



AMERICA'S BEN FRANKLIN IN:
THE ELECTROCUTION STRING

by

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NOTE TO AMAZON: There are changes on every page.

FADE IN:

EXT. HESSIAN CAMP - NIGHT

SUPER: Trenton, New Jersey December 25th, 1776

The Hessian flag flies on a pole beneath a British flag.

A group of HESSIANS -- German mercenaries -- are gathered around a campfire, drinking from BEER STEINS.

Hessian SOLDIER 1 emerges from a tent, his arms laden with PRESENTS.

SOLDIER 1
(in German)
Merry Christmas!

The other Hessians accept the presents with a CHEER and eagerly tear them open. Among the gifts are a HUNTING KNIFE, a PAIR OF BOOTS, and a RIDING CROP, which one of the Hessians proceeds to test on another, to much joviality.

A huge Hessian COOK walks out of the tent with a frying pan full of KNACKWURST.

The Hessians spear the sizzling sausages with their daggers or grab them with their fingers, burning themselves, swearing and laughing.

EXT. EDGE OF CAMP - NIGHT

The merry SOUNDS of the Hessians are heard distantly at the still black waterside.

Something moves through the water toward the shore. It looks like a big black seal, but it floats atop the water like a boat and its "eyes" look like glass.

The "seal" beaches itself. There's the CLICK of latches being released.

Then the top half of the "seal" swings open on hinges. Inside is the mechanism for a human-powered paddle boat encased in a wooden frame covered in seal skin.

The man operating the device is BEN FRANKLIN, 70 and stout. He wears bifocals, black clothing, and a black watch-cap pulled down to hide his face, with holes cut out for his eyes.

He gets out of the "seal," checks his pistols and knives, and heads for the camp.

EXT. HESSIAN CAMP - NIGHT

A Hessian GUARD with his back to the perimeter of camp chuckles as he observes the merriment around the campfire.

Over his shoulder, Franklin emerges from the darkness. He grabs the smiling guard's head and SNAPS his neck, letting his corpse fall to the ground.

Then he steps forward into the firelight.

The other Hessians slowly notice him and become terrified.

SOLDIER 1
(in German)
It's Franklin! It's Franklin!

The Hessians scramble to grab their weapons --

-- but Franklin's fast. He dodges the punch of soldier 1 and catches him in the stomach with his knife.

SOLDIER 2 points a MUSKET in Franklin's direction, but Franklin grabs the shaft of the musket and pushes it aside just as it FIRES, killing SOLDIER 3.

Franklin yanks the musket from soldier 2 and hits him with the butt of the weapon.

SOLDIER 4 swipes at Franklin with a KNIFE, but Franklin dodges it and kicks him in the butt. The man falls on his own knife and dies gurgling.

Franklin catches soldier 4's knife arm and knocks him to his knees. Then Franklin grabs the Christmas boots and SLAPS soldier in the face with them until he passes out.

The Cook comes out of the tent, brandishing a frying pan with more sizzling sausages. He flings the contents at Franklin, who ducks.

The sausages hit SOLDIER 5 in the face, burning and blinding him. He screams and throws himself face first into a snow bank.

The Cook comes after Franklin with the hot pan. He raises it and prepares to bring it down on Franklin's head, but Franklin blocks his arm.

BOOM! ZING!

A pistol fires. The bullet ricochets off the pan and gets the Cook between the eyes. He falls dead at Franklin's feet, clonking himself on the head with the pan.

Franklin then turns around and spots SOLDIER 6 (with the riding crop tucked in his belt) aiming his smoking pistol at him with unsteady hands. The man drops the empty gun and draws another one.

BOOM!

The pistol fires and hits Franklin in the middle of the chest, leaving a scorched hole.

He winces, but doesn't bleed -- and he keeps coming.

The Hessian stares and drops the smoking pistol.

SOLDIER 6
(in German)
A demon! A monster!

He draws his sword and charges Franklin, screaming.

ELSEWHERE IN THE CAMP

The rest of the Hessians hear German SHOUTS:

"It's Franklin!"

"Franklin is here!"

"Silent Killgood has come!"

The Hessians pour toward the part of the camp Franklin infiltrated.

AT THE MASSACRE SCENE

Franklin walks away from Soldier 6, who has the riding crop stuffed down his throat, his dead eyes wide and staring.

Fresh SOLDIERS rush up and form a line, all pointing their muskets at Franklin. Franklin's outnumbered and trapped. He slowly raises his hands in surrender.

A HESSIAN OFFICER steps through the line of soldiers with a cocky grin.

HESSIAN OFFICER
(in German)
It seems we have you now, Herr
Franklin.

Franklin reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a METALLIC ORB.

SOLDIER 7
(quietly, in German)
What is that?

SOLDIER 8
 (quietly, in German)
 It looks like a Christmas tree
 ornament.

Franklin rolls the orb over to the Officer as if it was a peace offering.

The Officer cautiously picks up the metallic orb, keeping his eyes warily on Franklin.

HESSIAN OFFICER
 (in German)
 Do you think you can win us over
 with pretty baubles?

FRANKLIN
 (in German)
 Perhaps you would prefer "A
 Little Night Music"?

As a heavy-metal harpsichord version of Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusic" plays, Franklin whips out a pistol and fires at the orb.

It EXPLODES, taking out the entire line of Hessians. Flames shoot upward and set the trees on fire.

The Hessian Officer's thrown forward by the blast. He lands at Franklin's feet and cowers.

HESSIAN OFFICER
 (in German)
 Please... We surrender! We
 surrender!

Franklin points his pistol at the Officer's head.

EXT. EDGE OF CAMP - DAWN

A dozen ROW BOATS loaded with CONTINENTAL SOLDIERS cut across the dark water toward the shore.

Posing heroically at the helm of the lead boat is GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON, 44, a tall, grim-faced man who looks like his teeth hurt.

As the boats land and soldiers jump out to pull them higher up on the beach, Washington sees the Hessian camp's ablaze.

Troubled, he climbs out of the boat --

-- and spots the Hessian Officer walking toward him, his hands in the air, looking terrified.

Several Continentals cover the Hessian with their muskets.

WASHINGTON

What is the meaning of this?

Franklin steps out from behind the Hessian and pulls off his cap to reveal a bald pate with a fringe of grey hair.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

Franklin. I should have known.

Franklin offers a mocking bow.

FRANKLIN

At your service, General Washington.

WASHINGTON

If you wish to do me a service, you will refrain from these... solitary adventures.

Several soldiers show up carrying Franklin's "seal" craft.

CONTINENTAL SOLDIER

General! We found this further up the beach.

Washington glances at it, then grimaces at Franklin.

WASHINGTON

One of your devices, I assume?

FRANKLIN

I believe it might be of use to the Navy.

WASHINGTON

A Navy seal? Preposterous!

He turns to the Sargeant.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

Confiscate it as contraband.

He turns back to Franklin.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

They will hear of this in Philadelphia, sir -- doubt it not!

INT. INDEPENDENCE HALL - DAY

Washington addresses the Congress, in full dress uniform.

WASHINGTON

Nothing can be more hurtful to an army than the neglect of discipline.

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

Discipline is the soul of an army! It makes small numbers formidable, procures success to the weak, and esteem to all. And Mr. Franklin --

He gestures to Franklin, seated nearby, looking aggravated.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

-- makes a mockery of that discipline.

JOHN ADAMS (early 40s) gets up. He has a sharp, intelligent look.

JOHN ADAMS

Mr. Franklin, what say you to this?

FRANKLIN

I am most assuredly guilty as charged.

Noises of outrage from some Congressmen. Adams bangs a book on the table.

JOHN ADAMS

Order, order!

Franklin looks at Washington.

FRANKLIN

Guilty of accomplishing in an hour what would have taken him a week.

More murmurs from the Congressmen, some supporting Washington, and others Franklin.

WASHINGTON

You teach my men to question my leadership. I cannot command an army under such conditions!

More hubbub. Adams bangs the book again.

JOHN ADAMS

Mr. Franklin... While Congress values your many contributions -- military, diplomatic, and scientific -- victory cannot be achieved by one man alone. General Washington is correct -- you do more harm than good when you undermine his authority.

Franklin looks disgruntled, but also a bit guilty.

JOHN ADAMS (CONT'D)

We ask -- nay, we must insist --
that you work with General
Washington, and not at cross-
purposes.

Washington glares at Franklin.

WASHINGTON

I have no need of Mr. Franklin's
assistance. And so long as I am
leading the campaign against the
British, the colonies have
nothing to fear!

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - DUSK

SUPER: EIGHT MONTHS LATER

Philadelphia's being overrun by the British. The
TOWNSPEOPLE run and scream as the REDCOATS advance.

EXT. WOODED HILLTOP - DUSK

Franklin's among those fleeing the city, struggling up a
hill carrying a heavy satchel.

He sets down his satchel and eases his sore back, then
looks back at the city, hearing shouts and shooting.

He shakes his head in a "I told you so" manner before
picking up the satchel and trudging onward.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET - DAY

British soldiers pour through the streets like red ants.

COLONEL WENSLEYDALE, 37, a fox-faced aristocrat wearing a
powdered wig and a coat unsoiled by battle, sits on his
horse and overlooks the scene with a satisfied smirk.

Another BRITISH SOLDIER runs up to him.

BRITISH SOLDIER

Colonel Wensleydale, sir? We
found something you ought to see.

Wensleydale motions for the soldier to lead on.

INT. FRANKLIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Franklin's house is littered with DOCUMENTS and scientific
GADGETS, some small and delicate, others bulky and
dangerous looking.

Some of the soldiers playing with swim fins, an odometer,
and a flexible catheter.

WENSLEYDALE
Whose property is this?

BRITISH SOLDIER
We found some documents signed by
Benjamin Franklin, sir.

He hands Wensleydale a few pieces of paper.

Wensleydale examines them.

WENSLEYDALE
Interesting.... Have you found
anything of use?

BRITISH SOLDIER
Well, sir... There's this...

He leads the general to a section of wall panel and pushes against it. The section pops open, revealing a hidden door.

Wensleydale enters the dim

LABORATORY

The Soldier goes up to a Wimshurst induction machine (http://youtu.be/ziH_Nnd17PE) -- something that looks like a miniature windmill hooked up to several Leyden jars.

He turns a crank, the "windmill" spins, and a bright purple spark jumps from one metal rod to another with a loud KAZAP -- blasting the Redcoat toy soldier atop the second rod.

Wensleydale jumps back, startled.

WENSLEYDALE
Bloody hell!

The Soldier takes a basket out from under the table and shows it to Wensleydale.

BRITISH SOLDIER
Seems he's been at it for some
time...

Wensleydale peers into the basket. It's full of melted Redcoats. He takes one out and examines it.

WENSLEYDALE
Indeed...

He drops the toy soldier back into the basket and looks around the room.

A large piece of paper pinned to the wall catches his attention. He goes closer to examine it.

It's a sketch of a kite flying in a lightning storm.

The kite's controlled via a rope attached to a winch aboard a ship.

From the kite, several wires trail down, conducting lighting to zap little stick figure soldiers on the ground.

Detail drawings show an elaborate clockwork mechanism, controlled by an ornate KEY.

Wensleydale's eyes widen.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

Put guards on this room. No one is to enter without my leave. I'll send Captain Pasley of the King's Engineers, to see what he makes of it.

BRITISH SOLDIER

Yes, sir.

Wensleydale looks around the room, thinking.

WENSLEYDALE

And find me someone handy with a quill. A convicted forger, if you can manage it.

BRITISH SOLDIER

Yes, sir. I'll have the gaols checked.

Wensleydale hands him back Franklin's papers.

WENSLEYDALE

Have him study these letters and learn Franklin's hand. If he refuses to cooperate, snap a few of his fingers.

BRITISH SOLDIER

Pardon my asking, sir, but what for?

WENSLEYDALE

My spies tell me Mr. Franklin is at odds with General Washington.

He smiles.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

If the rebels do not hang together, they will most assuredly hang separately.

EXT. FOREST - DAY (DAYS LATER)

The townspeople who fled Philadelphia have made camp far from the city with part of the Continental Army. Civilians tend fires and make meals while soldiers clean their rifles and drill in a clearing.

