

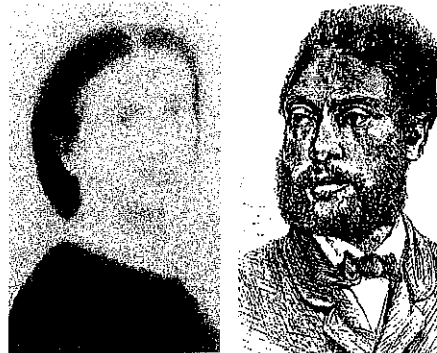
# 36 Fleeing to Freedom

**Some slaves** had light skin because most of their ancestors were white.

## Born to Shame

*From Elizabeth Cady Stanton's speech to the American Anti-Slavery Society, published in the abolitionist paper The Liberator, May 18, 1860.*

**T**o you, white man, the world throws wide her gates; the way is clear to wealth, to fame, to glory, to renown; the high places of independence and honor and trust are yours; all your efforts are praised and encouraged; all your successes are welcomed with loud hurrahs and cheers; but the black man and the woman are born to shame. The badge of degradation is the skin and the sex....For while the man is born to do whatever he can, for the woman and the negro there is no such privilege.



Ellen and William Craft made their freedom journey in December 1848. When they were buying steamship tickets in Macon, Georgia, the steamer's officer looked suspiciously at William and said, "Boy, do you belong to that gentleman?"

Ellen Craft was 22, slim, sweet-natured, and shy. She was very intelligent, but she couldn't read or write. She had curiosity, but she had never been far from home. Ellen had white skin, but she was a slave. She would soon be the best-known black woman of her day. Are you confused? Ellen was both white and black. She was biracial (by-RAY-shul). Read on and you will understand.

Ellen was the daughter of James Smith, one of Georgia's wealthiest plantation owners. Smith had a wife and children. Smith had a wife and children. Do you think I made a mistake and wrote the same sentence twice? That was no mistake. Smith had two families. His legal wife was white and mistress of the plantation. The other woman, whom he never married legally, was black and a slave.

Ellen's mother was the slave. Ellen's father treated Ellen and his other slave children like slaves. When Ellen was 11 she was given as a wedding present to her white half-sister. That means she was sent away from the mother who loved her. You can imagine how she felt—she was still a young girl and she was lonely and unhappy. Her half-sister would never admit they were related. Ellen was now a house servant. She learned to be a skilled seamstress; she also learned to be a good listener. She heard the white people talk about the troubles between North and South. She heard that there were people in the North, called abolitionists, who wanted to free the slaves. She de-

cided that she would run away to the North.

Then Ellen fell in love with William Craft, who was a slave and a carpenter. He fell in love with Ellen. William had money saved because his owner allowed him to earn extra money and keep it for himself. They made plans to run away together. They knew that if they were caught they would be beaten, separated, and perhaps sold. It took courage to do what they planned to do.

It was Ellen's idea. She pretended to be a man: a young, sickly white man. She pretended to be journeying to Philadelphia for medical treatment. William was her slave. Because she had listened carefully to her owner's conversations, she knew all about Philadelphia's doctors. But neither Ellen nor William Craft knew how to read a map, or buy tickets for a journey, or sign a name on a hotel register. How could they travel north? How could they carry out their scheme?

Ellen put her arm in a sling. She said it was injured. That explained why she couldn't write. She put a big bandage around her cheeks to hide her smooth face. No one would wonder why she didn't have whiskers. William bought her a man's suit; he also bought her high-heeled boots to make her seem taller.

Now Ellen had to forget her shyness. She had to act like a slave owner and order William around. She had to buy tickets. She did it. "A ticket for William Johnson and slave," she said in a strong voice. She was William Johnson. Because whites and blacks could not sit together, they rode in separate cars. Ellen was frightened. Then something fearful happened. The man who sat next to her was a white man she knew. Would he recognize her in spite of the man's suit she wore? She pretended to be very sick, groaning answers to his questions. He moved away.

Ellen and William Craft—who were now William Johnson and slave—traveled by train and boat. They stayed in a fine hotel; William Johnson ate in the hotel's dining room. They had more than

## 100 DOLLARS REWARD.

Running from the subscriber, on Monday June 15, a negro woman NELLY FORE-RISSE. She is about 45 years old, cloudy built, large pointed mouth, good teeth, high cheek bones, walks pigeon-toed. She is slow in giving a direct answer when questioned; her manner of speaking is rather queer.

She has a free husband living on Capitol Hill, Washington City, near Sim's old rope walk, named Hanson Forrest. I will give the above reward no matter where taken, so I get her again.

E. M. DOWIE,  
Lang Old Fields,  
Prince George's County, Md.  
July 6, 1857.

Less than two years after the Crafts escaped, the Fugitive Slave Law was passed. Now it was a crime to help a runaway slave.

