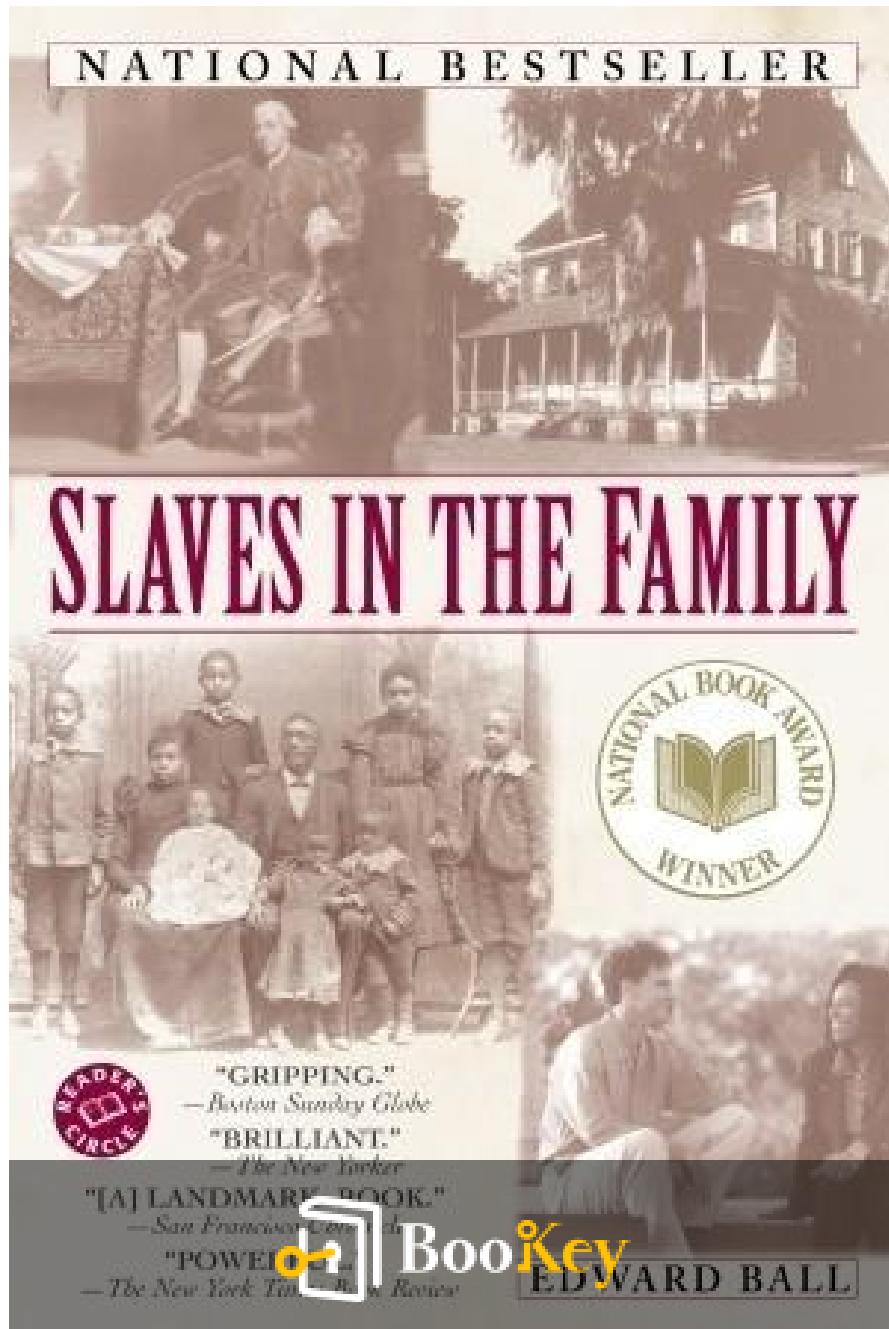


# Slaves In The Family PDF (Limited Copy)

Edward Ball



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# **Slaves In The Family Summary**

Unraveling the Hidden Truths of America's Slave-Owning Legacy

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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## About the book

In *\*Slaves in the Family\**, journalist Edward Ball embarks on a poignant exploration of the enduring impact of slavery through the lens of his own ancestry. As a member of one of South Carolina's most prominent slave-owning families, Ball delves into a legacy that encompasses 25 plantations and nearly 4,000 enslaved individuals. This deeply personal investigation is both a quest for understanding and a confrontation with uncomfortable truths.

Ball begins his narrative by outlining his family's extensive background in slavery, detailing the wealth and power derived from the exploitation of enslaved workers. As he traverses the historical landscape of his family's plantations, he interweaves the grim stories of those who labored under brutal conditions, challenging the romanticized notions of the "benevolent" plantation owner. Through interviews with descendants of enslaved individuals and meticulous historical research, Ball uncovers personal narratives that highlight the violence, dehumanization, and resilience experienced by those enslaved.

The stark accounts reveal not only the harsh realities of plantation life but also the complex relationships between slave owners and the enslaved. These relationships, often marked by violence and control, also contain elements of interdependence that complicate the historical narrative. As Ball

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gathers testimonies from approximately 100,000 descendants, he emphasizes the importance of acknowledging this painful history, arguing that understanding the legacy of slavery is crucial for both individual healing and societal progress.

By intertwining his family's history with broader themes of race, memory, and identity, Ball ultimately seeks to illuminate the difficult truths about America's past. His journey serves as a powerful reminder that the legacy of slavery is not confined to history; it continues to resonate deeply within contemporary society, shaping the ongoing conversations about race and justice in America. Through his deeply personal and historical narrative, Ball calls readers to confront this complex legacy, fostering a greater understanding of the American identity and its roots in the institution of slavery.

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## About the author

Edward Ball is an acclaimed author and cultural commentator, known for his in-depth explorations of history and personal legacy. Born in 1958 in Savannah, Georgia, Ball grew up in the diverse cultural landscapes of South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana. He graduated from Brown University with a degree in Semiotics, which is the study of signs and symbols, before obtaining a Master of Arts from the University of Iowa.

After moving to New York City, Ball worked as a freelance art critic, contributing to well-regarded publications such as *The Village Voice*. His career took a significant turn in 1993 when he began examining his family's history as slave owners in South Carolina. This journey not only deepened his understanding of his ancestry but also initiated a broader dialogue about the legacy of slavery in America. His efforts culminated in the National Public Radio documentary "The Other History," which earned the accolade of Best Radio Feature from the Society of Professional Journalists in 1994.

Ball's research and reflections on his family's past led to his notable book *\*Slaves in the Family\**, which became a *New York Times* bestseller and won the National Book Award for nonfiction. The book intertwines personal narrative with historical analysis, providing insights into the impact of slavery on both individual lives and broader societal structures. His work covers themes of biography, history, and memoir, establishing him as a

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significant voice in contemporary discourse on race, identity, and heritage. Currently, Ball resides in New Haven, Connecticut, where he continues to teach and write, enriching the understanding of America's complex past.

