

ALEX HALEY'S QUEEN

**The Story
of an
American
Family**

Alex Haley
Author of ROOTS
and David Stevens

Alex Haley's
QUEEN

Also by Alex Haley

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

Roots

A Different Kind of Christmas

Alex Haley's QUEEN

The Story of an American Family

Alex Haley
and David Stevens

WILLIAM MORROW AND COMPANY, INC.

NEW YORK

Copyright © 1993 by the Estate of Alexander Palmer Haley, Myran E. Haley, and David Stevens

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher. Inquiries should be addressed to Permissions Department, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10019.

It is the policy of William Morrow and Company, Inc., and its imprints and affiliates, recognizing the importance of preserving what has been written, to print the books we publish on acid-free paper, and we exert our best efforts to that end.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Haley, Alex.

Alex Haley's queen / Alex Haley and David Stevens. — 1st ed.

p. cm.

Sequel to: Roots.

ISBN 0-688-06331-4

1. Haley, Alex. 2. Haley family. 3. Afro-Americans—Alabama—Biography. I. Stevens, David, 1947– . II. Title.

E185.97.H24A3 1993

813'.54—dc20

92-47089

CIP

Printed in the United States of America

First Edition

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

BOOK DESIGN BY BARBARA COHEN ARONICA

Dedicated to the memory of Alex Haley

And to the African, Kanyuro, of the
Kikuyu, who saved my life during a
small skirmish in an obscure war on the
Kenya/Uganda border, and gave me the
priceless gift of the years since then.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The role played by David Wolper in Alex's career, and, latterly, my own, is remarkable, but I would also like to record my gratitude to Bernard Sofronski, who first had the idea of associating me with Alex and this project.

My thanks also to Mark Wolper and John Erman. To Jeff Sagansky, John Matoyan, and Larry Strichman. To Paul Bresnick, and everyone at William Morrow.

To Louis Blau, and to George Haley, Alex's brother, and William Haley, Alex's son.

To my agent, Irv Schwartz, who is the best, a pillar of support and a valued friend. To Fiona McLauchlan and Daniel Donnelly, for their help in research. To the staff at Alex's farm, who adopted me and nicknamed me The Moonshine Kid, and especially Gertie Brummitt, who first let me into the secret.

To Bubby, with love. And Rooney, Myrtle, Maggie, and Dudley. And Morgan, whom we miss.

On Alex's behalf, it is incumbent on me to record his gratitude to Myran E. Haley, his wife and valued associate, and to George Sims, his lifelong friend and master researcher.

PART ONE

BLOODLINES

Hurra for the Hickory Tree!
Hurra for the Hickory Tree!
Its branches will wave
O'er tyranny's grave
And bloom for the brave
And the free.

Presidential Campaign Song, 1832

1

On a cold and rainy April night, in a guarded garret somewhere in Dublin, James Jackson II, known as Jamie, swore a most sacred, solemn oath.

"In the awful presence of God, I, Jamie Jackson, do voluntarily swear and declare that I will form a brotherhood among Irishmen of every religion, for equal, full, and adequate representation of all Irishmen. Not hopes, fears, rewards, or punishment shall ever induce me to inform on, or to give evidence against, any member of this society. So help me God."

It was the year 1797. Jamie was barely fifteen. There were eleven other men in the room, for no cell of the illegal association could be larger than twelve. He had been sponsored into the group by his uncle Henry. Partly because of the eloquence with which young Jamie voiced his convictions, partly because they needed every man they could get in the fight against the occupying British, but mostly out of respect for his uncle, not one black bean was cast against him.

Three months previously, a fleet of forty French ships carrying twelve thousand men had sailed toward Bantry Bay, in southern Ireland, to drive the British from the country. On the flagship, *Indomitable*, was Wolfe Tone, who had persuaded Napoleon that the British could be defeated. The weather went against them, and high winds and heavy rainfall frustrated the landing of men from the French fleet. The storm raged for six days, forcing the ships, one by one, to cut cable and seek safe harbor, until the *Indomitable* stood alone. Then she too turned about and limped back to France.

When news of the retreat at Bantry Bay reached Dublin Castle, Lord Clair, the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, personally appointed by King George III, made a jubilant proclamation.

