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AMs
Actor Master,
Showmen

By Francis L Billingsley

A M S

Letter to Mari.

Dear Mari, forgive me for not writing to you with some brief account, a message as-to my welfare. But I could not at that time find the will to write until this very two weeks. A letter to you then, would have merely preserved the sadness and broken dreams. So ... be that poor judgment on my part. Let me now bring good news from Charleston, South Carolina, in the Americas.

It was fourteen days ago, that Master Louis Fleur hired me as the tutor for his only daughter, Carol Ann. This tutoring was in addition to my occupation of performing and managing a local theatre at *the White Mare Tavern*. From Master Louis, I have earned four times the theatre wages. Four times, dearest Mari! But here is the most wonderful news! Presently Master Louis Fleur has assured me of my continued service. And there shall be an increase in some twofold again for my services. Consider this, dear sister. My work here in the theatre will no longer be needed to sustain myself. I can therefore concentrate my efforts in the service of Master Louis. My compensation will include in two month hence, room and board at the Fleur Plantation on the Ashley River, half day's travel west of Charleston. In the present parcel Marie, I have included my notes, muses and a volume of thoughts concerning my South Carolina American experience.

Dear Marie

A M S

I would be most thankful and appreciative, if you could place such contents securely at the bottom of my blue actor's trunk. Oh Marie could Shakespeare have proclaimed for me months prior, "All's Well That Ends Well"?

A M S

From the notes, writings and muses.

Be assured while in the States, I have always longed for the possibility of returning to England. Oh, how I wish to be called by my true Christian name, Thaddeus. I pray now the Merciful God Almighty may someday forgive me.

My exile started before I had even boarded the Samuel Middleton frigate bound for South Carolina. A shell of a man I was, in despair and dreadful poor health, having spent almost eight months in the Duke of Shropshire's dungeon cell.

I recall, you watching painfully as the prison guard threw me by my long wretched hair into the back of the ghostly cold and damp mule cart. We jostled back and forth in the cart, which continued for days. With tears in your eyes so lovingly you spoke softly, pleading that I must soon transform my Christian name and identity. The Duke at any time could change his thoughts again in a rage and have me hung in the courtyard. Therefore as you desired, I chose my deceased infant's name, Edward, followed by in an odd reversed order, the name of our city of birth Bridgnorth to Northbridge.

In kindness again you implored me, to let my hair grow wilder and longer than it already was. This you said would be so that some

passenger on board or idol sailor later, would be unable to recall who I was or what I had been. Leaning into my corpse with loving arms and a warm caress, you whispered tenderly, "For present dear brother, speak only in your most artfully strange and acting manner".

The next day the cold piercing rain continued. Our poor neglectful peasant driver eventually stopped abruptly as wagon lost its wheel near a dock outside Bristol. You lifted me with difficulty, as I leaned heavily on your shoulder for support. We then walked a great distance to a ship's ramp. I remember your final words so poetic and beautiful.

"Be gone, while the castle still slumbers for a third night. Your sister's heart brakes, dear brother. May a thousand angels protect you."

I nodded in silent prayer, always thankful that you had saved me.

.....

The Voyage

The long voyage nights, were worse than the days. By day I had become *Caliban* of "The Tempest". Though admittedly less articulate. By night, I returned to the languishment of sleepless

nightmares in the re-living my imprisonment. Or worse the circumstance, that brought this tragedy upon me. Such a breach of trust, I had violated in my duties to Duke Leo and his family.

But was that really so?

Many were the evenings aboard ship, that the nightmares became so vivid watching his lovely daughter, Louisa and her strange brother, Brumonti, the heir apparent, wantonly caress, cajole and bring forth all manner of uncontrollable passion and lust from within me. And yet Mari, I say now, I was trapped in that tragic incident.

Those two villains had locked me in her private bedroom chamber somehow, very late that night. I, the fool, being drunk as an Elizabethan influenced buffoon can only be. Then dear sister, were they not as guilty or more guilty than I? Let me tell you more. Earlier that evening, I was celebrating with strong drink for my triumphant return to the stage at the Drury Lane. I was to re-enter as a player, having the role of Henry in Shakespeare's, Henry VI, Part I. What a great opportunity, lost.

It had been a year since my wife's life had been taken from me, along with my infant son, only seventeen months prior. However, I do admit. I was their tutor in diction, poetry and speech.

And yet, little did I know of their true hearts, their avarice behavior lurking from within. The result! It cost me my

reputation, my family, and almost my life.

But alas in time on board the ship, the nights did somehow change after those three weeks of hell.

Somehow as if in a "Midsummer Night's Dream", I suddenly awoke late in a startled and terrified state. A satanic image, like Lucifer himself, screamed with a vengeance at me. It barred its long pointed bloodthirsty teeth as if to immediately attack.

Was I to be killed, eaten or captured by this underworld deamon creature? Yet, as my eyes adapted to the darkness, I saw this screaming image was in fact, a ribbon-nose African Baboon creature. How odd indeed it was, that this thing, had four small devil monkey accomplices jumping up and down around him.

I found out later, the entire gang had escaped from their cages earlier that evening. They must have been hunting. For whom or what? So, cautiously handed the baboon an ear of corn. He left in gulps of utter silence. As for, the four midget ruffians, I merely sprinkled other loose grain on the floor, and departed myself quickly, to settle down the frightened remaining creatures in the large confined deck area, where I also took my sleeping quarters. Eventually, the herd calmed down, gradually upon my reassuring touch and conversation.

Then moments later, the official stableman entered our underworld level. Together, we proceeded to gather up the remainder of loose animals to place them back in their stalls.

He was especially concerned about the pair of magnificent Hanovarian mares. It was a great relief to him, to find, that they had not been injured in the night's fiasco. He later indicated to me, though cautious at first, that my meager food rations would improve considerably. And yes, the character of *Caliban* was evolving. I had now found my place in the social order of our vessel, and my health was advancing as a result of improved quality nourishment. In a month's time, the Samuel Middleton was in sight of Charleston. The city appeared like an English port, in scale, color, architecture and surroundings. Especially as to the beautiful outline of the tall church spires and steeples which rose gradually from the harbor.

As many of the passengers departed, I purposely delayed my exit. Here I noticed the vast majority of those rapidly accumulating at the dock of laborers for our ship's cargo were negro slaves.

Only on occasion, was a white merchant or foreman to be found.

After five more hours of this, I left the ship with my fellow animal creatures from another firmly secured ramp. For the night before, the stable manager had rewarded me with a few shillings to assist him with the removal and distribution of animals to

their appropriate owner servants. Finally two large wagons appeared with monstrous cotton bales and huge sacks of rice.

I watched the negro slaves with their muscular frames and black shaven heads, set up the tacks, ropes and pulleys in unison. Their ebony bodies glistened with reflected sweat as they gowned loudly, lifting and leveraging heavy cargo on to the deck. These slaves were of such great size and height, that I wondered. How in God's name, could they be so docile and obedient, as a pompous plantation master had stated on board ship.

Now upon my departure, while walking up from the bay dock area, I noticed the street under me was glowing in the sunlight. To a lesser extent even the buildings and sidewalks did so as well. I had never observed this in Europe. Was the sea journey affecting my sight? Then two privately talking sailors nearby confirmed my observation. For the younger mate made the similar comment as mine. First the older man heartily laughed, then poked the youthful sailor vigorously, while coughing and spitting. He then spit his tobacco whole on the side walk, and explained, that finely crushed seashell dust had been originally mixed with the white sand as a base for the city streets. This created the sparkling. He then muttered that this was found in many of the Caribbean ports as he was to soon find out.

Further I walked on and saw two youthful negro women wearing to my amazement the most elegant and fashionable attire to be worn by ladies. Could a rich English merchant have afforded such clothing of the latest French fashion, I surmised. And yet maybe they were of some free black gentry stock. Soon thereafter, a well appointed Georgian coach of four whisked them away, as if they had been invited to a Sunday afternoon stroll in Regency Park. Further on, I noticed a plentiful variety of stately and impressive homes. Many of which architecturally had unusually designed double porches, of which the spacious verandas were along the interior long side of the homes. More than a few had luscious tropical gardens adjoining the residences. Others had interesting patterns of exquisitely maintained brick walls with some type of Myrtle species of growth as a partial covering to their enclosure.

At another fork in the road, I found very active business thoroughfare with many carriages, wagons of produce and individual cart vendors. On the corner of Market Street an interesting looking, old negro man and his flower lady daughter were peddling. I asked them. "May I inquire? Are there available, any reasonable lodgings nearby? And might I glance at your Charleston newspaper for work notices?"

My appearance was still *Caliban* of the wildness, so extremely unkempt, for the fellow looked at me with caution and tossed a questioning glance to his daughter. Then he proceeded to speak in a puzzling French dialect to her. I estimated her, to be in her late teens or early twenties. Interrupting him slightly, I interjected the same question again, but in French.

To this, he smirked at his daughter, saying in his Creole dialect of French, "He looks so filthy, and yet he speaks French like a court dandyman". I then thought to myself, 'Oh My God! I rarely had ever acted in the French language! Here I've been on the shores of America barely six hours, and I am exposed in my charade by an old 'could be French negro man and his young daughter, a flower vendor! How shall I survive?'

So humiliated, I made a more sincere gesture in English with, "I am an actor, with a sad and tragic story from my homeland, England. You understand sir? I must keep it confidential.

May I have the honor of your name, and that of you daughter?"

He seemed at first surprised, then so taken back.

To my surprise and embarrassment the young lady started to laugh out loud uproariously with a shake her hips so flirtatiously. Swaying over to the old man she kissed him on the cheek saying, "Well lov, this Brit thinks you're my old man? Will you ask him for his real name before he changes into something else?"

A M S

I responded "Edward Northbridge of London". with a flowing and theatrical bow. The old man walked up to me, interested now.

Then, he came close to my ear, saying,

"I know someone, who can make good use a you.

May have a place ta sleep?"

I nodded my head in agreement, while he continued. "She'll take you ta Senegal Jack's." As I started to stand by her side

however, she looked at me and shook her head saying,

"We're slaves of Master Francis Hanson and his Mistress Gloria.

Don't you know that? I advise ya, sir,

to keep a space say one stride behind me. When we get to Jack Senegal's, you all go by the back. Don't worry! I'll show ya.

But don't dare enter S Js before I say so! And until he waves his hat at ya."

Taverns and theatres

I worked like a slave for a few tavern owners during this brief period. Until one late night, while reading a Charleston Courier, I came across a notice theatre audition notice to be held at the White Mare Beer Hall and Garden.

The next day at the audition, I found a reasonably good stage, an open audience area or common, surrounded by three inter-connected buildings in the shape of a horse shoe. There was a simple frame structure on one of its sides, having the two levels used for borders, or otherwise. The second side building was a Dutch like barn used for animals besides storage. In the middle of them both, was a large three story brick warehouse looking building with white washed interior. It had a wonderfully unique ornate and massive Germanic balcony flowing into the interior beer hall, all on the main tavern level. As to it being used for an open theatre, it could accommodate more than three hundred patrons having mostly benches to sit on. I was told, that during beer festivals, weddings and other events, it could hold two hundred and fifty patrons when the large tables were in use. The entire three structure complex had a capacity for over six hundred inhabitants.

The request for auditions stated the need for players to be "somewhat" familiar with William Shakespeare's, Henry IV. It did not however state which Henry IV, Part I or II. The organizer of the theatre production was a Mr. Maximillian Bleu, a robust, almost pirate looking individual, who admitted early on, that he may not always be available for rehearsals, having seasonal obligations just outside of Savannah. I told him of my experience in the role of Prince Hal in Henry IV, Part I, years ago, which he was overjoyed to hear. As we talked further he divulged his lack of experienced in the actor auditioning. At first I became concerned, but then unusually quite confident.

So when he asked the question, "Mr Bridgnorth, sir, do you have a preference for a character part?" I answered,

"Falstaff of course."

He looked at me a little dismayed, as if he had already chosen someone for that part. So I took initiative.

"With that part", I responded

"I would be willing to assist in some tutoring of actors and helping with your stage management, for reasonable compensation".

Well! It was as though he had won Charleston Lottery.

He stood, waving his eboney cane up and to the side, and then shook my hand robustly stating "Then sir, you shall have it!"

I had found out by the end of the day, that not only, was I, the only actor experienced in Shakespeare, but I was the only individual there who even knew there was a Henry IV, Part II.

Back at my lodgings, Jack Senegal congratulated me.

Yet, he warned me about the "multitude" of pick pockets that made the Mare their den of activity.

He was very appreciative of my helping, Jimmy Angola on Broad Street, and also for the unusually late evening readings of plays, which I performed while reading for the his unnamed and unseen clients.

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The first week, Mr Bleu rarely attended the rehearsals. Then after three weeks, he never attended them. The cast was made up of four Irishmen, three ladies of the night from Georgia, and a mix of North and South Carolinians. Only the Irish lads had any theatre experience, and that was working as clowns in the equestrian circus.

The older of two brothers from Ireland, Andrew McKinna was sure that instead, he should be playing character of Falstaff. As he put it. He had even "read the play."

Meaning, besides having some familiarity, he could read.

But more importantly Maximillian had "promised" him the part.

When at last, we did get into the rehearsals, Andrew's brother Liam agreed with me that "Indeed I was the far better choice". as Liam said, Andrew would make a more convincing Prince Hal, being naturally arrogant.

I found it odd at first, that he was the only cast member who would talk at all about their life experiences.

No one else, ... I repeat no one else, would talk about their past.

Were we all outcasts? Or pirates?

Our captain at the helm, had been Maximillian the strangest looking pirate of our lot. But he was absent, on leave, gone.

Therefore, It was I, who became the de-facto production manager, guide as it were, to the world of William Shakespeare and acting.

The good news for me, was now, most of my wages were paid weekly, by the White Mare's proprietor and owner, a Mr. Hamilton. That was in direct contrast to the other players, who were paid only as a result of final ticket purchases.

The owner, in fact welcomed my transition into the position of manager. It seemed Maximillian had faded into the Charleston harbor fog, as one could say, having owed Hamilton a considerable sum of money.

Regretfully though, a week before opening night, I had to communicate to Hr. Hamilton the extent and amount of emergency

tutoring, I had performed. I was feeling sure that he had heard nothing about the arrangement from my predecessor.

Which I was right about. So surprised at first, he said, consolingly, "if your production is popular with my clients and the public, you will be compensated".

But, he continued, "You know Shakespeare had never been successful here?" However, I felt confident. The cast was amazingly almost ready, and I would steal, or borrow every acting trick, that I had ever learned or observed over the years, having played in some fine Shakespearian productions in and out the London arena.

And Praise the Lord! Mari so indeed, I was right on our opening night. The Irish lads were magnificent, princes of the stage. We had our own little circus.

Mostly the audience, which loved the tavern scenes, a context the patrons could easily relate to.

So over the next two weeks or more, we had many of our previous ticket holders coming again and again.

Then to Hamilton's amazement and ours, the Charleston gentry started to attend in droves. As a result, the players were asked to continue our production of Henry IV, Part I, for another month, and lead eventually into Henry IV, Part II, including another play, Macbeth.

Luther R. Mandrake of the Charleston Courier wrote that our production "... Was a surprisingly exceptional event", in what he characterized as an otherwise uneventful theatre season for Charleston, "... and not performed in city's theatre hub but on Queen Street at The White Mare, Beer Hall and Garden.

"Henry IV is a must for anyone educated or un- to see". He also had mentioned that, "Edward Northbridge, in Falstaff, and his Irish lads are unforgettable rascals".

Mr. Arthur Hamilton was riding the crest of a wave in popularity, he had never before experienced. The Mare was on the map, competing with the Charleston theatre elite and winning.

He was even looking forward to putting some money away. If the success continued. For myself, having inherited a small quantity of Dubliner stock, I knew it was time to warmly congratulate the Irishmen, and then prepare with fan fair for the newly formed White Mare Shakespearean Theatre Company.

Likewise, It was important to publically praise all the cast for our success. A grand party was the result, to be held at the Mare, and Arthur and I would be preparing for it, at length.

It was during the middle of our parallel run of Henry IV and MacBeth, that I received the most bizarre invitation. Arthur Hamilton put it in these words.

"You are to have the most important meeting of your life at the Palmetto Theatre." A formal afternoon dinner had been planned, and I had not a fathom for what purpose it was or whom. But Arthur's son-in-law had lent me a fine set of cloths for the occasion.

So that afternoon I walked up as directed, the grand Palmetto Theatre steps from a magnificent carriage with four impeccably dressed negro servants in spotless velvet attire lined up at both sides of the entrance, in what one might think was in my honor. One of the colored servant's took my hat, as the others led me, in a procession down the center theatre aisle to the stage. There to my astonishment, a lavish formal dinner feast was arranged center stage. Sitting at the head of the table, stage left was Master Louis Fleur, who had been briefly introduced to me after one of White Mare's performances. He addressed me briefly, as I was being seated.

"Apologies for such short notice Mr. Northbridge. Good of you to come, sir. This is in your honor."

Respectfully, I bowed before being seated. There were also, two exquisitely dressed young ladies at the table, both say fifteen or sixteen years of age. They acknowledged my presence with a cordial bow and nod of their ornate silk fans.

Master Louis then introduced himself and his daughter Carol Ann,

who was seated next to him, including next to his niece a Rebecca Lee Stanton. "A pleasure to be in your presence ladies, and you, sir" I responded. Rebecca Lee, also called Becky, responded radiantly, "Charmed by your manners, sir", her fan tilting elegantly from the wrist as she spoke.

So I added dramatically. "To be in the presence of such lovely ladies of the Carolinas, on the stage of this prestigious theatre with a wonderfully elegant dinner Well! As an actor, ladies I'm speechless."

Playfully, Carol Ann now said, looking at Becky,

"I should hope not."

After putting his table cloth away from his mouth, Master Louis spoke up, "Thank you, for your appreciation of Carol Ann's and Rebecca Lee's creative southern hospitality but...".

Carol Ann instantly looked at her father. Her eye brows indicating "May I father?".

To this he stopped, and said, "Yes, Carol Ann?"

"Its ... alright father." She said, apologetically with a slight studder. "No. Please." He insisted, but not forcefully.

So she started again, slowly.

"Our setting, arrangement and dinner are cutesy of the Planters Hotel, the Azalea Room."

Becky then added."Sir, Did you know your in the finest theatre

in the south?"

Carol Ann` returned. " If, if... not the Nation! You should be performing here!"

"Well, isn't that right , Uncle Louis?" Becky added.

"So make your case, Carol Ann." ,The Master responded.

"Father." She said playfully.

"Go, Carol Ann." Becky insisted.

'First, we were enchanted by your performance as Falstaff and Macbeth". Carol Ann starts.

"Second, the White Mare, though I love it dearly, is just a beer hall".

" Third, your diction, stage presence, animation -"

Becky listened most attentively. But had to get in the thick of it. "Mr. Bridgenorth indeed your manner of acting is divine".

Carol Ann adds, "...and his movements! And the high point in Charleston theatre this year".

Now, Becky starts quicken the pace. "You must have observed the reviews in the Courier? No? My dear, Mr. Northbridge, Where have you been? He is disarming, Carol Ann. Such a humble gentlemen".

"Overwhelmed ladies", I returned at last.

"You can say that, Mr. Northbridge". Master Louis chimed in.

But now I knew I had to perform sensing my present audience.

"For an actor like myself to be so outwardly ...
Should I say lavishly appreciated ... and praised, is most
gratifying."

Closing the moment Master Louis said,
"There you have it, Mr. Northbridge. The plantation mistress at
her best. Defending her position, or her brood."

After the third course, Master Louis Fleur called over his
personal servant, Joseph. Saying "Joseph, come here. For our
celebration have Scipio sing the tavern song.

I'm sure it's one of your favorites, Mr. Northbridge."

Scipio had been serving the supper meal back and forth from the
Planters Hotel. Upon his entering the theatre again, Joseph
relates the wishes of Master Louis. The tall male slave in his
early twenties, stood about thirty feet from me on the stage,
facing Master Louis, who then signaled, saying,

"Begin."

The Negro man starts to sing, TO ANACRON IN HEAVEN perfectly.

Finishing at the end of the first verse, the master says

"Second."

So, he sings the second verse as good as the first. Finally, Master Louis gives him the order to sing 'The Star Spangled Banner', which have the exact same melody. Miss Carol Ann stands and puts her right hand on her heart. I wait to see what Master Louis will do. He is obviously pleased with his daughter's patriotic gesture. As Scippo gets to final part of the song, he forgets the words, and then his voice can't hit the notes.

Shaken by his mistakes, he looks at fellow servant/slave Joseph to get his reaction. He then glances a second at Master Louis. Next Scippo lowers his head waiting for the ultimate reaction. However Master Louis says nothing building a dramatic tension which felt like forever. In contrast Carol Ann's face showed her anger, whereas Becky's eyes looked down to the table. Finally, Master Louis looks over at Joseph to brakes the silence.

"Come over here, Joseph", he says. Immediately Joseph walks to Master Louis' side. Joseph asks "Yes, my Master Louis?"

So he responds, "Joseph, I thought you said, he could memorize these lyrics in no time?" "Yes, Master Louis, I did."

