Droix had ordered for him by several days, losing his life not a day sooner than was due him.

While Jefferson sat at the dying man's bed, Franklin became animated and curious as to what was happening in France. He asked repeated questions about the affairs and had nothing but good to say about Lafayette, with which Thomas concurred completely. They spoke for several minutes about Europe when Franklin said, "This may be the last time we talk, so listen well, my greatest hope for this country. I am so glad that you finally accepted General Washington's offer of the post of Secretary of State on your own. I was afraid that I might have to use my influence with you."

The Virginian blushed, which Franklin noticed immediately and told him that humility was fine, but he believed that Thomas was critical to the survival of the nation, to which Jefferson said, “We have many competent leaders in this country.”

“Capable, yes, incorruptible, no. It’s down to you, my boy, it’s down to you.”

“So what am I to do?”

Franklin coughed several times and motioned for Thomas to prop a pillow under his foot to elevate it. “Lee Boo has found out that Number 94 is in place.”

“Franklin, trouble yourself not with further intrigue. We have Washington at the helm, a fairly good constitution, although it lacks a bill of rights at this time and contains a bit too much of Tory principles for my liking, I believe it is certain to soon have a bill of rights; we will become a strong nation.”

The old man coughed again. “Don’t be naive. The British want this country back, and will do anything to reclaim the colonies. There were at least two agents in the Constitutional Convention, and more eavesdroppers for the Crown than you could imagine. We probably will have a bill of rights, I hope that Madison will accomplish this. But, we will never be safe from retaliation.”

“Did I detect cynicism in your voice regarding Madison and the bill of rights?”

Franklin smiled. “Well, he was a self-appointed secretary of the constitutional convention, and I have seen some of his notes, which don’t bear fidelity to what I remember happened while we were chiseling out that document.”

“What about the bill of rights?”

“I think that he’s doing it to stay in your good graces.”

“What should I do?”

“Keep him close to you. If he’s an enemy, you want close by.”

“Then why not tell me all you know about 94.”

“He’s in New York and close to Alexander Hamilton, that’s all I know.”

“Do you mean that foul Hamilton is on the British payroll?”

“No, I don’t think that they have gotten to him, but the man’s ideas are dangerous enough to help them anyway. Hamilton wants a strong central government, a hereditary monarch, a debt-ridden country. Those concepts play right into the Crown, so they don’t even need to recruit him, but if they were to, oh, I hate to think of it. Someone keeps feeding him the tripe so he zealously works on what he believes is right and proper.”

“And I have to go work beside that pompous baboon in Washington’s cabinet. Imagine, me as the Secretary of State, a small government man, and Hamilton as Secretary of Treasury, trying to build a Goliath. How will we ever get anything done?”

“Just be on the watch for Number 94 while you’re in New York.”

“And if I catch him?”

“Let him have his rope, then prove him a traitor for all to see, then expose the British for trying to take back the country from within by intrigue and deceit.”

“And then rest?”

“No, never rest, because for every line of deceit we find, there will be ten that escape us, William Eden set up a maze of agents so thick that in Paris, you can’t walk down the street without bumping into one or two.”

Thomas reflected for a moment, scratched his head, then poured a glass of water for the dying man. “Then, tell me about Solomon, who is that?”

“As nearly as I can tell, Solomon is a contingency plan, one being kept deep in the woods, to be used only occasionally for long term shaping of this country if we fend off the early attempts at take over by the British.”

“Is it a person?”

“Perhaps one, perhaps many.”

“Can you tell me more?”

“They thought that they had you, that you would be Solomon.”

Thomas roared, “That’s choice.”

“No, Thomas, no. Anybody who goes to Paris is tempted in many ways, by British agents, and if not by them, by international bankers and legitimate merchants or even drug traffickers. Solomon might well be procured in Paris. He will seem to be one of us, but he won’t be.”

“Why bankers and traders?”

“For greed, to appeal to greed.”

“So the bankers are working for the British?”

“So it would appear.”

“And what makes this country, fledgling as it is, such a prize?”

Franklin coughed again and Thomas knew that this was the last time he would ever see him. That deep congested sound could only mean that death was near. “Liberty. The British adore slavery, express and implied. We stand for breaking the bonds of servitude. That irks them. And further, they see us as an upstart child that needs a thorough whipping.”

“So you think that our freedom will make us great and powerful?”

“And rich, free people become wealthy people, and mother England wants her share.”

A tear trickled down Thomas’ cheek, which Franklin, ever observant, brushed away with a finger. “Don’t worry about me, Mr. Jefferson, take care of my country.”

“Why?” asked Thomas.

“Why what?”

“Why have you given everything, risked everything, done everything for this country?”

“Well, I’m not as much an altruist as you, but I didn’t do it for fame, nor for riches; I did it for liberty.”

“You must feel great about what you’ve done.”

“One thing I want to see, but won’t.”

“What’s that?”

“The end of slavery. I think it will eat at our nation, drive at its heart, dig us a grave if we don’t attend to it.”

“It’s ugly, but I dare not become an open abolitionist, at least not yet. And, that’s another thing about the Constitution. The slaving states are free to import more slaves until 1808, and the federal government can tax them for it and if any unfortunates escape from slaving states to free ones, they have to be turned back over. What rot! And, it wouldn’t surprise me in the slightest if the British don’t outlaw slavery before America gets around to it, just to show how ‘enlightened’ they are.”

“I know what creeps are running that country, Thomas, and I know our fledgling country is in good care. Regarding, Lee Boo, use him when you think you’ve found either 94 or Solomon. That man is trustworthy and he can write like the wind. The British think they have him, but let me assure you, they do not.”

“I will.”

“And Thomas, watch Washington closely.”

“Surely you don’t suspect the general.”

Franklin shook his head. “No, but his mind is showing from his years. I think that he can be swayed by advisors, which is why you must be close to him.”

“That’s disappointing to hear.”

“Not at all, were Washington in his full mental capacities, I believe that the British would assassinate him. Instead, they’ll attempt to manipulate him. And, I’m not too hopeful about how long freedom will last in our country. I made a speech at the constitutional convention about why people in public service should forego remuneration. You’d have thought I was talking to stone walls. One thing I know for certain, when you combine ambition and avarice, you have tyranny. When offices of importance compensate the holders well, then those attracted to the positions are the worst sorts of power-hungry demons. I know that liberty won’t last that long in our country, but, I also know that if you put forth your best efforts, the British will have a much more difficult time eroding our freedom.”

“Do you really believe the British are that horrible?”

Franklin nodded, then changed the subject. “You know Thomas, I’ve done quite a lot in my lifetime. I feel much has been accomplished.”

“What more could a man have done?”

“With a couple of more years, I would have electrified America. My experiments have gone well with electricity. And, I think I would have solved the puzzle of how names and numbers go in cycles.”

“Names and numbers!” exclaimed Thomas. “Vergennes was on that route also.”

“Vergennes? My gosh, I never would have guessed. What did he tell you?”

“That everything is based upon the cycles of nine and that letters are ordered in groups of nines. Then he went into something about vowels being the thinkers and totals being the doers,” said Thomas with a bit of a sarcastic sneer.

“That’s it! Nine! Why didn’t I think of it? I’d used even numbers and nothing would work, but nine, why its the square of three, yes of course that’s it.”

Jefferson's sneer departed. "I don't really understand these nines, and I was quite skeptical when Vergennes explained them, but when I finally had a remotely open mind on the matter, Vergennes was dead."

"Feel not sorrow, young Thomas, you've made a sick old man quite happy. I now understand better how the world functions. I always knew the answer was mathematics, and you've just given me the proof. If I feel well enough in a few days, I'll write out a paper upon it. Yes, when astrology is combined with the vibrations of numbers, a great deal that is currently hidden, will be revealed."

"I'll wait for it with slightly skeptical, yet bated breath."

"Oh, Thomas, I want you to have this, read it at your leisure." The old man handed over a stack of 25 pages, hand written in Franklin's large running style.

Thomas protested, "No, these are your papers."

Franklin held up his hand. "Keep them. Now, will you make an old man happy by complying with a last request?"

"Of course."

Franklin pointed over to a few pages of documents that were written also written in his own hand. "My eyes are a bit tired. Could you do me a favor and read those to me?"

Jefferson picked up the papers and began to read silently, then identified what it was. "This is my bill!"

"Yes," said Franklin, "and a beautiful bill it is too. Please read it to me so I can remember what a champion you are in my final days."

Thomas had a tear in his eye as he shuffled the well worn pages. Then he read:

An Act for establishing Religious Freedom (1779), passed in the Assembly of Virginia in the beginning of the year 1786.

Franklin smiled. “Imagine, you wrote that in the middle of the Revolution. People were willing to go to war against Britain, but they wouldn’t pass your bill.”

“Yes, but they passed it while I was in Paris. What a celebration I had over that. I printed copies of them and distributed them everywhere. Why don’t you have a printed copy of this bill? Why is it that it’s in your own hand?”

“I just wanted to be a part of it, so I wrote it out in long hand.”

“That’s quite a compliment, my friend.” He continued reading:

Section One. Well aware that Almighty God hath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his Almighty power to do; that the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible, and as such endeavoring to impose them on others, hath established and maintained false religions over the greatest part of the world, and through all time; that to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves, is sinful and tyrannical; that even the forcing him to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular pastor whose morals he would make his pattern, and whose powers he feels most persuasive to righteousness, and is withdrawing from the ministry those temporal rewards, which proceeding from an approbation of their personal conduct, are an additional incitement to earnest and unremitting labors for the instruction of mankind; that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, more than our opinions in physics or geometry; that, therefore, the proscribing any citizen as unworthy the public confidence by laying upon him an incapacity of being called to

the offices of trust and emolument, unless he profess or renounce this or that religious opinion, is depriving him injuriously of those privileges and advantages to which in common with his fellow citizens he has a natural right; that it tends also to corrupt the principles of that very religion it is meant to encourage, by bribing, with a monopoly of worldly honors and emoluments, those who will externally profess and conform to it; that though indeed these are criminal who do not withstand such temptation, yet neither are those innocent who lay the bait in their way; that to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles, on the supposition of their ill tendency, is a dangerous fallacy, which at once destroys all religious liberty, because he being of course judge of that tendency, will make his opinions the rule of judgment, and approve or condemn the sentiments of others only as they shall square with or differ from his own; that it is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government, for its offices to interfere when principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order; and finally, that truth is great and will prevail if left to herself, that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict, unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate, errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them.

Section Two. Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly, That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in nowise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

Section Three. And though we well know this Assembly, elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of legislation only, have no power to restrain the acts of succeeding assemblies, constituted with the powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act irrevocable, would be of no effect in law, yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby asserted are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any

act shall be hereafter passed to repeal the present or to narrow its operation, such act will be an infringement of natural right.

Thomas slipped the quire of papers that Franklin had given him into his pocket after completing the reading of the bill. Franklin was crying. Thomas also cried as he shook Franklin's hand, then hugged him before leaving to take on his duties as Secretary of State. It was the last time the brilliant old man who planned America's freedom would speak with his protégé, the person he believed to be the last hope for freedom.

CHAPTER 46

PHILADELPHIA, 1791

Thomas Jefferson, the first Secretary of State of the United States of America, reviewed his documents. He knew that all standards of measurement must remain pure and therefore had proposed that America adopt the 12-inch foot, the three-foot yard, and the 5280-foot mile. He further set out the liquid measurements and the volume standards. He had also designed what he knew to be the most ticklish of affairs, the standard for the currency of the United States of America.

Ultimately, he chose the dollar as the standard, but he was troubled as to how to break it into portions, and finally arrived at the solution of dividing it by use of the decimal system. It was chosen for its ease of use. He decided that the money would be designated as dollars and percentages of dollars. Therefore, an article costing one and one-half dollars would be designated as one dollar and fifty percent. Ultimately, this would be shortened to one dollar and fifty cents.

More importantly, he needed to make absolutely certain that a dollar would be a standard of measurement that could be relied upon to always mean the same thing. During the revolution the British had counterfeited and circulated American currency, causing massive inflation. The buying power of the money was nullified. To counter this, Jefferson recommended that a dollar be backed by 376 grains of silver. Thereby, the dollar would always be a standard of measure, just like the pint or the foot.

While the buying power might go up and down with the fluctuations of supply and demand for goods and services, it would always be guaranteed that anyone could

trade an American dollar in for a fixed amount of silver. By this protection, nobody could debase the currency without first undoing Jefferson's protective handiwork.

As he reviewed his proposals, he heard the President's familiar voice. "Come in, Thomas, do come in."

Jefferson walked into Washington's office and bowed at the desk. Washington returned the bow and motioned Thomas to have a seat. Thomas looked at the general who had refused an inheritable crown to sit at the head of government, who had quelled his officers when they wanted to force the citizens to pay the soldiers for fighting the revolution, which would have resulted in a military dictatorship, who gave everything he had for the United States of America. His admiration of Washington approached the feelings he had for Franklin. "I hope these proposals for standards of measurement are satisfactory and can be enacted by the Congress."

"I've no doubt they will be. Fine piece of work, Thomas, fine piece of work."

"I'm glad you approve, and if you have no additions or deletions to recommend, I'll present them in total. Moving on to another piece of business, I'm troubled by something and wonder if I could impose upon your counsel."

"Thomas, your request for my ear is well taken. I am honored that you seek my advice."

Thomas cleared his throat and said, "I fear that I have compromised the wishes of Dr. Franklin, though totally by accident, and with the best intentions."

"Dr. Franklin trusted you above all people in America. He told me that so emphatically one time that it actually set me back a bit, because it was clear to me the Franklin had included me in his list of Americans who are less trustworthy than you. I am certain that there is nothing that you could have done to lose that trust."

“When I visited him, about a month before his death, he gave me a quire of hand-written papers. I kept them and later read the packet. Upon his death, I learned that he bequeathed all his papers to his grandson, William Temple Franklin, I immediately wrote to Mr. Franklin, to inform him I possessed this paper, which I should consider as his property, and would deliver to his order. He came on immediately to New York, called on me for it, and I delivered it to him. As he put it into his pocket, he said carelessly, he had either the original, or another copy of it, I do not recollect which. This last expression struck my attention forcibly, and for the first time suggested to me the thought that Dr. Franklin had meant it as a confidential deposit in my hands, and that I had done wrong in parting from it. I have not yet seen the collection he published of Dr. Franklin’s works, and, therefore, know not if this is among them. I have been told it is not. It contained a narrative of the negotiations between Dr. Franklin and the British Ministry, when he was endeavoring to prevent the contest of arms which followed. The negotiation was brought about by the intervention of Lord Howe and his sister, who, I believe, was called Lady Howe, but I may misremember her title. Lord Howe seems to have been friendly to America, and exceedingly anxious to prevent a rupture. His intimacy with Dr. Franklin, and his position with the Ministry, induced him to undertake a mediation between them; in which his sister seemed to have been associated. They carried from one to the other, backwards and forwards, the several propositions and answers which passed, and seconded with their own intercessions, the importance of mutual sacrifices, to preserve the peace and connection of the two countries. I remember that Lord North’s answers were dry, unyielding, in the spirit of unconditional submission, and betrayed an absolute indifference to the occurrence of a rupture; and he said to the mediators distinctly, at last, that ‘a rebellion was not to be deprecated on the part of Great

Britain; that the confiscations it would produce would provide for many of their friends.’ This expression was reported by the mediators to Dr. Franklin, and indicated so cool and calculated a purpose in the Ministry, as to render compromise hopeless, and the negotiation was discontinued. If this is not among the papers published, I ask, what has become of it? I delivered it with my own hands, into those of Temple Franklin. It certainly established views so atrocious in the British government, that its suppression would, to them, be worth a great price. But could the grandson of Dr. Franklin be, in such degree, an accomplice in the parricide of the memory of his immortal grandfather?”

Washington rose from his chair, walked to a window, hands behind his back, and shook his head in rapid motions. “No, no, no! Have the British bribed Temple Franklin? We must assume not, and wait to see whether this paper is published. Let us give the lad the benefit of the doubt, and should that document not appear in twenty years or so, then the truth will be known.”

“Do you think it probable that the British would bribe Temple?”

Washington smirked. “I’ve been an officer on the side of the British before our Revolution, and during it I opposed them, they are treacherous beyond belief, whether by design, culture, language, nature, or what, I believe that I can always count on the British to working some sort of duplicitous game of espionage when they are not openly seeking corruption. I’ve been approached by them, but I think they believe me harmless, and I must admit, that my mind is not as strong as it once was, but yes, I would think it in keeping with their character to bribe young Franklin.”

Thomas whistled a couple of notes, then said, “My next subject is whether it is right for you to follow Alexander Hamilton’s advice and maintain a small amount of

debt at all times. I think it is absurd for someone to think that being in debt can breed prosperity. It is a fool's desert."

Washington laughed. "Alexander is young, and he is learning. We can try out a few of his ideas, which he'll soon discover are ludicrous. He's in possession of a fine mind. The country needs him, despite his beliefs about debt."

"But, he has a plan to banish our coins and print paper money, printed in the form of bank bills now issuing into circulation. These carry a ten or twelve percent annual profit paid to the lenders of this paper medium taken out of the pockets of the people, who would have had without interest the coin it is banishing: that all the capital employed in paper speculation is barren and useless, producing, like that on a gaming table, no accession to itself, and is withdrawn from commerce and agriculture, where it would have produced addition to the common mass: that it nourishes in our citizens habits of vice and idleness, instead of industry and morality: that it has furnished effectual means of corrupting such a portion of the legislature as turns the balance between the honest voters, whichever way it is directed: that this corrupt squadron, deciding the voice of the legislature, have manifested their dispositions to get rid of the limitations imposed by the Constitution on the general legislature, limitations, on the faith of which, the States acceded to that instrument: that the ultimate object of all this is to prepare the way for a change from the present republican form of government to that of a monarchy, of which the English Constitution is to be the model: that this was contemplated by the convention is no secret, because its partisans have made more of it."

Washington quietly listened, then said, "We do have a problem, a major one between State and Treasury, don't we? Can it be solved? I need you both. Maybe Alexander is desirous of a monarchy, which we both agree would be the total end of

freedom and would render our past revolution as a wasted effort, but, I believe him to be loyal to Americans. If he is honestly in error in his views, don't you think that truth will prevail?"

"I don't know. Sometimes I tremble for my country."

"Well, Thomas, since you are quite spiritual, let me tell you a story about our country. During the war, when things were blackest, as was my usual practice, I would pray for guidance. During one of my prayer sessions, a vision appeared, a beautiful woman, who looked at me and said, 'Son of the Revolution' see what is here. She showed me a map of our conflict, and revealed that America would prevail in her battle with Great Britain. Then, she showed me two other wars on our soil, which I assume were against the same foe, the British. The second was short, and relatively bloodless, but the third showed many of our cities burning. Death was rampant, and the horrors were terrible, but, freedom prevailed."

Thomas swallowed hard. "Mr. President, that is quite a vision."

"So you see, Thomas, we have God on our side."

"I hope that God will see to it that Mr. Hamilton begins working for our nation and guiding us on a path out of debt instead of into it. If our debts continue to mount, we won't need to worry about losing the country by war, we'll have it repossessed by the bankers."

CHAPTER 47

PHILADELPHIA, 1793

Thomas sat dejected in the President's office waiting with Alexander Hamilton for their meeting with George Washington. This conference had been delayed for too long, years too long for Thomas. When the President entered, both his Secretary of State and his Secretary of Treasury rose and bowed, which were both returned by Washington perfunctorily. He signaled them to sit, which they did.

"Now, I seem to have a bit of a problem with you two. Is it resolvable, or are the differences irretrievably separating you both? I ask because I need the most competent men in the country assisting me, and I believe that I have them both sitting in my office and would like to keep it that way."

Hamilton let out a nervous chuckle. "I have nothing but respect for Mr. Jefferson's principles, yet there is no common ground between us. He would denude the federal government of all its power, while I find it still lacking sufficient energy and authority to perform its duties; our general government is hampered, hamstrung by states' rights enforcers."

Thomas pulled out a piece of paper, glanced over it, then returned it into a file. "It is true that I believe that government which governs least, governs best, and our Secretary of Treasury totally disagrees with that. But, more critically, Mr. Hamilton deceived me on the national bank matter, fraudulently winning my support, and I have lost all respect for him. I cannot continue to work with him, and not wishing to make your Excellency choose between us, I will gracefully exit. It is my firm belief that if

there is a national bank, that the bank will by means of manipulating inflations, followed by deflations, ultimately be able to confiscate all of the private property that we Americans have fought so hard to win. Without property, there is no freedom.” Then Jefferson reached into the file and removed the piece of paper he had been studying earlier and handed it to Washington, who read Jefferson’s notice of resignation without outward emotion, although reading it ripped at his insides.

Hamilton reddened, grasped the arms of his chair and squeezed them until his whole body trembled, but he said nothing, figuring that having Jefferson leave the cabinet was reward enough. He needn’t take up dueling pistols over the insult, and he knew that neither Washington nor Jefferson would be spreading information about this meeting to anyone.

Washington looked at both of them for several seconds, studying the disdain in each other’s eyes, and resolved himself to do without one of them. He was relieved that one of them had resigned, rather than force him into a choice of who would stay. Washington rose and left the office, disappointed in losing one of the finest minds in America, followed by his two cabinet members, and the meeting was over. Washington was a consummate politician, but he had tried the impossible by attempting to meld a big government monarchist into a cabinet with a small government republican. The two headstrong men of diametrically opposed ideas about government would never again serve on the same cabinet.

CHAPTER 48

LONDON, 1796

La Droix was tired, and walking up the few stairs to Sir Northborough's place had done him in totally. He sat in the foyer, waiting to be called into Northborough's study, but the lord was playing his own cards now, realizing that La Droix had aged and slowed, Northborough made the elder man wait. After thirty minutes, a secretary opened the door and announced that it would only be a few minutes longer before Sir Northborough could see him.

The marquis fretted and regained his breath while the lord played a number puzzle that had arrived in the morning's post. He couldn't get the last four boxes filled in correctly, but he finally discarded his game and called for the marquis.

When the silver-haired man entered, he was fully spent, lacking the energy and power he evinced in his earlier days. He hobbled in to see the knight who was destined to take up the charge. The marquis was old and he felt his failing health would soon make continuation impossible for him. "You wanted to see me, Sir Northborough."

"I did, La Droix, I did. You seem rather poorly today. Would you still like to grab my neck and strangle me, or would you think better of it now?"

The steely eyes bored in on the knight, letting him know that while his partner was sick, he was still able to defend his honor. The lord wisely let his comment drop.

“I have word from America that Jefferson is probably going to be somewhat successful with his upstart party, the Democratic-Republicans. While nobody gives him a chance at winning the presidency, some predict he will win second chair.”

“That’s a shame,” said La Droix, “we had worked hard to try to make the colonies a one-party affair, which would have made them much easier to overthrow from within. This may force us into a frontal course, a war.”

“I don’t think it will be necessary,” said the knight, filing down his fingernail and blowing dust from them occasionally.

“Why not?”

“Because, we have Number 94 firmly in place. Let Jefferson do what he might, we will spoil all his thunder and lightning with our man from New York.”

“Don’t ever be so overconfident. We need more plans than one. I’ve been trying to tell you this, and if you insist on fighting the issue, I’ll go over your head.”

The knight sneered at his elderly guest, who not long ago had controlled the younger man with an iron fist, but now only pleaded for him to listen. “For your benefit, I’ll keep the Solomon plan alive, but we don’t have a Solomon as of yet, you understand.”

“But, Northborough, take advantage of my vast experience, and you will see the merit in keeping Solomon in the reserve. Or, at least, take out Jefferson now – you wanted to before.”

“I can deal with Jefferson, and I’ll recruit a Solomon. Now can you go home and die in peace?”

“You’re an impudent pig, you know that?”

“And you’re ten years past your prime.”

“Consider working with the bankers, they can help you in a pinch.”

Sir Northborough stood and rang the bell. His secretary walked in and ushered out the protesting marquis, who was physically unable to resist the effort. Northborough laughed to himself at his mastery over the man who had once dominated him. He waved good-bye to La Droix.

CHAPTER 49

PARIS, 1797

When John Marshall had sailed across the Atlantic on the brig *Grace*, strange things happened. The *Grace* was detained three times en route by British warships, but on each occasion, the vessel was immediately released upon the British captains learning that the ship carried Mr. Marshall. These events filled Marshall with self-importance that expanded with each encounter, since he was unaware that safe passage of him had been ordered by a silver-haired marquis, who, while weakened, still retained his mental capacities and knew the importance of the Envoy Extraordinary from America.

Upon arriving at Paris, Marshall, Elbridge Gerry, and Charles Pickney were entreated to the beckoning of a strange group of representatives of the French government. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, an ugly, pale man named Talleyrand, had sent the first of these in the person of a Swiss financier named Hottenguer, who tested the water to see how big of a bribe could be gotten from the Americans. The purpose of the bribe was so the French would not retaliate for President John Adams' comments about Barras, who was vying with Napoleon Bonaparte as the power broker of France.

When the first of Talleyrand's agents was unable to get anywhere with the American cast of envoys, another was sent. This time it was a man from Geneva who resided in Hamburg by the name of Bellamy. This agent again sought bribe money for protection, at least a quarter of a million dollars for openers, followed by several

millions. While Gerry began considering the arguments, Marshall and Pickney were unmoved.

Talleyrand reached into his bag of agents and sent forth yet another to approach the Americans, a West Indies trader named Hauteval, who threatened that General Napoleon had already forced Austria into surrender, and now would be free to work on Britain and then the United States. When Hauteval asked for the protection money, an indignant Pickney shouted, “No, not a sixpence!”

The French had more agents, one being the charming Madame de Vilette, who fared no better than the first three.

Then Talleyrand brought out his biggest gun, Pierre Agustin Caron de Beaumarchais, the author of *The Marriage of Figaro*, and a man who aided the Americans greatly by giving them arms during their revolution. Since Beaumarchais was a client of Marshall and he was involved in an enormous lawsuit in the United States, Beaumarchais suggested that if the judges were to bring in a suitable verdict that he would front the quarter million dollar initial payment of tribute for the Americans if they would handle the remainder of the millions of dollars in protection money. It was Marshall’s time to be indignant, and since he had not yet taken the bench on an American court, he replied naively that judges in America didn’t work that way.

These bribes would be known as the XYZ affair, which President John Adams would use to its fullest in the anti-French campaign.

All of these meetings, the silver-haired marquis watched in glee. It was now time to arrange a meeting with Mr. Marshall himself. Knowing the man’s weakness for games of chance and horses, La Droix invited Marshall to join him at an exclusive

box at the racetrack. Marshall wondered what further mischief the French would be attempting at this meeting, and he almost declined it outright.

When Marshall arrived at the ornate box that came complete with Renaissance oils hung in gilded frames, he drew a deep breath. There he saw La Droix sitting on a chair and holding a cane with a droll smile on his face that gave him a totally harmless appearance.

“Well,” said La Droix, “so good of you to join me at the races.” He reached into his pocket and asked whether Marshall would go place a thousand francs on Streuben, then handed his guest two thousand francs. “You might want to place one yourself.”

“That’s too rich for my comfort,” said Marshall, reaching in his pocket and removing a one-hundred franc note. “I’ll play this.”

“As you wish, but I had heard you gamed for bigger stakes.”

Marshall responded hoarsely, then left the box to place the two bets. While he was in line, he heard a shill pretending to be a jockey but who was actually a La Droix agent, exclaim that Streuben was ready for a big run. By the time it was his turn to bet, he placed two thousand francs on Streuben, one thousand for La Droix, and the other thousand for himself.

As he walked nervously back to the box, he felt a chill in his back. He had just bet more than he could afford by ten-fold; the horse had to win, his wife and children at home would be going without plenty if it did not come in for him. As he bumped into people in line, he found his way back to the box to a cheery old man, who seemed not to have moved an inch.

“Did you place my bet?”

“Absolutely,” said Marshall, handing La Droix his ticket, and his one-thousand franc note.

“Oh, you didn’t place one?”

Marshall displayed his ticket that showed he likewise had one thousand francs riding on the race on the same horse. However, Marshall’s ticket was now covered with some perspiration from his thumb and his stomach was rising and falling, bringing his heart up to his neck, then dropping it with great rapidity. His nerves were frayed, but when the horses lined up, he composed himself enough to ask, “Which one is he?”

“She’s number twelve and the only filly in the batch, that’s why we have ten-to-one odds.”

Marshall’s heart sunk to his bowels, and he felt as though he had just been taken for a chump. He bit his lip and held back a whimper. He’d placed a thousand francs on a filly that might never come in for him. He thought of his Polly, and wondered how he would explain this foolish loss, then decided that she need never discover it, that she could be told that Paris was just so expensive that it literally broke him to go there.

The horses lined up, and before they were allowed to take off, there was an announcement that one had been scratched. While he waited for the number of the horse, Marshall was praying that it was number twelve so he would be out of this insane bet. La Droix watched with pleasure as Marshall went through grimace after grimace as he waited to learn the number. Finally, the announcer said that number eight had been scratched. Marshall grasped the rail for strength, weak from having been praying so feverishly that it would have been his horse that was scratched.

“That’s lucky for us!” shouted La Droix. “The only other horse I would have given a chance against Streuben was number eight. We’re in!”

Marshall wasn’t so certain, but now that the horses lined up again, his blood rushed, and he dismissed all worries about the thousand francs. For the next few minutes, all he could see was ten thousand francs when Streuben won. As the horses took off, there were two quick starters, his white mare, number twelve, and a black stallion, number five. The rest of the horses were a length or two behind them. Marshall felt chills running from his toes and working their way to his neck. He shook with pleasure as he watched the filly pull her head past the black horse.

Hooves were thumping and the gallery was a raucous affair with feet stomping in the grandstands. Marshall clenched his ticket, and shouted, “Come on girl! Keep it up!”

