

AFTER
BONDAGE
AND
WAR



AN HISTORIC FICTIONAL NOVEL

DAVID CLAIRE JENNINGS

After Bondage and War

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*For those who have inspired, cared and helped-
Abraham, Jimmy, Nick and Joan*

Foreword

Slavery was a stain on our country. It deeply falsified our founding ideals and was a longstanding shame for us in the eyes of the world. In the first hundred years of our history, we developed as two divergent societies and cultures based on two different visions in interpreting our founding ideals. Adams had a vision for a country of enterprising merchants and property owners with emerging industrialism in small towns and cities bound together under a central government - a system of Federalism. Jefferson had a vision of an agrarian society of independent small farmers with slavery under more localized governance in states. The North and South grew apart.

The period of the Civil War and its aftermath of failed Reconstruction was a watershed moment in our history, and perhaps its most important moment. As the regional and sectional issues heated up beyond reconciliation, the country blew up. The Union was preserved and slavery was abolished. But the South was devastated and the country's wounds have never completely healed.

What if the Civil War had not been fought? Would slavery have ended a couple decades later as the rest of the country industrialized? What would have happened if Lincoln had not been assassinated? Would the subsequent century of racism and sectional divide have been lessened? What would have happened if Eli Whitney, or anyone else, had not invented the cotton gin, or the boll weevil had been successful, or the world market for cotton as a raw material had declined 50 years earlier than the early 20th century?

While the backdrop for the story covers a century of our history, beginning with the antebellum period, progressing through parts of the Civil War and failed Reconstruction, and ending around 1900, the characters resonate with thoughts and feelings we all share today: frustration, hopelessness, loneliness, spiritual longing, friendship, and love. Like all of us, there are parts of our being that we can define as evil, or morally corrupt, and parts that are pure and good. As Shakespeare once said, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." In addition, as peoples' lives progress with time, the fundamental nature of their character may change. We readers may start out rooting for one person that we believe to be a morally good person, and end up feeling that he or she has fallen short or utterly failed in his or her growth, or even has become corrupt and evil.

As I have come to re-know David after more than forty years apart, I have learned that he cares about and feels these things deeply. Through his extensive study, reading, and writing, he has developed a great sensitivity for our history and country and has gravitated toward a care and concern for its South.

I was the consummate Yankee, having been raised outside of New York City and having lived 10 years in Upstate New York, who knew nothing about the South. However, for the past 44 years I have lived in Georgia or Alabama. From metropolitan Atlanta to the most rural area of northern Alabama, I have come to know and understand the South as it has become. The New South rose from her ashes when she was rebuilt after the war. The South began to industrialize. For the rural Deep South however, much remains the same as it was in the past. Many of the positive characteristics of the southern culture embodied in this book are alive and well today, particularly in the rural areas. A deep abiding faith in the love of God, family and country still

prevail in most of the people I know. And for many southerners, the Civil War continues to be a deep wound in their hearts.

The people of the South that I have come to know over the years are steadfast in their views and willing to lend a hand to anyone needing help, be it friend or stranger.

I am an educator by calling and a story teller by nature and David is a feeling historian. Several months ago, David asked me if I would read the book he was writing as a favor. It only took one reading for me to become intrigued by the characters and their story. Since then our old friendship has come alive in a new way, now that we are much older and have lived our lives and careers. Though thousands of miles apart, we have mentored each other and labored together to produce this book. With our care and concern for all the American people, we believe *After Bondage and War* to be a sensitive and important statement about this period of history and the people who lived through it.

Not since Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, has this story been told with such emotional intensity and pathos. I feel we have treated it with a broader reach, dimension and poignancy. Through its personal recounting of history and its very human characters, it is our intention that our readers will feel this way also.

We hope so and hope you enjoy the story.

- Joan Austin

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Prologue

The old man paused in his daily walk to rest on his favorite bench on the quad of the Miami of Ohio campus. He enjoyed the energy of the young students, their passion for civil rights and to end an unjust war. It was the 1960's.

He told them about his grandfather and his struggle 100 years ago. He told them about the Civil War and his grandfather's friend David whose name had been chosen for his father. He wanted them to gain a perspective that can only come from knowledge of the past.



Josiah was tired, not in his muscles or bones from a hard day's work, in his soul for the loss he had suffered and the apprehension of what was to come. He slowly walked down the hard-packed and rutted red clay dirt road leading away from the Savannah Oaks plantation. He felt old beyond his years, and the simmering sultry heat and humidity of the southern Mississippi summer added to his fatigue the longer he walked. The massive live oaks, with their curtains of hanging Spanish moss provided some shade, but held the humidity so close to the ground that he could feel the droplets of water floating in the air around him.

He remembered the last time he had traveled this road, as a young man 13 years ago, when he was brought to Savannah Oaks. This time the journey was for a different purpose and under different circumstance.

