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Cotton Candy: A History (300 words)

1900 Nashville

Time was, *fairy floss* jus' cooked-up sugar in copper-bottomed pots - the poppin' nectar then whipped like a twister in the air. Some kinda alchemy commingled and... sure good eatin'.

Geddit wrong, it'll rain down like blisterin' bee stings... never was much for pain.

But *this* contraption, dollars to donuts, it'll take the confectionary bidniz by the wotnots. Like *Cretors' Corn Popper* in '86...

'Clemmy, got summat for you.'

'Mmm candy?'

I swirl a stick 'round the basin, catching worms o' heated sugar. Grows as it cools.

'Smells like warm cherry pie!' Clementine murmurs... 'Pale as a cloud... like what baby girls arrive on; like... cotton!'

'Taste it.'

'So *light*, like frosted webs... you gotta sugarplum spider Ambrose?' she beamed. 'You told

Gratitude?' pullin' mouthfuls in, 'You *godda thell* Grathithude.'

'Had word from Jefferson, might go down real well overseas.'

She was silent for a lifetime... like waitin' for molasses goin' uphill!

'Jefferson says it's *good times*, he's *in with society*!

They marvel over a darn *pineapple*!

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Up at the Big House, on May Day... Be like *givin'* candy to a baby!

Clementine spoke softly, 'I won't go Ambrose, this the first time I *ever* felt safe.'

'Weren't gone say but... there's whisperin' on the railroad... Festus.'

'Festus?'

'He *knows*.'

'Don't talk tricky Ambrose! That's the most elaborate fabrication, *even* for you!' she touched her stump.

'Ain't so many one-armed damsels roamin' these parts. He smashes in, bustin' your illusions?

Wouldn't you wish...?'

Well... *she* holdin' *her* notions. I jus' playin' *her* game!

We hooked the wagon up to *The World's Tallest Horse*; traded him for passage on The American Line. May Day made sales of four thousand pounds!

Lookin' back, Clemmy agrees, cotton candy spinnin', jus' 'bout the perfect distraction for a *One-Armed Wonder of the World*.