## Common Destiny

*Frederick Douglass, the great abolitionist, had also been a slave, and had run away to freedom. In 1851 he said this to white people:*

**H**ave we not a right here? For 300 years or more, we have had a foothold on this continent. We have grown up with you. We levelled your forests. Our hands removed the stumps from your fields and raised the first crops and brought the first produce to your tables. We have fought for this country....I consider it settled that the black and white people of America ought to share common destiny. The white and black must fall or flourish together. We have been with you, are still with you, and mean to be with you to the end. We shall neither die out nor be driven out. But we shall go with you and stand either as a testimony against you or as evidence in your favor throughout all your generations.



A slave nursemaid might care for the owner's children and see her own children sold away.

## Sale of Slaves and Stock.

The Negroes and Stock listed below, are a Prime Lot, and belong to the ESTATE OF THE LATE LUTHER MCGOWAN, and will be sold on Monday, Sept. 22nd, 1852, at the Fair Grounds, in Savannah, Georgia, at 1:00 P. M. The Negroes will be taken to the grounds two days previous to the Sale, so that they may be inspected by prospective buyers.

On account of the low prices listed below, they will be sold for cash only, and must be taken into custody within two hours after sale.

No.	Name.	Age.	Remarks.	Price.
1	Lunesta	27	Prime Rice Planter,	\$1,275.00
2	Violet	16	Housework and Nursemaid,	900.00
3	Lizzie	30	Rice, Unsound,	300.00
4	Minda	27	Cotton, Prime Woman,	1,200.00
5	Adam	28	Cotton, Prime Young Man,	1,100.00
6	Abel	41	Rice Hand, Eyesight Poor,	675.00
7	Tanney	22	Prime Cotton Hand,	950.00
8	Flementina	39	Good Cook, Stiff Knee,	400.00
9	Lanney	34	Prime Cotton Man,	1,000.00
10	Sally	10	Handy in Kitchen,	675.00
11	Maccabey	35	Prime Man, Fair Carpenter,	980.00
12	Dorcas Judy	25	Seamstress, Handy in House,	800.00
13	Happy	60	Blacksmith,	575.00
14	Mowden	15	Prime Cotton Boy,	700.00
15	Bills	21	Handy with Mules,	900.00
16	Theopolis	19	Rice Hand, Gets Fits,	575.00
17	Coolidge	29	Rice Hand and Blacksmith,	1,275.00
18	Bessie	69	Infirm, Sews,	250.00
19	Infant	1	Strong Likely Boy	400.00
20	Samson	41	Prime Man, Good with Stock,	975.00
21	Callie May	27	Prime Woman, Rice,	1,080.00
22	Honey	14	Prime Girl, Hearing Poor,	850.00
23	Angelina	16	Prime Girl, House or Field,	1,000.00
24	Virgil	21	Prime Field Hand,	1,100.00
25	Tom	40	Rice Hand, Lame Leg,	750.00
26	Noble	11	Handy Boy,	900.00
27	Judge Lesh	55	Prime Blacksmith,	800.00
28	Booster	43	Fair Mason, Unsound,	600.00
29	Big Kate	37	Housekeeper and Nurse,	950.00
30	Melie Ann	19	Housework, Smart Yellow Girl,	1,250.00
31	Deacon	26	Prime Rice Hand,	1,000.00
32	Coming	19	Prime Cotton Hand,	1,000.00
33	Mabel	47	Prime Cotton Hand,	800.00
34	Uncle Tim	60	Fair Hand with Mules,	600.00
35	Abe	27	Prime Cotton Hand,	1,000.00
36	Tennes	29	Prime Rice Hand and Cocahman,	1,250.00

Who were Abel, Violet, and Honey? What happened to them? Did they ever see their friends again? Who are their descendants?

**Ellen Craft** had become prejudiced against white people. Knowing her background, you can understand that. But does bigotry make sense? Ellen was as much white as she was black.

one close call, but they made it—to Philadelphia and freedom.

When they reached Philadelphia, they found free blacks who sent them to the home of an abolitionist family. But when Ellen saw the people she refused to enter their house. They were white. Ellen didn't know that white people could be nice. She didn't believe that white people would help her. She thought it was all a trick. But she began to find that skin color has nothing to do with kindness or meanness. Those white people became her friends.

Ellen and William Craft were soon famous. People wanted to hear their story. They moved to Boston, which was a center of abolitionism. They made speeches. Articles were written about them. They would have preferred a quiet life, but they understood the need to tell their story to help others who were still enslaved.

When slave catchers came from Georgia just to capture the Crafts, Henry Ingersoll Bowditch, the son of the renowned navigator Nathaniel Bowditch, whom you read about in chapter 15, helped Ellen and William flee to England. In England they learned to read and write. They taught sewing and carpentry. Then some English

merchants sent William to Africa to sell their goods. But in Africa the king of Dahomey took his goods and gave him chained slaves in return. Craft would have nothing to do with slavery. He freed the slaves. That was the end of that job.

Ellen and William were homesick. They longed for their own country. Finally the time came (after the Civil War) when it was safe for them to go home. They spent the rest of their lives in the South, teaching and helping others.

When William Johnson and slave walked down that long, winding American road toward freedom and justice, they didn't realize they would be speaking out for all those left behind. They learned that it would take hard work to make the words of the Declaration of Independence mean what they said. Ellen and William Craft were willing to do their part.