The historical sources for this narrative about Charles Thomson and the times he lived in, are many. I hope it has done both Charles Thomson and the founding of our nation justice.

Entr'acte One

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1827

"My name is Seth Bartley from the Philadelphia Democratic Press," the young man said to the balding, sour faced man at the front door of a stately looking home. "I have an appointment with Mr. Drummond. He's expecting me."

Michael Drummond's man servant eyed the young man, inspecting him from head to toe. "He was expecting someone older," he grumbled. "Follow me." The small, aged man dressed in a black waist coat and long, heavy pants, led Seth down a hall passing well-appointed rooms indicative of a man of success. They stopped at the door of one of the rooms. "He's waiting for you there," the man servant said. He opened the door and motioned for Seth to enter.

Inside was a wood paneled study of fine oak and woolen curtains on the windows. In the center of the small study sat a diminutive old man, in his nineties, sitting at a large ornate desk under a towering bookshelf lined with books from floor to ceiling.

At the desk sat Michael Drummond.

"Come in," Drummond said, beckoning Seth with his hand. "Let's sit at the couch. More comfortable." Drummond stood up and moved spryly for his age as Seth walked to the couch.

"Now," Drummond said, as he sat down. "You have some questions for me."

"Yes, sir. My paper is doing a special spread on the fortieth anniversary of the signing of the Constitution."

"How old are you, lad?" Drummond interrupted.

"Um. Fifteen, sir."

"Aren't you a little young to be a reporter?"

"I'm researcher, sir. Working as an intern at the newspaper."

"I see."

"I'm to do research on the founding fathers. The men responsible for the Constitution."

"Why do you want to talk to me?" Drummond asked. "I was not involved with that."

"My editor thought, due to your age, you may be able to answer a question."

"And what is that?" Drummond stood up and walked to his desk.

"In my research, I came across a name, or, a title, really." The young man opened up his small notebook from his chest pocket and said, "Samuel Adams of Philadelphia."

Drummond picked up a pipe on his desk, emptied the old burnt tobacco and refilled it from a pouch in his open draw. He lit the pipe and tuned towards Seth. "Samuel Adams of Philadelphia, you say?"

"Yes. I know of the founding father Samuel Adams of Boston. Could that be the same man?"

Drummond slowly shook his head. "No. You are speaking of Charles Thomson. The title you refer to was given to Thomson by John Adams"

"Charles Thomson?" Seth replied. "Never heard of him. Was he a founding father?"

"No. But he was just as important and had done just as much, if not more, in founding this country as Franklin, Jefferson, or Adams."

"How come I haven't heard of him?" Seth answered, puzzled.

"Near the end of his life, Thomson destroyed over a thousand pages of his diary, detailing those years from the Declaration of Independence to the creation of the Constitution and the establishment of our Republic." Drummond paused in reflection. "That, son, and much more, was the contribution to this nation by Charles Thomson. A true patriot." He walked over to Seth and regained his seat. "He was a man of principle. Principles that he lived by. And he paid a price for them."

"How did you know him?"

"He and I met in school and have stayed in touch over the years."

"Where can I find him?" Seth said, sitting on the edge of his seat. "I want to interview him."

"You can't. He's dead. Died a few years ago."

Seth was visibly disappointed.

"But if you want to know the whole story of this remarkable man, my friend, I will gladly tell you."

Seth nodded his head.

Drummond sat back on the couch. "His life in this land started many years ago, at the age of ten, on a journey across the Atlantic, filled with peril.

Stave 1

Aboard the William & Mary, Fall of 1739

"Mary, where's your brother?" John Thomson, said, pursing his lips and standing on the lower, passenger's deck of the William & Mary. John Thomson had decided to sail the arduous journey from Dublin to Pennsylvania with his children to seek land in the New World.

"Which one, Father?" she smiled.

"Charles."

"On deck," her violet-blue eyes and curly black hair rendered her the spitting image of her recently deceased mother.

"He knows he isn't supposed to be up there," John said, brushing his honey-colored blond hair out of his eyes. The putrid stench of body odor, vomit, mildew, mold, urine and feces, permeating every inch of the boat, caused his moss green eyes to water.

"He said he can't stand the smell any longer. Should I go get him?"

"No, sweetie, stay with your brothers."

Mary scurried down the hallway to the first of two beds her family of six had been assigned. William, Matthew and John were fast asleep. She squeezed herself between the primitive closely packed hardwood bunks that lacked both privacy and to a large extent, sanitation. The sounds of coughing and retching and low wimping of laments filled the air of the sleeping quarters.

John Thomson, a stocky, broad-shouldered, six-foot, Irish farmer, bent his head and shoulders down and shuffled through the low, dimly lit ceiling. He stepped around the open, communal vats of urine used to put out fires.

He felt something strike his skin. Propelled droplets of mucous landed on his face out of nowhere as he ascended the ship's rigid hewn oak stairs. As he climbed, he looked to see an old woman tending to a sick man, picking lice off her arm. She whipped out a wet, gray rag and wiped her nose.

Thomson grimaced and continued up the stairs.

Once on deck, he took a deep breath of crisp, cool mid-day air and spotted Charles leaning against the railing and chatting with Parson Jones. He made his way towards the slim and gaunt Parson who donned a short, black vest, dress jacket and heavy wool overcoat.

"Young lad, go down below," Thomson overheard the Parson say.

"Please, sir. I came to partake of the cool air." Charles said.

"This is no place for a child, I daresay," the Parson said, pointing to the tangle of thick, camel-colored ropes, heavy, swinging booms, and fast-moving sailors rushing around them. Some were running new rigging of heavy ropes. Others were chipping paint off the rusting surfaces of metal while others repaired sails made of flax and cotton.

All the while being barked at by the First Mate.

"Good day, Parson," Thomson said as he approached the Parson and his son. "Charles. Mind me. Go downstairs."

"I am unwell, Father, and the air on the lower deck causes me to vomit. Can't I stay a bit longer?"

The Parson nudged John Thomson and glanced over at a body covered by sailcloth and a newborn baby, resting on deck, next to it.

"Charles, go downstairs this instant!" Thomson ordered.

"Yes, Father." He scurried across the deck to the staircase.

"Mrs. McCarthy?" Thomson asked the Parson.

"And child, they died in childbirth.

"This is a serious matter, Parson, to be denied a proper, Christian burial. Is there nothing to be done about tossing the deceased into the sea?"

The Parson shook his head. "Unfortunately, no, good sir, but I do pray to the Lord that more of our brothers and sisters do not succumb to the foul conditions to which they are subjected," the Parson said, grimacing in the midst of the cold, damp conditions. He buddle his heavy wool coat around him.

“John, you do not look well. Touch of sea sickness?”

“Perhaps. But no more than everyone else on board.” Thomson replied, folding his arms across his chest. “I am looking forward to disembarking and never setting foot on a ship again!” He changed the subject. “How much longer do you think before we reach Philadelphia?”

“We’ve sailed for over six weeks now. Ten days more, with adequate wind,” the Parson said, looking up at the billowing white sails.

After a pause, he placed his hand on Thompson’s shoulder. “At least you and your family will be spared the fate of most of those poor souls below. You have money and paid your way across. Those poor immigrants will become indentured servants upon arriving in Philadelphia and will not be permitted to leave the ship unless they pay for their passage or can give good security.” He shook his head. “They must remain on board the ship until they are purchased and are released from the ships by their purchasers.”

“And if you’re sick or unfit when you arrive?” questioned Thomson.

“The sick always fare the worst, for the healthy are naturally preferred and purchased first. The sick and wretched will remain on board in front of the city for two or three weeks and frequently die.”

“Get below,” a raspy voice of the British First Mate came up suddenly from behind the two men. “The captain said a storm is coming.” He pointed a scraggly finger from a thick hairy arm protruding from his short stubby body at the growing dark mass of clouds now being back lit by flashes of lightening.

“Is it bad?” asked Thomson.

The First Mate frowned under his bushy mustache. “When they look like that, they’re never good.”

Stave 2

The Storm, Fall of 1739

The First Mate’s answer was an understatement. The storm came on with a vengeance and the gale raged for two days and two nights. The doors to the passenger deck were latched closed leaving the passengers with little or no light.

The frightened mass of passengers huddled against each other as the wooden bark shook violently as if an unseen force from outside slammed against the walls of the hold.

Amid the weeping and sobbing that underlined the air of the hold, Mary hid her head in her oldest brother's chest. "I'm scared, Alex" she whimpered. "Are we going to die?"

Alexander stroked her head. "Hush. It will be all right," as the coupled pair swayed back and forth in rhyme with the movement of the ship.

Above the din of sorrows, Parson Jones consoled them with singing, praying and with encouragement. "Please people. Do not fear. Place your trust in God. He will protect his flock." Bowing his tall frame under the low ceiling, he read from his bible. "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Many of the voices responded with a fretful "Amen."

Charles, sitting next to his father lamented, "I want to go home. I want my mother."

Thomson put his arm around his youngest son and held him tight in reassurance. "I promised your mother before she passed that I would take the family to America and start a new life for us. The captain has the money we will use stored safely in his quarters." He placed his hand under his young son's chin and raised his eyes to his. "This storm will pass, my child. And we will all be in America soon."

From across the room, weeping questions were heard of "How much longer?" and "When will it cease?" passed between the passengers.

But the storm did pass. And as the ship settled down, one by one, the passengers gave thanks to God.

* * *

"Father? *Father*! There's something wrong with father," Mary whimpered.

Her oldest brother hurried over to his father's bed.

"Look," Mary cried, holding her father's hand "He's shaking so much. And he is very hot. What is it?" she pleaded to Alexander.

"I'll get the ship's doctor," he said and looked in her weepy eyes. "Don't worry."

* * *

"Is it bad, doctor?" asked Alexander. William, Mathew and John, the other Thomson children, huddled around him in worried anticipation waiting for the doctor's response as their father lay feverish in his bed.

Little Mary was weeping at her father's side.

The doctor solemnly shook his head. “I’m sorry. I’m so very sorry.”

This was too much for young Charles. He had to leave. Leave the stink and stench of the passenger deck that had become his life to clear his nose and mind.

As soon as he arrived on deck, he heard a scuffle near one of the cargo holds. He turned to see the First Mate beating the young black cabin boy with a small makeshift whip. The poor boy was cowering at the mate’s feet.

“This will teach you to follow orders, scum,” he bellowed. “Now get below and do what I told you to do.” He turned to see Charles staring at him. “What?” he growled.

“I…You...Why did you beat him. He was just a boy?”

The mate slowly walked towards the young Thomson and threatened, “You should mind your own business, Irish bog-jumper.” He slapped the whip against his open hand. “That little nigger deserved it.” He raised his upper lip. “You want more of the same.”

Charles vigorously shook his head.

“Stay below, boy or I’ll throw you to the fish,” he sneered.

Charles knew there was no love lost between the British and Irish, but this was the first time he experienced such prejudice. He lowered his eyes and sulked away.

Stave 3

Burial and Betrayal, Fall of 1739

“We therefore commit the earthly remains of John Thomson to the deep.” Parson Jones read from his King George Bible with one hand, the other securing his sash around his shoulders against the brackish breeze that blew over the ship’s creaking deck. He pointed to the body, wrapped in sailcloth and perched on the railing. Charles, Mary and Alexander emitted guttural sobs and most of the female passengers wept.

Alexander, with Charles close to him, held the young boy with a supportive hand.

“On judgment day, the sea shall give up her dead; and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in Him shall be changed and made unto a glorious body; according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. Amen," Parson Jones said. He nodded at a burly, frowning crewman to release the rope.

As John Thomson's body slid into the churning sea, with the American coastline in sight, the bitter wind filled the sails above. But below, it chilled the tears of the Thomson children and lashed their grief-stricken faces.

After saying a silent prayer, Alexander led Mary and his four brothers, William, Matthew, John and 10-year-old Charles Thomson to their quarters where, each in their thoughts, wondered what would become of them.

Who is going to take care of us now?" asked Charles of Alexander. "How will we eat? Who will wash our clothes?"

The Parson came to them to offer his personal condolences. "On this voyage, I have come to know your father well. He was a good man. A good father and he loved you all so much. I know there is a special place in heaven for him."

"Thank you, Parson," Alexander said.

The Parson nodded and said his goodbyes to each of the children.

When he left, Alexander declared, "We have father's money. We can make do when we arrive. Let's see the captain," he declared, "Father gave it to him for safe keeping on the voyage."

As they left their cabin, they found the First Mate standing outside their door. "Captain Gower wants to speak to you," he snipped at Alexander. "Follow me."

"Wait here," Alexander said to his brothers and sister.

Once in the Captain's cabin, Alexander was brought before a crusty looking elderly man with an unkempt beard that covered most of his lower face. He wheezed when he spoke and the rancid smell of alcohol was upon him.

Alexander felt a shiver down his spine as the British captain scrutinized the oldest Thomson child with the indifferent regard of a merchant inspecting his goods. "I am sorry for the loss of you father," he mumbled unpassionately into his beard.

His dismissive tone made Alexander doubt the captain's sincerity.

"You are now orphans and I have the responsibility for your redemptioning."

"What do you mean redemptioning?" asked Alexander.

"Your father paid for your crossing by selling your family into indentured servitude. Now I have to arrange payment of such servitude when we land."

“That’s a lie!” shouted Alexander. “He paid you for our crossing and had you keep his money in safe keeping.”

The captain laughed. “He had no money.”

“He did. And you *stole* it!”

Captain Gowers’ expression turned from joviality to anger. “You watch your tongue,” he glared. “You are orphans and will be indentured with people who will reimburse the shipping company,” he barked. “You will earn your keep.”

His short stubby body stood up from behind his oak desk. “We dock at New Castle tomorrow. Be ready to leave.”

Stave 4

Sold Into Slavery, Fall of 1739

At the Delaware docks the next morning there was a tearful separation of the Thomson siblings as, one by one, they were portioned out to families that would both care for them and have them work off the debt of their voyage.

“Slave market,” Parson Jones whispered to himself.

“It is what it is, Parson,” the British captain said. He was almost grinning. “Look.” He pointed to the throng of Englishmen, Dutchmen and High-German people from the city and nearby places to the newly arrived ship. “Those in debt for their passage bind themselves in writing to serve 3, 4, 5 or 6 years for the amount due by them, according to their age and strength. Very young persons must serve until they are 21 years of age.”

“And the children?” the Parson asked.

The captain shrugged his shoulders. “Many parents must sell and trade away their children like so many head of cattle. But if their children take the debt upon themselves, the parents can leave the ship free and unrestrained. But as the parents often do not know where and to what people their children are going, it often happens that such parents and children, after leaving the ship, do not see each other again for many years, perhaps, not in all their lives.”

The captain turned back to his ship and said, “As I said. It is what it is. You don’t approve - then change it.”

“Maybe someday or something will,” the Parson replied.

As he watched his brothers and sisters purchased and travel off, Charles stood alone with the First Mate. After a what seemed to Charles an eternity of apprehension, the strapping Mate walked Charles to a waiting man on the dock.

"He may be young," the First Mate said of Charles, speaking to the broad-shouldered muscular man, "but he seems to be quite intelligent." The First Mate placed his gnarly hand on the shoulder of the young boy. "This is Mr. McKee. He's a blacksmith and will take good care of you as long as you earn your keep."

Charles bristled at the word '*keep'*. It sounded like a sign of ownership. And he didn't like it.

"Come along laddie," McKee said, motioning to the young boy and pointing to his carriage.

The First Mate gave Charles a not-so-gentle shove. "Get along."

Charles resigned himself to the situation and obeyed, climbing into the blacksmith's carriage and off to an unexpected and unknown future.

* * *

As the following weeks went by, Charles lived with the blacksmith. McKee lived alone and worked hard long hours filling orders for a variety of metal products. Though McKee treated Charles well, he was a tough taskmaster, making Charles do hard, hot and dirty work.

"The Robson farm needs their iron gate repaired," he said. "I promised them they'll have it today. When will it be finished?" he asked of Charles.

"Soon," Charles replied, wiping the sweat from his brow.

"Earn your keep, boy. Finish it!"

Hearing those words again infuriated the young boy and he slammed the heavy forging hammer on the hinge of the gate.

"Easy boy!" McKee shouted. "You'll break that gate!"

Charles regained his composure and mumbled, "Yes, sir."

A few hours later and his work for the day done, Charles and McKee sat down for a Scottish dinner. More often than not, it was haggis, a meat pudding accompanied by mashed potatoes, 'neeps' and a whisky sauce. The tired boy, hungry after a hard day of forging iron, wolfed it down.

"Easy, boy. You'll get dyspepsia. Your stomach will come up on you."

And just as McKee said that the young boy's tummy seemed to come up his throat. He stood up from the table and ran outside to vomit.

After a few minutes, his constitution now back to normal, he returned to the house. When he revisited the table, McKee was gone – his dinner half eaten. He looked around and heard low voices coming from outside on the porch. He quietly approached the front door and listened in on the conversation.

"Five hundred pounds!" an unrecognized voice exclaimed. "For that little boy?"

"Aye. He's a hard worker," McKee's voice breathed. "I know. He will be an asset to your factory. Besides. I have this debt I have to repay to the bank and…."

"I know of your debt," the stranger's voice replied. "And it's not five hundred pounds. Closer to three hundred."

There was a long pause and what sounded like negotiations that Charles had a hard time hearing.

"Sold," McKee said. "I will deliver the boy in the morning."

Sold?

Charles was angry. Sold like some cow or piece of farming equipment. His skin crawled at the thought. And with a burning determination of a person well beyond his years he thought, *I will not be treated as a slave.*

There was a sound of movement on the porch and Charles hurried back to the dinner table.

McKee sat down and gave the young boy a long stare. "Get to bed, laddie," was all he said.

Charles returned to his room.

Determined to be free, he packed what little clothes he had and waited for McKee to fall asleep. When he sure he would not be noticed, he sneaked out of the house and ran as fast as he could into the moonless night.

Stave 5

Flight to Freedom, Fall of 1739

Not knowing wither he went, not caring where his next step landed, or where his next step would be, Charles kept running through the moonless night. His only thought was to put as much distance between him and his slavery as he could before McKee knew he was gone.

Charles knew of a dense forest a dozen miles or so away that he had passed through delivering iron gates for McKee.

I'll hide there during the day, he thought.

But first he had to get there.

The howling sounds of nature in the night frightened the boy, causing him to shiver on the inside. The mysterious owls and the wailing crickets and the hissing insects were all cautioning him to turn back.

But he couldn't. No matter how frightened he was.

Alone.

In the dark.

It was the knowledge that he was no longer someone's slave that drove him on.

With the orange light of dawn painting the horizon before him, he ran deep into the forest. Exhausted, his legs shaking, his heart pounding and his lungs aching, he needed to find shelter. A place where he could hide and recover his strength.

Trudging through the underbrush of the forest, he spotted a small cave behind a pile of bushes. He entered the shelter as the morning sun peaked over the horizon. *I know they will be looking for me soon*, he thought. "I'll hide in here. If I sleep during the daytime and run at night, maybe they won't catch me," he whispered to himself. He found a small rock to rest his head on, and the cave's soft ground was somewhat comfortable to sleep on.

He was glad to rest and the sound of his heavy breathing and throbbing heart soon gave way to another sound.

The growling of his stomach.

He opened his haversack and pulled out the only food he took with him. Though McKee's kitchen was well provisioned, Charles only took the leftover loaf of bread on the counter. He didn't dare make a noise going through the cupboards and maybe alerting McKee of his actions.

He wolfed what was left of the loaf and tried to settle into sleep. But each time, a strange night forest sound echoed through the cave. Each time his eyes opened wide and he would awake again. But soon fatigue overtook his fears and he fell asleep.

The next morning, as the sun's rays stole its way into the cave. He awoke with a start. There was a rustling of bushes treading his way, passing the giant bushes surrounding his hiding place.

Do they know of this cave? he anxiously thought. He cornered himself into the darkest part of the cave in case someone would peer inside. But the rustling past.

He decided not to risk staying there. He would travel during the day. Besides, he needed food and water and would chance being caught to find them as thirst and hunger drove him on.

