

VOL 1 of THE FREEDOM CYCLE

DREAMS AND REALITIES

BASED ON A TRUE STORY

One man's dream exposes
nightmare realities

JONATHAN L. TRAPMAN



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BASED ON A TRUE STORY

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Dedicated to Captain A.H. Trapman and my
parents John and Lois Trapman, without whom
there would be no story.....
To all who search for truth, peace and unity

PRELUDE

The gathering storm turned the twilight on Lake Como gunmetal gray as lightning flashed, illuminating the regulars lined up along the Italian waterside bar. Its sharp light cut through the smoke-filled room as movement homewards beckoned for one of them.

A young waiter struggled outside to close down umbrellas no longer serving custom whilst hopelessly at the mercy of a wind whipping them to demonstrate the futility of human impudence against Nature's rule.

An impeccably dressed carabinieri lent against the bar, relishing a walk home, where he would cook his favorite dish, a pleasure reserved for his one day off. Before departing he threw down a final Cinzano, turned, adjusted his trench coat collar upwards and headed for the door.

"That boat outside is still drifting untethered," shouted a man entering, in a suit that had seen better days.

"Boat? What boat?" answered the Sicilian officer, adjusting the black cap neatly placed on his head.

The barman, aware of the lawman's imminent departure, hollered.

"You've got to be kidding. Didn't you notice it on the way in?"

The ill-suited man faced the policeman directly and glowered.

"Isn't this your department, Fantozzi, to solve mysteries around here?"

Fantozzi looked up grudgingly and replied.

"Tomorrow maybe, but tonight I've a date with spaghetti alla carbonara."

The barman shouted across the room.

"Aren't you in the slightest bit curious, Guido?"

Without turning, Guido blurted back.

"Loose boats are the boatman's problem," and skirted past the suit.

The man, facing the bar, addressed Fantozzi.

"Maybe in Palermo, but here we expect the carabinieri to do their job."

An awkward silence followed, quickly filled with the barman's attempt to lower the temperature.

"Go on Guido – just a quick look, keep everyone happy and then you're home."

He winked overtly at Fantozzi's questioner as Guido pulled the door open with unusual authority and twisted round to his interrogator's back and spat his response.

"In Palermo, sir, our boatmen tether their boats securely."

The door slammed shut behind him.

He made his way to the waterline, the wind whipping waves, spume spitting onto polished black shoes.

Retreating back a few paces he looked to left and right, making sure no one witnessed the pedantic process of taking each shoe and sock off in turn. Feet naked, trousers rolled up to avoid a soaking; he made his way gingerly towards the tossing skiff. Realizing he still wore his cap, he turned and threw it with precision over the shoes and socks behind him. Turning attention back to the craft in the water, he waded in.

The wind edged the boat closer. Confident of aim and balance, he raised both arms and lunged forward into the boat. The stiffening wind withdrew his target and Fantozzi fell headlong into the water. Spitting out cold, clear water, he scrambled towards its prow and clambered over.

Another flash illuminated the interior, revealing an Enfield revolver, lying on the bottom of the boat. He froze, looked left, right and left again catching the outlines of an empty wine bottle. Another longer flash exposed a handwritten note. As the boat bobbed up and down, he reached in, grabbed it and began to read.

A loud clap of thunder followed by peel over peel rolled across mountains and lake as stronger waves, indicated he could not expect to enjoy a quiet evening.

CHAPTER ONE

Leaning back in a rounded rosewood chair, one arm resting nonchalantly on the long oak table beside him, the correspondent was bugged by a niggling fact refusing to clarify. Having completed the work envisioned as his get out of penury ticket, he stared up at the gilded golden ceiling above. Its blue sky and cotton bud clouds teased his imagination transport itself beyond the raging storm lashing Arcadian steps outside leading to the New York Public Library he presently occupied. He struggled to stay present.

Ferret-like referencing, stitching and compiling of facts, compelling words, chapters and information had brought this definitive book on dogs to life. A rain-soaked April evening in 1928 became a potential prelude to a future free from the leaden weight of scraping by. It heralded a pursuit of happiness craved, for so long. Well over two years expended on this project, had

enabled him to uncover family links to the Carolinas, which had expanded his knowledge of the family's past and encouraged him trace roots and origins. This parallel research developing his own family tree fitted comfortably into travels back and forth to Europe researching dogs and humans alike. Yet as he sat there something was missing, something so important he readily threw away the opportunity to daydream.

What was it, he asked himself. What have I missed in what's written and researched?

He read and reread the manuscript, scanning notes on the family; over and over perusing each paragraph. Time passed, so much so he forgot it altogether. All he knew for certain was the missing link lay in the family research.

That bugged him.

"Excuse me sir, I apologize for disturbing you but we are now closing."

The correspondent, deeply absorbed, did not register the senior librarian's voice. Raising his voice slightly the librarian tried again.

"Sir, we're closing and I must ask you to pack your things and leave."

He placed a gentle hand on the writer's shoulder who jumped, alarmed at the invasion.

"I beg you sir, we need to close, and may I ask you quickly collect your research and leave?"

Brought into the present with a jolt, the man realized his absorption and obliviousness to the librarian.

"But I must find what's missing, I must, it's here somewhere – or more to the point it's not..."

"Sir, you can return tomorrow at seven when we open and continue. As a concession you may leave all these references in place and I shall personally see to it that nothing is disturbed."

The correspondent became agitated.

"It has to be here, it has to be..."

"I'm sure it is," the kindly librarian attempted soothing the troubled researcher's plight, "but have you not got family to go back to and spend the evening, take supper with?"

Like a bombshell, the researcher felt his mind explode realizing what was missing. He turned, stood up, took the shoulders of the head librarian in both hands, one on each, and shook them with joy.

"My God, thank you sir, thank you."

The other man, stunned at the sudden gesture, the intimate action and

complete ignorance of what induced it, allowed the elated man, still holding his shoulders, to continue.

“You see it was just that, you hit it on the head. You helped me find the missing piece.”

Unaware of the shock the librarian now registered, Captain Albert Henry William Trapman, ex military, erstwhile foreign war correspondent for the London Telegraph, seeker after fortunes and dreamer of better things to come, let slip his hands from the librarian’s shoulders and took the man’s left hand in both of his and shook it vigorously.

“Thank you so much, sir, for letting slip the magic word family.

Funnily, I have no family in this great city with whom I can share an evening meal. I have even less money to even purchase one, but all these are mere incidentals compared with the gift you’ve just given me and the knowledge my family from the deep south hold an important and missing piece of my puzzle.”

The librarian remained stunned, perplexed and riveted to this extraordinary fellow who, before him, was as radiant as he was loud in these hallowed halls of silence. Under ordinary circumstances, such an outburst would never have been permitted. However the truth was that they were the only two left in the building, so he felt less impelled to quieten his visitor down. In confusion as much as shock, he switched off his automatic internal responder.

“You see it’s the family I’ve missed, it’s the family that’s the key and it’s my family I must pursue,” explained the effulgent researcher.

Letting slip the handshake, he beamed wildly at the books and shelves around him, lifting arms outstretched in grateful supplication to one and all. At the same time honoring the librarian and all the ghosts who had begun to drift into place as the living withdrew. Hastily gathering what seemed important, along with the finished manuscript he looked triumphantly to the heavens and gilded golden ceiling above.

“Thank God for dogs and family,” Captain Trapman cried.

The librarian remained stunned.

“Thank you for allowing this carnage to remain as is, sir and I’ll return at seven. For now I must allow you to close shop and be about your business.”

The librarian was not only bemused, mystified and thoroughly relieved as he watched the Englishman skip, like a child, out of sight but more importantly glad he could now close the doors and his evening on one of the strangest encounters he had witnessed in all his years in the New York Public Library.