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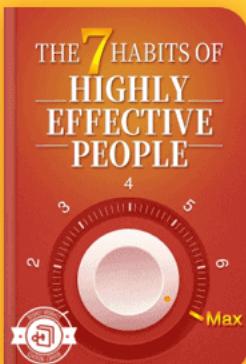
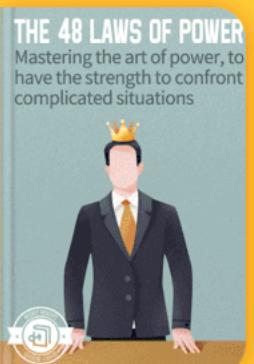
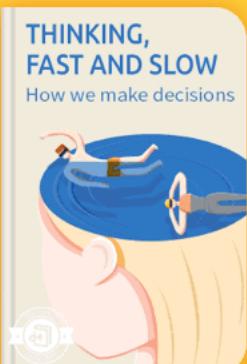
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# Chapter 1 Summary: 1 Plantation Memories

## PLANTATION MEMORIES

### Family Legacy and Silence

The narrative unfolds as the author contemplates his family's complex legacy as slave owners, specifically focusing on the Ball family's ownership of plantations in South Carolina from 1698 until the end of the Civil War in 1865. His father, Theodore Porter Ball, often humorously alluded to hidden family secrets, suggesting an underlying tension regarding their history with slavery. A notable possession of his father is the book "Recollections of the Ball Family," a piece that signals an unfinished exploration of their past and the intricacies woven into it.

### Ancestral Tales

During his childhood, the author heard numerous stories about ancestors who played roles in pivotal historical moments, such as the American Revolution and the Civil War. However, these tales frequently omitted the lives and experiences of the enslaved individuals, reducing their existence to mere footnotes. One notable ancestor, Wambaw Elias Ball, a Tory during the Revolution, exemplifies this duality of the family's pride and its disregard

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for the humanity of the enslaved people they owned, highlighting the troubling inheritance of shame and pride.

## **Childhood and Heritage**

Raised modestly as the son of an Episcopal priest, the author felt the weight of his family's plantation past, which set him apart from those around him. His mother's own plantation heritage further complicated his sense of identity, linking him to the symbols of Southern elite culture while burdening him with a legacy of slavery that could not be easily ignored.

## **Connection to the Past**

As the author matures, he senses a disconnect between the notable achievements of his ancestors and the existence of the enslaved people who sustained their wealth. An invitation to a family reunion prompts him to delve into the history of the Ball plantations and the descendants of those who were enslaved, igniting his curiosity and sense of responsibility.

## **Journey of Discovery**

Determined to unearth the truth, the author relocates back to Charleston, where he focuses on examining both family records and oral histories. This endeavor highlights the stark contrast between the privileged lives of the

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Ball family and the struggles endured by the enslaved individuals, propelling him toward a deeper understanding of this shared history.

## **Reunion and Reflection**

The family reunion, set against the backdrop of a boat journey through the remnants of former plantations, serves as a pivotal moment. The navigation difficulties encountered symbolize the challenges of reconciling the past with the present. Throughout this experience, the author engages meaningfully with historical records, gradually uncovering the intertwined destinies of the Ball family and the enslaved individuals who once inhabited their lands.

## **Exploration of Historical Records**

In Charleston, the author immerses himself in the Ball family papers, revealing rich details that bring to light the lives of both his ancestors and the enslaved people they owned. This thorough examination allows him to reconstruct narratives and identities that had largely been overlooked or forgotten.

## **Conclusion and Accountability**

In conclusion, the author grapples with the responsibility of confronting his

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family's past openly. He recognizes that the legacy of the Ball family and that of the enslaved individuals is inexorably linked. Understanding this interconnected history becomes essential for him to move forward with integrity, embracing a narrative that acknowledges both triumph and tragedy. Through this reckoning, he aims to foster a more honest dialogue about the implications of his family's legacy.

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# Chapter 2 Summary: 2 Masters from England

## ### MASTERS FROM ENGLAND

### Elias Ball's Ancestry and Background

Elias Ball, a central figure in the narrative, hails from a long line of tenant farmers in Stokeinteignhead, England, born in 1676. His ancestors faced a gradual decline in status linked to broader socio-economic shifts, including the turmoil of the English Civil War. Elias's father, William, and mother, Mary, struggled against a backdrop of poverty and lost aspirations, experiences that would shape Elias's character and future ambitions.

### Historical Context and Revolutionary Events

Elias grew up amidst significant historical upheaval. The period was characterized by the rise and fall of influential leaders like Oliver Cromwell, followed by the restoration of the monarchy under King Charles II. This chaotic environment deeply affected the Ball family, who endured financial decline and social marginalization, igniting in Elias a desire to reclaim their dwindling legacy.

### Migration to America

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The family's hope for a better future materialized through Elias's uncle, John Coming, a pioneering sailor who became instrumental in establishing settlements in Carolina. Coming amassed wealth through land acquisition and the use of enslaved labor, setting the stage for Elias's eventual inheritance of a significant estate in America, along with the complex social dynamics entailed.

## **Establishment of a Slave Economy**

In Carolina, the influx of English settlers, including Coming, laid the groundwork for a robust slave economy. The introduction of chattel slavery involved the systematic importation of Africans, formalized under the Fundamental Constitutions, which delineated the rights of white settlers and the exploitative conditions imposed on enslaved individuals and Native Americans. This grim reality of enforced labor became a critical element of the burgeoning colonial landscape.

## **Elias Ball's Inheritance**

Upon the death of John Coming, Elias Ball was named heir to the estate of Coming's T, along with the enslaved workforce. Arriving in Charleston in 1698, he found himself stepping into a position of authority on land that had once belonged to Native Americans. This inheritance entailed significant

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responsibility, as Elias had to manage a diverse labor force within the harsh context of enslavement.

## **Life on Coming's T**

Coming's T was a vibrant estate set against a backdrop of natural beauty, yet it served as a stark reminder of the grim realities of slavery. Confronted with the daunting task of managing enslaved individuals from various backgrounds, Elias faced immense challenges, particularly in fostering effective communication and understanding with his workforce, which was crucial for the success of his new life.

## **Elias Ball's Future**

With aspirations to establish himself as a powerful figure, Elias sought to navigate the complexities of plantation life. His humble beginnings and limited education did not deter him; instead, his careful management of financial affairs would prove vital in fulfilling his responsibilities. The chapter concludes with Elias on the cusp of shaping his legacy in a world rife with exploitation and struggle, setting the stage for the unfolding of his story amid the harsh realities of colonial America.

