

When God Turned His Head

Chapter 1

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A gust of wind blew in from the harbor. The wooden shingle hanging over the Codman Saddle Shop rattled side-to-side in the breeze. Leaves and other litter swirled around in the corner between the Clarke Apothecary and the Miller Bookstore.

Like a sleepy ghost town, the docks at Boston Harbor slept through its day of rest. No crowds wandered the streets. The storefronts were locked while their owners observed their Sabbath. Bostonians with their Puritan heritage still took their Sabbath seriously. Even loading and unloading ships were forbidden on Sundays. Any ship that came into harbor on Saturday night sat with its cargo untouched until Monday morning, and ships were never scheduled to disembark from sunset Saturday night until sunrise Monday morning. No amount of money would make a Bostonian of 1753 break his Sunday Sabbath.

It was February, and the sun itself decided to take a Sabbatical along with the rest of Boston. Gray hung low in the Boston sky. Long icicles hung from the eaves of the North Church that stood in the corner of Price Street and North Street. Temperatures hovered near zero.

The church was a wooden building painted white with a pyramidal roof and topped by a belfry whose brass bell pealed the announcement to the good Puritan Bostonians that it was time for them to make their slow dignified approach to the respected institution. The breath from the heavily clothed church laymen hung heavy around the church steps.

"I sure am ready for this cold weather to end," one elderly matron said to another.

"Well, better that we have this kind of weather in February than in April. I always say," the other woman replied.

"I suppose," said the first. "However, I am certainly ready for spring. It seems as though spring and summer just fly by, but winter seems to drag on forever. It sure is tough on my rheumatism."

The two women continued their conversation as they entered the Old North Church.

John Adams joined his cousin Samuel and Samuel's wife Elizabeth just inside the great church. There, they greeted the pastor of the congregation—Reverend Elliot. Reverend Elliot wore black robes. A red sash hung ceremoniously around his neck.

“It is certainly nice to meet you, Master Adams. I hope you enjoy your visit to Old North Church. I understand that your father is a deacon at the church in Braintree.”

John Adams smiled at the Reverend. “Yes, Reverend, he is. After all this hustle and bustle here in Boston, it is going to be tough returning to that sleepy little hamlet.”

“Any excitement you may find here in the big city may not be what a young person like you really needs. A growing city like Boston gets more and more corrupt every day. There’s so much influence from people from all those other places around the world coming into this colony with beliefs that are different from our own that could lead astray a young man such as you.”

“Thank you for the concern, sir. My life is to go as the Lord leads.”

“I understand that you just graduated from Harvard.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Am I to understand that you studied law?”

“That is correct, sir.”

“I find it rather odd that a good Christian would study law rather than go into the ministry like most of your fellow Harvard graduates. I am especially shocked that your father, Deacon John allowed you the freedom to pursue a career in Law.”

“No need to be concerned, Reverend. When I felt the calling on my life to become a lawyer as a young age, the Lord led me to I Corinthians twelve, particularly verse fifteen which says, “If the foot say, because I am not the eye I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? Just because I am not called to be a pastor, does not mean that I am not a good Christian. My father understands my conviction to do as the Lord leads rather than follow the crowd.”

“Well, if your father agrees, I guess. . .” his voice trailed off.

“Father says that since we were to walk as Jesus walked, and he is our advocate with the Father in heaven; there must be advocates for the accused here on earth.”

“Perhaps your father should have been the attorney.”

“You may be correct,” John Adams replied. If John could have smiled without retribution for smiling on the Sabbath Day, he would have. John cleared his throat instead. The minister did not realize just how close to the truth his statement was.

“It has been a pleasure to meet you, Reverend,” he replied. He nodded a farewell to the Reverend and entered the stately doors of the church.

The double doors of the Sunday morning meetinghouse opened into the grand meeting room. The ceilings and rafters were so open and reverberating that above the pulpit hung a great sounding board

that hung above the minister's head like a great extinguisher. This ornate rosette carved and painted ornamentation reflected the sound back toward the congregation, dispelling echoes from around the room.

