



THE FOREST OCTOBER 7, 1770

I BEGIN TO KEEP THIS JOURNAL AT THE SUGGESTION OF A gentleman who fears I shall lose my life unless I write it down. I think this a peculiar fear, and said so to the gentleman, whereupon he took from his pocket-book a worn Virginia Almanack and said, “For example, I can tell you where I was on Wednesday last.”

I looked, and found that on Wednesday last he had paid 45 shillings to Harry Mullins and settled his accounts with Speirs and Ford and paid two shillings for an entertainment at Byrd’s Ordinary. And he thought this important!

Gentlemen love to think about money and other such too abstract things, and they lose thereby the joy of the moment. I thought he could live better without his book.

“Your third of October is gone,” he said. “Mine I shall recall in some detail forever.”

“Mr. Jefferson, on Wednesday last I rendered a kettle of fat for soap and stuffed the sausages you ate this day and turned beds, I think, to prepare for the ball and rocked my son for the pain in his ears. What might I want to remember of that?”

I had spoken in jest, for I did not know the sensitive nature of this gentleman. He felt reproved. His face went pale, and his cheeks grew pink by the fire’s light. He blinked. I had a terrible thought of the air between us stiff as glass.

“You are right, sir!” I put my hand on his sleeve, the gray brocade I had thought so fine when I first saw it at the ball that night. “I know you are right. Indeed you are right. But some lives are better recorded than others.”

“Mrs. Skelton.”

His voice was gone as stark as his face. He feels an awkwardness in the presence of ladies that has kept him still single at twenty-seven, but we had coddled one another all evening until our words flowed freely. This dance of words at first acquaintance is a very careful minuet, and there I had in a careless moment trod with force upon his toe.

I opened my fan, for my cheeks were heating. I had made myself believe all evening that I only entertained my Pappa’s guest, yet my own dismay made me know that I most greatly desired Mr. Jefferson’s friendship. This I must not do, for I had resolved that I would not remarry. So my warm delight in Mr. Jefferson’s company as if he shed a radiance into the room served for nothing. It only rose to flame on my face.

So I began to flirt. Flirting is my certain defense against any greater intimacy. Flirting charms a gentleman while it puts him away; it lets the lady lead. Then it was that I first understood the shield that it had become for me. I lowered my eyes and fluttered my fan and said the first artful thing that came to mind.

“You are right. All we may ever keep of each precious day is its memory. So in memory of this evening, sir, I vow to begin to keep a journal. But I shall not record in it shillings spent nor featherbeds turned nor hog-fat rendered. What I shall record will be all that matters. Emotions, Mr. Jefferson. I shall write what I feel.”

Then I lowered my fan and smiled at him, and I saw in his face such a play of emotions that I nearly laughed aloud. He was charmed and distracted and surprised out of words.

“You may read it, Mr. Jefferson,” I boldly said, and then it was my turn to feel abashed. There is a brazenness to blatant flirting that gave me not a care when I was young, but at twenty-two I feel the

shame of it. "That is, you might read some part of it," I corrected myself from behind my fan.

Mr. Jefferson is such a kindly soul that my discomfiture made him forget his own. "I should like that very much," he said with the warmth of our earlier conversation. "You will read my shillings and pence, and I shall read the gentle thoughts of your soul. I should like that very well indeed."

That moment recorded and read again, I come to the conclusion that this my emotional journal might serve very well. I proposed it in play, yet the thought compelled me, so today I have begged of my Pappa this blank-book meant for his legal cases. He had it from a binder who wanted his trade but he never bought its fellows, so he gave it me now with all the ease of any valueless gift. Still he said, "Take care of it, Patty, please. Remember that books are very dear," as if I am ever to remain a child.

So many white pages! The fluttering bulk of them thrills and dismays me out of mind, for journal-keeping in a book so fine seems a duty near to sacred. Shall I search for adventures to feed my journal? Shall I move my thoughts onto a higher plane? I have a thought that I shall live more nobly, so as not to cause my journal embarrassment.

