

HARRIET

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&
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Story by
Gregory Allen Howard

EXT. ARMY ENCAMPMENT - SOUTH CAROLINA - NIGHT - 1863

100 BLACK UNION SOLDIERS are assembled, bayonets pointed at the starry sky. A legend tells us this is...

South Carolina, 1863 - Two years into the Civil War...

A small black woman, HARRIET TUBMAN, 40, addresses the troops. We hear her before we see her...

HARRIET

Suppose there's a snake coiled at your feet, and it shoots up to bite you.

We catch glimpses of her through their bodies as she paces in front of them. Her plain face with its habitual scowl, her eyes alive with passion.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Folks get scared and send for a doctor to cut out the bite. But the snake, he rolled up there and while the doctor cutting, he bites you again, in a new place this time. The doctor makes another cut, the snake spring up and bites again. Finally you realize the snake ain't gon' stop til someone kills him.

A white commanding officer, COLONEL MONTGOMERY, watches intently as Harriet continues...

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Slavery is still alive. Those rice fields downriver are feeding Rebel troops, with the toil of a thousand slaves still in bondage. Our mission is to free those slaves. We've waited years to be allowed to fight in this war, against our own enslavement. *And it will not be won without us!* Now is our time! Are you ready to kill the snake?

The men shout, YES, their eyes fierce, emotional.

Harriet nods in approval. As we watch, she retreats into herself, as if listening to inner music, or voices we can't hear. INSECTS CHIRP in an eerie chorus, taking us into...

FLASHBACK VISION: A SERIES OF IMAGES - *monochromatic, out of sync and nightmarish* -

EXT. BRODESS FARM - **FLASHBACK/VISION**

TWO YOUNG BLACK WOMEN in their early twenties, LINAH AND SOPH, faces twisted anguish, as they are ripped away from their family at gunpoint by WHITE MEN and dragged to a slaver's carriage, where other SLAVES are shackled. Their mother, RIT, wails in grief as--

*HORSES'S HOOVES pound, carrying them away, their expressions of despair seared into our memory. The chorus of insects grows louder, until it becomes overwhelming, like every insect chirping at once... We hear A VOICE, eerily present, otherworldly... **MINTY!***

SLOW FADE IN:

EXT. BRODESS FARM - BUCKTOWN, MD - CLOVER PATCH - DAY - **1849**

ON "MINTY" ROSS (YOUNG HARRIET) mid-twenties, a distinct dent in her forehead, from a wound long healed. Her eyes flutter.

A handsome black man, JOHN, 28, is shaking her awake.

JOHN

Minty!

Her eyes open, taking him in... deep brown skin, full lips, eyes sparkling with excitement...

MINTY

John...

She's lying in a clover patch in the field. He pulls her to her feet and kisses her above her scarred forehead. Minty is small and muscular, a foot shorter than John.

JOHN

Least you 'member my name. I'm always scared you'll wake up from one a them spells and forgit it.

MINTY

Johnny, Johnny, Johnny...

JOHN

Guess what I got, Minty-mine?

He pulls a document from his pocket and waves it. Her face lights up. She grabs for it.

MINTY

Oh, Lord, is it...?

(CONTINUED)

He holds it above her head. Minty jumps into his arms. He checks to make sure no one's looking and then spins her, kissing her deeply. A stolen moment.

Minty's father, BEN, 60, handsome and wiry, stands a discreet distance away, letting the lovers have their space. She runs to him.

MINTY (CONT'D)

Daddy! We got it! We got de letter!
What it say, John? Read it to me!

JOHN

Don't need to, got it remembered.

(reciting)

*"...I, Joshua Abrams, having reviewed the
original last will and testament of
Atthow Pattison..."*

As Minty walks away between Ben and John, their voices are lost beneath a louder, soulful voice, singing...

REVEREND GREEN (PRELAP)

Hold on!

SLAVES (PRELAP)

Hold on!

REVEREND GREEN (PRELAP)

Hold on!

SLAVES (PRELAP)

Hold on!

EXT. BRODESS FARM - HOUSE - LATER

A plantation house is situated scenically in fields of wheat and corn. 20 Slaves are gathered in front of the wide veranda where...

REVEREND GREEN, 55, black, is leading them in a slave spiritual.

REVEREND GREEN

*Keep your hand on the plow and hold on!
Wanna get to heaven I'ma tell you how;
Keep your hand on the gospel plow.
Keep your hand on the plow and hold on!*

Amongst the slaves are Minty, John and Ben, along with other members of the ROSS FAMILY; Ben's wife, "RIT," 57, fierce and emotional;

(CONTINUED)

their children, ROBERT, 32, tall and muscular, BEN JR "JUNYAH", 26, HENRY 18, and RACHEL, 20, heavily pregnant and with a toddler in hand. All singing with mournful passion.

REVEREND GREEN (CONT'D)

Hold on!

SLAVES

Hold on!

REVEREND GREEN

Hold on!

SLAVES

Hold on!

REVEREND GREEN & SLAVES

Keep you hand on that plow and hold on!

Keep you hand on that plow and hold on!

EDWARD BRODESS, white, 46, watches from the porch of the big house with his wife, ELIZA, 44; his son, GIDEON, 26, handsome with piercing eyes; twin boys, VINCE and VICTOR, 12, and a girl of 10, BECKY.

REVEREND GREEN

I leave you today with these words, from Colossians 3:22.... "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord." Amen.

SLAVES

Amen.

BRODESS

Amen. Thank you, Reverend Green for those wise words.

(to the slaves)

You folks enjoy your Sunday. Cook has gravy for your cornpone tonight.

As Green moves off and the slaves disperse...

ON MINTY - still praying, forefingers pressed to the dent in her forehead. John nudges her. She slowly comes back to the present, catching Ben's eyes.

The Ross family confers briefly, with furtive glances to the whites on the veranda.

ROBERT

I'm coming with you.

(CONTINUED)

MINTY

Robert, no. You too hot-headed.

ROBERT

I'm coming.

Rit stops him, a hand to his chest...

RIT

Dey beat you again, dey gon' kill you.
Go wit Mary.

Robert's wife, MARY, waits for him anxiously. Reluctantly he joins her and his brothers heading back to the cabins, as Minty, John and Ben peel away from the others and approach the veranda of the house.

Brodess looks up at them, perplexed.

BEN

Massa Brodess, can we git a word?

EXT. BRODESS HOUSE - VERANDA - CONTINUOUS

Brodess waves them forward. John, Ben and Minty step onto the veranda. Rit stands back, keeping her distance. Eliza looks on from the doorway. Gideon leans against a pillar, arms crossed, eyes on Minty. She trembles as Ben steps up, hat in his hand.

BEN

Massa Brodess... I think you know Minty's husband, John, who works with me over at Thompson Mill...

BRODESS

Course I know him. I let him marry her.
What's your point?

JOHN

Suh, me and Minty, we thinking bout having a family... and we want our babies born free. So we hired a lawyer...

Brodess barks a laugh, looking from John to Ben.

BRODESS

You hired a lawyer. Ben, what the hell is this nigger talkin' bout?

(CONTINUED)

BEN

Well, suh, we talkin' bout the last wishes of your great-grandfather, Atthow Pattison. He gave my wife, Rit, to your mama as a chil', but she s'posed to be freed at 45. She 57. Rit always knowed bout the will - her mama tol' her when she was jus a chil' - so when Minty and John got married, well... we hired a lawyer to dig it up...

Brodess is quietly irate. He turns to his wife.

BRODESS

Hear that, Eliza? We got lawyer-hiring niggers right here. You got this will?

John pulls out the letter.

JOHN

Got a letter from the lawyer, suh. He say it's clear - your great-granddaddy meant for Minty's mama to be freed at age 45, 'long with her children.

Brodess glares at Rit. She glares back, tears in her eyes. Minty steps up, summoning her nerve.

MINTY

Mama was 46 when you sold my sisters. Lawyer say dat illegal. We all s'posed to be free when she turn 45. My sisters is lost to us, but John and me, we wan' our babies born free, like dey s'posed to!

Brodess snatches the letter from John, glaring at Minty.

BRODESS

How you know, Minty? You learn to read?

MINTY

No, suh. John read it to me.

Brodess glares at John and then puts on his glasses and reads... He looks up at them.

BRODESS

How you niggers save enough to pay a lawyer in the first place?

BEN

I worked some extra hours for Thompson. Took near two year.

(CONTINUED)

Eliza looks from Ben and John to Minty, outraged.

ELIZA

You have the gall to stand here and tell us you been plotting against us for two years?

Brodess tears up the letter. The blacks are stricken. He balls up the torn paper and tosses it to Gideon.

BRODESS

Make her eat it.

Gideon takes a hold of Minty's face and forces the paper in her mouth. Their eyes meet as she gags.

BRODESS (CONT'D)

(to Minty)

Now you listen here, girl. Your daddy may be free and your husband too, but you and your mama, your brothers and sisters - belong to me, for *life*. Your babies will belong to me, and their babies, TO USE OR SELL AS ME AND MY BOYS SEE FIT! YOU UNDERSTAND ME?!!

Ben and John watch, shaking with rage. Rit starts to cry, unleashing decades of emotion.

RIT

You a devil! You a devil, Edward Brodess! You sold my daughters south, where nobody know dey name! My babies lost, and nobody know dey name!

She sobs. Brodess looks from Rit to Minty.

BRODESS

I may have to sell this one too, Rit. Can't have this kind of mischief round here. But don't worry about Minty, she's strong. Strong enough to pick cotton. Now git off my damn porch!

John puts an arm around Minty and steers her away. Ben follows. Brodess shouts after them...

BRODESS (CONT'D)

John, you and Ben ain't welcome here no more! I don't want you near my slaves, lest you spread your contagion! STAY OFF MY PROPERTY!

(CONTINUED)

Brodeess falls back in his chair, mottled and gasping. He glares at his son.

BRODEESS (CONT'D)
Weren't for you, I'da sold that girl
years ago.

Gideon goes after them.

EXT. BRODEESS FARM - MOMENTS LATER

Ben supports a sobbing Rit. John tries to comfort Minty. He takes her face and kisses her hard.

Gideon pursues them.

GIDEON
John, you heard my daddy! You and Ben
get on back to Thompson's.

The men wrench themselves away from their wives and head off toward the gate.

Minty glares at Gideon. She runs off, into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Minty collapses in front of an enormous poplar tree by a creek, crying, praying fervently.

MINTY
My massa an evil man, Lord! You know he
evil. Dear Lord, if you cain't change
his soul, take him! TAKE HIM, LORD!

A chill runs up her spine and she turns...

Gideon is standing not far away, watching her.

GIDEON
Lord don't listen to niggers, Minty. I
been tellin' you that since we was kids.

Minty faces Gideon. A cool breeze raises goose bumps on her arms.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
Since that time I had Typhoid as a boy
and mama had you sit with me. First thing
I saw when I opened my eyes, was your
little black face, hair sticking up every
which way. Praying.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Scared the fever right outta me. I got used to your face, but that praying always made my skin crawl.

He gives a rueful laugh, full of complicated emotions.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

What the hell were you thinking, hiring a lawyer? Did you think daddy would just let you and your family free - damn near half his property - just like that?

She is turned half-towards him, her face impassive. He studies her.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Daddy warned me, "Boy, having a favorite slave is like having a favorite pig. You can feed it, play with it, give it a name, but one day you might have to eat it or sell it. You know it, and the pig knows it. If you have to sell it, there's no more guilt than separating piglets. And if you have to eat it, you'll forget its name."

He looks at her, full of complicated emotions.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

I hope one day I forget yours. C'mon home, Minty.

He turns and walks back towards the farm. Minty's chest rises and falls, her feet refusing to follow. Gideon turns back.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

C'mon, I said.

Minty stumbles after him.

INT. ROSS SLAVE CABIN - LATE NIGHT

Minty is sleeping. Her eyes open. A second later, we hear ELIZA'S SCREAM--

As Eliza continues screaming, the other family members stir.

EXT. SLAVE CABINS - LATE NIGHT

Slaves come out of their cabins and look in the direction of the big house, Eliza's distress coming from within...

(CONTINUED)

ELIZA (O.S.)
He's dead! Oh, God, he's dead!

ON MINTY, horrified...

EXT. BRODESS FARM - GRAVEYARD - DAY

A few gravestones on a shady patch of lawn.

Minty, Rit and Rachel stand with the women, children and elderly Brodess slaves at a fresh gravesite on the property, as the Ross brothers and male slaves lower Brodess's plain coffin into the earth. A WHITE MINISTER mumbles gloomy words to the neighboring farmers and family friends in attendance.

Eliza is with her children, face swollen from crying, choked with grief. Rit and Rachel keep their eyes downcast, thoughts hidden. Minty prays in earnest, tears streaming. She looks up...

Gideon is glaring at her, wounded accusation in his eyes.

EXT. BRODESS FARM - WOODPILE - AFTERNOON

Minty is chopping lumber, splitting upright logs on a stump, muscles rippling with each blow. As she chops, INTERCUT--

EXT. WOODS - SAME

GIDEON hammers an AUCTION NOTICE onto trees. He stands back and reads it, sweat and grief in his eyes. *NEGRO FOR SALE - On Monday, the 30th of September, a female slave called Minty, about 25 years old.*

EXT. BRODESS FARM - WOODPILE

ON MINTY - releasing her emotions on the wood. She upends a new log, ax raised against the sky...

The sound of insects grows louder... A BIRD in a tree above her chirps, urgently.

Minty faints, embedding the ax in the wood, unconscious on her feet.

MINTY'S VISION -

(A) DARK CLOUDS race across the sky. (B) A FLOCK OF BIRDS take flight, (C) HORSES break from their restraints and run, panicked, flanks straining... The VOICE, otherworldly, present... **LEAVE, NOW!**

EXT. BRODESS FARM - MOMENTS LATER

Minty heaves the ax from the wood with a gasp. She looks around her, panicked...

In the distance, the overseer, Foxx, approaches, shading his eyes against the blinding sun... Minty drops the ax and edges behind the shed. She runs, skirting the outbuildings. She can see Foxx, searching for her...

Minty evades him, tearing up a path, colliding with--

JOHN. He holds her, pulling her out of view. She clings to him.

MINTY

John! Johnny... I gotta go! I gotta go
right now!

JOHN

I know. We goin'.

She looks up at him, confused. He pulls a crumpled auction notice from his pocket - *Negro For Sale*.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm coming with you.

She touches his face and lips, shaking her head.

MINTY

John, you free. Dey catch you, dey gon'
take your freedom. I cain't live wit
dat.

JOHN

You won't make it alone, Minty. Who gon'
protect you, you fall into one a them
spells? Who's gon' be there when you
wake up? You need me.

Minty seems to consider this. She kisses him hard.

MINTY

Wait for me by de gate. I'm gon' say
goodbye to my mama.

(CONTINUED)

John nods. He presses her close.

JOHN

We be alright. Hear me? Jes hurry.

He kisses her again and dashes off. Minty watches him.

EXT. BRODESS FARM - LATE AFTERNOON

From behind a barn, Minty peeks out as...

The slaves finish their work. Rit rubs her back, sighing at the rising moon. The air flickers with dragonflies and moths. Minty begins singing, emotionally....

MINTY

*I'm sorry I'm going to leave you,
Farewell, oh farewell;
But I'll meet you in the morning...*

MINTY'S VOICE floats to the slaves in the fields. Rit is unnerved by her daughter's choice of song, she looks around for her as the other slaves join in...

MINTY & SLAVES

*Farewell, oh farewell!
I'll meet you in the morning, I'm bound
for the promised land!
On the other side of Jordan, Bound for
the promised land!*

Foxx, reassured by the sound of her voice, searches for the source of it, but by now all the slaves have taken up the song, obscuring her.

Minty ducks towards the cabins.

INT. ROSS CABIN - CONTINUOUS

SINGING continues as Minty throws a few items into a cloth and ties it to her waist, tucking a knife into the makeshift belt. A pair of worn shoes are side by side near her mother's pallet. Minty takes the shoes and puts them on her bare feet. With the knife, she draws a heart in the dirt floor where the shoes were.

EXT. BRODESS FARM - EDGE OF PROPERTY

SINGING continues as Minty sprints to the edge of the path, where she sees...

(CONTINUED)

JOHN, half-hidden in the trees near the gate, waiting for her anxiously.

Eyes shining with tears, Minty wrenches her eyes away from him and takes off, in the opposite direction.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Minty runs lightly through the woods as the moon rises.

EXT. BRODESS FARM - EDGE OF PROPERTY - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER

John comes out of his hiding place and scans the growing darkness for Minty, chest tight with worry. He heads back towards the gate. We hear HORSE HOOVES approaching...

John is trapped with no place to hide as Gideon rides up.

GIDEON

What you doing here, John? We don't want your kind here!

John raises his hands, submissively.

JOHN

Come to kiss my wife, is all, suh. Sho is hard not bein' able to see her.

GIDEON

You better get used to missing her, John. In fact, if I was you, I'd find another wife. Now git yourself back to Thompson's Mill.

