

IYAPO YAPA

AUTHOR OF 'MELANIN'



AND WHAT OF THE
CARGO
A NOVEL

And What of the Cargo?

A Novel

(Chapter 1 Excerpt)

And What of the CARGO?

A Novel

IYAPO YAPA

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And What of the CARGO?
Chapter 1 Excerpt

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"This is not about worshipping the dead, but paying tribute to our ancestors,"

— Tony Akeem, *an organizer of the fifth annual Tribute to the Ancestors of the Middle Passage.*

"On any basic figure of the Africans landed alive in the Americas, one would have to make several extensions- starting with a calculation to cover mortality in transshipment. The Atlantic crossing, or "Middle Passage," as it was called by European slavers, was notorious for the number of deaths incurred, averaging in the vicinity of 15-20 per cent."

— Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*

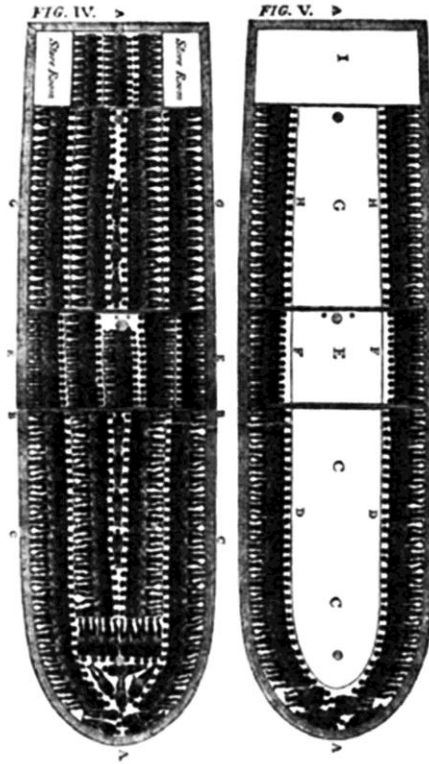
Dese all my fader's children, My fader's done wid de trouble
Dese all my fader's children, o' de world, wid de trouble o' de world,
Dese all my fader's children, wid de trouble o' de world,
Outshine de sun. My fader's done wid de trouble
o' de world,
Outshine de sun

— *Negro Spiritual documented in Florida and North Carolina, ca. 1865*

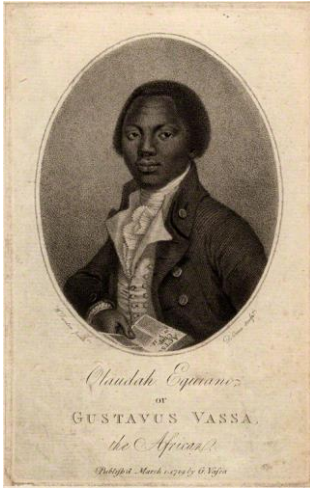
I keep sailing on in this middle passage. I am sailing into the wind and the dark. But I am doing my best to keep my boat steady and my sails full.

— Arthur Ashe, Professional tennis champion

AND WHAT OF THE CARGO?



IYAPO YAPA



OLAUDAH EQUIANO "The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror, which I am yet at a loss to describe, nor the feelings of my mind. When I was carried on board I was immediately handled, and tossed up, to see if I were sound, by some of the crew, and I was now persuaded that I had got into a world of bad spirits, and that they

were going to kill me. When I looked round the ship too and saw a multitude of black people of every description chained together, everyone of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate, and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted.

The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable."

— Excerpts from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written By Himself.*



We are here by those who lived,
But what of they who sought to give?
But, before contribution were took away,
Their tale of existence wiped out that day?

We are here by those who strived,
By those who fought and stayed alive,
Did they who perished fight any less?
A resounding “NO” should be our guess.

We are here by those who knew,
Our people are not just I or you,
Our people are US, and that includes,
The ones unknown, who paid our dues.

