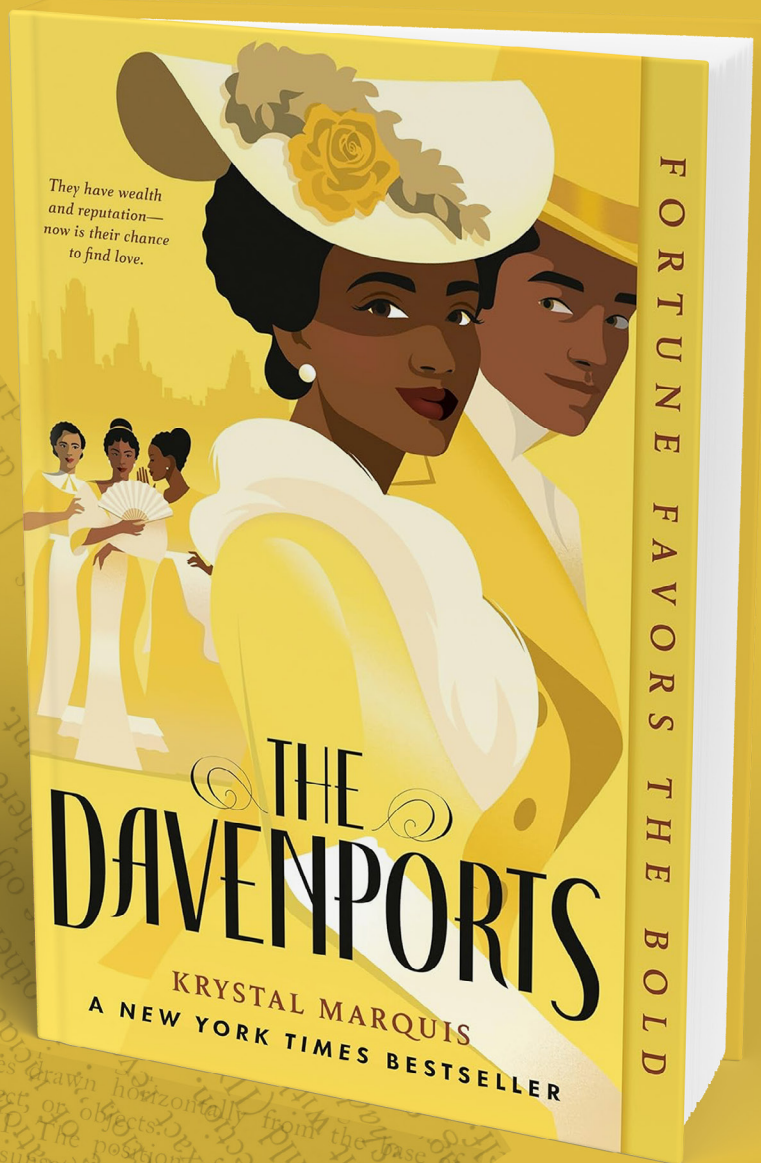




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THE DAVENPORTS CHAPTER SUMMARIES



The book takes us through the ebb and flow of love, status, expectation and Blackness and the quest to become who each character wants to be.

Chapters 1-10

The book starts when Olivia Elise Davenport meets her friend, Ruby at Marshall Field's department store. As she looked through the luxurious silk fabrics, a white clerk approached her and suggested that she should "pick up [her] mistress's orders at the service desk". Olivia was irritated at the woman's transparent prejudice and began pointing to expensive gloves and silk to add to her account as she reiterated her last name, Davenport. Olivia was accustomed to being a member of the elite class and was surprised whenever someone derided her because of the color of her skin. When she arrived at the family home, her parents were entertaining a guest, Jacob Lawrence.

In Chapter 2, Helen tinkered with the damaged Ford Model T that John had brought to the garage. The youngest Davenport child felt out of place in the presence of her parents' friends and at balls, but in the garage, she felt like herself. Despite her aptitude for mechanics, her parents did not approve of her time in the garage and expected her to enter society and marry soon. In the following chapter, Amy-Rose moved about Freeport tidying up after Olivia and Helen. When they were young, Amy-Rose was close friends with the girls. While she was raised in the house, Amy-Rose dreamed of leaving to open her own salon.