Below the sounding board, the pulpit here at North Church was even more pretentious than the church in Braintree was. This one had a tall desk with a narrow flight of stairs leading up to it. A towering hexagonal mahogany structure ornate with pillars and panels enclosed these stairs.

Families entered the church with the head of the household proceeding and the remainder of the family followed. Sam and his wife who carried their young son Sam Junior came in first and John followed them in quiet procession. They stopped at the Adams' pew.

The Adams' pew was on the right side of the church, fourth pew back. The Adams family, like all the families in the church maintained their own pew. A person's wealth and position determined the location of the family pew within the meeting hall. Wealthier people with high positions in the community sat in the front of the church, while poorer families sat in the back. Four pews back in the church was an admirable position for a man like Samuel Adams. Adam's pew, like others in the church had towering whitewashed partition walls, which extended so high that only the tops of the tallest heads could be seen when the occupants were seated. The door of the pew hung lower than the pew itself. On it hung a sign with the name Adams neatly etched into the placard. The Adams' family was not alone in this practice. Many of the prominent families of Boston had their own pews marked with the family name. The floor within each pew was several inches higher than the floor between the pews. Each member of the family had to step up in order to get into the pew. They then had to step over the crickets and the foot bench within the pew. One long, low footrest stretched across one side of the pew floor to the other. This long bench had three tiers or shelves. The lower and broader shelf was used for a footrest. The second one was to hold the men's hats, and the third and narrower shelf was for hymnbooks and Bibles. On the other three sides of the pew hung the narrow, uncomfortable seat that folded up against the pew when not in use. Some Sundays, especially during a long, boring sermon, John wished that he were an elderly or infirmed woman, because only elderly women could sit on cushions during the service.

The tops of the pews of more affluent parishioners contained high railings ornamented with balusters. John smiled when he saw the paint worn from the pew spindles. Here as in his father's church in Braintree, children tested the spindles to see which ones would turn and which ones would squeak. John knew the game well, because he too had turned pew spindles when he was a lad.

Two rows in front of the Adams' pew on the same side of the aisle, a portly man and his frail wife, and a simply dressed daughter entered the stately pew. John would not have paid particular attention to them except three Africans followed them.

John nudged his cousin. "Who is that?"

"That is the Captain John Codman Family."

Captain Codman was about two inches taller than John Adams was. John judged that the man probably carried about fifty pounds more weight around his middle. His wife by contrast had a small build and looked undernourished.

“He appears to have a healthy appetite, that’s for sure.”

Samuel Adams smiled at his young cousins’ statement. “He has a healthy bank account to go with it. At one time, Mistress Codman was a rare beauty, at least that’s what they say.”

That’s hard to believe now.”

“As I said, that was years ago. It shocked the whole community when Captain Codman married her. She had been his indentured servant.”

“I didn’t realize that they still hired indentured servants here in Boston.”

“You do see indentured servants here in Boston from time to time, but you’re right. They haven’t used many indentured servants in Boston since 1700.”

“I find it interesting that people from England are willing to make themselves like slaves for seven years just for passage to the colonies. How is it that a young woman is willing to become an indentured servant?”

“I heard that she was coming to America with her father. He was supposed to be indentured for fourteen years to pay for both of their passages, but then he died so she was forced to indenture herself for her own passage.”

Codman purchased her indenture papers, and when she was just two years into her contract, she married him. Everyone thought she was destined to marry another indentured servant—Kanter Thorton—when they finished their contracts, but then she up and married Codman instead. They say that she bettered her station in life by marrying Captain Codman. Everyone considers him a fine upstanding citizen of this fine city. He used to be a ship’s captain. He retired when his first wife died. He made all his money with African slaves as his cargo. They said that he could not sell last three slaves, so he kept them. From what I hear, he beats them and his current wife on a regular basis. The beatings may be the reason for none of them looking very healthy. His African manservant, Mark, showed me stripes on his back from a whipping he once got. There were other scars on his back too. Proved to me that it was not the first time Captain Codman beat him either.