Franklin sits with his back against a tree, reading.

Halting footsteps approach and a shadow blocks the sun.

FRANKLIN
You're in my light.

He looks up to see MAJOR GENERAL BENEDICT ARNOLD, a short man of 36. He carries a cane and limps out of Franklin's light.

GENERAL
My apologies, Mr. Franklin.

He bows, awkwardly.

BENEDICT ARNOLD
Benedict Arnold, at your service,
sir.

FRANKLIN
The hero of Saratoga? I am
honored to make your
acquaintance, sir. Please, take
a seat.

The General painfully eases himself down next to Franklin.

BENEDICT ARNOLD
I have heard of your...
difficulties with Congress. You
have my sympathies. It is
claimed I owe Congress a thousand
pounds, having failed to
adequately document my expenses.

He taps his injured leg with his cane and grimaces.

BENEDICT ARNOLD (CONT'D)
Having become a cripple in the
service of my country, I little
expected such ingratitude.
General Washington went so far as
to publish a rebuke.

Franklin makes a sympathetic noise.

FRANKLIN
Yes, the General is a great one
for public rebukes. He seems to
feel I lack discipline.

BENEDICT ARNOLD

I cannot fault him for that, sir. My own men suffer more from that than from the small-pox. They might rather be called a great rabble than an army.

He looks morose.

BENEDICT ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Sometimes I feel we have so many difficulties we cannot surmount them.

He gestures off in the direction of the city.

BENEDICT ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Washington has given me the task of re-taking Philadelphia, but the British have it locked down tighter than a nun's -- Well, let's just say it's locked tight.

FRANKLIN

What is your plan?

Arnold takes out rough map of Philadelphia and shows it to Franklin.

BENEDICT ARNOLD

The west perimeter seems to be their weakest point, so I thought if we center an attack there, we could --

FRANKLIN

No, that's where they want you to attack. They'd close around you from all sides, and the whole army would be finished in a matter of hours.

BENEDICT ARNOLD

What do you suggest, then?

Franklin thinks.

FRANKLIN

You need a battalion to go around northeast and another southeast and strike them from both sides.

BENEDICT ARNOLD

But that would leave the entire western front exposed!

FRANKLIN

But they'll expect an attack from that direction. You'll catch them off-guard.

BENEDICT ARNOLD

Like walking in on a fellow with his trousers down in the jakes.

FRANKLIN

Exactly.

BENEDICT ARNOLD

Mr. Franklin, I cannot adequately express my gratitude. I will present this to General Washington at once.

FRANKLIN

Yes, well, you will have a better chance of having "your" plan accepted if you neglect to mention I had anything to do with it.

He struggles to his feet and offers Arnold a hand up.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

And perhaps I can offer you some assistance in carrying it out.

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS - DAWN (SEVERAL DAYS LATER)

Franklin leads a small team of Continental SOLDIERS stealthily through the underbrush.

He gives them a signal, and they attack the BRITISH SOLDIER watching the roads.

One of them slashes at him with his bayonet, but it only rips through the outer layer of his vest before Franklin grabs it and whacks him upside the head with the butt of the musket.

He sees that all the British soldiers are down and whistles a signal.

Continental Soldiers pour onto the road.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREETS - DAY

General Wensleydale rides down the street as BRITISH SOLDIERS rush past, some carrying loot.

A MESSENGER runs up to meet him.

BRITISH MESSENGER
Colonel Wensleydale, sir. The rebels are attacking from the southeast.

WENSLEYDALE
What regiments do we have there?

BRITISH MESSENGER
None, sir. Peckingham's men were caught unawares. They say Franklin himself led the attackers. We've been ordered to retreat.

WENSLEYDALE
Send word to Captain Pasley at Franklin's house to pack up everything he can carry.

The messenger nods and hurries off as cannons BOOM in the distance.

Wensleydale rides around a corner and dismounts in front of a house.

INT. CITY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Wensleydale walks into the parlor and spots an UNSEEN FIGURE sitting in an armchair.

WENSLEYDALE
Good, you're here. I want constant reports on the rebel army's movements.

He produces a LETTER from his coat.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)
And see that this is found by the right people.

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS - DAY

The British army retreats from Philadelphia.

In the British baggage train is a wagon loaded with items from Franklin's lab -- including the Wimshurst induction machine.

Wensleydale's nowhere to be seen....

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET - DAY

The TOWNSPEOPLE cheer the Continental SOLDIERS as they march through the streets of their retaken city.

Franklin moves through the crowd, his clothes slashed and grubby.

BENEDICT ARNOLD (O.S.)
Mr. Franklin!

Franklin turns and sees Benedict Arnold riding toward him.

FRANKLIN
Congratulations, General. This
victory is yours, and well
deserved.

BENEDICT ARNOLD
Your plan was brilliant -- and
most effective.

Franklin inclines his head, modestly.

FRANKLIN
If you will excuse me, I long to
see my house -- and a hot bath.

He walks away through the crowd.

INT. FRANKLIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Franklin enters his house, which has been tossed by the British.

He hurries toward the laboratory. The secret door gapes open.

He stands in the doorway -- the lab's been almost emptied out.

He sees something on the floor and picks it up --

It's a little melted Redcoat.

Then he notices the blank spot on the wall where the kite plans used to be.

A VIOLENT KNOCKING on his front door jerks him around. He strides to the

ENTRY HALL

and yanks open the door.

A MESSENGER stands on his stoop.

MESSENGER
Benjamin Franklin?

FRANKLIN
Yes?

The messenger hands Franklin a SEALED LETTER.

MESSENGER

You've been summoned to appear
before Congress, sir.

FRANKLIN

I am greatly fatigued at present.
I will attend them on the morrow.

MESSENGER

They said you were to come at
once. Or else be compelled.

He gestures at a pair of large GUARDS waiting on the street nearby.

FRANKLIN

At least you will allow me time
to change into something more
suitable?

Without waiting for a reply, he closes the door in the man's face.

BEDCHAMBER

Franklin eases off his tattered coat, wincing at his sore muscles.

Then he takes off his vest and shirt. Underneath, he wears an unusual garment:

It's a curved false front, to make him look fat. The outer layer's padded and quilted, and shows signs of repeated mending. The stuffing's coming out at a few fresh tears, and there's steel underneath the padding.

He unstraps it, revealing a torso remarkably buff for a man of his years.

He goes to a cupboard and takes out another protective vest, also much-mended.

He sets the new vest on the bed next to the first one, and removes a series of small gadgets and wires from pockets in the first vest, moving them to pockets in the new one.

INT. INDEPENDENCE HALL - DAY

Congress is in session. Franklin enters in a fresh suit of clothes and his "fat" vest, quieting the room. He's followed by the guards, who wait by the door.

He sees that some of the Congressmen look outraged; others can't stand to look at him.

As Franklin walks to the center of the room, John Adams stands up from the head table.

JOHN ADAMS
Mr. Franklin, do you know why
you've been called here?

FRANKLIN
Perchance Congress wishes to
commend me for my assistance in
retaking the city?

He gestures at the large guards.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
But that would not explain the
need for such an escort.

Adams produces Wensleydale's letter.

JOHN ADAMS
We have come into possession of a
most alarming letter.

FRANKLIN
Indeed?

JOHN ADAMS
Is it not true that your very own
son is a Loyalist, Mr. Franklin?

Franklin bristles at the mention of his son.

FRANKLIN
He is, and it is a topic of
discord within our family. But I
do not see what that has to do --

JOHN ADAMS
Tell me: is this not your
handwriting?

Franklin steps forward and takes the letter.

JOHN ADAMS (CONT'D)
Well?

FRANKLIN
It looks to be my writing, but --

JOHN ADAMS
Would you be kind enough to read
it aloud?

FRANKLIN

(reading with disbelief)

"I have determined that the weakest point in the city's defense is in the south. Should you attack when the guards change shifts at dusk, you shall find easy passage into Philadelphia. May the British Empire live forever, B.F."

GASPS and MUTTERED COMMENTS fill the room.

Franklin tosses the letter back on the table in front of Adams, disgusted.

JOHN ADAMS

Order! Order!

FRANKLIN

You actually believe this tripe?

JOHN ADAMS

Someone leaked vital information that led to the capture of Philadelphia. This letter -- admitted by you to be writ in your own hand -- is --

FRANKLIN

An obvious forgery! Let me see it again!

He reaches for it, but Adams snatches it away.

JOHN ADAMS

You are to be jailed immediately and tried as a traitor to these United States.

FRANKLIN

Egad, what nonsense! Why would I betray the city and then help retake it? Adams, you musn't --

Adams gestures at the Guards waiting by the door.

JOHN ADAMS

Guards, arrest him.

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

The two Guards push Franklin into a stone cell floored with dirty straw, then lock the heavy door behind him.

Franklin sees SAMUEL HILL, a 26 year old black man, sitting on one of the cots. He eyes Franklin.

SAMUEL
Drunk and disorderly?

FRANKLIN
Nothing so respectable as that. I
am accused of treason.

He bows.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
Benjamin Franklin, at your
service, Mr. --?

SAMUEL
Hill. Samuel Hill.

FRANKLIN
And what brings you to this...
establishment, Mr. Hill?

SAMUEL
I was payin' a call on a young
lady. And when her father
returned...

He grins ruefully.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
I made a hasty exit from a second-
floor window. Landed right on
the constable, who didn't believe
I was an invited guest...

FRANKLIN
So we are both falsely accused.
I would recommend John Adams to
you as a lawyer -- but he's the
man who put me in here.

Samuel studies him, admiring.

SAMUEL
They say you took the Hessians at
Trenton, single handed.

FRANKLIN
Not worth a fart in a whirlwind,
it seems. All my prior services
are eclipsed by the shadow of my
disgrace.

He plops down on his cot and simmers.

SAMUEL
What you intend to do 'bout it?

FRANKLIN

What may I do about it, other
than await my trial?

SAMUEL

You could break us outta here --
if you're half the man they say
you are.

FRANKLIN

That would only confirm my guilt.

SAMUEL

I know a free man of color can't
get a fair trial in this city --
you think you can?

Franklin thinks about this.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

And who's gonna fight the
British, with you locked up in
here? Sounds like somebody
wanted you outta the way.

FRANKLIN

Indeed...

He heaves himself to his feet, resolute now, and goes to
the door.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

And I intend to find out who.

He unfastens a button on his vest and removes a lock pick
from a hidden compartment inside his padded vest.

He works at the lock, sweat breaking out on his forehead.

CLICK.

The door swings open.

Samuel gets to his feet and grabs his three-cornered hat.

SAMUEL

You work fast.

He starts for the door, then gets an idea and stops.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

But maybe we better buy ourselves
some time, just in case...

He gathers up an armful of straw and debris from the floor
and dumps it on his cot. Then he covers it with the
blanket to look like someone's sleeping.

Franklin eyes this with admiration.

FRANKLIN

Mr. Hill, I see you are a man
after my own heart.

He stoops to get his own armful of straw.

HALLWAY

Franklin and Samuel stealthily make their way down the hall.

They approach the half-open door of the GUARDROOM. The sounds of drunken merriment come from inside.

Franklin signals to Sam to wait and takes something out of a hidden pocket. It's a brass tube about the size of a pencil.

He pulls it open and it extends like a spyglass. On one end is a lens that pivots. He edges the lens past the edge of the door and peers through the other end.

He sees a distorted view of the guardroom. The three GUARDS are gathered around the fire, drinking and whooping it up. They're not paying any attention to the door.

Franklin signals to Samuel, who quickly slips past the doorway. After a moment, Franklin follows him.

EXT. JAIL - DUSK

People are hurrying through the street, many celebrating, drunk, singing, arm-in-arm.

One passing WOMAN recognizes Franklin, and nods. He turns away to hide his face.

Samuel sees what he's doing and moves to shield him from passersby.

FRANKLIN

My face is too well known in the
city, and my arrest will soon be
general knowledge, if it is not
already.

Samuel thinks about this, then leads Franklin into a nearby alley.

SAMUEL

You got a handkerchief?

Franklin reaches into his coat pocket and produces a large one.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
Hit me in the nose.

FRANKLIN
What?