Joseph's eyes say, he wants to continue speaking, though instead he pauses. Carol Ann is ready to interrupt, but she doesn't. She has just realized that she would have overreacted in this situation. Joseph continues.

"This is the boy, who brought your filly Marion to Georgetown, Master Louis. He had a rough time with her I'm afraid. I surely thought he could handle both tasks. My sincerest apologies, Sir." So, here cleverly making little of the present situation, Master Louis responds. "This is the second time this week, Carl Ann, Isn't it? That we have heard this STAR SPANGLED BANNER mangled. At least this boy has the lungs for it. The women at The White Mare goodness knows couldn't come close to reaching the notes them. Hell, I couldn't!

Isn't this drinking song of the tavern from your country, Mr. Northbridge?"

"That, it is Master Louis. And I've lost in it many a time, sir.

"Indeed", the Master returned.

"And you would not be alone, Mr. Northbridge.

I think there seems to be a curse in forgetting the lyrics."

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We had gotten through another dinner course as Carol Ann was telling me about her grandfather, Jacob Fleur, who was also a Charleston theatre connoisseur and very fond of the London theatre as well. Therefore, I told them all an odd story about a play that I was in at Covent Garden. After this tale, which she enjoyed very much, Carol Ann asked me, almost like an aside.

"Did you ever come into contact with Edmund Kean?"

This took me by surprise. There was a long pause, before I started. Which only served to make Master Louis even more interested.

"I first remember Mr. Kean around 1808, I believe.

He being almost twenty and I, a few years older.

Kean was then a stroller like myself traveling with a company.

I think it was, The Kings Men! They were engaged at The Theatre Royal, Chaltenham. Probably...oh maybe early December, performing both *The School of Scandal* and *The Bridal Spectre*.

Kean's wife was playing the lady of the Court.

I apologize, I don't recall Edmund's part. But anyway she was much more at ease to talk with really. Quite modest, but winning. The personel in the *Shropshire Players*, of which I was a member, was engaged at The Serepent. We were about to put on a production of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Then most unfortunately, three of our players became ill. His company, let him, for vast sum of money, going to their management, play with ours for two weeks.

While his under-study took his part with their troop.

Now at this time, he was not really a known leading man.

Oh, he was talented, but not like those of us who were the tall and handsome types. He was young, hard working and very gifted back then. He studied and slaved...excuse me.

Worked beyond the normal strolling player of the countryside. His wife said most of his peers and fellows of their company were jealous of his talent and energy on the stage. She was right!

I was diligent yes, but no dynamo, like he was. More a flash of lightning than acting. I could project over him in voice and out distance him in a singing. But he was even then, becoming the genius of the stage.

So then five years pass. And Kean opens at Drury Lane as Shylock.

It was then his lightning bolt had hit the London stage."

Carol Ann waves her fan interrupting.

"Ya ... you were in the Merchant of Venice?"

"No unfortunately not." I continued.

"However in Hamlet, I played opposite him as Leates. It was surely my pinnacle. By that time, he had eclipsed everyone as a tragedian that I had ever seen, or heard of.

The audience and I were mesmerized.

After Hamlet, I was in Two Gentlemen of Verona for only four days. Then, I was auctioned off, and finally let go.

During this time, my wife Michelle had our first child, Edward."

I paused again, and continued slowly.

"Three weeks later both my wife and my child were gone.

They both perished.

I could not function on stage for a very long time."

Then Master Louis added, "Understandable, Edward."

"So, I tutored in England.

Now, I find myself in America, performing on stage again."

"How did you end up in Charleston?" Becky asked.

"My voyage was arranged by my sister, Mari." I answered.

"I stayed with her in London for a year, or two, before departing for South Carolina."

Before the final course was brought to the table, Master Louis looks over at Carol Ann and Rebecca Lee approvingly. But, they are puzzled.

"Well." He said, pausing as he placed his table cloth next to his wine glass. "I have two important matters that I would like to discuss with you.

First; there is some talk. The Irish fellows prefer that the theatre company produce, Othello.

The City Fathers, (pause), which I have talked to already would appreciate instead your cooperation in our Charleston Fourth of July Celebration. Therefore, I would hope you could consider to substitute instead, *Cato*. In that case, the City Elders would agree to the company performing here, in this theatre."

Becky reacts joyously, "How exciting!"

"Correct me father?" Carol Ann stated.

"Wasn't *Cato*, George Washington's favorite play, father?"

"Yes. And coincidentally, *Cato* was staged right here for President Washington. Well in his honor, I believe during his second term."

Becky adds "the Father of Our Country. My!"

"What a...delightful event, Becky!" Carol Ann echoed.

A little perplexed I said " I apologize, sir. But I am not as familiar with the play or your American history yet. However, it would be an honor and a pleasure to produce the play for you.

" Then It is done!" The Master said, as he stands to toast.

"To George Washington, the Father of Our Country, The Fourth of July, and the City of Charleston"!

Somewhat surprising myself, I toast" Long live..."

"The Republic!" Master Louis finishes and adds,

"Now to the second subject."

Here everyone present including the slaves are curious.

"I am a silent partner with Arthur Hamilton, Mr. Northbridge.

We own The White Mare. Arthur has found out, through a very reliable source that The Royal Theatre Management on Dock Street is planning to approach you with a substantial monetary offer when your contract obligation ends with Arthur. Therefore, I am going to personally make this offer to you."

Here, Master Louis Fleur signals Joseph to come over to him. The Master takes a note pad out of his exquisite silk jacket and writes a financial offer down. As he continues talking, Joseph delivers the offer to me.

"I need a tutor, Mr. Northbridge, in Charleston for at least three months for Carol Ann and Miss Rebecca Lee.

I have been searching unsuccessfully for the right tutor in diction, speech, English culture and language. Here is what I can offer you for the next three months, starting Monday."

I was amazed and overjoyed by the substantial sum for only three months. "You do not have to make your decision tonight however."

Master Louis continued. "But if the lessons prove advantageous to Miss Carol Ann, myself and Miss Rebecca Lee, we would extent an option for ten more months. As a result, I would double your salary again, besides free room and board staying at the plantation house."

"I am overwhelmed" I said out loud, reading the amount of pounds sterling involved. Carol Ann then spoke. "Mr Arthur Hamilton told us all about your talents. "Tutoring the cast night and day."

"Thank you". I said.

" And your results with Mr. Hamilton's son in law, Harold" Becky joins in "a miraculous metamorphosis".

A M S

Here the Master signals Joseph to his side again.

As he hands him his calling card, which is delivered directly to my hand, he ends the evening saying, "So we can look forward to hearing from you in two days time?"

I nodded my head silently in agreement as my arm shook in excitement from under the table. "There's my address sir on the card. I expect you Friday at 9am sharp.

A pleasure Mr. Northbridge".

Miss Carol Ann and Becky

It was June, and Rebecca Lee Stanton had left Charleston to return to her family's plantation on the Cooper River. It appears Master William Stanton had disagreed with his brother in law, Louis Fleur concerning the hiring of myself as the principal tutor. Instead, Master Stanton wanted only Miss Elizabeth Hargrove of Charleston for the position. To soften the implications, Master Louis explained that when his wife Sophia had died three years ago, the Stanton family had graciously taken care of Carol Ann for almost two years. For that time, Miss Hargrove was Becky's and Carol Ann's tutor. It was also Becky's mother, Mary Williams Stanton, the sister of the deceased Mistress Sophie, who declared, "What, an English actor!"

Now it must be admitted, that the Stantons were very fond of Carol Ann, as indeed Master Louis adored Rebecca Lee, his niece. One can imagine Carol Ann being deeply upset with the departure of her favorite cousin and best friend. But distressing to me was it was definitely affecting her lessons. I told Master Louis as much, and I was also saddened by Becky leaving so soon. I mentioned that "The ladies were doing so well for the two weeks." We were about to have a scene reading of "The Tempest", which

Carol Ann and Rebecca Lee were most excited about in to show off their new skills. I had worked with them every other day, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Admittedly this was a challenge for me, in leu of the fact, that I also had to manage and act for the White Mare Theatre Company on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Yet Macbeth had been cancelled for lack of attendance and interest. Oh the company was still performing Henry the IV, Part II, and we were diligently rehearsing for Cato. This time Andrew McKinna had the role of Falstaff.

I had already put the theatre company on notice in that by two or three months, I might be leaving the troop. Mr. Hamilton had confided in me, that he wouldn't be able to afford me anyway, because the theatre attendance was lacking.

In any event, It was after one my private lessons with Carol Ann, that Master Louis divulged the main reason for supporting me as the principal tutor. He said of Miss Hargrove, "Carol Ann's stuttering becomes worse under her instrution!" After hearing this, I shared some of my observations in the last three weeks. I told him, not only did working with both of young ladies make economic sense. But having Rebecca Lee present made Carol Ann more relaxed, attentive, and articulate in diction, "Her performance was enhanced by her good friend and cousin being there, Master Louis. They simply make each other much better

students."

I had found that in my years of tutoring, however such friends generally had a tendency of distracting each other. Yet, this was not at all the case with our two ladies. One could tell that Master Louis was touched by the remarks. I then added that the advantage of working with young men or women for that matter using Shakespeare's plays was that it developed a much deeper and richer poetic flow in vocabulary. If instead, however," I told him. "The ladies were in need of improving their writing skills as in correspondence, well then I may not have been the better choice. Yet they are both excellent in the letters art and medium". This made Master Louis feel quite better than before. So, he asked me to have dinner with him that evening, as Carol Ann would be back in three and a half days from the Edisto plantation.

In the week that followed with Rebecca Lee's return, you see Master Louis had convinced William Stanton to continue the lessons for at least twenty one days. I would put on a practical demonstration of all my worth and unique methods. As those days flew by, I found Carol Ann and Becky to savour their readings and acting of 'The Tempest'. This was a good sign for it would be soon Master Stanton would be attending the demonstration with his oldest son, William Jr. This was ultimate the test. A scene

reading and discussion thereafter of the practical value of Shakespeare's plays as it specifically concerned their daughter's education.

So when the morning of the reading came, I walked my usual pat, across from the slave quarters, past the stable, through the garden, and then up the stairs to the huge kitchen side door. Now instead of usual three servants working away, there were only two now preparing for our visitors. An inexperienced girl Tulip was there substituting for the regular servants. She would be assisted in serving the meal by Massandra. However Massandra was specifically an upstairs servant.

So that morning when Joseph, Master Louis's personal servant, entered the kitchen he was in such an agitated huff, for under the unfortunate circumstances he would have to help serve the meal besides his other task in greeting the guests at the door and waiting on them. In the kitchen, now, Joseph and Massandra talked about what had happened on the Ashley River plantation. There had been an emergency. The fever had hit again. Already four had the sickness, including one of the house servants. In this time of the year during rice cultivation, the slave field workers needed an additional cook and cleaner on duty at Fleur Plantation. Also the new overseer was in a real panic. It seems the outdoor kitchen slaves were hit first, all three of them. As

a result, the two servants, which were to come into town to assist us, would not be here. In fact as I have stated, the two from the Charleston house had left last night to go back to the plantation. Master Louis and Joseph would be leaving immediately after when Stantons had departed. This is why the three in the kitchen chattered so differently in their Gullah phrases for the most part. I just couldn't understand most of it. That is, while they all peeled more the potatoes and yams.

Another factor to the calamity of the day was Carol Ann was shrieking. She was livid, when she found out that Massandra would be serving that day. I found out about her true contempt for Massandra, the very first day of my tutoring at the Charleston house. Massandra, also called Messy, was indeed a most beautiful women either black or white in the city. Her hair was short, but not shaven. She was exquisite. Taller than most women, and her figure was superior in curves and proportion, from her sculptured waist and hips, right up to her large shadowy hazel eyes. The simplicity in her clothing white or amber cotton, with the indigo head scarf or turban down to her black leather sandals, merely enhanced her attractive bearing to any male eye. And she had 'Helen' like face, warm ruby lips and soothing ebony 'Venus' glow about her. When Messy walked, her physical movement and posture swayed like that of an exotic Caribbean dancer. Her father was

said to be a Spanish sailor, while Massandra's mother was a servant slave from Havana, Cuba.

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On the rare occasion that Miss Carol Ann and Massandra would be in the same room, Carol Ann knew that she could not risk speaking. Otherwise the result could be the massive stutters. In addition to that her face would turn pink. Massandra knew how to vanish as soon as she had appeared in a room. And sometimes, it was only Carol Ann who knew that she had even been there. To her credit this beautiful slave women knew to only respond to the commands of Master Louis.

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So when Master Stanton and his son finally arrived that morning, they came with their two colored servants, Old Joey, the coachmen, and Young Plutarch, the boy footmen. Only Plutarch came inside the house though. He was there to fulfill the needs of the Stantons at any beckoning moment.

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Oh Marie, I forgot to tell you of the Fleur Townhome itself

where this event was to occur. It is of red brick, Adamesque design, much like the Widow Russell's House on Meeting Street. But the Fleur home on Queen Street had only a ten foot ceiling in height, instead of the twelve foot ceilings of the Russell's. Both homes had elegant, free-flying staircases to provide a defining focal point and processional route to the second floor formal rooms. In grandeur, splendor and decor, these were the most elegant dwellings in all the Charleston. It was regrettable that Master Louis's wife never had the opportunity to enjoy this residence, having died in the midst of its lengthy construction. Amazing to it was her side of the family wealth that had paid for the fine edifice itself. Even though Master Louis had owned the land prior to their marriage. Master Louis told me that almost every time Master Stanton visited him in town, Master Billie couldn't help but state, why he couldn't just sell the Georgetown plantation for a Charleston home such as this. However Master Stanton's wife Mary would rather invest her resources in the large parcel of land that the family owned in Providence, Rhode Island. There, the future objective was to build a magnificent summer estate. In any case, Master William owned two plantations on the Cooper River. One of which was the location of their chief residence. They referred to it as 'The Big House'. Their other plantations were located in Georgetown and Beaufort. Whereas,

Master Louis Fleur owned his Ashley River rice plantation near his main home, with the horse farm adjoining and a sea cotton plantation on Edisto Island.

So as I was saying when the day of reckoning came, Joseph met the Stantons and their servant boy at front the door. He thereafter led them into the large entry parlor. The door immediately to the left was where Master Louis had his office and library. It was locked.

"Would you gentleman care for refreshments, sir?" Joseph inquired. Master William Stanton said, with gesturing, "Not at this time, thank you".

William Stanton and his son, William Jr., then sat on the Renaissance bench in the corner, and started to converse about last evening's Jockey Club Party, when Louis came in from the interior hallway. Immediately, the two stood, the Senior Stanton saying, "We missed you at Club, Louis!"

Master Louis returned. "Sir, I see your not having any of my fine imported Champaign. Recuperating, I hope?"

William's son then responds, "Yes Sir, it was too much French wine, Uncle Louis."

"Well," Master Louis said, "My wine cellar is yours.

When you are ready."

Master Billie Stanton then got down to the business at hand.

"So, you're going to make actresses of our two daughters.

Or do I have to save them from you, Louis?"

Louis smiled at one of his favorite relations.

"Billie, your just going to have to wait till after the reading, for our re-negotiations."

Billie returned swiftly. "You are, quite the horse trader, Louis."

Master Louis then retorts,

"You know, my father would have loved this Billie. British culture is still culture, cousin."

"But Its not Southern culture, Louis!" Master Stanton snapped back. Master Louis now parried Billie's final thrust in their verbal duel.

"We all have some Sir Walter Scott in us, here in South, Sir."

At that moment Joseph rang the dinner bell.

Here instead Miss Carol Ann and Rebecca Lee came down the lovely, spiraling staircase, one of a kind, Russell staircase.

"My, my, Carol Ann! We are becoming a fine looking women.

"Billie said.

"Thank you, Uncle Billie." Louis then said, as he grins with pride, "Rebecca Lee is surely my Bell." He says as he walks over to her, taking her hand gently, and escorting her upstairs to the

circular dining room. Here Master Billie is feeling that he is surely being out done. So he says to Master Louis, "I look forward to the first dance, with your charming daughter, with your permission of course, Louis?"

Louis answers, "If Rebecca Lee will return the favor? Then I'd say. We are the luckiest men alive, Sir."

Laughing ever so politely, they all enter the dining room's curved pearl mahogoney doors, which are masterful artwork in themselves. It was wonderful to see the uncles walking so proud, hand in arm with their nieces.

And yet, what was going on at the plantation?

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While they had dinner, I prepared for The Tempest reading in the great parlor room. I wanted the natural sunlight to come in from the large floor to ceiling windows, behind us. Here the audience chairs of four, were set some thirty feet forward of us. They would not be affected, if any of the sun's glares came in through the window because of the distance. As I did this, Massandra came in and opened up the long gold colored silk drapes. It is interestingly, I had never conversed with her alone. So I said at last.

"Missy, I hear you have been assisting Master Louis in his lines?"

Noticing my small talk, she answered.

"Mr. Northbridge, I pray you sir, I have played many parts for Master Louis this week." Curious now, I continued.

"Yes, indeed all the world's a stage."

She stopped working momentarily, and said in a friendly cordial manner, and yet not too.

"I hope the reading goes well, sir..."

But, I enjoyed your Falstaff much more with the Master."

While still waiting for dinner to reach the desert wine and cigar stage, I walked into the garden, and thought.

Was this right? Going back into the tutoring of youth, after what had happened to me in England.

Still, I'm fortunate, considering my fame in Charleston theatre had been brief. Well, at the plantation, I should be insulated from all of humanity. What better place to hide from the past, and make a small fortune in a short time?

Who will ever know? When, I finally get to relatives in Philadelphia, next year, I may be even able to buy into a small theater there.

After more than thirty minutes respite, I was finally was led into the great room by Joseph with Master Louis saying,

"Here he is Mr. Northbridge. We have been talking about you and our dinner party at the Palmetto Theatre.

William Stanton, Rebecca Lee's father, has a question or two." Master Stanton then shook my hand and started.

"My compliments sir, for the loyalty and confidence that they have in you. But you must write down for me your history, your teaching method, and experiences. Letters of recommendation might be sufficient."

"Yes." I answered. "A letter on the subject would be my pleasure."

Still the interrogation continued, "And what are we going to observe here, Mr. Northbridge?"

I paused, and then delivered my soliloquy.

"You will hear words of the preeminent genius of the ages. Our greatest poet to write in the English language in total thirty seven plays and one hundred and fifty-four sonnets, A man whose plays and words are unparalleled. Rivalled only by The King James Bible.

Here, this afternoon, a scene from the Tempest will be presented his last play.

I admit some words being archaic. But far more echo through all time. The words and language are as beautiful now as ever. We are all aware of how words and phrases can be used with utmost skill

as a tool, as a furious sword, to make one cry, or to make one laugh with delight.

I leave such, with your young ladies, gentlemen".

Master Louis then clapped his hand and said. "Let us begin." The four in the cast took their places in half circle of chairs.

"Our cast for the reading of Shakespeare's '*The Tempest*' Act One, Scene II, are

Master LouisProspero
Carol AnnMiranda
Rebecca LeeAriel
EdwardCaliban

Now the play".

Miranda

How came we ashore?

Prospero

By Providence divine.

Some food we had, and some fresh water, that a noble Neopolitan, Gonzalo, Out of his charity, who being then appointed Master of

this design, did give us, with rich garments, linen, stuff, and necessaries, which since have steaded much; so of his gentleness, Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me from mine own library with volumes that I prize above my dukedom.

Miranda

Would I might but ever see that man!

Prospero

now I arise. (Puts on his robe)

Sit still, and hear the last of our sea-sorrow:

Here in this island we arriv'd, and here have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit than other princess', that have more time for vainer hours, and tutors not so careful.

Miranda

Heaven thank you for't! And now I pray you sir, for still 'tis beating in my mind, your reason for raising this sea-storm?

Prospero

Know thus far forth; By accident most strange, bountiful fortune

(Now my dear lady) hath mine enemies brought to this shore; and

by my prescience I find my zenith doth depend upon a most

auspicious star, whose influence if now I court not, but omit, my fortunes will ever after droop. Here cease more questions.

Thou art inclin'd to sleep; 'tis a good dullness, And give it way. I know thou canst not choose. (Miranda sleeps.)

Prospero (continues)

Come away ervant, come; I am ready now. Approach, my Ariel. Come

(enter Ariel)

Ariel

All hail, great master, grave sir, hail! I come to answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly, to swim, to dive into the fire, to ride on the curl'd clouds, To thy strong bidding, task Ariel, and all her quality.

Prospero

Hast thou, spirit, Perform'd to point the tempest that I bade thee?

Ariel

To every article. I boarded the King's ship; now on the beak, now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin, I flam'd amazement. Some Sometime I'ld divide, And burn in many places; on the topmast, the yards and bore sprit, would I flame distinctly, Then meet and join. Jov's lighting, the precursors O'th' dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary And sight-outrunning were not; the fire and cracks of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune seem to besiege, and make his bold waves tremble, Yea, his dread

trident shake.

Prospero

My brave spirit! Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil would not infect his reason?

Ariel

Not a soul But felt a fever of the mad, and play'd Some trick of desperation. All but mariners plug'd in the foaming brine, and quit the vessel; Then all afire with me, the King's son, Ferdinand, with hair up-staring (then reeds, not hair), was the first man that leapt; cried, "Hell is empty, and all the devils are here,"

Prospero

Why, that's my spirit! But was not this nigh shore?