He leaned over scanned the contents of research left with his photographic memory, remembering each piece and placement of the referenced detritus. He prided himself on attention to detail and was certain that in spite of the craziness he had just witnessed, he would honor his word that all would be exactly in place and ready for the Captain returning in the morning.

Noting it all he turned to go.

Across the library, Albert Trapman reappeared.

The librarian's heart sunk.

"By the way, I never introduced myself, though we've spent so many months together across these tables. I'm Captain Albert Trapman and you are?"

"George Evans, Captain," he mumbled.

"Excellent, George, excellent and please, call me 'Toto.'"

George Evans, senior librarian at the New York Public Library had no time to query the man's sobriquet. He did what he would automatically do in times of mental confusion. He took off his spectacles, looked at them quizzically and began cleaning the lenses with a finely pressed silk handkerchief. He noted he might ask that question at a later date.

Captain Trapman meanwhile disappeared into the raging storm outside.

CHAPTER TWO

A black-swathed sea of figures moved almost motionless with inner turmoil battling outward restraint.

A golden casket scythed through this ocean of grief, towards a candlelit trestle before the altar in the Anglican church. Nestled behind the metropolitan bustle describing London's Knightsbridge Kensington borders, the church became a fitting place of somber ceremony for one of its own.

A chill November day in 1932 and a sharp shower became the backdrop for the grief within, where an elderly woman, her veil covering deeply lined and saddened features, self-consciously endeavored to check sobbing sadness, while a tenor launched divinely inspired resonance throughout the church, to accompany the playing out of a final adieu of a life lost before its time.

No-one noticed the entrance of a tall, fleet-footed young man creep through the rear porch entrance, remove a rough tweed cap and seek the refuge of a back pew. Kneeling down, he silently paid his respects. The chasm

of vacant pews between him and the tightly packed congregation up front described perfectly the divide between his own island of sorrow and the rest.

His thoughts raced across a landscape of shared memories, times together, the bond of brotherhood. The young man's aloneness swept into a receptacle of sorrow, vibrating deep within. His soul consumed by an other-worldly presence accepted an unknown force holding him, soothing him as an inner voice softly bid him still.

All is very, very well, it coaxed.

He recalled many walks both had taken across gorse-strewn headlands and silver strands of sand. Talks of ancestors escaping deprivation and poverty, seeking freedom and release in the promise, dreams and riches lying across the ocean. The times his companion shared tales of family whose journey took them half way across the world, supporting revolution and change.

Smokey Greene, riveted to the pew, felt himself part of something he cared little for, yet shared with his now departed friend. Twenty-three years separated them, now inconsequential within what seemed too brief a sum of years. Waving aside a torrent of unspoken questions tearing round his youthful head, Smokey did what he always did, left it to brew waiting for answers to appear in their own good time. If nothing else he was a patient soul, an essential quality for an emissary to come. Painful experience and hard-learned truths would be the scholarship he must experience on his journey to mystic sage.

For now, loss absorbed was shared with a tribe of unknown relatives, friends, compatriots and colleagues, all touched in their own way by the departed's eventful and unique existence.

Smokey silently thanked him for each moment of their time together. Vowing to be true to his memory, he swore to uphold his promise given.

As gratitude and love consumed sorrow, a subtle expansion and entrance of surprising joy entered.

He took this moment as cue to withdraw as quietly as he had entered.

CHAPTER THREE

The storm lashing the streets of New York of an April night four years earlier had absolutely no effect on Toto's spirits. He was as high as a kite with exhilaration even prohibition could not bring down to earth.

His enthusiasm drove him on as he crossed Bryant Park heading towards Broadway and West 44th. The park almost deserted save for a handful of passers by, invited intemperate weather and the wraiths of haunted souls frequenting this potter's field. Toto was having none of it. He may have felt the presence of the displaced, yet tonight's mission was to get to the Hotel Astor, hoping to cadge supper off one of his journalist buddies. Wrapped in a trusty mackintosh, he raised its collar against the weather and marched forward.

Rain pelted down unremittingly; incapable of diminishing the enthusiasm felt having finished his book. He was joyful for George, his friend and ally at the library, for giving him the key he believed would be far bigger, far more important than any downpour. Where it led at that precise moment remained a complete mystery. Appreciation for the librarian's kick-start to discover more with even greater impetus sheltered him from the stormiest external influences.

Present penury had for now been assuaged by intuition. If life had taught him anything, it was to trust that. Tonight was about hitting home runs.

From an early age it had been an experiential truth. It was responsible for his nickname, Toto.

His mind floated back to that sunny morning at Cavendish, the English country house in Suffolk, where he had spent his early years. A far cry from the stormy New York parkland he presently traipsed across, yet no less tangible than the cutting bite of the rain across his face.

He saw himself, the young four year old, in his bedroom on the first floor. Talking, as he so often did, to Toto, his invisible friend. That morning, while in deep discourse, his father, fresh home from another merchant business trip, hid himself on the landing outside the lad's bedroom, wishing to surprise his son. Aware of his father's game, he carried on as if oblivious.

His invisible Self assured Albert that as long as he always remembered their bond and its presence, the boy would never be alone. Albert's father – privy only to his son's side of the conversation – was shocked when the boy turned and spoke.

“Papa, you can come in now, he's gone away again.”

His father William slowly crept into the room to witness the boy standing in the middle, in pajamas and a smile to warm the coldest heart.

All these years later Toto still felt the warmth and thrill of rushing into his father's arms. How he landed in a tumbledown sort of way into long legs. He was a giant of a father in all senses of the word.

“How is my young warrior then?” William asked, as he whisked Albert into strong arms.

The young lad looked piercingly into his father’s eyes, enjoying the dizzy heights experienced by adults.

“Papa, you’re home, tell me about the Indians and buccaneers again.”

His father hugged him, realizing there was no escape from recounting oft told tales. Adult Toto remembered the pleasure his father took in retelling a rich repository of adventures the boy absorbed like a sponge. His adult self appreciated the imagination it cultivated and how it had helped direct him to land in New York City, albeit strapped for cash, yet using skills creatively and professionally as a journalist.

He chuckled to himself, in spite of the rain working hard to bring him back to the present remaining focused on the childhood memory.

“Firstly Albert, you’ve not introduced me to your friend.”

Albert struggled in his father’s arms, faking escape.

“Not so easy young man till we’ve been introduced.”

William had often heard Albert in conversation with his invisible friend, always accepting this as part of the process growing up for a child.

“Papa, Toto’s gone. He’ll not be back yet.”

“Toto?”

“Yes Toto, Papa.”

“So where did this friend Toto come from, Albert?”

Settling down on the floor, he looked his son in the eye and asked again.

“So where did this friend Toto come from, Albert?”

“He’s me.”

“You?” William replied, with some consternation.

“Toto says that,” the boy replied.

“Toto says what, that he’s you?”

“Yes, he’s my friend.”

Intrigued at the boy’s precociousness, his father continued.

“Is this a real friend or just one of your imaginary ones?”

“Real, of course. None are imaginary,” Albert responded slightly hurt at the insinuation.

“So can I meet him, Albert?”

“No, he’s gone.”

“So we’ll never meet him, your mother and I.”

Adult Toto remembered the concern he felt at this question and how he had paused long and hard searching for a suitable way to describe the

conundrum. As a child it had been so clear yet for adults so mysterious. All these years later he still felt proud of his reply.

“He’s me, so you’ve met him.”

His father was staggered at his son’s logical jump. A process, he considered, way beyond tender years. Nonetheless he entertained the boy’s imagination.

“So perhaps we should be calling you Toto then.”

“Can do.”

