

# Who Was Eleanor Roosevelt?

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By  
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Illustrated by  
Elizabeth Wolf

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By Gare Thompson  
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## Who Was Eleanor Roosevelt?

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During the 1930s and early 1940s, Eleanor Roosevelt was our country's first lady. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was president of the United



States then, was her husband. There have been more than forty first ladies of the United States. What made Eleanor Roosevelt so special? Well, for one thing, Eleanor was first lady longer than anyone else was.

FDR, as he was called, was elected president four times. Eleanor was first lady for twelve years—from 1933 to 1945, when FDR died. Before Eleanor, first ladies gave dinner parties. They gave teas. But they did not speak out on important issues concerning our country. That's what the president did.

Eleanor Roosevelt, however, worked while she was first lady. She wrote newspaper columns and books. She gave radio interviews and taught classes. She worked hard to help start the United Nations. Eleanor had opinions and shared them with the world. She let people know what she thought about important issues of the time, such as equality for all Americans.

Eleanor Roosevelt paved the way for the first ladies who followed her. Now, most first ladies have a cause. Some have focused on the danger of drugs, others have fought for better schools and libraries, and others for health care.



Eleanor Roosevelt was a smart and brave first lady. And even after she left the White House, Eleanor continued to work. By the time of her death in 1962, Eleanor Roosevelt was known as “the First Lady of the World.”







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## Chapter 1

### Early Years

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It was spring, 1887. Eleanor Roosevelt was almost three years old. She was very excited. She was going to cross the Atlantic Ocean on a great ship, the *Britannica*. Her father, whom Eleanor adored, had told her about the different countries that the family would visit.

The *Britannica* left from New York City's harbor. On the very first day of the voyage, the fog was very thick. Ships coming into the harbor could be heard, but they could not be seen easily. Suddenly the sound of ripping steel filled the air. Another ship had rammed into the *Britannica*!

Was the *Britannica* going to sink? Would everyone drown? People onboard panicked.

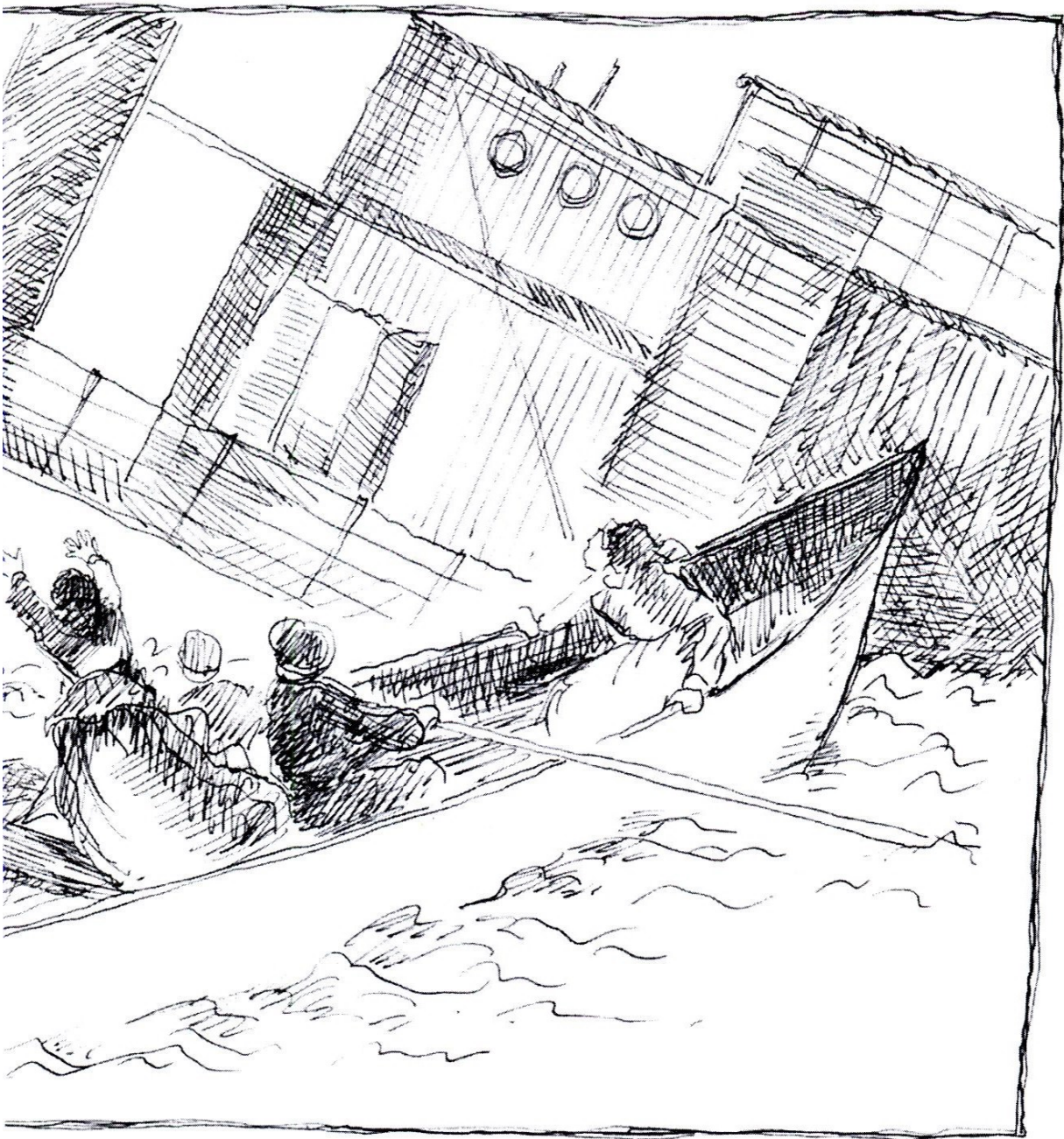


Eleanor's father got her mother, her aunt, Eleanor's nurse, and himself into a boat. But where was Eleanor?



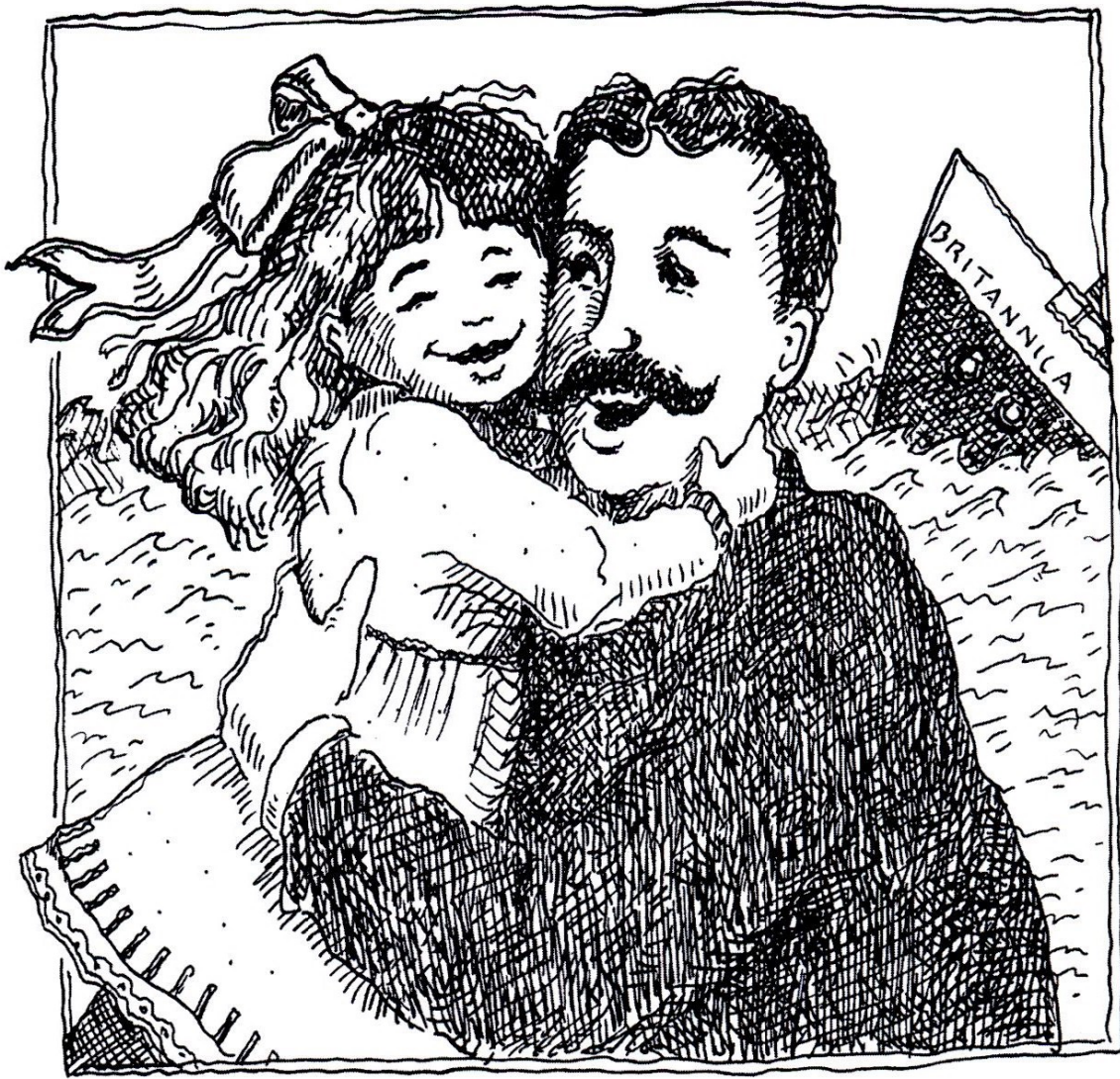
She was still on the deck of the ship! As the lifeboat was lowered into the ocean, her father saw her. He pleaded with her to jump into his arms.

“Jump, Little Nell, jump. I’ll catch you,” cried her father.



But Eleanor was too scared. Finally, Eleanor let go of the sailor holding her, and she fell into her father's waiting arms.

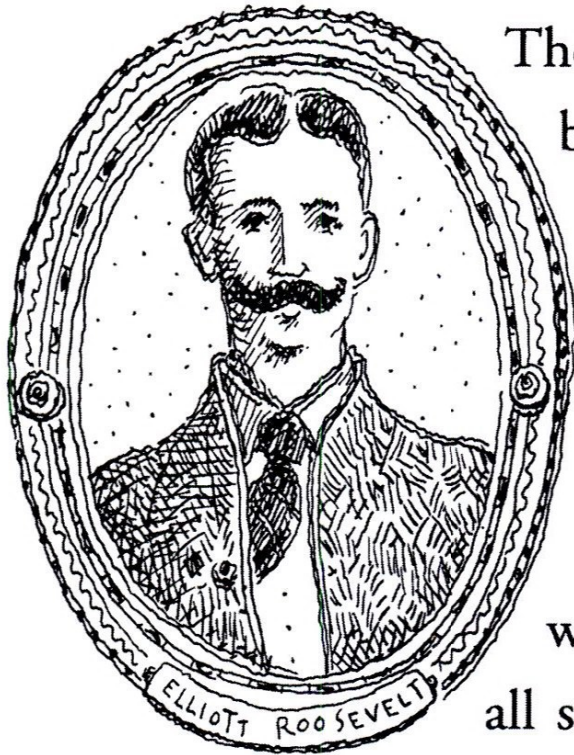
The lifeboat took them safely to shore. And Eleanor was able to calm down. But that terrible



day stayed with Eleanor all her life. It took her years to overcome her fear of water and boats. Even so, that fearful little girl became a fearless, famous world traveler.

Eleanor Roosevelt was born on October 11, 1884, in New York City. She was named Anna

Eleanor Roosevelt. She was called Eleanor because her mother's name was also Anna. Eleanor's mother was known for her great beauty. Her father, Elliott Roosevelt, was a smart, dashing gentleman. They both came from rich and successful families.



They could trace their ancestors back over two hundred years.

At the turn of the century, rich and poor people lived very different lives. In New York City, the rich lived in mansions. They had servants who waited on them. The rich all seemed to know one another.

They married one another. The men

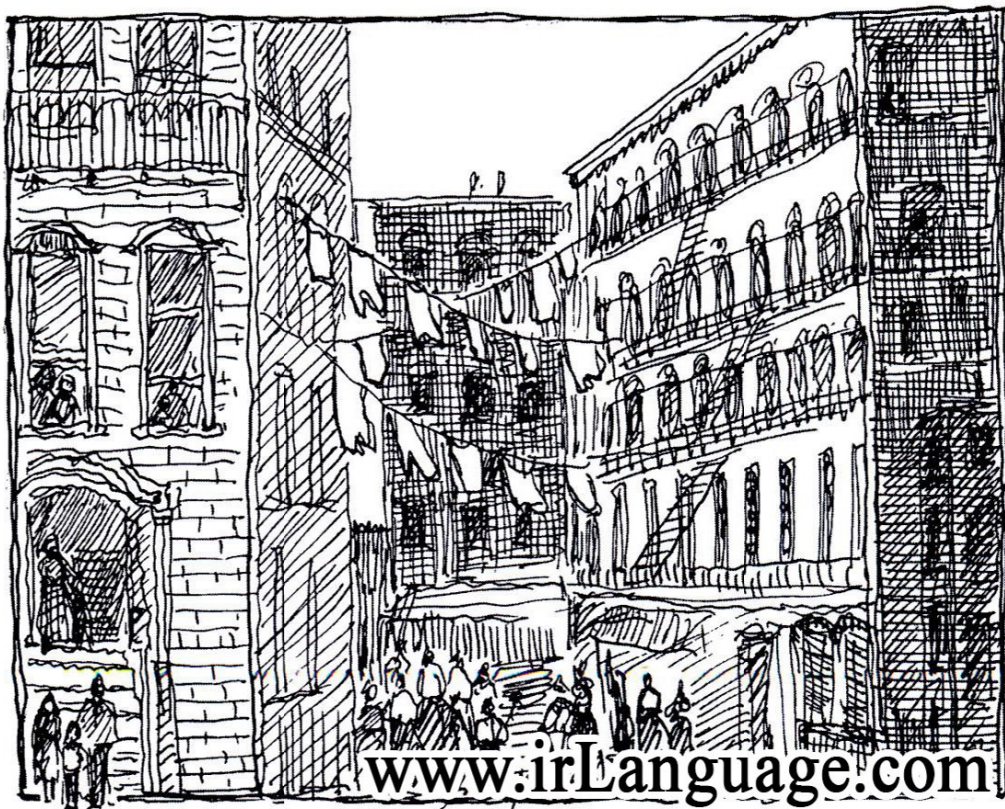
worked as bankers, lawyers, or in a family business. Women did not work. They stayed home, entertained, and visited one another. It was important to dress fashionably and look lovely.

Eleanor knew she did not have her mother's beauty. She thought of herself as an awkward and ugly child. She sensed that her mother was disappointed in her. She felt that she could never please her. Yet Eleanor knew that her father loved her dearly. And she, in turn, wanted to please him and make him proud of her.



# NEW YORK CITY TENEMENTS

IN THE LATE 1800S AND EARLY 1900S, POOR PEOPLE LIVED IN SMALL, CROWDED BUILDINGS CALLED TENEMENTS. WHOLE FAMILIES OFTEN LIVED IN ONE, SMALL ROOM. EVERYONE IN THE FAMILY WORKED, INCLUDING CHILDREN. SOME STARTED WHEN THEY WERE ONLY EIGHT YEARS OLD. VERY FEW POOR CHILDREN WENT TO SCHOOL. MANY OF THE POOR LIVED IN A PART OF NEW YORK CITY CALLED THE LOWER EAST SIDE. THEY WORKED IN FACTORIES, EARNING JUST PENNIES EACH DAY. THE FACTORIES WERE DANGEROUS PLACES WHERE ACCIDENTS HAPPENED. IT WAS A HARD LIFE, BUT ONE THAT MANY PEOPLE FACED WHEN THEY FIRST CAME TO THE UNITED STATES.



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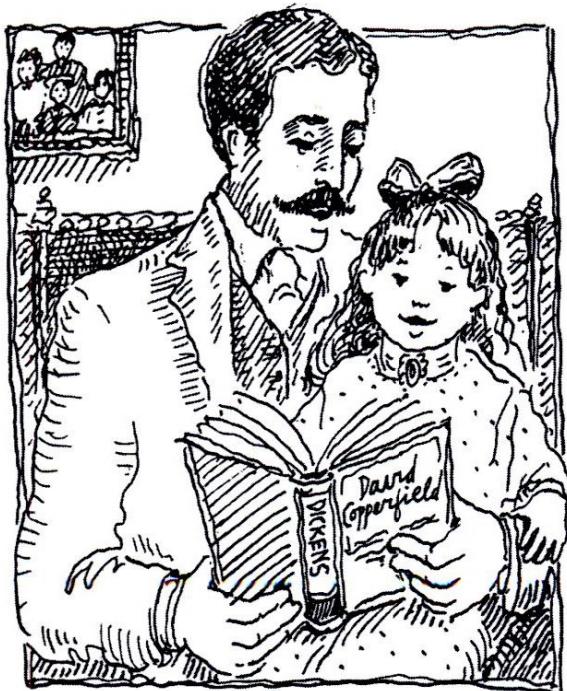
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## Chapter 2

### Daddy's Little Girl

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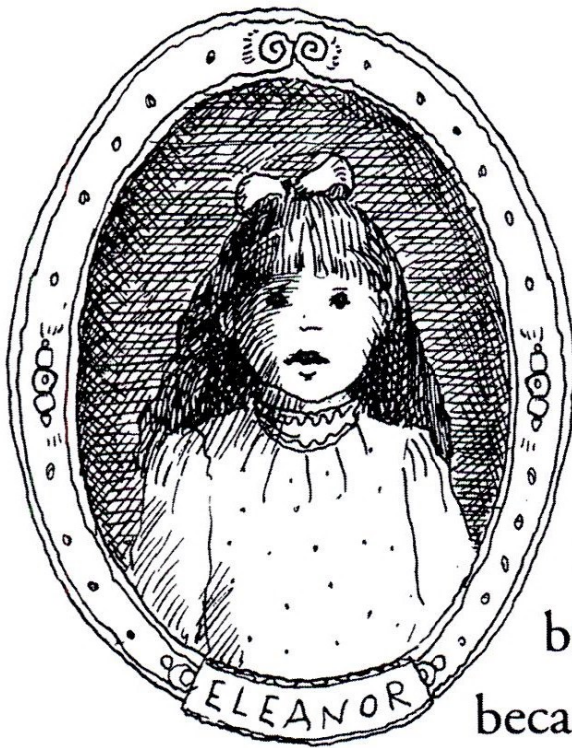
Eleanor's father called her "Little Nell." Her nickname came from one of her father's favorite books by Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Charles Dickens was a popular English author who lived in the 1800s and wrote many famous novels, such as *A Tale of Two Cities* and *David Copperfield*. Elliott Roosevelt was a great reader and loved to tell stories. Often, he entertained



Eleanor by telling stories. Eleanor later said that her father always made her feel brave. She tried to do things that she knew would please her father. She loved to make her father smile.