La Droix watched the American’s expressions, unconcerned who would win the race, but satisfied that his reports were correct. Not only was Marshall a gambler, but he had that addicted look in his eye. It was clear to the marquis that Marshall not only wanted to win, but he loved the sport of it. He was the mark; he would become Solomon.

The horses battled for position as they took the last turn, with the black horse riding Streuben’s hindquarter, and Marshall was on his tip toes as he screamed, “Do it! Take him! Put him away! You can do it girl.”

As the pair rounded the turn, the black horse caught fire, extending its stride with a burst of speed that it had held in reserve, and it shot past the mare, easily besting her valiant effort. Marshall’s eyes sank. Now the worst had come. He had nothing left with him to gamble to attempt to win back his loss. He was done for as far as he could see.

“Don’t look so dejected,” shouted La Droix as he tossed the ticket in the air. “Some come in, others don’t. We’ll have our turn.”

“I think not for me today.”

“Well, then, let’s not trouble ourselves with horses. You’ve had some set backs speculating on land too. Sometimes things just don’t work out, but in the long run, they do.”

Marshall stared quizzically at the silver-haired marquis wondering how he could know about the land deal, and that his main backer was nearing bankruptcy.

“Oh, you didn’t think I could understand American investments, at least that’s what I read in your face.”

“It is troubling that you know so much.”

“I don’t even need to know. As a rule of thumb, don’t do business with anyone who signed the *Declaration of Independence*.”

“And why not? They’re a group of highly principled men.” Marshall indignantly stuck out his chin to show his pride in the country.

“They’ll mostly end up in ruin, at least that’s what I see.”

“And why is that?”

“Rebels make a lot of enemies in their own country and in foreign lands. Rebellions disrupt the order of society, they make too many people nervous. You watch and see if the signers don’t have financial ruin.”

“Even people as rich as Jefferson?” asked Marshall, who envied his cousin’s wealth.

“Most definitely.”

Marshall smiled, thinking that might be a nice prospect. He closed his eyes and envisioned proud, quiet Thomas Jefferson begging him for a few farthings to ward off a trip to debtor's prison. That thought gave Marshall unmitigated joy

"Do you have any need for money, I mean, will this speculation in land ruin you?"

Marshall's reverie broke and he glared at the marquis without responding. He fingered his losing ticket and tossed it in the air. Then he placed his hands on his hips and his unstated words silently demanded that the marquis was to stop prying. He, like Sir Northborough, was of the mistaken belief that the marquis was lame and weak. Both of them would be in for a surprise if this aging, yet powerful athlete pounced upon them.

"Oh dear, I've offended you, haven't I?" said La Droix, wiping his mouth and straining on his cane, feigning difficulty in rising. "You'll have to forgive an old man, won't you?"

"Forgiven," said Marshall.

La Droix was now on his feet, and his size shocked Marshall, who stood taller than most men, but was dwarfed by two or three inches. "You see, you and I have a common enemy."

"And who is that?"

"Thomas Jefferson."

"And what has my disreputable cousin done to you?"

"He cost me a great deal of money, money that I could afford to lose, but that I didn't like losing. I want to see the man suffer for the pain he put me through."

"So you hate him?" asked Marshall.

"Totally."

“He’s a dangerous enemy to have. He’s got the entire countryside wound up as pro-French despite the bloodshed in the recent French revolution. He’s hyped up how wonderful the French are and how dreadful the British. I tell you, the ignorant people are in a near frenzy to support him. He handily won the vice-presidency last year, and if things keep up, he’ll take the first chair and run the country.”

“That would be a disaster. I don’t trust the man.”

Marshall stared and considered why this marquis would care about who was President of the United States. “Well, you’re right not to trust him. I’ve known him most of my life and I have yet to hear a true statement come from his mouth.”

“Would you help me in ruining our common enemy?”

Marshall reflected momentarily, smiled broadly, and said, “Name it,” as he extended his hand to shake that of the marquis.

La Droix took a deep swallow, fearful of going too far on this meeting, because this was going to be Solomon, this was too important to chance. “Well, I know that you are having money problems.”

Marshall held up his hand as if to close the discussion.

“Now, don’t get me wrong,” said La Droix. “It’s no crime to be in financial difficulties, and for a smart young man like you, it will be but a passing phase. I can get you money.”

“I don’t want blood money.”

“Oh, dear me, what do you take me for, some kind of assassin? I don’t want Jefferson dead, I want him ruined.”

That relieved Marshall, because much as he despised Jefferson, he didn’t want to see his cousin killed, just badly humiliated. Marshall took a card from his pocket and picked a piece of meat that was lodged between two teeth. “How?”

“How what?”

“How can you get me money?”

“It would be nothing, really. You’ve been approached by several agents of the French regime, agents who have offended your patriotism and dignity, I might add.”

“So?”

“Just stick to your position, don’t give the French a farthing of tribute, and I’ll get you money.”

“But, that is my vote of conscience, I will do that without any money being tendered. It is right not to give into bribes.”

The marquis struggled to take a step towards Marshall. “I know it’s your conscience, and that’s why I want to help you. You’re doing only what you want to do, and you’ll help me ruin Jefferson by doing it.”

“Well, I can’t take your money in any event. What would it look like for me to return home with riches?”

La Droix raised his cane and went into a deep, throaty laugh, reverberating the air so violently that a picture hanging on the wall actually shook. “My dear man, under no circumstances would I ever think of sending you home with money.”

Marshall tilted his head and smirked, “So you had no intention.”

“I want you to write a book, or several for that matter, on the biography of George Washington, and for that you will be most well paid.”

“A book, or a treatise! Are you mad? I write legal briefs, but not books, I’ve no training or interest.”

“I’ll tell you what, if ever you decide to write my book, then here’s the publisher to take the proposal to, and you will be most well paid.”

“How well?”

“Extremely, just ask your price when you write the book.”

“And will you want anything in exchange?”

“Nothing except to trouble Jefferson.”

“And it was solely he who caused you such a financial setback?”

“That *Declaration of Independence* of his is what did it, I was set to make a killing, and then there was Jefferson writing that damnable document that convinced Louis the Sixteenth that the colonies really meant business, and he backed the rebels in the colonies when I had backed the Crown of England.”

“So you’re a British loyalist?” asked Marshall.

“I know no country other than gold.”

The answer satisfied Marshall, who shook La Droix’ hand once again. La Droix knew that it would be far easier to take back America if Adams remained in power and continued to offend the French. Jefferson, on the other hand, being so friendly with the French, would build such a strong alliance with France that it would be foolish for Britain to try to overcome the “colonies.” Adams, in all his arrogance and hatred for the French was a British asset, even if an unsuspecting one, while Jefferson was a severe liability to the Crown.

CHAPTER 50

PHILADELPHIA, 1798

The envoy from France reported on the bribes for freedom, and President John Adams, always a forceful politician, took full advantage of the situation. He could see his Federalist party losing block after block of votes to Vice President Thomas Jefferson's new party, the Democratic-Republicans. To bring his party back into the folds of the American public, Adams drove the fears of the electors by addressing the three main French agents as X,Y and Z. Addressing the French agents by initials added mystery to the brew and gave the entire affair a more sinister in appearance. Further, he called for building up the army and the navy and to arm merchant ships to ward off an imminent attack from France. These acts were playing directly into the hands of the silver-haired marquis, who needed Americans to drift further from the dangerous French and closer to the clutches of the British.

As an additional political ploy, Adams sought support from his Vice President, he called Jefferson into the presidential office and attempted to explain the peril from France. Thomas entered, bowed, and waited for a return gesture from the shorter man who ran the country. Adams gestured him to sit without returning the bow.

"I need your help, Thomas, the country needs your assistance, can you back the military buildup against the possibility of a French invasion?"

"You know how I feel."

Adams said, "Not for certain on some points, perhaps you could explain."

“We’re fresh out of a revolution that overthrew Great Britain and she wants us back in her grasp. The Crown will do anything to repair the rupture, either by force or deception, and if this occurs, she will squeeze us until we cannot again rebel. We would have lost the revolution but for France’s considerable assistance against Britain, sending us prodigious quantities of troops and officers, officers such as Lafayette. France is not our enemy, but our friend.”

“It’s politically unstable in France. Can you trust them?”

“As to who will lead, I know not, as to what they’ll do, I know not.”

“Then you must agree with me that we need to protect ourselves against this uncertainty.”

Thomas closed his eyes and began counting. While he did so, his mind raced with images of all he and Adams had been through with ciphered messages from Franklin and battling the British at all levels and he wanted to side with this man, but he could not. As Franklin had warned, Adams’ had become victim of flatterers, who kept his ears filled with whispers about the people loving him so that they would sacrifice their liberties just for the chance to have such a man lead them. Adams gave the outward appearance of being addicted to power, but he was being used by members of his party who sought more power, and by British agents who sought the downfall of the new nation. The Federalists had begun growing the government at a cancerous rate, increasing the national government’s size and power; this grasping of power frightened Thomas to the point he felt that he would soon be in direct opposition of his long-time ally, John Adams.

“Well, why don’t you answer me?” demanded the President.

“While you are correct, the French situation is unpredictable, the British is not.”

“What are you saying?”

“The British at this moment are plotting an intrigue to reclaim our country.”

Thomas wished he hadn't said this, but it was done.

“And where do you get this nonsense?”

“From a very good source.”

Adams stood and walked around his desk, “What source?”

“Franklin.”

“Franklin! You fool! Don't you know that he was a British spy?”

“Do you really believe that?” asked Thomas incredulously.

“Well, I don't know, but something was definitely wrong in his affairs.”

“The man hatched our Revolution. Is that the work of a British agent? Their agents are active all right, disparaging Dr. Franklin's name, and loading up your cabinet.”

“So you think that the Crown is loading our offices with Tories to steal back the country? Jefferson, you're paranoid.”

“I'll give you more ammunition to accuse me of mental defect, and that is that if the intrigue doesn't work, they'll go to war against us. And they'll have ample support. To the north, Canada is loaded with sympathizers, and the Tories are moving south at a brisk pace, being welcomed by naive Americans.”

“Now, I know that you should strapped down in straight coats.”

Thomas rose and asked if he could be excused.

“Absolutely not until after I get an answer. Will you, or will you not support our country's military buildup against the French?”

“It is only respect for the office that keeps me here, but you must let me leave.”

“No! You must answer!”

“I think your plan is almost insane! It’s a vile deception to try to bring back your dying political party. I thought Franklin in error when he told me that you were sometimes out of your mind. Now, I see he was correct.” Thomas turned and walked out of the office with Adams left in a rare state of quiet, his mouth gaping open, his tongue hanging loose.

* * * * *

John Marshall arrived in Philadelphia to a gala welcoming as a hero who stood up to French pressure. He and Pickney were instant successes for their stand and cheers were heard from the crowd, “Millions for defense, but not one penny of tribute!”

Marshall seemed to be taken aback by the warm response and he gave humble speeches, claiming that he was just an American doing what was best for his country. The people were elevating his status daily as the man who shut down agents X,Y and Z; the man above corruption. Newspapers flooded their pages with stories of the homespun lawyer from Virginia who couldn’t be bought, bribed, or cheated.

Thomas, despite his immense dislike for his cousin, and for Marshall’s political positions, decided upon paying a congratulatory call upon him. Twice, the Vice President stopped by O’Eller’s Hotel to see him. Both times Marshall was out, being in meetings with the President and the Secretary of State. To demonstrate that he had attempted to see his estranged cousin, Thomas wrote out a card saying that he had called and twice been so lucky as to not catch Marshall. Upon reading it over, Thomas notice the mistake and inserted a diacritical carat next to “lucky” and above the carat inserted the letters “un” to show the misfortune of the attempts.

When Marshall returned and read the card he laughed heartily, proclaiming to the clerk, “Well, if that doesn’t take all. Thomas Jefferson had a slip of the pen and that’s the closest he’s ever come in his life to telling the truth.”

While he was laughing, he opened another letter, posted from Holland, and when he read it, his disposition went black, and his laughter ceased. It was a short letter containing a one-thousand franc note:

Dear Sir:

I shouldn’t have let you gamble this much. Please take it, the race was my treat. I think that should you run for Congress, you would win.

LD

Marshall burned the letter when he went into his room, pocketed the banknote, and wondered what to do. While lying in his bed, he realized that his boots were worn through, and that it wouldn’t do for a hero to be seen with holes in his footwear. After wrestling with whether to keep the money, he soon convinced himself that La Droix had coaxed him into placing a thousand-franc bet when he would have only wagered one hundred. Once he accepted that premise, he decided to return one hundred francs to La Droix.

Refreshed, he rose, left his room and strutted down the street to the cobbler and ordered a new pair of boots. While he was being fitted, he decided that it would be foolish to return any of the money, if for no other reason than he had no way to contact the silver-haired marquis. As he thought about it, he realized that he didn’t even know what country the man came from. Then he smiled and decided he would use the remainder of the money to buy whiskey to entice the voters of his county to elect him to Congress. He liked the idea of representing them in Philadelphia.

* * * * *

In the fervor generated against the French by the X,Y and Z affair, Congress moved to protect our country from the foreign “invaders” by passing a hideous set of anti-alien acts. Not being satisfied with that, and fearing for their political survival, the Federalist-dominated Congress tacked on anti-sedition acts. These became known as the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, with prohibitions against criticizing the President or the Congress.

When the anti-sedition act passed, Thomas went into a rage, screaming at anyone who was within shouting distance, “What have they done? Do they not think the First Amendment means anything, if the people have not free speech to criticize the government, what type of speech have they?” He stormed about town ready to take on the entire Congress by physical force if necessary, but when he reached the steps of the legislative building, he stopped, closed his eyes and stood for several seconds, then opened them and snapped his fingers. He saw how to undo the horrid usurpation of the Constitution, turned and ran for his office, ready to do battle against the law that he believed to be so flagrantly unconstitutional that anyone with common sense could see it.

When he arrived at his office, he wrote James Madison a letter explaining that they needed to overrule the Congress. He outlined his plan, which involved drafting a resolution to have presented in the Kentucky legislature declaring the Alien and Sedition Acts as unconstitutional and void, and asked Madison to do likewise for Virginia. If the Congress insisted upon trampling on the First Amendment, then all of the states would show Congress otherwise. Kentucky and Virginia were good places

to commence the overthrow of the tyrannical law. Madison was pleased to write the bill, sensing it would boost his political position.

While the resolutions were being drafted and submitted to the state houses, the Federalists began a muck and mire attack upon Americans with the filthy statutes, charging newspaper editors who dared to publish derogatory statements about the government. In all, twenty-five were charged with the new crime, and since the prosecutors were all Federalists, they pursued the “infidels” with vigor.

While anyone who could read the First Amendment knew that “Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press . . .” clearly meant the Sedition Act was illegal, the judges who presided over the cases were appointed by Federalist presidents and therefore ignored the obvious defect in the laws.

Even though Jefferson and Madison had resolutions that would free the people from acts of Congress that stifled free speech, the resolutions would take time to pass, so the criminal trials went on against publishers who had the audacity to suggest government could be improved. These trials took place at a time in American history when the country still maintained full-fledged jury trials. In 1798, jurors who were called on a case would serve unless it was shown that they were actually prejudiced toward one side or the other. Jurors weren’t subjected to invasive questions by attorneys or judges, but were instead randomly chosen to sit on a case.

These juries that heard cases also knew that if they didn’t like a law, or if they thought a law violated the Constitution, that they could discard it as void. Because of the informed and powerful juries, while prosecutors in tandem with their able assistants, the judges, were able to prove that the publishers violated the law, the diabolic duos only won ten convictions. In the other cases, the jurors totally disregarded the law in deference to the Constitution.

Until Jefferson could encourage the various states to overturn the Alien and Sedition Acts, the juries stood as rigid sentinels of freedom, refusing to bow to the Congress, the President, or the courts. The juries protected the Constitution from the political antics of the Congress that clawed and scraped to hold onto and expand its power, regardless of how our governmental officials trampled upon freedom.

While Thomas battled for the common person, for freedom, and for liberty, he wondered whether a revolt would be necessary to reclaim the government. Deep in his heart, ironic as it was for the author of the *Declaration of Independence*, he was a pacifist. His resistance against armed uprising would have waned and fear for the freedom of the country would have grown had he known that La Droix had backed and encouraged the Alien and Sedition Acts. Thomas had wrongly concluded the corruption was from within, working for purposes of greed and power, and did not grasp the role of British agents acts in flattery of Adams, or their participation as provocateurs to unsettle the resolve of the young country.

Thomas decided to make one more plea, and asked for a meeting with the President, who granted it. Jefferson now sat in the foyer, waiting to be shown into John Adams' office when a page announced that he would be admitted directly. Jefferson rose and walked into the President's office, bowed and waited for permission to sit, but never received it. Instead, Adams rose and said, "This will be short, so there's no need to get comfortable."

Thomas stood facing the much shorter man and waited several seconds before saying, "John, please get off these Alien and Sedition Acts."

"I don't like them, but I support my party, and my party passed them."

"But, John, can't you see how they spit into the face of the Constitution?"

“I would appreciate you showing respect for my office. My advisors tell me that the American people want a stronger, more energetic government; that my policies are meeting widespread approval.”

“Very well, Mr. President, but will you not protect our Constitution?”

Adams had been fighting an internal battle, with his heart leaning on the side of freedom, but his head was being so filled with flatteries that he actually believed that only strong Federalist policies could maintain the fledgling country. He was certainly not about to give into a political enemy such as Jefferson about the Alien and Sedition Acts. Jefferson already had ample support to wrest the presidency from Adams in the upcoming election of 1800. “Out, out, damn you, out!”

Disheartened, the Vice President walked out of the office and made a vow to run with all his might and ability for the presidency, a chair Franklin had told him that he must occupy. As he walked away, he sadly reflected, then looked toward the ceiling and spoke as if to Franklin, “Did you know this would happen? Is that why I’m supposed to run this country? Oh, why am I left with this chore?” Franklin’s spirit was mute, leaving it to Thomas to figure for himself.

CHAPTER 51

PHILADELPHIA, 1799

John Marshall sat in his office, a newly elected member of Congress representing Virginia. He had attempted to fight off La Droix' suggestion to run for the office, and had convinced himself that one thousand francs would not a congressman make, when he was hit by another person of considerable influence, a person whose motives were exactly opposite La Droix' intentions.

America was immersed in fear that there would be a war with France; the pitch had heightened until old, failing, George Washington was called out of retirement to lead the army. Washington summoned Marshall and said that he must run for Congress to shore up a seat for the Federalists. Marshall had protested that he was deeply in debt from the Fairfax estates, but the old general said that it was his duty to run for office.

The suggestion from La Droix, coupled with the persuasion from Washington, a person who it was most difficult to tell no, tipped him over, and Marshall ran, and narrowly won the election. While he wasn't thrilled about being there, he would make the most of it. A little bitter, he sat reading a complex resolution that was being proposed by a colleague, attempting to glean its meaning.

His self-pity was working overtime as he worried about his home and wondered what he was doing in Philadelphia when he heard a knock on the door and in his deep, southern drawl, said, "Enter."

Lee Boo walked into the office, dressed in neat, clean, yet inexpensive garments. The material covering the buttons on both sides of his coat was frayed, and his vest was too orange for his coat. “Mr. Marshall?”

For the first time, Marshall looked up from his reading and his eyes opened wide. “A Negro! What gives you the right to come in here? Get out, you freak. The servants’ entrance is anywhere but here.”

Lee Boo lowered his eyes to the floor and said, “I’m big-big sorry to trouble you. Could you just read this?” Lee Boo approached the Congressman’s desk, dropped a sealed letter on it, and retreated for the doorway, then stood waiting.

“Oh, you’re just a delivery boy, pardon my temper,” Marshall said with false warmth. He wished he didn’t have such a biting tongue and temper on many occasions, but no matter how hard he worked on the fault, it always busted through. He reached into his pocket and removed a copper coin, attempting to undo his outburst. “Here you are, for your trouble, boy.”

Lee Boo remained motionless in the doorway, his eyes cast on the floor. He said nothing.

“What! Are you refusing my generosity? Very well then,” Marshall said as he pocketed the coin. “Now, be gone boy, be gone.”

Lee Boo cleared his throat and softly said, “Would you please read the letter?”

Marshall glared at Lee Boo, but to no avail because the man from Palau never raised his eyes from the floor, eliminating the chance their meeting. After a minute of silence, Marshall tore open the letter, read it, and gasped. Then he read it again:

Dear Sir:

Please give this ignorant and illiterate darkie a position in your office.
He could sweep floors or whatever.

LD

Marshall flung the letter across the room and shouted, "Look at me, you dumb jerk. How to you know this man?"

Lee Boo kept his eyes on the floor.

"Don't look down there! Look at me!"

Lee Boo raised his head and saw that Marshall's face was contorted and had turned crimson. "What does the letter say that makes you so many-many angry?"

"A friend wants me to put you to work."

Lee Boo smiled broadly, saying, "Oh, that would be very good-good. I am without much-much money."

"And so you'll remain. I'll not have an African savage working in my office. Now, get out, you little creep."

This time, Lee Boo obeyed and left the office. He was obviously hurt by the treatment of Marshall, but he did smile a little to himself that the Congressman was so ignorant as to think him an African.

CHAPTER 52

Six weeks passed since John Marshall's visit from Lee Boo, but the encounter still troubled him deeply, caused him great worry. Marshall fretted over how La Droix, a person he owed nothing to, except perhaps one thousand francs, would dare ask such an outrageous favor of him as to force him to hire a savage? That baffled him. It was asking far too much in the name of friendship.

While he was considering for at least the hundredth time about the puzzle of La Droix and Lee Boo, he opened a letter that changed his focus. Another creditor was after payment from the Fairfax debts. He opened his account book and wondered how this could be accomplished, yet found no room in his budget to tender even a token to show good faith. Up until just a week ago he had an extra fifty dollars, but, he lost that betting on a cock fight. He could have used that money to hold off the creditor, but it was gone.

As Marshall ran over the numbers again, he heard a knock. "A minute," he said.

A second check of the columns was worse because he found an error that meant he had to borrow money to make it through the month. In desperation, he added the numbers again when he heard three raps on the door. "Oh, come in, then!" he shouted.

The door opened and Lee Boo took a tentative step into the office. "Many-many pardons, sir, but I have another letter for you."

Marshall glared at the intruder for several seconds, but could not get eye contact with the man who seemed to perpetually be looking at the floor. "Then, give it me!"

Lee Boo walked to the desk and dropped the envelope on top of Marshall's ledger book. Then, he immediately retreated to the door to await any instructions from the Congressman. While Lee Boo retreated, Marshall angrily broke the seal and opened the letter and read:

Dear Sir:

I was disturbed to find that you would not hire a man who I sent to you. Lee Boo is trustworthy, diligent, and stupid. You cannot ask for better qualities in a servant. But I understand your reluctance to pay an extra person on your staff, so I have taken the liberty to open an account at the express office in your name for \$3,000 to cover your inconvenience. Please take care of him, will you? He has a wife and two children to support.

LD

Marshall went over his ledger figures again, this time adding \$3,000 to his asset account, and grinned. He stood and approached Lee Boo. "Well, Mr. Lee Boo, I would like to hire you to sweep the office and such. Can you read well enough to file papers?"

"I can tell some letters apart, but many-many times they look alike to me."

"Fine, fine, I'll have someone teach you to read enough so you can file the documents in the right places."

Lee Boo raised his head; it was the first time Marshall saw his dark eyes, friendly with a blank look that disguised the intelligence within his mind. Although he appeared stupid to La Droix and Marshall, Franklin and Jefferson knew differently. As did his wife, Sally, who first met him in Paris when she took the trip with Jefferson and his daughter. Sally knew quite well how brilliant her man was, but that didn't matter to her as much as his compassion and dedication to her and the children.

While he was much smaller in stature than Rubin had been, she saw him as a much-much bigger man than the rest of the world did.

CHAPTER 53

LONDON, 1800

Sir Northborough sweated as he paced about the castle, wondering when he would be called into the room. After fifteen minutes of traversing the carpet, he took a chair in the hall, where he sat for two minutes, then rose and began pacing anew. With his hands behind his back and his trunk bent forward, he walked up to La Droix, who sat passively in the foyer, holding his cane in his right hand, his eyes closed.

The knight stamped his foot and demanded, “How can you sleep? How can you sit there like nothing is going on in the other room?”

“I’ve been called in here before, and I suppose I will be again,” answered La Droix.

“You’re impossible, you don’t have any sense of urgency or danger. Doesn’t anything ever frighten you?”

“You did when I was so sick a while ago.”

“But you had a remarkable recovery.”

Both of the double doors opened and a servant dressed in black knickers, white stockings, and grey shirt announced, “You may both come in now, if you would.”

La Droix struggled to his feet, using the cane he had little need for but he enjoyed the prop that deceived everyone as to his strength. When he reached his full height, he stretched and said, “Now then, let’s be on with it.”

Northborough followed behind his companion as they entered the oval-shaped room. Once Northborough had cleared the threshold, he felt a whoosh as both doors

slammed behind him. He looked around the room, quickly focusing on the oval table where two men were seated, one at either end. The room was dim, not having any windows and being lit by only three candles in the center of the table. Both men sat in shadows, with some of their features taking on elongated appearances from the flickering light.

“Sit down, won’t you both?” said the man on the left. Northborough recognized the voice as belonging to “Able,” a man he had never seen in any but the dimmest of light. Northborough sat in the velvet chair located near the middle of the table. For a moment he thought the upholstery was maroon, but then he accepted that it could be nearly any color as it appeared grey in the scarce light.

The silver-haired marquis sat next to Northborough after hearing the command from a voice that he had never before heard. “Thank you for inviting us in on this strategy meeting,” said La Droix.

“We needed you to be here,” boomed the man on the right. La Droix recognized the voice immediately as belonging to “Cain”. He nodded to show his recognition. Northborough searched his memory of voices, but could not place the one from the man on the right.

“Glad to be of service,” said La Droix.

“Forget the small talk,” said Able, “we have a problem in the colonies. Just when we had their Federalist party behaving like good Tories, slowly bringing the country back into the fold of the Crown, we have to deal with this upstart Democratic-Republican party of that godawful Whig writer of the *Declaration of Independence*. Now we are uncertain which way to go and want your input.”

“Is war out of the question for now?” asked La Droix.

“For now, but we’ll keep it in the background as an option,” said Cain.

La Droix was growing accustomed to the light, and he flicked his eyes in small circles to improve his low-light vision and get a fix on Able, remembering the face as best he could under the circumstances. “Fine, we have over one hundred agents scattered throughout America that are on the payroll.”

“I know,” said Able, “and you’ve underestimated the number of field operatives. It’s costing us a bundle.”

“But well worth it.”

“And, what of our special . . . reserve agents?” asked Cain.

“Number 94 is in place, and ready for any contingency.” These were the first words spoken by Northborough at the meeting and his voice cracked as he said them.

“Is he reliable?” asked Able.

“Greedy, yes, cowardly, yes, reliable, probably,” said Northborough, his voice strengthened since his last attempt.

“Perhaps we should just kill Jefferson and end our problem,” said Able.

“Stop that,” said Cain, “we don’t need a martyr for the rabble to rally behind.”

“Just the same,” said Able.

“Not in the picture,” retorted Cain.

“Then, let’s do everything we can and set Number 94 into full swing. You’re certain that he is able to deliver?”

“Absolutely, he runs the politics in New York, and Jefferson is going to need his help to take the election. We could rig the election to get Adams another term, but I fear that tampering at this time is too dangerous.” Northborough was not as positive as his promise, but since Number 94 was his responsibility, he was on the hook for that operation anyway.

“Excellent,” said Able, “I like hearing positive reports.”

“Now, to the Solomon matter,” said Cain.

“Nearly in place, and nearly turned to our side,” said La Droix.

“Who is it?” asked Able.

“John Marshall.”

“Marshall!” boomed Cain. “That fool was the key vote in Congress to eliminate the Alien and Sedition Acts. Masterful pieces of legislation that we instigated at tremendous cost in printing propaganda, bribing legislators, and the like. Why should we rest such a critical contingency plan on someone who so blatantly opposed us on this.”

“He isn’t all the way with us yet. I’ve given him some money, have some compromising gossip on him, but we haven’t gotten him turned as of yet.”

“And what makes you so certain that you can?” asked Cain.

“He has weaknesses. Gambling for one, if need be we can break him at a table of chance. Another is that he is overextended and we control his creditors. I keep his creditors harping on him, and when things are at their seeming worst, I rescue him with an offer of enough cash to get him through a few months, but not enough to get out of trouble. We’ve got him on the economic tether.”

“So what has he done for us to date?” demanded Cain.

“Nothing that he wouldn’t have done on his own, but we’ve bent his principles and he’s about ready to fall. I know this game.”

Able cleared his throat and took a swallow of mead from the silver mug at his side. “I know you do.”

“Thank you for your confidence.”

Cain said, “Then, it’s settled. We’ll run a smear campaign against Jefferson with the usual, call him an atheist, a French sympathizer, and a want-to-be dictator.

Maybe that will get our gullible Adams back in and we'll work on more legislation like the Alien and Sedition Acts. If Adams loses, we still have Number 94 in the background for both of our major alternative plans. And, if all else fails, we have Solomon, but that is a long-term ordeal. That's my least favorite of the options, I might even prefer an all-out war against the colonies to that. But, we will have Solomon available, won't we my silver-haired friend?"

"Definitely."

Cain continued, "If Adams loses, then I want you to go into the field."

"Me?" said Northborough hopefully. He'd dreamed of being in the field for years.

"No, La Droix."

"And who is checking on Solomon?" asked Able.

"Pretty reliable fellow, Lee Boo."

"He's the man who turned in Franklin, isn't he?" asked Able.