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# Chapter 3 Summary: 3 The Well of Tradition

## ### The Well of Tradition

### Family Connection

On a warm summer afternoon in Charleston, the narrator finds himself at the apartment of Elias Ball Bull, a distant relative renowned for his meticulous knowledge of the Ball family and South Carolina's history. Elias, who has a disability, is surrounded by a plethora of historical documents that unveil the intricate lineage of the Balls, a family steeped in a past marked by both privilege and the legacy of slavery.

### Elias Ball's Legacy

Elias shares captivating tales of the family's patriarch, also named Elias Ball, affectionately referred to as "Red Cap." His stories reveal a flawed family coat of arms – an emblem of military prowess that, despite being unjustly claimed by the American Balls, symbolizes the overarching themes of identity and legacy that haunt their history.

### Plantation Life

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As their conversation deepens, the focus shifts to the lives led on the Ball plantations. Elias notes that while the plantations housed a significant number of enslaved individuals, only a small fraction worked in the fields, often due to age or disability. He presents an idealized recollection of relationships between the Balls and their slaves, juxtaposing it against the harsher realities documented in history, particularly concerning the disintegration of families.

## **Voices of the Past**

Meanwhile, Dorothy Dame Gibbs, another family member, contributes her childhood memories, particularly stories rooted in the history of the enslaved. She reminisces about Scipio, an enslaved man who was allowed an education, albeit in a manner that served more as a spectacle for Northern guests than a genuine attempt at empowerment. Her reflections on slave names evoke the broader themes of identity intertwined with classical education and the suppression of African heritage.

## **Contemplations of Race and History**

The chapter delves into the complexities of race and the varying perceptions among family members regarding their slave-holding ancestry. Dorothy's views, tinged with historical biases, reveal the struggle to reconcile past injustices. The narrator feels a rift between generations: older relatives often

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avoid discussions about slavery, while the younger members are eager to confront these uncomfortable truths, seeking a deeper understanding of their heritage.

## Family Dynamics

As the narrator embarks on an exploration to connect with the descendants of former Ball slaves, he faces diverse reactions from older family members, many of whom harbor concerns about potential conflicts arising from these discussions. The chapter concludes with a palpable tension, highlighting the challenge of reconciling familial pride with the harsh realities of their shared history, emphasizing the urgent need for open dialogue and a comprehensive understanding of the complexities that shape their identity.

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# Chapter 4: 4 Bright Ma

## Chapter 4 Summary: Bright Ma

In the dim atmosphere of a September day in Harlem, Edward Ball attends a gathering of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, a group dedicated to preserving African American family histories. Ball, a descendant of plantation owners, is on a quest to trace the lineage of the enslaved individuals from his family's South Carolina plantation. His journey takes a poignant turn when he meets Denise Collins, who shares a profound connection to the Ball plantation through her great-grandmother, Katie Heyward, who endured slavery there.

Denise recounts her family's oral history rooted in Moncks Corner, South Carolina, establishing a powerful bond with Ball as he learns about the Heyward family's past. As they delve into conversations at her home, they highlight the stark contrast between the often fragmented historical records of Black families and the richness of their oral traditions, which have preserved vital elements of their ancestry. This dialogue underscores a broader theme regarding the challenges of documenting Black history and the vital role oral stories play in maintaining ancestral ties.

Intrigued by their connection, Ball discovers historical records that link

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Denise's family to his own over successive generations. This lineage begins with enslaved individuals named Tenah and Adonis, whose exploits reveal the harsh realities of slavery—including separation, injury, and the struggle for dignity and resilience. Their stories are emblematic of the broader African American experience and serve as a testament to the human spirit's

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# Chapter 5 Summary: 5 A Family Business

## ### A FAMILY BUSINESS

### Childhood on Sullivan's Island

The author begins by reminiscing about his childhood on Sullivan's Island, a serene beach town in South Carolina where his family home had a breathtaking view of the ocean. This idyllic yet secluded environment was filled with the natural sounds of waves and wildlife, and shrimp boats could be seen working daily on the horizon.

### Historical Context of Sullivan's Island

The narrative dives into the island's dark history as a pivotal point for the transatlantic slave trade, where enslaved Africans first arrived in America. The South Carolina legislature mandated that all slave ships dock at Sullivan's Island for a health inspection at the pest house, a facility where African captives awaited their fate before being sold at auction in Charleston. This historical backdrop is essential for understanding the interwoven nature of the author's family history with the legacy of slavery.

### The Human Cost of Slavery

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The author poignantly recounts the grim realities of the Middle Passage, where many Africans did not survive their harrowing journey. He shares a chilling story of corpses washing ashore, highlighting the indifference displayed by authorities toward the lives lost, who were viewed only through the lens of the health risks they posed to the white populace.

## **Formation of the Ball Family Plantation**

This chapter introduces Elias Ball, the author's ancestor, who began his career as a rice planter in South Carolina. It chronicles his struggles and eventual triumphs that led to the establishment of the Comingtee plantation. As the plantation expanded, Elias increased both his landholdings and the number of enslaved Africans who labored under grueling conditions to meet the agricultural demands of rice cultivation.

## **Interactions with Native Americans**

The narrative touches on Elias's fears regarding potential Native American revolts, reflecting the tense dynamics of the time. His involvement in colonial militias to suppress these fears culminated in the Yamasee War. This tragic conflict resulted in a devastating defeat for Native Americans, further entrenching the reliance on African slavery within the plantation system.

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## **Establishing a Family and Expanding the Plantation**

As Elias found success, he married twice, first to Elizabeth Harleston and later to Mary Delamare, with both unions resulting in a mix of births and deaths among their children. This section describes the challenges of plantation management and the social dynamics of the era, including the rejection of slavery by some local groups like the Anabaptists, who abstained from participating in the institution.

## **Cultural Shifts and Rice Cultivation**

With rice emerging as a dominant cash crop, the author elaborates on its labor-intensive cultivation process, drawing attention to the profound agricultural expertise enslaved Africans brought to the plantation. This transition played a critical role in shaping South Carolina's economy and necessitated the development of considerable infrastructure to support rice farming.

## **Life on the Plantation**

The day-to-day life on Elias Ball's plantation is examined, revealing the complex social hierarchy and the significant roles of enslaved people, such as Fatima and Dolly. The author explores the nuanced relationship between

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Dolly and Elias, hinting at an intricate dynamic of power, dependence, and perhaps genuine affection, as evidenced by Dolly's treatment and their children together.

## **Elias Ball's Legacy**

The chapter concludes by reflecting on Elias Ball's business practices in the context of prevailing societal norms surrounding slavery. An exploration of his will highlights a contentious blend of recognition and endurance of the practice of slavery, illustrating how personal relationships were intricately tied to systemic issues.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter captures the intertwining narratives of hardship, family, and survival on plantations, linking personal stories to historical realities. It underscores the profound and far-reaching impacts of slavery on individual lives and the fabric of society, reflecting on legacies that continue to shape the present.