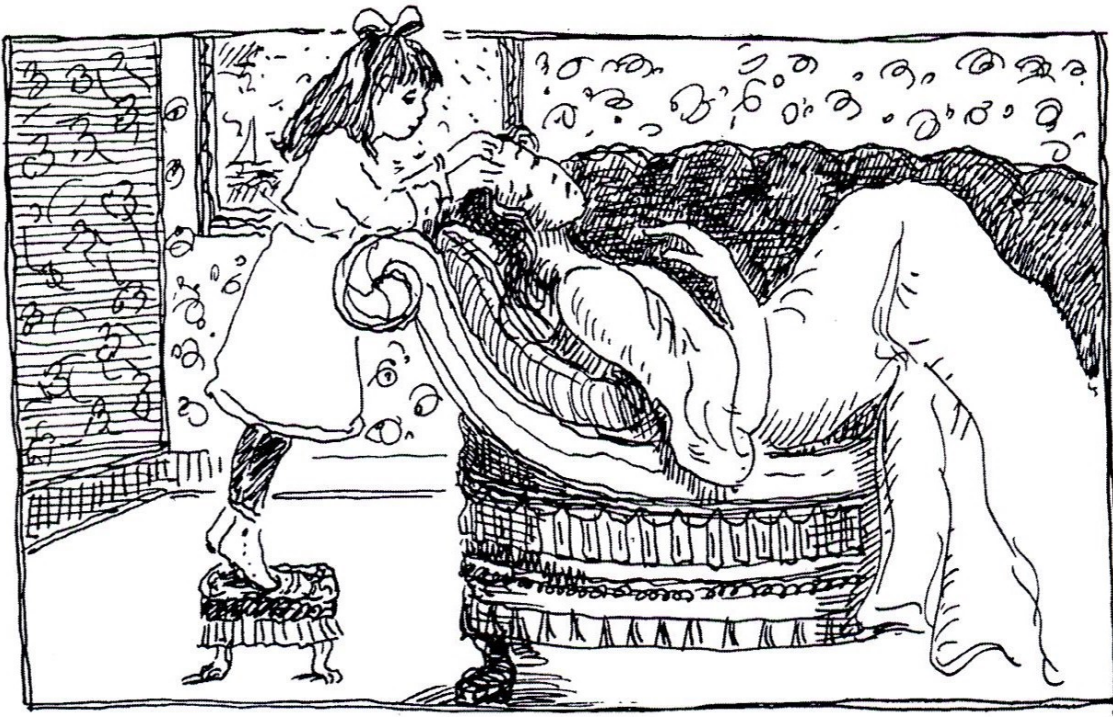
Eleanor's mother, however, was a colder parent. She did not hug Eleanor or play with her. She called Eleanor "Granny" because Eleanor was such a quiet, serious little girl. Eleanor said that when she heard herself called Granny, she wanted to sink through the floor.





Eleanor looked so serious because she did not like to smile. She wanted to hide her buckteeth. When Eleanor was a child, dentists did not know how to straighten teeth with braces. So Eleanor rarely laughed because she thought people would think she was ugly.

Eleanor heard people talk about what a beauty her mother was. Reporters wrote about her mother in the society pages. No one told Eleanor that she was pretty. No one except her father. He reminded Eleanor that in Hans Christian Andersen's story, "The Ugly Duckling," the duckling turns into a beautiful swan. He said that would happen to Eleanor, too. Eleanor could not wait until she turned into a swan. Until then, Eleanor promised herself that she would be the best girl that she could be. And she tried.



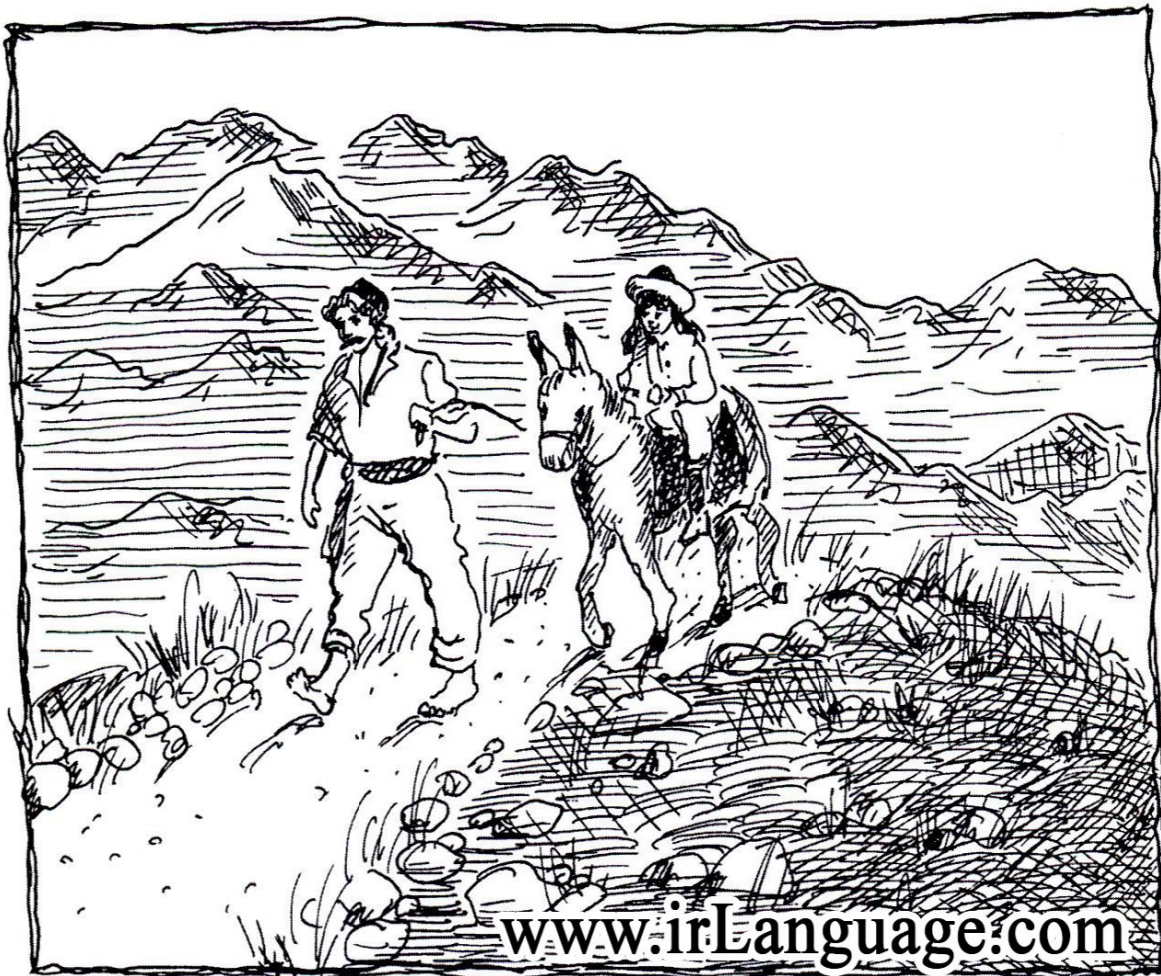
Eleanor's mother often got headaches. Eleanor rubbed her forehead to make the headaches go away. It made Eleanor happy to be able to help her mother. Eleanor later wrote that these times together made her feel useful and wanted. Eleanor also had a baby brother. Elliott Roosevelt Jr. was born in the fall of 1889. She loved being the older sister. Her relatives told Eleanor that she was a sweet and good girl.



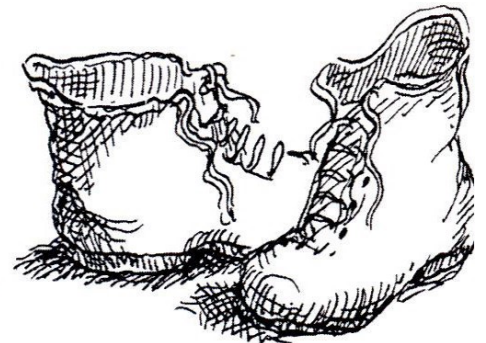
When Eleanor was almost six, she and her family sailed for Europe again. This time, Eleanor enjoyed the trip across the Atlantic. Her father promised nothing bad would happen. And it didn't!



Eleanor loved the time that the Roosevelts spent in Italy. She and her father rode in gondolas in the canals of Venice. They tossed pennies into



the volcano Vesuvius. The pennies were thrown back at them covered in lava! Eleanor rode a donkey on mountain paths. The guide did not have shoes and his feet often bled as he walked on the rugged paths. So Eleanor bought him a pair of shoes. This simple act of kindness was typical of Eleanor. All her life, the hardships of others touched her very deeply.



The time in Europe was not always happy, however. Eleanor's father had serious physical problem. Finally, he got help for his problem at a hospital in France. His family settled nearby.

Eleanor's mother was expecting another baby. While her mother prepared for the birth of her baby, Eleanor lived at a French school run by nuns. She was only six years old. Eleanor could not speak French and she missed her family. She was very lonely. She wanted the attention of the nuns; she wanted the other girls to notice her.

One day, a girl swallowed a coin. The nuns called a doctor. Everyone fussed over the little girl. That gave Eleanor an idea. She told the nuns that she had swallowed a coin, too! But she hadn't. And the nuns knew it. They did not call a doctor. Instead, they called her mother who took her out of the school. Anna Roosevelt was very angry with Eleanor. She told her never to lie again. Eleanor felt terrible. All she had wanted was some attention.





On June 2, 1891, Eleanor's brother Hall was born in France. Her father was with the family when Hall was born. Now Eleanor went to a

nearby school in the mornings. In the afternoons, she and her father took long walks and fed the ducks in the park. Eleanor said that her father was the only one who did not treat her as if she were a criminal. But her father became ill again. He went to a hospital near Paris. As soon as Eleanor's mother could travel, in early summer, the Roosevelt family returned to New York—without Eleanor's father.

One day, an aunt of Eleanor's found out that she could not read. Eleanor was almost seven years old



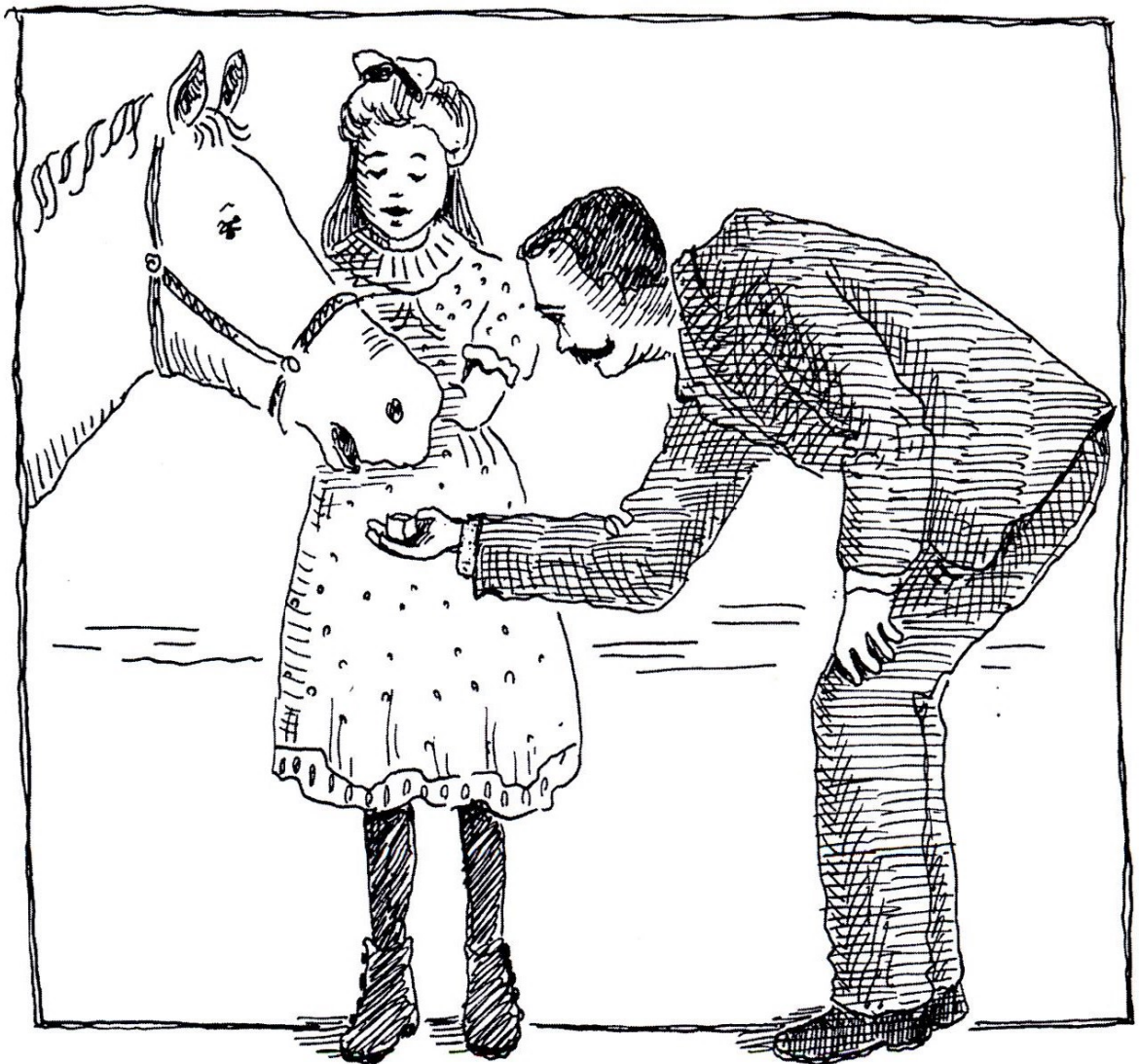
at the time. Her aunt was furious and told Eleanor's mother that Eleanor must learn to read, sew, and cook immediately! Like other rich New Yorkers, Anna Roosevelt wanted her children taught at home. So she started a school on the third floor of their house. A few of the neighbors' children came, too.

At first, Eleanor was shy. The other children knew more than she did. She couldn't spell simple words. Her mother, who sat in the back of the room, told her to try harder. Eleanor did. By the end of the first year, she was the best reader in her class!



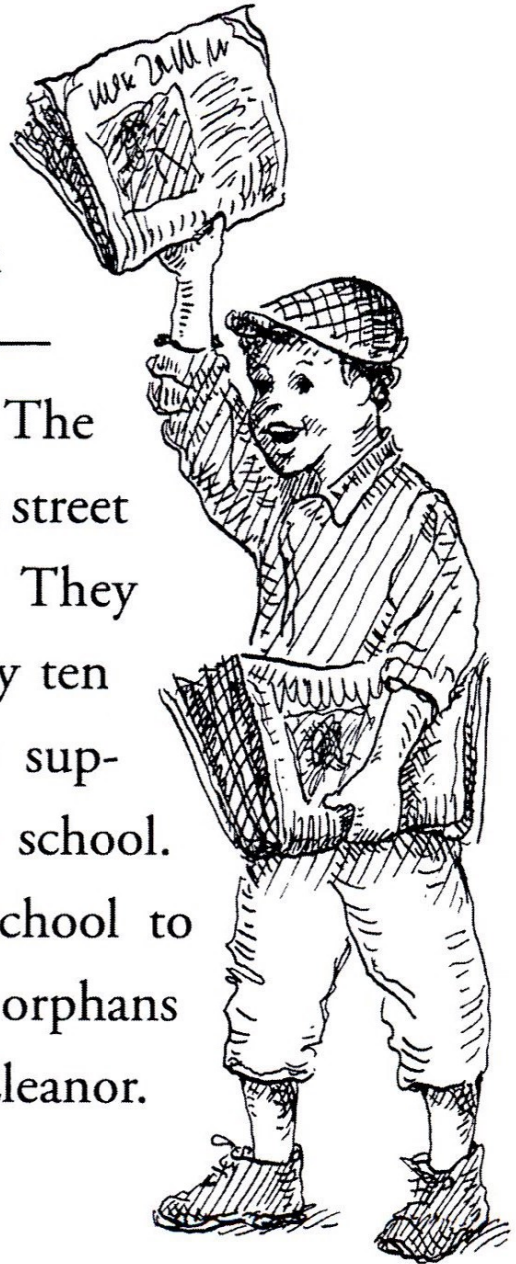
Eleanor also learned to sew, but she never learned to cook!

Finally, Eleanor's father returned home. He was feeling better, but was weak. Often he had to stay in the hospital for months. However, when her father was home, they went on walks again and talked about books. He taught her to feed the horses with a lump of sugar or a piece of apple. They studied nature together. Eleanor's father



taught her to open her eyes and really look at the world around her. He always asked Eleanor what she was thinking. From her father, Eleanor learned to question things and to seek answers for herself.

The Roosevelts were rich, but Eleanor's father wanted her to respect poor people and appreciate what she had. One week around Thanksgiving, her father took her to a home for poor boys—"newsies," they were called. The newsies sold newspapers on the street corners of New York City. They earned about a nickel for every ten papers they sold. They were supposed to sell the papers after school. Instead, most boys skipped school to sell more papers. Many were orphans and not much older than Eleanor. They were poor and hungry.



Eleanor's grandfather had started the home for the "newsies." So Eleanor and her father brought lots of holiday food to the boys. Eleanor felt terrible for them. She saw how important it was to help people in any way that she could.

It was a lesson that her father taught her. It was a lesson that she would never forget.



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## Chapter 3

### All Alone

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Shortly after her seventh birthday, Eleanor's life suddenly changed.

When she was a child, many of the medicines we have today had not yet been discovered. Many diseases that now can be cured often killed people. One such disease was diphtheria. People with the disease ran high fevers and had trouble breathing. They grew weaker and weaker. Often they died.

In the fall of 1892, when Eleanor was eight, her mother had to have an operation. Afterward, she was very weak. Then she got diphtheria. She became so ill that Eleanor was sent to live with relatives. Her father was away, too, once again trying to stop drinking. Eleanor was all alone. What would happen? Would her mother get well?



On December 7, 1892, Eleanor's mother died. Eleanor was only eight years old. Eleanor wrote about that terrible day. She was standing by a window in her aunt's house. Her aunt came into the room to tell Eleanor what had happened. Eleanor wrote, "Death meant nothing to me, and one fact wiped out everything else—my father was back and I would see him very soon."

Eleanor was a shy, lonely girl. She knew that she had never pleased her mother. And now, she

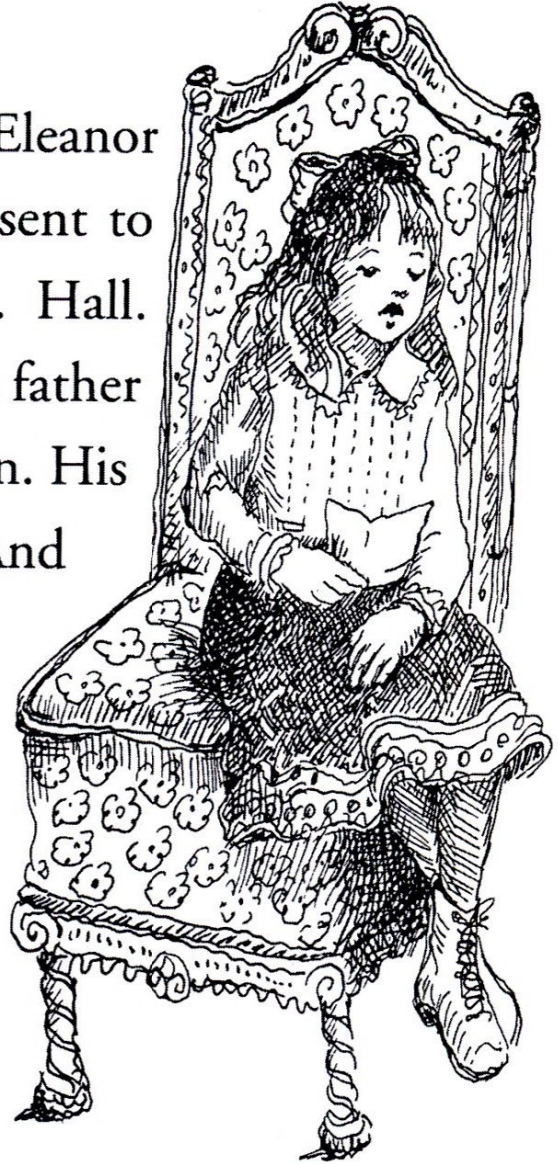


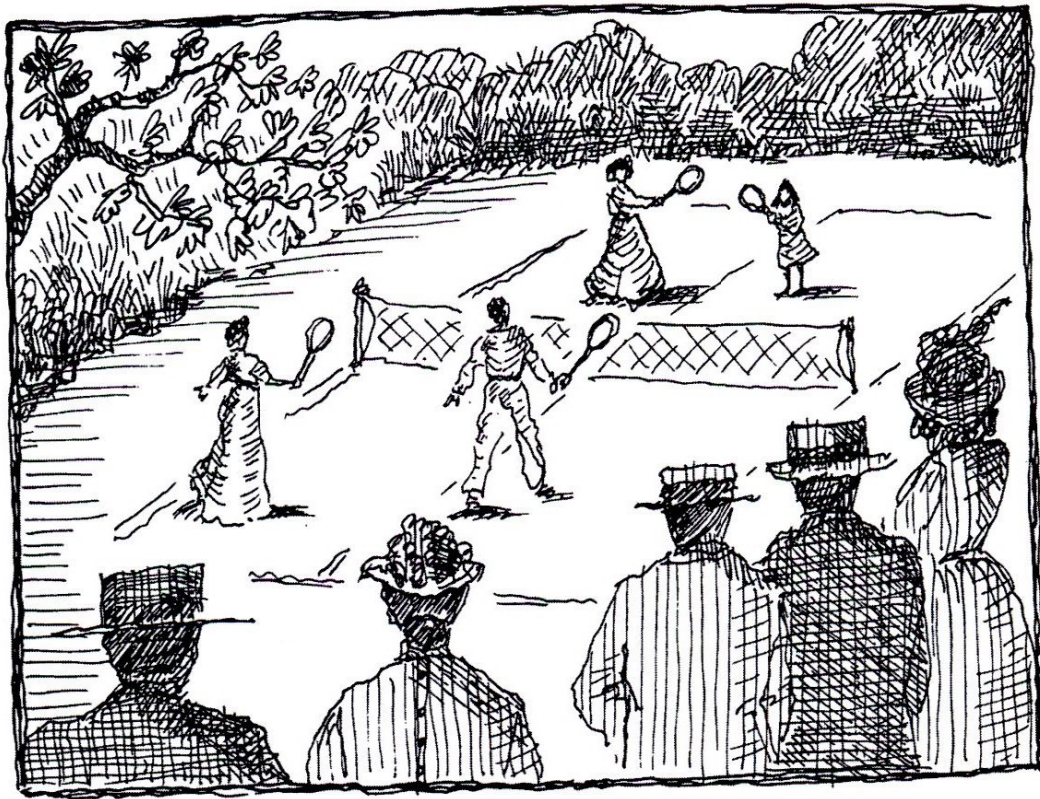
would never have the chance to do so. It made her miss her father more than ever. Eleanor hoped she and her brothers would now live with him.