Ruby struggled with her family's financial situation in Chapter 4. After her father began his mayoral campaign, the family had begun selling off assets to finance his political run. While she did not confide the financial situation to Olivia, the friends talked about their marital prospects. Ruby had been in love with Olivia's brother, John, for as long as she could remember and she knew a union with him would secure her future, socially and financially. In Chapter 5, Olivia visited the soup kitchen on the South Side of Chicago. While there, she saw a group of young people and followed them to a nearby meeting house. As she scanned the crowd, a man approached her and asked if she was lost. She did not know until he walked onto the stage, that he was the young lawyer, Washington DeWight, whom everyone had gathered to see. In Chapter 6, William Davenport reprimanded Helen for working in the garage. He told her that it was John's duty to take over the family business. In Chapter 7, Amy-Rose was surprised when John came into the kitchen; she thought the entire family had departed for the party already. He jokingly explained that a button had fallen off his shirt and needed help repairing it. Amy-Rose felt her heartbeat quicken as he removed his shirt but was unsure if he saw her like a sister.

At the party, in Chapter 8, Ruby flirted with Harrison Barton to make John jealous. She was angry at her mother for taking her ruby pendant which had been a gift. She knew the family needed money but did not understand why she had to give up her personal possessions. In Chapter 9, Olivia was surprised to see Washington DeWight at the Tremaine's function. She had thought about him continuously since they met. In Chapter 10, Helen hid in the garden during the event. As she smoked a cigarette, Mr. Lawrence strode onto the lawn and introduced himself. Helen felt comfortable as they spoke but was unsure if their conversation was crossing into the realm of flirtation.

Chapters 11-17

In Chapter 11, Helen was startled when John approached her in the garden. She asked him about the party, and he confessed that he felt his independence and self-sufficiency dissipate whenever he returned home. As they talked, John jokingly asked her to dance, and they waltzed around the hanging laundry. In the following chapter, Olivia went on a stroll with Mr. Lawrence, chaperoned by her mother. They sat in the park chatting and Olivia strained to find a suitable topic of conversation. When he spoke about being born into a wealthy family, Olivia felt confident that "time and familiarity would close [the] gap between them" . She was sure she could fall in love with the eligible bachelor. In Chapter 13, Mrs. Davenport hired Mrs. Milford to teach Helen etiquette lessons. Ruby spent time with her cousin, Agatha Leary, in Chapter 14. As they watched a game of baseball, Harrison Barton was struck by a ball and Ruby ran toward the field. She was embarrassed by her public display of affection but knew he was the key to securing a proposal from John Davenport.

In Chapter 15, Amy-Rose snuck out to the garden at night to write in her notebook and plan her salon. When she sat near an oak tree, John stood up from the shadows. As they talked, John asked how Amy-Rose had started working at the house. She explained that she and her mother left Saint Lucia after a storm destroyed their home and most of the town. Initially they went to Georgia, where Amy-Rose's father lived. However, when they arrived at the house, they were not permitted inside and the white family told them to leave, informing them that her father was dead. Her mother started working at Freeport Manor because the Davenports were "the only ones who would take the both of them" . As they talked, Amy-Rose had subconsciously moved herself closer to him. In the shadowy garden, they kissed for the first time.

Olivia was struggling to focus on her reading when Helen snuck into her room, in Chapter 16. Her younger sister was hiding from Mrs. Milford. When Olivia made her way down to her father's study, she was startled to see Washington DeWight standing in the doorway. He explained that he was at Freeport to speak with her father and asked if she was heading to Mr. Davenport's study to ask for her "allowance to purchase ribbons [or] perhaps a new dress to entrap the poor, unsuspecting Mr. Law-

rence into an arrangement". Olivia was incensed by his assumption that she was a vapid woman with no conviction or personal thought. Later, at dinner, Olivia was distracted by thoughts of the young lawyer and his activism. In Chapter 17, Helen ran into Mr. Lawrence during her break from etiquette lessons and asked him to drive her into town. As they drove, the buggy wheel became stuck in the muddy dirty road. When they dismounted the carriage, Helen slipped in the mud. She grabbed a clod of the wet dirt and playfully tossed it at her sister's suitor. She felt enlivened by their time together and guilty for betraying Olivia.

Chapters 18-26

In Chapter 18, Ruby went dancing at a jazz club with Harrison Barton. While her intent continued to be seducing John through jealousy, she found herself enjoying her time with Harrison. As they chatted, Ruby admitted that her family was in a financially precarious position. Her father's mayoral campaign had drained their assets. Mr. Tremaine believed that if he won the election, he could help create a world in which "Black people with wealth, education, and opportunities, [are] common". Later, she told him about her ruby necklace that Mrs. Tremaine pawned. At home, her parents questioned her about the evening and her progress with John Davenport.