As he walked out of the forest and continued on his journey, he passed homes both large and small, dotting farms of corn and tobacco and ranches filled with horses and livestock along his route. Some homes were made of wood and others, a sign of more well to do residents, were constructed of brick and stone.

One small farmhouse surrounded by a low stone fence caught his interest. There was a well off to the side of the house partly hidden by tall cypress trees. He climbed the fence and quietly moved towards the well. Noting no one could be seen, he reached the well and slowly pulled up the wooden bucket from its depths. When the creaking bucket reached the top of the well, he pulled it towards him and cautiously took a drink, satiating his bitter dry thirst.

After a few gulps of water, he backed away from the well and quickly left the small farm.

By noon, he came upon a small village that held the promise of food and more water.

He cautiously entered from a side street and watched as both oxen drawn wooden carts and local inhabitants carrying bags of goods passed him by.

It was a normal farming village with a small church in the center of the hamlet near the market square where farmers had set up booths to sell produce and small merchants peddled their goods. He thought that would be a good place to beg for some food.

He tried to act calm and give the appearance of a resident of the hamlet. Halfway to the square he passed a tavern and a farmer loading his wares onto a wagon from the general store, he halted. Shocked at what he saw. On the outside of the general store, tacked to the wall, was a small paper notice that sent chills down his spine.

It read:

> *Run away, on the 12th instant, from Joseph Jackson, of London Grove, Chester county, an Irish servant man, named William Farrell, of middle stature, and brown complexion: Had on when he went away, a striped flannel jacket, a brown sailor's jacket, a pair of coarse trousers, striped drawers, a felt hat, and a check shirt, his hair cut off, of a dark complexion, and is pock* mark'd*: Whoever takes*

up and secures the said servant, so that their masters may have them again, shall have Six Pounds reward, and reasonable charges, paid by JOSEPH JACKSON.

My God, he thought. *My name will be on one of these.*

And just as that thought struck him, a voice from across the street boomed, “Hey! You!”

Charles turned and the voice roared, “Yes. You! Who are you?”

Charles started to back away from the stout man dressed in grungy pants and work shirt soiled in sweat and dirt from hard work on a farm. *Does he think I’m a runaway?*

“I said who are you?” the farmer bellowed. “Where do you live?”

Charles’ hesitant steps turned into a trot, and he quickly moved back down the street. He didn’t dare look behind him and prayed he wouldn’t be chased. Within minutes he was out of the village and on the dirt, road leading out of town.

After several minutes of running, and assured that he wasn’t being followed, he stopped by the side of the road to catch his breath. Tired, hungry and frightened, Charles remembered what he was told by McKee.

“If you ever try and run away,” he said, *“you will pay dearly when you are captured and brought back to me. Even if you are away for just one day, you must serve for it as a punishment a week longer of your indenturedtude . Longer, for a week away, a month, and for a month away, half a year.”*

The young lad, realizing what his fate might be, sat down at the side of the road - and cried.

But he stopped when he heard the sound of oncoming wheels.

They followed me! And he stood up to run but his legs were like jelly, and he collapsed in the road – weeping.

He looked up to see the sound of wheels belonged to an ornate carriage pulled by a handsome white horse. *Maybe he had died and it was sent to bring him to heaven?*

Charles was right in one respect. It was a gift from heaven.

The carriage stopped at Charles and a beautiful mature lady exited and walked over to the boy. He was bewitched by her poise and beauty as she held out her hand and helped the sobbing boy to his feet. “Why do you cry?”

His answered was unexpected by the unknown woman.

“I ran way. I refuse to be another man’s slave,” Charles wept. “People should not be forced to provide labor. It’s obscene and morally unjust!” He expressed, through tears, these lofty sentiments to a stranger.

The woman was impressed with the noble words and thoughts of such a young boy. “If you don’t like being a slave, what would you like to do with your life.”

“I would like to be a scholar.”

“A scholar, you say?” she said in surprise.

“Yes. And gain my self-support by my mind and pen. I would like to study and be an educated person. Educated people have the ability to help others and make life better. I want to make significant changes to the world. Good changes.”

“Well young man,” the refined woman said, “To do that you need to have influential, wealthy friends and allies in order to make changes for the good in this world. Wealthy people are in a position to help noble minded persons.”

“Yes. I would like that.”

The wealthy lady nodded. “You have heart young man and a brain to go with it.”

Charles wiped the tears from his eyes and smiled.

“Come with me. If you are serious, I will take it upon myself to give you the education you seek. The world needs people like you.” She put a comforting hand on the boy’s shoulder and led him to her carriage.

Entr'acte Two

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1827

“So. Who was this lady. Who was Thomson’s benefactor?” asked Seth.

“I don’t know. Charles never told me. Her name is lost to history.”

Drummond relit his pipe. “His time at the school gave him a classical education. And a second run in with British bigotry. This is when he was introduced to the writings of famous philosophers on Natural Law and the chance to debate this thinking with British students at the school and solidified his belief in the rights of an individual not to be overridden by any artificial authority – to include rule of royalty.”

Drummond laughed. "He would always have his long nose in some arcane publication that was beyond my comprehension. But the instructor's there saw something in him that others did not."

"So, he was pretty much an academician then," noted Seth.

"No. Not totally. There was a practical side to Charles, too." Drummond skewed his head as to search for something in his mind. "Not to quote him exactly, but I remember something he said. About finding influential friends if you wanted to exact changes for good in this world."

"And did he?"

"Oh, yes. Eventually. But first let me continue with his education at the prestigious school." He looked askance at Seth. "You are putting this down? Correct?"

"Every word," Seth replied enthusiastically.

"Good. Now. This is when I personally met Charles Thomson and my experiences with him.

Stave 6

The Francis Allen School in New London, Pennsylvania, Fall, 1743

"It looks like the Irish is to send all of themselves here," snarked Howard Kent.

"They're like a plague in this province," added Kent's classmate, George Winchester.

"And the Scotts are no better," added Kent.

There caustic remarks were meant to be overheard by Charles and his Scottish friend Michael Drummond – and anyone else in the Academy's lunchroom.

"British arses," Charles growled.

"Let them be, Charles," cautioned Drummond. Both he and Charles had become fast friends at the New London school of late. Drummond himself came from a wealthy Scottish family from New York.

But Charles had had enough of Kent's bigoted remarks. From day one, he had been insulting Charles and his heritage. This time, it was enough. He tossed his coffee onto the table and moved towards Kent.

Kent saw him coming and said, “You have something to say, bogtrotter.” He stood up from the table, his buff, six-foot height matched the lanky height of Charles.

Charles, a strapping youth of twenty, with a furrowed face and black flashing eyes, bored into Kent. “Plague, huh?” he snarled, clenching his fist.

Seeing the situation may get out of hand, Drummond walked over to Charles, restraining him. “Now. Now. We are supposed to be gentleman,” he said, holding the sleeve of Charles’ waist coat.

Charles raised his upper lip and said to Kent, “An arrogant people that make slaves of the world are no gentlemen,” he snapped.

That moment, Francis Allen, the school’s proprietor, entered the dining hall. He quickly picked up on the situation not unfamiliar to him. He was quite aware of the British students’ personal opinions. He walked over to Kent and Winchester. “Didn’t I tell you to keep your private prejudices to yourselves?”

The two Brits eyed Charles and Drummond, then moved back to their seats.

“And you two,” Allen said, addressing Charles and Drummond, “stay away from them.”

“Let’s go,” Drummond said, pulling on his best friend’s sleeve. “I lost my appetite.”

Drummond left with Charles in tow for the tree covered elms of the quadrangle beneath a clear cloudless sky beside the stately red brick building of the Academy. It was really an old mansion that Allen converted into the private school – a school for boys from wealthy families. At this time, the only means of education in the middle colonies was to be found in the academies. There were no colleges in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania or Maryland.

They found a small metal bench and sat down.

“Sometimes, Charles, I feel you don’t like it here. This is an elite school. We are privileged to have a classical education, tutored in the Roman and Greek Classics, mathematics, logic, philosophy and Latin. After our education here, we have the education and contacts to become prominent either in the church or in the councils of the colonies.”

“Yes. I know,” Charles replied. He placed his hand on Drummond’s back. “I’ve learned that nobody can survive on his own. One needs to have influential, wealthy friends and allies in order to make significant changes for good in this world. And that’s what I want to do. The fathers of the students here are politicians and businessman. They are in a position to help noble-minded persons realize their noble-minded goals.” He gazed up into the sky. “That is why I am here. I want to make a difference in the world.”

The two sat silently for a while. Then Drummond asked, “You never told me how you came to the school. You are not from a wealthy family.”

Charles grinned. “You want the whole story?”

Drummond nodded.

Charles went on to tell his story of leaving Ireland, the voyage across the Atlantic, his father dying in route, the British captain stealing his family’s money and then he and his brothers and sister being sold into slavery.

“I can see now, why there is no love lost between you and the British. But how did you afford such an education.”

“I had a benefactor. A woman who believed in me and paid for my education up to the Academy.”

“So, your distaste for the British goes deeper than what that British sea captain did to you and your family.”

Charles paused. “Yes. You’re from New York. I don’t know if your colony is Royal or Proprietary.”

“It was first founded as a proprietary colony under the ownership of James, the Duke of York, and stayed that way until 1685. Now it’s a Royal colony.”

“Pennsylvania is Proprietary,” Charles replied. “The land is owned by private landowners and retain the rights that are normally the privilege of the state. But there is an anti-proprietary element that wants to see all the colonies Royal. Under the authority of the King.” He took a deep breath and clinched his fists. “Kent and his ilk would love to see that.”

The two young men sat in silence for a while then Charles said, “I don’t trust the British and believe a reckoning will happen someday.”

Stave 7

The Francis Allen School in New London, Pennsylvania, Winter, 1743

“Philosophy class tomorrow,” stated Drummond, sitting in Charles bedroom. He placed his hands behind his head and leaned against a large sham covered in a paisley duvet. “I enjoy the banter there in Dr. Abrams’ class.” He noticed Charles leafing through some papers. “What do you have there?”

“Not enough,” he replied with a frustrating retort. “There are pieces missing from this article. I wanted to present it in class!”

“Let me see.” Drummond reached over and took some loose leaves of a small newsprint called *The Spectator*. “What is this?”

"It's sort of a philosophy and morals publication for the average scholar – and you don't have to be an academician to write for it." He paused a beat. "It was just published for two years. 1711 to1712." He read from the Masthead on the loose leaf. "*The Spectator* will aim to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality."

He smiled at Drummond. "It sought to provide readers with topics for well-reasoned discussion, and to equip them to carry on conversations and engage in social interactions in a polite manner. And in keeping with the values of Enlightenment philosophies of their time, *The Spectator* promoted family, marriage, and courtesy."

Drummond shook his head and grinned. "Charles. You have an insatiable thirst for learning." He then read on one of the leaves, "Miss Simcox on Natural Law. You are going do a presentation on Natural Law?"

"Yes. I've been reading Thomas Aquinas and…"

"Thomas Aquinas?" He shook his head. "You read the most arcane material."

Charles ignored Drummond's interruption. "….and he posits that Natural Laws are defined by morality and not by an authority, like a king or a government. In short, any law that is good is moral, and any moral law is good."

"So, what does this woman Simcox have to do with it?" puzzled Drummond.

"The author advances the theory that Natural Law is in no need of a deity." Charles scratched his chin. "But I have only half of the article. I need the rest to follow her position."

"So where are you going to find it?"

"In Philadelphia. I'm leaving tonight."

"How?"

"I'll walk."

"But we have Dr. Abrams' class in the morning."

"I'll be back by then." And he picked up his small rucksack and headed for the door.

As he left, Charles didn't notice Kent standing outside the building.

* * *

Charles walked all night and by late morning, he had reached Philadelphia. He liked the bustling city of 25,000 inhabitants with its streets laid out with great regularity in parallel lines, intersected by others at right angles, flanked by handsomely built structures. On each side there was a tree lined pavement of broad stones for foot passengers and, in most of them, causeway in the middle for carriages.

He saw examples of splendid edifices, daily construction of new houses and ships, and the abundance of provisions in the marketplaces. But the strongest reason why there is such an influx of people from other provinces is partly due to the liberty which all strangers enjoy in commerce, belief and settlement, as each one understands it. And this liberty warmed the heart of Charles.

There was only one thing missing. There were no warehouses of arms nor any method of defense either for the city or Province in case of the invasion of an enemy. This was owed to the determination of the Quakers to maintain their principle of non-violence.

He stopped into a local pub, refreshed himself with dark lager, then acquired information to the City Hall. It was unseasonably hot but a cool breeze from the seaport made the temperature tolerable.

When he arrived at City Hall, a two-story solid brick building capped by a gleaming white tower, he asked for the reference desk. He was quickly escorted to a rather old but stately woman sitting at a broad wooded desk. “I would like to see a past issue of a newsprint called *The Spectator*. It went out of business in 1712.”

She looked up at Charles with tired eyes through small round spectacles. “Anything that old, young man, may be found at the Library Company. You’ll find it on Fifth Street facing the State House Square.”

Charles thanked her, hurriedly left, and he soon arrived at the Library.

“May I help you?” An elderly gentleman dressed in a short back waistcoat and white shirt greeted Charles seated at the entrance.

Charles noticed he smelled of pipe tobacco and had small burn marks on his jacket. “I am looking for a past issue of *The Spectator*. An article entitled *Miss Simcox on Natural Law.* It was published in 1711. I’m a student at Francis Allen School in New London and need to see it for my research.”

“Hmm...” the gentleman said. “Have a seat there and wait.”

Charles complied and seated himself under several pictures of the library and peoples, he assumed, connected with it. On the small table to his side was a pamphlet that read ‘The Library Company, Founding and History’. He opened it up and leafed through the pages and learned that the library was formed by a group called *Junto* lead by Benjamin Franklin as its founder.

Benjamin Franklin, he thought. *I think he's on the board of the Academy*. He would have to look into this further when he returned to the school.

Almost an hour passed when the stuffy gentleman returned with a leaf of paper in his hand. "I believe this is what you want." He handed it to Charles. "You can't take it with you but there are a desk and chair in the study room behind you. You can read it there."

Charles thanked the gentleman and proceeded to the room.

An hour or so later, with his notes in hand, he left the library to return to school.

* * *

"Where is Charles?" asked Michael 'Fitz' Fitzgerald of Drummond. He wiped his brow against the unseasonal heat in the classroom room.

As to echo Fitz's question, Dr. Abrams asked of the class, "Does anyone know where Master Charles Thomson is?"

"He left last night, Sir," shouted Kent. "Without permission."

"Thank you, Master Kent. But in the future keep your opinions to yourself."

At that moment, Charles entered the classroom. "I'm sorry, Sir, that I am behind my time."

"Where were you?"

"In Philadelphia, Sir. Doing research for my presentation today," Charles said as he took his seat.

"Perhaps you would like to be first?"

"Yes, Sir," Charles said eagerly. He took out his notes and stood at the head of the class. "I want to start by saying Natural Rights are derived from Natural Law and should be the basis of government and liberal politics. And these rights are given to us by God and not by Man. Natural law theories hold that human beings are subject to a moral law. Morality is fundamentally about duty, the duty each individual has to abide by the natural law."

He went on. "John Locke speaks of a state of nature where men are free, equal, and independent. He championed the social contract and government by consent. Government must respect the rights of individuals."

Abrams sat back in his chair behind his instructor's desk and puffed on his pipe. "Does anyone have a counter argument?" He liked to stay out of the discussions and have his class debate.

“I do,” Kent replied and stood up. “That’s your interpretation, Thomson. Thomas Hobbs has a different view. He believed, and I fully agree, that the only form of government strong enough to hold humanity's cruel impulses in check was an absolute monarchy, where a king wields supreme and absolute power over his subjects.”

“You would believe something like that, Kent,” Drummond remarked.

“Personal attacks,” Abrams stated, is not an argument, Master Drummond. Go on, Master Thomson.”

“My reply to Master Kent is this. Hobbes argues that freedom and equality, and the priority of individual rights mean that individuals in the state of nature could pursue their survival and interest without limitation. They had no duty to respect the rights of others.” He could see Kent nodding in approval. “This is why Hobbs’ state of nature was a state of war.”

Charles looked over at Abrams for a reaction.

Abrams was stoned faced.

Charles went on. “But Locke’s claim is that individuals have a duty to respect the rights of others, even in the state of nature. The source of this duty, he says, is Natural Law.” He took a deep breath and almost snarled. “The view of Natural Law of Hobbs leads us to the arrogance of Royalty today.”

Kent jumped from his seat. “Sir! I take issue with your opinion of the King!” Kent was fuming.

“All right, gentleman,” Abrams stated. “Let’s keep our tempers in reign. We will agree to disagree. Remember. In this class we seek clarity not agreement.”

* * *

That afternoon, Charles wanted an answer to a pressing question, so he visited the office of Dr. Abrams.

“Come in. Have a seat,” Abrams said puffing on a thin reed pipe.

Charles sat opposite his teacher, took a breath and began. “I have a question, Sir. According to my private studies of Natural Law, it was introduced as a philosophical idea by Thomas Aquinas. A Catholic theologian.”

“Correct.”

“So, my question is this. From where did he draw this secular knowledge?”

“From the Holy Scriptures,” Abram replied.

Charles gave this some thought. Then said, “If such men drew their understanding from the Scriptures, then I shall apply directly to the same source, instead of taking knowledge at second hand."

“So, you intend to become a minister after graduation?” This was a different side of one of his prime students.

“No. But I will do a careful study now of the Bible and use it as a foundation of my studies. I will also use those studies to teach others as myself. I want to share my good fortune of the education I received.” He stood up to leave. “Thank you, Sir.”

“Wait.” Abrams said. “Now I have a question for you. You have very strong beliefs and the desire to fight for individual freedom. I know something of your background and can see why. Sit down.” He relit his pipe. “Some of us feel that the times we live in will soon force us to make a choice and I think you sense this.”

“What do you mean?”

Abrams searched for the right words. “Charles. In every critical epoch of history there are two forces at work. The one attracting the admiration of the country by superior statesmanship and one attracted to the thrilling deeds of valor on the battlefield. The former is the steady influence guiding the destinies of the State in the hour of peril.” He paused for effect. “Charles. You have the drive of the former force. But not as a warrior but as a strong will to the country. Do you understand?”

“Yes. No. Maybe. I don’t know.”

Abrams stood up and placed his hand on his student’s shoulder. “You will... In time.”

Stave 8

Philadelphia, Offices of the Pennsylvania Gazette, Summer, 1754

“Sir?” a balding impish man wearing short length pants fastened at the knee over long woolen socks, topped by a sleeveless jacket and leather shoes peeked his head into Danial Whitaker’s office - Chief Editor of the Pennsylvania Gazette. “Michael Drummond is here.”

“Good. Send him in.”

Drummond strode in and sat in the chair indicated by Whitaker. “You wanted to see me?”

“Yes. I have an assignment for you.” He rustled some papers on his large, long oak desk. It took up most of the space in his sparse office. “This should be up one’s own province. You did

a research paper at that Academy you attended, the Francis Allen School, about the Ohio Territory controversy?"

"Yes, sir. Both the French and British say they own it. The Royal Governor of Virginia, Dunwiddie, was a stockholder in the Ohio Company and the French are encouraging on his territory."

"Well. He needs someone to tell the French to cease and desist their activities there. They're putting a crimp in his business," he smirked. "God forgive that he is doing this out of the responsibilities of his office." He rifled through his desk draw looking for something as he said, "He is sending someone who knows the five hundred miles of mountains, rivers, and forests full of Indians in between." He looked at a sheet of paper he found in his desk. "Ah here. His name I am told is a young officer named George Washington. He has been assigned as a diplomat to tell the French to politely desist. He carried a cease and desist message from the King to the Frenchman Legardeur St. Pierre."

"And…?"

Unfortunately, the King's request was rejected. The Frenchman replied, 'As to the summons you send me to retire, I do not think myself obliged to obey it.'

"Well. He replied politely," Drummond smiled.

Whitaker scratched his light beard. "Things are going to get worse. Dunwiddie gave Washington an army of 300 to build a fort on the Ohio River to keep the French out. I want you to go there and report what happens."

