

Book Excerpt II: Indentured Scholars

It was 12:10 in the morning. LeDain Sanford was roughly awakened by Professor Brodrey Toomers. He shook the disoriented boy to the floor and made it clear that he was to get dressed in rapid fashion: Toomers reminded LeDain that he knew the whereabouts of his mother and showed LeDain the bowie knife. It served to reinforce his intentions of what he'd do to his mother if he did not do exactly as commanded.

LeDain finally steadied himself, intent on obeying all of the professor's instructions. Toomers pulled LeDain close to him until they were face to face. LeDain could barely look at him.

"You will do exactly as I say—exactly," said Toomers. "Anytime that I think that you intend to do anything else, I will make sure that you get the chance to speak to your brother."

Tears welled up in the eyes of LeDain. He still thought often of his dead brother. Toomers sprayed spittle on LeDain's face as he spoke and increased the pressure of his grip.

"Don't you dare go sissy on me, you little prick! I ain't finished talking to you just yet. What you especially need to know is that if you don't behave like I say, even if you run away from me, I will find you." His voice slowed down. He intentionally enhanced each syllable as he finished his threat: "But understand this, I won't look for you right away because I'll be directly on my way to see Miss Nora Sanford. After having danced with mommy, I'll then make it my job to track you down. It won't matter where you are or who you think is protecting you, one day I'll tap you on your little shoulder. Now what we're going to do is to take a little private ride to the dock and get on that ferry. You will not say a word, I'll handle everything. You just remember mommy and whether you want to see her all laid out in front of the church."