



H u c k E s c a p e s

“STAND UP! WHY ARE YOU ASLEEP?”

I opened my eyes and looked around. I could see Pap standing over me looking very angry—and sick, too.

“Why are you holding that gun?” he asked.

I knew that Pap had forgotten all that had occurred the night before. I answered, “Someone tried to get into the cabin last night. I took the gun to protect us.”

“You should have awakened me.”

“I tried. I really tried. I shook you, but you continued to sleep.”

“Don’t stand there talking all day. Go to the river to catch some fish for breakfast. I’m hungry.”

Pap unlocked the door, and I walked along the river until I found a good place to fish. I noticed many branches floating on the river. The river was much deeper than it was normally and was flowing much faster. Several large logs floated down the river. I became excited. What else might I find?

Suddenly, I saw an empty **canoe** floating on the river. It was thirteen or fourteen feet long and in excellent condition. I jumped into

the river and began to swim to the canoe. When I reached it, I jumped in and rowed to shore. At first, I planned to give the canoe to Pap to sell for ten dollars, but when I reached the shore, I couldn't see Pap. Then I had another idea. I would hide the canoe and use it to escape. Instead of walking many miles through the forest to get away from Pap, I would use the canoe to go fifty miles down the river to a place where no one would be able to find me.

I hid the canoe in a small stream near the river, and covered it with tree branches. I knew that Pap would not be able to find it. When I returned to the cabin, Pap noticed my wet clothes. I told him that I had fallen into the river. Then I cooked the fish for our breakfast.

After breakfast, Pap said that he would sleep awhile. I sat and thought about my escape plan. I was troubled by one part of my plan. I knew that when Pap discovered that I had escaped, he would begin to search for me and I would always live with the fear of being found. I needed to think of a new plan. Finally, an idea came to me. This new plan would assure that no one would search for me.

At noon, Pap awoke and walked to the river. He called to me to say that he saw a **raft** made of nine logs floating down the river. He wanted to get the raft because he knew that he could sell the logs at the store. We jumped into our boat and rowed out into the river. I seized the rope tied to the raft and pulled the raft to shore.

Pap was eager to sell the logs to buy more whiskey. He locked me in the cabin and said that he would slowly pull the raft down the river to the store. I knew that this would take a long time and that he would not return until the following day.

I quickly got my saw and moved my bed away from the wall. I soon finished sawing the hole through the log wall and climbed through to freedom. I carried bags of food from the cabin to my hidden canoe. I also took blankets and dishes and pots and pans and everything else that I thought might be useful. The last things that I took were Pap's gun and his ax. Then I pushed the piece of log back into the hole. I didn't want Pap to know how I had escaped.

I took Pap's gun and walked into the forest to hunt for a wild pig.

Soon I shot one and dragged it to the cabin. With the ax, I cut a large hole in the front door. Then I dragged the pig into the cabin and cut its throat. Blood poured out onto the floor.

Next, I got a large bag and filled it with rocks. I dragged this heavy bag across the cabin floor, through the door, across the ground outside the cabin, and all the way to the river. I threw the bag into the river and watched it disappear in the deep water. Marks made by the sack were left on the ground. Anybody looking at these marks would think that they were made by dragging a dead body over the ground.

Night came and I was very tired. I sat in the canoe and waited for the moon to rise. I smoked some tobacco and thought again about my plan. When Pap returned and found the cabin empty and blood over the floor, he would think that I had been murdered. He would assume that my body was dragged across the ground and thrown into the river. He might search for my body for awhile, but he wouldn't suspect that I was alive and therefore, wouldn't attempt to find me.

The river was very wide, nearly a mile across to the far shore. The moon was bright now, and I knew that it was time to begin my journey. I began to untie my canoe, when I heard a faint sound on the river. I knew that it was the quiet sound made by a man rowing a boat. Could Pap be returning? I had not expected him until the next day.

The boat came nearer; it was now close enough so that I could have reached out and touched the man in it. It was Pap! I could see him in the moonlight, but he couldn't see me or my canoe because I was hidden in the tree branches that grew out over the water. Pap didn't appear to be drunk.

I waited until Pap had rowed past me, then quietly moved my canoe down the river. I stayed close to the shore so that I would be hidden by tree branches. When I became too tired to row, I lay in the canoe and let it float gently down the river. As I lay there, I smoked my tobacco and looked into the sky; not a cloud was in it. The sky looks very deep when you lie down on your back in the moonlight. I had never known this before.

A person can hear voices a long distance on such nights. I heard

people talking on the far shore, and I could understand every word they spoke. I heard one man say that it was three o'clock in the morning and daylight would come soon. As my canoe floated further down the river with the current, the men's voices became faint. Then all was quiet again.

I sat up and could see Jackson's Island far ahead of me. It was in the middle of the river, large and dark and with many trees growing on it. There were no lights on the island and no signs that anyone lived on it. That's where I planned to live.

I rowed the canoe to the edge of the island and hid it under some tree branches. Then I sat quietly watching the river. The sky was beginning to turn gray. I knew that the sun would soon be in the sky. I found a safe place under the trees and went to sleep.