"He's the one," said Northborough.

"Send Hawkins into the pits, have him watch Solomon and Lee Boo. We need to know what we have going on with this much resting on our contingency of needing to use Solomon." Cain ran his fingers through his hair and said, "You may both leave now. Thank you for the reports."

La Droix and Northborough rose and walked for the spot where they thought the door was, and when they reached it, knocked until a servant opened the door. As he left the room, La Droix stole a look at the table to check out both men with the light from the opened doorway. The glance confirmed what he had suspected. The doors shut.

La Droix saw enough to know that Able's voice belonged to the Archbishop of Canterbury. La Droix had long believed Cain to be the Freemason's Grand Master. Now, it fit together. If La Droix could have looked behind the doors now, he would have seen Able and Cain meeting with Adam, better known as George the Third, and Seth, who was Mayer Anselm Rothschild.

CHAPTER 54

WASHINGTON D.C., SUMMER 1800

John Marshall wondered if the landlord would install a window or at least stick a screen in the hole in the wall to keep the flies out of his boarding – house room. Thoughts of his room depressed him as he slogged through mud flats and swamps of the new capital city. The chunk of land that was now the nation's capital was a mosquito-infested, muggy, hell hole, made worse on this sultry afternoon where the air steamed thicker than the mud under his feet. Why he had consented to become the Secretary of State in John Adams' administration in this half-built town, was still a mystery to him. Adams had enough sense to remain as long as possible in Massachusetts, and the Vice President was enjoying his hilltop estate in Virginia, far from the ugly town he designed.

Marshall shook his head in bewilderment at why he had come to this place. Perhaps he had taken the position out of a sense of duty to his country, but more likely it was because of the persuasive note from La Droix that suggested he accept a cabinet office if one was offered. A few days after Lee Boo had delivered the La Droix request, Adams fired his Secretary of State, Timothy Pickney. Marshall mused, *Was that a coincidence? When La Droix was at work, things seemed to fit into place too often to be coincidental.*

With mud-caked boots, Marshall entered the unfinished capital, leaving a trail on the plank floor that would soon harden into a crusty filth. As he entered his

make-shift office, he was surprised to see Lee Boo at work sweeping out yesterday's hardened mud with a stiff-bristled broom. "How can you wear a coat in this heat?"

Lee Boo's eyes remained on his work as he said, "This is not so very-very hot to me."

"I should have known a jungle would be to your liking. That would make you feel at home." Marshall still believed that Lee Boo came from somewhere in Africa, having never asked the man about his past.

"But it is very bad for my Sally. She got a big-big fever here when we came."

"You brought your wife to this steamy bog? Have you no heart?"

"My Sally says my heart is much-much big."

Marshall sat at his desk and said, "Go get me a hard roll at the bakery."

Lee Boo shot out of the office and ran through the town for his employer. While he was gone, Marshall wrote a letter to La Droix and sealed it. When Lee Boo returned with the roll, Marshall handed him the envelope and told him to post it. Again, Lee Boo took off, but before leaving he asked if he could stop for something to eat on the way, to which Marshall nodded his authorization.

Lee Boo ran to his rented room where he found Sally and his two children involved in a play acting a fairy tale. She was playing the main character, the oldest was the damsel in distress, and the baby was cooing approval to the whole affair. When he walked in the door, Sally rushed to him and hugged his body with the greedy grip of a hunger-starved beggar who just seized a loaf of bread, crushing his breast to hers.

Lee Boo relished the attention, but he had work to do, so he broke the embrace and sat at the table. He removed a piece of paper from the stack he had been stealing from John Marshall's office, one page at a time, and opened the letter to La Droix. He

read it once to get the flavor of it, then he held it up to the heat of a candle to see whether any invisible ink messages had been inserted. When satisfied that there were none, he read the paper again before deciding whether to go to work on it. It was a strange letter that rambled, but contained two key sentences that made Lee Boo think it important.

. . . I have done as you suggested, and am now the Secretary of State, but the pay is so dreadfully low that I must have some assistance to survive. Would you have an extra \$2,000 that I could borrow at the usual terms? . . .

Lee Boo removed a quill and ink from a writing box that looked like a toy house, and began to copy the letter with the skill he had learned from master engraver, Benjamin Franklin, a man who had procured several contracts for printing paper money because he was so talented. Lee Boo scratched away until his copy and the original were indistinguishable, right down to the ink blot in the upper left corner of the paper. When he completed the copy, he folded it in the same manner as the original had been. Then, he sealed the copy into the envelope by another trick that Franklin had taught him. He addressed the copy and secured away the original letter.

When he finished, he put away his writing gear and said, "I've got to go. If I'm gone too long he won't have anybody to kick around the room."

Sally smiled her understanding as Lee Boo hugged his children, one at a time. She hummed as he walked out of the rented room, and the deep meaning of the note clung to his mind as he tromped through the quagmire to the post office. When he arrived there, he deposited the perfect copy to have it delivered to La Droix. Lee Boo's forgeries were so competent that even the author would be hard pressed to pick out which was which if a copy were judged side by side with an original.

CHAPTER 55

LONDON, 1800

La Droix was uncharacteristically nervous, twitching in his chair as Sir Northborough read the letter from New York. A swarm of British agents infested the main city of that state, and reports were coming in pell-mell from the various spies. This one was most troubling.

As Sir Northborough set the paper on his desk, he said, “Well, we’ve got our work cut out for us, then. Can we still salvage Number 94?”

“I think so, he’s just feeling self-important because of the position he’s in, but if we manipulate his finances so he needs more money, he’ll come around to us again.”

“He’s deceived us many times; how can we trust him?” Northborough read the letter again.

“Nobody should ever trust him, but we might as well follow through the plan, we’ve got so much of it in place.”

“Do you really think that he can win the election?”

“There’s a much better chance than one would guess. The Americans are so trusting and they have flaws in their Constitution that might just bring it about for us.” La Droix stopped twitching and combed his hair, which was thinning rapidly.

“I hope you’re right, I certainly don’t want to be called into see the two men in the black room again.”

La Droix closed his eyes as he remembered that meeting around the unlit oval table. “If you think that was bad, imagine when they have to talk to their superiors, that must be quite a show.”

“Don’t you think that they are the upper layer of authority?”

“Close to it, but not the top.”

“This was quite a position that I inherited from my father, wouldn’t you say?”

La Droix smiled, “Yes, but you’re coming around just fine. Maybe a little too soft hearted, otherwise, you’ll soon be first rate.”

“Really?” Sir Northborough puffed out his chest at having received his first compliment from La Droix.

“Now, let’s make Number 94 a winner.”

Sir Northborough lit a cigar and inhaled a whoosh of grey smoke, held it for several seconds, then blew smoke rings toward the ceiling, rings that elongated, distorted and dissipated in the air. He clenched the butt of the cigar in his teeth and said, “He’s certain to do well. Maybe 94 can pull it off after all. Then we’ll reign him in like a tame pony.”

CHAPTER 56

WASHINGTON D.C., 1800

Thomas occupied the office of the Vice President, and the Democratic-Republican party he led had its sights on the presidency. In the spring of 1800, he was unanimously nominated by his party for the higher office. Since Aaron Burr of New York had been his running mate in 1796 when Thomas was elected Vice-President, the party opted for the same ticket for 1800.

The battle lines were drawn as Jefferson and Burr took on John Adams and Thomas Pickney, and a brutal campaign began. The main issues were clear in most American citizens' eyes. Jefferson was a Whig who, like the late Federalist George Washington, believed that America must avoid foreign entanglements, and he stood for the principles of John Locke, the classic liberal who averred that freedom was composed of three elements: life, liberty, and property. Those, argued Jefferson, could only be brought about by downsizing government. That was the rallying cry of the Democratic-Republicans. Regardless of the party name, Americans with common sense knew that Jefferson stood for the rights of the people, like all Whigs before him.

Adams represented the Federalists, who were leaning heavily toward a larger national government, and with the aid of hoards of Tories swarming into the party, favored the British over the French, and had used the possibility of a war against France to commence dismantling liberties and placing the country on the path toward tyranny. Again, notwithstanding the ideals of the Revolution that was fought mainly

in the name of the Federalists, that party was now protecting the rights of the rulers, and taking the ground of the Tories.

For the election campaign, lies were the norm. The Federalists attacked Jefferson incessantly for being a robber of widows and orphans who defrauded everyone he dealt with. He was also painted as an atheist who would ban the Bible if elected to the presidency, and some clergy openly opined that he was indeed the Antichrist. Some of the less scurrilous reporters called him an anarchist and a coward. While these attacks cut to the quick and hurt Thomas deeply, he felt it was his duty to continue with the campaign so he could speak and act for the common man.

Jefferson had the Alien and Sedition Acts to throw at Adams, and he flung them often and with great vigor, scoring many bulls-eyes with them. The common people understood their rights had been stripped by those acts. Jefferson's party incessantly declared the Federalist party as the author of the acts, which showed it to be tyrannical and power hungry and the expense of the people's freedoms. Democratic-Republicans charged that if the Federalists became any closer aligned with Britain that the country would need another revolution to break away from the shackles of tyranny installed by the Federalists at the behest of the mother country.

The campaign was fought in town meetings and taverns, in newspapers and pamphlets, and with tremendous amounts of mean spirit. As the election neared, Jefferson declared that the people had a chance to have a silent revolution at the ballot box, but he feared that if the Federalists remained in power another term that another revolution would ultimately sweep the land. He waited and trusted in the common sense of the people, but he was totally unprepared for the trap that had been laid against him by La Droix and company.

The votes began to come in and it was clear that John Adams had been defeated, as had Thomas Pickney. Adams received 65 electoral votes, while Pickney won 64. So, it was certain that Aaron Burr was to be Vice-President and Jefferson the President, or it was clear that the people had so voted.

However, Thomas received 73 votes, as did Burr. Most everyone assumed that since Burr was running for Vice-President that he would defer to Jefferson and take that position, but everyone did not know the bundle of corruption and deceit they believed they had elected to the second chair. Agent Number 94 had some ideas that ran counter to the will of the people, and he put them into full swing.

Thomas, still unknowing of how despicable Burr was, sat in a chair at a meeting with him. Franklin's sage advice was missed sorely, and it certainly would have reduced his surprise at Burr's betrayal. "Well, Aaron, it looks like the people have spoken and picked us to lead the country. We should celebrate our new positions."

Burr's eyes sparkled, and they darted about the room, not focusing on any objects, and never touching on Thomas. "But who is to go to which position?"

Thomas smiled, "Good joke, Aaron." Then he laughed and hummed a few bars to a melody that began running through his head earlier that day. To perfect it, he pulled out his Stradivarius and stroked out the tune.

"I'm serious, Jefferson. We must find out who will be the President."

"You've carried the joke far enough, Aaron. It ceases to humor me."

"We'll see how the House of Representatives votes, that's what is to be done when there is a tie."

Thomas set his treasured violin down carefully, then glared at Burr. "You know that you were only to be Vice-President, nobody voted for you to run the country."

“We’ll see about that,” said Burr as he turned to leave.

“Get out of here, you sewer rat, and make it fast while you can still walk of your own power.” He charged at Burr who scurried out the door and down the hall.

While Thomas sat in his room fuming, Burr lobbied for position, promising money, power, fame, and anything else he thought would win the vote for him with the various representatives. Burr worked his magic, sparkled his eyes, and began using Sir Northborough’s money to purchase drinks and votes. It was all or nothing because he had shown his hand; he had to win now.

Burr had a great advantage working for him, because the lame-duck Congress was dominated by Federalists, and many of them despised Jefferson and his party. Although only a few of the Congressmen were actually working for the British directly, there were many who would support the intrigue indirectly and unknowingly. Many patriotic Federalists plotted to vote for Burr just to put Jefferson in his place.

There were a couple of powerful Federalists who took no part in this business. One was Alexander Hamilton, who argued that Burr was morally bankrupt beyond all redemption. Another was the defeated President, John Adams, who believed Burr worthy only of contempt and that it would be a humiliation for America to suffer his hand at the helm. Of course, Adams had another reason for wanting Burr defeated; as annoying as it would be to lose the presidency to Jefferson, it would totally demoralize him to be replaced by Burr.

In 1800, there were sixteen states, and each state had a single vote for the presidency in the event of a tie in the electoral college. In early February of 1801, the House of Representatives met to break the tie. The first vote was eight for Jefferson, six for Burr, and two divided states. It meant that there was no clear majority. Burr’s London inspired plan was working, and a few more bribes could win it for him.

Nineteen times the house voted the first day, and nineteen times the results were identical. Everyone was stubbornly locked into position. On three succeeding days, the House met on the issue, but each time the vote was the same; there was no winner. The Federalists were going to subvert the will of the people, much to the pleasure of the London office.

Finally, John Adams called Thomas into his office, where he told the younger man, “Sir, the event of the election is within your own power. You have only to say you will do justice to the public creditors, maintain the navy, and not disturb those holding office, and the government will instantly be put into your hands.”

Jefferson responded in quiet tones. “I will not come into government by capitulation.”

Adams huffed indignantly. “Then, things must take their course.”

Jefferson bowed and left the office.

As Jefferson departed, he saw his dreaded cousin entering it with a smirk across his countenance. “Congratulations on your new position, said Thomas, referring to his confirmation as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. For a few days at least, until Adams’ term expired, John Marshall was both the Chief Justice and the Secretary of State. Jefferson wondered why his cousin didn’t excuse himself from the duties of the Secretary of State because of the obvious conflict of interest, but he figured that since ethics were never high on his cousin’s list of priorities that it might never have occurred to him that his joint-occupancy was inexcusable. Thomas left the key Federalists to plot out their dirty work.

Secretary of State Marshall bowed as he entered the presidential office, then he sat in a chair. “I see my cousin didn’t like your offer.”

“He’s incorrigible, downright incorrigible. And to think Franklin and I let him write the *Declaration of Independence*. In fact I practically forced him to do it. And that’s the thanks I get.”

“We should protect our party from him, he’s not to be trusted.”

Adams shouted, “Oh, you can trust Jefferson all right. He is morally intact. But his politics are unconscionable. He’s a damned anarchist, he is.”

“And we Federalists need to weather the storm.”

“How? The creep has won the Congress, the Presidency, he knows no bounds, there’ll be no check on his power.”

Marshall smiled coyly. “I don’t know about that. All of the judges are Federalists.”

“The Judiciary. A pitiful arm of the government without the power to wipe its own feet.” Adams stomped on the floor. “Judges won’t save us, and besides, he’ll be appointing a flock of them when he enters office.”

“If Burr doesn’t win in the House vote, you mean.”

Adams walked about the room, flipping the long tails of his coat with his palms as he strutted. “We can’t have Burr. Half the states might secede from the union if we did that.”

“Then, let’s stop him from appointing judges. While all the attention is on the House, why don’t we have our friends in the Senate pass a bill loading us with judicial positions? They’ll all be appointed for life, so no matter what Jefferson does, he won’t be able to water down our power base.”

“But like I said earlier, what power has a judge? He must sit and wait for a case to appear before he can act? The courts cannot check the Democratic-Republicans, the judiciary is impotent.”

“We won’t be for long,” smirked Marshall, “not for long at all now that I have the top seat of that branch. Certainly you’re familiar with the writings of Brutus, the outspoken Anti-Federalist.”

“Of course, of course. The man was a scare monger, claimed that if the Constitution were ratified that the judiciary would soon rule the country.”

“Well, Brutus’ arguments have given me an idea about running the courts.”

Adams wondered if he had appointed a man too naive to sit on the Supreme Court. He liked Marshall’s vigor and enthusiasm for the job, but he thought maybe he should bring him down to the planet. “Don’t you realize that John Jay refused to come back to the Court because it was too weak? You have no power there.”

Marshall grinned, “I might interpret the Constitution a little differently than Jay.”

“How? The thing’s plainly written in English so anybody can understand it. We don’t need judges to tell us what it says.”

“We’ll see,” said Marshall. “Now, could we get those positions created in the Senate?”

“I see no impediment to it. It seems a bit rash to do to poor old Jefferson, to strap him like that.” Adams got a devilish grin, then said, “Yes, why not? He deserves it!”

Marshall left the office a happy man, and a relieved one. He had balked at La Droix’ proposal to take the Chief Justice’s position if offered, and was concerned momentarily over the suggestion of loading the courts, but his creditors were hounding him again, and the \$8,000 he was sent from Holland would keep them at bay for some time to come. While he had to hire another friend of La Droix’ in the bargain, at least Alford Hawkins could read, unlike Lee Boo, the idiot.

* * * * *

Alexander Hamilton was beside himself watching his party try to break the Democratic-Republicans who as nearly as he could tell had won the election fairly. He insisted on meeting with the sole delegate from Delaware, James Bayard. Hamilton walked quietly into Bayard's office and took a seat.

"Thank you for seeing me James. You must know what this is about?"

"How could I not know. You've been everywhere with your pleas to get a vote changed in favor of Jefferson over Burr."

Hamilton flipped his head, sending his hair into a bouncing frenzy. "I must."

"Why must you? Jefferson is our mortal enemy. We've worked hard to stifle states' rights in favor of an energetic national government. We would be taking giant steps backwards with Jefferson and his idealistic concept of liberty. Now he's even talking about running a surplus budget. Can you imagine that? In no time we'd be out of debt! Then there would be no controlling the people, hardly even a reason to tax them. How can you support him?"

"Because there is no fair reason to suppose Jefferson to be capable of being corrupted. And I fear corruption even more than I fear Jefferson's ideals."

Bayard raised his hand in protest. "Are you implying that Burr is not to be trusted?"

"Implying, forget not that I was law partner to that scoundrel. Trust. I say the man is a bundle of ambition without principle, never long under the guidance of good sense."

"I'd shoot you for saying such trash of me."

“And he may well do it himself, but he is driven by a lust for power. He is sanguine enough to hope everything – daring enough to attempt everything – wicked enough to scruple nothing.”

Bayard stirred his tea and added a few grains of sugar, before sipping it. “This sounds personal with you and Burr, I’m not about to get into the middle of a petty squabble.”

Hamilton alternately tapped the fingers of his right hand in staccato on the arm of the chair. “I say not personal. I shrink at your suggestion. If there be a man in the world I ought to hate, it is Jefferson. With Burr I have always been personally well. But the public good must be paramount to every private consideration.”

“Do you think that Burr as President would actually jeopardize our country?”

“From my deepest reaches, I so believe.”

“And you think Jefferson is a good man for the position?”

Hamilton laughed. “Good! I don’t recall ever saying that, I view it the choice between two horrible evils, one being considerably less vile than the other. Jefferson’s politics could well run us aground, but at least it would be the mistake of an honest captain hitting a reef. Burr, however, might purposely steer us at protruding rocks.”

“I really think you should be going, Mr. Hamilton,” Bayard shook his guest’s hand and directed him out the door.

* * * * *

The next morning, when the House met to try to break the deadlock, Bayard announced that Delaware would be casting its vote for Jefferson. There were screams of protests from many Federalists who declared Hamilton a traitor for his fight to install Jefferson. Tempers were hot, but the election was over, as was the Federalist

intrigue to steal the presidency from the voter's chosen candidate. While it was not a total victory, the London office would have good reason to be joyful. Solomon was falling tighter into their grip, and Number 94 was about to take office as the Vice President of the United States of America.

CHAPTER 57

While La Droix might have devised the scheme of loading up the federal courts and explained it to John Marshall, John Adams, upon hearing of it, adopted the diabolical plan with full Machiavellian delight. This, he knew, would cripple Jefferson's administration.

Adams and his Secretary of State/Chief Justice were feverishly working at their appointments of judicial positions; the offices were granted in batches. As fast Adams could nominate candidates, their names were presented to the Federalist-dominated Senate where advice and consent was requested, and almost always assured. Once the Senate confirmed the appointments, the commissions were presented to Adams for signing, then given to Marshall, who fulfilling one of his positions, applied the seal of the Secretary of State to the documents, and thereafter delivered the commissions to the various new judges.

With two days left in his presidency, Adams had filled every one of the newly created positions on the Federal bench. All that remained to be done to lawfully complete the appointment process was to actually seal and deliver each of them. This was the duty of the Secretary of State, John Marshall, who was completing the task of appointing the judges who would serve under him, as he was also the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. However, there was such a pile of commissions that Marshall worked as the Secretary of State until nine at night on the last evening of the Adams' presidency sealing commissions and delivering them to their recipients. When he left the office, there were seventeen remaining commissions that had been signed and sealed, but remained undelivered.

At noon the next day, John Marshall showed up in the Senate chamber as the Chief Justice, unrepentant for the mischief to the integrity of the court system he had been doing the week previous. With a wallet full of money from La Droix, he cared little that he had been working in the executive branch as the Secretary of State and simultaneously as the chief judicial officer, violating every tenant of separation of powers as set out in the Constitution. President Adams, on the other hand, ignored the ethical and constitutional wrong of having Marshall sit as Chief Justice and Secretary of State simultaneously for personal reasons. He wanted revenge.

In his judicial capacity, it was Marshall's sworn duty to uphold and defend the very instrument that he had so cavalierly adulterated just the day before. As the two cousins from Virginia squared off to meet one another, one as the chief-executive-officer-to-be, the other the Chief Justice, the battle for the Constitution of the United States began.

Marshall held out a Bible, which Jefferson placed his hand upon, and the following exchange took place:

Marshall said: "I do solemnly swear or affirm . . ."

Jefferson, following his cousin's instruction, repeated the phrase.

Marshall said: ". . . that I will faithfully execute the Office of the President of the United States . . ."

Jefferson parroted the phrase back to Marshall.

Marshall said: ". . . will to the best of my Ability . . ."

Again, Jefferson repeated the phrase.

Finally, Marshall said: ". . . protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

On this last phrase, Jefferson repeated the words exactly, binding himself to their import. He was now entrusted as the guardian of the Constitution, the person in the country upon whom its survival depended. Thomas took the oath as a serious vow to protect and defend the Constitution, hence, the people's freedom, well knowing that it would face many attacks while he was President. What he could not know then was the most brutal and insidious assaults on the document that was the foundation for all laws in America would be coming from the man swearing him into office. Even Marshall didn't know what was coming, but he would learn soon enough the price for receiving loans and other favors from La Droix. Solomon was in place, and while he would always be a reluctant servant, his master across the Atlantic was at this moment sailing for America to begin extorting his due.

Jefferson then read his inaugural speech without flair, in a low-pitched monotone. What it lacked in style, it made up for in content as he urged the people of the country to come together after the bitter election, saying that "Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We are all Republicans; we are all Federalists."

* * * * *

The next day, Jefferson began attending to affairs of state, James Madison was appointed as the Secretary of State, but he was away, so Levi Lincoln became the acting officer for a few weeks. One of his duties was to discover the seventeen commissions in the office. He brought them into Jefferson's office and bowed deeply. "Mr. President, I have some papers to bring to your attention."

Thomas scowled. "I'll forgive you this once, because it was the custom mandated by both Washington and that pompously arrogant Adams, but nobody is to

bow to me. Now come over here and shake my hand just like you were greeting an ordinary American.”

Lincoln raced to him with alacrity and heartily shook the new President’s hand. “Oh, that’s wonderful to hear. Bowing made me feel like I was in the English Court.” After shaking hands, he gave Thomas the commissions.

Jefferson looked at them for several minutes, then asked, “Where did you find these, Levi?”

“In John Marshall’s office.”

“Well, it seems that in their haste to pack the courts, somebody got rather sloppy. I still don’t want to believe that Adams would saddle me with such a terrible trick by appointing all those judges.”

“Do you think he did it in spite, sir?”

“Spite. Adams. Perhaps. I can’t believe that he dreamed up this idea. I have to fall back on what Benjamin Franklin said about him to accept the damnable appointments.”

Lincoln looked blankly at Thomas. “And what was that?”

Thomas laughed, remembering the man who founded the country, who fostered the revolution, who went into the bowels of Parliament to buy the colonists time to ready for revolt. “The sage, Dr. Franklin once said of Adams that ‘He is always honest, *sometimes* great, but *often mad*.’ That’s what old Franklin said.”

Lincoln began chuckling, then exclaimed, “Well, I’ll be. I never did fully understand John Adams until just now.”

Thomas reached into a cabinet and removed his hand-crafted violin, and began playing a lively tune, to which Lincoln began clapping to and dancing about in the room. When the piece was over, Thomas set the fiddle down and said, “Now, to take

care of the messy business of those undelivered commissions. While they appear in order, they were never delivered. Did you find instructions to deliver them?"

Lincoln said, "I did not."

"Then we will follow the law to the letter, and the commissions will not be delivered and there will be nobody granted the positions."

"What should I do with these?"

"As you like."

"Very well, sir, as I like." Lincoln walked out of the presidential office and to his own, where he deposited the commissions into the burning fireplace and watched the new judgeships disappear in curls of smoke.

* * * * *

Thomas busied himself deciding how he would attack several issues. In France, he had Napoleon to deal with, a man who could easily overpower Europe with an army that could also file through America. It would take some excellent statesmanship to avert a crisis with that fellow. But, Adams would have declared war on France. Jefferson was far too bright to consider that type of action.

As to domestic issues, Washington and Adams had left the country mired in debt, eighty million dollars worth. This, in no small part due to Alexander Hamilton's insistence that a little debt was healthful for a nation. So, if a little debt was good, then a huge debt must, by Hamilton's standards, be great. Jefferson detested debt. He viewed it as evil. He considered Hamilton's ideas on debt to be as stupid as thinking that if God created a little evil just to tempt mankind. He could not bring himself to believe that God would create evil, unless God were evil. Following Hamilton's debt

analogy, the logic would be so absurd, that one would have to proclaim that if God had created a great deal of it, it would be so much better for human beings.

To Napoleon, who had not yet begun his world conquests, Jefferson would send envoys and try to appease the upstart general. America could have no liberty if she were conquered by Bonaparte.

With the inherited national debt, he took some hard roads, foregoing the pomp and opulence that had been so lavishly applied in the previous administrations. He believed that debt and revolution were as inseparable as cause from effect. To him, a rising national debt was like a flood that left unchecked would seize the throat of liberty and strangle it to submission. Although England believed in running a deficit, he felt otherwise. He viewed debt as a thing to avoid, and believed that if the public indebtedness reached a formidable size, that the country would be hopelessly committed to the English career of debt, corruption and rottenness, which would certainly result in another revolution.

To attack the debt he would forbid further borrowing, no matter the reason. He then would apply heavy excise taxes to luxury items so those who could afford to pay the taxes, would do so. He would run a budget of austerity, firing unnecessary government employees. While he inherited an enormous debt, his plans would pay the entire debt off in sixteen years, and then the nation would be free to grow to her full potential, hopefully to never again be caught up in the English mania of operating on debt and paying out all of the profits of the nation in interest that benefited nobody except the lenders.

CHAPTER 58

VIRGINIA, 1801

A coach pulled by two draft horses slogged through muddy paths, its submerged wheels kept spinning only by enormous effort from the team as the matched chestnuts slipped along the slick, boggy road. Rain streaked horizontally as it pelleted the driver's face who sat atop the vehicle, unprotected from the storm except for a drenched greatcoat and a cocked, three-cornered hat, which drooped from two of its three sides as water cascaded from it.

The air crackled with electricity as white rivers of power strobed the sky. A roll of thunder built to a crescendo, jarring the coach with its final boom. One of the chestnuts reared from the sonic blast. When its front legs reached a zenith and were about to descend, lightning struck a nearby tree, further spooking the horse, which leaped off its back legs and was totally airborne, strapped down to the earth only by the rigging of the coach.

The frightened horse heard the driver shout, "Easy, easy," and relaxed as gravity pulled it back to the ground. When it landed, its hooves slipped in the mud and it toppled over, dragging its teammate and the coach to their sides.

The lone passenger banged a knee and his head simultaneously on the roof that was now the sidewall of the coach; a trunk toppled over and crashed down upon his shin. The blow to his head knocked him unconscious, and he lay in a toppled vehicle that was filling with mud and water, swallowing the murky soup that was once a road.

The horses squirmed and kicked until they righted themselves, but their double tree had broken loose of the carriage. They stood waiting for a command, covered with mud and slime, when a crash of thunder boomed, sending them running with the rigging being dragged behind them.

The driver had been thrown from his seat; he raised himself and shot after the horses, but slipped, and fell into the thick ooze. He fought his way to his feet, then slogged his way to the upset coach, careful to maintain his footing. When he arrived at the carriage, he saw his passenger lying motionless, face down in a sloppy mud that had swooshed into it.

He desperately pulled on the coach, attempting to right it, but two tons of mud made the job impossible. Then he crawled through the door and into the swamp of a carriage. He pulled on the silver-haired passenger and got his head out of the muck, then slapped the unconscious man on his back several times, forcing him to expel some of the slop he had swallowed.

La Droix coughed and spit, then vomited on the driver. He opened his eyes, slowly realizing that his clothing was soaked through and he was being assisted by a mud-covered man. The marquis tried to rise upright but a wrench of pain shot through his leg, and it buckled, toppling him. He lay in the mud-filled coach, in too much pain to attempt moving. "I can't get up. You better go for help."

The driver climbed from the coach and out the door. "I'll walk toward town and hope to find a house. You'll have to prop yourself up and stay awake, otherwise you might drown in that slough."

"If this thing gets any more full, I might drown anyway. You don't have a swallow of whiskey, do you? This pain is murderous."

The driver reached into a vest pocket and removed a flask. “Here, take a slug of this.”

La Droix grimaced and then gulped the whiskey, which was so raw that he would have spit it out under any other circumstances, but he wanted the pain killer in him. He chugged another mouthful, and held the metal container outstretched. When the driver reached for it, La Droix pulled it back. “No, I need it all.”

“You can’t drink it all down or you might pass out. In that pool, you’d drown for certain.”

