

# **GILLY, JAZZ & JIMBO**

Charles Coiro

© Copyright Charles Coiro 2012

This edition is available free of charge from [www.obooko.com](http://www.obooko.com).  
Although you do not have to pay for this digital copy, the book nevertheless  
remains protected by international Copyright law and must not be offered  
for sale in digital or printed form.

## CHAPTER 1

### The Sideman

He had done the entire route, Chicago, Kansas City, New York, New Orleans and here in Louisiana where he was going to stay. Those other cities were too cold in the winter and at his age, his arthritis really stiffened his fingers too much. How was he going to finger those notes? Besides, he had everything he needed here – even the occasional “prosti” when he felt the urge. Everybody knew him, some from those days when after a gig, some of the good musicians stayed on and played just for each other but mostly for themselves. You could let yourself go, try out new ideas, sounds and riffs that you didn’t blow when there was an audience listening.

He was recalling, those times in his past more and more these days when he felt that he was in the middle of things; the middle, no, the top! Everything was smooth then – you stayed up late, popped a “benny”, and forgot you were tired; and the sounds, round and fat, that came; those sounds carried you out of your body into some mysterious world where you and you alone existed. It was pure gold, and all yours.

Remembering how he started as a sideman; the clarinet and tenor sax were his horns and he had started working on flute. There were times when some special sound effects were needed and the high, driving tones of the flute were just the answer. Besides, the more instruments you played, the more money you could command. But his real love was for the tenor sax.

You could blow your horn at some chick, sitting with her dude and know that she was listening to you. You didn’t need words, just sounds and the way you wafted the music in her direction, and there were so many sounds you could make: soft dulcet tones, almost breathless sounds, sounds that told the person you were playing to her; there were sounds of yearning, sounds of softness and tenderness and also, sounds which gave you presence and control. You could tell that the chick was going to be yours. If not that night, then another when she would come alone or with some girlfriend. Man, things were so good!

His name was Gilly Polito. The Gilly was a made up from the first letters of his formal, given name; Gilberto Ignazio Luigi, each name the patronymic inheritance from his grandfathers’ given name. He had three, his grandfather on his mother’s side having fallen off his donkey driven cart was found dead at the bottom of the cliff which bordered the road. His grandmother, given her very young age, (no one was even sure that the marriage was consummated) was allowed to remarry and so he had three grandfathers that were part of his background.

Gilly Polito was rather short. He tried to make up for his short stature by combing his wavy hair at high as he could; it really didn’t work but he felt he was doing something to rectify the condition. His nose was rather beak-like and gave him a sort of predators look. His clothes, which he wore loose on his bony structure made him look more like a scarecrow than a man. It was, however,

the look he wanted since he wanted to look like the starved musician who gave up everything including food to prove that his dedication to music was all encompassing; everything for art. His skin color was on the dark side, (roots from his ancestors in Italy) and he took advantage of the dark complexion by wearing light colors so that there was more of a contrast. He also felt that he stood out more, sort of like being on center stage. Gilly also thought of himself as sort of a ladies' man, hence his desire to show himself off.

Gilly's parents came from a small town near Salerno, Italy and were part of the wave of immigrants that settled in America. In 1888 the family landed in New York City but soon moved west to St .Louis, Missouri where some other relatives had settled previously. In 1900, Gilly was born to the new arrivals and the family settled down to start their lives as Americans.

His father worked on a river barge plying trade all along the Mississippi River. When he was home, he told stories of all the cities and towns he had visited, he told about the negroes working on the docks, about the Indians that were still around and most of all, the things you could buy and see. He especially talked about New Orleans and the new music, so that the imagined city was like a beacon to Gilly's imagination. One day, Gilly told himself, I'm going to ride a barge down the Mississippi and see New Orleans for myself and hear some of that music.

Gilly had always loved music, from the brass bands that played for the church and its feast days to the songs his father would sing to himself when he was especially happy. Those sounds of the past still reverberated in his ears; the deep voice of the tuba, the piercing notes of the trumpets, the almost human sounds of the clarinets, the rich, sonorous sounds of the trombones and of course, the pulsing, driving rhythms of the drums. He remembered how his whole body reacted as though charged with electricity, full of energy and excitement and there never seemed to be enough music for him.

When he was 11 years old, an uncle who had played for the church in the small town in Italy, gave him his old clarinet and told him he would give him some lessons if he would be sure to practice. His uncle said that he did not want to waste his time unless Gilly was serious about practicing. It was figured that with the playing of the clarinet, Gilly would be able to make a little side money playing at weddings or funerals . His playing of the clarinet was never supposed to replace the need for a good paying job though; just a little something to augment his income on weekends.

Gilly was delighted! His uncle told him of the importance of developing a "good tone"; essentially, deriving the best sound that the instrument could give and also how he had to develop something called the "embouchure", a French word meaning the way one was to apply one's lips and mouth to the mouthpiece of the instrument. Thus, by developing the muscles of the face near the mouth, one could develop a "good tone". Gilly's uncle told him that the clarinet was a very flexible instrument; about how its range was about 3 ½ octaves which made it a really versatile instrument for playing all kinds music; even the Jazz Gilly's father talked about.

With diligence, and great enthusiasm on the part of Gilly, along with his uncle's teaching, Gilly learned not only how to master the instrument but also about musical theory.

When he was 15 years old, and after 4 years of intensive study with his uncle, Gilly had the opportunity to visit New Orleans. Voicing his desire to bring his clarinet with him, his uncle checked his enthusiasm and told him to just bring his mouthpiece. If there is an opportunity to play, you will be able to borrow a musician's instrument but using your own mouthpiece and reed. Your mouthpiece and reed are adjusted to your "embouchure", with the stiffness of the reed already fitted to your comfort. This carrying of the mouthpiece was something that never left Gilly, he always carried his mouthpiece with him and even today, now, Gilly had his mouthpiece in his pocket ready if needed, to play an instrument.

That small, 4" piece of the tenor saxophone with its reed made sounds that you controlled with the muscles of your mouth. The sounds brought the instrument to life but it was not the soul of the instrument. You, with your sense of feeling, your awareness of the possibilities of the instrument and an awareness of your own limitations made you either unique or at one with everyone else; you were the soul of the instrument. It was really the feeling you put into the instrument which made what you played something that was only you.

## **CHAPTER 2**

As it happened, it was a hot, sticky May morning, more like an unbearable August morning as only New Orleans can be in August when Gilly was sitting on his favorite bench, doing nothing in particular. This year had been a really strange one with temperatures way higher than normal. He was recalling in his daydreams the times past when he was part of New Orleans; part of all that was happening.

He was seated in front of a small park which had since decayed and returned into the original marshy land it was before the city fathers had decided to make the park a landmark for the city government building which faced it. The rain of the previous evening, with its heavy atmosphere caused a miasmatic mist to float gently over the park and was an effective cover for the mosquitoes. The insects were more than abundant and with them, the frogs whose diet consisted mostly of the blood sucking creatures. However, the insects won out and the park was unbearable from dusk to dawn. Cattails still dominated vast patches of the "park" and the young boys made daily visits to gather the "punks"; the chocolate brown seed pods of the cattails, so that they could dry them out and later use the smoke of the lighted "punks" to drive the mosquitoes away. The fragrance of the

smoky seed pods was not unpleasant and together with the more acrid smell of the citronella oil which many people used gave a distinctive flavor to the “park”. It was the fragrance Gilly remembered most about New Orleans.

### CHAPTER 3

Marcel Gimbeaux Cosnard, had awakened early that morning and had wandered about wanting to get the feel of New Orleans before the masses of people had started on their daily tasks of making a living selling vegetables, fish, crafted souvenirs and whatever else they could sell and buy. Marcel Gimbeaux Cosnard was known to his friends as Gimbeau (now pronounced Jimbo). At first, his friends thought the name sounded really Southern and they were delighted at the sound. So, Gimbeau, (Jimbo) became the name he was known by. Jimbo was a fair skinned young boy whose silky straight hair was always covering his eye and which caused him to develop the habit of tossing his head to remove the hair from his sight. He was small in stature and tended to be on the pudgy side. As a young boy, he kept himself immaculately clean since he never wanted to play in any roughhouse games with his friends. He preferred to stand on the sideline and watch. He felt that he need not participate in the actual game to be part of the group. So when games were decided on, his friends simply ignored him as part of the activities. It worked well since he was never any good at the games and so everyone felt at ease on his being just an observer. His blue eyes, behind the glasses he always had to wear gave his skin a rather transparent, fragile look.

He grew up as a rather introspective boy, always wanting to be with others and always a follower rather than a leader. His strength was focused on his imagination and he lived a great part of his life as the brave adventurer of his dreams rather than the quiet young man that he was. He loved to read and found solace and peace in the reading room of the local library where he would retreat when he was left out of some of the social activities of his friends. There he could fulfill his dreams by being part of the adventure he was reading about. Thus, he grew up and passed his childhood. His one major nightmare which he had never been able to dispel was his knowledge that he had negro blood in his veins. This knowledge, known by his neighbors and townsfolk was the main reason he was omitted from invitations to events and parties that could possibly lead to a more permanent relationship with some young girl. Hence, he was always omitted from the important social happenings. No one ever said or mentioned his background but it always hung like a dark, silent veil over everything.

Jimbo's great grandfather had married a negro woman, some three generations back and although there was any never indication either by color or features in any of the succeeding offspring, it was never known whether any negro characteristics might show up and the mere fact that it could, precluded Jimbo from a really intimate relationship with his contemporaries.

When he was 17 years old, he won a full scholarship to the Sorbonne, in Paris, France which, luckily for Jimbo, allowed him to leave Baton Rouge for the less prejudiced atmosphere of Paris. Here, he would be able to develop his social life without the bias he had known in his natal city.

At the Sorbonne, he obtained his doctorate in literature and music; was inducted into the U.S. Army for 4 years during World War II, then returned to Baton Rouge where he taught for 30 years, retired, and decided to write about the development of Jazz in New Orleans.

On this particular morning when Jimbo decided to look over New Orleans before the bustle of the day began he told himself that he would be especially sensitive to everything around him and really try to get a feel of things.

He was dressed in a pair of white cotton trousers, a light cotton, short sleeved shirt made of an almost transparent weave, sandals with out socks and a small bag in which he carried a small notebook and two pencils. Having walked for a long while, he looked around to see if he could find a place to sit with some semblance of shade so that he could write down some of his impressions of that morning. Spying the bench where Gilly was sitting, he sauntered over and asked politely whether there would be any objections on Gilly's part if he could share the bench.

Gilly, awakened from his daydreams and still enjoying the recollections of his thoughts felt as though his peace was being invaded and responded in a somewhat rash manner "I don't own the bench, suit yourself," and after a quick perusal of this intruder noted half aloud, "an octoroon for sure", while in the meantime, looking around to see if there was another empty bench that he could move to. His morning's peace had been destroyed and so Gilly moved his position placing his back to this stranger, crossed his leg and tried to ignore the interloper. Bloody tourists, he thought, they invade our territory and then expect people to be civil. Gilly thought to himself, I'm going to ignore this disturbance because if I keep thinking about it, I'll ruin my whole day.

Trying to get back to his recollections he found was impossible and so he just decided to close his eyes and rest, clear his mind and try to remember the small group of jazzmen he heard at one of the clubs last night. He thought, those guys are really into something new. I never heard sounds like I heard and the playing was almost foreign to his ears. It was like ensemble playing except that each musician held back until it was his turn to play. When you listened to the whole though, it created a beautiful "smear of sound" was the only way he could describe it. It was not unpleasant at all, but allowing each instrument to really lead the "conversation" when it was its turn to talk created a new sound. Gilly would have to think more about what he heard and try to fit the music into some sort of

logical progression, i.e., trying to see who influenced the music from what was being played by today's musicians.

Gilly had not anticipated being disturbed a second time and was about to answer in a disturbed and angry manner but then checked himself while thinking, this guy is only trying to be friendly. I can't concentrate with him on the other end of the bench so why not just chalk it off to another disturbance in the daily life of disturbances.

Gilly extended his hand and introduced himself as Gilly Polito, jazz musician of New Orleans and proponent of the hot music of New Orleans. "And who do I have the pleasure of knowing" he asked.

"My name is Marcel Gimbeaux Cosnard but my friends call me Jimbo," he answered. Jimbo asked if Gilly had lived in New Orleans long and whether he was still playing Jazz. Gilly noted that when he spoke of Jazz, Jimbo's face took on an animation and an interest that was a little uncommon. Well, he thought, at least he is not a total loss, he seems to be interested in music.

"Where are you from" Gilly asked, more to be polite than interested in this stranger. Actually, my great grandfather was one of the original Cajuns who moved down to New Orleans, from Nova Scotia after the French and Indian war. You know, the so called "Great Upheaval" after the Treaty of Paris which allowed 18 months of unrestrained emigration; a lot of the Cajuns moved here to New Orleans wanting to live under French Government. My great grandfather was raised in one of the original Acadian settlements in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. He was also a musician, he played the violin and was an accomplished musician. From what I understand, many of the musicians from New Orleans played by ear and couldn't even read music. He was also a scholar and professor in one of the fine schools of learning in France.

"Actually I'm in the process of writing a book about the music of New Orleans. I don't mean who started what or who was an influence – that information has already been written. What I'm trying to do is "understand or try to get the "feeling" of what these musicians were doing and somehow, I feel that this city, New Orleans had something to do with how the music came about. And so, I'm here to try to "feel" or get the vibrations from the city itself. I don't think it will be easy but I feel that if I can talk to people, especially people who have been around for a while, I might be able to get a start."

Gilly felt a jolt of adrenalin in his body, like a quick shot of whiskey after a night of being hung over. He turned now, facing Jimbo with a new interest and respect. He thought, I called him the tourist when it's really me who is the tourist. This guy has roots, deep roots here and somehow, just somehow, I think this can be the start of an interesting experience.

"You know," said Gilly, I've been around New Orleans for about 76 years, not all 76 years here because I did travel a lot with Jazz groups. Chicago, New York, California, Kansas City; you name it and

I played there. I was what you call a “sideman”. A sideman was a musician who made up what the orchestra or band was as a group. There was a rhythm section, usually piano, drums, double bass fiddle, and guitar. Then there was the brass section, trumpets, and trombones, then the woodwinds which was clarinet; b flat and bass clarinet, flutes, and saxophones; soprano, alto, tenor and baritone. A vocalist (male and female) and the band leader. From this group of musicians, some were soloists or the outstanding musicians. But the structure of the band were the sidemen I mentioned.

We were the spine which supported the soloist. It’s just that they were the stars. But I can tell you a little about what it felt like here in those days of the 20’s and 30’s. There was excitement everywhere, not like today when all you really get is a romanticized version more with its goals toward business and profit than to anything else. But, there are still pockets of the old days here and there, hidden for most part from the commercial interests.

Take Storyville, for example. You have probably heard of Storyville, it was an area of town where there were supposedly some 1200 prostitutes working the area. Those girls though, were responsible for a lot of music since most girls were attached to clubs or joints where you could buy booze (legally or not) and a woman. Well, the booze and the girls weren’t enough, you also needed the stimulus of music, of singing and dancing. With so much profit in having a club, the owners had to go looking for musicians to supply the music. I can’t tell you how many performers got their start and experience in the clubs. Some went on to become real stars, like Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton and for others, it was a way of making a living.

But to get back to what the town was like. First, a man was free to do and have whatever he wanted. You could drink, you could sing and dance and best of all, you could get a woman. There were black women, Spanish women, “Frenchies”, Mulattos, even some Indian women. You had a choice and could fulfill your fantasies. Everything was wide open and all you needed was the cash to have it all. Depending on where you went from the real cheap joints, you could get a woman for as little as fifty cents. In the exclusive houses, you would have to pay up to ten dollars.

A man felt liberated in those days and that gave way to accepting anything that was offered. So, a jazzman could mix in with musicians who had some formal training and could read notes and also play with the “uptown” musicians who played by ear and with soul, playing what they called “ratty or dirty” music. The musicians fed from each other. After hours, the real musicians stayed on and played for themselves. There were some drugs and liquor of course but the soul of the night was coming from the players who tried out new combinations of sounds and rhythms. Usually two cornets, trombone, clarinet, bass fiddle and drums would make up the ensemble. No written music was used, just a basic tune, we called them classics, that everyone knew and then each instrument played his own music – all together. It might seem that it was just all sounds in all directions, but each instrument was listening to each other and responding to what music was being played. To do that, you had to be a very alert instrumentalist and your ear had to be really finely tuned. Jazzmen didn’t start that you know, you take some of the late quartets of Beethoven for instance like the “Big



Fugue", the Grosse Fugue, I think it's called, each musician is playing but his ears are listening to his colleagues, fine tuning and balancing the sounds and tempos with each other.

"You listened to Beethoven" asked an unbelieving Jimbo?