JOHN

(bristling)
Yes, suh.

John turns and starts away, holding his breath. He walks a few paces...

We hear the thunder of hoofbeats as Foxx rides up, on horseback.

FOXX

Gideon!

GIDEON

What is it?

FOXX

Minty! She gone!

(CONTINUED)

Gideon raises his gun, aiming at John's back.

GIDEON
Stop right there, nigger!

John turns around. Gideon and Foxx corner him.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
Where is she? Where's Minty?

JOHN
I tol' you, I was just comin' to see her--

Gideon takes his riding crop and STRIKES him across the face. John falls to the ground, blood in his eyes.

EXT. THOMPSON'S MILL - POPLAR NECK - NIGHT

A mill by a man-made waterfall, surrounded by stacks of lumber.

Minty skirts around it towards a scattering of small cabins.

INT. THOMPSON'S MILL - BEN'S CABIN - NIGHT

The modest cabin is decorated with wood carvings and hand-crafted figurines. Ben takes off his boots painfully. He rubs his knees.

There's a knock; Minty's face at the window. Ben glances up, then immediately turns away. He opens the door, avoiding her face.

BEN
Don't wanna look at ya. Wanna say I ain't seen ya. I can see your heart.

MINTY
Daddy, dey gon' sell me down river, where nobody come back from. I gotta run.

Ben turns away, packing a small sack with biscuits and yams.

BEN
Listen here, gurl - you go to Rev Green church, ask him to pray for your journey.

(CONTINUED)

MINTY

But... Reverend Green always preachin'
obedience...

Ben turns to her sharply, still avoiding her face.

BEN

Do what I say. Go to Rev Green church,
ask him to pray for your journey.

MINTY

Yes, daddy.

He hands her the sack, then goes to a shelf where small figures of his wife and children have been lovingly crafted from wood. He picks up the one of himself and presses it into her hand. Her hand covers his. They stand there a moment, hands clasped together.

BEN

Just know I'll be with you.

MINTY

I love you, daddy.

BEN

I love you too.

A sob is stuck in his chest, the strain of not looking at her proving too much for him.

BEN (CONT'D)

Go on, then.

Minty tucks the figure into her pocket and kisses him. She walks out the door...

EXT. BEN ROSS'S CABIN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

BEN

Minty!

Ben steps out, points in the sky towards the Big Dipper.

BEN (CONT'D)

Don't forgit the Big Dipper. Pointer stars in the cup point directly to the North Star. Follow the North Star.

MINTY

Yes, daddy. I love you.

(CONTINUED)

Minty turns and runs. Ben stands silhouetted in the doorway, eyes dropping to the earth.

EXT. WOODS - POPLAR NECK - LATER

Minty runs, using the stars to get her bearings...

EXT. REV. GREEN'S CHURCH - NIGHT

Minty approaches a clearing in the woods. Rock formations, marking the graves of slaves and freedmen, cast shadows in the moonlight. A small wood building with a rough hewn cross rises beyond the graves.

The church is dark. Minty tries the door. It's bolted shut. She bangs on it... We hear noises from inside.

REVEREND GREEN (O.S.)
Who is it?

MINTY
Minty, Ben Ross's daughter.

Rev Green opens the door and pulls her in quickly.

INT. REV. GREEN'S CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

He bolts the door behind them. It's dark in the church and Green is in a dressing gown.

REVEREND GREEN
Girl, what are you doing out here alone at this hour? Have you lost your mind?

MINTY
My daddy say ask you to pray for my journey.

There's a shift in Rev Green's demeanor. He lights candles.

REVEREND GREEN
You the one wit the spells?

MINTY
...Yes, suh.

He turns to her, the candle illuminating his skepticism.

REVEREND GREEN
And you intend to run.

(CONTINUED)

MINTY

Dey gon sell me south, way from my
husband an family...

REVEREND GREEN

Which means they motivated. You money ta
them. Unless word spreads you run off,
then you damaged goods. They'll make you
pay for that - beat you, hobble you, or
worse. You go alone, you got a hare's
chance in a fox grove. If the slavers
don't get you, timber wolves and
copperhead will. Can you even read,
child?

Minty shakes her head. He sits her on a bench and sits
beside her.

REVEREND GREEN (CONT'D)

Maybe nobody noticed you gone. Maybe
you can sneak back 'fore daylight.

Minty looks up at him, suddenly fierce.

MINTY

I ain't goin' back. I wan' be free!

The power of the words stuns Minty - words never spoken. The
reverend nods solemnly. His manner businesslike.

REVEREND GREEN

There's not much time. It's near
midnight. You must be miles away from
here by dawn. I need you to remember
what I tell you. Can you do that?

Minty nods, determined, trying not to be overwhelmed.

REVEREND GREEN (CONT'D)

Fear is your enemy. Trust in God.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Minty runs through the woods. She stumbles, picks herself up
and runs again.

REVEREND GREEN (OVER)

Keep the Choptank River to your left and
the North Star ahead. If there are no
stars, just keep following the river. If
you can't see the river - listen for it.
You know moss grows where its dark and
wet - wet points to the water.

(CONTINUED)

Above the trees we see the Big Dipper. Beyond it, the North Star. A river glitters in the moonlight.

REVEREND GREEN (OVER) (CONT'D)
Follow the Choptank to its headwaters in Delaware. When the river splits, cross the rushing creek to your left and head straight North.

Minty squats peeing. The moon's reflection is caught in a brackish pond. The woods are alive with sound.

REVEREND GREEN (OVER) (CONT'D)
In a few day's time the Delaware River will be on your right. Follow it to Wilmington, look for a blacksmith and iron merchant named Thomas Garrett. I'll send him word.

She finishes and takes off again, running lightly over tree roots and fallen limbs.

REVEREND GREEN (OVER) (CONT'D)
May God be with you!

EXT. THOMPSON'S MILL - NIGHT

ON BEN - mournful and sincere.

BEN
I ain't seen her, suh. Ain't looked on my daughter's face since Massa Brodess run us off.

Gideon and Foxx face Ben and his boss, the owner of the estate, A.C. THOMPSON, 50s. John stands bleeding between them, face split from the whip. Gideon is irate.

GIDEON
Is that so?

A.C. THOMPSON
Ben's an honest nigger, Gideon. He says he ain't seen her, he ain't.

Gideon approaches John, full of menace.

GIDEON
This one knows something. Caught him sniffin' round the cabins just when Minty ran off.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

I tol' you, I ain't seen her!

Thompson steps between them.

A.C. THOMPSON

Nephew, this is uncalled for! These men are my respected workers! I will not have them further injured!

The two white men face off, Thompson richer and more powerful, Gideon a head taller and decades younger.

GIDEON

If your niggers helped my slave escape, I'm holding you responsible. So if you don't want me taking this personal, *uncle*, why don't you send some of your men to help me bring her back?

Gideon and Thompson glare at each other.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Minty lies asleep on a bed of pine needles, hidden against a ridge. Suddenly she's jarred awake by a tidal wave in her soul...

A PRAYING MANTIS seems to be looking at her intently. We hear *THE VOICE: QUIET. DANGER.*

We hear DOGS and VOICES... Minty doesn't dare move...

A PATROL of men on horseback, approaching. We hear GIDEON'S VOICE.

GIDEON (O.S.)

Morris, you and Butch stay to the roads, Foxx and me will take the woods.

The men split off. A SLAVE with hounds on a leash leads Gideon and Foxx deeper into the woods, away from her...

Suddenly the dogs seem to catch a scent and go veering in her direction--

ON MINTY - Frozen. If she moves, she risks being seen. But she can't wait for the dogs...

Minty takes off, tearing through the woods, pursued closely by the dogs, only 50 yards behind her.

(CONTINUED)

Gideon and Foxx ride after the dogs, the horses picking their way through the overgrown woods with difficulty.

FOXX

They got a scent!

WE FOLLOW MINTY - as she plows through thickets of trees, branches slapping her face and arms. She trips over the carcass of a possum. She picks it up and hurls it away from her, sliding painfully into a ravine.

She dives under a fallen tree, disturbing a SNAKE, which unwinds itself from a branch above her head and dangles face to face. Minty tries to control her terror as the dogs pass close, going after the dead possum.

HORSES' LEGS, follow, jumping the ravine. Minty keeps her eyes on the snake as she edges out of her hiding place. She runs, in the opposite direction.

EXT. WOODS' EDGE - DAWN

Minty catches her breath at a tree line, an enormous clearing before her. The North Star shines ahead, faint in the growing light. We can hear the dogs barking behind her, back on her scent. She steels her nerve and runs--

Dashing across the open space, a dark, small figure against the graying landscape. She races for the distant tree line.

EXT. TREE LINE - MINUTES LATER

Minty looks back. The wide expanse is clear... then we see the tiny figures of the dogs, followed by Gideon and Foxx, with lanterns, converging with the men from Thompson's Mill. They ride towards her, then separate, hoping to head her off.

Minty peels the shoes from her bloody feet and rubs her skin and shoes with spruce pine, trying to cover her scent. We hear the dogs, barking in the distance. Minty runs...

EXT. CREEK, BRIDGE - MORNING

Minty drags herself forward, exhausted. She comes to a bridge over a fast moving creek. Minty hesitates...

(CONTINUED)

We hear HORSES AND DOGS.... She dashes across, looking behind her as--

BUTCH and MORRIS, two dangerous looking white men, converge with the dogs on horseback. Minty sprints away from them, but stops short when--

GIDEON appears with Foxx the other side, also on horseback.

GIDEON

Minty, you devilish girl.

Minty eyes the churning water below, the Thompson's Mill men advancing slowly from the other side. Gideon gestures for them to halt. He dismounts, inching towards her.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

C'mon back peaceful. Your family's worried about you. Your mama's crying, your sister too. C'mon home.

Minty's eyes flick to the water and back to Gideon. He stops, a few paces away.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

You thinking bout jumping? Suicide's a sin against God - you know that. Against those that own you too.

Minty climbs onto the rail. Gideon inches closer. He leans on the rail, several feet away, speaking casually.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

I've decided not to sell you after all, Minty. You been there all my life - I'd miss your ugly face. I'm gonna have to hurt you a little, to teach you a lesson. But it wont be too bad, long as you come back gentle. C'mon home, Minty.

Minty looks him dead in the eyes.

MINTY

I'ma be free or die!

In the blink of an eye, she thrusts herself off the rail, into the churning water below.

The patrol converges on the bridge. Gideon watches in horror as the current pulls her away and under.

GIDEON

Goddamnit, Minty!!!

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

Gideon, Foxx and the dogs search the river's edge. Down river, Morris shakes his head and draws a hand across his neck. She must be dead.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DOWNSTREAM - AFTERNOON

Minty wakes, sprawled at the edge of the river bank. She pushes onto her hands and knees, vomiting water. After a moment, she crawls to her feet. Her shoes are gone, along with her head wrap, the knife, everything but her tattered dress, which hangs indecently from her battered body.

She searches frantically in her pocket for the figurine of her father, giving a sob of relief when she finds it. Barefoot, hair wild, she trudges off.

EXT. FARMLAND - MARYLAND-DELAWARE BORDER - LATE AFTERNOON

Minty runs through wide open farmland, exposed in the afternoon light, searching desperately for a place to hide. She sees...

A FARM HOUSE in the distance. Another across the road, field-hands with the cattle, slaves working the fields.

Minty sees a farm cart, covered with a tarp. She sprints towards it...

EXT. FARM CART - SAME

The cart is piled high with wheat and hay. Minty crawls beneath the tarp and tucks herself between bales of hay.

She rests. Her breathing slows, her eyes closing...

EXT. FARM CART - PRE-DAWN

ON MINTY - She opens her eyes. The cart is moving! Minty peeks from underneath the tarp...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

MINTY'S POV - The farm cart bumps along a country road, passing...

(CONTINUED)

SLAVE CATCHERS, heading the opposite direction... THREE RUNAWAY SLAVES tied together in the back, passing close enough to see their despair.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - JUST BEFORE SUNRISE

The cart stops. Minty peeks from underneath the tarp...

The farmer dismounts. He looks up at the stars. He speaks softly, almost to himself.

FARMER

I know you're there. I'm heading to market, just up the road. Best get out now.

Minty jumps from the wagon and darts into the trees. She watches as the farmer climbs on his horse and drives off.

The sky breathes with dawn's first light. Minty finds the North Star and runs.

EXT. DELAWARE - RIVERFRONT - DAY

The sky is just clearing after a downpour. Minty is soaked and shivering, hiding at the corner of a tavern near a sparsely populated stretch of waterfront.

MINTY'S POV - A WHITE COUPLE kiss in front of the tavern, 20 feet away. Minty looks past them to...

A BLACK BOAT WORKER docking his skiff.

As the couple moves off, Minty makes a dash for the river, approaching the black boatman.

MINTY

Suh... You know a blacksmith round here, name of Garrett?

The boatman, JASPER MARLEY, looks down at the tiny figure in the drenched, torn dress. He quickly whips off his rough cloak and throws it around her shoulders.

JASPER

Careful, girl. You half dressed, look half dead. Anyone with eyes can see what you are. The man you looking for is on the corner of 4th and Shipley. No more than half a mile west.

(CONTINUED)

Minty pulls the cloak around her. It drags the ground. She looks up into the sailor's rough, worried face.

MINTY

Thank you, suh.

She staggers off. Jasper watches with concern.

INT./EXT. GARRETT HOUSE AND SHOP - SHIPLEY STREET

THOMAS GARRETT, a youthful and robust white man in his fifties, dressed plainly in the manner of the Quakers, polishes a set of fire irons, an assortment of ironworks on display around him.

He hears a rustling and looks up, jumping as he sees Minty, shrouded in the dripping cloak, like death itself.

GARRETT

May I help thee, friend?

MINTY

Suh... You know a Negro name Reverend Green?

GARRETT

Yes, I do. I've been waiting for thee.

Minty collapses.

INT. GARRETT HOUSE - BEDROOM - EVENING

Minty wakes in a strange bed in a plain room. She's in her underclothes. She sits up, alarmed...

Across the foot of the bed is a plain chocolate brown dress.

On a table next to her bed sits her father's CARVED FIGURINE.

INT. GARRETT HOUSE - CORRIDOR - MINUTES LATER

MINTY'S BARE BANDAGED FEET pad down a corridor. The dress is too short and comes high above her ankles. She hears voices below and tentatively starts downstairs.

INT. GARRETT HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Thomas Garrett sits at the head of a long table, laden with food. His wife, RACHEL GARRETT, looks up as she sees Minty. She's very plain, with a kind smile.

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL GARRETT

I couldn't mend your dress I'm afraid. T'was too far gone. What you're wearing was our Amy's favorite. She's with the Lord, and has no use for it. But she would approve. I found something in the pocket of your dress which I put by your bed. It looked important.

MINTY

Thank you.

Minty looks at them, timidly. They're both emotional.

THOMAS GARRETT

Well. Come down. You must be hungry.

INT. GARRETT HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - LATER

Minty sits at the table with Rachel and Garrett. Garrett is holding forth, while Rachel watches him, indulgently.

THOMAS GARRETT

You're not the first to sit at our table, confused and hungry - far from it! Helping fugitive slaves is my divine duty and my life's work. Why, I almost lost this house just last year, when I was sued in federal court for aiding slaves. After being tried, convicted and heavily fined, the judge asked me if I'd learned my lesson. I said to the court. "If thee knows of any slave who needs assistance, send him to me, for I now pledge to double my diligence in assisting slaves to freedom!"

He laughs robustly. Rachel smiles and pats his hand. He takes a bite of pork, peering at Minty, bright-eyed.

THOMAS GARRETT (CONT'D)

So tell me, friend, how did thee find the courage to come all this way alone?

MINTY

T'was de Lord. I think God wan' me be free.

THOMAS GARRETT

My dear child, I believe that God means all mankind to be free.

Minty looks at him in wonder.

(CONTINUED)

MINTY

Suh... you a saint?

THOMAS GARRETT

No, friend. I'm a Quaker.

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA BORDER - SUNRISE

A horse-drawn carriage drives across a broad plain as sunrise tinges the horizon pink and gold.

Garrett drives the horses, wearing the broad-brimmed hat and cloak that distinguishes the Quakers. He brings the carriage to a stop, climbs down and opens the back.

Minty gets out, half hidden by a wide Quaker hat.

THOMAS GARRETT

Here we are, friend! The Pennsylvania border. Shall I drive thee across, or would thee prefer to walk into freedom alone, on thy own feet?

MINTY

(overwhelmed)

I'll walk with de Lord.

Minty gives him back the hat and cloak. She still wears his daughter's plain brown dress. He regards her fondly.

THOMAS GARRETT

Then this is where I'll leave thee. It's 25 miles to Philadelphia. Find the Pennsylvania Antislavery Society and ask for William Still.

He reaches in his cloak and presses a daguerreotype of a handsome black man into her hands.

Minty looks at it in wonder.

THOMAS GARRETT (CONT'D)

This is his likeness, so you'll know him when you see him. Until we see each other again, God bless thee.