Now he was traveling away from the place - his forced home for those last arduous, grueling and cruel years. The farther he walked, the further he remembered that bitter past journey on

this road from Natchez. His thoughts drifted back to that earlier time, to his brief happiness with Josena and his accomplishments then.

The live oaks with the hanging moss became less oppressive and brought him a sense of calmness and peace he had not felt earlier. Hope began to fill his heart. Now he would have the chance to find his beloved Josena. He began to walk faster.

This long day had begun with the arrival of the federal authorities at Savannah Oaks. They had come to broker the release of the plantation's slaves. Although the war had officially ended in April when Lee surrendered at Appomattox, the fighting didn't stop immediately, but continued in the western sections of the country.

The South had been so completely devastated and crippled by the war, communication was almost non-existent with virtually no functioning telegraph service. While communication in southern cities had been difficult, the southern plantations, which had always been spread far and wide in the Deep South, were more isolated than ever. It had taken from April until July for federal authorities to finally arrive at Savannah Oaks.

With the arrival of the government people, the plantation's slaves were gathered together. Some came from the fields, some from their cabins, the rest from the mansion. They assembled in the big yard in the front of the main house. They stood in groups and alone, anticipating a change but not knowing what it would mean. Some of them stood near the pole where they had been bound and lashed on so many occasions.

The government men explained to them that they were freed. This pronouncement was unprecedented, unfamiliar, but

joyously welcome for the human beings who had always been enslaved, always been the property of some other human being, in one place or another. The authorities explained that there was hope for government programs to help them. They assured the emancipated people that the Freedmen's Bureau would make its best effort, with limited funding and political support, to provide for them.

The ideas they were considering were for better education, land provision, legal rights, and a societal readjustment to a free labor agricultural system. These noble plans for reconstruction had not been worked out and could not be guaranteed. A free labor system was a concept the South had no experience with or knowledge about. The many governments involved would debate and contend for authority.

But on this day, their message was received as both hopeful and frightening for the former slaves who were just now released. In the end, the politicians in the South and Washington looked out for their own interests and little was done to help them, despite the best intentions of the Freedmen's Bureau and some in the government.

As the former slaves stood there not quite knowing what would come next, they were told that for now they could leave as they wished and go where they wished. The younger ones were anxious to go and face a new future. The older ones were hesitant to leave their familiar life and more frightened of the unknown. None of their ancestors had traversed this free world before them.

They must be on their own and care for themselves. Their security and sustenance would be their own. There was no place to live, no food to eat. No one would provide. This was the end

of a co-dependent society, a cruel security, where some would be forced to work for others and the others would provide for their care. The enslaved and the enslavers would part their ways.

They could search for their families, travel freely throughout the country and contract for their labor as best they could arrange. For the first time in their lives, those gathered in front of the main house realized that they owned their own selves.

This was both an exhilarating and worrisome revelation, for they were homeless now, they had nowhere to go, and their life was going to become very difficult in new and unanticipated ways. They were going to have to deal with a world in which they had no experience and, as it would turn out, with little help from the federal government that had just given them their freedom.

With the loss of the Confederacy, the southern whites were embittered toward the federal government of the North for the devastation of their land and loss of their way of life. A bitter white aristocracy would look for ways to gain back their way of life and win their lost cause. They would find new ways to economically enslave the freedmen despite the passage of the 13th Amendment.

When the embittered South could not accomplish its mission, it would resort to other means of taking out its anger on the freedmen through many acts of violence. While the two races had formerly lived together in a form of a co-dependent society, now whites would set the former slaves apart from southern society and enact laws to deny the new freedmen their individual rights.

None at the Savannah Oaks plantation that day could foresee all the problems or know how it would end as the slaves were gathered on the front lawn of the main house. They began to move away from the yard, some returning to their cabins not ready to leave. Many, like Josiah, decided to leave the plantation right away.

For Josiah, there was the realization that for the first time in his life, he was free from bondage. But how would he go forth? What would he do now? He had never known anything other than bondage his whole life. Now that he was free, he would have to apply his keen mind to begin to understand what this newfound freedom would mean to him. More importantly, now he would have to find out how he could make a good life for himself in this new different reality.

Without looking back, he walked away from Savannah Oaks and began his search for understanding and a new life.