It seems amazing what I can recall when I sit with my journal to write it down. I have written my conversation with Mr. Jefferson as the cat heard it dozing on the hearth, near all of the words, and perfected by the fact that I have thought them through a second time. I did not say, "I shall write what I feel," but I said instead, "I shall write what I think." Yet now I prefer my second version, so I shall let my journal believe it true.

And I make a further discovery of journal-keeping. A few words written may stand for many. Reading our conversation brings to my mind the hours of the ball that went before, so I feel again the chill of the ballroom that thickens like ice in my bones. I hear the fiddles tuning to the harpsichord, and the rustle of gowns and the murmur of talk as my Pappa nods and the fiddlers begin *Les Petites Demoiselles* right merrily.

I had that first minuet with my Pappa. We always open the ball together. He is a gouty dancer, tender of feet, who dances in the fashion of twenty years past, while I dance in the latest fashion that is grandly fancy of step and gesture. We look, we are told, quite comical, and I smile and laugh, and so does he.

When Pappa had danced to the end of his wind, I had reels and country-dances with some few gentlemen who claim that right at every ball and will not be disheartened. I dance once with each and fly to the next with what must seem an excess of gaiety but is nothing more than a wish to be free of them. So I gaily danced with my usual spirit, freeing myself from my chain of beaux, and as I danced I noticed Mr. Jefferson standing tall and quiet by the parlor-door. I had gained my first sight of him only that morning, and had my introduction at dinner-time, yet the sight of him was so pleasing to me that I felt from the first a discomfiting connection. I feared that he thoroughly knew my mind, my rejection of my suitors and my liking for him, so I danced along faster and averted my face that he might not read my thoughts in it.

After I had flown from my last failed beau, I took my turn at the harpsichord. This I played on heartily until I had a thought of eyes on me, and I found Mr. Jefferson standing beside me, wearing a look most warm and kind. I dropped every finger onto the keys. I recovered, but then all the dancers were off so I hastened the measure to catch them up.

“Will you dance again, Mrs. Skelton?”

My cheeks were heating despite the cold. It was indeed so cold that I could see my breath. I had chosen my gown and craped my hair with Mr. Jefferson in mind, yet there in the sight of him I was abashed. All my art in casting suitors aside seemed of a sudden mere artifice, for never had I met a gentleman since Bathurst’s death these two years gone who had seemed to me anything but dim and foolish. To cast aside a beau who seemed warm and wise and who looked at me as if he had determined to love me required a more practiced skill than I possessed.

“Forgive me. Please. I must play on. Now I am behind the fiddles. Please do excuse me.” This and other such things I said when I could say words between the notes.

“Here is your sister, Mrs. Skelton.”

There came Tibby at what she told me was Pappa’s bidding. My Pappa was nursing his gout by the fireplace while he plotted out matches for his daughters. Tibby is but sixteen, so he pulled her from the dance and directed that she replace me at the harpsichord when he saw that his eldest had set her hook into a splendid fish. So I stood and put my hand on Mr. Jefferson’s fingers and curtsied deeply for his bow, and we whirled into the country-dance.

After that first dance came other dances. We had a heating, spirited reel and a country-dance of the handkerchiefs. Mr. Jefferson dances along most fine, light on his feet despite his height, and very loose of limb; there is a happy intensity to all he does, so he bows more deeply and steps more distinctly and speaks and listens with more attention than any other gentleman. Soon we were conversing in the intervals between the tunes, but it was only when the jigs began that I found a reason to slip away. I thought him too shy and dignified to want me to chase him around the room as some of the other ladies were chasing, to the great hilarity of all the gentlemen.

I stood on toes and said to him, “I am warmed too much for the chill of this room. Will you retreat with me to the parlor fire?”

We were alone in the parlor. We sat on the chairs. I tipped the fire-screen to shade my face. We talked, I recall, of a mare he hopes to send this season to Partner, the fashionable English stallion from which we have had a promising filly. We talked of apples next, and then he told me he is building his home-farm on the top of a mountain. His servants have leveled the highest height, and there he has built what he assures me is a most unpretentious temporary cottage where he plans, nevertheless, to be living this winter. From there we went to talking of the swift passage of time, and from that exchange arose his thought that I should keep a journal.

