

“Boy what’s your problem!”

“I just don’t see the purpose!”

“Well maybe I should just start treating you like a slave if you keep acting this way!”

I can hear John and Red yelling all the way from the field. The dry wheat crops crumble under my feet as I dig the shovel into the ground and stomp on it with my bare feet. I flinch at the pain, but I’m used to it. I rub the bottom of my blistered feet, I can feel the indents that the shovel gave me. All of a sudden I see a white boy with blonde hair running towards me. I look at the ground to keep from blushing. It was Red.

“Jesse, hey Jesse!” I hear him yell. I look up and wave at him.

“I could hear you yelling all the way from here” I smile.

“I’ll do anything for my favorite girl.” he babbled. I smile at the ground.

“You know if your papa knew what was going on he would have both our heads on a platter” I replied.

“I don’t care and you know it. I just hate slavery and I don’t like seeing you being put through this, no matter the color of your skin. I’m going to help you escape.” He stares into my brown eyes.

I look at his soft, caring blue eyes. *You’re crazy. No you’re not. You would get killed*, I thought. “No you’re not, I can do it myself.” I reply getting back to my shoveling.

“Jess you’re not, no way are you going to run all the way to the Northwest territory without help, I’m going to help you.” He states.

“But what if you get caught?” I ask staring at him.

“I won’t” He says walking closer to me. I take a step closer to him and he’s about to take my hand in his when we hear someone yelling in the distance.

“Red! Boy where are you?” We both look back at the house and see John walking towards us.

“Go” He whispers to me, “meet me under the old oak tree at sunset, you’re going to escape tonight.” I quickly run towards the shack where all the slaves on this plantation sleep. I run in and hide behind the wall. I’m so tired of being a slave, and being treated like I’m property. I hate working out in the blazing sun all day, and the scars that John gave me all over my body. I don’t see why I have to be treated this way just because the color of my skin. I flashback to when I was five years old. I’m sitting beside my mother, she’s crying because my brothers and sisters just got sold. I see a tall white man point to my mother, I clung onto her tighter praying that I would go with her. The next thing I knew the man walked over and grabs my mother’s arm and pulled her away. I started to scream when they pulled me off of her. My mother was taken from me. Ever since that day I swore that I would eventually be free. The one and only terrible thing about all of this, I’m never going to see Red again. Even though it kills me, not even Red can stand in my way of my dream. I’m going to escape from slavery.

That night I lay on the floor of the shack and think about my escape. Red has told me the plan before. In the morning before everyone is awake I’m going to sneak into the woods and run for my life. I’m going to run north until I come to Gabriella’s house. Gabriella owns a safe house for slaves, I overheard John talking about her. I know exactly where I’m going. I never told Red this part of the plan because he doesn’t believe that I will be safe. I don’t think that he knows that I can take care of myself, but it is sweet that he cares about me. I feel a hot tear slide down my cheek. I wipe it away quickly. I’m going to miss Red so much, it hurts to think about him not being with me every day. I start to fall into a soundless sleep but remember that I have to meet Red at dusk.

Later that night, I get up from the dirty ground and I tip-toe over the other slaves. I step out of the shack and look around in the darkness. Behind me I can hear the soft sound of snoring coming from the shack. I run towards the old oak tree and see Red, I feel my heart smile. “Hello” he whispers.

*I’m going to miss you much*, I thought. I smile through the pain and mumble, “Hi”  
“I have something for you” he says.

“Really?” I question.

“Well I couldn’ t let you forget about me so-”

“Red,” I interrupt, ” how could you think that I would ever, ever forget about you.”

I step closer to him.

He blushes. “Here” He hands me a small silver box. I gasp as I open it. It’ s a silver necklace that’ s shaped like a heart. I look at the heart more closely, engraved on the back its says “*Forever free.*” I’ m sobbing at this point. I throw myself into his arms and he spins me around. “Jesse,” He whispers. I look up into his eyes. “I love you”

I feel the hot tears slides down my face. I kiss him gently on the cheek. “I love you too Red. I’ m going to miss you so much” I cry.

“Red! Boy are you out there?!”

John.

“Run” he urged.

“I love you” I say back and take off for the woods.

