

Harriet Tubman: Let My People Go  
Part One

By,

JJ Flowers

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INT. CONSTITUTIONAL CONGRESS. PHILADELPHIA. 1776. DAY.

Ben Franklin warns the congress:

BEN FRANKLIN

Aye, at long last men will be shielded from tyranny by the noble idea of inalienable rights, that of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And yet by silent agreement we have excluded the Negro from his God given liberty, the most basic of all liberties, that of owning his own bones, his own muscles, of owning his own mental and moral powers. And I warn you now this exclusion will someday rip this country apart and the gulf that comes to divide us will be filled with the spilt blood of our sons...

EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS. PLANTATION. MARYLAND. 1822. NIGHT.

A driving rain pelts the endless rows of wood shacks of the Brodas Plantation. The slightly run down opulence of the big house sits in the distance. Forests of pines surround plowed cotton fields.

A seven year old girl, MARYANN ROSS, holds a potato sack over her head as she runs from her family's small windowless shack across a wide expanse of mud to another small shack. She pounds on the door.

MARYANN

Cojoe! Cojoe! Come quick!

The door opens and an old man, Cojoe appears.

CUJOE

Did the babe come?

MARYANN

It's got a mark! Mama needs you to get a look.

Cojoe quickly follows Maryann to the Ross's shack.

INT. ROSS'S SHACK. NIGHT.

BEN ROSS, a large, handsome man, opens the door to admit his daughter and Cojoe. Two pine needle candles light the sparsely furnished shack where OLD RIT lies on a blanket on the floor, holding the newborn child in her arms.

Three other children, WILLIAM, HENRY, BENJI, gather around

their mother and the newborn infant.

CUJOE

A girl babe?

WILLIAM

Smaller than a rabbit.

OLD RIT

(laughs:)

She a tiny bit of flesh. The good Lord forgot to give me Eve's pain, too. She came out as smooth as water flowin' into a bucket.

MARYANN

She be plain as day!

OLD RIT

You hush, girl. God don't never turn out perfect.

BEN

We named her Araminta Harriet.

CUJOE

(laughs:)

A mouthful of name for such a small child. Let me get a look at little Minta.

Cujoe takes the baby into his arms. His expression goes from good will to curiosity to wonder.

CUJOE

(continuing)

She's got kindness written all over her. Like an angel. Where's that mark?

Ben gently reaches for the cloth and pulls it down to reveal little MINTA'S chest. Cujoe carries the babe over to the light of the candle. He stares in silence for several long minutes.

MARYANN

Is it bad?

CUJOE

A splash of light over the heart...

Cujoe suddenly LAUGHS and holds the baby up to the sky.

CUJOE

(continuing)

The Lord, he's got a plan for you, child!

EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS. PLANTATION. MARYLAND. NIGHT.

The clouds part, revealing the bright light of the North star.

INT. BRODAS PLANTATION. PARLOR. DAY. (SIX YEARS LATER.)

EMMA LEE BRODAS, a beautiful seventeen year old girl stares out the window. Emma Lee's younger, plainer sister, MARTA sits reading. The girls' mother, SARAH BRODAS is engrossed in needlepoint.

EMMA LEE

Mama! They're here! They're finally here!

Marta and Sarah look up with excitement. Emma Lee runs from the room.

EXT. THE BRODAS PLANTATION HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

A carriage slowly makes it way through the gardens to the front of the Big House and stops. A COACHMAN ties the reins and steps down to open the doors.

Emma Lee, followed by her mother and sister, rush down the front step, passing TWO SERVANTS who wait to take the bags.

PHILIP HERDON, a well dressed fifty year old gentleman and his handsome twenty-five year son, CHARLES, disembark.

SARAH

Philip, Charles, oh it's been too long!

PHILIP

My dear, Sarah. How are you?

Philip kisses Sarah's hand before an affectionate embrace.

Charles holds both of Emma Lee's hands.

CHARLES

You're even more beautiful than I remember, Emma Lee.

EMMA LEE

Did Harvard teach you to flatter the ladies like this?

CHARLES

My flattery is owing to its inspiration, nothing more.

The happy party LAUGHS and turn to move inside. Charles stops upon seeing Marta.

CHARLES

(continuing)

Little cousin! Look at you. Why I  
half suspect you're going to tell

me the dolls have come off the  
shelve already?

MARTA

Don't tease me, Charles. I'm  
practically sixteen--

CHARLES

Practically sixteen!

(Laughs;)

And still a voracious reader?

MARTA

Thanks to all the wonderful books  
you send me. Congratulations on  
winnin' a seat in congress! We're  
so proud of you. The youngest  
congressmen ever elected in  
Philadelphia!

CHARLES

I maybe the youngest but I feel  
like the oldest after that  
election--

Emma Lee tugs on Charles' sleeve, drawing him away from her  
sister.

EXT. PLANTATION. NIGHT.

Moonlight showers the warm night. Marta stands on the  
veranda, book in hand, staring across the distance to the  
slave shacks. Light shines from one shack, where the slaves  
have gathered after work. A distant sound of SINGING reaches  
Marta. LAUGHTER follows.

Charles comes up behind her.

CHARLES

What are you staring at?

MARTA

(Startled:)

Oh!

She indicates the shack.

MARTA

(continuing)

Old Cujoe's shack.

CHARLES

Cujoe?

MARTA

Our oldest negro. He was raised with my grandfather, even fought alongside him in the war. Saved my grandfather's life twice.

CHARLES

A colored war hero?

Marta nods, smiles.

MARTA

My grandfather loved him. He even taught Cujoe to read. He owns a bible, bought it with his own hard earned monies. My father let him keep it.

CHARLES

(Drily:)

That's mighty generous of your father.

MARTA

Don't take that yankee condesendin' tone with me, Charles. You might not think it's much, but folks everywhere criticized him for it, includin' our very own Reverend Michaels. Cujoe reads it to the others, you see. My own mother thinks it's a mistake, that it's best not to shine a light on their darkness--

CHARLES

There's an apt metaphor.

MARTA

Isn't it? Shining a light on their darkness.

(She shakes her head:)

Anyway, my father says ole' Cujoe knows better than anyone not to stir up trouble.

CHARLES

Trouble's coming with or without help from your ole' Cujoe. No man, no law, no society, will ever extinguish the spark of intellect God has given them.

Marta is taken by these words, just as the distant sound of a SONG raises from the Cujoe's cabin.

INT. CUJOE'S SHACK. NIGHT.

Firelight casts a haunting light into the small, dirt floored cabin where a DOZEN SLAVES have gathered, including PETER, an older man, JACOB, Peter's young twelve year old son. Ben and Old Rit sit in the circle of people along with young Marianne and their boys: William, ten, Henry, nine, Benji, eight and Minta, now six years old, who lays on Ben's lap, listening intently.

JACOB

But why don't they get word back?  
To tell us what it's like up  
North? If they really is free?

The others nod.

PETER

Cause they dead, they all dead.  
And them that don't die be brung  
back.

CUJOE

(He speaks to the  
younger boys:)  
Not everybody dead. Massa ain't  
gonna tell us the ones that make  
it. He gonna lie and say they dead  
when they be livin' free just  
yonder the border.

BEN

(Nodding:)  
Some makes it for sure. I knows  
they do.

JACOB

I dream bout it. I picture  
workin' and workin' and then  
someone puttin' coins in my hands.  
And them coins is mine!

The others LAUGH with pleasure. An intensity of interest in appears in Minta's eyes as she listens.

BEN

What a boy like you gonna do with  
his own coins?

JACOB

Save up them coins until I got  
'nough to buy me a plot of land.  
Build me a house with a wood  
floor, a whole room for the  
cookin' and another for sleepin'  
just like the white folks got.

PETER

(Smiling:)

My boy's always been a dreamer.

CUJOE

Ain't nothin' wrong with dreams.

BEN

No suh.

OLD RIT

Dreams like that will get him  
killed or whapped, one way or  
another.

(Nods:)

Like Cole Summers.

BEN

That was a sorrowful sight.

PETER

Paddyrollars beat him bad,  
draggin' him in on a rope.

HENRY

He could hardly stand.

BENJI

Had him a busted arm, too.

OLD RIT

He be stick thin like a scarecrow,  
like he ain't ate in a month of  
Sundays.

PETER

Them others they caught from out  
east look even worse.

OLD RIT

And ole' massa sell 'em south on  
the first chain gang.

PETER

Didn't get to say goodbye.

OLD RIT

The only freedom for us is in  
heaven.

Little Minta shakes her head upon hearing this.

MINTA

What about Moses? Moses be comin'  
for us someday!



All gazes come to Minta's face; they suddenly LAUGH. A chorus of AMENS sound in the room; the people take up a SONG.

GROUP

Go down Moses, Way down in Egypt's  
land. Tell ole Pharaoh, let my  
people go.

Minta takes up the SONG as well, firelight dancing over her face.

EXT. COTTON FIELDS. DAY.

FIELD WORKERS toil beneath a merciless hot sun. CALDWELL LOEMAN, the overseer, sits on top a horse in the shade, dozing.

MINTA, small for her age, carries a heavy water bucket through the fields, stopping at each worker. She LAUGHS and SINGS as she works, delighting in the company of her friends.

MINTA

Juber do and Juber don't/ Juber  
will and Juber won't/ Juber up and  
Juber down/ Juber all around the  
town./ Sift the mill and gimme the  
husk/ Bake the cake and gimme the  
crust/ Fry the pork and gimme the  
skin/ Ask me when I'm coming  
again!/ Juber, Juber, Juberee!

Jacob gratefully takes a cup of Minta's water.

JACOB

How do you get that cool water,  
little Minta?

Minta looks guiltily in both directions.

MINTA

I hook the master's old cane on to  
the bucket and push it way down to  
the deepest part of the creek.  
Daddy Ben says it ought to take  
three of me to pull it up again  
but I manage just fine.

JACOB

You be braggin' girl!

MINTA

No sir! I be sayin' a fact.

Jacob throws his head back and LAUGHS. Minta looks to where Caldwell dozes on his horse.

MINTA

(continuing)

Hush now, or else you'll wake ole'  
Caldwell and won't nobody be in a  
good mood then. More?

Minta dips the cup and hands it to him.

JACOB

It feels like heaven, for sure.  
Put some over my back, will you?

MINTA

Start the story again?

Two women, DORA and SALLY stop and LAUGH.

DORA

Child, you spin that story better  
than any of us.

SALLY

You tell it, Minta.

With effort Minta lifts the bucket and pours some over Jacobs  
back.

MINTA

Once upon a time in Egypt, there  
was a mean ole' king. He had  
hundreds of slaves and he worked  
them to the bone, day and night--

A BABY starts CRYING in the distance. Minta stops, turning in  
the direction.

MINTA

(continuing)

Little Kyle's woke.

Dora looks anxiously to where Caldwell doses. She starts  
forward.

SALLY

He be givin' you a whippin'!

Dora stops, hesitating.

DORA

The noon bell ain't for another  
hour or more--

The baby CRIES intensify.

DORA

(continuing)

Minta, here. Take him this  
sucklin' clothe.

Dora removes a cloth that was held against her breast.

DORA  
(continuing)  
Maybe it'll hold him.

Abandoning the bucket, Minta takes the cloth and runs to Dora's infant. The tightly wrapped baby lays near the fence post. Minta kneels down beside the infant and takes him carefully into her arms.

MINTA  
Hush now baby, hush. Here lookit'  
what I got for you.

She holds the sucklin' cloth to his mouth and gently rocks him.

MINTA  
(continuing)  
I'll sing you a happy song.

The child quiets as Minta SINGS.

DORA  
He quiets for Minta easier than he  
does for me.

SALLY  
She's an angel. From the day that  
girl was born, she brings folks  
nothin' but smiles.

EXT. FIELDS. LATER.

Minta carries the water bucket among the workers. A HORN and BARKING dogs sound in the distance.

MINTA  
What's that?

WILLIAM  
Massa's got a huntin' party goin'  
out today. Must be getting the  
horses ready.

Minta stares across the distance as if to see before she suddenly jumps up and pours the entire bucket over a surprised William, who watches as the little girl runs off toward the forest.

EXT. CREEK IN FOREST. DAY.

Minta drops the bucket near the creek and hurriedly searches

the ground until she finds a long stick. She seizes this excitedly before she takes off running.

The little girl runs joyfully through the forest, YELLING a song, banging the stick against trees and bushes, scattering animals and birds to save them from the hunters.

EXT. MEADOW. CONTINUING.

Minta rushes out into a meadow and stops.

A great stag stands in the meadow. Upon seeing Minta, the stag freezes. The moment stretches in time.

Minta starts running, arms spread. The stag bolts.

MINTA

Run! Run for your life! Hunters  
are a comin'!

EXT. PLANTATION. DAY.

Old Rit, the Brodas family cook, stands outside the kitchen.

OLD RIT

Minta! Where's that girl gone off  
too, now?

EXT. FOREST. DAY.

Minta rushes through the forest but stops upon hearing her mother calling. She takes off at a dizzying speed to reach the kitchen.

Strong black arms suddenly reach out from a bush and grab the little girl. Minta shrieks but seeing it is her father, she GIGGLES.

Old Ben lifts Minta in the air and catches her in his arms. Minta LAUGHS with pleasure.

BEN

Your mama's been callin' you for  
half a day. Where you been  
hidin', chile?

Still holding the little girl in his arms, Ben reads the guilt on Minta's face.

BEN

(continuing)

Warnin' the creatures again, have  
you?

MINTA

Somebody's got to save them!

BEN

(Chuckles:)

One day old Massa's goin' catch you at it and finally see why he such a poor hunter.

MINTA

Guess what I saw, Daddy? A giant stag, this high! He stared me straight in the eye, too and I got the strangest sense he was tellin' me somethin', somethin' important--

BEN

He was tryin' to tell you to hurry on up! Your mama's callin'.

MINTA

Oh Daddy, that ain't it!

BEN

It should have been, little Minta. You run off now! Folks is waitin'!

Ben lovingly kisses Minta before setting her down and watching her run off.