So our Friday evening was happily spent. Less promising had been

our morning meeting. This being late on a rainy Sunday, with Jack asleep and his ears at peace and an hour to come before candle-time, I shall tell what I can of the rest of that day. And since this venture of journal-keeping seems much like making a new acquaintance, I commence by recording my history. A story is never begun at its middle.

My Pappa is a practical man. When he saw that Providence had blessed him with four daughters to be given in marriage and a home-farm near to Williamsburg, he built to the eastern end of his house a ballroom larger than the house itself. It is, I confess, hardly more than a barn, for which it sometimes serves in summer, and the smell of curing tobacco fills it even at the moment of minuet. But it serves very well its intended purpose. Pappa offers three or four balls each year at the spring and fall sittings of the Burgesses, and whether or not these balls were the cause, he has disposed of two daughters out of four. That his first has come back seems to him no more than a passing inconvenience.

It is Pappa's keenest wish that I should remarry, and my own keenest wish that I should not. To be an aged spinster is a shameful thing, but I am no spinster; I was married at eighteen and widowed at nineteen, and my little son Jack is nearly three. I cannot face again all the trials of marriage, yet still I find a pang in putting it by, for its promise of love and nurturance persists even though I found the promise hollow. My Pappa's resolve that I must remarry has strengthened my own that I will not, for I must cultivate a solid will if I am to prevail against him.

I feel now just a more ardent version of my first reluctance to be a bride. Bathurst was the brother-in-law of Pappa's third wife. I had known him since the age of twelve, and played with him at cards and pebble-games, and we had ridden out on our pair of grays we had raised from foals to pull our chaise. He always swore that I would be his wife.

This promise of Bathurst's was a comfort to me at the callow age of twelve. Yet when I was fifteen, my Pappa began to give his balls that he might marry his daughters, so then I had my three years as a belle. Then

did I dance! Then did I flirt! At seventeen I had four loving suitors all paying their addresses to me at once, and more beyond them, a whole garden of beaux that I might stroll and flirt for my own pleasure.

I had no wish to pluck a single flower when I might enjoy the garden. Yet Betsy grew fast behind me in age, and she fell much in love with Francis Eppes, so then Pappa commanded me to choose a husband that I not obstruct my sisters. Francis is the nephew of my dear dead mother, and Bathurst was related to my Pappa's third wife, which symmetry so pleased my fond Pappa that I chose out Bathurst from the rest. It seems a great foolishness that I chose my husband primarily upon my Pappa's whim, yet I sit here now and truly that seems to have been my strongest reason. I believed that gentlemen were much alike so it really mattered little.

My Bathurst was bold and dark of look, quite low of stature and thick at the waist and grim of a habitual set of his mouth, yet pleasant enough, had the angers and petulance he showed before his wedding-day been the worst that I would see of him. But they were the best. What had been just boyish sulking swelled after marriage into genuine rage, and his determination to have his stubborn will that had been the cause of childhood bickering became after marriage an iron rule. I shall not again place myself and child beneath the control of a gentleman who may delight before marriage in order to woo but will turn once we are wed into a tyrant-king.

It seems an adventure, this widowhood, if I may see it in that light. A widow controls her own property and holds her own children and chooses wherever she will make her abode, which seems a very garden of decisions. A married woman has no decisions at all. I know no other unmarried widow. Most are wed again before the grass grows on their husbands' graves, which is a sorry pity, since to marry or not is almost the only choice a woman may make, and the making of it in the negative gives her rights that she may earn in no other way.

So on Friday morning I did not dress like a lady expecting beaux for a ball. I was only very plainly attired in a jump with bedgown and apron over. I spent that morning with Betty and Ondine and Suck

preparing dinner for forty people, which history said was the number we might expect to arrive by three o'clock. We had extra food by for twenty more, and a plan for a bread-and-apple pudding if even more people arrived than that.