"What! You think jazz musicians only listen to jazz? A musician listens to all kinds of music and he appreciates everything, from the complex drum rhythms of Africa to the new and modern composers like John Cage. Of course, we don't try to play the classics, but some good men can. Take Benny Goodman for instance, he played with his band in Carnegie Hall in '38" and played not only Beethoven but Mozart's quartet in A Major with the Budapest string quartet. We, all the musicians were very proud of Benny because it meant that the classical musicians also had some respect for Jazz. Goodman even took lessons from Reginald Kell, one of the best clarinetists involved in classical music. No, we listened to everybody and it seems, they listened to us too.

But, getting back, music changed little by little and after a time, the small changes made the sounds different. Not to the detriment of the music, but an added dimension that was not there before.

With the addition of singing, came the need to have all the instruments playing the same notes so that you could hear the human voice which also had a message. But here too, some instrumentalists could sing and play at the same time. You had Slam Stewart, playing the double bass with a bow and humming an octave higher at the same time; then you had Lionel Hampton accompanying himself on the vibraphone or xylophone. You see, changes in one type of music made its mark on other types of music.

In the early morning hours, after a whole night's work, all kinds of feelings emerged. Some of loneliness, of longing, of being separated from family and friends, of feelings of being discriminated against. From these feelings came the Blues, the Spirituals, the Hymns and these feelings injected something human and deep that a lot of music was incapable of providing.

The improvisation of the polyphonic sounds was too complex for the normal audience and with the addition of the voice, the music had to adapt. From that, you can see the easy jump from vocalist to soloist. There, you could really utilize the "stars or soloists" who became big names in themselves and continue on to this day. People like Jelly Roll Morton, Freddy Keppard, Tom Brown, Nick La Rocca, King Oliver, Kid Ory, Sidney Bechet and of course, Louis Armstrong.

The new stars, mostly from the 30's and 40's are almost too numerous to recall but some outstanding ones are Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Charley Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Chic Webb, Max Roach, Davey Tough, Benny Goodman, Ben Webster, Dexter Gordon and Don Byas. These instrumentalists brought excitement to Jazz for a large group of fans. And vocalists like Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Billie Holiday, Peggy Lee, Mel Torme and Frank Sinatra gave a really wide range of excitement and these people are only part of the whole picture."

“But there must have been other influences as well that gave Jazz its strength,” asked Gimbo.

“Sure, sure, there was help from other areas as well. Jazz and swing merged with each other. Jazz was more for listening to and swing was more for dancing. I used to think, in Africa, where a lot of the rhythms came from, you could imagine the complex beats on logs and the other instruments they had with people caught up in the overwhelming sounds that stimulated their natural rhythms of the heart, breathing and the very rhythms of the living body.

“And of course” added Gilly. Let’s not forget the disk jockeys like Fred Robbins, Sidney Torin also known as “Symphony Sid, Martin Block and William B. Williams. These radio programs pushed all kinds of popular music including Jazz. They made the recording companies a lot of money because almost everybody was starting to collect records. There were even influences from Latin America with people like Pru Devons’ “Nights in Latin America”. Devon was the daughter of an American ambassador who served much of his career in Latin America. His daughter, Pru, loved old Latin American music, some from the jungles, and recorded this music for people to hear. Much of her recordings were done on cylinders or 78 rpm, scratchy, and hard to hear, but it had its influence as well on jazz.

“After working with so many musicians, you must have a big record collection. Do you still listen to them?”

Exasperated, Gilly said, “What would I do with a record collection? I moved around so much and had to travel light. I can just see myself lugging a record collection with me, so the answer is no.” replied Gilly.

“Why do you think so many of the musicians playing jazz were black, asked Jimbo,?” Weren’t the whites just as good as the blacks in playing jazz?”

“Now that’s a good question”, answered Gilly. I’ve thought about that a lot and even as musicians we used to sit around and give opinions on that. I think everyone agreed that the blacks were the best and you just couldn’t beat them. Maybe the blacks had the hardest times of all. Things like slavery, discrimination, rejection, being uprooted from family and friends and just made to feel inferior might be some of the reasons. How can you explain to a white man what it’s like to feel rootless and despised so that your only outlet in music is the blues or Spirituals and Hymns and Gospels. The hopes which came in with the Spirituals Gospels and Hymns, they all had a sadness as a base even though there were hopes there too.

A few white instrumentalists got close to the black sound like Georgie Auld on Sax and some vocalists like Peggy Lee, Rosemary Clooney or Anita O’Day. There were a few, but not too many.

Along with their backgrounds in music, each group brought with it, special foods, drink, spices and flavors. That is what made and makes to some extent New Orleans what it is. Your forebears

brought things like boudin, gumbo, jambalaya, crawfish boils and spices to liven up the place. Even word sounds were exciting with different groups pronouncing the same words with a different accent. And as a shipping port, you could buy almost anything that was produced in the world. Everything was magic – like having a magic wand and asking for anything and being able to get it.

It seemed like everybody was busy, doing something, dealing, making money or losing it. This was the type of excitement one felt and which translated itself into what you could call the “New Orleans experience.” There were just not enough hours in the day for everything you could do. Why I can remember having my breakfast at 3:30 P.M. in the afternoon and thinking this was normal.”

Jimbo saw that he was really taking up Gilly’s morning and that it was getting towards mid morning already. “Would you like to have a coffee, he asked?

“Thanks but no, I’ve already had my coffee this morning. But if you could make that a beer instead of coffee, I would accept readily.”

“It’s too early for me for alcohol or beer but maybe later, near lunch time, you will let me buy you a lunch. I haven’t tasted a good Cajun meal since I’ve been here and I’m sure you must know of some good places. When you mentioned that crawfish boil, my mouth watered.”

Gilly noticed that Jimbo had been taking down notes while he chatted on about the New Orleans he knew in his youth and thought, well, I won’t feel too bad accepting his offer for lunch. I haven’t had a good Creole meal in ages.

After noting that Jimbo was readying himself to ask more questions, Gilly said, “We’ve been sitting here for a little while now and I feel I can tell you that I really have to pee. At my age, the need is sometimes real intense and the urgency makes me forget my manners. I usually sit on this bench every morning because it has that big tree in front of us. It’s very handy and keeps me hidden when I can’t wait any longer.” Saying that, Gilly quickly ran to the other side of the tree and relieved himself.

“Sorry about being so explicit, but it’s almost painful to try to keep it in. By the way, my tree was why I really felt annoyed when you decided to share this bench; I thought, where am I going to go?”

Settling down again, Jimbo took up his pad and pencil and asked.

“Do you live alone or do you have a family here,” asked Jimbo?

“Me, I live alone – no family that I know of – been out of touch for years now. After I first arrived in New Orleans, I used to go visit at Christmas or Thanksgiving but for several reasons, that did not work out too well with my playing. It was during the holidays that I was able to get as much work as I did. Besides, when I went home for a visit, I would have all my relatives asking if I had a girlfriend, was I making plans to get married and when was I going to find a real job instead of playing

music. To them, playing an instrument was a pastime and sure, you could earn some extra money on weekends playing at weddings, parties or funerals, but a man needed a steady job, preferably in some trade where he could be sure of supporting a wife and a family. For them being a shipping clerk or a machinist was the only route to go so, after a few visits home and after hearing the same thing, I decided to write a postcard every so often, just to say hello and to let them know I was still alive.”

“Did you eventually marry,?” asked Jimbo.

No on that question too. I had no time to support a wife , my work took me all over. Sometimes, I was in New Orleans for two weeks before I was off to someplace else. I did have a girlfriend though who sang with the band I was currently playing with. We got along real fine. She knew the business I was in and I knew the same of her. Her name was Tilly Brooks and the guys in the band used to joke about Gilly and Tilly until they got tired of thinking it was funny. But Tilly and me, we got along fine. Neither of us wanted to marry nor have a family. We gave each other whatever each needed. Eventually, Tilly got an offer to sing with a different band and off she went. We said our goodbyes, told each other that we would probably see each other around and that was it. I did hear after a couple of years that Tilly got deep into drugs, lost her voice and took off to who knows where. To this day, I don’t know whether she’s alive or dead.”

“I take it that you live alone. Doesn’t that get lonely sometimes” asked Jimbo?

“Well sure it gets lonely sometimes, but I don’t know your situation, whether you’re married and have a family or what, but don’t you get lonely sometimes? I would guess that we all feel lonely even in the middle of a crowd or with a family around you. There are times, when you crave a little aloneness, to get in touch with yourself, you know. Me, I live in a basement apartment –one room – with a small bathroom and I feel content. I think a lot about what my life has been and wouldn’t change it for the world. I think, how lucky I have been to be part of something I really loved- playing my horn. I wouldn’t change that for all the things the “normal” life offers, whatever that is.

I feel that the making of music, from the anticipation of playing that evening, from what new things I am able to create, what new sounds I make are what I really am. On the outside, I’m a wrinkled old man, but inside, I’m still a young man burning with love and energy.”

“And to further answer your question as to being lonely, sure, I need to talk to other human beings and talk about things other than music. Luckily, they have a program here where you can eat a real good meal, soup, meat, vegetables, bread and coffee for just \$1.00. Mostly its men, elderly, without families and living like I do on a small pension. These men are not bums or alcoholics, just old men whose families either don’t want them or who simply have no one to call family. We gather at around 5:00 P.M. each day and exchange information about what is happening or what has happened to one of us. It’s sort of like the village well in some small towns. You exchange news and get to talk to people.

Being able to buy a good meal also saves me the trouble of cooking. Did you ever hear of a single person who cooks a big meal? No, you grab a can or you fry a couple of eggs and that's it. In the morning, a cup of coffee and a roll is enough.

But people know me around here. Some even remember when I played some of the clubs and I still get to hear some good jazz when groups come to practice at the clubs. Since the owners know me, they let me sit somewhere, out of the way and I get to listen.

"Do you ever get a chance to sit in, you know, like you used to" Jimbo broke in?

"No, I don't know whether they even know I'm listening, but I still have my mouthpiece in my pocket, just in case.

Have you ever seen a mouthpiece, I mean close up?" Taking his mouthpiece from his pocket, he removed the aluminum cap used to protect the reed and explained its use to Jimbo.

"The most important part is the reed, it's made from a piece of cane and sharpened to a very thin edge. Each musician has his own feel for a reed. Some reeds are stiff and make for harder sounds and some are real soft. The soft reed allows the musician to blow real gentle and to have a wider range of response. When I talked before about playing to a woman in the audience, it was the soft reed that enables you to do that; sounds so soft and caressing and gentle, like I said, it's like whispering words in her ear and telling her things she likes to hear."

"When you play or blow into just the mouthpiece, you get only a squee sound because it takes the horn to make it into a real sound. But behind everything, it's you, your heart and soul that's making the sound. Naturally, having a good instrument was part of the sound. I remember when I started, I was really lucky to find a Selmer Sax (the Cigar Cutter model) but later, I found my true love, a Conn with silver plated keys. The silver plating on the keys cost more but you could slide your fingers from one note to another with an ease that just wasn't possible on nickel plated keys. Just like classical piano, a soloist visits a factory to select the piano that suits him and to sense the response of the keys, The saxophonist is alert to the way the keys respond too, how fast they return to the original position, etc. Everything has its subtleties."

Quickly turning a page on his pad, Jimbo said, "Obviously, you preferred the New Orleans of old than the one we are in today, but does any of the present New Orleans still inspire like the old one?"

"It's like night and day" replied Gilly. Sure, there is still the French quarter but it's make believe. Old signs and quaint shops and restaurants, all in place for the tourist. Why the tourist is visiting as though they were visiting some reconstructed village at a World's Fair. Everything is pretty and in its place, everything is freshly painted, the streets are clean and you never see anyone hung over sleeping it off on a bench or in a doorway. It's too Walt Disney and couldn't inspire anything

except a pretty postcard to the family back home telling them about what a wonderful time you were having and how precious and quaint the town is.

“Have you ever thought of moving someplace else, of finding someplace like what New Orleans was?”

Gilly looked Gimbo in the eye, not knowing whether he was pulling his leg or what. “Son, at my age, (I’m 92 years old), you don’t play Don Quixote trying to topple windmills.. You settle for what you have, your recollections and your memories, and you hunker down, warmed by exciting thoughts from times gone by. Maybe the only things that haven’t changed are the fragrances and the smells. You can still smell those spices, the frying fish, the okra, the gumbo and the pork cooking someplace. Funny, you just made me realize that that is all I have from those days that are not in my mind and memory.

After all this talking, my throat is getting a little dry and besides, it’s after 1:00 P.M., shouldn’t we think of having that Cajun lunch you talked about?”

As far as Gilly was concerned, there was no beating around the bush. He felt that he sang enough for his supper. Strange how a few years makes you outspoken and saying the things that only a few years before you would only think about saying. So, off the two went in search of a good Cajun meal.

When they arrived at the restaurant, they informed the waiter of their choice ,i.e. the crayfish boil and were told:

“You are really lucky because as you know, we only serve the crayfish boil from February to May and since this was such a strange May, we have stopped ordering crayfish – so you will be just about the last customers for the boil until the season starts again in February. I believe we have about 5 or 6 lbs. of crayfish left and if you need more, you will be out of luck.

While not a complicated recipe, the boil does take some time since the crayfish have to be purged of any wastes in their stomachs. For that, the crayfish have to be submerged in salt-water, then allowed to stay in fresh water, another salt-water purge and they are ready to cook. Into a huge kettle, potatoes, onions, garlic, smoked sausage, corn on the cob and spices are combined and finally, the crayfish are added. After cooking, the table is spread with 5 or 6 layers of newspapers and the pot is drained of its liquid. Then the pot, with the remaining ingredients is poured on the newspaper layered table and the feast begins. No utensils are used, only the hands with shirtsleeves rolled up to keep them from dragging across the food. Usually, a large white towel (an oversized napkin) is tied like a bib so that the juicy sauce can drip without spotting the fronts of dresses or shirts.

When all is finished, the newspapers are gathered up enclosing the remains of crayfish shells and thrown away. Usually cold beer, copiously served is the beverage of choice.

The meal finished, the two men moved their chairs away from the tables edge, unbuttoned the top button of their trousers and started talking about themselves.

Since most of the morning had been spent with Gilly talking about the “old days” in New Orleans, Gilly leaned over and said to Jimbo, “I have been doing all the talking this morning, I would like to know a little bit about you.”

“Do you want the whole story or just some odds and ends that might help to make sense of what I am trying to accomplish?”

“Let’s do the whole story. I am free until 5:00 P.M. and so if you are free, I would be delighted to listen.

## PART 2 - JIMBO

### CHAPTER 4

“Well, he claims that it is a direct descendent from Francois I. Francois I was considered the first Renaissance King of France and the first to be called “Your Majesty”. He was considered to be great patron of the arts and brought many Italian painters and sculptors to France, including Leonardo da Vinci who painted the Mona Lisa (called in France La Gioconda). Franchoise I was also a man of letters and created fantastic libraries including the inclusion of all books published in France in his new library. He was also interested in exploration and financed the expedition of Giovanni da Verrazano who claimed Newfoundland for the French Crown. He has a bridge named after him in New York City you know. All of this was done between 1515 when Francois I was crowned until 1547, when he died.

My family claims that their origins in the new world dated from those explorations. Of course, this could be speculation since we all want to believe we came from important people in the past, but that is the claim.

Somewhere along the way, my great granddad fathered a child with a Negro wife, and that is the start of our being Cajun since the family came from Arcadia up in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. By the way, why did you suspect that I had Negro blood in my veins?”

Gilly answered, “you are wearing sandals without socks and the heels of a person somehow always show that there is Negro blood in a person. Of course, it’s not foolproof, but often times, it does show.”

“Like I mentioned before” replied Jimbo, “ some members of the family even fought in the French and Indian War. After the treaty of Paris was signed ending the war, part of the treaty permitted Cajun emigration and many of the people, feeling they might be targeted because they fought with the French decided to move south to Louisiana and some to the islands like Martinique and Haiti so that they would still be under French Government That move was called the “Great Upheaval”. Naturally with the people came the music, the religion, the foods, the customs and the language.

Did you know that Elvis Presley was a Cajun? ,said Jimbo.

Anyway, with New Orleans an important port for both shipping and receiving, a whole host of people came along too. There were Blacks, Irish, English, Spanish and even Indians. Each group bringing part of its past with it and creating a real “melting pot” of cultures. The Mississippi River was the natural waterway for all the products of the mid-west and into the Allegheny Mountains. Everything passed that way.

My great grandparents however, decided that the city of New Orleans was too undisciplined and so they moved on up to Baton Rouge. “Red Stick” or “Red Pole”. You might ask, why “Red stick? The story goes something like this. In the late 1600’s or the early 1700’s, French explorers came upon a reddish cypress pole hung with bloody animals and birds. They later discovered that the bloody red stick or pole marked the hunting boundaries between two Indian tribes. Anyway, the French described the area as “Le Baton Rouge”, the red stick, or red pole.

Later ,Baton Rouge became a center of culture which my great grandfather chose since he felt that his upbringing and family would be more comfortable there than in New Orleans.

As I mentioned earlier, my forebear was a very learned man. In France, he studied and taught at the French Sorbonne and taught literature and mathematics. He was also a dreamer and decided to move west to the New World because he simply wanted to see more of the world before he died. His association with the Sorbonne would play an important part of my life because of his teaching there. I like to think that my intelligence was the reason I was accepted, but somehow, I feel it might also have been because of my great grandfather’s connections in the past.