INT. BEDROOM. PLANTATION. DAY.

Emma Lee sits before the vanity, as a maid, Maryann, does her hair. Marta holds a book as she stares out the window.

MARTA

Emma Lee, if you sit there fussing much longer you're libel to start seein' gray hairs.

EMMA LEE

I just want to look my best. It isn't every day that a girl gets a proposal.

MARTA

(Uncertainly:)

You haven't got one yet.

EMMA LEE

But I will. You know I will. Charles and I have practically been promised since birth.

MARTA

Am I the only one who sees how ill-suited you are to our dear cousin? He can't keep still, full of high minded ideas and notions, to say

nothin' of bein' a yankee--

EMMA LEE

A very rich yankee. Handsome to boot. You're just jealous, little sister.

Marta turns to her sister with incredulousness.

MARTA

I am not! Oh Emma Lee! You'd be so much happier with Doc--

EMMA LEE

Doc? He doesn't want me. He just wants to join his land with ours. Besides he's not half as rich as my very own Charles. The youngest congressman in the whole country--

Sarah enters the room, bursting to tell her secret.

SARAH

Maryann, go see if Old Rit needs help in the kitchen.

MARYANN

Yes'm.

Maryann leaves the room.

SARAH

Your father finally managed to mention you put off two different offers, waiting for his. Oh I know this is the night! I cannot wait to start plannin' the weddin'!

Marta rolls her eyes as she exits, but pauses at the door to hear.

SARAH

(continuing)

Don't mind her. Her time will come soon enough.

Marta exits unhappily.

INT. STAIRCASE. DAY.

Marta descends the staircase, book in hand.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL. DAY.

Marta passes through the entrance hall.

INT. LIBRARY. DAY.

Marta enters the library, surprised to see Charles sitting in a chair, reading a book.

MARTA

Why Charles!

Charles stands, book in hand.

CHARLES

Marta.

MARTA

Didn't you go hunting with father and the others?

CHARLES

Actually no.

MARTA

No?

CHARLES

I might enjoy the fruits of hunting, but I've never been particularly fond of the process. I always find myself rooting for the doomed beast, I'm afraid.

Marta is touched and delighted by this confession.

MARTA

We have a little colored girl who shares the same tender sensibilities. Just before everyone left I saw her running through the forest with a stick in hand, shouting like all the world's goin' end, tryin' to scatter the creatures.

CHARLES

(Laughs:)

Yes but she has the excuse of being young and presumably, naive. I have no such excuse, I'm afraid.

MARTA

So Charles... I wonder... Do you have something for me?

CHARLES

Greedy, are we?

MARTA

Desperate actually. I've read every book in the library twice

now.

CHARLES

What are we reading now?

He takes the book from her hand and reads the title.

CHARLES

(continuing)

What Every Christian Wife Should  
Know?

He throws his head back and LAUGHS.

MARTA

Father gave it to me, worried that  
all his books were fillin' my mind  
with unsuitable ideas for a young  
lady. I'm only half way through  
but if I read another word about  
the Christian fortitude necessary  
to preform my wifely duties, I  
think I'll faint straight away!

CHARLES

You poor thing!

MARTA

Where is it?

Charles holds up a bible.

MARTA

(continuing)

The bible? Why... I--

Marta tries to hide her disappointment as she takes it in her  
hands.

MARTA

(continuing)

Thank you... But--

Charles LAUGHS at her efforts to hide her disappointment.

CHARLES

Don't you know not to judge a book  
by its covers, young lady?

Charles exits LAUGHING and Marta opens the book. The bible  
cover hides the real book, and she carefully pulls away the  
false cover to read the title: INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A  
SLAVE GIRL.

The book is a curiosity to her. She looks furtively about  
the now empty room before sitting down and opening the  
treasure.



EXT. PLANTATION. DAY.

Minta runs up to her mother.

OLD RIT

Minta, I've been calling you so long, I all but gave up the notion of laying eyes on you again! Where you been, child?

MINTA

Well, I was--

OLD RIT

Oh, never mind. You be needed in the big house this afternoon. The flies are botherin--

MINTA

I ain't never been in the big house afore!

OLD RIT

You go wash those feet and put on the new cotton shirt I laid out for you--

MINTA

A new shirt!

OLD RIT

Hurry! Folks getting seated soon and we ain't half done.

MINTA

Mama, I missed the noon meal. I haven't ate since yesterday noon and--

OLD RIT

Lord, I ain't never seen a child who needed more food but who food did so little for. Ask Rita if she can spare a sweet potato. Now hurry, girl!

Minta runs off.

INT. COOKHOUSE. DAY.

Minta enters the cookhouse where her mother and a number of other slaves prepare the meal. Minta's eyes go wide upon seeing the food: two hams, stuffed pheasants, a mountain of creamed potatoes, vegetables, piles of fruits, pies and cakes. Old Rit carefully lays a pie crust over a pie. The little girl is in a state of awe.

MINTA

Mama, I ain't never dreamed of so much food.

OLD RIT

It's a pretty sight, ain't it?

MINTA

(She nods, swallows:)

Why don't we have meat and cakes like folks here at the big house?

OLD RIT

They white folks, honey. They rich, important people. We just slaves.

MINTA

Slaves. Is that a bad word, mama?

OLD RIT

Ain't good or bad. Just is. Don't you worry none. We safe here.

(Uncertainly:)

Ole Massa always been good to us. He promise me and mine get our free papers someday.

Minta doesn't hear as she approaches the food, her eyes wide with desire.

MINTA

There's so much. Can't they share some? Rita gave the last sweet potato to Jacob and--

OLD RIT

Hush, child. Talk like that will get us into troubles.

MINTA

Why?

OLD RIT

(Exasperated:)

Minta, you ask more questions than all your brothers and sisters put together.

INT. DINING ROOM. DAY.

The Brodas family, Sarah and her older corpulent husband, EDWARD, Marta, Emma Lee, Charles, Philip, DOC WALKINS, a twenty-nine year old man and an older couple, Mister and Mrs. McKIM sit at the dining table.

SERVANTS serve the sumptuous dinner throughout the conversation, pretending they don't hear.

Minta stands off to the side, waving a giant fan to keep the flies from settling at the table. She stares at the food with unmasked desire.

PHILIP

We might all agree that in an ideal world there would be no need to enslave our colored brethren, but no one can see any reasonable means of ever abolishing the hateful practice. You'd be asking millions of people to give up their wealth, their property, their very livelihood.

DOC

Hateful? I'll tell you what hateful is! Hateful is when some thickheaded Northern do-gooder starts tellin' me what to do with my own God given property!

McKim nods, waves his napkin in irritation. Charles winks upon noticing Marta's alarmed look.

MR.McKIM

Those damn yankees go on and on about the purported mistreatment of our very own people. Why in all my life I've never seen a single slave mistreated. Not a one!

CHARLES

My good sir, surely, you don't deny that there are mistreated slaves?

EDWARD

Why should there be? They're our most valuable commodity, aside from the very land itself. A contented slave is a good worker; a mistreated slave isn't. It's as simple as that.

McKIM

I've got a hundred and fifty two slaves--thank the lord--and all my people are good hard workers, every one. I've never had call to whip a one. Not a single one.

CHARLES

And how many runaways?

McKIM

Only eleven to date. Caught all but one. My men traced that nigger all the way to Wilmington before he plum disappeared off the face of the earth.

CHARLES

Still, the time will come; it is inevitable.

PHILIP

It's true. Abolitionist sentiment grows stronger every day in the North.

MRS. McKIM

You yankees just don't understand that our slaves don't want to be free!

CHARLES

I believe, dear Madame, the thousands of escaped slaves arriving North at risk of life and limb disputes that assertion.

EMMA LEE

The religious fanatics just keep lurin' them away with grand notions of an easy life of luxury and laziness. And they are a people prone to laziness.

DOC

Northern folks just can't seem to grasp that the Negro is not like us.

MRS. McKIM

They're like little children, for heaven sake.

SARAH

Why they wouldn't know to step out of the rain if someone didn't tell them too.

PHILIP

In Philadelphia we have found that Negro children can be taught just as easily as white children, if given the chance. We have quite a number of negro schools now.

EDWARD

Huh! I don't believe it. Lies, all of it lies and propaganda. Why half the time they can't remember their God given names, for heaven sakes.

SAM

Especially when you're callin' them.

Restrained LAUGHTER.

SARAH

Amen to that.

CHARLES

You don't really believe that? That the negroes mind is so dull as to be unable to benefit from the rigors of a decent education?

DOC

It's a fact. The sooner the North comes to understand the mental limits to the Negro, the better.

Charles looks around and spots Minta, who stands quietly with the fan, staring intently at the food, dreaming about eating the food.

CHARLES

You, child?

Startled, Minta looks alarmed.

CHARLES

(continuing)

Don't be afraid, child. I just want to ask you a few questions. What's your name?

MINTA

(Softly:)

Araminta Harriet, sir. Folks call me Minta, for short.

CHARLES

And how old are you?

MINTA

I am six and one half or six and two quarters.

Charles looks back at the company triumphantly.

CHARLES

Six and a half! So old for such a tiny girl?

MINTA

Well, I am small... but I'm as strong as a woman full grown. Just everyone says so.

Minta cups her mouth as if she said something wrong.

MINTA

(continuing)

I ain't suppose to be braggin' more.

Charles CHUCKLES.

CHARLES

How many quarters more until you're seven?

MINTA

(Smiles, delighted with the question:)

Two, sir.

CHARLES

And how many years until you're ten, Minta?

MINTA

Three and one half more years.

CHARLES

Here's a hard question little Minta. Are you ready?

Minta nods eagerly.

CHARLES

(continuing)

How many quarters till you're ten?

EDWARD

That's ridiculous. She can't answer that! Why she can't even count.

MINTA

I can count, massa! Once I counted to two hundred and seventy three before it gave my mama a head pain and she made me stop.

Edward becomes red faced, furious.

EDWARD

Why I never! Who taught you to  
count girl?

MINTA

I don't rightly know. Seems like  
I always be countin'.

CHARLES

How many quarters until you're  
ten?

Minta stares, bites her lip, looks down at her bare feet.

MINTA

Well, it would be three years and  
two quarters and ifin' there be  
four quarters in each year...  
Fourteen?

Charles and Philip LAUGH triumphantly.

CHARLES

Very good, Minta. And where do you  
live?

MINTA

Just down yonder, sir.

CHARLES

No, I mean what is the name of  
your state?

MINTA

Maryland, sir.

CHARLES

What country do you live in?

MINTA

The United States of America, sir.

CHARLES

You wouldn't happen to know the  
name of the president of the  
United States, would you, Minta?

Minta looks around uncertainly; the company waits in suspense.

MINTA

My Daddy says his name is Mister  
Andrew Jackson but I've never laid  
eyes on him afore. He lives in a  
big white house far away--

Edward interrupts furiously.

EDWARD

That's quite enough, girl. You go find your mama and see that she needs something.

MINTA

Yes, massa.

Minta exits. Charles and Marta exchange triumphant, pleased looks.

PHILIP

(Laughs:)

Well, done Charles. A six year old colored girl shaking the very foundations of Southern slavery. Little Minta was quite a spectacle!

SARAH

Imagine in my very own home, a freak of nature! I warned you about letting ole Cujoe keep his bible!

EDWARD

An aberration, a fluke.

DOC

No doubt. Within a year she'll be as dull as a butter knife.

CHARLES

Now, that's somethin' we can agree upon. Little Minta will never reach her potential because she will be forced to the ceaseless toil and grind of a wretches' life.

EDWARD

(Disturbed:)

The little urchin. Countin' like there's no tomorrow. Why I never.

EXT. ROSS SHACK. NIGHT.

Daddy Ben tucks Minta into sleep, singing her favorite story. Nine other children have fallen asleep. Old Rit sits by the fireside, listening as she sews a beautiful patch work quilt.

BEN

And Moses said to the King: Let my People Go--

MINTA

Daddy, will Moses come to set us



free?

Ben's face is a study in fear and he looks to Rit, who sighs and shakes her head.

BEN

We don't need no Moses, Minta.  
Ole' Massa takes right good care  
of us. Always has, always will.

MINTA

We never have enough food, Daddy.  
We do all the work and he gets all  
the food. I saw it! I saw it all!  
Pies, giant plates of pork, a  
whole side of roast, sweet corn,  
peas, and cakes. It ain't fair.

BEN

We have enough to eat most times,  
Minta.

MINTA

Wouldn't you like to have a whole  
ham and string beans and potatoes  
and creamed corn? I ain't never  
tasted creamed corn but I saw it  
today. Made my mouth water  
somethin' fierce, Daddy.

BEN

Why Christmas sees us a ham every  
year--

MINTA

(Giggles; yawns:)

Oh Daddy, that's a little, baby  
piglet for ten people.

BEN

We get by, honey. We do get by.  
Now, what you gonna be dreamin'  
about tonight?

MINTA

I'm gonna dream that I was sittin'  
at that table with one of them  
plates piled sky high with food  
just for me.

Ben contemplates this thoughtfully.

BEN

Maybe tomorrow after work, you and  
me can go down and see ifin' we  
can pull up some more crabs for  
supper.

Minta's gaze goes wide with excitement.

MINTA

Can we, Daddy? Oh, can we?

OLD RIT

You get caught, you whipped. The  
massa never whup you, Ben but  
there always be a first.

BEN

Go to sleep now. Dream about some  
good ole' cooked crabs comin' our  
way.

Minta happily closes her eyes on this thought. Ben and Rit  
exchange concerned glances.

OLD RIT

She ain't like any of the others,  
Ben. The Lord means to give me  
heartache with that one.

With eyes full of worry, Ben blows out the candle.

INT. CONGRESS OF THE USA. 1829.

A full house. Over a hundred spectators. JOHN CALHOUN, a  
congressmen from South Carolina, addresses the issue of  
extending slavery into the District of Columbia.

CALHOUN

In conclusion, gentlemen, the good  
citizens of the District of  
Columbia demand that they be  
granted their God given rights to

their property, that slavery be  
extended into the district.