“I am surprised that anyone has slaves here in Boston, much less the citizens of the town allowing anyone to beat them. I thought the church frowned upon slavery.”

“The church does frown on slave ownership, but since John Codman pays his tithes and foots a project or two each year, the powers that be at the church overlook that little discrepancy in his lifestyle. Not only do they overlook the slave ownership, they voted him in as deacon this year. It is a

horrible state of affairs, in my opinion, when a church looks at the bank account and neglects spiritual fruit.”

“Huh,” was John’s response.

“To be fair, I can’t say that Codman is all that bad. I hear he has always been an industrious worker. Codman’s father was a hard man. He made Codman work his way up from deck-swabby to captain of the old man’s ship. After he took over his father’s ship, Codman’s father retired and built the house where Codman now lives. His father did not live long after the house was finished so when Codman married his first wife, Codman and his bride moved into Codman’s house. During their marriage, they had eight children, but unfortunately, none of them survived. The only living heir he has is this daughter you see here from his current marriage. They named the girl Rachel.”

At that moment, Captain Codman turned around and glared at someone behind the Adam’s pew. Both John and Sam’s gaze followed Codman’s gaze toward the back of the cathedral. Captain Codman stared at a young man. The young man removed his tricornered hat as he ushered a pretty woman and two young boys into the sanctuary. The woman was obviously expecting another child. Sam Adams nodded at the man when man noticed the men observing their activity.

“That’s Kanter Thorton. Captain Codman makes no bones about the fact that he hates Thorton. I cannot understand his animosity, though. Got what he wanted when he married Drusilla. I guess some men just aren’t happy no matter what they have.”

John looked at the two boys who followed Kanter Thorton into the sanctuary. Each was a smaller version of Kanter Thorton.

“Are those Thorton’s boys?”

“Yes, they are, and fine strapping boys too. Any man would be proud to claim them as his own.”

“Maybe those boys are the reason Codman hates Thorton. Codman only has a daughter.”

“No, I’m certain that is not the case. Codman hated Thorton before Thorton ever had a son. I have heard from several people that Mr. Codman claims that Mrs. Codman cheats on him, but I am certain there is no way she could cheat on him. The servants spy on her and report back to him of every move that she makes.”

John Adams watched Kanter Thorton and his family enter the Thorton pew. Kanter stepped aside to allow his wife to enter the pew. She wore a silk bonnet over her dust cap and carried a fresh handkerchief, a well-worn Bible, and a sprig of dried lavender.

“His wife is pretty, isn’t she?”

“Sarah certainly is. She was Raven Master’s daughter. You remember Raven Masters, don’t you? He came down with me to visit your father when you were a little boy.”

"I remember Raven Masters. I remember that he smelled of horses and hickory smoke, and boy could he spin a yarn. I remember one he told about two horse thieves on the frontier. Why he. . ."

Sam Adams put up his hand and shook his head. Church was not the time or the place for that story. That was not the only reason. Sam had his own story to tell.

"Good man, that Raven Masters. From what I have heard about Kanter Thorton, so is he. Kanter married Sarah a couple of years before Raven died, and after Drusilla birthed Rachel. The gossipers said that Kanter married Sarah for her father's money. I understand that Raven left everything he had to Kanter and Sarah because Sarah was his only child, but I believe he would have left all his money to them anyway. Raven was fond of Kanter for the man he is. Raven always talked well of his young protégée."

"I assume that Thorton apprenticed under Masters."

Sam nodded. "In my opinion, Thorton is a better blacksmith than Masters was. That is saying a lot because I think that Masters was the best blacksmith in Boston before Thorton came along. I wouldn't take my blacksmithing to anyone but Thorton for half the price and you know how frugal I am."

John Adams had to take his cousin's word for it, because John knew that his cousin was not frugal at all. John looked from the prosperous young man behind him to the pathetic, frightened woman who sat in the pew two seats in front of him. "And you say he was an indentured servant?"

