



My sister Jane had it right.

Growing up, I enjoyed numerous advantages — which she, as a member of the faire sex, did not. I was able to go to school, learn to read and write, meet important and influential people ... and then, as I grew in knowledge, I later added to my life's lessons through business and political activities, especially my travels abroad.

Jane, of course, had the ability to see through all my self-importance and bring me right back down to earth, reminding me from whence I'd come. In all humility, I must say that rising from rather lowly beginnings to where I am today was often more a matter of luck, and as they say nowadays, 'being in the right place at the right time,' than anything I personally planned or intentionally prepared for (notwithstanding my comical attempts at moral perfection, which everyone can read about elsewhere). However, nothing in all of this life of good fortune and world acclaim had ever prepared me for what I am about to tell you. After a lifetime of doing things in the public eye that were momentous enough to 'make history,' I now find it necessary to report on a variety of odd — to be more precise, *cataclysmic and universe-impacting* — experiences of mine that are not so well known to the public.

This new revelation— I am tempted to offer a play on words and call it 'The American Revelation' (American Revolution, *Revelation* — clever, is it not?) — but seriously, this revelation is a prime example of the times that outside forces beyond my understanding, combined with experiences of which I had no part in the making, mysteriously came together to create an adventure and an opportunity the likes of which few human beings could ever imagine.

My name is Benjamin Franklin — a humble printer, inventor, diplomat, statesman, and a Doctor of Philosophy (now known as 'Science'). And it is in this latter role that I have unexpectedly been a witness to phenomena that would shock and amaze most

ordinary people. With that said, what I am now about to reveal are episodes of my life that heretofore I have never dared to share with anyone.

By the way, I apologize in advance for whatever anachronisms and oddities of historical inaccuracy that may have crept into this writing — as you will soon learn, dear reader, the reason for this lies in the very sort of travels I am about to describe.

1. It started with an experiment

I believe this whole story began back on that fateful, rainy night in 1752 when I was conducting my famous ‘kite’ experiment with lightning, attempting to prove that the flashes of light from the sky were one and the same as the phenomenon of electricity.

It was one of those nights when I felt I needed to get out of the house. My wife Deborah and I had been bickering, and so I turned to my work. I thought I’d be returning home later that night, but that was not to be.

You see, somehow in the midst of my experiment, something unexpected happened. I was not at all prepared to suddenly vanish from the face of the earth.

I was there in my place of shelter, being assisted by my son William, as we attempted to harvest lightning by flying the kite in a thunderstorm. As best I can recall it now, my entire body started glowing and tingling. Rather than standing on *terra firma* in that old barn, I felt as if I was now hurtling through space, plunging headlong through a celestial cloud.

I briefly lost consciousness as my rotation became increasingly faster, until the point at which I blacked out and lost track of what was happening around me. Eventually, I slowly regained my senses and discovered myself sitting atop a stack of hay in some farmyard. And there, after collecting myself and enquiring at the nearest house, I received the shock of my life when it was made known to me that something was very, very different from my previous environs. It was difficult to estimate who possessed the bigger look of astonishment — the stranger who opened the door ... or myself!

Number one, my dress, and the clothing of this stranger (I would guess him to be a farmer), were close cousins but *very distant* cousins, so there was an immediate realization that I was in some sort of a foreign land, where the attire was dramatically different from my native 18th century Philadelphia.

Number two, the language, though English, was not the same as I had learned through my schooling in Boston. There is almost a lack of formality, or a carefree or primitive sound to it, which did not at all sound like the King’s English.

And number three, as I looked around in his farmhouse, I spotted a number of strange objects and devices that told me that he was either an inventor like myself, or perhaps a conjurer or wizard ... or again, possibly someone from a distant, exotic land where the people employed numbers of objects which we colonials have never set eyes on nor imagined in our wildest dreams.

There was a small white box, out of which could be heard the sounds of music playing. It was a tune I was not familiar with, and the words sounded like “*I know we had to try to reach up and touch the sky, baby, whatever happened to you and I, that I don’t want to go home?*”

In another room, there was a larger box, with pictures flashing on it, which also seemed to have someone speaking from within it, reporting on news events.

On the table, there was a very tiny white and black device resembling a flattened snuff box — which suddenly uttered a strange sound! When the farmer picked it up in response, this too had pictures, flashing randomly upon its miniscule face.

All these devices appeared to be the work of intelligent beings far more sophisticated than any of us in the 18th century, so I can only conclude that perhaps this unusual place I found myself in was either a foreign land more advanced than ours, or perhaps ... I shudder to think. ... possibly our own native land of America, except at a point many, many years in the future.

I should mention as an aside, that the farmer’s conversation with this little device was most interesting. I overheard him speaking, via the device, with a friend who shared with him an

amazing occurrence that he had just witnessed.

The farmer's friend declared excitedly, "First I saw a flash of light in the sky, and then a bunch of rainbows ... this was in broad daylight, Fred! And they were streaking through the sky, heading toward your place..."

Fred, holding the device to his ear, interrupted. "I saw it, too... but here's the craziest part. After that flash of rainbow-colored lightning, this guy shows up at my door, and he's standing right here in my kitchen now. But something isn't right. It's really odd, because he looks like one of the people I remember reading about in our history books."

"Well, who is it?"

"I'm not exactly sure. I think it's either Christopher Columbus, or maybe a Pilgrim.... Or, that's it! It must be George Washington!" "You're putting me on!" "Well, I don't know... I wasn't very good in history class, you remember.... I thought Abraham Lincoln was one of our Founding Fathers."

"Yeah, I remember that time. The class couldn't stop laughing."

"But anyway, so this guy is here with me now, dressed in shorts and leggings, looking like he's a little lost. What do I do?"

"Did he say anything?"

"Not a whole lot. But he sounds British or something."

"Aw, give him a beer. Find out what he wants."

"What if he's a Jehovah's Witness?"

"Tell him you're into devil worship, start doing some mumbo-jumbo as if you're casting a spell, and wave your arms around a lot. That usually gets rid of them."

"Okay, but if you don't hear from me in ten minutes, you better git over here with your shotgun. Catch you later."

Fred then turned to me. I could see how nervous he was, as he kept wiping the perspiration from his hands on his trousers. "So, uh, what's up? What can I do fer you?"

I decided to play it very circumspect. I didn't wish to alarm this poor soul any more than necessary. Besides, I hadn't figured out myself what had just happened. My trip through the heavens could probably come across as the ravings of a lunatic.

Pausing for a moment to collect my thoughts, I came up

with a plausible reply. "I was, er, out on a long walk in the country, and became somewhat lost. Could you direct me back to Philadelphia?" (I desperately hoped I hadn't been transported to a foreign land where they'd never even heard of my city of residence.)

"Philadelphia, huh?" Fred scratched his head and appeared a little concerned. "That's a pretty long walk. You training for the Boston Marathon or something?"

"Marathon?"

"Never mind. Hey, can I get you a beer?"

It would probably be a good idea to take him up on his kind offer of hospitality. As I once wrote somewhere, if you put yourself in another's debt by asking them for a favor, they are more likely to look kindly upon you. "Oh, yes, that sounds quite refreshing, thank you."

