

smoldering pile of ashes. Only the stone fireplace and part of a charred chimney remained.

It was going to be hot. All the morning dew had already evaporated, and waves of heat were rising from the ground. I played with my shoelaces while Papa paced nervously at the edge of the grove.

Tooooot! Tooooot!

Two toots of the air horn meant the steamboat was approaching on the river. Our house, or what was left of it, sat on the west bank of the Indian River, just south of Fort Pierce. Twice a week, a small steamboat delivered mail, news from the outside world, and any food that we had ordered from Mr. Titus's store upriver at

Sand Point. The steamer was coming from the south, heading back to Sand Point.

Papa waved the steamer down and told Captain Brevard what had happened. Captain Brevard looked over the ruin of our house and then said, "Well, I just came from the Jupiter Lighthouse downriver about forty miles. They need a new assistant lighthouse keeper if you're interested."

"Can you take us?" Papa asked immediately.

Captain Brevard agreed. Soon he had turned his boat around, and we were all headed down the Indian River, leaving behind the smoldering pile of ash that had been our house. We grabbed what few possessions we had left and set off for a brighter future.

Chapter Two

Shipwreck!

We had a fair wind at our backs and made good time down the river. It was October 1872, and the heavy rains from last summer had raised the water level of the Indian River so that Captain Brevard could safely get his boat downriver. During the drier times of the year, some parts of the river became too shallow to cross.

We reached the Jupiter Lighthouse before nightfall. The lighthouse is located at the

intersection of three bodies of water: the Indian River, the Loxahatchee River, and the Atlantic Ocean. I later found out that *loxahatchee* means “river of turtles” in the Seminole language.

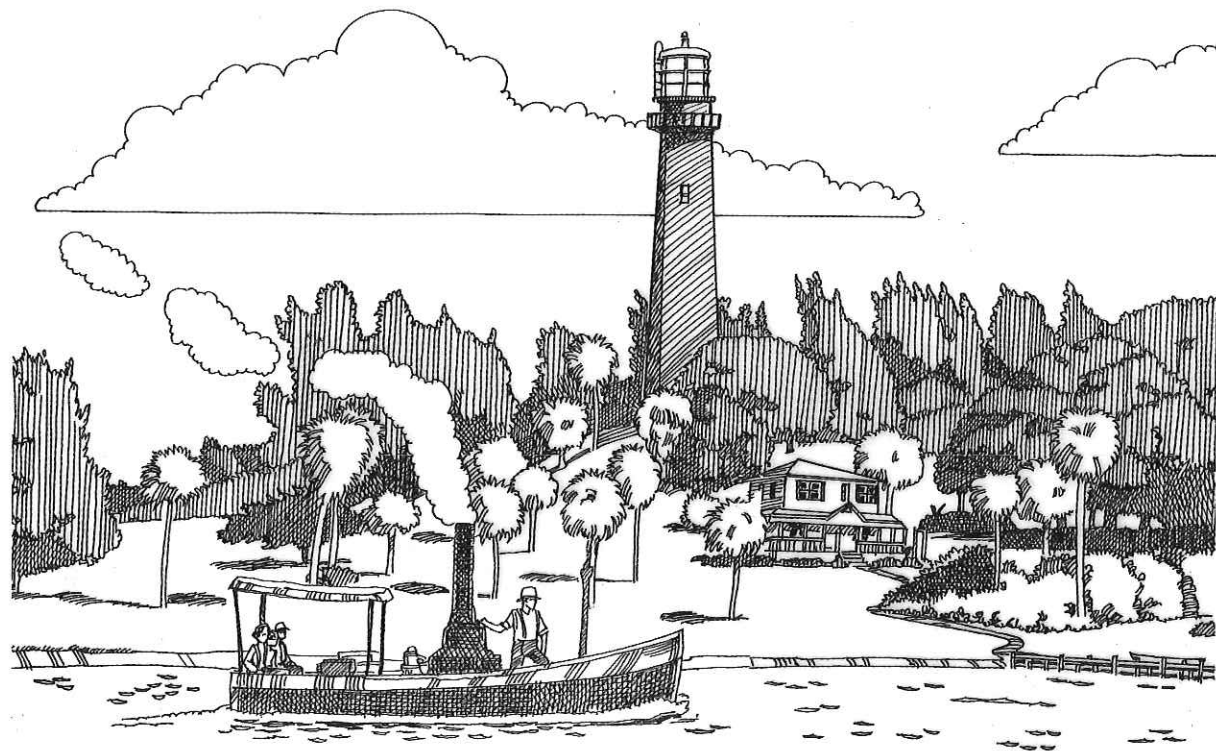
As we docked, Captain Armour and his assistant, Charles Carlin, were waiting at the end of the long wooden dock. The tall lighthouse rose behind them. I had never seen a lighthouse up close before, but I knew lighthouses were very

important because they helped ship captains see where the shore was so they could avoid wrecking. Captain Armour was the lighthouse keeper, and Mr. Carlin was his assistant, but it took three men to operate a lighthouse. After we docked, Papa went ashore to talk to Captain Armour, who said his other assistant had died of yellow fever several weeks ago. He hired Papa on the spot, and we moved right into a small set of rooms above Captain Armour's house. We felt very fortunate to have found a new job and home on the same day we lost our house to fire. Mama was right. God had provided for us.