Ariel

Close by, my master.

Prospero

But are they, Ariel, safe?

Ariel

Not a hair perish'd; On their sustaining garments not a blemish, But freasher than before; and as thou badst me, In troops I have dispers'd them 'bout the isle. The King's son have I landed by himself, Whom I left cooling of the air with sighs, In an odd angle of isle, and sitting, His arms in this sad knot.

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(At this point there was an interruption to the reading. Joseph hand delivered a critical message to Master Louis.)

He looked over a Master Stanton after reading it. He then signaled Joseph to deliver to Master Stanton. After he had read it, Louis walked directly over to me and whispered, "next plan , Mr. Northbridge."

(As it turned out, at our practice two days prior, I had suggested that, here was the place in the play to take small respite, or If we needed to shorten reading. For this would be an appropriate place, and Master Louis always appreciated my contingency plans. I therefore announced, as he sat back in the half circle.)

"Thank you for your patients..... We will now continue the reading, a few pages onward.

.....

Prospero

Do so; and after two days I will discharge thee.

Ariel

That's my noble master! What shall I do? Say what? What shall I do?

Prospero

Go make thyself like a nymph o' th' sea; subject to no sight but thine and mine, invisible to every eyeball else. Go take this shape. And hither come in't. Go. (Ariel) Hence with diligence!

Prospero

Awake, dear heart, awake! Thou has't slept well, Awake!

Miranda

The strangeness of your story put heaviness in me.

Prospero

Shake it off. Come on, We'll visit Caliban my slave, who never yeilds us kind answer.

Miranda

Tis a villain, sir, I do not love to look on.

Prospero

But as 'tis, We cannot miss him. He does make our fire, fetch in our wood, and serves in offices that profit us. What ho! slave! Caliban! Thou earth, thou! speak.

Caliban. (Within.)

There's wood enough within.

Prospero

Come forth, I say, ther's other business for thee.
Come, thou tortoise, when?

(Enter Ariel like a water-nymph)

Fine apparation! My quaint Ariel, Hark in thine ear.

Ariel

My lord, it shall be done. (EXIT)

Prospero

Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself.

Upon thy wicked dam, come forth!

(enter Caliban)

Caliban

As wicked drew as e'er my mother brush'd with raven's feather
from unwholesome fen Drop on you both! A south-west blow on ye,
And blister you all o'er!

Prospero

For this, be sure, to-night thou shalt have cramps.
Side-stitches, that shall pen thy breach up; urchins
Shall, for that vast of night that they may work,
All exercise on thee; thou shalt be pinch'd as thick as
honeycomb, each pinch more stinging Than bees that made 'em.

Caliban

I must eat my dinner. This island's mine by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first,
Thou strok'st me and made much of me, wouldst give me

A M S

Water with berries ins't and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night; and then I lov'd thee
And show'd thee all the qualitiars o' th' isle.
The fresh springs, brime-pits barren place and fertile.
Curs't be I that did so! All the charms Of Sycorax, toads,
beetles, bats, light on you! For I am all the subjects that you
have, Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me
I n this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest of th' island.

Prospero

Thou most lying slave, Whom stripes may move, not kindness!
I have us'd thee (Filth as thou art) with human care,
and lodg'd thee in mine own cell, till thou didst seek to
violate the honor of my child.

Caliban

O ho, O ho, would't had been done! Thou did'st prevent me;
I had peopled else This isle with Calibans,

Miranda

Aborred slave, Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage,

Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
a thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
With words that made known. But they vild race
(Though thou didst not learn) had that in't which good natures
Could not abide to be with ; therefore wast thou
Deservedly confin'd into this rock,
Who hadst deserv'd more than a prison.

Caliban

You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red-plague rid you
For learning me your language!

Prospero

hag-seed, hence! Fetch us fuel, and be quick, thou'rt best,
To answer other business. Shrug'st thou, malice?
If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly What I command, I'll rack
thee with old cramps, Fill all thy bones with aches,
make thee roer That beast shall tremble at thy din.

Caliban

No, pray thee. (aside) I must obey. His art is of such pow'r,
It would control my dam's god, Setebos, And make a vassal of him.

Prospero

So, slave, hence!

.....

(Here is I announced. "We are at the end.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen."

Master Louis looked over at Carol Ann. 'The Tempest' reading was finally over. Do you ladies have anything to add?"

(Master Louis daughter spoke, first.)

"Dear Uncle, your concern for me, is why I love thee so. But listen, dear sir. I will be the wife of a wealthy planter. In fact, I will most inherit the rice plantations Fleur, and a sea cotton plantation in Edisto. My husband will have to be a wealthy planter, merchant or other man of influence.

Maybe all! I surely do not anticipate Rebecca Lee, or myself, running off, to be wandering poor players. Even owning a theatre, does not interest either of use." Here she looks over at her father, and continues, after touching his hand.

"But, when entertaining guests of culture and breeding, Shakespeare's language can be a wonderful source of pleasure. Is it not true, that my father was taught Shakespeare at the Princeton Law College? And grandfather loved it, as I now do?"

(Rebecca Lee here impressed with her cousins flawless dialogue and delivery, continues.)

"I concur with dear cousin, Carol Ann, completely.

In fact, she has said, everything! Father, this is a grand opportunity that I do not want to miss.

I recognize that you were trained to be a medical doctor, sir. But, does not science have a greater respect for words, language, passion and truth? I am having a grand time, obtaining a superior education here with Carol Ann and dear Uncle Louis. Miss Hargrove had said, sir, that I should, as a personal task, enhance and improve my vocabulary and diction.

Well, it is but happening dear father."

(While still seated, Master Stanton bows his head, and waits for a moment. He then stands to speak.)

"Well, you have carried the day. I don't know how long this is going to be productive. But for now, ya'll ar learning a great deal, ladies. I do see that. And you, sir, should be commended. Cousin Louis, here is my final offer. You know the Mistress Stanton is gonna be real unhappy. But, here it is. four of the five days of lessons, can be with our Mr Northbridge, Rebecca Lee. But one day a week, I want Miss Hargrove. There are some real grand events coming about for the planters. Miss Hargrove may not have as much of the influential way she use to with Carolina Planters Society, Louis. But she is one of us. Or, at least, she was. You know. She knows all of the planters and mistresses.

Mr. Northbridge knows nothing of our culture. So, I'll pay for Miss Hargrove, out of my pocket, Louis.

No expense to you, Louis. I got to live with the Mrs!

Hell, this is only be ten more months, a year maybe Rebecca Lee, I know that. But can your Mama live with that? Oh, I guess so.

Now, Mr. Northbridge, I want some British and European history for our ladies, in there too." You hear me?"

Master Louis, slowly walked over to Master William Stanton, shakes his hand to finalize the agreement.

"I am pleased". Louis says?" "The issue is settled then. I agree. I thank ya all, very much for coming."

As the two plantation masters walked down the stairs together, aside Master Louis said to Billie Stanton,

"That special medical man Billie. Tomorrow, He'll be meeting me at the plantation. Is that right?"

"You have my word, Cousin Louis." Master Billie said as he shook Master Louis's hand in a final goodbye.

A M S

A M S

July 4, 1825

The play Cato had been a great success. But it was only performed five times. During this time, I found the history of General George Washington, their first president, to be more interesting than the play the Roman Cato failing in his efforts to preserve the republic from Caesar. And yet it still amazes me that General Washington's Army ever defeated the British Empire. Of course there was considerable financial and military support from France. In any case, I now prepared to execute Master William Stanton's directive to include a historic perspective of Europe into British Empire lessons. But how would I cross reference the European Continent to England, you might ask? My main theme of England was not to put some elitist slant to it. However in all truth, I was not that strong on the continental perspectives either. Therefore, as a frame of reference, I decided to start with Shakespeare's historic plays describing in detail their inaccuracies. In that I had already spent a great deal of time investigating Shakespeare, it was time for a detour. So I told the ladies personal stories as when I first experienced acting in a touring theatre company. We traveled, all through the provinces. Thank God, my Uncle Jasper, once a Quaker, took me

July 4, 1825

under his broad wing. And it was there, I met the love of my life, Michelle in the company of the Roving Shropshire Players.

Getting back to my lesson organization, I would carry out in chronological order starting with Richard II. But just mention him. Then spend more time on Henry IV, Part I and II, followed by a good deal of time on Henry V. Absolutely no time would be invested, whatsoever on Henry VI Part I, II or III. It would bore the ladies of South Carolina tears. Yet a great deal of effort was invested on Richard III. In Richard, I would talk more about my experience with the actor, Edmund Kean, again.

The play book, Henry VIII would never be opened. In fact, I had never opened it back in England.

My hypothesis here was, most of plays were really under the English History topic of the War of The Roses, the bloody conflict of power between the Houses of Lancaster and York for the British Crown. So why not cover them from Shakespearian perspective. And as a result, make life more bearable me.

Of course, this would all lead painlessly and wonderfully to reign of Queen Elizabeth. Later I would cover the Stewart line, honoring the City of Charleston name sake. Cromwell would be mentioned, only as a footnote. For his forces had destroyed my own fair city of Bridgnorth.

A M S

Then last, we would discuss the present Hanovarian line, all four of the Georges, especially George III. Here, I was sure the ladies would be delighted, when we got to their own rebellion, the American Revolution. There, they could give their honorable tutor a good thrashing for the whole affair and perceived injustice. Here I could also tell them some stories of Benjamin West, the painter. Finally by this time, I should be on my way north to Philadelphia, at last financially stable and secure.

Journey to Fleur Plantation

It was three months after our The Palmetto Theatre dinner party, that we left Charleston on Master Fleur's barge for his rice plantation on the Ashley River. For most of trip, I sat in a comfortable chair on the starboard side of the boat, alone, reading Lord Byron's poems. That is until, Miss Rebecca Lee, with her gracious southern curtsy, asked me to join them. Here the barge was about to turn another serpentine of curves in the river, when suddenly two loud pistol shots rang out. I was in the middle of standing up. I therefore dove to the deck floor below.

Yet my shock soon turned into a panic, as I should have dragged Rebecca Lee to safety along with me! After two long seconds, I heard her voice. "What are you do'en, Mr. Northbridge!" I looked around. And there she was, right above me, with her hands stretched out, smiling. Somewhat embarrassed She said.

"That's the overseers salute to the Master."

I straightened up, still looking around cautiously. So she added, with a smirk on her face, "You sha were a pitiful looking thing down there." So, in a less than gentlemanly poise, I brushed the grain dust from my new flannel suit, and followed her, to the front of the barge.

"You're in for a unique experience, Mr. Northbridge. Come along!" When at last we got to her uncle and cousin Carol Ann, I distinctly heard the increasing strange biblical cry of human clamor. "My God." I whispered to myself for it was the sound of a mass of at least a hundred fifty joyous negro slaves waving and cheering Master Louis' and Carol Ann's arrival. The revelry, continued until long after we landed, got off the dock, and entered the small tent specifically set up for the occasion. I could see the landscape of the large estate clearly with a pastoral field of more than fifty yards between us and the main house's rear veranda. In the tent, we had refreshments provided by 'the negro folk', as Miss Carol Ann described them. As I looked out the tent, I noticed two strategically placed horsemen at each end of the clearing, snapping their dark brown leather bull wipes crisply in the air. Their horses were substantially over fifteen hands each. Occasionally, they fired their pistols in unison. Rebecca Lee described them both in more detail while we walked to the rear piazza. "Man on the bay, is a common sort".

She said describing his simple cotton vest, outdated three pointed hat and brown paddock boots.

In contrast, she specifically asked me to notice the other gentlemen's attire. On his gray stylish mount, this man cleared a pedestrian path, as the crowd was getting a, "little too

rambunctious" the way Carol Ann put it.

This fellow's horse had the movements and carriage of a well trained cavalry horse. This became more easily recognizable as he approached us. I agreed that he did look impressive in his dark blue military uniform, breeches with their distinct strip down the seam and his superbly polished black officer boots. He wore his dark silk dress shirt for the occasion, a riding jacket obviously tailored, and a formal black beaver top hat. Rebecca said he had fought in the Battle for New Orleans with General Andrew Jackson. She stated also that it was unfortunately that his military career had ended so abruptly when his shoulder was dislodged temporarily as the result of gunfire wound in a duel over a women. To me, it was interesting to observe the slave population's reaction toward him, as he opened our walking route with a unique equestrian Dressage crowd control maneuver. A few of Negro men were especially responsive in helping him direct a group of new recently purchased slaves from the Slave Market Auction a month prior.

On the piazza, Master Lois now stood waiting for his colored folk to settle down. He glanced approvingly, left and right at his overseers on horseback, especially of that of the officer in charge on the gray. They both immediately dropped their heads in recognition of his unlimited authority. I couldn't help looking

at the cavalrymen differently, being reminded of an incident that I witnessed in Regency Park. It was of the Prince Regent's Dragoons dispersing an unruly workmen crowd. When they finally lined up in Regency Park, the cavalrymen drew their sabers slowly and deliberately. Then the military bugle horn blew out. They descended on the park population in full charge resulting in considerable panic and bloodshed. All hell broke loose that Sunday afternoon in London. The cavalry horsemen here had that same determined look upon him. However he had on military saber. Instead he armed with bull whip and pistol, formidable tools of his new trade.

The house servants had prepared a noon meal that would come after Master Louis had made his speech. It went something like.

"My plantation family is all here!" The crowd responded cheering wildly. "And I see many recuperated well, since the fever.

I remind you, I had brought one of the finest doctors in South Carolina here, when I first heard of the outbreak.

So my children are well!", referring to the slaves.

"And my property is doing better than ever!

Now the second great harvest is comin, and you will benefit.

Go now! Take the rest of the day." He paused, and turned around to his house slaves with an aside remark said to them, "Except my

faithful servants here."

I was told in the days of Master Louis' father, the slave population would literally carry the master, mistress and the children from the river barge, all the way to main house veranda. Louis Fleur decided not to follow the tradition. He said, "The present spectacle is quite enough."

.....

I was by no means a scholar. And yet I had produced two folders of note for my Uncle Jasper Mackin on the issues of Shakespeare's loosely based history in his historic plays. This was while I was the country player for two seasons. During this time, a number of the theatres had been closed because of the Small Pox's quarantine. In truth, there had been a number commentaries written previously on the Bard's numerous and purposeful inaccuracies as portrayed in his historically oriented plays. And I was given excess to one of them. And I did expand upon it considerably for my uncle, who was having difficulty in his reading and writing. I was to find out later that it was more artistic license on a Shakespeare's part, than being neglectful of the historic facts. So as I mentioned in the city of Warwick, I had been given access to the Warwick Guilds Library. Because the city had been a strong hold of Cromwell's during the

civil strife of that era, Warwick had been spared the perils of the devastation during England's Civil War. To be more precise, it was left standing. In contrast, the toll had fallen heavily on Bridgnorth our home of birth.

Luckily for me the Reverend De'Soto, a close personal friend of Uncle Jasper's, had given me access to the Guild Library and mentioned above thesis on Shakespeare. I bring this to one's attention because Master Louis had giving me full access to his library at the plantation main house. Whereas Duke Leo would never have given me that opportunity because it would have been inconceivable for our English class structure to allow it. For example, concerning the Duke's library, only two of his staff librarians, or peers of the realm, or in some cases mature family members were allowed to enter his inner sanctum.

As to the Fleur Plantation library contents, one third of the collection had been inherited from Master Louis' wife's family, the other two thirds were from his father, Jacob's side. The English selection of novels, plays, and poets there was considerable. Also Louis's wife Sophia had been interested in the history of England as well as in the new American Republic. In the State of South Carolina, Master Louis was noted for his collection on colonial America and the new republic periodicals, including assorted printed newspapers. This assemblage was to be

donated to the College of Charleston upon his death. However the College seemed to have never gotten off from its early planned stages. For the last five years Louis had concentrated on expanding on his contemporary periodicals having to do with horse training and breeding. I found it interesting in addition to this, he owned four rare Italian guitar books. Besides Carol Ann's interest in the library only one slave servant from the main house, a senior 'Old Fella' took any real caring eye toward library, and he once confided to me that he, "could never read any how". But felt being near the library gave him the air "the atmosphere of knowledge." The deceased Mistress of Fleur Plantation Sophia had loved the library deeply, putting her prized imported French pianoforte on display there. In recent years Louis would rarely use the room, preferring to read his periodicals from the veranda or his private second story study. Prior to his wife's death, the coupe would practice and perform duets in that grand library room. After which in addition, Carol Ann would cease taking her piano lessons, declining all invitations to play her mother's grand instrument. It appeared that besides the horse stable of Thoroughbreds mares and race horses, Master Louis spent most of his time at the elegant town home in Charleston.

A M S

The Plantation

Tutoring at the Fleur Plantation was as follows. Monday mornings at eight, I would meet with Master Louis, after he had returned from the rice fields or the horse stable. We would discuss the lessons planned for the week, and his expectations. If he was not available, we would have our talk either that evening or Tuesday morning.

At the end of the week, we would meet on the veranda before supper. I would relate what expectations had been accomplished, and then review the future plans for the following two weeks. By this method, He could examine present and future plans and goals. Generally the morning would be lessons concerned with projection, language, diction and literature. The afternoon, we would cover English History and culture from a contemporary and historical perspective. Most late afternoons, we would form a circle and read Shakespeare's plays. At some point say Thursday or Friday, the ladies would be ready to read their chosen poem at the circle with the Master present. The wonderful news is that within the month, Carol Ann's studded had become barely noticeable. The lessons had gone so well that Master Louis would say at the supper table, which he let me attend as his guest occasionally

that "Truly magnificent Mr. Northbridge! All this accomplished, and Miss Hargrove hasn't even joined us yet." His praise and encouragement had grown to such an extent, that he became even more liberal about my use of his library. I was beginning to dream some evenings that I was indeed 'of the manor born'.

He had on a number occasion graciously allowed me to bring one two, or even three of his very rare books back to my quarter's located at the Barbadian Guest House. This was so that I could spend part of my time on Saturday mornings conveniently in my room preparing. He rarely declined any material request of mine. By now, most of my tutoring plans were being prepared in the library or in some cases in my exquisite living quarters at the Dutch styled guest house nearby. I was only thirty yards from the main house and an half that to the kitchen outbuilding.

One would have thought aesthetically that the grand Georgian Main House, and Barbadian Guest House, having mere cottage of kitchen between them, would have architecturally clashed within that same designed landscape. And yet this was not in any way the case. Let me describe it more specifically. The great Georgian structure was the singular prominent structure to the north only, beautifully connecting the landscaped to the scenic river shoreline. Its extended veranda embraced the majestic structure and flowed gracefully to the manicured park like green

surrounding it. As to the Barbadian House, it had its design orientation to the south, in an inward landward direction. The supporting horse and carriage circle was part it's frontal focal point with its exquisite Greek Revival front door and Italianate piazza. Here was the main entry road to the plantation which meandered toward the county highway, the Ashley River Road beyond. On both sides of this entry lane were magnificent large ancient oak trees dramatically draped with Spanish moss, which softening or buffering any possibility of architectural or aesthetic visual conflict between the buildings. It was almost like having two magnificent independent estates all in one resplendent plantation complex. Even the cottage kitchen was ever so softly landscaped and placed between the two prominent structures an equal distance apart. I took my meal in the cottage kitchen, like the other servants.

For two months, even though very curious, I had never made my way to the rice fields, some hundred yards away, staying to the rear parlor for the lessons in the main house. I was told by one of the white servants, that the slave quarters to the east resembled a primitive African village. It was located some distance away because during a hurricane of fifteen years ago all the cabins were destroyed. Therefore an obsolete close-by rice field was cleared and drained for its use. The slave burial ground was

relocated as well, up further from the river. the prized horse stable was located to the west of the main house, an area a little higher in elevation from the river.

.....

Strangely it was about dusk one evening, that I was preparing for my usual English history and contemporary culture lesson that I thought I heard something most baffling. It reminded me of a Moroccan peddler band. I once had been acquainted with such a sound, while involved in an exotic London theatre production. But this was on a South Carolina rice plantation! I thought for a moment. I must have been reading too long. I needed a breath of fresh outdoor air. So, I opened the balcony door of my second story quarters. My eyes half closed, I took a deep breath, and then one more small step forward.. There was no mistake as I gazed out from above the carriage circle down the plantation lane with Ashley River Road in the distance. I definitely heard something, which sounded to me like Moroccan music And it was getting louder. Then I started to see dust clouds rising from the south in the direction of the road. A minute later, I saw an faint outline, that of two long columns of chained slaves marching in cadence with an armed horseman to the

side of them. As they turned into the lane the horsemen snapped his bull wipe high into moist slightly overcast surroundings. The most unusual thing was the large red, white and blue America flag being held high from the front of the near slave column, waving in a subtle, almost unnoticeable breeze. One huge dark slave held the flag proudly, almost at the height of the mounted overseeyer, as if with military formality of a once victorious returning army. To me, it was so strangely shocking, if not heavily weighted in an absurd kind of way in the ultimate patriotic irony. In contrast to the flag bearer, the rest of the Negro troop was physically exhausted from the chains worn of their forced march. Of the forty or so slaves, there was an odd limping unchained female holding on to and playing what appeared to be an African or Arabic instrument to the other side of the chained flagmen. In the second row was primitive drummer and slave fiddler, both unchained. So here was the source of the strange music. Later it was explained to me the female's musical instrument's origin. It was called a banjar or banjo. I had remembered seeing and hearing a similar type loot instrument at the Charleston harbor and even at Senegal Jack's. It made what sounded like an Arabic music in tone or quality. However the banjo was really said to have come from the slave ships, and its origin was West African.