SAMUEL
I always been a bleeder. Go ahead. Not too hard, mind.

Franklin gives him a gentle punch.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
Harder than that.

Franklin hits him harder.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
OW!

He holds his nose, and his hand comes away bloody.

He grins and wipes his nose with Franklin's handkerchief.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
Here -- you hold this against your face.

He indicates Franklin's bifocals.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
Better take those off, too.

Franklin puts the glasses in his pocket.

Samuel takes off his own battered tricorn and puts it on Franklin's head.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
There now. Your own mama wouldn't recognize you.

He makes an "after you" gesture and they head off together down the street, Franklin hiding his face with the bloody handkerchief.

INT. JAIL - DAY

A half-drunk GUARD ambles out of the guardroom and down the hallway.

He peers into the small barred windows as he passes each cell.

When he gets to the one that Franklin and Samuel were in, he sees the blankets over the "sleeping men." He just grunts and moves on.

EXT. FRANKLIN'S STREET - NIGHT

Franklin and Samuel wait in the shadows across the street and eye Franklin's house. It's dark and there's no sign of anyone there.

FRANKLIN

You go first. See if anyone's there.

Samuel strolls across the street, climbs the steps and knocks on the door.

No answer.

He waits, and knocks again.

Still no answer.

He signals to Franklin, who crosses the street, keeping his face covered with the bloody handkerchief.

But instead of going to the front door, he goes around to the alley alongside the house.

Samuel checks to make sure no one sees them, then follows.

ALLEYWAY

Franklin takes out a key and unlocks the door to a side entrance.

INT. FRANKLIN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Franklin carries a lighted candle. He walks quietly, stopping to listen every few steps.

Samuel follows.

Franklin goes to the secret door and presses against it. The door swings open.

Light comes from inside the secret laboratory.

CLICK -- the sound of a gun being cocked.

Franklin stares into the barrel of a GUN pointing at his head, held by a MAN in civilian clothes

Wensleydale sits in an armchair, holding a glass of wine. He also wears civilian clothes.

WENSLEYDALE

Please come in.

Franklin steps into the

LABORATORY

Samuel doesn't follow; he's disappeared.

FRANKLIN

And who might you be?

WENSLEYDALE

Colonel John Wensleydale of the
British Intelligence Service.
And you are Mr. Franklin, I
presume?

Franklin inclines his head in acknowledgement.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

Please, take a seat.

FRANKLIN

I do not need an invitation to
sit in my own home, particularly
if I am about to be shot.

WENSLEYDALE

I have no intention of shooting
you, Mr. Franklin. You're worth
far more to me alive.

Wensleydale motions to the Man with the gun, who lowers it.

Franklin takes a seat and glares at Wensleydale.

FRANKLIN

What are the British still doing
in Philadelphia?

WENSLEYDALE

Oh, just some unfinished
business. Speaking of which, I
understand you are to be tried
for treason.

FRANKLIN

May I assume you had a hand in
that?

WENSLEYDALE

Many of your fellow rebels have
come over to us, in secret.
That's why they're so ready to
hang you.

Franklin's skeptical.

Wensleydale refills his glass.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

This is an excellent claret, by
the way. My compliments.

He sips.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)
 What was that you wrote? "Wine
 is constant proof that God loves
 us and loves to see us happy."

FRANKLIN
 I am flattered that you are
 familiar with my work.

He gestures around at the emptied lab.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
 Are also responsible for the
 theft of my property?

WENSLEYDALE
 Such an impressive array of
 engines and enticements. Say
 rather that I... "borrowed" them.
 For the duration of the war.

He sips.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)
 Which may not continue much
 longer -- thanks to you.

He indicates the spot on the wall where the kite diagram
 once was.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)
 That kite, for example. Most
 ingenious.

FRANKLIN
 A failed experiment, worthless.

WENSLEYDALE
 Oh, I think not. Captain Pasley
 assures me that it could be a
 formidable weapon. If only we
 had the key.

FRANKLIN
 As I said, a failed experiment.
 The key never existed.

WENSLEYDALE
 But my sources tell me that it
 did. And that you gave it into
 the care of a brother Mason -- a
 man you thought you could trust.

Wensleydale smiles.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

And if I could prove that this man has already betrayed you...?

He reaches into his pocket, takes out an invitation, and puts it on the table next to him.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

I took the liberty of going through your mail. This is an invitation from a Mistress Keating. She's invited you to a soiree to celebrate the retaking of the city. Doubtless the man you gave the key to will be there And you can learn for yourself whether he still has it.

He stands.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

You may find me at British headquarters in New York, if you wish to come over to the winning side.

He puts a note with a wax seal next to the invitation.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

This will give you safe passage through our lines.

He bows to Franklin and signals to the man with the gun to follow.

The armed man keeps the gun on Franklin until Wensleydale leaves, then follows him out.

Franklin watches them go, unnerved.

Samuel appears in the doorway, brandishing an iron fire poker.

SAMUEL

(whispering)

Want me to get 'em?

FRANKLIN

(whispering)

No -- let them go.

He ushers Samuel into the lab and closes the door behind him.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

You heard them?

Samuel nods and grins.

SAMUEL

So we got a party to go to?

EXT. KEATING MANOR - NIGHT

A CARRIAGE DRIVER opens the door to a CARRIAGE, and a man climbs out, in formal evening wear, visible only from the neck down.

He wears a watch chain draped across his brocade vest, and from the chain hang several watch fobs, including a MASONIC SEAL -- and the KEY from Franklin's kite drawing.

The man is George Washington.

PARTYGOERS climb the steps to present their invitations to the BUTLER.

Washington joins the line.

Franklin and Samuel watch from across the street.

Franklin's missing his false front, and looks much thinner. He's dressed as a French fop, with an elaborate wig, a powdered face, and a prominent fake beauty mark.

Samuel wears a wig and servant's livery.

Franklin tucks away his bifocals and gets himself into character, then flounces across the street, holding a gold-topped cane.

Samuel follows behind him at a respectful distance, working hard to keep a straight face.

INT. KEATING MANOR - NIGHT

Franklin presents his invitation to the BUTLER, who announces him.

BUTLER

Monsieur LeGrand!

Franklin enters the room like he owns the place.

He squints, then gestures to Samuel.

FRANKLIN

Do you see him? I'm blind as a bat without my glasses.

Samuel scans the room and shakes his head.

SAMUEL

Maybe we better split up...

FRANKLIN

Divide and conquer...

He moves into the crowd, bowing and nodding at the other guests.

Samuel moves off in the other direction, discretely eying the ladies' low-cut dresses.

IN ANOTHER ROOM

Washington makes his way through the dense PARTY CROWD, taking a glass from a servant's tray. He accepts the nods and smiles of the crowd with formal courtesy.

He finds himself pressed up against a beautiful young woman -- BETSY ROSS, 24. He peers down the front of her low-cut dress, blushes, and tries to move away. But the crowd forces them together.

MISTRESS KEATING, a plump older woman with a towering wig, pushes toward him through the crowd, waving her fan.

MISTRESS KEATING
General Washington!

She pushes Betsy out of the way and extends her hand to Washington.

He takes it and bows, stiffly.

She sees someone right behind Washington.

MISTRESS KEATING (CONT'D)
And here is the hero of the day!
General Arnold!

Washington turns to see Arnold with a pretty woman on his arm -- PEGGY SHIPPEN (18).

BENEDICT ARNOLD
General Washington, may I present
my fiance, Miss Peggy Shippen?

Peggy Shippen extends her hand. Washington takes it and bows.

BENEDICT ARNOLD (CONT'D)
Her father is Judge Edward
Shippen.

WASHINGTON
(frowning)
The Loyalist?

BENEDICT ARNOLD
Many families are divided. Why
even Mr. Franklin's son --

Washington looks disapprovingly at Peggy Shippen.

WASHINGTON

I understand your father did
business with the British during
the occupation.

PEGGY SHIPPEN

Business is business, General.
Surely you did not expect us to
starve?

Washington eyes her; she's on the plump side.

WASHINGTON

You do not appear to be at any
risk of starving, Miss Shippen.

He turns away, leaving Peggy stricken and Arnold outraged.

MISTRESS KEATING

Come, General! There are so many
people who wish to meet you!

She takes Washington's arm and leads him into another room
with a large FOOTMAN guarding the door -- clearly some kind
of VIP room.

Franklin enters the room, sneaks a peak through his
glasses, sees where Washington has gone, and tries to
follow.

He's stopped by the Footman at the door to the VIP room.

FOOTMAN

Forgive me, monsieur. But this
room is only for Mistress
Keating's particular friends...

Franklin turns away, feigning a snit, and retreats to a
refreshment table, where he has a view of the entrance to
the VIP room.

Benjamin Arnold comes up to the table, alone, very unhappy.

He glances at Franklin, glances away, then looks at him
more closely.

BENEDICT ARNOLD

Pardon me, monsieur. Have we
been introduced?

FRANKLIN

(French accent)
Monsieur LeGrand. Your servant,
sir.

He bows, elegantly.

BENEDICT ARNOLD
It's just that you...

His eyes widen as he recognizes Franklin and takes him aside.

BENEDICT ARNOLD (CONT'D)
(quietly)
By god, Franklin! What are you playing at? I heard you were arrested!

FRANKLIN
A temporary inconvenience. I am in the process of clearing my name. And to that end...

He gestures at the VIP room.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
Can you get me into that room? I need to speak to Washington.

BENEDICT ARNOLD
I'd rather be whipped with a bastinado than spend another moment in that man's presence. He was most shamefully rude to my fiance.

He gives Franklin a sympathetic look.

BENEDICT ARNOLD (CONT'D)
I would speak on your behalf, but would likely do you more harm than good. I've been taken out of the field and assigned to West Point. And they say I'll face a court martial over those damned receipts! I swear to you, every man of ability is being hounded and disgraced -- as you yourself can attest.

Franklin ponders this.

FRANKLIN
A campaign to discredit anyone of use to the revolution...

BENEDICT ARNOLD
I know you, at least, are a true patriot.

He glares toward the VIP room.

BENEDICT ARNOLD (CONT'D)
 But as for our commander-in-
 chief...

He spots Peggy, looking forlorn.

BENEDICT ARNOLD (CONT'D)
 Forgive me, I have neglected my
 duty to Miss Shippen.

He goes to get a cup of punch.

Samuel comes up to join Franklin.

SAMUEL
 I haven't seen him.

FRANKLIN
 (indicating the VIP
 room)
 He's in there. I can't go in...
 but perhaps you can.

He picks up a tray from the table and hands it to Samuel.

SAMUEL
 (taking the tray)
 And what am I sposed to do once I
 get in?

FRANKLIN
 See if he has the key on his
 watch chain.

SAMUEL
 I'll see what I can do...

He heads off, holding the tray like a waiter.

Franklin watches as he goes right into the VIP room without
 being stopped by the Footman.

BETSY (O.S.)
 Pardon, sir?

Franklin turns to see Betsy and is riveted by her
 impressive cleavage. Her dress isn't as elaborate as those
 worn by some other women in the room, but it's artfully cut
 to make the most of her figure.

BETSY (CONT'D)
 Would you be kind enough to pour
 me a cup of punch? It's so
 dreadfully close in here.

She fans herself, looking sweaty and luscious.

Franklin hands her the cup.

FRANKLIN
 (French accent)
 It would be my great pleasure,
 Mademoiselle --?

BETSY
Madame Ross.

She smiles, flirting.

BETSY (CONT'D)
 Betsy to my friends.

FRANKLIN
 (French accent)
 And is Madame's husband with her
 this evening?

A shadow crosses Betsy's face.

BETSY
 He was on a privateer, captured
 by a British frigate.

FRANKLIN
 (French accent)
 You must be... very lonely
 without him.

BETSY
 Yes, very...

She finishes the punch and hands the cup back to him.

BETSY (CONT'D)
 Thank you, Monsieur -- ?

FRANKLIN
 (French accent)
 LeGrand.

He bows, deeply.

When he straightens up, Betsy's heading into the VIP room.

He watches her go, smitten.

LATER

Samuel comes out of the VIP room, carrying his empty tray,
 and joins up with Franklin.

SAMUEL
 Key's not on the chain.