Great grandfather’s precipitous move may have also have been due to his being tied in with a black woman. I would rather like to think that it was his passion to see the world rather than being castigated by a society which made him decide to journey to the New World; I suppose I will never find out.

The family stayed on in Baton Rouge and I am sure that some of the “first families” never forgot that there was Negro blood in our line. As a result, I was never really invited to events where the possibility of meeting a member of the closed society could ever be someone I could marry. Those early experiences, (perhaps I was overly sensitive) left their mark on me and I tended to be



more of a loner. I enjoyed studying and as a result, I was able to win the scholarship to the Sorbonne. As I said, I hope it was my scholarship and intelligence that got me accepted, but it remains another unknown for me. It may seem strange to allow the idea of acceptance because of merit or acceptance because of connections to concern one but one always likes to think the best of oneself.

Admittedly, with the influence of my great grandfather and my family “advising” me, I gave in and decided to study French literature and music at the Sorbonne with the hopes that I would one day be able to teach and write or perhaps even perform music. In reality, this was not my choice but I listened and obeyed since I was unable to make a decision.

What I really wanted to study was something involving adventure. In my own imagination and fantasies, I did all the daring things and was not the retiring weakling I am. As a result, I read all the books of Jack London, I remember being entranced with “White Fang” and “The Call Of The Wild” and everything Alaskan. Somehow, that led me to the discovery of Robert William Service, the “Bard of the Yukon”. His stories and poems are embedded in my mind, even to this very day.

Yes, they were a far cry from French Classics but again, I was following the wishes of my family and not myself.”

“I still remember something Service wrote and how I wished I could have applied it to myself, but, I was not ready. He wrote:

Thy life is Thine to make or mar, to flicker feebly, or to soar, or to soar – a star. It lies within Thee, the choice is Thine, is Thine-----

Gilly shook his head and finally said, “You are really a “ciuccio”. (sometimes pronounced chooch) that’s an Italian expression that came from the small villages in Italy. It was an expression used in a loving way to those who were simply fools or blockheads or donkeys. And, as I said it was uttered more with love than with scorn. I am not blaming you, it was just unfortunate that you were not strong enough to follow your own ways. The truth comes hard sometimes. It requires a lot more strength and honesty to face yourself and your deficiencies but growth requires that one do so if you want to advance.”

“You’re right” said Jimbo,” but I was happy in France. No one ever made reference to my background and I was accepted on my merits. Even the young women accepted or rejected me on the criteria as to whether I was handsome, or interesting or fun to be with, whatever but never as to whether I was of one race or another.

Eight years I spent in Paris. I was almost convinced that there is where I would end my days, but events were not to bear me out. World War II intervened and I was told to return to my country for inclusion in the armed services. Trained as I was in the fine arts, I was at best unfit for the trenches and miraculously, I was sent to Officer’s School for training in Intelligence work. Our duties

included intercepting all messages emanating from Germany and then pouring over them to see if we could detect coded transcriptions. While the work was not in itself physically difficult, it was a great strain on the intellect. I was promoted to Captain, which made my family very proud. But to myself, I was still the timid, inward sort of person you see before you now.

After the war, thinking about returning to Paris was out of the question. France was in a reconstruction mode and emphasis on education was relegated to science, industry and rebuilding. Besides, I noticed that I had missed my country and my skin had thickened so that I was not as sensitive as I was before; growing up will do that to you, you know. Baton Rouge was growing and becoming an important city and so I thought I would spend my time there.”

“Did you marry, do you have a family, children?” asked Gilly.

“No” replied Jimbo, “but not for the reasons that you didn’t marry or have children. For me, I simply never found the right woman and if I did see some woman for a while, I could never bring myself to ask if she would marry me. I am going to rephrase that since I really want to be honest with myself. I liked a certain girl very much but she did not really want to be tied to me. She was also seeing two other boys and while I remained a gentleman with her, she permitted the other boys to have privileges that she denied me except for one time. I am embarrassed to say that the one time I could have been with her, my inexperience caused me to climax even before I was able to enter her. She laughed at my inadequacies and made me feel very unsure of myself. It hurt me very deeply to discover that she was free with herself to the others. She eventually had a child, which neither of the boys would admit was his. She moved away and had her child here in New Orleans.

Would it sound crazy to say that in the back of my mind, I would still like to meet her again. I would have asked her to marry me but frankly, I was afraid that if we had children and a child was born with Negro features or color, I would have been accused of not telling about myself.

So, if I want to be truthful to myself, I would have to say that I am still suffering from the discrimination I felt when I was a boy and was not acceptable as a husband for some of the families in Baton Rouge.

“Strange,” said Jimbo, “I wanted children and prevented myself from having them and you didn’t want them because it would interfere with your career.

Stranger also was the fact that most of the people who avoided me became “run of the mill” families. Some finished high school, but because of family influence, were considered the “elite” of the town. Oh sure, they still control a great deal of the city politics and businesses but they never advanced intellectually or made any cultural contributions to Baton Rouge.

So, whom is better off, the poet or the business man or the political manipulator. One affects future generations and the other decides the direction that the town takes.

I like to think that I am not bitter but I am afraid that if I am truthful, I am. I haven't opened myself like this to anyone before and why I am doing so with you, I can't imagine." Jimbo sat quietly, his head down and faced hearing himself talk about things he said to himself in his mind.

*Note: This is a free digital edition from [www.obooko.com](http://www.obooko.com). If you paid for this ebook please advise the author and publisher. We also advise you to return to the retailer to demand a refund.*

### Part 3

## THE SITZMANS

It was Gilly's time to ask some questions. Sipping his beer, he let a few minutes pass before he asked Jimbo; "Are you going to look for this woman. What is her name?"

"Her name is or was Eleanor Sitzman. Her family came from Germany many years before and settled in Baton Rouge. Eleanor's father had many business interests, especially in trade. The few times I remember seeing her father, Max Sitzman was his name, he was always dressed in a suit and tie, never a hair out of place and unfriendly to the point of being rude. Jimbo's recollection of Max Sitzman was not far off from the truth.

Max Sitzman was born in the East German town of Schwed in the Brandenburg district just on the Polish border. His father was a strict disciplinarian and young Max was raised in the strict, formal ways of his father. As a young boy, he was made to understand that without strict and studious ways, he would be a disgrace to his family. He played with his fellow students almost not at all and due to his diligence, made great strides in his studies. Life was strict, not a game to be played for enjoyment and when one excelled, he was fulfilling life's requirements. Max pleased his father very much. As Max grew to manhood, he felt superior to his fellow friends and always cited how uneducated they were. He, for one would be a source of pride to his family, his town and his country. Max dominated his "friends and acquaintances but when it came to females, he struggled to keep his composure. He simply had not been instructed by his father as to how to deal with them. His mother, dominated by his father was the only guide to the type of relationship that males and females had. As a result, when Max married, he chose a woman who was under his thumb. Her function was very much like what he saw with his own mother; raise a family and be subservient to the father. All decisions were relegated to the male and the female had nothing to do with decision making except to follow the man's will.

Max Sitzman dominated his business acquaintances with his superior knowledge in his field and was thus, very successful. His suits were always a medium grey, worsted with either a thin blue or a thin red stripe, almost minuscule until you were very close to him. His shirt was always white with a collar and cuffs always lightly starched. His ties, muted Macclesfield ties in silk with an unobtrusive pattern and his knot was either a Pratt or a Half Windsor, since he insisted that the knot be symmetrical beneath the shirt collar.

Max was what one would call, a man's man. His only fault lay in the fact that his young daughter was even more insistent on having her way than he. All his strong-willed insistence crumbled when this small child wanted something. He tried harshness and would deprive her of desserts or some toys but those methods brought worse results. Finally, he had to face the fact that he could not win and so he spoiled her outrageously. In one sense, he felt defeated but in another way, he had a sense of pride that his daughter possessed his dominant traits, making her a superior person.. Eleanor was an only child: anything she wanted, her father bought for her and since he was away so much, he felt that giving her what she wanted made up for his absences. Eleanor's mother was a very frail woman and was always sick with some illness or another. Whether she was really ill, I don't know but she left the raising of Eleanor to a maid/housekeeper the family employed. As a result, Eleanor did not feel bound by the maid/housekeeper's discipline and she did as she pleased. It seemed she always wanted a good time without anyone standing in her way.

Why she saw me I don't to this day understand. I was not good looking, nor was I popular, nor was I wealthy, but she said she liked seeing me because I had principles and she enjoyed my daydreams of Alaska. I don't know, maybe I was gulled into thinking she liked me because she enjoyed my talking to her.

Well, after the problems Eleanor had when she became pregnant, she was sent to live here in New Orleans with a woman to take care of her. She had a child, a daughter but that is all I know.

But look, it's near 5:00 o'clock and you said you had to meet with your friends. I will say, this had been a wonderful day for me. I feel I have really gotten a good start on my project and I want to thank you for the information, your friendliness and finding the restaurant for that great feast of the crayfish boil."

"I had a great time with you too, Jimbo" Gilly replied, "it gave me great pleasure talking and recalling those old times. Sort of brought them into focus again for me. You know, I always spend a great deal of time at this bench (you know with my tree and all) so if you ever want to talk some more, you'll find me here. And good luck on your book." Saying that, Gilly excused himself, went behind the tree and prepared himself for his walk back to his friends. He would have something new to talk about. Strange guy but he seemed really alright. I sort of felt sorry for him about letting his life really disappear but sometimes that happens. What a "ciuccio".

## CHAPTER 5

True to his promise, Jimbo did stop often to talk with Gilly and a lovely friendship started to develop. Each gave to the other in a way that was unselfish and that helped fill the void each had. For Jimbo, Gilly filled the need to know something about New Orleans during the years that jazz was a vibrant part of the culture. Moreover, Jimbo felt that he was talking to someone who was not critical of him or his background; Gilly was a person who seemed to drift over any of the notions of race that so constricted Jimbo.

And for Gilly, Jimbo was a person who listened to his stories about the great time in jazz history and who did not seem to tire as Gilly unrolled his tale. So, for both, each gave and received for Gilly had the need to express his thoughts and recollections and felt that in talking to Jimbo, he was reliving that important time of his life. The weeks turned into months and the two felt rewarded in the new friendship.

One morning, Jimbo wanted to see New Orleans by dawn, as the sun was rising and when the busy footsteps of the townspeople were not pounding down the streets and sidewalks. It was for Jimbo, a new vista of the city. No cars or people, only the hungry gulls and sparrows seemed to be present in their long search for food. The miasmic fog blanketed many areas, especially the low areas making it feel that one was walking through clouds, soft and unreal, and that hid from view anything below on the streets and sidewalks over which you moved. As he walked, Jimbo tried not to see so much as to feel and smell the town over which he was moving. For some reason or other, he found himself walking in the direction of the docks where he wanted to see and hear the knocking of the moored rafts and boats as they moved against the tide's pull. He knew that the quiet he wanted would be almost impossible since just the gulls would be anxiously be trying to best each other for some small morsel floating on the river.

In order to reach the docks, Jimbo would be passing Gilly's bench and he thought, I imagine Gilly's absence is being felt since he sat there each day. On some rainy days, Gilly still sat with his large black umbrella dreaming his dreams of yesteryear for those dreams were the sunshine of his life.

As Jimbo approached the abandoned park, he could not be sure but it seemed that someone was sleeping on Gilly's bench. So, he thought, the bench also gave someone else its place of comfort. As he got closer, he noticed that the person was lying down and appeared to be asleep with one arm extended as though it was a pillow. For some reason, a feeling of fear overtook the silence and he thought, perhaps Gilly was not able to get home and decided to sleep the night out, but, with all those mosquitoes? Jimbo started to feel some alarm as he hastened his pace towards the sleeping form. He hoped it was someone else, some homeless man or someone just sleeping off a good drunken night.

But it was not to be for upon his arrival at the bench, he could make out Gilly's face, grey as the fog itself and as unmoving as the bench.

Jimbo ran to the nearest light, a gas station that was open all night and asked to use the phone. Giving directions to the police, Jimbo returned to stay with his friend until someone could come to take him to the morgue.

When the ambulance arrived, Jimbo gave the police whatever information he could; told them what his name was, where he lived and whatever else the police would need to identify him. Jimbo was asked his relation to Gilly and told the police that Jimbo had mentioned that he was out of touch with whoever was left of his family. All he knew was that Gilly was born in St. Louis and was 92 years old.

Jimbo traveled with the ambulance to the morgue so that if any further information was needed, he could provide it. On the way to the morgue, the attendant noticed something in Gilly's hand. Opening Gilly's fingers, they discovered that his hand was holding his mouthpiece.

The attendant asked, "what is this"? Jimbo said, "It's his mouthpiece, he was a musician you know" Could I please have the mouthpiece- it would be the only thing that Gilly would want to have saved."

So, even on his arrival to heaven, Gilly would have wanted to be ready to "sit In" with Gabriel's horn. "See, I have my own mouthpiece," he would have said.

## **CHAPTER 6**

After leaving the Coroner's office, a dazed and confused Jimbo stood on the sidewalk trying to think where to go. He felt alone and somehow guilty that he was not there to help Gilly but of course he realized that he could not have known that Gilly was ill. Looking around, he saw that he was on Loyola Avenue and right there was the Public Library. With a sense of relief, he moved towards the building feeling that there was his place of protection, his fortress, his Citadel with all the thick walls lined with books. The library had been his retreat whenever he felt the difficulties of coping with his life. There, hundreds of thousands of voices from every culture and country and language were there, pressed between pages of written text ready to divulge to him some mystery or give some knowledge of all that passed in the world since words were recorded.

He could sit in the silent, darkened room, the only light a circle of light before his desk and dream and fly. The smell of paper and ink of the books and the waxed, rich, polished oak tables gave a sense of strength and peace and he felt he could finally breathe. He sat in the cool reading room for more than an hour trying to make clear the happenings of the morning, his mind slowly unwinding the myriad events that had him so upset.

His reverie was silently disturbed by the shadow of a person standing over him. A not unpleasant voice asked softly. "Is there anything we can get for you? You have been sitting here for more than an hour. You know, we do not allow people who are not engaged in the use of the library facilities to remain. If there is something you need; some book or reference, we will help you find it but our rules say that we must ask you to leave if you are not using the facilities."

Jimbo started, he had not expected to be confronted and questioned. He started to say that he had had a very disturbing thing happen to him that morning and as he made ready to rise, he suddenly felt very faint and collapsed on the table in front of him. The voice again asked if he was unwell and was there anyone to call or would he prefer that a hospital be called."

His face very gray and head still dizzy, he replied that he would appreciate it if he could just rest for a short time and would then be on his way. He repeated that he had had a shock that morning and that coupled with the fact that he had not eaten breakfast or lunch may have brought on his dizzy spell.

By that time, the librarian was joined by the guard and awaited her instructions. The librarian could see that Jimbo was not an indigent nor was he drunk nor under any type of drug influence and so she thought she would offer Jimbo a place to rest for a short time. Presently the librarian said, "We have a small conference room which is rarely used that has a sofa, perhaps you could rest there for a short time – would you like that? When you are feeling stronger, you can leave."

Jimbo nodded his assent, gave thanks and left with the guard to try to recuperate.

At about ten minutes to five, the librarian was getting ready to close the library. Some of her staff would remain until six P.M. to return the books to their shelves, etc. As she passed the small conference room, she noticed that Jimbo was still asleep on the sofa. She immediately turned to call the guard since she felt she might have trouble getting Jimbo to leave.

The guard roughly shook the sleeping Jimbo and told him that he had to leave, now. Jimbo excused himself and apologized profusely and told them that he just fell asleep and that it was not his intention to cause any trouble. Turning to the librarian he said, "Please forgive any trouble I might have caused. Please accept my apologies Miss ---?-

My name is Sitzman and I am the librarian here. I believe you that you fell asleep but now I have to insist that you leave. Saying that, she looked at the guard and nodded. As the guard

approached Jimbo, he said “Sitzman”? It’s very strange but that is exactly the name of the person I am trying to find. I came to New Orleans some 4 months ago from Baton Rouge to research a book I am writing and also try to locate a woman called Eleanor Sitzman from Baton Rouge. Why I sound so uncertain is that the Sitzman I am trying to find came here in 1936.

As the guard took Jimbo’s arm to lead him out, Ruth Sitzman, the librarian held out her arm restraining the guard from leading Jimbo to the library’s entrance.

Wait” she said. “I will show the gentleman out. I want to ask him some questions first.” She dismissed the guard and asked Jimbo to sit down.

“Why exactly are you asking about an Eleanor Sitzman who came from Baton Rouge in 1936.”? Ruth felt her heart pound as she continued to question Jimbo.

“First, what is your name and where in Baton Rouge are you from?”