Immediately, when the slave gang got close to the Barbadian house and halted, the overseeyer would order them to rearrange and form three lines around the coach circle. Slowly and surely the riflemen guard got down from his wagon as did his partner, a pistol and whip carrying driver. That was only after the horse wagon had been moved to the front of the formation line and quickly unloaded by two kitchen servants. The mounted overseeyer then talked for a long time still on his horse to Master Louis. During which a small safe box was handed to the Master after first signaling to the standing rifle armed guard. Next the overseeyer and his pistol carrying assistant inspected each slave. A servant slave then folded up the American flag neatly and handed it to Master Louis. Finally the three guards lead the entire troop back to their slave cabins. By now, Master Louis saw that I was on the balcony watching closely. So he shouted up to me, "What do you think of our marching band, Mr. Northbridge?" Still struck by the sequence of events, I answered. "Indeed sir, I shall always remember this, Master Louis."

There were a hundred and sixty five slaves in all at the plantation of varying skill, rank, and shades of color. By a month and a half here I had only come in personal contact with eight.

In contrast as to the non-Negro population here, there was the Master, Miss Carol Ann, Rebecca Lee and myself, a part time cook and clothes washer, a half Scotch and Irish urchin stable boy groom and sometimes jockey and finally two rotating overseeyers and the Master Overseeyor. Oh, and of course there was Miss Hargrove, who would be arriving next week, and she was known for many things besides tutoring, including match making within the planter society, especially those of French Huguenot decent. Her mother was originally from Paris, where as her father had owned a significant indigo and rice plantation on the Santee River. The family had gone through hard times though after the War Of 1812, losing almost all of their property and holding. Yet she was able to keep her two family inherited home in Charleston.

A M S

Dear Sister

Dear Mari as to my most recent notes and muses, please also place them in the actor's trunk. As there was little of the writings describing in any detail the slave population at Fleur Plantation, I shall now remedy that deviancy and delve more deeply into this supposed, lower sphere of humanity. In effect this unique opportunity came about, as a result my taking an earlier morning breakfast, along with an unusually interesting character, young Richard of the horse barn. At these early morning meals we discuss almost everything about plantation life, horse racing and indeed sometimes Charleston. There has also come about a new cook Cleo, who has been recently purchased. Specifically, the two are rapidly becoming very fond of one another. Their courtship is a singular story to itself. And this girl has also become close to Massandra as well. Therefore, I shall be accumulating a unique array of information about this slave subculture. I will sent that along as time presents.

But sister! I have not yet received one correspondence from yourself! Please write. I should be at Fleur for at least ten more months. I do sincerely hope that you, the family, your tavern and the boarding house business are doing well.

Dear Sister

A M S

God Bless you, my love.

Always

Your brother Thaddius

The Slaves

Young Richard was almost a handsome young man of ebony dark complexion, light weight for his five foot eight height, and gregarious. A most agreeable talkative fellow, who I enjoyed immensely and spend many of my morning meals. Master Louis called him, "born natural in the saddle, with an experienced jockey fine touch and vision. A extremely reliable horsemen, with just enough pluck for the Thoroughbred Race Horses." With many a glass of Madera under his breath, I have heard Master Louis also say, "He's worth ten of my field niggers."

However one failing of Richard in the opinion of Joseph was that he was "one damn chatty conversationalist!" with the visiting white horseman and at the race course events. And understandably so he was appreciated for his skill by many of them. But Joseph, on a number of occasions had to chastise him. "or straighten the young man out for his actions." Saying, "Boy, you gotta know your place... at Fleur, but especially you got ta know your place at the race course!"

The white man 'token head' of the horse race branch of Fleur was a Mr. Langfield. It was his influential name that was used in the official race course and Charleston Jockey Club publications, as the 'managing trainer and part owner'. What he was in fact was, as Master Louis's put it, "a fine promoter and showmen".

He rarely came to the stable or even plantation for that matter. "But he was our great dealer." Richard said. "And sir, you don't want to play cards with Jerome Langfield. Noo, sir."

At a late dinner, one evening at the Master's Charleston house, I heard him point out, "Only one man, only one man ever out smarted Mr. Langfield, and that was Hachaliaha Bailey, the New York circus man and promoter. "Mr. Bailey had out bid Mr. Langfield, I mean us, twice at the Charleston Jockey Club Auction.

I guess he knew the mare's pedigrees better than we did. Then he don sold em both up north for a bloody fortune. Damn."

The vast majority of the time there was no fooling with the inner circle of the Jockey Club. They knew where the training talent came from at Fleur and it was Master Louis's personal servant, Joseph. If it had to do with horses, carriages, livery, training or general animal husbandry, he was the ultimate most knowledge source. Joseph broke in and trained many of the new carriage drivers and footman of the area as well, all up and down

the Ashley. Joseph by no means was an attractive person, for he appeared quite African and primitive. Some said he looked more the part of a guard at an ale house. The pock marks on his face were extensive and his nose was so wide, even for a black man.

Most knew he was Master Louis's right hand or even henchmen at times, besides a most talented southern gentleman's personal servant. When he wore his livery attire as coachmen, he was an impressive sight. As to many of his duties, he would usually take the master and two other servants in to the Charleston house.

Richard would then, take charge of the stable. It was Joseph or Remus who would pick up Rebecca Lee at the Stanton Cotton Plantation and bring her back. The Master, so trusted Joseph, that no one at the plantation could remember anyone else as Master Louis's second for his notorious numerous pistol duels, that served to preserve Master Louis Fleur's sacred honor. It was rumored, that young Richard was one of Joseph's offspring. The young man's mother was said to have worked for the Stanton Plantation, once, but was probably sold with many of the other cotton workers to a speculator in the west.

Next, there was Old Fella, the senior house servant slave. He was also a substitute cook, tailor, butcher, handyman and once a fine bango player.

In his youth, he was an excellent garden keeper. Richard said, he had heard that Old Fella had come originally with Master Jacob Fleur from the Barbados cane plantation. He spoke in an almost let's say too courteous, subservient manner, which I heard was the preferred custom throughout the South, as in, 'Yes um Master this...or Mame that' kinda speech. In contrast to Joseph's very dark skin, Old Fella was almost what Carolinians call a mulato. His fellow servants at the main house would say behind his back, that "the old boy kinda looked like a Fleur". He was an affable kindly old man except when it concerned Massandra. At a moments notice he would shun her with his eyes whenever that man had the chance. In his best efforts, he would make sure Miss Carol Ann would not have to see Messey when she was in the next room.

Lastly, there were the slaves of the field, such a sorrowful existence of humanity. Especially, when compared to the house servants or stablemen. The most dreadful stories of the field slaves that Richard witnessed and I heard with my own ears, were the night whippings. Here the overseeyer loudly swearing would refer to these creatures as "the real niggers". He used this phrase also when he had gotten so angry with the slave hands, when he thought they were slacking off in their labor. One day in particular Richard said it had been one of the most

insanely humid mid days with a blistering sun. "All day, the brute was snapping his whip high and loud, till the end of the day. Some overseeyers yell out anything to keep up the work. But thank God. Master Louis finally fired that one, after the harvest."

Not only were these field creatures economically expendable for their lack of skills. But they were treated with utter disdain by the other slave servants and stablemen alike. If the hard labor, mosquitoes, or fever didn't kill most of them, their survival would be a continued slow death. Interestingly to this commodity based market was the perpetuation of pregnant females being an eventual but considerable return on the dollar. And even though not as productive in the field a month before and after delivery, they were a future investment worthy of protection. Brought into this world among the field slaves was a small, lame, very dark and very thin female called Annie. I had seen and heard the young girl that evening from the balcony, playing her bango for the chained marching field hands. That evening I almost felt like her muse or presence was somehow leading them all home. How clever of the Master to use her gift of music, as opiate for his traveling slave gang.

Annie Banjo that's what she was called.

She worked under Ma Redi as an outside field cook and cleaner.

Annie also helped in the garden and seasonally with pregnant females, mostly taking care of their young. It was well known at the plantation, that Old Fella was fond of her. So much so, that he taught her how to play his banjo. Later he gave the instrument to her after he just couldn't handle the pain of playing it with the shoulder and arm aches that resulted. But yet even then, he could still dance to her playing, especially out near the plantation docks.

In direct contrast to him, Joseph had "no use for the lame girl who plays that nigger music!" Yet he would die, and almost did if need be, for his master, Louis of Fleur Plantation.

Finally there was Ma Redi as mentioned, the leader of many of those who toiled in the fields. She was devoted to Annie, supposedly her daughter. She even called her that and made the young girl her special secret messenger. Annie was among those few who could cross over the lines of slave social structure or domains to the other side, whether field, servant or stablemen, as was young Richard. Master Louis was always aware of their social status peculiarities, differences and conflicts. But he just let go most of the time as long as the work done. For such as it was, he was their lord and master.

And ruling over Fleur his self-sustaining shire, he had ultimate

god-like authority. Everyone knew it, every day, and the consequences.

The Masquerade

*"Oh Billie, let them plan their Renaissance Masquerade Ball
whatever they want a call it Birthday Party!"*

Said Master Louis, shouting back at Billie Stanton on horseback.
But Master Stanton starts up again. "You haven't had a ball or
plantation gathering ... for ..." But Louis returns quickly
"Miss Hargrove will be in her glory."

"Well, you do have something there, Louis."

Both Master Fleur and Stanton knew this was a brilliant idea, a
great opportunity to show off Carol Ann and Rebecca Lee in their
coming of age, to the whole of planter society. Master Billie
could even get his friend at the Charleston Currier involved for
some regional exposure. "Cousin Billie, Have Miss Hargrove make
up a bachelors list, immediately!"

"Damn Louis, your right! She is the perfect hound for gentlemen."

"And our young ladies are champing at the bite. I want ... "

Here Billie interrupts Louis.

"Whatever you want, you shall have Louis."

Joseph immediately brings out a bottle the Master's most
expensive French Champaign and his finest London crystal glasses.

"But, ... well? Who am I going be, Louis?"

"Paracelsus!"

"Oh yes.", responded, Master Stanton.

"My dear wife is going to love this." He added. Now animated about the idea. Louis ever so gently took his glass and handed a full glass, still appropriately bubbling to his cousin. He raises his glass to Master Stanton, saying, "To a our charming ladies, sir.

" And let the hounds loose, Louis!

And truly the ladies were beside themselves, everyone of them. As they spend the next two months preparing for a grand plantation society celebration. Carol Ann would later describe it as, "The most wonderful and most important event of my life." After conceptual plans were agreed to on the scope of the Birthday Ball, Master Louis confided to me in the library, that it had been more than three years since his wife's untimely death, and it was long overdue to celebrate Miss Carol Ann's future place in planter and Charleston society. Master Stanton in contrast had already had two such celebrations for his eldest sons. I then asked respectfully, "May I then have permission, to prepare the young ladies to perform a scene from 'Twelfth Night'? They have enjoyed it thoroughly at present.

It would not take much time and attention, sir."

Master Louis pondered the request in silence. So, I continued.

"Carol Ann and Rebecca Lee requested that I seek your permission, first. Both would like special costumes made for the event." To my surprise he sat uncomfortably for a time. Then he stood and walked over to the pianoforte of his wife's. "So, your saying she has her heart set on this?" He responded.

I bowed my head, meaning yes, in silence and respect.

"Well." He answered. "This will be her first and last theatrical performance for the planters, Mr. Northbridge."

I bowed again, and stood ready to leave. But instead, he indicated lowering his hand, for me to sit again.

"Mr. Northbridge, and how are you and Miss Hargrove getting along?" "It is interesting you ask, sir." I said smiling and taking his last comment as a yes.

"Since the celebration announcement, we have been in constant agreement for the vast majority of the time. "Explain?" He asked. Before answering I thought, Carol Ann had related to Master Louis about Miss Hargrove's and my contentions with her over different tutoring techniques for our lessons. For example, the Charleston matron, thought Latin and Greek more important than the Bard of Avon. But now however, fortuitously, she was in the midst of preparing for the celebration. Therefore she was leaving me, or

us, alone as to reading Shakespearian scenes. "Master Louis, she has agreed to my suggestion of having both Carol Ann and Rebecca Lee write out and then speak their own conversational dialog lines as if at the plantation ball celebration, as in what should or should not be said. We are in complete agreement, Sir."

So Master Louis only said "Well done sir and then Joseph entered with Master Louis's riding coat and they were off.

The next morning after Miss Hargrove lectured the ladies on the obligations of a plantation mistress in manners, she would review their play scripts, and give her comments to all of us, later.

The next day, I would critique her and the young ladies words and phrases, they had chosen from the ten or so Shakespearean plays.

Mostly the plays we had previously studied and they were comfortable with. Again, I would make more suggestions and comments over the next few days, reading over, and editing their masquerade celebration dialogues thoroughly.

As this went well we started to act out the entire celebration ball once a day. One of the most important factors to consider was that Miss Hargrove and I would meet separately with the ladies. Therefore, what resulted was a minimum of conflict and competition on our part. And I admitted openly, that this plantation event was really in Miss Hargrove's arena of

influence. It was her reality theatre, not mine. However, Carol Ann, Rebecca Lee and myself had complete editing powers.

In fact we were in complete control of the whole text, to customize and adapt Shakespeare's words and language to the girls and my preference. They had to be comfortable with the flow of the Shakespeare's words in their dialogue. And many times I would repeat, "the words are not the only element, ladies! It is the fluidity of your speech and dialogue, the flow of your words. It is your story."

Amazingly under these circumstances, it became evident to me, that I was now in fact becoming much more familiar and comfortable with the cultural nuisances and expectations of the South Carolina plantation society. Especially as to what was deemed appropriate.

.....

Three weeks had passed in good order for preparations for the Renaissance Masquerade Ball. To show his appreciation for my efforts and accomplishments with Carol Ann, Master Louis lent me the use of his elegant Charleston town home. The master was, in any case, away for a forte night, visiting a Congressmen relative

in Washington's, District of Columbia. Therefore, house servant Remus drove me to the city in one of Fleur Plantation's better coaches to the Charleston Jockey Club party, occurring the evening of my arrival. I was being introduced to the wealth and power of the eternal city and South Carolina at this time, so when I would later meet them in their costumed appearance, I would be less confused with their real social character for Carol Ann's Ball. In facial appearance, I was clean shaven now, as in the last four months and I was rapidly separating myself from my strolling actor days. There I was introduced by Master Billie Stanton, as Carol Ann Fleur and Rebecca Lee Stanton's tutor, and a famous dramedian from London's, Drury Lane. I was treated with the utmost respect and cordiality throughout dinner, as Master Billie pointed out the Mayor of the city, a Senator over here, or a Middleton, Drayton and Hayward sitting over there at our long banquet table. At the end of the evening on the piazza, Master Billie spoke to me cordially. "Mr. Northbridge sir, I am sure cousin Louis Fleur mentioned, that I had practiced as medical doctor some ten years? So let me cut to the chase. I had referred Miss Carol Ann to a great many specialists, because of her stuttering condition, which came about quickly, after her mother's death. Sir, they were all unsuccessful. You, with no medical training have succeeded beyond any ones expectation.

In the family all of us are deeply grateful."

I was touched by this individual, who had for some time challenged me in my efforts to secure the tutoring position.

This personal gesture now was greatly appreciated. Obviously, Rebecca had gotten to him. So, I bowed in response, and said. "To my way of thinking sir, Carol Ann must before she speaks, take a longer pause, than most individuals. However, with that said. The quality of her response, with a little more patience on her part, can be quite remarkable. She is thoughtful, analytical, and cultured a very unique combination of skills in a young lady. she should frame her conversations more in questions. Then she is a very impressive." Here he interrupts me.

"Very Interesting, sir Now as to Rebecca, Mr. Northbridge."

"She is wholly a different lady of gifts". I said.

"For one, she can instantly respond with clarity, and a very clever young lady. It's disarming the way she can playfully manipulate a situation, and very quick witted. But she must learn to listen better, like her cousin. That will come. I find it interesting how relaxed and natural she is. Other times she can trap almost anyone in a fast moving conversation. But with a wonderful disposition, amazing really. Always a pleasure to be in her company. You must be very proud of her?"

"Indeed." He answered.

"Together Master Stanton," I added. "They are an unstoppable force. One of the finest experiences I have ever had." Upon my finishing, he concluded our night's conversation with "I look forward sir, to what Master Louis, you and the young ladies have in store for us at this Masquerade Ball, extravaganza." He then slipped a folded note with an extra week of wages into my dinner jacket's interior pocket, followed by a hand shake.

My three nights at the Charleston town home were regaly enjoyed. Special meals were prepared each evening. For some diversion of atmosphere, I proceeded to a London, England looking tavern, two streets away, to have a meal of fish and chips with some excellent vinegar, I had heard of. So I was tucked away at the corner of the tavern room, When Chelo the plantation kitchen girl came right up to my table in a totally distressed frame of mind. "Where is that skinny bastard, Richard the slave jockey?"She moaned. Then continued with "That black prince got me pregnant! I am with child! And he did it. He did it many times! I still love him. But he did it too many times."

"Dear lady." I said return, and embarrassed for both of us, now trying to change the subject matter. "Are you hungry?" She murmured. "Yes sir", calming down for a second.

"Please sit." I said, pointing at the chair on the other side of the table. "I am not Master Louis." I continued

"Or even one of his close associates. But ... " I paused and thought to myself. What the hell, I'm I getting into here?

"I'm merely a tutor of Miss Carol Ann, dear." She then held my mouth shut, and said. "So, you tellin me, you can't do nothin?", with tears in her eyes. The innkeeper at this point, came over. However, with my hand out stretched, I gestured for him to let us be. "And yet," Now I said. And I still don't believe I said it.

" Yet I do talk to Master Fleur now and then. And even to your Richard...occasionally" Looking first intently around the room, she came much closer. When she thought no one was watching us, she pulled up her loosely fitted garment. Grabbed my hand, and put it on her bare abdominal, the area of pregnancy.

A little shocked, I commented. "It is a fact, dear. Yes, you ... " I wanted to quote from a verse in Shakespeare. But I was sure it would not be received politely. So I asked. " What would you like me to do? " She answered quickly. " Listen! "

So she proceeded to tell me, that she, Richard, Messy and the Master had one evening come into town with Joseph. Then "later on, that night", As she put it. "While Master Louis had thought Richard, I and Joseph securely bedded down in the slave quarters above the stable". Instead those two, that is, she and her lover

Richard, had hidden away in Master's office that night. You see, they just had to look up in Master's books and find out how much money Richard was really worth. At this point, I said.

"Just maybe my dear, you should tell this to Joseph?"

"No sir" she said. "Senegal Jack said to talk to you, and only you". She then said as if a demand. "May I please continue, sir"?

I answered. "Do I have a choice?"

She looked at me and cocked her head, but continued.

"As I was saying, while I was looking through the books. Because Richard can't read! We heard the servant's bell ring.

Really sounded more like chimes coming from somewhere downstairs.

So we both froze in terror at the thought of getting caught!

Well, Master come down the grand stairs slowly into the formal

parlor carrying a lite candle in his white pearly night gown. And

oh My! There on the I-talian sofa was Messy, nude as a smooth

plum, touching her breasts waiting for her lover. While he the

Master stared at her. Anyway it was real soon he took his gown

off! Aroused by women's beautiful naked presence, she then took

his hand and pulled him down. Grabbing the back of his neck

firmly with her other hand." I interrupted her.

"Do you have to go into such detail? " I was looking around the

tavern by this time, because I was getting aroused. She looked at

me frustrated because I had stopped her, telling her story.

Then, she said pointedly.

"This is the way Richard likes me to tell him the story, more than fifty times now. You could listen, just once, Mr. North bra....., or whatever your real name is".

I said, "We are getting to the end then?"

"Well", she continued. "They did it on the sofa with a lot a moanin and gyrated! After they did it on the sofa, Messy said something. Sounded like some of your Shakes beer.

Then, the Master carried her up the swirly flying stairs to his bedroom. Guess what they did it? "I nodded my head, looking about the tavern room again to see if anyone else heard this.

Then I thought. 'If she just changed the names a London publisher....But she interrupted my thoughts, saying," So do you want to know what we did in the Masters office? Well after he carried her upstairs Mr. N ". But before I could say anything, she continued. "We prayed to lord, and thanked him humbly for delivering us from the jaws of utter confusion and vengeance"! "Profound, story Miss." I returned exhausted. "I'm sure you don't want me to share this with anyone. Do you?" She didn't respond. So stood up saying, "Sorry, but I have to be leaving. All the best to you, your baby and all of you." And I left, asking the Inn keeper to continue her food servings as long as she desired.