MINTY

God bless you, suh.

A small sign marks the Delaware-Pennsylvania border. As Minty walks past it, the sun rises, bathing the countryside in light. Minty looks down at her hands to see if she's changed. She spins around in the field, exuberant.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - STREET - DAY

The bustling city of Philadelphia. A carriage passes, revealing Minty. She looks around her in wonder.

BLACK VENDORS roast oysters, chestnuts and corn, or peddle matches and flowers to fashionable WHITES.

Minty feels conspicuous, fighting the urge to duck when whites look her way. She approaches a VENDOR.

MINTY

"Please, suh... I lookin' for de Pennsylvania Antislavery Society.

VENDOR

Corner of 5th and Arch Street, bout half a mile down.

He looks her over, realizing.

VENDOR (CONT'D)

(he lowers his voice)

Don't be afraid, there plenty of us here in Philadelphia. Walk like you got a right to, won't nobody pay you no mind.

Minty nods gratefully and continues on, trying to walk like she's got a right to.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY - DAY

PRINTING PRESS - A pamphlet is being copied.

WILLIAM STILL, 28, black and dashing handsome, carefully pulls a pamphlet from the press, the ink still wet. He hangs it up to dry next to others on a rack. The pamphlet is titled, *ANTI-SLAVERY REFORM*.

Minty enters. William peers through the pamphlets.

WILLIAM STILL

May I help you?

She checks the daguerreotype against the man in front of her.

MINTY

Suh, are you Mr. William Still?

WILLIAM STILL

I am. And you are...?

(CONTINUED)

MINTY

(she hesitates)

...A white man name of Garrett sent me.

A beat. William looks at her with clinical interest.

WILLIAM STILL

Please, have a seat.

William leads her to a chair by a desk. He disappears into a back room and returns a few moments later with a cup of water and a weathered copper case, from which he removes a marbled NOTEBOOK. He puts the cup in front of Minty and opens the book, dipping a pen in ink.

Minty drinks the water, gratefully.

WILLIAM STILL (CONT'D)

What is your full name and where are you from?

She hesitates. He tries to put her at ease.

WILLIAM STILL (CONT'D)

This book is full of fugitive slave histories. I keep a record of most of the slaves that come through Philadelphia. Some I have to find, most find me, as you have.

MINTY

My name Araminta Ross Tubman. Folk call me Minty. I come from Dorchester County, Maryland, farm of Edward Brodess.

WILLIAM STILL

Edward Brodess is your master?

MINTY

Massa Brodess dead. His wife, Miz Eliza, own me and my family.

WILLIAM STILL

Not you, not anymore.

Minty is quiet as she tries to grasp this concept.

WILLIAM STILL (CONT'D)

Where are the others?

MINTY

Weren't no others.

(CONTINUED)

WILLIAM STILL

You can tell me, Minty. I'm a friend.
Who did you escape with?

MINTY

I left my husband an family. T'was jus
me, an de Lord.

William takes this in, blown away.

WILLIAM STILL

You're... a brave and lucky girl, Minty.
I don't know if you realize how
extraordinary it is, what you've done.
By some near miraculous means, you've
made it 100 miles, alone, to freedom.
(collects himself)
Would you like to choose a new name, to
mark your freedom? Many ex-slaves do.
Whatever name you want.

MINTY

(thinking)
Dey call my mama Rit, but her name
Harriet. I want my mama name, and my
husband. Harriet Tubman.

We see the name, *Harriet*, as he writes it in his book. **From
now on, we will call her Harriet.**

WILLIAM STILL

Very good. So, tell me, Harriet, how
would you characterize your master? What
kind of man was he?

HARRIET

He de devil. Most whites I know is
devilish.

WILLIAM STILL

Not all of them. Mr. Garrett just got
you to me.
(back to business)
Did your master ever hurt you,
physically? Do you have wounds? Scars
from beatings?

Harriet fingers the dent in her forehead.

HARRIET

Overseer crack my head open, when I was
bout 13. I was at the store, out at de
crossroads, with Massa's son, Gideon.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Gideon an me was companions when we was young, and I was strong, and could carry a 40 pound bag a rice, so overseer let me go.

Harriet frowns, lost in the memory. William watches her, pen hovered over his book.

HARRIET (CONT'D (CONT'D)

My big brother, Robert, snuck off and followed us - din' trust Massa Gideon lone in de woods wit me. I tol' him to go back, but he wouldn't leave me. Few minutes later, overseer bust in, lookin' for 'im - mad as a rabid hound. Robert - he a proud boy - he stand up to 'im, say his piece. Overseer got so mad, he pick up a weight from the counter an hurl it at my brother... 'cept I stepped 'tween 'em. Crack my skull right open.

She fingers the scar. William is spellbound.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Dey say I slept most 2 month. Next thing I 'member, I was seeing my sisters sold.

FLASHBACK VISION -

The same image we've seen before - Harriet's sisters, LINAH AND SOPH, faces twisted in anguish, as they are forced into a slaver's carriage. Now we see YOUNG GIDEON, armed with a rifle, helping load them in. HORSES'S HOOVES pound, carrying them away.

INT. PHILADELPHIA SLAVERY SOCIETY - BACK TO SCENE

HARRIET

Cept I saw it before it happen.

WILLIAM

(confused)
Before it happened.

HARRIET

God showed me, to prepare me I guess. But when it happen, it hurt so bad, worse den any beating, worse den de hole in my head. Hole in my head jus made God's voice more clear.

(CONTINUED)

William is stunned. He makes a note in his book: *possible brain damage*.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET - AFTERNOON

William walks Harriet through town. He walks with confidence. Harriet, still resisting the urge to duck, looks at the whites around her, mystified.

HARRIET

How you tell de angels from de devils,
when dey walking in de street, side by
side?

WILLIAM STILL

Well, often you can tell immediately, by
how they look at you. But sometimes you
have to use your intuition.

HARRIET

You mean, my top eye. Dat's what we call
it.

William looks at her, amused and a bit charmed.

WILLIAM STILL

Yes, your top eye.

Harriet looks at the whites, trying to see their souls.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET - ROOMING HOUSE - AFTERNOON

William and Harriet are walking through an enclave of black laborers and freedmen. They approach a modest rooming house and enter.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - AFTERNOON

William goes to a counter and rings a bell. Moments later, a beautiful and sophisticated black woman in her thirties, MARIE BUCHANON, comes downstairs.

MARIE BUCHANON

Mr. Still, good evening.

WILLIAM STILL

Good evening, Marie. This is a new
arrival, Harriet Tubman. Harriet, this
is Marie Buchanon. She is a friend and
the owner of this establishment.

(CONTINUED)

MARIE BUCHANON
Please to meet you, Harriet.

Harriet is shy in front of the elegant woman.

HARRIET
...Ma'am.

William and Marie exchange a look.

WILLIAM STILL
I am leaving her in your good hands,
Marie. Good evening, ladies.

William tips his hat and strides off, leaving them alone.
Marie looks Harriet over.

MARIE BUCHANON
C'mon in.

Marie leads her upstairs.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - AFTERNOON

A woman and two men play cards in a handsome parlor.

Harriet looks around at the fine furnishings, overwhelmed.
Marie watches her, amused.

MARIE BUCHANON
Yes, I am a woman, yes, I am Negro, and
yes, I own the place. Get your jaw off
the floor. My mama was freed when her
master died. She was pregnant with me,
so I was raised free, here in
Philadelphia. You can have the last room
on the left upstairs. I've served supper
already, I'll make you a plate. But
first, you need a bath. You stink like a
barnyard animal! There's a wash tub in
the kitchen. I'll put some water on.

Marie starts back downstairs.

HARRIET
You was born free. Guess you never had
de stink of fear. Of runnin' fo yo life.

Marie stops, turns back, chastened.

MARIE BUCHANON
(gently)
You're right, Harriet. I have not.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Marie carries a pot of hot water from the fire and pours it into a copper tub, already half-filled.

MARIE BUCHANON

I'll warm your plate. You need anything,
just let me know.

A folding screen separates the tub from the kitchen, offering a bit of privacy.

Harriet takes off the dress and underclothes and lets them fall to the floor. She catches her reflection in a piece of mirror. A map of scars, both old and new, covers her lean, muscular body.

Marie catches a glimpse of Harriet's body as she lowers herself into the bath.

MARIE BUCHANON (CONT'D)

You got a man?

BEHIND THE SCREEN -

Harriet sinks lower in the tub, delighting in the sensual warmth of the bath.

HARRIET

My husband, John. He free like you. He was gon run wit me, but I's scared if we get caught, dey take his freedom. So I left 'im.

She watches the dust dance in the fading light.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Now I wish he was here wit me. Must'a been hard on him when dey found me gone.

MARIE BUCHANON

The boatmen, the "black jacks," travel up and down the Delaware and Chesapeake Bay. Maybe they can get word to him that you made it. Then he can come to you.

Harriet brightens. She sits up, splashing.

HARRIET

Thank you, ma'am.

(CONTINUED)

MARIE BUCHANON

Call me Marie. Wash up good. Tomorrow
we gonna get you a payin' job.

Harriet grins at the thought. She soaps her hair,
vigorously. Then puts her head under the water.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SUMMER - 1850 - DAY

A BROWN HAND polishing wood until we can see reflected...

Harriet, in a maid's uniform, hair tamed, furiously cleaning.
Time has passed and she looks healthy and fit, but there's
something manic about the way she works, as if she's trying
not to think. A tear hits the polished wood. She wipes it
away.

A young black woman, JESSE, pauses outside the open doorway,
watching her.

JESSE

Slow down, Harriet. They don' pay us by
the bushel!

Seeing her mood, Jesse comes in and helps Harriet make the
bed, looking across at her with concern.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Come to the social tonight. You might
have fun. Would that be so terrible?

Harriet doesn't answer. Jesse looks at her, knowingly.

EXT. DOCK - AFTERNOON

Harriet hurries down a narrow street to the river. She's
grown more confident in her manner, no longer fearful. She
spots a boat worker she knows and waves...

It's Jasper, the black sailor she met in Wilmington.

JASPER

Hello, Miss Harriet!

HARRIET

Jasper! Any word from my family?

JASPER

Yes, ma'am. Brought some lumber from the
Eastern Shore. Your husband and family
know you safe.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET
My husband send word back?

JASPER
No ma'am. No word 'cept what I tol' you.

Harriet turns and walks away, crestfallen.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY - AFTERNOON

Harriet barges into the office, barely noticing...

The bustle of people, mostly white, engaged in various activities, passing pamphlets, signing petitions...

William, writing at his desk, looks up.

WILLIAM STILL
Harriet! How are you?

HARRIET
Mr. Still, I need yo angels to help git my husband an family.

WILLIAM STILL
That's not how it works, Harriet. My "angels" are part of a sophisticated network, not for your personal use. Trust that we are doing what we can, for who we can.

Harriet paces, wringing her hands.

HARRIET
But I feel somethin' wrong, William. I cain't sleep. Please help me!

WILLIAM STILL
Harriet, listen to me! Our work has gotten much more dangerous. Slaveholders are frustrated over the number of runaways. Federal judges, marshals and slave catchers are working together. Even congress is threatening to pass laws to appease the South.

He can see that he's lost her.

HARRIET
If you won' help me, I'll go myself.

William is losing patience.

(CONTINUED)

WILLIAM STILL

Don't be ridiculous. I can't have you risking your life and my network because you're lonely! Rescuing slaves requires skill and careful planning. Can you read a sign, or a map? Can you read at all?

HARRIET

I put my attention on tryin' hear God's voice more clear.

WILLIAM STILL

Do you know what would happen if you got caught? They'd torture you, til you pointed them right to this office! You got lucky, Harriet. Be grateful you made it this far and pray for those yet to come. There's nothing more you can do!

HARRIET

(erupting)

Don't tell me what I cain't do. I made it dis far *on my own!* God was watchin', but my feet was my own - runnin', bleedin', climbin', nearly drowned - nothin' to eat for days an days. An I made it! So don't you tell me what I cain't do. You don' know me!

William, watches, stunned, as she walks angrily away.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - NIGHT

Harriet is with Marie, having just shared her dilemma.

HARRIET

I made up my mind; I'm goin' back. Wit'out my husband an family, I'm just a stranger in a strange land. If I'm free, dey should be too. I'm gon go git em, one by one, starting wit my husband. I need a suit for him and a dress for me, so I can look like a free lady. Will you help me?

Marie goes to the window and looks out, troubled.

MARIE BUCHANON

I can give you a dress you'll likely be hanged and buried in...

She turns back to Harriet, having made her own decision.

(CONTINUED)

MARIE BUCHANON (CONT'D)
Or I can teach you how to wear it.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - PARLOR - DAY

Harriet is in a lovely dress and dainty shoes, walking with her head high. Marie leads her, extending her hands in graceful, ladylike gestures.

MARIE BUCHANON
How do you do?

Harriet imitates her carriage and gestures with surprising skill. She's a natural mimic.

HARRIET
How do you do?

MARIE BUCHANON
Good. You're confident, composed, but wise enough not to look a strange white man in the eyes. You don't want trouble.

Marie goes to a carved box and retrieves a COLT REVOLVER. She puts it in Harriet's hands, adjusting her grip from behind.

MARIE BUCHANON (CONT'D)
But if trouble comes, you'll be ready.

Harriet looks in the mirror. She aims the revolver, fierce.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

Off the city streets in a disreputable neighborhood.

MARIE BUCHANON (OVER)
I'll put you in touch with a man who'll sell you free papers.

Harriet moves slowly until an UNSEEN MAN whispers to her.

MAN (O.S.)
Hey gal.

She hands him money, he hands her papers.

(CONTINUED)

MARIE BUCHANON (OVER)
 They won't be yours - they're someone
 else's. May not match your description
 exactly, but they'll get something right.

Harriet pushes the papers back to him.

HARRIET
 Read 'em for me.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - AUTUMN - 1850 - DAY

A train chugs through farmland.

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

Harriet sits by a window in a car near the engine room as the
 train heads south. She clutches a satchel.

MARIE BUCHANON (OVER)
 Hopefully they won't read 'em too close.
 They're more worried about Negroes
 heading north. Runaways don't go south.

The train pulls into a station.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)
 Dover. Dover, Delaware.

Harriet puts her satchel across her shoulders and takes out
 her papers. She trembles as we follow her out.

EXT. DOVER STATION - NIGHT

Marshals wait to search northbound trains.

Harriet sees a group of recently captured RUNAWAY SLAVES in
 shackles. She tightens with fear. A MARSHAL approaches and
 she turns to him.

HARRIET
 Hello, suh. How do you do?

MARSHAL
 Papers.

Harriet gives him the papers, her back straight and her eyes
 below his chin. He eyes at the papers, then her.

MARSHAL (CONT'D)
 Dessa Dixon?

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

Yes, suh.

MARSHAL

Where were you born, Dessa?

HARRIET

Philadelphia, July 18, 1824, of free issue.

A deputy approaches. The captured slaves watch the scene unfold. Harriet sets down her bag.

MARSHAL

Says here you're five an a half feet tall. You ain't more'n five feet.

HARRIET

Musta worn my high boots that day.

She smiles. They laugh, unpleasantly. Behind Harriet's back, her hand grips the handle of the Colt revolver, which the slaves can see, but the marshals can't. The slaves watch, on edge.

MARSHAL

It says you have a birthmark on your forehead.

With her free hand she tips her hat back to show her scar.

HARRIET

That's correct, suh.

They look at her head a moment, then at the papers. A beat. The marshal hands them back.

Hiding the gun in her dress, Harriet takes them. As she walks away, weak-kneed, the slaves breathe a sigh of relief.

EXT. BRODESS FARM - DAY

Harriet's brothers, Robert, Junyah and Henry, are raking the fields, along with other slaves and their families, preparing for winter planting.

INT. BRODESS HOUSE - SAME

Gideon sits at a desk, writing, while Eliza dictates.

(CONTINUED)

ELIZA

Dear Dr. Thompson--No, dear brother-in-law... I hope you will accept this modest payment on the money owed you by my departed--my dearly departed Edward. It has not been easy for me with him gone. He left us in a sorry state of affairs, the depths of which we've only recently discovered. Since you have said you are not in a position to forgive the loan, please accept the enclosed \$7.50. I will try to make another payment next month. Your neighbor and sister-in-law, Eliza Brodess.

Gideon puts some bills and coins into an envelope.

GIDEON

We're gon' have to sell some slaves, mama.

ELIZA

Our stature in this community, is measured in negroes. We can't live like paupers. Who's supposed to work the fields - the twins?

GIDEON

Would you prefer to keep the slaves and sell the farm?

Eliza turns away from him, sullen.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

We'll sell the Ross brothers. Robert alone is worth 6-7 hundred. If we sell Junyah and Henry too, we can bring home maybe 16. That will go aways to paying off daddy's debts. You won't have to beg, the twins can remain useless and we can go on as we have.

ELIZA

With you unmarried and sleeping in brothels?

