

SAN ANDRES:

CHAPTER FOUR

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The very next day, way before dawn, my white father renounced everything he had and owned, abandoned the father who disowned him, left the wife he never loved and fled with his woman, my mother, the newly freed slave. A few days later, in the month of April of 1852 my parents arrived in Boston and found refuge among Lucy's family. My father somehow found work doing odd things to earn a living, while he (along with my mother) lived in one of the many houses his mother's relatives owned. In Boston he went by his middle name, Alfred, and by his mother's maiden surname, Jones. And so Paul and Eloise Hamilton became Alfred and Eloise Jones. They stayed among his relatives until I was born on September 9th of 1852.

Shortly after my birth word reached my father that his father had died of an infection caused by the gunshot wound he received that April. In addition, prior to Paul Sr.'s death, Miriam, depressed and now insane, took advantage of her caretaker's absence one evening and hung herself. These two deaths shocked both Theresa and the entire Douglass (Miriam's) family. With Paul Jr.'s abandonment of his duties as successor and owner of the property, his wife gone, and Theresa unable to look after the plantation and its slaves, the remaining Hamilton relatives and Miriam's family began a dispute for the property. Furthermore, after having learned that old Paul's death was caused by his own son and that Miriam's depression and suicide was also due to Jr.'s betrayal, affair, subsequent abandonment: everyone wanted his head. So, in fear of retaliation, my parents decided to live in secrecy and for this, they opted to leave the company of my father's relatives, and seek their own fortune in the outskirts of Boston.



Escucha aquí el audio en inglés

A HERSTORY

CHAPTA FUOR



Chranslieshan tu Kriol bai Henrietta Forbes Bryan,
Shanelle K. Roca Hudgson ahn Sedney S. Suárez Gordon.

Di veri neks die, lang bifuor di son kom out, mai wait pupa rinouns tu evriting ihm wehn gat ahn evriting ihm wehn uon, ihn abandon di pupa we disuon ihm, lef di waif ihn neva lov ahn ron weh gaan wid ihm uman, mai muma, di sliev we wehn jos riisentli get friidom. Som kopl diez lieta, iina di mont a Iepril a 1852, mai pierens get tu Boston, ahn fain shelta mongs Lucy famali. Som kain a wie, mai pupa fain work de du schrienj tingz fi mek wan livin, wail him (lang wid mai muma) wehn liv iina wan a di meni hous dem we ihn muma relativ dem wehn uon. Iina Boston, ihm yuuz tu go bai ihn migl niem, Alfred, ahn bai ihn muma taikl, Jones. Ahn so Paul ahn Eloise Hamilton kom fi bii Alfred ahn Eloise Jones. Dehm stie mongs fi him relativ dem til mii baan pahn di naint a Septemba a 1852.

Likl bit afta mii baan, nyuuz get tu mai pupa se fi him pupa ded wid wan infekshan fahn di gon shat we ihn risiiv da Iepril. Alsuo, bifuor Paul Sr. ded, Miriam, we wehn dipres ahn nou out a ihn main, heng ihnselw wan iivnin wen huu tek kier a ihm neva de deh. Dehm ya tuu det shak buot Theresa ahn di huol a Douglass (Miriam) famali. Sins Paul Jr. abandon ihn dyuuti dem az huu inherit ahn uon di lan, ihn waif ded ahn Theresa we neva kieepabl fi luk afta di plantieshan ahn ih sliev dem, Hamilton relativ dem ahn Miriam famali staat wan kwaril uova di lan. Pahn tap a dat, afta dehm fain out se Mista Paul det wehn kaaz bai ihn uon son ahn se Miriam dipreshan ahn suisaid wehn alsuo siek a Jr. afer ahn abandonment: evribadi wehn waa ihn hed. So, fried fi venjans, mai pierans disaid fi liv iina siikriit ahn fi dis, dehm chuuz fi go mouns, mai pupa relativ dem ahn luk fi fain dehm uon lok outsaid a Boston.