“Don’t care. Now, go get help.”

The driver trudged down the black road as the coach settled deeper into swampy road. La Droix propped himself against a sideboard and drank the remainder of the foul whiskey and waited for the alcohol to subdue the throbbing in his leg. He sat in the thick goo, shivering in shock and frightened of the future.

He bent his knee so that most of it was out of the water, ripped at his trousers and tore them open, and to his horror, saw several splinters of bone from his tibia protruding through his skin. He cringed at the thought of the slimy ooze that had seeped into the wound, and writhed in pain from the compound fracture. He held his breath, and said a pseudo-prayer: “Jacques, this might be it. Why in the world did you break your leg in this dirty, backward region? Ah, never mind, Jacques, just accept what’s coming.”

He sat in the carriage, half drunk, and half hoping for the end to be swift. He closed his eyes and attempted to fall off to sleep, but the pain was too great for him to get any relief in that manner. So he waited, and thought about cutting his own throat, figuring that would be quicker and easier than this.

After an hour, he heard horses coming up the road. That perked him up, and soon the horses stopped, and he felt the coach shake. “You still in there?”

“No, I ran away.”

“Oh, that’s a good one, jolly good one,” said a huge man with a thick, curly beard. “A man what’s got a humorous touch will heal right up, that’s for sure.” The hulk crawled in the coach and examined the injury. “And you’ll be needing a lot of laughs if you want to heal this one up.”

Despite the heavy rain coming in, La Droix could smell garlic seeping through every pore of this man’s body. Then the bearded man smiled and exposed a mouth of green teeth and black gaps.

“Do you need my help?” called the driver.

“Nah, not enough room in here as it is. Just take him when I lift.”

The hulk bent over and spraying spittle as he spoke that went directly into La Droix’ face. “Hold tight.” Then he lifted while La Droix turned his head to avoid the man’s stench and foul breath.

The hulk hoisted the fallen man quite easily, then handed him through the door to the driver, who didn’t have near the strength of the hulk. The driver staggered and nearly fell, but maintained his balance long enough for the hulk to retrieve the patient and take him from the driver’s arms.

As La Droix was being carried to the flat-bed cart, the world began spinning, and he passed out in the hulk’s arms. “Just like a babe, he be a sleeping in his daddy’s arms,” laughed the big man.

Both men got in the cart and the big fellow cracked the whip once and the horses headed back home. “That’s a bad one he’s got.”

“Terrible.”

“I’d say so.”

“Not him. Don’t you see? My carriage is broken – I lost my team – I’m destined for the poor house.”

“Would you rather be him, then?”

“Maybe, he’s got a heavy purse.”

“For all the good it might do him.”

The horses slogged through the road and the wagon bounced about, waking La Droix, who was now seeing double and triple images. “Whiskey, please, whiskey.”

The driver handed him a bottle that they had brought along. La Droix grabbed it greedily, pulled its cork, then quaffed. His throat burned as the fluid crossed it, but it was considerably smoother than the earlier flask, having been aged for a few months.

“It’s good that you’re awake now, real good. I be Zaun Smith at your service.”

“Huh, good, that’s nice,” said La Droix, gulping down more whiskey as the wagon bounced along the road. The torrents of rain had washed most of the mud off his clothes and the wound was getting cleaned as the cart moved down the road.

“You picked a bad night. But you don’t much find good nights to have your leg go bust.”

The wagon stopped at a small structure on the end of town. “Where are we?” asked La Droix.

“At Doc Bailey’s.”

“A doctor? You have a surgeon in this back-woods swampland?”

“Absolutely,” said Zaun, “you’re in the spanking new capital of the Yeenited States of America. If we didn’t have no doctors, then who would?”

“Great,” said La Droix in a tone thick with sarcasm.

Zaun picked the injured man up in his arms and carried him to Doc Bailey's porch and banged on the door.

After several minutes, a man in a nightshirt answered the door. "What you doing here n –" Then he spotted La Droix' injury. "Oh, is that it, eh? Well, come in then, get out of the downpour."

Inside the house there were four pans on the floor, each filling drop by drop from the leaks in the roof. "Walk him back into the surgery room, if you will?" said the doctor, pointing at a door.

Zaun nodded and carried the patient through the doorway. As he set La Droix on the table, the marquis dropped the empty bottle he had finished and let out an enormous burp in the hulk's face, partially paying back the big man for his odoriferous breath and body.

Doc Bailey removed his long, black coat that hung on a nail and slipped it on. Then he picked up a huge knife that was sitting on the nearby table and wiped it on his coat. La Droix jerked in protest as the beady-eyed doctor approached him wielding a butcher knife and wearing a night shirt covered by a black surgeon's coat. "I need a holder!"

Zaun grabbed La Droix by the shoulders and said, "Be still."

The driver grabbed his torso as the doctor slid the knife along the trousers, then ripped the material away from the crotch down, fully exposing the wound. When Doc Bailey set down the knife, La Droix let out a rush of breath in relief.

"Whiskey, please, whiskey," called the patient in desperation.

Doc Bailey pointed at a cabinet, in which Zaun discovered two clear bottles of corn liquor. He removed one and carried it to the patient. "Here you be, and be careful. This stuff'll kick your head in the morning, kick it real bad."

La Droix grabbed the bottle and gulped several ounces, took two breaths of air, then drank again. He continued this process until half of the bottle was inside of him, and then he dropped the container and passed out yet again.

“That’s good that he’s out of commission. This is a real bad break. Stoke up the fire, will you?” asked the doctor of nobody in particular.

Zaun slipped a few pieces of wood into the fireplace and blew on the hot embers until the new fuel caught flame. Then he smiled at the doctor.

Bailey nodded as he examined the wound, discovering that the few splinters poking through the skin were only the beginning. Inside the leg’s broken bone had literally shattered. “Stick the iron in the fire, will you. This leg’s too tough to set.”

Zaun followed the request and watched as the doctor picked up the knife, wiped either side of the blade on the black coat, and said, “Start counting.”

“What do you mean?”

“Count out the seconds, like this, one – two – three – I need to know how much time is gone, I got to be quick with this one. And I need both of you to hold him down.”

Zaun grabbed the patient’s shoulders again and began counting slowly as the doctor raised his arm and slammed the knife into La Droix’ leg, just above the knee. The honed blade cut through to the femur and stopped. Bailey expertly turned the patient and worked the knife around the bone, separating the muscles, tendons and ligaments from the upper and lower portions of the leg. With the slicing done, the doctor set down the knife and grabbed a saw, which he lined up on the bone and drew back and forth with feverish strokes. As he cut through the final sliver of bone, he heard Zaun say “fifty-two” and smiled momentarily.

La Droix awakened to see the doctor carrying his previously attached lower leg, which Bailey dropped with a clunk into a pan. He screamed, not knowing whether he was having a nightmare, and struggled, but couldn't break loose from the hulk's grip.

Doc Bailey whisked the iron from the fire and raced for the table and shouted, "Hold him tight!" Again, La Droix kicked and squirmed until he felt a huge fist crash upon his forehead, knocking him out.

Bailey slid the hot iron onto the spurting wound, searing it shut. La Droix awoke and screamed, "Yeow!" His face contorted and he shook violently.

"Pour some liquor down him, quick!" shouted the doctor.

La Droix screamed, but drank greedily from the bottle. Gulp after gulp he took, hoping to crash from this trek into hell, then he belched and passed out.

CHAPTER 59

John Marshall sat in his office looking at the law books on the shelf and wondering what he would do with all his spare time. Since John Adams had pushed through the judiciary act, the courts were flooded with judges and the workload would be slight, nearly non-existent. It even appeared that he would not have to ride the circuit any longer and he could relax with almost no work to do. His mind set about planning how to make work for lawyers and judges.

While he was reflecting upon this, Alford Hawkins entered the office. Marshall looked at him in disgust and wondered what this short, fat man with greasy hair had done to befriend La Droix. The only good thing about him was that he could read and write in French, English, and Spanish, unlike Lee Boo, who appeared too stupid to learn literacy in even one language. He would certainly have refused the man a position but for his referral and the amount of persuasion that the marquis was able to muster, especially with sums of money when things were getting the tightest. To Marshall, it was uncanny how the man could make an offer of a small amount of cash just when it was most needed. Could he come through again? Some creditors were pressing right now.

“What is it, Hawkins?”

“I have a letter for you.”

“Thank you,” said Marshall. He broke the seal and read:

Dear Sir:

We had talked about a biography of your first president. If you are still interested, please write a note for Lee Boo to deliver to me. Remember, I know a good publisher for the work, so you should ask for a suitable amount.

LD

“Where did you get this?” Marshall demanded of Hawkins.

“Lee Boo gave it me, and I haven’t a piece of a clue from whence it came.”

“Get me Lee Boo.” Marshall figured it had come through the usual channels and that La Droix was in London.

Hawkins bowed and left the room and shortly after, Lee Boo appeared. “May I be a big-big help, sir?”

“I need you to deliver this to La Droix.” Marshall was scribbling on a sheet of paper. He crossed it out and started anew. He stared out a window, listened to a bird singing for a moment, then thought of what would really give him financial freedom. Then he wrote:

Dear Sir:

I think that a several volume set of the great general could be written, containing approximately five hundred pages per volume. For this work, I would suggest a payment of \$150,000 (One hundred fifty thousand dollars). If the terms are agreeable, I could begin the work at once, and not having much to occupy my time in my current position, I could complete the work promptly.

Lee Boo was staring as Marshall wrote, but was having some trouble reading the language upside down. When he realized that Marshall wanted over one hundred thousand dollars for the book he was to write, his eyes nearly exploded out of their

sockets, but the judge was too busy spending his money to notice his servant's expression.

Marshall folded a covering sheet into an envelope and sealed it, then addressed it to La Droix, and handed it to Lee Boo. "Get this to the marquis with the greatest dispatch."

Lee Boo nodded and shot out of the office. Hawkins was about to follow him out when Marshall called him. "Hawkins, I need your help. Can you read this land offer for me? At least I think that is what it is."

"Surely your mind is sharper at law than mine," said the stout man, staring out the window at Lee Boo and ready to run after him in hot pursuit.

Marshall laughed and said, "But it's written in Spanish and you're considerably better able to glean the meaning of that language than I."

Hawkins saw Lee Boo round a corner and lost him. "How soon do you need it read?"

"Now, now, my man. I might want to speculate on some of that land in Georgia."

"Very well," said Hawkins, angered at losing another chance to follow Lee Boo to the delivery contact for La Droix. He read the document, which was quite complex, and needed to read it again, then translate it into English for the judge, who seemed willing to invest in the land despite it being a wildcat gamble.

Down the street, Lee Boo doubled around to make certain that he wasn't being followed, then cut down an alley and into his house. There he found Sally crying. "What is it?" he asked, "What troubles you?"

"Nothing."

“Come on Sally, you can tell me.” He placed both hands around her shoulders and rubbed her neck.

“It’s money. You get some from Holland, some from John Marshall, and I have the small annuity that Masser Jefferson gave us for a wedding present, but we can’t make it. I can’t afford no milk for the children.”

Lee Boo released his hands and spun her to look into her black eyes as he brushed her coarse hair out of her face. “I have many-many letters I could try to sell to President Jefferson.”

“Don’t you do no such thing. You give them to him. To take money for them would seem dirty and wrong. Don’t you do that to my Masser.”

“You’re a freed slave, you have no master.”

“When I say Masser, I don’t mean nothing bad by it. Thomas Jefferson is good folk.”

“Well, I have to make a copy and fast, so if I could have the chair at the table?”

Sally rose and kissed her husband. “Do you have to hurry away?”

“I regret it many-many-many times, but I must.” He took out his toy box filled with letters and writing equipment. After removing a quill, ink and paper, he sat at the table and made a perfect copy of the Marshall letter, which he sealed into the envelope and placed the original into the toy box. When he had that done, he kissed his wife and left, running for La Droix’ hotel.

As he approached the entrance, he stopped a moment, then remembered that the marquis wanted an apple, so he ran to a green grocer, purchased one, then darted back to the hotel. As he walked inside, he caught a glimpse of one of the maids, who wore a dirty outfit and had orange hair.

Lee Boo cringed, then noticed the woman's hazel eyes and realized that she was part Negro. He wondered how many people in the hotel knew this, or if they were all fooled by the red dye she had doused in her hair.

Lee Boo took the steps two at a time until reaching the second floor, then found his way to room number six and knocked on the door. "Come in," said a voice inside.

Lee Boo opened the door and gasped at what he saw. La Droix had his stubbed right leg hanging over the side of the bed and Doc Bailey attending to an awful smelly infection. He choked a bit, and swallowed hard, about to be sick.

"This looks good," said Doc Bailey, "you have a bucketful of laudatory puss, more than I expected.

Lee Boo grabbed his mouth and ran from the room, down the stairs, and into the street where he retched. When he felt better, he returned to the room. As he entered, he brushed Doc Bailey who was carrying the bucket of gloop from La Droix' leg in his hand. "You don't have much of a stomach for this, do you?"

Lee Boo shook his head. "Sit down, Lee Boo," said La Droix, pointing at the lone chair in the room.

Lee Boo did so, then said, "Does it hurt much-much?"

"I've been better."

"You have that ugly goo in your leg because it is many-many dirty."

"And how do you know that?"

"My cousin is shaman. Whenever someone loses a leg or arm, it must be washed many-many times, otherwise the goo forms."

"A shaman? You mean a witch doctor don't you? As little as I like the treatment I got from Doc Bailey, your cousin would never touch my body."

Lee Boo was through arguing. Whether his cousin was right or not didn't matter much, so he handed La Droix the copy of the letter from Marshall. The marquis broke the seal without looking, much to Lee Boo's relief, because he had trouble putting it back together this time and it was cracked on the edges.

As La Droix read the letter, he took a swig from the whiskey bottle next to his bed. He began to laugh, and said, "Why you greedy idiot – I've got you now." If he weren't so affected by alcohol, he would not have blurted this out in front of Lee Boo, but La Droix was no drinker, and his body and brain were filled with spirits to ease his pain, making him careless.

After reading it, he held it to a candle to see if there was an invisible message, but nothing came through. Again, this was a mistake to do in the presence of Lee Boo, but La Droix was under considerable stress and was suffering from a high fever.

La Droix asked for the writing box, which Lee Boo gave to him. The marquis positioned it on his lap and thought about writing, then said, "Oh, hang it anyway. Tell the avaricious gentleman to visit me here."

Lee Boo stood, his mouth drooped open. "But you told me not to tell him you were in Washington."

"I changed my mind. Now go fetch him."

Lee Boo darted out of the room and ran to the court, where he told Marshall that the marquis was in town in room six of the hotel, and that he was feeling poorly, but he wanted to see the judge. Marshall gulped at the thought of having to face that man in person again, but he decided to do what must be done. He handed a document to Hawkins and said, "Please translate this into French and I'll be back in thirty minutes to go over it with you."

Hawkins glared, but agreed, losing another chance to follow Lee Boo, who would run off as soon as the judge left the office. At least if he stayed true to form he would. Hawkins had reported to London on Lee Boo that the only thing suspicious about him was his incredible laziness and unparalleled ability to find excuses not to work.

When Marshall was gone, as expected, so left Lee Boo, with Hawkins being stuck with the translation job. *Oh, well*, he thought, *better this than sweeping floors like that dumb savage*. Tonight, he knew that Lee Boo and his family were going away for the weekend. This was the night he would burgle the home and see if there were any incriminating things in the house. If it was clean, he would send London a report to continue to trust the black idiot until next they thought he had been compromised.

Lee Boo ran home and gathered all the papers from his toy box and bundled them in his arm. He ran for the President's house, and was detained momentarily at the front door when James Madison saw him and said, "Let the Prince in at once." The doorman thought that the Secretary of State was making a joke about Lee Boo's heritage, but complied with the order.

Once inside, Lee Boo said to Madison, "I need to see Mr. Jefferson much-much bad."

"Okay," said Madison, pointing at the proper door, "but I warn you, he's having those headaches, it's been bothering him for a week or so."

Lee Boo knocked lightly on the door and was told he could come in, so he silently turned the latch, quietly opened the door, and padded up to the President's desk. Jefferson jumped from his chair and rushed to the visitor. "Lee Boo! Lee Boo!" He extended his hand to the man from Palau and shook it with remarkable

vigor. “How are you and Sally? How is the little one doing? Why don’t you ever visit me?”

“I am here very much-much right now.”

“So I see, so I see. What brings you to my humble office?”

Lee Boo looked at the President and noticed that he was wearing slippers, and that his shirt was untucked. “If you are ill, I will go.”

“Nonsense. Sure, I have a headache, but it’s been with me so long now that it feels like an old friend.”

“If you chew willow, it might go away.”

“Willow? Why willow?”

“I don’t know, but it works.”

“I might just try that; it can’t make it worse. Now, please sit down.”

“Thank you Mr. Jefferson. Sally sends her best wishes. And our children are both strong and healthy. I bring many-many letters that you should have.”

Jefferson took the bundle from his hands, rifled through them, then set the batch on his desk. “So, what are these?”

“They are letters that Justice Marshall wrote or received.”

“What? You’ve stolen his letters?”

“Yes and no.”

“What does that mean, Lee Boo?” demanded Jefferson.

“When there is one that I think is important, I make a copy.”

“So you’re reading all his correspondence?”

“When I can, yes, when I can.”

“That’s wrong to do, you should stop it at once; if you keep it up, you’ll be like the British, spying on everyone until nobody in their proper mind will trust you. I advise you to take these copies back to their owner.”

“Those are not copies.”

Jefferson narrowed his eyes. “Then what are they?”

“The originals. I send the copies I make to the people.”

Jefferson looked at him incredulously, then grabbed a quill and wrote two lines of verse with his left hand, and one with his right, then handed the paper to him. “Could you copy these lines?” he asked.

Lee Boo shifted the quill in his left hand and read the verse two more times, until he could feel the words. Then he studied the curves and jogs in Thomas’ writing, and after several minutes, he scratched the quill on the surface and wrote the lines.

When he finished Jefferson snatched the sheet from him and examined the two samples. Shaking his head, he said, “Marvelous duplication, and where did you learn to do this?”

“Franklin taught me.”

“Franklin? Why did he teach you?”

“He said you might need me some day. He said I was very much-much surreptitious, whatever that means.”

Thomas burst into laughter. “Well, the old spy is sending me assistance from beyond the grave. As much as I appreciate these, and as much as I hate my cousin Mr. Marshall, I don’t think that the country has anything to fear of this man.”

“Then why did Marquis La Droix instruct me to hurry-hurry get a job with him?”

“La Droix, the British agent La Droix?”

“The same man.”

“You work for La Droix?”

“He pays me, but I work for Franklin.”

“But Franklin is dead.”

“So is Washington, but you work for him, don’t you?”

“No, but I see the point. So what do you think I should do with these,” asked Thomas, staring at the pile.

“Read them. I don’t think I’ll come back here again. It’s too dangerous, I have a bad-bad man named Hawkins tailing me all the time.”

“Hawkins! My cousin’s clerk is a British agent, is that what you’re saying?”

“I think that your cousin is, but I’m not certain yet.”

“You’re crazy, Lee Boo. He fought in the Revolution, he led the militia, he loves this country.”

“So did General Arnold.”

“You shock me, Prince Lee Boo. What you say scares me.”

“I don’t mean to much-much frighten you. I’ve been collecting these just like I thought Franklin would want them, and it seems the time to give them to you.”

“What can I do to repay your kindness?”

“Nothing – except – nothing.”

“What, do you want money for these letters?”

“Sally would boil me in tar and flock me like a turkey if I took money from you, but we are much-much poor.”

“Then, I’ll give you some money.” Jefferson reached into his drawer for some money.

“No. Give me nothing. I will find a way to earn small-small extra money.” Lee Boo rose, shook the President’s hand, and said, “Congratulations on your new job. It is big-big headache to lead a whole people. I know, my father does it. You must chew lots of willow.”

Thomas watched the man walk from his office and when the door shut he read through the letters and wondered whether Lee Boo was right about his cousin. There was nothing absolutely damning, but there were many ugly inferences that could be drawn from them. He scratched instructions to a bank on a piece of paper and folded it over. It would be delivered tomorrow, telling the bank to double Sally’s annuity.

* * * * *

John Marshall stood outside the door to room number six and tentatively knocked. He heard a muffled voice within and tested the latch. When he opened the door, he saw La Droix lying in bed with a thick comforter over his body. Marshall could not tell that part of a leg was missing under the covers, but saw the man was sweating profusely from a fever.

“I didn’t know you were coming to America. And I’m so sorry that you’re feeling poorly.”

“It’ll pass.”

“Did you have a nice trip here?”

La Droix fumed in the bed. “Not particularly.”

“Oh, the fever. Don’t worry, it will be gone soon enough and you’ll be up and about like before.”

“I doubt that.”

“Pretty negative, aren’t we?”

“Quiet!”

“Very well,” said Marshall.

“I have your request for \$150,000 for the Washington books. What kind of money tree do you think that the publisher has? A set of books won’t earn a fifth of that, and you know it.”

“I know it not.”

“Thirty thousand.”

“What?”

“Thirty thousand is the top offer for those books.”

“Are you agent for the publisher?”

“You might say that.”

“I’ll do it.”

La Droix winked, and said, “I have a small favor.”

“Name it.”

He did, and Marshall’s eyes opened so wide that the whites overtook the tops and bottoms of them. “I will not.”

“We’ll see, we’ll see.”

Marshall stomped out of the room and returned to his office and worried about the request for the remainder of the day. By the time he was heading home, he had an idea of how to perform the request without violating any of his still existing ethics, or without stretching them too overmuch.

CHAPTER 60

WASHINGTON D.C., 1803

The presidency had proven to be a very difficult job. One unsuccessful office seeker, James Callender had begun a series of viciously false libels against Jefferson, including a series of allegations that Thomas had fathered children of Sally's, which sent Lee Boo into a rage. It was all Thomas could do to calm him down, as Lee Boo kept insisting that Callender should be much-much dead for insulting his wife, his children, and his friend. Thomas barely contained Lee Boo, even though he agreed that Callender deserved to be much-much dead.

Further, his friend and true freedom-loving patriot Thomas Paine, ran into trouble with charges of treason in England and had a near meeting with the guillotine in France. Jefferson wrote to him and offered him a safe haven in the United States. He couldn't allow him to be treated in such a manner. In America, Paine was allowed to push his reasoning to whatever length it would go. Jefferson loved Paine's thirst for liberty, and felt that no writer had exceeded him in ease and familiarity of style, in perspicuity of expression, happiness of elucidation, and in simple and unassuming language. He certainly could be favorably compared to Benjamin Franklin in prose. Of course, there were many who actually thought that Franklin had written Paine's *Common Sense*, but, those thoughts a ghost-written pamphlet faded quickly when Paine demonstrated his powerful prose later in the year with the *Crisis* series.

All contact had ceased between Jefferson and John Adams since the election, which was a great blessing. The midnight judge appointments of John Adams were

still haunting the President, and this nightmare was now complicated by the destruction of the undelivered commissions by acting Secretary of State Levi Lincoln. In December of 1801, four of the seventeen men who had been denied their appointments filed suit asking for a writ of mandamus directing James Madison, the Secretary of State, to deliver their commissions.

Had Jefferson known what was in store for him and the country, he would certainly have delivered over the commissions. However, it might have been a useless act, because unknown to Thomas, La Droix had extorted a promise from Marshall that he would make the Supreme Court omnipotent and unimpeachable. If it were not this case, it would have been another.

Marshall had protested and fought La Droix fiercely, but when confronted with all the questionable money paid him, he finally reasoned that he could make the court stronger while at the same time protecting the government from the Democratic-Republicans that controlled the executive and legislative branches. John Marshall twisted his ethics by pretending to himself that he would only perform the commands from La Droix, not to help La Droix, and whoever he represented, but to ease America back to Federalism, and allow the national government to grow strong at the expense of the states.

Now, thanks to the filing of the suit by William Marbury, Dennis Ramsay, Robert Hooe, and William Harper, the country was taking a turn that La Droix had plotted for. The marquis delighted in what he saw. Their cases were the groundwork that would support total judicial subversion of the American republic.

Lee Boo appeared to be sleeping on a cot in the boarding house where the Supreme Court justices were discussing what to do with the case, but he heard everything. Marshall had figured a way around the case that would satisfy the

one-legged marquis and build America stronger. His problem was to convince his colleagues of this, which he was about to attempt.

“Gentlemen, let us again consider the case of *Marbury v. Madison*, and sort through it.” Protests rang that it had been beaten to death and should be allowed to die its natural death.

“Now wait. The former Secretary of State admits he saw the commissions once, but can’t even guess what happened to them. So Marbury’s lawyer calls the then acting Secretary of State to the stand and asks what happened to the commissions.”

“What of it,” asked Bushrod Washington, a justice who was assisting Marshall in writing the biography of his Uncle George and partaking in some of the money from La Droix. “So Lincoln took the Fifth Amendment and refused to give information that might incriminate him. It was his right.”

“It was his right only because of that little creep Madison, who is nothing but Jefferson’s toady, shoved that horrid article of amendments to the Constitution down our throats, that dreaded Bill of Rights. How did Jefferson ever turn him back to a Bill of Rights anyway? Alexander Hamilton had Madison well under control during the constitutional convention. I think that Madison was just backing his political bets on Jefferson, and doing what he was told to do, like some type of flunky. I tell you, our jobs as Federalist judges would be much easier if it weren’t for those infernal attachments.” Samuel Chase flung his wig across the room in anger.

“Stop it,” shouted Marshall. “I hate those amendments as much as you, but I’ll never let that out of this room, and neither should you. We can get around them.”

“How so?” asked a Justice Paterson.

“By making ourselves the final say on what each of them means.”

“Impossible,” shouted Chase. “Why Jefferson and Madison proposed those abominable resolutions in the Kentucky and Virginia legislatures which declared the states have the final say on the Constitutionality of Acts of Congress.”

“And we have no power to do it in the Constitution,” said Bushrod Washington.

“But, gentleman,” said Marshall, “I know how we can be the sole and final word on the Constitution.”

“How?” demanded Chase.

“By proclaiming we have the power,” grinned Marshall.

Paterson screamed, “No! No! We fought a revolution for a republic. I won’t see it taken by a court.”

“It won’t be taken, William. Who could better protect the people from tyrannical laws than we judges? Who can defend the Constitution better than lawyers who wrote it?” asked Marshall.

“Madison wrote most of it, and he’s no lawyer. However, I think that Jefferson must have written the Bill of Rights.” said Chase.

“Regardless of that, we, the Supreme Court Justices of America, should take on the responsibility and the duty to defend the Constitution, at least until the people come to their senses and elect Federalist representatives and a Federalist president.” Marshall was winning them over.

“And how would you propose doing this?” asked Chase.

“Simple. We deny the commissions because the parties filed in the wrong court and we have no jurisdiction to hear the trial, only the appeal. It should have been filed in a lower court under the Constitution.”

“Now I’m having trouble, John. You want the court to have more power, but you’ll strap us to the thing with your admission that we can’t hear a case because of it.” Chase was insistent.

“Samuel, that is the beauty of it. Do you want to hear a bunch of trials and be burdened by witnesses and the like, or would you rather sit here quietly and review appeals from lower courts?”

“Appeals, most definitely,” said Chase, to which all the justices agreed. They were cleaner, easier, and the judges didn’t have to ride the circuit on those horrid roads to hear appeals. They could force the lawyers to come to them and never move from their comfortable courtrooms.

“Okay,” said Bushrod Washington. “So we deny the commissions. Then what?”

“Well, I was thinking that we could write an opinion degrading Jefferson for being so petty as to withhold the commissions despite all equity saying that he should have delivered them, then after thoroughly ridiculing my cousin, I could pounce on the law, the *Judiciary Act of 1789*, and declare that when Congress gave the Supreme Court the right to issue ‘writs of mandamus, in cases warranted by the principles and usages of law’ they acted without authority of the Constitution. That they could not do what they had no power to do in the Constitution.”

“It’s sounding interesting, but what good does all this do?” asked Chase. “We still haven’t solved any problems or enlarged our power.”

Marshall’s face took on a heightened appearance and he continued in his rich, southern-accented voice, “Here is the gem, Samuel, here is the beauty of it all. We declare that *‘an act of the legislature, repugnant to the constitution, is void.’* And

just like magic, we, the Supreme Court, have the power to overrule every law of Congress.”

“Cunning, devious, and fantastic,” said Chase. “You throw the case out of court; so Jefferson prevails on the merits and can’t appeal the verdict, then you seize the ultimate power of the law for all time.”

“A word of caution,” advised Paterson. “If we do such a thing as to declare an Act of Congress void, we should resolve not do this often, or the people would rebel against our Court. This is a grave power indeed, and we must use it only in the most desperate of circumstances. However, if carefully crafted, or obfuscated enough, we might be able to make this look like a blessing to the people. You see what I’m saying. We could paint ourselves as the saviors of the republic. Shoot, with all the new lawyers abandoning Coke and taking the soft path through Blackstone, it won’t be long before the bar has lost touch with Whig principles. Soon, the entire bar will be loaded with Tories, and we’ll have our power structure solidified.”

“I agree fully,” said Marshall. “Just having such a tremendous cannon in our arsenal will check the other branches, but we must not use it with reckless abandon. Otherwise, the people will recognize the Trojan Horse for what it is.”

The justices agreed, and Marshall offered to write the opinion that would shake the republic, win back power for the Federalists, satisfy La Droix, and embarrass his cousin, the President. Marshall left the room happy, although on the way out he kicked Lee Boo’s cot and said, “We’re done, now clean up the mess, you lazy dog.”

* * * * *

After the decision was handed down in *Marbury v. Madison*, Jefferson and Madison were both pacing about the room, sometimes bumping into one another.

