

Isaac Newton's Girl

by Vickie Cimprich

*“ a bright mulatto, part Indian . . . ,
early convert at Pleasant Hill.”*

—Julia Neal, *The Kentucky Shakers*

Didn't nobody know how mean Daddy was
back in Oconaluftee. We all thought
it was the drink, but then things got so bad
he was invited out of the village. So
we all went up through Cumberland Gap.

The first
white man he met, he sold me to, mama
being gone that day. The last I saw
of any of my people. Might be worse:
Newtons were church-going folks, that is,
when there was a church. That's likely why,
soon as the Paint Lick preaching settled down,
we all rushed off to join the Shakers at
Elisha Thomas' place on Shawnee Run.

The first I'd danced since I left home was there.
Crazy steps. It scared me that they all
might be drunk, but it never happened.
Just more of singing, more and more of dancing,

another family maybe I could keep.