But that was not to be. Eleanor and her baby brothers were sent to their mother's mother, Mrs. Hall. The family felt that Eleanor's father could not care for the children. His drinking had gotten worse. And so, Eleanor began a new life with her strict grandmother.

All Eleanor had of her father were his letters. She looked forward to them, cherished each one, and wrote back immediately.

Eleanor's aunts and uncles still lived at home with her grandmother. They were not much older than Eleanor and treated her as a younger





sister. They loved sports and taught her to play tennis. They also loved music and languages. Eleanor's grandmother had her tutored in French, German, and piano.

Then on August 14, 1894, the worst thing that Eleanor could imagine happened. Her father died. He had just sent Eleanor a letter. He wrote, "I hope my little girl is well . . . and never forget I love you . . ." Eleanor kept this letter for years.

It was her grandmother who broke the news. Eleanor was almost ten. Everyone thought that

Eleanor would weep and shut herself in her room for days. But she didn't. After she was told, she was quiet as a mouse. All she said, in a whisper, was, "I did want to see him again."

Eleanor was now an orphan. No mother. No father. And then, shortly after her father's death, her brother Elliott died of diphtheria. Just as their mother had. Eleanor was just a child, yet already there had been so much



sadness in her life. From then on, Eleanor watched over her baby brother, Hall. She became like his mother. She taught him things and tried to protect him for the rest of his life.



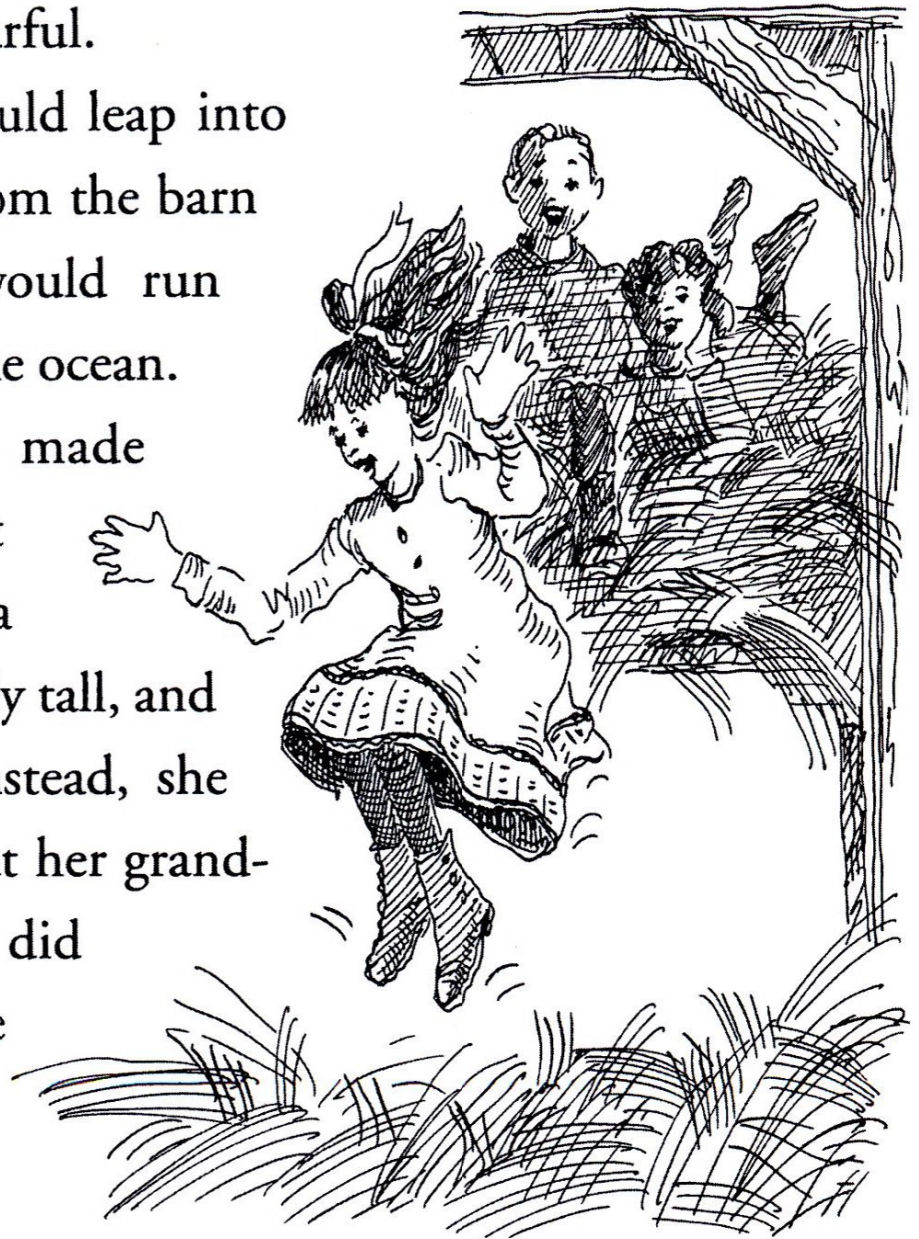
For the next four years, Eleanor retreated into a dream world. In this world, she lived with her father and was pretty and happy. When she was not dreaming, Eleanor escaped into books. One of her favorite places to read was high up in a tree. Eleanor felt safe there.

One bright spot in her life was visiting Long Island. That's where her Uncle Teddy Roosevelt

lived. He was her father's older brother. He was a rising star in politics in New York. He was full of life and adored the lonely Eleanor.

When Eleanor came to visit, he would greet her with a big bear hug and tell her that she was his very favorite niece. He loved that Eleanor tried hard at games even though she was sometimes clumsy and fearful.

Eleanor would leap into piles of hay from the barn loft or she would run straight into the ocean. Uncle Teddy made Eleanor forget that she was a plain, unusually tall, and gawky girl. Instead, she felt special. But her grandmother Hall did not really like



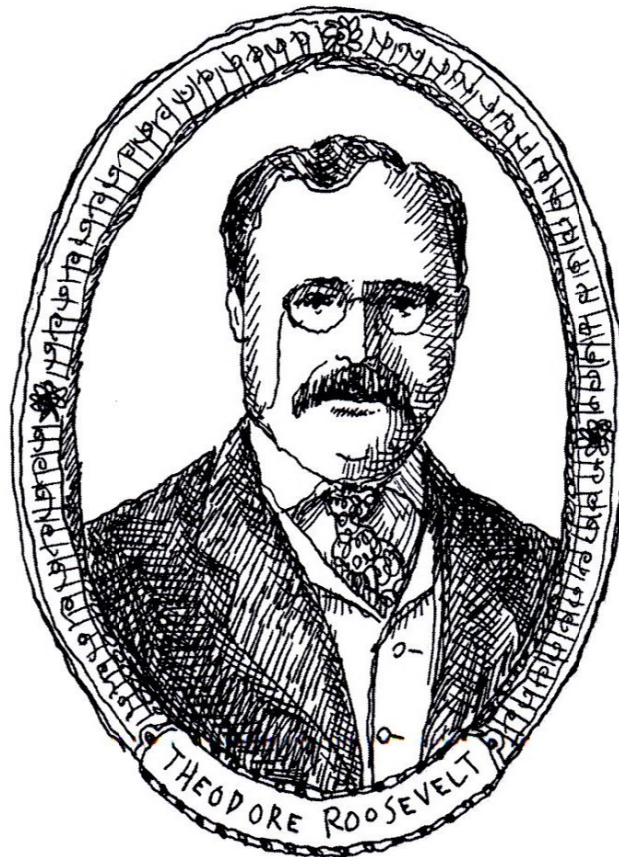


her Uncle Teddy, so as time passed, Eleanor got to spend less and less time on Long Island.

And so, Eleanor passed her days at her grandmother's home in New York City. She studied. She read. She went to the theater with her aunts. But Eleanor wanted more. She wanted to explore the world. And finally, when she was fifteen, she got her wish. Eleanor's grandmother agreed to send her to school in England. For Eleanor, this was her chance to make a new life for herself.

# THEODORE ROOSEVELT

THEODORE ROOSEVELT WAS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES FROM 1901 TO 1909. HE WAS A WEAK CHILD AND OFTEN SICK, BUT WORKED TO MAKE HIMSELF STRONG. HE SPENT LONG HOURS LIFTING WEIGHTS AND POUNDING A PUNCHING BAG. HE ALSO LOVED THE OUTDOORS. AS AN ADULT, HE LIKED TO RIDE, SWIM, AND HUNT. ROOSEVELT WAS A MAN OF ACTION. HE BUILT THE UNITED STATES INTO A WORLD POWER. MANY PEOPLE THOUGHT HE WAS ONE OF OUR FAIREST PRESIDENTS. HE WORKED HARD FOR THE POOR. DURING HIS PRESIDENCY, THE FIRST NATIONAL PARKS WERE OPENED. THE TEDDY BEAR IS NAMED FOR HIM.



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## **Chapter 4**

### **Years at Allenswood**

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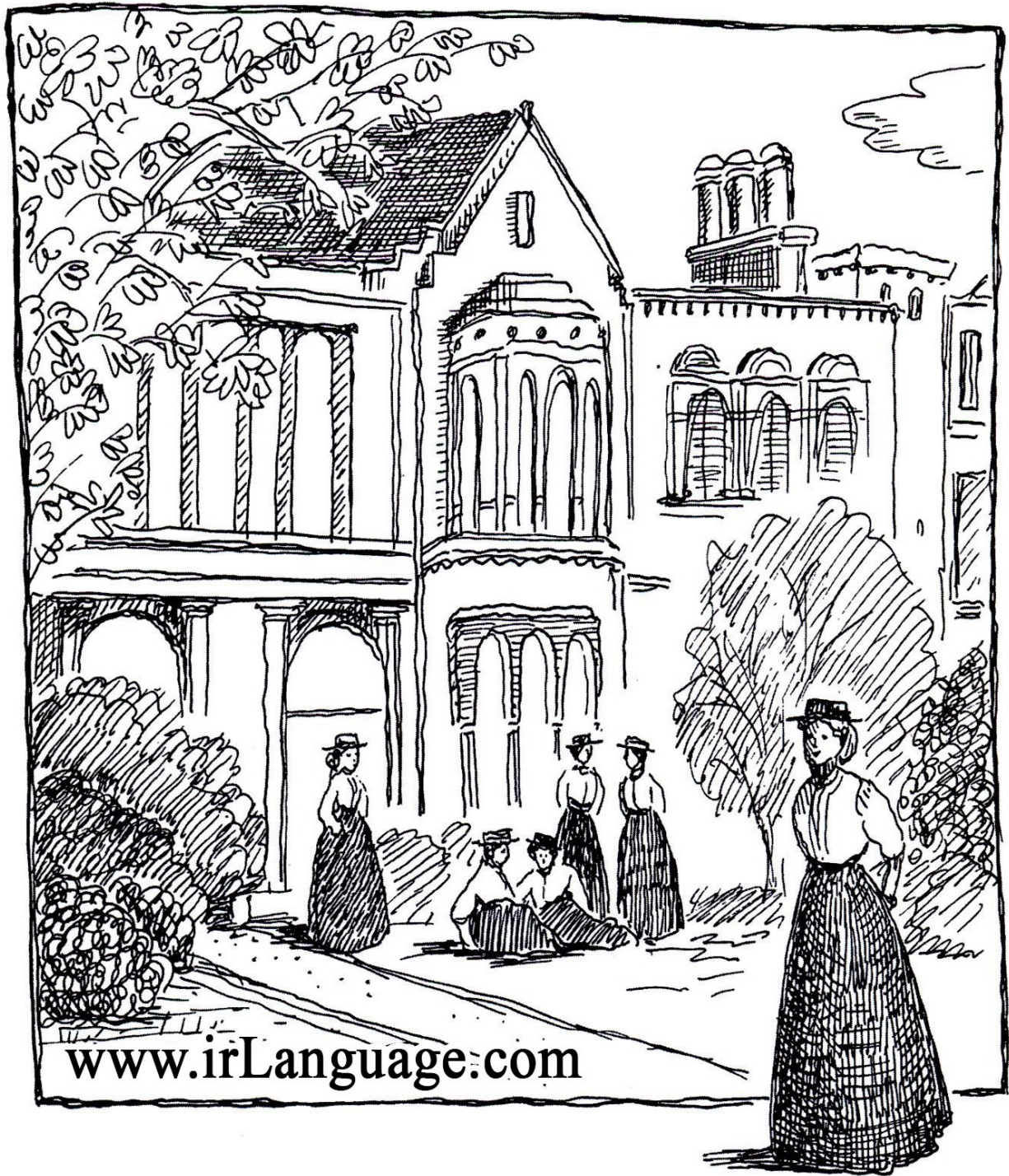
It was 1899. Eleanor sailed to England with one of her favorite aunts, Aunt Tissie. Eleanor said her aunt “was always kindness itself to me.” Her beautiful aunt loved adventure and life, and she wanted Eleanor to have a wonderful time in England.

The Allenswood School was only a short train ride from central London. It was a very small school for the daughters of rich European aristocrats. Eleanor wondered if she would fit in. After all, she was American. She was tall and plain. And she worried her dresses would be out of style. But she was well-read, spoke several languages, and was smart. She hoped that she would make a few friends.



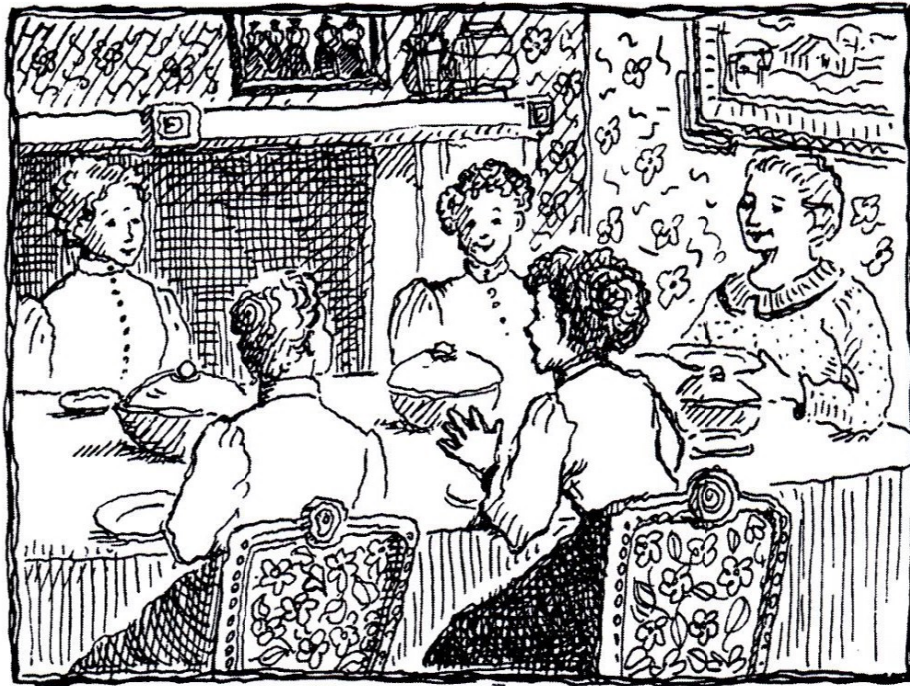


Madame Marie Souvestre was director of the school. She was short and stout with a cap of wavy, snow-white hair. Her eyes sparkled with intelligence, and she was a forceful speaker. Eleanor impressed her immediately. Within her first week at school, Eleanor had made a name for herself by speaking out and having strong opinions. Eleanor was no longer shy. She became one of Madame Souvestre's top students. Eleanor was thrilled and continually pushed herself to live up to Madame Souvestre's high standards.



The other girls at Allenswood respected this new American girl. At meals, Eleanor sat at Madame Souvestre's table. She spoke fluent

French, and loved to give her opinion on anything and everything. She was a quick thinker and debated issues well. At Allenswood, Eleanor changed. The caterpillar turned into a butterfly. Eleanor was confident. She no longer walked with stooped shoulders, trying to hide the fact that she was almost six feet tall. Now, she stood tall and straight. She walked at a fast pace, eager to get to class and to be noticed.

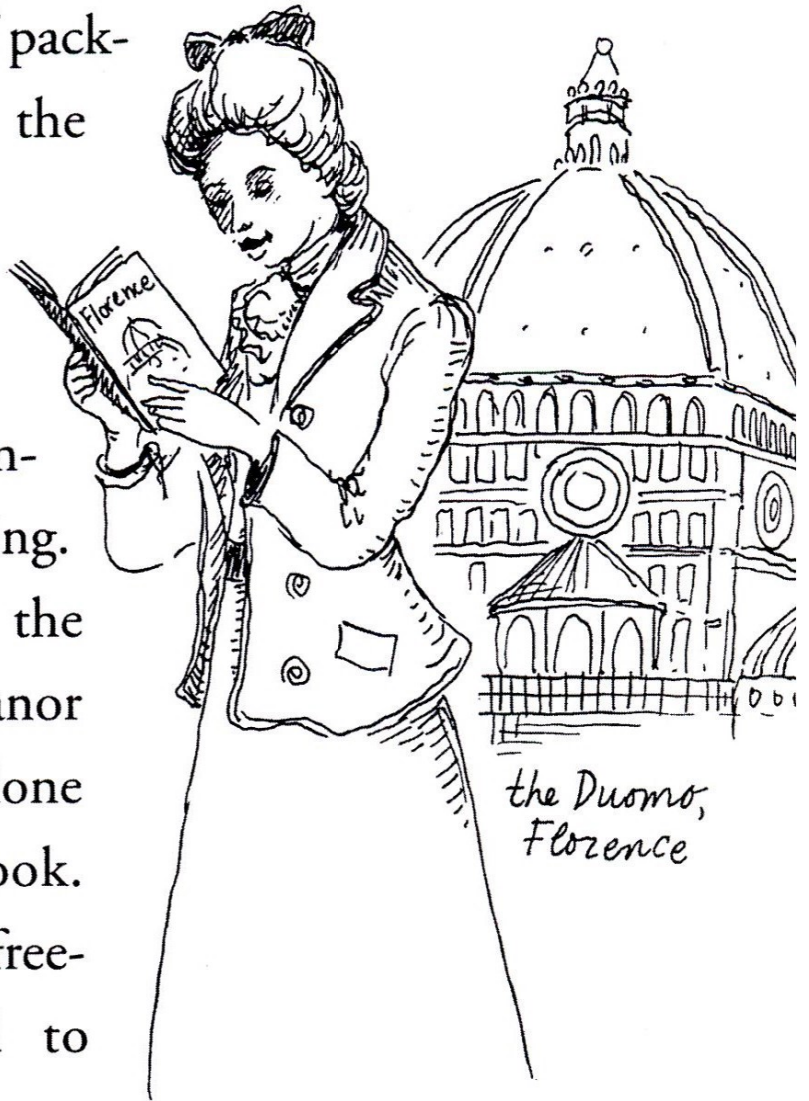


Madame Souvestre invited Eleanor to join a group of students who discussed different subjects



after dinner. In Madame Souvestre's library, Eleanor often led the discussions. And the other girls listened carefully to what she had to say. Eleanor was a leader. Before coming to Allenswood, Eleanor had always had a cold or a cough. Like her mother, she also had headaches. But in England, they disappeared. Eleanor took long walks in all kinds of weather. She played sports. She felt healthy and strong. And, more importantly, she was free to say how she felt and what she thought.