Illustrations



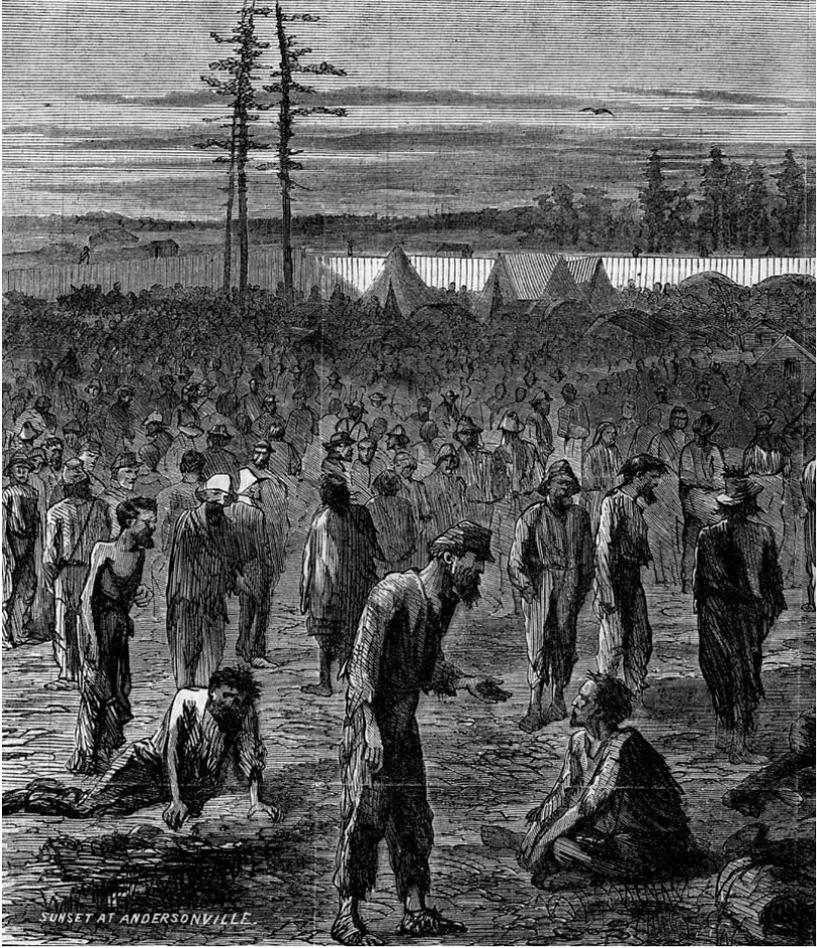
Fountain in Forsyth Park - Savannah, Georgia



Savannah Oaks plantation mansion - near Natchez, Mississippi



Battle of Antietam - September 17, 1862



Andersonville Prison - Ft. Sumter, Georgia

One - Marcus

Now, wherever the stars and stripes wave, they protect slavery and represent slavery... This then is the final fruit. In this, all the labors of our statesmen, the blood of our heroes, the lifelong cares and toils of our forefathers, the aspirations of our scholars, the prayers of good men, have finally ended! America the slave breeder and slaveholder!

- Seth Grahame-Smith

Marcus Taylor was born in 1807 in Savannah, Georgia to a wealthy family. His people were of Dutch ancestry tracing back to New Amsterdam in the 1600's. His father Hendrick made his fortune as a cotton factor before Marcus was born. Accountants and brokers were in demand.

He was one of the earliest to prosper from Savannah's role as a major seaport for the cotton business. Shortly after his death, his work, and that of the other early successful factors, would require the completion of the Savannah Cotton Exchange. As the South's king cotton continued to boom, it was built there on Bay Street. Savannah later grew in 1880 to become known as the "Wall Street of the South" before the boll weevil and falling world markets decimated cotton agriculture. Savannah's heyday and decline would come after his day, but Hendrick was one of its pioneers.

Savannah's bustling business hub was perched on a ridge facing north and overlooking River Street and the brisk seagoing activity on the Savannah River. Stone steps were built along the

Marcus

way to descend the steep bluff serving as a levee to the river front.

The Taylor family - Hendrick, his wife Jane, Marcus, and his younger sisters Marcy and Constance - lived in a mansion on Columbia Square, originally laid out in 1799. This was one of Savannah's historic squares developed over several decades. They eventually became miniature parks, beautified by live oaks, and with historic monuments and sidewalks running north-south through their centers.

The squares south of Bay Street grew to 24, but began as 4 originally laid out by British General James Oglethorpe in 1733, the same year he founded the colony of Georgia and the city of Savannah. His original plan was to provide space for the colonists to practice military exercises and as vegetable gardens to feed his troops stationed there as a "border" defense in case of invading Spanish from St. Augustine, Florida. James Oglethorpe also established the first Masonic Lodge in America on Bay Street in 1734 at the site that would later become the Savannah Cotton Exchange.

The city was undergoing growth in every direction as expansion tried to keep pace with its commercial successes from king cotton. At the east end of Bay Street, a new road and bridge were under construction to open up Tybee Island to wealthy leisure seekers.

Savannah preserved its history. Fort Pulaski still stood on Tybee with its long history dating back to Oglethorpe and the French and Spanish before his time. Bonaventure Cemetery lay along the Wilmington River to the east of Savannah on the way

Marcus

toward Tybee. Its old graves dated back to the end of the 18th century.