"It was a Protestant victory! It saw God on our side!"

He intensified the suppression of the United Ireland movement, he ordered massive recriminations against the intransigent Irish peasants, and finally he declared martial law.

The ferocity with which the British troops enforced his orders shocked

even the most moderate of men, and Jamie, appalled by what he saw, made his decision and formally cast his lot with the Irish cause.

He was not the only member of his Protestant family to have made such a dangerous commitment.

His older brother John had abandoned Ireland and gone to America with three of his brothers, but his older sister Eleanor was married to Oliver Bond, a leader in the secret association. His sister Martha had married Hugh Hanna, whom Jamie believed to be a "Peep O' Day Boy," a vigilante group mostly from the peasant class. Under cover of night, toward dawn, the Peep O' Days took what small vengeance they could against the occupying British troops.

His sister Sara was engaged to Jimmy Hanna, Hugh's brother, who had been tutor to Jamie when he was a boy in Ballybay, and had helped to awaken his social conscience. Jamie's uncle, Henry Jackson, with whom he lodged while he was at school in Dublin, was leader of the small cell that Jamie had joined.

Yet Jamie was an unlikely revolutionary. The eleventh of twelve children, he was born to comparative wealth, and grew up in an atmosphere of privilege and security. His father, James Jackson, owned many acres of land and a linen mill at Ballybay, near Carrickmacross, in County Monaghan. The British were well disposed to those native-born Irish who espoused their religion and respected their authority, and James Jackson had flourished under their colonial dominion.

A stern, intolerant man, James Jackson loved the English way of life, and had little sympathy for the Catholic peasants. It appalled him that so many of his children had chosen to embrace the nationalist cause, and thus put everything he had worked for and achieved, and their own inheritance, at risk. He could not understand that it was the bloodless austerity of his heart and manner that had driven his children to seek love and companionship in the camaraderie of political passion. He was dispassionate toward his family and, except in matters of procreation, detached from his wife. Other than the marital bed, his only passion was his hobby, the breeding of champion racehorses.

When Jamie was eighteen months old, his mother gave birth to another boy, Washington, and died four months later, at thirty-five, worn out from childbearing and a loveless marriage. Jugs, the family housekeeper, became surrogate mother to Jamie and his infant brother, and she came to love Jamie as the son she had never had, and he basked in her affection.

Gravel-voiced, toothless, bosomy, and superstitious, the Catholic Jugs had served in the Jackson household as loyal friend and confidante to Jamie's mother, Mary Steele Jackson, whom she had nursed from infancy. After Mary's death, she ran the house with peasant discipline, faced trouble by first crossing herself and then wielding a big stick, and

tended toward earthy language after a few nips of her master's brandy. She knew every Irish superstition in the book, and practiced most of them, especially those that were said to placate the fairies.

It was she who introduced Jamie to the world outside his father's bleak and loveless estate. Several times a week, Jugs went to visit her sister, Maureen, and her husband, Patrick, a tenant farmer on the neighboring Hamilton land. Maureen had a son, Sean, of Jamie's age and Jugs took Jamie with her on these visits because she thought the boy needed a companion. They became more than playmates. From widely diverse backgrounds, Jamie and Sean quickly became fast friends, and grew up in each other's company.

Maureen's simple home was paradise for a young boy whose own was cold and formal. The cottage had a thatch roof, mud walls, an earthen floor, and a vibrant sense of life, of passion and laughter and anger. The loom was the largest piece of furniture, and in the winter the cow lived inside with the rest of the family.

Jamie loved the simple formalities of peasant life. Whenever he went in through the door he would say, "Blessings upon all I see," as Jugs had taught him. He learned some words of Gaelic. When Maureen churned butter, she recited to him the legends of it. If milk splashed during the churning he would be doomed to marry a drunken spouse. If someone "blinked" your cow, he learned how to break the curse. When the butter finally broke, he twisted the staff three times, and placed it over the mouth of the churn, and he helped her smear a little of the butter on the wall of the cottage as an offering to the fairies.