He brought a bottle out from another mysterious, tall white box in his kitchen, this one containing what seemed to be a variety of food items inside — with, wonder of wonders, a bright light that appeared inside the box when the door was opened!

"Here you go, an ice-cold Sam Adams." He removed the cap from the bottle with some sort of a metallic opener device — another extremely clever invention!

"Sam Adams? You know of Sam Adams?"

"The beer. That's a Sam Adams lager."

"Oh." I glanced at the bottle, and saw the label, complete with a very handsome painting of the Bostonian businessman and politician I knew as Samuel Adams, and realized that we were each talking about two different things. He was referring to the beer, and I to the person. "Oh, yes, certainly! Foolish me!"

"So, where are you from? Philadelphia?" Fred asked.

"Yes, my good sir, and quite proud of it!"

"We don't get many folks from Philadelphia around here."

"Where is 'here', might I ask?"

"Huh?" Fred seemed genuinely confused by my question.

"What town are we in now?"

"Groton."

"Groton? And where is that?"

“Massachusetts.”

“Ah! Massachusetts! I was born there, in Boston.” (I almost mentioned the year of my birth, but I caught myself just in time.)

“So, are you visiting here from Philadelphia? What brings you to town?”

I couldn’t very well tell him exactly how I landed in his haystack. But being a ‘visitor’ would probably explain everything to his satisfaction. “Yes, I just rode in last night. I’m visiting my family in Boston.”

“You ‘rode’ in? Like, by horseback?”

“Yes, horseback.”

“How did you manage that? They don’t allow horses on highways.”

Not usually being one to engage in arguments, I figured it would be pointless to insist that we certainly *could* ride our horses on highways back in Philadelphia, but there obviously must be something different about the customs here in Groton. Perhaps their “highways” are different from ours. So, I wisely switched to a different tack of conversation.

“My good sir, I want to thank you for your kind hospitality, and your conversation. I need to be on my way, however, and I was wondering whether you might be able to point me in the right direction.”

“Sure, no problem.” Fred was excited to finally be of assistance to me. “Just let me call up Google Maps on my phone. Where do you want to go?”

He brought out the snuffbox-with-pictures again, and this time it showed the image of a map upon its face. As I looked at it more closely, I saw a brightly colored drawing of many more roads and attractions than I’d ever seen before in my entire life, even in the relatively large town of Philadelphia. I was astounded by the vast size and complexity of this new land. Fred noticed the surprised look upon my face.

“Something wrong?”

“Uh, no...”

“Never saw anybody get so rattled by a phone before. Hey, if you’re having some kind of a problem, I can drive you to the

hospital in the next town...”

It was beginning to look more and more like I had definitely left behind my beloved Philadelphia of 1752 as the result of this unexpected turn of events. Had I indeed been transported into the future as the result of my lightning experiment?

“You could have gotten a rather serious bump on the head,” Fred suggested. Holding up two fingers, he asked me, “How many fingers do you see?”

“Two, of course. I’m perfectly fine, my good sir.”

But Fred didn’t give up. “What’s today’s date?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“What’s today’s date?”

I had absolutely no idea what the date was, let alone the year or century. And to reveal that now would certainly be cause for Fred to call out the local constable and have me taken into custody. So I attempted a distraction.

“Oh my,” I exclaimed, pointing out the window. “Look at that large turkey in your yard.”

“Oh yeah,” he said, not even glancing away. “We get a lot of them around here.”

“But this one is coming up to the house,” I insisted.

“Turkeys aren’t too smart. Sometimes they even fly into the window.” Fred was simply *not* going to look away, no matter what I said. This demanded a more aggressive maneuver. So I clumsily knocked over the bottle of beer. Poor Sam Adams was now face down in a puddle of foam and ale — art imitating life!

“Oh, I’m so sorry! Forgive me. Here, I’ll help you clean things up.”

I stood up, hoping to be able to find other clues as to the date and year, perhaps somewhere in the kitchen. But Fred was already one step ahead of me.

“No, that’s all right, I’ll take care of it.” He turned to get a dish cloth to wipe up the spill.

Ah-hah! A calendar was attached to the wall. It was printed below a quite fetching portrait of a young lady wearing minimal attire. I disguised my embarrassment, but got the information I needed. What was most important was the date! (or, at least, the

month and year).

“You were asking about the date, my good sir. I can tell you that this is May, 2016. The exact date, however, I’m not certain of, because I did manage to lose track of time on that long ride from Philadelphia.”

“Okay,” Fred said, finishing the cleanup. “Sounds like you’re pretty much together.” (What a relief!) “But maybe in the interests of all, I need to give you a lift somewhere, so you don’t have to go traipsing through people’s backyards and wind up with a real concussion.” (What a bother!)

“A lift? Are suggesting hoisting me up into a tree or something?”

“Oh, no, I mean I’ll give you a ride.”

“Do you have horses? I didn’t see any barn outside.”

“No, in my pickup truck.”

“Pick up? Truck?”

“Never mind. Just let me get my stuff, and we’ll be on our way.”

2. Ben is on the money

Fred led me out behind the house, to the very large object with dirty windows, mud-spattered sides, and rusting metal that he called a ‘pick up truck.’ I wasn’t quite sure what he planned to do with it.

“Get in.”

“Pardon me?”

Fred walked me over to the other side, opened what seemed to be a door of some sort, and motioned for me to get inside. I paused for a moment to watch him walk around to the other side, open the door, and sit down, giving me a chance to copy his actions, seating myself on what appeared to be a horse blanket.

“You don’t have to worry about buckling,” he advised. “I disabled the darn seat belt alarm, so it doesn’t make noise anymore.”

“Thank you, my good sir. I’m certain that is a big improvement.”

Fred inserted some sort of small metal object into the wheel-

like object in front of him, turned it slightly, and suddenly a large roar was heard around us — I couldn’t tell whether it was front or back, since a variety of noises seemed to envelope us, just as a thick cloud of black smoke poured out from the rear. Fred manipulated some other control, and with a hesitant lurch, the “pick up truck” started moving forward, just like one of our horse-drawn carriages!

Hearing him talk about his success with this so-called seat belt alarm piqued my curiosity. “Do you enjoy inventing?”

“What? *Inventing*?”

“Do you like tinkering and fixing things?”

“Oh, yeah. I’m pretty good with my hands. Last week I hot-wired the neighbor’s Cat and took it out for a spin, just for the heck of it. I always wanted to move mountains.”

“You did *what* with the cat? Did it scratch and hiss?”

“No, not a *cat*, a *Caterpillar* tractor.”

Fred didn’t realize it, but his talk about spinning a caterpillar didn’t make any more sense to me than spinning a cat. I concealed my ignorance, however, and nodded in agreement. “I’m an inventor, too, by the way.”

“You are?”

“Yes, indeed.”

“What did you invent?”

“Swimming fins ... the Pennsylvania fireplace... the lightning rod...”

“You’re joshin’ me! I thought somebody else invented those!”