“Are you saying Albert you’d like to be called Toto from now on?”

“Can do,” the child repeated again.

His father was nonplussed. Wishing to ease his incredulity the boy added.

“Mama knows Toto.”

“Mama has met him has she?”

“Yes,” mother Eliza confirmed, timing her entrance to perfection.

“So he’s introduced you to Toto then?”

“Well not exactly, he’s just gone away according to Albert,” her husband replied, greatly confused.

Eliza’s exquisite knack at extricating her husband from the masculine mire of incomprehension was what adult Toto had adored about her, alongside her ability to resolve the irresolvable. He always felt it would have stood her in good stead for the diplomatic corps.

“Why don’t we call Albert Toto from now on. That makes Toto happy, Albert happy and you and I can go downstairs and take breakfast.”

With that wisdom and diplomacy, from that day on everyone in his family and those considered a close friend called Albert Trapman, Toto.

Even today in his fifties, Toto recognized his intuitive self as the very same Toto of his youth. Never parted, always there, despite so many years forgetful of this constant companionship. Another thing he had utterly forgotten was the gas lamp designating the edge of this side of Bryant Park and the beginning of Sixth Avenue. Not even a refined intuition would have prevented the painful meeting of skull and metal. If nothing else it brought Toto back into the present swiftly yet more painfully than he would have wished.

“Bugger, what the...” he cried out to a deserted space of darkness littered with encroaching street lighting, swiftly cupping head in hands, unaware of the exact nature his inattention had procured.

“Look where you’re going, mister,” cried an unsympathetic voice from the gloom.

His foolishness felt compounded just long enough for the rain to become irritating. He marched briskly off to the Astor and a free meal.

Rounding the corner to the hotel, the opportunity of a free meal presented itself stepping out of a sleek Rolls-Royce Phantom accompanied by an editorial counterpart from the New York Times he knew well. Adolph Ochs, renowned publisher of what was now considered one of the best and most respected newspapers in the country, shuffled toward the entrance, followed by Jerry Graves, his file editor.

Toto manufactured the accident.

Swiftly adjusting his wet dog look with help from one of the hotel's windows, he dispensed mackintosh onto his arm and bumped lightly into Graves.

"Most terribly sorry," Toto began.

The commotion had Ochs turn, immediately recognizing its cause.

"The British may rule the waves but their navigation leaves much to be desired, especially from an Army man" he chortled.

In spite of his seventy years, the magnate still retained the sense of humor Toto always relished. Graves immediately ceded to his boss's welcome of the encounter and brushed himself down, patting Toto on the shoulder.

"Good to bump into you," he exclaimed with unnatural irony.

All three entered the hotel, Toto sweeping in on their coat tails.

"Albert, what a pleasure and since we're in casual mode I insist you join us in The Grill Room for supper."

Fait accompli, thought Toto, accepting the invite. Ochs kept the conversation going.

"About that slim volume of yours. Is it ready to be featured in our review?"

Toto, eager to share events, diplomatically suggested he bring them up to speed at the table.

Three quarter way through the meal, with Toto sharing the completion of his book and delivering his take on the supernatural qualities he found dogs possessed, his peripheral vision caught a familiar face making its way along the center aisle. He focused on his tale, as the others craned their necks to catch his dramatic delivery.

"You see I believe a dog is able to sense those who carry bad character and those who are friendly, when it comes to us humans. We all get vetted through some sense or other when meeting these highly intelligent beings."

"Certainly need my own dog to sift unreliable sources across the news desk," quipped Graves.

"You'd need a wolfhound," Ochs responded without a pause, then chided.

"Jerry, let Captain Trapman finish this fascinating insight, please."

Picking up his thread, Toto caught the approaching figure closing in. He paused, looked up, as the elderly stranger wearily reached their table. Toto's suspicions confirmed, he stood up abruptly and extended his hand. The others turned round.

The stranger ignored the hand, while the others immediately recognized his identity.

"Nikola, Toto," the researcher greeted.

"You think I've lost my marbles? You of all people should know I never touch the unwashed, never know where it's been, so drop that hand," Nikola Tesla brusquely corrected the researcher.

He swiftly scanned the rest of the table.

"So what, you now scheming with scribbling wolves?"

Toto trying hard to cover the inventor's directness made his introduction.

"Gentlemen, I introduce the great Nikola Tesla."

The others, hands well out of sight raised themselves slightly from their chairs.

"Good evening," they both chirped in unison.

Ochs assured Toto the visitor was a well-known quantity.

Tesla gave them glancing acknowledgement and directed himself at Toto.

"These news hounds continue to under-report my genius."

Graves shifted uncomfortably in his chair as Ochs, perfectly used to this behavior from the inventor stood.

"Mister Tesla, I am well aware of both your inventions and idiosyncrasies and congratulate you on the former. Would you care to join us?"

"Dine with those supporting my enemies. Thank you but never."

"Please Nikola, do join us," Toto implored.

"You know me better than that. I'll leave you to keep these hounds under control. You know much about the breed."

Toto laughed nervously, more out of embarrassment for Tesla's huge foot he felt had been placed in the way of potential support, than his own embarrassment.

"At least your man Van Anda had passion for the sciences and a kind pen towards my work, while you lick the boots of plutocrats who make sure my truths never truly get reported," Tesla rebuked the newspaper magnet and editor.

At that moment a waitress arrived at the table and addressed Tesla.

"Can I serve you sir, or are you with these gentlemen?"

Tesla turned letting his bad temper land on the unsuspecting employee.

“Yes, you can – go home and feed your brats.”

The reply hit her hard. She struggled visibly to hold back tears retreating swiftly. They all felt it. Tesla remained oblivious to it, including his manner.

“This place is infested with vultures and cockroaches. Two have just tried stealing my latest patent over dinner and you press hounds support their criminality. Toto, visit me. I’m off.”

Tesla stormed towards the exit.

The researcher turned towards his fellow diners beginning an apology.

“No need Captain. The fellow has a reputation to uphold. Remember, we’re press and that comes dressed automatically with a hard nose!” Ochs laughed heartily and Toto responded, excusing himself at the same time.

Graves turned to his boss.

“Do you suppose we’ve a poodle in the Captain?”

On the street outside Toto caught up with Tesla, by now getting a good soaking as the rain poured down. The researcher opened his umbrella shielding the inventor from the downpour.

“Why were you so bad tempered back there, I’ve never seen you so furious.”

“They’re all sluts to the whores of banking and wealth. None of them have an idea how energy works, how the very fabric of the universe pours through each crevice of time and space,” the inventor spluttered, deeply hurt.

“You need these guys on your side Nikola, you need the American people to know your true worth. Why go out of your way to aggravate them?”

“On my side?” Tesla shot back. “Just like those two trying to rip off my patents over a trout and vegetables?”

“I’d no idea. How was I to know?”

“There’s much you don’t know, dear friend. That will be your downfall. The rats infesting this ship have too much invested in it to jump.”

Tesla felt himself shrink under the endless battering he had endured. Toto targeted reassurance.

“There’s money here. Investment capital, we can find it together,” he pleaded.

Tesla looked at him, at his incessant hope and forced an honest smile.

“Your father was a good man, kind, as you are. He connected me with good support. When we three met those years ago things were different. Today greed, selfish interest and the rape of Earth’s natural resources have changed all that.”

“Show them another way with your...”

“What use are eyes to blind minds and oil barons with no desire to comprehend free energy?”

“Carnegie, Rockefeller, Morgan, Vanderbilt, Warburg. They crow about philanthropy,” Toto urged.