THE CELEBRATION

The family, planter gentry and Charleston dignitaries came in the most elegant of horse carriages. Each, with at least one Negro coachman, but usually two footmen, all impeccably dressed. Some came by way of the Ashley River their entourage accompanying them on the barges. Inside the event, many had their own slave attendants, waiting upon their every desire. For the occasion, Master Louis had leased out an additional six servants. This was not including the four of Master Stanton's most trusted servants. On the lawn area from the river leading to the main house veranda an exotic French garden was arranged with chairs, round tables and the formal dinner settings all set up in symmetrical patterns with center open for ballroom dancing. In contrast, two enormous white canvas tents had been erected on each side of the house the night before, for special entertainment purposes. In addition there was an unusual Commedia Del Arte troop from Venice, that performed on the main house veranda, which then wandered about the plantation in character, throughout the evening. My favorite act was the southern minstrel boy playing the Spanish guitar and

with his mother on the lute. When they played and sang 'Barbara Allen', I felt my soul back in London Towne.

However, it was the circus tent which captured the hearts of most of those who attended. It was only a small contingent of the entire Blocks Circus, who came out specially from a Columbia, South Carolina show, as Mr. Bailey had promised they would. There, as described in the program, under the big top were, Three Renaissance Zannis, or clowns, two trained Beagle Hounds, an Ethiopian Monkey, 'Jim', who rode his small Shetland pony, waving an American flag. A lovely woman in silk tights rode without the aid of saddle or bridle on a white Percheron, also there were two Belgian Tigers, and finally on exhibit for the first time in the south, a Serengeti Graff. Although the circus was not exactly a Renaissance inspired circus, they were a great attraction to this "extravaganza".

The chosen theme for the birthday celebration festivity, as mentioned, was a 'Renaissance Masquerade'. Therefore as requested most guests appeared in costume adhering well to the guidelines, of a fictional or nonfictional characters from the 15th, 16th, and 17th Century. But beyond this, the costume reproductions were all beautiful in themselves. In attendance were wonderful likenesses from Spain of Cervantes, Don Quixote, Dulcinia, Queen

Isabelle and King Ferdinand. Italy was represented with Machiavelli, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Galileo, Raphael and two popes. Then from France there were, Joan of Arc, with Louie XIV, who showed up late. And finally from mother England were Queen Elizabeth, Henry VIII, and two other monarchs, Charles II and James I. Interestingly having a strong story involvement to my own character, and thank goodness those individuals were reasonably affable, were Prince Hal, Falstaff, Shylock, and Romeo with his Juliet. Many of these mentioned, enjoyed making me their main target of jest. Because I was William Shakespeare which Master Louis had insisted upon it from the very beginning. Considering the wars that raged during the existence of these characters, I was relieved to see that few military heroes were among the costume choices. Think of it Mari, merely twelve years ago our own nation of England had been at war with the Americans. We had set fire to their capital, Washington, leaving government buildings utterly destroyed. And yet the entire evening, not one person, brought it to my attention in conversation. Being so far from Europe, did have its advantages. And I hoped that distance would spare them the horrors of my own continent's bloody history, especially as to the carnage of human life in the recent Napoleonic Wars.

Having re-immersed myself in Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies for the past two years, I was more than prepared for any intellectual planter who would want to discuss with me the finer points of the Elizabethan period. So indeed this was the happiest of events celebrating the coming of age of our lovely, articulate and privileged ladies Carl Ann Fleur and Rebecca Lee Stanton. Here with the Renaissance theme, the immense wealth and influence of South Carolina and beyond were in attendance. Tonight we would celebrate, the artistic, literary and musical accomplishments of humanity.

While the guests arrived for the ball and dinner, I patiently waited in the rear parlor, dressed as what Master Louis thought William Shakespeare should have to look like. First, I stood with a John Stockbridge. He had known Master Louis for a long time, and had also worked for a short time for the Master's father in Charleston. While swirling his French wine, he said to me. "I think you will find conversations on the Tariff, rice, indigo, or cotton and slaves worth listening to, Sir. You may find it valuable for a future investment." Not to appear rude, I changed the subject to a more personal curiosity in asking, "What was Master Louis's wife like?" When he did not answer immediately, I added, "I noticed her portrait hanging, half way

up entry hall stairs." Glancing at him again, for he was one of the few, who did not choose to dress in the Renaissance era. Here he decided to talk, seeing I was not a threat or a vengeful character. "She was a ravaging, singular beauty. At parties she held right here, that I attended in any case, Louis and she would entertain the guests with a musical duet, she on the pianoforte and he on the Spanish guitar, maybe two or three duet arrangements. But then each would perform three or four of their own selections. They were both of close to professional quality in their musicianship. Too bad Carol Ann gave it up, as did I think Louis." Here I admitted that I had not examined her portrait in detail. "However, the quality of the portrait artist had some wonderful French influences of color and texture, especially in the landscape behind her. Even to an untrained eye like my own."

"John Vanderlyn," He replied. Looking, as if he was in a trance, remembering.

So I said. "Yes and?" prompting him.

He was most definitely in a trance, as he answered saying, "No one could compete with either of them for each other's attention. In the main parlor, they had an aura, a flair, a fashion. And then, the music in the room! It was the type of evening, you just don't forget. Vanderlyn was there.

He had to paint her. She had to be painted, immortalized!"

As he left my side, I could see he was somehow drawn to her portrait up the stairs. In another moment, he would be lost in the Fleur party from the past. I knew this, because many others were doing the same thing, like a strange ritual. As if one third of the participants were here to pay their respects to her memory. Yet another third were at the plantation for the circus. And finally there was the third who were here in search of a wealthy appropriate female or male of this same planter society or class.

The last guest for the evening then entered the large formal parlor, as a servant closed the doors from behind.

A moment later, Rebecca Lee came nearby to give me a flowing gracious curtsy, in her own singular flirtatious way. I noticed her fan being changed from one hand to the other several times as she said starrng into the crowd. "Your right Mr. Northbridge. The young bows are here in battalions! It's so hard to resist, each and every one of them.

Oh but, I am here on business, sir."

She gestured for me to follow her, with her fan swaying in the direction. So, respectfully I put down my glass of chilled water and presented my arm. Becky then took me for a closer more

intimate look at the family portraits which hung along the elegant and curving staircase to the second floor. We looked first at a painting of Jacob Flaur, Carol Ann's grandfather. In which the artist was John Trumbell. Jacob Fleur was a patriot soldier of the Revolution with Col. John Trumbell. Then at last we stood by life sized portrait of Mistress Sophia Fleur. Rebecca Lee confided. "You must prepare me, one last time.

Father and mother will be watching in the front row. I am forgetting everything!" I tried in vain to calm the young lady, but she insisted. "Meet me on the veranda in three minutes, sir. You must be a gentlemen, Mr. Northbridge. I am a lady in distress." I answered calmly. "Rebecca Lee, you and Carol Ann are prepared, and even if one of you falters I shall be there to prompt you." She responded by squeezing my hand, and then saying. "I have already gotten permission from both my father and Uncle Louis to meet you on the veranda. Shall we then?" There was no discussing the issue further. So I said.

"Then we must. Please get the Twelfth Night book."

She opened her handbag and showed me Carol Ann's book, saying, "So we shall." "Wonderful." I returned. "But forgive me first. And where will Carol Ann's portrait be hung?"

She responded agitated changing her fan hand twice quickly.

"On the mantle of the formal parlor, of course.

Can we precede with the task at hand, sir?"

We walked halfway down the staircase, arm in arm, when I asked.

"Is Carol Ann coming?"

"Most definitely not"! She said "She thinks I am about crazy!

But this is my first and only time on the stage."

"Yes. But remember." I said. "All the world ... "

"... a stage." She completed, rolling her eyes beautifully and playfully upward. On the veranda, with only twenty minutes at our disposal, Rebecca Lee proved that she was well on her way to complete mastery of Act III Scene One.

"Your very good at this, Miss Rebecca." I said when we had finished. The present audience will love it, especially when you go running about after Viola, our dear Carol Ann. Stay in the character of sweet Olivia, our Becky, and enjoy it." I said it while leaning on the veranda rail looking out to the river.

"If this turns out, as I expect it will." Becky confided. "Father promised to get the tickets for Carol Ann and I". I turned showing my curiosity. So she answered, "When Edmund Kean comes ta Charleston in four weeks of course"!

From the side door of the library, the two of us entered the formal parlor inconspicuously as possible. Master Stanton's sons were singing their last of the traditional southern ballads.

Following the cheers and clapping from the audience, Master Louis had his servants refill the glasses of the entire room full of guests, while his Negroes removed the piano temporarily. They carefully rearranging the stage area and then brought in exquisite furnishings for our scene of Twelfth Night. At long last, Master Louis introduced me as the author, "William Shakespeare", I responded with a bow and added, "Only tonight, Master Louis."

Smiling I continued. "I beg your indulgence, to see and hear this scene tonight with Miss Carol Ann Fleur as Viola, and Miss Rebecca Lee Stanton as Olivia, from William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, one of my favorite plays. Let me prepare you for Act III, Scene One. Viola is in disguise as Cesario." The guest were at last seated, and so the performance began.

(Becky) **Olivia.**

Let the garden door be shut, and leave me to my hearing. Give me your hand sir."...

(Carol Ann) **Viola.**

"My duty, madam, and most humble service.

Olivia.

"What is your name?

Viola.

"Cesario is your servant's name, fair princess.

Olivia.

"My servant, sir? Twas never merry world Since lowly feigning was
called compliment. Y' are servant to the Count Orsino, youth.

Viola.

And he is yours, and his must needs be yours Your servant's
servant is your servant, madam.

Olivia.

For him, I think not on him: for his thoughts Would they were
blank, rather than filled with me.

Viola.

Madam, I come to whet your gentle thoughts On his behalf.

Olivia.

O, by your leave, I pray you. I bade you never speak again of
him; But would you undertake another suit, I had rather hear you
to solicit that Than music from the spheres.

Viola.

Dear Lady---

Olivia. Give me leave, beseech you. I did send.

After the last enchantment you did here, A ring in chase of you.
So did i abuse Myself, my servant and , I fear me, you.
Under your hard construction must I sir, To force that on you in

A M S

a shameful cunning Which you knew none of yours. What might you
Think? Have you not set mine honor at the stake and baited it
with all th' unmuzzled thought That tyrannous heart can think? To
one of your receiving Enough is shown; acypress, not a bosom,
Hide my heart. So let me hear you speak.

Viola.

I pity you.

Olivia.

That's a degree to love.

Viola

No, not a grize; for 'tis a vulgar proof That very oft we pity
enemies

Olivia

Why then, methinks 'tis time to smile again.

O world, how apt the poor are to be proud.

If one should be a prey, how much the better

To fall before the lion than the wolf. (Clock strickes)

The clock upbraids me with the waste of time.

Be not afraid, good youth, I will not have you,

And yet, when wit and youth is come to harvest,

Your wife is like to reap a proper man.

There lies your way, due west.

Viola.

“ Then westward ho! ”

..... End of scene

Both of the ladies were perfect in delivery and execution. I could see from where I was standing that Master Louis was so proud. He was glowing with admiration, as he listened to his daughter deliver in words and acts an impeccable performance. Shakespeare, himself, might have felt the same exaltation while watching such a flawless presentation of his poetic dialogue. In the front row Master Stanton tactfully nudged his wife and looked over to his Cousin Louis. He said. “Magnificent!” Those were his exact words.

A M S

Early the next morning, I could hear the faint sounds of Spanish guitar being played from the main house veranda as the servants were cleaning up after most the night's celebration.

The Fall

It was only a month after the masquerade ball, and Master Louis hadn't returned from Charleston. He was having another meeting with his circus partners, Hachaliah Bailey and Captain Brewster. Mr. Bailey had recently come into town with his new equestrian troop by steamboat. Within a few days Captain Brewster and Hack Bailey would take over my rooms at the Barbadian guest house. Therefore, Old Fella's task for the day was to get me faraway into a secluded cabin by the river, some fifty yards from the village cluster of slave cabins. There was however a certain degree of intimacy to this primitive cabin space, having a brick fireplace as it's focal point in its one room. The simple furnishings reminded me of a Devonshire cottage by the ocean, that I had resided in once during run of sickness that had been spreading through London at the time. The theatre district had been closed as a result. These Spartan quarters were in far contrast to my elegant abode at the guest house, which I sincerely missed. Oh, the once gentile accommodations I recalled as home, with high ceilings reaching the sky, large sumptuous windows. Exquisite Regency furnishings, and my fireplace at the Barbadian guest house of highest Georgian style, extremely ornate

and so very beautiful.

Alas in contrast, the ceiling in the cabin was extremely low. As if I had been banished like Caliban to the cave? And yet the saving grace to my cottage was the outdoor veranda porch of cedar which had a more than partial view of the Ashley River.

On the second night of my cabin experience, the Block Menagerie Circus appeared on Fleur plantation taking up their residence in three exhibit wagon circles. These camps were to the west of the main house in the field reserved for the Master's horses. So for the next four nights, I would have to listen to the incessant bantering sounds of exotic wild animals in the jungle plantation. This was a stark contrast to the guest house, though I did not miss the depressing and ireful first of the month Thursday night slave whippings, which usually occurred as a result of some serious action or lack thereof, as in a returned runaway slave.

Back in the jungle plantation as I was recall each night it started with the caws of South American Macaw birds, then the trumpets of the African and Asiatic elephants, followed by the loud roars of caged lions and chatter and fearful screams of monkeys. Finally as a crescendo the eerie laugh of a wild Hyenas. Then it would repeat and repeat again and repeat again. It was becoming too much for me to bare. Therefore I quote William Shakespeare now, "Hell is empty, the devils are all here!"

But there was more dear Mari. A new sound then was added to the thorns of this sound-scape. I heard what one might describe, as a very amateur, no in fact infantile like, of so dreadfully and distinctly out of tune, the four piece brass section, something vaguely resembling the German 'um-pa' marching band. The noise came from the east one of the three circled wagons.

Interestingly, each group of circled wagons had its own high sparkling glow from its individual campfire. Included with the disorganized brass instruments, which I shall not call music, was a terribly out of sync bass drum. Not ten minutes into this rehearsal the group stopped followed by two of the individuals hysterically laughing. Then, five beats later, came a series of loud Germanic insults. I could stand it no more! But in any case in some strange comparison, it reminded me of a mad gypsy camp. So my curiosity was peaked. And anyway what were these circus people really like? And what were they doing?

In a most deliberate and in haste manner, I walked in the direction of the questionable circus band campfire and its circle of wagons. Amazingly instead of the music improving it was getting worse! Even though I think someone new was playing the bass drum. In my early days as an actor in England, I had always had the strange fondness for the gypsy camps. For even though they were so abused and ostracized they were free.

And the vast majority of gypsy musicians were talented. At more than one gypsy camp, I was seduced by the beauty of their exotic music especially if an experienced solo violinist was among them. Suddenly as I got closer to the circus encampment, I was caught off guard, by four large dogs rushing ferociously toward me. Then I believe, but I wasn't exactly sure at that time, a monkey was riding the largest of the canines. Just before they reached me in full gallop, I heard a booming Germanic voice yell, "DOON!".

Immediately the dogs halted, as their heads and body went to the ground. "Excuse me, gentlemen." I announced, apologetically.

"But, I could not help being drawn to your circus campfire and the sound." I paused as the circus folk became extremely annoyed by my presence. So I added. "I am Edward Northbridge, the tutor of Master Louis Fleur's daughter!"

So the three zanni clown voices responded in unison. "SOOoo ! " The dogs still stayed on the ground, so I hastily continued.

"Miss Carol Ann is at her cousin's plantation.

She'll be back, Tuesday."

"SOOoo " ! the three clowns responded in the weirdest of voices.

At last one of them broke ranks.

"So, the English bleuk wants to listen to our bimbo brass band."

Then another vanni blurted "Lets give hm ta tha dogs, boys!"

As he rolled his eyes wildly saying his other comrade the last

clown had to get involved with, "No! Listen ta this!" I could see now I was the brunt of their game of zanni insults. So I interrupted with, "You excel my musical talent on your instruments comrades! For I am a mere singer in the theater plays." The third clown returned my parry "Comrade! Comrades! So, now you sing to the slaves on a PLANTATION!

What do you take me for?" Then all the clowns chimed, alternating. "No thanks!"

"No tanks!" "No anks."

But at least, we were communicating. And their dogs stayed to the ground. I therefore continued. "Here at Fleur, I can make four times, what I had earned on the London stage. And eight times that of Charleston." This at last made sense to them! As I finished, the corpulent Germanic fellow, half dressed, wearing a black top hat and a white under garment shirt with loose red suspenders, stood up from his small table stand. He looked so comical as if some type of has been theatre huntsmen. One of the zanni clowns was under his small table looking for something. He jumped up finding the ringmasters boot. At this the huge gentleman beamed with joy to at last find it's whereabouts. He then walked over to me and as he glanced back at the vanni troop, shook my hand vigorously saying. "Vee shut be mor cortial my merry troop. And you, you no goodsky, music'ans. Vee need help.

Loots a, Ya. The clown chorus came back with "Yeah! Yeah. Yeah.
"Then the littlest zanni voice of all sang."Oh yeah. Oh yeah.
We're clowns ... we're supposed to be funny Ruppy!"

It was as though, they were practicing their new circus routine on me. The German bandleader laughed hardily at this and spoke.
" Mine name is Rupert Van Warren das ringmaster extraordinaire Master of the circus hounds and monkey trainer too, of das Block Circus Caravan... Welcome to the evening Rrehearsal. Veer just clowning. No?". Then the clown sang.

"So It's goin vell Ruppy! But we're clowns."

This was followed by alittle more campfire laughter. Another clown soon sang, "I'm doing the best that I can Ruppy!" A silence then came to the group." I do have a suggestion". I said.

So the ringmaster and three clowns all leaned forward me.

"It would be better to practice, I think, in the day, preferably on an empty stomach". The ringmaster bandleader smiled, clapped his hands together loudly saying, Yau! Zen rehearsal's over! Bring in das beer, Villy. Tomorrow, vee get Ricco to play ze bass. And no eating before rehearsal tomorrow boys."

After this he looked at me saying,

"You like ber, Mr brdnat?...A von, unda two, unda tree," .

Thereupon, all the dogs barked three times in perfect unison.

The ringmaster bandleader laughed, and said.

"Da shu ve da ban. Ya?"

"Yes definitely". I concurred.

"Mr. Bailey brings un da rrell band, un two das." Rupert bumbled.

"So, then you are the clown band." I projected with a voice as if on the stage also. "This explains everything."

Then from behind me, I heard someone running up. I turned and waited as the he came into view. It was Young Richard puffing and talking at the same time. "You in a load a trouble Mr. Actor, or ... whatever your name is."

"Well Richard." I regretfully answered, "Any suggestions as to my next move?"

"No. Well yes!" He confusingly responded. "Hell! Someone's gotta come! Master's gonna loss the plantation, everything."

He then pointed his hand in the direction to follow.

During our walk to the other circus camp fire, He told me Master Louis was gambling, "and drunk as a skunk". So I asked, "Why get me? Why not..." He interrupted. "No Joseph, No Messy, No Old Fella." He returned rapidly. Even Miss Carol Ann, nowhere to be found! You is it sir".

"No one?" I repeated. We were still walking quickly. Then he stopped abruptly, saying. "I can't even find the new overseer! Looky here, Mr. Actor. You got one shot! To some how come outa

this, and not looking so damn terrible bad"

He paused and glanced at me pensively. "I maybe the only friend you got left"! At that, I thanked him sincerely saying "You are indeed, Richard." My hand and arm gesture requested that he lead on. "But slow down, Richard", I said in the darkness, trying to catch up with him. But in fact, I was pondering, my next move as well. Somehow my true identity had been revealed. It was probably inevitable. But, all I needed was say six more months! I could have been on my way, riches in hand. Well sometime tonight, I must read the contract I signed with Master Louis.

Pondering my fate, I thought. Although my contractual duty was to Master Louis, and also I am very fond of Carol Ann and Rebecca, I shall miss Richard most of all. That is if I survive. Spending time in our meals together, hearing his plantation stories. It was just wonderful. And he was never the kind of human being to hide behind an ulterior motive. In another life, he could have been a scientist or preacher. One who shares the riches of life like Richard, so freely, deserves more than this reality of a slave. Many were the times, I saw him mesmerized in his attention to a Chinaman, Egyptian or white Yankee. Such are the qualities of an insatiable and curious human the inter-mingler. So honest he was.

I hope, It is not he, who the leads to my downfall.

In my tutoring here at Fleur, I had succeeded very well with the young ladies. But there was always, the master servant / relationship. It was duty above all. I found it interesting now, that Richard was one I told my most accurate stories to. At least As true as I could, without revealing the whole of my identity. And many of my questions about plantation culture were revealed through his eyes. And he enjoyed each moment telling me such.

We now approached the last circle of wagons. Our first had been for clowns, maintenance men, wagon drivers, tent erectors, tumblers and jugglers. The second was for the equestrian elite. And then the last here was the camp fire which we were approaching that occupied the mangers, section chiefs, and exotic menagerie owners, or at least the part owners. And their camp fire was known for its large gambler stakes.

