

Part Two:Chapter 1

The chapter opens with Jim, a runaway slave, waking to the sound of rustling leaves at dawn. He is startled to discover Norman, another slave who has escaped from their captors, emerging from the woods. Norman, still in blackface makeup, explains he fled after overhearing their former master, Emmett, threatening violent retribution against Jim. Exhausted from running all night, Norman collapses into sleep while Jim keeps watch. Their reunion sets the stage for a tense and uncertain journey, as both men grapple with their precarious freedom and the dangers of being pursued.

Upon waking, Norman expresses surprise that Jim hasn't abandoned him. The two discuss their shared goal of reuniting with their families—Jim's wife and daughter, and Norman's wife, whom he hopes to purchase out of slavery. Jim proposes a risky plan: Norman, who can pass as white, will pose as Jim's owner and sell him repeatedly, with Jim escaping each time to accumulate funds. Despite recognizing the extreme dangers, including severe punishment if caught, they agree the plan may be their only hope. The conversation highlights the brutal realities of slavery and the lengths to which they must go to secure their families' freedom.

As Norman cleans off his blackface in a nearby creek, the pair discuss the financial and logistical challenges of their plan. Norman estimates his wife's freedom could cost a thousand dollars, a grim reminder of the dehumanizing commodification of enslaved people. Jim reveals he stole a notebook from Emmett, containing a racist poem that underscores the cruelty and absurdity of their oppressors. The notebook also serves a practical purpose: Jim can write, and Norman can read, skills that may aid their survival. Their dialogue reflects both their resilience and the pervasive fear of recapture.

The chapter concludes with Jim suggesting they travel south, a counterintuitive direction for runaway slaves. He argues that posing as a white slave trader and his

enslaved property would allow them to move more freely. Norman is initially skeptical but ultimately agrees, recognizing the necessity of bold action. Their decision marks a turning point, as they commit to a dangerous yet cunning strategy to reclaim their autonomy and reunite with their loved ones, despite the ever-present threats of violence and betrayal.