Escucha aquí el audio en kriol



After this decision, life was no less hard for them and they were met with a lot of prejudice and adversity. Despite the fact that they were in the Northern United States, and in the midst of the abolitionist movement, there was still a lot of disagreement (even among Abolitionists) regarding the treatment of the newly-freed Africans, and of an interracial couple.

It was into this environment that I came. An environment that did not accept my parent's union, and consequently, my existence. Yet, despite all the outer turmoil and hardship I must say that during the first few years of life I remembered that I was loved and my parents were perfect. I was named Abigail which means "I make my father rejoice". And indeed, after losing three children, I was a joy to my father. My mother always told me: "no matter what happened, you had a good father".

By 1855 I was almost three years old and we had become very poor. My father's money ran out and we resorted to live off the generosity of some of my father's relatives. Talk of a civil war only made things harder for my family, but thankfully (and just in time) my father received an offer to become a member of a law firm in Boston. My mother stayed home and dedicated herself to me. From an early age she passed on all the knowledge her mother had given her about the Motherland, our people, our customs and our language. She would also read to me from many of the classics of literature. I must say that I had very little interaction with other children; most of my time was spent with my parents.

Because things were going well, none of us could have expected what happened on that crisp October day of 1861. All I know was that one of my father's cousins, Mary, collected me from school and took me to her home (the same place we had lived when my parents first arrived in 1852) in Boston. Later that night my mother was brought to Cousin Mary's house, I remember seeing her hair mad and bushy, her eyes red, her body was trembling and she would burst into screams sporadically. My father had been killed.

Much later, when I was older, my mother told me that two of Papa's cousins along with Miriam's brother, uncles and cousins had learned from someone that we were in Boston. They waited for my father outside his work where they grabbed him, took him to an alley, shot him to death and then hung his corpse in the same way that Miriam's had been found almost ten years ago. They wrote on his shirt: "Negro Lover".

Although I did not understand much of the time, I remember seeing my mother completely devastated. She no longer sang, played with me, or looked after herself. She only stayed in bed and cried. After recovering from the shock, my mother became very fearful and anxious; she was afraid for my safety as well as that of my unborn brother. She wrote to her brother Ayo, whom she had been communicating with for some years, and asked

Afta dis disizhan, laif neva les difikolt fi dehm ahn dehm bok op pahn plenti diskriminieshan ahn advorsiti. Dispait di fak se dehm wehn de iina di Naat a di Yunaintid Stiets ahn iina di mids a di abolishan muuvment, yo wehn stil ga plenti disagriiment (iivn mongs di piipl we wehn in fieva a Abolishan) rigardin di chriitment a di Afrikan dem we wehn jos riisentli get friidom, ahn a wan intorieshal kopl.

Da iina dis invayament mii kom. Wan invayament we neva aksep se mai pierens dem kom tugeda, ahn iina da siem sens, neva aksep mai egzistans. Stil, inspait a aal di terenglment ahn difikoltis Ah hafi seh se dyuurin di fos yer dem a mi laif Ah memba se dehm wehn lov mi ahn mai pierens dem wehn porfek. Dehn niem mi Abigail we miin "Ah mek mi pupa glad". Ahn indiid, afta ihn luuz chrii piknini, mii da wehn wan hapinis fi mai pupa. Mai muma wehn aalwiez yuuz tu tel mi: "no mata wat gaan aan, yo wehn gat wan gud pupa".

Bai 1855 Ai wehn almuos ga chrii yerz ahn wi get veri puor. Mai pupa moni don ahn wi had tu liv aaf a som a mai pupa famili help. Di ruuma dem bout wan war uonli mek tingz haada fi mi famili, bot tankfuli (ahn jos iina taim) mai pupa get wan aafa fi bi paat a wan laa aafis iina Boston. Mai muma stie huom ahn dedikiet tu mii. Fram wan orli iej, shii paas dong aal di nalij ihn had fram fi shi muma bout di Mada lan, wi piipl, wi kostom dem ahn wi langwij. Shi yuuz tu riid fi mi fahn di klasik dem a lichrityo tu. Ah hafi seh Ah had fyuu interakshan wid ada piknini; di majariti a di taim Ah paas ih wid mi pierens dem.

