

HIGH COTTON

BY PJ DUNN

Chapter 1, West Africa, May, 1855.

Twelve-year-old Manni helped his mother, Mala, as she was stripping bark from a eucalyptus tree, then winding the fibers into strands that she would later weave into flat sheets for Manni and his brother to use as sleeping mats. It was a very hot and humid day in the West African Empire of Yoruba. Manni's younger brother, Jalani, was playing with some of the other younger children, next to the riverbank. Manni called to Jalani to get away from the riverbank, it was very dangerous. Just last week, one of Jalani and Manni's friends was attacked and killed by a crocodile. Danger was

always lurking somewhere in the bush of Nigeria or as Manni realized, next to the riverbank, waiting its opportunity to create havoc for the villagers.

Manni was quite a seasoned hunter. As he did many mornings, Manni would wake just at dawn and leave before Mala and Jalani awoke. He would go upriver, where the waters were shallow and were a safe place to cross to the other side. In the shallow water, Manni didn't have to worry about hippos hiding. Hippos were very aggressive and very deadly. He also didn't have to be concerned about an attack from deadly pirhanas. In the shallow water a school of pirhanas was easy to see, and simply beating on the surface of the water would frighten the school away and since the water was moving, the chances of walking up on wildlife was slim. Once across, Manni would move

stealthily up the river a short distance, to a favorite watering hole of the local wildlife. The pool of water was about 100 feet across, and had some very deep holes next to the bank and sheer rock sides. There was however, a rather shallow beach-like area where the animals would come to get water. Manni hid himself among some high grass and brush close to the water's edge. This morning, Manni was in for a special surprise. A small herd of gazelle wandered up to the watering hole. A large male ventured over near where Manni was hiding. He readied his spear and at the right moment he thrust the sharp point of the spear into the side of the gazelle. The commotion frightened the rest of the herd and they ran. The male tried to run also but didn't go far. Manni gave chase, caught up with the gazelle, pulled his knife from his side and finished

the kill. Manni made his way back to the village with his prize gazelle. This would provide food for the family for several days.

The rainy season was beginning in West Africa and Manni's family would try to shelter themselves from the rain, just as most animals would do. Mala and the boys remained inside their hut, playing, and singing, assured that the dangers of the forest were far away.

But, today, danger would come from an unusual source. Manni heard a commotion. People were screaming and running as Yoruba warriors stormed the village, rounding up all who appeared to be in good health and physically able to work. The young men, and the young women, were especially valuable to the Yoruba King. They would bring a good price with the Dutch slave traders. The

warriors took Manni and Jalani, but their mother was too old and was left at the village. About twenty people were herded together; their hands tied, and then tied in a chain formation as they were taken toward the boats moored at the riverbank. Many of the villagers knew what was happening and the uncertainty of their future as slaves was terrifying.

The captors were ruthless, and to them the villagers were simply captured prey, animals being taken to the market. Loaded into the boats, the villagers were taken down river, about eighty miles, to Lagos, a seaport where slave traders anxiously awaited their arrival. The trip was nine hours of pure torture. No food, no water, no stops to care for personal needs, beatings with whips for those who would cause trouble, and abuse occurred constantly. The younger of the females were not

molested because that would then damage the goods and reduce the price the King could receive. The more mature women, however were subjected to horrible abuse. Small children and babies would not survive. The crack of the bullwhip was a reminder. They were now enslaved, and subject to the will of others.

Upon their arrival at Lagos, Manni and Jalani could see the large ships anchored in the harbor. A sight they had never seen. About eight other boats were also docked ready to sell their slaves. There were men on the docks watching as the people were removed from the boats. Manni was amazed to see so many with white skin. The only other white skin he had seen was a missionary who came to the village. The slave traders immediately began an attempt to buy those they perceived as prime slave

material. Manni realized they were nothing but a product being sold for money.

One of the buyers stood out from the others. He was a Dutchman with long black curly hair and an almost clean appearance. His speech and mannerisms were father-like as he took part in the bidding for the twenty slaves. Manni thought he looked kind, but that was all a facade. Hannibal was his name and he was known by the other slave traders as one of the most brutal of all. Two others stood with Hannibal, as he surveyed the new crop of potential slaves. He walked over to several young males and females grouped together, in an attempt to comfort each other and hoping the buyers would ignore them. Hannibal pulled one young female from the group. Holding her by her hair at arms length he looked her over. He then shoved her

toward the other two men who began to strip her clothing and left her standing in front of all, naked. Hannibal turned back to her, looked once again, and pushed her away. She was rejected.

Hannibal reached out to the same group, taking a male, then pushing him toward the other two men, who immediately stripped him. The men then began to make gross comments, bringing laughter from the buyers huddled around. Hannibal moved him to the side with the slaves he wished to purchase. Hannibal looked at a woman standing alone. She was probably 18 or 19 years old, and was holding a small child. He knew the child would never survive the journey to America. Hannibal signaled to one of his men and pointed to the baby. The man grabbed the child from the mother and amid her screams and protests, drew a knife and

slaughtered the child. There was no use wasting time, space or food on one who would not survive anyway. The two men then pulled the woman over behind some crates, where she was beaten and abused. and then left her lying on the ground. The woman began to crawl out from behind the crates. Manni, Jalani, and another man, helped the woman up and quickly surrounded her by the other men and women in the group of 50 or more that Hannibal had selected.

Manni saw Hannibal reach out his hand to one of the warrior captors, and then they were all herded toward one of the large ships next to the dock. They were led up the gangway to the deck of the ship called the Albatross. There they were stripped naked and forced down some steps into a dark, damp, area in the hold of the ship. The space

had only four feet of head space, and most of the captives could not stand upright. Manni and the other men and older mature women were placed in one compartment and the young women were placed in another, for their safety. The smell was horrible. The heat was almost unbearable. The only light came from three small openings near the ceiling of the compartment. Manni could see to the outside through these openings. Inside the compartment, Manni saw there were others already there. Manni and Jalani looked for a place where they could sit on the floor. Scared and hungry, the boys huddled in a small corner space. The compartment was very crowded. There was only room to sit and not to lie down. Manni discovered five wooden barrels near the door opening of the compartment. These barrels contained the only

water source for all the captives. A short while later, Manni heard a noise and the door to the compartment opened and two men came in, each carrying a wooden bucket. There was a stirring among the slaves as the two men pushed and kicked their way over to where the barrels stood. No one moved, as the men poured the contents of the buckets onto the floor. They turned to walk to the door, but still no one moved. They only looked intently at what the men had poured in the floor. When the men reached the door, the slaves all converged on the food the men had poured out. Manni realized he and Jalani had to push their way through the mass of people to get the food they needed. Therefore, they joined in scratching and fighting for just a morsel of food. When the food was gone, the boys made their way through the people

back to the corner.

CHAPTER 2, Tamar, June, 1855

A few moments later, a woman crawled up to Manni and Jalani. In the dim light she stayed there on her hands and knees, staring at them. When she finally spoke, it was a dialect the boys didn't

understand. She appeared very frustrated. A man sitting nearby leaned over and spoke, “she wishes to thank you for saving her life.” Manni and Jalani could not speak, but just looked at her. The man nearby spoke again, “she may regret you saving her, if she ends up in a Jamaican seasoning camp.” “What is a Jamaican seasoning camp?” Jalani asked. “Shhh. Be quiet Jalani.” Manni said. The woman spoke again and the man listened, then he spoke. “She says her name is Tamar. Her baby is now dead and she doesn’t know where her husband is. She wants to know your names. My name is Autu.” “We are Manni and Jalani.” Manni told Autu. Everything was quiet. Tamar began to lie down, as much as possible, curling into a ball, and placing her arms and head across the laps of the boys. Then she began to cry, and cried for a long

time. Manni rubbed her hair as she lay there, but that wasn't much comfort. Tamar tried to stay near the boys. She tried to comfort them, and would try to grasp handfuls of food to give to the boys when the food was poured on the floor.

Manni and Jalani could sense the motion and knew the ship was no longer moored to the dock. They could barely see out the three small openings. They could no longer see the masts of other ships or any structures on the dock. They were underway. Manni and Jalani could not imagine where they might be going. The only way to determine day and night was light coming through the three small openings above. Manni tried to keep count of the days they were in this horrible place. Several days after leaving Lagos, three of the slaves in the compartment became violently ill and subsequently

died. That seemed to be a regular occurrence.

Occasionally, someone would come into the compartment and take three or four of the slaves to the deck above where they would perform menial tasks such as mopping, sweeping, and just general cleaning. If they performed well, they would receive extra food and be taken back up to the deck again. Poor performance would get the slave beatings, or whippings. Sometimes those taken to the deck did not return. Manni heard some of the men say those that did not return were shark food. Manni and Jalani had never seen a shark, but the stories they had heard were terrifying.

One day, a man came to take three slaves to the deck. Manni was chosen. It had been over a week since Manni had seen the outside or sunlight except through the three small openings. When he

emerged from the compartment, the sun was so bright; he had to shade his eyes. The ocean breeze was wonderful. He was given clothes to put on, and instructed as to what to do. Manni was assigned the task of cleaning the floors in the Captain's cabin. Captain Hannibal expected perfection. Manni was instructed well and began his task. He worked hard, and was doing a good job. He was busily scrubbing the floor on his hands and knees, when Captain Hannibal came in. He was yelling loudly at a man who followed him through the door. Not at all the father-like man Manni first saw on the dock several weeks ago. Manni came to realize the man Hannibal was yelling at was the Captain's cabin boy. Manni did not know what a cabin boy was. He pretended not to listen to their argument, but he hung on every word. Manni learned that the work he

was doing was what the cabin boy should have been doing and instead of doing his job himself, the cabin boy had Manni brought in to do it. He could then go to entertain himself drinking and gambling with the other crewmembers.

“Maybe this slave boy here should have your job,” the Captain said. “You are of no use to me. Go to the Mate and he will reassign you to another job.” The man left the cabin. Captain Hannibal looked at Manni, “Do you think you could handle the job of keeping my quarters clean and orderly?” the Captain barked. Manni could not believe what he just heard. But, what about Jalani? He couldn’t leave him in that hell hole. Manni responded to Captain Hannibal, “Yes sir. I know I could perform the job. But I have a younger brother, who is still in the hold of the ship with the other slaves.” The

Captain leered at Manni, “You mean you would go back to the hold with the other slaves, if your brother has to stay there?” Manni started to reply, but the Captain spoke up. “What is your name?” “My name is Manni and my brother is Jalani,” Manni replied. “Where did you learn to speak this language so well, Manni?” The Captain asked. “A missionary came to our village when I was nine years old, and he taught my brother and me.” Manni said. Everything was quiet for a long moment. “I will have your brother taken to the Mate and instruct him to find your brother a job to do, if you will become my cabin boy.” the Captain offered. How could Manni refuse? The Captain reached back on his desk, picked up a stocking cap, and he tossed it to Manni. “Now you will look more like a sailor.”

Manni and Jalani were given their own quarters. The boys had never had a space to call their own and though the beds were simple rope hammocks, the boys were thrilled. The food was not great but much better than the food in the hold. They were given free reign of the ship to go where they wished. Jalani was assigned the job of barrelman or lookout. The lookout was sometimes called a barrel man, because the crow's nest structure looked similar to a barrel. Jalani spent most of his day in the crow's nest, high above the deck of the ship. Even though he was high above the deck, and the sea winds were blowing, the other crewmembers could hear him sing the songs of his native land. They enjoyed listening to his soothing voice every day. Manni worked hard and was very diligent in his duties as cabin boy. The Captain was

well pleased with his choice. Early one morning, Manni heard the Captain telling the mate, Silas, to bring up two women from the hold. Some help was needed in the Galley. Manni did not know how the Captain would react, but he spoke up anyway.

“Captain Hannibal, sir.” “Yes Manni, what is it?” the Captain responded. “In the hold, sir, is a woman, Tamar. She is a good woman and would make a good helper in the galley.” “Now, what would make you say that, Manni? Just how would you know?” the Captain asked. Manni explained to the Captain, who she was, and about her baby being killed, then she was abused. The Captain stood silently for a moment and spoke to the mate, “Bring her up, Manni is a good judge of character. We will see how she does.” Tamar was brought up to the deck. She was still naked, and some of the crew made

remarks to her because she was a beautiful lady. Manni hurriedly found some clothing to cover her, and make her more comfortable. She was taken to the galley along with another woman, named Kiki. Though the galley was hot, long hours, and the work hard, Tamar was very thankful to Manni for his help. She always tried to do special favors for Manni and Jalani.

Manni and Jalani had a talent of entertaining. When the missionary visited their village, he taught the boys to beat out a rhythm and dance and to sing songs of the missionary's homeland, which oddly enough was Holland. It was the same as the Captain.

Late one evening, the boys had completed their work for the day and they were in their quarters. Tamar was with them. They were tapping

out their rhythm and singing songs of Holland, when the Captain and the Mate happened to walk by.

Stopping at the door, the Captain listened for a few moments. He opened the door, and Manni, Tamar, and Jalani immediately stopped singing. "Please do not stop," the Captain said. "It has been many years since I have heard the songs of my homeland."

Manni, again, saw the father-like figure he had seen on the dock that day. The facade has fallen away.

Chapter 3, The Atlantic Ocean, June, 1855.

The ship had been on the journey for about a month, and had weathered storms and rough seas. Captain Hannibal developed an unusually close relationship with Manni and Jalani, and even with Tamar. This had never happened before and he tried to deny it even existed. The first week in June, the skies became more ominous, the seas rougher than had been experienced since leaving the coast of Africa. Manni and Jalani became very

frightened, but they knew that Captain Hannibal was a well seasoned and experienced sailor and he would guide the ship through this storm also.

Jalani went to the main mast and climbed to the Crow's nest to get a better look at the storm.

Manni busied himself cleaning in the Captain's cabin, trying to keep his mind off of the approaching storm. Tamar came by worried about the storm, but Manni assured her that Captain Hannibal would take care of them and they would weather the storm. A while later, the Captain came into the cabin and taking a look around asked Manni, "where is Jalani?" Manni turned to look at the Captain and replied, "He was going up on the deck to get a better look at the storm." The Captain tensed, turned and ran from the cabin. Manni and Tamar followed him, thinking Jalani was in trouble

for going onto the deck. When they exited onto the deck the wind was unbelievably strong and the rain felt like being pelted with rocks. Manni stayed next to the door, Tamar inside, as the Captain ran, fighting the strong winds and rain, to find Jalani. When he reached the main mast, he could hardly see. He tried to look up to see the crow's nest, but the wind driven rain was limiting his view. The Captain began to climb the main mast, calling out to Jalani, struggling harder against the wind and the driving rain. The Captain looked up. The crow's nest was gone. He cried out loudly, "Jalani."

The storm raged through the night, but the next morning, the clouds were clearing and the sun rose above the horizon. The Captain called for the Mate to come to his cabin. He instructed the Mate to take care of the cleanup and to get the ship back on

course. He closed the door and remained in the cabin for several days, not even allowing Manni to enter, and refused all food. The Captain stayed in the cabin alone. He asked the First Mate to bring him several bottles of rum. He had to somehow ease the pain he felt. Manni would sit on the deck, looking up to where the crow's nest should be, and thinking of Jalani. The Mate had some of the slaves in the hold to gather the bodies of those who had drowned during the storm, and throw them overboard. In addition to Jalani, two other crewmembers had also perished in the storm.