West of the squares, and south below Bay Street, a new city market was opening for outdoor sale of fresh produce and social gathering. At the west end of Bay Street, the bridge over the river to the north led to South Carolina low country, its Sea Islands and Beaufort, the quiet village in the tidewaters.

The beautiful 30 acre Forsyth Park was under construction south of the squares. Neighborhoods south of that were being built for the poorer working folks. These would become the neighborhoods for freedmen after the war. Savannah was a unique city in that it was not as driven by the passions of racism or views of social class as much as most of southern society. As a bustling seaport, Savannah's people were exposed to visitors from European countries and, perhaps more than other southern cities, held a more international perspective. Their very nature was more friendly and inclusive.

More than Savannah, Charleston typified antebellum southern culture and defined the old South. Nearby Savannah, in Georgia, would never reach Charleston's size but would develop its own character. The contrast in societal view between Charleston and Savannah was stark. This was simply understood by the way people greeted strangers. If you visited Charleston, the greeting was "Hi. Where y'all from?" In Savannah it was "Hi. What y'all want to drink?" The Charleston people needed to test your social worthiness by inquiring about your origin and family. The Savannah people weren't concerned with that. They wanted new people to join the party. To say that they were colorful, eccentric, and humorous was to begin to describe them.

Two - Rebecca

Rebecca Stanley was born in 1809 in Charleston, South Carolina. All the years she was growing up, her family had participated in the high society there. Her father had risen through the degrees of the Free Masons, as had Mozart and Virginians Washington and Madison before him. The social and business connections had enhanced his position and station in society. Her brothers had joined De Molay and would join their father's fraternal Order of Scottish Rites when they were old enough. Her mother belonged to the sister Order of the Eastern Star as she would one day.

The parents belonged to the 1748 St. Andrews Society which met at 70 Meeting Street. They shared this same hall with the 1737 South Carolina Society. There were many other societal organizations in Charleston, including the most prominent St. Cecilia Society. They were all involved in philanthropic causes. The history of their society and its culture was rich and old and deep.

There were gay parties, coming out debutante galas and balls for the upper crust families, seasonal cotillions, celebrated engagements, big wedding affairs, receptions for all the important people on grand lawns with white canopy tents and flowers everywhere. There were mint juleps, merry cheers and toasts, flocks of pretty young ladies twirling in their finest long dresses, older men standing straight and proud, arms crossed, smiling with contentment, watching over them smoking their cigars, and handsome young men excited to begin the courting game.

Rebecca

The splendid architecture, the galleries, the cobblestone streets basked in sea breezes, the wonderful low country food, all brought a fulfillment and great satisfaction to Charleston's people. They loved their lives, filled with gentility and refined courtly manners.

Rebecca had completed her social etiquette training lessons, paid for by her old-moneyed parents. When she was 16, she was presented to Charleston's bachelors and their families at her cotillion. There were escorts, flower girls and pages to attend the grand affair. She had been paired with her beau escort by her parents in agreement with the committee of elite members of society. Her father had formally introduced her to the audience from the stage. She wore a white gown and satin kid gloves and curtsied in the St. James full court manner to receive the invited guests in the line. They had paid for their tickets and this event had charitable benefit for those unfortunate poor souls who weren't invited.

She was eligible to marry. But that was not what she wanted then. She wanted to enjoy her youth and the many beaus who would come to call. The attention and the grand life was the best she could have imagined. Charleston was a joy.

After some years had passed, things changed. She was older. She began to reconsider her life, thought about herself, looked back at and inside of herself, 'Then Charleston was stuffy - saw past this - as after youth began to fade, the courtship game grew tired, boring, too easy, had lost appeal, win was loss, many loves played and forsaken, too many young men's love's lost, while not the right gallant man had come or been found, for too long, it's late, time running out, still none proved strong to make me lose, and put me up high, and cherish as deserved because

Rebecca

intelligence was the impediment, no gentlewoman to gentleman man who would do all these things and still make a woman partner, trust and rely on her, let me free to judge, free to decide, rectitude, righteousness and fair, alone love's trials had run its course. I'll inform father, carve out my own path, join the brothers in business, travel, see new places, start new, bide the few years left before spinsterhood is the answer, maybe lower sights, take better aim, settle and lose to win the game in the end.'

That's what she did. Strong-headed she was. Made up her own mind. She traveled through the South with her older brothers to build marketing alliances with distributors of farm and workshop equipment to further develop the family's business. She worked smart and hard, sharing the marketing efforts with her brothers. But the South was a place of ease for the genteel and successful. She often enjoyed its leisure and took respite.