Franklin thinks about this, bothered by the implications.

Samuel gestures toward the VIP room.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)
I think he's gettin' ready to
leave.

FRANKLIN
Meet me outside.

Samuel hands the tray to a WAITER, who gives him a "who are you?" look. Then he follows Franklin, pushing through the crowd toward the entrance.

EXT. KEATING MANOR - CONTINUOUS

Carriages and hackney cabs are lined up along the circular driveway. The liveried carriage drivers and the scruffy-looking cab drivers are gathered near the front steps, passing a bottle.

Franklin comes out and spots Washington at the bottom of the stairs, about to get into his own carriage.

He hurries down the steps and grabs the General's arm.

FRANKLIN
(quietly)
Where's the key?

Washington looks at him with distaste.

WASHINGTON
Unhand me, monsieur!

He shakes off Franklin's hand, then recognizes him.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)
Franklin? I hadn't heard you
were released. What are you
doing in that absurd get up?

FRANKLIN
(quietly)
The key I gave you for
safekeeping -- where is it?

Washington looks down at his vest.

The key is gone.

WASHINGTON
I had it earlier this evening --
I remember it distinctly. It
must have fallen off. Or someone
might have stolen it, I suppose.
There was an awful crush in
there.

FRANKLIN

Or you could have given it to a
British agent, at the party.

WASHINGTON

Are you accusing me of treason?
I thought that was YOUR
particular vice.

He looks at Franklin with disdain.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

Mr. Franklin, I do not know
whether you are a traitor or
merely deranged. But I intend to
have nothing to do with you in
either case. Good evening, sir.

He gets into his carriage and closes the door.

WASHINGTON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Drive on!

The Driver slaps the reins and the carriage moves off.

Franklin watches it go, frustrated, as Samuel joins him.

SAMUEL

You gonna let him go?

FRANKLIN

I don't see I have much of a
choice.

SAMUEL

We can do somethin' 'bout that...

He slips between the carriages so he's out of view from the
house. Franklin follows.

Samuel opens the door to a hackney cab.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Get in.

Franklin hesitates, then climbs into the cab.

INT. COACH - NIGHT

Just as Franklin settles into his seat, the other door
opens and a woman climbs in --

It's Betsy Ross.

BETSY

Oh! I didn't know this cab was --

The coach starts with a jerk, sending Betsy tumbling into Franklin's lap and smashing her breasts into his face.

BETSY (CONT'D)
I beg your pardon, monsieur!

FRANKLIN
(French accent)
There is no need, madame...

He helps her sit down.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
(French accent)
I would be delighted to escort
you to your home.

He peers out the window behind them, to see the CAB DRIVER chasing after them on foot, yelling.

Then he looks ahead, to see that they're closing on Washington's carriage.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
(French accent)
But there is a gentleman I must
speak with first.

EXT. CAB - DAY

Franklin's cab pulls up next to Washington's, crowding the narrow street.

SAMUEL
Pull over!

Washington's driver looks askance at him.

Washington sticks his head out the window and sees Franklin looking out the window of the cab.

WASHINGTON
Franklin! You ARE deranged!

He calls up to his Driver.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)
Lose them.

Washington's Driver flicks his whip and the carriage picks up speed.

But Samuel slaps the reins and the cab follows close behind.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Betsy looks closely at Franklin.

BETSY
He called you... Franklin?

Franklin sees the game is up.

He rips off the fancy French wig and stands up, unsteady in the swaying cab.

FRANKLIN
Forgive me, Mistress Ross, for involving you in this.

He pulls himself out the window, and balances on the sill.

BETSY
Mr. Franklin! Pray do not injure yourself!

EXT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

Franklin clings onto the outside of the cab, watching Washington's carriage ahead.

EXT. HARPER'S BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

A broken wooden BRIDGE over a small creek looms in the darkness. A SIGN reads "Bridge Out"

The swaying lights of two approaching carriages can be seen in the distance.

EXT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

Franklin spots the damaged bridge ahead.

FRANKLIN
Mistress Ross, I advise you hold onto something.

In alarm, Betsy braces herself. Franklin climbs up the side of the carriage and balances on the roof.

EXT. HARPER'S BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Washington's carriage rockets toward the bridge. The horses and the carriage launch into the air, and they manage to land on the other side.

Once they cross, the carriage slows as Washington and his driver look to see if their pursuers will manage the same feat.

Franklin's cab careens across the broken bridge.

The cab catches up with Washington's carriage. Franklin jumps and swings through its window.

INT. WASHINGTON'S CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

Franklin lands on the seat across from Washington, breathless and windblown.

WASHINGTON

And what, pray tell, was the point of THAT ridiculous exercise?

Franklin grins.

FRANKLIN

Just keeping in practice. Never know when that sort of thing might come in handy.

WASHINGTON

And what is it you want of me?

FRANKLIN

Are you in league with Colonel Wensleydale?

WASHINGTON

Of British intelligence? Of course not. How dare you suggest it?

FRANKLIN

Then where is the key?

WASHINGTON

I told you already -- I lost it, or it was stolen.

FRANKLIN

By whom?

WASHINGTON

How should I know! You saw the crush of people at Mistress Keating's! It could have been any of them.

FRANKLIN

I could request her guest list.

WASHINGTON

Yes, and much good that would do you. A great stew of Loyalists, Patriots --

He eyes Franklin's French finery.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

And suspicious foreigners. Shall you interrogate all of them?

He calls out to his driver.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)
Stop the carriage!

EXT. CARRIAGE - NIGHT

The carriage slows and stops. Samuel pulls up behind in the cab. Betsy looks out the window, concerned.

INT. CARRIAGE - NIGHT

Washington glares at Franklin.

WASHINGTON
If you were not a brother Mason,
I would deliver you back to the
jail -- or perhaps to a bedlam
asylum. I am out of patience
with your antics and your
accusations. I have a war to
fight, Mr. Franklin. Now pray
leave me to it.

He opens the carriage door.

EXT. CARRIAGE - NIGHT

Franklin gets out of the carriage, looking somewhat deflated, and walks back to the cab.

Washington's carriage drives off.

SAMUEL
Now what?

FRANKLIN
Now I go home, I suppose.

SAMUEL
Won't they be watchin' the place?
Now they know you're outta jail?

FRANKLIN
I suppose...

BETSY
You could stay with me, Mr.
Franklin. You ARE Mr. Benjamin
Franklin, I believe? I cannot
imagine another gentleman with
that name could be leaping from
carriages in Philadelphia.

Franklin give her a bow.

FRANKLIN

At your service, Ma'am. And thank you for your kind offer, but I would not wish to compromise you.

BETSY

Do you suppose that only men may be patriots, sir? That only men may take risks? I know who you are and what you have done for the cause of liberty. I have but a faint understanding of what transpired tonight, but clearly you have been wronged. And I intend to help you set things to right.

She indicates Samuel.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Your man-servant is also welcome.

Samuel touches his hat.

SAMUEL

Thank you, ma'am. And where might your home be?

BETSY

On Second Street. Number 23.

She glances behind them.

BETSY (CONT'D)

But better to take another bridge, I think...

EXT. BETSY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The cab pulls up in front of a modest two-story building.

The sign outside reads "Betsy Ross - tailor and upholsterer."

Franklin gets out of the cab, wearing his French wig again, and helps Betsy step down.

SAMUEL

I better park this somewhere outta the way. Meet you back here later.

He drives off.

Betsy looks at the dark windows of nearby houses.

BETSY

You'd best circle 'round to the back alley. It would not do for the neighbors to see you enter my home at such an hour while my husband's away.

Franklin bows, in the French manner, then prances off down the street.

Betsy goes to open her front door.

INT. BETSY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Betsy, holding a candle, lets Franklin in through the kitchen door.

BETSY

Are all your evenings this exciting, Mr. Franklin?

FRANKLIN

More often than I would like.

BETSY

Oh, la, sir! You do not seem to me to be a man who shirks excitement.

She gives him a look that's just slightly suggestive, then leads him into a

BEDROOM

The room doubles as a workroom, with bolts of cloth and strips of red and white already cut out.

There's a stack of completed 13-star American flags.

Betsy eyes Franklin's trim form, curiously.

BETSY (CONT'D)

I had been led to believe you were a stouter gentleman...

Franklin smiles.

FRANKLIN

You may blame my regular tailor for that.

He looks down at his brocade vest.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

The French, on the other hand, know how to make clothes fit properly.

He admires the form-fitting cut of Betsy's dress.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

As do you, I see.

She gives him a look that's coy but inviting, and goes to the dresser.

BETSY

Some of my husband's clothes are here, for the morning.

She indicates Franklin's elaborate outfit.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Those might attract attention.

She opens a drawer and takes out a turned wood device with a cross piece -- it's a bed key for tightening the bed ropes, but the way she handles it makes it look like an 18th century sex toy.

She goes close to Franklin, still fondling the bed key.

BETSY (CONT'D)

This bed hasn't been used in some time. I'm afraid the ropes might be loose.

She hands Franklin the bed key with a suggestive look.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Sleep tight, Mr. Franklin.

He takes the bed key from her, and his tone is also suggestive.

FRANKLIN

And you, Mistress Ross.

She gives him a long look, and it seems something might happen between them.

But there's a KNOCK on the door in the other room.

BETSY

That must be your man-servant.

FRANKLIN

His name is Samuel Hill. And he is not my servant.

Betsy dips a curtsy and leaves.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

In his office in Independence Hall, John Adams confronts a Jailer and a CONTINENTAL OFFICER.

JOHN ADAMS

What do you mean he hasn't been found yet?

CONTINENTAL OFFICER

Sir, I've had my men sweeping the streets all night --

JOHN ADAMS

Have them do it a second time, or a third, or as many times as it takes! Distribute handbills -- assure that the entire city knows Franklin is a wanted man.

He waves his hand to dismiss them.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - DAY

The stolen cab's parked in sight of Independence Hall.

Franklin surveys the building. He's dressed in Betsy's husband's clothes and hat, looking nondescript and respectable.

Betsy takes his arm and smiles.

Samuel takes a bundle of flags from the cab and hoists it to his shoulder.

They set off for the entrance, Samuel following close behind the others.

EXT. INDEPENDENCE HALL - DAY

Franklin, Betsy, and Samuel approach the GUARDS at the entrance.

FRANKLIN

Mistress Ross has brought the flags, for Mr. Adams's approval.

Betsy indicates Samuel, with the bundle on his shoulder.

The Guards eye them, then wave them through.

INT. INDEPENDENCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Franklin, Betsy, and Samuel make their way through the busy halls.

Franklin sees other Congressmen that he recognizes. He keeps his head down so the hat hides his face.

They near a door with a card that reads "MR. JOHN ADAMS."

Franklin knocks.

JOHN ADAMS (O.S.)

Enter!

Franklin opens the door and lets Samuel and Betsy in.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Adams doesn't even look up.

JOHN ADAMS

Yes?

BETSY

I've come with the flags, Mr. Adams.

JOHN ADAMS

Fine. Put them there.

Samuel puts down the flags.

Betsy curtsies and leaves, followed by Samuel.

They leave the door open.

Adams looks up, annoyed.

JOHN ADAMS (CONT'D)

And close the door!

The door closes, from the inside.

Franklin's behind it, pointing a pistol at Adams.

Adams reaches for a bell on his desk.

FRANKLIN

Don't.

Adams freezes.

JOHN ADAMS

Who are you?

Franklin puts on his bifocals.

JOHN ADAMS (CONT'D)

Franklin?! Good god, man -- how did you get in here? Half the army's out searching for you.

He gestures to a chair.

JOHN ADAMS (CONT'D)

Pray be seated.

He looks him over.

JOHN ADAMS (CONT'D)
You've lost weight.

FRANKLIN
Prison food.

He sits, still keeping the pistol on Adams.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
I am not a traitor.

JOHN ADAMS
Yes, I know that.

This takes Franklin by surprise.

FRANKLIN
Then why all that nonsense with
the letter? Why the arrest? And
why the search?

JOHN ADAMS
To make the British think you are
a traitor. So they'll recruit
you to their cause.

FRANKLIN
Yes, they've already tried that.
Colonel Wensleydale approached
me.

JOHN ADAMS
Then our plan is succeeding
admirably.