Tamar would stand outside the door to the Captain's quarters, talking to him, singing to him, but he never responded to her. Several days passed, and the Captain emerged from the cabin, never mentioning Jalani to Manni. Tamar was

outside the door, when he came out, and the Captain, never saying a word, hugged her.

The ship was back on course and should arrive at it's destination within a week. Several of the Albatross' crew members worked to rebuild and install a new crow's nest and a lookout was assigned to keep watch. The ship was entering an area of the ocean known for the presence of pirates. Lookouts were posted around the clock. Three days passed and in the late afternoon the lookout, or barrelman, called out in a loud voice. "Land ho!" He had seen land on the horizon. Many of the crew ran up on deck to try to spot the land ahead. It was a beautiful sight after being on the ocean for almost two months.

Manni looked closely until he finally spotted what he thought was land. Then loudly and almost

in a panicked state, the lookout yelled, “ship to the starboard, ship to the starboard side.” The Captain and the Mate quickly came to the deck. Looking off to the right, several miles to the north, they could see a schooner similar to the type sometimes used by Pirates. The Mate climbed up to the crow’s nest, but even with a spyglass, he could not identify the ship.

In the center of the slave ship was a large cannon on a turret. The Captain ordered, “man the gun,” and had the crew to turn the cannon so that it was facing to the North, just as a precautionary measure. A schooner could travel much faster than the larger cargo ships and it wasn’t long until it was close enough for the Mate to identify the ship. She was flying a Union Jack. She was a friendly British vessel and not a pirate ship. Tensions eased

on the deck of the ship.

The Captain and the Mate walked toward the bow of the ship to view the land in the distance. Manni walked with them, listening to their conversation. It appeared that the land was the island of Puerto Rico, but the Albatross was scheduled to dock in Jamaica. Manni had heard of the horrors of Jamaican seasoning camps, where arriving slaves destined to go to South America, were 'trained.' The training consisted of several months of degradation, starvation, and physical and sexual abuse in an attempt to break the spirit of the slave, much like breaking a horse. They were conditioned to perform duties and tasks without question or hesitation. Half of the slaves sent to these camps did not survive. Slaves going to North America were not subjected to this 'seasoning.'

Manni did not know where these slaves were going, or where he would be going. “Is Jamaica where we are going?” Manni asked the Captain. There was a very long pause. Manni felt as if his heart was pounding in his throat. His heart was pounding so hard he could see his clothing move. Finally the Captain spoke, “No Manni, we are going to the Americas, North America. We are going to a place called Charleston, in the Carolinas. You will see in the next few days.” Manni felt a relief sweep over him.

The Albatross docked at Port Royal, Jamaica, to replenish supplies and for a short break from almost two months at sea. The crew was anxious to visit the local pubs and to associate with the local women. The Captain left the ship with the first group of the crewmembers. It wasn't long before they

found a bar and began to indulge in Jamaican brew. Many of the bar patrons were slave traders, ready to purchase slaves to fill their seasoning camps. Captain Hannibal was approached by buyers, wishing to purchase the slaves he had just brought from Lagos. The Captain at first refused, telling the buyers his cargo was bound for North America, but finally relented and agreed to sell ten of his slaves to the Jamaican buyers. When the Captain returned to the ship he instructed the Mate to allow the buyers, who would arrive the next morning to select ten slaves from a group the Mate would select for them to choose from. The Captain retired to his cabin to sleep and recover from a night of Jamaican rum and women.

The buyers arrived at mid-morning and began to view the group offered to them and began to

select the candidates they wanted for their seasoning camp. One of the buyer's attention was drawn to Manni and he was forced into the group selected. The Mate objected. The buyers threatened the Mate and he allowed them to take Manni along with the other nine selected. After leaving the ship, the ten slaves were loaded into a wagon and headed for the Jamaican countryside and the seasoning camp.

Early that afternoon Captain Hannibal woke from his sleep and made his way up to the bridge, expecting to find Manni there with the Helmsman. When he discovered Manni was not there, he began searching the ship. The Boatswain approached the Captain and told him of seeing Manni among the slaves taken by the Jamaican buyers. The Captain was furious and taking three of

the sailors with him left the ship to search for Manni. It seemed that everyone in Port Royal knew the location of the seasoning camp, so it was not too difficult for them to find it. Confronting the director of the camp, Colonel Gomez, the Captain demanded Manni be returned to him. Gomez refused, at which point, the Captain and the three sailors all drew pistols aiming at the Colonel's head. Gomez led the Captain and his men to the enclosure where the ten slaves were beginning their processing into the seasoning camp. The door was unlocked and the men entered. Captain Hannibal immediately saw Manni, on his knees in the middle of the yard. He did not have on a shirt and the Captain could see the red stripes and the whelps from the whip. "He is a twelve year old child," the Captain yelled angrily. He rushed toward the Negro holding the whip,

ripped it from his hand, and began swinging the whip at Gomez and the two Negroes in the yard. "All of you," the Captain said to the nine slaves, "make your way back to the ship....Now!" One of the sailors went to Manni, picked him up and started toward the ship.

Once back at the ship, Captain Hannibal gave orders to the anchor detail, "weigh anchor, come ten degrees apart," The call came back, "anchors aweigh, Captain."

"All hands on deck, bear a hand, free the breast line." the Captain continued to order. Eventually the ship was underway. The Captain ordered the Boatswain to have Tamar go to care for Manni and sent the barrelman to the crow's nest to watch. He feared the slave buyers might attempt to pursue them. All was well until the next morning. As the sun

came over the horizon, the lookout called out loudly, “schooner approaching the stern.” The Captain came to the wheelhouse, and watched the schooner until it was close enough to identify. The ship was gaining ground rapidly. There was no identifying flag or pennant visible, which led the Captain to believe this, was either a pirate ship, or the slave traders. “Come about,” he ordered. “Man the gun. Prepare to engage.” The cannon was loaded as the ship turned, and the elevation was set. “Ready to fire, sir.” “Stand fast.” the Captain replied. The schooner was not equipped with any big guns, and a slave trading ship usually was not armed with a cannon. The schooner was now within range. “Fire when ready.” the order came. All of the crew was tense. They had only fired the cannon in practice, but never fired at another ship. Manni

would not stay in his quarters, but went to the wheelhouse and stood next to the Helmsman. Suddenly, an ear-splitting, boom from the gun shook the ship, and heavy smoke from the exploding powder filled the air. From their vantage point Manni and the Helmsman could clearly see as the projectile from the cannon fell just short of the schooner. "Ready the gun," the Captain ordered. "Fire when ready." The gunnery crew adjusted the elevation slightly. Another loud boom, and heavy smoke billowed from the cannon. The projectile struck the schooner. "Direct hit," the Helmsman called out. The entire crew was quiet. Manni watched as the schooner slowed rapidly. He saw the mast of the mainsail fall to the starboard side. The Captain ordered the Helmsman to continue to circle, and the crewmen to reload the cannon.

“Prepare to fire,” the Captain ordered. “Fire at will.”

A third loud boom rocked the ship and smoke billowed from the barrel of the big gun. “Direct hit,” the Helmsman called out. Mani could see smoke and fire on the deck of the schooner. The Helmsman then called out, “white flag, sir. They are surrendering.” “Come about, and prepare to take on survivors.” the Captain said. There was a twelve man crew on the ship, and four perished. The other eight were taken aboard the Albatross. The schooner was scuttled, and the crew of the Albatross watched her as she went down. Disarmed, the prisoners were forced to remain in a group at the stern of the ship. The Captain issued the order to set course to Jamaica. It took only one day to get in the vicinity of Jamaica. The eight men were placed in a dinghy and lowered to the water.

Captain Hannibal called out to the Helmsman, “set course for North America.”

CHAPTER 4, The Carolinas, June, 1855.

The trip from Jamaica to the North American coast took about three days. The first land seen was the Florida coast. Another two days of sailing up the coast, and the Albatross would be nearing Charleston harbor. The ship remained about three miles off the coast to avoid any hazards in the waters, and to await morning. The barrel man remained on alert for pirates, who would relish a cargo such as what the Albatross was carrying. The coastal waters were patrolled by American and British Navy ships, in an attempt to deter the pirates and prevent shipments of illegal cargo from being

delivered to the Americas. It was early morning, the sun had not yet appeared over the horizon, when the barrel man reported the beam from the lighthouse at Charleston Harbor. The Albatross entered the Charleston Harbor. Manni had never seen so many ships and so many people. It was shortly after dawn when a heavily armed frigate, the USS Meridian, flying an American flag came near the Albatross and called the order to come about and prepare to be boarded. The Frigate Captain and Captain Hannibal met on the deck of the Albatross. The Frigate Captain was very friendly as he and Captain Hannibal exchanged pleasantries, and then he spoke directly, "We have received a report of a sailing vessel by the name of the Albatross, staging an attack on a schooner, which was being used by Jamaican slave traders, in an

attempt to recover runaway slaves. In the attack, the schooner was destroyed and subsequently scuttled, and four of the slave traders crew members were killed. Would you happen to have any information about this incident, or was this ship involved in the altercation, Captain Hannibal?”

Hannibal replied, “slave traders, huh. Runaway slaves, huh. Why, no Sir. We are not aware of any such incident. You are aware that cargo ships such as this one, are armed with only deck guns, are you not sir?” Deck guns are small arms capable of a limited range, for close quarter fighting and are not capable of sinking a ship, particularly a frigate. The Captain took a quick glance around the deck of the Albatross, ignoring the cannon and turret, covered by an old canvas sail. “Yes, Captain Hannibal, I am aware of that fact, and I see that your ship is in

compliance.” Both Captains, had a smile on their faces. The two shook hands, and as the frigate Captain turned to go, he said, “sorry to have bothered you, Captain Hannibal.” “No bother, Captain. No bother at all. Godspeed, Captain.” Hannibal said.

It was June 19, 1855, when the Albatross docked at Sullivan’s Island and all slaves disembarked, except for Tamar, and were taken to quarantine areas. There they would remain for several weeks before being taken to the slave market. Tamar was to remain with the ship. In Captain Hannibal’s words, “she was needed.”

No one was looking for the day of the slave auction to arrive, but it was inevitable. It was Monday, July seventh, and the auction was to take place the next day. The crew was to prepare the

Negros for the inspection of the buyers, a sometimes cruel event none of the slaves was prepared for. This day the prep would begin. All slave would be washed and scrubbed mercilessly, both males and females. All the hair would be shaved from the body, a process called smoothing. Any cuts, sores or scars would be covered with a mixture of grease and black tar to hide any imperfections. Then the entire body would be rubbed down with grease or fat to make it shine. Once ready for show, the slave would be ushered to the auction block. Standing before the buyers, naked, and being examined, probed and prodded, over the entire body was a most dehumanizing event for males as well as females. The younger males commanded higher bids if the private parts were large in size and the females likewise were

more lucrative if they were virgin. The auction moved very quickly. The most desirable were males 12 to 18 years old, strong and agile. The females 14 to 16 years old, virgin, and having the appearance of good child bearing capabilities, were also in high demand.

It was Manni's turn on the block. Several buyers showed interest, especially because he could speak Dutch, and appeared to be rather intelligent. Captain Hannibal did not want to see Manni at auction, and Tamar begged him to please reconsider, but his rationalization was 'business is business.' The price paid for Manni, though he had just turned thirteen years old, was the highest of the day, by almost double. He had many years of potential usefulness ahead of him, and was "A good purchase." the buyer said. Manni was tagged and

taken to a holding pen, much like cattle. There, he was branded with the plantation's logo. The pain from the red hot iron was excruciating. Grease was then applied to the brand to mainly prevent infection, but it also helped ease the pain.

CHAPTER 5, Home sweet ...? July, 1855.

The auction being completed, the buyers made their way to the holding pens to claim their property. A well dressed man, looking to be fairly young, and a young lady approached the pen where Manni waited. The man walked toward Manni and pointed to him, without speaking, and motioned him to come with him. Manni was very uncomfortable being naked in front of the young lady, but she didn't seem to mind. After all, he was just property. Manni was handed over to a large Negro man and put on the back of a wagon with three others, one man and two women. He was given a shirt and a ragged pair of pants, but at least he was no longer naked.

There was no talking as the wagon began the journey to their new home. Leaving the slave market, Manni saw other slaves he recognized from the Albatross, on wagons and some walking to begin their new life.

They had left the market just before noon, and had traveled about an hour, when the wagon stopped beside a slowly meandering river. The large Negro man walked to the back of the wagon. He chained the two women together, then the two men. He grabbed Manni by the shoulder and led the two men back into some bushes. Both knew what they were there for and began to relieve themselves. Taking the men back to the wagon, he then led the women into the bushes. They returned a few minutes later.

He then walked all four to the river bank and

he began to wash his hands. Manni began to wash his hands also and the others followed suit. Back at the wagon, the man took a basket from under the seat, opened it and gave each of the slaves a pone of cornbread and a tomato. None of the slaves knew what it was but they began to eat. It was very tasty. The best tasting food they had eaten since leaving home. Each took a long handled dipper and dipped a drink of water from a bucket on the back of the wagon. After having the water, the four climbed onto the back of the wagon. Before getting back onto the wagon, the Negro man stopped, pointed at himself, and said, "Eli." Manni then pointed at himself also and said, "Manni." The others also repeated the process, giving their names. The women were Juma and Mara. The man's name was Yaffee.

Juma and Mara were young women, probably 14 or 15 years old. Yaffee was older, probably 18 years old.

Their journey continued for several more hours and by dusk, it appeared they had arrived at their destination. The new slaves were taken to the slave quarters, given food, and a blanket. Mani found a corner where he sat down, wrapped in his blanket, and quickly faded off to sleep.

Mt. Pleasant Plantation was a large farm of over 500 acres, just North of Charleston, owned by James and Elizabeth McPherson. Mani was awakened early, just at daybreak, by the overseer's horn. Most of the slaves were already stirring around. Field slaves worked from sunrise to sunset. Domestic or household slaves also arose around daybreak, but unlike the field help, their

days may not end at sunset. Field slaves worked six days and had Sundays off and sometimes part of the day on Saturday. The routine and the rules varied greatly from plantation to plantation. Mt. Pleasant Plantation was among the better of the plantations in treatment of slaves, but they were still slaves. They were still subjected to harsh treatment, limited food, poor sanitary conditions and sleeping accommodations. The slave quarters consisted of dirt floor huts made of whatever materials the slaves might find. A fortunate slave would be able to sleep in the same hut night after night. The huts offered very little protection from the elements.

Manni learned that the man who had bought him at the market was named Tom McPherson. He was the son of the farm owners and the young lady at the market was his sister, Madeline. Eli came

looking for Manni and the others, and assigned them to their jobs. Yaffee was sent to work in the cotton fields. Juma was sent to the kitchen, and Mara was to be the personal slave of the McPherson's daughter, Madeline. Manni awaited the decision of what his job was to be. Eli took Manni to the barn or warehouse area. He was left with a man named Malachi, or Mal, as the others called him. Mal looked at Manni as several others began to gather around. As was customary, new arrival slaves were renamed by the other slaves. "What could we call this young man?" Mal asked. The others laughed. "He doesn't appear to be much." a slave with one eye replied. "Kind of reminds me of the old hound dog, laying out yonder under that tree." another said. Mal spoke up, "well, yeah, he reminds me of a little pickaninny, being

carried out in the cotton field by his mammy. Yeah, so I know what we'll call him. We will call him, Scooter. So Manni became Scooter. Scooter became the latest addition to the crew.

Mal and his crew at the warehouse took care of loading, unloading, and storing, the cotton bales brought in from the fields. They stored any crops harvested and brought in. Mal and his crew were also responsible for all of the livestock on the farm, those for sale and those used for food on the farm.