At first, life at the Jupiter Lighthouse was only a little less lonely than life at the orange grove. Mama and I kept up with our lessons every day. I was quickly becoming a good reader, and my

books kept me company. But I also wanted to explore the jungles around the lighthouse. Papa and Captain Armour told me the forest and streams were full of bears, snakes, alligators, and Seminole Indians. Captain Armour didn't seem very interested in exploring, and Papa was busy most of the time. I was desperate to get into the woods, but there was only one other kid around, and she wasn't allowed to explore. Her name was Kate. She was Captain Armour's daughter. We went fishing and swimming every day, but Kate's parents wouldn't let her out of their sight. There were plenty of stories about people getting bitten by gators or snakes, and her parents worried that she would get hurt.

Papa took turns minding the lighthouse with Captain Armour and Mr. Carlin. They



divided each day into three eight-hour shifts. Each man worked one eight-hour shift per day. When Papa was working, I was not supposed to bother him. He had to keep all the lenses and mirrors at the top of the lighthouse clean and working. At night, he carried buckets of oil up the narrow, winding stairs of the lighthouse. The oil was burned to create the light that was then magnified by the lenses and flashed out to sea to tell passing ships where the shoreline was so the ships would not run aground in the middle of the night. Without the lighthouse, Papa said, ships would wreck offshore, and people could get hurt.

We were glad for a place to live, but we still didn't have any possessions or clothes. Mama borrowed a few clothes from Captain Armour's

wife for us to wear whenever she washed our one set of clothes. While we were getting used to our new home, I watched Mama carefully to see if I should be worried. I knew Papa was trying his hardest, but I also knew from Mama that sometimes Papa was willing to take big risks. Just moving here had been risky. I figured as long as Mama wasn't worried, then I shouldn't be either.

During the day she seemed fine, and she often said, "God will provide for us, Charlie. Don't you worry about a thing." But one night I was having trouble sleeping, and I heard Mama quietly praying in her room. "Dear Lord," she said, "My family has been through so much, and I know I shouldn't ask for this, because you will provide as you see fit for

us, but please, Lord, we have no clothes and nothing of our own. I ask only that my son Charlie is given what he needs to prosper in this foreign land. Thank you, Lord, and amen.” Now I knew she was really worried but was hiding it. I decided right then that I wouldn’t let Mama down—I would be strong too. Then I fell asleep.

I woke up in the middle of the night, while it was still very dark, and heard Papa climbing down from the top of the lighthouse. I could hear a roaring sound, and for a second, I was scared another fire had started in the lighthouse. Then I realized it was the wind outside. Papa banged on Captain Armour’s door below. The captain sounded annoyed when he answered.

“I think there’s a ship on the reef,” Papa said.

“No,” said Captain Armour. “It’s too dark outside, too overcast, to see all the way to the reef. There’s no ship out there. Now let me get back to sleep.”

I heard Papa climb back up to the top of the lighthouse. It seemed like a few minutes later when I woke up again and heard Papa banging on Captain Armour’s door. “What now?” Captain Armour said.

“I’m sure of it!” Papa exclaimed excitedly. “There’s a ship out there!”

Papa and Captain Armour climbed to the top of the lighthouse to look out, and just

minutes later, there was a lot of noise as they ran down the stairs and woke up Mr. Carlin. "There's a ship on the reef!" Captain Armour said. "We need to sail for it and see if they need help!" Mr. Carlin took watch of the lighthouse while Papa and Captain Armour rushed outside into the dark night and rigged out Captain Armour's small sailboat. I desperately wanted to go with them, but I knew I wasn't supposed to be awake, so I didn't even ask.

I watched from the small window in my room while Papa and Captain Armour sailed across the river and to the inlet. I could see their white sail bobbing in the waves, and there were big breakers coming into the mouth of the river. I strained my eyes to see the ship on the reef, but all I could see was black ocean and the

white foam from big waves. Eventually, when I couldn't see anything else, I went back to bed.

I was too excited to sleep in and woke up at the first light of dawn. Mr. Carlin was already out on the dock, rigging out his own small sailboat to head out into the surf. In the daylight, I could see how big the waves really were. I had seen big storms in Chicago, on Lake Michigan, but these were the biggest waves I had ever seen. I could also see the ship sitting out on the reef. Huge waves smashed against it, sending white sheets of spray over the rails and deck. I couldn't believe Papa and Captain Armour had sailed into these waves in the middle of the night! I ran outside, passing Mama on the way. "Charlie!" she yelled after me. "You need to eat something!"

I could tell she was worried, too, from the way she kept glancing out the window to the inlet. Papa and Captain Armour still hadn't returned from the ship.

"Is Papa going to be all right?" I asked her.

"Of course he is," she said. "Now don't you talk about it anymore."

As soon as I was finished with breakfast, I ran outside and down toward the water. By now, Mr. Carlin was already gone, and the dock was empty. But there was something else there. I looked to the southwest, to where the Lake Worth Creek empties into the Loxahatchee River. I saw a long canoe coming out of the creek and heading toward the lighthouse. Then

I saw a second canoe and a third. They kept coming, one after another, until I counted seven canoes, filled with Seminoles, headed directly toward us. Suddenly, everything Captain Armour had said about the Seminoles went through my mind, and I remembered how they had massacred that other white family up in Fort Pierce. I ran back to the house, yelling, "Mama, Mama! The Indians are coming for us!" Mrs. Armour panicked and cried out, "Oh, I wish the men were here!"

Just then, we looked in the other direction, toward the inlet, and saw Papa, Captain Armour, and Mr. Carlin sailing Mr. Carlin's small boat toward us. It was a race. Who would reach us first, Papa and his colleagues or the seven canoes of Indians?