

DONKEY WHO, young adult 1950's historical (current work in progress)

Chapter One

"Beat it, kid. These steps are for seniors."

The guy scowling down at me was too big to argue with. Shoulders like a linebacker. A cigarette case stuck into a rolled-up sleeve that cuffed around an imposing bicep. He pulled out a cigarette but didn't light up, as though waiting for me to scam.

Okay, so I was fresh out of middle school—junior high, they called it here—but did I look that immature? And my new school was segregated—racially. This was the '50s. Florida was in the South, even if a majority of residents were old Northerners.

The side door by which Dad dropped me off had GIRLS carved into the stone above the door and a bevy of skirts swishing through it. So I'd headed for the front door—and got warned off. Splitting entrances by grade and by sex? Really? Segregation to the nth degree! On the bottom step of wide brick stairs, I almost lost my balance. New town, new school, first day, and this soon I was getting off on the wrong foot.

In Philadelphia's Main Line suburbs, elementary school had been fun. In Delaware, a private middle school, Mom's choice, was hell. Was I in for more of the same? Dad had said this high school had its own circus, and I'd hoped life could be fun again.

From the walkway I stumbled back to, Sarasota High looked like a turn-of-the-century castle. Arches of white stone around the door, a crown of the same stone on the central tower. Three massive stories of brick spread out to either side. Might as well have a moat and a drawbridge, for all the luck I was having getting in.

A slim blonde passed me, hurrying up the steps, pink scarf fluttering from her ponytail. "Lookin' good, Dolly," the linebacker said. He patted the backside of her poodle skirt....