Jack's ears were bothering him less that day, but he wanted to stay close by to me so Betty's daughter was coddling him on a corner of the kitchen floor.

"He is fussing, mistress!" little Bett called to me. She is eleven years old, and a child of no patience. I put her aside while I worked with Ondine at stuffing the quails that would wear to the table their own heads and feathers returned to them and set upon nests of their own pickled eggs.

Bett called again. I could hear Jack fussing the half-angry sound that he often makes when the pain is rising. I left Ondine to finish the quails, and I said to Betty, "He might have laudanum. It will vex my Pappa if he spoils this day."

That is why we were passing through the kitchen doorway at the moment when Mr. Dalrymple's carriage rumbled into the kitchen-yard.

This gentleman is Pappa's choice for me. His late first wife was a Carter cousin, and he has hundreds of pounds a year from England and estates above ten thousand acres, but he is a callous gentleman who cares too much for the show he makes. The thought of Mr. Dalrymple once alarmed me with the worry that I might be compelled to accept him, but now with my firming resolve not to wed I find in his pomposity much high humor. Courtship being what it is, with ladies meant to feign a lack of interest, I have been unable to persuade him that I am not merely being coy. I had worn work-clothes to discourage him so I was glad to see his carriage coming, and vastly amused when his postilion directed his horses behind the house into the kitchen-yard.

Mr. Dalrymple travels like the Governor himself in a carriage of dark-green trimmed in red with four black horses in silver-trimmed harness. He had standing at the back of it four footmen in varied

livery, so I knew he carried other gentlemen within. His custom since he had bought the carriage was to carry the most honorable gentlemen he could find, and since the day promised rain he had found three companions willing to bear him for the sake of the ride.

My suitor had a new postilion. His former boy had run away, and I knew from Pappa that he had bought a new Negro who had been in country for barely a year and was hardly past his sickness. He bought him, I could see, for the show he made, so tall and black on the blacker horse, and for the savings in cost. But I am certain he rued the savings when his new postilion knew no better than to drive a carriage full of noble gentlemen right around the house into the kitchen-yard.

“Idiot! Fool!” Mr. Dalrymple called, and he bounded out the door of his carriage. He pulled the postilion off the near leader and shook him by his handsome coat. The boy was young, I thought him still in his teens, a whole foot taller than Mr. Dalrymple, and broad and strong as the horse he rode. The gentleman seized his postilion’s whip and beat the boy about the head with it while the boy could only tremble and make a sound very like Jack’s painful fussing.

I reached for my son to protect him from the sight, but Betty had him first. She caught him up with his face in her bosom before we confronted that scene again.

The other gentlemen were descending. I could see they were as vexed as we, and as helpless as we to intervene. While it is not polite to beat one’s slave, it is less polite to grab the whip and belabor the gentleman in his turn.

That was when I noticed Mr. Jefferson. I guessed at once who he was. My Pappa had described for me this tall young lawyer from Albe-marle who went Burgess at only twenty-six and is kin to the Randolphs and heir to a respectable acreage far to the west beyond Richmond. Pappa sees him as not a bad secondary choice. I had thought Mr. Jefferson must be another of my Pappa’s unfortunate marital candidates, which misapprehension made more confounding my first complete sight of him.

He seemed to me remarkably tall, the tallest man that I had ever

seen, with a strong nose and chin and a look about him of sweet good humor and gentle wit. His hair was red-brown, less ruddy than mine, but I thought our coloring much the same. He wore an unadorned brown coat and a plain black ribbon on his queue. His hair above his ears was not even curled, but it played unruly on the moistening wind. I liked that lack of wig or powder. I liked the long, calm look of him as he stepped down out of the carriage door.

And I liked what came next. Mr. Jefferson looked at me with my child and my maid standing helpless at the kitchen door, and as he looked, he stumbled. I would have thought him the most ungraceful of men had his stumble not been deliberate, but I saw how with care he contrived to place himself directly beneath the whip.

