

Letter 23

3-23-26

Ben Franklin

In 1753, Ben Franklin became the postmaster general for the American colonies and later for the Continental Congress. There he reformed the entire postal system and laid the groundwork for what we have today. His efforts saved the postal system, made it more efficient, and made it profitable. He played a role in you reading this letter today.

His problem-solving wasn't limited to postal logistics, though. He also established a library and a hospital and created a street-cleaning system in Philadelphia.

He would see a problem or a need and create a system to fix it. I bring this all up to explain why I often use "Ben Franklin" as a verb. I often have a desire to "Ben Franklin" something, meaning I want to take charge and fix something that I can see should clearly be done better.

This week, though, I am purposefully not "Ben Franklin-ing" a few things. I am instead falling back on the phrase, "Not my circus, not my monkeys."

The first thing I'm not doing is starting a career as a jailhouse lawyer. That job is currently held on this block by Dunning Kruger, Esquire, representing the firm, Smith, Wesson, and Meth. Having been in and out of jail for twenty years, he feels more than qualified to dispense the wisdom and legal knowledge he has collected.

Unfortunately for his clients, this is like a cancer patient saying, "I have been in the hospital so much, I'm basically a doctor. So, let me see that broken femur."

With no awareness of just how much he doesn't know, he confidently gives legal advice based on his own, often unrelated, offenses. It's clear that he misunderstood much of the process in his own cases, and he is passing on those misunderstandings to the next generation.

Like an inept fortune teller, he will make countless, often contradictory, predictions. Then, forgetting all the inaccurate ones, will point to the few that pan out as proof of his wisdom.

Pointing any of this out would be campaigning to take over the role. Since I have no desire to visit that particular circus, let alone be the ringmaster, I just observe. I will, however, dispense one bit of legal advice: Don't take legal advice from someone in orange pajamas. Get your advice from someone that gets away with being a criminal, like a lawyer or a politician.

The second place I am keeping myself purposefully away from is the lives of others. There are two monkeys in particular that I do not wish to claim.

They each need the same thing, just not from each other. They each need a friend, a mentor, a guiding hand. This is a role I am good at and have plenty of experience. However, that experience tells me that they each are bringing a box of crazy to the table. I am certain that

once the ribbon is pulled and a box of crazy is opened, it spills everywhere. It's damn near impossible to avoid getting some on you and stepping in the rest.

We are here long enough that I don't need to rush opening that box. Every day they can keep the lid is one more day that the rest of us aren't stepping in it.

I'm confident I am wasting my talents by not helping where I know I can. I am equally confident I am doing the right thing for my own sanity and mental well-being. This primate needs to be my first priority.

Letter 24

3-25-26

The Devil You Know

I am backstage with the magician. There is a student asking if the magician will be doing the same trick as last time. This is a rather rude question to be asking a guest of the school, and the teacher steps in to attempt to smooth things over.

It's a good trick and it's worth doing. It's not the magician's fault that the student is so dumb that he has been in high school long enough to see the act twice.

In this dream, the student and teacher are played by other inmates here with me. Jesus Christ, I can't even escape in my dreams.

The magician is about to go on stage. He locks himself into a small closet in the wings, just off stage. Hidden from view, the magician lets out a loud and thunderous fart. It rumbles through the closet, which is clearly not soundproof.

I wake up, and the fart can still be heard, rumbling down from the top bunk. It was so loud and long that it had time to invade my dream, wake me up, and continue on long enough for me to realize again that even in my dreams, there is no escape.

This was a final gift from my cellmate, who left for home later that day. It was a fitting parting gift, a "farting gift," if you will.

You see, he arrived at the jail two months ago with apparently none of the beneficial bacteria that should live in one's gut. This lack of gut health was evident even with our easily digestible jailhouse diet.

I'm not sure what you have to inject, smoke, or eat to convince those bacteria to abandon their posts, but I'm confident he did it. Nevertheless, pleasant memories also linger.

To paraphrase his words, you hope you don't end up with a cellmate, and then you do, then you get used to them.

As far as cellmates go, he was a good one. While I am alone, I will not miss him. I have a sneaking suspicion, though, that my next cellmate will make me miss the previous one.

I now have a weird connection to someone that I would have never talked to outside of here. I am confident in this assessment because we discovered during the course of two month cohabitation that, on the outside, we live about two hundred feet apart. We share a driveway!