

## XVII.

### *Poontang Schemin'*

On the first evening of this surprise visit, the Leone's sat down to a sumptuous feast accompanied by tall tales, boasting, gossip and riotous laughter. They set a long table outdoors covered with simple, checkered cloth. The Leone slave marms brought course after course of delicious food: smoked ham, greens, baked corn bread, lima beans, fried chicken, stalks of sugar cane, fresh peach pie.

Master Hank told ribald stories about his recent trip to New Orleans. For instance, was anyone aware that a certain house in that city held bawdy shows where the women flouted morality? Some of them even wore dresses with exposed shoulders and hems above the knee!

This shocking big city degeneracy caused Missus Marlene and Missus Aisleen to flash their eyes at Master Hank. There were children about!! Master Nate laughed uproariously nevertheless. He was thrilled to have his brother and his daughter at home. And, in truth, he'd been to that bawdy house, or several like it, while visiting New Orleans. He'd seen the rowdy women described, even tasted their fruits on occasion.

The laughter and conversation lasted well past the repast. The sun's last rays found the Leone slaves scrambling to clean the table, scrape food scraps for the dogs and wash the dishes in simple wooden pails. The family had set out candles to extend their sojourn into the evening, but the candles drew yellow flies and mosquitoes. Eventually these pests drove the Leone's from the yard. The young girls fled into the house first. Ben and Jake excused themselves and retired to the barn where they met up with Charlie. The Leone matrons stayed long enough to supervise the cleanup. Then they, too, escaped into the main house.

Charlie's mom Lizzie was part of the cleanup crew. Master Nate eyed her lasciviously. As the matrons left, Nate leaned over to his brother and whispered a suggestion.

"You reckon we might take a little trip down to the nigger quarters, for old time's sake?"

Hank laughed. "That's what I come for! You don't reckon I jist showed up 'cause I missed YOUR ugly mug!!"

Nate smiled widely. His younger brother was always a lot of fun. In fact, Hank had busted his first poontang with Lizzie as a teenager. Nate thought it would be fun to pair the two of them up again.

"I seen you eyeballin' Lizzie, there, during dinner. You reckon you can tame her? She ain't no little girl no more. She's a real filly, fine and strong."

“I can go for that, brother. But what I was hopin’ for was that yaller girl, Sandra. She’s young, but she’s ripe.”

Nate was taken aback.

“Ummmmm, no little brother. You don’t want her”.

He stumbled about for a plausible excuse.

“I think she’s got the taint.”

Hank said, “The TAINT? How d’you know?”

Nate replied, “She’s got all the symptoms. I think she got it from the nigger Johnny Boy, you know, the one I sold down the river. I wouldn’t touch her, if you know what I mean.”

Hank muttered, “The TAINT. Dang!! And she’s SO fine, too!! I can see that big old bushy pounce pokin’ out from her dress. I had my heart all set on that for tonite, son.”

Nate consoled him, “No, you don’t want that. If you don’t want Lizzie, there’s a few more that I can gitcha. Any one of ‘em’s good for a nice ride. You ‘bout ready to wander down?”

“Ain’t Lizzie Meshach’s woman?”

“Both Lizzie AND Meshach belong to ME. You let ME worry about Meshach. I’ll clear a path for you.”

The two brothers moved off into the gathering gloom without stopping to mention their destination.

Meanwhile, Ben and Jake were in the barn conspiring with Charlie.

“Charlie, I thought you said you were going to let me have a go at Ruthie? Fair’s fair, y’know. I give you some’a Annie,” offered Ben.

“I hope you don’t think I’m gon’ offer you some’a Jannie, boy,” countered Jake.

“Shut up, Jake. You ain’t got to be here.” Ben chastened.

Charlie ignored Jake’s comment. “She’ll be up here in a few. Y’know she’s gon’ bring Ike with her. They do everything together.”

“You reckon Ike’s tapping that ass?” Ben asked.

“I cain’t say. I just know I did it to her the other night and she seemed like she knowed what she was doin’. She seemed tolerable well acquainted with a good dick. I tole you what she did.”

“You tole me she wound you up like a peppermint stick!!”

“Yeh, thass what she did. Twisted me up like a corkscrew. And then, when I shot into her, she knotted up real tight and blowed up like a firecracker. Hopped around like a toad, I tell you. I told her I was gwine do it to her agin when I got mah stremff back.”

“She don’t know me and Jakie-boy are gon’ be here?”

“Nope. She thinks it’s just me and her. And Ike, I guess.”

“So Ike must be doin’ it to her.”

“I cain’t say. If you want me to send him home, I will.”

“You reckon he’ll tell?”

“Dat’s what I’m saying. Bof’ o’ ‘em’s tattletales.”

“Then why’d YOU do it to her?”

This question caught Charlie unawares. He couldn’t admit that he had something on Ruthie that would ensure her silence. That would lead to the next obvious question: “What might that be?” Then he’d be jammed up because he’d already claimed to be unaware of Ruthie and Ike’s assignations.

“I caught her stealin’ peaches,” he lied.

“She stole some-a OUR peaches?” Ben asked incredulously. This was an unfathomable sin.

Charlie immediately saw that he’d jumped from the frying pan into the fire. He tried to cover over his mistake.

“I ain’t see her steal the peach. I just see’d that she had one. Leastways she had the pit. I reckoned she’d ate the peach.”

“O pshaw. Anyone can pick up a pit from around here. There ain’t no shortage of ‘em. Did she tell you she stole the peach?”

“No. She said she found the pit. I told her I’d say she stole the peach if’n she wouldn’t give me some. She was so a’feared that I’d tell on her that she let me do it to her. She done tol’t on me so many times that she reckoned I WOULD tell on her just for spite.”

“Well, it’s gittin’ dark. I hope she hurries up.”

“Don’t worry. Yonder goes your Pa and Master Hank. I reckon they’s gwine down to the quarters. Like as not they’ll be stoppin’ by our place. They’ll send my dad and Ruthie and Ike off to the barn.”

“What about Mattie?”

“They don’t send Mattie anywhere. She’s a chile”.

“By jingies you dummy!! Didn’t you just say they’ll send ole Meshach up here? He’ll have your hide!!” Ben expostulated.

“My dad don’t come to the barn when your dad is down to the quarters. He just goes off somewhere. Disappears. No one knows where he goes. Comes back real late.”