“Pardon me, sir!” He caught Mr. Dalrymple’s hands as if he meant to right himself. He put an arm about the gentleman’s shoulders, standing as he did so far above him that he could have been a father instructing his son. I listened as we passed, and I heard Mr. Jefferson commending Mr. Dalrymple on the wisdom of his new postilion in having chosen the kitchen road for its deeper ruts and more obvious use. “The boy is learning quickly, Henry,” I heard him say while he contrived to limp. “All he wants is a little instruction in custom.”

That moment in the kitchen-yard changed all my plans for the afternoon. While Bett rocked Jack in my chamber-corner until the laudanum had its effect, Betty and I must find something splendid for me to wear to the ball. I had planned a brown sack-back trimmed in black to further discourage Mr. Dalrymple, but the thought of that gown and Mr. Jefferson together was a juxtaposition not to be borne.

“Your Pappa will believe you have changed your mind, mistress,” Betty said as she searched with me through the press where I had folded away all my gaudy gowns at my husband’s death. “If you dress yourself gaily he will think you past mourning.”

“I will not marry again. You may count on that.”

“Then make yourself less pretty, mistress.”

Betty Hemings has all of a slave-woman’s wisdom. She declares that her fortune and her bane is her face. And she is right, I know, for

a gaudy gown is like a sign upon the bosom begging the attention of any gentlemen who might be in the way of a wife. That I did not want. My only wish was to show good Mr. Jefferson how grandly I am able to dress whenever I might choose to dress.

“I only refuse to be wasteful,” I said for feeble explanation. “It seems a sorry pity to waste these gowns.”

My poor dear mother died in childbed only days after I was born, so forever she will be for me twenty years old, as she is in the miniature my Pappa gave to me when I was near about the age of four. As a child, I found my comfort in her face when my step-mother often upbraided me, styling me most ugly and slothful and making me a servant to her own children. My miniature not even two inches long seemed greater to me than the living lady. As I grew, my mother remained twenty years old, now older sister, now equal friend, until now she begins to be my junior. I protect and comfort her in my turn.

Her miniature shows a lovely beauty, although my Pappa swears it is a pallid likeness. She had red hair that was prone to curl, and a tiny, fine-boned, wistful face, and a look she must have struggled for, as if she did no work at all but she sat on a cushion and smiled all the day. I have had some of her gowns made over for me. She was smaller than I have grown to be, but still I am able to wear them well. What I searched for on Friday was a green brocade with side-hoops and gold lace wrought in flowers. I thought it might go very well with the yellow stomacher and petticoat that my sister Tibby had given me when she passed my own height at the age of twelve.

“Will Tibby’s quilted petticoat move, Betty? Do you think it might do well for dancing?”

“Will you look at that gentleman!” Betty said, sounding vexed. “How are those poor boys ever going to grow up?”

Betty was at the window, looking out at the boys who were gathering cider-apples in the orchard. I went to the window and looked out, too, and there was Mr. Jefferson in a crowd of four or five of the slaves, and two of Betty’s sons among them, showing the boys how to throw an apple to knock other apples out of the trees.

“Mr. Stevens is going to switch them for sure, he sees them doing a thing like that!”

Betty could not call to Mr. Jefferson. I could not call to Mr. Jefferson. Even our overseer, Mr. Stevens, had not the position to reprimand a Burgess for throwing apples.

Mr. Jefferson told me when we talked that evening that the gentlemen were then at their cards and their pipes, and since he neither smoked nor gambled and he meant to plant apples in the spring, he had gone out to see what varieties we had and how they were doing in our ground. When I told him that our overseer would not approve of throwing apples, he said it had been an experiment. He had asked Martin Hemings if throwing would work, and since Martin had not known the answer, Mr. Jefferson had determined there and then to find out.

I needed two gowns, a simpler one for dinner and a gaudier one to wear to the ball. The green, when we found it, was wrong with the yellow, so for the ball I chose my sister Betsy’s apricot lustring trimmed in fine imported Alencon lace that might well never fit her again. Betsy is great with child, and she has put on such a layer of flesh that even her stays are unlikely to help her. For the dinner, which Betty would soon have to serve – she only had time to crape my hair – I chose a pink chintz with a white linen petticoat embroidered in many-colored flowers.