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# Chapter 6 Summary: 6 Written in the Blood

## Written in the Blood

In this chapter, Edward Ball embarks on a personal quest to explore his family's historical ties to the Goodson family, a black family in Pennsylvania, whose ancestors were believed to have been enslaved by the Ball family. Amidst a snowstorm, Edward makes his way to meet Carolyn Smalls Goodson, setting the stage for a poignant exploration of race, identity, and ancestral lineage.

## Meeting Carolyn Goodson

Upon arriving at Carolyn's home, Edward is graciously welcomed, and a rich conversation unfolds. Carolyn, along with her sister Bea, shares vivid memories of growing up in South Carolina, where they faced the harsh realities of poverty and the lingering effects of racial segregation. Their lives were marked by limited access to basic amenities, emblematic of the systemic inequities that have long plagued African American communities.

## Shared Ancestry

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As the discussion deepens, Carolyn and Bea reveal their suspicion that their great-great-great-grandmother was purchased by the Ball family. They recount stories of their ancestors, particularly Frederick Poyas, believed to be the son of a Ball slave owner. This revelation brings forth the complexities of their mixed heritage and illuminates the struggles of identity they faced amid the persistent racial tensions of their upbringing.

## **The Goodson Family Legacy**

Carolyn reflects on her family's migration to Philadelphia, highlighting the challenges they encountered as they sought employment and stability. The narrative follows her journey from a childhood rife with hardship to a career in hospitals, marriage, and motherhood. Throughout these experiences, Carolyn and her family strive to connect with their roots, piecing together the tangled history that binds them to the Ball family.

## **Leon Smalls and Reflection on Race**

A shift occurs with Leon Smalls, another descendant, who expresses a wary disposition toward Edward's inquiries. Leon shares his candid experiences with racism, discussing how his family history intertwines with the legacy of

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slavery. His reflections convey a sense of bitterness shaped by encounters with discrimination, leaving him skeptical of the potential for racial progress.

## **Michael Goodson's Perspective**

In contrast, Carolyn's son Michael offers a more hopeful outlook. He navigates his identity with optimism while pursuing educational and career aspirations. His relationship with family, especially his late cousin Steven, underscores the importance of familial bonds amidst adversity, illustrating a narrative of resilience and determination.

## **Legacy of Violence and Hope**

The chapter takes a poignant turn as Michael mourns the untimely death of Steven, which casts a shadow over the family's legacy. This loss intertwines themes of grief, identity, and the imperative to reconcile with the past. Edward's exploration highlights a complicated history marked by love and pain, emphasizing the importance of understanding shared heritage as a means for healing.

## **Conclusion**

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Edward Ball concludes the chapter by reflecting on the absurdity and tragedy of slavery, prompting readers to ponder the motivations behind such inhumane practices. The narrative invites a broader contemplation of America's historical race relations while illuminating the personal stories that shape this sensitive landscape. Through shared experiences, there emerges a glimmer of hope and the possibility of connection, even amidst the profound societal divides characteristic of the American experience.

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# Chapter 7 Summary: 7 The Making of a Dynasty

## THE MAKING OF A DYNASTY

In 1736, an African woman named Angola Amy was captured and sold to Elias Ball, a plantation owner in South Carolina, marking the beginning of a significant legacy on the Comingtee plantation. Amy belonged to a group called the Angolans, the descendants of captives from the Congo River region, and she arrived in America alone as part of a larger wave of enslaved Africans brought to the colony. Over the following year, more Angolans were shipped to South Carolina, illustrating the brutal realities of the transatlantic slave trade.

At Comingtee, Amy partnered with Windsor, and together they had seven children, establishing the largest black family on Ball's rice tracts, their lineage growing to nearly 180 members within 150 years. The chapter delves into the complexities of slavery, revealing how some African chiefs participated in the capture and sale of their own people. It highlights a practice where enslaved individuals could be compensated for extra labor, granting them a measure of autonomy that was rare in the oppressive system of slavery.

Elias Ball is portrayed as a somewhat progressive plantation owner, who,

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while maintaining his dominance over the enslaved population, occasionally allowed them to earn wages for their labor. This arrangement provided slaves with limited opportunities to cultivate crops for their personal use, though Ball's ultimate aim remained the control and exploitation of their labor without allowing them the means to save enough for their freedom. Slavery practices, such as the task system, were implemented, allowing slaves to complete designated work and then manage their personal time—a small concession that was still heavily regulated.

As the Ball family expanded, so did Elias Ball's estate, enabling his sons to inherit and grow their own plantations, including Comingtee, Hyde Park, Kensington, St. James, and Strawberry. The narrative also covers the Stono Uprising of 1739, a pivotal slave rebellion that instigated a wave of fear among white slave owners, leading to the enactment of the Negro Act of 1740, which imposed stricter laws on enslaved individuals.

The chapter paints a broader picture of Elias Ball's life in Charleston—his opulent lifestyle, familial ties, and his influential status as a slave owner. Notably, his daughter Eleanor's marriage to Henry Laurens, a burgeoning slave trader, further solidified the family's prominence. Elias Ball's will, which reflected his substantial wealth and the number of enslaved people he owned at his death in 1751, underscores the growing power of the slave-owning class in colonial America and the enduring ramifications of this legacy through successive generations.

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# Chapter 8: 8 Sawmill

## Chapter 8: Sawmill

In this chapter, the author embarks on a quest to uncover the history of Sawmill, a village reportedly established by the descendants of slaves owned by the Ball family after the Civil War. Despite Sawmill's absence from contemporary maps, the author's search takes him to Cordesville, a nearby area historically linked to the Ball plantations, where he hopes to glean more information about this elusive community.

Upon arriving in Cordesville, the author encounters a struggling country store that serves as a microcosm of the local economy. Through conversations with various locals, he receives leads that might guide him to Sawmill. The area's dilapidated structures reflect the legacy of a community that was once vibrant, built by freed slaves seeking a place to call home after the tumult of the Civil War.

Eventually, the author discovers Sawmill—a modest settlement characterized by simple homes and a church, which stands as a testament to the resilience of the families who lived there. Initially faced with skepticism from the residents, he finds a pivotal connection in Georgie Richardson, a woman whose deep roots in the area make her a valuable source of historical

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knowledge.

Georgie Richardson's narrative is intertwined with her family's history linked to the Comingtee plantation. She shares poignant stories of her ancestors' transition from slavery to freedom and the establishment of their lives in Sawmill. These memories underscore the struggles and enduring spirit of her family as they navigated life marked by hardship after emancipation.

Growing up in poverty, Georgie recalls her challenging childhood filled with hard labor and the ache of family loss. Her vivid recollections paint a broader picture of the experiences of many African Americans in the post-Civil War era, revealing the harsh realities they faced in their efforts to thrive.