Oh no. I suddenly realized that my pride may have run away with my wits. After that *faux pax*, if Fred started inquiring further, he’d soon discover that yours truly, Benjamin Franklin, was standing before him in the flesh... which would raise all sorts of questions about how I arrived in this future world of his! I’d have to come up with a pretty clever explanation to get myself out of this one.

“Well, in reality, someone did,” I quickly clarified. “I just made some needed improvements to them.”

“Okay. That makes sense.”

“So, where are we going, may I ask?”

“Well, we’ll simply leave that for future negotiations,” I quickly summed up —putting to rest, for the moment, this issue of my age or my identity as this so-called ‘Doctor.’

17. Taking the plunge

The three of us gathered in front of an alien-looking, distinctively-styled table in Greenbom’s room, ready to get down to serious business.

“Have a seat,” Greenbom said, gesturing to the equally peculiar chairs positioned around the table. “Now, where were we?” he diplomatically offered, in an attempt to get everyone talking again.

Caty spoke first. “We had been considering how best to bring the reality home to your leaders that their electricity experiment is doomed to failure.”

“Any thoughts on that, Doctor Franklin?” Greenbom played the role of mediator well, offering me the next chance to speak.

“My initial concern was that providing them proof of their folly by taking a group of them into the future would turn out to be an even bigger mistake. Who knows what havoc they could cause, if they should happen to change other parts of history that didn’t need changing? But I’m open to other ideas on this subject.”

“Good!” said Greenbom. “Very well done, Doctor. And now, back to you, Caty...”

“I’m afraid my original suggestion may have been misinterpreted. I never said that a whole group of leaders should be brought into the future. Rather, I was wondering if the picture viewer in our little blue house could be used to relay images from the future, so that they could see for themselves the impact their experiment would have.”

“Ah! Now that’s a horse of a different color!” I exclaimed.

“And what do say to your crew mate, Doctor, to acknowledge this misunderstanding?” Greenbom cleverly maneuvered us to a point of reconciliation.

“Ah, well, er... I would like to apologize, Caty, for my hastily jumping to the wrong conclusion.”

“Apology accepted, sir,” Caty graciously responded. “So, what do you think about my idea?”

“This is a very new concept. I think I need a moment to collect my thoughts.”

“Very well. But obviously, we don’t have a lot of time to spare.”

“You are absolutely correct. Even our use of time travel does not offer us unlimited flexibility in that regard,” I replied. “However, I must confess, that it is not the idea itself which I am apprehensive about...”

“So, what *is* your concern, sir?”

“I... ah... um, how should I explain this? Caty, in our earlier disagreement, you very aptly pointed out how I can get carried away with my own importance. And yes, that is a failing I must admit to. I enjoy being able to show off my knowledge about a lot of different things.”

“How true,” Caty commented.

“Well, what goes along with that is a tendency to be uncomfortable about subjects about which I have literally no comprehension.”

“And? And?” Caty was extremely impatient for me to get right to my point.

“The truth is, I really don’t the faintest idea of how our little blue house operates. There! I’ve said it.”

“Well, now, sir — don’t you feel better, for having finally let us in on your little secret?”

“Yes, I’m quite embarrassed to admit that I don’t know everything, and this whole time-traveling blue house thing is still quite a mystery to me. Any success at all which we’ve had so far is due purely to luck and happenstance.”

“And?” Caty prodded.

“And, I have to say, I honestly don’t know whether our picture viewer has the capability of showing us scenes from the future in the same way it lets us see present events in the nearby vicinity.”

“I suspect, sir, that along with your reluctance to let others know of your particular shortcomings in a specific field of knowledge, you may also be afraid to ask for help at times like

these, so as not to betray your ignorance.”

“Not entirely accurate, Caty. I will readily admit to being ill-equipped or uninformed. For example, if you recall, I *did* seek out assistance at Harvard University...”

“Good point,” Caty replied. “So why didn’t you want us to know of your unfamiliarity with the picture viewer?”

“I suppose I prided myself on being a master of this time travel business. I didn’t want to appear to be less than knowledgeable, in your eyes.”

“You didn’t want to disappoint me?”

“Yes,” I confessed. “That about sums it up.”

“Well, Mr. Franklin, to ease your mind somewhat, let me assure you that I have no less respect or admiration for you now than when I first met you. It takes a courageous man to do what you’ve done, especially considering that this is all new, uncharted territory for both of us.”

“Well, thank you, Caty...” I could almost feel myself blushing.

“But now that we’ve cleared the air,” she abruptly continued, bringing us back to the main subject at hand, “How do we find a solution? Where do we turn for help now?”

I pondered her question for a moment or two, then sprang up from my seat with newfound excitement. “I have it! With all of their advanced knowledge of science, it could very well be that we can find the expertise we need right here! Isn’t that right, Greenbom?”

“Absolutely! We can easily figure out the technology on your craft, and together we will surely be able to employ this picture viewer you mentioned in a presentation to our leaders.”

“Now, see, it wasn’t that difficult, sir — was it?” Caty gently chided me, accompanying this with a soft, reassuring caress of my upper arm and shoulder.

“No, you’re right, my dear. As usual, I let my pride overpower my good sense.”

“So, where is this craft of yours currently located?” Greenbom inquired.

Caty and I both turned to each other simultaneously, with the same look of apprehension and dread, realizing that the blue

house had been left behind in all the commotion of the last several hours...perhaps even days! There was no way to tell how long we’d been here on this world of the green people.

“The last I remember,” I awkwardly began, “We were at the Tower of London...”

“It was the year 1775, sir...” Caty added, finishing my sentence.

“We traveled there in our blue house, but later arrived here through your own special form of time travel, that we happened to stumble upon.”

“Not to worry,” said Greenbom. “That is easily remedied. We can transport you back to your craft as quickly and easily as you were brought here.”

“Oh, you are such a life saver, Mr. Greenbom!” Caty effusively thanked him, as we all stood up in preparation for our imminent departure. “You have our eternal gratitude!”

“Save your sentiments for later, Caty,” said Greenbom. “There is still so much more work to be done. And once we get that picture viewer operating as we need it to, Doctor Franklin will certainly have an opportunity to use his persuasive powers as he’s never done before. It will be a performance of a lifetime!”

“It will? I’m going to do *what*?”

“You’ll do fine, Doctor,” Greenbom assured me.

His confidence in me was encouraging, but I still felt as if I were totally under-equipped for the task.

“Come along, everyone.” Greenbom ushered us into the adjoining room, where an array of odd-looking devices and controls were arranged around the perimeter. In the center was a raised platform, where one could see the faint traces of a sparkling mist, much like we had observed in the prison cell at the Tower of London.

“We’ll simply back-date your coordinates to the time when you first reconnected with our Earth landing party,” he explained. “You’ll touch down in a deserted corridor in the Tower, out of everyone’s view. I assume you can take it from there and locate your craft without too much trouble?”

“I sincerely hope so,” I replied, with a bit of hesitation.

“Oh, Mr. Franklin, I have the utmost trust in you,” Caty said, adding her cheery natural optimism to a situation that grew murkier by the minute. “We’ll find the blue house without any further ado!”