FRANKLIN
Only at the cost of my good name!
You might have warned me.

JOHN ADAMS
Yes, I regret that. But the
letter -- an obvious forgery, by
the way -- was presented to me
before the entire Congress. I
was required to summon you at
once. I would have come to you
in jail, but you made your escape
before I had the opportunity.
And I would have given you this.

He takes a sealed note out of his pocket and slides it
across the desk to Franklin.

JOHN ADAMS (CONT'D)
This will get you through our
lines. I want you to turn
yourself over to the British.

FRANKLIN

But why?

JOHN ADAMS

So you can uncover the real
traitor among us.

FRANKLIN

It's Washington.

Adams make a snort of derision.

JOHN ADAMS

Preposterous.

FRANKLIN

I entrusted him with something --
a key. Part of a weapon that
could win the war for whichever
side has it.

JOHN ADAMS

But why Washington?

FRANKLIN

Knowing the British might invade
at any time, I did not want the
key about my house or person. I
thought it was safe. Until I
found Washington no longer had
it.

JOHN ADAMS

But he might have lost it,
or -- ?

FRANKLIN

That is what he claims. And
there are other things...

He gets up and goes to a map on the wall. It shows
territory held by the Colonials and the British. He taps
each location as he speaks.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

He lost New York and then
Philadelphia. Benedict Arnold's
an able General. Yet Washington
has rebuked him publicly,
threatened him with a court
martial, and packed him off to
West Point -- rather than keeping
him in the field where he
belongs.

JOHN ADAMS

There was the matter of some
receipts --

FRANKLIN

Receipts be damned! Arnold wins his battles. Washington, of late, does not. Perhaps he is only going through the motions.

JOHN ADAMS

This is a serious accusation, and one I have difficulty believing. General Washington is even now preparing to take back New York.

FRANKLIN

The British could be building the weapon as we speak. Perhaps it's his intent to lead our army into certain defeat.

Adams thinks about this.

JOHN ADAMS

Then it is all the more imperative that the British take you into their confidence.

FRANKLIN

I agree. Call for your guards.

JOHN ADAMS

What?

FRANKLIN

There may be spies in this very building. They may have seen me enter.

JOHN ADAMS

Very well.

He rings the bell.

JOHN ADAMS (CONT'D)

I do hope you know what you're doing.

There's the sound of BOOTS marching quickly down the hallway outside.

JOHN ADAMS (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Guards! Arrest this man!

Two GUARDS burst into the room. Adams points.

JOHN ADAMS (CONT'D)

It's Franklin! Take him alive!

Franklin fires his pistol above their heads, smashing the window above the door and making them duck.

Outside the office, Betsy screams.

Franklin dashes past the guards and runs into the

HALLWAY

He grabs Betsy like he's holding her hostage and puts his pistol to her head.

The guards come out after him, and stop when they see him holding Betsy.

FRANKLIN

Stay there, or the woman dies.

The Guards freeze.

Franklin backs down the hallway, using Betsy as a human shield. She does her best to look terrified.

Franklin murmurs into her ear.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Have Samuel bring the carriage
'round to the bell tower, and
prepare for a speedy departure.
And pray forgive me for what I am
about to do.

They get to the base of the stairs.

Franklin shoves Betsy toward the Guards. She stumbles and falls.

Franklin dashes up the stairs, as the Guards run to Betsy. One helps her up -- which she makes as difficult as possible, pretending to faint every time he gets her on her feet.

The other guard, who is chubby and out of shape, follows Franklin up the stairs.

The first guard accidentally puts his hand on Betsy's breast while helping her up again. She slaps him and goes off in a huff.

EXT. BELLTOWER - CONTINUOUS

Franklin emerges in the belltower, where the LIBERTY BELL hangs.

He can hear the Guard coming up the stairs below him. He slams the trapdoor closed and stands on it.

He takes a gadget out of his pocket -- it's a small grappling hook with a thin rope attached.

He twirls it, and then throws the hook at the clapper of the Liberty Bell.

The hook attaches. Franklin yanks the rope to check that it's secure.

As the guard pounds at the trapdoor, Franklin pulls on his gloves.

Gripping the rope, he steps off the trapdoor, vaults over the edge of the railing, and rappels down the side of the tower.

The guard bursts open the trapdoor, huffing and red faced.

He looks around and doesn't see Franklin.

But then he notices that the Bell's pulled over by the clapper, and he sees the rope leading from it.

He goes to the rail and sees Franklin almost on the ground, far below, with the cab rushing toward him.

He grabs for the rope, but it's too late.

Far below, Franklin lets go of the rope and the bell swings violently, clanging loudly and banging into its frame.

The Guard turns, covering his ears --

To see the iconic crack develop in the side of the bell.

EXT. INDEPENDENCE HALL - DAY

Betsy holds the cab door open for Franklin and helps him climb in.

Samuel slaps the reins and the cab speeds along the drive and out into the street.

Guards rush after the cab, firing warning shots.

But the cab doesn't stop, and in a moment it disappears around a corner.

INT. CAB - DAY

Franklin catches his breath.

Betsy looks at him with admiration.

BETSY
Very impressive, Mr. Franklin!

FRANKLIN

And you played your own part admirably.

BETSY

Where shall we go now?

FRANKLIN

I will deliver you safely home. And then I must go to New York.

BETSY

But it's occupied by the British!

FRANKLIN

That is the very reason I must go. To beard the lion in its den.

BETSY

I'm going with you.

FRANKLIN

It is far too dangerous.

BETSY

I have already proven that I can be of use. This is war, Mr. Franklin. Do you think I can be content sitting home sewing flags when so much is at stake?

Franklin softens. He likes having her around.

FRANKLIN

Very well, Mistress Ross.

He leans out the window and calls to Samuel.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Samuel! To New York, if you please!

EXT. CAB - DAY

Samuel grins.

SAMUEL

That's a hundred miles! You got the fare?

FRANKLIN

Send the bill to John Adams.

Samuel chuckles and slaps the reins.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Betsy's fallen asleep against Ben's shoulder, and Ben himself is nodding.

He looks up as he feels the carriage slow.

SAMUEL (O.S.)

There's an inn up ahead. Better stop for the night.

Ben gently shakes Betsy awake.

INT. INN - NIGHT

Ben, Betsy, and Samuel enter the busy main room of the inn.

Ben hails the INNKEEPER. The man comes over to them, wiping his hands on his apron and looking beleaguered.

INNKEEPER

Yes, sir? How can I help you?

FRANKLIN

Three rooms, please. For me, my... wife, and our manservant.

INNKEEPER

We've only the one room left, and you're lucky to have that. You and the missus will have to put up with each other's snoring for one night.

He gestures at Samuel.

INNKEEPER (CONT'D)

And your man can sleep in the barn with the other nigras.

Samuel bristles at this.

FRANKLIN

Perhaps another inn would be more... accommodating.

He turns to go.

INNKEEPER

The next one's 20 miles, and it's full up. We've had folks just come from there.

Franklin looks at Betsy and Samuel.

Samuel looks at Betsy, who looks exhausted.

SAMUEL

I've slept in worse places, I
guess...

Franklin turns back to the Innkeeper.

FRANKLIN

Can you provide up with supper?

The Innkeeper indicates the crowded room.

INNKEEPER

Take any place you find -- but
your man eats in the kitchen.

FRANKLIN

Then we will join him there.

He takes Betsy's arm.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Come, my dear.

Samuel follows as the others head to the kitchen.

INT. INN KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ben, Betsy, and Samuel finish their dinner.

Everyone else at the long kitchen table is black. Franklin
looks at ease, but Betsy appears uncomfortable.

FRANKLIN

(to Samuel)

Does it bother you? To be
treated in this fashion?

SAMUEL

Would it bother you?

FRANKLIN

Of course.

Samuel gives him a "there you go" look.

Franklin looks thoughtful.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

In my younger days, I was a slave
owner myself. But in recent
years I have condemned the
institution, and recently joined
The Society for the Relief of
Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in
Bondage.

Samuel chuckles.

SAMUEL

That's a mouthfull... You got me
out of bondage, anyway -- back
there in jail. I 'preciate that.

Betsy yawns and covers her mouth with her napkin.

BETSY

Pray forgive me, Mr. Franklin,
Samuel. I really must find my
bed.

The men stand, politely, as she gets up from the bench.

She leaves the kitchen and they sit back down.

Franklin signals to the KITCHEN MAID, who comes to fill
their beer tankards.

FRANKLIN

I must confess, I once believed
that those of African descent
were inferior to those of
European stock. I even believed
they were unable to be educated.

SAMUEL

What changed your mind?

FRANKLIN

I visited a school for Negro
children and was greatly
impressed. Their apprehension
seemed as quick as any white
child's, their memories as
strong, and their docility in
every respect equal.

SAMUEL

Can't say I was any too "docile"
as a boy...

FRANKLIN

Nor was I, I confess. I was a
holy terror, in fact... But it
is considered a virtue in
children.

They both chuckle. Then Franklin grows more serious.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

It was this war that helped me
see the error in my thinking. I
believe that the British mean to
enslave these colonies -- to
treat free men as cattle and
property.

Samuel gets up.

SAMUEL

Well... I better go find where
the other "cattle" sleep...

He leaves the room.

Franklin watches him go, with a pang of guilt, then drains
his tankard and stands, a bit unsteadily.

INT. INN BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Franklin comes into the dark room, holding a candlestick.

BETSY (O.S.)

Mr. Franklin?

FRANKLIN

Pardon, Mistress Ross. I did not
intend to wake you. I will make
my bed here on the hearth rug.
If you might be kind enough to
spare a blanket?

Betsy sits up in bed. The candlelight reveals that she's
dressed in a thin linen shift that shows the lines of her
body. Her hair's down and curls around her shoulders.

Franklin can't help staring.

She meets his gaze, evenly, and turns back the bed covers,
inviting him in.

BETSY

Please, Mr. Franklin. There is
room for two here.

FRANKLIN

But your husband...?

BETSY

Is likely dead by now. It has
been a year since I last heard
from him.

She gets a wistful look.

BETSY (CONT'D)

It has been so long since I had a
man in my bed. A woman gets so
lonely....

Still Ben hesitates.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Surely it is not a matter of
scruples!

(MORE)

BETSY (CONT'D)

It is said you have as many
illegitimate children as there
are American colonies!

Franklin smiles, ruefully.

FRANKLIN

An exaggeration. I have only the
one -- my son William. The
product of my youth.

He sits on the edge of the bed.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

It has been too long for me as
well. My Deborah died whilst I
was last in England. We were
together 44 years....

He strokes Betsy's hair.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

I thought I might never again...

Betsy takes his hand and kisses it.

BETSY

Come, Mr. Franklin. And we will
keep each other warm.

She pulls him down and kisses him deeply.

INT. CAB - DAY

Betsy and Franklin ride side by side, both looking a bit
shy and embarrassed.

He puts his gloved hand on top of hers and smiles.

The cab slows.

Franklin looks out the window.

FRANKLIN

We're coming up to the American
checkpoint.

He takes out the pass from Adams.

EXT. AMERICAN CHECKPOINT - DAY

Franklin hands the pass out the window.

A young AMERICAN SOLDIER examines it, then hands it back
and waves them through.

They proceed down the road 100 yards, until they reach the
next checkpoint.

EXT. BRITISH CHECKPOINT - DAY

A BRITISH SOLDIERS waves the cab to a halt, and peers up at Samuel, suspiciously, then goes to look inside the carriage window.

BRITISH SOLDIER
What is your business?

Franklin presents Wensleydale's pass.

FRANKLIN
I'm to see Colonel Wensleydale.

The soldier examines the seal, breaks it open, and reads. Then he hands the paper back to Franklin.

BRITISH SOLDIER
Let him pass!

The other soldiers raise the barrier and Sam drives the cab through.

EXT. BROOKLAND FERRY LANDING - DAY

The cab's in line with other vehicles waiting for the ferry across to Manhattan Island.

Ben gets out of the cab to stretch his legs, and helps Betsy out at well.

They look across the water at the view:

New York is a city of 30,000 people, occupying only the island's southern tip. The harbor's filled with ships flying British flags.