When this happened, the smaller man was nearly run over, so after two of these crashes, Madison selected a section in a corner and walked in tiny circles, staying clear of the tall Virginian's path.

"Who does he think he is? God?" demanded Jefferson. "How can he take it upon himself to say the court is the custodian of the Constitution and declare a law void? The people do that. They do it in their state legislature or in the jury. Where did he find the power of judicial review in the Constitution?"

"Let's appeal his decision," said Madison.

"How? The skunk let us win the case. How can we appeal what we won?"

"What a cunning fox he is. You have to respect him for that."

"Respect his intellect!" shouted Jefferson. "Cunning yes, intelligent, no, and the man is bankrupt morally. The only person I hold in lower esteem than John Marshall is our Vice President, Mr. Burr."

"What can we do, Thomas?"

"I don't know if anything can be done in this case, but the next time he has the audacity to declare a law void, we'll go for the throat. However, we might try impeachment, yes, maybe we can defrock the pig."

The pair of angry men were interrupted by a knock on the door. "What is it now?" screamed Jefferson.

Aaron Burr walked into the office and bowed. The air was thick with hatred, and Burr could feel four eyes boring through him with disgust.

"Don't bow to me," shouted Jefferson, "I'm not a member of royalty."

"Pardon me, but I have a communication from James Monroe."

"Well, give it me and be gone," shouted Jefferson.

Burr carried the document to the President, nodded politely to Madison, and squirmed out of the office. Burr smiled to himself, knowing that he would only have to be servile a little longer, and then the humiliation would be on them. As he left the office, he was glad that he decided to meet with Anthony Merry, the British Minister to the United States.

After Burr left the office, Thomas read the communication and learned that Monroe had spent more money than he was authorized, but he had acquired not only New Orleans from Bonaparte, but the whole of the Louisiana Territory for 60 million francs. Monroe apologized for going beyond his authority, but hoped that Jefferson could convince the Congress to approve the deal.

“James! James!” shouted Thomas joyfully. “Monroe has talked Napoleon out of the entire reaches of Louisiana.”

“Thank God! We won’t have to go to war against the French after all.”

“We would have been destroyed by the little general, but we got him with money, we bought him off! Sometimes I think God gave America Napoleon solely to harass the British long enough for us to stabilize this continent and be ever free of George’s tyranny.”

Madison’s face turned dark.

“What’s the matter, James?”

“Well, I don’t know where in the Constitution we could have authority to do this purchase.”

“I have considered this before, and, we don’t have good constitutional authority for the purchase, but, I’ll take the heat for it. Don’t worry, given the circumstances, it will be accepted.”

“But, how is this different from the Supreme Court case we were just wrestling through, where Marshall stole power not his in the Constitution?”

“I don’t know,” said Thomas, “but I know where my heart is in this matter and believe that I must do it for the country. And I would hate to see where Marshall’s heart was set, for I wish not to venture into the depths of hell.”

“I don’t like it, Thomas, but I don’t see that we have a choice.”

Jefferson stared out the window, then at a map on the wall, then out the window. His mind was going so fast that it caused his eyes to flicker involuntarily. After several seconds, he looked at Madison and said, “Get me Meriwether Lewis, and tell him to prepare to take a rugged journey, I’d like to find out what we just purchased from France.”

CHAPTER 61

Aaron Burr stewed bitterly as he sat in his room, wondering what to wear for the occasion. After trying several garments, he decided on formal dress, even though it was morning. Once making that decision, he spent over an hour getting ready for the meeting. When he was satisfied that he was fit and proper he strutted about in front of a mirror, then walked to the street to summon a cab.

The conveyance he took had cloth upholstery that was blanketed with a creeping mould, which seeped into the Vice-President's nose and began to overtake his lilac cologne. As the cart jogged through the ruts, Burr wondered whether he should cancel, but decided that it had to be done. Something had to be done to stop Jefferson, and he was just the man to do it. By the time he arrived at Anthony Merry's office, he had forgotten about the mould, convinced himself that it was critical to the country to do this, and he had resolved to tip the driver well.

The cab stopped at the office, and the Vice President of the United States paid the driver and walked for the front door of the plank building. He read the door, which had block letters indicating that he was at the office of:

ANTHONY MERRY, MINISTER OF ENGLAND TO THE UNITED STATES

Burr flipped the latch as his eyes darted about to see who might be watching him. As he walked inside, he saw Lee Boo in the waiting room. The Palauan appeared startled to see Burr, quickly excused himself and slid through a side door.

Burr considered following him, but remained seated, waiting for Merry, who soon opened a door and said, “Vice President Burr! It is an honor to see you.”

Burr was relieved that he had dressed formally, since the man in front of him was decked out in full regalia, including a ceremonial sword that was strapped to his side. “Minister Merry. So good of you to see me.”

“I must say, I am relieved to see the person occupying the second chair of your country has the decency to dress appropriately.”

“And, I must say, our President can be rather casual about his appearance.”

Merry motioned for Burr to follow him into his office, and when both men were inside, he shut the door. “Casual you say! My word yes. One day I went to call upon the President of the United States by appointment, so it was no surprise that I was coming. I arrived at the appropriate time, and do you know what occurred?”

“Not the remotest of idea do I have.”

“Well, James Madison led me through a corridor so narrow that my sword bumped the walls, and when I reached the end of the dark hall, I entered President Jefferson’s office, where he was working.”

“Was he pleasant?” asked Burr, hoping that Jefferson might have been suffering from headaches and been irascible.

“Pleasant, oh yes, but slovenly. He was not merely in an undress, but actually standing in slippers down at the heels, and both pantaloons, coat and underclothes indicative of an indifference to appearance. I was thoroughly insulted at the way he would treat a minister of the Crown.”

Burr had never heard of this incident, but wanted Merry to believe it was a deliberate affront by Jefferson. “Things go around and come back.”

“How is that so?”

“Several years ago, when Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were introduced to King George the Third, your King turned his back and ignored the pair. Our President has always wanted to return the rudeness, and apparently he did it to you, the Crown’s highest placed servant in this country.”

Merry bubbled a little from the flattery, but turned slightly red at thinking that he had been singled out for insult. “Well, I say. In any event, Mr. Burr, what can a humble servant of the Crown do for you?”

“I have a proposition for you, and I need your word on confidence in this matter.”

“But, as a Minister of King George, I cannot pledge that.”

Burr’s eyes sparkled. “As an Englishman would be good enough for me, your word as an Englishman that you will not relay what we are about to discuss with anyone in America. I care not that it goes to *our* King.”

Merry could not miss the emphasis on ‘our’ in Burr’s request for confidence. “But, you are the Vice President of your country.”

“An office which I soon will be resigning.”

Merry poured a glass of claret for himself and offered one to Burr, who graciously refused it. “I know that you are friendly to the Crown, I’ve been made aware of that by my superiors. But are you a loyal subject of Great Britain?”

“As always, I am, and ever will be. I have been helping the Crown for quite some time.”

“Don’t you have a contact here who you could have processed this through those channels?”

“I used to, but he was replaced by an idiot who I’ve never met. You can’t be too careful of changes, so I figured that I must come to you directly.”

Merry sniffed and declared, “That is an interesting perfume you have on.” He inhaled deeply, taking in Burr’s odor, then announced with some pride. “Lilac, traced with a touch of musk. Most invigorating.”

Burr recalled the cab’s mould. “A specialty for the occasion.”

“Well, then, tell me what you want to do?”

“Before I do, I’m worried about the black boy who was in your office before I arrived. Why was he here?”

“Oh, you must mean Lee Boo.”

“The same.”

“Well, tell me how I know that you are trustworthy, and I will allay your fears of the little pile of horse dung who greeted you here.”

Burr wondered what he should do, then decided he was in too deeply to get out anyway. “Does the number 94 mean anything to you?”

“A little, I know something of that number.” Merry tried to act casual, wondering whether Burr had just dropped the number by chance, or . . .

“It means a great deal to Sir Northborough and me.”

Merry swallowed hard. His superior was La Droix, who he always suspected had worked with or for Northborough. This was confirmation. Before him was Number 94, or somebody directly associated with 94. As he thought about the recent election and the part Burr had played, he realized he could trust the man, or at least that the Secret Service of Great Britain did.

“You seem surprised. I hope that I’ve not astonished you too much.”

“A great deal, a great deal. I am most pleasantly surprised that 94 is so highly placed, ah-hem, are you 94?”

Burr nodded.

“Regarding the little dung heap, he’s one of our delivery boys.”

“Trustworthy?”

“We think so, he’s got an excellent record of work for an ignorant house boy.”

“But he works for John Marshall.”

“He works for us.”

“If Marshall discovers he’s got a spy in his chambers, there will be hell to pay from Charlottesville to Boston.”

“Perhaps, but perhaps not.”

Burr reflected upon this comment, and wondered for a moment what Merry meant by the comment. He decided not to pursue it. “Here is my proposal.”

Merry listened, and while the information that the Vice President was an agent of the Crown was astonishing, this proposal flabbergasted the minister, who could only state that he would pass the word on and it would be fully evaluated.

Burr rose and said, “That is all I could ask for, and don’t feel offended if I don’t drop by again.”

“I think it would be wise if we had as limited a contact as possible,” agreed Merry.

Burr walked out of the office, leaving Merry to contemplate the proposal. After some trepidation, Merry accepted the offer as legitimate. That decision made, the counsel for Great Britain sat at his desk and wrote a letter to La Droix, of which he retained a copy that would later be sent to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in London. When he was satisfied with the letter, he banged on his desk, and Lee Boo came running into the office from the hidden chamber.

“This is an important message, Lee Boo; it must be delivered to your contact as soon as possible. If it goes through any other channels, the American post will read

it.” It would have surprised Merry to discover that Lee Boo, Burr and he had the same contact person.

“I will do it much-much fast,” said Lee Boo.

“Excellent, and you never saw that man in my office, you understand.”

“What man?”

“Excellent,” said Merry as he drank the remaining ounce of claret in his cup.

Lee Boo shot out of the office, darted down the street, and ran behind houses and buildings, checking to see if he were being followed. When he was satisfied that he was not, he headed for his house. Sally was out shopping at the market. He opened the letter and read; his eyes bugged. As always, he made a perfect copy of the original, then sealed the copy back into place.

This document was so startling to him that he risked a run by the White House. As he ran through the alleys and streets, his intuition gave him signals that it was safe, so he darted to the back door of the presidential house, where he was admitted by a cook. Lee Boo asked to see Jefferson, and when he discovered him gone, then James Madison.

Upon hearing of the visitor, Madison entered the kitchen and greeted Lee Boo warmly and said, “You missed the President, he’s out riding his mount in the country. Been gone an hour, so I expect him back shortly. Do you wish to wait for him?”

“No, just give him this and say it was from me.” Lee Boo handed the letter to the Secretary of State.

“I will.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Lee Boo, as he scurried out the back door and ran through the streets of Washington to go deliver the forged copy to his contact.

Madison carried the paper upstairs, and knowing that Jefferson had a special file for Lee Boo correspondence, he placed the letter in that folder with the numerous other papers from Lee Boo. As he was about to write the President a note to check his file for the new document, he was interrupted by Burr, who entered and screamed, “Someone’s taken a shot at Jefferson while he was riding. Come quickly! He wasn’t hit, but he’s quite shaken.”

Madison flew out of the office and forgot all about the note, and the urgent document Lee Boo had risked his safety to deliver lay in the folder where it would go unnoticed.

CHAPTER 62

NEW YORK, 1804

In a dingy tavern, La Droix sat at a table speaking with the man he knew only as Cain. Of course he was only Cain's trusted representative, since the Grand Master of the Freemasons would not travel to America, especially on this business. The old marquis wrestled with a tough piece of mutton and washed it down with hot water. As he spoke, he coughed.

"You're getting old, and slow," said Cain.

"And my eyesight is failing. There's no way I should have missed that shot at that infernal Jefferson, which would have put Number 94 in the top seat."

"That was desperation. I just don't understand what's wrong with that man. He violates all human nature. Even though we got nowhere bribing or threatening Washington and Adams while they were leading the United States, we still got our way. Washington was enough into dotage to easily trick, and Adams bought our flatteries. And, Adams wanted so desperately to hold onto power, that he stole a great amount of liberty from the people. And both of them ran up huge debts. But this Jefferson takes office and does the ridiculous. Whoever heard of a leader giving up power? Immediately after he took the reins of government, he fired his internal revenue agents, all 468 of them. Why would anyone give up the right to tax his people? It's absurd! Jefferson figured he could run the country without tax collectors and without internal taxes. He thinks they're oppressive and impediments to freedom. What a dolt! Of course they are and they do."

La Droix sipped his drink and looked around the vacant tavern to make certain nobody was listening. “Costing us a large amount of field operatives in the course of it, I might add. That Albert Gallatin he hired as Secretary of Treasury is ruining our plans. I thought he would be on our side, being Swiss and close to banking, but there’s no help from him.”

“Then, the fool Jefferson raised tariffs and froze spending, and to top it all, he ran huge surplus budgets. If we leave him to his devices, he’ll get the country out of debt and reduce the central government down to a shell. We figured that since Jefferson had no knowledge of financial affairs that he would continue to follow the English model and continue to run up debt. While Alexander Hamilton remains unapproachable by our side, his ideas play right into our game, and after twenty years of his debt-laden spending we would have our colonies back. However, we can’t even trust Hamilton to remain pure to the British. He thinks that the British are foul for enslaving the Indian people, making them grow opium and forcing them to carry it to China. What could the Crown have done otherwise? The Chinese have all those luscious goods, like tea and silk, yet no appetites for European goods. We had to sell the Chinese drugs or we wouldn’t have anything to trade with them. Hamilton set up a wonderful scheme of dragging America into debt, and the man fervently believed in the scheme. Brilliant and ignorant, that’s the best combination for the Crown. But the first thing that Gallatin did as Secretary of Treasury was to figure out how to pay off America’s \$80 million of debt. Yet, if Gallatin ruins one of our plans, we’ll follow another.”

La Droix swigged the last drops of the water and reflected. As he thought about the situation, a wry smile formed on his face. “Having so many contingent routes for reclaiming America is a brilliant plan of yours, Cain. If one doesn’t work, another

will. We'll have these fools back in the fold, and they'll think they're better off, just you watch."

"And this egg we have hatching in Number 94 is so great that we can't but be happy that your shot missed Jefferson. Were 94 the president, who knows how expensive the bribing would have gotten. This development with him meeting Anthony Merry is much better, much better indeed. Was Merry's letter safely transmitted to London?"

"Direct courier, it's on its way. Hopefully, we will be able to give him what he wants."

Cain lit a cigar and puffed on it. "And Solomon? How goes Solomon?"

"Wonderful. Certainly you read the *Marbury v. Madison* decision that we – encouraged – him to write."

"It's nice to watch the court begin to encroach on the Congress and by reading the decision I realize that Solomon has a devious and ingenious mind. However, I understand that he's justified it in his own mind that he is working for the United States, and not for you, La Droix."

"Yes, he plays all kinds of intellectual games to rationalize his moves, but all the same, he comes through for us."

"Could he turn on us? I mean the man has abominable ethics and an insidious mind. Is he too dangerous to use?"

La Droix gave a throaty laugh. "What, you challenge the ethics of a judge who hears a case where he is the main witness to the sealing of the commissions, having himself neglected to have done the act? You question a judge who decides a case in which his own negligence caused the commission not to be delivered to the litigant? Surely, Cain, you are just not the trusting sort of person."

“Your sarcasm hits squarely at his ethics, but what if he decides that his country is more important to him than our cause?”

“We can paint him as a man who has surrounded himself with British agents and his moves look like he’s working for us. The Tory press in America would destroy him,” La Droix laughed, “which if we have our way will be the only kind of press this putrid continent ever has. I’ll be so happy when the Whig sympathizers quit publishing their rot. We almost had the colonies back with the Alien and Sedition Acts, what? But, we moved too fast. The people have the Revolution too fresh in their heads, but one day, yes, one day. And the money trail behind Marshall. He would have his problems exposing us, especially because he cannot now know that I have had him working for the Crown. He probably thinks me a thug, not a representative of a government. Further, I think he wishes to be remembered as a true, unmitigated patriot for posterity.” La Droix finished drink.

“How is the leg?”

“Horrid, it hurts all day long. I think that I have but few days left on this earth.”

“Have you a suitable trainee to take over your position?”

“Sir Northborough is explosive, but he is cunning and cruel. He’s come a long way. I think that he will work out fine.”

“But is he ruthless enough?”

“It took some doing, but I think so. Only time will tell if he has the courage to make really tough calls, but my seventy-seven years have caught up to me. He better do it.”

CHAPTER 63

WEEHAWKEN, NEW JERSEY, 1804

Hateful and accusatory letters flooded the newspapers as two highly-placed political men slashed at one another, culminating into a gale that promised no calm. As the accusatorial storm blew, Alexander Hamilton steadfastly defended his assertions that Aaron Burr was a scoundrel and a totally unprincipled character. Burr demanded apologies, but none were to be had as Hamilton stubbornly clung to what he knew to be a true assessment of the greedy, deceptive man.

Burr realized that after his shenanigans of the 1800 election he would never be chosen as a running mate for Jefferson again; his days as Vice President were numbered, so he ran for another post, the governorship of New York. He might have swallowed Hamilton's abuse and vocally hated the man, but never acted upon it, however, Hamilton threw his political might about in New York, which cost Burr the election.

It was on the evening of July tenth that the two men met in a small tavern in Weehawken to try one last time to settle the matter. Since a duel had been scheduled for the next morning, Hamilton had made out his will on the ninth.

In the dingy light from a few candles, Burr and Hamilton glared at one another. A small table was between them as they stood, each with their hands on the table. "Will you take the insults back and apologize?"

“Never!” shouted Hamilton. “I think you much worse than I said. I have word that you are planning a civil war in America, that since you can’t earn the presidency, that you’ll steal it, true to form.”

Burr wanted to scream, but became the politician, asking: “What turned you from wanting to make the government bigger and better? How did we lose you Alexander? Just four years ago you were in St. Andrew’s Club of New York where a toast was given to ‘The President of the United States,’ which was drunk without any particular approbation. But, when the next was to, ‘George the Third,’ you were on your feet, and insisted on a bumper and three cheers. Everyone in the club followed your suggestion.”

Hamilton screamed, “That was when I respected the Crown. That is something I can no longer honor.”

Burr seemed nonplused, although his stomach was twisting in loops. “Can you not be brought back into the fold?”

“What fold?”

“Why, to the victims of the Revolution, the Tory party, of course.”

“No, no, blast you, no! I’ve never been a Tory, and never will be.”

“But why?”

“I cannot continue to support the rights of the rulers. My place is with the common man.”

“Where did we lose you, Alexander, how can we right this course?”

“India! I know what the Crown of England thinks of its subjects, I understand that an entire population was stripped of its spirituality to sexual desires and to drugs. I know how the Indian subjects must produce opium that is destined to ruin yet another great country, and that is China. The lion’s mask has been stripped from the

island, revealing the dragon for what it is. I know why those beautiful Irish rebel and rebel against the Crown of England. The Irish still taste freedom, and won't have it wrested from them, no matter how many rebellions it takes. England, if given the opportunity would turn all Americans into drug-addicted, ignorant subjects, who care more for free sexual pleasures than freedom."

"No love for your mother country?"

"None! And, you, Mr. Vice President, should be ashamed. You are a low-life traitor!"

"Then, we settle it tomorrow!" shouted Burr, having lost his cool as he stomped out of the tavern.

* * * * *

On July 11, the combatant's squared off for a duel. With pistols selected and loaded, they paced off their distance and faced one another. Hamilton was an excellent shot and a soldier who idolized Julius Caesar, but he was repulsed by dueling. However, it was still considered as an honorable method of settling a dispute.

Hamilton's second watched along with a physician, as Hamilton pointed his pistol at Burr, then raised it, and aimed well over his foe's head. Hamilton hesitated momentarily, fired the shot, and shouted, "There, does that settle our honor?"

Burr pointed his pistol at Hamilton, who stood waiting for the return shot, hoping that his assailant would likewise fire a harmless warning. Burr cocked the flintlock, extended his arm holding the pistol, paused for a second and squeezed the trigger. As the report rang from the barrel and the powder flashed from it, a ball flew, piercing Hamilton's side and liver.

Hamilton fell and Burr mounted a horse and rode away. The physician treated Hamilton for thirty-six hours, but the wound was mortal. The duel showed the tragic result that so frequently occurs when knaves are given an open shot.

A public outcry erupted for justice and warrants for murder were sworn out in both New York and New Jersey for the Vice President of the United States. Aaron Burr was on the run, and the only chance of power he held was with the proposal he made to Anthony Merry. If it was rejected, Number 94 was finished.

CHAPTER 64

WASHINGTON D.C., FEBRUARY, 1805

Three men sat around a long, rectangular table at the White House. Papers were spread about in neat piles, and despite the size of the table, every inch was covered with reports and documents. James Madison picked up one pile and thumbed through it. Jefferson had another he was looking at while the Secretary of Treasury, Albert Gallatin, sat quietly hopeful that they would approve what he had done.

“Do I have this right, Albert,” asked Thomas, “when we took office in 1801 the total debt was at \$80 million, and under Hamilton’s policies it was growing at more than \$4 million per year during the Washington and Adams administrations?”

“That’s right, Mr. President,” said the former Swiss banker who was emotionally unable to use any other method of addressing Jefferson due to his upbringing in Europe.

“I’m amazed by these figures,” said Madison. “I thought we were in debt because of the Revolution, but we amassed much of that debt after we won our independence.”

Gallatin stroked his chin and touched his pointed nose with his index finger. “Hamilton believed that modest debt was good. However, he got addicted to it as you can see, while we borrowed only \$2 million in 1792, look how it steadily climbed to \$7 million in 1800. This was not modest, but excessively dangerous. There is no excuse for running such horrendous deficits. I dare say that ten more years of that type of activity and the country would have been bankrupt beyond redemption.”

“And your plan was to have the debt reduced to \$47 million by 1810. That would have been quite an undertaking which you obviously are not going to make, to have retired forty percent of the debt in ten years.” Madison was smiling and standing at the table, although with his abbreviated height, he was not tremendously taller in that posture than was Jefferson while seated. “While you haven’t met your goals totally, you have run surpluses each year and paid off most of what you had planned. I think that you’ve done splendidly, Albert, absolutely splendidly.”

Jefferson nodded in agreement. Thomas made a mental note that it seemed that Madison had overstepped his bounds here and was trying to take on a duty belonging to the first chair with that comment. This was exactly the type of thing that Franklin had complained to him about Madison. Franklin had observed that Madison would very subtly usurp at the most opportune times, often it was done so slyly that almost none would notice the move.

“It would have been much better,” said Gallatin, “but someone insisted on abolishing all the internal taxes.” He smiled as he looked at the President. This had been a sticking point between Jefferson and the Treasurer, but it was a point in which Thomas was immovable.

“They’re too oppressive, internal taxes bleed the lifeblood of the people. Let the money come from tariffs, then our people can pay taxes if they want imported goods, but they need never pay a tax if they consume only goods from this country. I’m sorry that slowed down your timetable, Gallatin, but I had to clear out those taxes and free our people from those meddling internal revenue agents.” Jefferson said this lightly, but all at the table knew that there had been no compromise on the issue with him, unless it would have meant more debt to abolish them. But since Gallatin was

able to project surplus budgets without the internal tax revenue, Jefferson sought Congress's approval to ban them entirely.

"I agree with you, Mr. President, the debt of a nation will lead us to corruption and enslavement. While I would have liked the luxury of using internal taxes to pay down the debt faster, I understand why leaving them in place would set precedent to keep them forever. I must agree that internal taxes should not be used except in times of dire emergency."

"And what of war?" asked Madison. "In preparing for war should we use them?"

"Internal taxes and borrowing are both probably necessary for war, but not otherwise." Gallatin was firm in this stand, despite his quiet tone in stating it.

"I'm pleased with your work, Gallatin, most pleased. Regarding the war, Britain is doing all in its power to lure us into one, shamelessly impressing our seamen, but, another war with England is one that we would surely lose. However, that Corsican is terrorizing the European continent, keeping the British occupied with other problems. Not to mention our friends in Ireland seething in a pot that boiled over recently, and might well do so again. For now, at least, war seems out of reach for England, even though they are surely planning one against us." Jefferson was smiling while going through the volumes of reports concerning his first term. He was ready to begin his second term after a landslide election showing his popularity was deeply entrenched in America.

The Secretary of Treasury grinned. "Now I don't think it was wrong, but you did saddle me with an extra \$11.25 million in debt when you purchased Louisiana. That's why I will only have the debt down to \$57 million at the end of 1808."

“Only down to, only down to. Gallatin, don’t down play your accomplishments. You’ve worked magic and should feel proud. Had we kept on the path of Hamilton’s extended debt, I could conceive that within time we would be paying more interest on the debt than we could possibly raise in revenues, that the debt would be so high that we would have to borrow just to service its interest.” Jefferson stood and reached his hand across the table and shook Gallatin’s with excessive vigor. “Well done, well done indeed.”

“It could never get that bad, at least I shouldn’t think it could,” said Madison, who frowned as Jefferson stood; the short man was disappointed that the President had regained control of the meeting.

Gallatin was glowing from the compliments received from Jefferson. He knew the man well enough to know they didn’t come often, and never for idle flattery, but only when truly earned. “Corruption knows few bounds. Politicians will raid the coffers to appease the voters, will raid them into financial ruin if given a chance.”

“Well, it won’t happen to America,” declared Jefferson. “Once you finish getting us out of debt, we won’t ever again be subject to the whim and cry of a banker. Our country will be totally free, for us, for our children, and for our children’s children.”

“As long as we stay out of Europe’s wars, we will. Those people will bicker and fight amongst themselves forever, nothing will ever stop that. We must isolate ourselves from their petty warring. If we get involved with their battles, we will bankrupt ourselves.” Gallatin was speaking in a dry monotone, almost as if what he said was well known to everyone in the world.

“Now, then, about the Chase matter. The man has terrible temperament on the bench and has been so biased in cases that he cannot defend his work. If ever a swine sat on the bench, it is he,” said Jefferson.

“I’ll listen only if you don’t mind,” said Gallatin. “But it seems a shame that you can’t have George Clinton preside over the trial instead of Aaron Burr.”

As Vice President of the United States, Burr was President of the Senate, and therefore would be presiding over the impeachment trial of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase. “Dog that he is, Burr is still the Vice President, so he must preside over the trial of our ‘esteemed’ Supreme Court Justice.” Jefferson disdained the thought of having a man wanted for murder sitting in the Senate and overseeing such an important trial, but he was stuck since Clinton would not become the Vice President for another month when the new presidential term started.

“Do you really think we can take down John Marshall from the Court after we remove Chase?” asked Madison.

“Pretty certain, but he may step down himself when he’s called to testify. I can just imagine how my cousin will squirm and evade when he is sworn to tell the truth, not that I think he can, regardless of the oath he takes.”

Madison walked to the window and opened it to let in some chilly air from the winter snow that had just fallen. “A fresh fall of snow smells so clean,” he said sucking in deeply. “Maybe we can blanket the court with the whiteness of truth and get rid of those tyrants. Lifetime appointments to office were probably a mistake, a flaw in the Constitution.”

“Definitely were,” said Gallatin.

Madison grinned without saying anything in response. He knew if they got into a discussion, Gallatin would also say that the President had too much power under

the Constitution, which he deemed to be another flaw, a great danger to liberty of the people.

* * * * *

The impeachment trial of Samuel Chase lasted a month, and like Jefferson had predicted, John Marshall proved to be the slimiest of witnesses, slicker than a muddy bog after a downpour. And when all was said and done, Samuel Chase was not convicted, thanks in large part to Federalist loyalty and many dollars sprinkled amongst the senators by La Droix.

Although Jefferson had expected Burr to be a thoroughly biased judge of the trial, the opposite appeared true. Despite being wanted for murder throughout two states, he behaved as a gentleman, with more apparent fairness in the ordeal than once could have guessed possible from Burr. A casual observer watching the charming man of five and a half feet in height would never have guessed that he had holed up as a fugitive in Philadelphia, then escaped to Georgia and on to South Carolina in fleeing justice from the charge of murder. One of the reasons for his tremendous display of impartiality was Anthony Merry had given him confirmation that his bold proposal was approved by the British Secret Service. Burr behaved admirably because he was lobbying for support from politicians. With Merry's news, he had enough British money pledged to tackle his daring plan, all that was wanting was some internal influence.

The acquittal of Chase led Jefferson to declare that the concept of impeachment was a farce, and would never be useful in removing bad judges. After Chase won his trial, Solomon was assured never to be tried for impeachment. Nobody on the high

court would face it because Jefferson realized that it was nearly impossible to prevail in one and didn't want to waste resources attempting a useless act. He realized that the Constitution needed to be amended to rid it of the fatal flaw of allowing lifetime appointments to the judiciary, or liberty was doomed.

CHAPTER 65

WASHINGTON D.C. 1806

James Madison was screaming, raging beyond control. Despite the man's tiny frame, Jefferson actually believed he was in danger from the uncontrollable Secretary of State. A lamp went over, then a chair. Madison picked up a paperweight and tossed it out a window then jumped in the middle of the room shouting, "That dirty jerk. I'll wrench his throat until his lungs are empty, starving all air and life from him!"

"James! James! What is it?" shouted Jefferson.

"Burr, that rotten creep! Burr, that traitorous scoundrel!"

"You're telling me nothing new," said the President, wanting to smile, but fearful of what type of response there might be if he did.

"General Wilkinson has just sent word that Burr is down in New Orleans getting support for rebels to overthrow our government!"

"Who would follow such a ruined man?" asked Jefferson.

"Well he recruited one you might recognize, Andrew Jackson. He's got support, arms, men, and ample funding."