She arrived in Savannah, a short trip from Charleston, and took in the sights of the city. It was different than Charleston. Savannah had grown rapidly at the turn of the century and had more diverse architecture, monuments, statues, refined art, and shops along the riverside quay. There was more of an international flavor to the area with the busy seaport activity on the Savannah River. She had brought her dog and they enjoyed all the beautiful parks and historic squares there together.

She often turned off Bay Street and walked south to St. James Square on the corner of State Street. This was talked about as the most fashionable neighborhood in Savannah. There was a new mansion there she always stopped to admire. The old woman, matron of the estate, was often tending her vegetables

Rebecca

on the side yard or flowers in the front. The home was stately, beautiful and imposing.

The morning air was still cool. The flowers sparkled with the dew and soft sunlight rising toward its glorious mid-day brilliance. She took a few moments to compliment the woman on her beautiful Gloriosa daylilies, gardenias, petunias, and Floribunda wild roses. The woman took pride in her garden and appreciated Rebecca's admiration.

Each time, by habit, Rebecca strolled further south to the expansive Forsyth Park beyond the squares. The new fountain there was splendid and a wonder. The whole city was a place of peace and beauty - an urban city yes, but abundant in gentle earthly comforts.

On other occasions, she walked her dog in the park at the east end of Bay Street, looking at the sailing ships moving in and out of the port. She noticed a handsome man watching her from the sidewalk and smiled to herself. She was flattered that she still had the looks to turn heads. And she was amused and gratified - still confident of her charms. She thought, 'Now there's a man I'd like to meet. I mustn't approach him. That wouldn't be proper. I'll bet if I smile at him, he will come over here'. Sure enough, she did and he did.

Three - Josiah

*Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul*

- William Ernest Henley, *Invictus*, 1888

Josiah Ashford was born in 1829 on a plantation in Missouri. By that time most slaves had been born in America from slaves born here also. In most cases it had been generations since they were brought from Africa. The direct link with their heritage and culture had been severed.

His ancestors lived in the west African country of Gambia which was surrounded by the country of Senegal. Well before the 14th century, Muslim merchants had established

Josiah

commercial trade in slavery of its people through trans-Saharan routes. The Arab culture by the 14th century defined the area as the Mali Empire.

The first Europeans to arrive in the area were the Portuguese in the 15th century. They provided slaves captured in Gambia to Brazil. Dutch, French, German and British came there in the 17th century. Africa sold its people to Europe. Ultimately, the British established the trans-Atlantic slave triangle routes to the Caribbean and the British colonies in North America later in the 17th century. This enterprise lasted for two centuries.

For its indigenous African people, a human was defined by his will to survive. His courage was tested by his bravery to hunt and provide. The symbol of his strength was the heart of the lion. For the human spirit to be human, it must be free. This core belief of humanity would pass on through the centuries.

By the 19th century, America had grown from a country with slaves to become a slave country. By custom, they were given their names from their owners, from biblical or white family sources. Often they had no last names but would gradually be given, or adopt themselves, the family names of the slaveholders.

Josiah's grandfather had been brought from the Caribbean to a plantation in Virginia. He labored there as a tobacco planter under the task system. His son, Josiah's father, had been born there. Years later, Josiah's father was sold to a plantation owner in Missouri. When Josiah was born, the owner had named him Josiah from his recollection of the Old Testament in the Bible. He didn't remember that Josiah had been an ancient Hebrew king of Judah whose name meant "Jehovah saves".

Josiah

The agriculture on Missouri plantations was a mix of tobacco and hemp crops like the Upper South and short-staple cotton like the Deep South. The slave labor system was also a mix of the more benign task system and the harsher gang system. Josiah's father worked the task system and labored to produce tobacco. But life was not easy for the Negro slaves all the same. They found their solace in worship services on Sundays.

Josiah grew up attending the services which blended the hope for salvation of the Christian belief with the African traditions of the ancestors. The gospel songs they enthusiastically sang were unique Negro spirituals plaintively expressing their angst and sorrow. He sang *Swing low, sweet Chariot* which expressed the longing to be free, and *There is a Balm in Gilead* for the comfort that Jesus heals all who come to him. The congregation stayed after the service for the "ring shouts" which were a carryover tradition from African dance, very expressive, and animated. There was hand clapping, foot tapping and blissful moaning.

He had an insatiable curiosity about life and an African respect and reverence for the wisdom of elders. His father, however, was fully resigned to his station in life and did not look in a forward direction to change his fate as Josiah did. There wasn't much of substance or hope he could learn from the older man. So Josiah watched as time passed and his father grew older and remained resigned to the fate of the enslaved. Salvation did not come in this earthly life. He would have to wait for the next.

His father had long ago given up and, in a contradictory way of reason, inspired Josiah to hope and prepare for the future. When the time came that his father passed, he mourned his

Josiah

father's death but vowed that he would never give up hope or faith in life. His life would be better.