Drummond turned to leave when Whitaker said, "Wait. I've been meaning to ask you something."

"And what is that?"

"With your education, why waste it on a correspondent's job? You could have been a minster or a teacher or a businessman – or even went into politics?"

Drummond thought back. "Years ago, at school, I had perchance to meet at an inter-collegiate debate with a certain John Adams who was attending Harvard at the time. He was quite the intellectual. Anyway, we discussed our futures, and I asked him what his plans would be after his studies. He replied, 'Doing things that matter with people that matter.' So here I am."

***

Drummond arrived at the fort that was named Fort Necessity.

If you could call it a fort.

It was actually a small storage shed to keep supplies from being stolen by Washington's own men. It was surround by a tall makeshift wall of cut timbers. And was already filling with water from early rains. Drummond wondered that if attacked, could it really repel an attacking army.

He stopped one of the troops and asked, "Soldier. I'm looking for Major Washington. Where can I find him?"

The young soldier pointed to a large tent over his shoulder. "There." And went back to hauling timbers for the fort's wall.

As he approached the tent, Washington came hurrying out barking orders to a young officer no younger than Washington behind him. "A group of French-Canadians are approaching. We'll take fifty men to the French-Canadian camp. Since they have rejected the King's plea for them to leave peacefully, we will use other means."

"Sir?" Drummond interrupted, "My name is Michael Drummond. A correspondent for …."

"Not now." Washington said gruffly, pushing him aside. "If you want to report, come with us."

A half-hour later, Washington and his men were standing outside the French-Canadian camp. The French-Canadian saw Washington approach and began shouting at them in French and moving towards Washington.

"What are they saying? I don't speak French," Washington declared while his soldiers raised their rifles.

With no knowledge of what the French-Canadians were shouting, Washington ordered his men to open fire. They shot at least ten of the French-Canadians to death and took the others prisoner in a bloody fifteen-minute battle. Among the slaughtered was the French ambassador, Joseph Coulon de Jumonville."

"My God!" Drummond said to the young Washington. "You launched an unprovoked attack on some peaceful Canadians! And killed a French ambassador too."

"The Canadians' intentions were hostile." Washington insisted. "I heard the bullets whistle."

But realizing what he had done, Washington ordered them back to Fort Necessity to await and almost assured retaliatory attack by the French-Canadians.

And that's exactly what happened. A French army of 700-strong attacked Washington's three hundred men in the fort. The fort was too shoddy to successfully repel an overwhelming

force. Fort Necessity was too small to hold the men and was completely exposed to attacks from higher ground. Worse yet, it was quickly filling with water as rain poured down.

Washington was forced to surrender and the French agreed to let Washington and his men go if he signed a paper that was in French.

Entr'acte Three

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1827

"You mentioned that Thomson would meet the influential people he was looking for," said Seth.

Drummond nodded. "After graduation, Charles was hired as a teacher by the Quakers at their school. And this is when he met one of the most influential people of the time. Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was so impressed with Charles that he asked him to apply his fastidious skills at research and writing to a study that he wanted done."

"What study?" Seth asked.

"The Delaware Indians were being swindled out of their land by the British and the Pennsylvania Proprietors. Franklin asked Charles to do a study of all the treaties with the Indians and report. Franklin asked Charles to attend a Treaty hearing in Eaton and at this meeting he was exposed firsthand to the bigotry shown by the Pennsylvania Proprietors and their disregard for the treaties they have had with the Indians."

Drummond continued. "The chief of the Delawares was so impressed with Charles at the hearing that he asked him to represent them in the matter. In fact, the chief, I can't recall his name at this moment, gave him an Indian title. The 'Man who speaks the truth'."

How did the British secretary holding the hearing feel about that?"

Drummond laughed. "I'll get to that." He paused in thought. "The Indians were one of many groups that he came to the defense of against arbitrary authority that he had both experienced and desired to change. He dedicated himself to making things right."

Stave 9

Philadelphia, Summer, 1757

"You've all had time to review your assigned readings in Greek Philosophy," Charles Thomson declared looking down his excessively long nose. His six-foot lean frame towered over the thirty-eight boys that early morning seated around the large classroom table at the Quaker School in Philadelphia.

This was his second teaching position with the Quakers at their school at 4th and Chestnut Streets. He enjoyed teaching the Classics of Latin, Literature and Philosophy – especially those that supported his positions on human rights and freedom.

"Mr. McCartney. What was the Sophist School of Greek philosophy and what was their position on human rights?"

The young Irishman stood up and replied, "Sir. The Sophist School argued that all human beings are equal in nature."

"Good." Charles turned his attention to the Scotsman seated on his left. "And why is that important?"

The young man stood up and confidently replied, "Laws and institutions that failed to respect basic equality are contrary to nature."

George Whitcomb, and Englishman sitting near the Scotsman shifted in his seat.

Charles noticed the Englishman's discontent. "Do you have something to add, Mr. Whitcomb?"

"Yes, I do, sir."

"Then stand when you address me."

Whitcomb reluctantly stood. "We forget that we live in the real world."

"And that world is?"

"Economics. Not everyone is equal. Some are property."

"You mean slaves."

"Yes, Sir. We came to these colonies in search of and to secure the right of property. You, sir, of all should know that. Your father died on his way here to secure property for himself and his family. It is only natural."

"And the British have profited immensely from your position. Your slavery to be precise," Thomson said. He went on. "The Negros are not property, sir. They are people treated as property. But Natural Law on Human rights supersedes your "natural" moral, religious or even biological order." Charles calmly fingered the chain of his breast watch. "Natural Law is independent of transitory human laws or traditions." He stared at Whitcomb. "But you disagree."

Whitcomb mumbled something and sat down.

Charles addressed the class. His white silken sash around his throat bellowed as he took a deep breath. “The foundations for living together as human beings are liberty, equality and justice. Just as Aristotle has postured.” His eyes rested on Whitcomb. “Regardless of what the Crown dictates.”

Whitcomb bristled and was about to respond when the School’s Headmaster entered the room.

“That will be enough for today,” Charles stated to the class. “We’ll take this up next week.” He dismissed the class and turned to the headmaster who had a grin on his face. “I have something for you,” he said, and handed Charles a letter with his thin boney hand. “I think you were waiting for this.”

Charles held the letter in his hand, looked at the return address – and smiled.

“Good news, I hope?” the headmaster asked.

“Yes. It’s from Benjamin Franklin. He’s accepted my request to meet with him next Monday.”

“Congratulations. I trust as a representative of our school you will represent yourself in the proper light.”

Charles nodded. “I need to gather some papers of mine for my meeting with him. I won’t be at Monday’s class.”

“Understood. And good luck.”

***

“Come in, Master Thomson,” a frumpy mid-aged man with long hair cascading down, side by side, from a half-bald head. He was dressed in a grey traditional three-piece suit of the day, sitting on an over-stuffed chair resting a lame leg on a small foot stool in front of him. A cane leaned against a small table near him. “Pardon me if I don’t get up to greet you. This leg has been a particular bother today. Damn gout,” he grumbled

“Thank you for seeing me, Dr. Franklin. Please call me Charles like our time at the Academy.” He opened his leather worn briefcase and started to pull out sheets of paper. “I have some papers here that I want to discuss with you.”

Franklin laughed. “Slow down, Charles. We have all afternoon. Your reputation of being headstrong is well earned.” Franklin shifted in his seat to make his leg more comfortable. “Now. Take a seat near me.” Franklin nodded to a small chair next to him. “Tell me. What have you been up to since graduating from the Academy?”

Charles put the papers back in his briefcase and complied. “For several years or so, teaching at the Quaker schools. In between I tried my hand at commerce. A distillery, part owner

of an iron works and such. But teaching gives me the chance to give young men the opportunity that I had."

"Did you enjoy life as a businessman?"

"Somewhat. But I am more interested in using my knowledge in politics. That's why I wanted to meet with you. You are a very influential man and I must make wealthy, elite friends so I can have a political career. I want such a career because certain things need to change in our society. Like slavery and Indian land issues."

"That's very admirable of you."

Charles gave the noted intellectual a serious stare. "I would like your advice about careers in government. I am eager to serve our nation."

"Nation, you say?"

"Yes. Someday the colonies will be faced with the challenge of independence and I want to be part and parcel of that process."

"Hmm…" Franklin mused. "Independence, you say. That's a very bold statement and such a position could be viewed as treason, I might add."

Charles knew what Franklin meant. "I know, sir, that your approach to dealing with political issues is different from mine. You are more often than not, charming, tactful, political and people-pleasing and you dislike public debating. On the other hand, there are times when an intellectual and aggressive approach is called for."

"With little tact, I would say?"

Charles did not respond to Franklin's backhanded compliment. He reached into his briefcase and started to pull out sheets of paper. "I have here writings that support …."

But Franklin cut him off. "Charles. I did not ask you here to discuss politics or the future of the colonies, but I will grant you the support you need to meet the influential people you mentioned. You are invited to join my exclusive discussion group. The Junto. You will meet and interact with influential men of Philadelphia. You'll join them to dine, drink wine, and discuss philosophy, the issues of the day, and politics and new ideas with the men who could forward your career. But if you want me to help you in your political endeavors, you need to help me."

Franklin placed his hand on Thomson's arm.

"How can *I* help you?" Charles puzzled.

"Your analysis of our approaches to an issue is correct. I need the type you can provide. I need someone intellectual with attention to detail - and aggressive on an issue." Franklin groaned

as he leaned into Thomson. “I want you on a special Commission.” He leaned back on his chair holding his leg. “If you want to find justice for the Indians, if you want to fight against bigotry, then this Commission will further those goals.”

Charles eagerly nodded his head. “What do you want me to do?”

“The land agreement with the Delaware Nation Indians evicted them from the hunting grounds of the ridges of the Appalachian Mountains and they are taking revenge on the settlers. The conflict can turn into all-out war. I want you to look into the agreement and write a report on who is at fault with the Indian uprising. Find out how the Indians are being treated.”

Franklin paused looking for the right words. “The Penn family’s group who has control of the Pennsylvania Assembly are in negotiations with the Indians. The Treaty of Easton. Have you heard of it?”

“Yes. There is much dispute over it.”

“Good. Now, the Pennsylvania Assembly refuses to pay taxes for the militia to safeguard the frontier from something they may have created. I want you to sort this out and find the truth.” He paused. “See this appointment as your first taste politics. Believe me, Charles, you will soon understand what politics is all about and maybe at the end, you may see that my studied approach to issues is also valuable.” He gently pulled his leg from the footstool. “Do this for me, Charles?”

Charles enthusiastically agreed.

“Good. Do you know of Israel Pemberton and the Friendly Association?”

“Yes. I’ve seen Mr. Pemberton around the School.”

“I want you to go to Easton. See a Mr. Pemberton. He’s expecting you this afternoon.”

“That’s a way from Philadelphia.”

“Then you should be moving,” Franklin jabbed.

Stave 10

Easton, Summer, 1757

“Mr. Pemberton will see you now,” the middle-aged receptionist of the Friendly Association blandly stated. “Through that door.” She pointed a long finger without leaving her eyes off the scribblings of the legal pad on her desk.

Charles entered Pemberton’s office and heard him say,” Ah, Good. You’re here. We haven’t much time. The meeting will be starting soon. We’ll talk as we walk.”

"Walk where?" Charles inquired.

"To the meeting." Pemberton gathered up some documents off his desk and led Charles out of his office.

As they walked the cobblestone street towards the Parson Taylor House where the meeting was held, they passed by the Great Square lined with age old oak trees and a favorite gathering place for residents and travelers. "That's the County Courthouse," Pemberton said pointing out brick building on his right. "Very regal looking now but before that it was known as a ruckus tavern no stranger to many a drunken brawl."

They walked a little further and Pemberton asked," What do you know of the Walking Purchase of 1747 between the British and the Lenape tribe of Delaware?"

"I am not familiar with it."

"I'm not surprised. The British would rather see that swept under the rug. But It's come to a head now." Pemberton pulled out a white handkerchief and wiped his brow. "August heat," he commented.

He went on. "Briefly, the purchase agreement was between the Penn family, the proprietors of Pennsylvania, and the Lenape. It was agreed that the land area of the purchase would consist of how far a man could walk in one and half days. About 113 kilometers from the start. Now, the Lenape leaders assumed that about 60 kilometers was the longest distance that could be covered under these conditions. But the Provincial Secretary by the name of James Logan hired the three fastest runners in the colony that he could find – and made the run – not a walk - over a prepared trail."

Charles furrowed his brow. This type of British swindling of the Indians was no surprise to him.

"As you could imagine," Pemberton went on, "the area covered for the purchase far exceeded what the Lenape expected, and it included their favorite hunting grounds. It's been a thorn in the side of the Lenape and has led to Treaty discussions here in Easton with a Delaware Chief who calls himself the *King of the Delawares*. His name is Teedyuscung."

The two men stopped in front of the Parson Tylor House - a small two-story stone building that acted as the Town Hall. "Follow me in and just watch the proceedings."

Within a few minutes, Charles and Pemberton were seated in a small stuffy conference room with two officials of the Prudential Governor, Secretary Logan and a tall, stately looking Indian wearing his ceremonial clothing. "That's Teedyuscung," Pemberton whispered, nodding towards the Chief. He paused a moment and commented, "The Chief doesn't look well."

"He's not sick," Charles surmised, watching Teedyuscung sway in his seat. "He looks drunk." He glanced over the British officials. They were smiling.

Pemberton saw the angry glare growing on his friend's face. He nudged Charles as to say this is not the time or place.

The conference was in full swing and Charles and Pemberton had walked into fiery discussion. "You're late," growled Logan at Pemberton." He was definitely distraught. "I'm not going to sit here and listen to these charges against the Pennsylvania Proprietors from that…that, Indian." He threw his pen down." I will not be party to this persecution. Find another Secretary." He glared at Pemberton.

"We have. By request," Pemberton calmly replied.

"Requested by whom?" the Provincial Secretary snarled. "Who?"

Pemberton motioned at Charles. "He was requested by Teedyuscung. He is asserting his right to have a secretary of his own."

"And who is he? What are his qualifications?"

"His qualifications are that he's been chosen to represent the negotiations as Secretary under my recommendation to Chief Teedyuscung. He will take the notes of these proceedings."

Charles was surprised but smartly chose to hold his tongue and discuss the unforeseen development with Pemberton later.

The proceedings went on for another hour with Teedyuscung fighting the urge to doze off and Charles becoming more and more infuriated with the manipulations of the Chief by the British. His secretarial recordings of the Teedyuscung's comments by the interpreter became darker and more confused. He realized that the British intended to keep the Chief drunk during the proceedings and were resolute to have the Chief unfit to say anything worthy of being recorded by the Secretary.

The conference ended and everyone vacated the room but Charles, Pemberton and Teedyuscung.

The Chief addressed Charles. "Pemberton," he said in broken English, "said you honorable man. Said you would be fair with Lenape and tell truth."

Charles nodded.

"We want you to write a fair and detailed report of what has happened to the Lenape," added Pemberton. "We want you to research and write a report on how the Indians were treated by The British and the Proprietors of Pennsylvania."

Teedyuscung stood up and placed his hand on Charles' shoulder. "Wegh-wu-law-mo-end'" he said softly. And left the room.

"What did he say?" Charles asked.

Pemberton smiled. "He called you *'The man who tells the truth'*. Wear that emblem proudly."

Charles did and was later adopted by the tribe of the Delawares.

Entr'acte Four

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1827

"*So how was Thomson's report on the Delaware Indian problem received?" asked Seth.*

Drummond gave a haughty laugh. "He didn't hold anything back. His report was filled with controversy."

"How?"

"Let's say everyone's bull was gored. The British. The Pennsylvania Proprietors. Even George Washington."

"George Washington?" Seth said in shock.

"Yes. He pretty much accused the young Major of contributing to the start of the French and Indian War."

"That must have raised a hornet's nest."

"But his thorn in the side of the establishment didn't end there. It was only the start of his social justice career. In fact, he took a stand on colonial independence long before our founding fathers did. He spoke treason and he knew it, while Franklin and the others tried a more tactful way. But that wasn't Charles. He went even further."

Seth was scribbling frantically in his notes. "How?"

"His thoughts had turned to actions. Remember the Boston Tea Party? It wasn't called that then, but it lit a flame of defiance in Charles. He became the leader of the Pennsylvania Sons of Liberty and made his mark on a British merchant ship filled with tea. That's how he was named the Samuel Adams of Philadelphia."

"But how…?"

"All in good time. Let me continue."

Stave 11

Philadelphia, Junto Offices, Winter, 1760

"Dr. Franklin," the be-speckled silver haired secretary announced, "Mr. Charles Thomson is here."

"Very good," Franklin said from behind his small ornate oak writing desk. "Please show him in, Betsy.

A beat later, Charles entered the sparse room. A small iron stove that Franklin had invented sat in the corner warming the interior.

"Come in, Charles. Have a seat by me."

"Thank you, Dr. Franklin. I came as soon as I could."

"Please, Charles. I've asked you to call me Ben."

"Of course." Charles noticed Franklin's foot. "Your foot must be better. You're sitting behind your desk."

"Good days and bad days," Franklin said. "This is a good day." He lifted a report from the left of his desk. It read *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Alienation of the Delaware and Shawnee Indians from the British Interest*. "I want to talk to you about this." He opened it and leafed through the report. "Very thorough. As to be expected from you. You did not disappoint me. But…" and he paused.

"But what?"

"Well. You didn't hold anything back."

"I wanted to tell the truth. In your own words, Ben. 'Half a truth is a great lie'."

Franklin chuckled. "Yes. It is. But you know the truths you have reported on will be filled with controversy – especially for you."

Charles ignored the remark. "You wanted a detailed, well researched study and I have provided it. Whose ox it gored is not my concern."

"Tact is not one of your better virtues, Charles," Franklin laughed. "He looked at the margin notes he had written on the first few pages. "You accuse the Pennsylvania proprietors of cheating the Indians."

“Yes. I did extensive research on all Indian treaties and deeds back decades and surmised that the Indians have been tricked into losing their land. Furthermore, these activities and those supported by the British were short cited, opening the door for the French and subsequently, leading to the current French and Indian War.”

“And you believe that the thievery of the Indian land by the Pennsylvania proprietors and British has led the Indians to embrace the French, thinking they would get their land back.”

“Precisely. And more.”

“More?”

“The report speaks to that. The mistreatment of the Indians. Including that of Major George Washington. He treated them like slaves.”

“Yes. I saw that,” Franklin said thumbing through the report. “Incompetent too, you say.”

“Yes. According to Michael Drummond, an old friend of mine at the Pennsylvania Gazette and who was there - you may remember him? He was a classmate at the Francis Allen School in New London.

Franklin nodded.

“Anyway, Virginia, after receiving the news of the incident, declared victory and made Washington a hero. Washington was victorious for his win in the opening ambush, and he was a hero for surviving and bringing home some of his men after facing such a superior enemy. But Drummond reported exactly what happened to me. He assassinated a French diplomat because Washington couldn’t speak French. He didn’t understand their cries that they were on a peaceful mission to ask the British to back off, essentially the same purpose as Washington’s earlier journey. He was sent to the Ohio Territory by the Pennsylvania Proprieties to do the same with the French. And to make matters worse, he signed a confession—in French, which he could not read—to Ambassador Jumonville’s assassination.”

Franklin skimmed the report and just shook his head. “He slaughtered the peace mission?”

Charles nodded. “His attack on the Canadians, as we know, has led to France declaring war on Britain, and led to the Indians en-masse switching sides to support the French.” Charles raised his voice and octave. “In a nutshell, Ben, George Washington set off a chain of events that started the French and Indian War.”

“That’s quite an accusation, Charles.”

“Ben. I have compassion for the Indians. Like my race, the British despise them. I know what it feels like to have something that is rightfully yours stolen by those in authority. I

understand dispossession and being thrown into poverty. Living in poverty while what is rightfully yours is enjoyed by a master class in society."

Franklin solemnly nodded his head. "I cannot disagree with your assessment, Charles, but in one fell swoop, you have alienated the Pennsylvania proprietors, the British and even George Washington himself in this report."