As we became visible to them, likewise to us, Richard disappeared from sight, or to the far side of a nearby cart. It was difficult to make out any ones face, until I was much closer to the fire. As I stood there, I noticed a great circus trunk being used as the card table. There were four men around it, seated on wood barrels turned upward. Master Louis was to the far left. Followed by, as I found out later, James Wright to his

right, and James' older brother, William next to him. Finally an equestrian clown, a Lewis Bailey sat with his back toward me. Although Bailey's face was clean shaven with no makeup presently, he wore his clown trousers and large red suspenders. And there was Master Louis, as I had never seen him before. He sat in a stupor, hunched over, with filthy stains all about him. The thick dirt and smudged grit was everywhere to be found on his breeches, and also his once white shirt. The boots he wore were an expensive custom design of French leather, but now covered with huge ruminants of hay and horse manure. And he smelled as bad as he looked. As I moved closer, his eyes caught mine, and I could tell that he was most confused, if not obliterated from his drinking. His eyes rolled back in his head every once in awhile as his neck bobbed forward. Lewis Bailey then stood up saying, "I've had enough losses tonight, thank you. Excuse me, but I am very tired. Always a pleasure to see you, Master Fleur. I guess father Hack will see you in a few days. Good night." He left for his wife's wagon, a well known and very beautiful bareback trick rider.

Coming to, for a minute, Master Louis glared at me momentarily in disgust. Then his eyes dropped as his jaw stiffened. Suddenly he stood. While he staggered forward a few steps he yelled, "What the hell is he doing here?"

William Wright noticed the extreme state of his host here at the plantation and said as the master got back to his seat with difficulty, "Master Louis, so far you have lost a great deal, sir. And your betting of wages are difficult to define. It might a good time to retire." To this Master Louis blurted.

"What are ten of my field slaves worth to ya?"

"Nothing"! Snapped back James Wright, adding "On July 4, 1827 all the niggers are to be set free in New York!

You'll have to do better than that." James was obviously the type of man that gets meaner as he drinks more. Which only served to make the Master even more belligerent, being of the same manner and type.

So Louis Fleur retorted. "I'll have Joseph take them downtown to the Slave Market Auction tomorrow!"

Instead of agreeing, James Wright audibly mumbled out loud. "What do you say, we race for twenty of them tomorrow at noon?" William his brother shook his head saying, "Don't do it James." But James shouted back. "Stay out of this"!

Here during the brothers dispute, Louis draws out a dueling pistol and lays on the trunk with a thud, saying, "Let him be!" At this point I thought I would risk my precarious welcome interjecting calmly,

" I hear that Joseph is looking for you, Master Louis.

Something about a pregnant mare."

James then looked at me answering "I'll take a pair of your mares instead"! To this the Master outraged tried and then slowly succeeded to reach for his pistol. However instead of standing up, he fell backward as his gun fired off. This scene resulted in huge cloud of dark red dust engulfing the camp area. Here everyone lunged and jumped away from the incident. Richard then quickly rushed into the confusion at level ground yelling "Where is Master layin? He wasn't hit? Damn lucky"!

These were the only words that came out of the dust fog which was now settling. I came to Richard's side on the ground, saying "I see his eyes are closed. Is he breathing?"

"Yeah and I think I hear a belch coming now" Richard said on his knees. "Good" was my answer. I looked over at the Wright Brothers, who were in combination of being horrified and embarrassed by the events. So I said, as Richard and I lifted the master up "Excuse us, gentlemen. But we must be retiring. We have to revive the Master". The Wrights' were still dusting themselves off in shock, as we carried the Master away. William started to talk to his brother with animated gestures of concern. James, as a result started to then bring the pistol to us. However, from some forty feet away, I requested, "Will one of you please return it ... to the big house tomorrow?" Now, by the outline of the campfire

light, we could see, William nodding his head, Yes.
Both of them now raised their arms of dust clouds in a sign of
goodbye.

On our way back to the big house, we struggled carrying our
heavy load. Then, Richard began to sing a field chant. But, it
really sounded more like drone than a work song. I had heard it
from a distance in the rice fields, not so far away from my
cabin,

Carr-in this heavy l o a d for masta.
Carr-in this l o a d, us his slaves.
Listen to the words of Jesus.
To get us home for just one more day.

Even I started to drone with him to ease the weight on my
arms, aching from our heavy load. Eventually we got to main
house, back door. But no one was there. So we went to the kitchen
house door. We saw there was a light flickering on and off. As
we leaned Master Louis on the barrel nearby, we started to knock
repeatedly on that door. After a minute, Old Fella came up to the
crackling open door, just enough to see who we were. "Can't you
see I am busy, Richard!" He mumbled. As a new servant girl was

dressing up near the fireplace behind him. Young Richard raised his eye brows as an answer. Then he pointed to Master with his eye brows up again even higher. Old Fella shocked now cried out "Oh! The Master done himself in"! Richard clarified the situation. "The circus people done him in!" The old man examined Master Lois closely and said to us.

"Well I think he's gonna live. But he sure is gonna ack for two or three days. What was they drinkin, port, whisky? Richard shrugged his shoulders. So I answered.

"Port, whisky ... and wine."

"Oh... !" The Old Fella said rubbing the white beard on his chin. He then added. "Then he just might die. Miss Carol Ann be back tomorrow. Well let's try to wake him up. Is Joseph back yet"?

"No sir", said Richard respectfully.

"He must have given Joseph the slip. But Messy and he should be back by now. If they tacked up Lady Margareta."

Old Fella stood there starrin at Master Louis for a while, and then spoke. "I am thinkin the fresh air on the veranda is gonna do him more good. Then to ten him up the stairs right now.

Has he chucked"?

"No. I don't think so. Not yet." was the young man's answer. "But I've just been with him maybe an hour.

Listen sir." Richard continued. "He's got some big money debs

with those circus men. And they would have been bigger still, if Mr. Edward Actor here hadn't pulled him away in time".

Surprised by the comment, the old man said. "He talked to the Master?" Old Fella had been looking at me suspiciously until then. But now smiled the oddest grin, I had ever seen in my whole time at the plantation. And then he said to me not jokingly. "I thought we were going to find you died on the roadside, tarred and feathered.

What is your real name anyhow"?

"Thaddius Bridgnorth" I said with the actor's bow and added.

"Shall we carry him to the veranda"?

"Well at least he got a sense of humor still." Old Fella then laughed slightly, after he said it. Nudging Richard on the shoulder he continued."He should let go there. If we're lucky. The Master does like to eat when he's drinking".

As we carried him to the rear piazza, Old Fella commanded the servant girl to bring two pales of hot water. As we got there, Richard said to me. "So your past has caught up with you? But you done alot a good here too".

So yes my past had caught up with me, even hidden away on a plantation in far off, South Carolina. I wondered who had made the connection to my real identity, Mrs. Hargrove, Master Stanton, or was it Senegal Jack?

And how would Master Louis settle our accounts being only six months into my time of service?

But for here and now, Richard and I sat by the Master of plantation to his left and right, he being in a most pitiful state, bobbing and jerking back and forth between us. Finally we settled him down into his favorite chair. Then all Hell broke loose! A flood of puck erupted from his mouth. There was no warning or hint in gyrations. No time to duck. So I became covered with it, all of it. Richard said, after he shook his head in disbelief with "And that's only the beginning!"

And yet these words did not in enough time to save me from being target number two. "My, my Thad you got both barrels." Old Fella said as he showed up with the two buckets of hot water. The next moment he cleared the Master's throat of particulate and fluid.

Here the Master coughed up for the old man holding on tightly to the trusted servant. "We got enough hot water here for all of us." The old man said adding. "So help me strip Master Louis, Richard. And you better strip down too, to the waist anyhow".

I thought about it while the awful disgusting smell surrounded me with all its putrid acidic qualities. When I had taken my shirt off to wash, Richard said to Old Fella very seriously.

"Come over here. Now sir! Show him your back Mr. Actor.

Right now", He blurred.

The old man staggered to one side, when he had seen all the scars from my back. He said to Richard. "This is no dandy boy! This is a serious whip-in. This is what a repeating whip-in will do to the skin, even to a white man. Notice the scaring over here and there. This man was beaten up pretty bad." The two slaves looked at each other puzzled. Then Old Fella asked. "You sure you never been a sailor?"

"Never"! I answered. So Old Fella suggested,
"Then you paid your dues for what you done".
"But I didn't do what these scares tell you". I said.
"I was falsely accused and then framed".

As Old Fella told Richard to come over and take a closer look. Joseph and Massandra arrived from Charleston, and walked up to all of us at work on the veranda. Massandra looked at her lover bowing her head slightly. Then she stood there and said to him. "Master Louis you should have been with us. Instead that stupid young overseeyor". While Massandra conversed with her incoherent Master, Joseph was hearing from Richard and seeing what all the commotion was about.

At first Joseph became very irritated saying to both of them.
"What is he doing here"?

So Richard answered. "Your Master's been betting up a terrible

storm with the gambling circus folk.

And he, Mr Actor comes to the rescue of the Master. So now you treat him like a nigger! Let go of it Master Joseph!

He's paid his dues, look"! Joseph now took a good look at the wounds on my back. He then said, "Well Richard, So what do you think they do to bad white folks in prison. Feed them barbeque?"

To my astonishment now Old Fella comes to my defense. "This man's been seriously butchered by his own kind and you treat him like a horse thief. Maybe you should get away from those horses and get around some people more often. Finally Massandra then comes over to take a look at the whipping.she speaks directly to Joseph.

"Jos I told you. This man's no lecherous cad. He doesn't have the continuous womanizing eye. Joseph rolls his eyes in disbelief. So he retorts "I don't need any of your men voodoo eye talk advice now. Hell I may be killin him next week!"

So Old Fella and Messandra were on the same side, my side. But Joseph might be killing me next week.

In the end, It was Old Fella who would have the last words on the subject, or almost the last words. The old man said asking me.

"Did you do this bad thing back in England to deserve this kinda wippin? Quickly Old Fella stops Joseph with. Jesus! Joseph let the man speak!" The group of four slaves of Master Louis Fleur now surrounded me in anticipation.

So I spoke slowly and clearly. "I was falsely accused in the incident that resulted in my imprisonment and these lashes from the wiper that you see. So help me God."

Old Fella shook his head in agreement as if he was the high priest that night and said. "That's it."

Thereafter Massandra and Joseph put their attention to Master Louis. She then whispered in Joseph's ear.

"Just give it some time. Master Louis will have to make up his own mind."

With the cotton shirt that Richard now handed me and helped me on with, I hoped we had put some distance to this discussion. The servant women, we had seen in the kitchen earlier started to wash up the veranda as Joseph, Massandra and Richard carried their drunken but at least now recovering master up the stairs to his bedroom chambers on the second floor of the main house. When Massandra and Joseph returned Richard and I were still out on the piazza talking. Joseph walked up to me as I sat on the a bench and said.

"Do you know Master Louis was in a pistol duel over your honor, sir, tywo mornings ago on the shores of Cooper River. The accuser said, after the first exchange of fire that besides your incident in England, which initiated the duel, you had begotten Carol Ann with child. Well, we now think it is William Stanton Junior.

Happened after the races in Georgetown. Remus and the new overseeyor were to bring our shaken Master to us in Charleston after the races. But Master Louis must have changed his mind and headed for the Fleur Plantation."

Massandra then spoke to Joseph. "When he has recovered we should bring him back to Charleston."

I then interrupted. "It appears there are some substantial gambling debits he has to take care of with the circus people". The two looked at each other and just walked away with Messy saying. "Another time Joseph."

End of Part I

Beginning of Part II

The next week I stayed in the cabin isolated, awaiting the verdict of Master Louis or his henchmen. The only place I wandered to was the Ashley River nearby. It was there I beheld one of the most interesting sites. An elephant was bathing and being washed by a youthful man of the northern circus by the name of Gilbert Moor of African desert. 30 yards from him I also watched with curiosity Annie Banjo playing her instrument in solitude behind a large cut down Palmetto tree. Half time she played and sang, the other half she peered from behind the tree at the docile African beast and it's scantily dressed caretaker bath him. Then as I expected, he heard the sound of Annie music. Yet taken by surprise he jerked his arm which resulted in the elephant's two loud trumpet blasts. Suddenly Annie's banjo flew into the air twirling, and then landed on a patch of salt hay in clear sight of Gilbert who decided to investigate. Here the lumbering giant Pachyderm followed at his side like one might expect a loyal hunting dog to. As the two got near the object in question, Annie stuck her head out from behind the log and reached for her instrument. But at the very same time the

elephant with his truck grabbed it first. Here Gilbert spoke firmly to his charge. "No Jumbo. Zu em."

With the command the great elephant handed it gingerly to Annie. "Thank ya Sir Jumbo." she answered sweetly with a smile, looking at Gilbert the entire time. "So you gonna play for us on drift log nearby us, lady?"

Why sure. If you tell me your name, and get that strange man (that's me) behind the bush out ta there." I therefore waved my straw hat in a gesture of farewell as I noticed them start to sit together on drift log at the edge of the shore. But first Jumbo got back into the river to continue his bathing.

.....

During a late evening rain not less than four days after, I heard three loud knocks coming from my cabin door. And yet there was no person to be found when I finally stumbled over to the crudely stained pine door. Yet now there was an odd looking wet straw basket placed in front entry. Was there some type of poisonous Adder waiting for me from within? But as my eyes adjusted to the moonlight, I found a piece of Richard's calico cloth pinned to the top of the container. It was his sign.

Curiously he had placed inside the basket a recent Charleston Gazette newsprint. Straining my eyes I started to make out the bold front page headlines of

Equestrian Accident Mares Bailey's Circus Extravaganza.

From within the newspaper it read exactly these words.

*At the Charleston Fairground last evening a crowd of over a thousand onlookers witnessed a bloody almost fatal equestrian accident during final climactic moments of **Bailey's New Equestrian Circus**. Further it went that without warning while standing in a full gallop Captain Miguel Alexander Danzao poised dramatically after jumping through a large circular velvet ribbon ring with his saber waving from his hand triumphantly. He was perfectly balanced standing in stride on his three magnificent white Arabian Stallions. Yet two seconds later all would change forever as one of the steeds became terribly seized with a deadly acute massive heart failure. The audience was stunned and gasped for air as they beheld the cascade of horrors to come, with the weight of all the horses being forced to the ground while they struck their heads frantically into each other and the solid earth. The mangled tangled-up and twisted bridles were strangling the two surviving animals. Then as if cannon being fired off, the horses smashed relentlessly into the protective wood railing and guard posts, the shattered wood burst out and flew in all directions. Upon impact it was obliterated. While the chain of events proceeded, the rider an*

expert Italian Horsemen of the Austrian Florentine Cavalry Academy was hurled some fifteen yards into the air, before finally landing on his own razor sharp saber butchering him in his own blood. There after he was crushed by the great mass of his own frantic tumbling steeds. The public moaned in desperation as they watched the still out of control remaining two Arabian horses dragging from behind them the horse which was dead. It was a miracle that so few of the frantic spectators were seriously injured with many of the spectators and their families leaving immediately thereafter. With the huge canvas circus tent erected for the weeklong event because of the rainy weather, who could have possibly imagined one of Europe's most renowned horseman being dealt such a crippling and bloody final here in our fair city. That evening and the following days to come the Captain Danzao would be under the care of a team of expert Charleston physicians and is miraculously on the road to recovery at Fleur Plantation on the Ashley River.

Surely this is a great blow to Mr. Hach Bailey and his extravagant New Equestrian Circus. This man for the record has graced and entertained our city and the South for over twenty years mostly with menagerie animal exhibitions. He was understandably not available to comment under the circumstances. And let it be known here that Bailey's New Equestrian Circus had fulfilled all expectations of success in prior showings of which two had been at Columbia Fairgrounds and Georgetown

Race Track, both in South Carolina. There was not one accident of any kind at either location. It was the exceptionally good and respectable entertainment Mr. Bailey is noted for.

.....

It was one week hence from first reading the Charleston Gazette, on another one of those dreadfully raining evenings at about the same time the basket and newspaper was delivered, that I heard the three knocks again. This time Richard's voice followed from the other side of the door with,

"Don't dare open this door! The Master said if I as much as see your face, I'm a dead man."

Obeying Richard's request I said in return when I had at last crawled to space at the bottom of the door." If I merely crack the door a few inches at most, you wouldn't have to speak so loud and we still wouldn't have to see each other's face. Would that be alright with you?"

"Hmmm". He returned.

Then adding "I suppose so. The Cavalry Captain tried to seat up yesterday. No way Thaddius. His Corporal had to be sent away in a fit of anger. Mr. Bailey was thinking of sending him to Savannah or New Orleans to join up with the other circus folks. They're

having a successful run down there. You listening?"

Having pried open the door and inch, I said.

"Oh yes, very interesting."

Therefore Richard continued. "The Master left for Virginia today to visit family. Miss Carol Ann will be dropped with the Cousins. Joseph will go to Charleston Auctions with those two Arabian Stallions. He is thoroughly disgusted with his partnership arrangement with Bailey. Oh my! Master Louis may be loaning you out to Mr. Bailey for awhile. You may come out of this with you hide, Thaddius. I got to go. Annie the Banjo may be visiting you. Don't look her in the eyes whatever you do."

I wanted to thank him with all my heart. But for now instead I said. "Whatever I must do you tell me. I so appreciate it."

However by this time Richard had faded into the night.

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Next evening I was standing on the veranda of the Fleur Plantation's Big House with famous showmen Hack Bailey. I wondered why we were here instead of on the Guest House veranda, for the servant who had called on me said that "Mr. Bailey will see you now even though he resides at your previous quarters. Follow me to the piazza of the Big House." So from the side entrance the piazza I followed him immediately. Bailey turned back leaning on the railing while clutching a newsprint in his other hand.

"Unfortunately for Master Louis and I" he began.

"And I believe you might be aware of this?" Here he handed me his copy of the Charleston Gazette, which by the way, Richard had already given me one night. So conscientiously I took the newspaper as if I had never known or seen it before and read it over. Answering "From what I have read very unfortunate sir."

"Well Mr. Northbridge it is very much worse than unfortunate. The Press was very kind. Three of the spectators had died soon after as a result of our accident. So as you sir, now I appear to have fallen from the graces of the Master. Well I haven't fallen to the depth of you. But this could be eventually my financial demise." Then he pauses and looks at me more sternly saying. "Do you remember when the Drury Lane Theater burnt down?"

"Indeed I remember." I returned. "But the owners I believe built it back and became even wealthier." Bailey smiled at this shaking his head in agreement saying. "Yes sir, you have my point. That even during such terrible times there can be opportunities. And this is what I am offering you. Because sir as fate would have it the majority of my parade band especially those in the brass, three clowns and two ringmasters have become extremely ill with the fever, and I'm rearranging, well more like creating a new circus lineup in addition to a name. Believe me sir only with the greatest consternation did the Master of Fleur so reluctantly agree to the sale your remaining contract with a fractional discount and the slave girl banjo player. This will help him start paying off some of our large loses that incurred."

I was about to tell him that I had no circus experience. But on second thought I considered it was best to remain silent.

"Mr. Bridgnorth I am going back to my roots of a simpler streamed down circus lineup. Jumbo the elephant will lead with some menagerie acts. I have borrowed from Blocks Circus in return for the loaning them the Spanish Corporal and the two remaining Arabian Stallions.

You as an actor I believe have some potential as Master Showmen. Simply put, take a more comical satirical view in your interpretation of your new title as the Royal British Huntsmen,

our circus ringmaster. Due to our downgraded status presently in the tour locations take a more raw folk-driven entertainment and liberties with your part, as you did with your White Mare Tavern Troup. That's what I'm looking for! Take some risks! Make the audience both laugh at and despise your pompous bumbling British comedy ringmaster act. You leave for Beaufort tonight at dusk. I shall meet up with the circus in Savannah the following week. I expect a minimum of three draft skits from you! One with the British huntsmen ringmaster and banjo slave girl, and the other two shall include the dogs and clowns. Surprise me. Did I make myself clear?"

"Absolutely". I Answered

.....

In the farm wagon, Richard picked up both Annie Banjo and me there in front of the plantation kitchen door. We would all meet up with Bailey's experiment circus's temporary manager in two days. However Richard would first be delivering a prized Fleur mare to a plantation just outside Beaufort, South Carolina below depositing us.

"Don't even think of running away Thaddius!" were Richard's first words. "You a marked man".

Instead of my speaking up, Annie made her first remark of the trip. "You imbecile! You and me is slaves! We're the only ones marked!"

"No." he returned. We are property. We are worth something at the moment." Here Richard grabs his pistol holster proudly saying. Either of you make a brake for it and I have orders from Master to shoot to kill." However instead of giving Richard his due respect. Annie waves her new colorful handkerchief at him comically and then lays it on her shoulders like it was her shawl recommending in a howl, "You put that dam thing away! Only person you gonna shoot in yourself. Remember bird brain, you gotta lame slave girl sitin here and a completely disoriented fool of an Englishmen over there."

Here I said, "Your not going to talk like this to Richard all the way to Beaufort?" At the words Richard started to laugh and smile with glee. He then slapped his thigh were the pistol was. Annie laid in on him again. "You couldn't outsmart a tree Richard. Put that thing away before you shoot someone, or all of us. I'm going to get some rest, near the trotting mare back there.