"Yes, and I know what you are thinking. You are thinking that it was not Mrs. Codman who bettered her station in life," Sam Adams replied.

John nodded. "Somehow I doubt Mrs. Codman married Codman for his money. I'd say there is a lot more to their story than anyone knows."

"If I were a betting man, I would bet you were right," Sam Adams replied.

A hush fell over the congregation. The service was ready to begin. The Reverend Elliot walked into the enclosure and closed the door behind him. He disappeared for a moment, and John counted the seconds from the time he closed the door until his head appeared through the trap door at the top of the pulpit. Reverend Elliot adjusted his horn rim glasses and looked down at his notes. He cleared his throat. He had done all the motions for settling into giving a long sermon.

John stifled a yawn and nestled back against the hard wooden pew. He saw at attention as a good soldier of the cross was supposed to sit. Like other adults in the church, he was prepared to endure the wordy Sabbath message of the morning. He leaned forward in such a way that it cushioned his backside. Reverend Elliot took a deep breath and started to speak in a low droning voice. This was indeed going to be a long sermon.

The following evening at the gray house on Middle Street, Rachel Codman stood in her upstairs bedroom and stared at her reflection in the blurry tin mirror she kept on a shelf. She pulled her brush

through the tangles in her blond wavy hair. Her pale blue eyes shone back at her. She ran her hand through a wing of hair and tucked it behind her ear. She smiled at the burry, but pretty, face staring back at her.

She heard a thump and a moan from downstairs. She frowned.

“Not again,” she thought. She set the brush down and walked to the stairwell.

Just as she suspected, at the foot of the stairs her father towered over her mother who was sprawled out on the floor in front of him. Her father had evidently just struck her mother and her father was now holding his hand in the air to strike her again. Her hair was disheveled and her skirt up, exposing her legs up to her knees. Rachel’s mother reached up and touched the angry red mark in the shape of a man’s hands that spread across her cheek.

Rachel’s father backhanded her mother and knocked her across the floor. Like a discarded rag doll, her body sprawled across the coarse fibers of the rag rug that covered the hardwood floor. Her face hit hard against the hearth.

Rachel shook her head. “I wonder what she has done this time.”

This situation was nothing new to Rachel. Scenes like this one between her father and mother were commonplace. Rachel could not remember a time her mother was not getting into trouble. Usually the thing that her father said that her mother did not make sense to Rachel, but Rachel was only a child, and she was not expected to understand. Sometimes Rachel wanted to tell her father that her mother did not do anything, but her mother had warned her many times to never come between them when her father was angry. Rachel had enough sense to listen to her mother. She wanted no part of her father’s temper or wrath.

“How can you think that I would not hear about you being at the market today? I saw the way you could not keep your eyes off that Thorton fellow yesterday. You were going there to meet him.”

“I was not. I was buying produce,” Drusilla argued.

“Do not lie to me! You have been cheating on me with him again. I am certain of it!”

“That is ridiculous! You know that is not true!”

“It used to be that I could take you before the deacon board at the church, and you would get what was coming to you. I wish the church were not so easy on women these days. It would have been the stocks for you in the old days. You would have been branded with the mark of an adulterer just on my say so.”

“So this was about that Thorton fellow again,” Rachel, sighed. He always seemed to direct most of his rage at this Kanter Thorton.

Rachel barely knew who this Thorton fellow was. She had seen Kanter Thorton at church with his wife and their two little boys, but he never spoke to her father or her mother for any reason. She probably would not even know who Kanter Thorton was if it was not for the many beatings her mother received while her father accused her mother of sneaking away from this man.

Her mother's whole body was shaking. She turned to face him. A trickle of blood flowed from her lip.

"You are crazy. When would I possibly have had the opportunity? You have those slaves reporting back to you every move I make."

Rachel knew that was true. She knew that the slaves had strict orders not to let her out of their sight. She knew that they feared her father's wrath if they shirked this duty. She knew as well as they did that they would suffer even harsher punishments than the beatings he gave her mother.