Betsy wrinkles her nose.

BETSY
What is that awful stench?

Ben looks for the source, then sees a dozen mast-less and rotting prison hulks anchored off-shore.

FRANKLIN
Those must be the British prison ships. Death ships, they call them...

BETSY
Perhaps my husband is there... if he lives.

Franklin shakes his head.

FRANKLIN

They are hellish places. Men are crowded together with little food, subject to abuse and neglect -- all as an inducement to quit the cause of liberty and join the King's Navy.

He sees the ferry arrives at the dock and takes Betsy's arm to escort her back to the cab.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Franklin and Betsy look out the cab windows at the busy streets, which are full of British soldiers.

British flags fly everywhere, and the shop windows display imported English luxury goods.

Betsy eyes the fashionably dressed ladies in their London dresses.

They arrive at a large, imposing structure on the southwest end of Manhattan:

Fort George.

EXT. FORT GEORGE - DAY

Sam drives the cab up to the guards by the gate, and Franklin hands out the pass.

A GUARD examines it, then waves them through into the

COURTYARD

Samuel pulls up in front of the entrance to the main building.

He sets the brake, then climbs down from the driver's box and opens the door to the cab.

Franklin climbs out, then helps Betsy out.

He takes out some coins, which he counts into Sam's hand.

FRANKLIN

(quietly)

It is better if they think you're only a hired driver. Go to the merchant firm of Templeton & Stewart and ask for Samuel Culper. He will give you anything you require.

Samuel looks around at the imposing fort.

SAMUEL

Good luck...

He touches his hat, gets back on the driver's box, and drives away.

Betsy takes Ben's arm and they walk up the steps to the entrance.

INT. FORT GEORGE - DAY

Franklin and Betsy are ushered by a LIEUTENANT into a well-appointed office.

Wensleydale's seated at his desk. He smiles and stands to greet them.

WENSLEYDALE

Mr. Franklin! Somehow I knew we would meet again. And is this Mistress Franklin? Or perhaps a daughter?

FRANKLIN

Mistress Ross -- my assistant.

WENSLEYDALE

Delighted, ma'am.

She presents her hand and he bows over it, then ushers them to take seats as he returns to his desk.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

So -- you have decided to join us.

FRANKLIN

I think that would be obvious from my presence here.

WENSLEYDALE

And you will help us build the weapon we spoke of?

FRANKLIN

As I told you -- it was only an experiment. I can give you no assurances that it will work in the field.

WENSLEYDALE

We will have the opportunity to test it soon enough.

He gets up and goes to a map on the wall.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)
 General Washington is preparing his attack. We expect to face him within the week.

FRANKLIN
 You told me he was a traitor.

WENSLEYDALE
 Oh, he is, I assure you. One of many. And he is about to deliver the rebel army directly into our hands. So we might destroy it at one blow. With the help of your weapon.

FRANKLIN
 Then you have the key?

WENSLEYDALE
 We will have it, by the time the weapon is complete. And to that end we will put every resource at your disposal.

FRANKLIN
 And if I should fail?

WENSLEYDALE
 Then you will die. Rather painfully, I'm afraid.

He indicates Betsy.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)
 Along with your lovely "assistant."

FRANKLIN
 If this is how you reward your friends, I would hate to be your enemy.

WENSLEYDALE
 If you succeed, you will have a very comfortable retirement in London -- or Paris, if you prefer. Any place but this desolate wilderness.

He stands.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)
 Let me introduce you to Captain Pasley. He is a great admirer of your work.

He goes to the door and ushers them out.

INT. BRITISH LABORATORY - DAY

Wensleydale ushers Ben and Betsy into a large, underground stone room. Light comes from small barred windows high up in the wall.

The lab's filled with a variety of contraptions -- many of them taken from Ben's own lab.

The plans for the kite are on the wall.

CAPTAIN PASLEY hurries up to greet them. He's a mad scientist type, wearing a leather blacksmith's apron over his shirtsleeves.

WENSLEYDALE

Mistress Ross, Mr. Franklin --
may I present Captain Pasley of
the King's Engineers?

Capt. Pasley takes Ben's hand and shakes it vigorously.

CAPTAIN PASLEY

It is a great honor sir, to meet
the author of so many splendid
inventions! I have one of your
stoves in my quarters here. It
is the very model of efficiency.

Franklin bows, with ironic modesty.

CAPTAIN PASLEY (CONT'D)

Come! See the progress we have
made with your device.

He leads them to a workbench, where a large metal kite is being constructed. It's about eight feet long and made of razor-thin steel.

CAPTAIN PASLEY (CONT'D)

Beautiful, is it not?

He leads them to a device for extruding a fine metal wire.

CAPTAIN PASLEY (CONT'D)

And we call this... the
electrocution string.

Ben and Betsy exchange a look of concern.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DUSK

Samuel walks out of a livery stable and gets his bearings, then sets off down the street.

British SOLDIERS are patrolling and lamplighters are lighting the street lamps.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Sam arrives at a warehouse with the sign "Templeton & Stewart."

He looks it over carefully, then knocks on the door.

The door's opened by a good-looking 25-year-old black woman wearing an apron and holding a candle -- LIZZY FREEMAN.

Samuel's instantly smitten and tongue-tied.

Lizzy smirks; she'd had this effect on men before.

LIZZY

Yes?

SAMUEL

Good day, mistress -- ?

LIZZY

Lizzy Freeman, if it's any business of yours. And who might you be?

SAMUEL

Samuel Hill, ma'am -- at your service.

He makes a rather elegant bow.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

I'm here to see Mr. Culper.

Lizzy's eyes widen. She looks up and down the street to make sure no one's watching, then ushers Sam inside.

EXT. FORT GEORGE - DAY

It's the next morning.

Sam shambles up to the GUARDS at the gate, his shoulders hunched and his head bowed, doing a "slave" act. He's carrying a large burlap bag.

He touches his hat, then presents his bag to a Guard for inspection.

SAMUEL

'Scuse me, suh. Massa Wensley tole me pick up da trash ousside da walls.

The guard looks in the bag and sees that it's empty. He waves Sam on.

Sam touches his hat again, then works his way around the outer walls of the fort, picking up windblown bits of trash and empty bottles and putting them into the bag.

The Guard stops paying any attention to him after a few moments.

Sam works his way along, glancing up at the barred windows 10 feet above his head.

INT. FORT GEORGE - DAY

In the laboratory, Ben peers through the bottom half of his bifocals at the exposed guts of a clockwork device about the size of half a cantaloupe.

A WATCHMAKER peers through his magnifying loupe at the gears and wheels, making minute adjustments where Franklin points.

Near them at the workbench, Betsy's carefully winding the electrocution string around a wooden spool. There are another half dozen wound spools in the other half of the "cantaloupe."

Ben straightens up, easing his cramped back. He takes off his glasses and rubs his tired eyes.

Wensleydale comes in and surveys the scene with satisfaction.

Captain Pasley bustles up to greet him.

WENSLEYDALE

You are making good progress, I hope?

CAPTAIN PASLEY

Excellent progress, with the help of Mr. Franklin and Mistress Ross. I believe we will soon be ready for a test, as early as two days hence.

WENSLEYDALE

Then let us hope for foul weather.

CAPTAIN PASLEY

But about the key...?

WENSLEYDALE

We will have it. I assure you.

He goes over and strokes the polished surface of the kite with his lace handkerchief.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

I am most eager to see this in operation.

EXT. BRITISH SLOOP - DAY

The sky's slate grey, and wind whips the harbor into whitecaps.

Two MEN carry the metal kite up a gangplank and onto a three-masted sloop-of-war flying the British flag.

The "cantaloupe" is mounted on the kite's cross-piece.

There's a metal ring in the center of the sphere for attaching a rope. The ring's surrounded by a dozen small holes, out of which small iron weights dangle from short lengths of electrocution string.

And off to one side is a KEY HOLE.

Captain Pasley helps the men settle the kite into its cradle at the stern of the ship.

Franklin and Betsy stand with Wensleydale and watch.

Wensleydale looks smug. Franklin and Betsy look anxious.

A BRITISH SAILOR runs up the gangplank and salutes Wensleydale, who returns the salute.

BRITISH SAILOR

Colonel! We have the signal from Governor's Island. Everything is in readiness!

WENSLEYDALE

Excellent.

He signals to the SLOOP'S CAPTAIN.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

Captain! Prepare to cast off.

SLOOP'S CAPTAIN

Aye, aye, sir.

LATER

Betsy and Franklin stand at the rail and watch Governor's Island approaching. It has some defensive earthworks and scrubby trees, but no buildings.

The sky's very dark now, and thunder rumbles in the distance.

The sea's rough, and they have to hold the rail to keep their balance.

Betsy looks ill. Franklin takes her arm and helps her toward the stern.

Captain Pasley attaches a thin rope to the ring on the kite. The other end of the rope's attached to a winch.

Captain Pasley has to shout to be heard over the wind and waves.

CAPTAIN PASLEY

Now all we need is the key!

Wensleydale turns to his Lieutenant.

WENSLEYDALE

Bring up the man.

The Lieutenant salutes and goes below, then returns with a thin, HOLLOW-EYED MAN, with long hair and a ragged beard.

Franklin looks at him curiously.

He turns to Wensleydale.

And then he sees Betsy's face.

She looks like she's just seen a ghost.

BETSY

Joseph, what have they done to you?

She goes to embrace him.

The Man looks at her with the barest spark of life in his eyes.

WENSLEYDALE

I have returned your husband to you, Mistress Ross. Now it is for you to honor your agreement.

Betsy sighs, then reaches around her neck and removes a chain hidden beneath her dress.

On it hangs the KEY.

She hands it to Captain Pasley, who inserts it into the keyhole in the "cantaloupe" and turns it like he's winding up a clock.

Franklin stares at the kite, then at Betsy, bewildered.

FRANKLIN

But how -- ?

BETSY

It was at the party, at Mistress Keating's. General Washington is no traitor.

FRANKLIN

But you are.

BETSY

Wensleydale said he could have my husband freed if I supplied him with certain... information. The key was my final payment. The letter was my work as well.

Ben turns away; he can't stand to look at her.

WENSLEYDALE

It was most kind of you, Mr. Franklin, to deliver Mistress Ross and the key. Saved me a great deal of trouble.

Franklin gestures at Betsy.

FRANKLIN

You are no gentleman, sir -- to use a woman thus!

WENSLEYDALE

But you have "used" her yourself, Mr. Franklin -- if I am not mistaken...

Franklin goes for him, but is restrained by two large SAILORS.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

Now, let us see if this weapon of yours is as effective as I hoped.

Captain Pasley finishes winding and carefully puts the key in his pocket.

CAPTAIN PASLEY

Ready!

Wensleydale calls to the Captain.

WENSLEYDALE

Turn upwind!

The Captain turns the wheel and the ship turns. The sails flap, then fill.

Betsy's husband shivers violently in the cold wind. She puts her arm around his shoulder and leads him below, with a sad backward glance at Franklin.

Captain Pasley releases the kite from its cradle and holds it over his head.

As it catches the wind and rises, he plays out the rope.

Despite himself, Franklin's thrilled to see his invention fly.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

How long until the strings
deploy?

CAPTAIN PASLEY

Twenty minutes.

Wensleydale takes out his pocket watch and checks the time, then calls out to the Captain.

WENSLEYDALE

Keep us upwind of the island!

The Captain turns the wheel to comply.

As the kite rises higher and higher, Franklin goes to get a better view of the island.

He wipes the salt spray from his bifocals and peers through them. His eyes widen with alarm and he hurries back to Wensleydale.

FRANKLIN

Colonel! There are men on that
island! You must take down the
kite at once!

WENSLEYDALE

Yes, I know. Rebels from the
prison hulks. Armed with empty
muskets to attract the lighting.

FRANKLIN

But this is criminal! They are
prisoners of war!

WENSLEYDALE

They are traitors to the crown.
And the men we picked were
already sick with dysentery or
typhus. They would have died
within the week in any case.

FRANKLIN

I will not allow it!

He goes to attack Captain Pasley at the rope, but the two burly Sailors restrain him.

WENSLEYDALE

Yet you were prepared to use it
on British soldiers? That was
your intent, was it not?