"From where?"

"Don't know for certain, but I'd guess King George. Blast it Thomas, why don't you send us to war against those rotters?"

"I'm afraid we'd end in financial or military ruin if we go. Either way, we'd lose our freedom."

Madison began throwing more items around the presidential office, while Jefferson watched, and began seething himself, but the two were irate for different reasons. Madison believed that if he raised enough of a stink at this time, that he could convince Jefferson to go to war with the culprits, the British. Jefferson's austerity was getting to him, and Madison felt that it was a proper time to borrow more money and build an army, regardless of what that would do to paying off the debt of the country. Madison wanted more power, and Jefferson wanted less. Jefferson was repulsed at the actions of Burr the traitor. The title fit the murderer of Alexander Hamilton all too well. While Thomas' temper heightened, a Madison-launched quill pen filled with ink stuck into his coat, blotting the cream color with black splotches. As he removed the pen, Madison threw a sheaf of papers that scattered through the air.

"Is Wilkinson reliable?" asked the President.

"When we consider all the other reports we have, we know his affidavit is good."

Thomas closed his eyes and hoped that he wouldn't receive a blow on his nose as he thought about the matter. Then he dug through the file he had accumulated on British agents. As he dug through it he discovered the letter that Lee Boo had brought to his office two years earlier, and read it for the first time.

Upon finishing it, he shouted, "What! Why didn't you tell me about this letter, James?" Madison was eyeing a portrait of John Locke hanging on the wall and contemplating ripping it down as Jefferson shoved a paper in front of him. "The envelope has your initials on it, so it seems like you filed it!"

Madison's bravado was gone as he quaked at the demand from Jefferson. He looked at the envelope for some time and thought, but his heated mental state blocked

his memory. He stared for several seconds, calmed himself, then said, “Oh my God! Prince Lee Boo brought that here the day you were shot at on your horse. In the excitement I completely forgot to tell you. Is it important?”

“Lee Boo never brings me anything that isn’t. I understand how it happened, but I hope your ‘oversight’ hasn’t cost us our country,” he boomed.

“That serious,” said Madison while shivering and sweating at the same time.

“Read it,” demanded the President.

The letter was dated 1804 and signed by Anthony Merry, the British Minister to the United States. It said:

I have just received an offer from Mr. Burr, the actual Vice President of the United States (which situation his is about to resign), to lend his assistance to his Majesty’s Government in any Manner in which they may think fit to employ him, particularly in an endeavoring to effect a Separation of the Western Part of the United States from that which lies between the Atlantick and the Mountains, in its whole Extent – His proposal on this and other Subjects will be fully detailed to your Lordship by Col. Williamson who will embark for England in a few days. It is therefore only Necessary for me to add that if, after what is generally known of the Profligacy of Mr. Burr’s Character, His Majesty’s Ministers should think proper to listen to his offer, his present Situation in this Country, where he is cut off as much by the democratic as by the Federal Party, and where he still preserves Connections with some People of Influence, added to his great Ambition and Spirit of Revenge against the present Administration May probably induce him to exert the Talents and Activity which he possesses with Fidelity to his Employers –

Madison went white as he read the letter, which the Thomas grabbed from him. He wanted to scream at Madison, but, instead of launching a tirade at the Secretary of

State, he calmed, and began to reflect. After some time, Jefferson said, “I’ll issue a proclamation to alert the people of the underhanded treason that’s afoot.”

Madison’s mind was working again. He realized that he would weather this storm. The politician began his cunning actions again. Now, all that was important was saving the country. *After all, what good will it do me to be elected President next term, if there is no country to run?* He said, “Should we print posters and disperse them around the country? Those sparkling eyes of his will betray him, nobody could miss them. I expect him to be in disguise, but he could never hide his eyes.”

“No, I don’t think we even want to name the villain just yet. But when we do name him, it will be for treason, James, treason. That jerk will pay, just as Benedict Arnold should have paid.”

CHAPTER 66

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, FEBRUARY, 1807

Burr's insurrection led to several arrests, two of which were troubling Solomon. His head buzzed with questions of what he should do with the case that La Droix had just dumped on his bench. The marquis wanted two of Burr's conspiratorial friends freed, a demand of the impossible. Marshall was cunning, but up to this point, he was without an answer.

The current nightmare began when Lee Boo had delivered a letter from La Droix that politely indicated that the marquis would be most appreciative if two of his fine friends, Erick Bollman and Samuel Swartwout, could be released. Fine friends indeed, they were heavily involved in the Aaron Burr conspiracy to overthrow the government of the United States of America. Upon receipt of the letter, Marshall wrestled with the request, wondering how such a blatant and unthinkable piece of judicial chicanery could be accomplished.

As the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court toyed with freeing the pair of traitors his gut churned, performing inverted loops and other near impossibilities. He still controlled the Court, but for how long? The Federalists included William Cushing, Samuel Chase (who had barely survived Jefferson's move to have him impeached), Bushrod Washington and himself. Thankfully, Jefferson had appointed only two, William Johnson and Henry Livingston to the six-man team of jurists. The Court stood firmly at four Federalists to two Democratic-Republicans, so, for now, the decisions would still follow Marshall's dictates. As a bonus to his control of the

Court, the Federalists were ardently loyal to their party, while the Jefferson appointees were less political, often attempting to decide upon the basis of justice, hence sometimes sided with the Federalist justices.

Marshall owed a great deal to La Droix, but freeing Burr's accomplices would stretch the credibility of the Court. While he was considering the case, Hawkins walked into the office and saw the judge worrying at his desk. "Got a problem, eh, Your Honor?"

"I guess," said Marshall.

"When the cases get tough, you need to search your soul, that's what I do," said Hawkins.

"You're right."

"What case is the troubling one?"

"Swartwout and Bollman," responded the Chief Justice.

"They're implicated by General Wilkinson, a man of intrigues beyond trust, if you were to ask me. If I were the judge, which I am most certainly not, then I'd find against that cowardly liar, James Wilkinson."

"Implicated by Jefferson too. It's fitting to put those two deceivers onto the same team." smiled Marshall, thinking it would be nice to burn his cousin on this one.

"I wouldn't believe that Wilkinson if he spoke from a pulpit with Bibles under each hand."

"It would take more than that to get Jefferson to approach the truth. I don't know, though, much as I'd like to get back at cousin Thomas, this might not be the right case for it."

** * * *

Much later that day, Hawkins sat beside La Droix' bed listening to the man's labored breathing. Between gasps, the one-legged marquis glared at his agent. "Are you certain he might not go our way?"

"No way to tell, should we order him to in the name of the Crown?"

"No, he's not committed enough. Pressure his creditors to call a loan, and I'll write him another note, offering him a few thousand dollars to tide him over."

"Do you want to write it now, then I could deliver it today?" asked Hawkins.

"No, I don't want to change procedure and spook Solomon until we have him locked in beyond retreat. There's always a danger of somebody turning righteous before we have his head secured in the guillotine. Send that stupid Lee Boo here tomorrow afternoon to pick up my letter."

"I don't like having a *fellow* for that putrid class carrying such important documents," objected Hawkins.

"Don't worry, my superiors know who in Solomon's Court is our greatest friend. Lee Boo is loyal, ignorant, and useful. Just let him be our delivery boy, that's all he's good for anyway."

"I'd like him out of the place."

La Droix coughed and said, "I've been told to keep him on indefinitely, so you must learn to tolerate him."

* * * * *

The next day, Marshall received two communications that troubled him greatly. One demanded money, the other granted a "favor". As he read the letter delivered by Lee Boo, Marshall wore a grim countenance, shaking his head as he considered it. How these traitors who were caught in an act of treason could be worth \$2,000 each to

La Droix was beyond him. Buying their freedom would be out of the question, and the Chief Justice would have resolved to tell the marquis that freeing them would stretch the friendship too far. Marshall had decided that he would accept whatever consequences such a defiant act might bring down on him – except for the other letter that arrived two hours earlier where his creditors had demanded \$3,000 or they would foreclose and ruin him.

After an hour of mental jousting over the decision, Marshall went to the express office and picked up La Droix' offering and paid his impatient creditor. Afterwards, he dragged himself into a tavern and drank several quarts of beer before playing heavily at games of chance. When he finished his "merriment," he had wasted \$500; then, he decided to leave. On the way to his house, he stumbled and fell into a ditch, where he slept for an hour before groggily rising. He staggered into his home, drunk, dirty and depressed when he finally crawled into bed.

* * * * *

The next morning, Marshall was in his courtroom office nursing a headache as he wrote the opinion. First, he freed La Droix' two friends on the basis of a *habeas corpus* writ, which Justice Johnson strongly dissented from, arguing that to grasp the authority to issue such a writ was in effect overturning *Marbury v. Madison*. Johnson also pointed out in his biting dissent that *Marbury v. Madison* overturned, or rather annihilated the earlier case of *United States v. Hamilton*. Johnson continued his heated dissent by saying that Marshall was playing an ugly and deceptive game, using the 1795 case of *Hamilton* to justify the writ of *habeas corpus* even though in 1803 the Chief Justice had written *Marbury* which absolutely voided the *Hamilton* case.

Marshall was a wordsmith of the highest degree, and he could produce more double-sided talk on the page than the finest of obfuscators. He covered his tracks with a circular opinion, a trick that he used frequently throughout his judicial career. He talked around the dissent of Johnson, then wrote twelve page opinion clearing La Droix' friends for all time, and returned the favor for the \$4,000 that saved his credit and reputation.

While Marshall was by no means happy with what he was writing, he finally justified it by concluding that in order to protect American citizens' right to revolt against bad government, that the definition of treason should be narrowly construed. Since Article III Section 3 of the Constitution said:

Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying war against them, or in adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort.

Marshall declared in his opinion that for treason to be proved, the defendants must have actually levied war against the United States. To free the traitors, he said that conspiracy to commit treason was not sufficient to prove the crime. The opinion continued to explain what would and what would not be considered levying war because "The mere enlisting of men, without assembling them, is not levying war."

At this point of the opinion, all Marshall had done was define the difference between calling men to arms, which was not treason, and assembling them, which probably was. Now came the tricky part, because Swartwout was caught with an incriminating letter in his possession, which type of evidence had been the hanging threads in the spy cases of John André and Nathan Hale. To overcome this most problematical piece of evidence, Marshall had to call upon all of his the most devious recesses of his vastly cunning mind.

This letter was anything but an innocuous document; it said that Colonel Burr “was levying an armed body of 7,000 men.”

To run around this troubling document, Justice Marshall trained in on the difference of assembling and enlisting men. He wrote in the opinion that:

If the term levying, in this place, imports that they were assembled, then much fact would amount, if the intention be against the United States, to levying war. If it barely imports that he was enlisting or engaging them in his service, the fact would not amount to levying war. It is thought sufficiently apparent that the latter is the sense in which the term was used. The fact alluded to, if taken in the former sense, is of a nature so to force itself upon the public view, that if the army had then actually assembled, either together or in detachments, some evidence of such assembling would have been laid before the court.

Marshall went on to confuse readers by saying that while the offenses presented before the court were heinous, such as the men’s conspiring to rob the bank of New Orleans to acquire assets to fund the enterprise, those offenses were outside the jurisdiction of his court. Then he concluded that if there was not enough evidence against Swartwout, then most certainly there could not be enough against Bollman, who was not even carrying an incriminating letter.

Justice Marshall loathed the opinion he had been forced to write, but he saw no alternative based upon the persuasive urging of La Droix. To comfort himself in removing the vile aspects of blending the law to protect his own reputation and his own assets, Marshall convinced himself that treason should be the most difficult crime to convict anyone of in a freedom-loving country. This decision had the added benefit of potentially preserving his skin if he should ever face a trial for the charge. In order to allow himself to sleep at night, he soon twisted what he had done until in his mind he began to believe that what he did in the Bollman and Swartwout cases was absolutely necessary to protect liberty from a President bent of stealing it from the

citizens. It was his mark in the history of the United States that would forever protect Americans from overzealous law enforcement, or so he was deluded into thinking. To him, this was now the end of the dreaded Aaron Burr case and his involvement with La Droix. Marshall now believed that his horrific ride with that blackmailer was done and finished.

CHAPTER 67

WASHINGTON D.C., 1807

La Droix was a crippled, tired man as he rose from the chair. His normally immaculate appearance was defeated by gravy stains on his shirt, wrinkled pantaloons, and a green coat that clashed with his brown outfit, giving him the look of a tawdry hawker in the marketplace. Even the silver buckle on his remaining foot was blackened with tarnish as he eased it forward, then dragged along his peg-leg, slowly crossing the plank floor, gasping for air as he went.

As he forced himself to the door, he stumbled once. Time had caught up with the ancient British spymaster, and this meeting was to be his last with Solomon. He had worked hard, fought for the same masters all his life, and now, he was spent. He hit the lever and opened the door, seeing John Marshall with his head bent over a sheaf of papers and writing furiously, he said, “Should I wait a little longer?”

“Oh, no, La Droix, do come in. I do hope that you are satisfied with the results that I got you in Swartwout and Bollman.”

La Droix nodded, flipping the once proud crop of silver hair that was now thin, stringy, and greasy. The worn man shuffled and dragged his pathetic body toward a chair. Marshall showed no emotion at his visitor’s struggle to ambulate, and kept writing while the decrepit fellow navigated the room and seated himself in the overstuffed chair.

Once he was reached the upholstered oasis, La Droix gasped for air with labored breaths. He hacked several times, then said, “Thank you for scheduling time to see me.”

“Always have time for an old friend.” Marshall kept writing without looking at the visitor.

“You won’t like this meeting.”

“Oh, well, being the Chief Justice, I don’t like many meetings, so give me your best shot.” Marshall blotted the page to dry the opinion he had just finished and set it onto the pile of papers to be printed. Then he took a fresh sheet of paper and commenced scratching with his quill to lay the foundation of another opinion of the court.

“I need your help.”

“Everybody does,” Marshall yawned, determined that this old blackmailer would get nowhere today.

“You must intervene in a trial for me.”

“I can’t do that again, now really, ask something more reasonable and I will try to help you for old times sake.”

La Droix lit a cigar, which drove his hacking into a new dimension. He removed a soiled handkerchief from a hip pocket and coughed into it, then hid it back in his coat. “You will do this.”

Marshall looked up from his papers for the first time of the conversation. “I think that you’ve worn your invitation to the thread, and you will not demand anything of me, old man.” His head bent over and he began writing again.

There was a faint click as La Droix pulled back the hammer on the flintlock. “I think you will do as I say.”

“Be gone you relic.”

“Look at me you blowhard,” shouted La Droix.

Marshall slowly raised his eyes, which bulged immediately upon seeing the bore of a long pistol pointed at his face. “Now, don’t g-g-get rash. You have my attention.”

“I’m glad, because you see, I’m desperate. A mutual friend of ours is in trouble and he needs your help.”

“And who might that be?” Marshall sweated profusely, and decided that one final “favor” would be acceptable. After all, what could be a tougher request than when La Droix demanded that he find a way to clear those two traitors who had been caught full tilt in a conspiracy with the former Vice President.

La Droix’ eyes narrowed as he announced the case that needed intervention. “Aaron Burr,” he said in an almost inaudible voice.

Marshall’s nostrils flared and his eyelids closed down to slits. “Burr! Didn’t you read my opinion that I wrote in February? I as much as convicted him to free your last pair of friends. I can’t help him. You ask too much. The man’s gone mad making war against Spain and instigating civil war. He is charged in Kentucky and Mississippi for treason, escaping from the court’s jurisdiction down South and being on the run. He faces a list of charges longer than your good leg! I won’t help that traitor.”

“He’s been captured and is being brought up here for a trial. He must not lose. It’s your job to see to that.”

Marshall screamed, “The man’s a British agent! I can’t help him and I won’t, now, be gone.”

“If I must leave without your promise, I’ll kill you.”

Marshall's head spun until he realized that he could promise anything, then afterwards, he could have La Droix arrested and be done with the business. "I'll see what I can do."

"You'll do more than that. I have two agents working for you, Lee Boo and Hawkins. They'll report how you're doing in fulfilling your promise. And since my health is bad, somebody else will be overseeing the project. You'll know him only as Isaac."

"I think you might as well shoot me, because I won't sell out my country." Marshall prepared for the report of the gun and the fatal wound as the pistol addressed his forehead, but sans any sound.

"When you die here, you'll be forever disgraced, your name smeared by your petty American friends, your reputation will be one of a dog, a low dog."

"How?"

"Come now, Marshall, you're not the least bit stupid. All the loans I've given you are documented as given in exchange for service to the Crown. The book contract where you demanded \$150,000 for five useless volumes on the life of George Washington will be understood when people realize that *Marbury v. Madison* was the prize you tendered me that made you think you could demand so much. Your hiring of Hawkins, who is a known British operative will surface. Things don't look so good for you. Couple that with your ridiculous word games in the Swartwout and Bollman cases to save a pair of traitors. I think that you'll help me with Mr. Burr."

"But, I wrote the *Marbury* opinion for the court, to gain power, to control that lying cousin of mine. Not for the British and you know it."

“You wrote it for the British, and whether you understood it at the time is irrelevant, you know it now. It won’t settle too well for your record to be spoiled with that bit of knowledge, now will it?”

Marshall began thinking about all the money that La Droix had fronted him, and realized that his actions could be misunderstood. Marshall had become corrupt, but had never considered himself a traitor, until now. Having a Chief Justice impeached for treason would denude the Court of power, embarrass it beyond reclamation. His work to slowly Convert the court into the fiercest branch of the government would be destroyed. If his name were smeared, his effort would have been for naught, and he rather liked being a respectable hero, someone important enough to be noticed on the street, to be invited to balls, and to wield ungodly power. This one-legged man would have a devil of a time attempting to destroy the Supreme Court or John Marshall. “What is it you want?”

“An acquittal.”

“What do you mean? Three fourths of the people know he’s guilty. He was attempting to flee to the sanctuary of the British navy, just like Benedict Arnold did with success. He can’t win this case, no matter who the judge is.”

“He must win, or we’ll smear you senseless.”

Marshall felt he had no options, so he decided it was time to bargain. “How much is this worth to you?”

La Droix laughed and coughed on his shirt. “That’s the John Marshall I know. Now, if Mr. Burr is acquitted and not exposed or any way tied to the British, you can relax, your creditors will never again bother you.”

“How much money will you pay so I can satisfy the creditors?”

“Don’t worry, we control when loans are called, and they will not be.”

“What are you saying? That you have been contriving my financial difficulties. What kind of horrid people are you?”

“It wasn’t easy to take down Robert Morris, but we did. And this one will make you happy; your cousin Jefferson is certain to go broke also. He’s a little tougher nut to crack because he isn’t driven by greed and avarice, but we’ll topple his estate all the same.”

“That’s the only good news you’ve given me today.”

“Can you get Burr an acquittal?”

“Tough order, but if you can break Jefferson’s wealth, I can trod on justice just enough to have another traitor freed.”

“You’re a brilliant jurist, I know you can. Oh, and by the way, we expect Hawkins and Lee Boo to remain on your staff unless Isaac tells you otherwise.” La Droix struggled to his foot and dragged himself out of the judge’s office. He had accomplished what needed doing, and he would report that Solomon was under control. As he opened the door, Marshall ran up to him and whispered, “I need \$5,000 this week.”

La Droix laughed, “I know that, and you’ll have it, but fail not on the trial. We have persuasive collectors.” La Droix dragged himself down the hall and would later report this meeting in full to Cain. It would be his last duty performed on earth, because his heart would stop tonight.

Marshall kept hearing the eerie laugh of La Droix long after the man left, and he wrestled with what he could do. He thought of suicide, but realized that would ruin both his reputation and the Court. After dismissing that solution, he elected to make the most of it, to do the dirty work for the British, and save his public image along with that of the Court as best he could. He figured that if later he made the Court

powerful enough, perhaps it could protect the country from the British intrusion. So, the reluctant agent decided to try to outsmart the Crown, a foolish attempt against a foe with numerous spies in the city and throughout the country.

CHAPTER 68

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, 1807

Aaron Burr was a regular party in litigation. He had been accused in many regions of the country, but he had escaped justice until now, when he faced his final trial. He was charged with treason and the trial was to be held in Richmond. He had previously stood for charges in Kentucky and in the Deep South. In Kentucky, Henry Clay had defended him superbly and the grand jury exonerated the former Vice President of any wrongdoing. He was later apprehended in New Orleans and again released by a grand jury, but was held over for further proceedings. At that point, Burr reverted to one of his greatest skills, deciding that flight would be the best defense. He absconded, but was discovered in disguise before he could achieve sanctuary aboard a British man-of-war at the port of Pensacola. There, Burr was arrested for the final time, and he was transported under heavy guard to Virginia to face the treason charges.

The courtroom was packed with curious citizens and concerned participants. The government was represented by George Hay, William Wirt, and Alexander MacRae. This team of prosecutors was directed by Thomas Jefferson, who stayed away from the courthouse, but planned the overall strategy, desperately wanting a conviction of Burr for many reasons, personal and otherwise.

The defense was led by Aaron Burr himself, who was among the finest attorneys in the country. Burr directed the entire case, employing a cast of skilled lawyers which included, Edmund Randolph, John Wickham, Luther Martin, Benjamin

Botts, and Charles Lee. The advocates on both sides were eloquent, experienced, and talented. A finer array of lawyers may never have been assembled in a courtroom in America.

At stake in the case was whether a British spy who had achieved the second highest office in the land and attempted to sever the country in twain would come to justice, or would be released due to corruption in the judicial branch of the government. The last time Burr was brought to court for similar charges in the South, the judiciary showed its prejudice and Judge Bruin became an advocate for the defendant rather than a referee. Once that judge decided who should win the case, the grand jury became a mockery and the traitor was saved for another day.

This time, however, Burr faced a more serious challenge than in the prior two cases. For one, most of the witnesses against him were available, and almost any given poll of the public ran about eighty percent to twenty in firm belief of his guilt. The public opinion had been fueled by a statement by the President of the United States. Jefferson, while speaking to Congress before the trial, indiscreetly announced that Burr's guilt was beyond all question.

Thomas Jefferson was feeling confident about this case because in the Swartwout and Bollman cases his cousin, John Marshall, had cleared the traitors by asserting that since there was no evidence of men being assembled to take arms against the United States that Swartwout and Bollman were not guilty of treason. However, Jefferson had proof positive that men were assembled on Blennerhasset Island with designs to move against the United States. He had the proof to convict the traitor, and there seemed to be nothing even his vile cousin could do to corrupt justice this time, or so Thomas naively believed.

As the spectacle was about to begin, four out of every five Americans wanted to hang Burr as a traitor. It was under these stark conditions that Chief Justice Marshall labored, knowing that his clerk and his messenger were British agents, which would be difficult to explain to Americans if they ever learned the truth. The Swartwout and Bollman cases would expose him if they were ever inspected closely. He knew that if Burr lost, that he would be uncovered and embarrassed for loans he received that would appear to have been blood money paid him by the British. And those loans, coupled with his outrageous demand for payment on writing the biography of George Washington would crush not only him, but the Court he had fought so hard to build into a powerful force. Without any constitutional authority for it, he had brazenly invented the power of judicial review and determined that it was only the Court that could declare whether laws passed by Congress were valid. Were his reputation blemished by the British and associated with them, the power usurped by the Court in *Marbury v. Madison* would be jeopardized.

Marshall would follow the dictates of self-protection. The only question he had was whether to do as La Droix to him, or to challenge the marquis. He had successfully fought off the attack against the Court by his cousin when the President tried to have Samuel Chase impeached. Of course, that again was a matter of preserving the Court, and it was altogether possible if Chase had fallen, that the Chief Justice could have been next. And now, things were far more complicated; it was unlikely that even as the Chief Justice he could fend off the multitude of ties he had with the British, although he could make an excellent case that they were all intertwined with reasons other than wanting to destroy America. Some of these reasons would appear noble, while others would be exposed as base and pedestrian.

Up until now, he had not knowingly worked for the British, only for his own selfish interests. The cards were dealt, and it was now time to play them out to the end.

Marshall knew that if the Washington biography contract were scrutinized, Justice Bushrod Washington, nephew of George who participated in the biography, would be implicated by the \$150,000 demand for payment. With another justice of the Supreme Court tied to the British, even by implication, there could be screams for mass impeachment of the Court. That, he knew could well lead to the removal of himself, Washington, and Chase. With half the court's six justices gone, he perceived that Jefferson would pack the Court with Democratic-Republicans. He reasoned that were the Court lost to the Democratic-Republicans, it could no longer protect the people from the Congress or the President, but instead, would do the bidding of those who appointed the new justices, just as the Federalist dominated courts were now doing for the previous administrations. What his twisted reasoning really amounted to was an attempt to find the safest road to protect himself first and the Court second from the wrath of the people, if ever they discovered the truth.

When things were at their blackest stages in appearance, Marshall got an insight to solve the problem. He scribbled a note to John Wickham, one of Burr's attorneys. In it he invited the lawyer to join him for dinner where they might discuss the a few matters. At the meeting, he would feel out how much Wickham wanted to win the trial.

* * * * *

The owner of the tavern where Marshall was staying for the duration of the trial set aside a table in a quiet corner for the judge and the lawyer to dine. The candles flickered as Marshall and Wickham sat across from one another, both men with stern faces.

Wickham was uncertain about the meeting, but he had attended it, fully expecting the worst, he anticipated being squeezed into submission by a judge who was out to hang his client. When he walked into the tavern and saw Marshall seated at a table for only two, he wondered what could be happening, and realized that the judge must be playing some type of cruel joke on him, but he greeted Marshall and had taken a chair at the table.

“Will anyone be joining us?” asked Wickham.

“No.”

Wickham wondered what to do, believing that it was unethical to be meeting with the judge alone. “Then the prosecutors don’t want to meet with us?”

“They might have come, but I didn’t invite them.”

Wickham’s head spun, quickly turning over the possibilities, rejecting most of them, then wondering what this could mean. If the judge were totally corrupt, why would this meeting be in the open so everyone could see it? If the judge were bent on a conviction of Burr, then why not just do it without putting his lawyer on a skewer? “Not invited?” Wickham said as he raised both eyebrows.

“No, I thought I’d find out what you had in mind with the trial.”

“We have all the guns on our side, we might as well fire them and give the audience a show; but we know what the result will be.” Wickham referred to the massive talent on the defense team, but he knew that even they could not convince a panel of randomly selected jurors of any plausible explanation for Burr’s activities. Burr had men assembled on the Ohio River to do damage to the United States, and that was treason, especially after the distinction between the calling of troops versus the assembling of them had been so clearly drawn in the Bollman case.

“Don’t give in so easily.”

“What do you mean? The prosecutors won’t give us any type of leniency, so we will fight to the end for Colonel Burr, but we will lose. You know that, and I know that.”

Marshall stirred his dinner with a two-pronged pewter fork, scraping the metal plate as he mixed vegetables and meat together. As he made this stew, he wondered how to deal with a man who felt the trial was hopeless. He swigged some wine, then tossed back his head. “Advocates should never give up before starting, otherwise they should resign.”

“When ten men face one hundred on the field of battle, they may fight valiantly, but they will die.”

Marshall scratched his temple, then stroked his chin as if searching for a beard, but found none. “But fight they must if the greater force will not allow surrender.”

Wickham stared into the justice’s dark eyes as if attempting to read the man’s devious mind. Unlike his dinner partner, the lawyer had left all the food untouched on the plate, unable to eat or even play with his meal. “How would they fight?”

“Creatively, deceptively, with great cunning, employing trickery where possible, and always striving for the impossible goal of success.”

“But jurors can read the situation. We won’t get two in ten who want to even listen to our side, much less be foolish enough to consider it reasonable.”

“Then you need to select your jurors carefully and change those odds.”

“Are you suggesting that I bribe the clerk into selecting only die-hard Federalists and Tories on the jury? Because that is exactly what it would take.”

“Not at all. That would be illegal, and is totally unnecessary,” said Marshall.

“Great, then just give us ten or twenty men at random and see what we get.”

“Why do you insist that they must be randomly selected?”

“How else?”

“You’re a creative attorney, Mr. Wickham, can’t you think of some way of disqualifying jurors from serving on the case?”

“Are you suggesting that we could pry into juror’s prejudices in some way to disqualify them?”

“I think that it might be necessary in a case such as this, where there has been massive publicity.” Marshall sipped his wine and was relieved to see for the first time that Wickham would make some bold moves in the case.

“Do you mean to say that you might allow me to *voir dire* jurors as I attempt to expose those who think Burr guilty, and then reject them from the trial?”

“Something like that.”

“Absurd! That would require me to reject those with insight and accept the fools, or those driven by politics instead of justice!”

Marshall laughed and said, “If you want to win the case, you should do just that.”

“And how are we going to get away with this revolutionary method of picking a jury – or rather rigging one?”

“I am the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, so who can go over my head?”

Wickham’s dour expression brightened, his eyes began to sparkle, and he lifted his glass. “A toast. To victory.”

“I’m afraid I can’t join you in that toast, it would seem a bit partial, don’t you think?”

“Certainly.”

Marshall held up his empty glass for the waitress to see that he desired a refill. “Why don’t you think about bringing a motion for bail tomorrow?”

“Bail! Are you mad? This is a capital offense!”

“I’m of sound mind and I know very well what the charges are, and I think that I know whether a person should be released on bail.”

Wickham’s head was spinning again. If bail were granted, surely a man facing a hangman’s noose would flee. Especially one like his client who had a history of running from murder warrants in New Jersey and New York, who also fled the jurisdiction of the Mississippi courts and had been picked up in disguise and arrested on this very charge of treason. *How could Justice Marshall grant such a thing?* What Wickham did not suspect is that Marshall could do so because he hoped that with Burr freed, the man would abscond, and the problem would be solved.