"I have never seen anyone as worthless as you are!"

He always said that she was worthless any time that he did not have a better reason. Rachel watched him kick her mother in the side. Her mother cried out in pain, and he then kicked her again. This time is the back. Again, she cried out. He raised his hands in a gesture of aggravated, mocking helplessness.

"I do not know why I bother with you."

He turned around and raised his hands again in the same gesture. He opened the front door and left the house, slamming the door behind him.

Rachel's mother lay there for quite a while, and Rachel watched her from her vantage point on the stairs. Her mother was weeping. After a few minutes, Rachel's mother got up, ran her hand through her hair and then over her dress to remove some of the wrinkles. She limped across the room, opened her bedroom door, went into the room, and closed the door.

Rachel turned back from the stairs and looked at herself again in the tin mirror. She frowned. She had her mother's face with the same blue eyes and the same waves in her hair. Rachel thought about her father spending so many hours at the cemetery visiting his first wife's and the eight children that she had born. Rachel thought about how much love and anguish her father showed when he went to visit the monument to them. She knew that he did not have that kind of love for her. She knew that he had wanted a boy when she was born so she was a disappointment to him from the beginning. She could understand why he had wanted a son. Every man wants a son. What she did not understand was—what was wrong with her that she was not worth more to him than those eight dead children? She shrugged her shoulders. At least, he did not beat her as he did her mother.

The beatings must be her mother's fault. Her mother must have done something terrible for her father to hate her so much.

Rachel picked up her brush again and drew it through her hair. She wished her mother was more trustworthy, and then perhaps her father would love her too. This had to be all her mother's fault. If she

would just behave and do what her husband expected, perhaps then Rachel's father would look at Rachel and love her.

With each stroke of her hairbrush, Rachel grew angrier and angrier with her mother. What was wrong with her mother that she would not learn to obey her husband?

In the room below where Rachel Codman was brushing her hair, the African slave Phoebe crept out of the shadows like a frightened animal. She was a full-grown woman of about twenty years old, but she was a petite woman and the smallest of Codman's three slaves. She seemed even smaller when she was afraid that she would be the brunt of Codman's wrath. She scurried like a mouse through the kitchen, picked up a rag from the ragbag, and wet it with water from the bucket in the corner. She looked to the right and then to the left, then she knocked at Drusilla's bedroom door. Drusilla cracked the door to see who was there, then opened it wider to allow Phoebe to enter. Drusilla took the offered cloth and thanked the young African woman. Phoebe left, and Drusilla closed the door. She dabbed the cloth on her face. She trembled as she gingerly touched her tongue to the bitter tasting flow at the corner of her mouth, and then blotted the blood from it with the cloth. Her jaw throbbed. She touched the cloth to the tender area on her cheek.

Drusilla looked in the glass on her bureau. She examined the damage done to her face. She knew she would have to cover that bruise before she went anywhere. Shame always belonged to the woman who received the bruise rather than to the man who did the injury. The authorities would say that Codman beat her because she had been a bad wife. Husbands did not beat good wives, but they did beat bad ones. There was no way local church clergy would believe that an upstanding deacon like John Codman would ever be a bad husband. He gave too much money to the church for that to be true. What kind of discernment could the church clergy have if they named someone a deacon who was a bad husband? The case would be final before it even started. John Codman was a fine upstanding moral man. The woman was at fault.

Another thing that stood against Drusilla was Codman's long history as a pillar of the community. Thirty years earlier, Codman had married his first wife right here in Boston. His first wife had been a sociality in good standing. Other women in Boston admired her for her frugality and her ability to keep her home in a way every other Boston wife envied. John Codman had been proud of his first wife. She managed the home alone while her husband was at sea. She birthed, raised, and then buried all eight of their children before any of them reached seven years of age.

Then one day while Codman was out on one of his many ocean voyages, she herself was struck with scarlet fever. He found out when he returned from one of his voyages that she had died four months earlier. After her death, he resented the sea for keeping her from him. After that, he sold his ship and its cargo and refused to return to the sea.