Josiah had strong faith in Divine Providence - that God had a plan He didn't reveal to man. There was a guiding force. The Lord required Josiah to relinquish his will to Him, while God gave him free will for good or ill. As an adult, he came to the view that he was the master of his fate. Free will permitted him to take charge of his life and strive for his own betterment. God's Providence would do what it would do.

Four - Josena

Josena was born in 1837 on the Savannah Oaks plantation. Her mother was Sarah, the feisty field hand that Marcus had bought at his first slave auction in Natchez. He hadn't recognized how much trouble she would be. He only saw her youth and strength. Sarah was one of those slaves that couldn't suppress their resentment. Her nature and spirit would not submit. She couldn't keep her feelings to herself. She always found ways to rebel and show her unwillingness to heal.

Marcus Taylor had begun his work developing his new plantation - an enterprise that was new to his experience. Sarah was a problem. At the beginning, he had left his new bride Rebecca behind in Charleston until Savannah Oaks was sufficiently ready for her to join him. Marcus was busy with all there was to do and lonely without her. As for Sarah, he decided to break her spirit and make her an example.

He stole into her cabin often at night and raped her repeatedly. In this way, he punished her behavior and enhanced his pleasure with his cruel dominance. Josena would be born as the outcome of his authority and his vile, cruel acts.

When she was born, he gave her the Dutch name Josena and favored her. Once she was weaned, he kept her in the plantation main house and raised her as the little mulatto girl of his affection. Everyone on the plantation had known the truth about this. Little needed to be spoken. It wasn't unusual.

Before, when Marcus had completed a rough house as a temporary measure, he had sent for Rebecca. She was immediately disappointed with what she saw. In a short time,

Josena

she heard gossip and understood what had happened with Sarah and why she was pregnant. There were few secrets at Savannah Oaks.

When Josena was born, Rebecca knew that this light skinned, yellow girl was the scion of her husband Marcus. She knew where Josena had come from. She seethed with anger, embarrassment, and jealousy and cruelly took out her hatred on little Josena. Confronted with this uncomfortable and disturbing truth every day, she intended to get back at Marcus with a vengeance for his acts of disloyalty. This would become a constant source of pain and their relationship would never be a loving one again as it had been in Savannah. Nevertheless, Josena grew up in the mansion.



When Marcus brought Josiah to the plantation, he quartered him temporarily with two other field hands in one of the slave cabins. The first morning he was to start to work in the cotton fields, overseer Benjamin brought him out to the yard in front of the main house to gather with the group of slaves. As a new arrival, his wrists and ankles had been shackled the night before. Everyone noticed.

Josena was on the veranda hanging up clothes and saw this new man right away. She noticed how strong and ruggedly handsome he was and the intelligent look about his face. She heard that his name was Josiah.

Once Josiah got over the initial shock and adjustment to his new surroundings - the harsher heat and humidity, the harder work - he noticed the young girl working around the main house as a servant. He heard her name was Josena. Everyone on the

Josena

plantation called her Josie. He noticed her watching him too and hoped for the chance to see her everyday as he happened by the mansion, or better still, had a carpentry task to do inside.

.....

Five - David

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

Theodore Roosevelt from the "The Man in the Arena" section of his speech at the Sorbonne in Paris, 1910

David Wexley was born fighting. His people had originated from the same place as Andrew Jackson's and Francis Marion's. They were born and raised in the Carolinas, he in Baltimore, Maryland. But their people came from Ulster in Northern Ireland. They were not Irish. They were the lowland Scottish troublemakers and cattle thieves King James VI sent to Ulster to rid his border of the problems they were causing him. They married with Irish and became the Ulster Scots. In America, they became the Scots-Irish.

They had a long history of hating the English but would pick a fight with anybody if the cause was right. In America, there

David

would come to be differing views of the Scots-Irish. For those who knew, there were two - the racist evil of the KKK founder, Nathan Bedford Forrest II, and the goodness of the tragic hero of freedom at Stirling Bridge, William Wallace. David would embody the second.

He was born in 1832 in Baltimore where his father's folks had settled. Many of the Scots-Irish had settled in the Ridgely's Delight neighborhood during the growing city's first period of expansion in the early 19th century. After they grew to prosperity, the Wexley family had built a grand row house there and moved in next to the many professional people who populated the area. It was a beautiful spot just a short walk to the harbor front, but away from its view.

His father Morgan had been born there also in 1802. Morgan made his money in banking as had his father before him. When David was two years old, his mother suddenly died from an unknown illness. Her heart had simply stopped beating. Morgan never remarried and did his best to raise David without a mother in the household. They were always close and discussed everything together. David revered and respected his father.

They attended Presbyterian church service together all of David's formative years. Morgan believed in helping the less fortunate and contributed generously to the church's missions. Their faith was kind but without a passion for God's direction or presence in their lives.