Scooter was assigned to help a fellow named Leonard, who the others called Lenny. Their job was to care for the livestock; cattle, pigs, goats, and horses. Work began at sunrise with getting feed to the mangers for the cows and getting the cows into the stalls so the milkmaids could begin the task of milking. Thirty-five cows were milked twice a day. In

addition there were eight goats to be milked. Once each day, Lenny or Scooter would have to go to the kitchen for any food scraps that had accumulated to mix with some grain and feed the pigs. There was always work to be done with the cattle and the horses. Horses were used by the overseers out in the fields, and the McPherson's had personal horses for sport and entertainment. Madeline McPherson had two horses. One named, Buttermilk that she would ride almost daily with some of her girlfriends. Her other horse, a thorough bred, was being trained to race at the track in Beaufort. When Madeline would arrive at the stable, Lenny or someone would have to stop their work to saddle her horse, and a horse for any friends she brought with her. Madeline was always respectful to the slaves. Her friend, Abbie, came to ride one day, and

the horse she wished to ride was not ready for her. Scooter was rushing to get the horse ready, but didn't want to neglect his other duties. Abbie called to Madeline, "can this nigger not work any faster. My father would take him to the whipping post." Madeline was very upset with Abbie's remark. "I am so sorry Scooter." Madeline said, and then she turned to Abbie, "I have changed my mind, and I do not wish to ride today. You may go home, Abbie." and having said that Madeline walked back toward Pleasant Ridge, the plantation home, leaving Abbie standing there dumbfounded. Scooter and Lenny were both surprised and pleased.

CHAPTER 6, Madeline my Madeline, Spring,

1856.

A nice warm day in the spring, Madeline came alone to the stables. Scooter began saddling her horse as she watched and tried to talk to him. He was very quiet and only answered her, “yes and no.” “Do you not like me, Scooter?” Madeline asked. “Yes Ma’am,” Scooter replied. “Well, then, why won’t you talk to me?” Madeline questioned. “Just because my parents own the plantation, doesn’t mean you and I cannot be friends, does it?” “No Ma’am” Scooter replied. “Scooter! Can you say anything but yes ma’am and no ma’am?” Madeline was determined to get Scooter to talk. “Yes, Ma’am.” Scooter replied again. Finally the horse was ready to go. Madeline climbed into the saddle. “You will eventually talk to me you know.” Madeline

called back to him, as she rode away.

Scooter and Lenny rotated working Sundays to share the time off from work. One advantage to working the stables was Lenny and Manni were allowed to sleep in the hay loft of the barn. Both had collected cotton that fell from the bales to make themselves a bed, something most other slaves did not have. Sunday was not a really busy day. Feeding the livestock, and preparing for milking didn't take the whole day, so usually there was a break after noon until around 6 or 7 o'clock when evening milking took place. This Sunday was Scooter's day to work. Shortly after noon, Madeline came to the stables once again. "I need two horses saddled today Scooter." Madeline said. "Yes ma'am," Scooter replied. Madeline just shook her head, and went into the stable to see her

thoroughbred, and feed him some apples she had brought.

In a short time she came out of the stable, went to her horse, Buttermilk, began giving her some of the apples. “Scooter, take some of these apples and feed Cocoa. I am sure he would like some too.” Madeline instructed him. Scooter finally spoke out of curiosity, “who will be riding with you today, Ms. Madeline?” Madeline smiled, “why, you will, Scooter. He felt his heart began to pound and his knees weaken.

He could not ride with her. That could cause him all kinds of troubles. “Ms. Madeline, I, uh I, I cannot do that.” Scooter stuttered. “Yes, you can Scooter. Now climb on Cocoa, and we’ll go.”

Madeline ordered. “You wouldn’t want me to tell my father that you wouldn’t do what I asked, would

you?” “no, no, no Ma’am, Ms. Madeline, no Ma’am. It’s just..” Madeline interrupted Scooter, “no excuses, now, let’s go.”

Scooter was experienced at riding. When new horses were brought to the plantation, it was Scooter and Lenny’s job to break the wild ones and then train them for trail riding. Madeline looked at Scooter with a scowl on her face, so he relented and climbed on the horse. She then broke out a big smile. As they started toward the open pasture, Madeline’s brother, Tom, came around the corner. “Maddie,” Tom called. “Don’t stay gone too long. Remember, your birthday dinner this evening. You can’t be late for that.” Madeline giggled, spurred her horse and as the horse began to run, she called back to Tom, “we won’t be gone long, and Scooter will take care of me.” Then she sang, “Happy

Birthday to me, Happy Birthday to me.” Tom looked at Scooter and laughed. “Do take good care of her, sometimes she is a bit reckless. You better go now and catch up with her.” he said and he swatted Cocoa on the rear quarter. “And Scooter, mind your manners.” Scooter called back, “yes sir, Mr. Tom.” As they rode away, Tom thought to himself. Of all of the slaves on the plantation, Scooter was the most well mannered. He knew Scooter would take good care of Maddie.

They rode out toward a canal that meandered toward an area called Little River. The Mt. Pleasant Plantation property line ran along the canal to the intersection of a small stream, then followed the stream back toward Pleasant Ridge, the Plantation mansion, making the ride a complete round trip. As the riders came near the canal and stream

intersection, an alligator lunged from the high grass and brush along side of the trail, startling Buttermilk. The horse reared up causing Madeline to fall to the left rear. The gator began moving toward Madeline. Scooter leaped from Cocoa, landing between Madeline and the gator. His mind quickly went back to his village in Nigeria when the crocodile killed Jalani's playmate, and the terror and helplessness he had felt. He pulled a knife from the sheath hanging on his side and dove toward the gator. The gator's open mouth closed on Scooter's left forearm as he began the wildly plunge the knife into the head of the gator. After about 8 to 10 swings of the knife the gator's movements began to slow and his grip on Scooter's forearm began to relax. Madeline was extremely frightened, and screaming and crying. Scooter got his arm freed from the mouth of

the gator, and looked at the wound the gator had inflicted. It seemed to be pretty serious, but at least he could move his fingers and his wrist. Scooter stood and started toward Madeline, but she jumped up and ran to Scooter, grasping him around his neck, hugging him tightly and crying. “Are you ok, Ms. Madeline. Are you ok.” Scooter managed to say with a shaky voice. “Ms. Madeline, are you ok?” Scooter said as he pushed her back slightly to get a good look at her. She nodded her head, and then regained her grip around his neck, still crying. Suddenly, she let go of Scooter and looked down. There was blood everywhere. She screamed again loudly. “Oh Scooter, you are hurt. You are hurt, Scooter.” She looked at the wound and began to panic. “Oh my gosh Scooter, we’ve got to get help. I’ll help you back onto Cocoa. Come on now, I’ll help

you Scooter.” She went over, got Cocoa by the halter and led him to Scooter. She helped him to mount the horse. She then went to Buttermilk and tried to take her by the halter, but she was still spooked and began to try to rear up and back away. Scooter called to Madeline, “ she still sees the gator and she is scared. Remove the vest you are wearing and cover her eyes.” Madeline did as Scooter said and in a few seconds, Buttermilk calmed down enough, that Madeline could get mounted and turn her away from the gator. The two then made their way back to Pleasant Ridge. As they arrived at the mansion, Madeline rode on slightly ahead, screaming and crying to get help. Two of the household slaves heard her screams and ran to meet her. The male slave, when he realized what had happened ran on to Scooter, who

was now very weak, and barely hanging on to the horse. The female slave was Mara, Maddie's personal slave. Seeing the blood all over Madeline, Mara screamed, " Lawdy child. Lawdy Ms. Maddie, is you alright, honey." "Yes Mammy, Yes. I am okay. It's Scooter, he is hurt badly." Maddie managed to say. Tom had also heard her screams, and he and another of the male household slaves ran out to Scooter. Madeline ran inside the house and her mother and father met her as she came in. Madeline was covered with blood, and as soon as James and Elizabeth found out what had happened, and that she was alright, they too ran to Scooter. "He has lost a lot of blood." Tom told his father. James turned to one of the male slaves, "go to Little River, get the doctor, and bring him back here as soon as possible." then turning to Tom,

James said, "I want the best treatment we can get for him. He just saved our little girl." Tom remembered what he had thought earlier. "I knew he would take good care of her, Pa."

Scooter was taken into the mansion, and placed in a room that was more beautiful than he had ever seen. He was placed in a bed that was like sleeping on a pile of cotton down at the warehouse. One of the female house slaves began to clean his wound, while Mara washed his forehead with cool water. Mara just kept saying, "Lawdy Scooter, is you shore you's okay, sugar. Lawdy Scooter." Two hours later the doctor arrived. James met the surry as the doctor pulled up at the porch, and led the doctor to the room where the injured man was lying. The two slaves backed away from the bed and the doctor stopped suddenly. "James, he's a negro. You

don't want to spend good money on a Negro slave do you?" Madeline heard what the doctor said and in a fit of anger started toward him, screaming and wildly swinging her arms. Her father held her back. "Doc, you will help this Negro," he hesitated. "No, you will help this man, do you understand? If you refuse, you will never see another patient in Charleston. Am I being clear?" "Quite clear." the doctor replied. The wound on Scooter's left arm required many sutures and both bones in the arm were broken, but the doc said he should be fine if he could keep infection from setting up. Scooter woke up the next day to find Tom had left him a gift, a gator head. Several months passed before Scooter was well enough to return to the stables. Scooter became the riding partner for Madeline and her friends for the immediate future.

CHAPTER 7, Civil unrest, January, 1861.

Scooter started to become accustomed the routine of each day.

Although Scooter was well treated and received

many benefits the other slaves did not, he dreamed of becoming a free man. He even discussed his dreams with Madeline.

The work was hard, but the McPherson's and the overseers were rather lenient in most cases, as long as the work was done and the slaves were respectful. James McPherson, was very stern with the slaves, and always kept a 'respectful fear' among the slaves. When there was a problem, it was dealt with swiftly and very severely. It was not unusual for someone to be disciplined with the use of a cat-o-nine tails, and receive 50, 75, or 100 lashes.

Tom McPherson seemed to be assuming more control over the plantation. James and Elizabeth were getting on up in age and allowed Tom to direct more of the day to day operations.

January of 1856 brought some of the coldest weather to the Charleston area in 20 years. The slaves suffered greatly. The makeshift huts offered little protection from the elements. Some of the children could not withstand the cold and wet, and became ill and eventually died. A severe strain of influenza made matters even worse. Of ninety slaves on the Mt Pleasant plantation, eighteen did not survive the winter. James McPherson was also stricken with the fever, and due to his advanced age did not survive. His death was a severe blow to the plantation.

Tom became deeply involved in the slavery abolition controversy. Many of the northern states were advocating for an end to slavery, and southern plantation owners, like Tom, fought vigorously to maintain slavery, for without the slaves, the

plantations could not survive. There was talk among the slaves at Mt Pleasant about becoming free men and women, but only talk. News came from some plantations where the slaves revolted and much blood was shed. The Magnolia Plantation, not far from Mt Pleasant, experienced very severe violence when an abolitionist came to the area, inciting the slaves to rise up against the plantation owners.

James was the financial genius in the family and after his death, Elizabeth took over control of the plantation finances. The plantation fell upon hard times financially, and was rumored to be up for sale. Tom made attempts to handle all the problems, but eventually, the plantation was sold. With new owners, the plight of the slaves became much worse than before. The talk of emancipation was welcomed by the slaves at Mt Pleasant

plantation.

The tensions between the Northern States and the Southern States grew steadily worse. Many slaves would run away from their respective plantations and try to go to the Northern states. Runaway slaves became prey for ruthless bounty hunters, who received rewards for returning the runaways. Slaves many times were never returned to the plantations by the bounty hunters, but were tortured and killed.

The presidential election fostered much division and animosity between the slave owners and the abolitionist. Abraham Lincoln, who opposed slavery expansion into the new territories being annexed into the United States, defeated Steven Douglas for the presidency. Before Lincoln's inauguration, seven of the Southern States formed

the Confederate States of America and seceded from the Union. Lincoln perceived secession as being illegal, but Lincoln declared in his inaugural address, that civil war would not be initiated by his administration.

The Confederacy seized federal properties, land, and forts they claimed as belonging now to the Confederate states. A peace conference was consequently held, but no compromise could be reached. The remaining eight Southern States still rejected joining the Confederacy at that time.

On April 12, 1861, when Confederate troops attempted to take control of Fort Sumter, and met with resistance, the Confederate fired upon the fort, and the hostilities began.

The Civil War, or the War Between the States, as it was also called, continued for four years,

ending with a Southern surrender at Appomattox, Virginia, on April 9, 1865.

Once the war was ended, the problems of reconstruction took center stage. President Lincoln established the Freedmen's Bureau, to help now freed slaves begin a free life. The Bureau worked to help plantation owners rebuild their farms and to encourage the white plantation owners to work as business owners and the freed black slaves to work as employees. That was easier said than done. Many times Bureau Agents would find themselves between the two groups, fearing for their lives.

The former slaves at Mt Pleasant Plantation were now free men. Some of the former slaves simply walked away, but they had no job, no income, no place to live. Many remained where they were, because they didn't know what else to do.

They had never had to provide for themselves.

They didn't know how to look for work, and many knew only one trade, or how to perform one task.

Scooter, previously known as Manni, was now 20 years old, and looked forward to starting a new life. No more caring for livestock, no more living in a barn loft, trying to survive the harsh weather. Scooter had no worldly belongings, except for two changes of clothes, and the clothes were ragged and worn.

CHAPTER 8, Grand reunion, Spring 1876.

Scooter set out on a Sunday morning going 'who knows where,' carrying all of his possessions. One change of clothes, and his prized possession, a gator head, were all he had in a burlap bag. Some of the older freed slaves at Mt. Pleasant

Plantation tried to convince him it was a big mistake to leave, but he was determined to go. Scooter went toward the docks at Sullivan's Island, hoping to maybe find a job on a cargo ship. After all, he spent two months on a ship. Scooter went from ship to ship, but the hard feelings toward the Negroes was very evident, as he was turned down over and over. Scooter was walking the docks wondering if this really was a mistake. Then he saw a familiar face. It was Silas, the First Mate from the Albatross, the one who allowed the slave traders to take him eight years ago. Had it not been for Captain Hannibal, he might not be alive. It is very likely, he would not have survived the seasoning camps in Jamaica.

Scooter did not approach Silas, or allow him to see him, as he followed Silas down the dock. Scooter watched as Silas entered a bar. It was late

afternoon. Scooter waited outside the bar. Several hours passed, and Silas finally emerged from the bar, walking right by Scooter, but he did not recognize him. Scooter followed him back up the docks toward the main body of moored ships. Silas appeared to be a little tipsy as he swaggered up the boardwalk, but Scooter thought that could be his normal gait. It wasn't.