The chapter also delves into the impact of the Comingtee plantation on Georgie's lineage, particularly highlighting the influential figure of Maum Mary Ann. This familial story connects to larger themes of resilience and the ongoing cultural memory of slavery, as the author highlights how the legacies of the past continue to shape identities today.

Georgie's reflections on church life reveal the importance of community support and solidarity in overcoming adversity. She reminisces about the evolution of their church from its origins on the plantation to the

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establishment of the St. James Reformed Episcopal Church in Sawmill, symbolizing the enduring bonds of the community despite changing circumstances.

In a poignant twist, the author uncovers Georgie's genealogical connection to

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# Chapter 9 Summary: 9 Bloodlines

## ### BLOODLINES

### #### Overview of the Ball Family Legacy

The Ball family, established by founding patriarch Red Cap, thrived through a series of plantations around Charleston, accumulating wealth via land, monetary assets, and, notably, slave labor. After Red Cap's death in 1751, the family's affluence persisted, centered around three key estates: Comingtee, Hyde Park, and Kensington.

### #### Survival and Continuity of the Balls

In contrast to many white families in St. John's Parish, the Balls achieved remarkable continuity in their lineage despite demographic challenges. Red Cap had twelve children, but only four reached adulthood. The family lineage was prominently carried on by John Coming Ball and "Second Elias" Ball, ensuring the endurance of their legacy.

### #### Blood and Identity

The concept of blood was fundamental to how the Balls perceived their family and enslaved individuals. A hierarchical view of lineage, influenced by their engagement in horse racing, prioritized bloodlines that dictated social standing and labor capabilities, thereby reshaping their perceptions of

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the workforce.

#### #### Perceptions of African Descents

Within this family framework, notions of tribal origins emerged, primarily shaped by Henry Laurens, who assessed enslaved people according to their ethnic backgrounds. This led to a system where certain tribes, such as the Mandinka and Gambians, were favored based on perceived favorable traits, while others like the Igbo were marginalized due to stereotypes attached to their attributes.

#### #### Economic Growth and Education

The prosperity following the French and Indian War allowed for expansion; Second Elias seized the opportunity to acquire new plantations and invest in education for his children. However, these educational pursuits remained superficial, emphasizing social status rather than fostering deep intellectual growth. The Balls adorned their estates with luxurious furnishings and portraits that reflected their elevated social standing.

#### #### Slavery Conditions and Personal Stories

The lives of the enslaved were fraught with brutality and sorrow, characterized by violence, familial separations, and bleak realities. Individual narratives, such as the stillbirths and the tragic fate of a slave named Chloe—murdered by her sister Isabel—shed light on the grim internal dynamics of plantation life.

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#### #### Runaways and Resistance

Countless enslaved individuals sought to escape the oppressive conditions of slavery, risking severe repercussions, including harsh punishments or death. Runaways were often publicized in newspapers with reward offers, showcasing the relentless spirit of those yearning for freedom despite formidable barriers.

#### #### Edward Tanner's Life

Edward Tanner, the son of an enslaved woman, navigated a complex identity within a racially stratified society. As a free person of color, he thrived as a leatherworker and horse-minder, but he endured personal heartbreak and social isolation due to systemic racial barriers.

#### #### The Impact of Slave Trade

Charleston served as a critical node in the slave trade, with the Ball family's connections to prominent slave traders amplifying their wealth. The city's role significantly influenced demographics and the historical narratives of African Americans, many of whom trace their lineage back to enslaved ancestors brought through its ports.

#### #### Concluding Thoughts on Heritage

The narratives of individuals such as Priscilla, a survivor among the Sierra Leone children acquired by Second Elias, highlight the resilience of family

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and culture in the face of oppression. The intertwining of the Ball family's generational wealth with the lives of those they enslaved creates a complex legacy, one that reflects both their affluence and the profound suffering of others in their midst.

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## Chapter 10 Summary: 10 “Yours, obediently”

### ### Chapter 10: “Yours, Obediently” - Summary

In 1926, Isaac Ball, an octogenarian Confederate veteran mourning the recent loss of his wife, Mary Louisa, received a heartfelt condolence letter from P. Henry Martin, a former slave with family ties to the Ball plantation. This correspondence encapsulated the intricate relationships that developed during and after the era of slavery, illustrating a blend of affection and respect between the two families.

Isaac, who had spent his life on the Limerick plantation and developed significant connections within the black community, was profoundly moved by Martin's words. Despite his blindness, he had his daughter read the letter to him, and it became a cherished family keepsake—a reflection of the intertwined destinies of the Balls and their former enslaved people.

P. Henry Martin, who transitioned from slavery to a life of service as a teacher and preacher, nurtured a sense of gratitude toward the Ball family for their kindness. His correspondence with them endured throughout his life, showcasing the lasting impressions of past interactions. Years later, the author reached out to Thomas Martin, P. Henry's grandson, who was eager to learn more about his grandfather's history. Their discussions unearthed a

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shared lineage, revealing the complexities and dualities of gratitude and hardship woven into their family narratives.

The chapter further explores the socio-economic landscape of the Martin family following emancipation. P. Henry's commitment to education not only shaped his family's legacy but also significantly impacted the community, as he dedicated himself to teaching black children. Carutha Williams, a modern descendant of P. Henry, shared insights into the evolution of the Martin family, illustrating the challenges and fragmentation they faced across generations—a mirror to the larger societal changes of their times.

The narrative also highlights Williams's experiences as a black woman navigating the civil rights movement, particularly the systemic racism she encountered while trying to integrate into predominantly white spaces, such as the Navy shipyard.

A pivotal moment in the chapter comes when members of the Martin family visit the remnants of the Limerick plantation. This pilgrimage becomes a profound opportunity for reflection on their ancestral roots and the legacy of slavery. During this visit, Mr. Martin honored the site, contemplating both the past hardships and the enduring connections that bind their histories.

A significant revelation about P. Henry's lineage leads back to a girl named

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Priscilla, brought from Sierra Leone. This insight sparked a deep sense of belonging and introspection within the Martin family, illustrating the rare chance to reconnect with their African heritage.

In conclusion, as the Martin family delves into their history, they uncover a tapestry of emotions—resilience, joy, and complexity—all rooted in their shared legacy. This journey through their ancestry becomes an affirmation of hope and survival, framed by the shadows of their past.

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# Chapter 11 Summary: 11 A House Divided

## A House Divided

### The Context of the American Revolution

The American Revolution, known in Great Britain as the War for America, profoundly affected the Southern colonies, particularly regarding the institution of slavery. Enslaved individuals seized the opportunity to escape as many sought refuge with the British Army, drawn by the promise of freedom. One notable person among them was Boston King, who successfully fled his enslavement and would later return to the African coast, illustrating the desperate hope for liberation that characterized this tumultuous period.

