

The Matilda Effect

Who picks up the pen that writes history?

Who started the mystery of the half forgotten, erased, in a blaze of white smoke to choke her until her mind resigns to live without a name? Defamed, successes blamed on the men around her. Books found her a scribe for his erudite so he's cited, she's short-sighted. Despite her fight to marry mind and name, it's in vain, he already has the patriarchal patents complacent in the deals, the steels, of her inventions. It's the convention. It's how the game is played, his name displayed, his story reigns, history feigns, her story in flames, her work the ash that remains. Two can play at that game.

Who are they?

Did Ada need Babbage or was she the full package? Programming machines on the horizon's mist, that didn't yet exist, predicting Spotify playlists. She's listed as the thief of his glory in the eighteen forties, ignore these smears. Her ideas saw the war end early by two years.

Who are they?

Percy penned the preface of Frankenstein. It bore his sign, he wore authorship, he was worshipped for her successes, authors don't run around wearing pretty dresses. False guesses throughout their lifetime, but it was Mary who wrote SciFi.

Who are they?

Was Lamarr just a wife or the mother of WiFi? The star of the screen unseen by science. Asked the alliance to patent her invention. That was their intention until they took it for themselves.

Who are they?

Eighteen dollars and Eglin was squeezed out of her wrangler, hung out to dry by white women who wouldn't buy it off of her.

Who are they?

Watson and Crick were quick to snap up Franklin's photos, double-helix DNA, didn't bother to pay her credit even though she said it first. Accepted her Nobel Prize under the guise that men realised the discovery. Hypnotised the world to prioritise their names over hers.

Who are they?

Anning's fossils founded Darwin's evolution. Yet she was excluded from every institution despite them needing her consultation. She said in frustration "The world has used me so unkindly", remind me, why was she shut out when she shaped palaeontology?

Who are they?

Alice Ball bounced from Seattle to Hawaii, went to university, studied chemistry, then pharmacy, at twenty-three, made a cure for leprosy. Tragically died from Chlorine, survived by Arthur Dean who swapped in his name. How many geniuses are hidden in the white fog? How many black women overwritten in the epilogue?

Who are they?

If men want to fly high, Dorothy could get them higher. But she was denied the role of supervisor. NASA had her lead without a title. But the computer computed she was entitled. Worked by day, coded by night, machines took her job away, but she was too bright. She saw a future in Fortran, trained the other women, and won.

Who are they?

If they could split the atom why couldn't they split the credit? Or might the repercussions be too explosive? Might there be a collision if fission was her vision? Meitner left off the paper, but Meitnerium put on the table. A periodic period to punctuate her story, liberate history from the ties of his stories.

Lift these women up from the ashes. Frazzled puzzle pieces put together for the masses.

Show girls how much of the world women built. Tilt tainted history back to equality. Stand in solidarity with the women who shaped science, technology, engineering, and maths.

Pick up the pen and write history.