Madame Souvestre asked Eleanor to come along on trips with her. She put Eleanor in charge of packing and organizing the trips. Eleanor loved it. She learned she was good at reading schedules, planning trips, and packing. In Florence, Italy, the sixteen-year-old Eleanor explored the city alone with her guidebook. Eleanor loved the freedom. She learned to trust her own judgment.

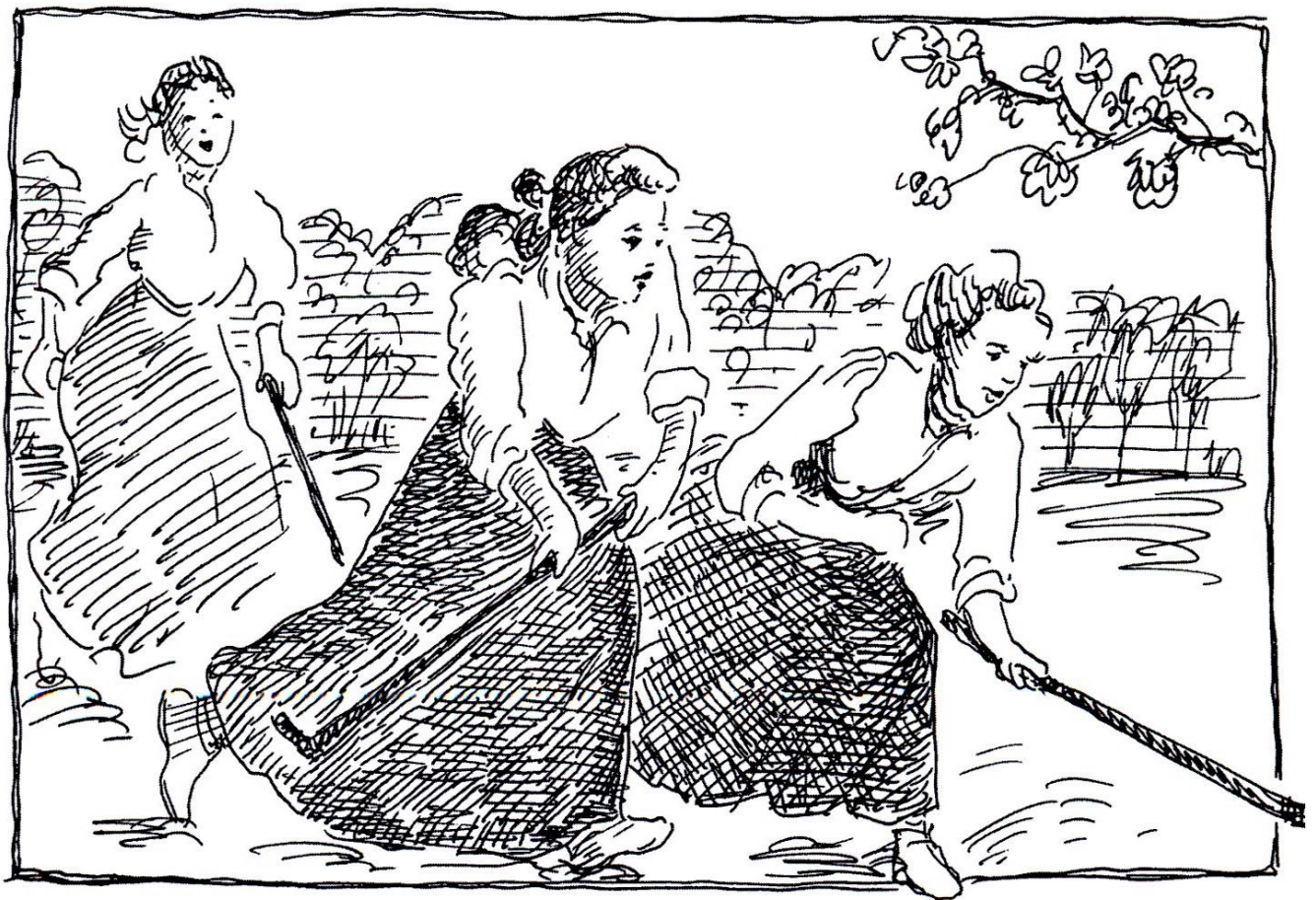


On one trip, friends of her grandmother saw Eleanor out alone. They were horrified. Back then, young girls did not travel or go about strange cities by themselves. Eleanor's grandmother

demanded that she come home. So, sadly, Eleanor left Allenswood after her second year.

Back in New York, Eleanor was miserable. But she decided to do something about it. She begged her grandmother to let her return to Allenswood. Finally, her grandmother agreed.

Eleanor's last year at Allenswood was a happy one. In fact, Eleanor later wrote that it was probably the happiest year of her life. Madame Souvestre treated Eleanor like a daughter. She made Eleanor feel special. And so, the year flew



by. Eleanor wrote long papers that won her high praise. She played field hockey. She traveled with Madame Souvestre.

Eleanor was now almost eighteen. She hoped to teach at Allenswood. That, thought the young Eleanor, would be the perfect life. But it was not to be.

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## Chapter 5

### Cousin Franklin

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Eleanor looked different when she returned to New York after Allenswood. She walked and talked with confidence. She looked



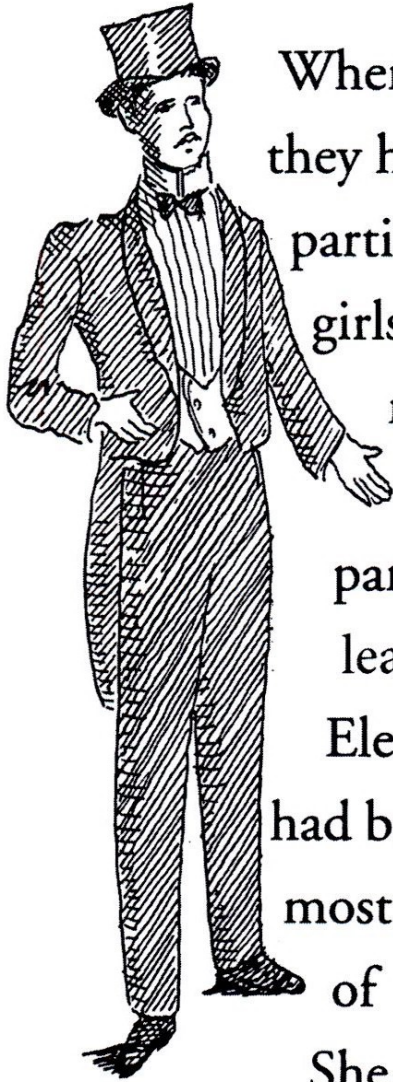
attractive in her smart, new clothes. The long dresses suited her. But no matter how confident Eleanor looked or felt, there was one fear that terrorized her. Eleanor was turning eighteen and would have to “come out.”

Coming out meant that girls were presented to society. Eleanor’s family was part of New York society. Her mother and aunts had all been debutantes. Debutantes were girls from rich families.





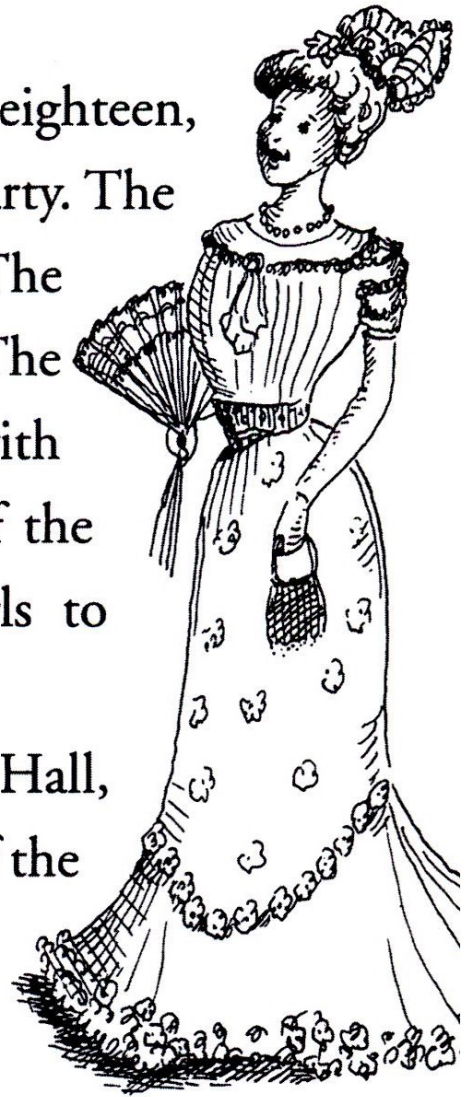
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When these girls turned eighteen, they had a “coming out” party. The parties were very formal. The girls wore elegant gowns. The men wore jackets with tails. The purpose of the parties was for the girls to learn social behavior.

Eleanor’s mother, Anna Hall, had been considered one of the most beautiful debutantes of the late 1800s.

She had many admirers.

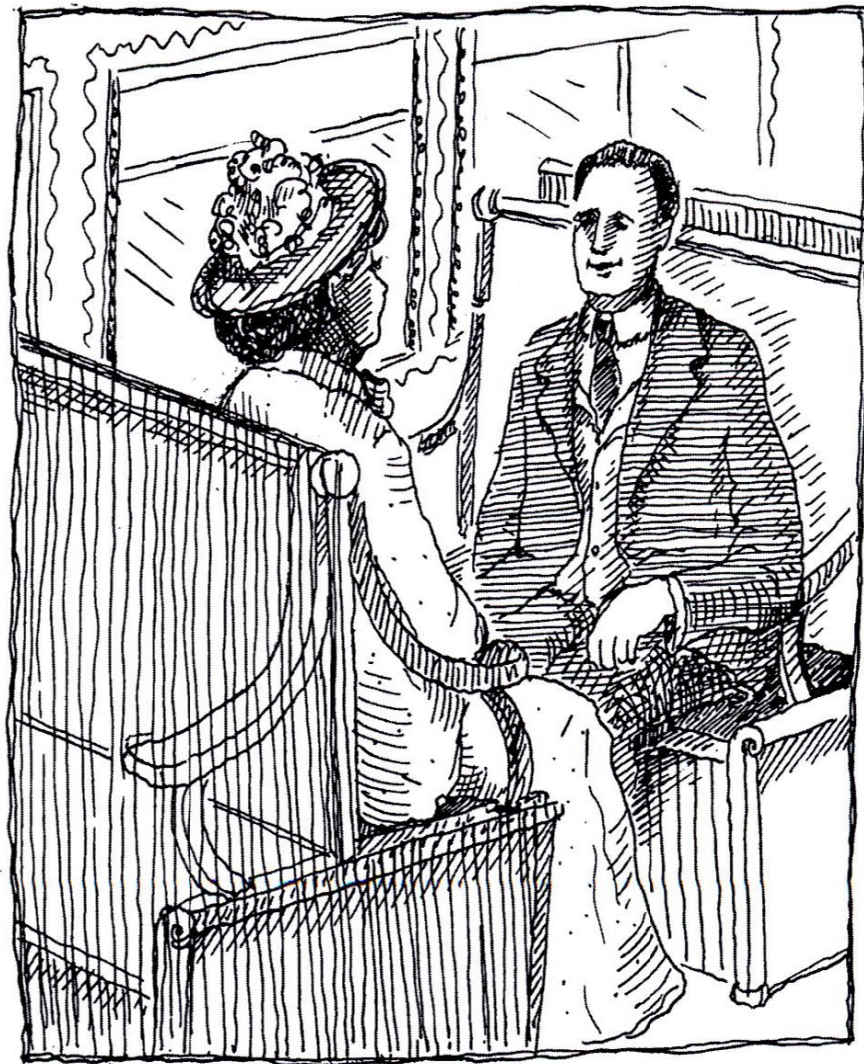


Eleanor knew she could never live up to her mother’s debut in society.

The idea of parties filled Eleanor with terror. Her Uncle Teddy was now president of the United States. His own daughter, Eleanor’s beautiful cousin Alice, was also entering society. Eleanor truly felt like the ugly duckling

now. She thought no one would ask her to dance. And everyone would notice her blank dance card. Her brother Hall was away at school. Eleanor wrote him every day, but did not tell him of her fears.

Then one day Eleanor was on a train. She was going from New York City to the country. A handsome young man sat down opposite her. He smiled and began to chat. Eleanor shyly smiled



back. The man was a distant cousin named Franklin Roosevelt. Eleanor listened as he told her about Harvard. The last time they had spent this much time together was when she was about two years old. Then, Franklin had given her a horse-back ride.

Over the next months, Eleanor found herself spending more and more time with Franklin. And though never as pretty or as witty as her mother or aunts, Eleanor did have suitors partners at the parties. But, by the time the social season was over in December, Eleanor and Franklin were a couple.

Far more important to Eleanor than the parties was her work. She remembered helping her father serve Thanksgiving dinner long ago. Now she and her friends worked at the settlement houses in lower New York City.

Eleanor taught exercise to children. While her friends arrived in their carriages, Eleanor took public transportation. People told

her it was not safe to do this, but she did it anyway. Eleanor wrote to Franklin, who was still at Harvard, that she found her hours teaching the children the “nicest part of the day.”

Eleanor also began working to help make factories safer and better for the women and children who worked in them. At this time, factories were

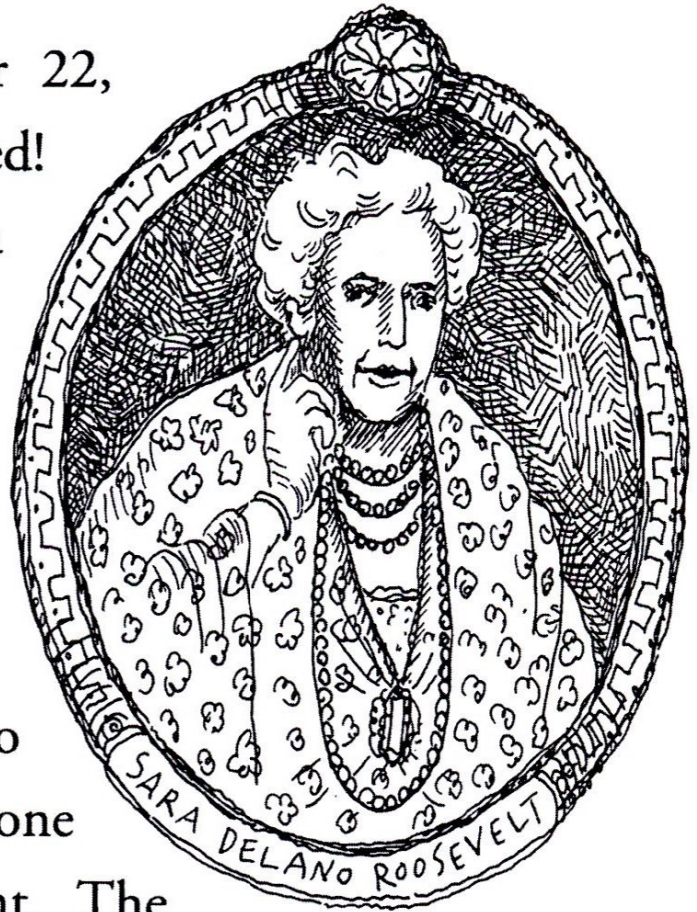


called “sweatshops.” Women and children worked up to fourteen hours each day. They worked under dangerous conditions. Often, they were locked in the factories and were not let out until it was time to quit.

Eleanor was horrified. She wanted women and children to have a better life. So she talked to politicians and wrote about what she saw. She made sure other people—people with power—were aware of the horrible working conditions. She urged leaders to pass laws to make factories safer and to shorten the workday. Eleanor was only nineteen years old. But she was beginning to look at the world and see how she could make it better.

Each night, she wrote to Franklin of her life in New York City. She wrote about her dreams of making the world a better place. He waited eagerly at Harvard for her letters. But their romance was a secret. Franklin’s mother did not want him to be serious about any young lady.

Then on November 22, 1903, Franklin proposed! Franklin's mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt, said they were too young. They were not ready to marry. So Franklin and Eleanor agreed to wait a year. They also promised not to tell anyone about their engagement. The year passed. Finally, the happy couple announced that they were going to be married!



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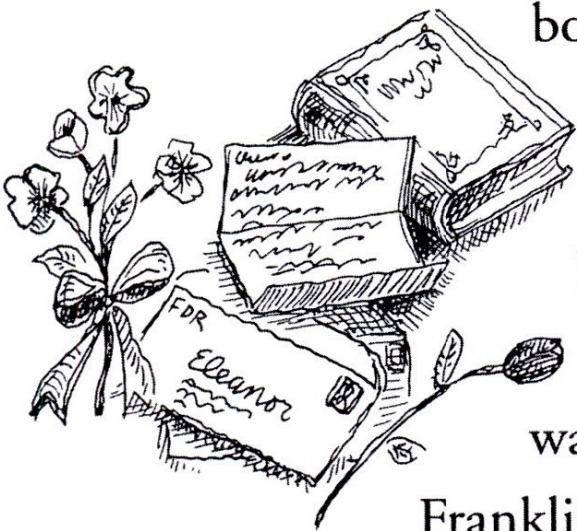
## Chapter 6

# Marriage and Children

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Although Franklin's mother accepted the engagement, she had no intention of letting go of her son. After all, he was her only child. Eleanor tried her best to please Franklin's mother. What that meant was letting Franklin's mother make *all* the decisions for them. It was a problem that Eleanor would deal with for many years.