“Much ado about nothing,” I muttered under my breath, quoting Shakespeare. “But more likely, a *great more* ado before all is said and done.”

And with those words, we once again vanished into thin air, time traveling by way of Greenbom’s amazing mist.

Just as we were told, after emerging from the mist on the other end of our trip, we found ourselves in a dark, deserted area of the Tower of London’s mazelike interior. Now the challenge was finding a way out, regaining our bearings, and locating the blue house.

“Do you have any idea of where we are?” Caty asked.

“No idea,” I said. “I suppose all that we can do is keep walking, looking for something that appears to lead us to the outside.”

“And what, pray tell, would that look like?”

“If I knew, I’d have us out of here in an instant.”

“Perhaps, in hindsight, we could have asked Mr. Greenbom to send us to the outside of the Tower, rather than the interior,” Caty reflected.

“Hindsight always happens after the opportunity is lost,” I said.

“Another *Poor Richard’s* saying, sir?”

“Not really. Not clever enough, I fear. Needs more work to be published.”

Sensing my slight hesitation in venturing into unknown surroundings, Caty decisively took the lead, stepping boldly into the darkness. She beckoned me to follow, but became a little impatient with my progress. She even reached out to take my hand, in an attempt to hurry me along. It was at that point that I remembered a snatch of a dream I’d had on my train ride to Boston. Could that mysterious lover have been Caty, leading me down a dark hallway as we were presently doing? What a strange foreshadowing! I quickly dismissed the thought, however, since

we had much more important things to be concerned about. And the notion of a dream lover was a bit too odd for me to contemplate at the moment.

Caty and I cautiously felt our way down the dark corridors, being careful not to inadvertently run into any of the guards. Although, come to think of it, that might have made things somewhat easier, if they were to provide an escort to the outside. But then, we’d have to explain ourselves all over again, and trust that our pretense succeeded. We might not be so lucky this time.

“Look!” Caty exclaimed. “Isn’t that a bit of light, there in the corner, coming from that opening in the wall?”

“You’re right! This must be an exterior wall.”

“It would be nice if we could shrink ourselves to the size of faeries and squeeze through that opening.”

“As a man of science, I would normally laugh at the absurdity of that, my dear Caty. But in this situation, I too could wish for something out of the ordinary to whisk us to the other side of this wall. It’s unfortunate that neither our blue house nor Greenbom’s technology are available to accomplish that. We’re on our own now.”

“If we walk a little further...”

“And try to keep in mind the location of this wall, as a sort of reference point...”

“We might be able to navigate out of here, with any luck.”

“Luck is something we’ll need a great deal of, Caty. I hadn’t anticipated how difficult it would be to find our way out of the Tower.”

“And we don’t even have any bread crumbs to leave behind, marking our trail.”

“No, that is true,” I said, rummaging in my pockets.

“What are you looking for?”

“Well, we may not have bread crumbs, but we *do* have a piece of paper that I can tear up into little pieces. I suppose, given the gravity of our situation, I might have to sacrifice it for the cause.”

“What sort of paper was it?”

“You don’t want to know.”

“Oh yes, I do, sir.”

“No, really, you don’t.”

“Now you’ve really got my curiosity piqued. Are you hiding something from me, Mr. Franklin?”

“No, not at all, my dear Caty. It’s nothing, really. Just a mere trifle, something I picked up somewhere....”

“Somewhere like Boston, perhaps? As in Professor Peters’ office?”

“No, of course not...” I said, attempting to return the paper to my pocket.

“Let me see that!” she snatched the piece of paper from my hands before I had a chance to put it away.

Caty held up the paper to whatever dim light happened to be available in the dark corridor in an attempt to read it. Squinting and turning the paper in various directions, she finally made out a few words.

“Mr. Franklin!” she scolded me. “You promised me that you hadn’t taken that book about yourself out of Professor Peters’ office!”

“That is very true, Caty! The book is still there in Boston, I assure you!”

“Then what is *this*?” she exclaimed, waving the paper in my face. “A torn page from that book, telling about your accomplishments in the 1770s?”

“It’s just a little passage. Not much at all!”

“But it tells you what’s in your future!”

“Very inconsequential, nothing to worry about....”

“Sir! I’m ashamed of you! Even the smallest bit of knowledge can affect the course of history! That’s what you lectured me about!”

“I thought it could be somewhat useful when I returned to Philadelphia...”

“You’re simply making excuses now, for your underhanded act of dastardly deception.”

“And you’re making me out to be a totally scurrilous villain, which I do not appreciate.”

“If the cap fits, wear it, my dear sir!”

With both our voices growing in volume, it was inevitable

that our little disagreement would attract attention. Two guards suddenly came out of a dark end of the hallway, swords drawn and ready for battle.

“Now you’ve done it!” I said.

“And whose fault was that?” she responded. “If you hadn’t tried to tinker with your own history....”

“I wasn’t tinkering. I hadn’t even reached that part of my life yet....”

“But you were planning to....”

“My dear Caty, we *do* need to table this discussion for another time, and deal with the crisis at hand. We have two guards about to charge at us!”

“So what does your future life tell you to do now?” she said, quite sarcastically.

“Just one word, Caty: *run!*!”

So much for planning, strategic thinking, and breadcrumbs. We raced madly down shadowy corridors, chased by sword-wielding guards who seemed out for blood. In our panic, we also lost track of any coherent idea of where we were going, or where that outside wall was. All we were focusing on was staying ahead of our pursuers.

“Would it be too much to wish for, that in our flight we might come across some door leading to the outside?” Caty asked between unladylike gasps as she frantically navigated the mazelike interior of the Tower.

“We could wish, but it doesn’t assure that our request will be granted,” I answered, equally out of breath, desperately trying to coax my 46-year old legs to keep going. Despite my penchant for exercise in my earlier years, I’d unfortunately let things go to pot, and was now woefully out of shape.

“I’d even settle for a window or a large crack in the wall,” she added.

“You can have the crack, I’ll take the window,” I said. “I’m afraid my days of squeezing through small spaces are long gone. Too many delightful dinners have taken their toll on my athletic figure.”

“You had an athletic figure?”

“Yes, believe it or not!” I said, with mock indignation.

“No!”

“I assure you, it is as true as the fact that day turns into night.”

“Are you referring to those *knight* suits we were wearing on our last trip here?”

“Very amusing.”

“*Day* were noisy, dusty, smelly, entirely too large... but I don’t recall them turning into knights. If they had, perhaps they could have jousting to win my hand.”

“*Joust* pay attention to where you’re going, my dear!”

Caty giggled, half out of amusement and half out of nervousness, as we continued running down the corridor. “Forgive me, sir, but the image of you with great muscles and trim waist is somehow quite amusing, since it does not fit with your present appearance.”

“A dubious compliment, if I ever heard one!”

Glancing behind us, Caty cried out, “It feels like they’re gaining on us!”

“No, just the contrary — we’re slowing down!” Huffing and puffing, I could feel my feet growing heavier by the minute. “Caty, I don’t know if I can keep up this pace!”

