

*Pursuit*

*Franklin, Tennessee*

*September 5, 1811*

Zeb pulled the sweaty horse to a stop at the edge of the forest. He turned in the saddle and stared down the steep meadow into the valley below, searching for any movement. In the distance he could just make out the house and barns of his family's farm, silent and abandoned in the moonlight.

About a half mile down the valley, lanterns still glowed in the windows of Tate McPhee's ramshackle cabin. "Must still be celebrating," he whispered to the horse. "They don't know we've gone."

The horse stomped his foot in the tall grass. Zeb leaned forward until his mouth was next to the horse's ear. "Hush, Christmas," he said. "We gotta be real quiet." He turned the big horse, moving into the dark forest at a slow, careful walk. Even with a full moon rising, he couldn't see more than a few feet ahead of him.

The horse skidded down the embankment onto the Natchez Road. The road was overgrown, just wide enough for one horse and rider or for men walking single file. Zeb grimaced. The