I run as fast as my feet can carry me. By morning John would have figured out that I’ m gone and send the dogs for me. I look up at the stars to know that I’ m going North, that’ s where Gabriella’ s house is. I pick up the speed. My feet are aching but I keep going. I look down at the necklace in my hands. “*Forever free.*” I whisper the words over and over again. I will be *Forever Free.*

I’ ve been running for at least five miles now. My chest feels like it caving inside itself, but I keep running. I’ m not going to stop. I can see the sun peaking through the trees, John has probably already found that I’ m gone. I wonder what he will do? Will he not care? Will he send the dogs? I don’ t know and I don’ t want to. I’ m sure if he sent the dogs I would know soon enough.

I look up at the stars and see that I’ m about halfway to Gabriella’ s house. I’ m almost there, almost free.

After running for hours I realize that I ran the whole night. I slow down to a walk and

feel my feet give out from under me. I slowly pick myself back up again and carry myself the rest of the way. I eventually come to a small white cottage. I know it's Gabriella's because there's a quilt blanket on the porch, that's how slaves know it's a safe house. I stumble up to the porch and trudge up the stairs. I look around and make sure that no one is watching me as I quietly knock on the door. After a few seconds a tall white woman with gray hair opens up the door. "Hello," I stutter, "My name is Jesse, and I want to escape to the Northwest." She gives me a blank stare and then gestures for me to come in.

"Hello my name is Gabriella. I can help you escape tonight, if you wish." She states.

"The sooner, the better." I reply.

She nods and leads me into another room. "You can relax here until tonight. Are you hungry?" She questioned. I nod and she leaves the room. I then realize that I haven't had food for at least two days and I'm starving. I look around the room and see that this room is very plain. The table I'm sitting at and a small box in the corner. *What is that*, I thought to myself. She comes back in carrying a small tray with some...bread? If that was bread, I've never seen bread like that before. She sets the tray down in front of me and I stare at it. "Something wrong?" She asks. Her grey eyes wander to the front door, then quickly shoot back at me. She plasters a fake smile on her face.

"No, no not at all, It's just that I've never seen bread like this before." I implied picking up the lump of wheat. I would know it's wheat, I've been harvesting the stuff since I was five.

"Just eat up" she chuckles and leaves the room heading for the front door.

I pick up the lump and take a bite. Was she trying to kill me? It tasted like dirt, literally. I quickly spit it out on the tray. I choked on my spit because of the dreadful taste. I hope she didn't hear me. She was nice enough to let me stay at her house, feed me, and help me escape.

What seems like an hour later she comes into the room once again and puts on her

famous fake smile. *That was weird.* I give her a strange look and notice that there is someone standing behind her. I gasp loudly.

John.

How did he get here! That must have been why Red didn't tell me about her, he didn't trust her. I should've told him.

I quickly search for an escape. My eyes land on a window about a foot to my left. In one swift motion I leap onto the table and kick the thin screen out of the window. I then look back at John and Gabriella. They both have surprised looks on their faces. *Try to catch me now,* I thought. I throw myself out the window. As soon as I hit the ground, pain shoots up my leg and I collapse. I scream out in pain as a large dog grabs a hold of my leg. I kick the dog in the jaw with my free leg. He whimpers and backs away. I look around wondering where the mutt came from. I see John run outside with other dogs. I panicky get up from the ground and start running. My leg is burning but I keep going. I never stop. I stumble into the woods and hear the sound of dogs in the distance, I start panicking. He wants me to die. I know I'm going to die. I tell my feet to keep running but my heart says stop. I jog to a walking pace, then stop walking. I turn around and can see John running with the dogs in the distance. I smile to myself as I think about my Red. I wonder what happened to him? What did John do to him? I pray that he didn't hurt him. I remember him so clearly, curly blonde hair, sparkling blue eyes and a big heart. I miss him so much. "*Forever Free.*" I repeat those words in my head again. I look down at the silver heart around my neck and smile. I glance up and see that John is nearly 10 feet away from me, he let go of the dogs and is now just watching me, waiting for me to die. I just close my eyes. I take my final breath and stand there motionless waiting for the dogs to rip me to shreds. Goodbye Red, you were right, I am *Forever Free.*