



W e F i n d J i m

TOM AND I STOPPED TALKING AND STARTED TO THINK. AFTER A while, Tom said, "Huck, what fools we've been. I think that I know where Jim is."

"Where?"

"In that small cabin down near the fence. When we were eating dinner, I saw a black slave walk down there with some bowls of food."

"I thought that he was going to feed the dogs."

"But he had fruit in one of the bowls, and dogs don't eat fruit. I watched him unlock the door of the cabin as he went inside, and then he locked it again before he left. I'm certain that a man is being held prisoner inside, and that man must be Jim. We need to think of a plan for stealing him."

"We can easily discover if Jim is inside. Then tomorrow night we can row my canoe to the island where I have my raft hidden. The first dark night, we can steal the key from Mr. Phelps's trousers pocket after he has gone to sleep. We can unlock the cabin door and free Jim. Once we get him to the raft, we can travel south, hiding in the daytime and traveling only at night. Will this plan succeed?"

“Certainly it’ll succeed. But your plan is too simple. A good plan will require more work than that. We have to think of a plan that will give people something to talk about for years to come.”

Tom then told me his plan, and I could see that his was worth fifteen of mine. His plan had style and would make Jim just as free a man as my plan would and might get us killed besides. I was satisfied. I won’t tell his plan here because I knew that he would probably change it many times.

When we returned to the Phelps’s farm, we walked down to the small cabin by the fence. We found a small, square window on the back wall of the cabin. A thick board was nailed across the window.

“This window is large enough for Jim to get through if we take the board off,” I said. “That’s so simple. I hope that we can find a more difficult way to get Jim out. We’re in no hurry.”

Behind the cabin was another small building joined to it. We went into this small building and saw that it had no floor at all—it was simply built on the dirt ground.

“We can dig him out,” said Tom. “That should take us a week.”

We walked to the house and quietly and carefully returned to our bedroom. The next morning, we went down the cabins where the black slaves lived and talked to the man who carried the food to Jim—if it was Jim who was being held prisoner in that small cabin.

Tom said, “What are you going to do? Are you going to feed the dogs?”

The black slave smiled and said, “Yes, Master Sid, I’m feeding a dog. An unusual dog. Would you like to see the dog?”

“Yes.”

“But Tom,” I whispered, “that’s not part of our plan.”

“Well, it’s our plan now.”

When we entered the small cabin, we could see nothing at all; it was so dark inside. But Jim was there and he could see us. He shouted, “Huck! And Master Tom, too!”

I knew that this would happen. I expected it. Now what were we going to do?

“Does he know you two gentlemen?” asked the slave.

Tom looked at the black slave and asked, “Does *who* know us?”

“This runaway slave.”

“He’s never seen us before in his life. What caused you to think that he knew us?”

“But he called your names as if he knew you well.”

Tom shook his head as though he were puzzled. “*Who* called our names? *When* did he speak?” then he turned to me and said in a perfectly calm voice, “Did you hear anyone speak to us?”

There was only one answer I could give and so I said, “No, I heard no one speak to us.”

Then he turned to Jim, looking at him as though he had never seen him before in his life, and said, “Did you speak to us?”

“No, sir,” said Jim. “I said nothing, sir.”

“Not a word?”

“No, sir, not a word.”

“Have you ever seen us before in your life?”

“No, sir, never.”

At last, Tom turned to the black slave, who looked very unhappy and frightened. “What’s your problem? How can you hear voices when no one has spoken?”

“It must have been the devil. The devil is always troubling me. Please don’t tell anyone about this. Master Silas would be very angry if he learned that the devil was troubling me again.”

Tom gave him ten cents and said that he wouldn’t tell anyone. While the black slave stepped to the door to look at his ten cents, Tom whispered to Jim, “Don’t tell anyone that you know us. If you hear anyone digging around your cabin at night, that will be us. We’re going to set you free.”