"So" Richard said slyly as Annie slipped into the back of the wagon. "I have two days to teach you all about the circus you done joined. In some ways I'm jealous a you even though Mr. Jim Wright is going to work your ass off. Remember him the stuck up

circus gambling crazy Yankee who almost got shot by the Master?"

"Isn't he the one that hates black folks?" I added.

"No." He said. "He hates all folks, blacks or whites. And everyone that ain't of the Wright Family or circus motif. O yeah he's going to break your ass, muck in that manure, cleaning them animals off, setting up site this , braking down that, like the tent, and then somehow YOUR getting ready for the show! You got a heavy load comin." Here I got a word in.

"I do know something about animals." Richard quickly reloaded his lungs and set off again with more. "In Beaufort tomorrow night there's a black minstrel frolic show going. Annie's played in it. I danced in it. There are probably some skits and stage routines you can rob from us black folks. I got to tell you what's been going on Thado as the last month you been an isolated. Now I can talk to you". Richard said in his past friendly way to me continuing, "You hear her kind a whistling back there? Well that means she's asleep. The real story is the I-talian Horsemen is a dead wreck. He ain't never going to ride again. At least that's what Joseph told me. Mr. Bailey and the Master have taken his two stallions for breach agreement. That's why his Corporal Diego was so dam mad. But he'll get over it. The I-talian Captain signed something agreeing to it. Now, the Corporeal D is gotta train the Savannah Sisters in quick

time to ride those two Arabs. Oh my. Bailey feels that after the ladies show them in the circus, they'll get a good return. Master Louis cashed in all his chips before he left for Virginia, selling all his interest in the two horses besides you and Annie. He needs cash. Now I'm going to admit this to you and only you. I have always wanted to be the circus ringmaster. But I ain't got the voice. That's what you got, and the actors' strut. Dame Bailey! He knows his animals and circus people." I interrupted here. "Richard, let me tell you ideas I'm working on. What if the drunken British Huntsmen comes to Carolina with the clowns as the hounds? Next idea is a slave girl song to the huntsman." Richard smiled but warned me. "Don't make Annie, no fox! People here in the South will take it as a runaway story. Oh my, will you be in trouble! I can see and smell the tar and feathers being mixed now."

"Hmm" I commented. "I hadn't thought of that".

Well that's why we're here talked about it! I just saved your ass again!" I bowed my head to Richard and said. "I don't know how I can repay you Richard." I thinking I might have said pay for his freedom. However we both knew that was ridiculous idea. He was worth a fortune as an expert jockey. Instead he said. "In a few months time you get out of the South and never come back. You live a long and happy life. I got faith in you."

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It was the next evening we got to Beaufort SC. After Richard delivered the mare to the Paragon Plantation, we headed directly to the Minstrel Frolic held around a huge barn surrounded by slave cabins. As we entered the encampment Richard leaned over to me and said "This is where Bailey said I should bring you, a Negro minstrel show. That's where raw type of showmanship is." Annie added, "I'm backing some dancers, so keep your eyes and ears open."

The entertainment had begun by the time we got there. A stage area was set up on the broad side of barn made up of two wagons and surrounded by lit torches. There must have been over a thousand slaves jammed in that area with but a very few white folks observing. Annie had me carry her banjo sack with one hand and the other arm draped over her arm as being part of her processional entry. In an amazing series of long extended struts Richard led us three, wearing his black velvet top hat and tails. Even though a show act was already performing, the audience opened another even wider row for us to somehow vortex in spins to the front of the stage. Here the audience wanted Annie to join the fiddle player on stage. Richard then said, "Do something

clever Thad!" So I borrowed his hat with a theatrical twirl strutting around him. I majestically raised the banjo over my head to bring it down with a loving caress which served to bring those in attendance to stand clapping and howling. Many were dancing to the rhythm of the fiddle player already. Here I suggested to Richard to remove Annie's bright orange shawl as if it was a magician's cap. As a result he smiled a broad grin removing the hat from my head with such deliberate animation and said to me as he pinched my white cheeks with his thumb and forefinger, "Now you got it Mr. Thad!" While we proceeded with our antics, Annie circled the instrument performing her chicken walk bringing the audience to an even louder frenzied peak of enjoyment. With her back facing the audience she took hold of her banjo and suddenly burst into a instrumental tune much like the fiddler but at an much greater tempo. While this was going on Richard and I prance on left and right of the stage following the rhythm of the music. In my experience I had never been part of, or even seen an act extend the entry presentation theatrical movements to such genius and length. But would it work under the circus tent? This fiddle, banjo and dance number went on for ten minutes. Upon the last beat of the music, Richard whisked Annie and her banjo off the stage with me comically trailing behind. The next act was about start up. When we got into the barn and

huddled together Richard nodded his head looking at Annie and said to me, "You go out there with Lady Sheba wearing the top hat with this feather in it, and look and hear everything going on. Bailey gonna treat you well if you make something of the minstrel frolic he likes. Sheba will take care of you, her token white man. No fighting girl!"

Sitting with big smiling Sheba I was protected. Here I was most impressed with a old man fiddler act with a young man dancer. I couldn't believe it. The old fiddler had covered his face and arms entirely with black chalk because it seemed that he was naturally of a lighter black. His lips were painted as well a bright ruby color. When the old man started to dance in a line exactly like the boy while both played instruments shaking his bottom wildly, I thought the roof would fall down with all the audience shaken as well. The only thing that compared to this was the trained goat and pig act. I could swear they were dancing with Sheba and Richard as Annie played the banjo.

The next day the Old Style Somers Circus had returned to Beaufort to pick us up. It was then that a terrible thing happened. As Annie and I were delivered in our wagon to Mr. Wright, Richard was immediately taken away by the Paragon Plantation owner wagon in chains. Well Master Luis must have received a small fortune

for one of the best jockeys in South Carolina.

Richard looked at us now as though he had strangely been waiting for this time. Annie just mumbled "shit." under her breath.

No wonder he had given me the hat an hour before. So here I solemnly took it off, held it at my chest and bowed my head in reverence, as Richard's new slave owner searched him for any and all miscellaneous items of value.

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The last time I had met James Wright was the night of Master Luis's drunken gambling escapade at the circus camp fire. This time he and his brother Charles were arguing ferociously in the circus managers' wagon. The early morning sun was braking from the fog and clouds. Annie looked at me implying with her hand to knock on the big red with gold trim wagon door. Then we heard something smash as throne at high velocity. A booming mean voice soon rattled from within, so I hesitated.

"Bailey is going to have our hides when he finds we haven't made one dime!" Charles Wright returned his brother's burst with a gentlemen's composure "Mr. Bailey explained this gamble, but you were too drunk. If you could have remembered He said 'If it's bad weather we win with our tent. Good weather, we draw the losing

hand." At this I knocked three times in quick succession. "Who the hell is it?" James belted. I answered, "Annie Banjo and Thaddius Bridgnorth at your service".

"Before you come in, wipe your feet now." He replied as the door swung back banging against wagon broadside with a metal tinny vibration.

"Well it's the actor guy and slave girl!" he continued.

"Have them muck the elephant stalls".

"Yes that's a start then help with the horses."

Charles added. "Bailey mentioned you got nothing of an experience as a ringmaster. He likes your actor voice though, the big hammyness of it. Zippo the clown will take you our competition's circus performance this afternoon. Watch that Southern Louisiana Circus ringmaster! Get the rhythm, the gatekeeper's timing down and attitude." Mr. Wright turned to Annie. "You go to Rumford. No it's Prince George now in the band tent. Learn their music after muck in out. Is that the banjo thing in your hand?" "Yes sir." She mumbled. James said, "I don't know what Bailey is up to with you. Well I guess this is the time to take some risks."

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The next afternoon Bailey showed up with another new act The Savannah Sisters a bareback trick riders. They were excellent equestrians, but with poor listening skills. The ladies looked

dark Irish in their appearance. Spoke very little English if any, only talking to each other in their native tongue Portuguese. The Sisters' father was a blacksmith in Savannah. Their mother had died on the voyage here from Portugal. Of course no one in the troop spoke Portuguese, yet one of the clowns spoke Spanish, at least he said he did having once been a sailor. This clown named Rasp wanted to get to know the Sisters to intimately shall we say so Bailey got rid of him in the first town we passed by. When later we would later in Columbia, South Carolina, the Corporal would be return to Bailey's Circus or whatever our name would be by that time. With the Arabian horses sold off in Savannah and the new owner having no use for him, he had begged Mr. Bailey to take him on as a percussionist and a bandoneon squeeze box player in our circus band. Until he reached us, I would be the Savannah Sisters interpreter because I knew French, and had been able to address them by name because I read their names Louisa and Isabella on the bronze plack attached to their riding trunk.

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In contrast to his other circus troops that Bailey was involved in, we were described by both Bailey and the Wright Brothers as a

D Level. An A or B Level circus took in the large population of the eastern coastal cities and other substantial size river towns, whereas an a C circuit hit the newer growing areas mostly to the interior. Finally there was the D classification. Bailey considered our D group much like his circuses in the early days of the nation and his career. In fact he even called us his Old Mud Circus, because we would be encountering as they did the much less traveled flooded roads and rutted paths or byways. Hardships concerning living and feeding of everyone and everything would more likely be a factor. This traveling caravan would be, at least for the vast majority of the time occurring at night, averaging if lucky fifteen miles each jump. Zippo the clown referred to our D Circuit troop as the **D**isposable Circus for when we met up with "the Big Boys" in the A Circuit, say Washington," some of us would make the cut into the big time or be let go. This was Bailey's way of training, dismantling, and reshuffling his talent. Zippo was more of a trainer in stage of his life.

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The only folks I would ever brake bread with were Zippo, Annie Banjo, Price George the new band leader, Horton the Moor who was Jumbo the Elephant's caretaker and the Savannah Sisters, Louisa

and Isabella.

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As the weeks went by in our mud show, I became more and more frustrated. The circus audiences had thus far made me the sole target for their half eaten apples, corn cobs and the peanut hulls. I guess I was a marked man! I had thought previous to this, that the clowns were the targets of choice as in the Louisiana Circus I observed. My ringmaster outfit was much like their ringmaster's, a black top hat, high black boots, and red huntsmen jacket. Yet it was interesting that our two clowns were adored by the audience. I guessed an old clown and his young apprentice were endearing to them. Then Zippo at meal gathering divulged to me that upon crowd entering our small circus tent, Reppo that is the boy clown and he, were selling peanuts and apples provided by local farmers, and were suggesting that the British ringmaster would make a perfect site to hit to show to everyone their loyalty to President Andrew Jackson. In addition upon leaving the show, those two would sell buttons with Andrew Jackson's outline specially printed. Mr. Charles Wright was in agreement with the marketing strategy and that evening suggested it was time for me to be more creative. At least that was one of the reasons Bailey hire me." "Do something actor showmen! We are

selling a lot of produce." So in leu of the situation I met privately with Annie and Price George to review some of my notes and ideas for the next performance. The new act we would be performing in addition to my ringmaster duties would be titled ***Annie and Her Magic Banjo***. During the early part of the show I had pointed out to the audience from my central position in the ring that "Annie Banjo, your out of tune with the circus band. "The Banjo wasn't magical to me!" At this she snuck around trained dogs and pig act and bopped me in the behind with her banjo as I inspected the pig closely near the clowns, yelling "Maga, maga, magic banjo do your best to this English beast!" Which was followed a large uproar of delight from the spectators.

At our intermission I quickly rubbed back coal all over my face, neck and arms as Annie had suggested. Then I put on the Rumford's old baggy bandleader costume. However instead of the long swirly buggy wipe I substituted a sad looking willow branch. After the intermission I ran frantically into, around and through the audience while Annie strutted to the center of the ring with her banjo held high bellowing "Maga, maga, magic banjo you done it!" At first there was a silent hush as some of the plantation ladies and gentlemen cocked their heads in questioning reaction. Then the small slave gallery screamed with delight.

Immediately upon this one of the old gentry plantation lady

yelled "Good for you Annie! I'd tar and feather that English dog now!" Next to crowds amazement the dogs, the pig and even the clowns were all running around the ring after me, as Annie played a furious banjo jig to the spectators' uproarious clapping. The signal for the next changing of the following circus acts at both the in and out gates was given by Annie and the clowns alternately. As a result of this success we spent two more days in that river town selling out our ticket quota. In the next week the only changes we would make were beside adding the elephant to the chase was right at the end the final of the show I came out to half black and half white waving two American flags and bowing to the audience as if at Drury Lane stage. It was a great success. As a result we had found our show stopper by refining the act material in different combinations. Charles Wright decided to end the show with one last Ringmaster chase around the ring with all the circus acts, instead of with the elephant act final.

..... . .

We continued our successful circus line up for three weeks straight on the road traveling every night setting up and then running a show every late afternoon, until late one evening I was woken up from a dead sleep in the rolling circus wagon along with

Annie, the elephant and Horton Moor to find out we had been separated from our circus caravan. Three hours later Henry our new wagon driver at last shared with us at stream crossing that Bailey had decided to pull us from the show and bring us to Richmond, Virginia as he put two days late " Now your going to play with the big boys." He then showed us the one by two printed circus billing that announced three brand new acts

.Annie's Magic Slave Banjo

.AMS Lord Bridgnorth

.Jumbo the Friendly Elephant Giant.

Richmond would be our real testing ground.

Amazingly it was a pure pleasure performing *The Magic Banjo*

For the good people of Richmond, Virginia. Only changes Mr. Bailey had made were my using a British flag as a cape and the group of clowns being dressed up as hounds for the chase scene.

The only difficult thing for me now was timing, planning and organizing in succession of the circus act for entry and exit gates until the intermission. Then the circus band leader would take over. Some of the newspapers were saying *The Magic Banjo* was *on its way* as a very popular circus act. However Bailey insisted to become a great act the other two, the other two skits I was working on be as good or better. And he wanted those two skits finished by the time we reached the capitol city of Washington.

To enhance one of them, Annie Banjo and myself were working on a Song about circus animals talking to each other titled "Doing Here". The only possible controversial part was its last verse which dealt with Annie, Master Louis and his overseeyor. In the first two verses the animals talk to each other. The clowns play the animal parts for example an elephant, giraffe, dog and monkey. I was thinking that we would be able to try it out by the time we reached Delaware on the way to the City of New York. The sketch at this point was titled *The British Master, Annie and the Elephant*. Although I was the sole author of the other two Annie would be my 50% collaborator on the third. The story would be about a British gambler so called lord from Jamaica wins a South Carolina slave girl and elephant in a card game. The young northern boy came with the animal falls in love with the slave girl. The story might have a New York City tavern innkeeper see the value in buying all them or for their services.

.....

Our big top circus in the American capitol was a masterpiece extravaganza delight. That is until Horton Moor disappeared. The next morning, the morning of our departure from Washington Annie and I sat at the little table in Bailey's circus wagon.

(The conversation went like this.)

Mr. Bailey (said)

You what?

Annie (responded)

Me and Horton got married, sir.

Bailey

So you were at some Virginia plantation frolic and suddenly you got married.

Annie

No sir Mr. Bailey. We was in love the first moment we set eyes on each other at the plantation. Since then it just grew and grew.

Bailey

So what were you the Mr. Ringmaster at this love feast? Where you playing preacher man?

Thaddius

No sir. I was the best man.

Bailey

Jesus, Thaddius! Lord forgive me. What were you thinking?

Thaddius

Horton said, was a good time to declare their love, publicly. There was this Methodist preacher there marrying these two other slave couples.

A M S

Annie

So we got in the line as the preacher suggested.

Thaddius

Yes sir, that's what the preacher suggested.

Bailey

Well for your information, she is chattel, property, my slave! She has no rights to do anything. Oh hell in New York I would have freed her, but after we finish this tour. So what other advice did Horton and the preacher give you, two?

Annie

Horton was go in on about EMANCIPATION this and EMANCIPATION that in his New York State. Talked alot about his friend Jay the abolitionist, and he being free and all.

Bailey

So he figured it was time to get hitched. Don't you know Virginia and the District are slave states! I'm sure Horton was drink in a lot being the man of authority. But when he's been drink in, Jumbo the elephant don't trust him. What you trusting him for?

Thaddius

Mr. Wright said stay with Horton. So I did.

Annie

And that was a preacher man!

Bailey

Judas was an apostle. But that doesn't mean you follow him. Do ya? How about if it was a Catholic priest? Would you do whatever he said?

Thaddius and Annie (respond)

Ah ...

Bailey

The circus leaves at night instead of this morning. I'll give him that much time to show, if someone hasn't already shot him by now. When did he disappear?

Thaddius

He wanted to sit with the preacher for a while to pray and talk about Jay.

Bailey

Oh, well that really help in the South! Both of you go directly to your tents, and don't come out till we leave tonight. Just get out of my sight for now. I need an elephant man! I'll figure out what to do, who to talk to here, Annapolis, Baltimore. I sure hope Horton didn't lose his papers.

.....

As we left Bailey's wagon I touched Annie's arm saying. "I'm so deeply sorry. Don't give up hope." Back in the tent I started writing again.

When we got to New York we were still running a very successful circus show. The corporal of the Italian Cavalry Master had joined the show as both musician and training the Savannah Sisters who had also joined us. I heard the rest of the mud circus was disbanded somewhere around Charlottesville, Virginia. James Wright had left the circus to become a slave overseer on Master Louis' plantation and Charles Wright had left the Crane Circus for the Caribbean and South American tour. Because of new investors' in addition to managing duties he would be buying exotic animals and sending them back east. Most of the investors in that syndicate were from Somerstown, Brown, Crane, Barlow and Bailey.

.....

Outside Manhattan in a farmers vacant lot the circus wagons circled the big top show and side tents. It was in one of those side tents that Mr. Bailey sat Annie and myself down for a briefing before the second show. "I'm here to start preliminary discussions with you two folks." He said taking off his hat and then continuing "That is for next two years in our European circus tour that I'm organizing right now as we speak. If that new circus is as successful as I anticipate after that two years in circus tents and theaters across Europe you will be a rich man and rich free young lady." then he handed me a newspaper and

said. "Read this to her my Actor Master Showmen, it concerns Horton. He's under arrest in the Washington, District of Columbia prison. It states here he's a runaway slave so he can be sold at the slave auction. We'll talk about it after the show. The District is not a place for a colored man."

.....

From the commercial metropolis of the city of New York our circus next traveled north. We had had a very successful month in Manhattan, and had only five more show stops before we reached Somerstown Mr. Bailey's Mecca of menagerie partners, circus families, show acts, workers, shops and monstrous barns at nearby farms to house priceless exotic circus animals. On behalf of Horton Moor, Judge William Jay had initiated local meetings, the formation of a committee, and petition demanding the interposition of the Governor of New York DeWitt Clinton for the protection and immediate release of Horton Moor, a free African American and legal resident of the State of New York. The true facts described in the document made it crystal clear that Horton was being cruelly punished under the circumstances and legally deprived of his Constitutional Rights as a United States Citizen. In this instance the District's sheriff had in fact violated Mr. Horton's rights when he arrested and imprisoned him under the

District of Columbia's interpretation of Fugitive Slave Law. Judge William Jay and the Committees petition would reach Congress, the Secretary of State and even President of the United States, John Quinsy Adams. Upon Horton's eventual release, Judge William Jay and his Committee would further petition through New York Congressmen Ward's active hand and sponsorship of Jays resolution demanding the immediate abolition of slavery in the Capitol Washington itself. The issue was now to be debated in the Halls of Congress.

.....

After our last performance in Sing Sing on the Hudson, Annie and I were quickly transported away to attend a private meeting with Judge William Jay and his father the retired Chief a Founding Father of the American Republic, at their Bedford Homestead just a hours coach ride from Bailey's farm in Somers. We had proceeded north up the Somerstown Turnpike along the Croton River which then dipped into the Muscoot River Valley. Bouncing as we crossed over a wood slat bridge Annie and I stared turning our heads in unison to the right marveling at the lush green color of Muscoot Mountain. When we had crossed over Woods Bridge the driver said, "Your now in Bedford, folks". The time flew as within less than an hour we found ourselves at the gate of the Jay Homestead and Farm. The entry gate was opened so our driver snapped his

carriage wipe to keep the horse moving nicely forward up the half spiraling incline of the main estate road. When we got to the top of the hill the main house came clearly into view. Though substantial in footprint, the residence was a simple unadorned Georgian style of house. The most interesting architectural detail was the front piazza or veranda, which was substantial. It beautifully embraced the entire long sweeping front façade of the building. And then we noticed the magnificent view behind us to the west including a gorgeous river valley and surrounded by hills beyond. I was dead wrong. In contrast this was a homestead that perfectly fit into its beautiful agrarian landscape. One could now see miles away the scenic Croton River and Muscote Mountain that we had passed. This was equal to any English landscape setting for in it the stone walls to the south of the home only appeared at first as we approached, but were in fact embedded into gradually sloping banks. The effect would be from the veranda those stone walls were softened and hidden the tall pasture field grass. As our wagon circled to the front, we were met by a colored servant who led us up the front stairs of the piazza. Neatly dressed, he instructed our driver to proceed to coach house where a stableman would water and freshen his horse prior to his departure. In one or two days a servant of Mr. Jay' would bring Annie and I to Mr. Bailey farm. We were to be guests

for the night and rooms were prepared. Although we had not noticed it at first, when we got to the second step of veranda we saw two gentlemen dressed in black, one middle aged and the other quite elderly. They had been following every movement there as they sat on their simple Windsor chairs near the front door. By the time we got to the fourth step the middle aged man Judge William Jay stood up to greet us. Upon closer observation, I recognized that their simple black suits were made to order and of finest material for such gentlemen. William Jay shook my hand and bowed to Annie courteously saying "It is a pleasure to meet both you, especially after watching your performances last week with members of my family". Chief Justice John Jay smiled a very subtle grin and raised his hand slowly in a gesture of cordial recognition. "How was your journey?" William Jay continued.