Charles shrugged. "So be it."

Franklin clasped his hands on his desk. "You wanted to be in politics, Charles. Now you are. And in the process, you have made some very strong enemies." He sighed. "This will most certainly cost you politically."

"That doesn't change my mind. My report stands."

Stave 12

Pennsylvania State House, Philadelphia, Summer, 1765

The sweltering, humid weather outside of the Pennsylvania State House was a suitable backdrop to the fiery speech Charles was giving in the chamber that day. "The British have broken their charter with the colonies by dictating to us and taxing us." He went down the list with the accounting of a bookkeeper standing tall in the chamber as he spoke. "The Proclamation of 1763 not only forbade us to create colonial settlements west of the Appalachian Mountains, but those who have already settled there were ordered to relocate to the eastern side."

He went on. "But more dictates from the Crown followed. In 1764, the British passed the Currency Act. And we all know the result of that. We were forbidden from issuing our own paper currency. This impeded our trade and commerce by making it difficult for us to pay our debts and taxes. Then followed the Sugar tax in just last year and now this new tax imposed by the British Parliament itself. The Stamp Tax."

A familiar voice echoed from the back of the room. "So, Mr. Thomson," huffed Howard Kent, the Brit Charles attended the Academy with. "Your taxes are too high. Well, sir. So are mine. The British fought and won an expensive war in our defense against the French and Indians. They are merely asking us to help pay for it."

"Pay for a war that should not have been? A war started due to British stupidity, Pennsylvania Proprietor greed and incompetent military leadership?"

"I take issue with that," roared Major John Agnew, Commander of the British troops quartered in Philadelphia. "Stupid and incompetent? How dare you, sir?"

Joseph Galloway, a noted lawyer and colonialist legislator, raised his hand as to quiet the anticipated quarrel. "Yes, yes. Mr. Thomson. We all read your *report*," dismissing his comment with the wave of his hand. "So, how do you propose to eliminate these overbearing taxes you claim and the governing of us colonies?"

"Independence, sir."

Major Agnew bristled, taking the comment of Independence as an act of rebellion. He was about to speak when Galloway said, "Independence, sir? And for what? Your petty little personal complaints. Come now. If you have grievances, Mr. Thomson, present them to the Crown. Use our present system to redress them – short of revolution." He paused and gave Charles a stern look. "Yes, that's what you want, sir. Revolution. Nothing less will satisfy you. Violence, rebellion, treason. These are not the acts of Englishmen."

"Not Englishmen, sir. Americans."

"Americans? Who is this tribe Americans?" Galloway replied with a smirk.

“Us. All of us.”

“All?” Kent added with a suspicious look.

“Yes. All people. Including the black slaves.”

“Oh? You are calling black slaves Americans.”

“Yes. They are people and they are here. There is no other requirement.”

Kent bristled. He stood firm and pointed his finger at Charles. “You are merely an agitator. Disturbing the peace, creating disorder, endangering the public welfare.” And he stormed out of the Chamber.

Stave 13

House of Burgesses, Virginia, May 1765

"There's trouble afoot." Those words from Drummond's Editor-In-Chief were ringing in his ears as he made his way to Virginia. On March 22, 1765, a little-noticed measure in Britain call the Stamp Act passed to pay for the expenses incurred by the British in the French and Indian War and hosting British troops on the Continent for the protection of the colonists, was stirring up a hornets nest in the Colonies. The Act required colonists to pay taxes on every page of printed paper they used. The tax also included fees for playing cards and dice.

A young firebrand by the name of Patrick Henry was raising Caine in the legislature of the House of Burgesses about the Act and is demanding resolutions to fight it.

Drummond arrived that afternoon and found a seat in the assembly room of House of Burgesses legislature. Placing his coat on the seat next to him, he felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned to see and old friend. "Tom!" he said. "I thought you were in Boston?"

"Was. There was to be a protest about over the Stamp Act there. A peaceful protest. It seems the protests are happening in many of the colonial cities. But I left Boston to come here and hear what Henry is to propose."

"What do you think Tom? What is Henry going to propose? You're from here. What is this list of Virginia Resolves he is proposing?"

"From what I hear," Jefferson replied, "the resolves would declare that all colonists should be treated as they would treat any citizen of Britain. They have as much as freedom and rights as everybody else in Britain. Basically, that anyone in the colonies should be treated as if British citizens."

"But we are British citizens."

"Yes. But we don't have representation in Parliament like British citizens do in Britain. Including taxation. We don't."

"Taxation without representation," Drummond mused.

"And that, my friend, is tyranny."

"Is that all?"

"There is one that I believe will not pass because it's too radical."

"…and?" Drummond asked becoming very interested in Jefferson's remarks.

“That the Virginia General Assembly is the *only* one to have the right to lay taxes on people in the colony.”

Patrick Henry rose to speak. And he did so with unsettling remarks summarizing his resentment to Great Britain.

"But when shall we be stronger?” he began. “Will it be the next week, or next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house?” He looked around the chamber of representatives. “Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance, by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot?"

Henry didn’t expect a reply from his audience. They were rhetorical questions and made to mark important points. But he didn’t stop there. He became more accusable with inflammatory words that shocked the legislature.

“Caesar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell and George the Third…”

At that point he was interrupted by cries of “Treason!" from the Speaker…and “Treason, treason!” echoed from every part of the house. from delegates who easily recognized the reference to assassinated leaders.

The mood in the room became testy to say the least and Drummond wondered how Henry would counter such charges. *Had he gone too far?* he thought.

Henry faltered not for an instant, but rising to a loftier attitude, concluded with "…may profit by their example.” He looked around the chamber of stunned representatives and said, “If this be treason, make the most of it."

Drummond and Jefferson were as stunned as the representatives.

Henry then proceeded to offer Virginia Resolves as actions Virginia should take against the Stamp Act and clearly laid out the ‘taxation without representation’ argument. After heated discussion, the legislature voted on them and all but the right to tax be the limited to the colonial legislature passed.

“You were right, Tom,” Drummond said. “That last resolve the legislature could not swallow.

Jefferson nodded. “Like I said. Too radical. The Colonies are not ready to make such a fiery statement. It borders on independence.”

Stave 14

Boston, Massachusetts, August 1765

"The colonial legislatures are all talk. Words, words, words," Daniel Tremaine, local young leader of the Sons of Liberty, voiced. "They pass resolutions and issue petitions against the Stamp Act. We need to take matters into our own hands." His voiced rose above the normal din of the Green Dragon Tavern in Boston's North End. Because of its meeting place for local dissidents, it was dubbed the "headquarters of the revolution".

"Direct action?" asked Thomas Young, Sons of Liberty member. "Against the tax collectors themselves? You are talking violence."

"Fluently."

"Here it is," Michael Clarke said," as he dragged a six-foot effigy of Andres Oliver, the local tax collector. "We have the lots of protestors waiting outside."

"How many?" asked Tremaine.

"Enough," was Clarke's reply.

"Good. Let's go."

Tremaine and his two cohorts entered the square outside the tavern where dozens of 'patriots', as they called themselves, began hooting and hollering for Oliver's head. They marched to what was to be known as the Liberty Tree - a giant elm tree at the crossing of Essex and Orange Streets in the city's South End and hung Oliver's effigy.

"Daniel," Young said, "Look!" pointing to an official making his way to the tree.

Sherriff Greenfield marched up to Tremaine and barked, "In the name of Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson, I order you to take down that that effigy."

But the crowd, now larger than before, surrounded the tree and blocked Hutchinson to come any closer. Hutchinson realized he was dealing with a surrey, determined group of men and hurriedly left the commons.

"Someone will pay for this unlawful gathering," he growled as he hastily beat a retreat.

A man named Ebenezer MacIntosh, a veteran of the Seven Years' War stepped up and cut down the effigy.

"What are you doing?" shouted Tremaine.

"Let's give Mr. Oliver the real thing," he roared. 'Follow me!" and, as a funeral procession, he led the crowd to the Town House where the legislature was meeting.

Satisfied that their protest was noted by the assembly, they procession marched to Oliver's office.

"Tear it down" someone in the crowd yelled. "Tear it to pieces!"

As the timbers of the tax collector's small office building were taken apart, McIntosh and others stamped the timbers.

At this point, the crowd was incensed and sought another avenue of their dissatisfaction.

"Onto Oliver's home Sons of Liberty!" cried Tremaine.

The procession carrying the effigy made its way to the Stamp official's home at the foot of Fort Hill. There, they beheaded it and Oliver's stable house, coach and chaise.

"Stop it!" cried Hutchinson, who was following the procession unable to prevent the violence that ensued.

"Stone him!" yelled the mob and threw heavy cobble stones at him driving him off.

The mob turned their wrath back on Oliver's residence.

"Burn it! Burn it down!" the mob screamed.

Oliver ran out and pleaded with the mob who at this point, were ransacking his home and looting its contents.

"Grab him!" yelled MacIntosh and several of the mob pulled Oliver over to him. "March him back to the Liberty Tree!" he ordered.

Oliver was unceremoniously marched through town to the Liberty Tree.

At the tree, MacIntosh ordered, "Resign. Publicly. Here and now - and leave town."

"This is how it's done," Tremaine declared. "Deeds not words are the only thing the Crown understands."

Stave 15

Pennsylvania State House, Philadelphia, Fall, 1765

Thankfully the weather had cooled by October, and a group of noted Philadelphia citizens assembled at the State House. James Tilghman, Robert Morris, Archibald McCall, John Cox, William Richards, William Bradford and Charles Thomson were in attendance.

The subject was the Stamp Tax imposed on the colonies by George Grenville, the British first lord of the treasury and prime minister of the Parliament.

"This tax is an outrage!" cried Tilghman, a prominent lawyer and public servant in colonial Maryland and Pennsylvania. "The gall of them! A stamp must be on every ship's paper, legal documents, licenses, newspapers, publications, and even playing cards! Anything and everything made of paper in the colonies must have an official stamp before it could be bought, used, or sold."

"The Parliament does not have the right to tax us," Cox stated. "That power should rest with the colonial legislatures. Only they should have the power to tax us."

McCall grumbled, "Aye. It's taxation without representation. The legislatures must push back like Patrick Henry in the Virginia House of Burgess and the Declaration of Rights and Grievances as in New York."

"No! No! Debates, legislative resolutions, declarations and demonstrations, boycotts of British goods – all of these will not stop the tax collectors," stated Charles. "We should consider the actions of Virginia. The tax collector there arrived in Williamsburg with the stamps, and he was mobbed by a group of angry people. A mob damaged the home and official papers of William Story, the deputy register of the Vice-Admiralty. Benjamin Hallowell, the comptroller of customs, suffered the almost total loss of his home. In Boston, the tax collector's house was attacked by the Sons of Liberty. The mob evicted the family, destroyed the furniture, tore down the interior walls, emptied the wine cellar, scattered Hutchinson's collection of Massachusetts historical papers, and pulled down the building's cupola.

"Are you saying, Charles, that we should do the same?" asked Tilghman.

"No. Not mob violence," Charles replied. "Mr. John Hughes is our new Stamp collector here in Philadelphia. I think this committee should pay him a visit. Convince him the error of his office."

***

When the committee arrived at Hughes' home, they were greeted by a servant.

"We request to see, Mr. Hughes," Charles stated.

Seeing the seven resolute men, the servant said uneasily, “Please take a seat in the study I will announce you.”

“What do you plan to do, Charles?” asked Tilghman.

“I will ask him to pledge not to enforce the Stamp Tax.”

“Just like that?”

“We are gentlemen. And we represent many. Hughes must be aware of what happened in Williamsburg and Boston. News of the protests against the Stamp Act has spread resentment throughout the colonies and violence and threats of aggressive acts have increased against the tax collectors.”

Several minutes later, Hughes appeared in the study. He surveyed the seven men. They looked serious and determined. “Is there something I can do for you, gentlemen?”

“Aye,” piped up McCall. “Refuse to collect the Stamp tax.”

“Mr. Hughes,” Charles said politely, calming McCall. “We want a written pledge from you that you will not collect the tax. Second, we wish to have your resignation. We will come back tomorrow for your answer.”

Shocked, Hughes could only nod his head as Charles and his entourage left.

Outside the residence, McCall asked, “Why give him to tomorrow, Charles?”

“Let him think about it. We will return graciously. Our intimidation may be enough.”

“Aye. I understand.”

***

The next morning, the committee of seven met with Hughes.

“Good morning Mr. Hughes,” Charles said politely. “Have you thought about our proposal? Will you sign a pledge not to tax and resign?”

Hughes replied, "Well, gentlemen, you must look to yourselves for this is a risky affair. No?"

Charles replied, "I do not know, but I hope it will not be deemed rebellion. I know not how it may end." He handed the letter of resignation to Hughes who read it over as the eyes of the seven men watched in anticipation.

Finally, Hughes signed the paper and handed it back to Charles.

"Thank you, sir," was all Charles said and the seven men took their leave.

Stave 16

Boston, Winter, 1770

Michael Drummond pulled the collar of his black heavy wool coat over his neck against the frigid, snowy evening of March 5, 1770. He was sent by his newspaper to cover the ongoing skirmishes between patriot colonists and those colonists loyal to Britain. And the skirmishes were getting more and more dangerous.

"To protest the Stamp Act and Townshend Acts," his editor told him, "patriots have vandalized stores selling British goods and intimidated store merchants and their customers. And now more than 2,000 British soldiers are occupying Boston trying to enforce the tax laws. It's a very volatile situation."

"How bad do you think it's going to get?"

"I'm afraid, much worse. Just last month a mob of patriots attacked a known loyalist's store. Customs officer Ebenezer Richardson lived near the store and tried to break up the rock-pelting crowd by firing his gun through the window of his home. His gunfire struck and killed an 11-year-old boy."

"My God!"

"You can imagine what might come next."

With those words of warning from his editor urging him on, he found a local tavern to warm his body with a cup of hot rum. Off to his left, he heard a few young men – teenager's really – in a heated discussion.

"Lobsterbacks!" one young lad snarled. "We should send those soldiers and the Loyalists back to Britain where they belong."

Drummond decided to talk to the teens to get their perspective on the situation. He walked over and introduced himself.

"A correspondent, huh?" replied Samuel Maverick – a boy of seventeen. "What is your opinion about the taxes imposed on us by Britain?"

Drummond was about to speak when street bells began ringing. "Is there a fire?" he asked.

“No,” Maverick replied enthusiastically. “Come with us.”

Maverick led them to the Customs House on King Street having only a lone guard. It was shortly after 9PM. A crowd of rowdy colonists faced the soldier and threw insults at him and threatened him with violence.

This is not good, thought Drummond.

Being in close quarters with the now growing mob, the frightened soldier stuck a colonist with his bayonet.

“Oh, no!” Drummond said.

“Hit him!” yelled someone in the crowd and they proceeded to throw snowballs, ice and stones at the soldier.

He retreated and called for reinforcements.

Within minutes, a British Officer arrived on the scene with several soldiers and took up a defensive position in front of the Custom House. “Back off!” ordered the officer. “Return to your homes!”

“Kill them!” shouted the mob, in return.

“Don’t shoot,” pleaded Drummond and others in the crowd.

“No!” came from the crowd. “Go ahead. Shoot!” to which the violence escalated and some in the mob struck the soldiers with clubs and sticks.

Drummond was pushed aside by Maverick, who in a fit of rage, shouted, “Fire away, you damn Lobsterbacks!”

And they did.

Someone, British soldier or colonist, said “Fire!” and the British opened fire on the crowd.

Maverick was hit in the chest and fell at Drummond’s feet as the mob scattered.

Drummond looked at the bloody carnage around him. Five colonists were either dead or mortally wounded. One had his stomach blown out and another had a hole the size of his fist in his head.

Entr'acte Five

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1827

"That was pretty smart of Thomson," Seth remarked. "Didn't have to use violence to have the tax man resign."

Drummond agreed. "But he had a dream and he told Franklin what it was. Independence. Franklin agreed that the argument and debate for it was inevitable. But, Franklin, being the tactful diplomat that he was, wanted to digest such a dangerous action slowly."

"So how did Franklin respond?"

"He informed Charles that the grievances of the colonies were going to be addressed with a Continental Convention. A combined Congress of the colonies."

"That must have warmed Thomson's heart."

"Well. To an extent. Remember I told you about Charles making enemies? He made a big one in the form of Joseph Galloway. Thomson will find that standing by his principals had a price."

Stave 17

Philadelphia, Winter, 1773

"Come in, Charles," Ben Franklin implored. "Take a seat over there and I'll join you." Franklin's foot was hurting him again. The cold weather didn't help. He stood up from behind his writing desk in the office of the Public Library that he had created, and who Charles was its new director, and limped to his favorite soft cushioned chair.

Charles offered to help, but Franklin waved him off. He took his seat and Charles positioned the footrest in front of him. Franklin grunted as he moved in his chair.

"I have your letter here and wanted to speak to you about it. You make quite an argument. If it wasn't for the Committees of Correspondence set up between the colonies, we'd know little of what is happening in here. Your committee in particular, here in Philadelphia, has done an excellent job of informing the other colonies what we are doing to resist Parliament's attempts to enslave us."

Franklin adjusted his small, square, wire framed glasses on his nose as he read Charles' letter to him - but Charles quickly reviewed the contents.

“It’s come to this, Ben. Just four years ago I argued that the Crown not be allowed to tax the Colonies. Now look what has happened.”

He ran through the list of Parliament abuses. “The Townshend Duties in ’67, taxing imports of tea, glass, paper, lead, and paint in the Colonies. The New York Assembly is dissolved because they would not quarter British troops. In ’68, the Massachusetts Assembly is dissolved for refusing to assist with the collection of taxes and the quartering of British troops. In ’69 the Virginia House of Burgesses is dissolved after protesting England's plan to transport colonists accused of treason to England for trial. And a few years ago, the actual killing of our fellow colonists in Boston when British troops opened fire on them.” He paused a beat. “It’s all there in the letter. Something has to be done. And soon,” Charles implored.

“You’ve proved your point. Something has to be done.” He shifted in his chair. “What the Crown has done, is in defiance of its original charter with the colonies. We were to self-tax and self-regulate.”

Charles mouthed a popular refrain in the colonies. “But now it’s taxation without representation.” He went on. “And don’t forget, Ben. The Crown promised wealth to the colonists through that charter, then breaking that charter by trying to take that wealth away from the us, even though we worked the land, started the business and braved the Indian attacks, all to support a noble class.” He sneered. “I know something about a higher-class stealing wealth.”

“So. What do you think we should do?”

“The Loyalists demanded that we work with the British Parliament, but that time has passed,” Charles said. “Things will only get worse. The courts of justice and the offices of government are all shut to us. Numbers of people who are indebted take advantage of the times to refuse payment and are moving off with all their effects out of the reach of their creditors. Many of our ports are shut. Thus, credit is gone, trade and commerce is at a standstill. That peace which we ardently wish for only presents us with a prospect of confusion and beggary.”

He took a deep breath. One with the air of defiance. “Ben. It’s time to take a stand. It’s time to choose. Freedom or tyranny.”

Franklin grinned. “You don’t mince words, Charles.” He smiled. “You know, people are calling you the ‘Samuel Adams’ of Philadelphia.”

“I’ll take that as an affirmation of what I am doing.” He raised an eyebrow. “So…”

“So... the colonies have agreed to form a formal Congress. A Continental Congress to debate actions. Delegates are being chosen.”

Charles face brightened and his ears went up. “Good. I expect to be a delegate from Pennsylvania.”

Franklin shook his head. “No, Charles. You will not.”

"What? Why?"

"When you wanted to be a politician, I warned you that you would make enemies. Strong enemies. You have. Joseph Galloway - among others. He blocked you. You will not serve as a delegate."

Charles was crushed and his body language showed it. "I'm to be left out from the most important debate in the history of this country. I am not to be present for the debate on independence?"

"You're getting ahead of yourself, Charles. The Congress is not undertaking the issue of independence. It will focus on the colony's response to these intolerable taxes."

"What about independence?"