Bikaaz tingz wehn gwain gud, non a wi kuda ekspek we hapn pahn da fresh die iina Aktuoba a 1861. Aal Ai nuo da se wan a mai pupa kozn, Mary, tek mi fahn skuul ahn ker mi huom da shii (di siem plies wi wehn liv bai wen mai pierens jos get, iina 1852) Boston. Lieta dat nait, dehm bring mai muma da kozn Mary hous, Ah rimemba de si ihn hier mad ahn bushi, ihn ai dem red, ihn wehn de chrimbl ahn ihn uda staat baal out jos so. Dehm kil mi pupa.

Plenti afta, wen Ah wehn uolda, mama tel mi se tuu a papa kozn alang wid Miriam breda, onkl ahn kozn dem get fi nuo fahn sombadi se wi wehn de Boston. Dehm wiet fi mai pupa outsaid ihn work weh dehm tek ihm fram, ker ihm da wan bak ruod, shuut ihm tu det ahn den heng ihn ded badi di siem wie dehm fain Miriam almuos ten yerz ago. Dehm rait pahn ihm short: "Negro Lover".

Iivin duo Ai neva andastan moch da taim, Ah rimemba si mai muma kompliitli mash op. Ihn neva sing no muo, plie wid mii, or luk pahn ihself. Shii uonli stie iina bed ahn krai. Afta ihn get uova di shak, mai muma get veri friedi friedi ahn angshos; ihn wehn fried fi mai siefti, ahn di siefti a mi breda we neva baan yet. Shi rait ihn breda Ayo, huu ihn wehn de iina kantak wid fi som yerz, ahn aks fi ihn help. Bikaaz a fier a muo vayolens fahn mai pupa famili, ihn pak op di fyuu liki tingz wi had, kalek

for his help. In fear of further violence from my father's family, she packed our few belongings, collected my father's last payment from the firm and that November we travelled to Jamaica, where Uncle Ayo had been living for some years.

Besides the birth of my brother, Ife Alfred Jones, in January, those first few months in Jamaica were fairly uneventful. We lived with my uncle Ayo and his wife and children in Kingston.

I remember my mother not being herself for a long time. She would drift away into thought, she would go to sleep crying and wake up wailing. Many times uncle Ayo and his wife would have to tend to little Ife because she could not. After several months she began to recover. It was during this that I began to notice that although she missed my father, she had changed. It was as she was a different person. Though she had received her freedom when she and my father fled my grandfather's plantation so many years ago, it was only until now that she was truly free. I remember once when I was a teenager she told me: "Your father was a very good man, my child, but as long as I was with him I could not *truly* be me: the *me* my mother always pressed and reminded me to be. I was always *Eloise* to your father and his family. And though he loved me and tried to appreciate my culture, I could never truly be Abeni to him, and in many ways he was still the master and I his slave".

As I grew and matured I began to understand some of the things my mother talked about. My mother was right, her identity had been swallowed by my father's, but that changed in Jamaica. Along with Uncle Ayo my mother took time to teach me even more about her parents. Uncle Ayo shared about their other siblings and Nnenade's parents Ayo and Emeka, whom my mother did not meet. Uncle Ayo's mother-in-law was Igbo, and so we learned a lot from her. I truly was able to enjoy and become proud of my mother's heritage, and I loved when uncle Ayo and his son Chinwe would play the djembe and other drums.

One day in 1865 after sharing with me the process, tradition and rituals of marriage that Nnenade had taught her, she hugged me and said: "Abigail, you are now a beautiful young woman. You have your father's kind eyes, fair skin, and your grand-mother Lucy's smile. But you have your mother's strength and your grandmother's temper. As your name Abigail says, you will always be your father's joy, but you are *my* pride. Do not be like me and give up your roots for another's, always remember the motherland and your ancestors. They live in you. From today, I will call you *Nneka*, so you will always remember who you are and that 'mother is supreme'".