"Very fine, thank you." I returned, whereas Annie merely nodded her head. I then started to watch her more closely, as every now and then she would stare at our Negro servant waiting at the doorway. Here the senior was also observing Annie so he raised his hand again and said. "My colored servants are paid and treated as equal to any servant Mrs. Moor. May we order you some refreshment now?". She returned "Yes Mr. Jay, sir" while clearing her throat. William pointed out to the servant to see to her needs, while I agreed with Annie that any refreshment would be

appreciated. Within a few minutes an older white male servant appeared with our tea, cider, water, hot chocolate and a dish of assorted biscuits and fruit cakes. William Jay then interrupted the servant saying that "we'll take refreshment in the parlor Jack. The sun will down soon. It is lovely out here on the piazza in the evening and Father enjoys the early evening breeze." When we took our seats, John Jay at the his fireside chair, William on the Queen Anne, and Annie and myself on the formal settee, William looked directly at Annie pulled his chair a little closer to her and said, "I see you are upset and rightfully so about the fate of your husband, Horton Moor." "Yes, very much so." she answered, her eyes being more blood shot at that moment. At this remark John Jay added with his hands on his chin. "We expected him to be here tonight or latest tomorrow morning." Then the William Jay announced "To our knowledge he was released last week. We received our first correspondence from him yesterday. News travels slow up the Hudson." At this Annie glowed a tearful smile and then her body shook as she looked over at me her eyes wide open. William continued. "His health is poor. Although a doctor's note mentioned he should recover in a month if quite at his brother's cabin in Somerstown. Here I thought to myself. So this is why we were summoned. A moment later I looked at both the Jays and said" Thank you from bottom of my heart.

Horton said you were great admirable gentlemen. But you are much more. Then Annie got on her knees and started to pray. "Thank you God! And God Bless these men. I'm at your humble and loving servant, forever!"

William therefore got on his knees and started to pray. "Thank you Lord as you will deliver Horton to us soon, Amen. The Chief Justice put his hands together and stayed silent. I also remained still, hands folded bent somewhat over thinking,

"Where are you Mari? Not one letter back from you as yet, dear. I owe you everything. I'm not a religious man. But Lord could you give me a sign". At that moment one of candles in the room blew out in a puff from a sudden breeze entering from the window. Anne screamed. "No! Is he gone?" Touching her softly I said to her.

"No Annie. My sister is gone".

I then asked William if I might go out to the veranda for a moment. Still kneeling he said, "Please do. There is a chair near that window outside."

But I could not get up from the settee yet, I instead listened more carefully to something odd I was hearing from outside.

William spoke up. "I shall be out on the veranda as well father."

He had heard it also. The sound became a little louder as the minutes past. Immediately William walked into the dark hallway with his cane held tightly at his side. When he just started to

open the front door, it instead furiously blew open from a powerful wind gust with a loud echoing slam of the door against the hallway wall. For the next ten minutes William kept staring outside the doorway. A drenching rain started as it got even darker. Now the elderly John Jay came to his son's side saying "Is it Sally, my son?" "I'm not sure Father. No it sounds like a wagon. There it is!" Annie was face down still on the floor when she heard William Jay's words. "My Horton" she said as she looked at me. Struggling she got up from the floor as did I from the settee. Now all four of us watched from the door as a what looked like a wagon turned the corner of the farm lane. Here William took Annie's hand and said to her. "Wait here with my father." Then he looked at me saying "Come with me to the wagon". Immediately he rang the servant bell and yelled. "Jack! Raymond! We need you!" Soon the wagon entered the coach circle and pulled up to veranda stairs. The driver yelled out. "Is this your colored man, Mr. Jay?" "And what is his name?" William shouted back. "Homer I think." Was the drivers answer. By this time the two servants John and Raymond were down by the wagon at the passenger's side. "Bring him into informal parlor Raymond." ordered William. "I'll take care of driver, horse and wagon", Sounded Jack.

Every step of the way that Raymond helped Horton to the rear parlor, Annie was there on the other side of him. And yet you could see Horton was really walking on his own, that is by the surprised expressions on both the servant's and Annie's face. Not sitting yet, Horton turned to William Jay and spoke fervently with a low bow, "How can I repay you Mr. Jay with all you have done for me?" He replied. "Become a fine and healthy man. And believe." Here he looked at the female servant who had just appeared, and said, "Tea and biscuits and some beef and fruit." The senior Jay sat exhausted in the cane chair at the chess table and said to Raymond "Bring my comfortable chair here and for the others. "Indeed Sir", was the answer.

Annie looked at Horton and also Judge William Jay saying "Shouldn't you rest? Shouldn't he rest?"

But it was Horton who answered shaking his head.

"I must look and talk to all of you! How can I rest now, dear Annie. Later. Tomorrow. May we talk your honors, Sirs?"

"If you must Horton", William replied.

Annie was sitting close by him, smiling, hugging him, closing her eyes then opening her eyeing then smiling again. It was clear to me, it was a time to listen. I would sit on the piazza later that night to make my piece Mari. She would have wanted me to act in that fashion.

When a servant came to help the Senior John Jay to his room he pushed lightly and shook his head saying "Not now."

It was Horton who started. "The Methodist preacher and myself were captured together, sir. They killed him right in front, pistol to the head. I was worth money they said. I thought my papers were in my pocket but the sheriff knocked me unconscious with his rifle. I woke up in the cell with only my pants on. I repeated a thousand times to "Get Mr. Bailey who's circus is here in the city! I am not a runaway slave. I'm from Somerstowm, New York. You are wrong with your accusations." That night the other colored man in the said "You're a slave now." The three drunk sailor thieves, also in our prison cell, kept to the other side of cell. Without the runaway slave man next to me, I think they would have tried to kill me, sir."

The Chief Justice spoke to Horton and his son with,

"It is their word verses yours, as to the preacher. In New York we'd have a case. But in the district, your in a slave state Mr. Moor, as if you were in Virginia." At this Judge William shook his head in agreement but to Horton. "We can try, Horton."

At this Horton paused in silence. Then he looked at Annie and said as if pleading. "Annie my dear, it is time to tell them about Vesey." Here I had no idea what he was talking about.

The two Jays looked at each other, then at Annie. Horton took her

hand as he spoke. "The Jays have saved many colored folks lives besides mine. It will help the cause. William looked at her and said. "Any information you have will help the Cause of Freedom. Annie stared at Horton, and then stared at the Jays individually.

Mr. Bailey said I was free with them papers, but I don't feel free. I took an oath to never talk of it."

Horton shook his head three times and said." You took an oath as a slave in South Carolina. You can speak the truth as a free these good people." At this the servant went out of the hallway and into the kitchen. Horton continued, " I would die for these people, as I would die for you and my family." Annie was moved but still hesitant. But then she took her Papers of Freedom out of her pocket and stood. She put them along the side of Horton where she had been sitting .Then limped over and stood right in front of the two Jays. At this William was about to speak when his father stood up handed him the Family Bible. William then gestured to her to put her hand on the front of it while the Chief Justice this, "This is our Family Bible. Do you solemnly and freely speak the truth, so help you God as a Freeperson now of the State of New York?" She note her head in agreement. The Chief Justice looked at the others individually in the room and continued. "We that here tonight, shall keep silent as long as you shall want us too." As she now took a deep breath and wiped

the sweat from her forehead. The Chief Justice said,

"Now proceed my dear."

Annie looked at us all occasionally, but in fact spoke in the direction of Jays.

"Dear sirs,

the Vesey Rebellion had come to our plantation on the Ashley River months before the designated date of upheaval in Charleston, when Denmark Vesey himself came to the slave cabin fire late one night . I was very young then Your Honors, but field slave cabin I slept in was nearby, and others were out in one of the fields camp in, so when I heard the voice like a black preacher man, I couldn't help get near to that window. He Congo Joe had asked him to visit the faithful personally and explain the plan in more detail. This was back when Joseph was part time Slave Driver. Oh and he was good at it! The Master and everyone called him Josephus then. Old Fella was not so old and still playin banjo. When he heard the roamer of the revolt he just laughed at field women partner and said something like, "Toussant from Santa Domingo gonna take in all the nigger boats from South Carolina after the killin, and the Slave South is goin to let it go. You crazy Mama?"

Now two kinda folks, Richard and Old Fella was not the revolt

leaders in our plantation. It was mostly the field slaves on our plantation that were with them. The twins Bo and Lucky I know was a big part of it. They would be kill-in most of the Big House whites, the Master, sick Mistress and their daughter and even the blacks if they interfered. Amazing my half Mama the real head of the field slaves was right behind the twins. She wanted to kill Joseph and the rest of the stable people. Mory and his friends would slit the throats of the overseeyor and guards after he got the drunk and took their guns. The majority of the field was with them here your honors, and Vesey said that night thirty or more plantations up and down the three rivers would ready in the month after the wagons delivered the pikes, spears, long knives and hatchets. That wagon load was to be buried by the rice swamps in two weeks. So this was really gonna happen Mr. Jays. This was no little Charleston raid. So as I was saying, I listen to a lot of the planning that night. I had to get a look at Vesey. He was the Messah to some of them. And if I was going to follow to the Holy City Charleston our Jerusalem. So I peeked out of a hole in the wall. Your Honors, and he was magnificent all in white there with the fire burning in the background. Holding his good book by his and reading what the Israelites done in Egypt and Babylon. Sirs he looked like our Moses to me. If Mama cut little Carol Anns throat I probably would have done in."

Judge William Jay poured her a fresh glass of water and asked her to drink before she continued. Which she did and took another bite of her biscuit to wash it down.

"The Chief Justice asked a summary question here. So your saying Mame that this was not an isolated Charleston incident which those few in the north had heard mostly roamers about. This was in effect a far reaching regional, city, as including the whole three rivers in the incident?"

She nodded her head and continued.

"Later, a month later, on the Day Redemption and Blood, I was asked to help Bo and Lucky dig out the buried tools of destruction. Mama didn't know that I was that much involved as part of the revolt but I was. So here we were the three of us starting to dig out the arsenal, and who shows up behind us is Josephus with his pistol drawn. He first tells us to stop what we are doing, which we did. Then he tells us to move over in front of the wagon and for me to hold onto to lite torch which near the driver's side. I did so, but in an instant Bo had thrown sand in Joseph's while they both attacked him. The gun blasted Lucky in the forehead killing him. Soon five of the others showed up saying they killed all the other stable hands even the black ones that resisted. There were two arsenal burial holes and at this point Bo decided to go with just the one buried batch of wepons.

He said time was cut and to bring this batch to the cabins.

Two of his boys tied up Joseph who was cut up pretty bad.

Bo said that "We'll finish him off in the fire".

As we were pushing the wagon I slept and got my foot run over by the wagon wheel. Sir it got real mangled up with blood all over me screaming. This is why I have such a bum leg now. So field men rapidly stuck a rag in my mouth to shut me up. I was so young sirs. We get to the slave cabin and only fifteen of us there.

"Well where is everyone?" Bo shouts. Mama then runs up behind him yelling and crying at the same time that Vesey's been captured.

'All our slave is in the rice fields praying!" Three of the fifteen at the cabin fire run for the fields as well.

Mama grabs me and drags me to her cabin trying now to stop the bleeding. Bo takes command. He thought his brother Lucky was still breathing so he had one of his men along with himself carry him back. Men followed Bo. He was a big strong man, real strong. He tells the men to follow him to the whipping post and bring along Josephus. At this point I didn't see it only what one of the field slaves told me. She said that's where they castrated Joseph, and then Bo and the Men had started to burn him in the fire alive, when Master Louis appears awoken from his week of melancholia with the surviving two overseeyor. They proceed shoot everyone in sight with their pistols and rifles firing.

Here is where Old Fella and another servant carry Joseph back to the Big House Kitchen to see what they can do, all the while Josephus is begging for a gun so he can kill himself. Next the Master and overseeyors march down to the rice fields where the shooting continues until twelve more are left dead in the fields. When the Master and overseeyors get back to the cabin fire. It's only myself and Mama at the fire where she is still trying to stop my bleeding leg. The two overseeyors grab mama and lift her up ready to shot her when Old Fella shows up and begs Master not to kill us because I'm his daughter and she's the mother.

"Let it stop here please Master Louis he cries. Her two sons are dead at the whipping there. She has paid for her sins. Let me take Annie back to kitchen and maybe save that leg. Maybe we can save Joseph too. The others will still work for her Master.

All Master Louis said is

"It's over for now. Take her with us.

Slave women you talk to your kind.

And at day brake we meet at the whipping post.

You ask them if they want this to continue?"

At this Mama said nothing and left for the rice fields.

"Your Honorable Jays sirs may I now take a walk outside with my husband Horton?"

.....

A M S

Corporal Alanzo, Annie and I stayed in the servants' help section of the Elephant Hotel in owned by Mr. Bailey. Early second morning of our stay we were all awakened by Ralph O'Donnell a farm hand of Bailey, who worked at the his hotel and on the road with the circus. He was to take us for a tour around the town so we could get acquainted with the area. We met at the front door of the hotel right across the street from the new elephant monument Bailey had recently had erected. I started a conversation with Ralph, the Irish lad.

"So you call this town Soo..mer or Somerstown, Mr. O'Donnell"

Ralph

Eye, Saa ..meres it is.

Alanzo

Saamers.

Annie

(She repeats also)

Sameres

Ralph

(Using a low bass voice)

The black folks hereabouts say Soo..mers.

Annie

Soo..mers.

A M S

Ralph

That's it! Now Captain Richard Saamers was a great American Navel Hero. But indeed it's an Irish sort a story. (He states sadly) A tragedy my friends. No doubt, you've heard of an Irish tragedy.

Alanzo

Trageedy. My Captain Carlos Lorezo Denza'o.

Thaddius

Exactly Corporal.

Ralph

You see his warship exploded in the Bay of Tripoli while fighting an army of pirates. He parishes. God bless his soul.

Alanzo

(The Corporal excited now puts his hat near his heart)

Me amigo, are we going to visit the war monument and burial site?

Ralph

Well sadly no my friends.

(Now takes of his hat) There ain't none.

Thaddius

He must be buried in Washington then. Not where he was born.

Ralph

He was not born in Somers. He was born in New Jersey.

A M S

Annie

Will we pass by the family's big house or farm he use to lived in, today?

Ralph

No that impossible! Cause the man never lived here!

Thaddius

So then he visited Somers many times? (Ralph shakes his head)

Alanzo

Did he ever visit uno, once? (Ralph shakes his head again)

Annie

Maybe?

Ralph

Never a one. I afraid.

Alanzo

Me Amigo, I don't speak English so great. I'm confused. Tell me, Why did ya name your town Somers, gracious?

Ralph

I don't know! I'm Irish.

Thaddius

Well that explains everything!

Ralph

But maybe I can bring some light these questions. Let's ask Ned over there Mr. Bailey's colored servant.

A M S

Ned my friend, can you help your Dear Irish pal Ralph out today by answering a question or two.

(Ned stops for a moment)

Ned

The best ale around town is at Wright's Tavern. The worst women are down the road in Huntsville tomorrow night. Any more

Questions?

Ralph

Well Ned we was thinkin this. What was Bailey and the town fathers thinkin when they named it Somerstown.

Ned

They didn't (Annie, myself and Alanzo stare at Ralph for a few seconds). The State of New York changed the name cause the old name Stephentown was already taken somewhere upstate. Bailey wanted them to name it Bailey Town. Wright would have none of it. So the next 4th of July, they name it after this war hero from New Jersey. The state said OK and that was it. Welcome to Somers.

Ralph

Well there you have it. I thought you were supposed to take these circus folks around town?

Ned

That's what I thought too. Isn't that what Bailey told us?

A M S

Ralph

(So Ralph starts walking away slowly saying to Ned)

Indeed he did! Please do the honors. I must get back to the hotel kitchen. I'm needed. Tell em about the animals, Ned my man.

The last scene

In the village of Somers like many towns, hamlets and cities throughout this land the inhabitants celebrate the signing of the 1776 Declaration of Independence from England with fairs, exhibits, fireworks, public speeches, concerts, horse races, and in some instances theatrical events or political rallies.

This July 4th of 1827 however was in one respect different for the Stat of New York because Slavery was to be statutorily abolished for the Empire State. Today it was most interesting and wonderful to notice the reaction of my dear circus friend Annie Banjo, once a slave. Unfortunately Horton Moore her lover and my friend an elephant caretaker could not join us, being ill and recovering from the prison ordeal. In the Hamlet, Annie would be obtaining her official documents declaring to all her status where in prior year she had been declared the property of Mr. Bailey. Today we would march proudly alongside ***Bailey's New American Menagerie and Circus*** bandwagon followed by equestrians, clowns, caged and un-caged animals. The day before both we had procured lucrative entertainment contracts from Bailey. Monetary wealth and stability would at last be with our grasp and forthcoming at the end of a two year long grand circus European tour. It was incredible to me as I pondered the events of the last four years walking along side Annie her banjo strapped to her side. I had come from a ship to Charleston in depravation and poverty, and was to leave in three weeks time back to England in a circus tour of

Europe. Annie Banjo and I had thoroughly refined our circus routine, the *Magic Banjo*; and *English Huntsmen, Elephant & Slave Girl*". We were still working on other acts of the same high caliber. Besides the grand festivities in the Somers Village, I had clearly seen from a distance Judge William Jay in dark sober dress suit. A two month ago we had twice to homestead farm one time to retrieve Horton and the other to entertain his family with song and dance as a result of Judge Jay's noble humanitarian and legal skills as to his success in obtaining Horton Moor's freedom from a Washington Sheriff's prison. I recall the Chief Justice John Jay and his son the Honorable William Jay lingering back from the family slowly in the parlor while their important guests waited for them across the hall for a brief private conversation with us. Again Horton was not among us as before in that he was still recovering in his cabin. It was the ancient Founding Father Jay who spoke first to us. "In the future, young lady once of the Carolina's, you must vigilantly work for the eventual freedom of your entire race of people. This is your noble as well as my son's." While he started to have difficulty continuing William respectfully added. "Re in the eyes of God, all men are created equal. This our cause, justice". Then the eighty two year old founding father patriot of the republic spoke in a whisper but intensely to all of us.

"This July 4th 1827 slavery shall be abolished in the State forever in a New York State Emancipation from Slavery Law I worked on personally. God willing I shall live to see this day." Then his son gingerly took his father's hand leading him out from the parlor with his father echoing these words as we all

repeated them "God Bless America", God bless America". After this William and John Jay reflection, I found myself standing to the side of a large ceremonial stand in front of the Elephant Hotel in Somerstown Village, which many had proclaimed as the capitol of the American Menagerie Circus and its calling. In a huff a newspaper man chose to squeeze by me to listen more closely to Mr. Bailey's speech at the podium. He was reporting on the events of day, the general surroundings, and even nature of the hotel itself. Unfortunately for him, he dropped his article notes unknowingly on the ground beside me. Before I could hand it him he was off again in the crowd somewhere. The article partially stated.

"Here in Bailey's Somerstown Village there is an unusual single shaft of dressed granite fifteen feet in height, resting on a double base, to which is securely fastened by bolt and cement. It is sixteen inches square at the bottom tapering to about twelve inches at the top where it supports a scrollwork of wrought iron about three feet high which amazingly stands a wooden image of an elephant, a miniature image that is gilded". Yet he who so ever shall read my notes, please do not interpret the elephant as some golden calf or idol that Moses would have cast down with his Twelve Commandments on the chosen people for violating the first covenant. Here Mr. Bailey though no saintly character by any stretch of the imagination is still a man of great perseverance, integrity and enterprise, though admittedly a wee bit peculiar considering the expense of such a grand symbol monument. The monument is in remembrance his elephant Old Bet, as is the Elephant Hotel.

*Personal comment here written by Hack Bailey a week before our
circus company left on board the ships to England and the
European Tour.*

*It is with the deepest regret that I Hachalliah Bailey have
notified Mr. Thaddius Northbridge today of his sister Mari's
death occurring almost one year ago. I was sent Mr. Northbridge's
actor's trunk and the legal contents by the local magistrate,
which arrived two weeks ago confirming his innocence as to the
appalling crime of rap in the County of Warwickshire, England. It
was my judgment to wait until this time to transfer to him the
legal correspondence and his letters of correspondence which are
the contents in his personal showmen's trunk.*

*Therefore on this date Mr. Thaddius Northbridge has left in my
care and position in safe keeping the above items mentioned to be
stored at my offices on the third floor of the Elephant Hotel,
Somers, New York, United States of America.*

Signed Date

Signed Date

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