“My name is Marcel Gimbeau Cosnard. I was born in Baton Rouge on Oak Hills Place, near Bluebonnet Blvd. replied Jimbo. My family has lived there all its life. When I was a young man, 17 yrs old, I used to be friendly with a young girl by the name of Eleanor Sitzman. Her father was some sort of trader and he was rarely home and Eleanor’s mother was a very sickly woman who anyone rarely saw – I think she was confined to her bed, but I’m not sure. Anyway, when I was 17, I went to study at the Sorbonne in France,- I had just been awarded a scholarship. At the same, I understand Eleanor had a problem and I heard she had moved to New Orleans. So, after I retired from my post at Louisiana State University, I decided to write a book about the origins of Jazz in New Orleans and to try to find out what New Orleans had that made it the birthplace of Jazz. At the same time, I thought it highly unlikely, but I would also make enquiries about Eleanor Sitzman, the girl I knew when I lived in Baton Rouge who to my latest knowledge was living in New Orleans.”

Ruth remained stunned. This man knew too much about her family for it to simply be a coincidence and while she was curious to know more, her natural inclination was to be cautious. Still, in the recesses of her mind, she thought that perhaps there might be answers to her father’s identity. For a moment she thought, “Is this man my father? Who, after 37 years would look up an old girl friend to say hello? There had to be more to this man’s searching than mere curiosity.”

Jimbo anxiously prevailed upon Ruth to discover more information about her mother, Eleanor. He wanted to talk with her and find out about her life. Inwardly, he was hoping there would be an opportunity to knowing Eleanor again and who knew, even the possibility of something more permanent. The gap of 37 years since he last saw her seemed to disappear in his mind. But there was so much to find out. Was she married? Was she seeing someone else? What were her plans? There were so many questions he had to have answered.



Jimbo cautiously asked, "Do you think it might be possible to mention my name to your mother and perhaps, even see her?"

Ruth replied that her mother was in Baton Rouge at this time. "My grandfather passed away and my mother is in Baton Rouge settling some problems with the estate. I don't think she will be back for the next three weeks or so."

"I see", Jimbo said. He desperately wanted to maintain his association with Ruth who could lead him to meeting with Eleanor.

After a swift look of disappointment shaded his face, he brightened and asked, "Look, it's 5:00 P.M., and you are closing the library. Couldn't we just talk a little longer about your mother? As I mentioned, I haven't eaten anything all day and with all the excitement of the morning with finding my friend dead and then the surprise of learning that I may have located Eleanor Sitzman, it is too much. Please, please, join me in having a cup of coffee and let me ask some things about your mother."

Finally, Ruth acquiesced and told him she would have a coffee with him at a diner nearby but that she would have to leave early since she had an important meeting with her neighbors on a project they were working on.

Seated at a small table, Jimbo asked if it would be alright if he ordered something more than a coffee. He said, "I'm starved and so excited by what I have discovered, I just have to eat something. Please, have something more and join me. Besides, you will have to eat supper and so having it here would make it simpler for you."

Again, against her better judgment, her curiosity prevailed. Jimbo told Ruth about his life after leaving Baton Rouge in some detail and also the dreams that he was never able fulfill about his adventurous spirit and longings; his dreams of the wild spirit of the Yukon in Alaska and his fascination of the poetry and prose of William Service.

Ruth had never met anyone so knowledgeable nor so perceptive before, and she became both fascinated and more secure with Jimbo as their talk extended into more than 2 hours when she reluctantly reminded him of her meeting.

Jimbo offered to escort her to her home but she had judiciously thought beforehand that under no circumstances would she allow him to escort her home. Instead, she asked if he would get her a cab.

Not wishing to break off her association with Jimbo, she coyly said, "If you want to find any of those books you mentioned, you will have to apply for a library card and before it is issued, there is a time lapse of about one week to check you out. (Ruth wanted very much to get information about

Jimbo and his applying for a library card would give her a great deal as to where he was living, his age, etc.

“You know, this library can utilize the entire library system so that if I don’t have the book one of the other libraries might.”

Yes, She definitely wanted to keep in touch with this interesting man.

## CHAPTER 7

When both Ruth and Jimbo retired for the night, each felt the disturbing but delightful feeling of an excitement that one sometimes feels when an unknown but potentially possible circumstance could impact on one’s life.

For Ruth, this very interesting man who was so intelligent and stimulating was not someone she generally had access to meeting. Not only was Jimbo stimulating but his seemingly vast knowledge of so many subjects did not affect his ego. He was polite, he listened when you spoke and he answered in ways that let you know he was involved in what you said. And how the time flew by! She would have liked to remain with him longer but she reasoned, perhaps it is best not to appear too eager. She congratulated herself on the “applying for the library card” suggestion without appearing that she was asking him to come see her again. This, hopefully could lead to something she thought although she tried to suppress the enthusiasm she felt. She had been disappointed a few times in the past but this seemed different, they both felt enthusiastic in their discussions but definitely with both feet on the ground. The one thing that left her uneasy was his interest in her mother, Eleanor.

When Eleanor found she had missed her period, she thought that that sometimes did happen. If she had any kind of emotional problem or something unusual had taken place, she would be late. But now, she had not only missed her period last month but this was now the second week and nothing. She decided to talk to Mrs. Schultz. Mrs. Schultz suggested they make an appointment to see their doctor but Eleanor decided she would wait until the time of her next period before doing anything.

The second month passed and finally, Mrs. Schultz persuaded Eleanor to visit the doctor. The tests and the reports were positive. Eleanor was pregnant. How were they going to tell her father Max? He would explode and since her disagreements were stubbornness on her part, she did not know what her father would do. How was she going to say that she didn’t know who the father was? She would have to admit that she was seeing two boys and the episode with Jimbo would really be

the limit. Three boys who could have possibly been the father of her child. She thought it prudent to limit the possibilities to the two boys she really liked.

One evening, after deciding that Mrs. Schultz should be the one to inform her father, Mrs. Schultz feebly knocked on Max Sitzman's study door. The knocking at the door stunned Max as he had left instructions that no one ever disturb him when he was working. He finally growled, "Who is there? Come in." Mrs. Schultz turned the knob and opened the door so that just her head was showing.

"I'm sorry to disturb you but I think there is something serious that I must tell you."

Never suspecting anything like what he was soon to learn, he expected to hear that something in the house was damaged and would need his attention.

When he at last learned that Eleanor had missed her period for two months and that they had visited the doctor to ascertain her condition and that she was definitely pregnant, he did something that was surprising. He simply said, "I see, we will talk about this first thing tomorrow morning. Please close the door and go to bed."

There was no sleeping in the house that night. Eleanor's father normally would have shouted and raged and put the fear of God in everyone, but this time, he was silent. This made everyone even more uneasy since they expected his attitude would be fearsome.

The next morning finally came around. At his usual time, Max had his usual breakfast of some fruit, two pieces of toast with marmalade and coffee. Eleanor who was seated at his right side, sipped some coffee since she was not thinking of food. No words were spoken between Eleanor and Max and every so often, Eleanor would glance at her father trying to gauge what his reaction was going to be and what he was going to do. Eleanor's mother pleading dizziness refrained from coming to the breakfast room and was unaware of the drama that was taking place. After eating his breakfast and glancing at the daily newspaper, Max called Mrs. Schultz and asked her to sit at the table.

Without looking at either of the women, Max simply said, "You have shamed this family, my name and yourself. I do not want to know the particulars, nor do I care to know who the father is. In one week, I shall have made arrangements for both you and Mrs. Schultz to live in New Orleans. You are never to consider this house nor this family as yours again. You shall not write or communicate with anyone here nor would I suggest you communicate with anyone in the neighborhood. You will receive a monthly sum to live on and you will make your own way in your life."

Saying that, Max removed himself from the dining room and looking at Mrs. Schultz said, "In one week from today, I expect you both to be gone. You will be contacted by my attorney as to where you will be living. Eleanor was in a state of shock. After the realization of what was to happen, the shock turned to a deep hatred.

“Everything was his fault. If he had ever thought of anything except his work; if he had just recognized that I was here, needing his love and attention, none of this would ever have happened. He and his proud, superior attitude. Look, see what your daughter did to you! She gave you a bastard for a grandchild. Start building your precious pride on that, Mr. Gestapo man.” No longer was Eleanor just a rebellious child, now she was full of hate and anger. She secretly wished her father to die so that she wouldn’t have to rely on his parsimonious charity.

Eleanor got her wish. One day when Max Sitzman was doing his exercises, he suddenly put his hand to his chest. He had a fatal coronary thrombosis attack which left his heart without blood. Since no one ever was allowed into his room without his consent, his body was discovered 4 hours later when Mrs Froeschl, his new maid concerned that Max Sitzman did not come down to breakfast as was his habit: she dared go to his door, listened intently for any sound of activity and then timidly knocked to ascertain whether everything was alright. That had been the only two times Max had been disturbed or anyone had dared to knock. The first was when Mrs, Schultz informed him of Eleanor’s pregnancy and the second when they found him dead. Had they found Max Sitzman a little earlier, they probably could have saved his life but his strict orders not to ever be disturbed caused his demise.

Max Sitzman was cremated according to his wishes and neither his daughter nor his granddaughter were to be advised of his death until they were informed by his attorney. His ashes were to be flown to the town of his birth, Schwed, in eastern Germany and sprinkled around the property where his natal house was located.

Poor Max was not missed. His daughter had hoped for his death and he had never met his granddaughter. While there was no animosity between his granddaughter Ruth and himself, neither was there love. His only interest was that she was methodical in her studies and ordered in her life. He felt there could be no more to be expected.

## **CHAPTER 8**

Eleanor always felt that life would take care of her. She therefore never thought about preparing herself for some profession or work. “I’ll worry about the luxuries, the basics will take care of themselves”, was her motto. So Eleanor never went past her high school and did absolutely nothing to improve either.

With Eleanor's father paying for Mrs. Shultz, the governess, house-keeper, cook, Eleanor left the raising of Ruth to Mrs. Schultz. Mrs. Shultz was the typical ordered, precise and efficient Germanic person to care for them. She brooked no nonsense from Ruth but Eleanor, still uninterested in going to college, or improving herself stayed clear of Mrs. Schultz and spent most of her time cultivating friends at the country club, playing tennis and golf and going to luncheons with friends.

Her intellectual development remained at a standstill and she still comported herself in the same spoiled manner of her high school days. She simply had not moved in terms of development and in fact, felt that her father would always provide for her and that there was no need to make any effort on her part.

As Ruth grew older and her main influence coming from the rather stoic ways of Mrs. Schultz, Eleanor and Ruth were often at odds with one another. Ruth never sought council from her mother since she felt that her mother would not be capable of giving sound advice and so Ruth always turned to Mrs. Schultz. Mother and daughter often expressed resentments towards each other with Eleanor always managing to imply that Ruth was the cause of her problems. She blamed Ruth for the fact that she was unmarried stating that "no man is interested in raising another man's brat". The resentment between the two grew to the extent that mother and daughter were actually hostile towards each other and only Mrs. Schultz's presence kept them living together.

So now, with this most interesting man she had just met whose main motivation was to re-introduce himself to her mother, Ruth felt resentment all over again. She had put off the meeting of the two due to her mother's recent return to Baton Rouge but what would happen when Eleanor returned? How could she make excuses at Jimbo's insistent request to meet with Eleanor. She thought of the conversation that Jimbo told her he had with Jilly. What was that Italian word he called Jimbo for his being a fool and not going after what he wanted? "Ciuccio" she muttered aloud. She was not going to be a fool this time. She was 37 years old, had no prospects and genuinely liked and admired this man, Jimbo. Ruth decided she would go after this man and damn the consequences.

Ruth need not have worried, for when Jimbo finally did meet Eleanor again after the 37 intervening years, he found her mannered, dull, actually sophomoric and spoiled. How could he have been so foolish as to think that she was any different from her post high school days. Her interests were shallow and her scope and understanding were the same as before. She had not advanced intellectually since the days of her youth.

For Eleanor though, unaware of Jimbo's impressions of her, Jimbo had now grown into a charming, sophisticated professional – decidedly many steps up from her usual acquaintances. She resorted to her usual coquettish ways that were charming in under age young girls but to a woman of 57 years of age, these kittenish, school girl wiles were actually offensive and foolish.

Eleanor did not notice that the impression she was making on Jimbo was not only making her look like a fool but showed her shallowness as well. However, one's illusions of oneself generally hide the true condition and so, comfortable in her own mind, she thought that she was commanding the situation and turning to Ruth and asked, "Poor darling, do you still have that awful headache? Why don't you go to your room and take an aspirin, I'll look after Jimbo – After all, he did come to see me. By the way, we may be going to the country club for dinner so why don't you ask Mrs. Schultz to fix you a nice bowl of soup?"

"Oh" replied Ruth, "my headache went away ages ago and I feel just fine." Ruth then turned to Jimbo and asked,

"Can I refill your glass, you seem to need a refill." "As for dinner, I thought Jimbo would appreciate a really good Cajun meal and so I made a reservation."

Eleanor shot back, "You know I detest that food – that it always makes me sick just to look at it. We'll call and cancel the reservation and dine at the club."

This time, Jimbo chimed in, "But I love Cajun food and would like to forego the country club's dinner if you wouldn't mind. I can't get enough of the food of my forebears. For Jimbo, the time for being gallant and a gentleman was past. He immediately weighed the two women, chose the younger, intelligent and interesting of the two and so off they went to savor the delights of a good, Cajun meal. This time, Eleanor feigned a terrible headache and decided to go to her room.

Jimbo and Ruth returned to the house very late. The long, delicious dinner, the delicious drinks and the interesting conversation kept the two out until after 3:00 A.M and Jimbo stayed an extra hour talking with Ruth. They could not get enough of each other and made plans to see each other the following day.

After Jimbo left, Eleanor went to Ruth's room and berated her daughter for leaving her alone.

"But that's all right" she said, "I can see that Jimbo hasn't changed at all. He is still that little, insignificant wimp of a man who seems to shrink into his own shadow. I wouldn't touch him with a ten foot pole."

"We had a wonderful time countered Ruth, you would have been bored stiff." Jimbo is so intelligent, so knowledgeable and such a gentleman."

"Isn't he a little too old for you. He's about my age, 55 or 56. Besides, he's old enough to be your father."

"Old replied Ruth, I hardly noticed his age. When someone fulfills all your hopes of finding someone so interesting, you do not think about age. By the way, he is 57 years old, the same age as you, not 55 or 56."

“Don’t be so flippant with me. Remember who has been supporting you all your life.”

“Oh”, rejoined Ruth, “I thought it was my grandfather who provided all the money for Mrs. Schultz, the house, my education and your membership to the country club. You may not know it, but we have been in touch for many, many years now. He has followed my education, and my career and has guided me in many of my decisions. Didn’t you know that?” she innocently asked?

## CHAPTER 9

Eleanor was furious. She left the room, slamming the door in anger. Her visit to the lawyer to settle some of the points on her father’s will indicated that Ruth would also be a legatee. Learning just now that the two had been in touch over the years while, she, angered at her father’s sending her away never kept in touch with him. She and her father had been like two strangers – filled with resentment towards each other for creating the problems in their lives.

Eleanor was also furious with Jimbo. How dare he come to visit her, Eleanor, and then in the most ungentlemanly way dismiss her as though she was in the way. She would fix the little squirt in her own time.

At breakfast the next day, Eleanor said to Ruth, “You know, you should be very careful in how far you go with “prince charming”. He could be your father, you know.”

Ruth looked at her mother in a questioning way. “How could he be my father? He told me himself that there was never anything intimate between you two.”

“Perhaps his memory is a little fuzzy” was Eleanor’s rejoinder. Perhaps he wants to forget the one time we were “intimate” or maybe he just wants to erase the incident from his mind. The one time I felt sorry for him and let him have his way, his inadequacies prevented him from entering me but he did climax all over me – down there. It has been known that a man does not have to actually penetrate a woman to conceive a child.”

“You’re making this all up, and trying to be more hateful than usual” returned Ruth. It’s just because you were unable to have your way. You would do anything, to hurt me wouldn’t you.”

“Have it your way” replied Eleanor “ but you’re really quite alike. For one thing, you are both bookworms. My other two friends would not be caught dead with a book. You think about it, but don’t say I didn’t warn you.” Pleased with her vindictive parry, Eleanor smiled, quite satisfied that her

words would create all kinds of doubts. Besides, she thought, it could be true, couldn't it? Perish the thought.

The next day, Jimbo bounced out of bed, showered and anxiously awaited the time for the library to open. He was looking forward to seeing Ruth and perhaps having lunch together. They had such a wonderful time together last night that he didn't want to believe that it was just a dream.

Gathering some materials, writing pads, pencils, he went to the library. It was too early and in his eagerness, Jimbo started to fantasize about the possibilities between Ruth and himself. He also thought about Eleanor and how she had not moved in any way whatsoever from her teen years. How can anyone just stand still for 37 years, not being any different from the way she was? He thought, "you can't expect anything to remain the same. Well, he thought, there went 37 years of hopes and desires.

At last the library opened. Trying not to appear too enthusiastic, Jimbo went to the men's room to try to calm down, wet his face, combed his hair so that he would be as presentable as possible when he met Ruth.

