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## The Castle of Lincolnvile

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## Foreword

Upon my research in the Florida Master Site Files, I was led to a barbershop owner by the name of Henry Eubanks. Barbershops have been an important institution in the black community for years, and I wanted to shed light on the possible secret stories that may have been in them, but also give a fictional history to the figure of Henry Eubanks. Enjoy.

### The Castle of Lincolnville

by Joshua Smith

65 Washington Street. Many titles have been given to the black barbershop. Some call it *The Black Man's Country Club*. Others view it as an enclave of wisdom and advice for matters ranging from dating tips to thoughts on legislation and politics. Furthermore, in more recent times, it has been considered a *safe space*, primarily for black men.

For Henry Eubanks this was no different. He was on his third or fourth attempt to own one of these multi-faceted businesses, and hoped that this time would be different. But what did he mean by *different*? Two things are true about most black barbershops—they are covered in hair and stories. And Henry had spent the majority of his life attending to both.

His new shop was small, slightly bigger than the last, but given its boxy layout it felt much smaller than any other shop he had previously owned. This was to be somewhat expected as he was just a tenant in a much larger building, and, in a way, his shop reflected the much larger building. It was also blockish and obtrusive in size. From many angles it merely appeared to be a giant concrete slab with little glass permeations that, had they been less dingy, would have been called windows by some. From other angles, however, it looked like a castle. And that was how Henry liked to view it.

I had happened to stumble across Henry's shop when leaving the ice cream shop on 94 Washington. I don't know what exactly brought me into his shop. It was as if the shop itself and all its stories called out to me and said "*Jason! Jason!*" And suddenly, without much thought or deliberation, I harkened.

I found myself through the door, sitting down in the third chair about three feet from the entrance. Next to me, on my left, was a man, who I will make mention of in more detail, later. To my right, was a tall man, well-dressed, with a freshly lined-up head of hair and a most neatly trimmed beard. There were also the barbers. Three in total. Standing like columns on the far right and the far left of the shop were two barbers whose names I gathered were Mark and Clark. In the middle was our shopowner, Henry. Lastly, there was the man in Henry's chair. He had a short, very short, buzz of hair on his head, and a measly amount of stubble on his face. I knew little about him, but simply by the look on his face, the contemplation of his brow, and the long, crane-like position of his back, I knew this was subject to change.

By the time I had entered the shop, a conversation had already been in motion. However, I did not immediately gather this. It appeared that I, by some manner of coincidence of much or no importance, had stumbled in right at the moment when a long-winded conversation lulls before its interlocutors recoup and continue their verbal exercises.

Henry, Clark, and Mark had been discussing the war. More specifically the return from the war. The argument was multilayered, but to a simpleton such as myself, I was rather young, it appeared to be between patriots and non-patriots. For now, I will not say which was which. The patriots, the idealists, saw the war and its American participants as heroes, who had done an honorable service. Those against, thought not of the participants, but of the concept of war itself.

Their argument was based on the idea that man had to find another solution to its problems other than violence. Both seemed reasonable, that is until the man in Henry's chair spoke.

"The true fight is at home," said the man in the chair.

Clark, smirking, looked at the man and said, "Marital problems?"

Everyone in the shop laughed, except myself. I didn't get the joke then, and, honestly, I still don't get it. Nevertheless, the men began to implore him as to what fight he was talking about.

"Look around. Who own's this building?" said the man.

"Uh, Henry, of course!" Mark said confidently.

Everyone laughed, once again. This time I laughed, as well. However, I noticed that Henry was not laughing. He looked rather embarrassed.

"Is that true, Henry?" said the man.

"No."

There was a slight gasp, I think it would've been much bigger had everyone not collectively caught themselves from further embarrassing Henry.

"Wait, but you collect fees from us! Where is that money going?" said Clark.

Mark leaning away from his chair, "Yeah, isn't that supposed to be our 'rent'?"

It was true that Henry collected money from them. A lot of it, to be specific. And it was true that they had fees to pay. A lot of fees to be specific. But Henry was not the owner of the building, but rather just a tenant. Henry owned the business, but not the place.

"I'm just a tenant. The money you pay just goes towards the lease." Henry said as he hung his head.

You would think that this revelation of innocence would have inspired relief amongst the barbers, but it did not. I'm sure that they were happy that they hadn't been stolen from, but in a way their idea of who Henry was and what the shop was had been stolen from them. Henry's lack of ownership had made everyone in the shop question how they had perceived a place they had been referring to as a "black business". Even I sat there in silence, stunned. I began to even question what other black businesses were not really black owned. It was as if you had found out that you weren't who you thought you were. Imagine living your life as a cat, only to later find out that you're a dog. And dogs we were.

We sat there like sad, shaven puppies for what felt like a long time, but, judging by the clock on the wall, was actually only a few minutes. Why did we feel so demoralized? Up until that day, I had rarely thought about who owned the shop. As a matter of fact, I rarely thought about who owned anything. I just kind of thought that if you acted liked you owned it, then it was yours. Who owned St. Augustine? It's something about the things that you don't know that often matter the most. Hence, why the old folks used to always preach about gaining knowledge. Makes you wonder if knowledge itself is as important as ownership.

After a little while, the man in the chair squinted his eyes and posed another question:

"This is fixable, you know? Would you like me to tell you how?"

Clark and Mark looked at each other and unanimously nodded their heads.

"You have to leave." he said with a smirk.

"Leave?" said Henry. I wanted to interject, myself, but I refrained for fear that maybe I would anger one of the two. Henry wasn't known to be angry, but I had a thing about not making people angry.

"Yep." said the man in the chair.

“That would defeat the purpose, correct? And, besides, I’m not leaving my shop. It’s the only place I have.” replied Henry.

The man in the chair looked puzzled. “Do you really ‘have’ it, though? Owning is having where I come from.” Where he came from was unclear to the other barbers, but to Henry, however, it seemed clear.

Henry then, understanding what the man was getting at, smiled and said “Well, where should I go?”

“Anywhere.”

And with that one word Henry had decided to leave and open up shop elsewhere...anywhere. Of course, there would be obstacles, but Henry had faced several obstacles before. Though we were saddened about Henry not being an owner, we weren’t, however, sad about him being a tenant, for that was an achievement in and of itself. Henry’s future journey was to move up the ranks, so to speak. That one word had rewired his thinking not only to prioritize ownership, but also to see the world as a place that, even if unwelcoming at times, could still contain a better quality of life. And with that new view of the world, not only was Lincolnville his castle, but maybe the city of St. Augustine itself.