Franklin sent Eleanor flowers, poems, and books. And they talked. Some people thought that Eleanor could have chosen someone better. Not Eleanor. She said that she saw "the promise that was Franklin." And he needed her. Franklin often said that Eleanor made





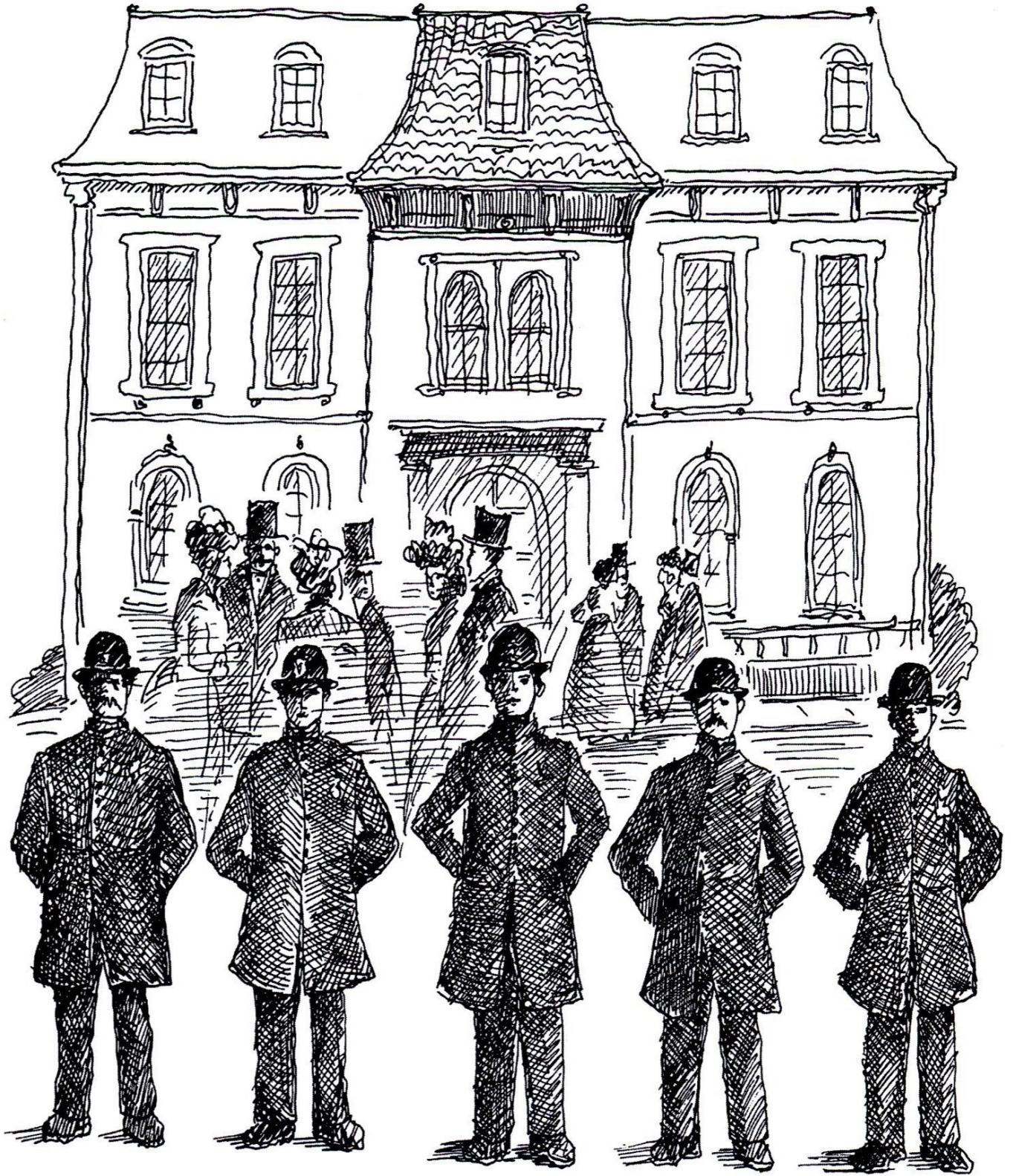
him a better person. He felt that they made a good team. As time passed and they wrote to each other, Eleanor's letters talked of how she would help him in his career. And Eleanor continued to try to win over Sara, Franklin's mother. She spent time with her, lunching and going to the theater. Eleanor felt that they were growing closer.



Eleanor's Uncle Teddy offered the couple the White House for their wedding ceremony. Eleanor and Franklin said no. They decided to marry in New York. They wanted their wedding to be private. They picked March 17, 1905, so that her Uncle Teddy could attend.

March 17<sup>th</sup> was Saint Patrick's Day. Her Uncle Teddy would be coming to New York City to take part in the big parade that day. Then, afterward, he would arrive at the home of Eleanor's cousin Susie on 76<sup>th</sup> Street. That was where the wedding was to be held. On the wedding day, the police closed off the street to protect Teddy. In fact, several guests were late for the wedding because of the security!

Eleanor walked down the aisle on her Uncle Teddy's arm. Guests whispered that Eleanor looked "regal" and "magnificent." Others said that she looked like her mother. For once, Eleanor felt beautiful. She walked very tall and



straight. Her thick, golden hair crowned her head. Her lovely, gray eyes shone with love and pride. And waiting for her at the end of the aisle was handsome Franklin. The two hundred guests watched the couple exchange vows.

Unfortunately, the parade, which went by the house, almost drowned out the ceremony.

Marchers sang loudly as they passed the open windows.

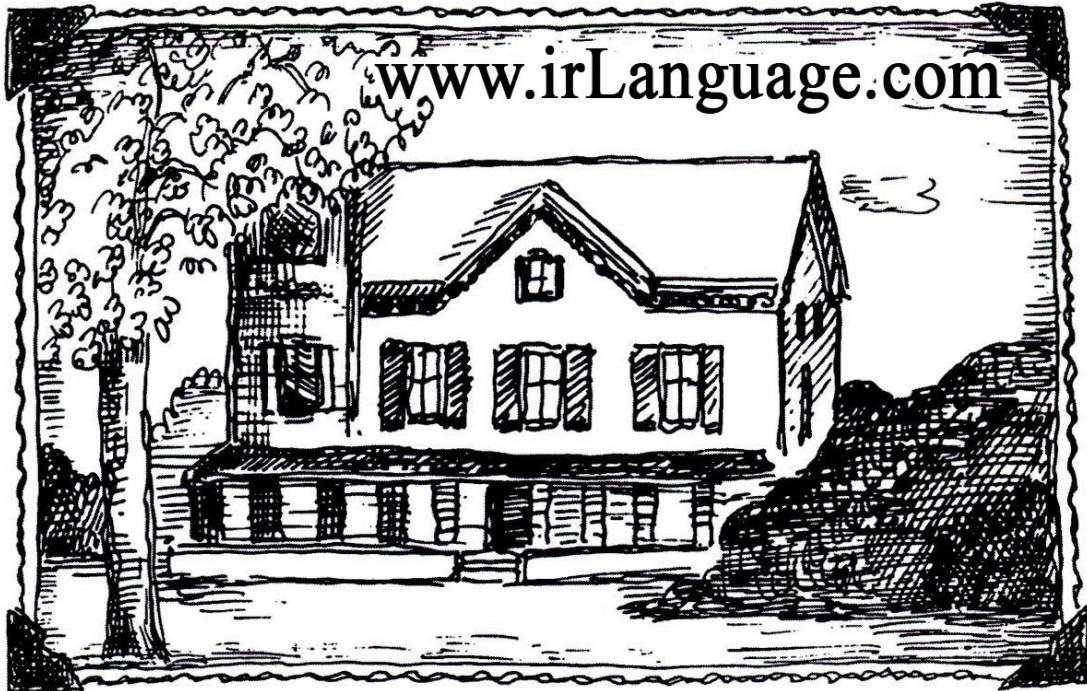
After the rings had been exchanged and the two had kissed, Teddy loudly declared, “Well, Franklin, there’s nothing like keeping the name in the family.” Eleanor was now Eleanor Roosevelt



Roosevelt. Everyone laughed. Then Teddy immediately headed to the library for refreshments. Eleanor and Franklin were left alone. Eleanor later wrote about her wedding and described how everyone wanted to spend time with Teddy, not the newlyweds. Later on, when she was asked about the day, Eleanor would just smile and shrug. After all, Teddy was her favorite uncle. Teddy's



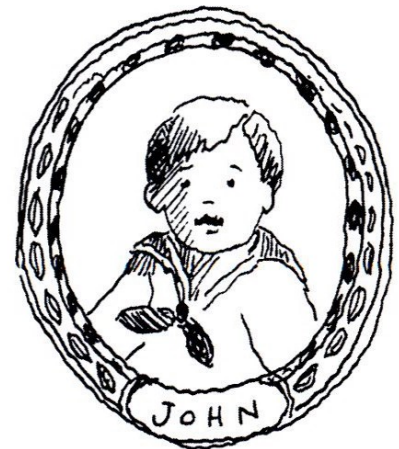
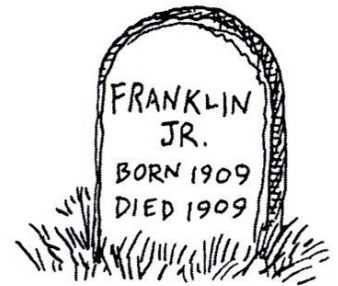
daughter, Alice, said of the day, “Father always wanted to be the bride at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral.”



*Hyde Park*

The couple first went to Hyde Park, New York, where Franklin had grown up. Then they returned to New York City so that Franklin could study for his law exams. They lived in a small apartment near Columbia University. As soon as Franklin finished his courses, the couple went to Europe for a long honeymoon.

Their first child, Anna, was born in May 1906. In December of 1907, James was born. Now, Eleanor's days were filled with babies. But sadness soon replaced their happiness. Another son, Franklin Jr., was born in March 1909. He looked healthy and seemed fine, but there was something wrong with his heart. At seven months old, he caught the flu and died. There was nothing that she could have done, but Eleanor blamed herself



for his death. Years later, she wrote that she never forgot the pain of burying her son. She often visited her little baby's grave.

Eleanor had three more sons. The next son she named Elliott, after her father. And her next son she named Franklin Jr. And, finally, John was born in 1916.

Eleanor spent the next ten years raising her children and trying to be a good wife and daughter-in-law. The Roosevelts lived in New York City, where Franklin worked as a lawyer. Franklin's mother bought two houses right next to each other. She had the two houses connected. She lived in one, and Franklin and Eleanor and the children lived in the other. Sara furnished Eleanor's home. She hired all of Eleanor's servants. And she often told Eleanor how to bring up her children. Eleanor saw her independence slipping away. She was even afraid to fire the servants Sara hired.

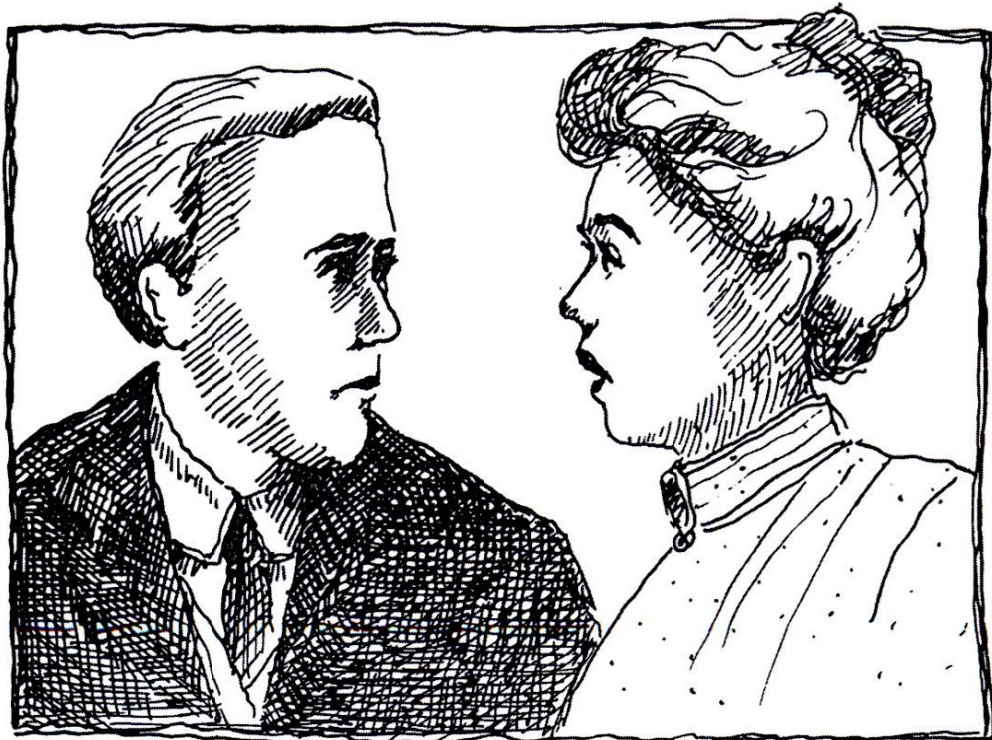






One nurse treated the boys badly. She did not believe James when he said he had brushed his teeth, so she made him wear his sister's skirt and a sign that said "Liar." Then she made him walk up and down the street in front of their house. Eleanor's heart broke when she came home and saw her son. But she did not have the nerve to fire the nurse until she found whiskey bottles in her room.

Eleanor complained to Franklin about Sara, but he did not want to go against his mother.



Eleanor did not know what to do. She wanted to stand up for herself, but all her life she had been taught to be a good girl and obey her elders. Then something happened that would change both Eleanor and Franklin's lives. The Democrats asked Franklin to run for the New York State Senate. It was the beginning of his long career in politics. And it was the beginning of new career for Eleanor, too.

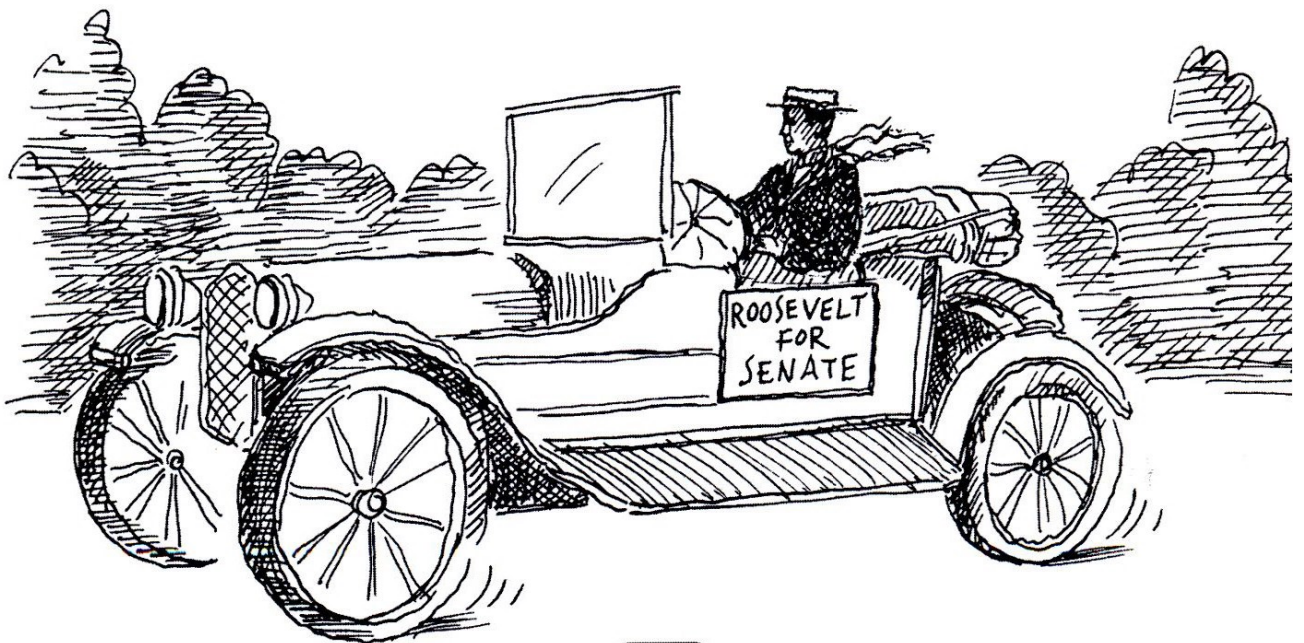
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## Chapter 7

### Politics

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In October 1910, Franklin began his first campaign. Eleanor wanted to be with him, but she had just given birth to Elliott. So she stayed home. She wrote Franklin every day. She encouraged him to speak out to people. And so Franklin bought a car and visited every village in upstate New York. And he won! He was the first Democrat to win there since 1878.





Eleanor and Franklin and family moved to the state capital in Albany, New York. At last, in her own home, Eleanor took charge. Within twenty-four hours, she had everyone settled in the new house. She fired servants she did not like. She hired new ones. She organized the house. She met the neighbors. She held “open houses.” During an open house, people from the area that Franklin represented came and talked with Franklin. Eleanor loved her new life.



Every afternoon, she spent time with her children. She read to them. They had tea. And she played with them after dinner. Early mornings, she met with people in their homes. She helped

Franklin in his new career in any way that she could.

In 1913, Franklin became assistant secretary of the navy. This was an important post. The family moved to Washington, D.C. Again, Eleanor did all she could to help Franklin in his new job. She called on other wives in Washington. She listened to Franklin's speeches and gave advice on them. What's more, he listened. Franklin valued Eleanor's opinions. They made a good team. People reminded Franklin that Eleanor's Uncle Teddy had once held his new job, and Teddy had

gone on to be president. Maybe one day Franklin would, too.

During their time in Washington, Eleanor learned to be the perfect political wife. She gave parties for over two hundred people. She spoke many different languages. People said that with her tall, thin figure and her thick hair piled up on her head, she looked like the perfect “Gibson Girl.” Even Sara admitted that Eleanor had never looked or sounded better.

In the 1890s and early 1900s, people wanted to dress and look like the illustrations that they saw in popular magazines. One famous illustration was the “Gibson Girl.” Charles Dana Gibson created the Gibson Girl. She was described as taller than most women, full of spirit and



*Gibson Girl*

independence. She wore her brown hair piled high on her head. She looked like a well-bred young woman. Eleanor and her friends tried to dress and look like Gibson Girls. But, for Eleanor, fashion never was as important as for some. What interested her most were the issues of the day.

The United States entered World War I in 1917. Suddenly, soldiers were everywhere in Washington, D.C. Eleanor worked hard for the Red Cross. She visited soldiers. She served coffee and food. This work made Eleanor feel useful and

wanted. The people she worked with loved her and admired her skills. The soldiers said how kind and thoughtful she was.

Eleanor was so busy that she hired a young, pretty secretary named Lucy Mercer. But soon Lucy was

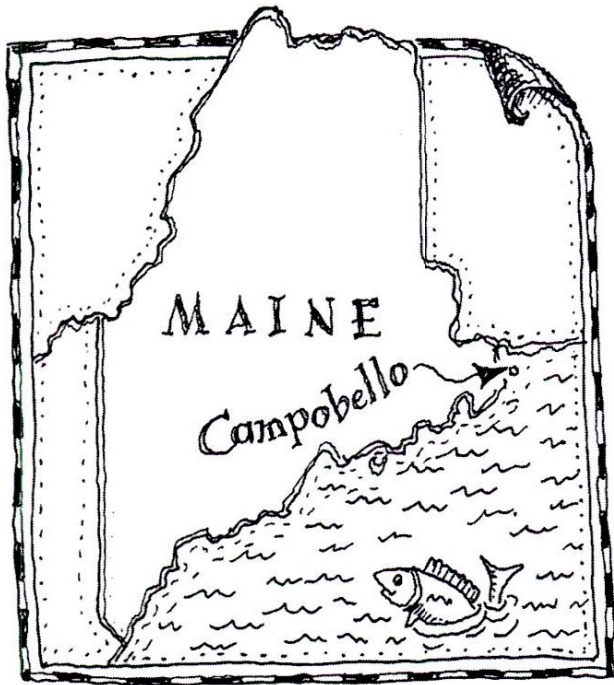




spending more time with Franklin than with Eleanor or the children. Lucy and Franklin fell in love. And Eleanor found out. She was shattered. She had trusted Franklin completely. And he had betrayed her. Franklin promised never to see Lucy again and Eleanor agreed to stay with him. Franklin knew that he needed Eleanor's help with his career. But their marriage would never be the same.