Forcing himself to show reserve, he approached Ruth, who with her head down, reading some reports did not acknowledge his presence. Finally, she looked up and met his eyes with a steady gaze.

"We have to talk," she intoned, not with a voice of friendliness, but more in a manner of concern and seriousness.

Jimbo was taken aback. We had such a rapport with each other, he thought and Ruth seemed to be having such a wonderful time, it's hard to believe that it was all make believe.

"I must talk with you very seriously. Meet me at the luncheonette at noon." I can't talk now, I have too many things to attend to but it is imperative that we talk."

Jimbo still couldn't imagine what had taken place between 3:00 A.M. and 8:00 A.M. to cause Ruth to act so coldly towards him. He was convinced that he really did not too much about women.

Going through the motions of doing research, the words in front of him blurred and he could only concentrate on the urgency that Ruth displayed. When it was time to meet Ruth, he felt dizzy and he sensed their meeting with some foreboding. Ruth had not indicated anything about the subject of their intended discussion. He wracked his brain to recall anything that he might have said or indicated in their time of the previous evening and could only conclude that nothing negative was either said or implied by either of them.

Gathering up his research papers, he walked to the luncheonette to await Ruth. A few minutes after noon, Ruth appeared, scanned the restaurant and walked over to where Jimbo was



sitting. She was glad to notice that Jimbo had selected a table that was somewhat isolated and out of earshot of the other diners.

Upon her arrival, Jimbo rose, scraping the chair legs against the floor, sat down and looked expectantly at Ruth.

“Let’s order first so we can talk without the waiter intruding” she said. “I think I am going to need a stiff drink first though so please bear with me until I get my thoughts in order.”

After the drinks and food was brought to their table, Ruth started by saying: “I received some very disturbing information last night and I am going to ask that you be very truthful and open with me.”

Jimbo thought, “the only person who could have given her the disturbing information would be her mother. Now what could she have said?”

“After I returned home from our dinner, my mother was waiting up for me she wanted to talk she said. She then informed me that I should be careful with you since it was possible that you could be my father. I protested stating that you had told me there was never anything more than talk between you. But it seems, there was one occasion when things got beyond talk and that you both got involved intimately. She also said that while you never penetrated her, you did climax against her genitals and that perhaps some of your discharge could have impregnated her.”

Jimbo turned red. He had not forgotten the event but felt that Eleanor’s other boyfriends were probably responsible. The idea of his inadequacy seemed another failure and he tried to forget the episode.

While she waited for Jimbo to answer, Ruth scrutinized his face searching for any telltale traits or idiosyncratic movements that could possibly tie them together. Ruth now recalled that Jimbo had mentioned how anxious he was to leave Baton Rouge. “Did Jimbo have any reason to fear that he impregnated Eleanor” she wondered?

Jimbo looked up at Ruth and with sheepish eyes admitted that indeed, the story was true.

“I don’t know what to say he rasped, this time with his eyes cast down at his plate in front of him. “I don’t suppose there is anything I can do to undo the fact, and I am sure you will not want to have anything to do with me from now on. I can only apologize and beg your forgiveness if I have hurt you.”

Jimbo got to his feet, the chair again scraping against the tile floor and said, “I’ll pay the check and then leave and you need never worry that I will cause you any additional unhappiness.” “I shall leave New Orleans tomorrow and write on another subject.”

It was now Ruth's time to talk. Laying her hand on Jimbo's arm, she arrested his attempt to stand up and said, "Look, what happened in the past cannot be the basis for destroying something that is basically good. I think that we should act like adults, ascertain whether or not you are related to me and then go on from there. They are doing wonders now with the DNA tests and I think that before we do anything rash, we should submit to the tests."

Trying to make light of the subject, Ruth added: "Besides, I have always had the intention of trying to locate my father, and so, if it is you, I will have gained a father and a friend. And, if you are not my father, we'll marry, that is if you would want me."

Jimbo, looking up in surprise at the graciousness of this lovely, sensitive woman, and could only feel grateful for her tact, her understanding and the goodness in this human being.

"There is nothing more I could ever want," he said.

"Look Ruth said, I have a month's vacation coming up in two weeks. Why don't we do some research and find a reputable DNA consultant in California. I had plans to go to Santa Barbara to visit with friends. I'm sure you can go any time since you have no set job to go to. We can resolve the problem one way or another and in the meantime, get to know each other better. If we are related, (and I hope we're not) we can at least create a beautiful friendship of father and daughter. In the meantime, I want to consider seeing you in a father/daughter relationship. How does that sound to you? Could you get away for a month in two weeks? It's short notice, I realize but you always wanted to be more spontaneous in your adventures so let's start now."

Jimbo was delighted. In a way, this was an adventure. Sure, he would postpone his plans on the book until the other matter was settled. Wasn't this what an adventure was? Letting everything wait until you could do that thing that was more important?

"What will you tell your mother," Jimbo asked.

"I will simply announce that I will be away for a month. If you wish, I could tell her that we are both taking the trip. After all, I don't think I need permission."

"I am going to phone my friends Skip and Kay Bronson that I shall be bringing a guest with me and to expect two of us. I'm not going to say it's a man that is coming with me, I'm anxious to see whether they will give us one room or two. You and I have our agreement, so it will be fun to see how things turn out. Do you object to my little game?"

"No, not at all" returned Jimbo. "Frankly, I wouldn't know how to act as either a father or a lover, so it can be a good joke on me as well when we tell them."

Since Santa Barbara is a beautiful, casual town, more inclined towards vacation and beach, they limited their wardrobes to mostly casual and sport clothes with a good suit and a good dress in

case there was something a little more formal that they would be attending. In the interim, Ruth contacted a very well known doctor who specialized in DNA testing by the name of Dr. Robert Maloney. Ruth wrote and asked what they needed to bring with them for the test, how long would the results take and of course, what costs were involved.

Ruth also wrote to the lawyer in Baton Rouge and told him that she would be unavailable until the month had passed and so would he please postpone the reading of the will until she returned. She had no idea what was involved and only knew that her grandfather was a very wealthy man with assets in many lands.

For Jimbo, the task was even easier. He simply informed his landlord that he would be away and that he would advance the payment of his rent so that she need not be concerned. He decided to ask Ruth to accompany him on a shopping tour so that he could get the proper clothes for him. It was strangely comforting to have Ruth with him and guiding his purchases. He thought, "It really feels like we are a family already, in one sense or another."

The day of departure came, both Jimbo and Ruth were flushed with excitement and also some fear concerning their DNA tests. But both minimized the findings as a plus in either way. She could gain a father which she had wanted to do since her early years, and/or she would be a daughter he never imagined or Ruth could gain a husband in Jimbo. Both discoveries would be a plus. There was only a positive ending in the DNA results.

After arriving at the airport, (they decided to fly rather than drive) they were met by Ruth's friends, Skip and Kay. After the first awkward moments of introduction and the confused looks of Ruth's friends, they all drove to the house where they would be staying. Kay wondered what the relationship was since Ruth had never mentioned a beau. One room or two she wondered. She concluded it would be two rooms, at least that would negate the error of giving one room for the two to share.

The house was a rather elegant bungalow. It was small as many of the bungalows were but it was beautifully furnished and best of all, it fronted right on the beach. What could be better?

The couples spent most of their time on the beach, ate informally and got to really know each other. When Ruth and Jimbo made their appointment with Dr. Robert Maloney, Skip lent them his car and as far as the Bronsons knew, the pair were off on some business.

One evening, Kay said she had invited a couple from the Santa Ynes mountain area to join them for dinner. Kay had mentioned that since both Ruth and Jimbo had talked about an adventure trip to Alaska, that Martha and Bruce Leeson might be interesting to meet. The Leesons have a son, daughter-in-law and three grandchildren living in Alaska. The thought was the Leesons could tell them about the adventures their children had when they were looking for a place that was still unaffected by civilization and had gone off, without experience to learn how to live off the land. The

youngsters were very happy as were the three children and they wrote often of the obstacles and adventures they experienced. Young Sarah, Jake's wife had learned to do all sorts of things for their survival. She could skin and cook squirrel and other small wildlife they trapped; could preserve blackberries and blue berries; preserve meats and tan small hides. And, she was only 16 years old when the two decided to live in the wilds. They even built their own log cabin, a non contaminating latrine and a water system for their needs", said Kay. " We are really proud of them. Skip and I had similar thoughts but our children actually realized them."

Jimbo then said, "What they are doing is what I really wanted to do and in fact, Ruth and I are thinking that sometime soon, we will just do that. Not to the extent that Jake and Sarah did but a somewhat more modified plan, after all,

Kay suggested, if you like, I could write and tell them what they would suggest as a way of starting or better still, I could give you their email address and you could contact them yourselves and ask what you want."

Ruth and Jimbo exchanged a short look full of meaning and agreed that they would really appreciate getting in touch with Jake and Sarah. Alaska was a lifetime dream for me, ever since I was a young boy and started reading Jack London's stories of the untamed areas of the north. The idea has never left me and for some reason, things seem to be falling into place in my life and can only think that perhaps "Fate" is a reality."

The following week, there was a letter from Dr. Maloney addressed to the Cosnards in care of the Bronsons. Kay received the letter, looked questioningly at the letter from a doctor and upon giving the letter to Ruth, said, "I hope it's nothing serious, but you have a letter in care of this address."

Ruth held her breath and Jimbo being more superstitious, crossed his fingers. The two went off to Ruth's room, and tremblingly opened the missive.

The letter only advised them that there were results and that the two should visit Dr. Maloney's office for an official consultation.

Ruth and Jimbo were on tenterhooks. How were they ever going have the time pass until their visit to Dr. Maloney? However ,the days did pass and they nervously rang the doctor's bell until the automatic buzzer permitted them to enter. There were no patients in the waiting room and after a few minutes, Dr. Maloney greeted them and showed them into his office, seated them and offered coffee.

Finally, he opened a file on his desk, studied it for a few minutes, closed the file and looked at both in the eyes.

"I don't' know what you are hoping for in this test, but the results of the DNA results show conclusively that there is no possible way that the two of you are related."

Jimbo slumped in his chair with a vocal sigh of relief and Ruth's broad smile beamed her delight in hearing the doctor's report. The two left, arms tightly squeezed together and breathed in the warm, mellow air of this beautifully sunny day.

"Jimbo" said Ruth, let's just the two of us find a lovely bar and have a drink together. I don't think I can go back without some sort of lift.

"Two long gin and tonics and make that with extra limes" said Jimbo to the bartender.

In silent acknowledgement, they toasted each to each and were filled with anticipation and joy on this event which would be the start of a new life and adventure together. The long wait in life which neither could have expected brought such a feeling of comfort and warmth was so hard to believe that they just sat and looked at each other- at peace with the world and themselves.

## CHAPTER 10

When they finally returned to New Orleans, Eleanor sniffed, "It's about time you thought of coming back. Mr. Brockhurst, the lawyer, called and said that the will is ready to be probated." Eleanor also noted a smugness on Ruth's face and a look of cool contentment on Jimbo. Her mind noted all this but she would think "why" tomorrow.

The meeting with Attorney Brockhurst was to take place in his office, the day after tomorrow.

"If she wanted, she would have someone drive them to Baton Rouge or she, Ruth could go on her own."

Ruth indicated that she and Jimbo would be driving up together and might want to stop on the way. So, it would be better if we met at the attorney's office at the allotted time."

Now, that smug look and Jimbo's contented look took on a more sinister meaning in Eleanor's mind. She decided to go up earlier herself, go to her father's house and do a quick appraisal of the premises.

When she arrived at the house, the door was opened by a heavy set woman, decidedly of German descent by the accent she spoke with, and iron willed as to whom she would allow to enter.

Gertrudis Froeschl, the maid stood behind the half opened door and was not going to let anyone in.

When Eleanor explained that she was Herr Sitzman's daughter, Gertrudis simply told her she knew of no daughter of Herr Sitzman and that she had orders from Attorney Brockhurst that no one was to be allowed to enter.

"If you are Herr Sitzman's daughter, you will have to get permission from Mr. Brockhurst.

Eleanor retreated. No matter, she thought, when the will is probated, that will be the last I shall see of either of them and the first person I shall get rid of will be that gestapo maid.

The journey from New Orleans to Baton Rouge was some 80 miles and could be reached in about an hour and a half.

Ruth and Jimbo, having no idea what would be bequeathed to whom in the will decided to leave early and to leisurely drive and enjoy the scenery. They thought of stopping at some nice inn for a delicious lunch and then proceed to Baton Rouge. Also in the itinerary would be a trip to visit Jimbo's family. His mother and father were still alive and he had not seen them in some time. Too, and most of all, he wanted to introduce Ruth to his family to discuss their immanent wedding and their plans.

When they finally reached the attorney's office, they were surprised to find Mrs. Schultz, the present housekeeper of Max Sitzman, Gertrudis Froeschl, Mr. Sitzman's chauffeur, Karl Stutz and of course Eleanor. Eleanor, as Max Sitzman's next of kin was seated opposite the lawyer and the others divided on either side of the conference table.

At each place, a pad, a pencil and a glass of water was evident. Finally, after a preliminary explanation of the procedure, the attorney cleared his throat and started reading the contents of the will.

To the chauffeur Karl Stutz, who has been my chauffeur for more than 35 years, I leave the sum of \$50,000.00.

To my housekeeper, Frau Gertrudis Froeschl, I leave the sum of \$75,000.00.

To my former housekeeper, Frau Ingrid Schultz, I leave \$75,000.00.

To Eleanor Sitzman, I leave the house in New Orleans and a monthly sum of \$5000.00 for every month she remains alive. She is free to sell or rent her house as she sees fit. She shall be responsible for all repairs, taxes or other costs. No other monies or properties will be left in her name.

To Ruth Sitzman, my granddaughter, I leave this house and all the remaining assets that I have. (To my estimates this should accrue to about \$12,000,000.)

Pandemonium broke loose. The maids and the chauffer clutched their hands in thanks, tears streaming down their faces.

Ruth was in shock. She was absolutely speechless.

As for Eleanor, she screamed that she would fight this will through every court. “ Even those Gestapo maids received more than me.” She turned to her daughter, Ruth and said, “That money belongs to me, he was my father and I’ll fight you in the courts. But for now you can gloat spending my money , with that person you are having an incestuous relation with.

Ruth countered, “I shouldn’t give you the satisfaction of knowing but Jimbo and I had a DNA test and the results showed that he couldn’t have been my father. So live with that.”

Eleanor sputtered, “Yes, but he’s still a Nigger.”

After calling the meeting to order, Attorney Brockhurst added. There is one other stipulation left in the will by Mr. Sitzman.

Quote “If anyone shall contest my last wishes in any court of law, that legatee shall forfeit any and all stipulations in the original document. “unquote”, signed MAX SITZMAN.

After the meeting, the recipients congratulated and embraced each other and the meeting room was alive with merriment. All of course with the exception of Eleanor Sitzman. Her features, black with anger and rage could not destroy the bountiful amounts left to each.

Eleanor turning to Mrs. Schultz she said, “come, let’s go home now that this circus is over.”

Mrs. Schultz looked at her in amazement. “You want me to go home or whatever you call that house?” Then she added, besides, why would you want to go anyplace with this “Gestapo Woman” as you called me.”

Eleanor countered, “you know I didn’t mean that, it was said in a fit of anger. It was just words.”

“First, for me, it wasn’t just words, it’s what you felt and feel about me. And second, my plans are to return to Germany and live with my sister and her family. There, I will have the love of my family and now, with the generous money left to me by Herr Sitzman, I can go and help my family economically too.”

“I have very little in terms of personal things, some clothes and some photographs. I will be out of the house in two days at the most.”

“But, Mrs. Schultz, you don’t have to leave so soon. I told you my outburst was a momentary fit of anger.” In reality, Eleanor was thinking of who was going to cook, clean, buy food and serve her. Damn, she thought, I should have held my tongue.

## CHAPTER 11

When Ruth spotted Jimbo who was waiting for her in the small park near the lawyers office, she approached him and told him that “he was not going to believe what she was going to tell him.”

Jimbo thought, she probably received 5 or 10 thousand dollars since she never saw her grandfather. When she told him that her grandfather left her 12 million dollars, his only reaction was to sit on the grass in front of him and roll over holding his head.

Say it again, he pleaded, I don’t know whether I heard you right the first time”.

“You heard me right, 12 million dollars, 12 million. This is going to take some time to digest and to think of the ramifications that this could have on our lives. This is more than just a great deal of money, it could also be a curse in the fact that we would have to know what to do with it; how to invest it; how to live a normal life without all that money taking all your efforts and time. Right now, I don’t even want to think about it. Please, let’s not discuss things until we are ready, O.K.”?

Attorney Brockhurst has said that I can take over the house at any time suitable to me. He also indicated that if I should be needing someone until I have settled, I can hire Frau Froeschl who indicated that she would be willing to remain until I find someone to replace her.

“And from what I heard in the office between Ms. Eleanor Sitzman and Frau Schultz, I think even Mrs. Schultz might be willing to come for a while or until you hire someone”, said the attorney. “The house is large and both women took care of the house at some point. You know Frau Schultz and have been living with her since you were born. Anyway, you have some choices and decisions. With both women, you know that the house will be in perfect condition.”