But for David there was always a void in his life. He lacked for no material comfort, or support from his father, but there was an emptiness. Morgan knew it but couldn't change it. He grieved

David

for their loss himself. There was a prevailing sadness that never went away.

As a young boy, David was a good student, attentive and eager to learn. He received a good grounding in the classics and shared his father's passion for history. Morgan discussed with him the significance of the long history of the European old world and its impact on the brief history of the new world here in America. They enjoyed their Socratic debates about the value of history for its ideas and meanings for mankind.

Morgan told him about witnessing the British naval attack on Baltimore harbor when he had been a young boy. The citizens of Baltimore watched the bombardment of the British ships and Ft. McHenry, back and forth, into the night. The British were defeated and the harbor was successfully defended. The flag still flew over the fort in the morning. It was named after James McHenry, a Scots-Irish immigrant and surgeon-soldier.

David grew up a restless boy who always longed for adventure. In his youth, he read all the great epic works - fiction and non-fiction - of action, adventure, exotic foreign places, the great military men and war. He was imaginative and lonely. He thought about becoming a writer, or a traveler or a soldier. He talked to his father about history and politics and would later become a journal writer. He was one of some young men who would leave the quiet life of the privileged father for life on his own terms. He wanted to strike out on his own and see the world. Morgan understood that David would not follow him in the banking business.

David

..... When he left Baltimore, David's father had bade him farewell, "Take care my son. I pray that you get through it and come back in one piece. Fair thee well."

"Thank you father. I love you. Be well."

For all he had learned and understood, not enough of love, he could not know the true source of his nature or where it would lead him. At its deepest root, from the long distant centuries past, and an ocean away, it was the spirit of Wallace - the warrior poet. It was the brilliant and beautiful sadness, so rarely understood. It was a view of injustice and the courage and conviction to fight against cruel authority. Awareness is not knowing. David was aware but would never know that was who he was.

Acknowledgments

All of us are the product of our times and experiences. We see the history we live in and that our lives have phases. We learn and grow under the watchful eyes of our parents and learn the facts and ideas of the world from our teachers. We learn the skills to make a living and provide for ourselves on our own. We marry, raise our children and watch them grow, and learn, and go out, and forward the same as we.

I am grateful to my parents, teachers, and my loving wives. I am proud of my children and the lives they have made for themselves. After seven decades of life, I thought it was time to put down the mantle, relish my remaining time, and enjoy the fruits and blessings life has brought me.

Sometimes life can take unexpected turns, open unexpected doors, and bring new self-discovery. It can happen at any time and surprise us. I have always gravitated toward younger people as my friends and co-workers, especially more so as the decades have rolled on. There are two who have inspired and have come along at this twilight juncture. There are two more who have cared and helped, one who stands close by and one appearing from the distant past.

Thank you Abraham, my African son, for teaching me what it means to be human. Thank you for your lessons of courage, resilience of the human spirit, perseverance and faith.

Thank you Jim, my passionate teacher. You are my professor, but I call you teacher for its higher meaning. I have known a lot of the facts for many years, but you have opened my eyes to the meanings. You taught me to feel history. Thank you for awakening my passion for learning and igniting my love for

history and writing. The ideas are planted now and need to grow, mature, and be harvested.

Thank you Nick, my literary and insightful son. You have been with me every step of the way; patiently reading it all, discussing it all, analyzing it all, and the sounding board for the important ideas.

Thank you Joan. As my old friend, so long far way, you have appeared back in my life when I needed you most. As a teacher of teachers, I couldn't have hoped for a better mentor, editor and partner. You believed. Your generous words were your gifts to me. I understand you now. Your words - words of writing, words of ideas, words of encouragement - were gifts of love and friendship. Your gifts made a poor book a good one. You brought me the last mile.

Author's Comments

Writing narrative is easy. It flows along like a river. Writing dialogue is more challenging. It requires knowing your characters intimately, how they think, and what they care about. The visuals of the settings and the story action attract the mind, but in the end, the characters capture the heart. It is more accurate to say that my characters revealed themselves to me, rather than that I created them. They often surprised me and I learned important things from them. For its writer, a book can be a catharsis, with teaching moments that test the truths and falsehoods of his beliefs. Hopefully, this will inform the reader in this same manner.

The storyline is centered around 1865. Some historical events were described with detail to build drama. Others were merely alluded to in passing since they would be familiar to readers. The story portrays the power of friendship in deeply troubled times. It is a blend of political, military and social histories and uses fictional characters to tell the story, with historical figures to provide the backdrop.

I visited Andersonville in 1987 and never forgot the sadness I felt there. The village and prison camp are an historic site. At present, the long rows of graves are arranged neatly and marked with aged alabaster stones spread across a beautiful green field for visitors to reflect upon. Many have names with dates of birth. The dates of their deaths were all within a year of each other.