In 1920, James M. Cox ran for president and Franklin ran as his vice president. The Democrats

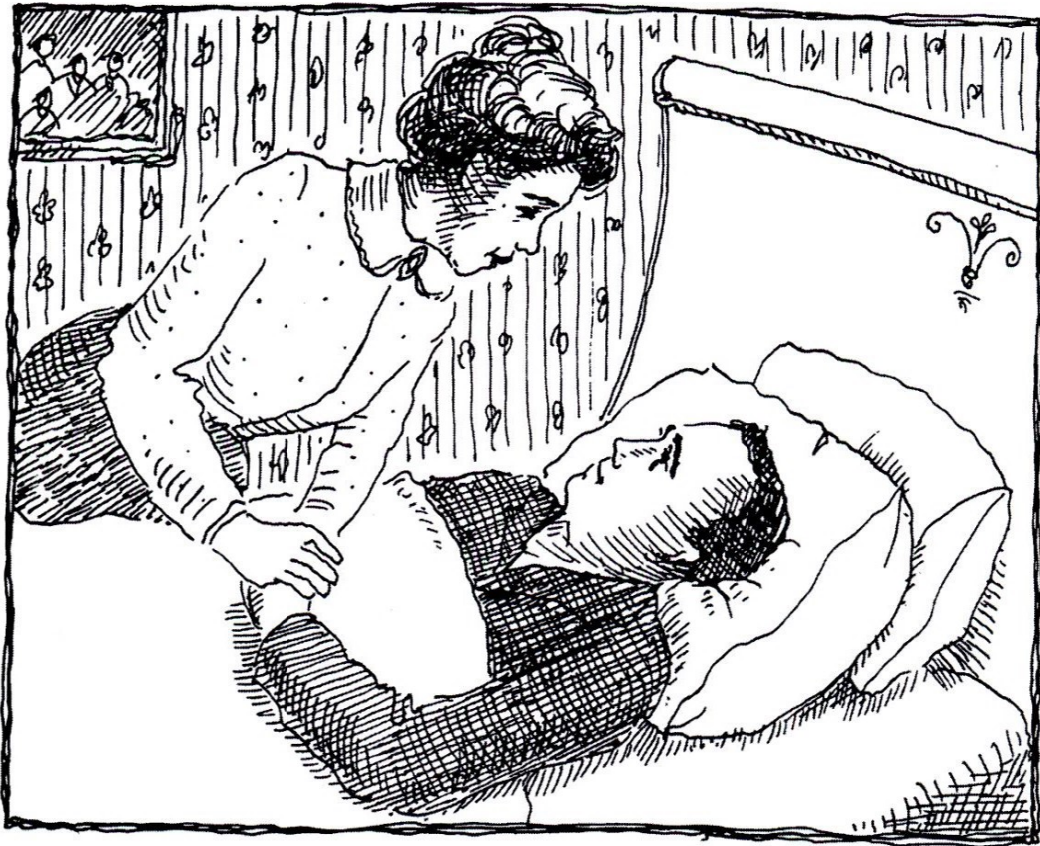


lost. So Franklin, Eleanor, and the children went to their summer home in Campobello, Maine. One night, Franklin became very tired. Eleanor told him to go to bed. But the next day, he could not

move his legs! He had polio at age thirty-nine!

Polio had been around since the time of the ancient Egyptians. When Franklin was a young man, there was still no cure. Polio was a disease that people, especially children, caught easily. Often, the disease left its victims unable to walk. They had to use a wheelchair or crutches for the rest of their lives. It was not until the 1950s that a vaccine against polio was discovered.

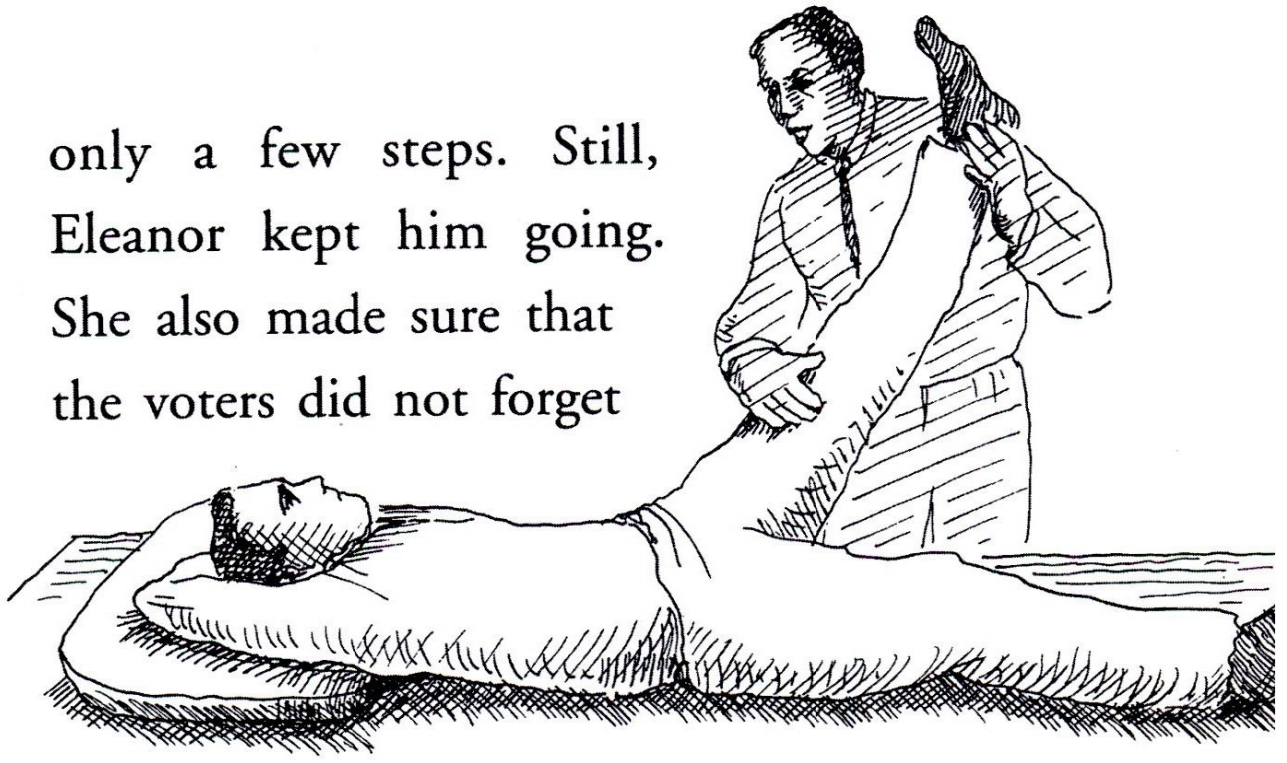
After Franklin fell ill with polio, his mother wanted him to return to Hyde Park and live in the country. There he could rest.



He must give up politics, said Sara. Instead, he could spend his time collecting stamps, which was a lifelong hobby of his, and being cared for. Eleanor, for the first time, said no to her mother-in-law. She did not want Franklin to become an invalid. He had important work to do. She wanted him to stay in politics.

So Franklin began a painful program of exercise to rebuild his strength. He would never walk again without heavy braces. Even then, he could walk

only a few steps. Still, Eleanor kept him going. She also made sure that the voters did not forget



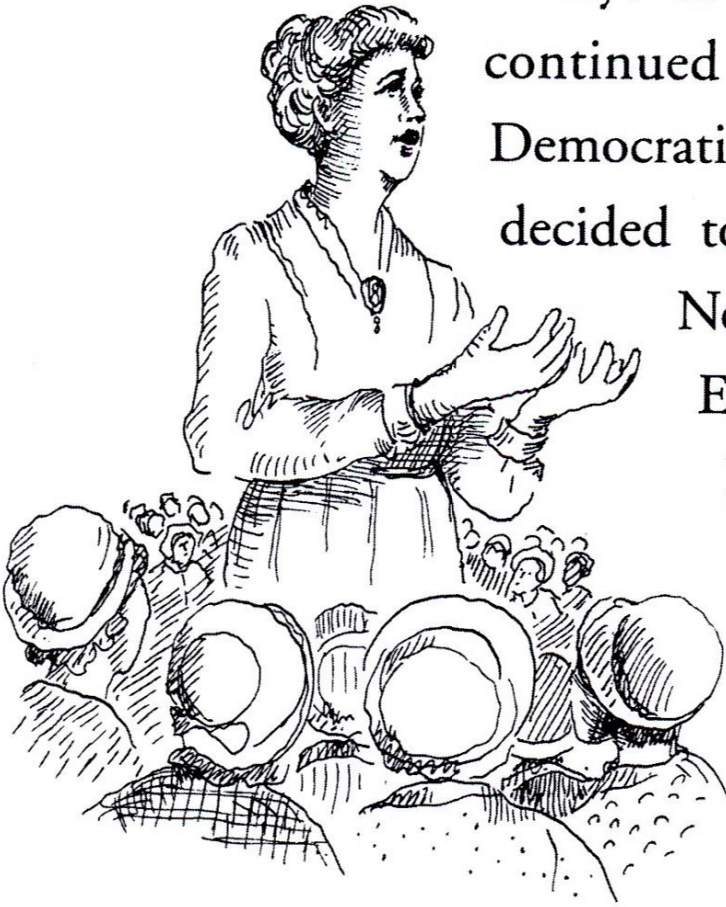
about her husband. Eleanor began giving speeches to different ladies' groups about Franklin. At first, she spoke quietly. Eleanor was still shy. But by 1928, Eleanor Roosevelt had become a wonderful speaker and a respected member of the Democratic Party. Because of Eleanor, political leaders remembered Franklin.

By the 1920s, the Roosevelts' daughter, Anna, had married. The boys were away at college or boarding school. While Franklin worked to regain his ability to walk, Eleanor started to teach. She and her friends took over a private girls school in

New York City. Eleanor loved it. It reminded her of her days at Allenswood. She also

continued working for the Democratic Party. Franklin had decided to run for governor of New York, and he needed Eleanor's help to win.

He counted on Eleanor to convince women to vote for him. And she did. Franklin won the race for governor in 1928.



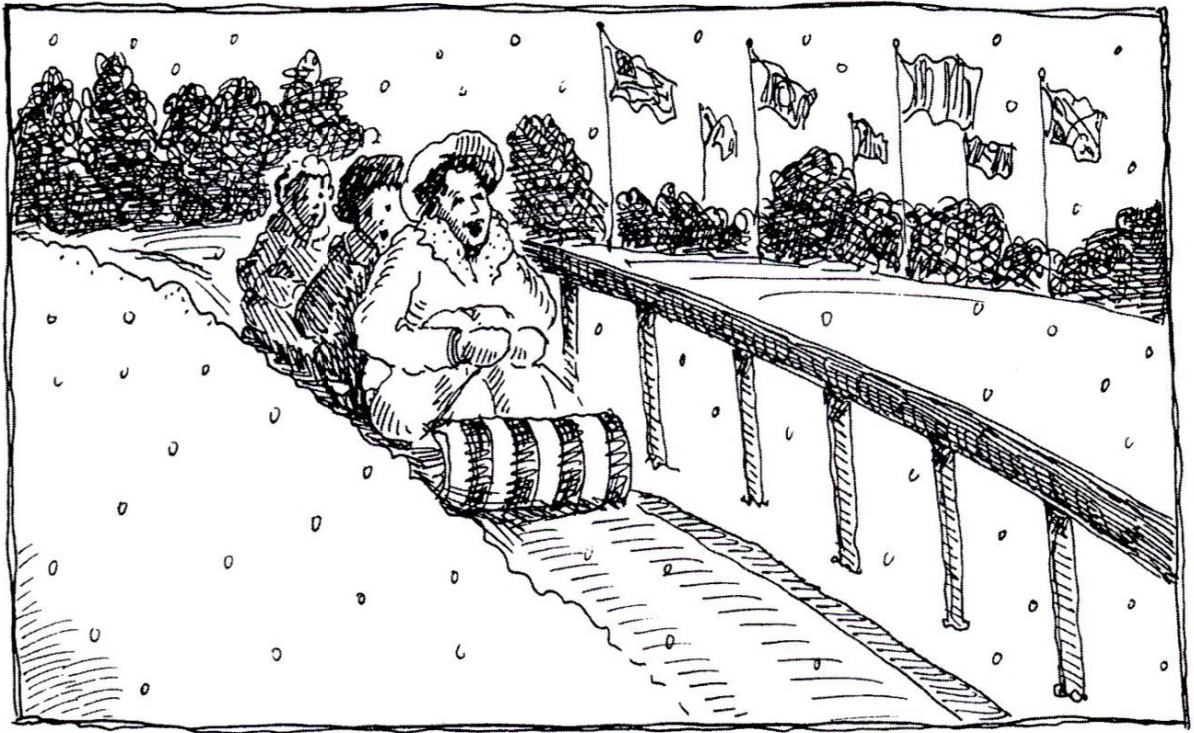
Many felt that it was the women's vote and Eleanor's efforts that won him the job.

Being the first lady of New York was a challenge. Eleanor wanted to keep teaching in New York City. But the state capital, where the governor lives, was in Albany. So each Monday she left the governor's mansion and took a three-hour train ride. On the

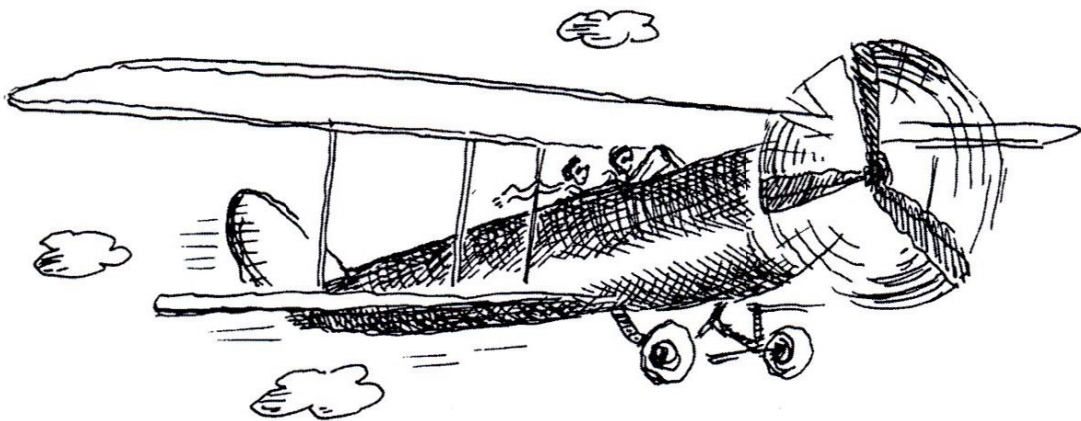


*the Governor's Mansion, Albany*

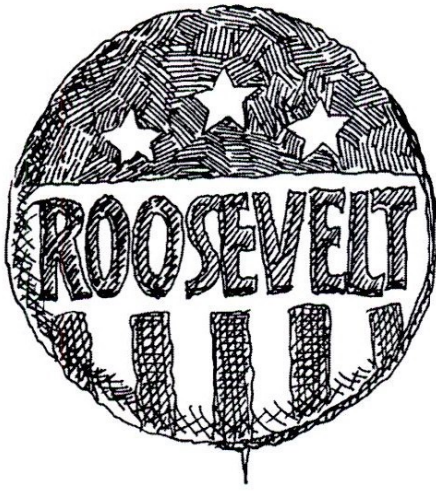
train, she graded papers, read magazines, and answered letters. Then she returned to Albany on Wednesday and hosted parties, met with party leaders, and gave speeches. People got tired just hearing Eleanor's schedule, but Eleanor loved it. She liked being busy and useful.



As first lady of New York, she also had opportunities to test her courage. She went to the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York and rode on a bobsled! Then she went for an airplane ride.



*Flying with Amelia Earhart*



It was difficult for Franklin to get around, so Eleanor became his eyes and ears. She toured prisons, hospitals, and homes for orphans and the mentally ill. She told

Franklin about what she saw. Franklin then wrote laws to help the less fortunate.

In 1932, Franklin Roosevelt ran for president of the United States. He won! On March 4, 1933, Eleanor Roosevelt became first lady of the United States. She was forty-eight years old. She was scared. What kind of first lady would she be?





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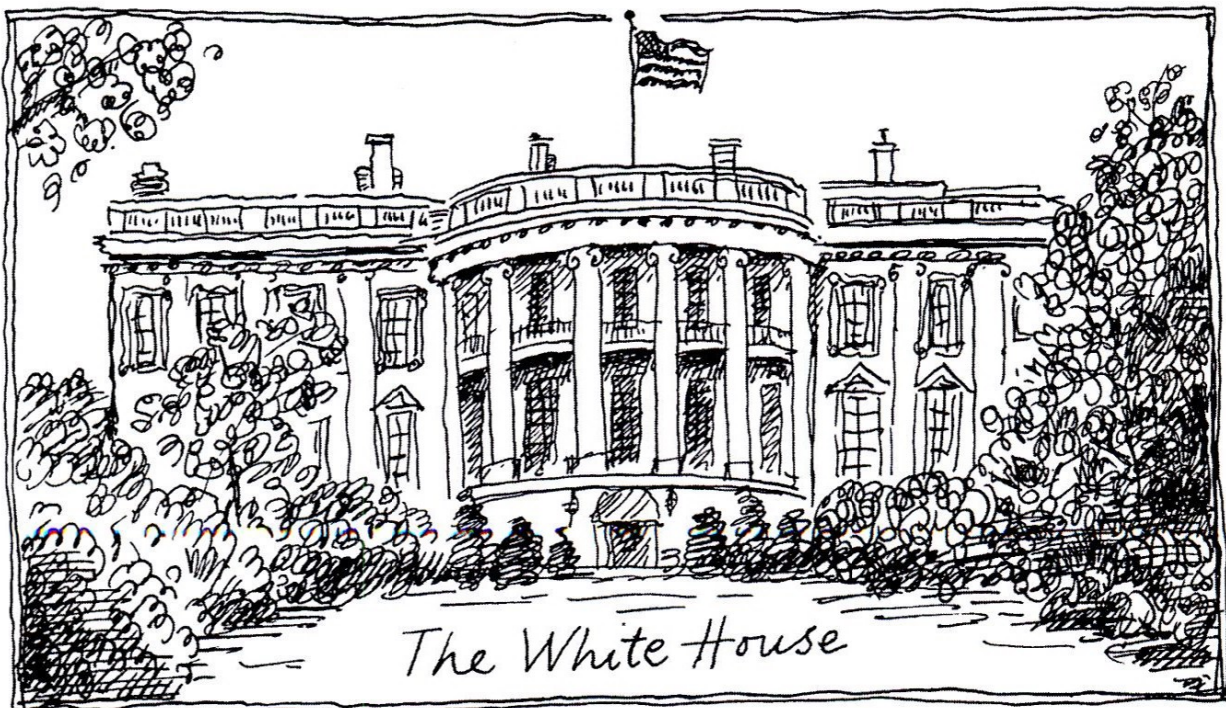
## Chapter 8

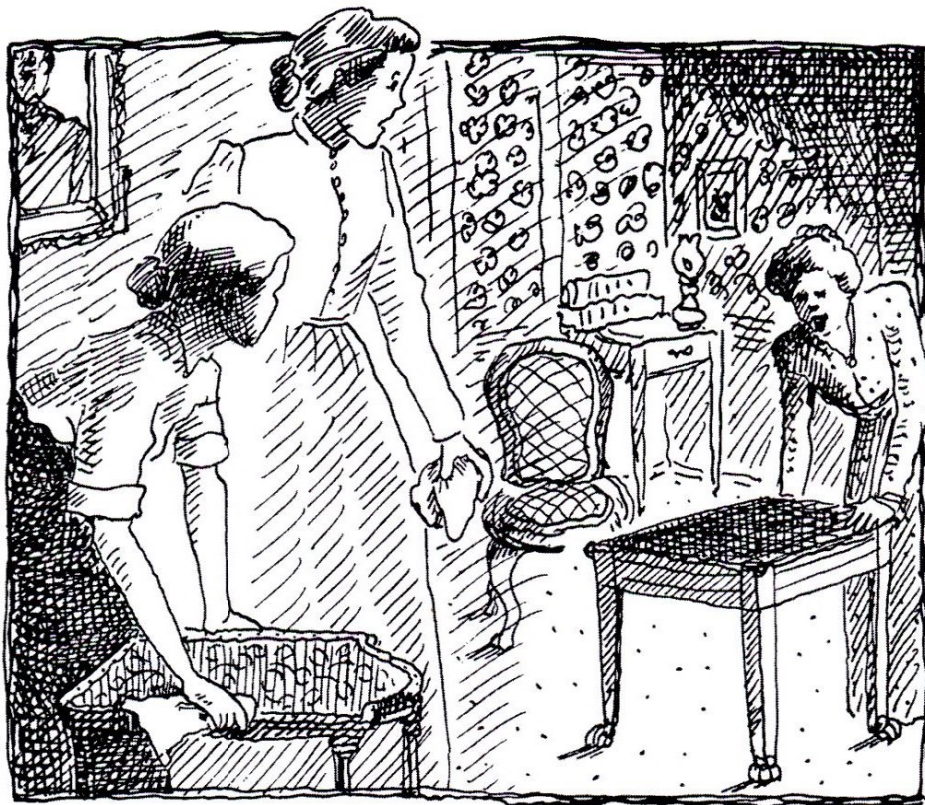
# White House Years

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Eleanor Roosevelt was a different kind of first lady. Before Eleanor, first ladies did not work. They did not speak in public and share their opinions.

Eleanor chose not to sit back and just be a good hostess. She had ideas. She wanted to help people. She was not content to pour tea and smile at White House parties. The staff at the White





House was shocked to see Eleanor moving furniture herself her very first week as first lady. But she wanted the White House family rooms to look like a home, not a museum.

