



# **The Declaration Of Independence**

**By E.J. Brotman**

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**1. INT. A SMALL OUTER ROOM OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS.**

**FIVE MEN** are **TALKING** among themselves.

ROGER SHERMAN

We have been picked by Congress to write a document declaring our independence.

ROBERT LIVINGSTON

Who should write it?

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Ben Franklin should write it.

**BEN FRANKLIN** **WOBBLES** and then **SITS DOWN**.

BEN FRANKLIN

Not I. I'm in ill health. John?

JOHN ADAMS

Not I. I'm not well-liked.

The **MEN** all **TURN AT ONCE** and **LOOK** at Roger Sherman.

ROGER SHERMAN

Not I. I am no writer.

The **MEN** all **TURN AT ONCE** and **LOOK** at Robert Livingston.

ROBERT LIVINGSTON

Not I. I don't truly support the idea of independence.

Franklin **STRAIGHTENS** his posture and give Jefferson a **BIG LOOK**. Jefferson, **SHAKES HIS HEAD NO**.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Not I. I'm too young.

## **1. INT. A SMALL OUTER ROOM (cont.)**

John Adams **WALKS** over to Thomas Jefferson.

JOHN ADAMS

You are from Virginia and we need their support for the Declaration. But even more important, you are the most learned and the best writer among us.

**ANGLE TO:**

BEN FRANKLIN

It's got to be you Tom. John and I will help you.

## **2. INT. THOMAS JEFFERSON'S STUDY**

Jefferson is **WRITING** while standing up at a high desk. He **STOPS** and starts **PACING** the room. He **STOPS** suddenly. He **PLOPS DOWN** in a chair. He **GETS UP**. He **GOES** to a window and **LOOKS** out. He **MOVES** back to his desk. He suddenly **CRUMPLES UP** the what he was writing and **THROWS** it on the floor. He **GETS UP** again and starts **PACING** with more determination. He **STOPS**. He **DARTS** from the room.

**CUT TO:**

## **3. INT. BEN FRANKLIN'S STUDY**

Jefferson and Adams are **MOVING** about the room in **DEEP THOUGHT**. Franklin is **WATCHING** them circle each other.

BEN FRANKLIN

What's the problem?

THOMAS JEFFERSON

I don't know where to begin.

BEN FRANKLIN

Start at the beginning. All the thirteen colonies have agreed to cut ties with England.

Adams and Jefferson **STOP IN THEIR TRACKS**. Adams **LOOKS DIRECTLY** at Jefferson and **MAKES** a **FIST**.

### **3. INT. BEN FRANKLIN'S STUDY (cont.)**

JOHN ADAMS

The people have the right to do so.

Jefferson also **MAKES A FIST**.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

First of all, God gave people certain rights that cannot be taken away. All men are created equal. They have the right to life, freedom, and find happiness.

BEN FRANKLIN

Great! What else?

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Governments must protect these rights because they get their power from the people they serve. If a government fails to protect them through fair laws, then the people should get rid of it.

Adams **CONNECTS** with Jefferson's thoughts, **NODDING ALONG**.

JOHN ADAMS

**(animated)**

We had tried to be patient, but we must end our suffering under the tyrant King George III!

BEN FRANKLIN

Now we must tell the world what he has done wrong.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Must I list all the the things King George has done to us?

BEN FRANKLIN

Yes, how else will other countries know?

### **3. INT. BEN FRANKLIN'S STUDY (cont.)**

JOHN ADAMS

The most important one is that he will not give us any say in making laws.

Franklin STRUGGLES to get out of his chair, but once he does he JOINS Adams and Jefferson, CIRCLING.

BEN FRANKLIN

He has imposed taxes on us without out consent.

JOHN ADAMS

He has dissolved our colonial legislatures when they opposed him.

BEN FRANKLIN

He has forced our seaman to serve in his navy.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

He made us feed and shelter soldiers in our homes.

JOHN ADAMS

He has taken away our right of trial by jury.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

He will not punish British soldiers for crimes against us.

BEN FRANKLIN

Tom, these are only a few of our complaints. You can state the others.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Okay, I have quite a few more I can name. I'll conclude with the statement that through all these wrongs, we have tried to work with the King, but he has ignored our complaints. He even made things worse. He is unfit to govern us.

### **3. INT. BEN FRANKLIN'S STUDY (cont.)**

JOHN ADAMS

(pounding on a table)

We also went to the British people and their law-makers to tell them why we came to the Colonies in the first place. They also ignored us.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

So now we must separate ourselves. We are now enemies in war.

BEN FRANKLIN

But we must conclude that when the war ends, we will be friends again.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

You have given me a good outline of what to say.

BEN FRANKLIN

Go to it, Tom. Make it sound impressive.

**FADE OUT**

**FADE IN**

### **4. INT. BEN FRANKLIN'S STUDY - DAYS LATER**

Franklin is alone in his studying, sitting in his chair with his legs raised, **READING** a document. **SALLY**, Franklin's daughter, **ENTERS** the room.

SALLY

Thomas Jefferson is here to see you.

Jefferson **ENTERS** the room. Franklin **LOOKS UP**, **RUBS** his forehead with his index finger and thumb, and **ADJUSTS** his eyeglasses.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

What do you think?

#### **4. INT. BEN FRANKLIN'S STUDY - DAYS LATER (cont.)**

BEN FRANKLIN

I think it is a magnificent document. It says everything we wanted to say. Your writing reads like poetry. I only have one suggestion.

Ben **RISES SLOWLY** out of the chair and **WALKS** over to a small writing table. Franklin **OPENS** a rolled document.

BEN FRANKLIN

You wrote. We hold the truths to be “sacred and undeniable.” I suggest it should say, “We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

I like it better. Thanks, Ben.

**FADE OUT**

**FADE IN**

#### **5. INT. INDEPENDENCE HALL - PHILADELPHIA**

Franklin and JOHN HANCOCK **STAND** side-by-side as **MEN**, one-by-one, come forward to **SIGN** the Declaration Of Independence on a table.

JOHN HANCOCK

*(leaning in to Franklin)*

You know that by signing this declaration, all of us have committed treason against the King punishable by death. Nevertheless, “we must be unanimous. We must all hang together.”

BEN FRANKLIN

*(raising an eyebrow)*

“Yes, we must all hang together, or most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.”

Franklin and Hancock share a **LAUGH**.

**The End.**