"Well, for one reason, Georgia will not have a delegate at the Congress. They are deep in a war with the Indians and they need British help and protection. The last thing they want is to raise the Crown's ire."

Charles pondered what Franklin has said. "So, I am to make no contribution?"

"Not necessarily. Though Galloway and his kind have succeeded in blocking you as a delegate, I did argue that you would make and excellent Secretary to the Congress. In fact, I insisted."

"Charles' face brightened. "Thank you, Ben. And what was Galloway's response?"

"Unhappy to say the least." He paused a moment. "Charles, be careful. What's before us are historic decisions that are fraught with danger. Not only to the colonies but to each of us involved in this 'controversy'. It can be deemed as treason." He smiled. "Depending on your point of view, of course."

Charles nodded. "Yes. Treason is invented by the winners to hang the losers."

Franklin laughed as Charles put on his coat to leave. "I have a meeting," he said. "Time for some personal action."

"Sons of Liberty?"

Charles nodded.

"Then be careful."

Stave 18

Massachusetts, Winter, 1773

"Come on Daniel. We'll be late," cried Michael Clarke. "They had to move the meeting from Faneuil Hall to the Old South Meeting House. Too many people had arrived."

"That's good news, Daniel Tremaine replied. "Maybe we'll see some action here in Massachusetts like in Philadelphia, New York and Charleston. They compelled the tea consignees to resign refusing to pay the Townsend Act taxes. Boston will do the same."

"With a little help from The Sons Of liberty," Clarke smiled.

When they arrived at the Old South Meeting Hall, there were thousands of people there.

It was Samuel Adams who called the meeting to pass a resolution and introduced a similar set of resolutions enacted earlier in Philadelphia in response to the tax on tea. They forced the tea consignees to resign or to return the tea to England.

"The *Dartmouth* is carrying a consignment of tea and is docked at Griffin's Wharf," Adams said. "We urged the captain of the *Dartmouth* to go back to England without being paid the import duty. We told him that we voted we refuse to pay taxes on the tea or allow the tea to be unloaded, stored, sold or used. Meanwhile, I have assigned twenty-five men to watch the ship and prevent the tea from being unloaded."

"Did the Captain comply?" a voice asked from the back of the Hall.

"No. The captain was told by Governor Hutchinson not to return to Britain, the tea tariff to be paid and the tea unloaded." Adams sighed and said, "This meeting can do nothing further to save the country."

"Hear that!" Tremaine said. "That's the Sons of Liberty's que. Time for action!"

That night, Tremaine and dozens of Sons of Liberty patriots prepared to take that action. About hundred men disguised as Mohawk Indians, boarded the *Dartmouth*.

"Open the hatches, boys," barked James Hawkes, "And remove all the chests of tea. Then crack them open and toss the tea into the Bay."

The boarding party split the chests with their tomahawks, so as thoroughly to expose the tea to the effects of the water and jubilantly threw the tea overboard.

"Done," Tremaine said smugly. "If they won't return the tea to England themselves, let it float there."

Stave 19

Philadelphia, Winter, 1773

"Charles. We've been waiting for you." A young lad in his teens wearing a Tri-cornered black hat greeted Thomson as he entered a local tavern by the Philadelphia waterfront. "We have news. Just arrived." He offered Charles a heavy goblet of rum as he removed his heavy black coat.

"No thank you, Abner. So, what is the news?"

"A few nights ago, the Boston Sons of Liberty dumped 342 chests of British tea into the harbor off Griffin's Wharf. They disguised themselves as Indians, war paint and all! Can you believe it!" He elatedly pressed Charles' arm. "It showed the British that Americans wouldn't take taxation and tyranny sitting down!"

Charles smiled. "Maybe this will rally the other colonists."

"But there's more," Abner said. "There's news that a British ship is on its way to deliver chests of tea here. To Philadelphia. The *Polly*. And the tax agents are preparing to meet it."

"When?"

"By Christmas."

Abner added, "A group of us met at the State House and elected to demand the resignation of the tax agents that have been named to receive the tea. Also, printed broadsides are circulated, warning that the owner of any pilot boat leading the *Polly* up the Delaware River would be tarred and feathered."

"Charles pondered this a moment then said with a smile, "Perhaps we should have our own tea party."

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Several days later, the Sons of Liberty led by Charles and a heated mob of citizens, stood on the wharf of the town of Chester to meet the British merchant ship *Polly*. It was cold and dreary, but the weather didn't dampen the enthusiasm of those waiting on the pier.

They didn't have to wait long.

The *Polly*, with canvas sails a billowing, sailed up the Delaware River towards them. Captain Ayres stood on the half deck looking through his hand-held spyglass at the scene on the dock. As the ship came closer, he strained to see where the official tax collectors were waiting.

He saw none.

The ship docked, and the captain came ashore looking for his tax collectors but was greeted instead by the irritable mob.

"Captain. My name is Charles Thomson." He looked over the grizzled looking merchantman that brought back memories of the man who stole his family's fortune.

"I'm Captain Ayers." He looked past Charles and the irate mob behind him. "Where are the tax collectors I am to meet here?"

"There will be no tax collectors. They have resigned, sir. You are ordered to sail your ship out of Delaware Bay immediately."

"On whose authority?"

"Ours" Charles stated flatly. "It would be best for all concerned to comply, sir."

The protesters on the dock chanted, screamed, and threatened to prevent the British ship loaded with tea and goods from unloading.

Ayres, familiar with the news of the now called 'Boston Tea Party' weighed the situation – and his options. They were few.

Charles was not threatening and was holding the mob back so Ayers decided to take Charles's advice and re-boarded the *Polly*. "Make ready to sail," he ordered, as the greeting party on the wharf watched the *Polly* set sail back down the Delaware River.

Entr'acte Six

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1827

"Those must have been exciting times," Seth remarked. "The debate for independence."

"Yes," Drummond mused. "And at times, contentious. Very contentious."

"How do you mean?"

"There was one incident where one of the delegates, Pennsylvania delegate James Searle was his name, claimed that Thomson misquoted him in the minutes of the Continental Congress. He challenged Charles on the floor of Congress and words led to a cane fight between the two right on the floor of Congress!"

"Emotions must have been running high during the debate for independence," Seth pondered.

Drummond nodded. "And while the Congress was debating, the war was in full swing. At first, the Continental Army suffered serious losses. The British captured New York City and Philadelphia. The residents and business owners were forced to flee, and the Continental Congress was moved to Baltimore."

"Dark days," Seth pondered.

"Yes. Charles, wanted by the British Parliament for treason, packed up and moved the secret records. The British Army went searching for him and Charles barely escaped. Because of this and the sensitivity of the debate, Charles was entrusted with keeping secret records of the proceedings that he was dutifully documenting. He even created secret military ciphers for the Continental Army."

"I could imagine what the British would do if they had seen those records."

"To protect themselves, in November 1775, the Continental Congress adopted a strict oath of secrecy and in June 1776 it adopted a secrecy agreement for its employees. Three more journals were added for Charles to record top secret information. For Charles's dealings with foreign countries, particularly France, Thomson added the Secret Journal of Foreign Affairs.

"Our founding fathers would have been hung before they could' founded' anything," Drummond went on. "And while Charles was busy recording the proceedings of the Congress, he also took a direct role in conducting foreign affairs and devise a winning strategy for getting French help that eventually turned the war in our favor."

Seth was filling up his notebook fast. "So, tell me. What happened at the Continental Congress? How was the Declaration of Independence created? You mentioned that, unlike what we are taught today, it was contentious."

Drummond nodded. "Yes. And it was almost not passed at all."

Stave 20

Carpenters Hall, Philadelphia, September 1774

"I hear, Joseph Galloway is not fond of our choice of venue for the Congress," Charles noted, speaking to Franklin in the City Tavern located at the intersection of Second and Walnut Streets. Made of red brick with colonial windows and cream-colored shutters, the tavern was a local meeting place of the gentile of the city.

"No," Franklin replied, feasting on his Virginia ham and oysters – a favorite dish of his. "He would have preferred the Pennsylvania State House to Carpenters Hall. He's still brooding over you being chosen as Secretary to the Congress. He believes you cannot do the job. Your

strong positions against slavery and for the Indians are making you few friends. But we agreed to have him choose the delegates from Pennsylvania. That swayed his opinion. And you can be assured that he and his delegates will support his positions in Congress."

Franklin mulled over something in his mind. "Charles. We need to be aware of Galloway, John Dickinson, Richard Henry Lee, John Jay, and Edward Rutledge. Those conservatives believe that we should tone down our protests and forge rational policies to pressure Parliament to rescind its unreasonable acts. They will be our opposition. They want to reason with the Crown. Seek to right the wrongs that had been inflicted on the colonies and hoped that a unified voice would gain them a hearing in London.

"Have you had any luck with reason?"

Franklin shook his head. "While in London last year, I wrote a public letter, under an assumed name of course, that made it clear how we felt about Parliament's acts."

"And that was…?"

Franklin grinned from ear to ear. "I said in that letter that Parliament appeared to be no better acquainted with their history or their Constitution than they are with the inhabitants of the Moon."

Charles chucked. "Not your usual diplomatic approach, Ben."

Franklin shrugged his shoulders. "Time to leave. Our history is waiting." The two left the tavern and headed to Carpenters Hall.

As they walked to Carpenters Hall on broad cobble stones past a causeway in the middle of the street for carriages, they approached a two-story brick building in the Old City neighborhood of Philadelphia, set back from Chestnut Street. The two spoke as they walked in the balmy weather of the Philadelphia Fall and spoke of what was to come. Knowing Charles' interest in independence, Franklin reminded him, "Remember. These proceedings will address the taxation acts of Parliament. It is too early to talk about independence."

Charles hesitantly nodded. "Yes. I know."

"Ah. There's our Congress President. Peyton Randolph." The two hurried to the entrance of the Hall. "Peyton," Franklin said. "Let me formally introduce you. This is Charles Thomson. He will be the Secretary recording these proceedings."

Randolph, a planter from Virginia and member of the House of Burgess there, held out his hand. "Oh, yes. The leader of the Philadelphia Committee of Correspondence. You've done a yeoman's job keeping Philadelphia informed of what the colonies are doing. I am happy to meet you."

“I’ve heard much about you. Franklin tells me you will make a good President of this Congress.”

“These are trying times,” Randolph said solemnly. “The colonies are united in a determination to show a combined authority to Great Britain, but their aims are not uniform at all. So, let’s hope this Congress as a whole can come to terms with these Intolerable Acts.” He paused. “We have a gathering of good, intelligent men here. There are hopes we can come to agreement on a course of action.”

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“Mr. Randolph.” Joseph Galloway rose from his seat in the small meeting hall. He had in his hand a small handkerchief damp from the sweat of his brow.

“Here it comes,” Franklin whispered to Charles who had his quill in hand.

“The Chair recognizes Mr. Galloway.”

“I move to discuss the Plan of Union as a form of peaceful reconciliation with England.” His attitude was emphatic as if it was the only course open to the Congress.

“And what is this Plan of Union?” asked Randolph.

“I propose that the colonies create a form of government to act in conjunction with that of the British, with a colonial parliament and leaders elected by Britain. This would offer the colonists their own representation while remaining loyal Englishmen.”

“I second the motion,” Richard Henry Lee immediately responded.

“Discussion?” stated Randolph.

John Adams, the delegate from Massachusetts, quickly piped up, staring at Galloway. “The aim, sir, is to *end* the abuses of parliamentary authority. Not join them. Your motion still gives the Crown authority on final policy. Our grievances will remain so.”

“Yes. Yes. Mr. Adams,” Dickinson scoffed. “We know you and Massachusetts have grievances.”

Adams stood from his seat. “Grievances you say! Fining Boston for the tea at our Tea Party protest and then closing the port of Boston until the fine is paid? Rewriting the Massachusetts colony’s charter granting broadly expanded powers to the royal governor? Revoking the right to hold meetings? Authorized the governor to send indicted government officials to other colonies or to London for trial? Forced to quarter British troops, allowing them to be housed in private residences? Then installed a British General to govern us and endure unjust taxation without representation? These petty grievances? These intolerable acts, Sir?”

Adams walked the floor. He was animated. Sweeping his arms in wide arcs encompassing the room. “We need to protest these Intolerable Acts by stockpiling military supplies, operating an independent government, boycotting British goods, and announcing no allegiance to Britain and a king who failed to consider the wishes of the colonists. And to retain our rights that have been guaranteed under both colonial charters and the English constitution,” Adams added bluntly. “The foundation of English liberty, and of all free government, is a right of the people to participate in their own legislative council. This Congress needs to develop a completely new system of government, independent from Great Britain, for our existing colonial governments are already dissolved.”

Dickinson responded. “Our present system must provide a gentler mean of redressing these grievances short of *revolution*, sir. And *that* is what you are advocating.”

Charles felt implored to speak. “The British have broken our Colonial Charter and their own Constitution. They are at fault. That is the issue here.”

“Mr. Thomson,” Galloway hissed, “You are not a delegate here. Only the Secretary. You have no opinion.”

“Regardless. Charles Thomson is correct,” Patrick Henry declared. “We must develop a decisive statement of the rights and liberties of the Colonies and end the abuses of Parliamentary authority.” He directed his next comment at John Adams. “John here will attest at the remedies General Thomas Gage has done in Massachusetts to reassure Britain that the colonies were secure. These is not the actions of a Crown seeking agreement.”

“I suggest a compromise,” Franklin said, clicking the tip of his cane on the floor.

“What kind of compromise,” Dickinson asked.

“Simply this,” Franklin replied. “A true Declaration of Colonial Rights should be agreed upon and redressed to the King that states the colonies are entitled to the rights of life, liberty and property with the right to establish our own colonial taxes.”

“Go on,” Dickinson said.

Franklin pulled on his chin. “Let’s call it the ‘Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress’ and state our objections to these coercive acts, list the rights of the colonists, and itemize objections to British rule beyond the Intolerable Acts. It will list the grievances of the colonies directly to the King, as Mr. Galloway wishes, but not assign blame to him.”

“I agree with Franklin,” Adams responded. “But we must go further and show the Crown that until these intolerable acts are repealed, we should reverse the economic sanctions placed on us and boycott their goods.”

That didn't sit well with Galloway, but he did get the compromise of petitioning the King.

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That evening, sitting at the City Tavern, Franklin, John Adams and Charles were reading over the proceedings of the Congress that Charles had recorded.

"As expected," Franklin said, "Very thorough and complete. A very good job, Charles."

Adams was more interested in the summary of actions decided upon as he read them off to himself. "Ben's idea for a Declaration of Resolves and a plan to form a Continental Association was adopted to boycott British goods. As for Galloway's Petition to the King, let him send it. At least it is a formal declaration to the Crown and the Parliament that the actions of the British must cease or else a revolution would result." He paused a moment. "I truly believe the Congress of the colonies was a success."

"And if our grievances are not addressed," Franklin added, "the Congress will reconvene this coming May to address further actions."

The three men nodded in agreement.

"And what about you, Charles?" asked Adams, as he finished off the last of his mug of rum.

"Yes, Charles. Tell us,"added Franklin, puffing on his pipe. "What do you think of the outcome?"

"I will tell you." He stood erect in his seat. "Yes. The colonies formed a united front. Called for the training of a colonial militia. Your Massachusetts militia are calling themselves the Minutemen. An apt name considering we are probably only a short amount of time from armed rebellion." Charles sighed. "Gentleman. I don't see any other way. Any possibility of compromise because our idea of freedom is defined differently than the British. I've always believed that."

"What are you saying, Charles?" asked Franklin

"This," he replied. "I fear that the actions of the colonies and resolutions of the Congress will most certainly lead to war with the British."

Stave 21

Richmond, Virginia, March 1775

"Revolution is in the air," Drummonds' editor, Danial Whitaker said, puffing on his hand carved pipe looking out his office window. "I can smell it."

"I tend to agree, sir," Drummond replied. "But maybe the Crown and colonist will see reason to avoid violence."

Whitaker shook his head. "I don't know. Let's face facts. Delegates from the American colonies had held the first Continental Congress and sent King George a petition for redress of grievances, among them the repeal of the so-called "Intolerable Acts."

"But the British have blockaded Boston harbor as punishment for the destruction of the tea," Drummond replied. "The patriots in Boston are calling it the Boston Tea Party. That blockade by the Crown shows that the King is not open to any kind of agreement with the colonies."

"I agree. And King George himself throws fuel on the fire when he denounced the "daring spirit of resistance and disobedience to the law." He puffed on his pipe. "But the colonists are trying. I want you to head down to the Second Virginia Convention being held in Richmond. The Convention is a veritable "who's who" of Virginia leaders. They are going to try again to arrive at a strategy to negotiate with the Crown."

"Yes, sir."

Drummond left that morning and arrived in Richmond the following day and quickly made his way to Richmond's St. John's Church where the Convention was taking place. When he arrived, he saw that his editor was correct. In attendance were some of the most veritable leaders of Virginia including Thomas Jefferson and George Washington – and a bewigged statesmen named Patrick Henry, a well-respected lawyer from Hanover County.

Drummond knew of Henry. He had long held a reputation as one of Virginia's most vociferous opponents of British taxation schemes. During the Stamp Act controversy in 1765, he had even flirted with treason in a speech in which he hinted that King George risked suffering the same fate as Julius Caesar if he maintained his oppressive policies.

Drummond found his seat just as Henry took the podium to address the one hundred and forty delegates in attendance.

"The distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers and New Englanders," he began, "are no more. I am not a Virginian; I am an American."

That began on an ominous note, Drummond thought.

“I propose a resolution that Virginia’s counties raise militiamen to secure our inestimable rights and liberties, from those further violations with which they are threatened.”

Peyton Randolph, the President of the Convention spoke up. “Mr. Henry. Such a proposal would not meet with the approval of many delegates here. Any such measure may be viewed by the Crown as combative. We still hold hope for a peaceful reconciliation with Britain.”

According to a Baptist Minister present, Henry replied with was described as having an unearthly fire burning in his eyes. He then spoke of the Crown without the need of notes. “I speak forth my sentiments freely. I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years, to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves, and the House?”

Henry then turned his attention to the British troops mobilizing across the colonies. “Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation?” he asked. “Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled, that force must be called in to win back our love? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us; they can be meant for no other.”

As he continued speaking, Henry’s dulcet tones began to darken with anger later reported by the Baptist Minister. Excitement began to play more and more upon his features. The tendons of his neck stood out white and rigid like whipcords.

“Our petitions have been slighted,” he said, “our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne.” His voice rose. “We must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!”

Henry stood silent for a moment, letting his defiant words hang in the air. When he finally began speaking again, his voice bellowed, shaking the walls of the building and all within them. His fellow delegates leaned forward in their seats as he reached his crescendo.

“The war is actually begun!” Henry cried. “The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?”

As he spoke, Henry held his wrists together as though they were manacled and raised them toward the heavens. “Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty”—Henry burst from his imaginary chains and grasped an ivory letter opener— “or give me death!” As he uttered these final words, he plunged the letter opener toward his chest, mimicking a knife blow to the heart.

For several moments after Henry sat back down, the assembled delegates seemed at a loss for words.

"No other member…was yet adventurous enough to interfere with that voice which had so recently subdued and captivated," delegate Edmund Randolph said. A hushed silence descended on the room. "Every eye yet gazed entranced on Henry," said the Baptist minister. "Men were beside themselves."

Colonel Edward Carrington, one of the many people watching the proceedings through the church windows, was so moved that he stood and proclaimed to his fellow spectators, "Let me be buried at this spot!"

Stave 22

Lexington/Concord, Massachusetts, September 1775

"You're a hard man to find," Drummond said to Samuel Adams finding him eating supper at a local tavern with Captain John Parker of the local militia. "You do know that you and John Hancock are on the Brits role of honor – so to speak."

Adams nodded and smiled. "Yes. They would love to make us guests of the Crown. But we won't let that slow down our work. Hancock and I are here in Lexington to meet with other patriot leaders to…"

"Sam!" Hancock said bursting into the tavern. "Riders from Boston arrived. They said the British Army – hundreds of troops – are on their way here from Boston to capture you and I and the stores of ammunition."

"You two better leave," Captain Parker said. "We'll hide the stores."