He loved the stories that the shanachies, the traveling storytellers, recited of the leprechauns and the little folk, and he believed in the fairies, who lived on the mist-shrouded Crieve Mountain nearby. He loved the great history of the Gaelic people, and of the blessed Saint Patrick who had converted them to Christianity, and had rid the island of snakes by tapping with his staff upon the earth. He learned of the glories of the time of kings and poets, and of the Viking raiders, who were defeated at Clontarf by Brian Boru. He heard the long history of invasion by the British, who were determined to subjugate the Emerald Isle, from Henry II to the ruthless, hated Oliver Cromwell. Of the Protestant settlers brought from England and Scotland to be settled in the north, to reduce the influence of the Catholics. He heard of repression and rebellion, evictions and retaliations, and the suppression of the Catholic religion that followed the Irish defeat at the Battle of the Boyne.

He wept when he heard the stories of the potato blight, and the awful famine that followed, which decimated the population and forced many of those who did not die to emigrate, mostly to America. He cursed the British for what they did then, expropriating yet more land, because the peasants, who could not afford to eat, could not pay their rent. He gasped at the stories of the White Boys, who refused to pay tax, and

rode through the night cutting off the noses and ears of tax collectors, but never harming the innocent.

He wept again at the tales of the reprisals against the White Boys, how they put the tar cap of molten, burning pitch on the peasant's head, and mocked him while he screamed in agony, unable to remove the fiery mess.

His blood ran hot at the stories of indiscriminate flogging and looting and rape, or the British soldier's sport of setting fire to the hay in a peasant's cart and ramming the flaming cart into the man's house, laughing while the cottage burned.

Most of all, he loved Sean, and tried to emulate his hero in every way. A moderate and studious boy, who grieved for the mother he had never known and sorely missed his father's affections, Jamie found in the rollicking, boisterous Sean a friend who filled the emotional void in his heart. Through the days of their childhood they were inseparable, roaming the lanes between Ballybay and Carrickmacross, the daring Sean leading the wide-eyed Jamie into scrapes and adventures and pranks.

Sean taught Jamie to play the wild game of hurley, and how to cut turf from the peat bogs, stack it in barrows, and take it back to the cottage to dry, to be used as fuel for the fire. They visited Sean's father at the Jackson linen mill, and Jamie watched in amazement the arduous labor, as the flax was hackled and scutched, and the peasant women toiled over great steaming kettles boiling the spun thread to purify it. They went to the annual Ballybay Fair together, and reveled in the fun of it, the tinkers and fiddlers, and the increasingly drunken peasants dancing increasingly drunken gigs. They giggled at the man with the shillelagh and long tailcoat who earned his living by challenging stalwarts to "step on his coat" and fight with him. They watched the races, dazzled by the bright colors of the silks the jockeys wore, and cheered the winners until their throats were sore, and, at the subsequent auction, pretended to bid for horses they could not afford.

When they grew older, and Jamie's father took a mistress, Sarah Black, who lived in Carrickmacross, it was Sean who taught Jamie about girls, and the great mysteries of sex, and it was Sean who first introduced Jamie to the wonders of beer and poteen, for the boy could not understand his father's faithlessness to the memory of his dead mother.

In all things they were as brothers, but although their ages were similar, it was Sean who led and Jamie who followed. They bridged, with the easy bond of youth, the many chasms that their different positions in society created for them, and they nurtured each other in spite of these differences, and drew strength from them. Once Jamie had Maureen crop his hair short, in the peasant-boy manner, the more to identify with his sunshine friend. When he went home, his father whipped him, and forbade him to leave the house until his hair had grown out, and Jamie kept his hair long after that.

So Jamie grew up with an appreciation of the life and hardships of the mass of the people. His other world of his father's ambition, and of class and privilege, bored Jamie, and made him long to be back with his peasant friends. Yet he could not avoid that other life.

Much of Ballybay was owned by the Leslie family, impoverished minor English aristocracy, who, lacking funds, were happy to accept the sometime friendship and occasional loans of James Jackson, whom otherwise they regarded as a man of trade and not of their social quality. For a while they were prepared to consider the possibility of an acquaintance between James Jackson's children and their own, and invited Jamie and Washington to spend an afternoon with their own children. Dressed in their best and sworn to good behavior by Jugs, they were driven by old Quinn, the hostler, in a fine gig with handsome horses.