So I became Nneka to my mother. She called me this at home, when she was happy, when she was sad, and when she would scold me, and I took great joy in being her pride and prize. ■



Excerpt from the novel *San Andres: a Herstory*.
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mai pupa laas piement fahn di laa aafis ahn dat Novemba wi chravl gaan Jamaica, weh onkl Ayo wehn de liiv fi som yerz.

Apaat fahn mai breda bort, Ife Alfred Jones, iina Janyueri, dehm fyuu monz iina Jamaica notn neva gaan aan. Wi wehn liv wid mai onkl Ayo ahn ihn waif ahn piknini dem iina Kingston.

Ai memba se mai muma, fi wan lang taim, da neva huu shii wehn yuuz tu bii. Shii wehn yuuz tu jrif weh de tink, ahn ihn yuuz tu go sliip de kraih ahn wiek op de baal. Plenti taim mai onkl Ayo ahn ihn waif wehn had tu ten tu liki Ife bikaaz shii kuda neva du dat. Afta sevral monz shii staat rikova. Da iina dehm be taim Ai staat si se, iivin duo shii yuuz tu mis mai faada, ihn wehn chienj. Alduo shii risiiv, plenti yerz abak, ihn friidom wen ihn ron weh fahn mai granfaada plantieshan, da onli til nou ihn wehn riili frii. Ah memba wans wen mii da wehn wan tiinieja ihn tel mi: "Mi chail, yo faada da wehn wan veri gud man, bot miinwail Ai wehn de wid ihm Ai kuda neva *chuuli* bii mii miself, dat siem *mii* we mai muma aalwiesz memba mi ahn pres mi fi bii. Aal taim mii da wehn *Eloise* fi yor faada ahn ihn famili. Alduo ihn lov mi ahn chrai fi aprishiet mai koltyo, fi him, mii kuda neva bii Abeni, iina plenti wiesz ihm stil da wehn di maasta ahn mii ihn sliev".

Az Ai gruo ahn matyoor Ah staat andastan som a di tingz we mai muma taak bout. Mai muma wehn rait, mai faada swala fi har aidentiti, bot dat chienj Jamaica. Wid onkl Ayo mai muma tek ihn taim fi tiich mi bout har pierans. Onkl Ayo tel mi bout ihn neks breda ahn sista dem, ahn Nnenade pierans Ayo ahn Emeka, we mai muma neva get fi nuu. Ayo mada ihn laa da wehn Igbo, so wii laan plenti fahn shii. Ai riili ge fi injai ahn bikom proud a mai muma heritij, ahn Ai wehn lov wen onkl Ayo ahn ihn son Chinwe uda plie di djembe ahn ada jrom.

Wan die iina 1865 afta mama shier wid mii di pruoses, chradishan ahn rituals fi ge marid we shii wehn laan fahn Nnenade, shii hog mi ahn tel mi: "Abigail yuu da wan byuutiful yong liedi. Yo hav yo pupa jenkl ai dem, lait skin, ahn yo granmada Lucy smail. Bot yo gat yo mada schrent ahn yo granmada tempa. Az hou yo niem Abigail seh, yuu wil fareva bii yo faada jai, bot yuu da *mai* praid. No bii laik mii ahn giv op yo ruuts fi sombadi els, aalwiesz memba yo Mada lan ahn yo ansesta dem. Dehm liv iina yuu. Fahn tide, Ai wan kaal yuu *Nneka* so yo wi aalwiesz rimemba huu yuu iz ahn se 'mada iz supriim'".

So mii bikom Nneka fi mai muma. Ihn kaal mi so huom, wen ihn wehn hapi, wen ihn wehn sad, ahn wen ihn wehn yuuz tu skuol mi ahn mii riili bikom jaiful fi bii ihn praid ahn praiz. ■

Teks fahn di novl *San Andres: a Herstory*.
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