Silas turned and went up a gangway and headed to the deck of the ship. It was dark, and Scooter couldn't see the ship well, but he instinctively knew it was the Albatross. The sentry at the top of the gangway laughed loudly as Silas stumbled at the top and rolled back down the gangway about fifteen feet. Scooter chuckled too, as Silas looked like a complete idiot. Silas managed to get on deck and carefully make his way to his

quarters. Scooter called loudly to the sentry at the top of the gangway, "permission to come aboard, sir." The sentry looked closely at Scooter, and then replied, "Come aboard, son." Once on the deck, the sentry looked Scooter up and down. "You look familiar, young man. What is your name?" Scooter smiled slyly and said, "My name is Scooter. I was named Scooter because of my size. I was told I resembled a pickaninny." Scooter and the sentry both laughed. "Well Scooter, what can I do for you?" the sentry asked. "Is Captain Hannibal still the Master of this sailing vessel?" Scooter questioned. "He is. And may I ask how you know the Captain?" the sentry said as he struck a match to light his pipe. "Wait a minute, wait a minute." he said as he reached for the whale oil lantern hanging on a standard behind him. Holding the lantern close to

Scooter's face, the sentry declared, "Holy Mother Of God! Your name isn't Scooter. Manni, its Manni. I am Seamus, the boatswain's mate." Scooter remembered him. "It used to be Manni, but I was renamed by the slaves at Mt Pleasant Plantation." Scooter explained.

"You were just a child when you were sold on the auction block." Seamus hesitated. "The Captain was most regretful that he had let that happen. He still regrets it to this day. So, you are now a free man Manni, I mean Scooter."

"I would like to see the Captain. Do you think he would want to see me?" Scooter asked. "Oh, I am sure he would. You wait here, and I will go to his quarters and inform him you are here." Seamus said and left. Scooter looked out over the harbor, turned and looked toward the crow's nest. The hurt

welled up inside his chest as he thought of Jalani.

Tears filled his eyes. "It's me Jalani, I'm back."

Scooter whispered.

Seamus knocked on the door of the Captain's quarters and he heard a gruff "enter!" He opened the door and stepped just inside. "Captain, there is a young man at the gangway wishing to see you. He is looking for a job." Seamus said as he glanced around the Captain's cabin. In the dim light he could see on the desk next to the charts and nautical instruments, the stocking cap the Captain had given Manni, so he would look more like a sailor. "Have him come back in the morning," the Captain said gruffly.

"But Captain, I really think you may want to talk to this young man. I think he would make a good member of our crew." Seamus was almost

begging. “Seamus, when did you start telling me what I need to do? Alright. Bring him here, I will speak to him.” The Captain seemed agitated. The sentry hurried out to get Scooter and bring him to the Captain’s cabin. Seamus again knocked on the door and again the Captain bellowed, “Enter.” They entered the cabin. “What is it you want?” the Captain asked of the young man. “I am in need of a job,” Scooter answered. The Captain turned to look at Scooter, and sensed a familiarity, but He couldn’t determine what it was. “What is your name, son?” the Captain asked. “My name is Scooter.” he responded. The Captain asked the young man to come closer, into the light of the dim lamp. He stood there for several moments, not speaking. Tears formed in the Captain’s eyes. Picking up the stocking cap, he felt the material for several

minutes. He turned back and said, “Manni.” He tossed the stocking cap to Scooter, and said, “Now you will once again look like a sailor.”

CHAPTER 9, Back to sea, 1865.

The Captain looked a bit different than Scooter remembered. His face appeared more weathered, wrinkled, and his hair was gray. The Captain no longer stood tall. He was stooped slightly from back ailments that had been plaguing him for the past few years. Scooter was given his old quarters back, and worked as a deck hand, which pleased him, since he wanted to become a

seasoned and educated sailor.

The Albatross no longer engaged in slave trade, but transported sugar and other spices from the Caribbean to Charleston, Wilmington, Baltimore, and New York. The ship was scheduled to leave Charleston the next day to make it's deliveries up the North American Coast. For the next couple of years, Scooter worked the ship with Captain Hannibal, and was given more and more responsibility. He was promoted to the rank of Boatswain when Seamus retired. The Boatswain was the deck supervisor, who planned, scheduled, and assigned task to the seamen. The Boatswain also participated in emergency situations, such as injuries or fire on board. Boatswains carried a small silver whistle, which was used to send signals to the crew in emergencies, beginning and ending of work

shifts and meal times. The nautical slang for this whistle is the pippity dippity. Scooter occasionally would use his pippity dippity to jokingly make strange sounds, even play a tune and dance to entertain the crew. Scooter was believed to be the Captain's favorite crewmember, but he was still respected and revered by all the crew.

The Captain's health gradually grew worse, and the First Mate, Silas, and the Boatswain, Scooter, ran the everyday operations of the ship. The Captain was amazed at how well the two worked together to make the operation of the ship profitable. Silas and Scooter were not expecting praise or money for making the Albatross successful. They, as well as the remainder of the crew, had such a respect for the Captain they would not allow him to be let down.

Winters onboard a ship were very trying for a sailor in good health, and the winter weather weakened further, an already very weak, Captain Hannibal. Three days before Christmas, the Captain called for the First Mate and the Boatswain. Silas and Scooter went to the Captain's quarters. It was very chilly in the cabin, so Silas added wood to the potbellied stove in the corner while Scooter poured some rum in a stein for the Captain. The Captain asked both to sit next to his bunk.

“I know my time is short,” the Captain began. “Silas, you have been my First Mate for over twenty years, my friend, and my companion. Manni, you and Jalani, were the sons I never had and when we lost Jalani, I felt as though my life was over, but I still had you. When I allowed you to be placed on the auction block, I was trying to rid myself of the guilt

over Jalani, and I only succeeded in heaping more guilt upon my soul. Then, after all these years, God saw fit to return you to me, Scooter, and gave me another chance to be your family and you my family. I am growing weaker and soon I will no longer be with you.

I have here a document I had drawn up in Wilmington, when we were there several months ago. This document gives the Albatross to the two of you. However, I have had a slight change of mind. I do not wish for you to sail the Albatross. Shipping is not for the likes of you. You need a much better life and family.” The Captain looked at Silas, “open the small cabinet next to the chest, and hand to me the box inside. This box contains all the money and gold I have accumulated over the last forty years, except what I spent myself, mostly on

rum and women. It is a quite a substantial amount. There are twelve crewmembers besides the two of you. Share with your shipmates as you see fit. As for the Albatross, remove anything of value that you might sell or trade. Begin doing this right away. When my time is done, I wish to be placed on the bow of the ship, sails unfurled, ship headed to the East, past the horizon so no land is visible. At sundown, set fire to the ship, and I will go to the depths of Davey Jones Locker, with my ancestors, who have gone on before. Silas and Scooter, this is my wish.”

Silas and Scooter were speechless. Silas opened the box, and it was spilling over with coins and gold. Silas went up on deck to the Helmsman and gave the order to set sail for the nearest port, which was Wilmington. There the Albatross was

docked. The crew was informed of the Captain's wishes. Only two of the crew had families and both families were in Charleston. Silas and Scooter counted up the value of the treasure in the box, and then divided it equally among the fourteen crew. The crewmembers were told they could leave whenever they wished. Three left right away, but the other nine remained with Silas and Scooter. On New Years Day, the Captain died. Most of the equipment that had any value had been removed and sold at auction, bringing a hefty price. This money was then divided among the crew that remained. Scooter made arrangements with the crew of the windjammer, the North Star, to escort the Albatross out to sea, leaving at midday. At sundown, all crewmembers left the Albatross, except for Silas and Scooter. The Albatross was

lashed to the North Star. The crews headed the ships due East, as Silas and Scooter made sure Captain Hannibal's body was on the bow of the ship. A barrel of whale oil was poured onto the deck, and Silas and Scooter crossed over to the North Star. The ships were unlashd and just as the Albatross began to move away, a torch was thrown onto the deck. Scooter retrieved his whistle, and whistled a salute to the Captain. The North Star then fired seven deck guns, three times each. Watching from the deck of the North Star, the Albatross crew stood silent, as fire consumed the ship, and it sank into the depths, to Davey Jones Locker.

CHAPTER 10, Go west young man, January, 1869.

The North Star returned to port in Wilmington and after a round of appreciation to the North Star Captain and crew, the former crew of the Albatross said their good byes to each other. Silas was staying in Wilmington and purchased for himself a fishing boat and hired two of the former crew as his help. Scooter had no real plans, but wanted to get as far away from the sea as he could. He booked passage on a train to Illinois and set out on his

journey.

The South was still recovering from the war and was being inundated by Northerners, known as carpetbaggers. These carpetbaggers were here only to take advantage of whites, who had lost everything and blacks, who had nothing to begin with. Along with the arrival of the carpetbaggers, the emergence of the scalawags also complicated life in the post-war south. Scalawags were native southern whites, who, just like the carpetbaggers, were out to take advantage of the whites and the blacks.

Before leaving Wilmington, Scooter had purchased some fashionable clothing, and flashed money all around the train station, having expensive meals and expensive cigars. Shortly after boarding the train, Scooter was approached by

a well dressed, well spoken northerner, who himself was flashing money all around. Abraham Goldman was the epitome of a northern carpetbagger, and his con-artist experience and scamming abilities led him to zero in on Scooter.

Scooter had no knowledge of banks or of banking, or how to handle money and had been accustomed to thinking all well dressed white business men were honest. Abe Goldman, in his white suit and Panama straw hat, smoking a huge Cuban cigar, had to be an honest man, or so Scooter thought. Abe's most notable trait was a gold tooth that seemed to be accented by his dark black moustache. Scooter's luggage consisted of one bag containing two changes of clothes, his Gator head, and some toilet items and a smaller bag which Scooter kept close to him, containing all

of his money. The train ride was long and very tiring, and having someone to converse with helped to pass the time. Abe made himself available to Scooter, for just that purpose. Tomorrow the train would stop in St. Louis, for a two day layover, and Scooter was looking forward to being off of the train for a while.

Abe talked with Scooter extensively and walked with Scooter back to the dining car. He bought a very expensive meal for himself and Scooter. He then asked the waiter for two glasses of brandy. The only alcohol Scooter ever had was when he tried some rum on the ship. He didn't like the rum and didn't have any more. Scooter did not want the brandy, but Abe encouraged him to try it. Scooter took a small sip and found that the brandy was not that bad, and had a couple more sips. Soon

the brandy was gone and Abe promptly ordered another. Although Scooter didn't want to drink the brandy, he thought, what could it hurt, and Abe encouraged him. Scooter didn't want to insult his new friend. Scooter went back to his berth and lay down to rest, placing his small bag inside of the berth next to the wall, where he could curl up around it. Scooter was awakened the next morning as the train pulled in to the station at St.Louis. Scooter exited his berth and turned to retrieve his small bag, but it was not there. Scooter began to panic and tore all of the bedding from the berth. Travelers in the other berths, hearing the noise, got out of their berths. Scooter began to rip the bedding from the adjacent berths. The conductor came up and ordered him to stop. Two police officers arrived. Scooter was escorted from the train. He

attempted to reboard the train, but was prevented by the police officers. He then thought of Abe, and began to frantically search for him. Abe was no where to be found.

Scooter looked for the police officers and finally found them about 2 blocks away. He began to explain the situation to the officers and at first they listened, but when Scooter mentioned how much money he had in the bag, the officers laughed. One of them looked at Scooter and said, “yeah, and I am Andrew Johnson, President of the United States. Where would a negro get that kind of money?” They began to walk away, Scooter stepped toward them, taking one officer by the arm. The officer pulled away. “You better watch out boy. You gonna end up in jail, if you ain’t careful. You better just go on your way, now.” “Please sir, help me. That white man

stole my money.” Scooter pleaded. “You better be careful accusing a white man of stealing, nigger. Go on. Get out of here.” the officer said angrily. Scooter had been called that word before, at the plantation. The word never hurt as badly as just now. Just as he learned at the slave auction, he was just a piece of trash to them.

His money was gone, he had nothing but a couple of expensive cigars, and two changes of very fashionable clothes, and a gator head. He had no food and no where to sleep. No one following him around wanting to be his friend, because now, he had nothing. He wandered the streets of St. Louis, homeless and desolate. He wandered down an alley between a classy restaurant and a show club. Fancy dressed white folks were going in and out of the club and the restaurant. They ignored

him, or looked at him in disgust. As he leaned against a gas lamp post, a man walked by, reached in his pocket and threw a coin at Scooter. He couldn't believe that they thought he was on the street begging. Scooter stood for a moment, then reached in his pocket. There he found he still had his pippity dippity, or Boatswain whistle. He began to blow on the whistle making strange sounds, and then he blew a resemblance of a tune he had heard, and began to dance. People passing by would throw coins into a can he had found in the gutter. It wasn't long before he had enough money to get some food.

The next day he was back on the street corner in front of the show club, whistling and dancing, and the rich white folks kept throwing money in his tin cup. He had taken a couple of

breaks from dancing and wandered around. He went into a pawn shop. Scooter had never seen a pawn shop before, but as he looked around, he saw a harmonica. He knew what that was. Back on the plantation, one of the men who worked with him had a harmonica and Scooter had played around with it a couple of times. It would take all the money he had to buy the harmonica. He didn't mind too badly sleeping in the alley, but he had to have food. He went back to the corner and whistled and danced until he could dance no more, and by the end of the day, he had enough money to get the harmonica, and to get food. Scooter learned a valuable lesson. If you want something, you have to work for it. Then, it means more to you. That night and for numerous nights afterward, Scooter would practice on the harmonica. He would go down the block to one of

the early ragtime clubs, listen to the music, then go back to the alley and practice until he could play the tune perfectly. Soon he was playing his harmonica instead of his pippity dippity.

There was an old black man down the street, who had a shoeshine stand and sometimes Scooter would go down to the shoeshine stand and he would play his harmonica. He and Ollie, the shoeshine man, would dance together, and Ollie would sing, but not very well. People still threw coins into the tin cup. Scooter was still sleeping in the alley and in rainy weather, he would have to find shelter in a doorway or under a porch cover. Many times he would be run away from the shelter of a doorway or porch, back out into the rain because of the rich white folks complaints.

Scooter walked by the shoeshine stand one

day after a heavy rain storm and he was dripping wet. Ollie asked if he did not have sense enough to get in out of the rain? Scooter replied that he had been run off the porch at the restaurant down the street and out of the doorway at the show club. Ollie said in his slow drawl, “well, why don’t you come stay with me? I have a room and it has two beds. You’re welcome to the one I ain’t using.” Scooter was grateful, very grateful to Ollie.

Scooter was back out on the streets every day, playing his harmonica and dancing. A well dressed white man walked by one day, stopping to throw a coin in the cup. He gazed at Scooter as he was playing and dancing. When Scooter stopped the man asked, “What’s your name?” “My name is Scooter” was the reply. “What is your last name?” the man asked. “I don’t have a last name,” Scooter

replied. “Hmm.. Why don’t you use mine?” The man offered. “My name is Fletcher. Thomas Clement Fletcher.” Scooter did not know that Fletcher was the Governor of the State of Missouri. He thought for a moment, Scooter Fletcher. When Ollie learned Scooter’s last name, he asked why he had to have two names. Ollie said he would just call him Scooter. That was a catchy name for a popular St. Louis street dancer. So ...Scooter Fletcher it was.

CHAPTER 11, What goes around... 1872.

Scooter had danced on the streets of St. Louis for the last four years. Ollie had moved his shoeshine stand into the lobby of the train station. The two still lived in the one room, and Scooter still slept on the bed that Ollie didn't use. Scooter was so popular, the rail master at the train station allowed him to dance in the lobby of the train station. After a fat lady told Ollie, bluntly, to quit his catterwalling, he would no longer sing. She must have hurt his feelings.

The train station was operated by the Cotton

Belt Railway System, which was mainly organized to connect the St. Louis cotton market to the cotton trade of Texas. St. Louis became the third largest cotton market in the US, and the fourth largest city in the US. The train station, in addition to housing ticket counters and railroad offices, also had a small snack shop. It was a rainy day, and Scooter was inside the rail station playing his harmonica and dancing. After about an hour, Scooter walked over to the snack bar to sit and rest for a few minutes.