### The Ball Family and Their Plantations

In 1776, as the revolution began, the Ball family owned several plantations in South Carolina. The patriarch, Elias Ball II, found his authority increasingly challenged by younger family members as loyalties began to diverge in response to the war. The plantation's stability was threatened not only by external conflict but also by growing fears of slave insurrections, particularly fueled by rumors of the British offering freedom to enslaved

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people willing to fight for them.

## **The War's Impact on Slavery**

As the Revolutionary War intensified, the anxiety among plantation owners, including the Balls, heightened. Prominent leaders such as Virginia's Governor Dunmore issued proclamations that promised emancipation for slaves who joined the British forces, which stoked fear of potential revolts. In response, South Carolina's militias began to prepare for possible uprisings, while many enslaved individuals began to converse about the war's implications for their freedom.

## **Loyalty and Defiance Within the Ball Family**

The conflict also fractured the Ball family. Third Elias Ball emerged as a Loyalist, while others like John Laurens supported the revolution, advocating for the enlistment of Black soldiers, believing that their participation could alter the course of the war. This dichotomy of loyalties not only mirrored the broader conflict but also highlighted the internal challenges faced by families similar to the Balls during this era.

## **Boston King's Journey**

Amidst the clamor of war, Boston King, who was born into enslavement,

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fled in hopes of gaining his freedom by aligning with British troops. His path fluctuated as he navigated various roles until the fall of Charleston to British forces, prompting a mass exodus of enslaved individuals from the plantations, seeking liberation from their previous lives.

## **The Aftermath of the War**

When the Revolutionary War concluded, the Ball family found their plantations significantly altered. Many enslaved individuals had escaped or been sold, severely diminishing their workforce. The future for Black Loyalists, like King, was often grim, as they were frequently relegated to labor roles or sold back into slavery, illustrating the war's harsh realities.

## **Boston King's Legacy**

In the wake of the war, Boston King emerged as a notable leader among Black Loyalists who relocated to Nova Scotia. He later participated in a movement to resettle in West Africa, establishing a new life in Sierra Leone. Through his documentation of experiences, King became a respected figure in his community, showcasing resilience and the quest for identity and freedom.

## **The Ball Family's Transformation**

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The Revolutionary War irrevocably changed the Ball family's fortunes. As they navigated a post-war reality where traditional power dynamics were unsettled, they faced inner turmoil and societal shifts. The legacies of war and slavery profoundly influenced the trajectories of both the Balls and their former enslaved individuals, marking a complex interplay of loss, adaptation, and the pursuit of new identities in the changing landscape of America.

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# Chapter 12: 12 The Width of the Realm

### Summary of Chapters: The Width of the Realm

## Cousin Marriages and Endogamy

The Ball family, entrenched in the plantation system, practiced cousin marriages, a custom known as endogamy, to preserve wealth and familial ties. Despite disapproval from the Anglican Church, these practices endured until the decline of their plantations. A significant turning point occurred when John Ball chose to marry outside the cousinhood, signaling a shift in family traditions that would impact their social structure.

## Health and Medical Care

John Ball's wife, Jane, struggled with health issues, treated through a blend of traditional remedies and contemporary medical practices. This intersection of plantation medicine with African herbal remedies illuminated the complex dynamics of care on the plantation. As medical advancements, such as vaccinations and professional physicians, emerged, the Ball family adopted a paternalistic approach to healthcare for their enslaved individuals, reflecting changing attitudes toward health and control.

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## Expansion of Plantations and Reclaimed Lands

In the wake of the American Revolution, the Ball family expanded their rice plantations, innovating techniques from traditional farming to tidal farming, which enhanced productivity significantly. As rice demand grew, they increased land acquisition and enslaved labor, reinforcing their reliance on and commitment to the plantation economy.

## Social Change and Education

The rise of abolitionist movements and educational institutions in the North began to threaten the Ball family's wealth and way of life. During a trip to the North, John Ball encountered evolving cultural and political ideas, raising concerns that his sons could be influenced by liberal ideologies in their education, potentially undermining the family's traditional values.

## Uprisings and Conspiracies

Tensions surrounding slavery escalated with the Denmark Vesey plot, a conspiracy aimed at challenging white supremacy. Key figures, including Peter Poyas—connected to the Ball family—became crucial to the plot, marking a pivotal moment of resistance against oppression and highlighting the instability of the Ball family's power.

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## Discussion of Family Dynamics

While the Balls prided themselves on benevolent stewardship over their enslaved community, underlying suspicions and tensions were prevalent. The trials associated with the Vesey plot exposed the fragile balance between

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# Chapter 13 Summary: 13 A Painter's Legacy

## A Painter's Legacy

### Introduction to Edwina Harleston Whitlock

As winter fades, Edward Ball receives a phone call from Edwina Harleston Whitlock, an elderly woman who reveals a familial connection to his ancestry. This conversation sparks a meaningful exploration of their intertwined histories, rooted in complex backgrounds that engage themes of race and heritage.

### Connection Through Ancestors

Edwina recounts the lives of her great-grandparents, William Harleston, a rice planter, and Kate Wilson, a woman who was formerly his slave. Their unconventional common-law marriage and the eight children they raised serve as a vital link between the Harleston and Ball families, illuminating how shared lineage can weave intricate narratives across generations.

### Discovering Shared Lineage

During their exchange, both Edwina and Edward uncover their multiracial

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heritage, affecting their identities and perspectives on family and history. They reflect on how their mixed ancestry brings forth a nuanced understanding of their pasts, revealing the often-overlooked complexities inherent in their shared lineage.

## **Kate Wilson's Story**

Edwina shares the struggles of Kate Wilson after the death of William Harleston, particularly her battles with relatives intent on scrubbing her legacy from existence. Despite the hardships she faced, Kate's spirit endures in the lives of her descendants, though a modest grave starkly symbolizes the unremarkable recognition of her significant contributions.

## **Edwina's Upbringing and Family Legacy**

Recalling her privileged upbringing, Edwina reflects on the influential roles of her adoptive parents, Edwin Harleston and Elise Forrest—figures imbued with Charleston's rich cultural legacy. Their background in journalism and the arts nurtured Edwina's own appreciation for the interconnected narratives of her family and community.

## **The Artistic Contributions of Edwin Harleston**

The chapter shifts focus to Edwin Harleston, Edwina's uncle, who navigated

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the challenges of being a Black artist in a segregated South. While initially facing systemic barriers, Edwin's artistic prowess eventually gained posthumous recognition, illuminating Edwina's efforts to honor his legacy and advocate for the visibility of Black artists.

## **Ray Maith Fleming: Another Descendant**

The narrative introduces Ray Maith Fleming, a great-great-grandson of Kate Wilson, who has carved out a career as a music producer in Los Angeles. Ray's journey underscores the ongoing complexities of identity and cultural inheritance, revealing the enduring interplay of familial ties and racial dynamics in contemporary America.