Adams nodded and looked down the road the British will be coming. "God help you and your men, Captain." He looked at Drummond. "You coming?"

"No. I think not. I'll stay. Shaping up to be a good story," he nervously grinned.

"It could be your funeral," Hancock replied.

The two patriots hastily left the militiamen, and Captain Parker set off to hide as much of the ammunition and gunpowder he could before the British arrived.

They didn't have to wait long.

"Here they come," Captain Parker said quietly, as several hundred British Dragoons entered the town and faced the militiamen on the town green.

"We have only eighty men," Drummond noted. More of a plea than a statement.

Parker did not reply. He only stared, determined, at the field of red uniforms facing them.

The British dragoons moved into place along the green and set up a line of troops in front of the militia facing the badly outnumbered armed colonists.

The opposing ranks eyed each other when a British Major stepped forward and yelled, "Throw down your arms! Ye villains, ye rebels!"

Drummond looked over at Parker who, thinking discretion the better part of valor and Adams and Hancock safely gone and knowing the cache of ammunition and powder was well hidden, told his men to disperse.

Suddenly a shot rang out – and all hell broke loose.

Several British volleys were unleashed into the militiamen's ranks. Cries of wounded men filled the smoke covered green and when order could be restored and the smoke cleared, eight militiamen lay dead and nine were wounded, while only one Redcoat was injured.

Drummond was aghast at what he witnessed and said so to Parker. "Do you know what this means? Open violent rebellion!"

"We have to move," Parker said to Drummond. West to Concord. They British will go there next looking for ammunition stores."

The small band of militiamen dispersed and headed towards Concord with Drummond in tow. They quickly outpaced the British troops and were soon in town. When they arrived, almost two thousand Minutemen – as the militia was being called because of being ready to fight at a minute's notice - descend into the area and more were arriving by the minute. They were gathered at Concord's North Bridge that was being defended by a contingent of British soldiers.

The overpowering Minutemen approached the British troops who, alarmed, fired at the gathering militia then fell back when the colonists returned fire.

"What now?" asked Drummond of Captain Parker.

"We pursue. We'll chase them back to Lexington." he growled.

At first, the Minutemen simply followed the British column. Then someone shouted, "Make them pay for Lexington!" and the colonists started firing at the retreating British from behind their column and then advancing ahead and firing at the British from behind trees, stone walls, houses and sheds. Before long, the British troops, unused to these battle tactics, abandoning weapons, clothing and equipment in order to retreat faster.

“We have a surprise for those murderesses in Lexington,” Major Buttrick said standing next to Parker and Drummond. “We’ll have over four thousand militia there waiting for them. We’ll outnumber them 2 to 1.

When the British column reached Lexington with the Minutemen in pursuit, they were joined by an entire brigade of fresh Redcoats that had answered a call for reinforcements. But that did not stop the enraged colonists from resuming their attack.

“Fire into them, boys!” shouted Buttrick. “Pour it into their bellies!”

And they did, all the way through Menotomy and Cambridge.

The British, for their part, tried to keep the colonists at bay with flanking parties and canon fire but that evening, a contingent of newly arrived minutemen from Salem and Marblehead came to cut the Redcoats off and perhaps finish them off.

Drummond had been feverishly writing in his notebook the observations of what he had seen the last couple of days when Buttrick ordered, “Let them go. They’ll have naval support at Charleston Neck. Disengage.”

He turned to Drummond who kept writing in his notepad. “This is history, my lad. Whoever fired that shot at Lexington has started the revolution. The country will never be the same again. Record it correctly.”

Stave 23

The City Tavern, Philadelphia, June, 1776

“Good God!” cried John Adams as he walked the floor of the City Tavern. “Two years! It’s been two years! Resolves have been written. Associations formed. Even a militia. When are they going to make up their minds? More than two years!” he repeated. “Two years this Congress has sat! When will the question of independence be resolved?”

“John. Are you going to walk from here to the corner of Second Avenue and Chestnut Street?” Franklin quipped. He was making refence to where the stately Tavern sat. “Please sit down.”

Franklin snickered, “John believes the only purpose of this Congress was to specifically drive him mad!”

Charles chuckled at Franklin’s remark.

Franklin added, “John. The second Congress has accomplished much over the last two years. It approved the ‘Declaration of Causes’ outlining the rationale and necessity for taking up arms in the Thirteen Colonies which many of the colonies have done, raising their own militias.”

Franklin finished the mug of rum and signaled to the inn keeper for a refill. “We’ve extended the ‘Olive Branch Petition’ to the Crown as a final attempt at reconciliation, but it was rejected.”

“Right,” Adams replied. “And what did it get us? The King’s response to the petition was to declare the colonies in open rebellion.”

“Thus, the need for the passage of the Oath of Secrecy,” Franklin continued ignoring Adam’s tirade, “adopted by Congress to protect ourselves with the strict oath of secrecy.” He continued. “And Charles here, has recorded the ‘Secret Journals of Foreign Affairs’ to keep confidential our negotiations with France and other countries for their assistance.”

“Yes, yes” Adams replied. “The moderates keep trying. They have persuaded themselves that they were not fighting the King but Parliament.”

“And don’t forget, John, the Congress approved the creation of a Continental Army,” Charles added.

Adams sat down and sipped on his rum. “Yes. With one hand they can raise an army, dispatch George Washington to lead it. With the other they wave the olive branch, begging the King for a permanent reconciliation. And what do we get from the King for our timid efforts? We are declared in open rebellion!”

Adams stood up and paced the floor again. “Words, words, words,” he moaned. “Blood has been shed at Concord and Lexington by the Minutemen. The news of Lexington and Concord struck the other colonies like an electric shock.”

Yes,” Charles said, “It flew from one local committee to another in the thirteen colonies, which had needed only a glowing fact like Lexington to fuse them into one defensive whole.”

Adams added, “Within twenty days, the news, in many garbled forms, has evoked a common spirit of patriotism from Maine to Georgia. It was plain that war - real war - was here.” Adams stopped his pacing, stood erect and determined. “What we need is action from the Congress! Not proposals and reconciliation!”

Franklin replied, “Calm down, John. Despite the military involvements, the idea of complete separation from England is still repugnant to many members of Congress and to a large part of the American people. Public opinion was not yet ready for such drastic action.”

“Tell that to Patrick Henry,” Adams said. “He has stated our situation succinctly. ‘Give me liberty or give me death!’ That has gotten the attention of the people. And the people have

read Mr. Paine's ‘Common Sense’ - a pamphlet that argues for America, the child, to be free of Great Britain, the parent.” he scoffed. “I doubt that Congress has even read it.”

The men were quiet in thought for a few moments when Charles said, “I see two choices before us. The Congress has to decide to either work out our grievances with Parliament and the King, or…”

Adams jumped in, “…or declare us independent of Great Britain.”

“A vote for independence is treason,” Franklin remarked. “A British crime punishable by death. Don’t you know these men in Congress are aware of that?”

“All I know,” Adams replied, “is the resolution of declaring independence has to be resolved. And soon. We are at war! Whether we want it or not.”

Franklin shook his head. “John. The men in Congress are just men. They are not saints. They, in the end, will want what we want, but not now.” He smiled, “Why don’t you give it up, John. Right or not, no one is listening to you. You are obnoxious and disliked.”

Adams bristled then said, “You’re up to something, Franklin? I feel it. What is it?”

“Given your obstinance, I suggest you have someone else in Congress propose independence,” Franklin grinned. “Someone with enough credibility in the colonies. More than you. Someone from Virginia.” He took a puff on his pipe. “Where Virginia goes, the south will follow. And where the south goes, so will the middle colonies.”

“I agree,” Charles said.

Adams gave that some thought. “Virginia, huh? Not a bad idea. Who do you have in mind?”

“Richard Henry Lee,” Franklin replied. “From the House of Burgesses of Virginia.”

Stave 24

Pennsylvania State House, Philadelphia, June 1776

Charles watched John Adams coiled in his seat, ready to pounce like a cat. In turn, Adams was looking at Richard Henry Lee. Charles could almost read Adam’s lips. “Do It. Do it.”

Charles’s observations were interrupted by John Hancock, the new President of the Continental Congress. “Mr. Thomson.” Hancock said. “Call to order.”

Charles stood up from his writing desk and read from a small booklet. “Call to order.,” he said. “The Second Continental Congress meeting in the city of Philadelphia is now in session. The Honorable John Hancock of Massachusetts Bay, President.”

“Thank you, Secretary Thomson. Read the roll.”

The roll was read and Thomson said, “All members present with the following exceptions. Mr. Paine, Mr. Gerry, Mr. Samuel Adams of Massachusetts, Mr. Morton of Pennsylvania, Mr. Wythe of Virginia….and the entire delegation of New Jersey.”

“The floor is open to resolutions,” Hancock stated.

Lee stood up. “Mr. President.”

“The Chair recognizes Mr. Richard Henry Lee of the Commonwealth of Virginia.”

Adams watched in anticipation.

There was a hush over the room as Lee began.

“Mr. President, I have returned from Virginia with the following resolution.” He read from prepared notes in his hand. "Resolve that these united colonies are, and of a right, ought to be free and independent states, that they are absolved from allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

“Hear, hear!” shouted Adams.

“Mr. Adams. Please,” Hancock said. He turned to Lee. “Is there anything else before we ask for a second?”

Adams was on pins and needles.

“Mr. President,” Lee replied. “We must also take effective measures to form foreign Alliances. Independence is the only way to ensure foreign alliances, since no European monarchs would deal with America if they remained Britain's colonies. We rejected the divine right of kings in the New World but must recognize the necessity of proving our credibility to the Old World.” He pointed to Charles. “And Mr. Thomson here was instrumental in recording the ‘Secret Journals of Foreign Affairs’ to keep confidential our negotiations with France and other countries for their assistance.”

“Is that all or your resolution?” asked Hancock.

“Yes, Sir.”

“Who then will second the proposal?”

Adams was up and out of his chair in a flash. “Mr. President. I second the proposal!”

Franklin smirked. “Good for you John. See what can happen if you just keep your flap shut.”

“The resolution has been proposed and seconded,” Hamilton said. “The chair will now entertain debate.”

John Dickinson stood. “Mr. President.”

“Here we go, John,” Franklin whispered to Adams sitting near him.

“The Chair recognizes Mr. Dickenson from Pennsylvania.”

“Pennsylvania moves….,” declared Dickinson.

“As always,” Adams mumbled.

“That the question of independence be postponed indefinitely.”

“Delaware seconds the motion,” said George Read.

“The motion to postpone has been moved and seconded,” Hancock said. He nodded to Charles.

“On the motion to postpone indefinitely the debate on the resolution on independence,” Charles said, “all those in favor of debate say ‘yea’. All those for postponement say ‘nay.’”

The roll was read. The tally was six for debate, five for postponement, one abstention and one absence. “The chair now declares this Congress for debating Virginia's resolution on independence.”

Dickinson grumbled from his seat. “You’ve got your way at last, Mr. Adams. We can now discuss the matter. And in a way I look forward to it. I’ve been itching to ask you why?”

“Why what, Mr. Dickinson?”

“Why independence. What is the need for it?”

“For the need of a separate and equal nation to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle us. And if that is too lofty for you, Mr. Dickenson, for the obvious reason that our association with Britain has become intolerable.”

“Are, yes. Intolerable. That word again, Mr. Adams. You seem to enjoy using it.” He strode over to Adams. “And intolerable to whom, may I ask? To you?”

Adams bristled.

"If so, I suggest that you personally sever those ties immediately. But please leave the rest of us in peace. As for me, I have no objection to being a citizen of the greatest Empire on earth. Enjoying its benefits as an Englishman."

"Benefits?" roared Adams. "What benefits? Crippling taxes? Repressions? Decimated rights?"

"Less you forget, sir," Dickinson retorted, "Hastings and the Magna Carta, Strongbow and Lionheart, Tudors, Stuarts? Are these to be ignored? And for what, sir? For you? You are merely an agitator, creating disorder. And for what? Your petty little personal complaints." Dickinson stood erect with his chest out. "Violence, rebellion, treason. These are what you want, sir. Are these the acts of Englishmen?"

"Not Englishmen," Adams sternly replied. "Americans."

"And what is so bad about being called an Englishman."

"I wouldn't mind being called an Englishman," Franklin interjected. "If I were given full rights of one. Which we no longer have."

"Americans, Mr. Dickinson," Adams stated coldly. "We are Americans."

Before Dickenson could reply, Franklin said smoothly, "This continent has created a new race. Unlike our gentile cousins in Britain. We're independent, both more violent and cruder to some extent. Less refined is a better word. We are a new nationality."

"And as a new nationality," Charles added from his desk, "we need a new Nation." He could not restrain himself.

"This argument is absurd," Dickinson shouted. "New Nation. New Nationality. Nobel words. But don't let Mr. Adams deceive you. Look at him. He wants to lead this continent down the path of war!"

"Damn it, man!" Adams roared. "We *are* at war! You forget Concord and Lexington? Why can't you accept the obvious?"

"You and Massachusetts may be at war. But you will never speak for Pennsylvania and Delaware." He returned to his seat. "To escape from the protection we have in British rule by declaring independence would be like destroying a house before we have got another, in winter, with a small family. Then asking a neighbor to take us in and finding he is unprepared. When our enemies are pressing us so vigorously, when we are in so wretched a state of preparation, when the sentiments and designs of our expected friends are so unknown to us, I am alarmed at such a Declaration being so vehemently presented."

"Our friends are known to us," Franklin interceded. "We are having ongoing conversations with friendly countries."

"Other friends indeed," Dickenson harrumphed. "Men generally sell their goods to most advantage when they have several chapmen. We have but two to rely on. We exclude one, Britain, by a declaration without knowing what the other, France, will give." He paused a beat, then said calmly, "I have a question, Mr. Adams. One of clarification. After we have achieved your independence, who would govern each of the colonies?"

"The people, of course."

"Which people, sir?"

"The people of the United States of America. All the people. One nation. One people. A nation of sovereign states. United for our mutual protection but separate for our individual pursuits."

"Gentlemen," Franklin said. "We are forgetting one thing. One of great importance. General Washington is in the field, against all odds, trying to keep our Army together. Has it ever occurred to us that an army needs something to fight *for* in order to win? A purpose? A symbol? Perhaps a flag?"

"Mr. President"

"The chair recognizes Mr. Edward Rutledge from South Carolina."

"Mr. President. South Carolina calls the question. We desire to end the debate and call the question of independence."

"Delaware seconds," declared Read.

"The question has been called and seconded. Secretary Thomson will record the vote."

Charles opened his tally sheet. "All those in favor of the resolution on independence proposed by the colony of Virginia, signify by saying..." But Charles was interrupted by three men entering the chamber.

"Excuse me," asked the strange men. "Is this the Continental Congress? Yes. It looks like it. We've been looking for you everywhere, we asked…."

"Excuse me, sir," Charles said. "We are about to decide the question of American independence."

"Wonderful! Then we're not too late."

“Sir. Who *are* you?” Charles questioned.

“Oh, these gentlemen are Mr. Francis Hopkinson, Mr. Richard Stockton, and I'm the Reverend John Witherspoon. We're the new delegates from New Jersey. The existing one being recalled.”

Adams piped up. “Quickly man! Where does New Jersey stand on independence?”

“Why, we are for it,” Witherspoon replied.

“Mr. President!” Adams shouted. “We are ready for the vote.

“Very well. Mr. Thomson. Continue with the vote on independence.”

Charles began. “All in favor of the resolution on independence as proposed by the colony of Virginia, signify by saying...”

“Mr. President,” Dickinson interrupted. “Pennsylvania moves that any vote in favor of independence must be unanimous.”

Read followed with “Delaware seconds the motion.”

“Good God,” Adams cried. “Mr. President. No vote has ever had to be unanimous! You know that Dickinson!”

“This one must be,” Dickenson replied. “No colony should be declared independent of Great Britain without its consent.”

“It has been moved and seconded,” Charles said. “All those in favor, signify by saying ‘yea’.”

He tallied the votes. “Six colonies say yea. Six colonies say nay. New York abstains.”

“Very well,” Hancock noted. “The vote is tied.”

Adams sat back in his chair, with a smile on his face.

“Why are you smiling, John?” asked Franklin.

“As President, Hancock will have to break the tie. He will vote ‘yea’. We have it.”

Silence hung in the room for several seconds. Then Hancock declared, “I vote for unanimity.”

"Good God, John!" shouted Adams. "What are you doing?"

"Listen," Hancock replied. "Don't you know that any colony who opposes independence will be forced to fight on the side of England? That we'll be setting brother against brother? I see no other way."

John's face reddened and was about to speak when Franklin said calmly, "John is correct. It must be unanimous. We must all hang together or most certainly, we will hang separately."

"You and your platitudes, Franklin," scoffed Adams. "And when they write the history of this revolution, the essence of the whole will be that Dr. Franklin did this and Dr. Franklin did that, and Franklin did some other damned thing. Franklin smote the ground and out sprang George Washington, fully grown and on his horse. Franklin then electrified him with his miraculous lightning rod."

"You're jealous, John."

Hancock ignored the banter. "Now. We need a unanimous vote. Mr. Thomson…"

"Mr. President." Adams stood up. "I move for a postponement."

"John?" asked Franklin. "Why?"

"How can we vote on independence without some kind of a written declaration?"

"What sort of declaration?" asked Hancock.

"Well," Adams continued, "like listing the reasons for the separation, our purposes, goals, so forth, and so on."

"We know those, John" Hancock replied.

"Of course. But does the rest of the world? We will need to ally with a powerful nation in opposition to Great Britain such as France or Spain."

"Come now, Mr. Adams," Rutledge said. "Is that all?"

Jefferson spoke up before Adams. "No. It is necessary to place before mankind the common sense of the subject in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take."

"Are you seriously suggesting, Mr. Jefferson, that we publish a written statement that declares us as traitors?" shouted Rutledge. "And that an illegal rebellion is indeed, a legal one."

"Mr. President," Read replied. "I second the motion to postpone the vote on independence until a declaration has been written."

“The motion has been seconded,” Hancock said. “Mr. Thomson, please take the roll.”

The roll taken and tallied, Charles said, “Six colonies say ‘yea’. Six colonies say ‘nay’. And New York abstained.”

“The vote again being tied, the chair decides in favor of postponement. Who will volunteer to write the declaration?”

“We do,” four delegates piped up.

“Record the following names,” Mr. Thomson. “Franklin, Adams, Sherman and Livingstone will be on the Declaration Committee.”

“And what about you, Mr. Lee?” Hancock said. “You started us on this road.”

“I would very much like to, but I have to return to Virginia. I have been appointed Governor there.”

“Do we have a substitute for Mr. Lee?”

Adams spoke up. “Yes. If Lee cannot, we need a Virginian on the committee. I propose Thomas Jefferson.”

“Good,” Hancock said. “Move to adjourn. The Congress will read, debate and approve the declaration three weeks hence.” He sighed. “And at that time, Virginia's resolution on independence will *finally* be voted on.”

Stave 25

Pennsylvania State House, Philadelphia, July, 1776

“Well, it’s about time, John!” cried Franklin. “Where have you been?”

“The roads from Boston were awash with water from these damn summer storms,” Adams brusquely replied. “So, Jefferson finished the declaration. Good. I was wondering if he would ever put an end to it.” He reached for the copy in Franklin’s hand.

“That’s my copy, John. Here’s yours.”

Adams quickly scanned the document and read to himself, "When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the Earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's god entitle them, a decent respect to the

opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

He skipped to the end. "And for the support of this declaration, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."

Adams was quiet for a few moments then, almost with a whisper, "Beautiful words. A masterful expression of the American mind. Jefferson has done a yeoman's job." He put down the document. "So, how far have they've gone?"

Franklin frowned. "They have been reading over the Declaration for the last few days. Picking at it, piece by piece. While you were gone, we have endured over 80 changes and the removal of almost 400 words!"

"Such as?"

"Reverend Witherspoon felt it was necessary to include reference to the Supreme Being imploring his help to achieve victory."

"And…"

"With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence' was included."

"What else?"