Jamie and Washington took a stiffly formal tea with the Leslie boy and girl, attended by their governess, whose manners were as starched as her dress and high collar. Afterward, they were taken outside to play in the formal gardens of the small castle. They strolled politely through the grounds until they came to a fence that bordered a cow pasture. Young Jamie, the devil in him, dared the Leslie girl to run through the pasture with him. She accepted.

The governess, furious, raced after them, calling on her charge to watch her step, but it was too late. The girl slipped on a cow pat and fell to the ground. When Jamie went to help her up, he slipped too, in the same pat. The girl began to cry, and the governess berated Jamie for what he had done. He was suitably contrite at first, but the sight of the primed girl covered in cow dung was too much for him, and he started to laugh. This infuriated the victim.

"Go away, you bloody Irish ass!" she cried. The governess boxed her ears for her language but not her sentiments, dragged her away, and told Jamie he was a horrid little boy, who was never to come near them again.

Old Quinn drove the boys home, his nose wrinkling at the smell of cow manure coming from the seat behind him, but his eyes twinkling with delight at the cheek of his young master. Washington was in awe of his slightly older brother, and Jamie could not wait to tell Sean.

That afternoon caused something of a change in Jamie's relationship with old Quinn. Previously, the stable master had regarded him as a bit of a nuisance, a bothersome boy who had to be taught to ride, and whose presence in the stables distracted Quinn from his true passion, and disturbed his precious Thoroughbred mares. Following the incident at the Leslies', Quinn, who detested everything British except racing stock, took more time with Jamie, and found in him a natural talent for riding. He encouraged Jamie's interest in horses, and astonished the boy with the breadth of his knowledge. He could recount the bloodline

of every horse in his stable, their ages, sires, and dams, back through several generations. He instructed the boy in their care and management, he advised him of the potential of any new colt, and by the time Jamie was a young man, he had acquired much of Quinn's knowledge, as well as his passion. All the animals were divided into separate stables, the racing horses in one, the riding horses in another, and the work-horses in a third, because, Quinn insisted, the bloodlines could not be mixed.

Jamie's father, James, was often away, on business in Belfast or Dublin, but sometimes Jamie was allowed to accompany him to races in which a Jackson horse was entered. Then his father was a different man to him. Free of the burden of being a parent, free to indulge his love of the track, James Jackson was attentive to his son, and taught him something of the ownership of racehorses, and the special skills that racing required. If his horse won, which his favorite, Crazy Jane, often did, James was expansive and bought his son gifts. If their horse was not placed, father and son traveled home in mutual, depressed silence.

Occasionally, his father would entertain, and the breakfast for the hunt club would be held at the mansion. These social events were used by James to extend and develop his social and business connections with the ruling class, with the Leslie and especially Dacre Hamilton.

Hamilton was the major English presence in the county of Monaghan, and served as sheriff. He was a strict Protestant, with no sympathy for Catholics. He took pleasure in rigidly enforcing all the penal laws against the peasants, whom he regarded as illiterate idolaters. These laws, instituted after the British victory at the Battle of the Boyne, were used to keep the defeated Catholics out of money, land, and power. The laws encouraged religious conversion and informing on neighbors—and even families, for only a Protestant in a Catholic family could inherit the land.

James expected his children to attend these functions, which they did unwillingly, for Dacre Hamilton was not loved by any of them. He had once briefly imprisoned their brother and sister, John and Eleanor, for some youthful high jinks. John had defended a hedge-school teacher against an irate landlord, and Eleanor had announced in public that she thought the religious persecution of the Catholics was obscene. Dacre Hamilton also protested to James Jackson, and warned him to exercise greater control over his children's opinions and actions. James had taken a riding crop to John, and locked Eleanor in her room for three days. It was this that persuaded John to emigrate to America and Eleanor to move to Dublin. The other Jackson children were wary of Hamilton, and while they enjoyed the sport of the hunt, they disliked the overweening sycophancy to England of the hunters. Encouraged by Sean, Jamie began to believe that most of the club would rather be in pursuit of Irish peasants than foxes or hares.