

CHAINS -CHAPTER 3

AND SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 4 AND 5

As I folded the blankets, Mr. Robert went out to the privy (bathroom). There was no point in grabbing Ruth and running. He had a horse and a gun, and we were known to all. I looked around our small room, searching for a tiny piece of home I could hide in my pocket.

What to take?

Seeds.

On the hearth stood the jar of flower seeds that Momma had collected, seeds she never had a chance to put into the ground. I didn't know what they'd grow into. I didn't know if they'd grow at all. It was imaginary notion, but I opened the

jar, snatched a handful, and buried it deep in my pocket just as the privy door creaked open.

As the wagon drove us away, Ruth turned to see the little house disappear. I

pulled her into my lap and stared straight ahead, afraid that if I looked back, I might break.

By midday we were in Newport, following Mr. Robert up the steps of Sullivan's

Tavern. I had never been inside a tavern before. It was a large room, twice as big

as Miss Mary's house, with two wide fireplaces, one on each of the far walls.

The room was crowded with tables and chairs and as many people who were loudly talking.

A serving girl came through the door and the talk stopped. Once Jenny had loaded up her tray and sent her back out, she sat down next to me. “How did you come to be with that man?” she asked. “I thought you were at Miss Finch’s place.”

I quickly explained the dizzy events of the last two days.

“There’s no telling what happened to the lawyer,” Jenny said when I was finished. “Boston is a terrible confusion—first the King’s army, and now Washington’s.”

“What should I do?” I asked. The words came out louder than they should have.

Jenny gently covered my mouth with her hand. “Shhh,” she warned. “You got to use your head.”

I grabbed her hand. “Could you take us? Please? You knew Momma ...”

She slowly pulled her hand from mine, shaking her head. “I’m sorry, Isabel. I dare not.”

“But—”

Bill opened the door and poked his head in. “He wants the girls. Best to hurry.”

.....

JENNY

Jenny was a free Black woman, not an enslaved one.

She worked at the tavern.

She earned wages

She had some freedom.

She could make her own decisions (within limits).

That is why she could talk about buying the girls.

A thin woman stood next to Mr. Robert. Her plum-colored gown was crisp and well sewn, and expensive lace trailed from the small cap on her head. She was perhaps five and forty years, with pale eyebrows and small eyes like apple seeds.

She looked us over quickly. “Sisters?”

“Two for the price of one,” Mr. Robert said.

“Hardest-working girls you’ll ever own.”

“What’s wrong with them?” the woman asked bluntly. “Why such a cheap price?”

Mr. Robert’s snake smile widened. “My haste is your good fortune, madam.

These girls were the servants of my late aunt, whose passing I mourn deeply. I must quickly conclude the matters of her estate.

A man joined the woman, his eyes suspicious and flinty. He wore a red silk waistcoat under a snuff-colored coat with silver buttons, a starched linen shirt, and black breeches.

“And what side do you take in the current situation, sir?” he asked. “Are you for the King or do you support rebellion?”

Conversation at nearby tables stopped as people listened in.

“I pledge myself to our rightful sovereign, the King, sir,” Mr. Robert said.

“Washington and his rabble may have taken Boston, but that’s the last thing they’ll take.”

The stranger gave a little bow and introduced himself. “Elihu Lockton, at your service, sir. This is my wife, Anne.”

Ruth and I stood with our backs against the wall as Mr. Robert and the Locktons ate and drank.

I watched them close. The husband was a head taller and twice bigger of most men. His shoulders rounded forward and his neck seemed to pain him, for he

often reached up to rub it. He said he was a merchant (businessman) with business in Boston, New York, and Charleston.

His wife looked at us at us from time to time. I could not figure what kind of mistress (owner) she would be. In truth, I was struggling to think .

“Well, then,” Lockton said, pushing back from the table to give his belly some room. “The wife is looking for a serving wench.”

Missus Lockton crooked a finger at us.

“Come here, girls.”

I took Ruth by the hand and stepped within reach. Missus Lockton studied

our hands and arms, looked at our feet, and made us take off our kerchiefs to

look in our hair for nits (lice, bugs).

“Can you cook?” she finally asked me.

“Not much, ma’am,” I admitted.

“Just as well,” she said. “I don’t need another cook. What do you do?”

I put my arm around Ruth. “We can scrub your house clean, care for cows and pigs, work your garden, and carry just about anything.”

“My aunt trained them up herself,” Mr. Robert added. “And they come with blankets and shoes.”

Lockton sighed. “Why not wait, Anne, and procure another indentured girl in New York?”

.....

Indentured girl is not owned forever, but she is not free right now.

His wife sat back as Jenny arrived with coffee. “Indentured servants complain all the time and steal us blind at the first opportunity. I’ll never hire another.”