Codman knew that Drusilla did not love him when they married, but he thought he would eventually change her heart. She stubbornly refused. When he realized that he trapped himself into a loveless marriage, he blamed Drusilla for letting him down in the same way that the sea had let him down. Unlike the sea, however, he could not divorce Drusilla and still keep his standing in the community.

Because he liked the way people admired him, he could not divorce her, like it or not, he was stuck with this wife until death do they part.

Codman always complained that Drusilla did not care for the household as he first wife had. He did not consider the fact that Drusilla was forty years younger than her husband was and did not have the experience. When she was a young girl and still an indentured servant, she had been eager to learn, and she had done well. Codman was impressed with her progress and with how she trained the slaves. After Codman forced her to marry him, however, she no longer cared about learning anything new or doing anything beyond what was necessary. That started a vicious cycle. The more he beat her or verbally attacked her, the less she cared about the house, cooking meals, or taking care of herself, the more he hated her, the more he abused her. She no longer cared about anything. She had little desire left to become more skilled and confident in her abilities. She hated her husband, and she did not care that she did not please him.

Drusilla was smart enough to know that since Codman could not divorce her, she had better not question his motives either. For any truly good reason, he would take her before the church board and have her chastened publicly. Even though Codman said that women were not punished as they had been in the past, she had witnessed first-hand what happened when women complained about their husbands' mistreatments. Drusilla had known two women who used to be members of the Old North Church and had been excommunicated. Because Boston is social activities centered on the church. Any woman who was excommunicated from the church was excommunicated from all of Boston society, and she suffered excommunication. Drusilla understood how they must have felt. She too suffered a lonely existence even though she was not officially excommunicated. Because Codman was so suspicious of her, she could not have any friends anyway. There was no way she could go out of the house without Codman accusing her of betraying him. Codman's obsession with the idea that Kanter Thorton and Drusilla were in a liaison kept Drusilla so closely watched that she was isolated from Boston society.

Drusilla sighed. She did not know how long she could take his mental and physical cruelty. The hope of an eventual end of all of it was all that kept her from killing herself. She refused to be the one who ended it all for herself. There were days when she prayed that day would be the day when in his fit of rage he would get so angry that he accidentally finished the job. Mr. Codman would never admit for being responsible for killing her. He would blame her death on an accident, or perhaps he would say that she committed suicide.

Drusilla wondered if Mr. Codman might secretly be planning her demise. One day while at church, Drusilla heard someone ask him where she got all her bruises, and he said that she fell down the stairs. He marveled at how clumsy she was. Another time, she heard him tell one of the other deacons of the church that she was mentally unstable. Drusilla was sure that if she ended up dead at his hand, he would get away with murder. No one would question him. The legal system and the church would have already been prepared to believe that if she died, she did it to herself.

Drusilla was not afraid to die. Death could not be any worse than living the miserable life she was living. She was resigned to the idea that only death would deliver her from this brutal life, but she could

not die, not yet. She had to fight to live. She had to stay alive for Rachel's sake. Rachel looked too much like Drusilla did when she was a young girl. She was also getting closer and closer to the age that Drusilla was when Mr. Codman had met her. Drusilla was afraid that eventually Mr. Codman would turn his rage on Rachel. Codman may have told one of the deacons that Drusilla was insane, but often Drusilla questioned Mr. Codman's sanity. If he ever suddenly believed that Rachel was Drusilla, Drusilla had to be there to protect her daughter. If Drusilla were dead, Rachel was at the complete mercy of her father. Drusilla would not let that happen.

Drusilla could not explain, nor could she understand why she loved her daughter as much as she did. At first, she resented the not yet born child that took her freedom from her, but once the child was conceived, Drusilla could not end the pregnancy. Yes, there were times at the beginning of her pregnancy that she hoped somehow she would lose the child. With no child to care for, she could run away and never have to come back to his horrible place. She however was unwilling to take another life simply to free herself. She did not feel that she had the right to take another life for any reason.