Charles rises to his feet, interrupting the APPLAUSE.

CHARLES

Dear sir, we may not all be  
abolitionists, but the one thing  
that unites us is a certainty that  
God does not condone slavery; He  
condemns it!

PEOPLE stand, APPLAUD, SHOUT. For several moments the  
gallery and many congressmen are carried away; chaos reins.

CALHOUN

My young colleague from  
Philadelphia is sadly mistaken on  
many fronts; slavery is the

natural and moral order that is indeed ordained to us by God above. The esteemed authors of the constitution knew this, the south knows this, indeed the whole world outside of the radical abolitionists circles of the North knows this!

Just as God is the benevolent guardian over His human flock, the slave holder is the benevolent guardian of his property; Not only does he feed, clothe and care for his slaves but he has literally lifted these savages from the darkness of Africa and brought them beneath the bright and shining light of the Christian fold!

Numerous congressmen and gallery onlookers stand to their feet with APPLAUSE.

CHARLES

These are old and tired self aggrandizing rationalizations of our nation's greatest evil and I for one cannot meet them with anything less than the full force of my repugnance. Slavery is our nation's greatest evil!

CALHOUN

Evil?!

Calhoun scoffs, begins a rebuttal--

CHARLES

Aye! The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most unremitting despotism on the one part and degrading submissions on the other--

APPLAUSE, CHEERS break out from numerous congressmen and people in the gallery.

CALHOUN

Those words ring hollow indeed when laid aside the fact that the author of them--none other than Thomas Jefferson--owned many slaves!

CHEERS and APPLAUSE from the other side.

CHARLES

At least that great man had the wisdom to grasp the danger of extending this dark and corrupt practice to any new territories. As that great man warned us these many years ago: 'I tremble for this great nation when I reflect that GOD is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever!'

Sudden CHAOS from the onlookers and congressmen.

EXT. PLANTATION. DAY.

Edward stands aside a rickety carriage, pulled by a old, thin horse and driven by MRS. COOK, a middle aged, poor woman.

Old Rit stands off to the side, crying, wiping her eyes on her apron as she calls little Minta.

OLD RIT

Minta! Minta!

Minta comes running happily up from the fields. Seeing her mother crying, she rushes up to her side.

MINTA

Mama, mama, what's wrong?

Old Rit gathers Minta up in her arms and holds her tight.

MRS. COOK

That is one small nigger.

EDWARD

Small but a good, hard worker. She'll do just fine.

Edward starts to take Minta from Old Rit.

OLD RIT

The massa's hirin' you out, Minta.

MINTA

Me?

Minta turns alarmed eyes to Edward. In desperation she throws herself at her mother.

MINTA

(continuing)

I don't want to go! Mama--

Mrs. Cook climbs atop the cart. Edward pries Minta from her mother and lifts her onto the cart. Minta holds her mouth to

keep from screaming.

EDWARD

You work hard now and mind your  
mistress.

OLD RIT

(Desperate; trying to  
be strong:)

Be good, Minta. Remember to say,  
yes missus, and yes massa. You be  
good and she be bringin' you back  
some day!

Mrs. Cook cracks the whip over the horses back. The creature  
jerks forward. Tears flow from Minta's eyes.

MINTA

(whispers:)

I didn't say good-bye to my  
Daddy...

EXT. ROAD THROUGH FOREST. DAY.

Minta quietly weeps. Suddenly, with no warning, Mrs. Cook  
gives Minta a smart rap on the head.

MRS. COOK

Stop that cryin' now or I'll give  
you something to cry about.

Fear and panic fill Minta's eyes and desperately, she tries  
to stop crying.

MRS. COOK

(continuing)

Lord, if I don't have enough  
trouble.

EXT. COOK'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

The cart pulls up in front of a two story, run down log  
cabin. Forest surrounds the house. A wood pile sits in the  
front. MR. COOK, a middle aged man, comes out of the house  
with his dog, RAKE, who BARKS excitedly.

He begins unhitching the horse as Mrs. Cook jumps down.

MR. COOK

That our nigger? She looks mighty  
small.

MRS. COOK

We won't have to feed her much, I  
suppose.

Minta stares wide eyed at the dog.

MR. COOK

Baby's been cryin' all day. Ain't even had time to check my traps.

MRS. COOK

You, go inside.

Minta jumps down from the cart and kneels for Rake. The dog sniffs her out. Gentle hands come to the dog's coat. The dog kisses Minta.

MINTA

Hey, big fellow.

MR. COOK

Look it that. Ain't never seen no nigger take to a dog afore.

MRS. COOK

(Sharply:)

You'll sleep in the kitchen, so you can light the fires first thing. You know how to light a fire, girl?

Minta, scared, shakes her head.

MRS. COOK

(continuing)

Stupid to boot.

(Sighs:)

You'll be more trouble than you're worth. Don't I know it.

INT. COOK'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Minta, still scared, overwhelmed, stares at the small kitchen. Minta's gaze comes to rest on a small whip hanging over the fireplace and she bites her lip before her gaze drops to the small iron pot hanging over the cold fireplace.

Mrs. Cook, carrying a fussing BABY, moves to leave.

MINTA

(Quietly;)

I ain't ate today.

Mrs. Cook follows Minta's gaze to the pot. She goes over to the pot, lifts the lid and spits inside.

MRS. COOK

You don't get nothin' till you're work's done tomorrow. Now, you get those fires lit first thing, like I showed you.

Mrs. Cook leaves. Minta stares after her. Once she is gone, she quietly steps to the pot and looks anxiously inside. Her hand comes to her mouth as if to stop a cry. Tears fill her eyes, she falls to the ground.

The dog comes into the kitchen. He sniffs her out again, then WHIMPERS. Minta's hands come to him for comfort as she cries.

MINTA

At least I got a friend...

INT. COOK'S HOUSE. DAY.

Minta sits on a bench alongside a cradle, peeling potatoes.

The baby wakes up and starts CRYING.

Minta sets down the potato and rocks the cradle.

MINTA

Hush, little baby! Hush now.

The baby keeps CRYING.

MINTA

(continuing)

I knows why you'se always cryin'.  
Your mama's always in a fit, like  
she's runnin' with a pebble in her  
shoe. Poor, poor baby. Ain't got  
no sweet talk or love in this  
house.

Mrs. Cook comes in with arm full of wood.

MRS. COOK

Did you wake the baby?

MINTA

No, missus.

The baby still CRIES as Mrs. Cook comes over to pick him up. Minta returns industriously to her work. Mrs. Cook turns to inspect Minta's potatoes.

MRS. COOK

You willful, stupid girl. Don't  
you ever listen! I said quarters,  
girl. Quarters!

Mrs. Cook takes a closer look.

MRS. COOK

(continuing)

And you've been eating them,

haven't you?

MINTA

(Panicked:)

I... I just got a fierce knot of  
hunger in my belly, I--

Mrs. Cook turns red with fury, moves quickly to the fireplace where the whip sits.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Minta sits on the floor next to Rake, holding a plate of food. Rake has the same food.

MINTA

(Whispers:)

I never knew a body could be so  
tired, Rake. Hey!

She finishes eating and looks to the pot hanging over the fire.

MINTA

(continuing)

I bet you don't never mind a  
little spittle.

Minta goes to the pot and using the ladle, she plops food into Rakes dish. The grateful dog gobbles it up.

MINTA

(continuing)

No sense in us both being faint  
with hunger.

She smiles and pets her friend, who wags his tail.

MINTA

(continuing)

You a true, true friend, Rake.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

The fire has died. Minta sleeps curled in a ball on the floor with Rake, careful not to let her scared back and neck touch the floor. Her feet are stuck in the fire pit, trying to draw the small warmth there into her cold body...

EXT. COOK'S HOUSE. DAY.

With Rake at her side, Minta washes clothes in the small river that runs behind the Cook's house, scrubbing them on a rock. She picks up a wet cloth and furtively glances behind her. Seeing no one, she lifts the cloth to her neck, and tries to soothe the sting of the whip there but she grimaces, it is too painful. She pauses, breathing heavily, her eyes



wild and full of the determination not to cry.

Looking over the water, she spots a magnificent butterfly.

MINTA

Ain't you a beauty...

Minta returns to her work, SINGING.

MINTA

(continuing)

There's no rain to wet you, oh yes  
I want to go home, There's no sun  
to burn you, Oh yes, I want to go  
home. There's no whips a-crackin'.  
Oh yes, I want to go home. My  
brother on the wayside. Oh yes, I  
want to go home. Oh push along my  
brother, oh yes, I want to go  
home. Where's there's no stormy  
weather, Oh yes I want to go home.  
There's no tribulation, Oh yes I  
want to go home...

The door opens and SLAMS.

MR. COOK

You girl! Hurry up with that and  
then go check my traps.

Minta turns to see him.

MR. COOK

(continuing)

And don't let ole' Rake tag along.

INT. FOREST. DAY.

Muskrat traps sit alongside the river. Minta follows a foot  
path until she comes to one of the traps. She picks it up but  
it is empty. She follows the trail a bit further and comes to  
the second trap. She looks at the muskrat inside, who

furiously tries to get out.

MINTA

Oh mister Muskrat! You done got  
yourself caught!

She looks behind her.

MINTA

(continuing; whispers)

I wouldn't be doing this, if they  
ever shared some of the eatin'  
with me but they don't. I don't  
see know why we both need to

suffer.

She lifts up the lid and lets the muskrat go free.

MINTA

(continuing; smiling)

Don't you get caught no more!

EXT. COOK'S HOUSE. DAY.

Mr. Cook stands over little Minta.

MR. COOK

Not a one, girl?

Eyes wide with fear, Minta shakes her head.

MR. COOK

(continuing)

You lyin' to me.

MINTA

No sir!

Without warning, he smacks Minta hard and she falls to the ground. Rake leaps up and looking at Mr. Cook, he GROWLS. Mr. Cook kicks Rake hard. Rake WHIMPERS.

MR. COOK

Nigger lovin' dog.

(To Minta:)

You lyin'. I can always tell when niggers lie. You really are a no account, shiftless girl.

INT. COOK'S HOUSE. DAY.

Minta enters, carrying a heavy load of firewood. She is thinner now, with bruises on her face and scars from the whip on her neck. Mrs. Cook sits by the fire, rocking her sleeping baby. Minta faints for want of food and falls. The logs tumble over the floor with a CRASH. The baby wakes up, CRYING.

INT. COOK'S HOUSE. DAY.

Minta comes too, as Mrs. Cook has the whip in hand, her fury so intense, she is not speaking. Minta SCREAMS as the whip hits her. She jumps to her feet. Mrs. Cook grabs Minta's arm to hold her. Minta twists her arm free and runs.

Mrs. Cook gives chase out the door and into the forest.

MRS. COOK

You get back here girl or I'll beat you within an inch of your life! You hear me! Don't let me

catch you...

Minta runs free.

EXT. FOREST. DAY.

Minta still runs and runs. Breathing heavily, she stops to listen. She hears RUNNING water, BIRDS but no other sound. She looks around the forest, assessing her direction. She takes off.

EXT. FOREST. DAY.

Ben, William and two other men swing axes against a giant oak, SINGING. The men step back, the tree falls with a thunderous CRASH. The men slap each others back and LAUGH.

Ben and the others sit upon the felled tree. Rake suddenly appears before them. The dog HOWLS at the men, then looks behind, then back.

BEN

Ain't never seen that dog afore.

WILLIAM

Looks like he wants us to follow him, don't it?

TORY

Probably just a dead rabbit.

BEN

Old Rit could maybe cook it up.  
Haven't had rabbit for a year.

Ben rises to follow the dog. Rake turns and quickly leads Ben to the brush where Minta's emaciated and beaten form lays unconscious. Rakes BARKS.

BEN

(continuing)

God above!

Ben scoops his daughter up.

EXT. ROAD LEADING TO BRODAS PLANTATION. AFTERNOON.

A carriage heads towards the house.

INT. CARRIAGE. CONTINUING.

With three books on her lap, Marta reads a letter from Charles.

EMMA LEE

I just don't understand why  
Charles writes you such long

letters.

MARTA

He just tells me about the books  
we read--

EMMA LEE

Does he mention me at all?

MARTA

Not yet. Most of it's about this  
man, William Lloyd Garrison he  
heard speak. The man caused quite  
a commotion in Boston...

Marta continues reading while her sister stares at her  
unkindly.

MARTA

(continuing)

Oh here's something--

EMMA LEE

(Face softening,  
smiling:)

Read it.

MARTA

Please convey my warmest regards  
to your beautiful sister. I do  
hope she has come to understand  
that a match between us would be--

Marta stops with alarm.

EMMA LEE

Would be what? Let me see that!

Emma Lee grabs the letter and reads it. Tears fill her eyes  
as she reads the devastating words again.

EMMA LEE

(continuing)

I hate him! I hate him! All  
these years he lead me to  
believe... I just assumed--

MARTA

Oh Emma Lee! I tried to warn you--

Emma Lee continues to read the letter; shock lifts on her  
face.

EMMA LEE

He's written to father about you!  
He wants to marry you!

MARTA

Me? Marry me?

EMMA LEE

You did this! You! You turned  
him against me and made him love  
you instead--

MARTA

Emma Lee, I never--

In a rage, Emma Lee slaps Marta.

EMMA LEE

Imagine that. Charles loves my  
ugly, little sister and her stupid  
books and ideas and long letters.

EXT. ROAD LEADING TO BRODAS PLANTATION. AFTERNOON.

Ben stands in the road ahead, holding his unconscious child  
in his arms. Marta flies out of the still moving carriage.

MARTA

Ben! Little Minta! What has  
happened!

INT. ROSS SHACK. MORNING.

Little Minta lays unconscious on the floor, washed and  
carefully, lovingly tended by Old Rit. Leaves have been  
placed on Minta's back, to ease the pain of multiple whip  
marks.

Marta appears unexpectedly with Maryann in toe and carrying  
a small mattress and extra blankets.

OLD RIT

Young Missus!