Gideon and Eliza exchange a loaded look.

GIDEON

We'll go on as we have. The others will just have to work harder to make up for the loss.

(CONTINUED)

A beat. Eliza gives a long, dramatic sigh, gesturing for him to begin anew... He takes another sheet.

ELIZA
Negroes for sale...

EXT. THOMPSON'S MILL - POPLAR CREEK - LATE AFTERNOON

Harriet stealthily approaches the estate where her husband and father work. She pauses beneath a tree, her excitement tinged with a sense of foreboding.

EXT. THOMPSON'S MILL - LATE AFTERNOON

Work is wrapping up for the day and Thompson's workers are trudging back to their cabins from the mill.

John says goodbye to his team and rests against a pile of lumber, exhausted. A VOICE floats to him from the woods.

HARRIET
I'm sorry I had to leave you...

Recognizing her voice instantly, John stands and looks around.

Harriet springs from the trees by the creek and throws herself into his arms. He clutches her in disbelief.

JOHN
Minty... Is it you!?

He pulls her out of view into the mill.

INT. MILL - CONTINUOUS

Both of them are awash in emotion, touching each other's face. She's changed since he last saw her, in proper clothes she has the bearing of a free woman.

John has changed also. She runs her fingers along the ugly scar down one cheek and across a clouded eye, where Gideon's strap made its mark.

HARRIET
Johnny, Johnny... What dey done to you?

JOHN
One good eye is all I need to see you, girl. You look good, Minty. But why you back here? It ain't safe.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

I come to git you, Johnny, bring you to freedom. I got a suit for you to wear... I been livin' free, in Philadelphia, but I cain't live without you.

He looks at her woefully. Fear grips her spine.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Ain't you happy to see me?

JOHN

I heard you was drownt, Minty. Never thought I'd see you again.

HARRIET

I sent you word... by de black jacks...

JOHN

By the time I heard you was alive...
(a beat; then)
Minty... I'm married.

She looks at him, confused.

HARRIET

I know you married, Johnny. You married to me.

JOHN

I took another wife, Minty.

HARRIET

You took another wife...

JOHN

Her name Caroline, and she free like me. She carryin' our chil'.

Harriet is floored.

HARRIET

Nother woman carryin' your chil'?
I thought you loved me!

Tears spill down her cheeks. He pulls her to him, trying to calm her, both of them crying now.

JOHN

Like I ain't never loved nobody, not my own kin! You left me, Minty. You went alone and left me and I prayed for you. Gideon whipped the sight out my eye - and I prayed for you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (CONT'D)

When I heard you jumped off that bridge,
and I thought you was cold and dead,
caught in the river weeds, like some
animal - I prayed for you!

HARRIET

Then you found another wife.

He looks at her, wretched. She pushes him away.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Go on then. Go home.

JOHN

Minty, you not safe here. You gotta
leave, now! Gideon still lookin' for
you.

HARRIET

So, de white man din' give up. You did.

He backs away.

JOHN

I love you, Minty. I would'a died for
you, if you'd let me.

He turns and strides out. Harriet takes a few ragged
breaths... She stumbles after him.

EXT. THOMPSON'S MILL - JOHN'S CABIN - DUSK

The cabin has a small vegetable garden in front. John washes
his face and hands in a basin by his stoop.

Harriet approaches, unseen. She looks in a window...

INSIDE - A lovely woman, round with child, puts aside her
work. Hearing her husband, CAROLINE glances at her
reflection in a bit of mirror, taking off her head wrap,
freeing her springy hair.

Harriet pulls the revolver, taking aim at her rival...

Then John walks into view, taking Caroline in his arms. He
holds her tight, letting her comfort him. Caroline kisses
away troubles, not asking their source. He puts his hands on
her rounded belly.

Harriet bends over her knees and vomits. She takes the
satchel from her shoulder and slings it hard against the
door. She runs, the revolver swinging at her side...

EXT. THOMPSON'S MILL - TREE GROVE - DUSK

Harriet runs into the grove of trees, reckless, consumed with anguish. She howls, devastated.

HARRIET

Why, Lord? I listen for your voice! You
tol' me come, I came! You led me back
here! Why bring me all dis way to rub
mud in my face? Why you let me live?

She contemplates the gun in her hand... The sound of insects grows louder...

Harriet arches backwards and falls to the ground, twitching in spasms.

HARRIET'S VISION - A RAVEN stands in front of her. She hears THE VOICE: **Harriet!**

EXT. BRODESS FARM - VISION

A strange dark cloud throws an eerie shadow over HARRIET'S BROTHERS in the fields.

EXT. WOODS - DAY - VISION

Harriet runs, FEET skimming the earth. Other BROWN LEGS follow; men, women, children...

EXT. ORCHARD - VISION

THE RAVEN looks at her. **LEAD THEM.**

EXT. THOMPSON'S MILL - ORCHARD - NIGHT

Harriet wakes and stands shakily.

BEN (O.S.)

John told me you was here.

BEN sits close by, back against a tree, kerchief tied over his eyes, Harriet's satchel at his feet.

HARRIET

Daddy...

He reaches for her and she pulls him to his feet, falling into his arms, heartbreak washing over her.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET (CONT'D)
Johnny don' love me no more.

Ben takes her shoulders, shaking her.

BEN
Minty, some things ain't meant to be.
But you here now is a miracle - I got
your brothers hidin' in the corncrib.
Miz Eliza fixin' to sell 'em.

Harriet is sobered by this, realizing the significance of her vision...

Ben hands her the satchel.

EXT. CORNCRIB - NIGHT

Harriet leads her father to the corncrib.

BEN
They been waitin' on Robert. Mary's in
labor and he won't leave her til she
delivers.

He unlatches the door and Harriet's brothers - Junyah and Henry climb out.

HARRIET
Junyah...

Junyah hugs her tight.

JUNYAH
Minty! Cain't believe it's you.

HARRIET
Henry!

Henry's face lights up as he joins in the hug.

JANE, a slender girl disguised as a boy, climbs gingerly from the corncrib. Junyah goes to help her.

JUNYAH
Minty... this my fiancee, Jane. From
Horatio Jones farm. Her massa been
beatin' her bad. She comin' wit us.

Henry helps a woman, PHOEBE, 20, with a baby in arms.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Phoebe asked to come too. She scared of bein' sol way from her baby.

PHOEBE

My husband pass last Spring. She all I got.

Harriet looks at the infant sleeping in Phoebe's arms.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

When I hear you made it to freedom, I name her Araminta. Maybe she see freedom too.

Harriet takes them in, overwhelmed. She looks at Baby Araminta. Phoebe is desperate.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

She'll be good, I promise. Your sister, Rachel, she stole Miz Eliza's laudanum, to keep her quiet.

HARRIET

Where is Rachel? Where my sister?

HENRY

Rachel too scared to run, Minty. She say Miss Eliza got a hawk-eye on her.

Harriet turns to her father.

HARRIET

And mama?

BEN

Rit wit me.

ANGLE ON - BEN'S CABIN in the distance, where they can see Rit moving slowly about inside.

BEN (CONT'D)

Miss Eliza let me buy her freedom. Ain't have much use for her. Rit ain't been right since she heard you drownt. Her heart would burst, she knew you was here, bout to run again, wit the boys. I'll take care of your mama. Don'chu worry bout us.

Harriet takes in the crew of fugitives, processing.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

I planned for one more, not all of you
and a baby too.

The baby stirs, face bunched in a scowl. Harriet looks at the infant, a stab of fresh pain fortifying her. She takes one of the baby's tiny hands. The baby looks up at her.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

But if you trust me, an follow my lead,
baby Araminta will grow up free.

BEN

It's late. You need to go. I'll send
Robert on.

JUNYAH

What if Mary don't deliver till sunrise?
He'll be caught and sold.

BEN

By sunrise, they'll be after you too.

This truth sobers them. Just then we see a dark form, streaking across the field towards them. Harriet runs to meet him.

HARRIET

Robert! Thank God!

ROBERT

Minty!

He lifts her off her feet, embracing her. The others surround him.

HARRIET

How's Mary? Tell us.

Robert is breathing hard, from exertion and emotion, making words difficult.

ROBERT

We got ourselves a baby girl. Delivered
myself, not an hour ago. Set her on her
mama's breast and kissed 'em goodbye...

Phoebe's baby gives a faint cry. Robert is overcome with emotion.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Mary's too weak from childbirth to run,
even if I could convince her... I had to
leave 'em.

(CONTINUED)

Ben reaches for his son's shoulder.

Harriet looks up into her brother's face, sharing his pain.

HARRIET

You had to leave 'em, either free or in chains. You chose freedom.

She hands him the satchel. Robert pulls the suit from the satchel and looks at her.

ROBERT

You come for John. I'm sorry, Minty.

Harriet shakes her head.

HARRIET

I thought I come for him... I see now I come for all of you.

Robert pulls off his shirt, revealing a profusion of scars on his muscled back, like a network of rivers.

BEN

Ain't but a few hours a dark left. If you goin', you need to go.

The siblings take a last look at their mother in Ben's cabin, wishing they could say goodbye.

EXT. THOMPSON'S MILL - MINUTES LATER

Harriet and her brothers lead their blindfolded father to the tree-lined edge of the field. Robert is wearing the suit. Ben hugs each of his sons. He kisses his daughter. She clings to him.

HARRIET

Come wit us daddy.

BEN

Me and your mama will be fine. I ain't goin' nowhere til all my children free.

He touches his daughter's face.

BEN (CONT'D)

Git gone, now. I ain't seen none a you.

Harriet leads the freedom seekers off, leaving Ben alone on the path. He waits until he no longer hears them, then he lifts the kerchief from his damp eyes.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The freedom seekers follow Harriet through trees. They approach a clearing by a body of water. The baby starts to cry. They freeze. Robert is instantly protective of the child.

ROBERT

She hungry. She gotta eat.

POV - The fugitives sit amongst the trees as Phoebe breast-feeds the baby. Someone is watching... We hear a scratching sound...

A DARK FIGURE crouches in the trees, gangly and nappy-haired, capturing the scene in a sketchbook.

EXT. REV. GREEN'S CHURCH - NEAR DAWN

Harriet and the freedom seekers approach through the graveyard. Robert is skeptical. He won't go further.

ROBERT

I don' like dis, Minty. Reverend say der a special place in Hell for runaways. I don' trust 'im.

HARRIET

You trust me?

Robert looks at her a beat. Begrudgingly, he nods.

Harriet knocks on the door of the church. A few beats later, Reverend Green ushers them in. He takes Harriet by the shoulders.

REVEREND GREEN

It's good to see you, girl. Heard you'd come back. Almost didn't believe it.

He hustles them into the sanctuary.

INT. REV. GREEN'S CHURCH - SANCTUARY - NEAR DAWN

Reverend Green and Henry move aside the pulpit, revealing a trap door underneath. Green pulls it up...

REVEREND GREEN

Go on. You'll wait out the day down there. You'll be safe.

INT. REV. GREEN'S CHURCH - CELLAR - CONTINUOUS

Harriet peers down. There's candlelight coming from below. We see FACES, peering up.

REVEREND GREEN
There's others. Word spread.

THREE SLAVES are huddled in the dark - a young man, ISSAC; his father, JOE, and Joe's mother, MIZ LUCY. They look up at her, eyes full of fear, uncertainty and hope. Harriet is overwhelmed.

EXT. BRODESS FARM - MORNING

We hear angry screaming. Slaves in the field look at the house with anxiety.

INT. BRODESS HOUSE - PARLOR - SAME

Eliza rages in her dressing gown, smashing plates and vases against the walls by Foxx's head. He ducks, resigned. Gideon watches his mother's tantrum, grimly.

ELIZA
FIND THEM, I SAID!!

FOXX
We will, ma'am.

The twins, Vince and Victor, rush in followed by Becky.

VICTOR
Ma, what is it?

GIDEON
We had five slaves run off.

ELIZA
5 slaves - over \$2000! This whole farm ain't worth but \$5000. We got a rat in our pantry, and it will starve us if we don't trap it and kill it! RACHEL!!

Rachel appears, holding a baby. A brown-skinned girl of four, ANGERINE "ANGER", trails behind her. Rachel quickly hands Anger her baby brother and looks at her mistress pleasantly.

RACHEL
Yessum.

(CONTINUED)

Eliza backhands her, sending her into the wall. Anger wails.

ELIZA
Don't you "yessum" me, you black bitch!
Your brothers run off!

Gideon grabs Rachel by the neck and pins her to the wall.

GIDEON
What's your part in this, girl?

RACHEL
I don' know nothin', I swear! I don'
even know what you sayin'! Who run off?

He tightens his grip.

GIDEON
I'll snap your neck.

RACHEL
(choking)
I... don'... know nothin'. I swear...

Gideon releases her. She slides down the wall.

He turns towards Anger and the baby...

GIDEON
Foxx, take these pickaninnies to market
and sell 'em.

FOXX
Yessuh.

RACHEL
T'was Minty!

Something like hope lights in Gideon's eyes. Almost tenderly, he takes the squirming baby from Anger's arms, turning to Rachel.

GIDEON
Minty's dead, you lyin' wench.

RACHEL
She alive. She come back.

GIDEON
You seen her?

RACHEL
I hear tell.

(CONTINUED)

FOXX

Niggers' tales. Like haints in the marsh. She's lying!

GIDEON

I hope it's true. Good Lord, I hope it is.

Gideon releases the baby into Rachel's arms. Anger runs to her mother, burying her face in her dress. Rachel clings to her children.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Foxx, round up some men and meet me out at Poplar Neck.

Foxx nods curtly and runs out. Eliza collapses into angry tears.

ELIZA

How could your father leave me with his debts and his mutinous slaves?!

Gideon goes to his mother.

GIDEON

Hush, Mama, try not to upset yourself. I'm gonna find 'em for you - Minty too. Rachel, give her a dose of laudanum for her nerves. I'll deal with you when I get back.

Rachel nods, terrified, thinking of the laudanum she gave Phoebe.

EXT. BRODESS FARM - MINUTES LATER

Gideon, on horseback, thunders toward the gate.

A BLACK YOUTH steps in his path. WALTER is gangling and nappy-haired, between 18 and 20, dressed in buckskin britches and work boots.

Gideon almost runs him over, his horse rearing.

GIDEON

What the hell is wrong with you, boy! Outta my way!

WALTER

You looking for some runaways, suh?

Gideon circles Walter menacingly.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

What you know about it? Speak up!

Walter pulls a beat up notice from his pocket.

WALTER

This here your notice, right? Runaway slave, short, strong, dent in her head.

He pulls out a sketch pad and hands it to Gideon.

There's a SKETCH of the slaves convening in the woods, another of Harriet - no longer the same slave girl Gideon once knew, but clearly recognizable as Minty.

Gideon looks up from the drawing, eyes burning.

GIDEON

Where'd you see her?

WALTER

Take you there, for a dollar. I'm a tracker, I know which way they headed, and I can help you find 'em.

GIDEON

A tracker, you say?

WALTER

That and lots more - artist, blacksmith, boatman, carpenter, fisherman, horseman... Got skills right down the alphabet til you get to scout and tracker. Work for wages though - ain't no slave.

Gideon pulls out his gun and aims it at Walter.

GIDEON

How bout you tell me which way they headed, or I shoot the nose off your face?

WALTER

East from Poplar Neck.

Gideon throws a coin on the ground. He spurs his horse and rides off. Walter calls after him.

WALTER (CONT'D)

I know Bigger Long!

Gideon pauses, rides back.

(CONTINUED)

WALTER (CONT'D)

Best slave catcher round - but hard to get, ill-tempered and expensive.

GIDEON

You know Bigger Long?

WALTER

We practically kin. Hangs out in places you wouldn't be seen, but I know where to find him.

GIDEON

Find Bigger Long and tell him to meet me at Poplar Neck. They'll be something in it for you.

Gideon rides off. Walter picks up the coin. He whistles and a black horse comes trotting out of the woods.

EXT. WOODS - POPLAR NECK - LATER

Gideon is waiting with Foxx and the men he's gathered for their patrol - a lean and leathery career patroller, ATWOOD, plus Morris and Butch, from Thompson's Mill, along with several hounds.

FOXX

How long we gon' wait for this nigger?

GIDEON

Bigger the nigger's worth the wait.

Just then, Walter rides up on his horse, followed by...

BIGGER LONG, a large, dark, scar-faced man, with hostile eyes and an unpleasant disposition. A THICK BLACK MUTT trots beside him.

Bigger looks at the group without speaking.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Last night, five of my best slaves run off; three bucks and a female, with foal. I will pay \$300 for their return, alive and unharmed. I want the girl that's leadin' 'em too. Don't want no harm to come to her by nobodies' hands but mine.

BIGGER LONG

I get \$200. They can split the rest.

Gideon gets in Bigger's face.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON
 \$200? What's an ugly nigger like you
 gon' buy with \$200?

BIGGER LONG
 Enough white whores to last me til Lent.