FRANKLIN

Men die in battle! It is the
nature of war! But to kill men
as... an experiment! It is
monstrous! It is inhuman! It is
dishonorable!

WENSLEYDALE

Losing wars is also dishonorable.

He looks at the sailors.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

Assure that Mr. Franklin has a
good view -- and that he does not
interfere with our experiment.

The sailors lash Franklin to a mast.

The RUMBLE of thunder comes closer, and there's a FLASH of
lighting in the distance.

Rain begins to fall.

Franklin stares at the island with trepidation.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S ISLAND - DAY

A dozen ragged, emaciated AMERICAN SAILORS huddle under one
of the scrubby trees, seeking shelter from the wind and
rain.

Several of them clutch rusty muskets -- more for comfort
than anything else.

One Sailor spots the kite hovering over the island.

He peers at it, not believing his eyes, and comes out from
under the tree for a better look.

K'ZAP! RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE....

The lighting's getting closer.

EXT. BRITISH SLOOP - DAY

Wensleydale checks his watch. Twenty minutes has passed.

He peers out at the kite.

Franklin stars at it too, willing it not to work.

EXT. KITE - DAY

The "cantaloupe" make a mechanical whirring and clicking noise.

Then the dozen electrocution strings descend on their iron weights, like a dozen spiders descending from a web.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S ISLAND - DAY

The American Sailor squints and sees the threads descend, directly overhead.

K'ZAP!

Lighting strikes the kite.

ZAP ZAP ZAP ZAP ZAP!

The single bolt splits into a dozen bolts, one for each string, and jumps from the iron weight to the island -- striking the tree and the men taking shelter under it.

Their muskets glow red hot, but the men can't drop them.

They scream as they sizzle and die.

EXT. BRITISH SLOOP - DAY

Tied to the mast, Franklin hears the men's screams.

He closes his eyes and murmurs a prayer -- or a curse.

Wensleydale takes in the scene with satisfaction.

He turns to Captain Pasley, who is focused on controlling the kite.

WENSLEYDALE

Highly satisfactory. You are to be commended, Captain. The terror effect alone should be sufficient to send the rebels fleeing for their lives.

He looks at the island. Nothing's moving.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

You may retrieve the device, and reset it for the next use. I will lead a landing party to inspect the results.

He goes to smirk at Franklin, who's struggling futilely against his bonds.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)
 Congratulations, Mr. Franklin --
 you've changed the nature of
 warfare forever. And doomed the
 revolution, I might add.

He gestures at Fort George.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)
 You are to be taken to the fort
 until such time as you may be
 conveniently be hanged. With
 General Washington at your side,
 should he survive.

Franklin glares at him.

FRANKLIN
 You may call us rebels, and say
 we deserve no better treatment.
 But we still have feelings as
 keen and sensible as Loyalists,
 and will, if forced to, most
 assuredly retaliate against those
 who are the unjust invaders of
 our rights, liberties, properties
 -- and lives.

Wensleydale smirks.

WENSLEYDALE
 Such a pretty speech. Be sure to
 repeat it upon the gallows.

INT. FORT GEORGE - DAY

Franklin's thrown into a cell, his clothes still soaked
 from the storm, his hands bound.

A nasty-looking JAILER and two burly armed GUARDS follow
 him inside, one of them with a basket of prison clothes.

JAILER
 Take off your clothes.

FRANKLIN
 I beg your pardon?

JAILER
 You're to be stripped and
 searched, includin' places the
 sun don't shine.

He leers.

JAILER (CONT'D)
 I've heard about you, Mr.
 Franklin.
 (MORE)

JAILER (CONT'D)

You and your little "devices."
You won't be 'scapin' on my watch
-- or Wensleydale'll have me
flayed alive.

He indicates Franklin's clothes.

JAILER (CONT'D)

Now strip -- or the boys'll do it
for ya.

Franklin looks at them with loathing and takes off his jacket.

LATER

Outside the cell, the Jailer waits as one guard carries the basket with Franklin's wet clothes and the other locks the door.

The Jailer peers through the metal grating in the door to see Franklin, in ill-fitting prison clothes, glowering at him from inside the cell.

INSIDE THE CELL

Franklin just stands there -- powerless and humiliated.

Then he pulls himself together and looks around for something he can use.

The only things in the cell are a hard wooden cot with a blanket and a metal bucket for a toilet.

The window's 10 feet up and barred.

Franklin props the cot on its end and clambers up it to the window.

He tests on the bars but they're solid. And the window's too small to climb through in any case.

He can see that the cell is in the outer wall of the fort, looking out on the battery of British cannons and the water beyond.

The rain's still coming down outside. It's a dismal view.

Ben shivers and for once he seems his age.

He climbs down again, sets the cot back in place, and sits on it, his head in his hands and the blanket around his shoulders.

He stares at the dirty straw on the floor, then picks up a single limp straw and examines it, considering the possibilities.

He picks up two more straws and knots them together. Then he begins to braid them.

EXT. FORT GEORGE - DAY

Sam shambles up to the GUARDS at the gate again. It's clear this has become a routine. He offers his sack but they wave him on without even looking in it.

Sam makes his way around to the south side of the fort.

He sees something strange and stops:

It's a ball about the size of an orange, made of braided and knotted straw. He picks it up and looks around, then spots a similar ball nearby and picks that one up.

He looks up at the nearest barred window.

A third straw ball come sailing through the window and bonks him on the head.

SAMUEL

Ow!

Then he whistles "Yankee Doodle came to London..."

From inside the window comes the return whistle:

"...riding on a pony."

INT./EXT. FORT GEORGE - DAY

Franklin climbs the upturned cot, peers through the barred window, and see Sam 10 feet below.

FRANKLIN

Samuel! Good to see you again!

Sam gestures out toward the water.

SAMUEL

Whole city's talkin' 'bout that kite of yours... Say they gonna wipe out Washington's army when he comes.

FRANKLIN

Did you make contact with Culper?

SAMUEL

Yeah.

FRANKLIN

Tell him to get word to Washington to delay the attack. He must stay out of range of the shore.

SAMUEL

Can't do that -- they got the city locked tight. Ferry crossin's are closed, and they got warships patrollin' to make sure no one leaves.

Franklin thinks about this.

FRANKLIN

Tell Culper this is what I need...

INT. FORT GEORGE - NIGHT

Ben sits on his cot, braiding straw just to give himself something to do.

He looks up at the sound of someone approaching.

There's a clank of keys and the door opens.

Betsy steps into the cell, wearing a traveling cloak.

Ben stands but does not bow to her.

BETSY

Mr. Franklin... I have come to say farewell. And to ask you -- to beg you -- for your forgiveness.

Ben just stares at her.

BETSY (CONT'D)

It was for Joseph -- to secure his safety.

FRANKLIN

Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.

BETSY

I did... care for you...

FRANKLIN

So you made me believe, and men love to be flattered. Old men, especially. But geese will be geese, although we think ourselves swans. And truth will be truth, though it sometimes proves mortifying and distasteful.

He looks at her, softening a little.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

The truth is that I am an old man, and you are a young woman. And I was a goose to believe there could be something between us.

He calls out.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Guard!

The door opens.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Mistress Ross will be leaving now.

She turns and leaves.

The guard shuts and locks the door.

Franklin just stands there, staring at it.

EXT. FORT GEORGE - DAY (THE NEXT DAY)

Sam approaches the Guards with trepidation. This time his sack is already full. He tries to hide it as best he can.

A guard sees him approach, and for a moment it seems like he's going to call him over.

Sam tenses, ready to make a run for it.

But then another Guard says something to the first one and he turns away.

Sam makes his way to the outer wall, picking up trash as he goes.

As soon as he's out of sight of the guard post, he hurries around to the window to Franklin's cell.

He whistles "Yankee Doodle" and Franklin's face appears in the window.

SAMUEL

Better get back...

Franklin disappears again.

Looking around to make sure there are no guards watching, Samuel takes a thin clothesline out of his bag. There's a lead weight attached to one end.

He swings it around, then launches it at the window. The rope goes through the bars.

INT. FORT GEORGE - DAY

Ben pulls on the rope.

It's like pulling in the laundry: attached to the rope at intervals are a British uniform, a powdered wig, a pair of polished boots, a pistol, a knife, and a lock pick.

LATER

The Jailer comes along the hallway, rattling his keys, peering into each cell.

He looks into Franklin's cell and sees "Ben" asleep under the blanket on the cot.

He passes on before he notices that the figure on the cot is just Ben's prison clothes stuffed with the straw from the floor.

EXT. FORT GEORGE - DAY

Franklin, wearing the British uniform, strides through the courtyard toward the guard post at the exit. He stumbles a bit in his ill-fitting boots.

He slows down when he sees that the guards are looking closely at people on the way in and out, and examining their papers.

But there's nowhere to hide. He joins the line of those waiting to leave.

ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE FORT

Samuel's cab's parked across from the entrance to the fort.

Lizzy Freeman gets out of the cab, carrying a basket of folded laundry.

She looks up at Samuel on the driver's box.

LIZZY

Thank you for the ride, Mr. Hill.

SAMUEL

(SUGGESTIVELY)

Any time, Miss Lizzy.

She gives him a look that says "we'll see about that," then flounces over to the guard post as he watches her, with admiration and anxiety.

INSIDE THE FORT

Franklin gets to the front of the line just as Lizzy arrives with the laundry basket.

She smiles and flirts with the soldiers, attracting their attention. She gives an especially big "come hither" smile to the soldier checking papers.

He barely glances at Franklin before waving him through.

Franklin crosses the street and gets into Samuel's waiting cab.

Samuel watches, worried, as Lizzy proceeds into the fort with the laundry. Then he slaps the reins and drives away.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Franklin's one of dozen PATRIOTS gathered around a table in an upper room.

These include SAMUEL CULPER, a nondescript middle-aged merchant, and several women -- most respectable-looking but one with elaborate makeup and a trashy low-cut dress that suggests she's a prostitute.

On the walls are maps showing lower Manhattan and the surrounding area.

Culper goes to the map and indicates a spot in the middle of the harbor, marked with a pin.

CULPER

Wensleydale isn't taking any chances. He's keeping the weapon on board ship in the harbor.

FRANKLIN

What about Captain Pasley? If I could get to -- ?

CULPER

He's on board, too.

Franklin looks frustrated.

Samuel's leaning on the wall by the door, arms crossed.

He tenses then the door opens, then is relieved to see it's Lizzy Freeman.

He gives her a wide smile.

She looks away, playing hard to get.

LIZZY

I was at the fort when they discovered Mr. Franklin was gone. There were checkpoints in the streets, and they'll be searching house-to-house.

CULPER
 (to Franklin)
 You won't be safe here. But
 there's a secret room in the
 cellar that --

FRANKLIN
 No. I must get to that ship
 before Washington arrives.

He gets up and paces, thinking hard.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
 I'll need the services of a
 boatwright and a furrier -- one
 who deals in sealskin.

Culper makes note of this.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
 A tailor... a shoemaker... a
 compass-maker... a bellows-
 maker... a map-maker... and a
 carpenter.

He grabs a piece of paper and a pen and begins to sketch.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
 Let me show you what I need.

The others lean in to watch.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT (SEVERAL DAYS LATER)

A cart rumbles slowly through the cobblestone streets. In
 the back is something large, covered with a tarp.

Samuel's driving, and Lizzy sits next to him.

Several veiled women in black walk behind.

Ships' masts are visible ahead in the moonlight -- they're
 near the docks.

They approach a British checkpoint, and a SOLDIER with a
 lantern steps out to flag them down.

Sam and Lizzy go into "slave" mode.

SOLDIER 1
 What's all this, then?

SAMUEL
 Massa's dead -- we's takin' him
 down to the ship, so's he can be
 buried back in London.

The soldier goes to peek under the veils of the women.

The first two he checks are modestly red-eyed and weepy.

The third one is the painted prostitute. She gives him a slutty look and licks her lips, which unnerves him.

He looks into the back of the wagon.

SOLDIER

That's big for a coffin.

SAMUEL

Massa was a mighty big man --
'most 400 pounds.

SOLDIER

I'd better check inside.

He reaches for the tarp.