“Philanthropy for them is self serving. The inventor is merely another cow to be milked. To spend useless hours bemoaning these truths only diverts me from the absolute necessity to harness all I channel. I must pass this to those coming after. Why waste precious time with back biting bankers, backers and vested interests. They’ll never know the thrill coursing through the human heart as the inventor’s creation rises from the ether, unfolding form and life. Such emotions make a man forget food, sleep, friends, love, everything. That’s why I leave funding up to George Scherff and Robert Johnson.”

“I remember Johnson but George, I’ve not met.”

The two of them had arrived at a junction. The umbrella having done its job and the rain stopped, Toto closed it. Hardly a soul was visible on the sidewalk.

Tesla turned to Toto.

“Then come round to my laboratory and be introduced. It’s just around the corner from the library.”

“I will do,” he reassured the inventor.

“One more thing,” the old man cut in. “Gold’s not in dollars or bars, it’s not in the glory of power, these things mere selfish acquisitions of men seeing riches for themselves, blind to the needs and dispossession of their fellow man. They’re the curse on humanity, leeches of all that’s wonderful, glorious and magnificent about the human in the search for self.”

Toto pondered his friend’s words as Tesla parted and crossed the street. Stopping suddenly midway, he turned and shouted back to Toto.

“Remember, progress can only start in the mind, not the laboratory.”

A passing carriage cut him from view as Toto was left scratching his head. Looking back to find Tesla, he was confronted by an empty street. He shrugged and made for home.

CHAPTER FOUR

A commotion in the street below awoke Toto from a deep sleep. Collecting his papers he was back at the Library minutes before its doors opened.

As good as his word Toto's new friend George Evans had allowed the papers left strewn over the table on the far corner of the Main Reading Room, to be undisturbed.

He settled down to paw through notes and copious references. Despite every note and penciled diagrammatic, he knew precisely where to start.

With the help of one of the staff he began looking through files on Southern families he knew were direct descendants of William and Eliza, his mother and father. He specifically searched references to his forebear John Moore. Perhaps it was something to do with the wealth this man had accumulated, more specifically, that Moore's father had accrued that helped focus Toto's research.

Might some good fortune trickle down through the ages and land me in clover? he wondered.

He wished.

John Moore's father had arrived in the Carolinas in 1699 and with considerable wealth. He had purchased over 3,000 acres of plantation, turning it to cotton and sugar cane, a crop with which his brother had made a fortune in Barbados. Having lost his first wife Margaret, Moore remarried Rachel, who bore him a son, John on July 4th, 1726.

As Toto looked at all the papers alluding to this young John Moore it became apparent the man was highly skilled and becoming wealthier by the day, marking himself truly to be his father's son. He noted wryly the date of birth, the fourth of July, merely because of its import in the national psyche. Through shrewd deals, climbing the social ladder, clever negotiations and contacts, by 1775 the now resourceful Moore had become a member of the Provisional Congress in Charleston. This all enthralled Toto. That they were of similar age, separated by centuries, made him warm to the congressman. Out of the blue he asked the assistant whether records of wills of congressional members of other states were held there in the library.

The assistant hurried off to scroll through private files, not normally available to the general public. On his return he informed Toto there were such records.

Together they scoured the retrieved files. As he turned the page, the assistant's eye caught a side entry on a copy of Moore's will.

"What's that?" Toto asked.

"It's a reference to the Library of Congress in Washington, which seems a bit strange."

"Why so?"

"Because normally this detail would be held locally."

Toto was intrigued.

“Especially in light of being the will of an ordinary, though rich, citizen of the South. Why do you think they’d annotate the will as it’s strange a copy of his will would be here in the North, even though he was a member of the Carolina Congress?”

“Precisely because he was a Congressional member, sir, as I said,” the clerk replied courteously.

The young clerk, assiduously polite and as modestly dressed as his meager wages ensured, took a well-used kerchief from his jacket pocket and wiped his brow. The woolen brown jacket, worn elbows and scuffed collar, had the air of a hand-me-down from a family member no longer in need. Conscious of its provenance and with the awkwardness of someone dressing more from necessity than effect, he answered Toto.

“I’m not experienced in these things but a similar anomaly a few months back turned out to be governmental, filed under matters of state in the Library.”

“That’s definitely caught my interest. Perhaps being a member of Congress, state-wise, meant he was tied to national government affairs.”

“That would be strange even if it was the case as it was rare even then. We’re looking at the gentleman’s last will and testament, which is more curious. Why would documentation associated to this Mister Moore be annotated to his will and found also in National archives?”

“Perhaps...” Toto began.

The assistant broke in and repeated.

“Perhaps if it had monetary implications attached to it pertaining a national issue.”

“Of course, you’re on the money there,” Toto answered. “It’d mean there was an interest to his surviving relatives he wanted taken into consideration, perhaps.”

Toto began to get excited. Could this be the missing piece he had felt was not present the night before? Was this perhaps part of a legacy money trail to hidden riches?

He had an idea.

“Is it possible seeing if this annotation helps us further?” he asked the assistant, pointing to a numbered reference.

The other mused.

“It may give us a clue. Let me check with Mister Evans.”

Yes, thought Toto, *George Evans his new friend was sure to know.*

Before too long the young assistant came scurrying back in as silent a

manner as to not break the library's sacred silence code. Toto chuckled to himself as he saw the librarian as excited as he was in discovering the outcome. Breathless, from restraint, he leaned over Toto to deliver the verdict in a conspiratorial whisper.

"It seems the annotation refers quite correctly to state matters whose reference denotes it being recorded in the Library of Congress. It does also mean, due to the alphanumeric string, the period in question would have been 1778 or 1779 and filed under loans."

"Fascinating," Toto responded as he struggled to contain his rising heartbeat.

More than fascinating but keep cool, he told himself.

"The bad news is," the librarian added.

Toto focused entirely on the next words he was to utter.

"The bad news is you're going to have to go to Washington to see the detailed entries there."

If that was the bad news then roll on the good news, he thought.

"I'll go straight away," he informed the assistant and without further ado and a lucky break at Penn Station he was on his way to the capital before lunch.

The Library of Congress had always been a magnificent piece of architecture for him and Toto was no stranger to its hallowed halls and contents. Another visit there he considered a pleasure more than a burden of duty. The fact it could hold family secrets up to now under wraps, was all the more reason for hightailing it over to Washington.

Armed with the references, he was escorted to the basement and encountered aisle upon aisle of stored archives. He stood waiting for the steward to retrieve two large ledgers that arrived and were duly opened.

Impatient, he watched as each page was folded back until the relevant page was reached. It revealed statutes on a War Loans ledger issued and entered on the order of General George Washington on behalf of the Continental Independent Army. The assistant read it aloud:

A loan in the amounts of cash and other loans, to the amount of fourteen thousand pounds in gold deposited on the days of February seventeenth, March third, July twenty first and September eleventh in the year seventeen hundred and seventy eight by John Moore II of Moorelands and St. Thomas Parish in the State of South Carolina. Subsequently issued through indents said loans herein specified are by order of Congress, to be considered war loans and repaid with interest until so settled, at six percent per annum...

Some notes pertaining to Revolutionary claims were also found but Toto

knew he had what he came for.

He calculated that – one, there was decent money owed the Moore family; two, he felt his fortunes changing before his very eyes and thirdly, it was incumbent on him to track down and realize these ‘Moore Millions’ awaiting him from his philanthropic forebear.

His whole life had been worth every cent of failure, dead end, calamity, pitfall and disastrous relationship he had journeyed. The bitter pill of divorce from Isabella, his Italian wife, who birthed his estranged son Adrian, sweetened.

His mind raced ahead, calculating with utterly insufficient information, the effect of such a windfall. To his credit he checked his mental engine and turned to the library clerk.

“This entry implies a considerable amount to be due to whoever made claim on this IOU, would it not?”