After this discussion, the conversation turned from the grave issues to lighter ones. Both men finished their dinners and laughed heartily as the night wore on into the late hours. Finally, Wickham excused himself and left, feeling light hearted for the first time since agreeing to represent Burr.

CHAPTER 69

RICHMOND, 1807

There were three days of hearings before Justice Marshall believed he had made the appearance of impartiality. After that illusion was completed, he ordered Burr held on bail for the lesser charge of launching an expedition against Spain and released him totally on the treason charge to await indictment by the grand jury. Immediately, Burr's friends posted the bail and the traitor who would have severed the country in twain for his greed and ego was free to go about town.

Marshall believed that Burr would flee the same day he was granted bail, but Isaac had other ideas. It was important that Solomon be forced into his commitment to the cause. Solomon must free Burr in open court.

Of course, Burr would have absconded immediately, but it had been made quite plain to him to remain for the trial. Isaac ordered him stay, and Isaac could be even more persuasive and brutal than his predecessor, La Droix. Burr would stay and face the charges or he would be killed by the British. Isaac had also instructed Burr on how he was to behave and to testify. Isaac explained in a most convincing manner that if Burr gave any improper answers at his trial, he would also be headed for the grave.

With that type of encouragement, Burr "elected" to stay in town, and he was invited to attend a fashionable party thrown by Wickham, where one of the guests was none other than Chief Justice John Marshall. At the pre-victory party, Marshall and Burr had a discussion in a corner of the parlor, under an eleven-foot ceiling.

“I understand that you are directing your own defense.” Marshall said dryly.

“I am,” said Burr.

“Is that wise?”

“I think it is necessary.”

“Well, then, might I suggest that you make certain motions which the court may entertain with pleasure.”

“What types of motions would you think to be the most likely to be granted?”

“Those dealing with suppressing various documents and limiting the scope of the trial. And you should direct your attention especially to those matters concerning the examination of jurors for exposing bias, as I advised Mr. Wickham earlier.”

Burr smiled as he looked up at the taller man, nodding his understanding of the situation. Number 94 had found his protector. “I shall work with great industry and will not despair, and perhaps we should not meet again until after the trial.” While an ex parte meeting with the judge of the case caused no concern to Burr, he mistakenly thought that Marshall’s ethics might require discretion in this matter.

* * * * *

Justice Marshall ruled upon motion after motion, with each decision hacking at the prosecutor’s case by limiting the evidence or excluding it outright. As the government’s case faded, Jefferson began screaming from the District of Columbia. He sent a message to Lee Boo, who had stayed behind while Justice Marshall traveled to Richmond to try the Burr case.

A couple of hours later, Lee Boo arrived at the President’s house, and sat across from Jefferson. Scattered on the desk were several documents that Lee Boo had

brought to the President concerning Marshall and Burr. Lee Boo stared at them and wondered if they would all pay off at this time for his friend.

“Are all of these originals?” asked Thomas of Lee Boo.

“They are the ones. It was copies that I sent in their places and the real ones were brought to you.”

“Fine,” said Thomas, “could you make me two sets of copies that appear to be originals for each of these documents?”

“Certainly.”

“How long will it take you?”

“Two hours, perhaps.”

Jefferson rose and said, “Lee Boo, you have the run of my office. I’m going for a ride on Eagle. If you need anything, James Madison will assist you.”

“I will do them much-much good. You have a long-long ride.”

Thomas walked out of the presidential office, leaving one of his most trusted friends inside to reproduce documents. He saddled up Eagle and rode furiously, pumping adrenaline throughout his body and feeling light.

* * * * *

In Richmond, a bundle of documents arrived by post that had no identifying marks, other than they had been postmarked in Philadelphia. The Chief Justice opened the packet and found several documents along with a card printed in upper case block letters saying that the sender thought these documents might help settle the Burr case. As he read the papers, John Marshall felt sick and ran to the bedpan kept in the corner and relinquished his lunch.

When he returned to his desk he read the letter Anthony Merry wrote describing his meeting with Burr when the man was still the Vice President, which detailed how Burr would sever the United States in twain, half for him and half for the British. Then he read the apparent extortion notes from La Droix which dictated how he should rule on certain cases. The documents stared at him and he visualized two things simultaneously. In one picture was a gallows with him hanging from it, in the other was the Supreme Court toppling. He had to avoid both of those premonitions, regardless of the cost.

As he reflected upon the documents, he thought about Lee Boo and Hawkins, reflecting at how easily the British had infiltrated his office with agents. In a few moments, he realized that they must have agents everywhere, in every office of the United States government, and he began to relax as he examined the papers. Certainly these came from a source that wanted to protect him, and they appeared to be originals, but he had seen copies of some of the other documents earlier. Since they were incriminating papers when he possessed them, they had been burned so he had no way of comparing information or handwriting samples.

After some careful deliberation, he threw the bundle into the fireplace and lit the stack, watching the ignition of the evidence that both Aaron Burr and he were deeply involved in conspiracy with the British. He smiled as the flames removed traces of proof that Burr and he were traitors.

* * * * *

The trial was going smoothly, with Marshall making every ruling possible to save the defendant, hence himself, from ruin. He wondered who had been the

mysterious donor of the documents, but let it slip by, realizing that he would have heard by now if the source was unhappy with the events. As his mind wandered, he realized that the witness on the stand was still talking and one of Burr's lawyers, Luther Martin had objected to something. The entire courtroom had quieted, awaiting the Chief Justice's ruling on the matter. Marshall stared at the counsel for the government, wondering what had been the nature and purpose of the objection, then in order to play the matter safe, he declared, "Sustained."

"What?" shouted John Hay, attorney for the government. "Your Honor! If I cannot elicit this question from General Wilkinson, the case will fall! On what pretext does the Court sustain the objection?"

Marshall thought quickly, then stated, "The issue before us is whether Colonel Aaron Burr was on Blennerhassett's Island when the troops were assembled. James Wilkinson was not at Blennerhassett's Island, or so he has testified, so anything that he can testify to relates to the defendant being somewhere else, otherwise, it is hearsay."

Hay screamed, "Are you ruling that there can be no treason unless Burr was on the island?"

Marshall reflected, wondered how he had gotten himself into such an obvious position of bias for the defendant, then nodded his head.

"Where do you get authority for that?" demanded Hay.

"From the Constitution of the United States," said Marshall, his head totally clear now and his ingenuity working overtime. "I need to have two witnesses testify that Burr was on Blennerhassett's Island when the men were assembled according to Article III Section 3, otherwise your proof of treason fails."

“Wait a minute Your Honor! You ruled just a few months ago in the *Swartwout* case, and I quote, ‘If a body of men be assembled, for the purpose of effecting by force a treasonable purpose; all those who perform any part, however minute, or however remote from the scene of action and who are actually leagued in the general conspiracy, are to be considered as traitors. But there must be an actual assembling of men, for the treasonable purpose to constitute a levying of war,’ a piece of language that I demand Your Honor overrule on this spot or allow General Wilkinson to testify on his point I was attempting to elicit.”

“Mr. Hay,” said Marshall calmly, “you do not demand anything of this Court, you only make requests. Further demands could result in my finding you in contempt. With regard to the law of treason in the United States, may I remind you that we are a new country, founded upon liberty, presuming not as Blackstone said of the British system, that it is better to free ten guilty men than to convict one innocent one, but by expanding upon that maxim more in taking with what was said by Benjamin Franklin, that it is better to acquit one hundred guilty men than to convict an innocent man. We safeguard a presumption of innocence in this country, and it is in the case of treason that you must prove Burr was on the Island where the other men were assembled.”

Hay’s eyes bulged and he shouted, “Might I have a recess until tomorrow morning, Your Honor?”

“Granted,” said Marshall as he slapped his gavel.

Burr’s table of attorneys were smiling broadly; they had a ruling that precluded a conviction of treason, and were finally ready to take the matter to the jury. They filed out, joking as they went. The government team walked with slow, deliberate steps and all were filled with despair.

As Marshall entered his chambers, he heard a knock on the door. “Come in,” he said.

Lee Boo walked in and said, “I am much-much sorry to interrupt you, but I have a message to bring.” He handed a letter to the judge, who read the note from Isaac:

Too much information is coming out in the trial, end it quickly even if the defendant is convicted of the misdemeanor.

This relieved Marshall greatly, since he was uncertain how he could have gotten around the issue of Burr making war on his own against Spain. The proof of that was overwhelming. The fortuitous daydream in the courtroom today had pushed him into a ruling that should acquit Burr on the treason charge. Even if the jury convicted, he could undo the verdict because of the narrow interpretation of treason he had just created. While he would face bitter abuse for this case, it was coming together as best it could under the circumstances.

“Lee Boo,” said Marshall, “thank you for bringing this letter. By the way, I am having a dinner with some of the lawyers tonight, could you help serve it since you are here?”

“I would much-much do that for you.”

“Good, follow me.”

* * * * *

At dinner were Luther Martin and John Wickham. Martin was rambling when Marshall walked in, “. . . and he don’t know the difference between a furlong and a footstool.” Wickham gave a gratuitous laugh while Martin wiped drool from his mouth with a handkerchief.

“I do wish you’d clean up your grammar,” said Marshall, grinning at Martin. Martin pointed at Wickham, “He don’t mind my tongue, just ask him.”

“Shall we continue our chess match, John?” asked Wickham as he pointed at the board with the pieces fully developed into a mid-game, with position favoring black, but power on the side of white.

“That would be rude with Luther here and all,” said Marshall.

“Go ahead and play, I need to practice a speech for tomorrow anyway. There’s one dumb bird on the jury that I need to convince. He don’t seem to know enough to vote correct.” Martin wiped his mouth again.

The chess players were staring at the board when Lee Boo walked in with a tray filled with rolls and offered some to each lawyer, then to the judge. As he was retreating to the kitchen, he saw Marshall move a knight and as he set it down on the square he said to Wickham, “Don’t you think you will be able to check-mate these fellows, and relieve us from being kept here three weeks more?”

* * * * *

After Lee Boo returned to the District of Columbia, Marshall pushed the defense team to rest their case, which they finally did, but with reluctance. Then Marshall instructed the jury that if they could not find by two independent witnesses that Burr was on the island when the troops were assembled, they must acquit. Further, he instructed, that since the expedition to promote secession collapsed, there was no treason.

The jury deliberated and found that “Based on the evidence presented us, we find the defendant not guilty.” They did, however, convict Burr of the misdemeanor.

An angry mob took over and that night burned Aaron Burr and John Marshall in effigy.

The prosecuting team was despondent, but their leader, Jefferson, saw some hope. Even though Burr was cleared of the capital charge, Jefferson believed that the people of the country, the only voice he counted as important, were well aware who the traitors and culprits were in the matter of *U.S. v. Aaron Burr*. He also felt that history would shine the light on the truth, although he was beginning to wonder about whether truth could prevail in this world.

In keeping with his prejudiced form, Justice Marshall allowed Burr out on bail, and the man who had earlier fled court jurisdiction on murder charges and again on treason charges, proved that he would fly even when facing punishment for a misdemeanor. Disguised as a sailor, Burr sneaked aboard a ship bound for Europe, where he met with representatives of Napoleon and King George III to attempt to lure those leaders into invading the United States.

CHAPTER 70

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, 1810

In the chambers of the Supreme Court, Justice Marshall sat in an overstuffed leather chair, smugly presuming that nothing could go wrong now. He had worried about what his cousin would do about the erratic and insupportable decisions regarding Swartwout, Bollman, and Burr, but nothing had come of them. And now, that Jefferson's term had come to a close, he began to relax, thinking that nothing would be coming from his hated cousin.

While he sat there, believing that everything was peaceful and fine, he heard a knock on the door. "Yes," said the Chief Justice.

A lever flipped and the heavy door opened. Hawkins stood at the threshold, a nervous look on his face. "You have a visitor."

"Well, does he or she have an appointment?"

"No sir, but I think you should see him anyway."

Marshall's skin went instantly wet, then he felt cold shivers from the small of his back that slowly ascended to his neck, and once reaching that point, spread out over his shoulders. *What could Isaac want?* There was nobody else who Hawkins would think it so advisable for him to see. "Is it —?" While he and Hawkins both knew Isaac, neither ever mentioned his name.

Hawkins shook his head that it was not.

"Then send him away. Set him an appointment for next week if he is insistent."

The second of the double doors now flew open and a voice boomed: “I’ll not wait! You’ll see me now!”

Hawkins slid out of the office and closed both doors.

Marshall stood and shouted, “I won’t be barged in upon like this, not even by a former President of the United States.”

“You will see me, cousin,” shouted Thomas.

“Oh, very well then, have a seat and tell me what’s on your mind.” Marshall had worried about facing Isaac, but today, Isaac would have been a treat. Never had he seen his cousin’s eyes so full of hatred and determination. Even though he was sixty-seven years of age, his frame was strong and straight, and Marshall had no misgivings as to who would win should combat erupt.

Jefferson refused the chair and stood across the desk glaring at Marshall. “I’m here on the Burr case.”

“It’s long over, long since decided, a part of the record in the annals of American jurisprudence. You can read over the case.”

“It was no case, it was a mockery of justice.”

“The jury said – ”

“The jury said that he was not guilty by any of the evidence presented them. You restricted the evidence and knowingly freed a traitor.”

Marshall remained standing in place, glad that his desk separated him and his cousin, and fingered the drawer where he kept a throwing knife. “It was a fair trial.”

“Stop trying to convince me. First you abuse your position by taking the case and promptly clear his compatriots because you argued that they didn’t assemble men to levy war against the United States. Then you said that had they been involved in such an enterprise from the remotest location with the smallest ties to it they would be

guilty of treason. Then, when the main culprit is brought to court, you again, as the Chief Justice, force the trial into your courtroom and give it a *fair* hearing, as you call it.” Thomas’ mouth watered and he drooled a sliver from the left corner that dripped onto his cousin’s desk. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

“It was a fair hearing,” protested Marshall.

“Fair, do you call it fair to dine with the accused? With his counsel? To throw out all the incriminating evidence? To allow bail for a man facing a capital offense? To overturn your earlier ruling that freed his compatriots and declare that since Burr was not on Blennerhassett’s Island while the troops against the United States were assembled, then he could not be a traitor because he would have to be present to levy war? To invent a procedure of quizzing jurors until the entire panel could be rigged to your liking? Is that fair?”

“I’ve listened to about enough,” said Marshall as he rose and glared at his cousin.

“Enough, have you? I will leave if you will tell me this. Why did you not permit the evidence I sent you by post during the trial? And why did none of your lengthy and insidious opinions not mention the documents you obviously chose to ignore?”

Marshall’s knees shook and he eased himself into his chair. “What are you . . . talking about?”

“The letter from Anthony Merry to London about Burr wanting to dissect our country, half for himself, the other to Great Britain. The correspondence between you and La Droix. I think you know what I mean.”

Marshall knew full well, but he had thought that those documents came from a friend, not from his cousin. His sweat glands flooded his vest and shirt.

From his pocket Thomas removed a bundle of documents which he tossed at Marshall. "Look these over and see if they are familiar to you."

Marshall undid the string and looked at the bundle, first examining the Merry letter, baffled that it appeared to be the original, yet he had certainly burned the true document during the trial. As his eyes danced over the letter in amazement, he said, "This would have been interesting to have presented at court if it could have been authenticated."

"You don't have to pretend that you have never seen the paper. I have friends enough on the Court to know that you've read this previously."

Marshall, weakened and fearful, swallowed and protested, "Never, never have I seen this document," he lied.

"No, you saw a copy of it, and in fact, that is a copy in your hands. I have the original in safe keeping."

Marshall tilted his head, "Cousin, just what do you intend to do?"

"I would like to see you resign your position on the Court. You are a disgrace to the rest of the judges in the country. You are worse than Chase by such a degree that your names should never be mentioned in the same reference, and he's the worst bigot the Court has yet produced."

"How soon?"

"I'm patient. Resign before Madison leaves office so he can appoint your successor and I'll be accepting of it."

"Why would you wait so long?"

"Because, whether you understand it or not, you are my cousin, and I owe you enough respect to allow you to ease out of the position without too much embarrassment, or more importantly, without tearing the Court in two because of you."

I've been hoping you would have done it on your own, but I guess you have no morals left in you."

Marshall could now see that Jefferson's reluctance to go to war and fight countries carried down to individual relationships. He felt some relief, and mistakenly figured that he would be able to write reasonable opinions and appeal to his cousin's better side and thereby remain on the Court. Resignation was out of the question, because he knew if he resigned, he would be dead. Isaac had made it ever so clear to him that he was imprisoned to life on the Court.

Marshall took the bundle of documents and filed them into his drawer. "I will act on these directly."

Thomas' eyes closed partially, revealing only the pupils, then he slammed both fists upon the desk, launching all things atop it and spilling the ink bowl. "You had better. Because, my *dear* cousin, if you do not, I will publish the originals and have you hanged. You, Mr. Chief Justice John Marshall, Aaron Burr, and Benedict Arnold all reek of a common scent!"

CHAPTER 71

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, 1810

John Marshall walked several blocks carrying a rolled up parchment, turned a corner and slipped into an alley where he jumped into a waiting carriage and ducked his head. While riding in the vehicle, he donned a beard and an oval-brimmed hat that had been waiting for him in the carriage. The disguised man was driven to a residence that he had visited openly before, but now that he had been so vehemently confronted by his cousin, he decided that further meetings there would either be avoided or done surreptitiously.

As the horses pulled up to the stone building Marshall jumped from the carriage and dashed to the front door, which was opened for him by an unseen servant. He wasted little time rushing inside the house and removing the scratchy beard. Inside he felt dwarfed by several masterful paintings elegantly wrapped in gold frames that hung on the walls of the foyer. On a small table rested a blue Chinese vase which he touched with his thumb and index finger to measure the thinness of the exquisite vessel. He wanted that vase, but its value placed it beyond his means.

As he released his finger, a short man walked up to him. “Well, hello there Mr. Marshall, or should I say Solomon?”

“Will you please stop calling me that, Isaac?”

“Oh, you should be proud of it, at least my contacts in London think you should.” Isaac pointed with his index finger for Marshall to enter the study.

Marshall walked inside and noticed a bald man seated in a chair. He guessed his age to be about sixty, give or take a couple of years. The man remained seated, so Marshall bowed to him, which the bald man returned with a nod.

Isaac looked at the bald man and said, “Mr. Marshall, you are entreated to the presence of Sir Edmund Northborough, here from London. He and I work closely together, so whatever urgent business you wish to discuss can go straight to it.”

Marshall tensed and wondered whether he should take a chair, but not being offered one, and seeing that Isaac was still on his feet, he stood and addressed Northborough. “Thank you for granting me this appointment, and sir,” he said, looking at Isaac, “I believe that I have fulfilled my contract in its entirety and wish to be released from further obligation.”

“We are most proud of you Solomon, most proud,” said Northborough, “but I don’t see that we can release you. There is so much left to do.”

“Will I never be free?”

Isaac shook his head, “Tsk, ts, such gratitude after all that we have done for you.”

Marshall reddened. “I have been blackmailed into casting erroneous and unscrupulous rulings, had all of my honor extorted from me, feel like a traitor to my own country, yet you tell me that I have had things done for me. It is rather that I have had things done to me.”

“You have done well, and we ask little more – at this time,” said Northborough. “All we ask is that you rule from your conscience from here on in, ever following the dictates of your Federalist beliefs, ever strengthening the central government and weakening that of the several uh, colonies. We would like to see you make a ruling

that the Supreme Court has the power to void a legislative act of any, uh, colony, but you may take your time on that one. We are really patient.”

“So you’ll never let me out of this vise of – “

“Treason, that’s the word you’re about to utter, isn’t it?” asked Isaac.

“Well, I’d rather say it was something else.”

“You’ve defined treason so narrowly in the Burr case that I dare say it would be quite an ordeal to have anyone declare you to be a traitor.” Northborough was smiling. “That was masterful, considering how many spies of the Crown we have in place. I must say, old boy, you did yourself proud with that one. London has been all abuzz over it.”

Marshall straightened his back. “This is nothing to joke about. I want out of the deal.”

“Not until after you have used your office to expand federal powers considerably.”

“Then, I need some help and quickly.”

“Why?” asked Isaac.

“My cousin, Mr. Jefferson, has shown me copies of incriminating documents.”

“Such as?” asked Northborough.

“A letter from your minister Anthony Merry about Aaron Burr and severing the United States in twain. Letters from La Droix to me demanding judicial favors. Ruinous letters. If ever the American people saw them, I’d be done for.”

“Where are the documents?”

“I burned them upon receipt of them.”

“Not very bright. How can we assess these phantom documents that so frighten you?”

Marshall lowered his chin into his chest and mutely stared at the floor.

“Where do you think he got these?” asked Isaac.

“How do I know?” answered Marshall, his chin still tucked to his breastbone.

“Perhaps the United States has as many spies as the British.”

“Doubtful, you Americans are too trusting.” said Northborough.

“We’ve got to get rid of these documents or they could ruin us all,” said Marshall.

“But, you said they were burned.”

“My cousin isn’t stupid, he served me with copies.”

“And where are the originals kept?”

“In the President’s house, and in the archives building.”

“You certain?” asked Isaac.

“Yes.”

“Well, we can’t very well destroy both buildings at one time,” said Northborough, “but I’m certain that we can think of something.”

“Thank you,” said Marshall. “May I be dismissed?”

“No,” said Northborough. “Since you are here, we have one small request.”

Marshall gulped, wondering what would be coming. “W-which is?”

“Do you know Benjamin Rush?”

“Yes,” said Marshall.

Northborough coughed. “He’s a friend of the Crown. He needs your help in extracting some of Jefferson’s religious beliefs from him. He’s been at it for years, trying to get Jefferson to publish some work on it. The communication is going well, but it has been stalled for years. Jefferson promised to give him a syllabus of those beliefs, which he is assembling, however, Jefferson is so thorough, he turned a simple

job into a decade long task. He's cutting out verses from English, Greek, Latin and French Bibles and assembling one of his own. We want that Bible. With it, we will ruin him. He disdains St. Paul, and we want him to declare that openly. Then, it will be a rare preacher who would support him, and most will openly attack him. We'll destroy him from the pulpits."

Marshall was smiling at that thought. "What can I do about it? Jefferson and I obviously aren't on speaking terms."

"John Adams is a close friend of yours, eh."

"Of course."

"Then get Adams to push Jefferson on the project. We want that Bible."

"But, Adams hasn't spoken to Jefferson for ten years! Not since he began calling him an atheist in the presidential election that he lost to Jefferson in 1800. He doesn't want anything to do with him."

Northborough cleared his throat. "Convince Adams that he better start communicating with Jefferson about this Bible. Tell him you want a copy to ruin Jefferson . . . tell him anything, but get the correspondence going between the two."

"May I go now?"

"Please, leave as you came, and make that ruling intruding into the various colonies legislatures in your own time. We trust you to behave and will not contact you further unless something serious arises." Northborough remained seated, holding onto a silver-tipped walking stick with both hands.

Marshall walked into the foyer, disguised himself and slipped out the door into the waiting carriage. He felt miserable about how the meeting had turned out, but figured that Northborough and Isaac would take care of the dreaded documents.

Inside the study, Isaac handed a cup of tea to his superior. “Do you see why I feel that he’s a squirrel? I’m worried about him, and how did that confounded Merry document ever see the light of day? I wonder whether Burr is responsible for that. I’ve never trusted him.”

“Putting aside the Merry and Burr matter, Marshall’s nervous, but we have too much on him for him to turn. The man is far too concerned about how history will judge him to do anything but stay with us. He’s committed, I guarantee it. Solomon is filled with pompous vanity, to him, image is everything.”

“What do we do about the documents?”

“I think that London might be able to think of something . . . something that might teach these upstart colonists a little lesson . . . something that might even take this continent back.”

Isaac’s eyes brightened. “Are you thinking of a war?”

“Perhaps. Napoleon’s not heading for Britain at this moment, so we have the resources available. We couldn’t coax Jefferson into confrontation. Not even by impressing American seamen. He was too cagey by coming up with that infernal embargo. We sure made him pay for that in the press. I just don’t understand that man. We insulted his character, questioned his patriotism, literally set him ablaze in the press, yet he refused to answer our charges or enter into any discussion. I wonder how we can corrupt him? By the way how are we doing at bankrupting him?”

“He lets everybody into his house. All guests, invited or no, so he entertains our agents occasionally without knowing it. Spends money on the intruders, and he feeds them. We’re taking him down, but it will take a while. We know that his chairs need mending, but the man is frugal, so he still must have plenty of money that he’s

not using. Just as surely as we burned out one of his farms during the revolutionary war, which these Americans think is over, we'll ruin that man."

"Good. Good. That is as it should be. I still wonder whether he's too dangerous to keep alive, but, well, he's apparently retired from government, so we'll leave him be. About the possibility of another war, Madison is quite a study in self importance. He foolishly seems to think that he has the power to beat us, and a war would drain their coffers even if the United States prevailed, which they could only do if that wild Corsican raised too much trouble. Sometimes I think that these upstart United States were gifted Napoleon by some higher power to keep us away from them. After all the interfering we did in the French Revolution, I'm not certain that we got what we wanted from it. Be that as it may, Jefferson put the united colonies on too strong a financial footing and paid down too much of their debt. If America continues developing without debt, she'll gain power, real power. Jefferson's financial plan needs some kinks thrown into it. Imagine, raising all his money by tariffs? Every dollar that America spends comes from foreigners. We could never control a country that is independent like that. A war might not be a bad idea. And that statesman of theirs, what's his name?"

"Clay, Henry Clay, a man after my own heart as he hawks for war," said Isaac.

"Excellent. Maybe we can't get Clay on our side, but we can use him for our purpose. Maybe a war would do the trick."

"Would we go to war over those few documents that Marshall told us about?"

Northborough smiled, exposing a missing incisor. "Heavens no! But their archives in this city are loaded with all manner of compromising documents if anyone ever took the time to compare them. I think it would be wise to burn down this little rebel's capital."

“Then you’ll be discussing this in London?” asked Isaac.

“As soon as I return.”

CHAPTER 72

As had been planned by Sir Northborough, John Adams re-opened communication with Jefferson in 1811, and tried to cajole him into preparing his Bible. For some reason, Jefferson kept delaying that project, no matter how many were prodding him to present it. Because of the delays, the Crown was being thwarted from its desire to ruin Jefferson for his religious beliefs.

A second declared war between Great Britain and the United States began in 1812 at the insistence of the American legislators. Hawks like Henry Clay of Kentucky cried for war, which unwittingly played into the plans of Sir Edmund Northborough and King George III. Clay, and others of his bent, railed against British naval ships that intercepted American merchant vessels and hijacked United States' citizens into service in the Royal Navy. The British were impressing American sailors out of necessity, at least that was their excuse for the abominable actions. Actually, Britain needed a huge number of sailors to continue in their battle with Napoleon, so the British continued to impress Americans totally against their will.

While he was President, Jefferson tried to halt British impressment with an embargo that was a dreadful failure because Americans despised the Embargo Act. He later attempted to end trade with Britain with the *Nonintercourse Act*, which only fueled Britain's impressment of Americans. When James Madison won the presidency, he had an electorate that hated the British tactics and war was a natural consequence for the little man with a huge self image.

The anti-British sentiment played into the designs of Sir Northborough, who helped plan various battles to teach the rebellious colonies a few lessons. While

battles went back and forth for the warring nations, in April of 1813 the Americans captured York, which is the present day Toronto. While occupying the city, Americans burned two parliament buildings, the governor's residence and several other government buildings. The destruction of the capital of Upper Canada was exactly what the British Secret Service was waiting for, and they gave orders to the military to return the insult in the District of Columbia.

In August of the next year, the American militia faced oncoming British outside of the capital in Bladensburg. Americans, and especially James Madison believed this would be an American victory; he soon learned otherwise. It would not be long before his wife would be carrying out such valued documents as the *Declaration of Independence* in a wagon, just before the British arrived to lay waste the city of Washington.

The British Admiral Cochrane had given his country's General Ross explicit instructions "to destroy and lay waste such towns and districts upon the coast" as he might find available, with full attention upon the District of Columbia. When General Ross marched into the capital of the United States, he followed his orders expressly, burning all government buildings, including the Capitol and the White House, while carefully saving private ones from destruction. He never fully understood the strange orders he labored under, but he did his soldierly duty, and once he destroyed the buildings, ostensibly because American forces burned York, he withdrew. His troops were well disciplined and did no looting. Sir Northborough was ecstatic when he learned that the evidence of several British covert activities and proof of their agents had been reduced to wind-blown ashes, never to implicate spies like Solomon, among others.

During the war, the British soundly spanked the American upstarts, and showed their total military superiority. As soon as the District of Columbia was burned, the British made strong overtures for peace, and a treaty was signed on Christmas Eve of 1814 in Ghent. A broken America would have soon fallen over to the mother country, but fate had yet another miracle in store for the fledgling American republic that James Madison had nearly ruined with a national bank act and a ridiculous war that could not be won.

Providence, however, was still smiling upon America, even though she was a slaving country. In New Orleans a battle was brewing as a British Admiral sailed hard for the port, unaware of the treaty that ended the war. Waiting for the British was General Andrew Jackson, also ignorant of the treaty. Jackson had the aid of privateer Jean Lafitte, but was completely outgunned and out-manned. However, Jackson and Lafitte totally routed the invading British. Before the battle ended, 2,000 of the Crown's military men lay dead, while only eight Americans fell. The Battle of New Orleans turned what would have been a horrible humiliation for the Americans into a moral victory over England.

Also, the War of 1812 America was the inspiration for a major symbol of American patriotism. During that war, an American lawyer on a ship had watched the siege of Baltimore and a valiant, successful defense of the city. Shortly thereafter, the witness reduced the brave defense to a poem entitled "The star-Spangled Banner."

