

mined the passage for his canal. An old man and drifting smoke had succeeded in laying out a riverway straight as a die—the marvel of every engineer who has seen Collins Canal.

The canal carried John Collins' crop by boat to the bay's edge. Two and a half miles across the blue expanse lay the mainland and the railroad. Here he faced the final question—how to carry his fruit across that water barrier.

John Collins had told his son-in-law, Thomas J. Pancoast, that his only solution was to build a bridge across Biscayne Bay, and he had started the work alone. When Carl first saw it the planks jutting from the bay's edge were gray in the sun. It was locally known as "Collins' Folly." Now the builder was seventy-five years old and the project was unfinished. Collins had gone broke trying to complete his bridge, and his tropical crop rotted on the trees in the clearing.

Carl came back after meeting John Collins in one of his eager and excited moods. He walked the floor, talking. "Why, that little Quaker is the bravest man I ever met, Jane. Imagine starting a gigantic project like that bridge at seventy-five—an age when most men are ready to sit down and die! And the sweetest, cleanest, finest person, Jane." I listened, recognizing the symptoms.

"What are you going to do about him, dear?" I asked, and Carl said firmly, "I'm going to help John Collins."

Carl loaned John Collins fifty thousand dollars. It was his first business investment in Florida. In return, he received bonds on the bridge and a strip of land eighteen hundred feet wide running across the heart of the jungle peninsula from Biscayne Bay to the Atlantic. He added to his wilderness kingdom by buying two hundred and sixty more acres of viscid land. He was building the way to the thing he wanted.

No one knew why Carl wanted this ribbon of swamp. I could not imagine, nor could any one else. When later we went by boat to inspect the new property, I protested. We walked, stepping gingerly and slapping at mosquitoes, skirting the swamp going toward the Beach. An old alligator roared its resentment of our invasion of their age-old jungle. Mosquitoes blackened

our white clothing. Jungle flies, as large as horse flies, waited for our blood.

Other creatures that made me shudder were lying in wait in the slimy paths or on the branches of the overhanging trees. The jungle itself was as hot and steamy as a conservatory. What on earth could Carl possibly see in such a place, I wondered crossly as I picked my way through the morass in my white shoes.

I can recall how disgruntled I was that day. The mosquitoes were biting every exposed inch of me. I refused to find any charm in this deserted strip of ugly land rimmed with a sandy beach. But Carl was like a man seeing visions. He had pulled a stick and peeled it on our way through the swamp, and when we reached the clean sand he drew upon it a plan of streets and square designs that represented buildings. That damp sand on which he drew is now the site of Lincoln Road.

"Look, honey, I'm going to build a city here! A city like magic, like romantic places you read and dream about, but never see. It's going to be a place where the old can grow young, and the young never grow old—the sort of place Ponce de Leon dreamed about."

He talked, while the Atlantic sounded a few yards away, and I, as I always did, fell under the mesmeric spell of his voice. I forgot, for the moment, the mosquitoes and the mud, and saw, as he saw, the dream behind the lines and squares he drew with his wand in the white sand. I think we saw then, that day in January, the city that would become real on that very spot and be known as Miami Beach. It was Carl's greatest and craziest dream, and many a heartbreak and humiliation would lie between that day and its building.

"Look, we'll build our house here on the ocean, and a city all around us with houses and hotels like palaces, the most beautiful city in the world!" He didn't look up from his drawing. I know now that he was seeing a completed luxurious play city rising from that swamp. In that moment Carl's imagination saw Miami Beach in its entirety, blazing like a jewel with hibiscus, oleander, poinsettia, bougainvillea and orchids, feathered with palms, and lifting proud white towers against the sky.