Amy-Rose visited Binga Bank, in Chapter 19, to deposit money and talk about her plans to purchase Mr. Spencer's barbershop for her business. As she walked home, John slowed his car next to her and offered her a ride. When she mentioned leaving Freeport, he admitted that he would miss her being around and professed his feelings. In the following chapter, Olivia asked Henrietta if she could accompany her to Samson house that evening. At the meeting, Olivia spoke with Mr. DeWight who asked her what she would do with her future if she had the choice. She was startled to realize that she had never contemplated what she wanted. In Chapter 21, John and Helen talked about the future of the family business. As they spoke, Mr. Lawrence entered the garage and Helen hid behind the automobile. Despite her efforts to evade him, Jacob saw her, and they began to converse. She felt confused by their interaction and her own nervous energy in his presence.

In Chapter 22, Mr. Barton brought Ruby to a jewelry shop where the clerk brought out Ruby's necklace. The gentleman explained that he had won the piece in a poker game. He knew it was his one opportunity to buy it back for Ruby. She tried to convince herself that they could be just friends. However, at the park, Ruby and Harrison kissed and her thoughts of ending the entanglement subsided. In the following chapter, the Davenports hosted an anniversary party at Freeport Manor. At the fete, Olivia danced with Washington DeWight until her mother interrupted them and scolded her for giving attention to a man other than Mr. Lawrence.

In Chapter 24, Helen excused herself from the festivities and hid in the library. As she sat near the fire, Jacob entered and moved toward her. Despite her hesitations, she kissed him and he “kissed her with the same passion she had desperately tried to hide”. However, when she reminded herself why she felt guilty, she pulled away and left the library. In Chapter 25, Amy-Rose overheard John telling his friends that “the business [was] the only thing that could keep” him home for the summer. She accidentally thought aloud exclaiming, “The only thing?”. John’s friends turned toward her and made jokes about him needing to take his affairs off the grounds. Amy-Rose exited quickly and hid in the kitchen. In Chapter 25, Ruby felt unsatisfied by John’s attention. When her mother pulled her aside, she congratulated her daughter for seducing John. However, as she spoke, Harrison approached, and Ruby knew he had overheard. When they spoke privately, Ruby admitted that she initially showed interest in him to make John jealous.

Chapters 27-34

In Chapter 27, Olivia noticed that Amy-Rose was distant and preoccupied. She knew that “in her rush to grow up, she’d left her friend behind” and missed their former intimacy. At lunch, Mr. and Mrs. Davenport directly asked Mr. Lawrence and Olivia if a proposal was forthcoming. Olivia was mortified, recognizing her own disinterest in the match and Jacob’s discomfort with the question. Olivia excused herself from the table and Mr. Lawrence followed. As they spoke privately, she asked him if they could “let [her parents] believe [they had] arrived at an understanding”. He attempted to confess his feelings for Helen but Olivia put him off before he could reveal his true feelings and made him promise not to tell anyone about their agreement. In Chapter 28, Helen struggled to focus on her dancing lessons with Mrs. Milford. She was surprised when the widow asked if her distraction was on account of Mr. Lawrence. Her companion encouraged her to “tell [her] sister before [Olivia and Jacob] walk[ed] too far down the path they’re on”. When Jacob arrived at the house to see Olivia, who was not home, Mrs. Davenport encouraged Helen to entertain him. She knew it would “be in poor taste for him to swap one sister for another. However, when Mr. Lawrence hinted that the situation may soon change, Helen allowed herself to hope.

Jessie encouraged Amy-Rose to get out of the house in Chapter 29. At Mr. Spencer’s barbershop, Amy-Rose was surprised to find that the sinks and chairs had been removed. She did not understand why he would leave early without telling her and made her way to Binga Bank. At the bank, the clerk told her that Mr. Spencer had sold his store to a different buyer. She was dismayed by the news; her hopes for a different future seemed to be collapsing. At Freeport, Tommy asked her if she would accompany him to California, expounding on the opportunities available on the West Coast. In Chapter 30, Ruby contemplated telling her mother about her feelings for Harrison Barton but lost her courage.

