

Freedom's Children

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Chapter Two Caught!

“Don’t move!” a voice whispered.

Emily froze. Her heart began beating fast in her chest until she thought it would burst. She felt the bitter taste of fear rise up into her throat and she swallowed hard. She wanted to run, but she summoned all her courage and remained still.

The person behind her grabbed her by the waist and pulled her backwards, his hand still clamped tight over her mouth.

“Don’t scream!” her captor hissed in her ear.

Emily’s body stiffened up in response and she stumbled. She tried desperately to dig her heels into the ground to regain her footing, but she couldn’t.

Before Emily could recover her balance, she was half-dragged, half-pushed away from the window. The determined girl flayed her legs out, dragging her feet on the ground.

“Stop it, girl!” the same voice ordered. “I’m not going to hurt you none!”

His hand still covering her mouth, the assailant pulled her behind the very same tree she had hid behind just minutes before. He had her pinned flat against the tree’s trunk, a small broken branch pressed uncomfortably into her back.

“Now quit your wiggling,” the voice said. “If you don’t scream or run, I’ll let you go. Okay?”

Emily nodded her head in agreement. As soon as she was free, she whirled around to face him. Emily didn’t scream. Instead, she opened her mouth in surprise. Her captor was none other than the black servant boy from the house!



“Just what do you think you are doing!” Emily said indignantly. “How dare you!”

“I could ask you the same question, Miss,” the boy countered. “What are you doing peeking through folk’s windows in the middle of the night?”

“Why I was...I was just...” Emily stammered. “I don’t have to answer to you.”

“No, Miss. You don’t have to answer to me,” the boy agreed, smiling a little. “I guess you would rather answer to the fine gentlemen inside.”

“No, wait...I no... Please, I wouldn’t,” Emily murmured.

“Thought as much,” the boy said. “Now just what are you doing here? Spying?”

“Oh, no!” Emily, replied, her cheeks flaming red. “I was lost in the woods. I saw the lights on in the house. Besides, why would anyone spy on the men inside?”

“There are spies everywhere these days, Miss,” the boy said with meaning. “What with the times we are livin’ in. You don’t know your neighbor from your enemy.”

“Well, I’m not a spy, I am just lost,” Emily insisted. “Now if you’ll get out of my way, I will be leaving now.”

“Not so fast, Miss,” the boy said, grabbing Emily’s arm to stop her. “I want to know the real reason you’re here.”

“Let me go!” Emily demanded. “Just who do you think you are!”

“My name’s Elias, Miss,” the boy said, ignoring Emily’s indignation.

“Well, Elias,” Emily argued, trying to sound convincing. “I told you. I was lost. That’s all!”

“Spyin’s a dangerous business,” Elias warned. “If those gentlemen in there were to find out they were being spied on...do you know what they would do? They would...”

Before Elias could say anything more, a shaft of light crossed his face. The boy put his finger to his lips, signaling Emily to be quiet. The back door of the house opened. A man stood in the doorway.

“Someone out here?” the man shouted. “Who’s there?”

“Just me, sir,” the boy answered, putting himself in front of the girl. “Elias.”

“What are you doing?” the man demanded. “Is someone there with you?”

“Oh, no, sir!” Elias replied. “Nobody’s out here—just me.”

“Answer me then!” the man ordered impatiently. “What are you doing out there?”

“I heard a noise,” Elias answered. “I thought it might have been that sly old fox trying to get to the chickens again, sir. I better make sure that fox’s not anywhere around. You don’t want to lose any chickens now do you sir?”

“Well, make it quick,” the man ordered. “My guests are getting thirsty.”

“Yes, sir,” Elias said. “Be right there, sir!”

“I have a mind to shoot that fox myself,” the man mumbled, hesitating. Deciding that his

guests were more important than a fox, the man went back inside the house and closed the door.

Elias turned to Emily and whispered urgently, “You have to go now—right now! Just follow that path over past the chicken coop. It will lead you back to the road. See it yonder?”

Puzzled at the sudden change in the boy, Emily nodded.

“One more thing,” Elias said with dead seriousness. “Promise that you won’t tell anyone that you were here tonight or that you talked to me. Understand me? No one!”

“Why shouldn’t I tell?” Emily asked.

“‘Cause if you do—you’re liable to get me killed!” Elias said gravely.