Ruth discussed the matter with Jimbo and said that she would leave her work at the library and move to Baton Rouge. They both thought that Mrs. Schultz would be the better choice to stay with them, “I could never live with my mother after this, so please, move in with me, we will be getting married soon and it would simplify matters if we were together making the decisions we will have to make. I’m not asking you to give up writing your book, only if you could postpone your research in



New Orleans for a little while, I would feel more secure and comforted as well if you were here to discuss what we should do.”

Pleased that Ruth valued his opinions and feeling a little more sure of himself, he assented. In the meantime, Ruth and he decided to have a quiet wedding ceremony with only Jimbo’s parents and Mrs. Schultz who had agreed that she would stay with them until she was ready to return to Germany. After all, Mrs. Schultz was the only mother Ruth had had, her real mother forsook her and was involved with only herself.

The attorney, Mr. Brockhurst gave the bride away and the small group celebrated with a beautiful dinner at an exclusive restaurant.

As Ruth and Jimbo agreed, they would put off thinking about her legacy until they could cope with the idea and what ramifications it would have on their lives. Neither wanted to devote their remaining days with investments and fiscal planning. Their interests were different. They decided to talk the matter over with Attorney Brockhurst. Since Mr. Brockhurst had handled so many business matters for her grandfather, he would be the logical one to advise them.

After making an appointment with the attorney, they spoke forthrightly and said, “Look, we don’t want to give the impression that the money is unimportant, but neither of us is prepared to know what to do with so much capital. We are a newly married couple, we would like to make plans like normal people and not be thrown into the world of finance which we know nothing about. Can you guide us?”

Attorney Brockhurst said, “I want to congratulate you on your thinking. Too many people think that inheriting a large amount of money puts you on Easy Street”, it’s quite the opposite to be honest and I can’t tell you what to do, those will be your decisions. However, I can steer you to people who are professionals in their field and you can pay them to guide you. For example, you might want to invest in U.S. Treasury notes. Or you might want to put some of your money in CD’s or you might want to connect yourself with a reputable stock broker, and/or work with someone in buying properties. I will tell you only one thing, Don’t invest in any one entity and also, be patient, let most of your investments go into long term, shorter profit but more certain profit. In other words, don’t invest and try to make a killing. Let others who are professionals do your work. Of course, you will be paying them but their recommendations and decisions will at least be professional decisions. No one, no one can ever tell you he or she knows anything that is a sure thing. I would be the first one to make my bundle and retire to a tropical island drinking cocktails as I lay in the sun if I knew that.

I will give you the names of some competent people in field; you will meet with them, discuss their terms and your needs and then can make your decisions. I’m sorry if I can’t be of more help but I would just be guessing and so, you will have to be part of the group of us who are in the same boat.

Don't rush, give yourselves some time to get used to the idea of having money but don't wait forever either."

Ruth and Jimbo decided that they would take Attorney Brockhurst's council. They would wait a few months before being concerned about what to do and to whom they should entrust the investing of the money. The time they spent together would be the really getting to know each other. Both had been together and spent lovely days and evenings but they had also spent time in stressful situations. Now it was time to just relax.

Max Sitzman was a meticulous man in his lifetime. He did not want to ever fail. He loved classical music and was especially impressed by the music of Mozart and Johan Sebastian Bach. With such fervent love for these great masters, he also felt they gave honor to Germany and Austria. So, in his inimitable way, he ordered an expensive Steinway grand piano. He spent hours practicing and studying with famous teachers, but, lamentably, he could only be considered a mediocre musician. To his chagrin, he persevered but unlike his other endeavors, this time, his perseverance yielded no results. The magnificent instrument was tuned constantly and awaited some unusual talent to show its qualities.

Enter Jimbo. Jimbo had studied music at the Sorbonne and was considered as more than adequate as a musician. His forte was sight reading and he could sit down and play a piece remarkably well. He would never dare consider himself as soloist material, but his sensitivity to the music before him brought praise from those who listened.

When Ruth and Jimbo moved into the house, Jimbo ran his fingers across the keys expecting the piano to be just a decorative item in the living room. To his extreme surprise, he beheld this magnificent instrument, finely tuned and in such good repair, that he sat down and teased the keys to listen to the beautiful sounds they emitted. Hearing Jimbo and seeing him sitting at the piano, Ruth remarked, "I didn't know you played the piano and so beautifully too! Please play something for me."

"I don't have any music, but perhaps your grandfather had some music when he was being taught the piano."

"If I know anything about my grandfather it's that he probably has all the music printed of Mozart and Bach. Mrs. Schultz said those were his favorites and so I think if we look in the library, we'll find something for you to play."

When they went to the library, a small area was walled off with an oak door leading to an archive. There, neatly catalogued was as Ruth innocently guessed, the complete works of Mozart and Bach.

Jimbo was impressed. Each piece of music was enclosed in a clear, plastic envelope with the name, date when it was composed; who published the music, its Koehel listing if it was Mozart or its BVW if it was Bach.

“What are those Koehel listings and BVW initials preceeding the works”? asked Ruth.

“Those words or initials give the number of the work as does your system of cataloguing them in your library. Koehel was the man who catalogued Mozart’s music and the BVW stands for Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis or simply put, Bach’s work catalogue. The two composers created so many works that a way had to be found to document them.”

“I would love to hear you play Bach’s “Goldberg Variations. That music has always been so calming to me, I can remember using earphones in the library’s collection of classical music whenever I had a stressful day. See if you can find the music. No, wait, let me see if I can locate it, I am sure my grandfather used the approved system to archive his music.”

The music was exactly where Ruth expected to find it. “What an extraordinary man my grandfather was, I would have loved to have known him and to have been taught by him.”

“Remember”, said Jimbo, I am seeing this music for the first time in maybe 2 or 3 years since I did play for myself very often, and I did love the “Variations”.

Sitting down to play, a peaceful calm illuminating his face, Jimbo played gently and fluidly. His mind had not forgotten the music and as he played, his self assurance in remembering the subtleties of the music came again to his fingers and heart.

For Ruth, the soft lighting of the living room and the lovely fading light of the ending day brought a sense of contentment coupled with the amazement that this was her Jimbo playing. How little she knew of his finer points! There was so much more to discover she thought and her face flushed warmly at her good fortune.

## **CHAPTER 12**

Two months had passed since she learned of her inheritance. Neither had wanted to bring the peaceful interlude to an end but each knew it was something that had to be done. Yet, like lingering in a warm bed on a frigid morning, the thought in the back of their minds was ever aware that this blissful peace would have to end.

On this particular Sunday morning, they both reclined, the various sections of the New York Times, spread over the huge oak bed that had been her grandfather's. On Sunday mornings, they each gave in to the treat of having breakfast in bed. Nothing too elaborate; some juice, toast and jam, coffee or tea. It was one of their favorite luxuries.

From the other side of the large bed, Jimbo, propped up on one arm, said: "I don't know if I mentioned it but I wrote to the Leeson's son and daughter in Alaska asking some questions about what would be necessary for us to bring, such as clothes etc. if we come to make our visit. Well, I received an email the other day outlining what would be necessary, what the weather is like, where or from whom we could rent a log cabin, etc. you know, useful information. You know that the trip has always been with me since I was a young man. Do you think you would still like to go?"

"Yes, I would like to make the trip and no, you didn't mention that you had written and received an answer. Maybe you had just forgotten."

Then Ruth popped back, and, oh, did I mention" -----

"Mention what, asked Jimbo, cutting her off in midsentence."

"Oh it's just that I think I'm pregnant, that's all," she returned. "We are going to have a baby."

On hearing those words, Jimbo without realizing it, sucked in his breath in astonishment. "We never talked about having a child and it's so soon."

Noting a frightened look on Jimbo's face, Ruth asked.

"You don't seem pleased or happy. Don't you want to have a family?"

Jimbo could see the disappointment on her face and explained. "I would love to have a family, but you know, we talked about it the first time we had a chance to be together. I told you that my great grandfather had a Negro wife. What will happen if the child is born with dark skin, or Negroid features?"

"What am I hearing from you?" Asked Ruth. "What are you saying? Is this the man I married?"

So what if the child is born with dark skin, or curly hair or Negroid features? This is not a social issue; not something the ignorant Rednecks would consider relevant. This is our child you are talking about. Your child and my child. That the child is well and healthy is all that matters, not whether it has blue eyes and blond hair. This is the first time that I have seen anything within you that I cannot live with; that shames me and quite frankly, I am very disappointed."

"Please, Ruth, listen to me. It's not me I am thinking of, it's the child. He or she will grow up feeling as though they did something wrong. They will have friends, but not friends whose parents will invite them to stay or to attend party's or where mingling with other children could lead to

relationships that could lead to marriage. I am only relating what happened to me and my features, skin color and blue eyes would never be a drawback. But, the parents of my friends knew that there was a Negro in my background and I was left out, excluded from social activities that would put me too close a contact with their daughters. Your mother, through rebelliousness towards your father, was the only one I could get close to. Can you now understand why I wanted to renew my friendship with her after 37 years.

It was only in France where I did not feel the stigma of racial mixing. Perhaps if I was dark it would have made a difference but as it was, I felt liberated from my background. Please understand Ruth, I am terrified and I don't know how to make the feeling go away. The thought of having a child with you would be the most wonderful thing that could happen to me."

Hearing his plea, Ruth felt the desperation he was feeling and her feelings towards him softened. She said softly, "I am so sorry that your childhood was so terrible and that you have never been able to conquer the fear you have. But I shall remind you constantly that however this child is born, I shall love it, care for it and protect it and will do the same for the man who is its father."

Ruth held Jimbo in her arms, giving him the sense of protection and assurance he needed.

Not wishing for Jimbo to dwell too much on the subject, she brought the conversation around to the agreed to "adventure to Alaska".

Both sat down, pad and pencils in hand and a calendar.

"First, when is our child due?" asked Jimbo.

"I am only in my second month so we will not have to worry about danger to the baby. Before we go though, we can check with the gynecologist, tell him our plans and see what he says. One other thing, I want you to agree that if the baby is a boy, we name him Robert, after the poet you so enjoy. And if it is a girl, we shall call her Roberta. How does that sound?, Robert or Roberta Service Cosnard?"

"I would like that very much, very much," responded Jimbo.

## **CHAPTER 13**

With the O.K. from the doctor, the dates set with the Jake and Sarah Leeson: the Cosnards left the house in the capable hands of Mrs. Schultz for a minimum of one or two months.

They had agreed to rent a log cabin which Jake and Sarah found for rent. Realizing that Jimbo was not too young a man, the Leeson's selected an area near the Denali National Park and Preserve but with some space between neighbors. In all of Denali, the area in which the Leeson's lived and in which they located the log cabin for the Cosnards, there were only a thousand people so Jimbo and Ruth could feel the sense of being alone without the hardships if an emergency did occur.

Jimbo and Ruth were met by Sarah and Jake at the small railroad station of Denali. The station was a recently built, simple, one story structure, gable roofed and with a protecting porch of some 8 feet surrounding the building. The small building had a huge wood burning, cast iron stove set upon a base of fired brick and gave off both warmth and the delicious fragrance of hickory wood.

Having sent pictures ahead, Ruth said, "That must be the Leeson's, there in the green SUV. Awaiting them were Jake, Sarah and the youngest daughter, Rebecca. Their other two children were left at home and were capable of taking care of themselves and knew who to contact in case of emergencies.

With friendly handshakes and embraces, there were the usual questions about how Jake's parents were doing; what was happening in Santa Barbara and Santa Ynes; what was their trip like and so on. For Jake and Sarah, even strangers like the Cosnards were a treat since they saw very few people.

Sarah knew that the Cosnards were tired from their trip and more than anxious to see where they were going to be living for the next month or two.

Sarah had brought with them, a basket with some of her homemade, sour dough rye bread, some cured venison, a large thermos of hot, herb tea and one of her fresh bramble berry pies. They sat on some fold up canvas stools and ate off the back of the rear door of the SUV.

"You might as well start learning how to "rough it" since you will be doing a lot of that in the cabin." Jake said. If she wouldn't be in your way, Sarah has agreed to spend a day or two with you to sort of show you around. She will help you buy some provisions, help you to rent a SUV, show you some of the necessary things we had to learn the hard way and then leave you on your own."

Ruth and Jimbo were grateful since they both had lived the sheltered lives in large cities and took for granted what to do for water, heat, electricity and so forth. Now, they balked at how to use the outhouse so that it was inoffensive to the person following your use of the facility. There seemed to be hundreds of little things that they suddenly became aware of so Sarah's offer was embraced heartily.

Once settled, Ruth and Jimbo began to enjoy the new discoveries, the new discomforts and most of all, the magnificent privacy. After a slow, easy and simple dinner, they enjoyed the warmth of the cast iron stove, dressed in wool stockings, warm woolen nightgown and pajamas. It was these

times that allowed them to really learn the subtleties of each other in such close proximity. With steaming cups of hot tea, they talked of little things that they had never before talked about with others. Things that were joyous, things that were frightening, attitudes towards all kinds of issues, everything. It was then that Jimbo, his demeanor serious and his voice low said, "When I die, I want you to promise that you will have my remains cremated and my ashes spread on these snowy mountains."

Ruth promised she would and asked the same of Jimbo, "which ever of us dies first, let the remaining partner save the ashes so that the ashes of both can be mixed and spread together." It was the kind of subject they would not talk of again but it had been inscribed in both their minds that this is what would happen.

When they played chess, Ruth discovered things about Jimbo she had never known. Just on the basis of his opening moves, sometimes bizarre, too often reckless, she noted his hesitancy at planning. Her subtle, conservative moves generally found him dumbfounded at hearing her victorious "check mate".

"How did that happen so fast?" he enquired. Ruth generally won all the chess matches but gave into second place on his skillful use of argument to win a point. They were a challenge to each other.

Bedtime came earlier as the light faded and after a goodly supply of wood in the stove, they could savor the pleasures of propinquity and love making.

Never too forceful or fast, they loved in the fashion of two musicians, each listening and sensing the needs and urgencies of the other and responding in like form. Theirs was a union, harmonic and responsive so that each felt that the giving to the other brought back returns never expected. Just in the gentleness of loving did their adventure in Alaska fulfill them.

There were times when Jimbo would read from the poems and prose of Robert William Service and Ruth soon learned and felt the promise of discovery that so inflamed the young Jimbo in his boyhood.

At other times, she loved to hear him read to her in French with his accent less, perfect French. He loved Verlaine and his reading was impassioned and beautiful.

Jimbo told Ruth about Verlaine, his passion for Arthur Rimbaud, the jealousies, the excesses. But, he concluded, "he left a legacy of beautiful poetry and perhaps that is all that matters in the long run. What we do with our lives and how we pay for the privilege of being part of life when we are here is all that really matters. Verlaine may have been unhappy but he also must have felt the inspiration of a god. There are many times that I think that if I could create so much, so much in the explanation of some part of life, I would settle for the life of tragedy. I realize I am being

melodramatic in speaking this way but I want to open myself to you completely, and if so, I must make some of these admissions even though I feel a sense of embarrassment in telling you.”

Much of the daytime when the sun was shining, they spent in the nearby National Park and Preserve. Walking the easier trails, the silence, the immensity of the forest, the size of the trees was overwhelming. All this was theirs alone for this precious short time. And then, famished with the morning walk, they would devour whatever Ruth prepared for them and which she placed in the back of the SUV.

Their time in the cabin permitted them to share more of their feelings than if they were at home in Baton Rouge. Here, one was a willing prisoner to the other and relieved that one could share in such secret thoughts. Little did they realize, these times together were building blocks of memories for them, that in later years, they would refer to as their special memories.

But not all introspective sharing was building memories. The mundane also brought its share of material to the future memories. Some humorous such as when on nights, both warmly tucked into bed, the sudden thought of using the latrine, some distance from the cabin, brought gales of laughter. Each offering the other first turn in using the facilities in the hopes that the seat would be warmed. They laughed as they thought how simple everything was back in Louisiana and how good to learn a little about themselves here in Alaska.

And finally, for Jimbo, a solitary wolf cry, late in the night left him shivering with emotion. That cry, so solitary yet so free and so true to the imagined wolf cry he heard as a child completed his joy.

After one and one half months, the weather started to really turn. Nights were frigid and some snow was falling with regularity. The walking, even to the latrine was starting to become risky for Ruth and so they decided that prudence was the better part of valor. They informed Sarah and Jake of their plans to leave and not wanting to endanger Ruth who was now entering her fourth month of pregnancy.

Sarah prepared a farewell feast of many delectable foods, all of which they either raised, hunted or harvested themselves. They even had a raspberry wine which they brewed for special occasions.

Ruth remarked, “what is this delicious meat that you are serving, I can’t remember eating anything so tasty.”

“You are eating squirrel and muskrat,” she replied. “I didn’t dare tell you what it was because I knew you would not want to try it. You know, when the colonies were settled in the lower 48, meat was something you rarely ever ate and so squirrel became almost a staple for the colonists.”



