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Successor and a Fictional Predecessor

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### Successor and a Fictional Predecessor

During the 20th century and into the early twenty-first century, women were making headway in America after years of oppression: Women finally had their right to vote in 1912, the prohibition of discrimination based on sex was amended in 1972, and women could finally have a chance of making the same amount of money as of 2009. Due to the women of this time, little girls can grow up and read about women who have soared across the skies of possibilities and cause the earth to quake underneath their brilliance and resistance. Of course, women like these can be from the world you see around you or the world written in the world in fictional adventures that feel so real. Amelia Earhart was the first female pilot to fly across the Atlantic Ocean and Sophie Neveu - from the novel, *The DaVinci Code* by Dan Brown - is a female cryptographer for the Direction Centrale Police Judiciaire, both women of great stature in their careers for young girls to observe. These women have had troubled childhoods and additionally had misogyny be a hot breath on their shoulder as men peered down on them that would make a person crumble. In retaliation, they rose and crafted a legacy for themselves and became independent women that defy what their societies have ordered them to be and lead an example for the future generation of women.

In the most vulnerable parts of your life, you are thrown with things that can shape you into your future self and for most people, their childhood is something that often speaks fondly of. On the other hand, you can have a childhood like Amelia's or Sophia's. In Amelia's childhood, she - to be frank - forced herself to be the adventure to escape from the tremors of childhood. Earhart, along with her little sister Muriel, had parents that weren't together; her father, a struggling lawyer with a later alcohol problem, and her mother being alone and having to have her children sent away to their grandparents ("Amelia Earhart biography"). As a young girl, Sophia Neveu had a broken family like Earhart with her entire family besides her grandfather being killed in a car accident, leaving her without parents, a grandmother, and a little brother. When Earhart was with either of her parents, there was always a mess for them to try to be untangled from, especially with her father soaking up any money with spirits that did nothing to help his image for his little girls. Being secure in her childhood was something Neveu had to never worry about,

but she had to deal with the weights of being the only granddaughter of Jacques Saunière, a curator at the Louvre who always tested Sophie's knowledge and was always teaching and testing thoroughly during her childhood (Brown). See, Earhart - for her time - was always discouraged from being more adventurous and outgoing, to be a true woman than an Indiana Jones per se. Earhart's grandfather, specifically, was always the one to critique Amelia's way of trying to be like a boy with her behaviors and to try to get her to act like a housewife, not an animal in his eyes. Saunière never discouraged her motivations to be more and smarter than anyone else, but he was a very secret man and never allowed her to be curious about her grandfather. Often, he would leave a rose on his office doors - sub rosa - to prevent her from going in his office to learn more about him than the world. This put a barrier between her and her grandfather, especially when the secrecy caused them to fall apart miles away from each other. These young women were forced to listen to adults, but that never stopped Amelia from hunting rats, horseback riding, and looking for insects ("Amelia Earhart biography"). While Sophia moved on and be the best she can be with what she got.

With Amelia being the first female aviator to fly across the Atlantic solo and Sophie being one of the best cryptologists among old men in the Direction Centrale Police Judiciaire, they are viewed as being in a man's world when their rightful place is in the kitchen making supper. Misogyny for many women, besides these amazing characters, is something that is a familiar foe and many choose to take it in stride while many cower. Despite having their careers not being built for them, Earhart and Neveu made it work for them and to thrive in their circumstances. Earhart hoped that by showing her skills and positive yet brave attitude, she would be able to curve the stereotypes of women, but also allow people to realize that women can work in every field. In contrast to the number of women in the aviation that work behind a desk, Amelia was one of the few who dared to defy social norms, wear clothing that didn't quite fit, wearing a helmet that wasn't built for fashion and still making it look good, not for men to approve of, but for women to gaze at what it meant to own who you are. Neveu also made suits look good, but also brilliance and according to Captain Bezu Fache, Director of the DCPJ, Neveu was, "one of the biggest mistakes the DCPJ has ever made." (Brown). Yet that never stopped Neveu from waltzing into the investigation of her own grandfather's murder and risking everything she has ever worked for to find out what his murder meant in a bigger picture laid in the works of Leonardo DaVinci. As a successor for little girls to look up to, Amelia made speeches about women's rights and equal gender roles in the workplace. In one speech, Earhart remarked that "The use of science has not only decreased the work in the home. It has provided economic opportunities for women no one ever dreamed of. Today, millions of women earn a living in ways made possible by new kinds of industry. Probably no scientific development is more surprising than how it has brought growing economic independence for women." (Earhart). Earhart was a

big advocate for Women's Rights and she stood by her word and she stood by her image in what she was able to do with the time she had in the area she was put herself in. In the novel, the reader doesn't get to see the side that is all for women's rights, but like Earhart, she stands by her image of being a woman in a man's world which the reader notices in the first few chapters of the story. When the character is first introduced, she is the one to proudly say that they are wrong in the direction they are taking and also manages to sneak a criminal out of the Louvre and lead the Captain of the French Police Force on a wild monkey chance, to outdo what a man could ever do. In their lifetime, anyone can see their share of hate, but when someone puts themselves out there, they risk their health to be better, yet Sophia and Amelia took the hate with strife and made the shadow cast upon them and used it to keep themselves warm at night on their adventures.

Of course, when your story ends, people are going to have to remember you for something, whether it be related to Jesus or defying what had been done before. Even though Earhart died (or was proclaimed dead) in 1939, her legacy as one of the most influential aviators in America still lives on. She influenced many young women to become aviators and seriously effected how women were seen. Sophie has a legacy in the sense that she is related to Christ. Her entire family is a legacy story for Christianity, without her even realizing it, yet this doesn't change her to the point of being cockier, but this makes her feel taken down and centered after all these years not sure of who she is. Amelia Earhart has a museum in Atchison, Kansas in her childhood home, dedicated to preserving her legacy and educating people about this famous aviator. This home includes artifacts and memorabilia of hers and her family's. Many families visit the museum every year. Even though Sophie does not have a museum in her honor, she was one of the only women in the French police force, and she was much better at her job than most of those men were. She not only solved the mystery of the Holy Grail, but she also discovers the mystery of her own family, something she had been wanting to discover for years. Amelia Earhart also has many books about her and her life. Some of them were written by her sister, Muriel. At the end of the novel, after her years of sacrifice, Neveu gets her family home together, she gets her little brother back - to share stories and tales of their time apart, and a grandmother who tells her the thing her grandfather did, which she is knowable to settle down with security in who she is, now able to build her legacy with her curiosity sated for now (Brown).

Amelia Earhart and Sophie Neveu, kindred spirits from a different period, yet they were both fighting for the same thing, to be seen and to not be discriminated against in the workplace because you are a woman. However, despite the hardships in childhood, and the persecutions in the workplace, both of these women crafted and shaped a great legacy for themselves, and became very memorable characters for doing just that. Sophie and Amelia will continue to be recognized in real life and fiction as wonderful, empowering

women who, despite the odds, did what they had set out to do in this life, and let others see what a woman is capable of besides cooking a man's dinner for them. For honoring their message, little girls can now see how great it can be for a woman who can own their imperfections, can deal with the hate, and can do anything with whatever cards they get.