Scooter noticed a gentleman at the snack bar, sitting on a stool talking with the waitress and another man. The gentleman caught Scooter's attention from the way he was dressed. White suit, white Panama straw hat, smoking a big cigar. The man turned and looked directly at Scooter. The man's moustache was now gray, but there was that

unmistakable gold tooth. ABE! It was Abe. The man who had stolen his money.

Scooter quickly went over to the shoeshine stand and told Ollie about the man. The man had gotten up and was going toward the door. Ollie, thinking quickly, started calling to the man.

“Shoeshine, shoeshine. How about a shoeshine mister.” Ollie turned to Scooter and whispered, “Go get the lawman.” Scooter hurried away. Abe slowed and looked at Ollie and said, “I don’t think so, old man.” “Best shoe shine around. I’ll do you an especially good job. Sit down here and rest and you can read the newspaper.” Abe relented saying, “ok, you old geezer. I have a few minutes while that fellow goes to the Bank.” Abe evidently was in the process of conning someone else.

Scooter arrived back at the shoeshine stand.

Abe was sitting there reading the news, while Ollie worked on his shoes. Abe glanced up over the newspaper. Scooter saw nothing, except the gold tooth. No doubt, it definitely was Abe.

Just a few short moments and Officer O'hara came up to the shoeshine stand. Scooter and Ollie had gotten to know Officer O'hara pretty well over the last few years. O'hara had walked the beat here in the neighborhood for about ten years. Scooter had told O'hara before about his money being stolen and even described Abe to him. To the surprise of Scooter and Ollie, O'Hara ordered Abe to step down from the shoeshine stand, and immediately handcuffed him, amidst Abe's loud protest. O'hara smiled as he looked at Scooter and Ollie. "We've been looking for this scoundrel for a couple of years now. This is gonna be a feather in

my cap,” the officer said. “Goldman, you’ve pulled your last con in St. Louis. Come on. You’re going to the slammer.”

Goldman looked at Ollie, and then he looked at Scooter. Scooter spoke up, “the name is Scooter. Scooter Fletcher. Remember me?” Goldman glared at Scooter, and mumbled, “No, I don’t remember insignificant people.” Then O’hara escorted him away to the pokey. Scooter called out as they walked away, “oh, Abe... Smile real big for us.” Scooter, Ollie, and O’hara laughed.

Abe was convicted of theft, robbery, and running a con scheme. What money he did have, which wasn’t much, was divided among his victims. The sum was no where close to what Abe had taken from Scooter, but it was better than nothing at all. Scooter didn’t know what to do with money. Ollie’s

only wish was to have a new shoeshine booth. He said that was all he knew how to do, and all he had ever done. Scooter hired two carpenters, for four dollars, to build Ollie a new booth.

After all these years, as a street dancer, harmonica player, and beggar, Scooter was very hesitant to trust anyone. Abe had really taught Scooter a valuable lesson. Scooter placed his money in a bank and looked for a place to invest.

Scooter could sing, dance, play a harmonica, and a couple of months before someone had given him a banjo. He struggled for a while learning to play. Ollie came in one afternoon and he had bought a new set of strings for the banjo. To Scooter's amazement, Ollie put the new strings on the banjo, tuned it up, and began to play. Scooter couldn't believe what he was hearing. "You old

coot...why didn't you tell me you could play?" he said angrily, and then laughed. Ollie replied, "You never asked me, and besides those old strings were awful." Ollie began to teach Scooter to play the banjo, and Scooter progressed very well. Soon he could play along with anyone.

Scooter asked Officer O'hara if he could advise him and help him to avoid another carpetbagger or scalawag. O'hara knew there was one thing Scooter could do, and do it well. Entertain people. Scooter bought an old beer warehouse on River Street with the money he had gotten back from Abe. There was a two room office in the warehouse that Scooter converted to an apartment and used the rest as a room for practicing. O'hara had Scooter working for a couple of months on an entertainment routine, he could

perform really well. O'hara wanted something that displayed all of Scooter's talents. After weeks of working, trying things, discussing things, then trying things again, O'hara and Scooter finally came up with what they thought was a good routine. Now, the job was to practice the routine until it was perfect. Over and over and over again, Scooter practiced until he was singing and dancing in his sleep.

He and O'hara agreed it was time to showcase his routine and the best place for that was the St. Louie Saloon, the show club, Scooter had seen when he first arrived in St. Louis. There was one serious problem. The St. Louie Saloon catered to rich white folks, and as far as O'hara knew, there had never been a negro even set foot inside, but that was about to change.

O'hara went to the St. Louie to see the

manager/owner Sugar Lyndal. Sugar had been the owner for ten years or more. O'hara had known Sugar since before he bought the saloon. Sugar was a tough cookie, and had his fingers in most all of the corruption taking place in St. Louis. He was not one of the upstanding, reputable citizens, who were his clientele at the saloon. Anyone one who was anyone patronized the St. Louie. All the rich whites came to the saloon.

O'hara went in to the saloon, and bellowed in his gruff voice, "I'm here to see Sugar." The reply came from one of the bartenders, "he's in the office." O'Hara didn't say anything, just walked to toward the office. A big burley man was standing at the door of the office. He put out one hand, stopping O'Hara in his tracks. "I'm here to see Sugar, just tell him O'Hara wants to see him." "Don't think he

would want to see you, Copper. Why don't you go arrest a jaywalker or something." the man said. With one swift move, O'Hara grasp the man's arm, twisted it behind him and shoved him against the wall, making a lot of noise, turning over a table and knocking pictures off the walls. The office door opened, and Sugar stepped out. "Buster, what's going on out here?" Sugar yelled. He saw O'Hara pushing Buster against the wall. "O'Hara...good to see you old friend. Buster, its ok, leave him alone. He's an old friend," Sugar was saying as he peeled O'Hara off of Buster. "Come on in the office, O'Hara," Sugar invited.

"Sit down, take a load off. Would you like a drink?" O'Hara looked at Sugar, "yeah, scotch and soda." Sugar waved his hand toward a cute redhead standing next to a bar. She got busy

preparing drinks. Sugar opened a box on the desk that appeared to be expensive wood, mahogany, maybe, and pushed it toward O'Hara. "Cigar?" Sugar asked. O'Hara reached and took a cigar, prepared it to light and Sugar reached over with a lighted match. Nothing better than a fine Cuban cigar. The cute redhead sat the drinks on the desk.

"What brings you to the St. Louie today, O'Hara?" Sugar asked. "Business," O'Hara replied, "entertainment business." "Entertainment business, huh. You started singing now O'Hara?" Sugar queried, and laughed. "No, I'd never make it singing. I'm here for a friend, an entertainer, and a good one at that. All I want is for you to take a look, listen to him, and judge for yourself." O'Hara asked. "That don't sound too unreasonable." Sugar said. "I'll do it just for you, O'Hara. Can you bring him by

tomorrow after lunch?” “Sure, no problem.”

O'Hara hesitated for a moment, wondering if he should tell Sugar about Scooter. Sugar spoke up, “oh, by the way. What's this fella's name?” O'Hara swallowed real hard and thought, here goes.

“Fletcher, Scooter Fletcher.” The room was deathly quiet. “Scooter, the street dancer? O'Hara have you lost all your marbles? He's a Negro; this is a white's only club. Are you crazy?” Sugar shook his head.

O'Hara went on the offense. “Now, Sugar, he's a good performer and everybody that sees him out on the street really like his dancing, music, and singing. And he's a good man. Honest, trustworthy, reliable and doesn't drink alcohol, so you won't have to worry about him boozing it up. Come on Sugar, give the boy a chance.” “But, O'Hara, he's a Negro!” Sugar whined. The cute redhead was standing at

the bar, with her hand up to her mouth hiding a giggle. Sugar looked at her, “don’t you say a word to nobody.” Her hand quickly fell from her mouth and the smile went away.

“Alright, O’Hara. I’ll listen to him, but no guarantees, and we have to audition him somewhere besides here.” Sugar relented.

“Deal!” O’Hara said quickly before Sugar could change his mind. Tomorrow morning, at the old beer warehouse on River St. That’s where he practices every day.”

O’Hara reached out his hand and shook with Sugar. “You won’t be sorry. I tell you. You won’t be sorry.” O’Hara started out the door. Buster was waiting for him. “I’ll remember you.” Buster said angrily. O’Hara looked closely at Buster, getting right up in Buster’s face. “I won’t remember you.

What was your name? Oh yeah, Bubbles. Nice seeing you today Blubber, I mean Bubbles.” O’Hara slapped him on the shoulder, turned to leave the saloon. “Hey, Copper, you gonna remember me alright. You’ll see me when you least expect me.” Buster threatened.

CHAPTER 12, Sugar rush, February, 1873.

The next morning around 10am, Sugar showed up at the warehouse, accompanied by one of his associates, named Arthur Cain, and the cute redhead, O'Hara had met the day before, whose name was Ella. O'Hara, Scooter, and Ollie were waiting in the practice room. Scooter was wearing black trousers, a white shirt with ruffles down the front, a red vest, a top hat, and of course, his tap shoes. Ollie was sitting in a chair against the back wall, and Scooter was pacing nervously across the room, swinging a cane he used as a prop. O'Hara greeted the three and seated them where they were comfortable.

“IT'S SHOWTIME!” O'Hara bellowed in his bass voice. Scooter took his starting position. He

began by taking his harmonica out of his pocket, playing a beautiful rendition of 'My Old Kentucky Home'. Then he sped up the pace with 'The Camptown Races,' and began to tap dance as he played. His dancing was absolutely amazing. Sugar could now understand why people on the street enjoyed his dancing so much. He completed his dance, turned and picked up the banjo. He began to pretend he didn't know what to do, made some remarks, about himself that brought laughter from the three person audience. He slowly began to play on the banjo, and began to increase his speed, until his fingers were almost invisible, playing an old Negro work song and singing. Arthur and Ella were absolutely thrilled with Scooter's performance. Sugar didn't display much emotion. Scooter finished his performance with a personal version of

'Oh Suzanna' that was absolutely remarkable.

Arthur and Ella broke into an almost spontaneous applause and praise to Scooter. Sugar stood from his chair, still maintaining a solemn look on his face as he walked toward Scooter and O'Hara.

He began to speak slowly, "that was fantastic!"

O'Hara and Scooter were elated. O'Hara looked at Sugar, "so, he can perform at the St. Louie?" Sugar looked at the two of them, "But he's a Negro..."

Then he smiled. "We'll work out something. You will hear from me by tomorrow afternoon." True to his word, four o'clock the next day, Arthur came to the warehouse, with a message from Sugar. He wanted O'Hara and Scooter to have dinner with him in the back meeting room at the saloon. If it was agreeable with them, Arthur and Ella would be

present also. Scooter wanted to bring Ollie along. He had a stake in this venture also. Arthur said he would make sure Sugar was aware there would be one more guest. It was set, dinner was at 7pm. “By the way,” Arthur said. “Sugar said to come around back and come in the rear door. Once in, the hallway leads directly to his office and the back room. And....don’t tell anyone.” O’Hara laughed. Scooter spoke up, “remember I’m a Negro.” They all had a good laugh, except for Ollie, who had a scowl on his face.

The anticipation was getting the best of Scooter. He paced and talked a mile a minute, saying the same things over and over. Time seemed to have stopped, but eventually it was time to go to the saloon for dinner. O’Hara, Scooter and Ollie went to the back door, trying to be careful that

no one saw them. They climbed the staircase leading up to the entrance. Entering the back door, they walked down the hallway to Sugar's office. Suddenly they heard a voice. "Hey...what are you doing in here? Why you bringing these niggers in here?" It was Buster, looking very angry. "Oh, hello. Bubbles isn't it. Well good to see you again." O'Hara said, mocking Buster. "What are we doing in here? That's none of your business, Bozo, and these two Gentlemen here, well, they are invited guests of Mr. Sugar Lyndal." The office door opened and Arthur came out into the hallway. "Good evening, gentlemen. Good to see you again. Please come in, Mr. Lyndal will be with you shortly. And please, tell Ella what you would like to drink, and she will be happy to serve you. Mr O'Hara, you gentlemen help your selves to a cigar there on the desk. Oh, and

Buster, make sure no one disturbs our guests.

Buster was livid. He stepped back from O'Hara and said to Arthur, "Yes sir Mr. Cain. As you wish."

O'Hara gave Buster one of those grins, kind of like a possum eating on a briar bush. Scooter pushed by Buster, saying, "Yes, Bubbles don't let anyone disturb us, boy." Ollie shuffled by Buster grinning, giggling, and mumbling, "boy, he, he, he."

Sugar came into the office, and greeted his guests. "Gentlemen, let's proceed to the back room where dinner is prepared. I hope you like dinner. Our special in the saloon tonight is 'roasted rack of lamb' with all the appropriate trimmings. It is quite good. It is my personal favorite."

Sugar turned to Ella, "Please join us, Miss Ella. My, but you look beautiful this evening."
"Thank you Mr. Lyndal. You are very kind." Ella

replied. O'Hara thought to himself, wow, the Missouri Southern hospitality is just oozing out tonight. "Yes, Miss Ella. You do look lovely." he added his oozing to the conversation. Arthur came into the room, and took his seat. He was followed by a waiter, pushing a cart, who began to serve dinner to all of the guests.

The dinner was exquisite. Conversations seemed to touch on everything but the saloon and entertainment. Sugar finally spoke up, "gentlemen, if you would, let's all go to the office, where there are more comfortable chairs, and we can discuss business. Arthur, I need you to be present, and Ella, if you don't have any pressing duties, I would like for you to join us also." When everyone had been seated, Sugar had another barmaid, a blonde named Jeannie, to take drink orders. He wanted

Ella involved in the conversation.

Everyone situated, Sugar began to speak to the business at hand. “O’Hara, Scooter, Mr. Ollie, I have discussed our proposal with two gentlemen who don’t have any dealing with the St. Louie Saloon daily operations, but are silent ‘financial’ partners. Contrary to my opinion, these two partners do not feel that at this time we should jeopardize the clientele at the Saloon by opening the doors to those of another color.. I explained to them that Scooter was indeed one of the best acts I had ever seen. Arthur and Ella were also present at that meeting, and expressed their opinions, totally agreeing with me.”

O’Hara felt like he was a big balloon, that had just been deflated. Scooter felt a big lump in his throat, and Ollie could not believe what he had

heard. “Now, gentlemen, before you get too upset, they did make a counter-proposal. Myself and the two partners would be willing to provide the necessary finances to take your old warehouse and convert it to a club. We would like for the new club to appeal to the middle class folks, the everyday Joe’s, and also the Negro community. O’Hara, the club would be totally under the control of you three. Arthur has agreed, since he is well experienced in club operations, to manage the club.” O’Hara and Scooter were beginning to become excited with the suggestion of having their own club. Ollie’s main concern was would he have a shoeshine booth at the club. Sugar continued, “Ella is very competent with bar and beverage operations, and would take care of that, while Miss Jeannie here, would supervise the daily operation of the bar. I also have

Pierre, our assistant chef, to handle the food operations. All of these people have agreed to help establish the new club.” Sugar offered to allow them a couple of days to discuss the offer and make their decision.