“You can do it, sir!” she said, trying to encourage me to keep going. “Think pleasant thoughts, such as the feast that awaits us as a reward — a tankard of good ale, a delicious turkey dinner, baked apple dumplings...”

“Please, Caty! I need to lose weight, not put more on!”

“...cranberry tarts, rum punch...”

“Stop, stop!”

“We can’t stop, we have to keep going!”

“No, seriously, Caty. Look ahead of you — there seems to be an opening in the wall at the end of the corridor!”

“My wish was answered!”

“We can talk about wishes and prayers later, my dear. Right now, let’s make a run for it. Any port in a storm!”

Without giving it a second thought, Caty jumped headlong through the hole in the wall, apparently trusting that whatever

awaited us on the other side was preferable to losing our heads to two sword-waving Tower guards.

I followed her courageous example, also plunging head-first (and eyes closed) through the hole, fervently praying that we would either be given wings to fly, or supplied with a soft landing at the other end of our leap.

After falling for what seemed like a minute of eternity, Caty’s blood-curdling scream brought me back to reality. Opening my eyes, I could see that we were hurtling through moonlit darkness towards a large body of water. Oh, yes, of course! It was the moat surrounding the Tower of London! What incredible luck!

In a matter of moments, we both hit the moat with a gigantic splash. As we sank beneath the surface of the water, Caty began frantically thrashing about, obviously not well-acquainted with the sport of swimming. Luckily, with my presence of mind and my well-honed aquatic skills (self-taught from an early age!), I managed to grab hold of her and pull her to the surface.

Gasping and sputtering, she took a few moments to come to her senses — all the while in my embrace, literally, as I continued to tread water in order to keep the both of us afloat.

“Oh, Mr. Franklin!” she exclaimed, still somewhat dazed. “You saved my life!”

“It was nothing, my dear,” I modestly replied. “Back in 1725, when I was only 19, I actually swam a couple of miles in the Thames, which is just the other side of the Tower, as I recall.”

“Nothing, you say! I had no idea that you were so gifted! Whatever possessed you to learn how to swim?”

“I suppose, growing up in Boston and watching fish swim in the Charles River, I probably fancied myself cavorting about as they do, just for fun. I even invented a pair of mechanical swim fins that I could wear, to help me get around better in the water.”

“Aren’t you the clever one!”

This conversation would have been quite pleasurable under any circumstances, but it was made even more so in this situation by our close proximity, as I was still holding Caty tightly with one arm while using my other to keep treading water. There’s something truly magical about water, I must admit, especially

in the moonlight — and this young woman’s very appreciative attention (and her very warm body) was certainly contributing to the sense of enchantment.

The spell was soon broken, however, when I glanced upwards and discovered a number of torch lights beginning to appear at the edge of the Tower’s parapets. Apparently, they’d sounded the alarm and gathered more reinforcements in an attempt to locate and capture us.

“Er, my dear Caty, much as I would greatly enjoy prolonging this delightful experience, I now see that the Tower guards are still a force to be reckoned with. We need to complete our escape before they can spot us, so that we can get back to the job of locating the blue house.”

“Oh, you’re always such a practical man, Mr. Franklin...” There was a slight note of disappointment in her voice, as she too observed the gathering contingent of additional guards. “Well, I suppose we must...”

“Can you hold your breath, Caty?”

“A little bit — why?”

“We’re going to have to keep our heads below the water surface for a short while, so the guards won’t see us.”

“As long as you hold onto me...”

“That I will, Caty. You can be assured of that!”

We dove back underwater, and did a few short yards forward, coming up for air and then going back in again, repeating the process a number of times until we reached what seemed to be the edge of the moat. The torch lights hadn’t moved, so I felt rather safe in assuming that the guards were still on the parapet, and had not yet reached the edge of the moat.

Caty and I, with our clothes sopping wet, climbed slowly and quietly out of the water. For a moment, we both collapsed, exhausted, on the ground. But, with the sound of shouting voices from high above, there was no doubt in our minds that we couldn’t linger very long, lest we be found and placed under arrest.

“Do you have any recollection at all of where we left the blue house?” whispered Caty.

“Not a clue,” I said. “Although, with the help of the moonlight,

we might stand a better chance of finding it, I would think.”

“But the moonlight could also aid the guards in spotting *us*,” Caty cautioned.

“Well, then, let’s be quick about it. There’s no time to waste!”

We got back on our feet, and began furtively moving about, trying to stay within the shadows, as we searched for the familiar oblong shape of the little blue house.

Providentially, it was not long before we encountered it. The ball-shaped object on the blue house’s roof happened to reflect the moonlight quite nicely, providing another distinguishing feature to help us recognize the structure in the darkness.

“Thank God!” said Caty, as she opened the door and ran inside.

I looked around before I followed her, in an attempt to assess our surroundings. Even though we’d already inadvertently allowed numerous people to witness our comings and goings, there was no point in adding to that collection. I realized that while this could be considered ‘locking the barn door after the horse had escaped,’ I thought it would be more prudent to continue keeping our departures unnoticed, so as to not risk any additional possibilities of changing history.

18. Sister and resister

It seemed strange to say it, but being inside this odd, time-traveling blue house almost felt like being home again. In truth, we hadn’t really spent that much time in it, but certainly the recent adventures we’d had together, both Caty and I, brought a small amount of familiarity and comfort to this ‘homecoming’ experience.

“Mr. Franklin...” Caty looked thoughtful, as if she were seriously and carefully considering her next words.

“Yes, my dear?”

“About that jump from the Tower...”

“Yes?”

“I am extremely grateful for what you did.”

“Well, you were the first one to actually make that giant leap of faith.”

“No, I mean what happened after that. In the water.”

“Oh, think nothing of it.”

“But there’s something you should know...”

“Anyone could have done what I did.”

“That’s not the point. When I was a little girl, my parents and I were making a trip from the mainland to Block Island. It was an extremely stormy crossing... the waves were tossing our little boat around as if it were a piece of paper. We all feared for our lives. It was dreadful! And then one giant wave, bigger than all the others, rose up and washed over the side of the boat, nearly turning our little craft upside down. But in that terrifying moment, I was suddenly thrown overboard!”

“Oh, Caty! I had no inkling! What a nightmare that must have been! How did you survive?”

“My father, seeing me go under, immediately jumped in after me. Luckily, there was enough light to be able to see, so he was able to find me and save me from drowning.... in the same manner as you just did!”

“At a time like that, there is no room for indecisiveness. A man simply does what he needs to do.”

“But it’s more than that, Mr. Franklin.”

“What do you mean?” I was rather clueless, trying to figure out where she was going with this story.

“There’s a certain bond between a father and his daughter...”

“Yes, I understand...”

“No, you don’t. Not entirely.”

“I have a son, Caty...” I began, intending to tell her about William, my illegitimate son. But then it occurred to me that perhaps sharing the pain I felt over losing my other son might be more relevant. “Actually, I also had another child — my dear, dear Frankie, who perished from the smallpox not so long ago, as an infant.”

“No, that’s not where I was going...”

“I am truly sorry, Caty. I shall stop prattling on and remain quiet now, and let you finish.”