Jake echoed, "When you learn about the environment you are living in, you learn what to eat – no different from any other animal. You also learn that you are not superior but just the same as any other creature; all of which are trying to exist also."

The Cosnards slept in the Leeson cabin that night and in the morning, they left for the small airport which would carry them to Juneau. From there they would take a large airline to Seattle and then home. Ruth was starting to be a little concerned since her pediatrician had suggested that her age should not be overlooked and that she should show some caution.

## **CHAPTER 14**

Once home, they nostalgically remarked on the wonderful, fulfilling adventure the trip had been. Now however, the events and problems that had not been resolved loomed large. First of all, they had to remodel the adjoining bedroom into a room for their new child. On being asked whether they would want to know the sex of the child, they both preferred to await the actual birth. Thus, the colors they chose were neutral, good for either male or female. Meanwhile, Jimbo played nightly to Ruth the various works of Mozart and Bach hoping that perhaps, the unborn fetus would absorb some of the vibrations of these two masters. The parents wanted everything for their soon to be born baby and counted on the "who can say, maybe the child can be influenced"?

Unknown to Ruth however, were the disturbing reports from Mrs. Schultz of the visits from Eleanor. She was always very high on drugs and liquor and kept telling Mrs. Schultz that the house and the money Ruth inherited was really hers. There were some veiled threats which frightened Mrs. Schultz and she therefore reported these events to the attorney, Mr. Brockhurst. She mentioned that Eleanor sounded extremely disturbed and felt that perhaps she should tell Mr. Brockhurst before anything serious took place. Mrs. Schultz also told him of Eleanor's rude remarks concerning Ruth and blushing said I never like to use such words but I think you should hear them.

On one of the visits, after being told that Ruth was not home, she remarked that Eleanor told her, "Tell that bitch that this is my house and she has stolen my money and I want it back. Tell her that I need plenty of cash and I need it quick."

Attorney Brockhurst was appalled. Eleanor had also visited his office, spoken rudely to his secretary and had made similar demands. The attorney felt that perhaps he should inform the authorities since Eleanor's dependence on drugs and liquor could cause her to do something serious. He just wanted the authorities to know that Eleanor was unstable.

A short time after their return from Alaska, Attorney Brockhurst asked Jimbo to please come to his office and to not bring Ruth with him. He told Jimbo that he had some matters to discuss with him.

This of course perplexed and worried Jimbo since he had no idea what the attorney wanted to tell him. After being told of what had happened both at their home and Attorney Brockhurst's office, Jimbo was asked if he wanted to bring a complaint against Eleanor.

"You know, Mr. Cosnard, "Eleanor could potentially become dangerous with her dependence on drugs and alcohol. I suggest we report the happenings to the authorities so that we can be on the safe side should anything emerge from her behavior. In the meantime, I suggest you keep this knowledge from Ruth so as not to worry her."

The complaint was filed both in New Orleans and in Baton Rouge and hopefully would not have to be followed through because of any additional threats, implied or real.

Ruth's visits to the doctor and her sensible habits of exercise, diet and rest brought her to the time of the birth in good form. Since her age was almost borderline for having a baby, it was decided that she would undergo a caesarian section. She was also told that she should think very seriously of not having other children since the dangers to herself and the child could be very real.

After an overall easy time, the child was born. He was a boy, blonde haired and blue eyed like his father. Although Jimbo never let on, he was more than greatly relieved. Ruth and he had never again mentioned anything nor discussed anything concerning Jimbo's original fears and now, he could put those fears to rest forever.

His name as had been agreed, was to be Robert William Service Cosnard, in honor of that poet who so inspired the adventurous dreams of Jimbo.

The boy grew strong and was very bright and alert; perhaps the traits were carried from his grandfather, his father and his mother. Not only was he bright, but he was also a beautifully behaved child and Jimbo proudly displayed him to everyone he met. Jimbo played and talked to him as though he was talking to another adult.

One evening after attending a concert at the City Auditorium, they arrived home quite late.

"Strange", remarked Ruth, "The light is on in Robert's room. It's quite late for him to be up. She hurried up the stairs to find Mrs. Schultz trying to calm the child whose tantrums were unknown before.

"What's wrong with him," asked Ruth?

"I don't know but he refuses to eat and he has a temperature. He has been pushing away from the light and he seems to have a rash on his chest. "How long has this been taking place", asked Ruth?

"Since noon, he kept pushing his bottle away and seems to be in pain. I checked to make sure there were no pins or anything in his crib or his diapers, but I didn't find anything.

Since you were away all day, I had no chance to tell you."

Ruth inserted the thermometer into the child's anus and after a few minutes read that the baby had a temperature of 104 degrees. "Wrap the baby well, I am going to take him to the hospital. In the meantime, I am going to call the doctor and ask him to meet me in the hospital."

Finally after interminable rings of the telephone, the doctor answered, sleepily and upon being told the symptoms and temperature of the child, the doctor said, "The temperature's much too high. Bring him directly to the emergency room and I will be there as fast as I can."

When they reached the Emergency Room, the doctor was already there waiting for them. The staff immediately inserted an intravenous solution and the doctor asked how long this had been occurring. Since this noon, I had to be out of the house all day and then I met my husband at the concert hall. When we returned home, which was about one half hour ago, I noticed that the light was on in the baby's room and I found Mrs. Schultz, the housekeeper trying to comfort the baby. She said he has been vomiting, seems to be disturbed by the light and has a rash on his chest. Do you know what it is?"

"I think you and your husband should sit in the waiting room so that we can make some tests. The nurse will get you some coffee in the meantime. Now just sit and try to relax until we have arrived at what is wrong and what treatment we are going to give."

The waiting did not take long. After about one hour, the doctor returned and told them that the child is very sick and the suspicion is that it is bacterial meningitis. He further said, "I am not going to minimize this – it is very dangerous and hopefully we can catch the infection in time so that there will not be any following effects. The child shall be treated with antibiotics and I am going to ask that anyone who has been in contact with the child also submit to an antibiotics treatment as well since the disease is very contagious. We shall have to put the baby in an isolation ward until we see whether the antibiotics are working."

"When can we know if the antibiotics are working and what can we do in the meantime?"

"Like I said, we are doing everything we can and there is no way we can rush things. I know it's difficult to wait but that is all that we can do for the present. I'm going to prescribe some calming medicine for you so that you can get some rest. If there is any change, I personally will contact you at once. Believe me, we have done everything we can and we can only wait. The baby is strong and was healthy up to this time so that is a factor in our favor."

## CHAPTER 15

It was exactly 1:30 A.M. when the telephone rang. It's piercing sound could be nothing more than the death knell. Jimbo could feel it in his bone. He looked at the heavily sedated Ruth, still asleep and decided not to wake her. Receiving the call from the doctor, he silently nodded ascent and a feeble "I see". He was told that because of the diseases virulence, the remains would have to be isolated and that it was highly recommended that the body be cremated.

Jimbo mumbled his thanks and said that they would talk to him in the morning. "I don't want to wake up my wife – she is so exhausted and since there is nothing we can do, I shall let her have the little rest she so desperately needs."

Ruth woke up at 6:00 A.M., the affects of the sleeping potion were over. Jimbo had been sitting at side and watching her with a compassionate, loving and concerned look on his face.

"Did you hear anything yet?" She need not have asked for just one look at Jimbo's face and his tearing eyes told it all.

"Robert is dead, isn't he? Why didn't you wake me when you found out?"

"I wanted you to have as much rest as was possible. There was nothing to be done and so your sleep gave you a few hours of hope."

"Where is his body? We will need to make arrangements to have him buried?"

The doctor has said that his illness, (he had an extremely deadly case of bacterial meningitis which is very contagious) requires him to be cremated. We, you, Mrs. Schultz and myself must undergo preventative treatment with antibiotics. We shall have to go this morning and avoid as much as possible any contacts with others."

Ruth could only sit at the side of the bed, her arms and face showed complete defeat. I want his ashes to be spread next to his great grandfather's in Germany .I feel certain that Max Sitzman would have loved him and would have wanted his ashes mingling with his own."

The unhappy parents called Mrs. Schultz and together they went to the hospital to receive their antibiotic injections and to reclaim the ashes of their son. It was decided that Mrs. Schultz should return the ashes to Germany and at the same time, to visit her family which she hadn't seen in such a long, long time.

The house had the pall of death over it. No music, no poetry resounded within those walls and the house was always almost dark. In that way, the months passed; Mrs. Schultz returned and the life of the family continued in a silent, unhappy way.

With the passing of time, things brightened and now there could be heard an occasional laugh when some memory was recalled from their adventure in Alaska. Music too, not so often but lighter (mostly Mozart) was to be heard and gradually, the family returned to a semblance of normality.

After some six months had passed, Ruth suddenly started to blossom. Her attitude and her outlook again had the look of expectation and of hope. One night, when Jimbo was again losing to her superior game of chess she said.

"You know, I am pregnant again. I feel so happy and alive. Please Jimbo, tell me that you are glad to be able to have a child again. Our loss was great but we can still hope and this time, perhaps the gods will let us raise this child to adulthood. I can't tell you how renewed I feel. I will never forget Robert but I somehow feel he would have enjoyed having a brother or a sister."

"Oh Jimbo, I just want to open all the windows and let all the sadness and the darkness out and feel the house filled with sunshine again. I feel so full of hope and so happy. Let me feel your happiness too."

Her joy was infectious, because Jimbo, seeing her alive again also gained hope and the skies seemed to be clear from the fog and mists of the past months.

One afternoon, Ruth received a message from Attorney Brockhurst's office asking if she might come to the office for the attorney wished to talk to her.

On the appointed day, Ruth and Jimbo were met by Attorney Brockhurst and ushered into his office. It was late afternoon and the slanting rays of the sun lined the walls after shining past the half opened blinds. For some strange reason, Ruth was suddenly reminded of the admonition to keep Robert out of the strong light when Robert was afflicted with meningitis and a strange pang of fear went through her.

After they were seated, Attorney Brockhurst opened a file folder in front of him and commenced.

"As you probably remember, part of your grandfather's will left of stipend of \$5000.00 per month with the proviso that if the money was not withdrawn from the bank for 1 year, the money was to be held in an escrow account and if after 5 years of no activity, the monies were to be returned to the original sum left to Ruth."

"We have been trying to locate Eleanor Sitzman and after checking with the hospitals, the Coroner's office and the vice squad's office, and the penitentiary, we have found no trace of Ms. Sitzman's whereabouts.

Do you know where your mother might be?"

“No replied Ruth, “I haven’t seen or heard from her since we were here at the reading of the will.”

Jimbo then spoke, “As you know, I reported that Mrs. Schultz informed me that Ms. Sitzman had come to the house claiming that the money and the house that Ruth inherited from her grandfather belonged to her, Ms. Sitzman. I never mentioned anything to Ruth for fear of upsetting her since she is pregnant and in delicate condition. That was 6 months ago.”

“Then we shall have to wait and see whether the money is claimed or not. I am sorry that you had to learn that your mother is insisting that the money and house are hers but I had to ascertain whether you knew her address or where she is staying before I could act further.”

“I know that the amount is trifling next to what you inherited but I wanted to be sure that all stipulations were covered. I will not be calling you unless we have located your mother, so please relax, have a beautiful baby and you can be sure, your money or your rights to the property can never succeed in any court.”

After they left the office, Ruth turned to Jimbo and asked, “Do you think we should try to help my mother?”

“Definitely not” replied Jimbo, “the woman is a drug addict, an alcoholic and hateful. She would only make our lives miserable.” Jimbo judiciously omitted the threats Eleanor had made on them plus on the soon to be born child. There was no sense worrying Ruth further.

## **CHAPTER 16**

Careful attention , visits to the pediatrician and freedom from stress paid off and Ruth delivered a beautiful blonde haired, blue eyed daughter. She looked so much like Robert when he was born that the two could have been twins.

Roberta entered their lives and brought with her the joys of sunshine and hope. The nursery where Roberta was to be raised had been thoroughly sanitized. None of the furniture, curtains, rugs or anything was going to be left on the chance that the dreaded disease that took Robert was not left to infect his sister.

Roberta Wihelmina Service Cosnard. They decided on the German pronunciation in honor of the child's great grandfather so that the German blood of the family was recognized.

The child seemed to inherit the quickness of Jimbo and the ordered mind of her great grandfather. Anything she was shown, she quickly mastered. At the age of 2, she was already starting to read letters and small words and by the time she was 3, she could manage an easy book. Unlike her great grandfather however, she showed talent for music. Sometimes, when alone, she reached up to the piano keyboard and seemed fascinated by the sound as she pressed her fingers on the keyboard.

Jimbo, seeing her potential, decided to buy her a tiny violin and engaged a teacher for her. At 3 ½ years of age,, she was passed the first through seventh positions and her vibrato was steadier as she practiced. Often she sat quietly looking at some book while her parents were either playing chess sitting listening to her father play on the piano. There was always music being performed.

In one of her books, there were pictures of children of different color. She asked her father, "Daddy, why do some of the children have white skin like me and some of them have brown skin?"

Jimbo thought for a moment and suggested the analogy of the small kitten she had recently been given. From the litter of kittens, some were white, some black, some spotted and some striped.

"Do you remember when you selected Choo Choo as the kitten you wanted? You picked the striped kitten. They were all kittens from the same mother but some of them were different from the others just in color. They are all the same but some have different colors.

"Well, people are the same, we come in different colors but we are all the same. Some of us come from where the sun is very hot. Do you remember hot it hurt when we were at the beach and you played in the sun too long, well you were too white for the hot sun. The little children with the dark skin didn't get burned because their skin was dark.

In places like Sweden, that's a country way up in the north, people have very white skin because there is not enough sun and so their white skin helps them to absorb more healthy sunshine that if their skin was dark.

Roberta simply said, " Oh, I see", and went back to looking at the pictures of her book, her curiosity satisfied.

Roberta progressed and it was not too long before father and daughter were playing some simple duets for piano and violin. Of course, Jimbo selected classical pieces that were easy rather than children's songs. He gave Roberta the music of Johan Pachelbel's Canon in D and Mozart's Sonata for Violin and Piano, in G Major, k.379. Jimbo felt that she would be able to handle both pieces if she studied them. Both were relatively simple. Let her learn from the masters, he thought.

Ruth would sit back, a cloth protecting her eyes from the strong light and think, my child is amazing. I wonder what she will eventually do with her life. I want so badly for her to be happy. How proud would my grandfather have been, hearing her play duets with her father.

## CHAPTER 17

The years seemed to fly by. Ruth mentioned at breakfast that “We have to start thinking about Roberta’s preparatory school and whether she remains where she is or do we send her someplace else. While I am grateful we have her so close, we shall have to think where it best suit her talents and intelligence.”

“Yes,” replied Jimbo, we also have to give her the chance to start making some decisions on her own. I have not been idle, I have been looking into the Louise S. McGehee preparatory school. The curriculum is broad based and stresses self reliance and women roll models. I think, if you agree, that we should make a trip to New Orleans, bring Roberta with us, and give us all an opportunity to ask questions, see the students at work or play, and ask pertinent questions.”

“The other thing is that the school is located in New Orleans which is not too far yet far enough away so that will be able to make decisions for herself and not rely on us for answers.”

“I have asked Roberta from time to time whether she thinks she would like to devote her career to music.” Said Jimbo.

“Her answer was, “I love music but somehow, it is too personal. I want to do something that affects the lives of others. I will always have the music but I need to feel that I am a person who could make a difference in the way things are done in the world. Besides, I don’t feel I would want to study 6 to 8 hours a day playing violin. And to just play in a symphony orchestra wouldn’t interest me.”

After consulting with Roberta, all were in agreement that the next step would be to visit the school, to see the students at work and play, to talk to the teachers and to visit the facilities and to see and talk about the extra- curricular activities.

The family drove leisurely the 80 miles to New Orleans. Jimbo and Ruth talked about the changes that had taken place and not all of them for the better. They noticed more stricken areas where poverty was obviously growing. Roberta was more intense when these areas came into view. “Why doesn’t the State or the Government do something about getting jobs for these people.” Somehow, her resolve to get “involved” excited her as she felt that she, somehow could be of value. That would



be one of the principal points for her to focus on. And, she noted, there were many Latin-Americans settled in New Orleans. While the Latino population was only 3%, it was still growing, so she had to make sure the school offered Spanish as a language. Roberta felt that to make an impact, one had to start with a manageable group. It would be too overwhelming to take on a social program that would inundate her efforts.

French she learned from her father and her skills in reading, speaking and understanding in French were quite developed. She was sure that speaking French could only be an asset since many of the poor spoke a French that could sometimes be barely recognized as French. But speaking French would definitely be an asset. She noted also, in the brochure the school had sent that they offered Latin. Latin she felt would be a beautiful challenge and so useful since the base for the Romance languages is Latin. Besides, Jimbo had spoken so often of the poetry of Horace that she thought the challenge of reading Horace in Latin would be a test of her intelligence.