“I’m badly qualified to ascertain that. However notes here do allude to there being reference of this in both the House of Representatives Library and in the House Manuscripts Library in the Capitol itself. To my knowledge it means a qualified authenticity to this claim has been lodged.”

“In your opinion, for someone to proceed further would it be best to approach Congress itself?”

“Yes sir, that’s an appropriate step to initiate, however the originals are lodged in Charleston, therefore best get hold of those from the Loan Division of the State of South Carolina. This seal copied here dates them as November 15, 1829.”

Having instructed copies be sent to him at the Alpha Delta Club in New York, Toto knew Charleston to be the next stop. Toto became a man on a mission. That mission he saw as resolving, in as short order as possible, any poor economic state he presently was forced to cultivate.

He made his way back to the metropolis determined to pay his nephew Willy a long overdue visit.

Wilhelm von Meister, elder son of Toto’s sister Leila, was soon to become an important cog in a wheel of fortune Toto saw turning to his advantage.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Trapman family arrived in England in the winter of 1860. The trip was instigated after William Trapman had married his young

bride Eliza Rose. His suggestion they honeymoon in Europe reflected the troubled political impasse in America, where Confederate and Union camps momentarily paused for breath in an ever widening rift that would soon, he adjudged, make life unacceptable for him and his new wife.

As the Prussian Consul in Charleston, South Carolina at that time, his movements like many Southerners became the focus of intense government interest. Most everyone suspected of alliances with European interests were carefully monitored, especially as uncertainty around whether European associations favored the Confederate cause more than impartiality, made those such as the Trapmans prime suspects for collusion. Anyone sailing from the States to Europe at that time would have been interpreted as being in the pay of the South and therefore spies.

With great haste and as much covert movement as they could muster, William and Eliza boarded an English ship transporting them on the honeymoon cruise to England.

As newly-weds and in spite of a ten year gap between them, William's besotted affections for his bride cast diplomatic decorum to the four winds, helped by the warm winter breeze greeting them as they stepped aboard the English vessel in Charleston harbor.

The captain, pleased to afford the couple his boat as vessel for their maritime crossing, made sure they were given the best cabin available.

The acting consul had been particularly careful to arrange the drawing down of all his funds. Various property and lands, more difficult to arrange disposal of at short notice, were entrusted to reliable contacts with orders to liquidate them quietly, out of sight of government interest.

His contacts within the Southern Confederacy and their secretive European networks, meant he also carried documents that, if discovered would have certainly proved to Union eyes collusion with the Confederate cause. Securing these and large assets he carried on him, the couple settled for the honeymoon crossing.

Washington, alerted to the consul's plans ordered a detachment of government officers race to Charleston and attempt boarding the vessel as it made for the open ocean.

Successfully boarding the vessel before it hit full ocean they made it clear the couple masquerading as newly weds were enemy agents.

The captain, no less directly asserted his command declaring as a foreign interest, under a foreign flag and in international waters, they had no jurisdiction. Demanding anything other than leaving the vessel would be considered

a violation of international and maritime law. He did, in the spirit of cooperation allow a cursory search.

It was then William discovered hidden qualities his young wife possessed. He witnessed not only her mettle but an undisclosed talent for theatre and masquerade. In later years these traits would bless their offspring with character, creativity and the love of the arts.

For now they would save their skin.

Prior to boarding William had handed Eliza certain papers relating to family and business, some sensitive enough to become a problem if discovered.

Eliza, in her role of spy tucked the apportioned documents discreetly about her person, hidden in voluminous folds of the travelling dress she wore.

As the officers made towards her and her husband, she struck a pose of confident comfort and a display of coquettish frivolity, making full use of her voluptuous nineteen-year-old assets. Settled into a deckchair, with accomplished nonchalance, she placed her feet upon a hassock in front of her. Within this innocent piece of furniture she had earlier placed the collected documents she was unable to hide about her person.

The officers, with considerable embarrassment, tried to carry out their duties. She turned on her charms and sweet approach.

Their embarrassment became their weakest link, provided the captain with a perfect excuse to call a halt to the inspection and allowed crew and passengers witness the government officers leaving the boat empty handed.

So as not to invite further unwelcome interest in his vessel or charges, he ordered full sail for Liverpool and a course etching a future of promise, joy and the complete unknown for both Eliza and William Trapman.

CHAPTER SIX

New York in the late spring of 1928 showed every sign of visualizing the American people's belief they never had it so good. Money was everywhere, overt ostentation and rampant celebration washing away austerities of the previous decade scarred by the bloodiest self-inflicted conflict mankind had experienced. Captain Trapman had left his mark on that conflict by not only having successfully survived the mass slaughter, an achievement in itself, but also, through his love of things technological.

His own small mark in history came through mobilizing and proving the effectiveness of bicycles as a potent war asset – noted favorably in the corridors of power.

He reflected on the bicycle's usefulness as he pedaled happily down Broadway to a rendezvous with his cousin Willy von Meister, whose acuity in things financial allowed him to not only settle in New York City but to grow a highly successful business as merchant in an eclectic field of trade.

Willy's mother, Leila, at the turn of the century had married Wilhelm von Meister, close friend and confidante to the Kaiser and a respected military man in his own right.

The love and affection his mother inculcated in the Royal Court of the Kaiser, through her particular beauty, diplomatic graces and to say nothing of her consummate musical talent on piano and guitar, allowed young Willy to surround himself with individuals and groups of such wealth, creativity and connectivity, he came to learn valuable lessons in dealing money, trade and negotiations on both a political and cultural level, something rarely afforded others his age. For Leila, whose own family benefited from a position both as outsiders in a strict Victorian social structure and acceptance into such circles by merit of not being British, such navigation became second nature.

Following the defeat of the German Empire in World War One, Germany's economic collapse and economy brought hyperinflation, chaos and confusion to the country, young Willy saw fit to ask his parents leave to emigrate to the States. Leila, in her wisdom, saw an opportunity she was loathe to let her son miss out on. So Willy arrived in New York in the early months of 1923. When visiting in 1925, his parents witnessed a son making the very most of a decade, literally bursting at the seams with wealth, growth and the precise opposite to what had taken hold back home.

It was this ongoing savvy business acumen that today Toto found irresistible and mesmerizing as he entered his nephew's offices. Plush furnishings, heavy oak and cherry desks for each of the three secretaries he employed, surprised Toto. He was amazed at the treatment of opulence Willy afforded these workers. However it did not end there. The two salesmen Willy engaged, far older than their boss, had separate offices and each of these finely individualized to each one's taste. Willy knew the secret to keeping good men. It was to make their life not only comfortable but also replete with aspiration. So his commitment to bonuses was, if nothing else, thorough. As for his own space, he chose to share it with his naval architect whose sole task was to create and construct vessels to expand the young man's trading

base not only across the States but also back into Europe and his roots.

As Toto was ushered into Willy's office, Stafford Jennings, the firm's naval architect excused himself allowing the two men time alone. Noticing his hasty retreat Toto exclaimed.

"Willy, please don't feel Mister Jennings needs to leave on my account."

"Indeed not Captain Trapman," the architect assured the new arrival, "I know from old you two fellows get more done without the added distractions of set squares, rulers and cussing in the background."

"Thank you once again Stafford for your consideration, you're well aware you are considered family under all circumstances," Willy reminded him.

"I know Willy and most appreciate it, however I'm duty bound, with Rose coming into town, to avail my wallet of its regular sortie administering womanly desires in Bloomingdales."

"Never starve a woman her desires," Toto quipped as Jennings took his leave.

Willy beckoned Toto onto a comfortable leather settee across from his own desk, enjoying his uncle's humor.

"So what do I owe the pleasure of your visit, are the smoky rooms of the press club too choked for you?"