CHAPTER 13, Let’s make a deal. 1873

O'Hara, Scooter and Ollie, went back to the warehouse. Sitting at a table in the apartment, Scooter spoke up, "What is there to discuss, O'Hara? I'm sure we will have some details to work out, but it seems like all the basics are here." Ollie seemed distant from the talk. "What is it Ollie?" O'Hara asked. "I'm not a smart fella, I don't know business, and I really am not good at dealing with people." Ollie said. Scooter looked at Ollie, "Ollie, if you don't do anything at the club, absolutely nothing, and if you don't want to have any say in the operation or anything to do with the club at all, that's ok. You are still a partner." "Thanks," Ollie said, "but can I still have my shoeshine stand at the club?" O'Hara put his hand on Ollie's shoulder, "sure you can, you absolutely can."

O'Hara and Scooter were ready to begin

construction on the new club. Sugar came by and let them know, they could start anytime. “You just need to go to the bank and set up an account and funds will be made available. On the account put only you two and Arthur as capable of transactions. Use the club name on the account.” Sugar waited for a reply, as O’Hara and Scooter looked at each other. “We, uh, don’t have a name for the club.” Scooter admitted. “Well, I guess you need to get busy and come up with a name.” Sugar laughed.

O’Hara and Scooter spent the rest of the day trying to come up with a good catchy name. O’Hara was leaving to go to his home for the night when Ollie came in. “I am really tired and ready for bed,” Ollie yawned. “Get you some good rest now, Ollie. That should be easy now that you are living in high cotton.” O’Hara started for the door. “Wait....

Scooter, Ollie.....Scooter where are you. Scooter, I've got it. Scooter." "You've got what?" Scooter wanted to know. "I've got a name for the club." O'Hara excitedly said. "Well, what is it?" Scooter asked. O'Hara walked out into the warehouse, raised his arms and declared, "Gentlemen, Welcome to the High Cotton Club," St. Louis' newest show club.

Construction and renovation of the old beer warehouse began. The apartment was moved to the rear of the warehouse and a couple of extra bedrooms were added. A new private entrance was installed away from the club entrance. Once this was completed, Scooter and Ollie moved to the new apartment, and demolition began in the warehouse. All walls and offices with the exception of load bearing and out side walls were removed. O'Hara

and Scooter designed the new layout of the club. The stage, the bar, the kitchen, storage were all part of the layout. Seating for the clientele was determined first and everything else around that. Three months later the building was ready for decoration, and installation of equipment. The building location, on River St was perfect. Water from the river was diverted to flow through a man made trench, to cool the beer and food items. Ice would be purchased from the local ice producer. Chef Pierre took the lead in establishing the kitchen setup; Ella, the bar, with help from Jeannie; the stage and lighting was Scooter's job. Arthur worked on table locations, seating, and waiter/waitress stations.

All was coming together. Grand Opening was scheduled for September 1, 1873, five weeks away.

The finishing touches, and final installations of equipment were nearing an end, and the decoration of the main club was almost completed. The décor for the High Cotton Club was based on an old plantation theme, and included an old wagon, several hay bales, tools, and items from a plantation. The walls included photographs and hand drawn pictures of the civil war and of work in the cotton fields of the south. Of course, there was one special decoration, just inside the front entrance; a gator head.

Opening day finally arrived. O'Hara and Scooter were nervous, but also excited. The doors opened at 5pm for dinner, and entertainment began at 8pm. The bar, of course, was always open. The club was filled to capacity by 7pm. Among the first patrons to the High Cotton Club were Jesse James

and Cole Younger, famous outlaws, and William Tecumseh Sherman, a Union General in the War Between the States. Sherman gained notoriety for his famous 'March to the Sea.' In addition, Joseph Pulitzer, creator of the Pulitzer Prize, and famous baseball players from the St. Louis Brown Legs of the early National Baseball League, Pud Galvin, and Jack Rowe, were also attending the grand opening.

The club opening was a huge success. Sugar was present, along with two other gentlemen, and their ladies. O'Hara recognized one as being the Mayor of St. Louis, and the other, his boss on his everyday job, the Police Chief. All in attendance agreed that the entertainment was superb, and their return to the High Cotton Club was a real certainty. The club quickly took its place in the nightlife of St.

Louis, and along with the St. Louie Saloon, became the venues that visitors had to patronize while in town. The High Cotton Club became a favorite of General Sherman, who was now a Congressman, when he was not busy with political business at the Statehouse. Sherman was a big fan of Scooter and many times would request Scooter have dinner with him and his wife. On one of these dinner occasions Sherman's wife decided to play matchmaker and brought along a former slave at her father's plantation by the name of Emily. Emily was 28 years old and was a most beautiful negro woman. Scooter came from backstage to the table where Sherman, his wife, Isabelle, or Izzy as Sherman called her, and Izzy's special friend, Emily were seated. Scooter was introduced to Emily and was simply awestruck at how beautiful she was. Scooter was seated

beside Emily, and just couldn't keep his eyes off of her. In addition to her beauty, there was something very special about her. Conversation eventually turned to their lives previous to the Emancipation. Izzy's father owned a plantation near Savannah, Georgia. Emily had been with them for about 10 years, before being freed. Emily worked in the kitchen as a cook. She explained how she had always loved cooking and preparing meals. She had been on a slave trading ship and was fortunate enough to work in the gallery for most of the trip. The ship was named the Albatross. Scooter almost fainted. Emily was smiling and talking with Izzy. Sherman looked at Scooter and realized something was wrong.

"Scooter, are you okay? Are you choked or something?" Scooter's eyes were fixed on Emily.

Scooter finally managed to speak, "Tamar." Emily dropped her fork, her eyes were the size of saucers, her mouth flew open and her hand flew to her mouth. Her eyes now became fixed on Scooter. She couldn't speak. Finally she whispered. "Manni."

Several months after the club opening, one afternoon, Scooter left the front entrance to the club, and noticed two Negro men on the street corner, with a tin cup at their feet. The older of the two gentlemen, would watch people as they went by, and select someone. He would greet them and casually reach up toward their ear and produce a coin, as if taking it from their ear. This aroused the interest of those chosen and others passing by. The man then would perform other slight of hand moves that amazed the crowds gathered to watch. The man approached Scooter, shook his hand, and then

offered to sell him a watch; Scooter's own watch!

The crowd laughed and Scooter was amazed.

"What is your name, pal?" Scooter inquired. "The man replied to Scooter, "My name is B-roy."

"B-roy?" Scooter mused. "Yeah, you see, on the plantation in Charleston, they called me 'boy', but my little brother here, he don't talk too plain and he stutters, and he called me 'B-roy' and it kinda stuck." B-roy tried to explain. "Well, what is your brother's name?" Scooter asked. "We call him BD." B-roy said. "BD? Why BD?" Scooter said as he smiled, waiting for the reply. He thought this may be interesting. B-roy patted his brother on the shoulder and said, "BD stands for 'brain dead'. You see, he ain't quite right in the head." Scooter and the others gathered around laughed heartily. BD laughed and shook his head too. The crowd started to move on

and B-roy was concerned they didn't leave much money.

Scooter saw B-roy as he looked into the tin cup, and BD picked it up and shook it. "Don't worry about that B-roy," Scooter said as he reached in his pocket, removed some money, and placed it in BD's hand. BD excitedly put it into the tin cup. B-roy looked at Scooter with amazement. Scooter spoke up, "that should be enough to feed you two for a couple of days, and have a little left over. By the way, where do you two live?" B-roy hesitated, then replied, "We been sleeping in the alley beside the saloon up the street." The same alley Scooter slept in when he was on the street. "Come with me," Scooter said. He took B-roy and BD around to the side entrance to the apartment and told them the two rooms were theirs as long as they needed

them. B-roy spoke up, “thank you Mr. Scooter, but we have to pay for our room, and we only need one. BD is scared to sleep by himself.” “I have jobs for both of you here at the club. B-roy you will be a magician, entertaining the folks, and BD, well, we’ll find something for him.”

Scooter and O’Hara began to work with B-roy on his magic performance, and surprisingly he had quite a repertoire of moves to amaze people. BD was learning to help Ella keep trash up at the bar.

CHAPTER 14, Business on fire. Fall, 1874.

The economy was booming in St. Louis in 1874. The railroad was expanding with the opening of the Eads Bridge across the Mississippi River, for both traffic and rail. The first train robbery by the

James Gang took place at Gads Hill on January 31 and began the crime spree of the gang. The High Cotton Club was growing in popularity, so much so, that Sugar began to look for new ways to attract business. But it seemed no matter what he tried, the St. Louie saloon was struggling. A new club also had opened across the river, in East St. Louis.

October 4, 1874, the High Cotton Club had experienced the largest crowd ever, partly due to the entertainment of some special guests from Europe who were touring in the U.S. Lydia Thompson, and her troupe, known as 'the British Blondes', were a very popular traveling burlesque show, that drew large crowds of men and curious women. O'Hara, after seeing the troupe in Nashville, managed to book them to the High Cotton Club.

The new club , in East St. Louis, catered to a slightly different clientele, by offering much the same as the High Cotton and the Saloon, but also offered local 'burlesque' style entertainment, and with personalized services from the ladies in the club.

O'Hara was also looking to help Sugar with entertainment at the Saloon, and booked a very popular pantomime show to appear the week after the burlesque show. George Fox, produced and performed a show called 'Humpty Dumpty', which eventually became the most popular and the most successful pantomime show in the U.S.

With the performance of these two shows, the East St. Louis Club, known as Harley's, saw its clientele begin to return to the High Cotton Club and the St. Louie Saloon. The owner of Harley's,

Edward Harley, had a few choice words for Sugar, Scooter, and especially O'Hara, vowing to close their businesses.

In the early morning of November 7, Scooter was awakened by BD, yelling at B-Roy. From the tone of his voice, he knew something was wrong. Upon opening the door to his room, Scooter found the hallway filled with smoke. B-roy and BD were making their way out the door and into the street, as Scooter called for Ollie. There was no response. The door to Ollie's room was locked and Scooter pushed, shoved with his shoulder, finally kicking with all the strength he had. The door moved slightly, and Scooter had to push hard to get it open. Ollie was laid against the door, as if trying to escape. Scooter picked him up and threw him across his shoulder, and made his way to the door

and into the street. Scooter collapsed as he exited the door. B-roy and BD grabbed Ollie and carried him across the street. BD came back for Scooter, helping him across the street also. Scooter lay on the ground and looked back at the club. Flames were high in the air above the roof and Scooter knew it was hopeless. He gains some strength, and turned his attention to Ollie, but B-roy shook his head. BD sat down beside Ollie, and began to cry. "He my friend," BD would say. "He my friend." "My special friend too, BD," Scooter choked as he tried to speak. B-roy put his arm around Scooter and BD. By that time, O'Hara came around the corner, followed by the fire brigade wagons, pulled by horses. They all knew the effort to douse the fire was futile, and the main job now was to keep the fire from spreading to other structures. O'Hara fell to his

knees by his friends.

Moments later, O'Hara stood and gazed at the massive fire. He looked all around, then up the street, seeing a rather unusual sight. Buster, the man who used to work for Sugar, but now worked for Edward Harley, stood there, also gazing at the fire. He turned his head toward O'Hara and with a slight grin on his face nodded. Anger built within O'Hara as he looked down at BD, B-roy, and Scooter, but when he looked up, Buster was gone. O'Hara remembered what Buster had said, "Hey, Copper. You gonna remember me alright. You'll see me when you least expect me."

It was determined the fire started just inside the front door. The only possible source was a gas light mounted beside the front door, but it was on the outside, and was eliminated as the source of the

fire. It was decided the fire was intentionally started, which now escalated the investigation to murder.

O'Hara didn't say anything to anyone about seeing Buster, but he determined if Buster had anything to do with this, he would see to it he was hanged and maybe Harley too. The St. Louis Police worked the case hard, but it seemed to proceed awfully slowly. What they needed was a break, something to get the wheels rolling.

The first day of December in St. Louis was cold with light snow predicted to start in the early morning. It had been two months since the fire at the High Cotton Club. O'Hara was walking his beat on the night shift. He stopped at the Freeport Hotel as he had done many nights for a cup of coffee. O'Hara met with two other officers there at the Freeport since it was a point where the patrol areas

of all three crossed. Officer Pitt and Officer Jarrett were relieved to get out of the cold, for even just a few minutes. O'Hara had a deal with Lloyd, the night clerk at the Freeport to use the roof of the hotel as a vantage point to view a good portion of his beat. Pitt and Jarrett also had a reasonably good view of their areas from the roof. With the light from the gas street lamps, the officers each could watch activity on the street. As the officers kept watch and conversed back and forth, Pitt walked over to where O'Hara was standing. "O'Hara, what is that guy doing in the alley near the rear of the St. Louie?" Pitt asked. O'Hara looked closely, and replied. "I don't know, but its a little cold for one of the homeless men to be out looking for a place to sleep." The officers, were then joined by Officer Jarrett, and they moved around a little to try to get a better view.

The man went under the rear stairs, and a few moments later came out and ran down the alley toward to street. Seeing a flickering glow come from the direction of the stairs, Jarrett yelled, “ fire, O’Hara, fire. He just started a fire. The three officers turned and ran down the stairs to the lobby in record time, scaring Lloyd half to death. O’Hara called to Jarrett, “you go toward the club, try to put out the fire. Pitt, you go around Livery Street and I’ll take Mumford Avenue. We’ll try to box him in.” When O’Hara turned off of River Street to Mumford, he saw someone duck into an entry way of a business. Pitt came around the corner from Livery Street. “Pitt, there’s someone hiding in the entry at Poston’s Market.” O’Hara called to warn him. Pitt drew his handgun and O’Hara did likewise. The man bolted from the entry, and ran across the

street. O'Hara and Pitt were converging on the man, when he stopped and fired a shot in the direction of the officers. O'Hara and Pitt returned fire, one bullet striking the man in the arm. The wounded man then struggled to run toward River Street. Jarrett extinguished the fire, and ran to help his fellow officers. As he came around the corner at River and Mumford, he confronted the man. The man fired another shot, striking Jarrett. Though wounded, Jarrett managed to get off three shots and two of the three hit their target. The man fell with a loud thump to the ground at Jarrett's feet.

Realizing something serious was happening, Lloyd ran out of the hotel to the call box on the corner and set off an alarm. Then he heard the shots. Other officers began to arrive, and Lloyd pointed them in the direction of the gunfire.

O'Hara and Pitt ran to Jarrett. "I've been hit." Jarrett said, "But I don't think it's too bad." O'Hara looked at the wound, and he and Pitt began to laugh. "You'll probably end up with a medal for this one. You've been shot in the...rear end." Pitt remarked. "The bullet went through both cheeks," O'Hara laughed.

Two other officers rolled the suspect over. He had three bullet wounds, but was still alive. O'Hara looked over, "Buster, just like I thought. Fellas get him over to the doc at the clinic and hurry. I want him alive." Later that morning, O'Hara gave the news to Scooter and B-roy. They were elated and relieved that Ollie's killer had been caught.

Sugar organized a celebration in honor of Ollie, and to recognize the fact that the suspect in Ollie's murder supposedly had been caught. Sugar,

O'hara, Scooter, and the others seemed to be in a state of relief and relaxation, which turned out to be a mistake. Sugar's celebration was held in the backroom at the St. Louie Saloon. Everyone invited was there with the exception of O'Hara. He had worked during the day and was behind getting home due to completing some paperwork. O'Hara rushed when he arrived home, then rushed to get to the Saloon. He went down the alley to the rear entrance and almost ran up the steps. He was excited to attend the dinner celebration. As he reached the top landing of the stairs, an explosion occurred. The rear door came off the hinges, striking O'Hara and the concussion caused him to fly over the handrail and into the yard. Smoke poured from the doors and windows. The blast had blown out all of the windows. Patrons in the front of

the saloon began to run toward the back, where the dinner was taking place. The back hallway, and Sugar's office was a shamble. Cries for help could be heard from the back room. One of the Saloon bartenders pushed the door to the side and out of the way, while others helped remove some debris blocking the entrance. To their surprise, Scooter and B-Roy were helping Sugar toward the door. All were bleeding from cuts and scrapes from the flying debris. Sugar was given to a couple of the employees, who took him outside to fresh air. Scooter and B-Roy went back in to help others but surprisingly found that all of them were okay. The explosion had taken place in Sugar's office, away from the main area of the back room. O'Hara was okay also, suffering some severe bruising.