LIZZY

I wouldn' do that if I was you,
suh. Massa died of the bloody
flux, and that's catchin'.
Here --

She flips back the tarp, revealing the coffin and releasing a wave of stench that makes the Soldier reel back. He covers his face, looking like he's going to retch.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

You can still smell it on 'im.

The "mourners" wail.

The Soldier backs off and waves them through.

Samuel drives on, struggling to keep a straight face.

SAMUEL

(quietly)
How'd you manage that?

LIZZY

(quietly)
I poured half a chamber pot back
there.

Samuel chuckles.

SAMUEL

Miss Lizzy, you are somethin'
else...

They get down to the docks and pull the wagon out of sight behind a warehouse.

They hurry to pull the tarp off the "coffin." Samuel pulls a few knobs, and the sides of the box fall away, revealing what's inside --

-- the next-generation version of Franklin's "navy seal."

There are handles on the outside of the "seal." Everyone grabs one and hauls the "seal" out of the cart, then carries it through the shadows down to the beach and into the water.

Samuel wades waste deep out with it and raps on the top 3 times -- a signal.

A periscope rises -- made from the viewer Franklin used in the jail.

Sam gives the thing a good shove into deeper water, then watches as it slowly sinks until only the periscope's visible.

Then he wades back to shore and stands next to Lizzy.

He's touched and surprised when she puts a hand on his arm.

LIZZY
He'll be fine...

They turn to go.

INT. SEAL - NIGHT

Franklin's crammed belly down into the seal, his legs working the paddle wheel that propels it. He's wearing nothing but a pair of trousers, and he's sweating in the confined space.

By the light of a candle stub, he studies a map of the harbour and a compass, then peers through the eyepiece of the periscope.

He can see the red and green lanterns hanging from the sloop ahead.

Using levers in each hand, he adjusts his course.

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY

The periscope slips through the water toward the sloop.

In the distance, thunder rumbles.

INT. SEAL - NIGHT

Franklin backpedals a little to slow the seal.

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - NIGHT

The periscope's now very close to the ship.

Water bubbles up, and the seal surfaces.

There's the CLICK and the top half swings open on hinges.

Franklin grabs a sealskin bag and slips silently into the water. Then he takes his knife and stabs the seal below the waterline in several places. It starts to sink.

He swims up to the ship and grabs the netting hanging from the side.

EXT. BRITISH SLOOP - NIGHT

Franklin moves stealthily along the deck. He find a private corner and strips the wet trousers off, then reaches into the sealskin bag for dry clothes.

MOMENTS LATER

Franklin strolls out from his hiding place, dressed as a British sailor with a pistol stuck in his belt.

RUMBLE, RUMBLE...

He looks across the water to the farther shore. There's a distant flash of lightning, followed several seconds later by another RUMBLE of thunder.

VOICE (O.S.)

Ahoy the ship!

Franklin sees a large rowboat approaching from Manhattan. He grabs a mop, puts his head down to hide his face, and swabs the deck.

The rowboat comes alongside and someone climbs up the netting and onto the deck.

It's Wensleydale.

The Captain comes to greet him.

WENSLEYDALE

We have received intelligence that General Washington will be attacking before dawn, from the New Jersey shore. Get the ship into position and wake Captain Pasley.

The Captain salutes.

SLOOP'S CAPTAIN

Aye, aye, sir.

He goes to the ship's bell and rings it vigorously.

There's hustle and bustle as the sailors pour through the hatches and get the ship ready to leave.

Franklin tries to make himself look busy while at the same time keeping an eye on Wensleydale.

Captain Pasley comes up from below, hastily dressed and still rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

Franklin watches him as he takes the key out of his pocket and goes to wind up the cantaloupe.

Wensleydale stands at the rail, looking over at the Jersey shore.

There's another flash of lighting and a RUMBLE of thunder.

He smiles.

WENSLEYDALE

Perfect...

The sails go up and flap in the rising wind. The first raindrops fall.

The anchor comes up with a RATTLE of chain.

The HELMSMAN turns toward the Jersey shore, filling the sails with wind. The ship heels over.

At the stern, Captain Pasley plays out the line and the kite rises.

K'ZAP!

By lightning light, Franklin sees scores of row boats launching from the Jersey shore.

FRANKLIN

No...

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - NIGHT

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

With a FLASH of fire, cannons roar from the battery by Fort George.

Cannonballs arc across the water to land with a SPLASH in the path of the row boats.

George Washington's in the lead boat.

It's rocked by waves kicked up by the cannonballs.

Some of his men look petrified, but he's resolute -- heading straight into the cannons' mouths.

EXT. BRITISH SLOOP - NIGHT

The rain's coming down in sheets now.

Franklin goes up behind the helmsman and whacks him upside the head with his pistol. The man falls senseless at his feet as he takes the wheel.

With the dark and the rain and everything that's going on, no one notices.

Franklin looks behind him and sees that the kite's well up in the air now -- and coming ever closer to the American boats.

He turns the wheel and heads for the battery.

Wensleydale sees that they're changing direction and shouts toward the helm.

WENSLEYDALE

What are you doing?! Head for the rebels!

Ben keeps them aimed at the battery.

BOOM! WHOOSH! SPLASH! A cannonball lands ahead of them.

They're between the Americans and the battery now.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

Turn! Damn you! Turn!

He sees that the helmsman isn't responding and works his way across the slippery deck toward the helm.

The wind's now carrying the kite back toward Manhattan.

BOOM! WHOOSH! SPLASH!

Another cannonball comes close.

Wensleydale looks at the battery.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

Can't those fools see we're out here?

He reaches the helm, and yells at Franklin.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

What are you doing? The Americans are THAT way.

He points -- and then realizes it's Franklin.

WENSLEYDALE (CONT'D)

YOU!

Franklin draws his pistol and pulls the trigger --

But the powder's wet. It just fizzles.

He throws it at Wensleydale's head, but the Colonel ducks in time and grabs for the wheel.

The two of them fight for it, the boat shifting from tack to tack, the sails flapping and filling in turn.

The rain pours down, and the deck's slippery.

Both men lose their footing and their grip on the wheel, sliding over to the rail as the ship heels over, out of control.

They grab at each other, wrestling, kicking, scratching, biting -- anything.

By the winch, Captain Pasley struggles to control the kite. It's directly over the battery now.

He takes out his watch and wipes the damp from it so he can read the face.

Then he looks up at the kite.

The electrocution strings are descending.

K'ZAP!

Lightning strikes the kite. It breaks into a dozen strands and ZAPS the iron cannons.

The gunpowder EXPLODES, sending men and shrapnel and cannonballs flying.

Now the kite's over the fort.

K'ZAP! Lightning strikes the kite.

And ZAP! A bolt hits the flagpole.

ZAP! ZAP! ZAP! Bolts strike all over the fort.

And BOOM! One of them hits the powder magazine.

And the whole place erupts like a volcano -- rockets red glare, bombs bursting in air -- the whole show.

The sloop's too close to shore.

Chunks of stone and iron and fiery metal rain down, punching through the sails and the hull, sheering off a mast.

Sailors scream and dive overboard.

Wensleydale finally gets to his feet and draws his sword.

Franklin's flat on his back. Trying to get up from the wet, slippery, tilting deck.

Wensleydale raises his sword --

And K'ZAP!

Lighting runs through the blade, bathing his body with an eerie blue light.

He falls, dead, on the deck.

Franklin half crawls to the stern, where Captain Pasley's wrestling with the kite.

FRANKLIN

Let it go!

He grabs at him, ripping his pocket -- and suddenly he has the chain with the key in his hands. He slips the chain over his neck and fights Pasley for the winch handle, finally succeeding in letting the line run free.

The rope un-spools like there's Great White Shark on the other end. The kite rises higher and higher, faster and faster, until finally it rips the winch out of the wood and sails off over the sea.

Franklin sags, exhausted.

The boat heels over, and he realizes it's sinking.

He goes to the rail and dives into the inky black water dotted with flaming debris.

Just as dawn breaks in the east, and the sky starts to clear.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

IN the early morning light, Washington's boat makes its way through the floating wreckage of the sloop and beaches on the Manhattan shore.

He climbs out and looks at the pile of rubble that once was Fort George.

Then he turns and sees Franklin, walking unsteadily up the beach toward him, battered and bedraggled after his fight.

Washington looks him up and down.

WASHINGTON

Again, Mr. Franklin, you have displayed a severe lack of discipline.

He looks over at the ruined fort.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

However, I believe we may let that pass -- just this once...

And he actually cracks a smile.

Franklin smiles back, and they head toward the fort.

EXT. FORT GEORGE - DAY

Franklin's in fresh clothes now, and he stands at attention next to Washington as a CHOIR sings the original American anthem -- a song called "Chester."

CHOIR

"Let tyrants shake their iron rods,
And Slav'ry clank her galling chains.
We fear them not, we trust in God..."

Franklin murmurs to Washington, under the music.

FRANKLIN

One thing still troubles me...
How did Mistress Ross learn that
I had given you the key?

Washington shrugs.

WASHINGTON

I may have mentioned it to someone,
when he admired it on my watch chain.
Benedict Arnold, perhaps?

FRANKLIN

No, that can't be it... The man's a hero.

Then he thinks again and mouths the name -- Arnold?!

CHOIR

"Howe and Burgoyne and Clinton,
too, With Prescott and Cornwallis
joined, Together plot our
overthrow, In one infernal
league combined.

(MORE)

CHOIR (CONT'D)

When God inspired us for the
 fight, Their ranks were broke,
 their lines were forced,
 Their ships were shattered in our
 sight, Or swiftly driven from our
 coast.

The foe comes on with haughty
 stride, Our troops advance with
 martial noise; Their vet'rans
 flee before our youth, And
 gen'rals yield to beardless boys.

What grateful off'ring shall we
 bring, What shall we render to
 the Lord? Loud hallelujahs let us
 sing, And praise his name on
 ev'ry chord!"

Franklin and Washington watch as Betsy's 13-star flag is
 raised over the ruins of Fort George.

Franklin gets a wistful look in his eyes.

EXT. FERRY LANDING - DAY

Samuel drives up to the ferry landing in the cab, then
 climbs down from the driver's box as Franklin gets out.

They walk over to where people are waiting to board the
 ferry.

SAMUEL

Too bad you lost the kite... We
 still got some war left to fight.
 Coulda come in useful.

Franklin shakes his head.

FRANKLIN

It is too dangerous to use, even
 in the best of causes. All wars
 are follies -- very expensive,
 and very mischievous ones.

He indicates the ferry.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

I wish you would come back with
 me...

SAMUEL

There's nothin' for me in Philly.
 I'm wanted for jail-breakin' and
 cab-stealin' an' messin' with
 young ladies and lord knows what
 else. Whereas here --

He glances back toward the city.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

There's a fine young woman I'm just gettin' to know. And you wouldn't BELIEVE what you can charge for a cab ride in this city!

Franklin grasps his hand.

FRANKLIN

Good luck to you.

He walks onto the ferry.

LATER

Samuel waves from the shore as the ferry heads across the water.

Franklin waves back to him.

LATER

The ferry reaches the center of the water.

Franklin reaches into his pocket and takes out the key on its chain.

He dangles it in the air for the moment, with a pang of regret.

Then he drops it overboard.

He looks back at the southern tip of Manhattan, where Betsy's Stars and Stripes flaps above the broken walls of Fort George.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Farewell, Mistress Ross...

A melancholy version of the first bars of the "Star Spangled Banner" plays as we...

FADE OUT.

END CRAWL

(The end crawl shows pictures of the persons and things mentioned, running in parallel with the credits as a jazzy version of "Yankee Doodle" plays.)

Benjamin Franklin discovered that lightning was electricity.

He invented:

The Lightning Rod

The Franklin Stove

The Odometer

Swim Fins

Urinary Catheters

AND

Bifocals

He helped create the "Turtle" -- the first military submarine.

He was a member of America's first foreign intelligence agency...

...directed paramilitary operations...

...and engaged in a covert operation so successful it brought the French into the war on the American side.

Benedict Arnold really was court-martialed for failing to turn in receipts.

13,000 Americans died on British prison ships and in New York prisons -- three times as many as were killed in battle during the entire war....

THE END