MARTA

How is she?

Rit starts CRYING as Marta kneels at Minta's side.

OLD RIT

We's scared. She be frail and  
feverish. Ain't got no flesh on  
her bones. Them folks musta  
starved her.

MARTA

Father's going to give the Cooks  
a piece of his mind.

OLD RIT

He won't send her back if she

comes to?

MARTA

Heavens no.

Marta does not see what a relief this is to Rit.

MARTA

(continuing)

Maryann, let's get her under the mattress. It will keep her warm. I brought extra blankets too.

The three women work together. Marta sees the flesh wounds and gasps.

MARTA

(continuing)

That wicked woman! Oh your poor little girl. This shouldn't of happened, Rit.

OLD RIT

No ma'am.

Minta wakes, opens her eyes and finds Marta.

MINTA

You look like one of the angels.

She closes her eyes.

MARTA

Angels? Oh dear--

MINTA

You smell so pretty, like violets, too. I keep dreamin' I'm flying high in the sky over a big river and tall forests and green pastures. I'm trying to get home. Just when I reach it, I see a fence. I knows I can't get over it and I start fallin' and fallin' but just before I hit the ground, the angels come and lift me up.

Marta is taken by the little girl's dream.

MARTA

Hush. Close your eyes, little Minta. You're safe at last.

MINTA

Safe at last...

Minta closes her eyes and falls back asleep. Marta stands up.

MARTA

Is there anything else you need  
for her?

Old Rit looks uncertainly at the floor and then, over to the corner where Rake sits on the floor beside Minta.

OLD RIT

There is one thing, misses. The  
dog there. Minta keeps comin'  
through and callin' him.

Names Rake or some such. We  
figures he musta saved her life.  
He brought Ben to where she be in  
the forest. We don't have enough  
to feed him and Massa never let no  
one keep a dog afore but, well, it  
be a shame to let him starve--

MARTA

I'll tell Mr. Caldwell you're to  
get extra food for the dog. Little  
Minta will have a friend when she  
gets well.

Old Rit nods, crying for all her gratitude for this small kindness. Marta squeezes Old Rit's hands before exiting. Rit watches her go.

MARYANN

That one ain't like the rest. No  
suh.

OLD RIT

Kindness does more for a soul than  
all the monies in the world.

She kneels by Minta and wipes her eyes.

OLD RIT

(continuing)

You is the unluckiest and the  
luckiest, all mixed up in one.  
Massa won't send you away no  
mores. You hear that? You is  
safe, Minta, safe.

EXT. FIELDS. AFTERNOON.

Old Rit and Ben stand outside on the veranda, off to side as Charles and Marta, wearing traveling clothes, appear and rush excitedly into a waiting carriage. They wave good-by to Edward and Sarah.

OLD RIT

It ain't right that Miss Marta  
married first.

BEN

Mr. Charles is a fine young man.

OLD RIT

Still, things won't be as easy  
round here without Miss Marta's  
kindness.

Emma Lee watches angrily from the up stairs window.

EXT. BOSTON STREET. - DAY.

Carriages, horses, the well dressed folks and the poor all  
bustle in all directions as FOUR MEN stand before a sign that  
appears on a post.

1ST MAN

It's about that Garrison fellow.

2ND MAN

That abolitionist trouble maker?

1ST MAN

Just the man. Seems they's  
plannin' a tar-kettle for him  
tonight.

The men LAUGH, nod as they move on.

EXT. BOSTON STREET CORNER. - DAY.

A young boy passes out the fliers to passer-byes. A MAN and  
WOMAN stop to read the flier.

MAN

Geezus, they're meaning to tar  
Garrison tonight.

WOMAN

You don't think you're going?

MAN

Someone's got to protect the poor  
SOB.

WOMAN

Oh Tom--

MAN

I may not agree with everything he  
says, but I'll be damn if I just  
stand-by and let an unruly mob  
silence the poor wretch.



A MAN and BOY take a flier.

BOY

Can I come with ya, pa?

The man pats the boy's head with affection and nods.

EXT. BOSTON STREET. DAY.

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS' interrupt their work as a YOUNG MAN stops and waves the fliers.

YOUNG MAN

Come one, come all! The people of  
the great city of Boston are gonna  
give the rabble rousin'  
abolitionist Garrison the tar  
kettle.

A WORKER removes a pipe to speak.

WORKER

That trouble maker don't need no  
tar kettle. He needs a noose!

The workers LAUGH.

EXT. BOSTON STREET. DAY.

A MOB of nearly two thousand people march angrily through the streets, SINGING a gospel hymn.

INT. BOSTON CHURCH. CONTINUING.

A packed church awaits the arrival of WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON. Charles and Marta, now married, sit in the back.

With interest Marta looks around, her gaze stopping on FREDERICK DOUGLASS, a young, striking black man, who stands in the back as well. Douglass catches her stare. Marta suddenly smiles. Uncertain, Douglass nods slightly.

MARTA

(Whisper)

You swear there won't be any  
trouble tonight?

CHARLES

The mayor has given me his  
personal assurance, darling. It's  
all just talk.

INT. BOSTON CHURCH. CONTINUING.

Garrison is thirty, tall, well dressed and handsome.

GARRISON

And finally I say to you, let the Southern oppressors tremble, let their secret abettors tremble, let their Northern apologists tremble! I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject I do not wish to think, or speak or write with moderation. I will not equivocate; I will not excuse. I will not retreat a single inch and I will be heard!

The church folks burst into APPLAUSE.

CHARLES

(To Marta:)

Garrison is as good as they say!

MARTA

Full of fire and passion! Oh! You must invite him to Philly, Charles.

CHARLES

Yes...

EXT. BOSTON CHURCH. CONTINUING.

The MOB stops outside the church. A sign announcing a meeting of the BOSTON ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY hangs outside the church.

MOB

Garrison, Garrison!

A MAN in the mob is lifted up on the shoulders of TWO MEN. He manages to reach the sign. He flings it into the CROWD, who tear it up.

INT. CHURCH. CONTINUING.

A WOMAN bursts inside from the back of the church just as everyone rises with APPLAUSE.

WOMAN

Run William! Run for your life!

Surrounded by supporters, Garrison disappears up the back stairs. The MOB burst down the front doors, racing through the packed church. People scream. FIVE MEN, including Charles, rise and fight the pursuers. Marta uses her parasol to trip THREE MEN pursuing Garrison, they topple with a clamorous NOISE. Chaos ensues.

An AGITATOR strikes Charles and he falls unconscious. Marta SCREAMS and falls over her fallen husband. Douglass sweeps down and lifts Charles, carrying him swiftly to safety.

INT. CHURCH ATTIC. CONTINUING.

This is a large airy room above the church. Garrison hides in a closet. The angry MEN burst inside and after a quick search, discover Garrison's hiding place. They lift him over their heads, carrying him to the open window, intending to throw him to his death. Despite all, Garrison appears calm, clutching his bible, MURMURING the Lord's prayer.

MAN

Wait! Wait! Don't kill the  
blackguard outright!

ANOTHER MAN

Hang 'em!

ANOTHER MAN

(continuing)

Hang 'em at the square for folks  
to see!

As they speak, a frenzied scene: The men tie a noose around Garrison's neck and lift him from the window down a ladder and into the the outstretched hands of two strong MEN in the midst of the rancorous mob. (The MEN appear to be mob participants, but they are in fact sympathizers.) Dozens of sympathizers shout for mercy, their voices drowned out by the viciousness of the others.

The two MEN, holding Garrison above their heads, move through the crowd.

WOMAN

They mean to hang him!

MAN

Save him! Save him!

EXT. BOSTON STREET IN FRONT OF CHURCH. CONTINUING.

Riding on horses, Boston's MAYOR arrives just in time with the SHERIFF and the sheriff's deputies. Rifles are readied.

The two men manage to deposit Garrison into their custody.

MAYOR

I may not like the man or his  
politics any more than you all do,  
but I'll be damned if we have a  
lynchin' in my town! I'll be  
damned before a mob executes  
justice in my town! Now you all go  
on home! Disperse!

Two SHERIFF DEPUTIES fire rifles into the sky.

A CHEER goes up from about a quarter of the crowd.

WOMAN

He's saved; he's saved!

GARRISON

Thank you Lord! Thank you!

INT. CHURCH. CONTINING.

Charles opens his eyes to see Marta and Douglass bending over him.

MARTA

Charles, Charles, my darling! You were struck.

Charles lifts up, holding his head.

MARTA

(continuing)

Charles, this is Mr. Douglass. He was kind enough to save you from being trampled from the crowd.

Charles meets Douglass's gaze.

CHARLES

Much obliged, sir! But what happened? What of Garrison?

MARTA

Saved!

EXT. PASTURE AT PLANTATION. SUNSET. EIGHT YEARS LATER.

Minta, now fourteen years old, and wearing a simple dress of homespun, tosses dirt on a shallow grave. Ben helps toss dirt over the grave. Old Rit, William and Maryann stand by.

BEN

Ain't never thought I'd live to see the day burying a dumb dog would wet my eyes.

OLD RIT

He was a good, ole dog. We all gonna miss him.

Minta wipes her eyes as she kneels at his grave side.

MINTA

I'm gonna miss you ole friend. Save us all a place in heaven, will you?

A young boy, JACKSON runs towards them from the big house and finally stops in front of Ben.

BEN

What's happened?

JACKSON

Trader's here. Come down from  
Bucktown. Massa gonna sell  
someone.

Alarm leaps on everyone's face. Minta slowly rises.

BEN

Who?

Jackson wipes at his mouth, looking away from Ben's eyes.  
Ben takes him by the shoulder.

BEN

(continuing)

Who Jackson? Who massa gonna sell?

JACKSON

Peter and... Maryann.

Maryann's hand slaps her mouth to stop a scream. Old Rit  
lets out a wail and takes Maryann into her arms. Ben appears  
in a state of shock.

BEN

That can't be. Massa says he  
never sells my children. Massa  
promise to never sell us!

EXT. PLANTATION. DAY.

Barefoot, nervous, Ben stands respectably off to the side as  
Edward Brodas, now an old man, and Doc and his wife, Emma Lee  
emerge from the big house. Heading to town, Doc and Emma lee  
wait for their mounts to be brought around.

BEN

Massa?

EDWARD

What is it, Ben?

BEN

You promise to never sell us.

EDWARD

(Exasperated:)

Can't help it, Ben. The price of  
cotton's just fallen to such a  
point that I can't afford to keep  
all my darkies any longer.

BEN

Massa, I never before asks a favor  
but--

EDWARD

Oh for heaven sakes Ben, you got  
a whole passel of children, most  
all of 'em grown now. Maryann'll  
go to a good home. You got  
nothing to worry about for her  
sake.

BEN

But massa--

EDWARD

Ain't nothin' to be done about it,  
Ben. You go on now.

Ben nods, standing there, head bowed, mute, helpless, his  
eyes fillin' with unshed tears. Edward turns inside. Emma Lee  
and Doc mount their horses and ride off.

EXT. ROAD. DAY.

Riding.

DOC

That was a spectacle. Your darkies  
got no respect.

EMMA LEE

Oh that's just ole' Ben. He's  
just upset over Mariann bein' sold  
but he'll get used to it. They  
always do.

DOC

I'd a had him whipped.

EMMA LEE

Daddy wouldn't dream of whippin'  
ole Ben, much as he might need it.  
Why he and his family been with us  
forever. Daddy pretty much let's  
them have their way. Even Minta  
who has caused trouble since the  
day she was born.

DOC

That's the one your sister always  
asks about, isn't it?

EMMA LEE

That's her. Marta and Charles keep  
tryin' to buy her from Daddy. They

had the notion of sendin' her to a colored school up North. Offered up a tidy sum, too. Daddy wouldn't hear of it though.

DOC

Set a bad example for the others.

EMMA LEE

Exactly. Speak of the devil, there she is. Third from the end.

The two draw their horses to a stop. Emma Lee points to where Minta picks cotton among the others.

EMMA LEE

(continuing)

See the saucy way she stares back at us?

DOC

She's a tiny thing for all her trouble. Why don't he sell her south?

EMMA LEE

Marta made him promise never to sell her.

DOC

That'll be one thing that changes when I take over. I don't cut no quarter from darkies.

The two ride off.

EXT. PLANTATION. - SUNRISE.

Peter is already chained, looking terrified. Jacob stands near-by, staring stonily, trying to keep from crying. Caldwell bends down to Maryann's feet. First one shackle, then the other locks around her feet. Numb with shock, Maryann is lead by a rope to the chain gang.

Minta stares with anguish at the proceedings. Old Rit drops to the ground for all her sorrow, Ben kneels to comfort her.

The TRADER rides a horse, a rope connects him to the chain gang. Maryann, with her hands bound and feet in shackles, is attached by a chain to the other slaves.

At the last minute, Minta, drops her basket, runs to her sister and throws her arms around Maryann.

Maryann's eyes fill with tears as Minta clings tightly to her sister, as if she will never let go.

Caldwell cracks the whip across Minta's feet.

CALDWELL

You get back to the fields, girl!

The chain gang moves out. Minta stares after them, slowly moving to the fields.

EXT. COTTON FIELDS. DAY.

Minta and Jacob, along with fifty others work the cotton fields beneath the hot sun, speaking in anxious whispers. Caldwell, perched on a horse, watches wearily.

JACOB

Massa chasin' him and Jim  
disappears right before his eyes.  
Swept up on the underground  
railroad.

MINTA

I can't believe white folks help.

JACOB

White and colored. There's this  
one man, a white man. His name be  
Thomas Garrett--

CALDWELL

Make a noise there!

Minta casts Caldwell an anxious gaze before winking at Jacob and taking up a SONG.

MINTA

Didn't my lord deliver Daniel,  
Deliver Daniel, deliver Daniel,  
Didn't my lord deliver Daniel--

CORUS

And why not every man?

MINTA

He delivered Daniel from the  
lion's den, Jonah from the belly  
of a whale. And the Hebrew  
children, from the fiery furnace.

CORUS

And why not every man?