Investigators suspected the incident was an

attempt to kill Sugar. Two of the employees from Harley's were seen in the alley that afternoon, but couldn't be identified. The Police Chief issued orders to the investigator to apply pressure to everyone at Harley's, including Harley himself.

O'Hara was anxious to talk to Buster, but the Captain assigned another officer, who was investigating the arson and murder as well as the attempted murder at the saloon, to question him, but O'Hara was kept up on any developments.

Scooter, O'Hara and Sugar, had already found another warehouse they could convert to a new High Cotton Club, and work was beginning, though cold weather would probably slow things down.

Six days later, Detective Alex Jordan contacted O'Hara and informed him he would be

going to the clinic to interview Buster at 2pm.

Nothing could have made O'Hara any happier. At

2pm O'Hara was waiting for Jordan at the clinic.

Jordan arrived and O'Hara said to him, "Alex, I have

only one request. I'll keep my mouth shut, you ask

all the questions, but if he comes clean, if he

implicates Harley, I want to be the one to go after

him. Deal?" "You got it O'Hara." Jordan said

CHAPTER 15, Case closed? January, 1875

When they entered the room where Buster was still recovering, the nurse and doctor left.

O'Hara stopped the doctor just outside the door,

"tell me doc, what's the prognosis; is he gonna

live?" The doctor waved the nurse to go onto the

nurse's station. "Officer O'Hara, the patient will

survive his wounds, but he will be an invalid for the

remainder of his life. He will not walk, and will only

have the use of his right side.

So, in answer to your question, yes, he will live, but he won't have a life." The doctor walked away and O'Hara went back into the room. Jordan began by asking general questions, and Buster refused to answer. He turned away and ignored the officers. Jordan continued to ask questions but no response from Buster. Finally, O'Hara had enough. "Let's go Alex; we have enough now to hang this lowlife from his wheelchair." "What are you talking about O'Hara? You got nothing on me. I'll be out of here in a couple days, and you'll never pin anything on me. See you on the street sucker." Buster gloated. "I don't want to bust your bubble, Bubbles. I mean Buster, but the doc tells a different story." O'Hara came back. "What are you talking about, O'Hara?" Buster looked worried. "You're gonna be a

cripple, Bubbles. You're gonna roll that wheelchair around begging for money. You're gonna be looking for someone to change your diapers. You'll be pathetic." Buster began to panic, and to yell, "Doc..doc, where's the doc. You're lying to me O'Hara. You're lying to me! He's lying to me ain't he Detective?" The doc came back into the room, "What is happening? What is going on here?" "Doc, doc, O'Hara says I'm gonna be a cripple. Doc say it ain't so." The doctor hesitated. "Doc say it ain't so...Doc!" Buster screamed.

"I guess Harley's got all he's gonna get out of you, Crip." O'Hara taunted. "You gonna hang, and until then, you're gonna be a cripple, and he gets off scot free. You're pathetic, Crip." Buster yelled, "No..No, he can't get off; the whole thing was his idea. You guys were taking all his business.

And..And I didn't mean for Ollie to die in the fire, but Harley said he was just insignificant damage."

"Jordan, you fellas will have to excuse me. I've got to go take care of some business." O'Hara said. "See you at the station." Jordan called to O'Hara as he rushed out the door, " Be careful, and take some help with you, O'Hara." "Don't need any." O'Hara replied as he ran to the door.

O'Hara made his way across the river to East St. Louis, to Tartan Street, and Harley's Club. He had only one thing on his mind as he entered the club. O'Hara walked up to the bar and asked for a scotch and soda, sat down on a barstool and began to look around. Soon, Harley walked from the back and up to the bar. He spoke to the bartender for a moment, and then started to go back to the rear of the club.

“Harley,” O’Hara called out. Harley kept walking, as if he didn’t hear O’Hara. “Harley,” O’Hara called louder. Harley stopped and turned around. “ Well, O’Hara, what brings you to East St. Louis? We heard you arrested your arsonist-murderer. I guess you are pleased with yourself. ‘Case closed,’ as I’ve heard you cops say.” “Not quite,” O’Hara said, clenching his teeth on his unlit cigar. “I’ve got something insignificant I have to take care of to complete the case.” O’Hara walked over to Harley, and two of his bodyguards walked over also. O’Hara stood directly in front of Harley, so close that his cigar was almost hitting his face. One of Harley’s men tried to step between the two, but O’Hara quickly pulled his handgun from under his coat, and placed the tip of the barrel between the man’s eyes. “Back off, I said back off, before your

buddy here has to have your brain cleaned off his suit coat.” O’Hara watched the other man and Harley closely. “Harley you’re my insignificant business. You are under arrest for the arson of the High Cotton Club, and the murder of my insignificant close friend, Ollie.” “You’re crazy, O’Hara. You’ve got nothing on me. You can’t prove a thing.” Harley protested. O’Hara put the barrel of the pistol under Harley’s chin. “Now, tell your men to back away slowly and you and I will walk out that front door.” O’Hara instructed. Detective Jordan and three other St. Louis police officers came charging through the door, guns drawn. “O’Hara, are you ok?” Alex asked. “I told you to bring some help.” The officers handcuffed Harley and led him to the paddy wagon for his trip to the jail. O’Hara looked at Alex, “everything was under control, Detective.” O’Hara

started down the steps at the entrance to the club as Harley was climbing into the paddy wagon. “Oh, Harley, now...Case closed.”

CHAPTER 16, The Show must go on. January, 1875.

The construction had begun on the new High Cotton Club, but cold weather, rain and snow threw a ‘wrench in the gears.’ It seems like work had stopped, and to some extent it had, but after a few weeks, the construction picked back up. The projected re-opening was set for March 19, 1875, and an explosive event was planned, the likes of which St. Louis had never seen. A complete weekend of entertainment, with headline

entertainers, from around the world.

Scooter and O'Hara were busily making arrangements. Scooter was taking care of the construction and setup of the club, while O'Hara continued to search for talent for the show. Sugar became friends with Roger Taylor, President of the Lazy River Brewery, and the two struck a deal for the St. Louie Saloon, and the new High Cotton Club, to exclusively sell Lazy River beer and other products.

The new High Cotton Club location was just down River Street from the old location and just as the river water was diverted at the old club, through the building and behind the bar to cool the beer, the new club could have the same arrangement. This was an unusual attraction, and many people referred to the High Cotton as 'the club with the river

running through it.'

March 19 seemed to approach rapidly after construction activities increased, and everything seemed to be on schedule. The club décor was very similar to the previous with one major change. The change was the idea of Roger Taylor. An outdoor beer garden with the river running through and beautiful flowers, trees and plants, would be built next to the club. Also contained in the garden would be an old shoeshine stand, and a statue of Ollie commissioned by Taylor, and the garden aptly named 'Ollie's Place.'

March 19, 1875 finally arrived. Scooter and O'Hara re-opened the doors to the High Cotton Club, accompanied by Sugar, General Sherman, and Roger Taylor, at 5PM, and by 6PM the club had reached capacity, including 'Ollie's Place.'

Headline entertainers, Lydia Thompson and the British Blondes returned, and George Fox, also returned. An appearance by Blind Tom Wiggins was a highlight of the weekend. Wiggins was born blind to a slave mother in Louisiana. Wiggins was a 'savant.' Though he had the appearance of being retarded, he possessed the intelligence of a well educated scholar, but with no social or communication skills. His memory was perfect. At an early age Blind Tom began to play piano. The performance at the High Cotton Club was nothing short of spectacular. The stage was setup with a piano, a banjo, and a guitar. Wesley Turpin, a local concert pianist, and Scooter would assist Blind Tom with his performance. Blind Tom appeared and walked slowly to the center of the stage. Blind Tom began to act strangely and dance around, and

quote the exact words from the days newspaper. Turpin sat at the piano, and began to play 'Moonlight Sonata.' Blind Tom stopped moving, and talking, and just listened. He then sat down at the piano and played the same music, not missing a note. The scene was repeated over and over, as Scooter played banjo and guitar. Then Blind Tom would repeat what Scooter played, note for note. The crowd was amazed. The entertainment continued with the British Blondes, George Fox, with Scooter, and B-Roy. B-Roy's magic and illusions were also a huge success. He was booked at other clubs throughout the area. The re-opening of the High Cotton Club was a success.

The following days and weeks brought changes to the lives of O'Hara, Scooter, and Sugar. O'Hara retired from the police force. He took on the

task of booking entertainment for both clubs.

O'Hara revealed a secret to all at the High Cotton Club, that no one seemed to suspect. He and Ella had been seeing each other for almost a year and earlier that day he had proposed marriage and Ella had accepted.

Everyone was very happy for the couple. The wedding was set for the fall of the year.

Scooter and B-Roy were invited by Congressman Sherman to attend and perform at the White House, in Washington, D.C. for President Grant's birthday.

While in Washington, Scooter and B-Roy's performances were seen by Albert Carter. Carter was the manager for George Fox and a producer for entertainers all over the east coast. Carter approached them and suggested that the two

consider going on a tour in England and France.
That was a very exciting possibility and Scooter and
B-Roy began to discuss if they could really do it.
They talked it over with O'hara and Sugar and they
were all for it. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity,
so they accepted Carter's proposal.

CHAPTER 17, World Travelers, June,1875.

Scooter and B-Roy were scheduled to leave for London June 10th. There were many arrangements to be made before they left. O'Hara and Albert Cain were to manage the High Cotton Club while they were on tour. BD, since he didn't like to sleep alone, would stay with Albert. BD was all excited to be 'taking care of himself' while B-Roy was gone. He was now a grownup. Albert, Ella, and Jeannie, would make sure he was okay and that he was cared for. Sugar would be available if any problems arose, but of course none were expected.

Scooter and B-Roy, boarded the ship on June 10th, as scheduled. The trip from New York to South Hampton by steamship would take 14 to 16 days and an additional days journey by train to London. They were anxiously awaiting their first performance and wanted to practice every day. The

ship on which they were traveling was on what is called a 'positioning voyage.' The ship was being moved from America to South Hampton, to be placed in drydock for repairs and refurbishing. To compensate the shipping company, passage was booked at a much lower than normal rate, but that also meant there were not a lot of amenities, such as entertainment. The Captain became aware that Scooter and B-Roy were onboard, and that they were entertainers.

Also onboard were two gentlemen, who were musicians. Val Curtis, was a pianist, who played vaudeville shows in New York. Val had become discouraged because there was not a lot of work in New York. He was returning to his home in Liverpool. Onboard also was Erin O'malley. Erin, a multi-talented performer, could play about any

instrument. He was returning to his home in Glasgow, Scotland. On the ship was a lounge, with limited services, but it did have a nice stage, and necessary equipment to perform a show. The Captain offered to these four, to return their passage fee, if they would perform for the passengers. By the third day onboard ship, a makeshift show had been put together, and for the next 12 days two shows per night would delight the passengers.

Finally arriving in South Hampton was a great relief for all, and Scooter booked passage on the train for himself and B-Roy. Before departing, Scooter offered to Val and Erin to join their troupe and tour with them. Erin was going home to his family and declined the offer, but Val was overjoyed at the prospect of traveling with a show. Scooter

and Val worked out a deal, and Scooter booked passage for him on the train also. They were on their way to London. Their first show was scheduled at Toole's Theater on June 29th, and from there they were on a whirlwind tour of three cities in England. Birmingham, Darlington, and Manchester, were all on the schedule for three days of shows each. Then they would travel to Glasgow and Edinburgh in Scotland. They would return to London for a one week stand at the Royal Albert Saloon, a premier vaudeville theater.

Business at the High Cotton Club was carrying on as usual. Scooter and B-Roy had been gone for ten days. BD had done his morning chores with Ms. Ella, had his lunch, and took his medications. Normally BD would nap after lunch for about an hour. This day BD was not tired and

sleepy. He lay on the bed, and something in the partially open closet caught his attention. He went over to the closet open the door wide and there hanging on the back of the door were some old ragged clothes. A dirty, ragged, red vest with a button missing, attracted him first. It was B-Roy's vest he wore before coming to the club. BD put the vest on and buttoned it up, and it didn't bother him that it was buttoned wrong. He looked further and saw a long tail tuxedo coat, that was B-Roy's also. On the shelf was B-Roy's old beaver skin top hat, looking very ratty and dirty. BD donned the outfit and looked at himself in the mirror. He thought he looked like B-Roy. Wearing the clothing, BD went outside and to the front of the club, next to the street lamp post on the corner. In the street gutter, he found an old tin cup that folks could drop coins in.

BD tried to talk to people as they passed by, but they couldn't understand him very well. He began to wander down the street, carrying his tin cup, and wearing B-Roy's magician clothing. BD wandered further and further away from the club. Suddenly, he realized he did not know where he was. BD became frightened and began to panic, then he saw four young men sitting on a dock there at the river. He went over to where the boys were sitting. BD tried to ask them how to get back to the club, but the boys began to mock him. They called him a dummy and mocked the way he talked. One of the boys jerked the top hat from his head, and threw it to another boy as they played a game of keep away. They began to push him around, and wanted to know if he had any money. They shoved him to the ground and one of the boys kicked him in his side.

They laughed as BD tried to get up off the ground. BD thought how B-Roy had told him not to fight and he knew he had taken his medicine this morning to keep him calm. As he struggled one of the boys grabbed the front of his coat, B-Roy's coat, and ripped it. BD could take no more. He lashed out in anger at the first boy, delivering a big roundhouse left, which took the boy to the ground. A second boy swung at BD, catching him on the left side of his head, but the blow only succeeded in making BD more angry. BD grasped the boy by his shirt and right pants leg, lifted him over his head, and tossed him in the river. One of the other boys pulled a knife from his pocket, and came at BD swinging the knife cutting BD's right forearm. BD grappled with this boy for a moment, swinging him around hitting the fourth boy and knocking him to the ground. The boy

thrown into the river was climbing up the riverbank. All four ran from the dock, calling back at BD and threatening him. He sat down on the dock and began crying like a small child. He looked at his arm and the blood pouring from the laceration.

Suddenly he heard a noise behind him and he jumped to his feet, only to see a cat run from the dock. Then he heard a voice. A female voice. "Is you alright young feller?" the lady said. "Oh my, you been cut. Let me look at that, we'll stop the bleeding." BD started to back away. "it's awright young man, I won't hurt cha." the old lady said. The old lady was Sally Preston, one of the local homeless people who frequented the docks, looking through garbage for food or anything of value. Known as Crazy Sally, she had been on the streets for many years. Sally reached in her pocket

and pulled out some dirty rags and began to bandage BD's arm. Sally heard a noise, and thinking the thugs may be returning, ran and hid behind some old crates next to the warehouse. Three police officers rushed around the corner, and surrounded BD, guns drawn. "That's the Crazy man that attacked us." a voice said. BD saw the four thugs as they followed the officers. "Yeah, he pulled a knife on us, and we took it away from him." Another one of the thugs said. "You gonna arrest him, ain't you?"