Eleanor had meetings with women reporters. She was the first first lady to hold press conferences about issues of the day. And reporters were happy to write about everything the first lady did and said. They followed her on visits to slums near the White House. She visited the camp set up by former soldiers who were out of work. Reporters



quoted her saying that it was disgraceful to have people living in poverty.

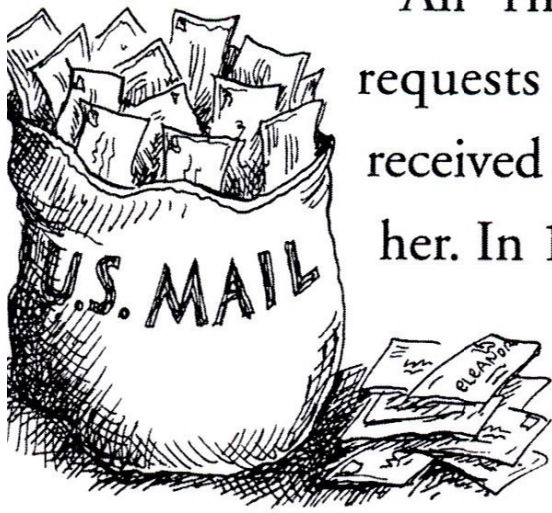
Franklin Roosevelt worked hard to end the Great Depression of the 1930s. He created the New Deal. That was the name for a group of government programs created to get the economy back on its feet. Banks reopened with government help. They loaned money to farms and businesses. The loans helped save jobs and create new ones. President Roosevelt passed laws to help people while they were out of work. For example, the Social Security Act of 1935 gave money to retired

# THE GREAT DEPRESSION

IN THE 1920S, MANY PEOPLE BECAME RICH BUYING STOCKS. (STOCKS ARE SHARES OF COMPANIES.) THEN IN LATE OCTOBER, 1929, THE STOCK MARKET CRASHED. THAT MEANT MANY STOCKS BECAME WORTHLESS. THIS FORCED MANY COMPANIES THAT ISSUED STOCKS AND THE BANKS THAT INVESTED IN THEM TO CLOSE. BY 1932, FIVE THOUSAND BANKS HAD CLOSED AND ABOUT THIRTY-TWO THOUSAND COMPANIES WERE OUT OF BUSINESS. OVER TWELVE MILLION PEOPLE LOST THEIR JOBS. MANY PEOPLE LOST THEIR HOMES, TOO. WHAT COULD BE DONE TO HELP PEOPLE?



people, as well as to disabled people and to workers who had lost their jobs. By 1940, the government had provided sixteen million dollars for people in need. It was a new kind of government, a government that looked after its citizens.



All first ladies receive letters and requests from people. But Eleanor received much more than anyone before her. In 1933, more than three-hundred thousand letters came from every part of the country—from children, mothers, and families. Eleanor and her secretary, Malvina “Tommy” Thompson, answered every single one! Eleanor also traveled all over the United States. In the days before television, this brought her in touch with the people of America. In 1933, she traveled almost forty thousand miles. Her travels earned her the nickname “Everywhere Eleanor.” And the support and love that Eleanor received

from the letters and her trips made Eleanor proud of who she was and what she did. During the White House years, photos of Eleanor show her smiling.

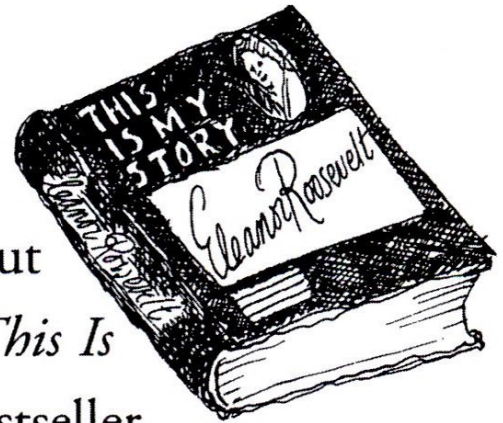
In 1935, Eleanor began giving lectures. She spoke about her favorite subjects, such as world peace, or about what living at the White House was like. Sometimes she gave lectures about the changing role of women. People flocked to hear her speak. They paid money to listen to her. Some people did not think that it was right for the first lady to get paid. Eleanor ignored them. She did not keep any of the money. She gave it to her favorite causes. What was wrong with that?



Eleanor also wrote a newspaper column. The column was called “My Day.” She wrote about her thoughts and opinions. She often gave radio

interviews. People would gather around their radios and hear what their first lady had to say. It was like having Eleanor Roosevelt over for tea or dinner.

In 1936, while campaigning for her husband's reelection, Eleanor wrote a book. It told about her early life and she called it, *This Is My Story*. The book became a bestseller.



Eleanor noticed something as she traveled around the country, meeting voters. She saw that African-Americans were not treated the same way that white people were, especially in the South. Black people were segregated—kept apart—from white people. They had to drink water from different water fountains, eat at different restaurants, and stay in “blacks-only” hotels.

Eleanor knew this was wrong. African-Americans deserved to be treated the same as white people. She tried to make this point when-

ever she could. Many of Eleanor's friends and advisers were African-Americans.



In 1938, Eleanor's friend, the African-American educator, Mary Macleod Bethune, asked Eleanor to attend a conference in Birmingham, Alabama. People were going to discuss ways to make the lives of poor people better. Eleanor decided to go.

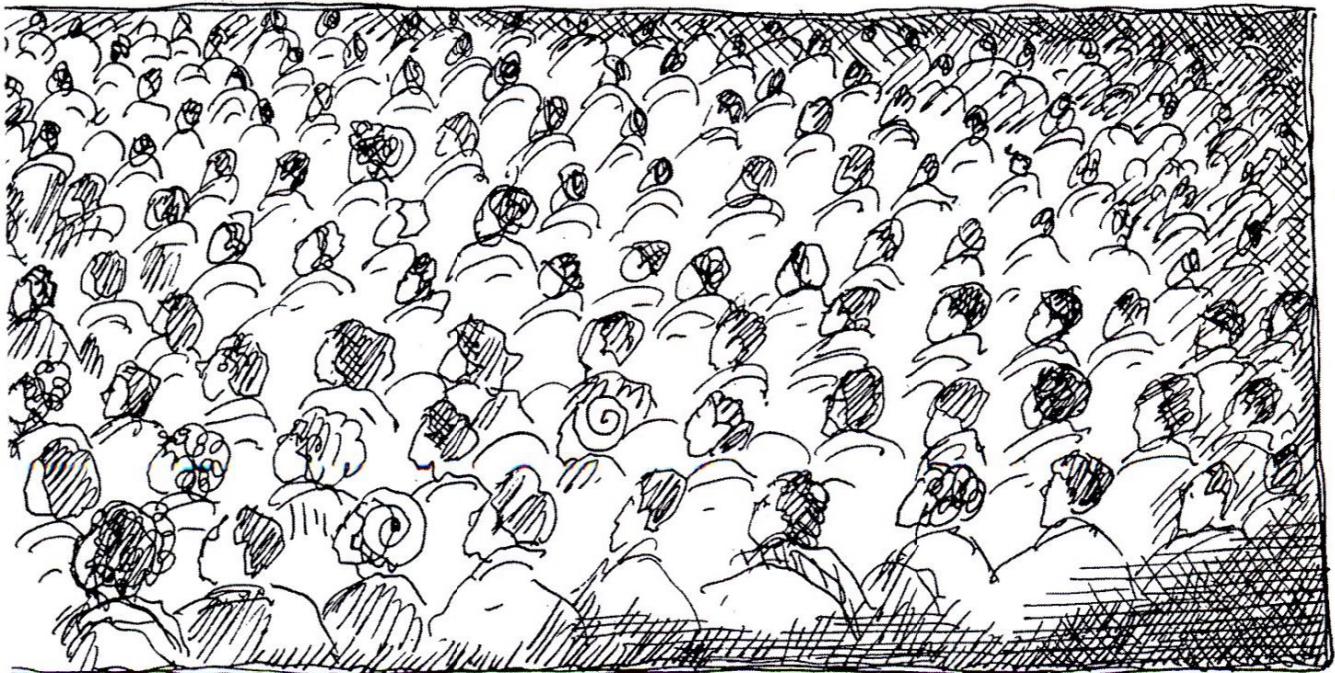
At that time, Alabama was segregated. And in the conference room, blacks could not sit with whites. Eleanor wanted to sit with her friend,





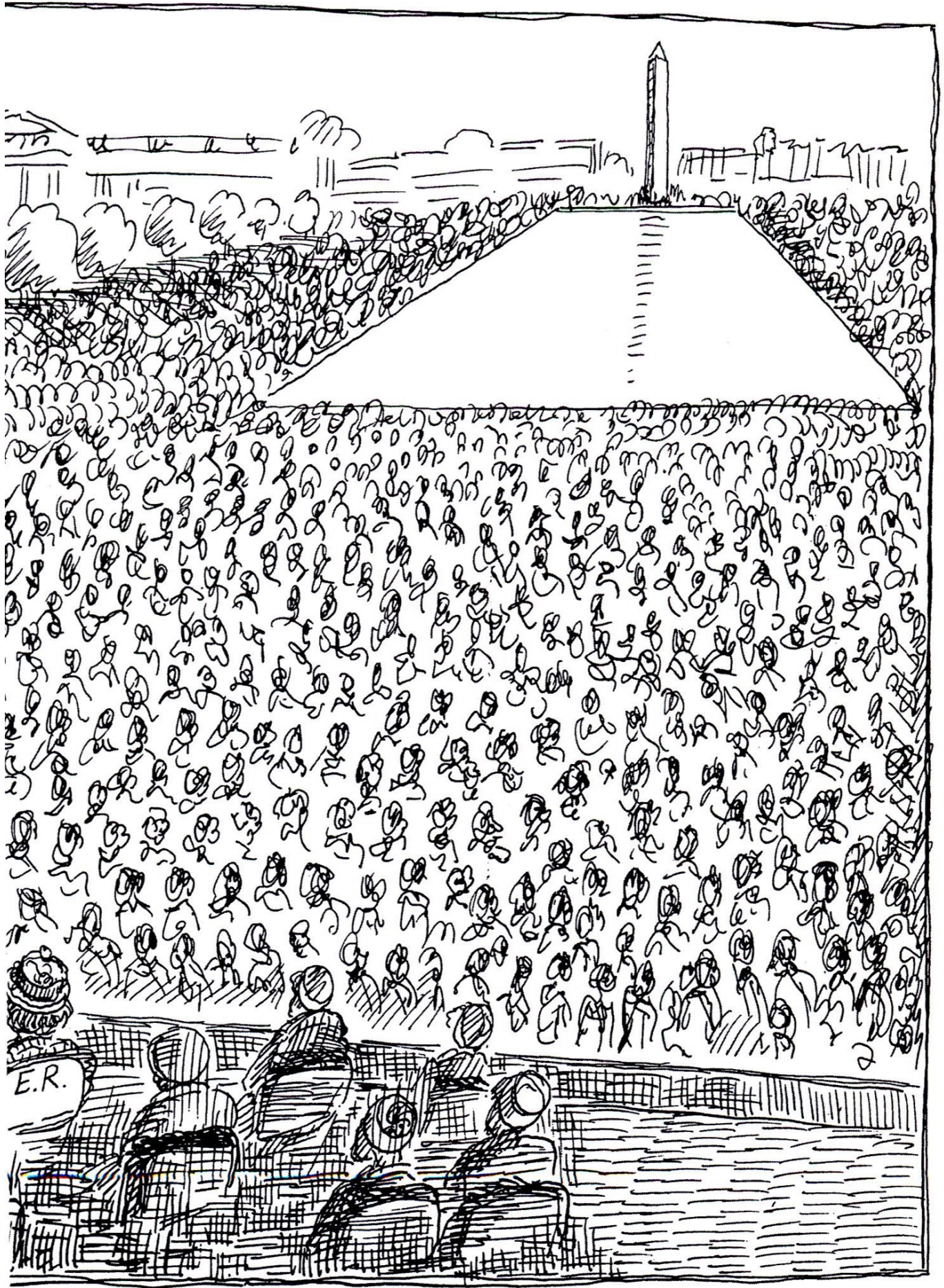
Mary Bethune. But by law, she could not. So very calmly, Eleanor picked up her chair and moved it into the aisle. She sat between the whites and the blacks. She acted as a bridge between the two groups. The police did not dare arrest the first lady.

Marian Anderson was a very famous African-American opera singer. Eleanor loved her rich, beautiful voice. In 1939, Marian Anderson wanted to give a concert at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. Eleanor was thrilled. But a group called the Daughters of





Marian Anderson  
at the  
Lincoln Memorial



the American Revolution (D.A.R.) owned the hall. And they refused to let Marian Anderson sing there. Eleanor was horrified and very angry. Eleanor quit the D.A.R. in protest and helped arrange an outdoor concert on Easter Sunday at the Lincoln Memorial. More than seventy-five thousand people came to hear Marian Anderson sing. Eleanor was among them.

Eleanor visited black schools. She often had her picture taken with black leaders. She raised money for groups that helped blacks. Some people admired her for this, but others did not. In fact, some Southern leaders asked Franklin if he could stop his wife. He laughed and said no—Eleanor had her own opinions. What others thought no longer stopped Eleanor.

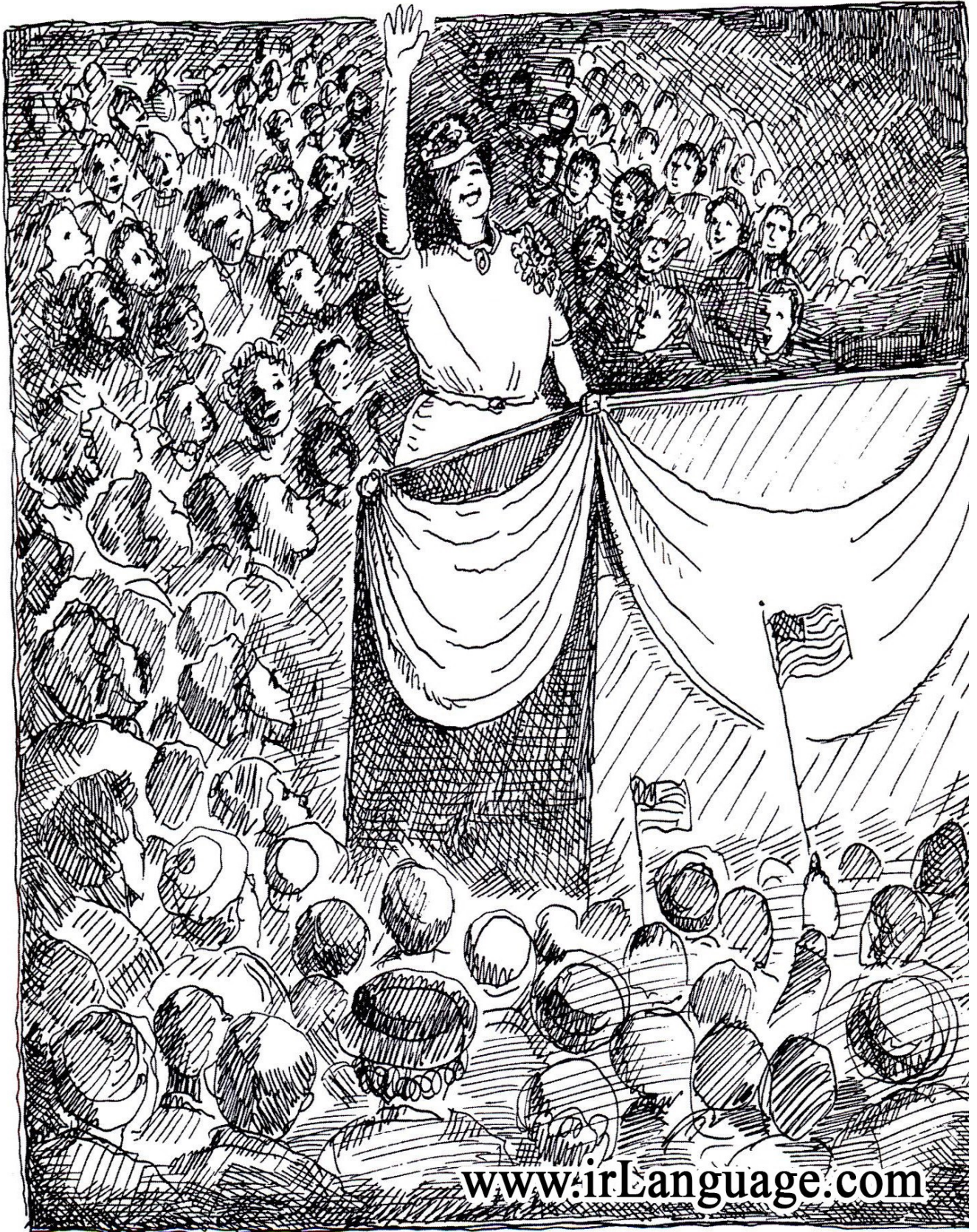
In 1940, there was another presidential election. Franklin had served two terms as president. No president had ever served more than that. Not even George Washington. But World War II was

raging. Adolf Hitler, the Nazi ruler of Germany, was trying to conquer all of Europe. And the United States was probably going to be pulled into the war, too.



FDR decided to run again. This bothered many Democrats. They felt that two terms were enough for any president. To show their disapproval, many Democrats would not support Henry Wallace, who was FDR's choice for vice president. FDR said he would not run without Wallace as his running mate. It was a battle of wills. How could the problem be solved?

The solution—call Mrs. Roosevelt! Eleanor flew to Chicago. That was where the Democrats' convention was being held. At the convention, the Democrats would pick whom they wanted to run for president and vice president. Eleanor gave a



[www:irLanguage.com](http://www.irLanguage.com)

short speech. The whole convention fell silent as she spoke. She said that in this difficult time, the president deserved to pick his own running mate. And that's exactly what happened. All the delegates at the convention voted for Henry Wallace, FDR's choice for vice president.

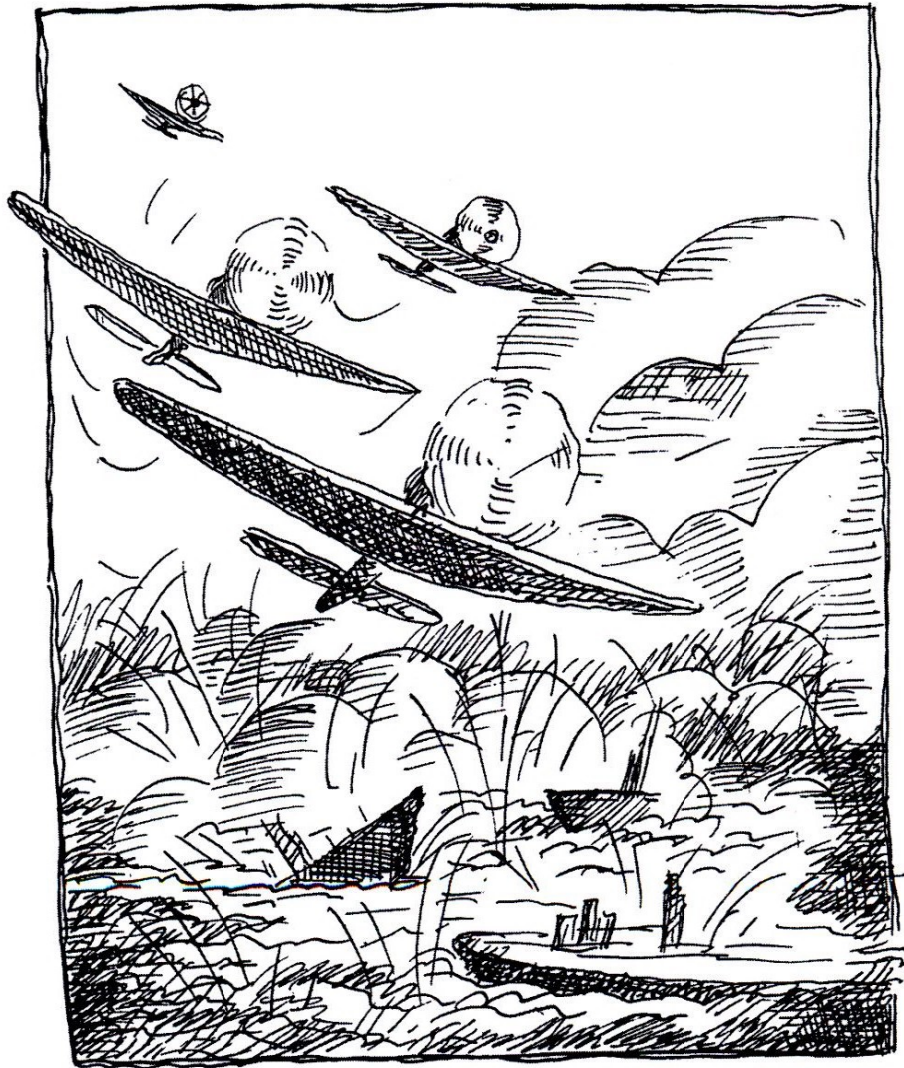
Once again, Eleanor campaigned hard for Franklin. Now as many people came to hear Eleanor speak as they did to hear the president. And he won again, the first president elected to a third term.