EXT. FIELDS. SUNSET.

Minta and the other field workers, including her three older brothers, Henry, Benji, and William head home at the end of the day, exhausted.



MINTA

If Michael makes it through the night, he's got a chance.

WILLIAM

(Shakes his head:)

They still lookin', little sister. They ain't back yet.

HENRY

Could be drown in some river, too.

BENJI

You always seein' the hardest path, Henry. He might be all the way to Philly by now.

WILLIAM

Don't never know till they tell us and like Cujoe always says, half the time they lie--

The workers look up as the paddyrollars appear. Four men on horseback, the young man, MICHAEL, in toe. His legs are shackled, his hands tied in front and connected to the horn of a saddle. Dogs follow NOISILY behind.

Edward and Doc appear on the porch in front of the house. Doc gives an excited HOOT.

William puts his arm around his sister, who stares intently at the scene.

WILLIAM

(continuing)

Minta?

MINTA

He just ran like a rabbit from a fox. He just didn't know the right ways, the ways that works...

EXT. FORESTS. DAY.

Old Ben stands in the forest, searching the surrounding area as Minta sneaks up behind him. As careful as he waits for her, she manages to surprise him. Minta lifts her hands over Ben's eyes. Her father gives a start and seeing how he got tricked, they both laugh.

BEN

That was like an Injun! Better even. Didn't hear a thing and I was listenin'!

EXT. FOREST. DAY.

Ben and Minta stand at the edge of a river.

BEN

Gotta hit the water by at least here. Go at least three or four miles in the water just to be sure. Ain't no dog in the world can track through water.

EXT. FOREST. DAY.

Ben and Minta bend over a small burnt sapling.

MINTA

And this one is good for infection, all kinds, settlin' an upset stomach and it's bout the only thing that will put a babe into a sleep. Look over here. There's a mushroom to show...

EXT. FORESTS. DAY.

Minta and Jacob work in the forest, pulling cut logs. Jackson races up to them.

JACKSON

Jacob, Jacob. Liza's done had your baby!

Minta gives a SHOUT for joy. Jacob looks stunned.

MINTA

Boy? Girl baby?

JACKSON

A boy!

MINTA

A boy. Lord a tellin' your boy's goin' be a handful, Jacob...

Minta notices Jacob's solemnity.

MINTA

(continuing)

What's wrong, Jacob? Ain't you happy about your new babe?

Jacob pauses, shakes his head sadly.

JACOB

He ain't really mine now, is he?  
(Bitterly:)  
Belongs to the master.

MINTA

(Fiercely:)  
 Don't you let them take every joy  
 from us.

Jackson looks down at his feet and whispers now.

JACKSON  
 Ole' Caldwell says you can come  
 get a look at it, if in you're  
 quick to get back.

MINTA  
 Liza lost her father and brother  
 south last year. That girl's got  
 enough sorrow in her life without  
 you addin' to it. Keep your sad  
 thoughts to yourself.

Jacob looks away.

JACOB  
 Think 'bout it all the time now.

Minta looks nervously in both directions before snapping to  
 Jackson.

MINTA  
 Tell Liza Jacob's a comin'.

Jackson runs off.

MINTA  
 (continuing)  
 Fool. Get yourself beaten or  
 killed and then what will Liza do?  
 Your little boy never knowin' his  
 Daddy? Now ain't the time. You go  
 take a look at your new boy. We  
 can talk later.

Jacob nods and heads toward the plantation shacks in the far  
 distance. Minta watches sadly.

INT. JACOB'S SHACK. AFTERNOON.

Jacob enters his shack. LIZA, young, pretty lays on the  
 floor, sleeping lightly with her new born baby in her arms.  
 Jacob approaches and kneels down. He carefully lifts the  
 blanket to see his new son. He stares intently before gently  
 brushing a strand of Liza's hair from her face. She opens  
 her eyes and smiles.

LIZA  
 He's beautiful, ain't he? I named  
 him Jacob after his daddy.

Jacob nods before laying down at her side and lovingly

gathering his wife and son into his arms. Something is wrong though; Jacob is terrified.

LIZA  
 (continuing; in a  
 whisper:)  
 Jacob, what's wrong?

Jacob shakes his head.

JACOB  
 I just want to stop loving you.

LIZA  
 No, no, don't be talkin' like  
 that.

JACOB  
 If only there was some way I could  
 keep you and little Jacob with me  
 always. If only there was a way I  
 could keep you safe...

INT. NANTUCKET CHURCH. NIGHT.

Frederick Douglass, well dressed now, addresses a chapter of the New England antislavery society. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, in his sixties, Charles, and Marta enter and observe from the back.

DOUGLASS  
 No ray of healthy public sentiment  
 ever visits these plantations and  
 thus isolated, rapt in their own  
 congenial darkness, these  
 plantations develop all the malign  
 and shocking characteristics:  
 indecency without shame, cruelty  
 without shuddering, murderousness  
 without fear of punishment. And it  
 was on just such a plantation that  
 I was born...

A MAN in the audience murmurs:

MAN  
 He's damn articulate for a colored  
 fellow!

WOMAN  
 Like a... white person of breeding.

Adam's brow raises.

ADAMS  
 He's very good...

INT. CHURCH. CONTINING.

The audience rises at the conclusion of Douglass's speech with thunderous APPLAUSE. Many people openly WEEP. Charles squeezes Marta's hand.

CHARLES

(pleased; excited)

What did I tell you, sir?

ADAMS

Indeed. He is the most persuasive speaker I've ever had the privilege to hear. Who educated him?

CHARLES

Self taught, sir but widely read. He wields a mighty fine pen as well.

ADAMS

Does he?

(Chuckles:)

How I'd relish parading our Mr. Douglass here in front of Calhoun and his ilk! T'would be the final death nail in his continuous rant on the lowly, uneducatable, inferior mental capabilities of the negro race. Huh!

(Pause; smiles slyly:)

Invite him to my office. Tomorrow. Noon.

Adam exits. Charles and Marta are thrilled by this.

INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAM'S CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE.

The office is ornate and opulent. A half a dozen well dressed MEN sit with tea cups in John Adam's congressional office, among them, John Calhoun, another Southern congressman, SIDNEY BELL and John Adams.

BELL

Quite the contrary, Quincy, the illegal harboring of our fugitive slaves in your cities is a most serious situation. The loss of our property is now counted in the millions. Millions and millions--

CALHOUN

With no end in sight. It acts as a continuous drain of the

financial security and wealth of  
the states.

ADAMS

Yet the North can offer no remedy,  
gentlemen. As we have no means of  
distinguishing free citizens from  
fugitives--

CALHOUN

That is exactly what must change.  
In this new session we fully  
intend to provide the means--

Adam's young, male SECRETARY, opens the door.

SECRETARY

Sir, Mr. Herdon and Mr. Douglass  
are here.

ADAMS

Ah, yes. See them in.

Frederick Douglass and Charles enter. Charles is somewhat  
taken aback upon seeing Calhoun and the other Southern  
congressmen.

ADAMS

(continuing)

Gentlemen, allow me to introduce  
my friends here. You know  
Congressman Herdon, of course. And  
with him is Mr. Frederick Douglass.

(To Mr. Douglass:)

Mr. Douglass, it is a pleasure to  
meet you.

Adams shakes Douglass's hand.

ADAMS

(continuing)

I was fortunate enough to hear  
your lecture last night. Most  
impressive. Allow me to introduce  
my company: John Calhoun, of South  
Carolina, Sidney Bell. Colonel  
Hampton, James Palmer and Carl  
Simon.

Adam's breach in propriety upsets the gentlemen, as gentlemen  
did not introduced negroes to white company.

John Calhoun warns the others with a slight shake of his  
head. Staring furiously at the assembly, Douglass nods  
curtly.

ADAMS

(continuing)

John, you'll be interested to know that Mr. Douglass, a former slave, is an eloquent speaker, perhaps one of the most persuasive speakers I have ever heard on the subject of slavery.

Frederick Douglass turns and addresses Adams:

DOUGLASS

Mr. Adams, I was indeed honored to accept this invitation to attend you here in these hollowed halls of congress and yet I surely would

have revoked my acceptance had I any inclination that you intended to parade me in front of these gentlemen as a... a circus side show. I find my countenance ill-suited to the performance. If you'll excuse me--

The gentlemen appear stunned.

ADAMS

One moment, my good sir!

(Stumbles;  
embarrassed:)

I admit my intentions were less than honest perhaps, but my motives were indeed honorable! These gentlemen here, do not believe a slave capable of anything but the most base and menial tasks. You sir, are the living, breathing proof otherwise. I meant to present you.

CALHOUN

It is a ruse. This... this man could not have been born a slave.

BELL

If he was a slave, then I am an ass.

The gentlemen chuckle nervously.

DOUGLASS

I was born a slave in Talbot county, on the eastern shores of Maryland, to Colonel Edward Lloyd, sir. Though I would not comment on Mr. Bell's assertion, I do have proof. My papers--

Calhoun waves his hand in dismissal, though he is visibly distressed.

CALHOUN

A freak, an anomaly. Quincy, you should know one example does not a case make.

DOUGLASS

Perhaps not, sir but then what does make the case to a closed and prejudice mind? Would a dozen negro gentlemen, a hundred or a thousand? I have met dozens, I have known hundreds and I have heard of thousands. It is not the negro mind that is a dark and empty place of no possible redemption or illumination but rather it is the bestial conditions in which the slave is kept. I dare say if you, sir were born into a place where you were torn from the very arms that bore you at a tender age and thrust into a world of no comfort and endless mindless and mind numbing toil, a place filled with daily, nay, hourly humiliations and fears, and forced to bear the accumulated weight of these apprehensions throughout the short span of your life, you too, would be a simple brute, utterly incapable of all but the most basic understandings of the world.

The assembly is struck silent. One gentleman drops his tea cup. It shatters upon the floor.

CALHOUN

Is it done speaking?

Douglass raises his head; his dignity intact.

DOUGLASS

And still darker than even this

place, is the human heart that willfully, obstinately refuses to see the truth. Good day, gentlemen.

Douglass exits. Charles follows.



CALHOUN

There will be no record of this meeting, Quincy...

INT. HALLS OF CONGRESS. CONTINUING.

CHARLES

You were magnificent, Frederick!

Douglass stops and seems to collapse.

DOUGLASS

I was a freak... an anomaly. We shall never change their minds, much less their hearts.

Charles looks down with shame.

CHARLES

No, perhaps not, but you made it a little harder to believe the lies upon which their temple has been built.

DOUGLASS

I sometimes despair--

CHARLES

Do not despair. While we might never fully change their minds, our movement grows stronger every day. We must now focus our energies on the railroad, on leading as many slaves to freedom as possible, on bleeding the blackguards dry and bringing about their financial ruin.

DOUGLASS

The freedom bound slaves are but a trickle-

CHARLES

And that is what we must change. We must turn the trickle into a flood.

INT. ROSS SHACK. TWILIGHT.

Ole Rit, Ben, William, Henry, Benji and Sam gather in the cabin. Ole Rit lights the fire.

Minta bursts inside, holding a bucket full of crabs and fish.

MINTA

Look what I got! Five fat crabs and two big fish! Lord, we'll all

get a full belly tonight!

OLD RIT

Massa gonna whip you when he catches you stealin' his fish, girl.

MINTA

Oh mama, you been sayin' that since I was knee high. Sides, I never see how crabs and fish can belong to anyone but the Lord above--

Minta notices the subdued expressions on everyone's face.

MINTA

(continuing)

What's wrong, Daddy?

BEN

Trader's in town.

Minta's eyes anxiously search everyone's face.

MINTA

Who Massa gonna sell now?

BEN

No one knows.

Minta takes over the lighting of the fire.

MINTA

Mama, don't you fret now. Massa ain't gonna sell any more of us. He promised; he gave his word.

BEN

He promise, and then he goes sell your two sisters, one after the other.

OLD RIT

Ain't never gonna see them again, not as long as I draw breath. You the only girl I got left.

MINTA

He ain't gonna sell me, mama. He might break his promise to Daddy but he won't break it to Miss Marta.

OLD RIT

Grief be comin' to someone, that's for sure and I got me a powerful

feelin' its comin' to Liza.

MINTA

Liza? But little Jacob ain't but  
a year old-

Minta stops and searches the faces of the others.

MINTA

(continuing)

You mean Jacob.

INT. BARN. AFTERNOON.

THIRTY PEOPLE, slaves, crouched around a long plank table in the barn, stripping a mountain of corn ears. Anxious gazes all around, stopping on Liza, Jacob and their new born son. With tears in his eyes, Jacob takes his little boy's hand and brings it to his lips.

Jacob finally rises and looks at Minta.

JACOB

Need some tobacco.

Minta freezes, nods silently. All the people stop before furiously resuming their work. Jacob leaves.

BEN

He ain't gonna make it.

MINTA

If Caldwell stays long, lingers  
over supper just a bit--

Minta stops as she catches sight of Liza who works uninterrupted, but tears slip down her cheeks.

LIZA

Massa gonna sell him just like my  
daddy and my brother. One way or  
another, I ain't never gonna see  
him again...

INT. BARN. MINUTES LATER.

Caldwell walks casually into the barn and with a whip in his hand, he assesses the group. He removes his cigar and begins doing a head count. His gaze stops at Liza and her baby.

CALDWELL

Where's Jacob?

Everyone freezes with suspense. No one answers.

CALDWELL

(continuing)

If he's run off--

Caldwell runs out.

Minta leaps to her feet, her stool falling over. Frightened, Ben reaches to grab her but too late. Minta runs out.

EXT. PLANTATION ROAD. AFTERNOON.

Jacob runs, a good distance ahead of Caldwell. Terrified, Jacob looks back and if possible, runs faster.

EXT. FIELDS. AFTERNOON.

Minta races across the fields.

INT. CROSSROAD STORE. AFTERNOON.

The small cross road store displays knives, rifles, rope, barrels, baskets, bolts of cloth, horse equipment and various food stuffs for sale. Ten or so WHITE PEOPLE and two BLACK MEN are in the store. Jacobs ducks inside to hide, breathing deeply and terrified.

