

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
ABBY IN TOWN

"Papa, I can't find Mistress Jolly."

"Well, Abby, we'll go into town, if she is not here."

I told Richard about the boys shooting marbles before. Maybe he could use the pence to join their game but he buy two candy sticks for us. He eat his but I save mine. Then he go that way and I go this way. So much to see! A man in funny clothes, doing magic tricks and pretendin' to eat fire off a stick! A stall with all sorts of dishes and spoons and nice things I wish I could buy for Mama. Another man fixing tin buckets and pans that have holes in them.

I wander from place to place, look for my milliner friend and finally I do see her! She talk to a lady in a gown, dress like the ones Mistress Jolly have little dolls to show gowns. I take out my knitting, mayhap she will know who I am if I am knitting, but she still talk to the lady so I sit down on a log close by and knit.

Finally I go fetch Papa.

"Aye, Abby, 'twill be best to go later." I look 'round with Richard but I want to see fancies and Richard wants to see soldiers. The sun 'twas low when I see Papa and Neighbor Mooney talk to Mistress Jolly. She crook her finger to me and I go.

She say, "Abigail, do you want to apprentice to me? 'Twill be seven years. I work hard and I expect you to work hard."

I say, "Yes, Mistress," and I smile and curtsy. Papa puts an X on a paper and say "Blessing, Abby," with his hand on my shoulder. He look at me a minute, and I think he will miss me at home. He go then for Richard. I watch them walk away. I stay at Mistress Jolly's table and help her put all her goods into baskets. She says, "Abby, please wrap this doll in this piece of cloth. 'Tis wise to keep them from chipping. The dolls are dressed in the alamode fashion." I didn't know what alamode meant.

'Tis a good thing Mistress Jolly stopped to talk to many people on the way to her shop. I carry two baskets of her finery and, with my load, have trouble keeping up with her. And I am comfoozled. We go up one street and down the next and when we get to her shop, I do not know where I am!

Mistress Jolly sleep up over her shop. She say, "Abby, you will sleep down here in the shop on that straw tick by the hearth. I expect you to waken early and get the fire started." She hands me a tinder box and I am comfoozled again. We bank the fire at home. I am not even sure what the tinder box is. "Mistress Jolly, what is this?"

"In the morning I will show you the first time how to light the fire with the tinder box."

After that first morning, I bank the fire at night and have coals in the morning and save her money and she is pleased. I put a few pieces of tinder on the coals in the mornin' and blow and soon have a fire. I go to visit the necessary in back and bring back in a bucket of water from the well that several houses share. I like the necessary better than the woods at home and the well 'twas closer than the run.

"Abby, did you see where Prince Street was last night?"

"No, ma'am, I cannot read signs, but you can tell me and I remember."

"We will work on learning the street names and you should then be able to read some. I want this short gown delivered to Prince and Alfred Street. 'Tis not far, I'll tell you how to get there. When you come back, I want the shop swept and first thing every morning."

I go out the shop door and a little bell tinkles. I look up and see it over the door. 'Tis to tell Mistress Jolly when people enter. I put the short gown over my arm careful and turn to go downhill and see the same ships that Henry said he see. He tell me a little. The streets are made of stone and the walks are brick. There are people walking this way and that and I pass shops and look in windows.

Some of the men walking along have white hair and then I see that they wear wigs. Finally I am back

at Mistress Jolly's and she say, "I wondered whether I sent you on a fool's errand since you don't know the streets. Did you succeed and did the mistress give you the money?"

I say, "I'm sorry. There was much to see. Here is the money." Mistress say, "I am pleased you have the money but there is much to do so I am not pleased that it took so long."

The bell tinkles and Mistress Jolly greet her visitor with "What do you buy?" I think that was rude but I found out all the shopkeepers greet people that way. When that lady go, Mistress put me to hem ruffles for sleeves of shifts and she ask me, "Do you still have the pudding cap you work on when I first met you at the Fair?"

I reach into my pocket and pull out the cap which was almost finished and she say, "If you finish this cap and wash it out, I will put it for sale in the shop and you may keep the money and put it aside. You will need money when you finish your apprentice. I will let you sell other things of your making but I will keep a little of the money after the cap. Meanwhile though, I don't want you stitching your own things when you work for me, except I give you leave."

One time Mistress tell me that she own her building where she live and have her shop because her father had a shop there before and bought the building in July of 1749 when there was an auction of half-acre

lots when Alexandria was new. Her father was not one of the real important people like Lord Fairfax and George Washington's brother who bought the lots. I want to see George Washington because he was with the militia Papa was in when he went to Pennsylvania and met Mama. When I walk around town I look for him but I wasn't sure what he look like.

Most of her neighbors did not own their buildings or land but that doesn't keep them from speaking their thoughts on King George and England and they don't think highly of them. Mistress say folks keep getting hotter and hotter ever since the Stamp Act of 1765.

Mistress say, "The Townsend Duties two years later on lead, paint, paper and tea made things worse. The Non-Importation Associations will probably bite the hand that create them. We need British goods."

She pointed around the shop at things that came from England. "Fairfax County, where we sit sewing, even passed their own Fairfax County Resolves to not import any British goods." I want to ask her how she got the things she have from England but I am afraid it would be rude.

She knows my thought because she say, "No one has paid them much mind but now George Mason says about shopkeepers who import from England, 'The sense of Shame and the Fear of Reproach must be inculcated and enforced in the strongest manner' and now they have taken to publishing names of

people who violate the Non-Importation pact. But I hear that the pact has been repealed."

I think about what "repeal" meant when just then the bell over the door tinkle and a lady came in with a girl younger than Annie who looked at me, point and pull on her mother's petticoat and say, "Look." I feel 'shamed 'cause I know she think I look a ragamuffin.

After they go, Mistress hand me a new shift and cap and said I could cut down a checked petticoat of hers to make a new petticoat. She say and smile at me, "You should look nicely clad to work here where clothing is important." I was happy to have a new shift; I say, "Many thanks," and wonder if I would ever have a gown.

I feel so warm through the winter that I worry about my family at home. They daren't build the fire too high because our chimbley is mud and wattle. Sometimes farmer's houses catch fire and burn to the ground during cold weather. Mistress Jolly's hearth glowed and always stayed warm, but there was not the danger there was at home.

Neighbor Mooney came 'round a couple of times after I came to the shop. I ask 'bout Henry and he shake his head but did not say much. I give him Mama's mitten to put with the one that Annie make her. It give Mistress the idea to have me knit some mittens to sell at the shop.