"I have to admit I've spent little time in those steamy rumor mills. I came to bring the news I've finished the book," he announced proudly.

"Well done old man, that's an achievement."

"Less of the old," Toto chided, knowing full well the thirty-three year age difference between them merited the remark.

"I'd have you know," he retorted, "I was in Baghdad before you were even a thought in your dad's bag."

The two men broke into fits of laughter. Family they may have been. Great friends they certainly were.

"So, how can I help you and what's the real reason for your visit today?"

Toto envied and respected in equal measure the sharpness of his nephew's perception. At six foot seven literally he looked up to the young man. Willy's business sense, earned Toto's admiration and hopes to emulate the Young Turk. For now he brought his nephew up to date on the Washington visit, the appearance of a debt owed and asked for advice and assistance to further these ends.

"Absolutely, I've some fine attorneys who'll know just the right people to call upon when the time's right. That's a given. As for information, seems you need to get down to Charleston and sniff around the state legislature."

Toto agreed.

“You’re going to need a fair bit of proof one way or another to waken the dormant debt if that’s what it turns out to be,” his nephew noted astutely.

“I’m going to need all my skills,” Toto replied confidently. “The loan’s marked down at six percent compound a year until repayment. I’m no math scholar but it could end up to be a tidy sum over a hundred and fifty years.”

“Well, certainly worth looking into, that’s for sure. However several bridges need crossing before we can reach a meaningful figure,” Willy responded with caution.

“Your mother assured me she could rally support as and when in Europe with her aristocratic and political connections” Toto informed him.

“I’ve several influential folk here very willing to repay not inconsiderable help I’ve rendered them over the years.”

Willy smiled reassuringly. Toto was visibly relieved at how things were developing.

He leaned forward.

“Sun Tzu’s advice in *The Art of War: Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win.*”

“Well said, forewarned is forearmed. I imagine you’re going to need a not inconsiderable stipend to further research and presuming your embarrassment to ask, here’s \$300 to get the ball rolling.”

He pushed the notes across the table.

“Willy that’s incredibly generous.

“Take all the time you need. Crucial days ahead and we need to gather the right information. Thankfully you’re just the man for the job.” Willy replied.

Toto admired his nephew, in spite of his comparative youth. He was up to speed on everything most his age hardly gave a fig for. Toto appreciated the business acumen and prescience his nephew exuded. For Willy payback was making Toto as comfortable as possible in his endeavors, whilst at the same time remaining truly fascinated at his uncle’s life experiences. He had a soft spot for an heroic uncle. He was indebted also to the Trapman clan for many connections afforded on his arrival. Without William Trapman’s extensive range of business connections in New York and throughout the Eastern and Mid States, Willy would have had to use even more of his business acumen to get him to his present ranking in the business hierarchy of this extraordinary metropolis.

Toto for his part thanked his father for inviting him, as a seventeenth birthday treat, on one of his several business trips as a merchant, to the States. It sparked an enduring love and admiration for the New World, its potential, possibility and dreams to exploit. All in all he was grateful for the

close family bonds, trust and fraternity existing throughout this extended family, something both parents had lived passionately since their own migration from these shores to Europe.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The maiden voyage of the S.S. Lucania in September 1893 from Liverpool to New York carried several noteworthy elements with it including a boatload of economic aristocrats plying their pleasure and business from one side of the ocean to the other in a style parallel to the ostentation and luxury the Cunard Line built into each new and better craft. The macrocosm of life, in this age of Victorian industrial wealth, was mirrored on board through absolute separation in class of travel, as well as purpose. Last ditch attempts breaking free of poverty in Europe, in pursuit of a New World of golden dreams, burned brightly in the consciousness of emigrants holed up in third and fourth class, as much as the diamonds and gold adorning wrists, necks and foreheads of self-made or inherited wealth frequented first class.

Within the bowels of the vessel, an attempt at a new Atlantic speed record held no interest for a newly signed on stoker. He cared nothing for accolades. Having left the shores of the Black Sea and a meaningless life of poverty, raw sweat and toil was the currency he traded to deliver him into the arms of riches and sweet revenge. Many levels above a birthday promise of passage, gifted by his father would change a young man's life forever. That both young men were oblivious to their intertwined destinies was an even greater gift for both of them.

William Trapman and son Toto watched as porters of the Line whisked away their luggage.

Toto's eyes were on stalks, blown away with the commotion, pomp and mayhem making the occasion so memorable.

"I'm so happy to be here," he voiced.

Hardly had the words left his mouth than a gentleman in a fine dark suit with dark blue epaulets hung with discreet gold tassels, gold buttoned jacket and white-gloved hands made his way to their side. With well-practised precision he removed his right hand glove and greeted the merchant businessman.

"A pleasure to have you with us today, Mister Trapman. May I invite you and your..."

"My son Albert Henry. He's traveling with me this time," William replied completing the steward's sentence.

The steward smiled and graciously accepting William's generous tone.

Turning to Toto he offered a finely manicured hand to the young man.

Toto flushed at the importance of it all.

The head steward's sole charge was the well-being of all first class passengers. As an astute and observant employee he took a keen interest, as well as pride, in recognizing and supplying every febrile need to his well-heeled charges. Shaking the young man's hand he could tell he was someone who got his hands dirty rather than dilettante youth. He noted it as commendable.

"Master Albert, a pleasure to meet you."

"My son's a keen follower of new technology, I'm sure you'll allow him a glimpse of the new engine."

"It'll be my pleasure to escort Master Albert on a comprehensive tour of the Lucania."

Below them, an impressive display of horse-drawn carriages, steam transport omnibuses, all kinds of trades vehicles making last minute drops of provisions and essentials, hawkers and dockside traders eager to relieve travelers of their funds bartered on. Others managed last minute purchases for steerage that wheedled their way to a new life.

A massed brass band entertained their imminent departure.

"Look at that party weaving its way through the melee," William pointed out as Toto squinted against the morning sun.

A colorful display of activity caused by the passage of a young man, near his age, sporting a brilliant white travel suit. Alongside him were servants, handlers and four struggling porters, almost crushed under the weight of their charges. Atop the luggage was the largest gift-wrapped box Toto had ever seen.

"What have they got there?"

"Well if I know Neily, it'll be something quite unusual," his father replied.

"You know who it is?" Toto queried, amazed at the breadth of his father's connectivity.

"Oh most certainly, the one and only young Cornelius Vanderbilt, inveterate traveler and collector of rare and mysterious artefacts. No doubt just returned from Paris. I cannot imagine what he found there but I'm sure we'll soon find out. He's not much older than you and if memory serves me he's on his way back to Yale."

"How do you know that?"

"Toto, my connections in Paris warned me this extravert member of a great family was due to be returning on the same ship, so it'll certainly make for an eventful journey. I'll introduce you when things settle down."

Toto was thrilled. He could not believe his luck all these incredible people, events and adventures just stacked up keeping him utterly occupied for the

duration of the trip.

What must New York be like if all these characters are swelling the decks to get there?

His imagination was ever ready to over deliver.

“When can we meet him?” Toto demanded.

“In good time young man.”

The ship having sailed found both William and Toto comfortably settled in the first class smoking room surrounded by the opulent splendor of an Elizabethan paneled theme featuring a first ever addition on any liner – an open wood-burning fireplace.

They relaxed near the hearth, alongside others mingling, getting used to the comforts the vessel offered. Suddenly the doors opposite swung open and in walked Vanderbilt, alongside a most attractive young woman hanging on his arm. As he sauntered up the room between rows of chairs and tables, his eye automatically fell on the fireplace.

William caught it and stood up. Toto followed suit.

“What a seriously pleasant surprise to have you join us Neily,” he acknowledged, as Vanderbilt approached.