## **The Cemetery Visit**

In an emotionally resonant finale, Edwina and Edward visit Kate Wilson's grave, which serves as a poignant reminder of the legacies multiracial descendants navigate. They consider the challenges of recognition and acknowledgment, ultimately arriving at the realization that while the acknowledgment may be insufficient, the lifeblood of their ancestors' stories thrives within their descendants.

## **Legacy and Reflections**

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Through an array of personal narratives encompassing art, music, and social trials, the chapter examines the enduring influence of cultural heritage and identity. It highlights the intertwined histories of African Americans and their white ancestors in the South, illustrating how these connections shape present realities and illuminate paths toward understanding, recognition, and unity.

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# Chapter 14 Summary: 14 The Curse of Buzzard Wing

## Chapter 14: THE CURSE OF BUZZARD WING

This chapter delves into the legend of "Buzzard Wing," a title bestowed upon Martha Caroline Swinton Ball, the second wife of wealthy rice planter John Ball. Following John's death, Martha, known for her extravagant lifestyle, allegedly cursed the descendants of his first wife, Jane Ball, amidst fierce inheritance disputes and family tensions.

### Caroline's Life and Spending Habits

Martha Caroline, born on Edisto Island, married John Ball in 1805 and became notorious for her lavish spending and prolific childbearing, giving birth to eleven children. After John's death, her financial habits led to multiple legal entanglements over his estate, exacerbated when she remarried Augustus Taveau, a gambler, further complicating her financial standing.

### Inheritance and Family Dynamics

In the wake of their father's passing, John Ball Jr. and Isaac Ball took control of the family estate. Caroline's protracted legal battles illuminated her

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struggle to sustain her lifestyle while ensuring her children's futures. This prompted growing animosity between Caroline's children and those from John's first marriage, as concerns arose over their perceived wastefulness and the potential dilapidation of family wealth.

## **Educational Attempts and Rebellion**

Seeking to reform Caroline's sons, John Jr. and Isaac sent them to a military school in Vermont, hoping this would instill discipline. However, the boys' poor adaptation to these strict surroundings led to a failed attempt at further education in England, highlighting tensions within the family regarding discipline and responsibility.

## **Decline of the Rice Economy**

The chapter explores the decline of rice as a profitable crop for planters like the Balls, attributed to the rise of cotton cultivation and the construction of the Santee Canal. This economic shift signified diminishing power for established families and further compounded the Balls' precarious status.

## **The Influence of Caroline's Offspring**

Despite inheriting wealth, Caroline's children exhibited financial irresponsibility, indulging in extravagant purchases and accumulating debts.

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This behavior echoed their mother's lavish lifestyle, reinforcing the belief that they were doomed to continue spiraling into misfortune.

## **Changes in Southern Society and Politics**

Amidst the internal struggles of the Ball family, significant societal transformations were underway in the South, particularly concerning the contentious issue of slavery. With increasing pressures from abolitionists in the North, John Ball Jr. became politically active, especially regarding states' rights and protective tariffs that threatened the Southern economy.

## **John Jr.'s Legacy and Family Struggles**

As John Jr. and Isaac managed the plantations, they failed to anticipate the impending economic and political upheavals. The chapter illustrates tensions characterized by violence and discontent among enslaved individuals, highlighting the fractured relationships between them and the Balls.

## **Subtle Omens of Decline**

As the Balls confronted external pressures from abolitionist movements and shifting political landscapes, their increasing detachment from evolving societal norms marked a significant decline. The narrative culminates in John Jr.'s death, symbolizing the broader misfortunes that would continue to

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afflict his descendants, reinforcing the fabled curse of Buzzard Wing.

### **Conclusion: The Fate of the Balls**

The chapter concludes by portraying the ongoing challenges faced by Caroline's children as they attempted to navigate a rapidly changing world. Their actions often mirrored their mother's decadent and irresponsible lifestyle, suggesting that the curse of Buzzard Wing indeed had a profound and lasting influence on the family's legacy and fortunes.

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# Chapter 15 Summary: 15 The Siege

## The Siege

### Overview of the Ball Family During the Civil War

In 1860, the Ball family thrived in the Southern plantation society, deeply intertwined with the legacy of slavery. As Southern states initiated secession from the Union, the women celebrated this bold move, while the men grew anxious about the impending conflict. The family's young men enlisted in the Confederate Army, determined to preserve their comfortable lifestyle, which included maintaining their personal servants, or slaves.

### Life on the Plantations

Patriarch William James Ball managed eight plantations with over six hundred enslaved individuals contributing to their wealth. Despite a cotton boom, the decline in labor availability compounded their challenges. Charleston played a vital role in the rebellion, but it remained a relatively small urban center without the industrial and educational advancements of the North.

### Secession and its Consequences

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Following South Carolina's lead in secession, other Southern states formed the Confederate States of America. The new Confederate Constitution enshrined the protection of slavery at its core, setting the stage for the war's primary objectives. Family members like Elias Nonus Ball attempted to secure military commissions but faced difficulties in doing so.

## **Events Leading to War**

Tensions heightened after Abraham Lincoln's election, culminating in the attack on Fort Sumter, which marked the onset of the Civil War. Initially buoyed by Confederate victories, the Balls soon faced the stark realities of war, including dwindling agricultural production and growing discord within their household as the conflict dragged on.

## **Economic Impact of the War**

As the war progressed, the Southern economy faltered under Union blockades and devastation from General Sherman's campaigns. To bolster defenses, the Balls employed their slaves, but shortages in supplies became increasingly dire. The women of the family assumed additional responsibilities to keep the household functioning amidst the chaos.

## **Military Participation and Family Dynamics**

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The Ball sons enlisted in various military capacities, intensifying the family's anxiety as battles raged on and casualties mounted. As the war encroached on their home front, the family contended with loss, mounting tensions, and uncertainty about their future in a changing world.

## **The Fall of Charleston and Slavery's End**

By early 1865, Union forces advanced toward Charleston, prompting the Balls to devise evacuation plans. When Federal troops eventually occupied the city, the end of slavery began to unfold with William Ball's reluctant decision to release his slaves. The family faced a complex mix of despair and relief, reflecting on their immense losses and shifting identity throughout the war.

## **Final Observations**

This chapter encapsulates the Ball family's turbulent journey during the Civil War, highlighting themes of tradition, loyalty, and the significant transformations within Southern society as the institution of slavery crumbled. It poignantly portrays the profound personal and communal upheaval experienced by families deeply embedded in antebellum America, illustrating the far-reaching impacts of a nation grappling with its moral and social fabric.

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## Chapter 16: 16 Aftermath

### ### Aftermath

The chapter begins with the author's recollections of a childhood visit to the Lincoln Memorial. At the time, he was unimpressed and indifferent to the monument's significance, failing to grasp the depth of Abraham Lincoln's role in American history. This experience serves to illustrate the differing perspectives within his family, especially highlighting his father's Charleston roots and potentially conflicting views on Lincoln, a figure emblematic of emancipation and civil rights.