Iyapo Yapa

This book is dedicated to the ancestors who perished in anonymous seas, forgotten in watery graves where some remain lost to time, as one day, we shall all—but should never... EVER be lost to memory. They laughed and cried, they loved and lost, they despaired and resisted. They were men, women and children, all with hopes, dreams and ambitions. We should never forget to honor and respect their memories and the fact that we exist because they existed.



CHAPTER 1

Being that this was the fifth cruise Nathan Fender had taken in as many years, he considered himself an old hand at getting around on a cruise ship. Fender, rich, successful, tall, blonde haired, blue eyed and devilishly handsome by the standard of many—was seated at the Captain’s Table with tonight’s future conquest, Amanda Raymond, or Ryan, or Richmond or *something* like that. He toasted the health and success of the captain and crew as well as the beauty of his dinner companion and new lady love, Amanda... something with an “R”. Sipping his wine and glancing to his immediate right, Nathan looked at the profile and figure of his dinner and hopefully soon to be bedroom companion, and his thoughts filled with visions of Amanda something with an “R” wearing apparel far more revealing than the flowing silk evening gown that presently adorned her athletic body. Nathan Fender was the purest of latches, but thanks to a combination of constant practice, the covering of money, fine clothes and, savoir faire, he was able to conceal it well. Tonight, the young CEO was in continuous use of every tool in his “need to get laid” arsenal and was not in the least bothered by the fact he could not remember the full name of the woman beside him, though he did chastise himself for not listening closely and missing the opportunity to catch that last name as she introduced herself to the captain and other guests at the table. But Fender was far more preoccupied by and interested in how soon he could manage to see his dinner companion void of her evening gown than figuring out some clever way to have her repeat her last name in case there would be some sudden need to know it.

The first time Fender saw Amanda was at the swimming pool on the Lido deck. She was a stunning brunette with what would be considered by many, “classic” features. She didn’t look to be wearing much makeup, except for bright red lipstick Fender surmised was the expensive kind that would last the entire day whether she spent most of it sitting beside the pool or if she swam several laps. He could not see her eyes because of sunglasses that

obscured them, but he imagined those eyes to be a fitting accent to her seemingly flawless face. She wore a black bikini that flattered a body that was obviously well taken care of by its owner—flat stomach with abs subtly showing through, but not too much, long toned legs, perfectly shaped not too large, not too small breasts—not bad... not bad at all. So why was there no crowd of men standing around this Venus, or at least even one man? Fender knew that it was because most men were intimidated by this lounging, sunbathing beauty and thus, petrified to approach her. And since there were no men around who had enough backbone or self-confidence to approach her, he silently thanked the cruise ship gods of casual sex for the lane they had cleared for him. Fender made his way over to her immediately, introduced himself and struck up a conversation, learning that her name was Amanda... something with an “R”. At the moment Amanda removed her sunglasses so she could more properly take in the man standing above her and he could see the two deep dark brown orbs that were the eyes of this goddess, Fender saw he was right about the eyes.

They instantly connected, Amanda for her reasons, Fender for his—reasons which may have been common or perhaps not. Amanda seemed interesting enough. She was the curator of a privately owned and operated museum of modern art in Saginaw, Michigan and was at one time in competition for the U.S. Olympic track team when she was in college, and by the look of her figure she was still doing some form of running or working out. Unfortunately, Amanda did not make the Olympic team, being narrowly shut out by one of her teammates who went on to earn a bronze medal and for whom she was genuinely happy. She had several interesting stories to tell as did Fender himself, who took the opportunity to invite the beautiful woman to be his dinner companion at the captain’s table later that evening.

She accepted, and to her credit did not seem as if she was caught up in the prestige of it, but that it would simply be another interesting experience in her life’s story. This Amanda something with an “R” person seemed very down to earth and well grounded. “These types are usually absolute tigers in the sack.” Fender thought as he stood up to leave her with some final words of how much he was looking forward to seeing her later tonight.

Seeing her under him as he lay on top of her, inside her and kissing her—that is.