Minta bursts inside, breathing heavily as well.

Before she has a chance to warn Jacob, Caldwell appears in the doorway. Alarmed, all the other people clear out of the store.

Jacob starts backing up to the back door. Minta moves slowly to place herself between Jacob and Caldwell.

CALDWELL

I'm gonna whip you within an inch  
of your life!

Minta stands between them. Jacob reaches the back door.

CALDWELL

(continuing; to  
Minta:)

Grab him and help me tie him up.

Minta slowly shakes her head. Jacob dashes out the back door and flees. Caldwell gives a SHOUT and moves forward but Harriet blocks his way.

Furious, Caldwell picks up an anvil and throws it. The weight hits Minta in the head and she falls unconscious. Blood spills from the wound.

EXT. CROSSROAD STORE. AFTERNOON.

Jacob runs into the forest.

INT. ROSS SHACK. EVENING.

Minta's family stares in horror as Caldwell carries the unconscious Minta inside.

CALDWELL  
She's dying.

He sets her harshly to the floor.

CALDWELL  
(continuing)  
Let that be a lesson to the next  
ungrateful nigger that disobeys me.

Panicked and horrified faces all around as Caldwell leaves.  
Old Rit falls on her daughter.

OLD RIT  
She's bleedin' to death. Give me  
the rags. Get some hot water--  
quick!  
(crying:)  
I ain't lettin' this child go from  
me...

INT. ROSS SHACK. NIGHT.

Pine knot lamps cast the room in a gold light. Old Rit keeps a virgil for her still unconscious daughter. Ben and his sons stand respectfully before Minta.

HENRY  
Even the massa don't stand up to  
ole' Caldwell. I ain't never know  
any one to stand up to him.

BEN  
My little girl got more courage  
than a bear with cubs.

Shaking his head, William stares with admiration.

WILLIAM  
I reckon Minta don't suit any  
more.

HENRY  
No sir.

BEN  
She be Harriet now.

The door opens and Edward Brodas and Caldwell step inside.  
The men step back, now staring at the ground. Old Rit  
continues ministering to Harriet.

EDWARD

I hear your girl got into trouble again, Ben and now she's dyin'.

BEN

Yes, suh.

EDWARD

That girl was always wild. Born wild; stayed wild and weren't nothing we could do to tame her ways. I brought the burial fee, Ben. You can bury her on the edge of south fence.

He sets the money on the edge of the fireplace. With emotion laden eyes, Ben stares uncomfortably at the coins.

EDWARD

(continuing; To Old Rit:)

I don't want to see you tending a lost cause, Old Rit. We need you back at the house, starting tomorrow. You hear?

OLD RIT

Yes, suh.

Edward nods and exits. Once the white men are gone, Ben picks up the coins, looks at them and angrily throws them into the fireplace.

OLD RIT

(continuing)

I ain't gonna bury this child. Not at the south fence, not anywheres. Not as long as I draw breath.

Old Rit starts singing: THE GOSPEL TRAIN.

EXT. FOREST. HARRIET'S DREAM.

Harriet runs through the forest, stopping upon a beautiful meadow.

The large stag stares back from the center.

INT. ROSS SHACK. - EVENING.

Old Rit sits by the fire, humming as she sews a piece to a beautiful quilt as everyone else sleeps. Harriet stirs. Old Rit's gaze shoots to the spot. She rises, moving to Harriet's side.

OLD RIT

Harriet, child, ain't you never  
going to wake up? Three Sundays  
pass all ready and sometimes I git  
this scared way down deep inside--

Harriet opens her eyes.

HARRIET

Mama.

OLD RIT

Harriet! Wake up, honey, wake up.

HARRIET

Where am I?

OLD RIT

Just where you always been, child.  
Right here at home.

Harriet tries to sit up but Old Rit gently keeps her down.

OLD RIT

(continuing)

Not yet, child. You got a gash in  
your head the size of a hammer  
head.

HARRIET

I keep dream of escapin' north. Of  
a beautiful stag and angels and  
runnin' for freedom. Times I'm  
alone and other times there be a  
passel of folks with me...

Harriet's eyes suddenly find her mother's.

HARRIET

(continuing)

Jacob?

OLD RIT

He ain't been caught yet. Massa  
got a five hundred dollar bounty  
on him but ain't been caught yet.

Harriet smiles.

OLD RIT

(continuing)

Oh it's good to see your eyes open  
and a smile! Sometimes I feared I  
never would again. Here, try to  
get some broth down now. There  
ain't an ounce of meat left on  
your bones. Does it hurt?

HARRIET

Somethin' fierce... Tired too.  
Mama, you're cryin'?

OLD RIT

You came back to me. You'se gonna  
be all right...

EXT. ROSS SHACK. MORNING.

Followed by his sons, Ben lifts Harriet, wrapped in a blanket, outside and sets her gently on a bench in the morning sun. Ben kisses her cheek, and Old Rit tucks the blanket securely around her form as they all go off to work.

EXT. PLANTATION ROAD. AFTERNOON.

Flanked by both her older brothers and followed by her younger brother, Harriet takes her first steps, fighting dizziness.

EXT. ROSS SHACK. AFTERNOON.

Cujoe, holding a walking stick, and Harriet sit on the bench in the sun, surrounded by LITTLE CHILDREN under the age of four. Wearing a head scarf around her still injured head, Harriet plays peek-a-boo with a two year old boy. The children's parents must abandon their youngsters each day as they work in the fields.

HARRIET

I wish there were another body to  
watch after these childrens.

(To the child:)

Boo! Every year it seems we lose  
at least one of them, leavin' 'em  
out alone all the day long.

(She shakes her head:)

As if their mamas don't have  
enough sorrows piled on their  
shoulders.

CUJOE

I watch 'em as best I can,  
Harriet. But an old blind man  
ain't got much use left in him.

HARRIET

I know you do--

NICKY, a young black man, comes up with a bucket of corn meal.

NICKY

Harriet, Cujoe.

HARRIET



Nicky.

Nicky dumps the bucket into a small horse trough, stopping to pet one of the children. The other children fly to the spot and half starved, using their hands, they greedily begin scooping out the food.

NICKY

How's your spells, Harriet?

HARRIET

Ain't had one for two days now.

NICKY

Don't you start feelin' too good, Harriet. Massa got three folks plannin' on havin' a look over.

Alarm first passes over Harriet's face but this turns to dismay and she shakes her head.

HARRIET

Again? When he's gonna get it in his head, ain't no one gonna pay a penny for these broke bones.

NICKY

Here they's come now. Act sickly!

HARRIET

(Laughs:)

Don't have to pretend that!

Nicky hurries away as three riders, MR. PARKER, MR. AVERY and Edward Brodas. They rein their horses to a stop.

MR. PARKER

That her?

EDWARD

That's her. She's young, eighteen or there about. Got a lot of years left.

MR. AVERY

She's a tiny thing.

EDWARD

But strong. Before the accident, she was one of my best workers. Did the work of two men.

Mr. Parker and Avery come off their horse.

MR. AVERY

Let's see your arms, girl.

Harriet slowly rises and slips an arm out of her dress, careful to protect her modesty. Mr. Avery grabs her arm and squeezes.

MR. AVERY

(continuing)

Thin as a rail. Ain't got any muscle on her.

EDWARD

She's still recovering, gettin' back her strength every day, ain't ya, girl?

They pry open Harriet's mouth and look at her teeth. Harriet's gaze blazes with indignation.

MR. PARKER

Look at the sass in her eyes.

Parker shakes his head, spits.

MR. PARKER

(continuing)

That's the trouble with you, Edward. Too soft on your darkies. A good whippin' take the sass right out.

EDWARD

You can whip her all you want if you buy her. She's real cheap. I'd take fifty dollars for her.

MR. PARKER

(laughs:)

I'd pay you fifty to keep her!

MR. AVERY

(Laughs:)

She'd cost more in feed than that.

Mr. Parker and Mr. Avery mount.

EDWARD

Well, shoot. Just like Doc says, we'll never be rid of her.

MR. AVERY

You should breed her. Breeding takes all the fight out the females.

EDWARD

Ain't none of mine willin' to take

her. Too homely, even for a nigger.

The men LAUGH as they ride away. Harriet stares after them before falling back down alongside Cujoe. A little GIRL comes and sits on Harriet's lap.

CUJOE

They treat us like animals!

HARRIET

They's like children, Cujoe. They don't know any better.

CUJOE

Every time they treat us like animals, a little part of their soul shrivels up and dies and--

HARRIET

There won't be nothin' left when they go to meet their maker. I wish I believed that.

(Muses:)

You suppose God don't know the white folks is stuck with how their mama's and daddies raised them up?

CUJOE

I ain't one to fathom the working of the maker's ways. But the ole' massa's right about one thing, Harriet. You need to pick a husband.

HARRIET

I ain't never found one worth the pickin'.

CUJOE

If you don't, massa will do it for you, honey.

HARRIET

(In a whisper:)

I don't aim to stick around that long, Cujoe.

CUJOE

(Alarmed:)

You can't run now, Harriet. Your sleeping spells. You be caught before you crossed the property line. You got to give up that dream now, girl.

HARRIET

Never. I can't.  
 (passionately:)  
 The one thing I've always known is  
 I've got to live free or die.

EXT. FIELDS. DAY.

SINGING solo, Harriet, with her head still wrapped in a bandage, works the fields alongside her brother. The other field workers join in the chorus. A young man, JOHN TUBMAN watches Harriet with interest as he works.

Bored, Caldwell watches from his horse in the shade.

EXT. FIELDS. DAY.

Harriet carries two bushels, a heavier load than any other worker, including the men. John Tubman runs up alongside her and lifts her burden for her. Harriet smiles as John pulls ahead.

EXT. FOREST. DAY.

Working with her father's logging crew, Harriet pulls a heavy log to a larger pile. Two men behind her do the same job. Swinging an ax, John Tubman notices this and stalling in the swing, he stares.

JOHN

That little body packs a man's strength. She'd give a man fine sons.

BEN

What you sayin', boy?

JOHN

You know.

BEN

I guess I do. Harriet ain't like others, Tubman--never has been. I don't reckon she'd jump the broom with a slave.

JOHN

Why not?

BEN

Set her sights higher, is all.

JOHN

That's somethin' I have a mind to change.

INT. ROSS SHACK. - NIGHT.

Ben answers the door to see John holding a basket full of crabs for Harriet. Harriet greets him with reluctant pleasure.

EXT. FOREST. DAY.

Harriet and her father walk to work, with axes slung over their shoulders. John steps out in front of the path, holding a bouquet of flowers.

EXT. ROSS SHACK. - NIGHT.

John and Harriet, with her head still wrapped in a bandage, sit outside the shack.

JOHN

Say yes.

HARRIET

I can't, John.

JOHN

Why not girl?

HARRIET

I got me plans. I got dreams.

JOHN

Dreams? What kind of dreams?

Harriet stares up at the bright light of the North Star.

HARRIET

Just dreams.

John follows her gaze.

JOHN

Them dreams'll get you whipped and sold south, girl.

(pause:)

That'a tear me apart. Jump the broom with me, Harriet.

HARRIET

Oh John--

JOHN

Say yes.

Before she can respond, he kisses her.

EXT. ROSS SHACK. - TWILIGHT

The Ross family conducts a modest jump the broom ceremony for Harriet and John Tubman, concluding with a kiss. The family applauds.

OLD RIT

(Whispers to Ben:)

Maybe I won't be gettin' a heart  
break. Maybe this will settle her.

BEN

Ain't nothin' gonna settle that  
girl. Not ole' Massa, not ole'  
Caldwell and sure as not John  
Tubman.

EXT. THE BRODAS PLANTATION HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

A fine and modern carriage arrives in front of the house. A female SERVANT rushes out to greet the visitor. Marta, fashionably dressed, steps out of the carriage and looks around, stunned by the disrepair all around her: paint peeling from dozens of places on the buildings, broken shutters and stairs, untended gardens.

Emma Lee steps outside to greet Marta; the two sisters greet each other coolly.

EMMA LEE

It's been a long time,  
Marta. Not since mother's  
funeral.

MARTA

It's good to see you, Emma Lee.

She stops, looks anxiously around.

MARTA

(continuing)

What's happened here?

EMMA LEE

What else? The price of cotton;  
it's been like a slow death. But  
thank heavens for Doc; we're a lot  
better off than our neighbors...

INT. LIBRARY. DAY.

Marta stands before the window looking out, while Edward sits in an easy chair with a glass of bourbon in his hand.

MARTA

Father, before I leave I have a  
request.

EDWARD

Answer's the same.

MARTA

Oh father, don't be like this!  
For heaven sakes, Charles will pay  
you top dollar.

EDWARD

I do not want your husband's  
money, madame.

MARTA

You're too poor now to be so  
proud! Look around you! The  
horses are gone, the house and  
outer buildings all need paintin',  
half your people are sold off, the  
garden's in ruins--

EDWARD

I said no and that's final. I'll  
never sell that girl to you.

Marta turns to him.

MARTA

You're just being stubborn! You  
can't want her--she's no good to  
you now, what with her spells and  
her poor health and all. Minta is  
special! She's smart; she'd make  
a fine teacher--

EDWARD

A negro teacher! You and yours  
disgust me with all these notions  
of emancipation, with teaching  
niggers to read and write. Get out  
of here! Get out and don't come  
back!

Trembling with emotion, Marta leaves the room.

EXT. BRODAS PLANTATION. PORCH.

Still holding a glass with whiskey, Edward watches his  
daughter's carriage drive away. He throws the glass against  
the wall, where it shatters in a thousand pieces before he  
grabs his heart and grimaces with pain. He stumbles inside.

EXT. COTTON FIELDS. DAY.

With her head still wrapped in a bandage, Harriet, William,  
Henry, John and Benji bend over, hoes in hand, working the  
fields along side two dozen other slaves. Harriet looks  
across to the house in the far distance, barely able to make  
out the black ribbon across the door. The funeral for Edward  
Brodas has just concluded and carriages drive away.