"BD, What are you doing down here in this crappy neighborhood?" Officer Jarrett asked. All four thugs backed up slightly when they realized the officer knew BD, as though they were preparing to run. "Hold it right there fellows." Jarrett said. The four turned to run. As they ran by some wooden

crates next to the warehouse, a foot and leg appeared and tripped the first boy and as he fell the others tripped over him and the officers quickly subdued all four. After handcuffing the first, Jarrett looked back at the crates. “Good job Sally.” he declared. “Them thugs had no bizness hurting that young ‘un. He held his own purtty good though and that one, that one there, he’s the one who pulled the knife.” Sally explained pointing out the boy.

“Doggone it. I’m gonna have a bruise on my leg.

The officers took the boys to the jail and Jarrett took BD back to the club. Sally decided she would tag along. Ella was very upset when she realized BD had been injured and she and Jarrett took him over to the clinic to get the wound to his arm treated. Sally said, “I’m gonna have a bruise on my leg.” She decided she would go to the clinic

also. The doctor cared for BD's injury, and they were ready to leave the clinic, when Sally spoke up, "I think I'm gonna have a bruise on my leg." Jarrett stopped, and looked at Ella. Both smiled, and Ella turned to the doctor, "Doc, can you take a look at our friend's leg? She was injured helping the officers capture the four thugs." Sally looked very sheepishly at Jarrett, then Ella, then at BD. Her voice trembled as she said, "I'm your friend? I ain't never had a friend before." Jarrett felt a lump come up in his throat, as did Ella. "You my friend, you my friend," BD said. "Just like Ollie, he my friend too."

CHAPTER 18, Something is still missing. July,
1875

Ella sent a letter to B-Roy telling him of the incident with BD and explaining the he was okay. B-Roy was upset, but knew that things were being taken of. Scooter and B-Roy had been discussing

the fact that their tour would be ended next week. Scooter was considering making a journey to his home country of Nigeria. He had already checked about passage on a ship from England to Africa, and there were several ships available. B-roy was anxious to return home to St. Louis to BD. Val was going to accompany B-Roy back to America, but Scooter felt he could not return without seeing his homeland once more. The tour ended and B-Roy and Val boarded ship to return to America, while Scooter arranged his journey to Lagos, Nigeria. The trip was a nine day voyage with a 2 day stop over in Barcelona, Spain. Scooter was to leave on July 15th. The anxiety of seeing his home and, his village, filled Scooter's mind. Was the village still there? Was his mother still there? Soon he would know. The ship arrived in Lagos early on the

morning of July 24th . As the ship approached dock, Scooter's mind and emotions began to run wild. The Yoruba warriors storming his village, being tied and placed on the boat. The grueling nine hour ride to Lagos. His mind went back to seeing a woman, stripped and held, head down over the side of the ship as the Yoruba warriors wagered how long it would take for a croc to take off her head. They laughed and beat the woman with a whip so she would scream and writhe in pain. This attracted more crocodiles. Two of the Yoruba Warriors held a contest to see who could throw a baby the farthest distance, and then watched and laughed as the crocodiles consumed them. He remembered all the men and women on the dock being sold to the highest bidder, many for a pittance, just to get rid of them. At this point, the potential slaves, would be

more than grateful to be sold to the slave traders, because those who didn't sell would suffer horrible abuse and death at the hands of the Yoruba warriors.

Scooter's mind went back to the first time he saw Captain Hannibal, his actions there on the dock, and his instructing his men to kill Tamar's baby. He recalled being herded on to the deck of the ship, like cattle, being forced to strip and being put into the hold. He remembered having to scarp for even a slight morsel of food, Tamar coming to him and Jalani, and how she did her best to care for them. Scooter became aware of his surroundings when, a boat owner spoke to him, " Hey, hey, buddy. Do you want me to take you up river or not? I don't have all day. Make up your mind." Scooter hesitated slightly, "Yes. Yes I do. When can you

leave?” “Just when do you want to go, I’m ready now.” the boatman said. Scooter looked around at the dock, and said, “ Now. Let’s go now.” Picking up his baggage,he mumbled. “I need to get away from this place.”

The trip up river took about 11 hours. The weather was hot and humid. The currents in the river worked against the boat the entire way. Scooter listened to the boat motor, a 15hp outboard, straining to turn the propeller, to move the boat. About 5 hours into the trip, the boatman slowed the motor and guide the boat over to the shore. Scooter stood and looked at the boatman. The boatman nodded his head toward the upriver side of the boat, “Hippos.” Scooter knew they could not pass that portion of the river until the hippos moved on. Scooter spoke to the boatman, “looks

like we may be here awhile. I don't like hollering 'hey you', so, what is your name." "My name is Ezra," the boatman said. "We may as well plan on staying here for the night. It's getting late now. I have some sleeping bags and a tent in the storage bin at the rear of the boat. Can you build a fire?" Scooter snickered and said sarcastically, "Can I build a fire?"

There was enough food and water stored in the boat for a couple of days, but, hopefully they would be back on their way in the morning. Scooter built a fire, helped Ezra pitch the tents. Each had their own small tent. Then he went foraging through the bush for a while before darkness fell. Scooter returned about an hour later with five duck eggs he had managed to find. Ezra had the fire roaring. He said it was to keep the wildlife away. He

evidently didn't know that the fire would not deter a hungry lion, tiger, or crocodile, only keep them at bay for a short while. Then the fire would provide light for them to attack their prey. The only sure protection from maneaters was a good weapon, and many times that didn't work either.

Ezra warmed up some food for himself and Scooter. Darkness had fallen and darkness in the bush, was really dark. There was zero visibility beyond the limits of the light from the fire. Ezra had a rifle and a .45 caliber handgun. Scooter felt a lot better having a couple of good weapons. When he was 12 years old, his best weapons were a sharpened branch and a knife.

Ezra had lived most of his life in Lagos and was not accustomed to the environment in the bush

and though it had been almost 20 years, Scooter still knew, not just how to survive, but how to live in the bush country. Scooter went over to his tent, opened the front flaps and folded them back. He spread his sleeping bag, and once everything was prepared he went over to the fire and picked up a small branch, blew out the flame so the smouldering branch would produce lots of smoke. He walked over to the tent and sat at the entrance, allowing the smoke from the branch to fill the tent. He then tossed the branch back into the fire. As the smoke began to clear from the tent, Scooter crawled in, closing the flaps as tightly as possible, pulling dirt up against the seams to help seal them.

Results..no mosquitos. Ezra watched Scooter carefully. "I'll be darned," was all Ezra could say.

CHAPTER 19, The African bush. July, 1875.

Morning arrived and light shown on the river, but the thickness of the bush caused the darkness to linger for a while. Scooter and Ezra prepared some food and began to pack up all their supplies in the boat. The fire was still burning and Ezra had

placed a coffee pot on the fire to boil the water, and dropped a small handful of ground coffee in the pot. After a few minutes, Ezra handed Scooter a cup and strained the coffee into the cup with a dingy, dirty looking cloth. Scooter hesitated, then thought, it sure does smell good, and drank the coffee down. They extinguished the fire, being sure to cover all embers with dirt. A wildfire in the bush was very deadly and destructive.

The river was clear ahead and Ezra guided the boat upstream toward their destination. They had been traveling for about four hours, and only had about one more hour to go. Several large crocodiles followed the boat for a short distance, then turned and went back down the river. Ezra began to pay close attention to the river and surrounding bush. “Scooter, keep a close eye out.”

Ezra said. All of a sudden Scooter noticed that a quietness had come over the bush. No birds squawking, no monkeys chattering, and no insect noises. A deadly quiet had come over the river and the bush.

As the boat rounded a turn in the river, Ezra spotted a disturbing sight. An elephant was standing in about four feet of water, about 60 yards from the boat. Ezra looked closely at the elephant. Elephants are not normally dangerous to humans in the bush, but adult male elephants experience something called musth. The temporal glands on each side of the head swell and secrete a sticky liquid substance. This is like rutt, which male deer experience. While afflicted with musth, an adult male elephant becomes extremely aggressive and destructive to all other species of animals, including

other elephants. Scooter and Ezra have only one option, get the boat to the shore as quickly as possible, and find a safe place to hide, preferably a cave or rock formation. An elephant experiencing musth will not only attack and kill anything close but once sensed the elephant will pursue and track a prey relentlessly. The only escape would be at night, which would be very dangerous. Elephants have very poor eyesight and nighttime would provide more cover.

Scooter and Ezra reached the shore and carried as much of their supplies as possible and headed into the bush. Hopefully the elephant had not seen the boat on the river and where they had tied the boat off at the shore. They found an excellent hiding place among some large boulders where the elephant could not reach them. A short

time later, Scooter and Ezra heard some loud crashing noises coming from the direction of the river. A lot more noise than an elephant moving through the bush. The noise kept getting closer, until they saw an unbelievable sight. Not just one, but two elephants battling. Scooter and Ezra knew this would be a battle to the death for one of the elephants, but it also created a perfect opportunity for their escape. The elephants were poised on either side of an open meadow in front of Scooter and Ezra, and when the elephants charged to engage, Scooter and Ezra would run for the river and the boat. The elephants charged, their battle began. Scooter and Ezra ran, escaping from the meadow. They reached the riverbank and the boat, loaded what supplies they had carried and launched, heading upriver once again. Thankfully,

the last hour of the trip was uneventful. The boat made the last turn in the river before the location of the village. Scooter could see the area of the riverbank where he and Jalani would play for hours. The old rickety makeshift dock was no longer there. Only a couple of timber protruding from the water. The brush seemed quite heavy along the bank where the village once spread out over the riverbank. Scooter felt the disappointment as he realized the village was no longer there. Two men were fishing on the opposite bank from where the village once stood. Ezra pulled the boat to the shore near where the two men stood. Scooter got out of the boat and approached the two men. He asked them about the village that used to stand across the river. One of the men remembered when the village was there, but he said it had been many years.

There was terrible flood on the river, the village was destroyed, and many of the villagers died. Scooter felt a sinking feeling come over him. Did his mother survive the flood?

The man continued telling Scooter that the remainder of the villagers after the flood, moved upriver a short distance and further into the bush away from the river bank. It would only take about ½ hour travel upriver to reach the new location. They would see a dock and several boats tied up. If they docked there, just follow the path through the bush to the village. Scooter felt some relief and even some excitement build, realizing that maybe all was not lost.

CHAPTER 20, Finally home. July 1875.

Scooter and Ezra got back in the boat and headed upriver toward the village. Shortly they saw the boat dock on the riverbank. They tied the boat off and walked up the path toward the village. As they reached the village, Scooter was quite surprised to see small wooden homes, with tin roofs, and a large community garden. There were

people hoeing in the garden, some tending to livestock, and attending to household chores. The women were dressed in brightly colored dresses and the men wearing shirts and shorts, but no shoes. Several younger men were gathered around a fire and were discussing hunting experiences, while two others were dressing an animal, killed earlier that morning. Scooter told the men who he was and one young man spoke up. The man appeared to be in his early 20's. The young man said his name was Ari, and that his mother had spoken of the Yoruba warriors taking the young people from the village many years ago, and she never knew what happened to her children. Scooter asked Ari if he could speak to his mother and Ari took him over to one of the homes. A woman was busily working boiling water in a large pot, washing

clothes, and hanging them to dry. Ari told his mother that this man wanted to speak to her about the Yoruba warriors raiding the village and kidnapping her children. The woman was old, and frail. Many years of the hard life in the bush had taken its toll on her health. She dried her hands on the apron she was wearing, and walked over to Scooter. Scooter greeted the woman, and thanked her for speaking to him. He looked at the frailty, the weather worn skin, then looked into her eyes. "Mala." Scooter said. The woman replied, "No, I am not Mala. I am her sister. Mala died many years ago, grieving for her sons who were taken and sold to Dutch slave traders." Scooter's heart was breaking, and tears filled his eyes. The old woman continued. "Mala was so distraught over the loss of her sons. She tried to continue her life, even having another child."

“Wait,” Scooter interrupted. “Another child?” “Yes,” the old woman said. “She had a daughter, Amala. She is now 16 years old. Mala died when Amala was 5 years old. I have raised her as my daughter since that time, and Ari has accepted her as his sister. She is aware that her mother died and that she had two brothers who were sold to slavery.”

Scooter could hold back no longer. “I am Manni.” Scooter said. The old woman erupted in tears, “Manni, oh Manni. I am your aunt, Kala. Oh, Manni. How did you come back? We thought you and Jalani were dead.” Scooter asked Kala and Ari to sit with him and he told them what had taken place for the last 20 years. Kala sent Ari to bring Amala to her. Ari returned with a beautiful young lady, who as of yet was not aware of what was going on. Amala looked cautiously at Scooter and

Ezra and stood beside Kala and Ari. She suspected something was wrong. She could see that Kala had just stopped washing clothes and Ari was usually off with the other men. Kala took her by the hand and stepped up to Scooter. Amala still did not say anything, but Scooter could see fear on her face. Kala began to speak, "Amala, this young man is your brother, Manni." "No," Amala said. "My brothers are dead. He is lying, my mother said my brothers were dead." Scooter was disturbed. Here was his sister, not believing him.

Scooter and Amala sat down and he began to explain to her what had happened in his life. Kala and Ari also talked with Amala. Amala listened to Scooter, and tears began to form in her eyes. She sat there listening to Scooter and looking at him. As she looked she began to see a familiar smile, a

kindness in the voice she had heard before, and mannerisms she recognized as being her mother's. Suddenly, she began to cry uncontrollably. Scooter reached out to Amala, and she fell into his arms, and through her sobbing and crying, she managed to say, "my brother, I love you my brother."

The entire village was buzzing with the news of Scooter's visit to the village. He was able to meet and talk to other relatives and to visit his mother's gravesite. He still was not able to learn of his father, of where he was, or what happened to him.

Ezra returned to Lagos, and Scooter remained at the village another week. Scooter asked Amala to accompany him to America. Amala wanted to go, but at 16 she did not want to leave the only family she had known. Scooter left in the early

morning and the return trip to Lagos was uneventful. The next day, Scooter boarded a ship to travel back to America. He was saddened leaving the sister he had found. Scooter left Amala with the promise that when she was older, if she wished to come to America, he would make it possible, and that he hoped to return to Africa in the next few years.

CHAPTER 21, Home again, home again.

August, 1875.

Scooter's return to St. Louis was welcomed by everyone at the High Cotton Club, and after a couple days rest, he was ready to get back to the show. The tour in Great Britain brought notoriety to Scooter and B-roy and each began to get invitations to book their performances throughout the states.

Scooter was very happy to return to Emily. The two had grown very close. Scooter told Emily all about his trip to his home, but the memories

seemed to bring a sadness back to Emily. Scooter looked for more pleasant things to talk about.

Scooter and Emily were married in the November of 1875, and over the next three years were blessed with a son and a daughter. The son, they named Mani and the daughter, Tamar.

The club became the premier entertainment venue in the state of Missouri, featuring top class entertainment from around the world. BD learned to be B-roy's assistant. Val became the club's resident pianist. O'Hara and Ella were also married and though they had no children, they lived happily in their cabin on a hill overlooking the Mississippi, and watching the riverboats traveling the river. O'Hara, Sugar, and Scooter were sitting on the veranda one day and Sugar, out of the blue said, "Maybe we

should buy us a riverboat.” O’Hara and Scooter looked at each other and said in unison, “maybe we should.”