Mimicking an aristocratic English accent, Vanderbilt replied.

“My dear Trapman how splendid to see you. Let me introduce my friend, Grace Graham Wilson,” the young socialite replied, carefully stepping sideways to fully present his female companion.

Toto was in awe. William, more accustomed to these niceties was politeness itself.

“Miss Wilson, an honor and gracious gift to have travel with us. I marveled at the beauty of our conveyance to New York, yet that pales against the beauty in front of me.”

Vanderbilt smiled broadly and turned to address Grace.

“William, my dear, comes from a long line of Prussians brought up to recognize only the most beautiful aspects of life and the first to acknowledge them.”

“I see that.” Grace responded with a wicked smile, addressing William directly.

She found it hard to contain her amusement.

“So William, my dear new Prussian friend, I’m honored to be likened to an ocean liner, albeit an even more beautiful spectacle.”

Toto flushed with embarrassment for his father as much as for his own shock of interpretation.

His father however delicately approached Grace, took her hand and bowed.

“The architecture of each could not be more different, yet beauty is in the eye of the beholder and yours blows everything else out of the water.

Grace loved the flattery.

“I’m happy,” William continued, “to see young Neily has understood an unalienable truth. There’s so much more to wealth than mere dollars and gold and I rejoice he’s found a veritable Eldorado in you.”

Turning to Vanderbilt, she remarked.

“Neily, you’re blessed with wonderful friends.”

She turned to include Toto in her remark making him blush again.

William invited Vanderbilt to join them.

“Now tell us about the other jewels you found in Paris.”

“Be aware our little excursion was undercover and secret,” the young socialite disclosed.

William smiled.

“When have you ever managed to keep anything undercover, with the press you carry and as for secrets you well know that is our business!”

Vanderbilt ushered Grace toward a chair Toto discreetly pulled forward. He looked up at William’s son and offered his hand.

“Happy to introduce myself: Cornelius Vanderbilt – well Neily to my friends – and since I consider your father one please follow suit.”

Toto smiled and shook hands. His desire to equally impress caught him out as he replied.

“A friendship gladly received and reciprocated. Albert Henry William Trapman, though my friends, at least my family that is, call me Toto. An honor to make your acquaintance, Mister Vanderbilt, I mean Neily,” he stammered.

“The pleasure’s all mine, Albert.”

“Please, call me Toto, since we’re now friends,” the young man insisted.

“Toto it is then.”

Something in Toto told him this would become someone he could definitely get on very well with. The same devil may care attitude around elite circles.

“How remiss,” Neily interjected. “May I introduce you to Grace.”

Grace, already sitting, leaned forward in the chair as Toto took a step towards her. He bowed gracefully and put out his hand. She offered hers and receiving it, he lent forward and lightly kissed it. He learned fast from his father’s chivalry.

She withdrew it with decorum as a slight grunt emanated from his father’s chair behind. He straightened immediately. Neily brokered the moment.

“William, your son has caught the Prussian gallantry we hear so much about. Are you certain he’s no Hussar?”

They all laughed uproariously.

“You must have picked up a lot more than sand from our French holidays, young man.” William quipped.

As lunch was called, Vanderbilt ordered champagne for all and announced his birthday would be celebrated on board. Toto beamed.

“It’s mine as well,” he cried.

“Well that seals the bond,” Neily chimed.

Toto got his trip round the ship. The purser escorting him below revealed the throbbing heart to the Line’s latest technology.

Men sweated away with shovels, spanners, mopping rags and brawn to maintain the ship at high speed and serious progress. Toto felt embarrassed passing lines of stokers shoveling feverishly. The contrast between the Englishman’s suit and naked torsos and belted pants heightened his awkwardness.

Had it not been for the inattention of one stoker whose shovel load lost balance and rhythm, the young visitor would have passed unnoticed. The ensuing collision of passenger and worker drew anger from the purser, embarrassment from Toto and an unwanted incident for the Line.

“Damned inexperience,” the foreman cried out in German as he weighed in the debacle. “Get off and put your back into work.”

The young German-speaking stoker looked at the foreman with such disdain and hatred; Toto felt moved to apologize. He quickly dispelled it, seeing the hatred shot at him from the man.

“It’s my fault I’m sure,” he pleaded in his best German.

His fence mending carried little weight.

“No sir, these people come here to work for free passage. There’s no blame on your part.”

Turning to the stoker he shouted to pull himself together and continue.

It made Toto again most uncomfortable to see cold clear, vengeful spite shining through the stoker’s eyes. He shivered and moved on as quickly as possible.

The laborer resumed his toil, cursing the weakness the wealthy carried, vowing his life one day would show the true power money and its force could wield.

Preparing for the Vanderbilt birthday bash, William looked into the mirror of the closet adjoining their cabin. He caught himself smiling at the thought

of how proud his own father would have been witnessing his grandson.

Toto poked his head around the door, as his fingers wrestled hopelessly with his wing collar.

“Why are these things so dashed difficult to manipulate,” he sighed as his frustration got the better of him. “I never seem to get the hang of studs, collar and shirt all lining up.”

“Lack of a good private school education, young man.” William grinned looking at the helpless youth, reveling in his toil and trouble.

“Look Papa, it’s too cruel to just stand there and laugh at my plight. Surely you could show me how I can do this once and for all.”

“You reminded me of a similar time I had with Grandpa.”

“So you know how humiliating it is to be so at sea with this.”

Toto caught his own pun and burst into laughter. William joined him.

“If that’s how the evening starts, I reckon we’re in for a good night,” Toto replied.

Straightening his son’s collar, adjusting the shirt, he stepped back and admired his offspring.

“I’m very proud of you ,” he began, meeting his son’s gaze, “and, like your mother, we’ve always held the highest hopes for you. I have no favorites among you all. It’s that I believe you, of all our children, have a special calling and gift.”

Toto stood silently before his father.

“I want to present something to you, to keep, carry and when blessed with your own, pass on. It’s something handed down to me by my father and by his before him.”

Toto felt honored and allowed his father continue.

“Our family as representatives of the Prussian people, in the capacity of consul elect have honored that privilege through bearing this token. It’s a mark of our responsibility to not only Prussians but also the world. A symbolic representation marking our endeavors toward the goal of harmony, peace and understanding of all peoples, cultures and races. As ambassadors for our emperor, we represent equally an ambassadorship of a greater empire, humanity. It’s why, as a family, we’re blessed to live beyond constraints, norms and expectations so many societies impose. We’re outsiders. We enjoy freedom many are utterly unaware of, yet equally crave. It’s the freedom of spirit beyond religious constraints, the freedom developed through understanding we’re all ultimately one stock, one body, one being.”

Toto allowed the words to flow through him as if they were his very life-blood. He accepted them as parched earth accepts a longed for shower in the

heat of summer. It triggered the realization as to why he chose to be here. His whole body radiated happiness.

Turning to the desk beside him, William opened a small oak draw under the left side of the table and drew out a long, thin box, plain and undistinguished. Turning back, he flicked a small clasp and proceeded to lift the lid. Toto remained spellbound. His curiosity wanted to lean over and see behind the lid hiding the contents. His father caught his expectation. Looking down on the symbol of continuity, he slowly picked it up between his thumb and forefinger. Lifting it beyond the lid, Toto caught sight of a small rounded silver coin held within a thin silver design, connected to a stubby, silken ribbon whose colors had faded with age. The heirloom folded into William's upturned palm as he presented it to his son. Toto noticed the silver medallion had an engraved symbol etched into it with words embossed around it.

He lifted it from his father's palm and looked closer. Around the edge of the coin was an inscription in Latin. The design holding all this comprised three interlaced and pointed ovals. The symmetry of the object fascinated Toto.