WILLIAM

You think mama will get it?

Harriet sighs, shakes her head.

HARRIET

Lots and lots of massas say free papers be just waitin' at their funeral; I ain't once seen it happen.

HENRY

It don't seem right how the massa didn't give us all a day of rest for his funeral. I was countin' on it, too. My back is still smartin' from yesterday.

BENJI

You always got complaints, Henry.

WILLIAM

(Nods:)

Ain't that the truth. Henry's been complainin' since he was waist high.

(To his brother:)

And you'll gonna have more now that Old Doc is the massa.

HARRIET

Hush. Here come the devil himself.

Harriet takes up a SONG and everyone resumes working as Caldwell and Doc pass by on horses. The two men stop to briefly study the laborers, speaking out of ear shot.

DOC

I want this field done by the day's end.

CALDWELL

It ain't but half done now--

DOC

(Irritated:)

This is just what I mean by things are going to start changing now. Edward was always way too easy on 'em. You tell 'em to put their backs to it or I'll start rationing supper.

Caldwell nods before pushing his horse towards the workers.

EXT. PLANTATION ROAD. AFTERNOON.

Harriet, still wearing a bandage, hauls a heavy load of



firewood towards the house. A buggy pulls up alongside her, driven by a quaker woman. The quaker woman stops the buggy in front of Harriet, who stares with curiosity as the woman pretends to fix the harness.

QUAKER WOMAN

(Kind voice:)

How'd you hurt your head?

Surprised by the question, Harriet nonetheless answers.

HARRIET

Massa threw an anvil at me.

QUAKER WOMAN

Did you provoke him?

HARRIET

I reckon. A friend 'o mine, Jacob was trin' to escape and I guess I stood between him and gettin' caught.

QUAKER WOMAN

(Chuckles quietly:)

That was very courageous of you, my friend. Did he escape, this Jacob?

Suspicious and excited now, Harriet nods before glancing in both directions.

HARRIET

It's a good thing, too cause since the old massa died things ain't been easy around here.

QUAKER WOMAN

So, I've heard.

HARRIET

You a quaker, ma'am?

QUAKER WOMAN

Yes, I am. I suppose you know that we do not believe in slavery. And neither does the allmighty God in heaven. Have you ever heard of the underground railroad?

Dropping her bundle, Harriet grabs her pounding heart.

HARRIET

I heard tell it ain't really a railroad.

QUAKER WOMAN

That's right. Over three thousand people help run our railroad. We've taken almost one hundred thousand slaves to free states.

HARRIET

One hundred thousand...

QUAKER WOMAN

(nervously; quickly:)

Listen: If I were to want to travel North, I would follow the Choptank River. I would go to its beginning, just at the border between Delaware and Maryland. Then I'd go north by northeast. It's just fifteen miles from the border to John Hill's farm in Camden, Delaware. Knock and hide. He'll get you when he can.

Harriet watches, mesmerized as the Quaker woman returns to her buggy and drives off.

HARRIET

(In a frantic, excited whisper:)

To the beginning of the Choptank, then north by northeast for fifteen miles to John Hill's farm in Camden.

She presses a hand to her mouth, overwhelmed with emotion before looking in both directions and seeing no one and nothing, she picks up her bundle and hurries away.

EXT. RIVER'S EDGE. TWILIGHT.

Harriet sits at the river's edge, staring northward. John steps up behind her and sits at her side.

JOHN

I knew I'd find you right here, dreamin' away.

He falls back into a prone position.

JOHN

(continuing)

I'm beat. I could hardly make it out here. Things sure have gotten bad since the old massa died. Ole Doc's gonna work us to death, that's for sure.

HARRIET

I'm leavin'.

JOHN

What's this? What do you mean?

Harriet looks at him solemnly.

JOHN

(continuing)

Oh no, you ain't. You with your sleepin' spells? Never knows when you drop into a faint! And when you do, no one can wake you.

(Shakes his head:)

Get the idea out of your mind, girl! Ain't nothin' north for us but heartache, cold weather and an early grave.

HARRIET

I got to go. I've been workin' on it. I'm ready--

JOHN

I won't let you leave; if I have to tell Caldwell myself, I will, I swear I will.

Harriet searches his face with incredulousness, devastated by the understanding that John will not go with her.

JOHN

(continuing)

Now, no more talk bout headin' North...

EXT. TUBMAN'S SHACK. NIGHT.

John Tubman sleeps soundly in the cot. Harriet quietly slips to the floor and lifts John's boots. She carefully laces each boot over her feet before rising. Carrying a small sack, Harriet opens the door, casting one last look back at her sleeping husband before shutting it and moving out.

EXT. ROSS SHACK. NIGHT.

Ever so quietly, Harriet knocks on the door. After a few moments, Henry, William and Benji appear one after another, each carrying a small sack.

Benji pauses and looks back inside where his parents are sleeping.

HARRIET

We can't say good-by. Caldwell'll beat it out of 'em before the sun hits noon.

Benji reluctantly slips outside.

EXT. FOREST. NIGHT.

Harriet leads her brothers through the forest.

EXT. FOREST. - NIGHT.

Fog settles over the darkness. Thick growth surrounds them. Each of the brothers START each time they hear a noise but no one slows their pace. They all speak in anxious whispers.

HENRY

The fog's gettin' thicker.

WILLIAM

You sure this be the way?

HARRIET

I'd know this path blind.

Henry stumbles, falls and hurts his foot. William and Benji help him up.

HENRY

Can't hardly walk.

BENJI

Can't see nothin' through the fog.  
We be movin' in circles.

WILLIAM

Dogs'll be at our feet by morning.

Harriet stops momentarily and turns back.

HARRIET

I ain't turnin' back.

Harriet continues on. The brothers follow reluctantly.

EXT. FOREST. NIGHT.

The four people continue at Harriet's fast pace. The thick fog has turned to drizzle.

HENRY

I gots to rest.

He sits down. The others stop. Harriet reluctantly agrees with a nod.

HARRIET

Just a short spell, is all.

They all gather close for warmth, their small parcels raised in a futile effort to keep the drizzle from their faces.

BENJI

You scared?

HENRY

(Nods;)

Paddyrollars be swarmin' over us afore long.

WILLIAM

Dogs scare me the most. I hear it tell that if the dogs get ahead of the massa, he ain't round to call 'em off and then they tear mens to bits.

BENJI

But Harriet knows how to handle the dogs, right?

The three brothers look to their sister, whose head has dropped. Henry shakes her.

HENRY

Harriet? Harriet?

BENJI

She fell into one of her spells!

HENRY

(Truly frightened:)

We ain't goin' make it now!

Henry looks nervously through the darkness.

HENRY

(continuing)

Maybe we can make it back afore dawn, afore anyone knows. Ain't no one the wiser.

WILLIAM

We can't leave Harriet. We have to wait.

HENRY

As soon as she wakes, I'm headin' back.

BENJI

Me too.

WILLIAM

We got to talk sense in her. She never goin' get far with her

spells.

HENRY

I should of known this wouldn't  
work!

EXT. NIGHT SKY. HARRIET'S DREAM.

Harriet dreams of a clear sky and the bright light of the  
north star...

EXT. FOREST. NIGHT.

Harriet wakes slowly, as if drugged. She studies the  
concerned faces of her brothers and abruptly remembers her  
circumstances. She jumps to her feet.

HARRIET

How long have I slept?

WILLIAM

Bout an hour.

HENRY

Harriet, we scared. We goin'  
back. You can't make it with your  
sleepin' spells.

WILLIAM

We wouldn't leave you while you  
were asleep.

BENJI

We can make it back afore dawn if  
we run.

The three brothers stare at Harriet, who searches their faces  
in turn.

HARRIET

I ain't never goin' back or givin'  
up easy. I will fight for freedom  
as long as my strength lasts.

WILLIAM

The risk is too great!

HARRIET

(Quietly:)

I will live free or die.

The brothers pause, search each others faces but they are  
resigned. Henry and Benji step forward to hug Harriet.  
William is last. Tears fall from his face before he turns  
back and disappears in the darkness.

Clutching her shawl tightly about her shoulders, Harriet

watches them disappear.

At last she turns down the path.

EXT. FOREST. NIGHT.

The fog gradually clears and the night sky blazes with light. Harriet stops to look heavenward and upon seeing the north star shining brightly and seeming to light her way, a feeling of overwhelming joy fills her.

INT. ROSS SHACK. - DAWN

William, Henry and Benji, each breathing heavily and looking scared, slip inside their parent's shack. Old Rit and Ben wake.

BEN

Lord a mighty, what happened?

Henry shakes his head.

OLD RIT

Not my girl!

EXT. FIELDS. DAWN.

The slaves, including the Ross family, gather nervously in the field, at first going about like nothing's wrong. A sleepy Caldwell stands by his horse, watering him.

Caldwell abruptly notices something is amiss. He reaches for his whip and turns to the gathering slaves.

CALDWELL

What the hell...

His gaze frantically searches the surroundings.

CALDWELL

(continuing)

Line up in order!

EXT. FOREST. DAWN.

Breathing heavily, Harriet stops and leans against a tree. The call of a bird alerts her to the impending dawn, the most dangerous time. She looks around and moves forward in a rush.

She looks down at her feet.

HARRIET

My tracks. I got to cover my tracks.

She moves forward in a rush.

As the dawn's light illuminates her surroundings, she sees a plantation house in the distance. She turns away, frantically running through the forest.

EXT. FIELDS. MORNING.

Holding a whip, Doc stands in front of William, who stares at his feet.

DOC

You know somethin' about this.

WILLIAM

No suh! I knows nothin'.

DOC

You're lying boy!

WILLIAM

No suh!

The whip comes down hard over William's bare feet. Old Rit stifles a scream. Ben puts his arms around her shoulders protectively.

DOC

You're lyin', boy

(To Caldwell:)

Go get Baker, Jim and the others.

And call out the dogs.

(To William:)

You better pray we find your miserable little sister, or so help me God, I'll beat you within' an inch of your life!

EXT. BRODAS PLANTATION. MORNING.

Caldwell and Doc watch as BAKER, JIM and TWO OTHER MEN unleash their dogs. The dogs rush off. The men mount and follow.

EXT. FOREST SWAMP. DAWN.

Harriet runs until she comes to a swampy area on the banks of a river.

Boots on, she steps tentatively into the swampy water. Two snakes slither away from her. She grabs her heart, panicked but she must go forward.

She moves cautiously through the swampy edge of the river, battling insects, exhaustion and fear.

EXT. WATER'S EDGE. NOON.



The sun travels slowly towards its' zenith. Still knee deep in the water, at last Harriet spots a small island a short distance out. Gathering all her courage, she moves waist deep in the water toward the small island.

EXT. SMALL ISLAND. DAWN

She surveys the tiny patch of land, the only place safe from the pursuing dogs and clears a small area from the bushes. She collapses. Within minutes she is asleep.

EXT. SMALL ISLAND. AFTERNOON.

The sound of dogs BARKING in the distance awakens Harriet. She cautiously peers from beneath the brush. She sees nothing and no one.

EXT. WATER'S EDGE. AFTERNOON.

BARKING dogs gather at the water's edge. Caldwell, Doc and a number of other men on horse back stop just behind the dogs and survey the scene.

DOC

Damn that nigger! She must have slipped in the water!

CALDWELL

She's a shrewd one all right.

BAKER

Well, can't stay in water for long. Let's take the dogs up stream a couple of miles.

The men turn the horses around. The dogs follow NOISILY behind.

EXT. SMALL ISLAND. AFTERNOON.

Harriet holds perfectly quiet, fear in her eyes. The BARKING of the dogs sounds closer and closer. Still, Harriet never sees them. At last the sound disappears.

HARRIET

They'll be back. First look up, then look down.

Harriet cautiously stoops back down and prepares to wait.

EXT. FOREST. TWILIGHT.

Surrounded by the dogs, Doc signals the party to stop.

DOC

Geezus, we've been going in circles for the better part of the

day now.

CALDWELL

Looks like we lost her.

DOC

Damn it to high heavens!

BAKER

You fellows go on back and leave it to us. We'll find her all right. It's just a matter of time.

EXT. ISLAND. - NIGHT

Harriet peers into the stilled darkness.

HARRIET

Now or never...

She quietly rises and moves waist deep into the water, returning to the banks of the river. With a glance to the horizon where the North Star is rising, and clutching her small bag of possessions, she sets off into darkness that is the forest.

EXT. MEADOW. DAY.

Harriet rushes through a meadow of tall grass.

EXT. STREAM. NIGHT.

Harriet comes to a small stream. She falls at its' edge, greedily drinking the water.

EXT. FOREST. DAY.

Harriet picks her way through the forest. She spots some wild grapes growing off to the side. With visible eagerness, she starts eating, plucking and stuffing herself as if starved.

EXT. CLEARING ON EDGE OF FOREST. DAWN.

Harriet moves swiftly through the forest, coming to a clearing of tall grass.

As she makes her way through the clearing, she abruptly grabs her head and falls faint, collapsing into a tight ball.

EXT. CLEARING ON EDGE OF FOREST. SUNSET.

Harriet awakens to sounds of men. Baker and Jim stop their horses just thirty feet from Harriet. Harriet doesn't move, her hands come to her mouth to stop a scream. She even holds her breath.

BAKER

She can't of made it this far  
north all ready. We must have lost  
her a back there some where.

Jim leans over his saddle, removes his hat, spits, and  
returns his hat.

JIM

All right then.

He turns his horse around. Baker follows. The two men  
disappear. Still Harriet doesn't dare move.

At last, when all is quiet and the sun has set, she rises up  
and makes her way.

EXT. FOREST. - DAY.

Harriet stops and listens, hearing the sound of the river.

HARRIET

I hear it, Lord! I hear it!

She runs through the forest.

EXT. CHOPTANK RIVER. - CONTINUING.

Harriet bursts through the forest and with arms spread with  
joy, she stomps into the river water, waist high.

EXT. CHOPTANK RIVER. - CONTINUING.