She laughed to herself as her father, in preparation for his recital of *Pocimus* by Horace, (she was convinced he knew only one poem and only the first few lines at that) would stand tall, his necktie thrown over one shoulder would in his deepest bass voice pontificate the words with sharp and precise enunciation:

POSCIMUS\_

Si quid vacui sub umbra tecum lusimus et quod in hunc annum vivat et pluris, age lic, barbita cermen Latium ,premiu modulate civi Lesbia - - etc. etc. etc.

Poscimus

Humbly now we play – if ever idle we play on you in the shade what may live into this year and many beyond, come, sing a Latin song, barbiton, first played upon by a citizen from Lesbos, etc. etc.

When asked to translate, he would clear his throat, and simply say, “look it up- that way you will learn something”.

Neither Ruth nor Roberta ever believed he knew what he was saying but it gave everyone a big laugh.

“I wonder what Daddy would say if I learned the translation?”

Ruth smiled broadly, “ He would innocently laugh and say”

“What!! You mean you didn’t know the translation?” then shake his head in disbelief and mutter, “What a family!”

Her father, for all his uptightness was really quite a funny fellow in his own inimitable way. It was part of \_his charm.

When they finally arrived at the Louise S. McGehee school, Jimbo expressed a little disappointment. He had expected the campus to be heavily treed like some of the better preparatory schools usually were. But Ruth, agreeing with Roberta, said that she didn't want to go from a beautiful parkland into the ghettos convinced him they were right.

"I am here to learn, to try to understand the conditions the poor live under and hopefully, with intelligence and understanding help to design solutions to alleviate those conditions. Quite frankly, I would have been disappointed if the campus was so serene and beautiful. Don't misunderstand, I love the beauty of nature but it would be too unreal to go from one environment to the other."

All three talked to students in the different years, the teachers and finally the head mistress. They discovered that the courses were hard but rewarding; that the girls were disciplined without feeling as though they were under the tutelage of wardens and that they were encouraged make decisions at all levels of learning. The head mistress also discouraged the girls going home so often on weekends to visit their families. Often times, the training and discipline would be lost on just a weekend. Weekends, they were told were for study. Weekends were a chance for the girls to work unimpeded and not by having to attend classes or other social activities. The student's time was her own and she could, of course, "waste" her time but it was hoped she would eventually reason that the time for learning in school was relatively short.

The parents were told what the menus generally were and what kind of dress was required and that wardrobe space was limited. In the meantime, the potential enrollee was given a reading list of worthwhile books that she could read if she wished. The list was not a requirement but just some classic books that the student should have read.

On the trip back, all three were excited and talked animatedly – school would be starting in 6 months.

Jimbo had mentioned that he would like to continue his research on his book and thought that his being in New Orleans could give Roberta and him chance to see each other every so often. "It's not to check up on you, but I would like to complete the book and I have to do it in New Orleans."

## CHAPTER 18

On the appointed day that school was to start, Jimbo packed Roberta, her belongings drove to the school. The trip was relatively quiet and the dual strain could be felt by both. This was the first time Roberta would be without her family and even though she was an independent young lady, she felt the absence of things familiar.

For Jimbo too, this was a first. He had not been away from his family and the closeness they had was something he too would have to adjust to. Now, with his two week stay in New Orleans, he would be missing Ruth terribly but fortunately, he had his research work cut out for him. He could not help thinking of Gilly and how the two of them developed a special kind of friendship. He took his hat from the wheel and gently touched the "Mouthpiece" Gilly had always carried. It was strange but Jimbo felt that by carrying Gilly's mouthpiece, he was giving Gilly life. From the day the Coroner placed the brass piece of Gilly's saxophone to now, he always put the object into his pocket. He felt it gave him a connection to Gilly's enthusiasm for jazz.

There were times when Jimbo felt that Gilly fantasized a little as to his role or place in Jazz and had even (to his own sense of betrayal) doubted Gilly's being involved as he said he was. One time, he wrote Gilly's name on the search in internet and came up with one mention of his name in all the material he went through. He hated himself and felt something akin to unfaithfulness and betrayal in checking on him but he finally convinced himself that if Gilly said he was involved, then he would believe him.

Jimbo worked arduously and often into the night. Nights were especially painful for him for he missed Ruth and his home. A few days before he was scheduled to leave for home, Jimbo decided that a few days more or less would not make an appreciable difference and so he left. His heart felt lighter the closer he got to Baton Rouge and he felt complete when he turned the corner of his street and saw his home, lights in the windows and thought of the fire in the fireplace, a small glass of an excellent Sherry and Ruth.

Ruth, hearing the car in the driveway, looked out the window and upon seeing Jimbo gave a shout of hurrah and ran to the door to greet him.

They had both missed each other very much and Jimbo said, "The next time I go to New Orleans to do research, you must come with me." He related how nothing was tempting. The restaurants, which he normally loved dining at, seemed cold, the food tasteless and he felt that a can of sardines eaten in his room would have sufficed.

"I don't know why I even thought of going to New Orleans without you but I figured I would be researching and you would be left alone. It was all a big mistake."

The words warmed Ruth and she felt satisfaction that she had a man who loved her.

The time was moving along and Jimbo was now 72. He still felt alert but when he had to climb the stairs to the bedroom, he often sighed and had to make a great effort. Reaching the floor above, he was often quite breathless and perspiring. Ruth never let on that she noticed anything, but she was concerned. But when it came to doctors, he always balked and found excuses not to have a checkup.

Ruth also noted how difficult it was for him to get out of the club chair or the sofa and suggested: "It's been a long time since I had a checkup at the doctors. Lets make an appointment and go together. I have been having some dizzy spells and I would just like to make sure that we are both alright."

Ordinarily, Jimbo would have put up an excuse but this time, he really felt out of sorts. He lamely said, O.K., why don't you make an appointment for us."

His instant agreement troubled Ruth even more than his old excuses of not needing to go. She suspected that Jimbo was not feeling well and did not want to trouble or worry her.

The next day she called their doctor and made an appointment for them both. Seated before his desk, the doctor inquired, who shall talk to first?

Ruth said, "Let's start with Jimbo, I somehow feel he is not feeling himself. Jimbo, you tell the doctor what you are feeling – no one knows better than you what you feel."

Jimbo, who never felt comfortable with doctors told of his difficulty in climbing stairs, his shortness of breath and how he perspired after making the effort. He also told the doctor of how tired he was in the middle of the day and how even after breakfast, he needed to take nap.

"I've put on a few pounds lately and maybe that could be the reason, but I put myself in your hands."

After ascertaining that Jimbo did not smoke, nor imbibe alcohol to any excess, he asked Jimbo to step into his examination room, to take off his clothes and to slip on the garment that was in the changing room. After his weight and height were recorded, his blood pressure his heart and lungs listened to, his eyes, ears, and throat checked, Jimbo was asked to lie down so that the doctor could do an EKG to see how is heart was doing. After those preliminary checks, Jimbo was given prescriptions to go to the local hospital and have a series of x-rays, ultra sound tests and a list of checkups on blood, stool, and urine.

"Whew" he said, "There seems to be nothing else to check."

"It's just that we want to be sure of a thorough examination now that we have you hogtied, so to speak."

“you can get dressed now and I will check out Mrs. Cosnard.” The doctor repeated the preliminary checkup with Ruth, asked that she take a few additional tests, told her to lose a few pounds and to make a visit with her gynecologist for additional examinations.

Turning to Ruth he said, I imagine you will be accompanying Mr. Cosnard when he takes the tests, make sure that all the results are sent to me. When I have all the information, I will have the nurse get in touch with you so that we can go over all the results.”

Somehow, Ruth sensed a sound of dread in his words. She spoke lightly of other things with Jimbo so as to not let him feel her fear.,

When the results of the examinations were finally in the doctor’s hands, he sat them both down before his desk and started to read the results of Ruth’s tests first. Actually, she was in pretty fair shape and the few problems she had were minor. She was given the prescriptions for some pills and told to return for a checkup in 6 months. He then turned to Jimbo and said, “I’m afraid we have some news that is not to good. He enumerated the results of the tests that turned out well and then went into the real problems.

“It seems you have some clotting problems and we are going to have to do some additional work. Your heart is undergoing extreme changes and we are going to have to change our lifestyle. I will still want you to see a heart specialist to verify my suspicions and I can recommend a man who is the “top” in his field. But I think you should not wait – I don’t wish to frighten you but the seriousness of the test results requires that you see a specialist immediately. If you are in agreement with the specialist I am recommending, I urge you to consider entering the hospital tomorrow or the day after. I will make all the arrangements with the Coronary Unit at the hospital so they will be waiting for you.”

Turning to Ruth, he said, “Just pack a few toiletries for him; the hospital will provide his gowns and so forth.”

“Let’s see if we can get this thing straightened out and start treating the problem. And the sooner we start, the better it will be.”

After Jimbo returned to the dressing room to put on his clothes, the doctor told Ruth, “He may need a heart transplant, his heart is that deteriorated. But I want the specialist to look at him and perhaps a few more tests to determine if his body strength needs to be improved. Try not to worry him and get him to the hospital as soon as you can. Make it tomorrow if you can.”

Ruth was in shock! This was only supposed to be a routine checkup, some advice on diet and exercise and some pills she thought. The seriousness and the urgency took her by surprise and she sensed the same feeling of dread she felt when they had just finished taking their tests and the doctor had told them that he would have his nurse contact them for a review of test results.

Jimbo was 74 years old now, and his life had never been one of excess strain but neither was his a life of exercise, careful eating and watching of his weight. His primary exercise was climbing the stairs to their bedroom at night and coming down in the morning. He avoided using the stairs when not absolutely necessary.

After checking him into the hospital the next day, it was a long intensive day for Ruth. She waited at the hospital until she was finally told that she should go home and try to rest. The hospital and the doctor would keep her informed of any changes or results. Since she was not allowed to visit or see Jimbo, she was actually causing herself a great deal of stress.

The heart specialist finally called her for a consultation and she was told that Jimbo could not survive without a heart transplant. Ruth was told that they had already put out a bulletin on what hearts were available that would be suitable for Jimbo.

“Unfortunately, there are only a limited number of organs available and there were other patients also waiting for a heart.”

We will keep him here for a week or two to stabilize his condition and then I think he can go home and be cared for by a 24 hour nurse. At home, he will have less stress and be with the people who love him – sometimes that is the best medicine.

In the meantime, you should fix a room on the ground floor so there is no need for him to climb stairs.

The large, heavy oak bed that belonged to her grandfather was carried down along with some comfortable chairs to sit and read in. All in preparation and waiting for an available organ.

With her father confined at home, Roberta now visited him on weekends. Often times she came with a friend, a young man she had met at a political rally and who shared many of her beliefs.

The young man whose name was Nathan Abraham Paine, was a student whose interest was law. He was enrolled at the Loyola University law school in New Orleans. Nathan was tall, serious, always dressed neatly and was black.

He and Roberta were introduced by friends at the aforementioned political rally and found each other interesting and engaging. One weekend, Roberta mentioned that her father was ill and that she always visited him on the weekend.

“Why don’t you come visit this weekend, I am sure you will find both my father and mother interesting people. It’s only an hour and one half away and it will give us a chance to talk some more.

Arriving at her family's home in Baton Rouge, they were greeted by Ruth and finally introduced to Jimbo. The two men got along famously and there was no strain or feeling of discomfort between.

After a few weeks of visits from Roberta and Nathan, Jimbo said to Roberta, "You and Nathan are seeing quite a bit of each other. What are the intentions?"

Roberta looked steadily into Jimbo's eyes and said, "Why Dad, Nathan is the man I am going to marry. We are really perfect with each other and we share more things than we disagree on. He's super smart, ambitious and just a great person. I don't think I could find anyone that could compete with Nathan."

"I think that's great that you both feel so good about each other, but I hope you're not thinking of anything permanent until you graduate and start your university studies."

Standing tall, an imposing German haughtiness on her face, she giggled, "No, like my grandfather's father supposedly said, 'without strict and studious ways, you will be a disgrace to your family'. 'I would never want to be a disgrace to our family, so Nathan and I have already discussed the issue and I am going to try to enroll at Harvard's Law School this fall.'"

"Nathan and I are too practical to let emotions stand in the way of our life's work."

Ruth too was delighted. She saw similarities between Jimbo's and her reasons for wanting to be together. She was sure that the two would be beautiful for each other.

Jimbo thought, Here I was trying to escape the negro blood in my family and living a miserable life avoiding it and now I find my daughter closing the circle. What an ironic turn of events!

On a Thursday afternoon, Jimbo was reading in his room. Ruth had taken the new housekeeper to help her do some shopping. Mrs. Schultz, now retired, remained in the house. Ruth could never turn her out, after all Mrs. Schultz was the closest person she had as a mother. Mrs. Schultz would never accept being a free loader and so she was given the task of keeping the new, younger housekeeper on her toes. Often, Mrs. Schultz would walk along and test to see if some furniture had been dusted or some other task that had been poorly executed. The young housekeeper was terrified at this old woman who never let up on what she was doing wrong.

On this particular Thursday, Mrs. Schultz as was her wont, lay peacefully snoozing in the sunroom.

In the meantime, Jimbo who had been reading the biography of Robert and Clara Schumann thought how it almost paralleled his own love for Ruth, was suddenly impelled to play some of Schumann's variations on a theme by Clara Wieck. He was about to call Ruth but then remembered that she and the new housekeeper were doing some errands and that only Mrs. Schultz was at home.

Realizing that Mrs. Schultz would be unable to find the music he wanted, he decided, I will go up the stairs very slowly and rest as soon as I feel a strain. Making his way to the stair, he climbed slowly and reached the room where the music manuscripts were store. Finding the sheets he was looking for, he triumphantly turned to go down the stairs. It seemed it was more difficult to go down than to come up he thought but I shall go slowly and be back in my room before Ruth comes home.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> step from the top, he could not bend his foot and he was too weak to use his arms. His fall, unheard by Mrs. Schultz, found him at the bottom of the stairs, dazed with blood coming from his nose. He was too dazed and confused to know what had happened and could not think to call Mrs. Schultz. For two hours, his arm holding on to the banister post, he sat until Ruth came home.

Spotting him on the floor, she shouted for the maid to call an ambulance. Jimbo was too heavy to move and besides, with blood coming from his nose, he could have suffered a concussion. Ruth bent down, her cheek against Jimbo's and asked, "What were you trying to do going up the stairs?" Jimbo sheepishly grinned and said, "I wanted to surprise you by playing some beautiful music Robert Schumann composed based on a theme from his wife, Clara Wieck. I felt such a surge of love for you that I wanted to show you how I felt for you too."

Ruth, never one to show her emotions, could only look away, tears streaming down her face and thought, How I love this man.

Miraculously, although badly bruised, his injuries were not as serious as was thought and after a visit to the hospital to ascertain no bones were fractured or broken, he was sent home to recuperate. Meanwhile, his spirit seemed to disappear and he lay in his bed, eyes closed and quiet.

The day came when the hospital excitedly called and told Ruth they had a replacement heart for Jimbo. "This means there is a chance" she said. We are going to take you to the hospital this afternoon. Oh Jimbo the gods are being good to us, be happy!" There was elation but Jimbo seemed not to take heart and continued in a melancholy, depressed state. Then Jimbo called Ruth and asked her to bring him Gilly's mouthpiece. "It's in the drawer next to my bed." Jimbo placed the mouthpiece in his hand and said to Ruth.

"I'm ready to go now and sit in if they ask me to, this time I am not going to be a "ciuccio"

But things were not to be. After an arduously long operation, Jimbo couldn't make it. His recent fall had stressed his body too much. He died, with Gilly's mouthpiece taped to his hand. He had insisted that the hospital staff do that and upon being asked if Ruth would permit it, she said "yes, the owner of that mouthpiece was very special to my husband."



## CHAPTER 19

Jimbo's ashes were sealed in a silver urn and along with his mouthpiece was placed on a shelf in the music manuscript room. There they would sit awaiting Ruth's demise so that the ashes could be co-mingled and spread on a snowy slope in Alaska.

It was ironic. Ruth had become the "grand dame" of the Baton Rouge society. Her many gifts to the City were acknowledged and received as part of the cultural heritage of the City.

For the public library, she had donated the money and volumes to add two wings to the existing building. In one wing was an exhaustive collection of jazz and classical music and in the other, a collection of German poets to honor her father. The collection, much of it from the personal collection of Max Sitzman included the works of Bertolt Brecht, Johan Wolfgang von Goethe, Gunter Grass, Heinrich Heine, Herman Hesse, Friedrich Nietzsche, Rainer Maria Rilke and Kurt Schwitters. There were even some original manuscripts to be preserved as valuable assets of the library.

What was ironic was the fact that this woman, donating such valuable gifts to the City was an illegitimate child, whose father was unknown and whose mother was addicted to drugs and alcohol. This woman whose daughter was preparing to marry a Negro was donating all this to the town. All this was taking place in this ultra-conservative city of Baton Rouge! It was unbelievable!

THE END

----- the path one follows does not always reach beyond, but often curls upon itself to start anew. Who knows what point in time or space it crosses other trails and what results might follow?

Charles Coiro