When the second British-American war ended, John Marshall was paid another visit by Isaac, who told him that to the best of the British Secret Service's knowledge, the originals and all copies of the insidious documents were gone. All Marshall needed worry about now was further attacks by Jefferson. Marshall responded with glee that he could handle himself in that accord, now that the proof was gone. Any

subsequent accusations by Jefferson could be treated by the press as slanderous and libelous slurs at the character of the Chief Justice, and nothing more. The blaze had given the traitor a reprieve.

CHAPTER 73

LONDON, 1815

An aged Sir Northborough lay in his drawing room, worn out and unable to walk, but his mind was still active. A colleague brought him information of the New World, which brought life into the bedridden knight. The dashing man with jet hair who stood before him was thirty years of age, trim, agile, and quick of wit.

“Yes, I know we burned down the capital,” said Sir Northborough, “along with all those foul papers.”

“Better yet,” said young Louis La Droix, “we’ve infiltrated other key military and civilian posts in the colonies.”

Northborough seemed unconcerned about this information and held his hand up to halt the talk on that subject. “Fine, now what of Jefferson, how is our plan going at breaking him?”

Louis looked puzzled. “Such an old man? Why do you care?”

“The man is barely over seventy, and dangerous as a cornered cat. Don’t ever forget that. For eleven years John Adams and he were separated. Seems Jefferson doesn’t take kindly to being an atheist. Fate had those two isolated in silence, but the pair has renewed contact at our insistence as we tried to get Jefferson’s religious views into the public. However, now the rebels are working together, or at least somewhat together. Jefferson is trying to strike blows for liberty, while Adams is trying to feed his ego and build his fame. Anyway, it’s getting out of hand.”

“John Adams! Now really, aren’t you stretching it beyond belief? He’s even older than Jefferson.”

Northborough adjusted a pillow and took a sip of water from a glass on the floor beside his bed. Such hot fire emitted from his eyes that the startled young La Droix half expected them to begin smoking. “I worked with your grandfather on this, and your father for a time, but he met an untimely death. You are as sharp as your grandfather, but never underestimate Adams and Jefferson. While I am sick, and probably dying, you must carry on, answering only to Able and Cain.”

“But Jefferson and Adams are so old.”

“Benjamin Franklin was an old man who freed the colonies from the Crown. He would have freed the slaves too, if he’d had his way. I’ve gone over that man with you at length before. Never underestimate someone because they are octogenarians.”

“All right. All right,” said Louis La Droix. “Who are Able and Cain?”

“They are positions, not people. Able has changed twice in the last score of years. Don’t worry about who they are, know only that you answer to them.”

“And who is their superior?”

Northborough sipped water and hacked. “Don’t know, I have suspicions, but I just don’t know. I think it’s Adam, but it could be Seth. That is unimportant. Is our plan to break Jefferson going along well?”

“He’s in trouble. Last year he was forced to sell his library to Congress, ten thousand volumes. It seems that someone torched the books in the American Congressional library. I can’t imagine who would be so shameless, could you? We had creditors hounding Jefferson from Philadelphia to Georgetown when he sold those books.”

Northborough chuckled. “That is good to hear. That man had been collecting those for over fifty years. They were his greatest treasure. He must be in deep trouble to have given them up to Congress. We must get him to guarantee someone’s loan, then see to it that the loan goes bad, and we’ll have him. Also, get him interested in a diversion to keep his mind off politics and the Supreme Court.”

Louis La Droix removed a dagger from its sheath and whittled on one of his finger nails. “Do you think Jefferson will move to take out Solomon?”

“Not certain, but we haven’t been demanding of Marshall of late, haven’t even called upon him. His work is laid, the bomb will go off, but the fuse is long. The Courts will continue to grab power out of greed. We won’t even need to meddle, if we’re lucky. I think it wise not to bother Solomon again, except in an extreme emergency.”

“What kind of an emergency would it have to be?” asked the young La Droix.

“Let’s say a pair like John Adams and Thomas Jefferson began soliciting aid from the French to confront the Crown. That would be such an urgent condition.”

La Droix paced the room, then opened a drapery. “Do you mind if I let some light into this place?”

“You’ve already done it with your presence, but please open the curtains also. I should reacquaint myself with the sun before I end this trek of life.”

“Why must we destroy Jefferson?”

“Because, if he is shamed with financial ruin, if he must travel to the poor house, then his idiotic beliefs about ‘Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness’ will die with him. People don’t usually make heroes out of financial failures. When those vile principles of his die, the colonies are ours again. Ruining Jefferson is a high priority.”

“Why not just kill him?”

“To kill him is to risk making a martyr of him. Murder is out of the question except in the most exigent of circumstances.” Sir Northborough coughed and blood trickled from his mouth. Consumption was overtaking him and he would soon be freed of the rule of man.

Louis eyed the blood and realized that this might be his last meeting with his mentor. “By the way, we have sent mulattoes to see Jefferson and he treats them just like other guests!”

“Sad to think that such a bright man would respect Negroes,” responded Sir Northborough.

“You take care of your cough, now won’t you?” said Louis.

“I will, now you be gone and let an old man die in peace; you must take care of the Crown from here.”

CHAPTER 74

MONTICELLO, NOVEMBER, 1824

In the crowd of well wishers carrying revolutionary banners stood a silver-haired man of thirty nine performing field work for the first time in his career. His jet hair had left him shortly after Sir Northborough had died, and today he could pass for his grandfather except his locks had some wave and body to them, while the elder La Droix' hair had been straight as a level timber.

It distressed the British spy that this visitor was touring the United States and had stopped earlier to see John Adams in Boston and was now in Virginia to see Thomas Jefferson. Louis La Droix replayed his final conversation with Sir Northborough, and realized that these might well be the exigent circumstances the old knight spoke about before leaving the younger man in charge.

A pair of stout horses pulled the barouche up the hill to Monticello. The carriage was surrounded by a mounted escort of Virginians that cleared a path through four hundred onlookers who had gathered to see the meeting of the two men. When his carriage stopped, the dignitary opened the door and limped from the vehicle toward the portico. Trumpets blared a welcome to the Revolutionary War hero from France, which made him slightly giddy as he trod toward the house. When he saw a tall man stooped with age in a swallow-tail coat and long waistcoat, his limp turned into a shuffle.

Jefferson, in response to his guest's hurried steps, began negotiating the steps when he heard his old friend from the revolution cry out, "Ah, Jefferson!"

Thomas began shuffling and both men were in a pseudo run as he shouted, “Ah, Lafayette!”

When the pair met, they clung to one another, sobbing so profusely that it infectiously caught the crowd, and handkerchiefs were dabbing eyes so furiously that it seemed as if a swarm of cloth had taken a single purpose. While most of the members of the crowd cried emotionally at the meeting of the two old champions of freedom, one man squirmed and wondered what to do.

Sir Northborough had warned him that all could be lost if rebels like John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and the French got together, and here was the Marquis de Lafayette, a French nobleman so dedicated to freedom that he fled France to fight in the American War for Independence as a volunteer. His record in America, and in France had earned him power and rank in France now that Napoleon was no longer in charge of the country. This had been the dreadful circumstance that Sir Northborough had warned about on his deathbed.

Louis La Droix wondered what his next move should be, especially considering that he had been instrumental in crashing down on Jefferson with imminent financial doom. Failed loans that the former president had guaranteed had been called, and Jefferson was only months away from total ruin. He decided to wait for a while as he watched the two old men shuffle up the stairs and into the house.

As they walked in, Thomas said, “Lafayette, you must see the university I have designed which is being built! It is the joy of my life, except for my daughter and all these grandchildren you see about you.”

“That I would most like to see, old friend.”

CHAPTER 75

MONTICELLO, FEBRUARY, 1826

Louis La Droix sat in his hotel room in Charlottesville, savoring the situation. Creditors were crying for blood and the old sage of Monticello was out of resources. It would only be a matter of weeks before the legend of Thomas Jefferson collapsed in desperate ruin. He was delighted that he had patiently waited for this moment rather than act rashly when John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Lafayette were all united. He would have his victory and the Crown of Great Britain would celebrate the news.

Outside the town, up on the hill, inside Monticello, Jefferson sat worried about what he would be leaving for his grandchildren and his daughter, Patsy as he looked over the account books. How he could have had so many disasters of late was amazing to him, but he was unaware of the orchestration of his demise. Everything that could go wrong, had done so. He waited impatiently for a response from James Madison, who he had sent a plea indicating that he needed special dispensation to sell his estate off in a lottery and retain Monticello and one farm. Otherwise, he wrote to Madison, “I must sell everything here, perhaps considerably in Bedford, move thither with my family, where I have not even a log hut to put my head into.” He added that he was not certain that there would even be left any “ground for burial.”

Madison viewed the plea from Jefferson with interest. He had always taken a back seat to Jefferson. This was his chance to reduce the image of Jefferson and boost his. Madison saw to it that the lottery bill was passed in short order and hoped that the sale would finish off Jefferson in the public eye. However, before the sale could take

place, the rest of the nation learned of Jefferson's plight. Mass meetings were held in the North, in the South, throughout the United States, where contributions were collected for the author of the *Declaration of Independence*. America would not let her hero be dragged through bankruptcy and thrown from his home at his age.

Donations flowed in from all around the country in varying amounts. From New York came \$8,500. Another \$5,000 arrived from Philadelphia. Baltimore kicked in \$3,000, and many other cities were heard from, and Jefferson was saved from ruin.

When news of the contributions reached him, he grabbed his daughter Patsy's hand. "Honey."

"Yes, Father."

"You are my life."

"And you, mine."

"But, this money that is saving us, it is a pure, unsolicited offering of love."

Patsy wiped her eyes and patted her father's hand. "Isn't it wonderful?"

"It restores my faith."

"God has moved many to help."

"It's not the amount of money they have sent, though that is considerable, it's the thought of the gift behind it." Jefferson sobbed twice and continued, "I have spent three times as much money and given my whole life to my countrymen, and now they nobly come forward, in the only way they can, to repay me and save an old servant from being turned like a dog out of doors."

CHAPTER 76

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, JUNE, 1826

Shutters were closed and doors were sealed in the chambers of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, making that office as dark as the feelings were of its occupant. Marshall wondered what could be happening that he must meet this stranger, a messenger from Isaac. They could not ask for more of him, not if they were reasonable people, but he had long since realized that they were most certainly unreasonable.

He had already ruled that federal law was supreme and that states must comply with the Constitution of the United States. Further, he had risked tremendous wrath by extending the Constitution by finding implied powers that gave the central government the wedge to eventually usurp most powers from the states. Certainly they could want nothing more of him. He had done all they asked and more.

In the room lit only by three candles, Marshall awaited his caller. When Hawkins opened the door for the visitor, Marshall jumped directly out of his chair. The man in the doorway was a replica of the dreaded, one-legged La Droix, complete with silver hair that Louis had straightened just for this occasion. “Do I startle you? Am I a specter? You appear as though a ghost is in your presence?”

“You-you must be related.”

“Louis La Droix is my name, and I assume that you mean I resemble my grandfather.”

“Remarkably so,” said Marshall as he signaled Hawkins to close the door.

“We are most appreciative of all that you have done for us, Mr. Marshall.”

“Who are we?”

“I work for the same people that my grandfather did.”

“And they are?”

“The Crown of Great Britain, or so I would suppose – of course it goes further than that, as you must have already surmised.”

“And you don’t actually know, then?” asked Marshall, his voice incredulous.

“Enough about me, I have a serious situation here in the colonies.”

“This is the United States of America, if you please,” responded Marshall.

“Call it what you like, but you are only rebellious children who will come home to your mother country one day. Therefore, you are colonies still.”

“And if we choose not to return to our parent, then what?”

“You will, don’t worry, you will. Whether by force, choice or ignorance, you will.”

Marshall rolled his thumbs as he interlocked his fingers and tried to be nonplused, but failed miserably. La Droix had control of the meeting, his presence was encasing the room like a giant envelope. “What is it then?”

La Droix lit a cigar and puffed for several seconds. “I like these Virginia leaves. They make a nice smoke. Unlike some other things from Virginia that I don’t have the slightest bit of tolerance for, such as your cousin.”

“Do you mean Thomas?”

La Droix stared absently at a painting that barely exposed itself in the dim office. “Of course I mean him. He’s too much of a liability and must be dealt with.”

Marshall was uncertain what direction this was heading, but didn't like the finality in La Droix' tone. "Certainly, you don't think a man of eighty-three can harm you."

"I do. And you also," said La Droix softly. "Certainly you've read his draft declaration and protest from last December which argues for states' rights, practically shouts for secession from the Union just because the federal government has ventured to build a few canals and roads in Virginia."

Marshall began shaking. While he hated Jefferson, this man seemed to want to silence him permanently. "A feeble protest by an old man. Harmless, totally harmless," he objected.

"He wrote that draft for the General Assembly of Virginia. That's anything but harmless."

"So why tell me this?"

"Because, Solomon, we are collecting on your obligation to us."

"What do you mean?"

La Droix puffed on the cigar and rolled it between his lips, shifting it from the right side to the left side of his mouth. When it landed in the far corner, he clamped it in his teeth and sneered. "I think you know." Then he reached into a bag that he had carried into the office and removed two vials that he set on Marshall's desk. "This potion will give him a quiet ending."

"No! No! Out, you dung from across the sea. Out! I'll have you arrested if you remain another minute."

Hawkins came rushing in upon hearing the outcry. "What is it?"

Marshall glared at La Droix and signaled his clerk as he shouted, "Get him out of here!"

The door slammed, and Marshall now faced two British agents. “Well, Hawkins, aren’t you going to do the bidding of your employer?” demanded Marshall.

“I will, whatever he says, I will do.”

Marshall screamed, “Are you people mad? You’re talking about murder, don’t you see?”

“There can be no murder. Jefferson will be but a casualty of war.” La Droix puffed on his green bundle of leaves.

“The war is over! The wars are over! There is no war,” shouted Marshall.

“The war will not be over until the colonies return, therefore, the war is on, so there can be no murder.”

“My own cousin! Have you no heart? Am I to poison my own cousin for you? Is that your blood-filled game?”

La Droix paced the room, then said, “No, I think you have no stomach for it. So if you would order it done, that would be acceptable.”

Frantically, Marshall reached in his drawer for his knife. Hawkins gave an insidious laugh. “It’s gone, Your Honor, I removed it earlier today.”

Marshall rang a bell and summoned Lee Boo, who entered the smoky, dim-lit room. “Would you need me?” he asked Marshall.

“Very much, please send these two away.”

Lee Boo stood quietly looking at the Chief Justice, saying nothing.

“Well, move them out of here Lee Boo!”

Lee Boo was stiff and his face dour. “That I can’t much-much do.”

“Why not?”

“Because Mr. La Droix is my big-big boss.”

“Lee Boo! Do all the years I hired you mean nothing?”

Lee Boo shook his head.

“That’s what I get for being so good to a low-life Negro. Damn you Lee Boo!”

La Droix handed a bottle to Marshall. “Now give it to either of your servants, who will perform the job.”

Marshall accepted the bottle and cradled it in tremulous hands, staring at it and weeping. “You can’t be serious.”

“He will ruin your country, Virginia will secede if he lives – or worse, he’ll start another revolution – he believes that the tree of liberty needs refreshing every twenty years or so. Worse, he might bring about a peaceful revolution. In any event, if left to his own efforts, he will ruin your glorious Court.” La Droix puffed and blew smoke in Marshall’s direction. “Now, give it to your messenger.”

Now bawling, Marshall whimpered, “Lee Boo, please take this.”

“That’s a good boy,” said La Droix, “now tell him where it goes and what it does.”

Lee Boo accepted the bottle from Marshall and his eyes showed confusion. “What do I do with this?”

“You must give it to my cousin, Thomas Jefferson.”

“What is it?” asked Lee Boo.

“A potion that will take . . . a potion that . . . poison.”

Lee Boo dropped the bottle when he realized the nature of the request. It rolled on the floor, but remained intact. “That I will not-not do!”

“You will or you will be hanged as a British spy, I’ll see to that,” shouted La Droix. “Now pick up the vial. I want it given on July fourth. On this mission, you shall not fail.”

Lee Boo's mind raced, then he comprehended that he would be alone on the mission, so he could do as he liked. He picked up the bottle and placed it into a pocket. "July 4th it will be."

"I'm glad that you are so co-operative, because your wife Sally, and all your grandchildren are in my custody and will not be released until after their keepers have confirmed reports of Jefferson's death."

Lee Boo gave a sneer to La Droix that would have provoked an assault from nearly any other recipient, but the spy just sneered back at the Prince from Palau.

Marshall sunk into his chair, his face covered with perspiration, his hands clammy, his eyelids heavy. He closed his eyes and wondered how he could have fallen into such a vile crowd of people. Then it hit him like a flare from a muzzle and his eyes were wide, taking in the flickering lights. "Why are there two bottles?"

La Droix began a throaty, eerie laugh, sounding much like a cross between a bear's roar and a hen's cackle. "That is for Boston."

"Boston? Why Boston?" asked Marshall, frightened of what might be coming.

"John Adams must also go, and also on July fourth. Do you have the courage to take it to him, or will you send a messenger there also?"

"Adams! My God, man! My good friend Adams! It was he who appointed me to the Chief Justice's chair. How could I possibly have his blood on my hands? You are insane! What can the deaths of Adams and Jefferson mean to you?"

"Plenty," said La Droix.

"But, they have no power, are aged, let them die in peace," pleaded Marshall.

"They have much knowledge and many friends."

"But no power. Leave them be. I beg you." Marshall was whimpering and sniveling.

“No power!” boomed La Droix. “Surely you jest and think me a fool. Jefferson and Adams have been plotting with Lafayette. They’re both ready to stir this ungrateful cluster of colonies into another rebellion as we speak. We aren’t about to lose decades of patient work to those rebels.”

Marshall stared incredulously. “England is afraid of three old men?”

“Not just three old men. Three who are dangerous as cornered badgers.”

“Dangerous? How?” asked Marshall.

La Droix began creating a plausible sounding story to convince Marshall. “Have you forgotten that John Adams has a son, Mr. John Quincy Adams, who just happens to be the President of these infernal colonies?” La Droix pushed his points. John Q. Adams was elected in what was deemed the most corrupt election in history. He knew that this father-and-son team were nothing for England to ever worry about. “Quincy, who claims that the *Declaration of Independence* is the American Ark of the Covenant. No, Mr. Marshall, these are not just three men, they are three usurpers who will not get a chance to work their treachery again. Not if we destroy the two American prongs of the trio.”

Hawkins stepped forward and grabbed the bottle. “I’ll do it with pleasure for the Crown. That overzealous man is responsible for more of my friends’ deaths than any I can imagine. How symbolic. How fitting. How delightful. I will do Mr. Revolution, and gladly on July fourth, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of this petty ‘republic’s’ *Declaration of Independence*.”

“I’m glad that I have you on board,” said La Droix. “Now, I will be taking a packet this evening, and expect to be quite close to Dover before the jobs are done. I have a contact in New York who will send word to release Lee Boo’s family, but only if both men die on July 4th.”

Lee Boo screamed, “You big-big pig dung. Kill me now and let my family go.”

“Oh, no, Lee Boo,” said La Droix. “You must kill Jefferson, or your family will pay, it is your choice.”

“My Sally and our children would much-much rather die than do your filthy work, so kill us all.”

“Die,” laughed La Droix, “who said anything about death? Why would I throw away what a sugar cane plantation would pay dearly for?”

“Slaves! You’d make my family slaves?”

“Under the worst conditions imaginable,” said La Droix. “And, both deaths must, absolutely must, look natural, oh so very natural.”

Hawkins smirked and held his mouth, barely able to keep his laughter from bursting through the room.

Marshall and Lee Boo drooped their heads while Hawkins and La Droix left the office in a most jovial manner. Hawkins accompanied his master to the harbor, but he would catch a packet to Boston instead of England.

CHAPTER 77

JULY 4, 1826

Hawkins paced back and forth as he stared at the house in Quincy, Massachusetts, then walked up to the door. When the door opened, he was instantly greeted. “Why, Mr. Hawkins, it was kind of you to come. Could the Chief Justice actually spare his clerk long enough to come and visit my sick father?”

“How bad is he?”

“Well, he’s been surviving. He has a single goal in mind, which is seeing our nation’s fiftieth birthday through. He gave a toast to ‘Independence Forever!’ earlier today. How he will do tomorrow is anyone’s guess.”

Adams’ daughter directed Hawkins toward her father’s room. “He will be glad to see you. I’ll leave you alone so you can give him any messages from his friend in private.”

“Thank you,” said Hawkins.

As he walked into the room, he noticed the ninety-one-year-old man still had some sparkle in his eyes. “Hawkins, it was good of John Marshall to send you up? Is he here?”

“No, he couldn’t make it.”

“I understand, it would have been joyous to have seen one of our old Revolutionary War officers on this auspicious occasion, but as an old man, I cannot have everything.”

“Are you well?”

“Much better to have made this day through, much better, thank you.”

Hawkins pulled out the vial and fingered it. He felt some reluctance to perform his duty thinking this man too old to bother with, but there was such symbolism in this death. La Droix had informed Hawkins that Adams had played into the British hands so well, that he hardly needed to be recruited, but, he was so arrogant and insane at times he was actually quite a liability, even though his arrogance and selfishness at the same time made him an asset. All the balancing aside, he would be quite valuable to the Crown as a corpse today. After a few moments consideration about this, Hawkins found his prior determination. “Why don’t you take this, it will lighten your load ever so much,” he said, offering the bottle to Adams.

“What is it then?”

“A special present from John.”

“From John, is it? Well, then it would be rude not to taste, eh?” Adams put the small bottle to his lips, then pulled it away. “This isn’t any kind of brandy, now, is it?” Then he returned it to his mouth and swallowed the entire contents.

A few seconds later his tongue felt thick. The old man looked at Hawkins eyes and caught their sinister glare and as he realized what had happened, he screamed. His daughter came rushing into the room as her father’s eyes bugged and he gurgled in the direction of Hawkins, “Thomas Jefferson still lives.” Few understood the import of these words. Even to the last, Adams could not bear to stand in the shadow of Jefferson, and he could not tolerate thinking that Thomas had outlived him.

The younger Adams grasped her dying father and wept until she felt no more breathing. After her father expired, she said to Hawkins, “At least your long journey was for a purpose. I am glad that you got to see him before he passed on.”

* * * * *

John Adams thought he was correct in his last words, but in Monticello, a similar event had occurred a few hours earlier. Aged Lee Boo had arrived at the door and was given a warm welcome and sent to Jefferson's room, where he tentatively entered.

Thomas saw Lee Boo and raised himself from the bed, exclaiming, "Lee Boo! Lee Boo! Give me a hug you wonderful American from Palau."

Lee Boo walked slowly to him, grabbed the aged man, and squeezed affectionately. "Fifty years, can you imagine that? Our little republic that nobody gave half a chance has been independent of Britain for fifty years. Thanks in great part to patriots like you and Benjamin Franklin who dared to walk both sides of the fence, risking your necks daily. God, how I love liberty, Lee Boo, and people like you who have given everything for it. My only hope is that one day, America will operate so openly, so cleanly, that spies will be a thing of the past. Spies won't be able to survive when truth is shown on them, and they'll shrivel up like prunes and be gone from this country. Oh, but do I ask for Utopia?"

Lee Boo wept, leaving wet stains on his friend's nightshirt.

"Come, come, Lee Boo. You don't have to be choked up over seeing me. I'm an old cuss and might be here next year with some luck. Now tell me, how is Sally."

Lee Boo broke away from his friend. "Oh, I have to tell you, and I hate to tell you now, but things are much-much terrible for us."

"I'm sorry to hear that. Would some money help?"

"Money would always help Sally and me. But things are bad-bad for us, for America."

"Why is that, Lee Boo?"

“Mr. John Marshall is being blackmailed by British agents, and he’s doing much-much awful things in the Court.”

Thomas smiled, “I still have all my teeth although my eyes are a bit tired, however, I can still read, I know that, but the states will resist the oppressions of the federal government. Of that I am certain. We might have a little rebellion, but we will put things right. In fact, we’re a little overdue for one now. Don’t let that worry you.”

“Mr. Jefferson, you are my good-good friend, my wife’s good-good friend, my family’s good-good friend, and I am here to warn you that John Marshall will kill you.”

Thomas laughed, “Some of his opinions nearly do. When he begins the rambling about with words instead of talking clearly, I always watch out because he is doing the bidding of the British, but the people will not stand long for a tyrant of a Court. Its day will pass Lee Boo. Not to worry.”

“Mr. Jefferson, I mean he really wants to much-much kill you.”

Thomas stared at his long-time friend searching to see whether he was playing a cruel joke. Lee Boo’s eyes told him it was for real. “But, while my cousin hates me, and even though I have accused him of being no better than Benedict Arnold, I can’t imagine that he would kill me.”

“He sent me to do it. Ordered me. See this bottle of poison they gave me. Or should I say La Droix did. If I don’t murder you today, he will quick-quick sell all my grandchildren into slavery in the West Indies. Marshall and La Droix are much-much bad.”

Thomas gazed out the window and a tear came to his eye, followed by several others. “You are right, Lee Boo, this country is in for trouble. I’ve fought my whole

life against men like Marshall and La Droix, but they seem to be winning. That rotten slavery issue could be our ruin. I had outlawed it in the *Declaration of Independence*, but I couldn't get the southern states to go along with it. I wish I'd fought the issue harder."

Lee Boo turned to go.

"Where are you going?"

"To kill John Marshall."

"That will do you no good, nor me, nor the United States."

"Then what do you suggest?" asked Lee Boo.

"Give me the bottle and send my daughter Patsy and all my grandchildren up to say good-bye. I will take the potion today and your boss will have his July fourth tribute. So, Adams packed the courts with Federalists, made Marshall the Chief Justice, and now his Secretary of State turned Chief Justice is ordering murders of signers of the *Declaration of Independence*. I guess that Adams was right after all in just using liberty for a political issue to bring himself glory. This world is too foul for those of us who wish to make things better. So the day belongs to Adams and his ilk."

"John Adams will also die today," cried Lee Boo, tears flooding his cheeks and rippling down to his coat.

"Adams! Do you know who ordered this?"

Lee Boo nodded. "It was Marshall – not by choice – but by necessity."

Jefferson took a deep breath. "So, the crook in the Court is killing the one who appointed him. Well, at least that is fitting." Thomas smiled at that thought, then declared. "Then you must save our country, Lee Boo, it will be up to you."

"Me, what can I do?"

"Write this story, let the whole country know what happened."

“Me? Who would believe me? Marshall calls me a low-life Negro, so do many others. Nobody will listen to a man with dark skin in this country, especially one as old as I am. This is a country that still has slaves, it won’t listen to a black man’s writing.”

“This country will not have slaves forever. I solemnly declare that to you. Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin and I were not able to break the institution in these lifetimes, of that I admit. But, Lee Boo, as horrible as this world is, with its foul spies and murdering ‘justices,’ I swear, slavery will not live here forever.”

“I wish I had your faith in that, my good-good friend.”

“I tell you what, Lee Boo. I am very sick of this foul world, but, I will make you this promise. Slavery will end, or I promise you, I will come back here just to break the issue to bits.”

Lee Boo smiled. “You are a good-good man. I know what a serious matter it is for you to promise something, and for you to promise something like that, well, I’m overwhelmed. Let me say that you have warmed my heart. I hope that the one who will free the slaves in America has already been born so you don’t have to come back here.”

“Just write the book Lee Boo, please. In time, America might wake up, and she might listen. If she doesn’t, a few will still strive for liberty. Be bold and brave, be the prince that you are. Write it for Palau, write it for freedom, won’t you, Prince Lee Boo?”

Lee Boo handed Thomas the bottle and hugged his friend for the last time, then he walked slowly down the hall and told Patsy to go see her father. With a heart weighing more than a ship’s anchor, he trudged out to his horse and rode for the District of Columbia. Within time, the entire world would know that Thomas

Jefferson and John Adams shared the same death day, the jubilee day of the United States of America.

CHAPTER 78

Epilogue

John Marshall's tour on the Supreme Court ended in 1835 when the Chief Justice died, leaving behind a trail of sickening decisions. These opinions paved the road to make the United States Supreme Court the sole arm of government that answers to no department, no legislative body and no president. The Court is truly "supreme" and all-powerful. While many justices have protected liberty and the Constitution, others followed the example of the traitorous John Marshall, and have stolen liberty for their own purposes.

When John Marshall died, another bigoted Chief Justice was appointed. Roger B. Taney served on the court until 1864 as the Chief Justice. During his term, the country suffered tremendously because of the issue of slavery. The British saddled America with the institution. The colonies were forced into importing slaves in the seventeenth century and then left the filthy project to clean up.

Justice Taney had a case come before him in 1857 that concerned slavery. This case led to as nefarious of decision as ever written by any court.

Justice Taney used the tool given him by Justice Marshall in *Marbury v. Madison*, a tool of ominous power which even Marshall dared not use twice in his torrid rule of the court. The tool granted the Court the right to overrule and act of Congress and declare it void as unconstitutional. This power is not derived from the Constitution, but was created by implication by Justice Marshall.

When Justice Taney used the tool, it was done for maximum impact. He ruled that the Missouri Compromise of 1820 (an act that would have ended slavery by attrition) was unconstitutional. Then, he carried the matter considerably further by declaring that Negroes were property and not ever capable of becoming citizens of the United States. If there was a chance of a peaceful settlement of the differences between the various states on the issue of slavery, it was gone, thanks to the *Dred Scott* decision of the Supreme Court. The Civil War followed closely behind the heinous decision.

Jefferson did not have to keep his promise to re-incarnate to tear apart the institution of slavery. Abraham Lincoln was already on the planet, and while he had to bend many rules to do it, break the foul institution into bits, he did.