The dinner table for forty people had been set up on trestles on the ballroom floor and spread with a length of homespun linen and laden with the fruits of our three days of work, our quails and sausages and squash-corn salads and kidney-mutton savories and sweet-potato biscuits and our cheese-cakes and moonshines and orange pies.

Some ladies in attendance wore homespun, too. This seems to be a coming fashion, what with the nonimportation resolutions imposed on us by the Association. The King has resolved to tax our imports to pay for business of his own, and this affront has so heated Virginia that gentlemen have been pleased to ban the import of nearly everything.

When Governor Botetourt gave a holiday ball, every lady there was in a homespun gown.

For me, however, this banning of imports is taking a switch to one's own head. If gentlemen had to spin and weave, they would show a greater respect for cloth.

There was such excitement on the air! I could not help but feel it, too, even though I was grim to resist for fear that it might charm me into making one gentleman more important than the rest. My custom is to play the harpsichord as a reason for avoiding most of the dance, and I generally play it even at dinner, before and after I have my bite. Mr. Burwell's William is a fair hand at the fiddle, so we play together, he and I. We did this while the company gathered, choosing a light Italian tune that I played while William improvised a sprightly gay accompaniment. We really sounded rather well.

Betty has for long been a lady's maid, but now she is training Bett to be my maid because Ondine has slow rheumatism. More and more, Betty is compelled to assume control of the house. She likes this, I think. Her mind is restless. So even though she is breeding again and only weeks from childbed, she oversaw the dinner serving, using for waiters mostly her children. Martin and Bob came in from the orchard, and Mary, Betty's oldest, whose mind is willful, and even little Jim. Nance came in to see the dinner with baby Critta on her hip, and this occasioned one awful moment that makes me shudder even now.

My Pappa has married and buried three wives. The last of them lived for barely a year. That he turned away from marriage after that was a thing that did not surprise me at all, but that Betty's children began to come paler a year or two after his last wife's death was a phenomenon I did not understand until after my own marriage.

Our Betty's father was a sailor named Hemings who left her complexion rather pale. Her four oldest children are tall and dark, but Bob and Jim are bright mulattoes with heads of molasses-colored hair. Baby Critta is a gray-eyed towhead. In the arms of her own dark sister, Nance, she looked as white as any child.

“John!” one of the gentlemen called to Pappa from partway down the table. “John! Is this a grandchild? Who is this?”

Since he knew that a baby at a ball wearing nothing but a thread-bare blanket could never be a child of the family, he said this only to tease my Pappa.

“No,” Pappa said. “She is a servant’s child.” Pappa seemed amused by this interplay, but I felt knotted-up with rage. That every lady cast her eyes demurely and every gentleman thought it a jest was a fact I had more reason to rue than any other person there. I grimly looked the length of the table and found Mr. Jefferson sitting in what looked to be a mortified silence. I liked him still better for the look of his face that told me that he found no humor in the thought of a master bedding his slave. I resolved at that moment to make his further acquaintance.

But now it is long past candle-time. Jack is waking from his nap and fussing for milk and bread for supper. And I am tired, but I find that writing all of this down has eased my mind. I am going to like journal-keeping very well.

THE FOREST OCTOBER 20, 1770

*P*APPA HAS RETURNED THIS NIGHT FROM WILLIAMSBURG with news that drives me back to my journal. I shall think of this more calmly if I write it down.

How shall I begin? My hand is shaking. Pappa’s chaise returned near eight o’clock, he having dined at Charles City Court-House with other lawyers who were passing there. He was not expected this week at all, so the step of his boot in the hall below set my slipper so quick upon the stairs that the rush of the air blew out my candle. Betty was quicker to greet my Pappa, since she lives with her youngest off the dining-room in a chamber that once was a storage-cellar. She held her candle so he might doff his greatcoat and see to hang his hat on its peg, and they spoke in low tones as they always converse, like people so long and so placidly wed that they nearly avoid a need to speak at all.

