

I want to go to Alaska to feel coldness. To look at the glaciers growing up from the ocean. The white giants, falling apart. I want to sleep in a bed there, memorize the sounds, watch the light that would fall in on me from outside.

In Philadelphia I sleep with books in an unmade bed. Some of these books are old and I imagine that many hands touched them, have folded the pages down to mark a place.

Everything has a history here. I also sleep with a deck of tarot cards underneath my pillow, but this is a secret. I am marking my place.

At night I fall asleep to the sounds of the TV, my legs bathed in its blue light.

ARTIST. TRAVELER. COLLECTOR. AUTOBIOGRAPHER.*

There are outside sounds of people shouting and the trolley hissing by.

The things that fall apart here are buildings.

These days sleep and I are at war. Sometimes I am awake when the light changes in my room, the shadows pushed back into the corners. The trolley continues to glide by.

The nights I do sleep I dream of forests where my paintings are nailed into the trees. I wake up feeling déjà vu and think of Alaska, even though I have never been there. I think of ice glittering on the roads and in the trees.

I slept in my empty bathtub once. I slept under my desk. I slept with a pea under my mattress and woke up unblemished. I would like to fall asleep in a church, but this is a secret.

I want to do all these things because I think that one day I could. Paint a glacier. Listen to a divine voice. Wake up happy. Own a book that one day will have my history on its pages.

– J. L. Schnabel



* THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
PROJECT

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin is the most widely published autobiography of all time. In honor of Franklin's 300th birthday, the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary and *One Book, One Philadelphia* invited today's Philadelphians to submit memoirs of their own, using no more than 300 words. At the end of the project – May 17, 2006 – a panel of judges selected twenty autobiographies to appear on bus shelters throughout the city. Visit www.theautobiographyproject.com for more information about the project, and to read more Philadelphia stories.

The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary is a non-profit organization established to mark the 300-year anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's birth. *One Book, One Philadelphia* is a project of the Mayor's Office and the Free Library of Philadelphia.



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