

Ross said. "It will take you across Lake Erie to Canada under its waving sails."

"Then you aren't comin' with us?" Julilly faced him soberly.

Mr. Ross heaved his great shoulders and breathed long and full into the vastness of his chest. "I must return again to the South and free more of your people," he said. He picked up the skimpy bundles from the carriage floor and walked towards the boat.

"Keep your caps pulled down and don't raise your heads to look at anyone," Mr. Ross turned and whispered to the girls. "With those new clothes a passer-by would think you were my children. It's fortunate the day is grey and cloudy."

It was only a few steps to the boat and at once Mr. Ross began shaking the hand of a man he called "the Captain." Mr. Ross didn't raise his voice with his usual flourish but spoke quietly.

"A friend with friends," he said at first. The magic password of the Underground Railroad. Julilly felt warm and excited each time she heard it.

"These are my children," Mr. Ross continued. "Take them safely to Fort Malden."

The captain was a jolly man with a hat cocked to one side of his head.

"Aye, that I will." He hung onto each word with peals of laughter. "Come with me, lads, to your bunks below."

Mr. Ross patted each girl gently on the shoulder and bade them goodbye. He disappeared into the grey evening dusk. Julilly and Liza wanted to call out to thank this big, kind man. But both of them knew the need for silence. It would be dangerous, too, for them and for Mr.

Ross if they lifted their heads and showed their black faces.

The girls walked aboard the *Mayflower* with the Captain. Julilly felt the boat must be breathing and that she was walking over its body. It went up and down with each rise and fall of the waves beneath it. They followed the Captain down a narrow flight of stairs and then walked along a corridor with tiny doors on either side. At one of them they stopped. The Captain opened the door to a little room. It was hardly big enough for the three of them to stand inside. Two beds seemed to hang on the side of the wall and a small round window looked out on the water.

"I know ye are lassies," the Captain laughed again, "but for this trip ye will be laddies to me and me mates."

He showed the girls how to lock their door and warned them to open it only when they heard three knocks and then the words "a friend with friends." He would bring them food and water at once. Then they were to crawl into their beds and sleep with all their clothing on.

"If all goes well"—the Captain smiled broadly beneath his thick black moustache—"we will reach the banks of Canada in the early morning light." The r's in his speech trilled together like the song of a bird, Julilly thought. She would have no trouble recognizing his voice behind a door that was closed.

The Captain bent down and walked out of the little door. The girls locked it behind them.