"It's beautiful father, a perfect design."

The young man examined the piece and turned it gently in his palm.

"I can just about make out the inscription," he turned it again to catch the light and began to read.

Fax mentis incendium gloriae lux ergo liber sum.

Toto lifted the piece and looked across to his father.

"Within the passion of glory lies the torch of mind whose light is freedom."

Toto was in awe at the inscription. His father marveled at the young man's classical prowess. Stepping forward he took his upturned hand in his. It would be many years before Toto became aware of the true significance of the inscription.

"What's it really mean, father?"

"That, young man is something you'll come to learn one day as I did and those that came before us have done. I'll offer you this much – once you come to understand the meaning of the triquetra, which is the symbol holding the inscription, its meaning reveals itself."

In his impatient youthful exuberance Toto wanted a fuller explanation, yet knew his father well enough to know that would not happen, so he did the next best thing.

He guessed.

"All for one and one for all?"

William laughed.

“Too much Dumas methinks. But let’s say you’re on your way, as we should be, if we’re to get to the party on time.”

The following morning on the quayside of New York harbor, a boatload of newly acquainted friends, hardened travelers and excited seekers after a new life made their separate ways having disembarked. No one noticed, from a lower deck exit, the hurried escape of a young stoker relinquishing his labors of seaboard sweat. He carried a small suitcase, wore a presentable suit and polished leather shoes. Neither would they have associated or credited him with being party to having delivered them all there in the fastest crossing time the Line succeeded in achieving.

He in turn cared nothing, if that was the case. His sights were set on a determined path to wealth, at whatever cost and an end to generational poverty born into back in Europe. Sweeping past an extravagant river of fur, fuss and frivolity he vowed vengeance and his own forced entry into this elite.

Toto, distracted by a welcoming brass band’s rendition of Sousa’s Liberty Bell, turned. He recognized the features of the stoker he had bumped into in the engine room and felt a similar shiver to one experienced back in Liverpool catching sight of two shady disappearing men in black on the quayside. The lively march diverted him dwelling on the connection, as the stoker disappeared into a crowded quay.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Armed with funds from Willy, Toto landed himself in Charleston on what turned out to be a relatively comfortable summer’s day more akin to temperate English weather than the southern states.

His mission: to seek out records of the Moore family and the provenance of the loans John Moore looked to have made to George Washington and the Revolutionary Army whilst holed up at Valley Forge. The assistant at the Library of Congress had suggested he try the Loan Division for the appropriate papers. That was a good move in a day or two but for now he wanted to contact Mabel Webber who he had corresponded with.

Mabel Webber was the much-respected editoress of the South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine. Her research abilities were legendary and as Secretary to the South Carolina Historical Society, Toto knew he could fast track a lot of investigation with such a professional.

It was not long before he found himself at the door of 88 Beaufain Street in Charleston. The impressive two storey twenty-year-old house exuded Southern chic. As a townhouse Toto loved its feel and if he could have transported it back to England and a favorite plot he had earmarked beside the Thames, then he would be a happy man. But for now his knock on the door brought Miss Webber, a studious yet kindly looking lady to the door.

“Captain Trapman, how nice to meet you after all our correspondence. Do come in. I’ve set up some tea on the veranda,” she informed him at the same time as beckoning him through a narrow corridor towards the side room, opening onto a veranda, looking over the garden.

“I’ve done some research as you instructed and have come up with some very interesting information that we can discuss over a cup of tea.”

Toto felt at home here, away from the bustle of the New York sidewalks and frenetic business centers.

“How very thoughtful of you to help my acclimatization into the South with some English tea, Miss Webber.”

“Please call me Mabel, Captain and though tea is the preferred brew of you English folk, we here in the South throw it back as men do their whiskey!”

Toto smiled.

“Such a pleasure to share with someone as knowledgeable as yourself Albert and I know we’ll have great fun working on this together.”

“We shall,” Toto agreed. “What are your views, if any, on the whereabouts of indents existing on the loan I wrote you about? The one John Moore made to the Revolutionary Army.”

“Ah, yes. Most interesting that and what a benevolent man your forebear was. How timely to get the whole movement out of what would have become certain defeat from lack of funds and a demoralized army. I personally hold this whole period dear to my heart, so when you furnished me with all the details, I can tell you I took an inordinate time away from other matters to look into it more.”

Toto deeply impressed with her devotion, felt guilt over her time and ensuing costs.

“Now I don’t want you worrying about my time. This is such a pleasure for me I can promise you whatever time it takes.”

“That’s most generous. You have my gratitude.” Toto acknowledged, relieved there would be no extra expenses.

“Well I’ve not been wholly truthful with you, Albert as I’ve been helped quite considerably by someone you’d love to meet.”

Toto’s sensors pricked up.

Interesting, he noted.

Thoughts of an aged professor of history filled his mind, along the librarian model he worked with in New York. Hopefully he would turn out less two dimensional than the assistants, dusting off a few volumes for him, over the last months.

“Luckily, just before you arrived, my helper popped in and needed to study some reference material I have. Let me get you two together. Stay seated, I’ll only be a moment.”

Toto imagined how with all this help he could be done here in Charleston in a couple of days. Eager as he was to advance his investigations, he wondered how he could further this resource.

Looking across the lawn he daydreamed possibilities. Marveling at the lush richness around the house, the ample wildlife and bird song filling the warm morning air, an intrepid mouse boldly shot across the lawn on a mission to a far bush, for cover and rest. He enjoyed the peace emanating from this spot and felt he could have been back at Riverdene, his brother Louis’ country house in England. It was all a long way away. Mabel’s caring nature reminded him of mother Eliza and made him homesick. The intrepid rodent’s progress brought him back, yet in no way prepared him for what happened next.

A shrill song from a bird in a nearby tree drew his attention. He searched, discovered a loggerhead shrike, resplendent in black, white and brown plumage, celebrating another excellent day in song. The bird song stopped, the creature’s head tilted as its interest fell on the mouse’s progress. Toto observed. The bird flew off the branch and in no time at all swooped down on the unsuspecting rodent, violently spearing it with its beak, collecting it in its claws and flying off. The mouse knew nothing as the shrike knew breakfast had been served. Toto shocked at the violence he witnessed, felt blood run from his face. In spite of witnessing atrocities far greater in the trenches during the war, something about this cruelty behind beauty triggered trepidation and horror. How was it such frailty and beauty could turn to such violence.....

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan L. Trapman has written since aged 9. His first novel *The Bull* got fair marks at school and marked him out as an author in need of improvement.

Defying his early detractors he began his professional career as a photojournalist, working for some of the top titles in Fleet Street at the time. Amongst them the *London Times*, *Daily Express* and a very short and boring stint with the *Sun* newspaper. Having been exposed to the amount of propaganda and half truths demanded from photo/journalists in the '70s and 80s, he decided his soul was worth more than shekels earned from the news rooms of corporate cronyism.

Marking his further career becoming one of the industry's foremost photographers he enjoyed getting to know the world, its peoples and a far wider vision of life on earth on others' behalf and at others' expense.

He has appeared on TV and radio including the BBC, France Inter and online radio. He has been invited to speak at creative and literary conferences across the globe.

In early 2012, in partnership with his wife, he accomplished several translations of foreign writers. The most enduring, endearing and ground breaking has been the first ever, in nearly 1000 years, translation of 10th century Sufi founder and mystic saint **Hoja Ahmed Yassawi's** *Divani Hikmet (Divine Wisdom)* poetry and sacred verse.

His magnum opus **The Freedom Cycle** is an ambitious seven book project, **Dreams and Realities** being the first, is currently evolving to publish over the next few years.

Jonathan presently lives in Somerset, UK.

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