

### Version anglaise

When Cora stepped into the hallway again, the woman summoned her up the stairs to the attic. Cora's head almost brushed the ceiling of the small, hot room. Between the sloping walls of the peaked roof, the attic was crammed with years of castoffs. Two broken washboards, piles of moth-eaten quilts, chairs with split seats. A rocking horse, covered in matted hide, sat in the corner under a curl of peeling yellow wallpaper.

"We're going to have to cover that now," Ethel said, referring to the window. She moved a crate from the wall, stood on it, and nudged the hatch in the ceiling. "Come, come," she said. Her face set in a grimace. She still had not looked at the fugitive.

Cora pulled herself up above the false ceiling, into the cramped nook. It came to a point three feet from the floor and ran fifteen feet in length. She moved the stacks of musty gazettes and books to make more room. Cora heard Ethel descend the stairs, and when her host returned she handed Cora food, a jug of water, and a chamber pot.

Ethel looked at Cora for the first time, her drawn face framed by the hatch. "The girl is coming by and by," she said. "If she hears you, she'll turn us in and they will kill us all. Our daughter and her family arrive this afternoon. They cannot know you are here. Do you understand?"

"How long will it be?"

"You stupid thing. Not a sound. Not a single sound. If anyone hears you, we are lost." She pulled the hatch shut.

The only source of light and air was a hole in the wall that faced the street. Cora crawled to it, stooping beneath the rafters. The jagged hole had been carved from the inside, the work of a previous occupant who'd taken issue with the state of the lodgings. She wondered where the person was now.

That first day, Cora acquainted herself with the life of the park, the patch of green she'd seen across the street from the house. She pressed her eye to the spy hole, shifting around to capture the entire view. Two- and three-story wood-frame houses bordered the park on all sides, identical in construction, distinguished by paint color and the type of furniture on their long porches. Neat brick walkways crisscrossed the grass, snaking in and out of the shadows of the tall trees and their luxurious branches. A fountain warbled near the main entrance, surrounded by low stone benches that were occupied soon after sunup and remained popular well into the night.

Elderly men with handkerchiefs full of crusts for the birds, children with their kites and balls, and young couples under the spell of romance took their shifts. A brown mutt owned the place, known to all, yipping and scampering. Across the afternoon, children chased it through the grass and onto the sturdy white bandstand at the edge of the park.

Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad* [2016], London, Fleet, 2017, p. 184-185.