After the U.S. joined World War II, Eleanor visited soldiers all around the world. She was like



# PEARL HARBOR

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1941, THE JAPANESE ATTACKED PEARL HARBOR IN HAWAII. JAPANESE PLANES DROPPED BOMBS ON U.S. WARSHIPS DOCKED THERE. NINETEEN SHIPS WERE SUNK OR DAMAGED. HUNDREDS OF U.S. PLANES ON THE GROUND WERE DESTROYED. SOME TWENTY-FOUR HUNDRED PEOPLE WERE KILLED. IT WAS A HORRIBLE DAY IN AMERICAN HISTORY. BECAUSE OF THE ATTACK, THE UNITED STATES DECLARED WAR ON JAPAN.





a substitute mother. She took messages home to their families. She comforted them. She wrote letters to them. Eleanor was now the most popular woman in the world.



In 1944, with the war still on, FDR ran for president and won a fourth term. But FDR was sixty-two years old now, and he was tired and sick. While Eleanor was giving a speech in Washington, Franklin Roosevelt died in Warm Springs,

Georgia. It was April 12, 1945, just before the war ended. The whole nation went into mourning. For many people, FDR was the only president whom they could remember. And Eleanor was their beloved first lady, the mother of a nation at war. Now she was alone. What would she do?

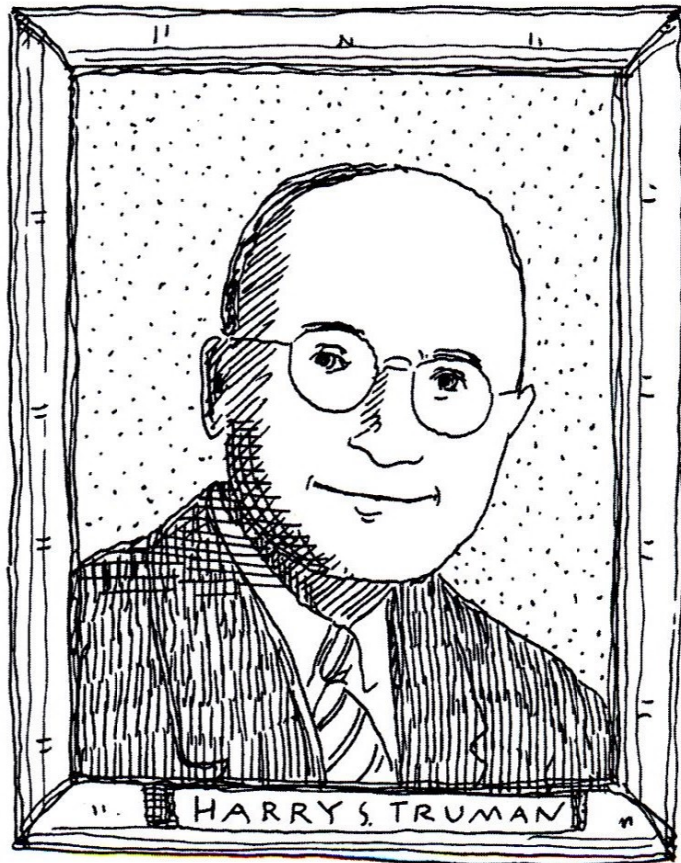
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## Chapter 9

# Ambassador to the World

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Harry Truman was now president. He had been FDR's vice president for a little over a year. But now he was in charge. His family would live in the White House. His wife, Bess, was now the first lady.





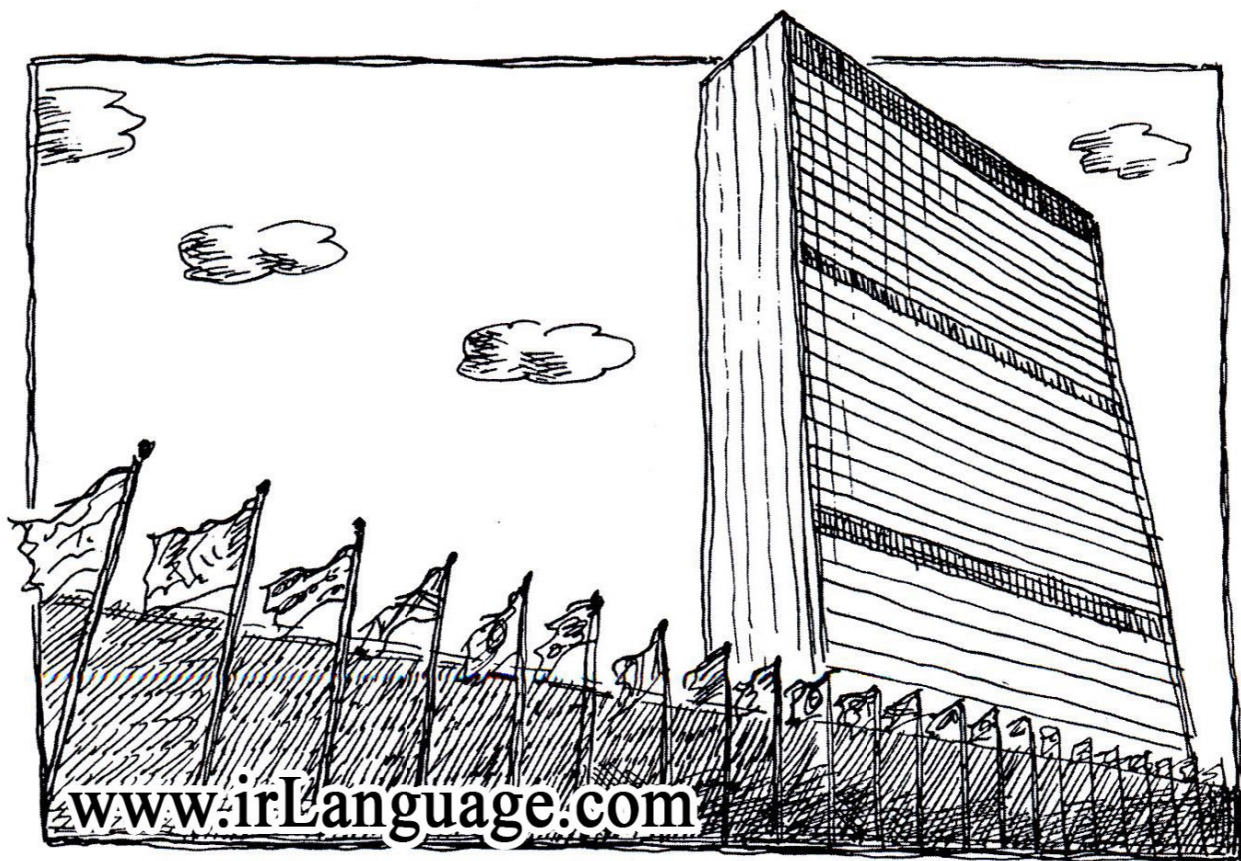
Eleanor left the White House and Washington, D.C. She went home to her cottage at Hyde Park. She played with her grandchildren. She bought books to read. She planned



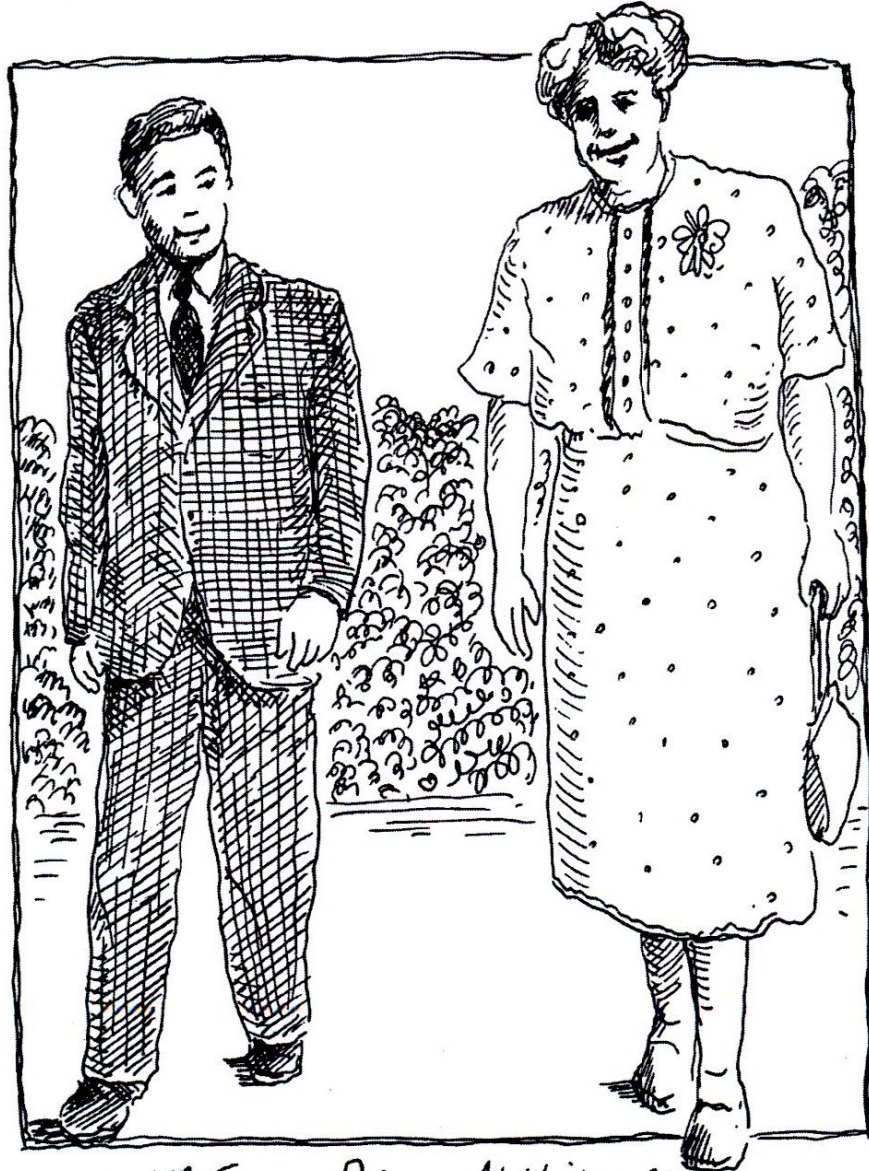
on starting a garden. But that was not to be. Although she was no longer the first lady, President Truman still needed her.

President Truman wanted Eleanor to represent the United States at the United Nations. The new UN was a worldwide group of nations whose goal was to bring peace to all parts of the world. The first meeting was to be held in London, England. Eleanor accepted the job. Now she truly was “the First Lady of the World,” as President Truman called her.

At the United Nations, Eleanor was on a committee that worked on education and human rights. Once again, she spoke out for the rights of children and women. The members from other

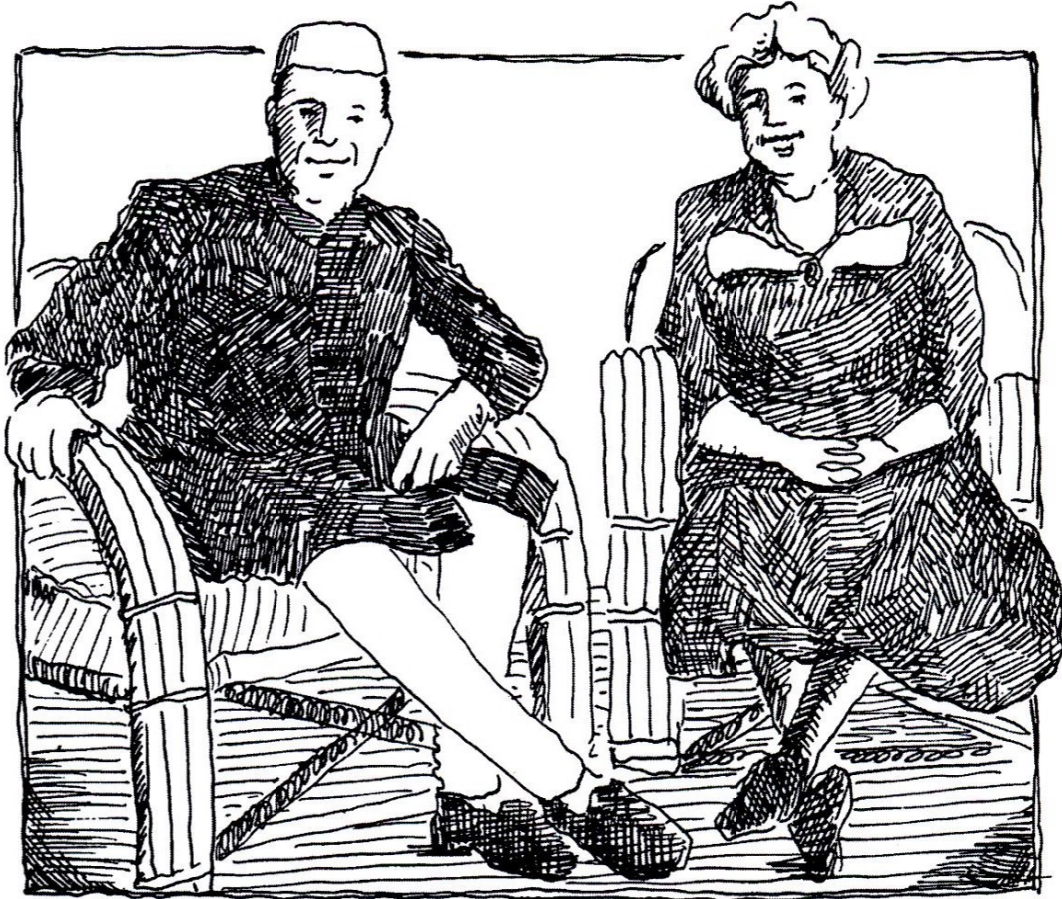


countries listened to Eleanor. She did her homework. When it came time for her to vote or speak, she knew what she was doing. Eleanor was fair. She was able to make other delegates listen to one another. She worked for the United Nations from 1945 until 1952. She was almost seventy by then. But Eleanor did not really retire when she stopped working for the United Nations.



*with Crown Prince Akihito of Japan*

Eleanor still traveled all around the world, meeting with world leaders. Everywhere she went, she made news. She visited Russia. She went to



*with Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru of India*

Japan. She went to India. In all the countries that she visited, Eleanor talked with the leaders about how their people could be helped, women and children most of all.

In the United States, she kept her hand in politics. She campaigned for Adlai Stevenson in the 1950s. A Democrat, he ran for president twice. He lost each time, but he counted on Eleanor to help him win votes. Then, in 1960, a young senator from Massachusetts asked to meet with her. His



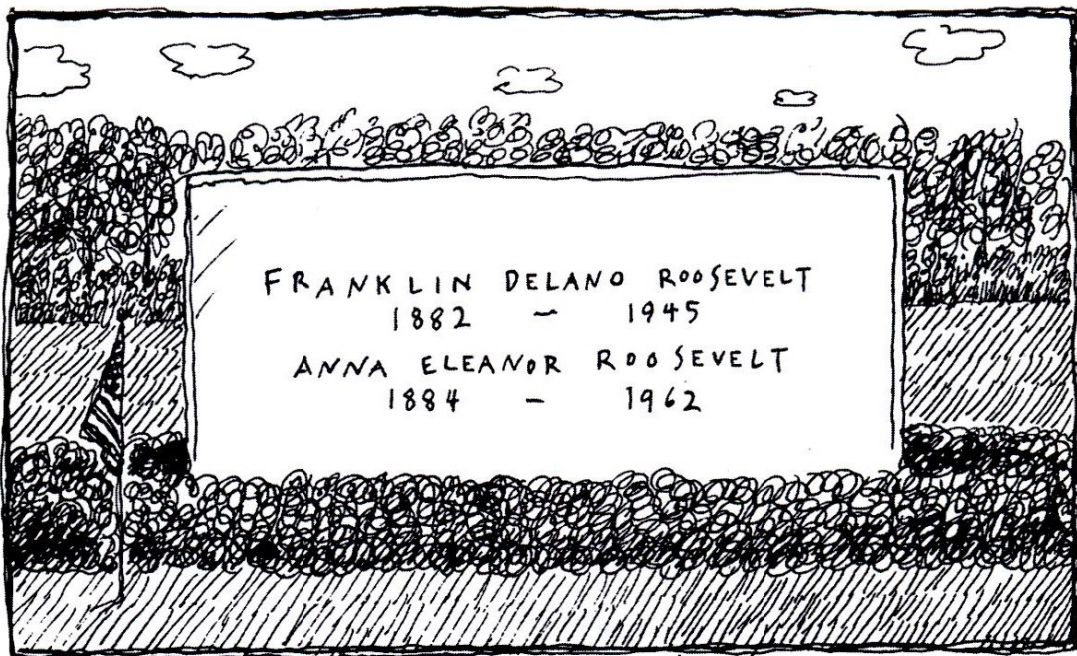


name was John F. Kennedy. He wanted to run for president, and he needed Eleanor Roosevelt's support. He got it, and John Kennedy won, becoming the first Catholic president. Many people felt that Eleanor had helped him win.



On November 7, 1962, Eleanor Roosevelt died. She was seventy-eight years old. Leaders from around the world came to her funeral. So

many people wanted to say good-bye to this wonderful woman who was laid to rest next to her husband. Adlai Stevenson summed up Eleanor Roosevelt when he said these words, “She would rather light candles than curse the darkness, and her glow has warmed the world.”



# TIMELINE OF ELEANOR'S LIFE

- 1884 — Eleanor Roosevelt is born in New York City on October 11
- 1892 — Eleanor's mother dies
- 1894 — Eleanor's father dies
- 1899 — Eleanor attends Allenswood school in England
- 1905 — Eleanor marries Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- 1906 — First child, Anna, is born
- 1909 — Franklin Jr. is born and dies same year
- 1913 — The Roosevelt family moves to Washington, D.C.
- 1921 — FDR contracts polio and Eleanor nurses him
- 1926 — Eleanor starts teaching in New York City
- 1928 — FDR elected governor of New York
- 1932 — FDR elected president of United States; Eleanor is first lady
- 1933 — Eleanor holds her first press conference
- 1935 — Eleanor begins writing "My Day" column
- 1943 — Eleanor travels to South Pacific to visit troops
- 1945 — FDR dies; Eleanor appointed UN delegate
- 1957 — First of many trips to meet with world leaders
- 1960 — Endorses future president, John F. Kennedy
- 1961 — JFK appoints Eleanor to head UN delegation
- 1962 — Eleanor Roosevelt dies

# TIMELINE OF THE WORLD

Statue of Liberty is dedicated	1885
Basketball invented	1891
Wright Brothers' first flight	1903
<i>Titanic</i> sinks and 1,503 people die	1912
First movie theater opens in the United States	1913
World War I begins	1914
Russian Revolution begins	1917
Band-Aid invented	1920
Bubble gum invented	1928
Stock market crashes	1929
First broadcast of the radio show, "The Lone Ranger"	1933
Hitler invades Poland; World War II starts	1939
Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor; U.S. enters WWII	1941
World War II ends	1945
Citation wins the Triple Crown	1948
Queen Elizabeth II is crowned in England	1952
First Barbie doll sold	1958
Miniskirt first worn	1960

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