The village and site are near Oglethorpe, Americus and Plains - the home of former President Jimmy Carter. His home is a modest ranch house and the old railroad station is a museum

for his early campaigning. The area is rural, very poor and desolate. It leaves a northerner with a feeling of what the old South must have been like after the Civil War.

There were three groups of people affected by the Civil War and reconstruction in the South. Like my character, David Wexley, I too have inexplicable feelings about the South; an inexplicable attraction that is appealing, melancholy and conflictive. Part of it is my Scots-Irish heritage and its manifestations in the poor whites of the South. Part of it is my bond with, and love for, my friend Abraham and his strength of character and great heart. Most of it is the lessons of humanity and inhumanity so vividly taught there.

I wanted to write about the old verities. I chose the context I understand best to illustrate them. This historical fictional work has depicted our American tragedy, during the most powerful period of our history, surmounting our greatest challenge, with triumph over horrific circumstances affecting the lives of all our American people. In the end, the book is about hope. All of life comes to that conclusion and finality.

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The poetry and tender heart of Rod McKuen, the courage and fortitude of Nelson Mandela, the grit and forceful character of Theodore Roosevelt

Fictional Characters

The Protagonists-

Josiah Ashford - slave and freedman, Savannah Oaks plantation

David Wexley - northern Union soldier from Baltimore

The Antagonists-

Marcus Taylor - Savannah Oaks plantation owner and slaveholder

John Manford - Drish plantation overseer

Supporting Cast in order of appearance-

Hendrick Taylor - Marcus's father

Jane Taylor - Marcus's mother

Marcy and Constance Taylor - Marcus's sisters
Benjamin - Plantation overseer, Savannah Oaks
Ned - Slave carpenter, Savannah Oaks plantation
Rebecca Stanley Taylor - Marcus's wife, Charleston southern
belle
William and Francis Stanley - Rebecca's brothers
Josena Taylor Ashford - Josiah's wife and a slave, Savannah
Oaks and Drish plantations
Morgan Wexley - David's father
Geoff Braxton - Master carpenter, Union soldier from
Baltimore
Patrick Allister - Union soldier from Massachusetts
Mary Custis Ashford - Josiah's 2nd wife
David Custis Ashford, Josena Custis Ashford - Josiah's
children
Jeremiah Johnston - Drifter, Union soldier from Buffalo
Bill Wallis - Drifter, Union soldier from Buffalo
Jim and Lucy Culpepper - Freeborn Ohio farmers
Estelle Culpepper - Daughter

Historical Characters

The Union-

U.S. Grant - Union Lieutenant General
George McClellan, Union Major General
Henry Halleck, Union Major General
Ambrose Burnside, Union Major General
William T. Sherman - Union Major General
Philip H. (Little Phil) Sheridan - Union General
George Meade, Union Major General

The Confederacy-

Robert E. Lee - Confederate Brigadier General
Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson - Confederate Lieutenant

General

A.P. Hill - Confederate Major, Brigadier and Lieutenant General

James Longstreet - Confederate Lieutenant General

P.G.T. Beauregard - Confederate General

J.E.B. (Beauty) Stuart - Confederate Major General

Albert Johnston - Confederate General

The Politicians-

Abraham Lincoln - U.S. President

John C. Calhoun - South Carolina U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senator, U.S. Secretary of War, U.S. Secretary of State, U.S. Vice President

John Crittenden - Kentucky Governor, U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senator, U.S. Attorney General

Stephen Douglas - Illinois U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senator

Henry Clay - Kentucky U.S. House of Representatives, Speaker, U.S. Secretary of State

The Slaveholders-

John Drish - Owner Drish plantation near Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Locations

Savannah, Georgia - place of Marcus Taylor's birth

Charleston, South Carolina - place of Rebecca Stanley's birth

Atlanta, Georgia - Confederate city destroyed by Sherman
Natchez, Mississippi - port near Savannah Oaks Plantation

Mobile, Alabama - Gulf port site of Union occupancy

Demopolis, Alabama - Freedmen's Bureau assistance center

Tuscaloosa, Alabama - John Drish Plantation

McComb, Mississippi - town developed near Savannah Oaks

Baltimore, Maryland - place of David Wexley's birth

Sharpsburg, Maryland - Battle of Antietam

The Wilderness, Virginia - Battle near Richmond

Richmond, Virginia - Capital of the Confederacy

Andersonville, Georgia - Prison camp for Union soldiers

Shiloh, Tennessee - Battle of Pittsburg Landing

Covington, Kentucky - city across Ohio river from Cincinnati

Cincinnati, Ohio - large city north of Ohio river

Hamilton, Ohio - small farm community near Cincinnati

Aspen, Colorado - silver mining town out west

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(end of sample)