Gideon's eyes narrow. Everyone reaches for their guns. The air crackles with hostility. Walter crouches low on his horse. Bigger breaks into a wheezing laugh. The others chuckle dangerously.

GIDEON
 You better be good as they say.

INT. REV. GREEN'S CHURCH - SUNSET

Reverend Green lights the evening candles.

The doors of the church burst open and Gideon and his posse storm in. Reverend turns, appalled, as dogs rush into the sanctuary and Bigger and the men turn over the rough-hewn pews and benches.

REVEREND GREEN
 Master Brodess, what in God's name?

GIDEON
 You hidin' fugitives, reverend?

REVEREND GREEN
 Suh, you know me better than to accuse me
 so unfairly! The Gospel in my hands is
 an instrument to keep slaves righteous
 and obedient.

Bigger approaches the pulpit. He tosses the pulpit aside, revealing the trap door. He gives the reverend a nasty smile.

BIGGER LONG
 Boss...?

Gideon rushes over. The hounds circle the trap door, sniffing.

GIDEON
 What have we here, reverend?

REVEREND GREEN
 Storage for my books and a few dusty
 bottles of port.

(CONTINUED)

The others look on as Bigger pries the door open. Walter hurries down the narrow stairs with a torch...

The small storage room is empty except for stacks of books and a few dusty bottles of port.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

FEET running through woods, other brown legs follow...

Harriet leads the large band of freedom seekers, running as fast as their feet will carry them. Miz Lucy, stumbles. Issac picks her up, carrying her on his back.

The freedom seekers run, silhouetted against the moon.

EXT. WOODS NEAR RAILROAD TRACKS - NIGHT

The freedom seekers sit huddled in a thicket of wood, taking a moment's rest. Joe rubs Miz Lucy's back, Robert dozes, Phoebe nurses the baby while Junyah rips a strip of cloth from his pants to wrap Jane's bloody feet.

EXT. WOODS/ROAD - NOT FAR AWAY

Harriet peers through the trees to see...

Butch and Morris standing watch on the road, waiting.

Harriet retreats back into the woods. In the distance, we hear a DOG barking...

EXT. WOODS - TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

Bigger drives his mutt through the woods, hot on their trail. The dog digs at something on the ground. Bigger investigates... A bloody strip of cloth.

BIGGER LONG

Good boy.

EXT. WOODS NEAR RAILROAD TRACKS - NIGHT

Harriet runs back to the group.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET
Patrols got de road blocked!

ROBERT
You tol' us to go dat way!

HARRIET
Now I'm tellin' you we cain't.

JANE
I don't think I can go no further, Minty.
Feel like we goin' in circles.

JUNYAH
Ain't everybody strong like you, sister.

HARRIET
Somebody tell you escapin' slavery was
easy?!
(She looks at Robert)
If you strong enough to bear de lash, you
strong enough to run from it!

We hear Bigger's DOG bark. Robert jumps to his feet, pulling Phoebe up.

ROBERT
C'mon!

The fugitives get up and run.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - TIDAL STREAM - NIGHT

The freedom seekers stumble alongside a tidal stream bathed in fog, trying to keep within the sparse tree cover, moving as fast as exhaustion will allow.

Harriet and Phoebe run ahead with Issac and Henry, Robert carries the baby, Jane leans on Junyah, Joe carries Miss Lucy.

POV - THROUGH A SPYGLASS - The freedom seekers approaching in the distance.

ON WALTER watching from his horse with a spyglass. He rides off.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Gideon and Atwood are waiting with dogs and shackles. Walter rides up.

(CONTINUED)

WALTER

They comin' right to us! Bigger's driving 'em from behind. The other two got the road covered, ain't no place to go but right here.

GIDEON

We'll be waiting for them. Don't let 'em outta sight.

Walter rides off. Gideon peers into the gloomy night. A smile plays at his lips.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

C'mon, Minty... C'mon home.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - TIDAL STREAM - NIGHT

Harriet runs towards the bridge in the distance. She pauses to let the others catch up, breathing hard. Clouds race across the moon... light and darkness, darkness and light. The wind whistles...

POV FROM ABOVE - Walter watches from high in a tree as Harriet sinks to her knees, moaning.

Robert and Joe run up to her; Joe panicking.

JOE

What wrong wit her?

ROBERT

She prayin'. Minty peculiar dat way.

The others catch up, surrounding her. Harriet rocks and moans, in a trance. Joe looks at her in dismay.

JOE

What we s'posed to do, wait?! She our leader. Get her up!

He goes to grab her arm. Henry blocks him.

HENRY

Don't touch her! She talkin' to God.

We hear Bigger's mutt barking not far away.

PHOEBE

Dey comin'. We gotta go!

ABOVE THEM - Walter watches as...

(CONTINUED)

The clouds part briefly, bathing Harriet in moonlight. Her eyes open... She stands.

HARRIET

We cain't go on dat way. There's danger!

We hear the dog getting closer. The fugitives panic.

HENRY

God say which way we *can* go?

HARRIET

Left.

Harriet takes off toward the stream. The others follow, running full out behind her.

Walter climbs higher, keeping them in view.

EXT. TIDAL STREAM BANK - NIGHT

Harriet runs to the edge of the stream.

JOE

What now?

Harriet looks uncertain, maybe terrified. It seems there's only one choice.

HARRIET

We cross.

Harriet pulls up her dress, tying the skirt around her legs. The freedom seekers look at each other in dismay.

MISS LUCY

I cain't swim!

JANE

Me neither.

HARRIET

Robert, carry the baby. Issac put Miss Lucy on your shoulders. Junyah, you carry Jane.

JOE

Dis fool tryin' drown us!

ROBERT

Minty, you gone full crazy! We got an old woman and a baby with us. We ain't goin' in that river!

(CONTINUED)

Harriet pulls out the Colt revolver.

HARRIET

I say we are. You'll be free or die.

Hands shaking, she aims the gun at her brother.

Phoebe gasps, Jane cowers behind Junyah. Henry watches wide-eyed. Robert towers over his sister.

ROBERT

I didn't leave my wife and family to
drown like a rat! You wanna shoot me, go
head.

JOE

If she drown, who gon' lead us?

MIZ LUCY

She de only one know de way to
freedomland. I wan' see freedomland fo'
I die!

Robert glares at Harriet defiantly, turns to the others.

ROBERT

I'll lead you! Follow me. To the
bridge!

He starts away. The others watch incredulously as Harriet raises the gun over her head and calmly walks into the water. Henry watches her, holding his breath.

EXT. RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

The water is up to Harriet's armpits. The tide pulls at her. She prays to herself.

HARRIET

Rivers of living water flow through me.
Lord, lead me cross, take me through...

FROM THE TREE

Walter watches as Harriet continues across until only her head is visible. Just when it seems the water will swallow her up, she reaches the deepest midpoint... then slowly, she starts to rise. A few steps later, her shoulders break above the surface...

Walter exhales.

EXT. TIDAL STREAM BANK - MOMENTS LATER

The freedom seekers watch, incredulous as Harriet comes out on the far bank. Henry rushes into the water, followed by Jane and Junyah. Miss Lucy jumps on Issac's shoulders. Phoebe hands Robert the baby and wades in.

A few beats later, Robert follows, baby above his head.

EXT. NEAR BRIDGE - MINUTES LATER

Bigger, Gideon and Atwood converge on Walter.

GIDEON

What happened? You said they were heading right to us!

WALTER

I lost 'em.

GIDEON

You *what*?!

WALTER

They disappeared in the fog. First they was there, then they was gone.

Gideon slams his shotgun into Walter's face, knocking him to the ground. Gideon cocks the gun at Walter's head.

GIDEON

I've had about enough of you, nigger.

Bigger shoves the gun as Gideon FIRES - The dirt explodes next to Walter's head.

Gideon spits at him and walks away. Bigger gives Walter a kick for good measure.

EXT. TIDAL STREAM BANK - OTHER SIDE - NEAR DAWN

Harriet watches sternly as the freedom seekers come out on the near bank, soaking wet and shivering, but unharmed. Finally Robert strides out of the water.

The baby has slept through the ordeal. Robert hands her to Phoebe and faces his sister, sheepishly.

Harriet glares at him.

ROBERT

Minty...

(CONTINUED)

Harriet points to the baby.

HARRIET

Dis baby gurl, Araminta, you can call her
Minty. You call me Harriet from now on.
Dat's my freedom name.

She faces the group, fierce.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

I'm Harriet Tubman, leader of dis group.
We do what I say!

The others nod, chastened. Behind them, the stream seems,
once again, impassable.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY - DAY

William Still is absorbed in his writing when Harriet bursts
through the door, followed by the freedom seekers - all eight
of them, plus the baby.

William stands abruptly, looking at them in amazement.

Harriet looks back at him, quietly triumphant.

WILLIAM STILL

Are these...?

HARRIET

My family and friends, freedom seeking
slaves. I went down south an brought 'em
back. God showed me de way.

William is awed by her. He remembers his manners.

WILLIAM STILL

Please introduce me! Which one of these
fine men is your husband?

Harriet falls silent.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - EVENING

Harriet's brothers, Jane, Phoebe, her baby, Joe, Isaac, and
Miz Lucy sit at table laden with food, along with Jesse and
other rooming house guests, eating with obvious pleasure.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - WASHROOM - EVENING

Harriet is in the tub. Marie sits on a stool behind her, combing the knots from her freshly washed hair. Harriet stares into shadows.

HARRIET

His wife a free woman, big wit his chil'.
John din' wan my babies. Couldn't bear
de thought his chil'ren be born slaves.
Every time dey tried to grow, he'd go
cold an quite... and one by one dey died
in my womb.

MARIE BUCHANON

Harriet... you are so far beyond any man
I've ever met. What's a man to a woman
touched by God?

Harriet goes still.

HARRIET

You making fun a me, Marie?

MARIE THIBIDEAUX

Not whatsoever. But I do have questions.
You say God's voice guides you. What's
that like?

Harriet contemplates a beat.

HARRIET

Sometime it sting, like a smack in de
face. Other times it soft like a breeze,
gone before you sure you felt it. Like a
dream dat fly off soon as you woke. Seem
like I learn to see an hear God, like
some learn to read a book. I put all my
attention on it, and act, 'thout
question, 'fore I can wonder if I heard
it at all. 'Fore I even understand what
it mean. I thought God meant me to go
git my husband. But John was just a way
to steer me where I was needed. Maybe
God don't want me loved. That's why he
made me strong, not pretty. Truth is, it
probably would'a never worked, runnin'
wit John. Men need to believe dey de
boss.

MARIE BUCHANAN

Umhmm. Even the best ones think they're
smarter than they are. And better in
bed.

(CONTINUED)

Marie laughs. A brief smile tugs at Harriet's lip.

MARIE BUCHANAN (CONT'D)
Where's Mr. Still taking you?

Harriet shoots her a sharp look.

MARIE BUCHANON
I know, he's married, but that's a fine-
looking man!

HARRIET
I din' notice.
(beat)
He say he taking me to some kinda
meeting. Say he got folks he wanna
'quaint me wit.

Marie's interest is piqued.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA ALLEY - NIGHT

Harriet, once again well-groomed and looking smart, walks down a dark alley off the main street with William Still.

HARRIET
There I was, wit a suit, but no husband.
I felt a fool.

WILLIAM STILL
He's the fool.

For a second their eyes meet.

HARRIET
God have other plans for me, Mr. Still.

WILLIAM STILL
I'm starting to believe that. That's why
I'm bringing you here.

They come to what appears to be an abandoned warehouse door, guarded by a man, wearing a pistol.

Harriet looks at William, eyes questioning. Still nods to the guard.

WILLIAM STILL (CONT'D)
Good evening, Martin.

GUARD
Evening, Mr. Still.

(CONTINUED)

The guard opens the door. William leads Harriet into the darkened warehouse, past dusty kegs of wine.

INT. WINE CELLAR/MEETING ROOMS - CONTINUOUS

William leads Harriet down a narrow stair and into a series of rooms, well lit, with many candles fixtures on the walls and tables.

Inside is a bigger interracial crowd than Harriet's ever seen. It's mostly black men, but there are whites as well, some women too, conversing and socializing, as if it were normal.

Several anterooms lead off from the main room, stacked floor to ceiling with wine bottles. On one long wall hangs a huge map of the United States, showing free and slave states and the territory open to slavery or freedom by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise.

HARRIET

Who are these people?

WILLIAM STILL

This is the Committee. The organizers and officers of the Underground Railroad, dedicated to helping slaves escape bondage. No one sees this. Only the initiated.

Near the map is a blackboard, which reads: "CONDUCTOR -- PASSENGERS -- LOST".

Underneath are the names of the conductors written in chalk and the numbers. All the conductors have lost some passengers. Still writes her name on the board and puts down "9" and "0" lost. William quiets the crowd.

WILLIAM STILL (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, may I present, a most extraordinary woman, Mrs Harriet Tubman. Harriet escaped from slavery herself just a year ago, and she's already gone back to liberate others. She's brought back nine souls, and lost none. In recognition of her bravery and skill, I welcome her to the committee as a "conductor" on the railroad.

(CONTINUED)

Some applause and murmurs of approval from the Committee. The men size her up. It's a tough room. Harriet tries to process this.

WILLIAM STILL (CONT'D)

(low; to Harriet)

They don't necessarily like new members. You'll have to win them over. They'll learn to trust you after a few missions.

She eyes the men warily.

HARRIET

Question is, will I trust dem? What's a conductor?

WILLIAM STILL

A conductor accompanies passengers, or "cargo" to safe houses, or "stations" run by "stationmasters", like my friend Sydney Howard Gay, one of the main agents of the UGRR. Sydney, meet Harriet.

SYDNEY HOWARD GAY, a white man in his 50s, shakes her hand.

SYDNEY HOWARD GAY

Good to have you aboard.

An intense looking black man in his thirties with a wild mane of hair approaches.

WILLIAM STILL

Harriet, this is Fred Douglass, also from the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Welcome, Harriet, and congratulations.

HARRIET

Thank you, suh.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Call me Fred. After all, we're both fugitives from the eastern shore.

William brings her toward two bonneted Quaker women.

WILLIAM STILL

May I present Mrs Lucretia Mott and her sister, Martha Coffin Wright.

HARRIET

Hello.

(CONTINUED)

Martha gives her a conspiratorial smile.

MARTHA COFFIN WRIGHT

It's a pleasure to welcome a *woman* to the committee.

WILLIAM STILL

And I believe you've met Thomas Garrett, chief station agent in Delaware. He will be your main contact.

Garrett grabs her hand, warmly.

THOMAS GARRETT

Friend, it's good to see thee, and to know we'll be working together.

HARRIET

Good to see you, Thomas.

Still escorts her to a group of black men.

WILLIAM STILL

And these men are our chief conductors: Lewis Napoleon, who works closely with Sydney Gay; Moses Pinkett of Wilmington and George Wilmer, who is technically still enslaved in Kent County.

The men nod coolly. Harriet is fixated on George Wilmer.

HARRIET

You still a slave, when you could be free?

GEORGE WILMER

I find it easier to help the cause from the plantation. Massa trusts me; lets me come an go as I please. Calls me a "noble nigger."

He gives her a wicked smile.

WILLIAM STILL

George Wilmer is an "abductor."

HARRIET

Abductor?

WILLIAM STILL

Someone who steals slaves directly from the plantation, under the overseer's nose. They have the most dangerous jobs...

(CONTINUED)

A big, powerful black man approaches, full of self-importance.

WILLIAM STILL (CONT'D)

(low)

And the biggest heads.

(louder)

Harriet, meet John Clay.

Clay towers over Harriet, extending his hand.

JOHN CLAY

John Clay. 9 - not bad for your first time. I abducted 18 on my first run. Only lost two.

HARRIET

Who were de two?

JOHN CLAY

Pardon me?

HARRIET

Two you lost, who were dey?

JOHN CLAY

An old woman and a child. I don't know their names.

Harriet ponders this.

HARRIET

Shame. I hope never to lose one. But if I do, I'll remember they name.

Clay, offended, stalks off. William looks at her with respect.

INT. WINE CELLAR/MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

William Still, Garrett, Sydney Howard Gay and the conductors go over a map of the South and the slave states, showing slave density by county.

WILLIAM STILL

4 million enslaved black southerners who need to be liberated, but all we can do at the moment is help a few at a time, while fighting the bigger battle to end slavery.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

I need to get back to Bucktown to get my sister. We left her lone...

WILLIAM STILL

There are sympathetic captains and black jacks who will take you down the Chesapeake into Maryland, but it's far too dangerous for you to go back to Bucktown. We'll make every attempt to rescue your sister, but you must think beyond your family. You're a conductor now, with duties and responsibilities to the Underground Railroad.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Which is in danger of becoming the *upperground railroad*, if some of our well-meaning and noble friends continue brazenly touting their accomplishments.

Garrett takes offense.

THOMAS GARRETT

I'll make no secret of my mission to aid runaways! Why should I? It's God's work we're doing.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

While I applaud your noble daring and willingness to subject yourself to bodily harm by openly avowing your participation in the escape of slaves, I can see very little good resulting from it, either for you or for the escaping slaves!