"Mr. Bartlett felt that reference in the Declaration to phrases like 'unfeeling brethren' and 'enemies at war' directed at the British should be removed. He felt our quarrel is with the British King, not the British people and is offensive to the British people."

"My God," Adams roared. "This is a revolution. We're going to have to offend somebody!"

"Tyrant!" came a sudden cry from the chambers down the hall of the State House.

"I think this is where you come in, John," Franklin grinned.

Adams furred his brow and followed Franklin into the chambers.

"Mr. Jefferson," Adams and Franklin heard as they took their seats. "You say here in your document that the King is a tyrant," Dickenson stated.

"Yes," Jefferson replied. "He is a tyrant."

"How so?" Dickinson questioned.

"Citizens arrested without charge. Homes entered without a warrant. The right to assemble a militia. And even the right to assemble is constrained."

"These incidents are to be expected. These are dangerous times, Mr. Jefferson. Is that grounds to call the King a tyrant and ferment rebellion?"

Franklin spoke up. "Mr. Dickinson. Those who give up some of their liberty in order to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety."

"And are we to confide in our fortune," Dickenson replied, "more boldly than Caesar himself, braving this storm in a skiff of paper?" He shrugged as Rutledge stepped in.

"Mr. Thomson. Would you be so kind to read a small portion of Mr. Jefferson's declaration. The one beginning with 'He has raged cruel war'."

Thomson nodded and read, "He has waged cruel war against human nature itself in the persons of distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere. Determined to keep open a market where men should be bought and sold…."

"Rutledge raised his hand and said, "Stop right there." He looked straight at Jefferson. "Are you talking about slavery, sir?"

"Yes, I am. Slaves. Black slaves."

Rutledge placed his hands behind his back and nodded. "Black slavery is an institution and a precious way of life here in the South. You wish us to abolish it?"

"Yes," Jefferson replied firmly. "It must be abolished. Fate demands it."

I'm not interested in what you call fate, Mr. Jefferson. I am interested in what's written on this little piece of paper you wrote."

Adams couldn't contain himself. "That little piece a paper deals with freedom for Americans."

"There's Mr. Adams' favorite tribe again. Americans." He snorted. "And now you are calling our property Americans?"

Thomson shouted from his seat, "Black slaves are not property. They are people!"

"Please, Mr. Thomson," Hancock said. "I must remind you. You are to record. Not comment."

“But Mr. Thomson is correct” Adams said. “They’re people and they’re here. That’s a good enough definition for me.”

Rutledge sat down and warned. “Remove that passage, Mr. Jefferson or the South will bury your ‘Declaration’. And with it, your dreams of independence.”

***

“The South has done us in,” Franklin sadly said. “I need another rum.” He motioned to the barkeeper at the City Tavern where they had gone after the South had walked out of the chambers.

“We pledge our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor," Charles muttered under his breath, nursing his goblet of rum.

“What was that, Charles?” Franklin asked.

“The South. They were ready to pledge their honor,” Charles solemnly replied. “And they were willing to only if they did the dishonorable thing of keeping slavery in our new nation.”

Adams mumbled agreement into his drink.

The three men were silent, each in his own thoughts.

Then Franklin spoke. “The slavery clause must go. It’s a luxury we cannot afford.”

“Luxury!” Charles shouted almost spitting out his drink. “You call almost a million people enslaved a luxury, Ben?”

“The issue is Independence, Charles,” Franklin sternly replied. “And we will have slavery whether we have independence or not. The South will insist on it.” He took a drink of his rum. “Again, I say. The issue is Independence. Independence first. If we don’t secure that, what difference does the rest make. Either we delete the slavery clause or go home.”

His eyes watered as he addressed his old friend. “I’m sorry, Charles.”

***

The three men left the tavern and returned to the chambers of the State House where Rutledge was silently waiting. They’re mood was gloomy to say the least when they took their seats.

Mr. Hancock declared, “The Congress will now vote on Virginia’s resolution for Independence. Mr. Thomson, take the roll. And I remind you all, a single ‘nay’ will defeat the motion.”

Charles swallowed hard. He knew what was at stake. Either we have a new nation with slavery or live under the thumb of tyranny. The roll was unanimous for independence until he reached South Carolina.

All eyes were on Rutledge.

“Well, Mr. Adams,” he said. “Will you remove the said passage on slavery?”

Adams stood up and walked to the document on Hancock’s desk. He took the quill there and scratched out the offending clause. He turned and marched to Rutledge. “There!” he said, tossing the declaration at him. “You have your slaves. Now vote man!”

Rutledge smiled and said, “The fair colony of South Carolina votes - ‘yea’.”

In quick lockstep, “North Carolina says ‘yea’.”

“Georgia says ‘yea’.”

Thomson was awe struck at the moment. He could hardly believe the words he was about to utter. “The Virginia resolution for Independence unanimously passes.”

Entr'acte Seven

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1827

Drummond walked to his desk for more pipe tobacco. Filled his pipe with a fresh load and walked back to sit next to Seth. “Charles was a wanted man. Or more exact, his records of the Continental Congress were. They knew Washington’s Continental Army had fallen on dire straits and they felt now was the time to round up the ‘rebels’ in Congress. So, they hatched a plan.”

They found a way to get the records?” Seth had the excitement of reading a well written spy story.

“Yes. Through treachery. And after this treachery was settled, Charles, from that day on, took the records home with him.”

But Charles’ contribution to the history of this great nation went further than being Secretary to Congress.” Drummond relit his pipe. “Do you know how the Great Seal of the United States was created? What the symbol actually means? Who designed it?”

Seth shook his head.

“It was Charles Thomson.”

Stave 26

Pennsylvania, Fall, 1777

"Those letters, too," Charles instructed his clerk, Thomas Edison. "The British will be in Philadelphia by end of day. The Declaration stirred up a honest nest. They are desperate to know what the proceedings of the Congress were and who was at attendance."

The clerk was stuffing personal papers and records of the Continental Congress, kept by Thomson, into two oversized leather pouches. "Sir. Do you believe General Washington can stop the British? First New York. Now Philadelphia. These are serious losses," he said.

Charles shook his head "As soon as we learned that the British fleet was at the head of the Chesapeake, a motion was made in the Congress for an adjournment to some place at least one hundred miles from any part of God's Kingdom where the British mercenaries can possibly land. So, we're moving the Congress to Lancaster."

"That small river town in Pennsylvania?"

Charles nodded.

Edison reminded Charles. "The King received the Declaration and, as of now, only you and Mr. Hancock's name appear on the document…"

"….and the Parliament wants me for treason."

"When will the others sign the broadside and place their neck in the noose?"

"Mr. Dunlap, the printer, left a large area below the Declaration on the broadside for the delegates to sign. It will be done eventually." Charles packed the remaining congressional records. "You take the letters. Be careful. British patrols are everywhere. Travel north rather than west to Bethlehem. It might be safer. I'll meet you in Lancaster."

***

Edison road his horse north while Charles, his carriage containing the congressional records, travelled southwest through the Lehigh Valley.

As dusk approached, Edison came upon what looked like a roadblock of troops. By the blue coats and colored facings of their uniforms, wearing black boots with a semi-pointed toe, and a tassel at the top of the boot which fell just below the knee, he knew they were Hessians.

He immediately pointed his horse to the woods but not before he was seen by the troops.

The Hessians followed in hot pursuit.

Through the woods Edison fled, urging his stead on but the thickets were too dense, and his horse tripped and fell throwing Edison to the ground.

Within moments, the Hessians were upon him. Two of Hessians wearing tall hats with a brass plate in front and a slender British Hanger sword hanging from their belts, held him fast between them. "Why did you run?" a Hessian sergeant snarled in a deep Prussian accent as he walked up to a frightened Edison. "And what do you have in those bags?"

Edison was silent. More out of fear than anything else.

"Rather not say? Then I'll look for myself." The sergeant reached down and picked up one the leather pouches. He pulled out a few papers and looked them over. "Letters from Mr. Charles Thompson." His eyes widened. "Thompson's wanted for treason!"

He turned on Edison. "What are you doing with these? Do you know Thompson?"

Edison was mum. His face twisted in fear.

"You come with me. General Clinton would like to speak with you."

***

As Charles dashed southwest through the Lehigh Valley, he drove his one-horse carriage hard through the night. The moon was full and, to his apprehension, illuminated the treeless road before him.

Just ten miles from his destination, a group of five-armed men rode out from bedside him wearing long, dark, coarse coats and black traditional triangle hats. Charles knew he could not outrun the horsemen, so he pulled his carriage to a stop as they galloped up to him and surrounded his coach.

A tall, thin young man, no more than eighteen looked suspiciously at Charles. After a moment he said, "Who are you and why are you in such a hurry?"

Charles knew it wasn't worth lying since all they had to do was look in his pouch at the Congressional records he carried. "My name is Charles Thomson and I'm heading for Lancaster."

The young boy's eyes widened. "Charles Thomson of Pennsylvania? The Samuel Adams of Philadelphia?"

Charles sighed and nodded.

"This is an honor, sir," the boy said and stuck out his hand. "My name's Daniel Tremaine. Of the Pennsylvania Sons of Liberty."

Charles was relieved.

"Why Lancaster?" the boy asked.

"The Congress has moved there. The British have taken Philadelphia and we had to flee."

Tremaine shook his head. "The Congress is not in Lancaster. They moved to York. A town of about 300 dwellings and 2,000 residents. The Lancaster Inns were already overcrowded because the displaced citizens of Philadelphia had flooded into the small community along with the fleeing State government of Pennsylvania."

"Why York?"

"It's defensible from British invasion. The other side of the Susquehanna River offers a protective natural barrier to British invasion. And York has an underutilized courthouse readily available to be used to reconvene Congress in safety and comfort." Tremaine signaled to the other Sons of Liberty. "With your permission, sir, we'll escort you."

***

"I don't think that's necessary," General Clinton said to the two Hessian troops flanking the handcuffed Edison. "Remove the hand restraints."

Edison was surprised and a bit relieved at the General's civility.

"Perhaps we can help each other," Clinton stated. "Have a seat." He pointed to a canvas covered chair in front of his small wooden desk, then motioned to the two soldiers. "You can leave us alone."

Edison sighed and took his seat.

Clinton took off his red, heavy uniform coat covered with gold braid on the shoulders and sleeve and draped it on his desk chair. "I have yet to acclimate to your colonial weather," he smiled as he sat on the edge of his desk. "Now. Who are you and why are you carrying such sensitive letters of a man wanted for treason?"

Edison saw no use in lying. The letters would speak for themselves. "My name's Thomas Edison. I am a clerk to Charles Thomson."

"And where are you going with these letters?"

Edison said nothing.

"Mr. Edison," Clinton said slowly and deliberately. "With these letters in your possession, I can hang you for treason. Do you understand?"

Edison again, stayed mum, sweat beading up on his forehead.

“I can help you avoid the hangman’s noose, Mr. Edison. Just tell me where Thomson is. Where are the Congressional records in his possession?”

“You know about the records?” asked the little clerk, surprised.

“We know Thomson was the Secretary to the rebel’s Continental Congress and has all the written notes on the assembly. He has attested to the treasonous Declaration of this so-called Independence that is spreading about the colonies.” Clinton stood up and towered over Edison. “I’ll ask for the last time. Then the noose. Do you know where the records are?”

Facing a certain death, Edison capitulated. “Yes, I do.”

“Good. You’re a smart man. Now. I want you to find those records and give them to us.” He placed a firm hand on the little clerk’s shoulder. “Agreed?”

Edison nodded.

Stave 27

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 1777

“It’s time to put the nail in the coffin of this rebel cause,” General Clinton stated firmly, eating his dinner of grouse and finger potatoes at his Philadelphia headquarters. “We occupy Philadelphia for the winter while Washington is shivering and starving in his winter quarters at Valley Forge. News we have is that his army is in disarray. It’s time to identify the rebel leadership, round them up and put an end to this treason.”

“Time to call in our turncoat?” asked his aide-de-camp, left tenant Howard Kent.

“You would love to see your classmate, Charles Thomson, be the guest of the hangman’s noose. Wouldn’t you?” Clinton chuckled.

“I would happily arrange it, Sir.”

“Good.” The General finished a piece of his overdone grouse and growled. “Contact our turncoat.”

***

“Mr. Edison,” Kent announced, as he stood behind Thomson’s clerk. He was nursing a tall glass of ale at Philadelphia pub name the Groggy Hog. “Took some time to find you. I hope you weren’t trying to avoid us.”

"I was hoping to," Edison thought. But he recognized Kent immediately. "Out of uniform, are we?" he snarked.

Kent ignored the remark. "We're calling in your side of our deal. We've arranged to have you deliver the Records of the Continental Congress." He hard-pressed his hand over Edison's on the bar and threatened, "And don't think about backing out."

Edison nodded.

"Be at the Jersey Pine Barrens at 11 PM. You know the place."

***

"You served as an officer in the Continental Army?" inquired Captain Bond, an intelligence officer with the British Army. "Why the change of allegiance?"

"I felt the colonial cause was unwinnable," Lawrence Marr replied. They watched on the ferry as Staten Island receded behind them. "I came to realize that the so-called Continental Army is a rag-tag group of militia and undisciplined troops. Unfit to wage a war against Great Britain. And, like many of the colonists, felt a stronger allegiance to the Crown."

"Where is this place we're supposed to meet this rebel army officer James Moody?"

"We land at Little Egg Harbor. In Ocean County New Jersey," Bond explained. "Moody is traveling overland by horse and is to rendezvous with us at Coopers Ferry near Camden. From there, we travel to the appointed place in the South Jersey Pine Barrens and meet Thomson's clerk. He'll hand over the records to us there."

Bond watched Marr's face that was etched in thought. "These clandestine affairs not sit well with you?"

"Not new to this. I've been involved in a number of guerilla escapades. I just have a funny feeling about this one." He paused in thought. "I mean, why would Edison do this? Throw in with the British? And why not have him tell us where the records are and send troops to get them?"

"The General didn't want to cause a scene with the colonialists wherever the records were. They are a violent bunch. And maybe like you, Edison had a change of heart." He laughed. "Then again, maybe he wanted to avoid being hanged."

***

"What's the matter, Thomas?" asked Charles. He walked into his office and found Edison fidgeting at his desk. "What's bothering you?"

“There’s something I need to tell you,” he replied. “When we left Philadelphia for York, I was captured by the British. Hessians to be exact.”

Charles lifted an eyebrow. “And…”

“They found the letters I was carrying. They wanted to know why I was carrying your letters and other papers. They said I was in league with traitors and I was to be hung.”

Edison didn’t look any worse for wear and Charles could figure why he was still alive. “You arranged a deal.”

“Yes. I promised that I would steal the records of the Congress that you kept here in your office and give them to the British.”

“And have you?”

“No. I thought I might evade them, but they caught up to me today. I am to give the records to them tonight.” He cried. “I couldn’t do it! So, I’m telling you.”

Charles was quiet a moment then said. “Thank you, Thomas. Where and when?”

“Tonight. At 11 PM in a pre-arranged location in the Pine Barrens.”

“Good. Let’s see what we can do about those spies.”

Stave 28

South Jersey Pine Barrens, November 1777

“Where is he,” Marr said, shielding his eyes from the lowering sun signaling the coming of dusk. “Moody was supposed to…”

“There,” piped Bond,” pointing to man walking their way over the wood creaking ferry landing.

The man approached the two and offered his hand. “I’m Moody.”

“Marr took Moddy’s hand. “We’re late. We have to get moving.” He turned to Bond. “Thank you for your help. We’ll take it from here.”

Moody led Marr to a pair of horses at the end of the landing. “Where is the meeting?” he asked.

“At an iron works near a small tributary of the Mullica River called the Batsto River,” Marr replied. “The Works is owned by Loyalists.”

Moody nodded. “Good place. Nothing for miles around.”

“And in case anything *unexpected* happens,” he accentuated the word ‘unexpected, “I want some people there that I can depend on,” Marr added. “Right. Now let’s go.”

***

The two men made good time and just after sunset, the arrived at the iron works near the river in a light rain. Though light, it had been raining for some time, and the ground was slick with mud. They walked up to the main building sloshing through the muck where they were to make contact with the Loyalists, but no one was there.

“Let’s try the house,” Marr said.

As they approached small residence of the caretakers, they were approached by a stout man dressed in drab work clothes and heavy work apron. A leather hat topped a head of long hair and a scruffy beard. “Who are you? What do you want?” he asked.

“My name’s Marr and this is Mr. Moody.”

The big man said nothing. In fact, he seemed very uneasy.

“You are expecting us. Correct,” Marr asked, raising one eyebrow.

“Yes,” was all he said.

Marr became alert. Something was not right. His experience as guerrilla soldier set off warning signs in his head.

“We’re to meet someone here,” Marr continued. “We didn’t catch your name.”

“Samuel Belington,” the big man replied. “My two sons, George and Elliot, and I run the Works.”

Marr eyed the man suspiciously. The name of the Loyalists were correct but why the unease. “As we said, we are here to meet someone.”

“He’s in the cottage with my sons. Follow me,” Belington said.

The weight of experience made Marr move his hands onto the two flintlock pistols he wore on either side of his hips as he and Moody followed Belington into the house. Moody noticed Marr’s action and placed his hand around the wooden stock of his iron tomahawk dangling from his side.

Once they stepped into the cottage, the Belington sons were standing in the small living space. They were similarly dressed like their father. A small man wearing a long wool coat, scarf and brown boots was standing between them. Marr looked around, still alert and asked, “Are you Edison?”

“Yes I am.”

“Did you bring the records?”

“I have them here.” He patted the satchel hanging from his hip.

“Give me the satchel,” Marr ordered.

Edison handed the satchel to Marr and as the spy was about to open it, two young men rushed into the room while another charged in through the front door. Two of them carried flintlocks while the third, Tremaine, placed a steady bead of his pistol on Marr and Moody. “The both of you are under arrest as spies. And you,” pointing at Marr, “drop those sidearms to the floor.”

Marr hesitated a moment then reached for his sidearms.

“Slowly,” Tremaine ordered. “And by the butt of the handles.”

Then, surprising both Tremaine and Moody, Marr rushed at the young boy, easily overpowering him, pushing him into the others and then flew through an open window.

Moody, seeing his chance, bolted from the cottage. He rushed to his horse by the main building, mounted and galloped towards the Batsto River.

The two companions of Tremaine took off after Moody, found their horses and went off in hot pursuit while Tremaine pursued Marr.

***

Tremaine heard the sound of boots slogging through mud and gave chase as the rain began to fall in earnest. He followed the sound until it stopped at a storage shack. Cautiously he approached the rickety shack of wood and chicken wire, held his pistol high, and slowly push the door ajar.

He only opened the door halfway when Marr came bursting through the wall near Tremaine, wood pieces flying. The boy fired in panic at Marr who was trying to get his footing. Tremaine missed but his shot distracted Marr giving Tremaine his chance. He threw himself at Marr who was tangled in the debris of wood and threw him to the ground. Marr had dropped one of his pistols and the two struggled to gain possession of it.

Though Marr was much stronger than Tremaine, he had to fight off both Tremaine and extricate himself from the tangle of wood and chicken wire he was in.

This gave Tremaine the chance he needed.

Tremaine retrieved the pistol first, scrambled on top of Marr and pointed the weapon at his face. “Now,” Tremaine said breathing heavily, “As I said. You are under arrest.”

***

Moody panicked by the unsuspecting events, drove his stead hard through the heavily forested area of pitch pines hoping to shake off his pursuers. But the heavily soaked moss from the rain slowed his horse’s progress. He could hear his pursuers slogging behind him as he pointed his horse towards the shallow river.

When he finally reached the tributary, his horse bolted in the soggy bog of the banks, lost its footing, and fell forward, throwing Moody into the swollen river.

Moody struggled to stand but was being sucked into the muddy water. He all but gave up when a pair of strong hands pulled him up and out of the water.

Moody looked up to see the one of the young men that surprised he and Marr at the cottage pointing his rifle at him.

“Should have let me drown,” grumbled Moody.

“No. We mustn’t cheat the hangman,” the young boy said.

