

BEN IN PARIS

by

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IN THE PARLOR OF BEN'S HOME IN PHILADELPHIA

WIDER ANGLE

Members of Congress surround Ben pleading with him to go to France.

MEMBER

General Washington just retreated. The British now control New York City.

MEMBER

We are losing the War.

MEMBER

Ben, you must go to France and get them to help us.

BEN

I'm too old and not in good health.

MEMBER

You're the only one to do it. You are greatly respected in Europe as a great scientist and inventor.

BEN

To cross the Atlantic in winter with enemy boats patrolling is very hard.

MEMBER

Please Ben, your country needs you.

BEN

Then I must go. America must be free.

INT. AT HIS HOME IN FRANCE

TWO SHOT

Ben opens a letter. He shakes his head. He is visably upset.

BEN

(angry)

It seems I'm surrounded by spies.

AIDE

What are you going to do?

BEN

Nothing. The French are spying on me. The British are spying on me. The French and British are spying on each other.

AIDE

Who is to know who is who?

BEN

(Calmed down, smiling)

It's impossible to know, but we won't let it bother us.

INT. AT A PARTY IN PARIS, FRANCE

WIDER ANGLE

Ben is demonstrating how he discovered that lightening and electricity are the same thing. Ben is holding up a kite. He jumps showing the shock he received when lightening hit the metal rod attached to his kite. Applause.

Edward Bancroft turns to the British diplomat next to him. His hand is covering his mouth. He is speaking softly into the man's ear.

ANGLE TO

ED

Ben and I are old friends from our early days in London. When the war began, he asked me to send him information of what was going on in England. Congress even voted me a salary.

ANGLE TO

Diplomat appears surprised.

DIPLOMAT

But the home office told me you were spying on Franklin for the British.

TWO SHOT

Both men move away to a corner of the room.

ED

I am. In fact, I have sent the British many American secrets including copies of all Franklin's letters to the French King and members of the French government.

DIPLOMAT

So who are working for?

ED

Both countries. I'm a double agent. I hate it, but the money is too good to turn down.

DIPLOMAT

British intelligence approves this.

ED

They don't seem to mind since I am sending them good information on Ben Franklin.

INT. AT BEN'S HOME OFFICE IN PARIS

TWO SHOT

Ben and Ed sitting at a table writing. Ben shows Ed what he is writing. Ed nods. Ben returns to his writing. Ed picks up the papers on the table when Ben isn't looking. He carefully folds them and puts them in his pocket. He rises from the table.

ED

Will you please excuse me for a moment?

BEN

Of course.

Ed turns and leaves the room.

EXT. IN THE YARD OF BEN'S HOUSE

Ed places a message in a sealed bottle and puts it behind a tree in the yard. Ed leaves. Another Spy tip toes up, takes the message, and leaves the bottle. He tip toes away.

INT. IN THE HALLWAY OF BEN'S HOUSE

ANGLE TO

Ben opens a large envelope. Quickly reads it. Throws his arms up in the air and shouts to his aide.

BEN

Come here.

WIDER ANGLE

Aide rushes into the hallway

TWO SHOT

BEN

The Americans had a great victory at Saratoga. We proved ourselves. Now maybe the French will help us.

Ben and the Aide give each other a High Five.

AIDE AND BEN

Hurrah!

INT. IN BEN'S OFFICE**WIDER ANGLE**

Ben pacing in front of his desk. Turns to an American military officer who has been spying on the British.

BEN

I can't believe it. Ed Bancroft is a spy for the British. He has given us important information.

OFFICER

I first heard it from a French Spy. Then I personally confirmed it. We Americans can spy too.

BEN

All this spying comes at a bad time. The French have not come to our aid even after our victory at Saratoga. But I have an idea.

INT. AT THE DINNER TABLE AT BEN'S HOUSE.

TWO SHOT

Ben is sitting, eating, and talking to Paul Wentworth.

BEN

Paul Wentworth, I'm pleased to have such a distinguished guest as you dine with me. Being head of the British Secret Service must keep you busy with all this spying going on.

Paul coughs and then laughs.

PAUL

Yes, it does. Do you have anything to tell me concerning the negotiations between you and the French?

BEN

Not a the moment. This is a purely social evening. I wanted to get to know you better. By the way, did you see that new play at the Paris Theater?

PAUL

No, I didn't. You, yourself told me I've been very busy.

BEN

Well, let me tell you about it.

INT. BACK IN BEN'S OFFICE**WIDER ANGLE**

Ben looking out of the window. Knock on door. The American officer enters room.

BEN

I have watching all the spies spying on each other from my window. Well did it work?

OFFICER

Yes, it did. The French spies reported back to the King that Wentworth had dinner with you.

BEN

Good. Now let's see what happens.

Aide bursts into the office.

AIDE

You won't believe it. King Louis's council voted in favor of an alliance with America. They thought that last night you and Wentworth were trying to reach a compromise concerning the war. They were worried that the Americans and the British might side against them.

BEN

(smiling)

Spies can be very useful!