“It’s just that this is so difficult to say... it’s not about father and daughter, or father and son. It’s about the closeness one feels...”

Could she be trying to say something about the relationship developing between the two of us? Those moments together in the moat weren’t the most romantic encounter, but they did serve to bring us together in a way that had awakened the passion in me...

“And, Mr. Franklin, I don’t want you take this the wrong way, but...”

“*But??*”

Suddenly, this intimate moment of true confession was rudely interrupted by a loud banging on the door of the blue house! Apparently, the Tower guards had somehow managed to track us to our place of sanctuary, before we’d even had a chance to finish off our escape!

“Caty, I am so sorry to change the subject, but we urgently need to get our blue house out of here, before the guards break down the door.”

“I assume we’re going back to see Mr. Greenbom?”

“You assume correctly. So, all together now, one... two... three!”

With its characteristic sounds of wheezing and whirring, the blue house followed our mental command to return us to the world of the green people, traveling across time and space in the blink of an eye. This time, our craft conveniently put us right in the same room as Greenbom. Thankfully, we would not have to find our way down dark corridors or fight off hostile guards in order to reconnect with our gracious host... which was a big relief to both Caty and myself!

“Ah, welcome back!” Greenbom said, greeting us with a bit more enthusiasm than previously. There were two other people in the room with Greenbom, who appeared to be clad in more practical attire...perhaps tradesmen or mechanics, I would assume.

“Thank you,” said Caty, who now seemed eager to get on to the next step in our mission. And yet, only a few moments before, she was on the verge of sharing a very serious revelation about our relationship. Will we ever have such a moment again, to revisit this subject? I will be forever curious about what Caty intended to say

Caty chuckled to herself as she walked away. Apparently, she did manage to wipe that little incident from his memory!

“All right, Benjamin, let’s get back to the blue house now,” she announced as she rejoined me at my lookout point, sitting down beside me on the bench.

“Another successful procedure, Caty!”

“Thank you, Benjamin. You’re such a dear!”

“And this device,” I said, taking the sweeper out of the bag, “...this is absolutely amazing! I can foresee all sorts of interesting applications for it, especially in the field of politics. I happen to know a few individuals to whom I’d like to give a good head-scrubbing.”

“Now, now. Remember, ‘speak ill of no man...’” Caty chastised me.

“Except when it is absolutely justified.”

“Well, along those lines, I think we’ll have to be very, very judicious regarding its use, so that we *aren’t* tempted to use it for personal gain...”

“Oh, my, I seem to have nudged something...” I said, noticing a piece on its control panel that seemed to have come undone.

“Don’t touch that! It’s the safety clip!” Caty exclaimed, lunging towards me.

Apparently, however, it was too late. I didn’t realize it at the time (*these words written here now were added to this manuscript much later, with the assistance of Caty*) — but I had accidentally activated the device, with the tragic result of **wiping out my own memory!**

“Benjamin! Oh no! Oh, how could this have happened? How will we ever get you back now?!”

32. Talk to me

(This chapter was written by Caty Ray, owing to Dr. Franklin’s unfortunate accident, having been incapacitated by the mind sweeper.)

Oh, this is so awkward, so awful, so...*catastrophic!* — I

never dreamed something like this would happen! Benjamin inadvertently switched on the mind sweeper, and erased his own memories!

I was totally beside myself! There we were, at Paul Revere Mall, Benjamin and myself, and now he’s...he’s...slumped on the park bench, unconscious. But when he wakes up, any minute now, will he even know who he is? Will he remember who I am?

I had to get him back into the blue house. That would not be an easy job! Compared to my own petite figure, Franklin is rather large in stature — with a distressingly ample, over-endowed midsection, I’m afraid — so lifting him up and carrying him across the mall seemed like such an impossibility.

I would have considered asking Fred for help, but I’d already wiped his mind of Benjamin’s visit, so I really didn’t want to go backwards and have to start all over again, at the risk of impacting history. What’s done is done. Fred is no longer a concern, and he could now go on his merry way, with no memories of Franklin crossing his path.

I realized it was up to me, then. Draping one lifeless arm over my shoulder, I tried hoisting him up. Oh, my word, was he heavy!

Eventually, I did manage to get him up and slowly walk (or drag) him across the mall to the blue house. I’m certain all the tourists around us were shaking their heads in mortification, seeing the great Benjamin Franklin (in their minds, only a lookalike, of course, but still... he *is* a symbol of the country’s history!) either intoxicated or indisposed. Mothers were probably shielding their children’s eyes, hoping they didn’t notice the drunken Founding Father.

Once inside the blue house, I gently lowered him to the floor, in a corner of the control room. This experience had obviously affected him much more seriously than either of the two others, Professor Peters or Fred. But then, with them, I’d only set the controls for a very minor, selective sweeping. Who knows how high, how all-encompassing the default parameters may have been when Benjamin hit the switch?

Right now, he’s still slumped on the floor. Still breathing. That’s good! But what am I going to do now? He’s in no shape

to go anywhere. And he certainly can't go back to Philadelphia like this.

It looks like he's stirring. Thank God! Finally!

He slowly opened his eyes, blinked a few times, glanced briefly at me, and then twitched a little bit. It didn't even look like he recognized me! He then looked all around the room, as if he were trying to make sense of his surroundings.

"Benjamin!" I cried. "Are you okay? C'mon baby, talk to me!"

He didn't say anything. Just a barely audible groan.

"Do you know where you are?"

He stared at me for a good minute or so, but the blank, quizzical look on his face gave me the answer. More disturbing was the fact that he seemed totally bewildered by the situation.

"We're going to try to get some help for you, Benjamin."

Another groan. Did he even comprehend what I was saying?

"Benjamin, can you understand what I'm saying? If so, can you nod your head?"

No response, at first. He appeared to be thinking about the question. Then he looked directly at me, and nodded.

That seemed somewhat promising. But we weren't out of the woods yet. My biggest concern was whether the process had only affected his memories, and not his intellect.

"Can I get you anything to make you more comfortable?"

He thought for a moment, then appeared to shake his head.

Okay. We're getting somewhere. I think.

"Are you feeling any pain?"

No response. Just a blank stare. We may be back at square one again.

All right, here's the big one: "Benjamin, do you know who I am?"

Again, no reply. He just gazed at me, with no expression on his face. Oh, this is so distressing!

I didn't have any idea at all of what to do next. I'd been trying so hard to keep my own emotions under control, for his sake. But that wasn't going to last much longer. I was already feeling like I was starting to lose it, big time!

I couldn't fight back the tears any more. I just sank to the floor,

silently sobbing. Benjamin looked at me, but showed utterly no understanding of what was happening. It was just so dreadful to see him like this!

"Benjamin... my dear, sweet, charming Benjamin," I cried. "How in the world are we going to get you back?"

It was like talking to a stone wall. I was totally drained, depressed, defeated. I couldn't see any earthly way out.

"This is all my fault — if I hadn't checked to make sure that bloody safety latch was still in place..."

Honestly, I was just about ready to pick up the damn device and throw it out the door. But I knew that would be of no help. So I just kept talking to myself — what else could I do?