As the group devolves into friendly bickering, Harriet turns back to the map, trying to make sense of it. She whispers to Martha.

HARRIET

Show me Maryland.

She points to it on the map.

MARTHA COFFIN WRIGHT

It's this strip right here.

She points to Philadelphia.

MARTHA COFFIN WRIGHT (CONT'D)

And here we are, in Philadelphia.

Harriet traces the short distance with her finger, marveling.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET
It look so close.

Behind her the bickering continues...

THOMAS GARRETT
How can we influence hearts and minds if
we're too timid to say what we're doing?

FREDERICK DOUGLASS
There's a difference between timid and
discreet, Thomas!

Harriet places her fingers over Maryland, making a silent
vow. William watches her.

EXT. JASPER'S BOAT - DAY - **MONTAGE SEQUENCE** -

A black crew of boat workers on deck, amongst them...

Harriet, dressed as a black jack, scrubbing the deck. The
seaman in charge surveys her work...

It's Jasper, Harriet's friend. He gives her a wink.

EXT. PLANTATION - MARYLAND - LATE AFTERNOON - MONTAGE

Slaves work the fields. We hear HARRIET'S VOICE in the
distance...

HARRIET (O.S.)
*Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt land
Tell all the Pharaohs to...*

Slaves in the fields join in, exchanging furtive looks.

SLAVES (O.S.)
Let my people go!

A few slaves dart off towards the wood.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT - MONTAGE

A group of ESCAPED SLAVES run through the trees following the
sound of Harriet's voice.

HARRIET (O.S.)
*When Israel was in Egypt land
Let my people go!
Oppressed so hard they could not stand...*

(CONTINUED)

SLAVES
Let my people go!

Suddenly she appears before them, confident and in charge. She empties a satchel full of shoes. The slaves dive at them. SINGING continues as...

EXT. WOODS - DAWN - MONTAGE

Harriet leads the fugitives running through the woods.

HARRIET & SLAVES (OVER)
*So the God said: go down, Moses,
 Way down in Egypt land
 Tell all pharaohs to
 Let my people go!*

DOGS bark behind them as...

PATROLS drive the freedom seekers towards a clearing.

The fugitives are breathless and exhausted. They seem to be cornered, the slave-catchers converging on them...

EXT. FARMLAND - DAWN - MONTAGE

Moments later, the freedom seekers have vanished. The posses circle each other, dumbstruck.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MONTAGE

The FARMER, unhurriedly closing up a salting pantry.

DARK TIGHT SPACE - The FREEDOM SEEKERS squeezed like sardines. REVEAL...

EXT. JASPER'S BOAT - DAY - MONTAGE

Harriet, dressed as a black jack, on deck with Jasper. He opens a cargo hold... Their human "cargo" emerges from below.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY - MONTAGE

Harriet comes in with her passengers. William Still tries to contain his relief. He and Harriet exchange a look filled with unspoken words.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY - MONTAGE

Harriet sits in a chair looking fierce and forbidding, as a PHOTOGRAPHER takes her photograph. William stands by, watching her...

INT. PENNSYLVANIA ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY - MONTAGE

THE PHOTOGRAPH of Harriet, framed. William looks at it, lost in thought. His beautiful, FAIR-SKINNED WIFE watches him. She puts a basket of food in front of him. He tears his eyes from the photograph and embraces her.

EXT. WOODS - MONTAGE

WANTED SIGNS for a "MOSES" go up everywhere, described as "likely a white male in blackface." Free blacks take them down.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY - MONTAGE

JUMP CUTS - FUGITIVE after FUGITIVE makes testimonials in William Still's office.

HANY

Massa's wife branded me wit a hot iron...

She shows him a scar on her chest.

MACK

...called me nigger like it was my name. Day I reminded him my name is Mack, he beat me senseless...

ABRAHAM

If I tol' her I was leaving, she woulda carried on so everybody know'd it... I couldn't say goodbye...

He dissolves into tears. William puts a hand on his arm.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY - ANOTHER DAY -

Harriet comes in with another group of passengers. William is flooded with relief. Before he knows what he's doing, he's taken her in his arms. They quickly pull apart. The fugitives look on, knowingly. **END MONTAGE**

INT. PENNSYLVANIA ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY - NIGHT

Harriet and William are alone, in mid-argument.

HARRIET

My sister's in danger! You tol' me you'd rescue her!

WILLIAM STILL

I said I'd try, and we have! She works in the Brodess house. She's been impossible to reach.

HARRIET

I can reach her!

WILLIAM STILL

I've told you, it's too dangerous to go back there. I forbid it!

HARRIET

You *forbid* it? Do you know who I am?

William sighs, with exasperated affection.

WILLIAM STILL

Harriet, these are dangerous times. Everyone is looking for you!

HARRIET

They looking for *Moses*!

EXT. BALTIMORE MEETING HALL - AFTERNOON

A large crowd of slaveholders, and lawmen are gathered on the steep steps. Tempers run high as the planters demand action. A mutton-chopped slave owner, GUS VERN, is speaking.

GUS VERN

What's going to be done about Moses?! This fiend is threatening our very existence!

SLAVE OWNER

They say he's black as the night!

GUS VERN

If he was a black, we would'a caught 'im. He's one of those white abolitionists in blackface!

Reveal Gideon, amongst the crowd.

(CONTINUED)

SLAVE OWNER

I don't really care what he looks like.
My family has personally lost thousands
of dollars worth of labor. Moses must be
stopped now!

INT. BALTIMORE MEETING HALL - DAY

Men in dark pants and expensive shoes, marching towards the
door...

EXT. BALTIMORE MEETING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A group of POLITICIANS in black coats and hats exit the
doors, and stand at the pillared entry. Everyone quiets in
anticipation as...

A LOCAL STATESMAN comes to the top of the stairs, waving a
telegraph in one hand.

LOCAL STATESMAN

I have the results of the vote in
congress, that you've been waiting for.
The Fugitive Slave Act has just been
voted into law!! From now on, nowhere in
these United States will a slave find
safe harbor! You are free to pursue your
property, with the aid and protection of
the law, wherever they may be!

Ecstatic CHEERING drowns out the Local Statesman.
Slaveholders throw hats in the air and smack each others'
backs. Now we see Gideon, standing amongst them. As the
crowd begins to disperse...

Gideon sees Bigger Long standing in an alley. Bigger jerks
his chin to Gideon. Gideon pushes through the crowd and
approaches.

EXT. ALLEY NEAR BALTIMORE MEETING HALL - AFTERNOON

Gideon joins Bigger.

GIDEON

Do you have news?

BIGGER LONG

A slave out at Vern's farm heard a rumor
that the gal that led your slaves off -
one you lookin' so hard for - is the
slave they call Moses.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

(he laughs)

Moses ain't a nigger and he certainly ain't no woman. He's an abolitionist in blackface.

BIGGER LONG

Or maybe she's a little black thing, bout so high, named Harriet Tubman.

GIDEON

I don't know no nigger named Harriet Tubman.

BIGGER LONG

What about Araminta Ross?

Gideon goes still. He stunned.

GIDEON

Impossible. There's no conceivable...

He falls into thought. Bigger watches him process.

BIGGER LONG

My price just went up.

GIDEON

Only if you find her.

BIGGER LONG

Hear she's hiding out in Philadelphia.

EXT. BRODESS FARM - DUSK

ON HARRIET, at the edge of the property, face infused with emotion as she looks at her old home.

Lanterns illuminate the windows of the big house in the distance. Stealthily, she makes her way toward it.

EXT. BRODESS HOUSE - EVENING

We can see Rachel and Eliza moving about inside.

Harriet hides in the bushes and watches as Rachel comes downstairs with a tray. She looks beaten and frail.

Harriet takes in her sister's fragile appearance with pain. She throws a pebble at the kitchen window.

(CONTINUED)

Rachel looks out. Harriet steps from the shadows. Rachel's eyes go wide. She backs away....

A few moments later, Rachel quietly opens the front door and slips out.

Harriet pulls her to the side of the house. They speak in whispers. Rachel is terrified.

RACHEL
Minty, why you here?

Harriet touches her sister's face, angry tears welling.

HARRIET
Come wit me.

RACHEL
Minty... Massa Gideon an Miz Eliza been full a the devil since you an de boys run off. Dey took my babies; won't tell me where dey be. Dey know I won't go nowhere t'out my chil'ren.

HARRIET
We'll find 'em, Rachel, I promise. My network will find 'em an bring 'em up north. But you got to come wit me now.

RACHEL
I cain't. I won't.

From inside, we hear Eliza's voice.

ELIZA (O.S.)
Rachel!

HARRIET
I ain't leavin' you.

Harriet pulls out the Colt. Rachel looks at it, defiant.

RACHEL
I ain't leavin' my babies. You try an force me, I'll scream.

ELIZA (O.S.)
Rachel!! Where are you? Get up here!

Rachel backs away from her.

HARRIET
Wait... What about Mary, Robert's wife? She still here?

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL

She found another man, Minty. He a slave at Luther Grant's farm. She stay wit him nights.

Minty is shaken by this. Rachel looks at her with wounded scorn.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Don't you judge her, Minty. Don't you dare judge us! We do what we have to do, to stay sane. Cain't everybody run.

Rachel turns and slips back into the house.

Harriet stands there a moment, devastated, then she ducks into the shadows.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Harriet is on her knees, praying.

HARRIET

Lord, I need you watch over my sister and her chil'ren till I can bring 'em to freedom. Protect her, Lord. Don't let 'em hurt her worse.

She rocks back and forth, in a religious trance.

Gradually she becomes aware that someone is watching her. She looks up to find...

WALTER, not far away. He's still got a scar over his eye, where Gideon hit him with the gun.

Harriet stands, gun raised. The two size each other up.

WALTER

You the one they call Moses.

HARRIET

You askin' me, or tellin' me?

WALTER

I want to offer my services.

HARRIET

What services those be?

(CONTINUED)

WALTER

I can do most any job, A to Z. Know the woods an rivers round here and most the folks in 'em. Name's Walter.

Harriet's eyes are unfocused, trying to see him with her "top eye."

HARRIET

Why should I trust you, Walter?

WALTER

Most folks definitely should not. I'll explain why you should...

We hear MEN'S VOICES, dogs.

WALTER (CONT'D)

But right now, we gotta go.

Walter whistles. We hear a whinny in the distance. A few moments later, the black horse comes running. Walter gets on and pulls Harriet up. They gallop off.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Walter and Harriet gallop through the trees. We see the flicker of lanterns, as patrols comb the woods. A vigilante FOOT PATROL is directly ahead--

Walter rides right through them, sending them diving out of the way. Harriet sticks out a foot and kicks another as they pass. Dogs run after the horse, barking.

FOOT PATROL

STOP THEM! THIEVES!

He aims a shotgun and FIRES. Gunshot rips into the trees around them. Harriet turns and FIRES back. They gallop on, escaping into the night.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

Harriet gets off the horse near the bank of a river. She gives a throaty owl hoot.

A RIVER MAN comes out of hiding and pushes his raft from the reeds. Five FUGITIVES come out of hiding behind him.

Harriet turns to Walter.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

So... why should I trust you?

WALTER

I just saved your life, not for the first time. I'd like to go on saving it.

HARRIET

What you want in return?

WALTER

Usually I work for wages, but I figure, since you talk to God - and seem like he talk back - maybe you could introduce us. I got some explaining to do.

Harriet grins. She looks up.

HARRIET

God, meet Walter.
(then; sincerely)
Walter, go wit God.

She jumps on the raft with the others.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - JASPER'S DOCK - DAY

Jasper docks his vessel. Harriet, disguised as a black jack, jumps from the deck. Several blacks crowd the dock, carrying their belongings.

A MAN calls up to Jasper.

MAN

This boat goin' north?

JASPER

Goin' back to Baltimore.

Disappointed, the man starts away. Harriet stops him.

HARRIET

Wait! What's got everybody so riled up?

MAN

They passed the Fugitive Slave Act! Save yourself!

Harriet and Jasper exchange a look of alarm.

JASPER

We have to head north now!

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET
Not without my brothers!

Jasper grabs her arm.

JASPER
Harriet!

HARRIET
Wait for me! I'll be back!

She pulls away from him and pushes through the crowd. Jasper begins pulling people onto his boat.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - STREETS

Harriet hurries through streets, which are a mass of confusion. Black families rush past with all their possessions in carts.

In the center of town William Still stands on a makeshift platform, with a group of abolitionists.

WILLIAM STILL
Fugitives, beware! There are slave hunters in our midst! Congress has passed the Fugitive Slave Act, allowing slave-hunters to pursue slaves in any state in the Union, and obliging law enforcement to turn over fugitives! Prepare to fight or flee north to Canada!

William spots her and jumps from the platform, fighting his way to her.

WILLIAM STILL (CONT'D)
Harriet! Thank God you're safe! I sent five men looking for you! You have to go north to Canada immediately. I put your family on the last train with Douglass. He'll get them to the border.

Harriet is weak with relief.

HARRIET
Thank you!

WILLIAM STILL
You must leave now. I'll arrange a carriage.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

I'll stay and fight. Long as my family safe.

Still takes her shoulders.

WILLIAM STILL

Harriet, your life is in danger. Brodess will come looking for you here. For the sake of the network, you must go!

Shaken, Harriet nods.

HARRIET

I'll be at the dock in 15 minutes. I have to say goodbye to Marie.

WILLIAM STILL

Hurry.

William moves back to the platform. Harriet watches, stunned, as a small MOB OF VIGILANTES storm the crowd, clashing with the abolitionists. It quickly becomes violent.

EXT. ROOMING HOUSE - DAY

Some THUGS have stationed themselves in front. Harriet ducks around back...

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - DAY

Harriet slides in a back door. We hear sounds of a violent scuffle, coming from upstairs.

Harriet pulls her gun and creeps up the stairs...

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - UPSTAIRS

MARIE, face bruised and bleeding, being held down by the huge figure of Bigger Long.

Gideon steps into view.

GIDEON

Just tell us where Harriet Tubman is.

MARIE BUCHANON

She's gone! You missed her. Heard she went south. But you won't catch her. She's too smart! God has plans for her.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

What plans are those?

MARIE BUCHANON

Wouldn't you like to know, cracker?!

Bigger slaps her hard, snapping her head. She catches a glimpse of...

Harriet, hiding around the corner, gun aimed at Bigger.

MARIE BUCHANON (CONT'D)

But she has to *live* long enough to do God's will. She knows that; she's smart.

Gideon glares at her. He shoots a look to Bigger.

GIDEON

She's not here. Let's go.

Gideon exits and runs downstairs. Marie glares at Bigger.

MARIE BUCHANON

What you waiting for, traitor? Massa hollared, better jump.

Bigger kicks Marie in the head - a deadly blow! As he thunders down the stairs...

Harriet takes aim and starts after him.

MARIE BUCHANON (CONT'D)

Don't make me a liar...

Harriet drops the gun down and goes to Marie. She strokes her face. Marie looks at her with one good eye.

MARIE BUCHANON (CONT'D)

God's got plans for you. Lead 'em...

HARRIET

I won't leave you.

With her last strength, Marie pushes her away.

MARIE BUCHANON

Go!

Marie falls back, dead. Grief-stricken, Harriet tears herself away from her friend and rushes out.

EXT. JASPER'S DOCK - DAY

Terrified black families crowd the dock, some with everything they own, others with nothing - uprooting their lives to move to Canada.

All the boats are full of passengers. William Still looks anxiously for Harriet as Jasper tries to block more frantic people from coming onboard.

JASPER
No More! We're full up!

A old man with a long white beard and striking eyes, JOHN BROWN, stands on a rise, preaching fire and fury.

JOHN BROWN
DO NOT RUN! STAY AND FIGHT! IN THE NAME
OF GOD, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE FREE!

Several ARMED MEN guard him, while his SONS and supporters hand out pamphlets to the crowd. His piercing eyes meet Harriet's.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
STAY AND FIGHT! GOD IS ON YOUR SIDE!

For a moment Harriet is mesmerized, wanting to stay and avenge Marie's death. She doesn't see...

Gideon and Bigger pushing through the crowd, elbowing their way to her--

William sees them and calls to her.

WILLIAM STILL
HARRIET!

Harriet turns and locks eyes with Gideon. He pulls out a gun... One of Brown's men slams into Gideon, smacking the gun in the air. It FIRES! CHAOS -- people duck and run.

John Brown's men face off against Gideon and his crew, shotguns raised.

William reaches Harriet and pushes her to the boat.

WILLIAM STILL (CONT'D)
Get on the boat! Now!

HARRIET
Marie... Those bastards killed her!

(CONTINUED)

Jasper pulls Harriet aboard, shouting to his FIRST MATE to set sail. As the boat pulls away, Harriet takes in the scene... The desperate faces of those left behind, John Brown's fury... William's stricken face... Her eyes meet Gideon's... Gideon tips his hat. It's not over.