Jenny set the tray on the table so hard the cups rattled in their saucers.

Lockton reached for a plate of apple pie. “Are you sure we need two? These are uncertain times, dear.”

Missus regarded Ruth. “This one looks simple. Is she addlepated?” (confused)

Ruth gave a shy smile.

I spoke before Mr. Robert could open his mouth. “She’s a good simple, ma’am.

Does what she's told. In truth, she's a harder worker than me. Give her a broom and tell her to sweep, and you'll be able to eat off your floor."

Jenny poured a cup of coffee and set it in front of the missus, spilling a little on the table.

"She's prettier than you," Missus said.

"And she knows how to hold her tongue."

She turned to her husband. "The little one might be an amusement in the parlor. The big one could help Becky with the firewood and housekeeping."

Jenny pressed her lips tight together and poured coffee for Lockton and for Mr. Robert.

Missus bent close to Ruth's face. "I do not brook foolishness," she said.

Ruth shook her head from side to side. "No foolin'," she said.

.....
Missus = Mrs. (one married woman)

Miss = one unmarried woman

Misses = more than one Miss (several unmarried women)

The missus lifted her head to one side and stared at me. "And you. You are to address me as Madam. I expect obedience at all times."

"Yes, ma'am, M-Madam," I stuttered.

"What say you, Anne?" Lockton said.

**“I want these girls, husband,” Madam said.
“It is Providence (wisdom)that put them in
our path.”**

**“How much do you want for them?”
Lockton asked.**

**Mr. Robert named his price. Our price. Two
for one, us being sold like bolts(pins) of
faded cloth.**

**“Wait,” Jenny announced loudly. “I’ll ... I’ll
take them.”**

**The table froze. A person like Jenny did not
speak to folks like the Locktons or**

**Mr. Robert, not in that manner. Lockton
stared at her as if she had grown a
second head. “I beg your pardon.”**

**Jenny set the kettle on the table, stood
straight, and wiped her palms on her**

skirt. “I want them two girls. I need the help. We’ll pay cash.”

“Keep to your kitchen, woman.” Madam Lockton’s words came out sharp and loud.

Did she change her mind? Will she really take us?

Work in the tavern wouldn’t be bad, maybe, and Jenny would be kind to Ruth.

I could ask around about Lawyer Cornell’s papers. When we found Miss Mary’s

will, I’d work extra to pay Jenny back for the money we cost her, fair and square.

Ruth and me would stay together, and we’d stay here, close to Momma.

Please, God, please, God!

“Leave us,” Lockton said to Jenny. “And send your husband over.”

Jenny ignored him. “It’ll take us a couple of days to get your money together,”

she said to Mr. Robert. “We’ll give you free lodging in the meantime.”

I crossed my fingers behind my back.

Please, God, please, God, please, God, please.

Madam Lockton flicked crumbs to the floor with her handkerchief. “Dear

husband,” she said. “These girls are a bargain at double the price. With your permission, might we increase our offer double?”

Lockton picked at his teeth. “As long as we can conclude this business quickly.”

Madam stared at Jenny. “Can you top the offer?”

Jenny wiped her hands on her apron, silent.

“Well?” Madam Lockton demanded.

**Jenny shook her head. “I cannot pay more.”
She bobbed a little curtsy.**

She hurried for the kitchen door.

Mr. Robert chuckled and reached for his pie. “Well, then. We had a little auction here, after all.”

Lockton said,” You may deliver the girls to the Hartshorn, if you please. Come now, Anne.”

Madam Lockton stood and the men stood with her. “Good day to you, sir.”

“Safe voyage, ma’am,” Mr. Robert replied.

As the Locktons made their way through the crowded room, Mr. Robert dropped the heavy coins into a worn velvet bag.

Ruth put her arm around my waist and leaned against me.

CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY “THE JOURNEY”

Isabel and Ruth are kept in the filthy, overcrowded cargo hold of the Hartshorn with cattle and supplies for two days.

Isabel struggles with severe seasickness but finds comfort in looking at the sea, remembering her mother's belief that ghosts cannot cross water, meaning they are now truly alone.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY “ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK”

The ship arrives in New York, where Isabel is overwhelmed by the crowded, chaotic, and heavily militarized dock.

Master Lockton is questioned by a Patriot named Bellingham regarding his loyalty, and a tense scene unfolds over the inspection of the Locktons' personal wooden chest.

When Ruth giggles during this confrontation, Madam Lockton demands to know who it was; Isabel claims responsibility to protect Ruth, resulting in a severe slap from Madam.

Isabel meets Curzon, an enslaved boy in a red hat who offers to help them, and they begin navigating their new, dangerous life in the city.
