

## Part II Chapter 47 Summer of 1852

Mrs. Jones insisted that she was sufficiently recovered to go to the shore for the summer of 1852. “The sea air will improve my health,” she assured Lena as she said goodbye. “You’ll enjoy a break too this summer, Helena, We’ll be back in September.” Lena thought she might look for summer work herself, though she knew her mother, with the new baby, would press her to help at home.

The summer of 1852 was a bad time to be looking for work in New York. The floods of Irish immigrants came crowding into Five Points, doubling the occupancy of boarding houses. They would do anything for a few shillings.



“Depriving us of decent wages,” the Nativists complained as they delivered their “No Irish need apply” placards to stores. Immigrants found doors shut in their faces and settled for tips for services like opening doors, carrying packages, assisting people across streets.

Dan, who had finished school that June and looked forward to helping his father work carting goods, found little to occupy him. He complained to his mother that Papa had nothing for him to do. He had seen boys peddling in the streets asked his mother why he couldn’t sell something. She had let Will sell matches, after all.

Bridget shook her head. “No more peddling. Let other boys’ mothers do as they please with their children. There’s plenty of work here, if you’re not satisfied working for your father. You can help Lena with her work, or look after Tom and George. “Or help me carry groceries,” she added, as she handed him a basket on her way out the door.

Bridget still shopped in the old neighborhoods where she knew the vendors and the prices were more attractive.

“You think it’s tiresome to sit and wait? Look there.” She pointed out a man standing beside a grocery cart.

“I wish Papa had a grocery cart.”

“That man is selling his own produce. If we had a plot of land we could raise vegetables too. Your Da is doing as well as he can.”

W. COLE, No. 8 Ann-st.  
**GROCERY CART AND HARNESS FOR SALE**—In good order, and one chestnut horse, 3 years old excellent saddle horse; can be ridden by a lady. Also, young man wanted, from 16 to 13 years of age, able to work. No Irish need apply. CLUFF & TUNIS, No. 270 W. ington-st., corner of Myrtle-av., Brooklyn.  
**BILLIARD TABLE FOR SALE**—Of Leona manufacture; been used about nine months. Also, tures of a Bar-room. Inquire on the premises. No.

They passed the root beer seller, the corn sellers, the charcoal wagon. Dan was attracted by their street cries. The milk wagon passed them, and they heard the milkman's familiar cry:

*MEEE-LECK COME!  
MEEE-LECK COME!  
HERE'S NEW MILK FROM THE COW!  
SO SWEET AND SO FINE  
THAT DOCTORS DO SAY  
'TIS BETTER THAN WINE!*

"Wouldn't be nice if Papa sold milk?" Dan asked.

"Wouldn't it be nice to have a cow?" his mother replied.



They paused by the butcher's cart.

"Any small ends I might have to season my stew, Mr. Brown?" She rarely visited him anymore as she couldn't afford meat. "Maybe something you were going to throw away?" She hated to ask him, but he would know she would pay if she could. She had been a loyal customer in the past. She knew he liked her. She smiled at him.

"Mr. Brown, do you need a helper?" Dan blurted out, surprising his mother and the butcher.

"Dan!" Bridget caught his eye but he ignored her.

"I could run errands, or deliver orders to people!"

"Customers like to come with their dishpans and pick out pieces for themselves, son."

"I could work for tips. Papa doesn't pay me anything, but lets me keep any tips."

Bridget was horrified to see her son begging for work. Were they reduced to this? Yet she reluctantly agreed. Daniel could help Mr. Brown and his customers, "for tips." "Now he won't be bothering me for something to do," she apologized to the butcher.

That night she asked Tom, "If you could get \$100 for your horse, would you sell him?" Tom ignored her, but the next morning, when he saw the horse looking at him, he imagined that he saw alarm in his eyes and tossing head and heard his whinnying, "No, don't sell me!".

"I will never sell you, Jack."

“How much does it cost a day to feed a horse?” Bridget asked that evening as he showed her the four shillings he had earned that day—.

“Not much,” he lied. Actually, he fed Jack five times a day. Feed cost more than he wanted to admit. Bridget already knew this.

With his meager earnings, they could barely pay the \$20 rent for August. Tom had made up his mind. They would move to Chicago. There was no future here, for him or for his boys. Dan wanted to work but could find nothing. And there were five more sons who would need employment in the years to come. Bridget would have to agree. By next June, Willie would be one and able to stand on his own feet.. He wrote a letter to Michael without telling Bridget his decision..

Michael had done well in the ten years he had been in Chicago, with his saloon on Canal and Harrison—“combination hotel, restaurant and pub,” he wrote. He boasted that in Chicago he had married well, learned to write, started a business and had a son. Tom should come and see for himself all the work available in Chicago. They were welcome to stay with him and Michael might even find him some temporary work until he found something suitable.

The Canal had been finished in 1848, and barges were now bringing grain from farms out in western Illinois and beyond to be stored in the big grain elevators at the docks on the Chicago River. From there grain would be loaded ships bound for points east. Now the railroads were arriving—over thirty lines would soon meet in Chicago. The main railroad lines from the East ended in Chicago, and those heading West began in Chicago.