Stave 29

Philadelphia, Summer, 1782

“A turkey. A respectable bird and a true original Native of America…”

“Damn it, Ben,” cried John Adams, “Not that again.”

“He may be a little vain & silly,” Franklin continued, ignoring Adams’ protest, “a noble bird of courage that would not hesitate to attack a Grenadier of the British Guards who should presume to invade his farmyard with a red coat on.”

Adams rolled his eyes. “A turkey is not a fitting symbol of our country and should not sit upon the seal of a great nation. Us!” He finished that last of the run in his goblet. He went on. “Just last year Washington defeated Cornwallis at Yorktown. The war is over. You and Franklin will lead the delegation to Paris next year to sign a peace treaty. The British will formally acknowledge our Independence and the boundaries of our new nation will be established. We need a fitting symbol attached to that peace treaty.”

Jefferson chimed in. “Besides a symbol of our country, we now need laws, a constitution, land policy …”

“That’s why I think the turkey….” Franklin repeated.

“No. No. No,” Adams interrupted. “A more fitting symbol would be the Phoenix. Emblematic of the expiring liberty of Britain, revived by her descendants, in America."

Charles quietly puffed on his pipe, smiling to himself as the three men debated their views.

“It should be the eagle,” Jefferson countered. “The North American bald eagle.”

“The eagle is a scavenger. A thief. A rank coward,” Franklin objected. “The little King Bird not bigger than a sparrow attacks him boldly and drives him out of the district. In addition, the eagle is a bird of bad moral character. He does not get his living honestly. Perched on some dead tree near the river, where, too lazy to fish for himself, he watches the labor of others, then steals the catch for himself.”

“And it is the symbol of over ten centuries of European mischief,” added Adams.

“The Great Seal should be allegorical, Jefferson said. “It should show the children of Israel in the wilderness, led by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.”

Adams jumped in. “It should be Hercules showing him having to choose to travel either on the flowery path of self-indulgence or ascend the rugged, uphill way of duty to others and honor to himself.”

“Hercules. Israel,” Franklin scoffed. “It should be Moses standing on the shore, and extending his hand over the sea, thereby causing the same to overwhelm Pharaoh as we have overwhelmed the Crown with rays from a Pillar of Fire in the clouds reaching to Moses, to express that he acts by Command of the Deity with the motto – ‘Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God’."

There was little unifying support for any of these proposals around the table among the frustrated men.

Finally, Adams asked, “And what of you Charles? You’ve been silent. What would you propose? You’ve been given the commission by Congress. Like the other commissioners, they could not agree on a Great Seal.”

Charles placed his pipe on the table, exhaling a cloud of white smoke. “Here is what I am going to propose to Congress and my reasons for.”

He removed a paper from his coat with a symbol scribbled on it.

“In regard to the shield of the United States,” Thomson explained, "the shield is composed of the chief & pale, the two most honorable ordinaries. The vertical stripes, represent the several states all joined in one solid compact supporting a Chief.” He pointed to the broad band above the stripes on his drawing, “which unites the whole & represents Congress. The Motto ‘E pluribus Unum’ alludes to this union. Therefore, the shield represents the unification of the member states through Congress. The Latin "E pluribus Unum" means ‘out of many, one’. Meaning although we are many, we are united as one.”

The three men were silent taking in Thomson’s explanation.

Thomson continued. “The colored vertical stripes in the arms are kept closely united by the Chief and the Chief depend upon that union & the strength resulting from it for its support, to denote the Confederacy of the United States of America and the preservation of their union through Congress. In other words, Congress draws its power from the States, and the States are stronger when united by Congress.” He looked at Adams.

“Continue,” Adams said.

Thomson nodded. "The colors of the vertical stripes are those used in the flag of the United States of America which the Continental Army fought under. White signifies purity and innocence. Red, hardiness & valor, and Blue, the color of the Chief. The broad band above the stripes signifies vigilance, perseverance & justice. In other words, the States are depicted as pure, yet courageous, while Congress is depicted as vigilant, persistent, and fair.

“In regard to the Obverse side of the Great Seal,” Thomson explained, “The Olive branch and arrows held by the American Eagle denote the power of peace & war which is exclusively vested in Congress. There are 13 arrows, because each state had their own military under the Articles of Confederation. The power to make war and peace was still a Congressional power. The Constellation denotes a new State taking its place and rank among other sovereign powers."

Thomson paused for affect. Then went on. "The shield is born on the breast of an American Eagle, without any other supporters, to denote that the United States of America ought to rely on their own Virtue. In other words, we should not allow foreign influence and should remain self-reliant.”

In regard to the Reverse side of the Great Seal, Thomson explained, "The pyramid signifies Strength and Duration. The Eye over it and the Motto ‘Annuit Coeptis’ allude to the many signal interpositions of providence in favor of the American cause. Therefore, the pyramid means that the US will endure. The Eye signifies divine intervention in favor of America. The motto "Annuit Coeptis" means "He approves of the undertakings".

"The Roman date MDCCLXXVI – or 1776 - underneath is that of the Declaration of Independence and the words under it ‘Novus ordo seclorum’ - ‘new arrangement of the ages’ – signifies the beginning of the new American Era which commences from 1776 and America's Independence from the British Empire - the start of a new system of governance.

“That is wonderful work, Charles,” Franklin declared. “It will have our support and I believe it will be accepted by the Congress.”

Entr'acte Eight

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1827

Drummond glanced out the study’s window at the fading afternoon light behind dark clouds threating rain. “I’ll ring for some tea,” Drummond said. “One of the few things of the British that I enjoy this time of day.”

Several minutes later, Drummond’s man servant entered the study with a silver tray of teacups and a small pitcher.

Drummond dismissed him and poured both he and Seth a cup of tea. “Sugar?”

Seth declined.

“So. Where were we?”

“How the records of the Congress were almost stolen,” Seth replied.

“Yes. Correct. And his contribution as Secretary of Congress didn’t end with the Declaration of independence. He continued as Secretary to the Constitutional Convention where the ugly head of slavery rose again. But Charles did gain a small victory with the Northwest ordinance and ended with a bold, chilling prediction.”

Stave 30

Philadelphia, Fall, 1787

“Almost three years, Charles, since the Constitutional Convention started,” Franklin declared, and we still are still no closer to creating a form of government.” The two were sitting at City Hall. They were having a leisurely lunch of overdone beef roast and baked potatoes - and mugs of rum.

Charles nodded over his rum. “With Washington residing over the convention, I was hoping the delegates would have forged an agreement quickly.” He addressed Alexander Hamilton, General Washington's aide-de-camp who represented New York at the Constitutional Convention sitting beside them.

"The challenge," Hamilton replied, smoking an ivory carved pipe, "is to take the *what* that we have declared in the Declaration, the fundamental freedoms of the American people, and find a way to preserve them in coded law of the nation."

"That's becoming easier said than done," Franklin lamented. "The individual States have a hatred of arbitrary authority. That's why the Articles of Confederation failed and need to be amended – or discarded entirely."

"Discarded is closer to the truth," Hamilton replied. "They have their freedoms and they want to retain them. They are highly resistant to a centralized federal authority."

"It's the same debate we have since creating the Declaration," Franklin mused. "About the proper balance between order and liberty. And I said then, if we give up some of our liberty in order to obtain order, we deserve neither liberty nor order."

"Ben," said Hamilton," You have such a way with words."

"Thank you, Alexander," Franklin smiled. "And you are a noble person to recognize such eloquence."

"May I interrupt this mutual adoration to tell you some news," Charles said, "There may be a solution. James Madison showed me a proposal. He called it the Virginia Plan. He's going to propose it in today's session."

"And that session is fast approaching," Franklin said. "So, drink up, friends! We have work to do."

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"Mr. Thomson," George Washington declared, "call this session of the Congressional Congress to order. Call the roll."

Each name of the fifty-five delegates, including James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, Elbridge Gerry, Rufus King, Gouverneur Morris and Charles Pinckney were called by Charles and accounted for. He was barely finished with the roll call when debate on a central authority began immediately.

"Mr. Chairman," Elbridge Gerry, a businessman and politician from Massachusetts said, gaining the attention of the Congress, "As we have stated time and time again in Massachusetts, we are not willing to exchange the central authority of the British Parliament with another central authority over the States."

Alexander Hamilton was exasperated. "Without a strong central authority, the Union will fail! We've been over this territory again and again!"

“We don’t agree that the authority of property owners, landed wealthy and elites should hold sway over the Union,” Gerry responded. “This country is far more represented by small farmers, shopkeepers, laborers, merchants. Ordinary Americans should have input into the government, not from corrupt elitists.”

Hamilton raised his voice. “I take issue with that statement, sir. The common people may not be the best people to run a democratic government and protect their liberty.”

Franklin piped up. “Ah yes. That wonderful concept of democracy. And what is democracy verses liberty? I say democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. While liberty is a well-armed lamb contesting the vote!”

“Enough of your witticisms, Franklin,” Hamilton replied. “Why are you so against democracy? Without your witticism.

“I will tell you, “Franklin began. “In a pure democracy, the kind you advocate, the majority opinion is not restrained and can impose its will on the minority. What we need is a Republic. A constitution or charter of rights that protects those indelible rights that we have fought hard for. Rights that cannot be taken away by government. Even if it has been elected by majority voters.

“Ah!” Hamilton replied. “That will only work if the people are moral and religious. What you call your Republic, is wholly inadequate to the government of any other. If we do not have good and moral people, none of this is going to work.”

“By the way, Alexander,” Gerry said, “where is your colleague, Patrick Henry? Why is not here at the convention?”

“He refused to attend. The man that who stood for no taxation without representation in his own words has said he ‘smelt a rat’.”

Gerry continued. “And I bring up something further. The larger States have called for seats in the government legislature determined by population, while the smaller States wanted each state, no matter the population, to have equal representation in Congress. How do we satisfy both?”

Mr. Chairmen,” Charles interceded. “May I speak?”

“You have the floor,” Mr. Thomson.

“Mr. Madison has a proposal that might steer us through this obstacle.” Charles nodded to James Madison, a leading instigator for the formation of a Constitutional Convention. “Mr. Madison. Please tell us your proposal.”

“I propose,” Madison began, “a government structure with an intricate system of checks and balances that would meet the concerns of those who want a strong federal government but will also provide equal representation for all Americans.”

“And how do you plan to pull off such a trick?” asked Gerry.

“The States that want equal representation no matter what their population number may be,” Madison answered, “will be in one of two houses of government. This Senate house would consist of two representatives from each of the States. The second house would consist of representatives from each State according to population numbers.”

He paused to feel out the delegates, then continued. “In essence, the government would be compromised of a bicameral, or two-house, legislature, which include a House of Representatives determined by population and a Senate where each state has two representatives. In that way such a system helps avoid the tyranny of the majority and preserve the rights of the minority that is essential to a democracy.”

“Is that all?” Madison asked.

“No. I would add that an executive branch would be included to carry out the laws legislated by the two houses. With each branch of the government, with *equal* authority, comes the checks and balances need to secure the freedoms that we have fought for.”

Franklin nodded. “A neat system. What do you think Mr. Gerry?”

“I am not satisfied. How does this system of government secure the freedoms that we have fought for.”

“It would be inferred,” Madison replied. “By the very structure of the checks and balances. Anything else would be unnecessary because the federal government would be granted no power to abridge individual liberty.”

“On the contrary, sir,” Gerry scowled, “protection of their rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, and that no government should rest on *inference*. Your, what is it called, Mr. Madison? Your Virginia Plan? May tell what such a government *can* do. But we need a counterweight that states clearly and without inference, what it *can’t* do.”

“And how do you propose to do that?” asked Madison.

“A list of specific civil liberties and rights,” Gerry replied. “Many of which are already protected by some of our state constitutions.”

“Unalienable rights?” Madison added. “Rights that are naturally ours as human beings?”

"Ye. Sort of a bill of rights?" Governor Morris, the leading delegate from Pennsylvania added. "Amended to this Constitution we are debating."

"Correct," Gerry replied. "Like freedom of speech, the press, religion, and assembly. Safeguards for those accused of crimes. The right to bear arms and the right to refuse the quartering of soldiers in one's home. Trial by jury. And most importantly, state that all powers not *expressly* granted to Congress in the Constitution, be reserved to the States."

There were mumbles among the delegates as Washington said, "We have a lot to consider. I propose we end this session and reconvene again later to give the delegates time to discuss Mr. Madison's proposal and that of Mr. Gerry's."

Stave 31

Philadelphia, September 1787

"Be it resolved," Charles Thomson said, at the final session of the Congressional Convention, "that James Madison's Virginia Plan and changes agreed upon by this delegation, and the Amendments to such called the Bill of Rights, be accepted as the Constitution of the United States."

"All in favor, say 'ye'," polled Washington holding his gavel high.

"Mr. President," replied William Paterson, delegate from New Jersey. "There is still the issue of representation."

"I thought that issued resolved," Washington replied. "Two representatives from each State in the Senate appointed by the State and representatives based on the population of the State and elected in the State."

"The issue is what counts as population?" Paterson stated. "The House of Representatives has representatives for every 40,000 inhabitants. Should slaves be counted? And how?"

Charles was quick to read between the line of Patterson's question. "Sir. It has established, and in my opinion, a sin against God, during the debate of the Declaration of Independence, black slaves were property – not people. Are you telling me now that their status as Americans be elevated to that of people?" He looked directly at John Rutledge. "What say you, sir?"

"Mr. Thomson," Washington interrupted. "Please remember your position here at the convention is to record the proceedings. And that is all."

"Then *I* will ask the question," Franklin said, standing on shaky legs. "So. Mr. Rutledge. You seem to want it both ways. Slaves as property and slaves as people when it suites the South's pleasure."

Rutledge directs his attention to Washington. “General. Either slaves count under representation or many of us will not vote for the resolution.” He looked at Charles then Franklin. “So, what will it be?”

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“So, what will it be?” mused Franklin glowering into his goblet of wine seated with Charles and Madison at the popular tavern.

“The slavery issue again raises its ugly head,” growled Charles.

At that moment, Madison entered the pub and sat down next to the brooding men. “I just left Roger Sherman, the delegate from Connecticut. He is proposing a plan, a compromise, that Rutledge and all would agree too.”

“What is it?” quipped Franklin “Would they want their cows and sheep to be counted as well?”

Madison chuckled. “No. A simple equation. A slave would be counted. But counted as three-fifths of a person.”

Charles threw up his hands. “Not only are they treated as property, but they are not even a full person!” He banged his fist on the table. “No! No! This abortion can go on no further. We endured slavery under the British. Then as property under the Declaration of Independence. And now a three-fifths of a human being under the Constitution?”

“Calm down, Charles,” Franklin replied. “Calm down. As with the Declaration, we will fix this later.”

“There was no later after the Declaration just as there will be no later after this.”

The men were quiet as Charles regained his composure.

“There it is,” Madison said sadly. “I don’t like it but either we do Sherman’s Connecticut compromise or lose the Constitution.”

“Charles?” Franklin quietly said. “It’s all we worked for.”

Charles hung his head and just nodded.

***

The compromise was made and the Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787.

"The United States of America has a government," said Madison, with Franklin and Charles, as they walked from the Pennsylvania State House. "An Executive Branch, a legislative Congress made up of the Senate and House of Representatives, and a judiciary branch or Supreme Court."

"And we have elected a President of the nation," Franklin added. He turned to Charles. "The Congress has a duty for you to perform. Your last official act as Secretary to the Congress." He withdrew a letter from his jacket. "Give this to Washington. It's his appointment as the first President of the United States." He placed his hand on Charles' shoulder. "You have that honor."

As they walked a small crowd of people gathered around the three men. A short man. A butcher in a stained apron approached Franklin. "Sir? In the meeting? What was decided? What will we have as a nation? A King? A democracy?"

Franklin patted the butcher on his broad stomach. "A Republic, my good man. A Republic – if you can keep it."

***

The tall austere figure of Charles with his narrow face and keenly penetrating eyes didn't relish the trying journey to Virginia, which was impeded by tempestuous weather, bad roads, and the many large rivers he had to cross. But he was to do the task given to him by Congress.

After the arduous journey, Charles arrived at Mr. Vernon. Washington opened the door and greeted Charles with a cordial embrace.

Once in the privacy of the mansion, Thomson read from a prepared statement. Thomson began by declaring, "I am honored with the commands of the Senate to wait upon your Excellency with the information of your being elected to the office of President of the United States of America by a unanimous vote. He read aloud a letter from Senator John Langdon of New Hampshire, the president pro tempore. "Suffer me, sir, to indulge the hope that so auspicious a mark of public confidence will meet your approbation and be considered as a sure pledge of the affection and support you are to expect from a free and enlightened people."

"While I realize the arduous nature of the task which is conferred on me and feel my inability to perform it," Washington replied, "I wish there may not be reason for regretting the choice. All I can promise is only that which can be accomplished by an honest zeal."

Charles understood Washington's reluctance. "Sir. You may feel you wonder whether you fit for the post. It's unlike anything you have ever done. You know that the hopes for a Republican government rest in your hands."

Washington nodded solemnly. "I know. As commander in chief, I've been able to wrap myself in a self-protective silence, but the presidency will leave me you little or no place to hide and expose me to public censure as nothing before."

“Sir,” Charles said. “The Republic is in good hands.”

Stave 32

Philadelphia, Winter, 1787

“Charles.” Richard Henry Lee, a delegate to the Northwest Territory Committee said, “We put ten years of work into this ordinance. It’s time we send it to Congress for their approval. It needs your signature as Secretary.”

Charles, sitting in the Committee offices of the Pennsylvania State House with Virginia Delegate Edward Carrington and Lee, was looking dourer. “I had hopes that this Ordinance for the new territory would set precedence for all new states to follow.”

“But it does, Charles. Carrington here, myself, and Massachusetts Delegate Nathan Dane brought an eastern influence to the committee’s deliberations. You know the importance of that.”

“Having those territories the republican rights preserved in the Constitution,” added Lee. “Such as freedom of religion and right to a trial by jury.”

“The Territory will no doubt be settled chiefly by Eastern people with a full an equal chance of it adopting Eastern politics,” Carrington added.

“The Northwest territory is far to the north,” Jefferson said. “Those lands beyond the Appalachian Mountains, between British North America and the Great Lakes to the north and the Ohio River to the south and the upper Mississippi River to the west form the Territory's boundaries. It’s beyond the reach of southern politics.”

“And what about slavery?” Charles asked.

Just then, Jefferson entered the room.

“Tom,” Charles said, brightening up. “I am glad you are here. With this Ordinance we can accomplish something that we have tried to do since the Declaration of Independence. Confront the issue of slavery.”

“It was confronted,” Lee replied. “Article Six of the Ordinance states….”

“Yes, I know about Article Six.” Charles withdrew a copy of the proposed Ordinance and read from the text word for word. “There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, provided, always, that any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any one of the original States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service as aforesaid.”

He folded up the paper and said, “The language of the ordinance prohibits slavery, but also contained is a clear fugitive slave clause as well. That doesn’t completely abolish slavery in the new States. It also says nothing about the Indians. They too, are the forgotten Americans.” He looked at Jefferson. “Tom. Here’s our chance to keep slavery from advancing further in this country. With no exceptions.”

“Charles, Jefferson replied, “The ordinance is a big step. You should attest to it.”

Charles placed his hand over his chin and shook his head. Then said, “Slavery is a blot on the character of us and this country and must be wiped out.”

He paused, stood and walked to an open window in the Tavern. Looking out at the setting sun over the Delaware River, as if gazing into the future, he said gravely, “If slavery cannot be defeated by religion, reason or philosophy, I am sure, by my word, that it will someday be swept away by blood.”

Entr'acte Eight

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1827

Seth put down his quill. “I must ask one last thing. How come Thomson has never shown up as a member of the government? I mean. After all his contributions to this country, why no recognition?”

“By this time, Charles had made too many political enemies,” Drummond replied. “They stood in his way at every turn. So, he retired to private life doing what he loved best. Researching and writing.”

The two were silent for a while with just the beat of rain drops against the windows of the room filling the void.

“Thomson was a great man,” Seth finally said, breaking the silence. “And that’s how I am going to present it to my editor. I hope history remembers him.”