"And he'd just figured out another piece of the puzzle regarding this business about him being The Doctor!"

Benjamin just continued looking at me... or maybe he was staring off into space. It was as if he'd lost touch with reality.

"Up to that point, it was Doctor this, Doctor that — getting upset that everyone was calling him 'Doctor,' but clueless as to why. And you could see it in him, at times, that incredible intelligence of his, wrestling with the knowledge of being someone else. Was he The Doctor, or wasn't he?"

I let out a loud sigh. I felt so low, I was beginning to withdraw into my own dark interior place, becoming less aware of everything around me. My own life seemed to be fading into a blur. A void where nothing existed, nothing mattered.

Nothingness. After all I'd done, all the places I'd gone, it came down to this! I closed my eyes and resigned myself to the futility of feeling anything different.

I was so wrapped up in feeling sorry for myself, I didn't even notice the ever so slight, slowly growing sensation of movement, and the soft, subtle sounds of the blue house preparing to lift off.

Sounds? Movement? *What?*

The wheezing, whirring sounds were becoming louder and louder. I snapped back to full consciousness, and realized we were now in flight. The blue house, seemingly on its own, had decided on a new destination — and I was hanging on for dear life, going along for the ride!

Meanwhile, Benjamin just sat there in the corner, oblivious to whatever was going on. He was as unwitting a passenger as I was, not knowing where we were going or why.

Could it have been something I said or thought? Did the blue house, with its telepathic circuits, pick up on my rantings?

I tried recalling what I'd just said in my little outburst. About the only things I mentioned might have been a return to Philadelphia... or... The Doctor?

Is the blue house taking us to The Doctor?

The wheezing and whirring began to dwindle. Apparently, we'd landed — somewhere!

I spotted something happening on the viewing screen. It looked like Benjamin, and he was standing near the controls of the blue house. Now, how could that be? We're here in the control room right now, and Benjamin is certainly not standing!

Across from him, on the other side of the control panel, was another gentleman. An older man, with a very serious expression. And he seemed to be busy making some adjustments to one of the levers. I wondered — was I watching something that had occurred in the past, or was this happening right now, somewhere in our vicinity? Was there another blue house close by?

Where's that clock device, that tells what year this is? Oh, here it is, right in front of me on this control panel. It's 1762! That makes it an event in our future... I think.

Oh, no — Benjamin is reaching for that same lever that shocked him before! No! Don't touch that!!

And of course, he did it again — or was that for the first time? I have no idea. Now I'm really mixed up about this whole timeline thing.

But there he is, slumped on the floor. That other gentleman appears to be trying to pick him up — with very little success. Oh, now he's just moving him a bit so that he's half sitting up, slouching against the base of the control panel.

So, who could this older gentleman be? Do you suppose it's this Doctor fellow that Benjamin has been obsessing about? He seemed to have been working with those controls like he knew what he was doing.

He could be the answer to our problems!

Without even thinking it through, I dashed out the door, making sure I had the key (locking up the door, of course!), and looking around to see if I could find him.

Once outside, it took me a moment to connect the '1762' readout on the control panel with the reality of where we'd landed... I was back in the 18th century, but this was not Boston, New York, or Philadelphia. It appeared to be England — more specifically, London. And from the writing on a few of the nearby merchants' signs, I'd assume that this was an area known as Leicester Square.

On the other side of the street, I spotted an identical twin of the blue house that Benjamin and I had been traveling in. Hmm, two blue houses! That's rather interesting.

I cautiously approached the other one and tried the door. Locked! Well, that's a fine how-do-you-do! After pondering the problem for a minute or so, I realized that I had our key in my pocket. Wonder if it works on this blue house?

Sure enough! Apparently, these two blue houses were so identical, the same key worked on both!

I threw open the door and rushed in. The older, serious-looking gentleman was still puttering at the controls. I immediately confronted him.

"You're the one who scrambled his brains!" I wasted no time at all in niceties like introductions.

"Who... who are you? And how did you get in here? I'm certain I locked the door behind me!" The white haired gentleman was evidently not only quite startled by my intrusion, he was also very much on the defensive.

"The bigger question is, who are *you*? And what have you done to deliver such a devastating electrical shock to Dr. Franklin?"

"I am the Doctor, young lady," he replied. "And I did no such thing. I merely applied a very mild jolt, just strong enough to knock him out, but not intended to hurt him in any way."

"Well, I beg to differ. You're totally wrong about that!"

"How on earth would you know what's going on? You've just burst in here uninvited, and accused me of something of which

you know nothing about!”

“Oh, I know plenty, Doctor! This isn’t the only time that Benjamin received a jolt from that control panel.”

“Who are you, anyway, might I ask? And what is your relationship with Benjamin Franklin?”

“I am Caty Ray, from Block Island, in the colony of Massachusetts ... and I’m, er, Benjamin’s traveling companion.”

“And how did you get here?”

“In a time traveling blue house, which I believe is identical to the one we’re standing in right now.”

“Oh, that’s a new bit of information,” the Doctor responded, with a bit of surprise. “I was aware, from my readings of some history books, that there was a young woman named Caty Ray, whom Franklin had befriended in the 1750s, but I had no idea you’d been snatched away from your time period in this manner...”

“You’re avoiding the issue! We have an urgent problem,” I said. “You have one Franklin slumped over on the floor here, and I have the other in our blue house, and he’s lost his entire memory. I’m afraid he doesn’t know who he is, how he got there, or anything else. So far, he hasn’t even been able to speak a single word. And it seems to me that *you’re* the one responsible — both times!”

“What! How can that be?”

“The one there, on the floor, received a shock from a lever on the control panel, which you just admitted to arranging. In fact, I even saw you fiddling with the controls on our viewing screen.”

“But, my dear young lady...”

“And the other one, my Benjamin, not only received a similar shock, from the same lever, but also had the misfortune of triggering a mind-sweeping device, accidentally.”

“An alien technology, no doubt?”

“Yes. I suppose you could call it that. It was given to us as a gift, and we were using it to help take care of some loose ends — people we’d visited in our time travels whose memories of us would be potentially problematic in the larger perspective of past, present, and future. Their knowledge could have potentially

changed history, unless we corrected that.”

“That makes perfect sense. I commend you on your problem solving, in that situation.”

“Thanks for the compliment. But that doesn’t let *you* off the hook!”

“I beg your pardon?” The Doctor was still on the defensive, feeling much maligned by my criticism.

“It was your meddling that caused these problems!”

“What do you mean?”

“You think you’re so above reproach! Well, let me tell you, sir, if it weren’t for that ‘mild shock’ you set up, we wouldn’t be in this pickle!”

“But...”

“What were you thinking? You’ve incapacitated one of the greatest minds in American history — twice!”

“Now, see here, young lady...”

“So what are you going to do about it?”

“Me?”

“Yes, *you*! The high-and-mighty Doctor, who just goes about and changes history, on a whim!”

“I do nothing of the kind!”

“If we don’t get Benjamin back to rights, history will really suffer a major reversal — without him, the American Revolution might take a drastically different turn!”