Harriet makes her way up the river's bank.

EXT. CHOPTANK RIVER. - CONTINUING

The river becomes a small stream, and as Harriet makes her  
way, it at last becomes a small trickle. She has reached the  
beginning of the river.

She collapses with joy.

EXT. EDGE OF FOREST. SUNSET.

Harriet peers out from the edge of the forest. Before her  
are wide open spaces of farmed land, divided by roads. This  
is perhaps the most dangerous part of her journey. She must  
travel into the open spaces now, away from the shelter of the  
forest.

HARRIET

You've been with me so far, Lord.  
Help me now...

With a deep breath, she starts off.

EXT. ROAD LEADING TO SMALL TOWN. - DAWN.

Harriet stops, making out the distant buildings of a small town. She looks to both sides. On one side rests small run down shacks.

She heads towards them.

EXT. SMALL SHACK. - CONTINUING

Harriet knocks softly on the door. A black WOMAN, wearing a cook's cap and apron, answers. She takes one look at Harriet and steps outside, looking nervously in all directions.

WOMAN

Hill's farm be in the little hollow there.

She points the direction.

WOMAN

(continuing; urgent whispers:)

Go to the haystack nearest the big barn. Crawl in and wait till mid-mornin'. Then pass two raps on the door. Hurry! Them paddyrollars still lookin' for you!

The door shuts.

Harriet turns and rushes toward the Hill's farm in the distance.

EXT. HILL'S FARM. - CONTINUING.

Harriet searches the small farm and barn. She spots the haystack nearest the barn. She runs to it, disappearing into the hay.

EXT. HILL'S FARM. - LATER

Baker and Jim ride up and dismount. MRS. HILL opens the door to confront them. Harriet watches from the distance, unable to hear what is said. Eventually Baker and Jim mount and ride off. Mrs. Hill returns inside.

Once Baker and Jim are gone, Harriet slowly comes out of her hiding place and darts to the door. She raps twice and waits, standing perfectly still and clutching her small bag.

Mrs. Hill opens the door. A warm smile comes over Mrs. Hill's face.

MRS. HILL

Welcome, sister.

Harriet steps inside.

INT. HILL'S FARMHOUSE. MORNING.

The Hill's home is a modest but comfortable country home. Harriet sits at a table, appearing stunned by her circumstances. Her boots have been removed and her blistered feet sit in a pail of steaming, hot water. Mrs. Hill busies herself fixing Harriet a meal.

MRS.HILL

You still have a long ways to go, Harriet. You'll be in constant danger until you're out of Delaware and into Pennsylvania. But at least now, you'll have help along the way. Lots of help. Thank the Lord.

Mrs. Hill finally sets a plate piled high with food: eggs, chicken breasts, grits and corn meal in front of Harriet.

MRS. HILL

Now, you eat your fill and I'll fix you a bath. You'll rest here for a few days until you've recovered enough to start off again--

Harriet stares at the food, unable to speak. Tears slowly fill her eyes.

MRS.HILL

Child, what's wrong?

A trembling hand reaches to her mouth. She points to the food.

HARRIET

This is for me?

MRS.HALL

Indeed! And there's plenty more, Harriet.

HARRIET

All my life I dreamed of a plate of food like this...

Mrs. Hall LAUGHS warmly.

EXT. ROAD. - NIGHT

Mrs. Hill drives a wagon over a back road. Harriet hides beneath blankets and a saddle in the back.

The wagon at last comes to a stop. Mrs. Hill hops down and

helps Harriet out of the back.

MRS.HALL

This is as far as I dare take you.  
Follow this road to--

HARRIET

Your brother, Mr. Brown's farm.  
Top of a hill. White with a wide  
stone wall around it. Red barn  
just like yours.

Mrs. Hall LAUGHS.

MRS. HALL

I'll get word to Thomas Garrett  
that you're on your way. Trust  
the Lord, Harriet.

Harriet and Mrs. Hall embrace before Harriet disappears down  
the road.

EXT. MR. BROWN'S FARM. - DAWN.

Harriet spots MR. BROWN all ready up and in the back, feeding  
the chickens. She cautiously approaches. Sighting Harriet,  
Mr. Brown tosses the rest of the fed. He leads Harriet  
inside his house.

MR. BROWN

Finally! Harriet Tubman! Lord a  
mighty sister, you got half the  
population lookin' for you!

Posted a seven hundred dollar  
reward for your capture. Signs  
plastered from here to  
Pennsylvania.

INT. MR. BROWN'S FARMHOUSE. DAWN

MR. BROWN

Hide in here till nightfall.

HARRIET

I am so...so obliged--

MR. BROWN

(Smiling kindly:)

It's the Lord's work I'm doing,  
sister. I am grateful for the  
means he hath provided me to help.

Mr. Brown leads Harriet to a secret room hidden in the  
fireplace. It is small and dark but a small cot and  
blankets makes it cozy.

MR. BROWN

I'll bring you food. Tonight,  
I'll take you half way. Don't you  
worry, though. We've arranged for  
a special escort to meet you and  
help get you through patrol  
station.

HARRIET

(With feeling:)  
God bless you.

EXT. ROAD BEFORE SMALL CABIN. NIGHT.

Mr. Brown stops his buggy before a small cabin. Harriet  
rises from her hiding place on the floor.

MR. BROWN

(Loud whisper:)  
Joshua! Joshua!

JOSHUA, a tall, thin older black man opens the door and peers  
out.

JOSHUA

That her?

MR. BROWN

Harriet Tubman meet Joshua.

JOSHUA

Lord, you sure are a tiny thing,  
if I don't say myself.

(laughs; shakes his  
head:)

Jump down Harriet and let me see  
your measure.

Harriet jumps down and stands to her full height.

JOSHUA

(continuing)  
You got shoes, little miss?

Harriet nods slowly, clutching her small bag of possessions,  
which now include her husband's boots.

MR. BROWN

She's carrying 'em. Her feet are  
too blistered to wear 'em.

JOSHUA

Well shoot. Ain't nothin' do be  
done bout that now. She needs as  
much height as she can get.

Joshua turns inside and appears momentarily with a bundle of

clothes.

JOSHUA  
(continuing)  
Put these on, Harriet.

EXT. SMALL CABIN. NIGHT.

Harriet emerges wearing a man's pair of worn overalls, a hat and the boots.

Mr. Brown LAUGHS.

MR. BROWN  
So that's how you mean to get her  
past the patrolers!

EXT. ROAD - DAY.

Harriet, dressed as a man and carrying a roe and a rake, walks alongside Joshua.

JOSHUA  
How'd you get that ugly scar?

HARRIET  
I was blocking the way of the  
overseer as he chased a friend who  
made a run for it. He threw an  
anvil at me.

JOSHUA  
Did you get a whippin' for that?

HARRIET  
I would of, but they thought I was  
dyin'.

JOSHUA  
Did your friend make it?

A broad smile crosses Harriet's face and she nods.

HARRIET  
I mean to try to find him, if I  
can.

JOSHUA  
William Still's the man to see.  
He keeps track of everyone passing  
through the underground.

HARRIET  
Mrs. Hall told me about him and  
Mr. Garrett. Course I've been  
hearin' tales 'bout Mister Garrett



my whole life, it seems.

Joshua nods.

JOSHUA

Mister Garrett just got out of jail. His third time. This time the judge fined him down to his last dollar.

(He chuckles:)

Know what he told the judge when he was sentenced?

Harriet shakes her head.

JOSHUA

(continuing)

He stands up and says to the whole court: If anyone knows of a fugitive in need of shelter or a friend, send him to me. I will never turn anyone away.

HARRIET

You was there?

JOSHUA

(Nods:)

Watchin' from the window.

HARRIET

You a quaker, too?

Joshua shakes his head.

JOSHUA

I ain't never been one for religion. I just don't know how a body can be sure of somethin' you can't see, you can't touch, you can't smell.

(Thoughtfully:)

But I know this much: If there is a Lord above, our Quaker friends are closer to Him than all others.

Harriet nods, rushing to keep up with him.

A FAMILY in a wagon pass, going the other way. Joshua and Harriet step aside as they pass.

HARRIET

But why you do it, then? Why you helping me?

JOSHUA

Why?

(chuckles:)

I don't reckon I need a God above  
to tell me freedom's 'bout the  
only thing worth fightin' for.

Harriet contemplates these words before she spots Baker and Jim ahead, riding towards them. She freezes with fear. Joshua instantly assesses the situation.

HARRIET

(Whisper:)

That's them that's lookin' for me!

JOSHUA

(whispers:)

Keep goin', little Miss. Just  
remember: you ain't Harriet no  
more. You my boy now.

Harriet forces herself to resume walking.

Baker and Jim stop their horses and appraise the two. Harriet stares at her feet, not daring to look up.

BAKER

Where you off too, boys?

JOSHUA

Got me and my boy two days work at  
Johnson place just North of town,  
suh.

Baker and Jim exchange glances. Baker removes a poster that shows a crude drawing of Harriet and offers a seven hundred dollar reward for her capture.

BAKER

We're lookin' for a runaway. A  
woman. She probably ain't this far  
North but you never know. It's  
worth two bits if you seen her.

JOSHUA

No suh. Ain't seen nobody.

BAKER

What about you, boy?

HARRIET

No suh, I ain't seen no runaway.

BAKER

You sure now?

HARRIET

Suh, I be turnin' in my own mama  
for two bits.

Baker and Jim LAUGH at this and turn away.

Joshua and Harriet continue on their way, appearing casual, as if nothing momentous happened but suddenly Harriet's knees buckle and she collapses. Joshua catches her up in his arm. Harriet rights herself and they continue walking.

Joshua's LAUGHTER is heard from the distance.

EXT. WILMINGTON. NIGHT.

Joshua and Harriet, nervously looking in all directions, move down the quiet darkened streets of Wilmington.

They approach THOMAS GARRETT's small shoe store on the outskirts of town.

Looking in both directions, Joshua spots a man kneeling on the side of a house, sleeping. He points the man out to Harriet.

JOSHUA

A patroller.

Harriet's face changes with fear. Joshua shakes his head.

JOSHUA

(continuing)

They be watchin' Garrett's house for better than three days now. But this one's slothful and a drunkard. He's out cold. Just walk on past him and rap on the door and when Garrett asks who it is, say a friend of a friend.

HARRIET

You leavin' now?

JOSHUA

This is the end of my line, little Miss.

Harriet stares hard before her eyes lower.

HARRIET

I don't know how to thank you--

She looks back up but Joshua is gone.

Harriet presses against the wall of a house, trying to recover. She spots the shoe store sign a few houses down. She approaches cautiously, keeping her anxious gaze on the sleeping patroller. Gathering all her courage, she raps lightly on the door. A shuffle finally sounds.

From behind the door,

THOMAS

Who is it?

HARRIET

A friend of a friend.

INT. THOMAS GARRETT'S SHOE STORE. NIGHT.

This is a small but clean shoe store: a counter, shelves lined with shoes and a work bench. The Garrett residence is above.

The door opens. Wearing night clothes and holding a dim lantern, THOMAS welcomes Harriet inside. The door shuts.

THOMAS

We've been expecting you, Harriet Tubman.

Harriet watches in amazement as a hidden door opens behind a shelves of shoes, revealing a windowless room. The lantern casts the small cot and night table. Thomas leads her inside.

THOMAS

(continuing)

You must be bone weary and hungry, friend. There's some food and drink in here where you can rest. Mrs. Garrett will see you in the morning.

A hand goes to her mouth, an effort to restrain her emotion.

HARRIET

I don't know how to thank you and Joshua and everyone who--

Thomas takes Harriet hand in both of his.

THOMAS

(Smiles;)

Harriet, you may thank God for giving you the courage to make this journey.

INT. THOMAS GARRETT'S SHOE STORE. DAWN.

Harriet is dressed as a man. Thomas leads Harriet out the back to where his wife, SUSAN, waits in a buggy, smiling.

EXT. THOMAS GARRETT'S SHOE STORE. DAWN.

Thomas embraces Harriet and sees her safely to the buggy. Harriet curls up in a ball at the floor. Bolts of cloth cover Harriet's form.

Susan cracks the whip and the buggy starts forward.

EXT. WILMINGTON. DAWN.

Susan drives the buggy through town.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING.

The buggy passes many people and groups on the road leading to Philadelphia: a group of NEGRO workers, a FAMILY in a covered wagon, three MEN riding horses, a CHAIN GANG heading south, a MAN, WOMAN and INFANT on foot, carrying suitcases and bags.

EXT. SMALLER ROAD OFF MAIN ROAD. AFTERNOON.

Susan drives the buggy off the main road and stops on the edge of a forest.

SUSAN

Here we are, Harriet. You can rise now.

Harriet comes out of her hiding place and slowly climbs down. Susan meets her to stand at her side.

SUSAN

(continuing)

This is as far as I can take you. Philadelphia sits a mile north.

HARRIET

(With wonder:)

I'se so close now...

SUSAN

Less than a mile before you feel a free earth beneath your feet!

Harriet looks north, as if she can hardly believe these words.

SUSAN

(continuing)

God bless you, friend.

The two women clasp hands and Harriet heads out.

EXT. ROAD LEADING TO PHILADELPHIA. TWILIGHT.

Harriet walks down the road.

INT. PHILADELPHIA ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY.

WILLIAM STILLIS, a young, handsome black man addresses the members including Douglass and Charles. He holds a stick in

his hands, pointing to a map of the area that hangs on the wall.

STILLS

We have word from all the major plantations in Maryland and Virginia. The people are waiting; waiting, if you will, for Moses to lead them to freedom. We need to find this Moses. We need a courageous conductor who is brave enough to travel right up to the plantations, gather the people up and lead them out...

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET. SUNSET.

Harriet stands amongst the bustle of a busy street: well dressed MEN and WOMEN move alongside poorer FOLKS: both black and white. Carriages, buggies and horses add to the commotion.

Tears fall from Harriet's face as she drops to her knees.

HARRIET

I made it, Lord. I made it. I's free!