Dinner at the captain's table was as expected. Interesting if not embellished stories were told by the senior crew members and guests in attendance as well as a few tales of the sea that were recounted by their host. The food was of course excellent, as was everything on the menu for every other passenger on board. They ate and drank by candlelight, laughing, recounting, recollecting, sitting in awed silence at various points as they listened to someone tell some truly enthralling story, and overall having a great time. Eventually the captain looked at his watch and stood, apologizing to his guests that it was time for him to go and check in with the navigation crew. He once again acknowledged and thanked everyone in attendance for a memorable evening, then turned, walked through the huge dining room, his hat tucked neatly underneath his left upper arm, tipping his head and giving a gentle salute with his right, (the kind military men give to civilians), and/or waving to other guests as he made his way to the exit, then finally disappeared down the hall.

Fender and Amanda took the captain's exit as the sign that dinner was officially over—at least for them. They stood up and exchanged pleasantries with the other guests and remaining ship's officers at the table, some of whom were still eating, one or two of them considering heading to the dessert bar.

"So, what do we do now?" Amanda said as she walked hand in hand with the new man in her life.

"How do you feel about finding the disco room and hitting the dance floor?"

"Disco?!"

"Oh, I'm just calling it that. It's actually a lounge with a huge dance floor that features live music every night. I've heard the band performing tonight is very good. Are you game?"

"Yes!" Amanda said as she squeezed Fender's hand. "Yes I am!"

The couple danced to the musical stylings of a versatile band calling themselves “The Soundwaves”. They played covers from songs of the 70s all the way through to the early 2000s. The Soundwaves were extraordinarily good, it was not at all difficult to understand how they got this cruise ship gig. They played their hearts out and their adherence to the sound of the source material of the songs they were covering was spot on. The Soundwaves had a reputation for their male and female vocalists’ ability to mimic the voices and singing styles of a wide range of singers, thus enhancing the authentic sound of the songs in their sets.

Fender and Amanda, both surprisingly good dancers, danced on several upbeat tunes as they joined the groups on the floor who were partying as if there were no tomorrow. Then, as was inevitable, the band slowed and mellowed the mood by playing the song “Angel” by Jon Secada. As the music started Fender, holding Amanda’s hand had turned to leave the dance floor, but he felt his dance partner pulling him back. “Oh my god, I love this song!” Amanda said as she led Fender back to the spot on the dance floor they had recently left. She turned Fender to face her with no resistance from him, put her arms around his neck, as Fender did the same with her waist. They swayed to the music as the lead singer belted out the vocals, and living up to their reputation, anyone in the dance hall could have closed their eyes and thought it was Secada himself. The couple swayed to the music and whispered into each other’s ears, they stared deeply into each other’s eyes, and they kissed as they allowed themselves the fantasy of a faux love strictly for the feeling of it. After the iconic final high note that served as the climax of the song, Fender looked deep into the eyes of Amanda something with an “R” and said, “Would you like to get out of here and go someplace a little more private?”

“I thought you’d never ask.” Replied his date.

* * *

Fender now sat at the foot of the bed in his massive suite after a quick stop at Amanda’s request, at the salad and food bar and another at her cabin to grab a pink leather bag that was just a little

bigger than the size of her hand; a small, unassuming bag she obviously felt she needed tonight. He looked around the room for no particular reason as he awaited the emergence of Amanda something with an “R” from the bathroom—fantasizing about how she was going to look. He saw his dinner jacket strewn out on the floor from when the couple entered the room and they started kissing, beginning the ritual of layer by layer removing each other’s clothes. Fender had only managed to take off his jacket, letting it drop to the floor, and loosening his black bowtie, as Amanda remained fully dressed, when she broke the embrace and looked in the direction of the bathroom. She then, walking slowly backward toward the door held up the small pink bag she had made a point of retrieving from her cabin and said, “I’ll be right back.”, then disappeared as she closed the bathroom door.

Fender stared at the jacket for a moment and decided that while he was waiting, he might as well hang up the thing. He put both hands on his knees and stood up, walked over to the jacket, and picked it up. He then took it over to the closet, found a hanger and neatly hung it along with the undone bowtie that was still dangling around his neck. Fender knew there was no way he would be wearing this dinner jacket again without getting it to the drycleaner—the thing was just on the floor for god’s sake. Nathan Fender was a leech and a womanizer, and was prone to intense bouts of assholism, but for all his flaws, he was no slob. As he hung the jacket, he listened for any indication that the bathroom door might be opening.

