Us Against the World

On a hot summer day in Hampton, Virginia, Scott and Thomas would wake up and begin their normal routine. Scott would get up to feed the horses and Thomas would start baling hay. Scott would then meet up with his brother to help him. After baling the hay, the two brothers would go work in the cotton field for no pay. The reason for this is Scott and Thomas are two African American slaves. The two brothers have been taking care of each other ever since they were fourteen years old. When they were at the age of twelve the brothers saw their own dad get beaten to death for trying to run away from the plantation so many times. Two years later Mr. Brooke, the plantation owner, came into their little shed that they lived in and said to the twins’ mother, “I’m sorry to do this, but we gonna have to auction you off. People are looking for a young house cook and we need a strong male.” She tried to resist but more men came and ripped her away from her children. Scott and Thomas were devastated, but knew they needed to stick together. A year later, the plantation was given over to Mr. Brooke’s son Joshua, who is a very good man to all his slaves. They seemed to like him because he was fair. He was a short, skinny man who always wore his reading glasses around his neck.

On a day of normal work on the plantation, Joshua called Scott over to where he was sitting on his deck. There was a sad look on Joshua’s face and the boys could tell. “Scotty, I really like you and I don’t like to do this, but we have too many Negroes working around here and we need to get rid of some of them and you are one of them that is gonna have to go.”

“But I haven’t done anything wrong” he said back to him.

Joshua replied, “I know, Son, that’s what makes this even harder than it is.”
“Thomas is coming with me, right!” asked Scotty.

“No, I’m afraid not.” replied Joshua. By this time Thomas was wondering what was happening.

Scott said to Joshua, “Sir, my brother is all I have ever since our parents passed away.”

Thomas heard this and rushed over and said, “Please, Sir, is there any way we can stay together? Anything we can do?”

Joshua stared down for a moment and said, “Yes there is, the army is having sign ups and I can’t go because of my poor eyesight.” He continued, “The continental army is offering for Negroes to fight in the war for one year, in exchange they will be a free man after their time is served.”

Scott said, “This is the only way we are going to be able to stay together?”

“Yes I’m afraid so.” Without any hesitation both men agreed to do this so they would be together. Two weeks later, the two brothers were fighting the best army in the world. They had never seen a red coat or even shot a gun. In the camp, they were treated horribly because of the color of their skin. They weren’t even given a tent to sleep in. One night all the troops were sitting around the fire eating beans for dinner. A white man named Nathan, who was a bit older than the brothers, tried talk with Scott and Thomas. He started asking them questions. After they talked more with Nathan, they found that he was friendly and had also experienced some hard times. He had lost his mother to a disease a year ago and his father was blacksmith. Nathan had worked for his father and enjoyed being a blacksmith, but after his mother’s death his father became a drunk. He would not stop drinking, so Nathan joined the army not only to start a new life, but to help his country.

After Scott and Thomas trained and learned how to fight, they were finally ready for battle. Nathan had become their best friend by now and the other soldiers did not like Nathan because of it. The twins were the only slaves in the camp, but Nathan didn’t care. He always talked to them about going back to his father’s blacksmith shop, as he really wanted to be the best at it someday.

One night when they were sleeping in their tents, gun shots awoke the men.
Thomas said, “Scotty, get up! We gotta fight! Where’s my gun?”
Scott said, “How many are there?”

So much happened all at once and they scrambled to find their guns and ammo. The troops defended themselves as much as they could that night, but ten soldiers were killed. Even though they had both seen their father die years ago, it was still frightening to them. Nathan was also afraid and committed to stick close to the brothers so they would protect each other in the future.

There were more battles that the brothers fought and their troops were moving the British farther and farther from their land. The militia was winning at least for the moment and they were happy about it. They would have some fun during their time away from the battle. One thing the troops would do is play a game much like hockey but with a can. The brothers had never played this game, but Nathan was good at it. He taught the brothers and they had some games resulting in fights, but mostly they had fun and it gave them a break from the battle.

One bright and sunny morning, the troops were marching along a trail. Everything was very quiet and it seemed like a nice peaceful morning, until “POW!” The sound of a cannon shook the ground they were on and many fell from the impact. There were also shots fired from the enemy at the same time. The troops rallied and the enemy left after defending their ground.

Nathan and Scotty were excited about winning the battle and they were going to see what Thomas thought.

“Tommy, did you see Nathan’s shooting?” Thomas was on his side and not moving. “Tommy!” He had been shot in back and was barely breathing. “Oh Tommy, what happened?” Scott exclaimed.


“What is it Tommy?” Nathan said. “Make me a promise: Stay with Scotty until he gets stronger and old enough to be on his own, cause I ain’t gonna…make it,” Thomas grunted.
“I will,” Nathan replied. Just then, Scotty came back with first aid bandages and saw his brother give his last breath.

Thomas was buried that night with two other soldiers. Scott was devastated. His twin brother was his other half. He was thinking, “How will I make it on my own?”

The next month was very hard on Scott and one night Nathan found him drinking whiskey out of a bottle left over from the other soldiers. Nathan pulled Scotty to his side and said, “You want to turn out like your father? Isn’t that the reason you joined up with the militia?”

“Don’t talk about my daddy that way! I’m going to show you,” and Scott tried to punch Nathan, but fell to the ground and fell asleep.

The next morning after Scott work up, he came over to Nathan and said, “Nate, I reckon I acted way out of line last night and I’m really sorry about that. You were right, I don’t want to turn to drinking like my father and will need to make a good life out of my own once I am free.”

Freedom was only a month away and Nathan knew it would be difficult for a black man to be on his own. He also knew he may not live long if he were. Nathan remembered his oath to Tommy and went in to talk to Scott.

“Scotty, my daddy’s got a blacksmith shop and that’s where I’m goin’ a month from now. I’ve seen the way you use your hands and the strength you have. I could teach you to be a good blacksmith if my daddy would let you. Will you come with me and try?”

Scott answered, “Ain’t got no other place to go, Nate. I will give you all I got if your daddy gives me a job.”

After a month, both boys went back to Nathan’s father’s blacksmith shop. When Nathan first saw his dad, he noticed a limp when he walked. When the father saw him, he started to cry. Nathan thought he was drunk, but he wasn’t.

His father said, “Nate, I was not a good father to you since Momma died. I was drinking to get her out of my mind, but it only made me worse. Son, welcome home. Who is your slave friend?”
“Paw,” Nathan said. “This is Scotty. He is a free man, Paw. He put in his time and he lost his twin brother in battle. He’s looking for a new life and I promised his brother I would take care of him until he was strong enough to be on his own. Could we use some help?”

The father replied, “Well, we’ll put him to work, son. As you can see, I can’t move around very good since I had an accident while I was drinking back then. If you two will give me your time, I will teach your friend how to be a blacksmith and I will send business your way.”

Scott said, “Aw Nate, I don’t deserve this. How can you and your paw be so nice to me?

“Cause you’re worth it Scotty. We’ll be just fine.”

It turned out that Nathan was the best thing that could happen to Scott. Not only did he learn a new trade, but also found a best friend.

Eventually, Nate and Scott grew their business. Scotty remained grateful to Nate and his father throughout his life.