In Chapter 31, Olivia went to the community center on the South Side where activists were gathering for a protest march. When she stepped into the street with Mr. DeWight, she wondered if Helen felt the same sense of purpose and defiance when she worked in the garage. Olivia chanted along with the crowd as they made their way to the Cook County Circuit Court. While the rally was peaceful, the police arrived shortly after the protesters and began shooting into the cornered crowd. Washington held Olivia's hand and ran toward a break in the officer lineup. When they stopped running, Olivia kissed him.

Amy-Rose told Tommy that she would accompany him to California, in Chapter 32. As she packed her things, John knocked on the door and she reluctantly allowed him to enter. She told him that she did not have a reason to stay, and it was "time to move on, start fresh, in a new town where [she will not] be known as the maid". John pulled a packet of papers from his coat explaining that he had purchased a store front for her. In the following chapter, Helen found her brother in the library. As they spoke about their frustrations, John admitted that he was in love with Amy-Rose. Later, Helen confided her feelings for Mr. Lawrence. In Chapter 34, Ruby met with Mr. Barton and apologized for misleading him but promised to tell her parents about their attachment. At the milliner's Ruby attempted to explain the situation to Mrs. Tremaine but faltered in her conviction.

Chapters 35-47

In Chapter 35, Helen entered the sitting room as Olivia made her way to sneak out for the night. When she met Washington DeWight that evening, they went to dinner at a crowded restaurant. The waiter led them up to the roof where a private table had been set up. As they ate, DeWight explained that he and the other activists were "heading to Philadelphia in a few days, then on to the Capitol". Olivia was startled and frustrated that he had not told her sooner. However, when he suggested she join them, Olivia imagined leaving Chicago for the first time and began making a to-do list in her head as they kissed. When she returned home in the early morning, Helen was sitting at her vanity. Olivia confided her relationship with DeWight to her sister and Helen reciprocated by telling Olivia about her feelings for Mr. Lawrence.

In Chapter 36, Helen took the streetcar to Jacob Lawrence's apartment. She told him that she was in love with him. However, they needed to keep the relationship quiet until she and Olivia could explain the situation to their parents. In Chapter 37, Harrison Barton proposed to Ruby, and she accepted. In the following chapter, John told Amy-Rose about his plan to expand the business with Helen. Olivia slipped away from church to meet Mr. DeWight at his apartment, in Chapter 39. She knew her decision could have consequences, but she felt convicted in her desire to pursue a relationship with the lawyer. In his small flat, Olivia told Washington that she wanted to go to Philadelphia

with him. In Chapter 40, Jacob Lawrence confessed that he had lied to Helen and the Davenport family; he was not the heir to a large fortune. Helen was dismayed that she had fallen for someone who lied and used her family for financial gain.

At the party, in Chapter 41, Mrs. Tremaine interrupted Ruby and Mr. Barton as they danced. She heard a rumor that they were engaged which Harrison readily affirmed. Ruby admitted that she had not told her parents about the relationship. Her fiancé was frustrated and left the party. In the following chapter, Amy-Rose overheard John speaking with his father in the garden. When he told his father that he was in love with Amy-Rose, Mr. Davenport was audibly disgruntled and told John that if he chose to marry the maid, he would “not pave the way for [John]”. When Mr. Davenport left the garden, she confronted her lover and told him she was not willing to wait for him to make up his mind and would not take the shop he bought for her.

In Chapter 43, Olivia slipped out of the manor and made her way to the train station. On the crowded platform, she saw Washington and attempted to make her way toward him. However, as she pushed through the crowd, a young man approached her and explained that Henrietta had been arrested. He needed her to help bail Hetty out of jail. Olivia knew she had to stay and said goodbye to Washington from afar. In the following chapter Helen attempted to cover for Olivia’s absence at the party. However, when she saw her sister across the ballroom, they slipped away from the festivities together. In Chapter 45, Amy-Rose resolved to leave Freeport Manor again, and head east.

In Chapter 46, Ruby told her parents that she was in love with Mr. Barton and intended to marry him. In Chapter 47, the Davenport siblings convened in the breakfast room and talked about their heartbreak and disappointments. As they spoke, Olivia saw a letter in the mail basket addressed to Amy-Rose. John ran to find Amy-Rose but returned to tell his sisters that she was gone. The siblings laughed over their mutual struggles in love and plotted to disentangle their messy romantic relationships.