EXT. BOAT - DAY

Jasper puts an arm around Harriet.

JASPER

It's alright. You safe now.

Harriet's eyes swim with tears. A pamphlet is clenched in her hand. It reads: *JOHN BROWN, ABOLITIONIST. JOIN THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM!*

EXT. BOAT - RIVER - DAY

As the sails catch wind and the boat speeds on...

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ST. CATHERINE'S - CANADA - DAY - 1851

A small rural enclave of displaced blacks and runaway slaves.

INT. ROSS COTTAGE - ST. CATHERINE'S - DAY

In the small, well-kept kitchen, 8 PIES cool on a counter.

Harriet takes a pot from the stove and pours hot fruit into a crust...

Suddenly she's seized by a formidable sense of dread. She collapses to the floor. The hot berry mixture splashes, staining the floor like blood.

As Harriet lies on the floor, a scene of tragedy playing itself out before her eyes, we hear REVEREND GREEN'S VOICE...

REVEREND GREEN (OVER)

Dear Harriet and family, it breaks my heart to write you with such sad news, but I am obliged to keep you informed about your family still in bondage.

INT. ROSS COTTAGE - LATER

Harriet sobs in Robert's arms, with Henry, Jane and Junyah nearby. Jane strokes her head as Reverend Green's voice continues...

REVEREND GREEN (OVER)

Your sister, Rachel, has gone to meet that good friend of the slave, the angel of death. I am content that she has found peace at last. I pray for her children.

INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

ON HARRIET, awash in grief, eyes turned inward.

REVEREND GREEN (OVER)

Yours with affection and sorrow, Reverend Samuel Green.

EXT. SEWARD ESTATE - AUBURN NY - 1851

Carriages arrive at the secluded estate in the rural and remote upstate town.

ARMED GUARDS greet the guests, both black and white. We recognize members of the Underground Railroad.

Harriet is helped from a carriage by a guard. She's dressed in all black, wearing her grief like a gilded mantle. It's become her superpower.

William Still rushes to meet her.

WILLIAM STILL

Harriet!

He embraces her deeply, holding her tight.

WILLIAM STILL (CONT'D)

I'm so terribly sorry about your sister.

The look in her eyes chills his bones.

HARRIET

I failed them, William. We failed them.

A silver-haired white man in his 50's, SENATOR SEWARD, hurries over to be introduced.

(CONTINUED)

WILLIAM STILL
Harriet, this is Senator William Seward.

SENATOR SEWARD
Miz Tubman, it's an honor to welcome you
to my home.
(taking her in)
My condolences. How can I help?

Harriet allows herself to be led inside.

INT. SEWARD ESTATE - MAIN HOUSE - DAY

The main floor is crowded with Committee members, including Douglass, Garrett, Sydney Howard Gay, Lewis Napoleon and John Clay, plus many abolitionists. Douglass greets her warmly.

INT. SEWARD ESTATE - MAIN HOUSE - LATER

The Committee stands around a map of the United States and Canada.

SYDNEY HOWARD GAY
500 miles from the Mason-Dixon line to
Canada - an unimaginable distance.

JOHN CLAY
Slave catchers are monitoring all the
northbound travel. God help the man
without free papers. I've read of
freedmen being pulled from trains as far
north as New Bedford and Boston.

WILLIAM STILL
How are we going to get our passengers
from the southern farms and plantations
all the way to the Canadian border?

The room falls into depressed silence.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS
We can't keep trying to outrun them.
John Brown is right. We have to fight.
The only way to make the Fugitive Slave
Law a dead letter is to make half a dozen
or more dead slave catchers! That will
cool their ardor!

WILLIAM STILL
Perhaps civil war is our only hope.

Harriet looks at them, incredulous.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

We cain't just give up and wait for war.
We gotta get back to work, bringing
slaves to freedom. By train, carriage,
horseback - by foot if necessary!

WILLIAM STILL

Harriet, it's 600 miles from Maryland to
the Canadian border. Your longest trip
so far has been 100 miles. It would take
months, not weeks. You can't--

HARRIET

I ain't givin' up rescuing slaves because
it's far!

She walks around the room, looking people in the eye.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Many a you don't know slavery first hand.
You were born free, or maybe you been
free so long, you forget what it's like.

She looks at Douglass.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

You got comfortable and important...

She looks at William.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

...You got beautiful homes, and beautiful
wives....

(she looks around the
room)

But I remember - chil'ren beat for not
workin', when dey too young to understand
what work is. Girls raped before dey
first blood. Brothers whipped, til dey
back in ribbons... Sisters sold way from
dey babies. Tryin' not to think a what
dey went through... What those still
enslaved are goin' through right now! I
have heard their groans and sighs, and
seen their tears, and I would give every
drop of blood in my veins to free 'em!

Harriet is on fire, enraged.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET (CONT'D)

So I ain't givin' up! I'ma do whatever I got to, go wherever I got to, however I got to do it - to rescue as many slaves as possible, til dis beast, dis monster call slavery is slain dead!

The crowd is shocked into silence. A beat... then they break into applause.

JOHN CLAY

If she can do it, I certainly can. My passengers await me!

THOMAS GARRETT

As do mine.

LEWIS NAPOLEON

Mine too!

SYDNEY HOWARD GAY

We'll have to establish a network through the northern states all the way to the border. It will take time. But it can be done.

Applause and shouts of renewed determination from the crowd. Harriet's eyes meet William's.

EXT. UPSTATE NEW YORK - 1853 - DAY

Harriet leads a group of exhausted passengers through rough and rocky terrain. It's gorgeous, but miserable.

A YOUNG WOMAN stumbles. Harriet pulls her to her feet.

HARRIET

C'mon, we almost there.

WIDE ANGLE - As Harriet leads the group across a rocky ledge.

EXT. SEWARD ESTATE - DAY

William Still gallops on horseback, fueled with urgency.

INT. SEWARD ESTATE - MAIN HOUSE

A meeting of the Committee is in progress. It's just the core group, mostly black, plus Senator Seward and a few hardcore abolitionists. William bursts in.

WILLIAM STILL
Where's Harriet?!

THOMAS GARRETT
Good God, friend! What is it?

Harriet walks into the room. William's relief is palpable.

WILLIAM STILL
John Clay has been captured in Maryland!

Everyone reacts, their worst nightmare come true.

WILLIAM STILL (CONT'D)
Harriet, they know your identity. Who knows what else he gave up. We must assume everything. We have to go dark while we assess the damage.

ON HARRIET pondering this.

HARRIET
Poor John...

William continues talking, but his voice is lost under the *eerie sound of insects...*

Harriet falls slowly, almost gracefully to the floor. The others surround her as she twitches and spasms.

EXT. SEWARD ESTATE - GUEST HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT

A more modest house on the property. Lanterns illuminate the windows.

INT. SEWARD ESTATE - GUEST HOUSE - NIGHT

William Still and Harriet are mid-argument.

WILLIAM STILL
When were you going to tell us?

HARRIET
I thought you knew.

(CONTINUED)

WILLIAM STILL

(exasperated)

That my star conductor has seizures? I did not! Good God! It's a miracle you're still alive.

(beat)

Well, it's over. With Clay captured...

HARRIET

...you need me more than ever.

WILLIAM STILL

Harriet, every slave-catcher in Maryland is looking for you. If they catch you, whatever they did to Clay, they'll do worse to you. You can't...

(catches himself.)

Senator Seward has offered you this home on his property, for you and your family. You'll be protected here. You can be a stationmaster.

HARRIET

I'm a conductor.

WILLIAM STILL

I won't have you captured and killed. I'm removing you from the network.

HARRIET

I got my own network. I'll team up with John Brown. He's...

WILLIAM STILL

Mad?

HARRIET

Fearless.

WILLIAM STILL

I can't lose you.

HARRIET

You tol' your wife that?

WILLIAM STILL

Don't be cruel.

HARRIET

You de cruel one.

WILLIAM STILL

If I had met you first...

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET
I'm not your type.

WILLIAM STILL
How could you be? I never dreamt God
made such creatures.

Harriet is moved. They stand close to each other, the air electric between them, dwelling for a moment in intoxicating possibility... before reality sobers them.

HARRIET
You should...

WILLIAM STILL
Yes, I suppose I should. Please be safe.
The movement needs you, Harriet.
Goodnight.

HARRIET
Goodnight, William.

William goes to the door. Harriet goes upstairs.

INT/EXT. GUEST HOUSE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Harriet watches from the window as William lingers outside the front door. He looks up at her window, meeting her eyes for a long beat, then he turns and strides off into the night.

Tears pool in Harriet's eyes. We see William's daguerreotype on the desk, next to the carved figurine of her father.

INT. GUEST HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Harriet is asleep in bed. We float down on her...

Suddenly, Harriet's eyes open. INTERCUT...

INT. BEN'S CABIN - THOMPSON'S MILL - HARRIET'S VISION -

The WOODEN FIGURES on her father's shelves are lit by torchlight, coming from outside... The shadowy figures of MEN outside the windows...

HARRIET'S EYES are wide with fear--

INT. GUEST HOUSE - BEDROOM - NEAR DAWN

Harriet is up, dressing quietly, tucking the revolver at her waist.

She grabs the figurine of her father.

INT. REV. GREEN'S CHURCH - DORCHESTER COUNTY - DAY

Rev Green is giving a sermon to a small gathering of local blacks.

Walter enters the church and slides into a pew next to an OLD WOMAN in a bonnet... It's Harriet. He whispers.

WALTER

Your daddy bout to be arrested for harboring a group of fugitives heading to Dover. One of 'em got caught and confessed. They on their way to arrest your daddy now!

Harriet and Walter slip out of the church. Rev Green watches them leave, making the sign of the cross.

EXT. REV. GREEN'S CHURCH - DAY

Harriet and Walter come out.

HARRIET

You build what I asked for?

WALTER

Close as I could.

He gestures to his horse, rigged with something like a sled tipped at an angle with a board for a seat.

EXT. BEN'S CABIN - THOMPSON'S MILL - AFTERNOON

Harriet approaches. On a rocking chair outside we can see Rit, kneading her hands as she rocks.

CLOSER - Too much grief, abuse and worry have taken their toll. She seems an old woman, frail of body and mind.

Suddenly the chair is grabbed from behind, a hand slapped over her mouth. Rit's eyes go wide in terror.

Behind her, Harriet whispers...

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET

Mama, it's Minty. Don't scream. I come to git you. We gon' git daddy too. I'ma let go, but you cain't scream, alright?

Rit nods, tears of hope in her eyes. Harriet lets go and turns Rit to face her. Rit screams, falling to her knees.

RIT

Oh, sweet Jesus, take me!! I'm ready to go. Take me home! I wanna see my daughters! I wanna see my babies!

HARRIET

Mama, I'm no angel come to take you to heaven. It's Minty, come to take you North.

Harriet takes off the bonnet from head and pulls her mother to her feet. Rit studies her daughter's face, spellbound.

RIT

You ain't my Minty. My Minty jus a plain gurl. If you not an angel, what are you?

HARRIET

I'm Harriet Tubman, mama. I'm Moses.

Rit's eyes widen. Harriet hugs her, burying her cries.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

That's right, I'm Moses, the slave stealer. I need you to come wit me, an do exactly as I say. Where's daddy?

EXT. THOMPSON'S MILL - LATE AFTERNOON

Ben is down by the waterfall, repairing a damaged chunk of stone and mortar. A pebble hits him on the shoulder. He looks up...

Harriet is hidden amongst the trees. She reveals herself, gesturing to him frantically.

HARRIET

Daddy!

Ben climbs up the fall towards her.

EXT. WOODS NEAR MILL FALL - LATE AFTERNOON - MOMENTS LATER

Ben embraces her. He dares a look at her, for the first time since her escape.

BEN

Minty! I can't pull my eyes away. I need to look at'ya.

(tear in his eyes)

It's good to see you, gurl.

He wrenches his eyes away.

BEN (CONT'D)

Who you come for?

HARRIET

You, daddy. You been harboring fugitives?

He looks at her, surprised she knows.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

One of 'em got cau ght and talked. They coming for you. We gotta go right now!

EXT. WOODS OUTSIDE THOMPSON'S MILL - DUSK

Harriet and Ben join Walter at the cart, where he's strapping Rit into the rig.

RIT

Ben! Our Minty's Moses! One everyone carryin' on bout.

He gets into the cart beside her and pats her hand.

BEN

I know.

HARRIET

I'ma take you north to see Robert and Henry and Junyah. But first I need you and daddy to go wit Walter to Rev Green's church. You'll be safe there.

Through the woods, they can see MEN WITH TORCHES in the distance approaching Ben's cabin.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Hurry. Then meet me at Brodess Farm.

(CONTINUED)

WALTER

Yes, boss.

Walter gets on the horse and drives off.

INT. BRODESS FARM - BEDROOM - DUSK

Eliza lies in bed, in the throes of an anxiety attack, stress and financial burden having taken their toll, Gideon sits by her bed, stroking his mother's hair.

A pitifully thin slave girl, Rachel's daughter, ANGER, 8, brings in a tray, balancing the pot and cup carefully. She goes to tip some drops of laudanum into the tea.

ELIZA

No more. I don't want it!

GIDEON

It's for your nerves, mother.

ELIZA

I don't want it!

She knocks the tray from Anger's hands, spilling the scalding tea, the pitcher shattering on the floor. Anger silently bends to pick up the broken china.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

That girl is trying to poison me. She blames me for her mother... They're all conspiring against us.

Gideon's eyes catch Anger's, her expression unreadable.

GIDEON

Mama, you're just anxious.

ELIZA

I'm suffocating in this place. It's like a prison where I'm awaiting my execution, surrounded by hostile, black-faced guards.

We hear a BANGING at the door... Gideon and Eliza exchange a look. Gideon goes to the window.

A GROUP OF MEN stand below in the yard. Gideon gives his mother a look of quiet alarm and runs out.

Eliza gets up, pushing past Anger to the window.

EXT. BRODESS HOUSE - DUSK

Gus Vern and other PLANTERS we've seen at slaveholder meetings stand at the door. Gus bangs again.

GUS VERN

Gideon!

Gideon opens the door and faces the mob.

GUS VERN (CONT'D)

You and your mother need to come with us. We gotta discuss this Moses business, and what you intend to do about it.

GIDEON

My mother's not well.

But Eliza comes down behind him, pulling on a cloak.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

We see a circle of torches...

A large group of planters are gathered in the woods, including Vern. The mood is dangerous.

Eliza and Gideon are in the center of the circle.

GUS VERN

Seeing as how Moses has been discovered to be a nigger girl from your farm, we think it's only appropriate that you pay us restitutions for our lost property.

GIDEON

We don't have that kind of money! We're going through hard times, like the rest of you.

PLANTER

Then you gon' have to sell the farm!

ELIZA

NO!

Eliza is fierce, eyes glittering with tears of rage. It's a performance, and she knows her life depends on it.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

We are victims of this diabolical nigger just like you are! She ran off with 5 of our best slaves! Our crops are meager.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ELIZA (CONT'D)
 Our fortune all but gone! My livelihood -
 my very health - has been ravaged. We
 are *victims* like you! We need to work
 together to find this thief and burn her
 at the stake like Joan of Arc!

Angry cheers from the planters.

ELIZA (CONT'D)
 If we work together, we can catch her. I
 have a plan...

She's got their attention.

ELIZA (CONT'D)
 I'll put her sister's child up for
 auction. We'll post notices everywhere.
 Harriet Tubman will come to rescue her
 niece and we'll be waiting for her!!

The planters cheer this plan. She's won them over. Gideon
 looks at his mother with admiration. She meets his eyes.

EXT. BRODESS HOUSE - SAME

Harriet sneaks up to the house and slips inside.

INT. BRODESS HOUSE - BECKY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anger stands on a stool, combing Becky's hair. Vincent and
 Victor stand in the doorway, drunk and surly.

VINCENT
 Where's mama?

ANGER
 Out wit Massa Gideon.

Vincent and Victor look at each other in confusion.

VICTOR
 She went out? At night?

VINCENT
 (to Anger)
 Girl, go get us some brandy from the
 storeroom!

ON HARRIET, with the Colt revolver, at the other doorway.

HARRIET
 I got a better idea.

(CONTINUED)

The boys turn.

VINCENT
Hey! It's--

Harriet points the gun in their face. Becky screams.
Anger looks at Harriet in terror.

HARRIET
(to Anger)
Don't be scared, Anger. I'm your mama's
sister. We family.

Anger runs to Harriet, clinging to her dress.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
Where your brother, Anger?

ANGER
Trader carry 'im off. Dey kep us lock
out in de smoke house, on'y let us out to
bury mama, den de trader took 'im.

Harriet takes this in, gun aimed at the Brodess kids.

INT. BRODESS FARM - OUTHOUSE - SAME

Foxx is on the shitter. The door slams open. Walter has a
gun pointed in Foxx's face.

FOXX
Who the hell are you?

WALTER
Call me whatever you want, that's what
you white folks do.