“It’s a Catholic town too, founded by French missionaries, and the bishop is from Ireland— Bishop Quarter—don’t you know him—? Lots of Catholics moving here—especially Irish and German.” Bridget would be glad to hear that Tom knew.

With this exuberant reply from Mike, Tom broached the subject to Bridget. Maybe *now* was the time to think of leaving for Chicago. “Daniel is 14. He’ll want better opportunities than he can find here, where no one will hire someone with an Irish name.”

Bridget’s response: Did he not see that she has a nursing baby at her breast? How could she travel so far nursing a baby? .How could they leave their many friends in New York—how could she leave Betty and Peggy? And how about Tim? After all he’s done for us. How could Lena give up her good job? And with the children all in school—did they even have Catholic schools in Chicago? What kind of work did he hope to get? Besides, where did he think they would get the money for a long trip like that? Perhaps he could go by himself to get settled? He could take Dan with him. The rest of them could live on what Lena

brought in. He should think about it. Write to Michael and ask him all these things. She wanted some guarantees first.

Tom took that as a yes. He felt inspired, and he had been known to act on inspiration before, especially when taking big leaps. That was how he had gotten Bridget, how he had decided to come to this country, how he had bought Dolly. On matters of great importance, he trusted personal revelation.

Next day after work he stopped by to seek his friend Tim's advice.

"No work here anymore, Tim. It's time to leave. I'm going to Chicago, but I need money."

"I can lend you some if that's what you want?"

"No, no! Bridget said she thought I could get a hundred dollars for my horse."

"Old Jack?"

"Only seventeen. That's not old for a horse. He'll live to be thirty."

"How much longer can he keep pulling heavy loads?"

"He's getting a lot of rest lately," Tom grumbled.

"Who would buy a horse that's well beyond retirement age?"

"I bought Dolly, not knowing how old she was. I felt sorry for her, but she lived another ten years. For me."

"Where will you find someone as dumb—I mean kind-hearted—as you were?"

The next day was extremely hot and with no work, Tom was sheltering Jackson out of the heat under a shady tree. Two men came by and seeing him sitting in his cart in the shade, commented, "See how idle those Irishmen are? Bone idle."

He wanted to call after them "No Irish need apply!" but instead said to Jack. "They complain we're idlers, but they keep us idle!"

Brian stopped by later that week. Was it true that Tom was looking to sell his horse? A family had inquired at the stable, looking for a settled, older horse gentle enough for a lady to ride, but used to pulling a cart to take children to a rural school. They were only willing to pay \$100? A horse and cart usually cost \$300. Would Tom take \$100?

Tom rode Jack north the following Saturday on his errand of disloyalty. All the way up he tried not to think of what he was going to do, and all the way back, he tried to justify having done it. Jack was like his business partner; now their business was at an end. Jack had looked at him reproachfully for betraying his word, but he had never felt about Jack as he had about Dolly. Dolly loved him for rescuing her. Jack had always been treated with kindness. All he asked was to be fed and watered and treated humanely. He didn't look for or return affection.

At home he had to face the reproachful looks of his children who had been told that he had sold Jack. They looked forward to Sunday rides in the cart. Tom tried to reassure them that other children would now have the same chance. "He'll be well looked after," he added when he saw that only made them feel worse.

"Don't reproach yourself, Tom. You did the right thing," said Bridget as he handed her one hundred dollars in gold.

"I may have done the right thing, but I have lost my source of income. Now I have only my own back," he lamented. "Bridget, the only way I could do this was so we can get to Chicago."

Bridget didn't answer, so he took that as another yes. He unearthed his old hand cart in the tool shed. With it he had hauled bricks and stones and even garbage many years ago. Now almost twenty years older, he found himself back where he began, with that old cart, and nine children to support.

He had another cause to regret selling the horse and cart when he learned that men were needed for the construction of the new Crystal Palace. Inspired by the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London in 1851, a giant display building was planned on four of the nine acres to the immediate west of the Croton Distributing Reservoir. The building, called an Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations was designed by Karl Gildemeister and would showcase the industrial wares, consumer goods, and artworks of all the different states of the nation. The Mayor's office had appealed for more workers to speed up the construction. The building was running months behind schedule. The same call for more men had gotten him and Mike and Brian their work on the Croton Reservoir, and here was another public project on the same site, and again they were desperate to hire anyone, even the cursed Irish. His job would be hauling materials as before, but without his horse and cart. "What have I done?" he wondered. But he had to take the work. If work had been hard to find in the warm summer of 1852, it would be worse in the colder months.

The construction site at Fortieth and Forty-second streets was too far north to walk there every morning, so Tom decided to get out his tent and camp as he had on the Croton Aqueduct. He would miss having his brother as a tent mate.

Bridget threw up her hands in protest. “That was 1840, Tom, and you were thirty. Now you’re forty-two!”

Taking a shovel and knapsack in the cart, he set out for site on a warm September morning. “I’ll be home Saturday night for dinner.”

“You’re a stubborn fool, Tom. You’ll change your mind when the cold weather comes.” But she realized that Tom was just showing her he meant business about moving to Chicago.