Nothing.

He closed the closet door and walked, making a brief stop at the bistro chairs and table on which sat a bottle of wine being chilled in the standard bucket with ice, caviar and crackers, along with soft cheese, a block of hard cheese and a knife with which to cut it. There were also two bowls, one containing grapes, the other strawberries. Amanda had requested these things to take back to the room—evidently not having stuffed herself at dinner, and likely something she was used to as “after sex nutrition”. Fender grabbed a few grapes and chewed them as he made his way back to the foot of his bed slowly sitting down and patiently waiting—because after all, he had all night—as he once again waited for his temporary lady love to

appear.

Amanda had spent an unusually long time in the bathroom, but now Fender could see the doorknob slowly turning. When she appeared, immediately he felt it was worth the wait. She stopped in the doorway for a moment and posed for him wearing bright white lace panties and bra, with a sheer white robe; something she obviously purchased from some high-end lace and love clothier. So pleased was Fender by this vision that he didn't even allow himself to wonder what could have taken so long to remove her clothes and put on those three pieces. What did it matter? There she stood. Having been on so many cruises Fender had more than his share of trysts onboard cruise ships, as a matter of fact, it was to a greater or lesser degree, his entire purpose for indulging in cruises at all. So, he was no stranger to the scantily clad female figure. The truth of it being that the sight of a woman in some form of panties and bra was far closer to pornography to him than that of the same woman in the altogether. As he hung around the pool onboard and watched the women as they walked past him in their various cuts of bikinis and bathing suits, for him at least—because of a fetish he had developed from the time he was a teenager, Fender was infinitely more turned on by the sight of a woman in swimwear, or panties and bra, or in this case, a lace nighty, than he could ever be by their naked form.

But that was *his* little secret.

Considering that, the lovely Amanda something with an “R” immediately got a rise out of the young businessman. He stood up leisurely from the bed and stepped slowly toward her as she likewise sauntered in his direction. Fender took in the full sight of her, already imagining the various positions in which he would have her contorted over the course of the evening. Likewise, Amanda spied the ever-swelling bulge at the crotch of the man walking toward her. Fender, following her eyes knew exactly at what she was staring, and didn't mind at all that she was. They met halfway and without a word embraced and kissed deeply, passionately... lustfully. In no time at all Fender was out of his clothes and was where he had longed and fantasized being from the moment, he had lain eyes on this woman—Amanda something with an “R”.

On top of, and inside of her.

The only article of clothing he had allowed her to remove was the sheer robe of her ensemble as he was far too excited by the look and feel of the panties and bra upon her skin, because of his fetish, to ruin this session by letting her become fully naked. On the bed the lovers undulated, moaned and groaned with the pleasure they were experiencing from each other.

The roll in the hey on this on the ship, hey, was going better than either party may have anticipated or was going exactly as both parties had wished it would. In the coolness of the suite, surrounded by its luxury, they kissed and at times moved so fluidly from position to position that it would have seemed their tryst had somehow been choreographed.

On their sides.

Fender on top.

Amanda on top.

Spooning.

Amanda something with an “R” was definitely pleased. Fender knew she had had an orgasm and suspected she’d had two. Fender was a womanizer of the highest order to be sure—but he was never an inconsiderate lover.

Never. For in the casual sex company structure, being a good lover always left the door open for possible repeat business. With that in mind and the knowledge that he had “taken care” of Amanda, Fender felt he could complete the circle—it was now time for **his** climax. The couple rolled and kissed until Fender was back in his favorite position—on top—and he began ramming the woman beneath him in earnest. As he did, he was still a short way from his own ecstasy, but he was fairly sure what he was doing prompted yet another orgasm for his temporary lady love.