"I stay just the night."

"The fire is banked."

"Something cold, then."

"Does your sore improve?"

"Well enough."

"Then sit thee down."

We took cloaks and went out to the kitchen, where the fire was abated into orange embers just bright enough for the smallest kettle. I set the kettle in the coals and shaved my Pappa's chocolate, while Betty carved his slice of ham and hunted up the remnant of our dinner-pudding. We worked in silence in a darkness made blacker by that orange ineffectual glow of the fire.

I had it in my mind to remark that I am grateful for the kindness Betty shows to my Pappa, so he need not be alone in the world and yet he need not marry. I had found comfort in witnessing their moment of greeting one another in the hall. I would have thanked her for her kindly attention to him, but my thought was too close to a topic that never may be opened between us.

I may not consider them in my Pappa's chamber. Yet when I think of it, I imagine them there very much as they are by day, he careful of her in respect of her temper and she efficient at serving him.

We set out his food in the dining-room. He paced while we laid it, and he ate it restlessly, sitting, but then having a thought of a book or some order he had meant to give to his coachman, so he stood again frequently upon some errand. I knew that something was troubling him and pleasing him in equal measure. Betty and I exchanged many glances before he stood for a final time and said that he must have a word with me.

We went up to my chamber. I set the candle on my clothes-press, far enough away from Jack's small bed that it would not awaken him. My Pappa stepped to look at my son, and then he came back restlessly to pace around at the edge of the light. It was warm in my chamber by grace of the fire. He removed his coat and threw it on my bed.

"I had dinner and conversation with a friend of ours on Thursday

last," he said to me. "A friend of mine, and, I am pleased to say, a friend of yours."

I said nothing. I sat down on my bed and began to pick at a petticoat-thread while my Pappa wound himself up into words.

"Mr. Jefferson is very well-considered. He has been frank with me about his fortune, and I am pleased to say that it approaches your own. He will make a good living as a lawyer, I think, and he is a Burgess at twenty-seven. He has the confidence of prominent men. You could do, my dear Patty, a great deal worse."

"I will not marry, Pappa."

"He was charmed when he met you at the ball. I am pleased to hear that you let yourself be charming," my Pappa said with a sidelong glance.

"But I will not marry."

"Of course you shall marry!"

My Pappa is a gentleman not very tall. He will not wear a wig although his hair grows thin, and he has a seething spirit that makes him seem to be always about to lose himself in anger or laughter, in some strong emotion. He contains his laughter in the presence of ladies, and when his temper rises beyond his will I have seen him strike a fence with his riding-whip that he not commit a violence upon a slave. I try to avoid provoking in him an anger that he must labor to overcome, so I had let him believe until this evening that I only awaited my proper suitor. That I could no longer do. My thought of Mr. Jefferson would not support from me the most benign dissembling.

I said gently, "I will not marry. Whether I shall marry is my own choice."

"What nonsense! Every female marries!"

"Then here is a new thing under the sun." I was near tears, and feeling this weakness vexed me. However much I say that there is no shame in my remaining an unmarried widow, indeed there is shame enough that we both feel it. Why does no man marry John Wayles's daughter? And she even an heiress? Can she not buy a husband? Oh,

I do feel it. And I rue it! Why should this, which is my only life, be so constrained by the minds of people who have no care at all for me?

“There is no man I want for husband, Pappa. I truly have no wish to marry.”

“You have no wish? No wish? But this is your life! This is not some ladies’-play!”

Here Jack cried a sound in his sleep that made us both wince for my Pappa’s anger. Pappa seized my riding-whip from off my clothes-press and nearly upset the candle.

“I do not like marriage.” To my shame, tears began, but I kept them within by an effort of will.

“You must marry! You are just twenty-two!”

“Decency required me to marry the first time,” I said as calmly as I could. “But a widow has the right to mourn forever.”

“You do not mourn!”

This is largely true, but ungentlemanly indeed for him to remark.