“And what do you propose I do about it?”

“Number one, we have to restore Benjamin’s memory.”

“I didn’t even have a hand in that!”

“Yes, you did — indirectly!”

“And so what’s number two?”

“Because of those electrical jolts, he’s been having an identity crisis like you wouldn’t believe. We wouldn’t even be in this predicament, this mind-sweeping thing, if your bloody interference hadn’t caused him to get involved in affairs he has no business tinkering with!”

“What are you getting at?”

“He thinks *he’s* the Doctor!”

“Hmm.” The strange look on his face told me I’d finally

broken through. His eyes narrowed as he thought for a moment before responding.

“Well, he very well could be.”

“*What?* I don’t understand!”

“Well, I don’t really have the time right now to explain it all fully. I need to get *this* Benjamin Franklin back to his lodgings at Craven Street, before he wakes up from his jolt.”

“And what about my Benjamin?”

“We can talk about that on the way there. As a matter of fact, your arrival is rather fortuitous, young lady. You can help me get him there. Dragging him all by myself, all the way from here, could be a bit tiring for me... it would be nice to have some help.”

“All right then, let’s you and I carry him,” I suggested.

As we both struggled to lift him up and support him between ourselves, the Doctor mentioned, “You know, as I see it now, these two Franklins are from different points in history — about ten years apart, I’d say. Obviously, they cannot meet. That would be a disaster waiting to happen. You said that your Benjamin is back in the other blue house. Is he safe to remain there alone, while we carry his 1762 counterpart to Craven Street?”

“I think so. From what I observed, he can’t speak, and certainly seems to be in no frame of mind to even get up and move.”

“But, my dear, he is a rather curious, inquisitive soul. That’s one reason I set up that shock, because he was considering experimenting with the controls, to see what they would do.”

“Yes, I could picture him doing that. But, Doctor, that mind sweeper thing *really* knocked the stuffing out of him. He’s in no condition to do any exploring or experimenting now.”

“Very well. Let us hope so!”

After a great deal of awkward dragging, shifting, lifting, and lugging, the two of us finally managed to get 1762 Franklin to the entryway. We paused to catch our breath. The Doctor suddenly had a thought.

“You know, this matter of the electrical shocks is a bit like the proverbial ‘which came first, the chicken or the egg’ story.”

“What do you mean?” I was puzzled by this odd remark.

“I don’t think it was the shock he just received... the one you

saw happening here in 1762... because that would have been chronologically impossible. In other words, that’s too late in the game.”

“But what about the one my Benjamin received, in our blue house?”

“That would appear to be the more logical cause, since it affected the ‘earlier’ Franklin, who came from the 1750s. But something still doesn’t seem right.”

“How could that incident be any more chronologically correct?”

“That’s what I mean, ‘chicken or egg.’ Because the question is, how was it that the lever was electrified, when I didn’t actually make that change until just a little while ago?”

He glanced over in the direction of the central console. He was obviously wrestling with an extremely complex question of logic, judging by his furrowed brow.

“Ah! I think I know,” he said. “How did you and 1750s Benjamin happen to come into possession of your blue house?”

“I don’t know. It was just there on the street, when I first met him. He didn’t say how he’d acquired it.”

“Hmm. It was obviously unoccupied at the time, otherwise you would have known of someone else’s presence when you were traveling about.”

“That’s true.”

“So, here’s my theory. There was a brief time that I could not get into *this* blue house,” the Doctor explained, with a slightly embarrassed look. “I’d accidentally locked myself out, without the key. And that’s when I enlisted Franklin’s help, with a little bit of kite-generated electrical power, to get me back inside.”

“Go on...”

“During the time that this blue house was locked and unused, it’s very conceivable that it somehow managed to travel, on its own, to the 1750s, when your Franklin first found it.”

“How could something like that happen?” I asked.

“I have absolutely no idea,” the Doctor replied. “It’s very uncharacteristic — it usually doesn’t function like that. But, nonetheless, that’s what must have occurred.”

“But wouldn’t you have noticed it missing?”

“Normally, yes. But I’d walked away from it in order to find Franklin at the local pub. And, of course, thanks to time travel, the period during which it disappeared, and that you and Franklin did your traveling, would have been shortened considerably. So its absence was never noticed, since it was returned to the same place before I got back.”

“But why do we have two blue houses here now?”

“I would conjecture that it’s because you haven’t concluded your travels yet, and you will need to depart from Leicester Square before everything is put back to rights, history-wise.”

“Okay. That makes sense. So the blue house we’ve been traveling in *is* the one you tinkered with, to electrify that lever.”

“Yes. And I apologize for that. I forgot to reset the circuit.”

“No matter. It’s been repaired now.”

“By whom?”

“Greenbom’s people.”

“Who?”

“Long story. We can’t get into that right now.”

“Very well. Let’s get on with moving this Franklin back to Craven Street, then.”

“No,” I said, quite firmly. “This still doesn’t solve the problem of getting *my* Benjamin his memory back, so that he can function again.”

“Er...oh, yes! That would certainly be more pressing. I’ll need to get a look at that device you mentioned.”

“It’s over in our blue house.”

“Splendid. Let’s go over there and take care of that right now.”

“But what about him?” I gestured towards the 1762 Franklin, still unconscious, slumped in the entryway.

“Oh, I think he’ll still be out a little while longer. We can leave him there for now.”

“Do you think that’s advisable? What if he wakes up?” I asked. “Remember, this is the Franklin who is still in full possession of his senses.”

“He’ll be fine. We can always keep an eye on him with the viewing screen.”

“If you say so.” I wasn’t convinced that was the best course of action, but this was ultimately the Doctor’s call. Monitoring him on the screen, however, seemed like a pretty good compromise.

“Come along now, young lady. There’s work to be done.”

My word! This Doctor fellow can be awfully directive... not to mention chauvinistic!

33. Getting to know you, take two

(This chapter is a continuation of the account written by Caty Ray during the time Dr. Franklin was incapacitated.)

I entered the blue house with a bit of trepidation. Thankfully, Benjamin was still sitting in the same place, on the floor, exactly where I’d left him. He still looked as dazed as ever, and barely showed any recognition when I came into the room.

The Doctor slowly approached Franklin, so as not to alarm him, and gave him a cursory once-over. No reaction to this, either.

“And he hasn’t been able to communicate with you?” asked the Doctor.

“Other than perhaps a nod or a groan, nothing. And even those, I’m not positive about.”

“I’d like to have a look at that mind-sweeping device you mentioned.”

“I’ll bring it out. Just a minute, I’ll be right back.”

The sweeper was still in the bag from our ill-fated visit to Paul Revere Mall. I’d dropped it off in the side room when I was dragging Benjamin in from outside. I brought it out to the Doctor.

“Ah, what have we here?” he mused, as he examined it, taking care not to push any buttons or accidentally activate the device.

“I put the safety latch back on,” I said. “At least you won’t have to worry about that.”

“I had another thought about this memory loss thing,” he said.

“What’s that?”

“You’d mentioned that Franklin thought that he was *me*.”

“That’s correct.”

“I don’t believe that any of these accidents could have done