They kissed as Fender felt the beginning of it, for him the explosion

of ecstasy would be happening within the next few moments. He opened his eyes so that he could look into the face of the woman into whom he was about to release his seed as it happened.

Deep brown eyes stared back at him in the near darkness—but they were not the brown eyes of Amanda something with an “R”. Nor was it her face, nor her lips or, though the body was indeed athletic, it was not the lanky, athletic white body of his intended conquest.

It wasn’t difficult for Fender to make out that the person beneath him was not Amanda, and that she was completely naked; and though he closed his eyes and shook his head a couple times, thinking what he was seeing may have been some trick of shadows or of his own mind, Fender quickly arrived at the solid conclusion that she absolutely was not the woman he had been making love to for the past forty-five minutes. Amanda was replaced by an unfamiliar Black woman. A Black woman who, even in the darkness of the room, Fender could see what could only be described as pure fury and hatred in her eyes.

“Soppeeku de man mbaam!”¹ she yelled using both hands to push against Fender’s chest. Even amid the sudden pain, Fender recognized that he was now weightless having been pushed with enough force to send him flying in the air across the luxury suite, the opposite wall being the only thing interrupting his trajectory.

Fender sat (if it could be called that), naked, awkwardly positioned on the floor next to the wall—dazed and shaking his head trying to process and, in some way, rationalize what had just happened. Stiffly he leaned to his left, reaching for the switch of a lamp on an adjacent table. Shaking, and bleeding from broken glass lodged in his back, Fender tried through labored breath and fear to summon enough of his voice to ask the Black woman who she was and what she was doing in his room. However, upon finally managing to flip the switch and flooding the room with soft light, Fender no longer saw the Black woman who was responsible for his aching chest, sharp pain at the back of his head and the damage to a huge mirror that had

¹ Zehnoka Language: “Get off me pig!”

been hanging on the wall but was now laying in pieces across his naked, bleeding back.

He saw in the subdued light—Amanda—

something with an “R”.

Finding himself now caught within a whirlwind of confusion, Fender stared at Amanda, and was slightly relieved he was not seeing the woman who had so viciously attacked him. She looked blankly at the man on the floor for a moment, then without a word turned as if in a trance, toward the table on which the wine and food sat. She walked slowly to the table then did something Fender couldn't quite make out because he could only see her from the back, as moment by moment he'd become more aware of the present pain throughout his body, a precursor to the pain to come. He now also found himself making a conscious effort to quell the ever-growing fear that sought to overcome him; a feat made nearly impossible given that he now felt the unmistakable warmth of his own blood now starting to stream freely down his back. Fender attempted once again to stand but fell comically back to the floor. He extended a hand in the direction of his bed partner and said in a feeble voice that was the best he could muster in the moment. “Amanda, hell are you doing? Come over here and help me to the bed.”

Still wearing the white panties and bra and giving the appearance of the woman a few short moments ago was beneath him, she was now walking slowly toward him as he recognized the distinct gleam of the knife she had evidently just now liberated from the block of hard cheese on the table and was now held firmly in her left hand.

Adrenaline forced Fender to his feet, enabling him through the pain of which he was now only slightly aware, to move about the suite attempting to find a way past the knife wielding woman who stood between him and the door. “What the hell are you doing?!” Fender said.

“Dara de yow di mus xam jaam ba yepp ñun sont ci ganaaw ci sunju gaa.” Said a voice—no longer that of his dinner, dancing and love making companion. The body was that of Amanda something with

an “R”, but the voice was that of the Black woman who Fender saw in the shadows and had just thrown him, like a rag doll to the other side of the room. He had heard that voice only once, but there was no way he would ever forget it. Observing the woman before him more closely, Fender recognized that not only did the voice emanating from the woman, not belong to Amanda, but he also looked on in horror as he gazed into the eyes he once considered belonging to a goddess. Eyes that had become those of what he perceived as being those of a demon. She now had the eyes of whatever woman was staring up at him in the darkness, and now, in the light the absolute hatred and vitriol radiating from them was unmistakable.

“Dara de yow di mus xam jaam ba yepp ñun sont ci ganaaw ci sunju gaa!” The voice emanating from Amanda repeated viciously.

