

## Chapter 9: Freedom

Mayor Koo had awakened from his sleep. The joy of the last six years filled him. He now played solitaire while Bennie watched.

“What is that deck of cards?” Bennie asked.

“These?” Kidokezo said. “Oh. These are the Heroes of Black America. They come from the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Like it says on the box these are the *52 Greatest African-Americans Playing Cards*. It’s kinda funny advertising though for a couple of reasons.”

“Why?” Bennie asked. “Is it because they have a card for you?”

Kidokezo started speaking before listening “Now they...” he stopped realizing what Bennie had said. They both laughed. “Yeah, dat’ll be da day!” he said. In his mind Kidokezo thought about it. “Naw” he said “These are the *52 Greatest African-Americans!* They ain’t like 52 of the Greatest African-Americans but these are certifiably the top 52. Let no other African-American dare be capable of thinking that they could be included!”

“What’s the other reason?” Bennie asked.

“The other reason is that, with the jokers in the deck, there are actually 54 cards!” Kidokezo told him. “Which 2 double AA batteries do you drop out to get down to 52?”

“Let me see those” Bennie said. He picked up some of the cards and started going through them. The cards were organized by suits. Diamonds were Sports Stars. Clubs were artists. Hearts were a mishmash of businesspeople and entertainers. Spades naturally were politicians and civil rights leaders! The two jokers were also naturally comedians.

“Ya know, according to the Hero Deck” Kidokezo said “Dred Scott was not one of the 52 Greatest African-Americans. The first man to have his slavery case ruled on by the Supreme Court just isn’t that great. Nor was Polly Berry. Paul Collins, an artist so renowned that the Israeli’s commissioned him to create paintings for the Knesset and who received a key to the city of New Orleans, did not make the cut. Paul Robeson? The man who has one of the most extensive files ever created by the FBI and the US Intelligence community is not so great a hero. James Meredith? Not so much. That’s the thing about idol worship. Eventually it is used to create a situation of the *who is greater?* game when the fact is that all people are great and while some have achieved more notoriety than others that by no means makes than *greater* than other people.”

Bennie read the blurb on Richard Pryor. He found it funny that Richard’s card focused on his *colorful style & use of racial epithets*.

The Mayor saw Bennie’s interest and laughed. “It’s funny” he said “that they mention his use of racial epithets in the context of one of the 52 greatest black’s. They don’t mention that he quit using racial epithets in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of his career when he had made it and realized how offensive he was.” Koo paused. “It’s also funny that they would choose a guy who burned up his head free basing cocaine would be included, dontcha think?”

"Is MJ in there" Bennie asked.

"Which one?" The Mayor asked. "The Thriller or the hooper?"

"I was thinkin' the Gloved one but since ya mention it" Bennie answered.

The Mayor laughed. "Naw, Billie Jean didn't make the cut. He's turned his skin ghost anyway so dat probly DQ'd him anyway. And Magic didn't make it either." Bennie made a face. "Oh alright, Jordan made it. But ya'll know if the Magic man and Jordan had been matched in their prime ain't no way Jordan getting six rings!"

Bennie laughed. "I see Obama is the Ace of Spades! Now don't that beat all! Dem Fishbellies gotta love dat!"

"So will the Fan Kuei" Amy interjected.

"Say what?" Bennie asked.

"That's a Chinee' word for Ocean Ghosts meanin' whitey" she told him.

"Really?" Mayor Koo asked.

"What...you think having racial terms is something only Americans got?" Amy said. "That's pretty privileged, isn't it? To have exclusive domain over slang words for insulting people? You think I never was called a slant eye or mook or pan face or bucket head or shovel head? It' bad enough bein' insulted but damn it burns more when they throw Chinese aspersions at me when I got more Korean in my than Chink!"

The Mayor and Bennie were quite surprised by Amy's comments from the blue. "What, you think the blacks in America are the only ones who have had to deal with slavery? Just because it wasn't slavery like on plantations doesn't mean that Chinese and other Asians didn't get beaten and whipped in the good Ole USA. It's just easier to be self centered around one groups prejudiced history cuz then it sounds like you was the only ones who ever suffered. Yeah, black and brown skinned people have had it bad but don't think that all yellow skins and white skins all got it easy. Most didn't, and there is still slavery going on all over the world and in the US today!"

"So whadda dey call a brother?" Bennie.

"Hung" she deadpanned. It took a second for Bennie and the Mayor to catch it and start laughing. Amy laughed with them before saying "Well, a couple Chinese words are *Hagwei* or *Hayquay* which mean like *Black Devil* or *Black Demon*." She looked at the Mayor and Bennie. "From what the papers be sayin' you got quite hagwei makin' some play out there!"

"What you mean?" The Mayor asked.

She leaned across Bennie to speak quietly to the Mayor. "How many women are they sayin' you been sexting with?" Amy said looking up and down at him. "It sounds like your black demon gots a mind of its own!"

"Baby the Mayor's office is just happy to serve the needy people of the city, that's all" he told her. "it's like when a citizen is stranded and needs a ride and the limo is there waiting. Anything we can do to help a poor helpless person in need, ya hear wahat I'm sayin'?"

Amy smiled. "Sure, it's all about helping the poor needy ones, ain't it? And what if they ain't poor and needy and if the taxi is waiting?"

"Baby why take a taxi when you can enjoy a ride in a limo?" The Mayor said.

"I dunno?" Amy said. She leaned back. "I'll have to see if I can come up with an answer to that!"

"Think hard about" the Mayor told her as she went about working in the cabin. Bennie looked at Kidokezo incredulously. "It's good to be the Mayor!" he told Bennie, and then he went back to playing solitaire. "You coming over to the residence tonight?"

"Aww, boss, I gotta deal with getting a new phone." Bennie told him. "I was thinkin' a just getting' a car and a room and chillin' out. I hadda couple of busy days and I could use a night o' nuttin'."

"That bump on yer acorn causin' you a headache?" The Mayor asked.

"Yeah, it's kinda like dat." Bennie answered. "Let's hook up in the AM and start goin' over tings. Bingi and Bobo are already here anyway, ain't they?"

"Yes they are." Koo conferred. "Tell ya what. You give Bingi a call when you get a phone. He'll set ya up with where we will meet for breakfast."