

STEAL AWAY by Andy Froemke

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Title: “Steal Away” based on the book *Captain of the Planter: The Story of Robert Smalls*

Genre: Historical Biopic

Logline: The inspiring true story of Robert Smalls, a young slave who becomes a U.S. Congressman after masterminding the most daring naval feat of the Civil War--commandeering a Confederate warship from heavily fortified Charleston Harbor and sailing his family to freedom.

Tagline: “They stole his freedom... he stole it back.”

The tone is *42* meets *Twelve Years A Slave*. It’s an inspiring story of a man who refuses to let his circumstance define his life.

“A very impressive screenplay about a very impressive man.”

—Ben Cahan (Co-Founder of Final Draft and CEO of Talentville.com)

As a child of a house slave, Robert’s early life is a balancing act between two worlds. Although his master can’t teach him to read, he does teach him to sail. It gives Robert a taste of freedom he will never forget. But Robert’s mother, Lydia, knows the brutal realities of slavery that lie ahead for her son as he matures. In an attempt to spare him a life of grueling labor on the McKee’s plantation, Lydia persuades her Master to take Robert from Beaufort to Charleston to be leased out (work for wages he pays his master). Her sacrifice gives Robert a fighting chance.

Encountering his first Free Black, Robert senses the potential for upward mobility. He quickly hones his entrepreneurial skills on the wharf, becomes a steamer pilot, and courts Hannah, the beautiful woman he marries. But the shadow of impending war looms over the couple’s new life together. The rise of the Confederacy restricts the freedoms Robert has carved out for them and now crushes their hopes for the future. The moment Robert holds his newborn daughter, he realizes he could lose everything. Escape is the only option.

Robert seizes the warship he’s enslaved on and takes huge risks to bring his family aboard. Posing as the Confederate ship’s captain, Robert does the unthinkable... he attempts to sail past five heavily armed forts. Despite coming under fire, he makes it through to the Union blockade and delivers the boat to Federal forces. His heroism makes national news and he’s immediately sent to Washington D.C. to meet with Lincoln. He manages to convince the President to authorize funding for African American troops, then returns to his ship... this time to do battle with Confederate forces.

Despite past accomplishments, Robert’s put in a subservient role. After a few minor skirmishes, his ship comes under heavy fire and the Captain orders Robert to beach the boat. Understanding this means certain death for the African American contingent aboard, Robert takes command and leads the boat out of harm’s way. Robert is immediately promoted to Captain for his bravery in battle.

Finally, the war ends and Robert returns to Charleston a hero but realizes his accomplishments still don’t assure him a life free of prejudice. He still has to fight. Teaching himself to read and write, Robert casts his first vote and decides to run for the House of Representatives. He immediately becomes a target of the Klan and is run out of town. Despite pleas to give up his political ambitions, Robert won’t back down. He knows he must stand up to the Klan. He returns to the town and gives a moving speech that helps cement his victory, then heads to Washington D.C... completing the most unlikely rise to congress in U.S. history.