I knew that my Pappa would not apprehend my female reluctance to trust in marriage, his strength being such that my fears born of weakness would be as foreign to him as the Man of the Moon. He would understand nothing, so from my desperation I gave him a reason close to his own heart.

“I will keep my own money, Pappa. While I do not marry, what Bathurst left is in my control, but if I marry a new husband he will take it from me.”

“That is no reason to deny yourself a marriage!”

I had thought this a reason any man would understand. That my Pappa passed it off as nothing felt like a blow, for I never could give him my other reasons. Oh, devoutly do I have reasons! They tumble in my mind at night, so often I cannot sleep for their commotion.

I never could say how the mother of my sisters used to pinch my face and shame me for being less to her than the children of her body. I suffered under that lady for my whole childhood, and suffered the more because I never dared complain of her to my Pappa. I feared to ask him to choose between us. And how could I tell Pappa about

Bathurst's Lovey? Bathurst had a mulatto maid who bore him a pale child when our own baby was only six months old. I never could share with my Pappa my reasons. The perpetrators were dead souls dear to him, and hearing of their transgressions now would distress him, or, worse yet, it would prompt him to defend them and belittle my pains. Such a treachery from him I could not bear.

So I never could tell my Pappa my reasons. But I knew with every fiber of my soul that my son would never suffer a step-father, and I would never suffer another Lovey.

"Mr. Jefferson has asked if he might pay you his addresses. I have given him my consent."

"He may address me if he will! I will never marry, and if the gentleman asks I will say it to his face."

"Patty, Patty, be sensible," Pappa said while he paced the edge of the light. He began to tap my whip against his leg. "Do you think you can throw away beaux forever?"

"I know I can. We shall grow old together, Pappa. Who else but I can shave your chocolate? Who knows as I do how to keep your accounts?"

Pappa looked at me then, as I knew he would. Despite his irritation, he came near to smiling.

"You may keep young Mr. Jefferson's accounts! Of what use to me are all my daughters if I cannot buy with you the finest sons?"

"You might buy him with Nancy. Ask him to wait. She is fourteen already. He will not wait long."

"It is not Nancy with whom he plans to attend the theater on next Friday evening."

"No, Pappa!"

"I have given my permission. You will stay the week-end with Peyton Randolph. It has already been arranged."

"Fine, then!" I said in a confusion of emotion. I confess that I wanted to see Mr. Jefferson. I liked the thought of a week-end in the Capital, but I felt a powerful unpleasant current of male determination carrying me. I refuse to allow this pair of gentlemen to conspire

together to arrange my life, yet my strength is so puny against their own.

“Marry or not as you will,” Papa said. “That is something I cannot control. But if you love me enough to obey me, you will let him pay his court to you. I leave it to him to do the rest.”

“But Jack has ear-fever! He might not be well.”

“That I leave to God,” Pappa said, sounding weary. “There is a limit to what I can do.”

WILLIAMSBURG OCTOBER 27, 1770

I CARRIED THIS BOOK TO WILLIAMSBURG EXPRESSLY TO record the events of last evening. I had hoped that my evening at the theater would confirm for me my resolve not to wed, but instead it has proven that I have no resolve. I cannot say what I feel, and there is little time, for Mrs. Randolph plans to take me on a round of calls this afternoon.

I arrived in the Capital at mid-day yesterday, tired from the ride, but glad of the thought of two days ahead without any work beyond the unaccustomed duty of pleasing myself. Betty was keeping Jack, who is better now, so I had not even motherhood; I was seventeen again, and gay with all the old familiar pleasures of girlhood. My mind was lit by the thought that indeed my life has made a circle, and if I never marry, I might contrive to be seventeen again forevermore.

Mr. Jefferson had been invited to dine with Peyton Randolph’s family before we were to depart for the theater. All of this had been arranged by Pappa, and the family left us alone in the parlor before the meal was served. A maid sat by the door, mending linens, but other than that we were as much alone as we had been in the parlor at the ball.

Pappa must have seen Mr. Jefferson during the week between and said something to him that made him feel clumsy. Perhaps he confided my aversion to marriage, or else he avowed that I was eager to wed;