Transitioning into the post-Civil War era, the narrative examines a pivotal moment in 1862 when, amidst Union occupation in South Carolina, black Americans began adopting surnames. Contrary to the common belief that freedpeople often took on the names of their former enslavers, many individuals associated with the Ball plantations opted for distinct surnames to distance themselves from their past affiliations and reclaim their identities.

The chapter continues by depicting the decline of the Ball family fortunes following the war. The once-thriving plantations fell into neglect and disrepair, exacerbated by the family's inability to sustain labor contracts with

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former slaves. This financial downfall represents a significant shift in social dynamics, as the previously dominant Ball family struggled to retain their status.

As time progressed, the narrative recounts the migration of many former slaves from the South, particularly in the years following World War I. This mobility marked a profound transformation in communities, contributing to a growing separation between black and white populations, as families sought new opportunities away from the constraints of their past.

Personal accounts from individuals like Benjamin Nesbitt highlight the persistent hardships that former slaves encountered in their daily lives, emphasizing their resilience amidst challenging work conditions and the enduring impact of slavery on their families.

The author's encounter with Reverend Peter Withers, a descendant of the Ball plantations, further complicates the dialogue around history and reconciliation. Withers shares his grandfather's experiences under slavery, embodying a perspective that promotes peace and spiritual healing over a focus solely on historical injustices, thereby inviting a nuanced conversation about the past.

Family reunions among the descendants of the Ball slaves are portrayed as significant gatherings that help preserve cultural heritage and personal

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histories. These narratives reveal a diversity of experiences that contradict the monolithic portrayal of the Ball family's treatment of enslaved individuals, showing instances of support and educational encouragement alongside account of suffering.

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# Chapter 17 Summary: 17 The Preservation Society

## Chapter 17: The Preservation Society

In this chapter, the narrator encounters his distant cousin, Black John, in Charleston, where John extends an invitation to dinner at the South Carolina Society—a prestigious men's club founded in 1737. This society is steeped in exclusivity, composed primarily of descendants from plantation owners, embodying the remnants of the antebellum South's patriarchal values.

As they dine, Black John recounts the legacy of Judge Waring, a federal judge who took a stand against racial segregation laws in the mid-20th century. Despite his commitment to civil rights, Waring faced severe backlash and social ostracism from his predominantly white peers, illustrating the deep-seated resistance to change in the society's old guard.

Originally a charitable organization for French Huguenots, the South Carolina Society has evolved into a network where the nostalgia for plantation culture is palpable. This transformation emphasizes the historical narratives surrounding race and class within Charleston and highlights how the society has become a bastion of outdated values, resistant to modernity.

The narrator learns about the club's membership practices, showcasing a

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gatekeeping system that perpetuates privilege based on race and ideology. Black John underscores the ongoing tensions within this historical context, revealing how notions of exclusivity continue to fracture the community.

In a poignant contrast, the chapter shifts focus to a performance by the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals. This event, where members—white descendants of those who once benefitted from plantation life—perform African American spirituals draws attention to issues of cultural appropriation. The authenticity of their performances is questioned, raising important discussions about heritage and power dynamics.

As the narrator reflects on his family's history and its connection to these spirituals, the chapter delves into the complexities surrounding identity and memory. Members of the society reminisce about their ancestral ties to plantation culture, illustrating the delicate balance between honoring heritage and grappling with the painful histories that accompany it.

Ultimately, Chapter 17 juxtaposes the elitism of the South Carolina Society with the cultural significance of spirituals, framing a broader dialogue about the ongoing legacy of slavery and the intricate racial dynamics pervasive in Charleston today. The struggles to reconcile admiration for heritage with the urgent need to confront historical injustices are at the heart of this exploration of Southern identity.

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# Chapter 18 Summary: 18 A Reckoning

## A Reckoning

### Introduction

The narrative begins with Edward Ball's visit to Luzena King, who reaches out to him after reading his article on his family's plantation history. During his visit, he meets Emily Marie Frayer, King's mother, who offers rich insights into her family's ties to slavery on the Ball plantations.

### Family Heritage and Memory

Emily Frayer shares her memories of growing up on the Hyde Park plantation, once owned by John Coming Ball. She vividly recalls the arduous rice cultivation and recounts family stories centered on the lives of enslaved ancestors, particularly her grandfather, Philip. Philip's life takes a tragic turn when he is sold, resulting in his maintaining two families—a poignant reminder of the personal toll exerted by slavery.

### The Harsh Realities of Enslavement

Delving deeper, Frayer portrays the grim realities endured by the enslaved.

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She describes heartbreak practices such as night-time burials conducted hastily to prevent disruption of work schedules. This narrative not only underscores the brutality of the slave trade but also exemplifies the profound societal fractures that shattered familial bonds and deeply affected her family's history.

## **Life Post-Emancipation**

Following the Civil War, Philip, who took on the surname "Lucas," enlisted in the Union Army, marking a significant turning point in his life. Post-emancipation, he faced immense challenges in achieving land ownership, eventually succeeding as a sharecropper and nurturing a large family. Frayer reflects on her mother's education and experiences, illustrating how racism pervaded employment opportunities and shaped their lives in Charleston.

## **Societal Changes and Family Stories**

Luzena recounts family traditions rich with creativity and resilience, highlighting acts like stealing food to create joyful meals after long workdays. The discussion also touches upon punishments endured and the ambivalent feelings surrounding emancipation, particularly the complex emotions brought on by Union soldiers who represented both liberation and occupation.

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## Reflections on the Past

Emily Frayer offers profound reflections on the intricacies within the dynamics between slave and master, acknowledging the instances of both oppression and unexpected complexities, including emotional ties and sexual exploitation. Despite the painful history, Frayer conveys a sense of understanding and forgiveness toward some members of the Ball family, showcasing a remarkable capacity for empathy.

## The Search for Truth

The conversation takes a turn toward familial lore, specifically regarding a woman named Abby and her son Moses, whose identities potentially intertwine with that of the Ball family. Edward Ball embarks on a quest through historical records, revealing the enduring legacy of these connections that stir both curiosity and sorrow.

## Journey to Hyde Park

Years later, Frayer visits Hyde Park, a journey laden with nostalgia and emotional weight. As she engages with her family's history, she seeks closure and a deeper connection to her roots, embodying a strong desire for understanding and reconciliation with her past.

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## Conclusion

In his reflections, Edward Ball emphasizes the intricate tapestry of shared histories narrated by Emily and her family. He accentuates Emily's wisdom, which advocates for recognition, understanding, and forgiveness as essential steps toward healing in the ongoing dialogue about the legacy of slavery and its impact on contemporary society.

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