CHAPTER THREE – Click on the audio to listen as you read.

Huck and Jim travel south

For some days everything went along quietly, but we were getting bored. We wanted to know what was happening in town and so I decided to go and find out. Jim said, 'Why don't you wear the old dress and the hat that we found in the house? People won't know you, then. They'll think you're a girl.' And so I did.

Just after it was dark, I got into the canoe and went up the river to the bottom of the town. There, I left the canoe and went on foot. Before long, I came to a little house which was always empty. Now there was a light on, and when I looked through the window, I saw a woman of about forty. She was a stranger and that was good because she didn't know me. So I knocked on the door. 'I must remember that I'm a girl,' I said to myself.

The woman opened the door. 'Come in,' she said. She looked at me with her little bright eyes. 'What's your name?' she asked.

'Sarah Williams,' I replied. 'I'm going to see my uncle, on the other side of town. My mother's ill, you see, and she needs help.'

'Well, you can't go there by yourself now. It's too dark. My husband will be home in about an hour. Wait for him and he'll walk with you.'

And then she began to tell me about all her troubles. I was getting bored with all this until she said something about Pop and my murder.

'Who did it?' I asked.

'Well,' she replied, 'some people say old Finn did it himself; other people think it was a slave who ran away that night. His name was Jim. They'll give three hundred dollars to anybody who finds him - and they'll give two hundred dollars for old Finn. He got drunk and left town with two strangers. A lot of people think he killed his boy and he's going to come back one day, and get all Huck Finn's money.'

'And what about the slave?' I asked.

'Oh, they'll soon catch him. People want the three hundred dollars. I think he's on Jackson's Island, you know. I've seen smoke there. My husband's gone to get two of his friends and they're going over there with a gun later tonight.'

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When I heard this, my hands began to shake. The woman looked at me strangely, but then she smiled and said kindly, 'What did you say your name was?'

'M-Mary Williams.'

'Oh,' she said, 'I thought it was Sarah.'

'Er... well, yes, it is. Sarah Mary Williams. Some people call me Sarah and some people call me Mary, you see.'

'Oh, do they?' She smiled again. 'Come on, now what's your real name? Bill? Bob? I know you're not really a girl.'

So then I had to tell her another story, with a different name, and I said I was running away. She said she wouldn't tell anybody, and gave me some food before I left. I hurried back to the island and Jim.

'Quick, Jim!' I cried, waking him up. 'They're coming to get us!'

We got out the raft as fast as we could, put all our things on it, tied the canoe on behind, and moved off down the river. When it began to get light, we hid. When it was dark again, we travelled on. On the fifth night we passed St Louis, and we decided to go on down to Cairo in Illinois, sell the raft there and get a boat to Ohio. There are no slaves in Ohio.

We slept for most of that day and we began our journey again when it was dark. After some time, we saw lights on the Illinois side of the river and Jim got very excited. He thought it was Cairo. Jim got the canoe ready and I went off in it to take a look at those lights. But it wasn't Cairo.

After that, we went on down the river. It was very dark that night and it wasn't easy to see where we were going. Suddenly, a big steamboat came at us very fast, and the next minute it was right over us. Jim and I jumped off the raft into the water. The boat hit the raft and went on up the river.

When I came up out of the water, I couldn't see Jim anywhere. I called out his name again and again, but there was no answer. 'He's dead!' I thought. Slowly, I swam to the side of the river and got out. I saw that I was near a big old wooden house. Suddenly a lot of very angry dogs jumped out at me. They made a terrible noise and someone called from the house, 'Who's there?'

'George Jackson,' I answered quickly. 'I've fallen off a river boat.'

Well, the people who lived in that house were very kind, and they took me in and gave me some new clothes and a good meal. I told them that my family were all dead, so they said I could stay with them as long as I wanted. It was a beautiful house and the food as good there. So I stayed.

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A few days later, one of the slaves in the house came to me and said, “Come with me” Together we went down to some trees by the river. “In there,” he said and went away.

On the ground, I found a man, asleep. It was Jim! I was really pleased to see him. When the steamboat hit the raft, Jim told me, the raft didn't break up. Jim swam after it and caught it. Then he began to look for me.

We decided to leave at once. It's all right living in a house for a little while, but you feel more free and easy and comfortable on a raft.

After reading, answer the questions and explain. Write in complete sentences.

Why did Jim want Huck to dress up as a girl? What were they planning to do? Explain.

How did the woman figure out that Huck was not a girl? What does the woman tell Huck about Jim?

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Why did Jim and Huck leave Jackson island in a hurry and what happened to them on the river? Explain.

What does Huck tell the people that give him food and shelter about who he is? How does Huck find Jim again?

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