INT. BRODESS HOUSE - BECKY'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Anger aims the Colt with shaking hands while Harriet finishes
gagging and tying the three kids to the bed with strips of
bed-sheet.

Harriet takes the gun from Anger and aims at the helpless
kids, rage in her eyes.

HARRIET
This for my sister and her son.

She FIRES!!

(CONTINUED)

The Brodess kids are wild-eyed, crying, the floor at their feet splintered by the gunshot. Pee spreads on Vincent's trousers. Harriet looks at them, coolly.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Give your mother and brother my regards.

She picks up Anger and hurries off.

EXT. BRODESS FARM - NIGHT

Harriet come running out with Anger. Walter heads them off. The dogs sound the alarm in their kennels.

HARRIET

Where's Foxx?

WALTER

Tied up in the shitter. Let's go!

Harriet looks to the slave cabins.

HARRIET

Wait a minute.

She sings, *GO DOWN MOSES...* One phrase is all it takes.

SEVERAL SLAVES peek their heads out from their cabins.

WALTER

We're gonna need a bigger cart.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Walter and Harriet are on the horse. Two SLAVE WOMEN are squeezed in the cart, Anger between them. TWO MEN run alongside.

A very light-skinned slave dashes from the woods in front of the cart. TILLY's eyes are desperate.

TILLY

Wait! Take me with you! Please! My massa tryin kill me.

Walter looks at her, perplexed.

WALTER

We definitely gonna need a bigger cart.

INT. BRODESS HOUSE - BECKY'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

Eliza opens the bedroom door and sees her three children tied to the bed and gagged. She SCREAMS and faints--

The children look at their mother in dismay. Gideon appears behind her.

GIDEON
GODDAMMIT!!

EXT. ROAD - NEAR DAWN

Gideon and a large group of LAWYERS and PLANTERS have gathered - some on horseback, some on foot - including Gus Vern, Bigger Long, Atwood and other slavers, SHERIFF NED UTLEY, Marshal, Deputies and Police. All heavily armed and out for blood.

SHERIFF NED UTLEY
We will break into teams and cover this whole area, from Bucktown to Cambridge. I want law enforcement in each group. The letter of the Law must be obeyed and every precaution taken to bring this dangerous wench in alive, so she can face her full punishment! I know some of you are itching to have a chance at her; to make her pay for what she done to your fortune and family. Rest assured, she will be tried and executed by the harshest methods available, as dictated by the laws of the State of Maryland!

The crowd cheers, some grumbling too, as the men break into groups.

GIDEON
Bigger and Atwood, come with me! Let's pay an early visit to Rev Green!

The posses split up and gallop off.

EXT. ROAD - DAYBREAK

A covered freight wagon approaches up the road. A single driver steers the horses.

Walter steps in front of it, two guns pointed at the driver. The driver puts his hands up in panic.

INT. REV. GREEN'S CHURCH - MORNING

Rev Green watches wearily as Gideon's posse ransacks his church once again.

The storeroom is empty. Rev Green manages to look indignant and vindicated. Gideon's frustration is evident. He spots a pamphlet on the floor, picks it up.

GIDEON

Look what we have here - a copy of Uncle Tom's Cabin. You're in possession of banned abolitionist material, Reverend. Deputy, arrest this man!

As the deputy handcuffs Green, his eyes meet Gideon's, defiant and smug.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A slender WHITE MAN drives the freight wagon with haste. The horses seem skittish and uneasy. It's the light-skinned slave, Tilly, wearing Walter's clothes, skin ash-whitened, kinky hair jammed under a hat.

IN THE BACK - the wagon is filled with ears of corn, moving mysteriously as the wagon bounces along.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

Heavily guarded by lawmen. Pedestrians have gathered to watch the inevitable capture, the air alive with excitement.

SHERIFF NED UTLEY

They gonna have to come this way. We got every other way blocked off.

EXT. ROAD - NEAR BRIDGE - SAME

The covered wagon bounces towards the bridge, Tilly, nervous as a cat, slows the horses to a trot.

TILLY

I'm gonna wet myself!

Harriet coaches her, voice muffled beneath the corn.

HARRIET

You know your massa better than de lines in your hand. Be him.

(CONTINUED)

Tilly steels her courage and drives the horses towards the bridge, doing her best to channel her master as the wagon approaches the roadblock of lawmen.

TILLY
(lowered voice)
Gentlemen, good day. What's all this?

A LAWMAN steps forward.

LAWMAN
Slave stealers on the loose. That devil Moses. We got a surprise for her.

TILLY
I hope you catch that bitch and hang her, fer mine git any ideas. Any of 'em even breathe that name on my farm, I'll beat 'em into Sunday. Don't let none of 'em past the gates - not anymore. Strange times, when a man can't trust his own slaves. Best o' luck to you.

Tilly starts forward. The Lawman stops her.

LAWMAN
We're gon' have to check the cart, sir. Sorry to inconvenience you.

Tilly freezes, in sirupy terror. The Sheriff strides over, scrutinizing Tilly, something troubling him.

SHERIFF NED UTLEY
You related to Luther Grant?

Tilly, who is, gives a shaky and ironic smile.

TILLY
Yes, sir. He's my daddy.

The sheriff laughs. He puts a foot up on the side of the wagon.

SHERIFF NED UTLEY
Thought I saw the resemblance! You tell your daddy he owes me a whiskey! Tell him Ned Utley hasn't forgotten. With all this corn, he should be able to afford it! Y'all have a nice day!

He waves them through.

TILLY
You too, sheriff.

(CONTINUED)

Tilly tips her hat and drives the cart over the bridge.

EXT. DESERTED ROAD - MINUTES LATER

Harriet and Walter, in Tilly's dress, uncover the rest of the Freedom Seekers, who emerge from the corn, stretching cramped limbs. Harriet pulls corn silk from Anger's hair. Ben rubs Rit's shoulders.

Tilly, weak with nerves, leans over her knees, trying not to vomit.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

Gideon and his posse ride up. Gideon bristles as the lawmen chat and smoke. He approaches the Sheriff.

GIDEON
Any sign of them?

SHERIFF NED UTLEY
Not yet. Just the usual foot and horse traffic and a few farmers. Luther Grant's son came by with a freight wagon full of corn. A good yield, by the look of it.

Gideon looks puzzled.

GIDEON
Luther Grant's son?

SHERIFF NED UTLEY
That's right. Looks just like 'im.

Gideon and Bigger exchange a look. Gideon pulls him aside.

GIDEON
Luther Grant ain't got a son. Got 5 daughters and a nigger girl looks just like him.

BIGGER
By the time these crackers figure out she got past 'em, she'll be long gone. We know she's headed north. We can find her, collect the reward for ourselves. Maybe get you some time alone with her, employ a looser interpretation of the law.

Gideon gives him a nod. They slip away.

EXT. RIVERFRONT - DAY

Harriet, her family, and the freedom-seekers are huddled in a small grove of trees by the waterfront.

Ben is asleep holding Anger on his lap. Harriet strokes her mother's hair.

RIT

Tell me, one mo' time.

HARRIET

(speaking softly)

Senator Seward sold me a nice house on his property - big enough for everybody. You and daddy, Robert, Henry, Junyah and Jane, and Anger too. We gon' be together. An no massa forcin' us to do nothin'. I'm gon' spoil you and take care a you. I love you, mama.

Tears run down Rit's cheeks. She grips Harriet's hand.

RIT

I love you too, Minty.

A BOAT glides into view. Walter waves from the deck.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD BY THE RIVER - SAME

The freight wagon is abandoned by the side of the road, the horses eating grass. Over it we see...

Gideon and Bigger riding up. The wagon is clearly empty.

GIDEON

They ditched it!

Gideon searches the treeline, Bigger gallops ahead.

EXT. WATERFRONT - SAME

Harriet hands Anger up to Walter and helps the last of the freedom-seekers onto the boat. As she prepares to climb aboard...

She feels the familiar flutter in her chest, her whole body buzzing with it... *DANGER*.

HARRIET

Get everyone below deck.

(CONTINUED)

Walter hustles the family below. Harriet goes to the edge of the trees and peeks out...

In the distance we see...

Bigger galloping towards them, Gideon in the distance. Harriet ducks back into the trees and dashes for the boat.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
Hurry, get 'em out of here! We got company.

Walter reaches a hand to pull her up.

WALTER
Alright, let's go!

She takes a step back.

HARRIET
Walter, promise me you'll get Anger and my parents to safety.

WALTER
Why? What're you--?

HARRIET
I can't have Gideon coming after 'em, Walter! If you want to help me, help my family. Get 'em to safety! *Promise me!*

A beat. Walter nods. He unties the boat and pushes off.

EXT. WOODS NEAR RIVER - DAY

Harriet emerges from the tree-line and steps into the road, waiting for them to notice her.

EXT. WOODS NEAR RIVER -

ON GIDEON - spotting her tiny figure in the distance. He shouts to Bigger.

GIDEON
There she is! Get her!

Harriet dashes away from the river. Gideon and Bigger gallop after her...

EXT. WOODS NEAR RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

Gideon and Bigger search the woods. They've lost her. Gideon puts a finger to his lips.

GIDEON
I want her alive.

Bigger nods. They split up.

EXT. ROCKY TERRAIN - DAY

Harriet scrambles up a rock face, breathing hard.

Below her BIGGER rides into view... He sees her and draws his gun. She ducks as he FIRES! A bullet hits the rocks.

EXT. WOODS - SAME

Gideon reacts to the gunfire, riding in the direction of the sound--

EXT. ROCKY TERRAIN

ON HARRIET - Crouched against the rocks, gun aimed--FIRING!!

Bigger's hat flies off his head. Damn close, but not close enough. As Harriet frantically reloads her revolver, Bigger aims at her with murderous rage.

BIGGER LONG
You gone die bitch.

GUNFIRE--

Bigger falls forward and slides off his horse, shot in the head.

ON GIDEON - emerging from the woods behind him, rifle smoking.

GIDEON
I said I want her alive.

GIDEON'S POV - As Harriet scrambles down the rocks, swinging herself onto Bigger's horse...

GIDEON (CONT'D)
MINTY!

(CONTINUED)

Harriet takes off. Gideon gallops after her, HORSE'S HOOVES thundering past BIGGER'S DEAD BODY.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Gideon chases Harriet through the woods, up an incline, both riding hard. At a distance, she looks back at him...

GIDEON

I'm coming for you, Minty!

EXT. WOODY PLATEAU - LATE AFTERNOON

Gideon emerges onto a wooded plateau, starkly beautiful in the late afternoon light.

Bigger's horse is grazing some distance away, riderless. Gideon looks around. No sign of Harriet...

GIDEON

MINTY!

Suddenly she appears behind him, Colt revolver pointed at his head.

HARRIET

Toss your gun. Easy.

Gideon slowly removes his rifle and tosses it to the ground at her feet -- quickly drawing a revolver from his holster--

Harriet SHOTS the gun from his hand! Gideon howls in pain, a fleshy hole by his thumb.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Off the horse.

Gideon slides from his horse, cradling his bloody hand. He faces her, breathing hard. The two of them only yards apart, the closest they've been since the day she jumped from the bridge. She tucks her revolver at her waist, picks up his rifle and trains it on him.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

On your knees.

He sinks to his knees, looking up at her, teeth clenched in pain.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

It didn't have to end like this, Minty. You could'a stayed with us, if you only knew how to behave. But you were so damned insolent. Unruly and untamed. I guess that's what I liked about you. And you liked me too, I know you did. You prayed over my bed, when I was sick. You asked God to make me well.

She looks at him with something like empathy.

HARRIET

I asked God how a sickly little boy could think he owned me.

Gideon's eyes turn hard.

GIDEON

I do own you, Minty. Even now, you're mine. You're just a damn runaway.

HARRIET

I was never yours, Gideon. I was never nobody's property! That was a lie you told yourselves. Since the day your daddy sold my sisters I prayed for God to make me strong enough to fight, and that's what I've prayed for ever since! I reasoned there was one of two things I had a right to, liberty, or death. If I couldn't have one, I'd have the other.

GIDEON

You know what they'll do to you, when they finally catch you? They'll tear you limb from limb, tar you and burn you alive! Even if I'm not there to watch it, I can almost smell it now. Like roasting pig.

Harriet remains unfazed. She levels the rifle at his face.

HARRIET

But you'll die right here.

Gideon flinches, waiting for the gunshot...

But Harriet lowers the rifle, using it to gesture to the woods around them.

(CONTINUED)

HARRIET (CONT'D)

On a frozen, blood-soaked battlefield,
the moans of a generation of young men in
your ears, *dying in agony around you*, for
a lost cause. For a vile and wicked
idea! *For the sin of slavery! Can you
hear them?*

For a moment we hear the death-moans of a thousand men, in
the aftermath of bloody defeat.

Gideon looks spooked, as if he can see their mangled bodies,
stretching into the distance. He looks back at Harriet.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

*God don't mean people to own people,
Gideon! Our time is near!*

Harriet tosses the rifle, then turns and walks away, towards
the grazing horse. Gideon watches her, tears welling in his
eyes.

GIDEON

You bitch! You destroyed my family!

Harriet swings herself onto the horse's back. She speaks in
THE VOICE - it's her own, maybe it always has been.

HARRIET

***You tried to destroy my family, but you
can't. You tried to destroy my people,
but you won't. God has shown me the
future, and my people are free. MY
PEOPLE ARE FREE!***

Gideon watches as Harriet rides off, into the glare of the
setting sun.

ON HARRIET, face grim, eyes turned inward...

We hear HER VOICE **from the opening...**

HARRIET (OVER) (CONT'D)

Now is our time! Are you ready to kill
the snake?

A hundred soldiers shout YES with passion. As we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COMBAHEE RIVER - SOUTH CAROLINA - DAWN - 1863

A GUNBOAT, THE JOHN ADAMS, looms large in the background as dozens of ROWBOATS row away from it.

ROWBOATS - BLACK UNION TROOPS onboard, rowing stealthily towards the shore.

HARRIET stands in the prow of the lead rowboat, like a figurehead.

EXT. COMBAHEE RIVER AND PLANTATIONS - DAYBREAK

As the sky breathes with light we can see the shore and tree-line. Beyond that, the distant plantations.

Harriet begins singing, in a loud commanding voice...

HARRIET
*WADE IN THE WATER, WADE IN THE WATER
 CHILDREN... WADE IN THE WATER, GOD'S
 GONNA TROUBLE THE WATER!*

For a moment nothing changes. Then we see...

FEET RUNNING as...

SLAVES begin pouring from the woods, running for the beach... towards the armed black troops in the rowboats.

HUNDREDS OF SLAVES, carrying their children and meager belongings on their backs, splashing through churning water towards the boats and FREEDOM!

Their voices join hers, singing triumphantly...

HARRIET & SLAVES (OVER)
*WADE IN THE WATER, WADE IN THE WATER
 CHILDREN! WADE IN THE WATER! GOD'S
 GONNA TROUBLE THE WATER!*

Harriet watches from the lead rowboat, arms spread wide, tears streaming.

Soldiers raise their weapons, prepared to defend the slaves or die trying. Their voices join Harriet's...

HARRIET, SLAVES, SOLDIERS (OVER)
*WHO ARE THOSE CHILDREN ALL DRESSED IN
 RED? GOD'S GONNA TROUBLE THE WATER!
 MUST BE THE ONES THAT MOSES LED! GOD'S
 GONNA TROUBLE THE WATER!*

(CONTINUED)

SLAVEHOLDERS and FOREMEN race from the trees, weapons aimed at the fleeing slaves.

The SOLDIERS take aim -- GUNFIRE.

EXT. SEWARD ESTATE - HARRIET'S HOUSE - AUBURN, NY - DAY

HARRIET'S VOICE CONTINUES, singing alone soulfully as...

Harriet walks wearily to her house, on the Seward Estate.

HARRIET (OVER)

*Wade in the water... Wade in the water
children! Wade in the water... God's
gonna trouble the water!*

Rit is sitting outside on a rocker. She sees Harriet and screams. Harriet's family spills out into the yard, greeting her ecstatically. Rit and Ben, Henry, Robert, his new wife and their children, Junyah and Jane and their children, a teenaged Anger - family whose freedom she's made possible.

HARRIET (OVER) (CONT'D)

*God's gonna trouble the water! God is
gonna trouble the water!*

They pull her inside and close the door.

CODA:

Harriet Tubman was the most famous conductor on the Underground Railroad, helping over 70 slaves to freedom.

After the UGRR disbanded at the start of the Civil War, Harriet became a spy for the Union army. On June 2, 1863, Harriet Tubman led 150 black Union soldiers in the Combahee River Raid, freeing over 750 slaves from the rice plantations. She is the only woman to lead an armed expedition during the entire Civil War, and one of the few women to have done so in US history.

After the Civil War, Tubman remarried and dedicated her life to helping impoverished former slaves, the elderly and the women's suffrage movement. She died surrounded by loved ones on March 10, 1913, at approximately 91 years of age. Her last words were, "I go to prepare a place for you."