She remembered the first time she actually felt the child moving within her. She would never forget the awe she felt when she felt the child's movement within her about five months into her pregnancy. She remembered how she gradually began to accept this child, not as an evil emissary, but as an equal victim of these circumstances. Drusilla remembered the long drawn out labor, the agonizing hours that dragged out over two long tortuous days. She remembered welcoming the pain. She had hoped that perhaps this would be the end of her life, and she could take the baby with her to her grave. However, that was not the end. Rachel was born early in the morning on February first, twelve years ago. From the first moment that Dr. Clarke laid the infant daughter in her arms, she knew that in this child she found love again. She loved her daughter with all of her heart.

Drusilla wiped her hand across her mouth. She would never let Rachel be treated this way. Drusilla wiped her hand, streaked red with blood, with the cloth that Phoebe had given her.

Drusilla reminisced about the day her daughter was born. She remembered holding her precious daughter in her arms. Rachel, as a newborn, lovingly gazed back at her mother. In Rachel's eyes, Drusilla saw a light from heaven. The light in her child's eyes promised better days ahead for Drusilla, lay crocuses blooming through the snow at the end of winter.

Slowly Drusilla sank down onto her bed. She sighed. Spring was not coming to Drusilla's life. She had no illusions that spring would ever come to her. There would be no heaven for her. Someday the grave would claim her, and her end would come. She doubted heaven even existed. God would never shine his face on her life again. Her only prayer was that she could hold out until Rachel was safely married and out of the house. Only then could Drusilla let go of this feeble painful existence. After that, no one would ever have to care that Drusilla had ever walked upon the earth or that she even existed. She would never rise from dormancy like the crocus in spring.

A cold draft blew around her window and she began to shake from the cold in the room. Warily she snuggled under the threadbare blankets on her bed. Outside, under her bay window, crocuses lay dormant waiting for the spring of 1753.

As she began to doze off to go to sleep, a shriek startled her awake. She bolted upright. Someone was screaming. She listened. It was Phyllis, one of the slaves. Phyllis kept screaming and screaming and would not stop screaming. At the same time, Mr. Codman was yelling at her.

“How dare you keep this secret from me!” he yelled. “Did you think you could keep this a secret from me? Do you know how much all of this is going to cost me?”

“He was not able to take all of his anger out on me, so now he is taking it out on Phyllis,” Drusilla thought. “Little wonder, that girl has been eating a lot more lately, and she has been getting fat. Master Codman does not take kindly to gluttony.”

The physical and mental abuse that she had taken that day was taking its toll. Drusilla was too weary to stay awake and wonder what was happening. She started to drift off to sleep again.

She dreamed that Rachel was a baby again and that she was crying. Drusilla was lying on her bed and Rachel’s cradle was where it had been sitting in Drusilla’s room when Rachel was a baby. Drusilla got up from her bed, went over to the cradle, and looked in it. There in the cradle was the baby dressed in a white gown. Drusilla bent down to try to comfort her. She picked up the baby and looked at the little one’s face. Drusilla gasped. This was not her baby! This was some other baby! She could not see the baby’s face, but she knew it was not Rachel.

She awoke with a start. She sighed. She was relieved that she was just dreaming.

“Please stop, please, do not do it. We promise to be good, really we do. Just do not do it, please! I will tell you everything from now on. Please have mercy,” Mark begged. Mark was the only male slave in the household. “Please reconsider.”

“Too late,” Codman relied. “My mind is made up.”

Drusilla rolled over and frowned. Mark should have known better than to ask him for mercy. John Codman never reconsidered anything.

Thank you for reading Chapter 1 of When God Turned His Head. Then what happens?

After all these years of abuse, John Codman is poisoned. Only Kanter Thorton and John Adams believe in her innocence. What does this dream (or is it a dream?) at the end of chapter 1 have to do with the story line? How does Captain John Codman’s abuse of Drusilla affect how Rachel relates to the world? What about the slaves? What is their significance to the story? Will they help find the real killer? There is only one way to find out and that is to read the book.

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