“W-w-what are you talking about?!” Fender said, “What are you **saying**?! A-Amanda! Snap out of it!”

With a speed that struck Fender as being otherworldly, Amanda charged toward and tackled the once perpetually horny CEO, who screamed in agony as he landed on his back on a hardwood section of the floor—all the weight and momentum of Amanda adding to his burden and causing the still lodged shards of glass to sink more deeply into his back. Very soon however, the intense pain to his back would give way to the trauma of the multiple stabs to his chest, stomach and anyplace else it seemed, his attacker was able to land the point of her knife. Fender, screaming in pain and the horror of what was supposed to have been an evening of “love”, but had turned into what was now a nightmare, did all he could in his now weakened, stunned state to defend himself until his body finally abandoned him and he lay virtually motionless, but still alive, as the woman on top of him took several more jabs before seemingly being satisfied she had inflicted enough agony to the man beneath her.

As he lay dying, slowly bleeding out, Fender summoned enough strength to put his hand weakly on Amanda’s shoulder, which was promptly, violently grabbed by the woman and thrown back at him, causing it to limply hit the floor with a thud. He lay, head moving slowly side to side, and eyes looking around blankly, and rolling

back, but seeing nothing, before losing consciousness Fender whispered, “Amanda... Amanda... *Randal*.”

For Nathan Fender, everything gradually faded to black for him—for good.

Amanda stood slowly, now covered with the blood of the man she had met at the pool earlier that day, her bright white panties and bra now deep red in places and various shades of pink in others. She, or rather, her within Amanda, stared at the lifeless body for a moment. Then she raised the knife high into the air with both hands. “Dara de yow di mus xam jaam ba yepp ñun sont ci ganaaw ci sunju gaa.” She once again said, whispering it this time. Then with one fluid, powerful motion, buried the knife deep into the chest and heart of Amanda Randal—formerly, Amanda something with an “R”.

As her lifeless body dropped to the floor landing atop the naked, blood-soaked corpse of Nathan Fender, from within the silence of the room, from just outside the door, the sound of a few muffled screams floated in the air. Soon those screams were joined by others, and then still others as the entire ship became a choir of terrified howls and pain within a church of retribution.

About The Author



Iyapo Yapa Iyapo Yapa has worked as a cartoonist, illustrator, and graphic artist most of his adult life, and has finally made the leap to his TRUE passion, WRITING.

When not writing, Iyapo can be found designing something or other, drawing cartoon characters or composing music.

Iyapo is the host of the READING and WRITING in the DARK Podcast and also hosts the Drapetomaniac Podcast, with his co-host Angela Yapa at:

<http://www.doeaiamedia.com> and on Spreaker.

You can visit Iyapo at his website: iyapoyapa.com

And What of the CARGO?

Other Works By Iyapo Yapa

MELANIN: A Novel

What happens when the only way to live is to either become genetically/phenotypically Black or risk almost certain death?

PARADIGM VOID

A collection of short stories in the genre of Theoretical Ebon Fiction.
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On Kindle Vella

Surviving the WORST

Dinosaurs and Zombies and Harpies, OH MY!
Three people are confronted with the task of SURVIVING THE WORST!

“Kylah Mbaye of the Zahnoka people, lay as silently and still as she could, halfheartedly petitioning the ancestors that at least for one night she would not be spirited away and taken above deck to endure yet another in a procession of endless rapes. Another woman would have long ago given in to despair - but Kylah - in the face of such crushing odds against her and her people within the bowels of this floating nightmare, knew that eventually, this voyage would not end well ... for her **captors**.”

And so it began.

AND WHAT OF THE CARGO? is a tale of love and hate, tears and triumph, suspense and horror that leads to an unimaginable conclusion.

* * *

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He is the author of MELANIN, Paradigm Void and The Redemption of Maxine Allison, and proudly presents: And What of the Cargo?, his first outing into the unpredictable world of suspense/horror.

Iyapo lives happily in the tropics with his beautiful wife and muse, Angela.



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