

**Third Place, Fiction, Ages 10-13**

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"Toho"**

Virginia

October, 1835

The wind blows my hair wildly as I work in the cotton fields with Ma. The master trots down the stairs and stares at my Ma, like as if she's a criminal behind bars. He's more evil than I could ever imagine. He snaps his fingers and we all run towards him.

"Yes, sir?" My mother first speaks.

"You." He points at my sister. "You" He points at my brother's friend. "And you." He points at me. "Follow me." He says sternly.

We glance at each other oddly and frightened then I trail behind Master. He brings us to the front of the house, where he keeps a couple carriages and a wagon.

"Get on." He commands. I climb the wagon and sit at the very end of the bench. The others hop up with the shake of the wagon. He tells the driver something, and then he makes his way to the big carriage. A servant lightly grabs his hand and guides him into the carriage. As the carriage pulls away, we follow them, tailing close behind.

We end up in the middle of the big city. There is a man standing at a podium and a stage is surrounding him. There are people, like me, standing up there in shackles and cuffs. I shiver and look over to Julie. Her little face stares at me in fright. Master comes over to our wagon.

"Get off, now!" he demands. We all just nod and follow his order. As we get off, he cuffs out wrist together.

"Get up there!" He demands, pointing up at the stage. I follow Fredric. He doesn't show any sign of emotion at all, while my sister cries and shakes. We climb up the stairs leading to the top of the stage. The white people start yelling out things like "24 guineas for the little girl!" and "54 guineas for the boy!" A man grabs my sister's arm and drags her away, shrieking. I try to chase her, but I trip on the chains and fall. I get back up and she's gone. Another man grabs my chains and tows me with him to his carriage.

Virginia

June 30, 2011

Our car pulls up to this weird looking house. It's so old. It obviously have had better times. I climb out, while my parents take some of the suitcases from the Lexus. The paint looks like it should have been a peachy color, but it's peeling off. It has a somewhat white porch. I shrug. Can't complain looks way bigger than the other house. I climb up the creaky steps and open the large white wooden door. I walk in and set down my bag on a hook.

“It looks like no one had been here for ages.” Mom complains

“We’ll only be here for a week, honey.” Dad remarks. I run up the stairs and down the hallway. The floorboards creak at each step I take. I walk into a room, with a bright light shining through the mosaic windows. I smile. It’s so beautiful.

“This room is officially mine!” I shout.

Virginia

October, 1835

I get pushed into the carriage, and the carriage starts to quickly go deeper into the city. It halts at a large peach house, with white shutters and porch. The man comes back to the carriage and lifts me up and onto the ground.

“Follow me.” He mutters.

I nod and tail behind him. I trot up the stairs and into the house. He stops in the middle of the hall and swerves on his feet to face me.

“You are to work here, as a personal servant to me. I am your new master. Understand?” He says, towering over me. I nod and shiver.

“But I am a slave.” I whisper.

“Not anymore, you are a servant.” He grins. “Servants quarters are upstairs, last room to the left.” I just nod again. This place is so much more different than the old one. The new master is so much kinder, so far anyway. I follow his directions. The room turns out to have a colorful mosaic window. The sun’s rays shine through it so beautifully. This is my room. I have my own room! And there’s a bed! I open up a small end table’s drawers. It has a diary inside. I open it and it’s empty on the inside. No writing at all. Not like I could read it, though.

“You can keep it if you want.” He shrugs. “Used to be my wife’s. She’s hated it though.”

“Thank you.” I mutter. “But I can’t write or read.”

“I could teach you.” He says. “What’s your name?”

“My old master called me, Elizabeth.”

“Is that what you wish to be called?” He asks

“I guess...”

“What’s your real name?”

“TohKo.” I respond.

“TohKo. It suits you.” He smiles

Virginia

June 30, 2011

I hurry over to the closet and haul it open. A bunch of dust falls out. I hop up and down and shake my head. The dust floats off my hair, and I giggle. I glance over and notice a small oak wood end table. I stride to it and open up the top drawer. There is a lovely diary in it. It looks almost magical. There is weird engraving on the front of flowers and leaves and things. I open it. The first page has a one word in it. Tohko. Sounds like a name and there's the date. October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1835. In the second drawer, a quill and ink bottle. This diary is like ancient. I run my fingers over the writing. It's so neat. It's in the most perfect cursive.

"Elise?" Dad shouts for me.

Virginia

October, 1835

I wake up to the puppy eyed stare of a Golden Retriever. "Hello." I sigh. "Good morning." I giggle. I hurry down the stairs to greet my master. The dog decides to follow me.

"Good morning, Tohko." He mutters. " And Rex."

"Good morning." I respond. I stand next to him.

"Yes?" He mumbles, looking up at me.

"I'm waiting for you to give me an order."

"Have a seat. The chefs should be bringing out breakfast soon." He smiles "While we're waiting you should go upstairs and grab that little journal." I nod, and run upstairs to grab it. I trot down with the book in hand. I set it on the table as I sit down. He walks over to a writing desk and pulls out an ink bottle and quill from the drawer. He writes something in the diary. "That says, Tohko. Here let me help." He puts the quill in my hand and wraps his hand over mine. He moves his hand and I willingly follow his.

"There. See? You did it."

"With help." I mutter.

He grins. "You'll get it I promise."

Virginia

June 30, 2011

I lie in my bed that night, and read the diary. It's used to be a slave girl's. She wrote about how she was beaten and whipped, how she was bought and had to leave her family, about how nice her new master was, about how he taught her to read and write, about how close they were. Her name was Tohko.

Virginia

April, 1835

After a few months, I could read a book almost as fast as Master could. I could write an entire eight sentence paragraph without having to think about it. I was proud of myself, and so was Master, but this gloomy morning there was nothing to be proud or happy about.

I hopped my way down the stairs with Rex trailing behind. Master wasn't at the dining table, like on every morning. I looked in the parlor and the kitchen, the library. Where was he? I ran upstairs and burst into his room. He was still in bed. His brown chestnut hair still tangled and the blankets pulled up to his neck.

“Master?” I whispered. Silence.

“Master!?” I screamed. Silence.

“Master!? Answer me!” I cried. I put my head on his chest... not even a heartbeat. No steady rhythm of his breathing. I ran out of the house, crying and screaming. I ran down the front steps and into the forest around the house.

“Savage!” I heard a man yell. Then I heard a click and pow. Then blackness.

Virginia

2011

It was the end of our visit to Virginia. I wanted to bring the diary with me... but it didn't feel like the right thing to do. Instead of keeping it in the house, the slave girl mentions in her diary about how she loved to play with her master in the forest. That is before her master grew ill of chicken pox. I decided to bury it there.

“That should do it.” Dad murmurs

I drop the diary into the hole. As I walk away, I swear I heard a faint “Thank you.”