

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

by Asmaa Jamil

Screenplay adapted from the book
of the same title by Harriet Ann Jacobs
(in the public domain)

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FADE IN:

A black woman's hands tremble as she writes on a crumbled piece of paper: "In the eyes of God you already free."

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

SUPER "SEPTEMBER 1830"

A small cottage with a kitchen with a storage room and a back door that leads into a small garden.

The kitchen with a long table extends onto a sitting area, which leads to the front door. A Fire blazes from the fireplace against a wall.

A young woman, HARRIET ANN JACOBS (mulatto, 15), quiet, obedient, and reserved, walks towards a China cabinet in the kitchen.

She forcefully opens the cabinet doors where unmatched chipped cups and plates sit on top shelves and torn linen at the bottom.

Harriet looks inside one of the doors and smiles when she looks at seven chiseled crosses. Two crosses have circles around them.

Harriet says a silent prayer as she runs her fingers down the crosses. She closes the cabinet door vigorously.

Harriet's maternal grandmother, MOLLY HORNIBLOW (mulatto, 55), active, respectful, and fearless, walks in humming from the back door. She holds tubs of milk and butter.

Molly sets the tubs on the floor with her cracked hands.

MOLLY

Your mistress must've slept early.

Harriet nods and grabs two aprons from the hook of the back door. She hands Molly one apron. She puts her apron over her head.

HARRIET

She was tired after playing outside all day.

Harriet swiftly walks to the storage room and takes out a big bag of flour. She sets it on the kitchen table.

She closes the storage room door with her foot.

She puts an apron on and straightens it with her hands.

She reaches to the bottom of the table and grabs salt and sugar. She sets them on the table.

Molly hands Harriet a big wooden bowl.

MOLLY

Your first mistress sure fooled us.
She said you were like her child
but did not set you free.

Harriet grins and shows a decay spot on her front tooth. She pours ingredients into the bowl.

Molly's oldest son, MARK HORNIBLOW (mulatto, 28), who mixes logic and heart when he speaks, walks through the front door with long strides.

He hangs his hat and jacket on a hook behind the front door. Mark walks towards Molly and kisses her. He then washes his hands.

MARK

You are all eager to bake tonight!

Molly slaps his back gently as she smiles.

Harriet mixes the ingredients in the bowl.

Molly's daughter, BETTY HORNIBLOW (mulatto, 34), lively, simple, and fearful. She walks in through the front door.

Betty heads towards the fire to warm her hands before she joins everyone in the kitchen.

Betty puts her apron on, and hands another apron to Mark.

BETTY

Dr. Norcom was sure going crazy
searching the house in the
afternoon.

Harriet hands Molly and Betty large pieces of dough.

MOLLY

He was looking for someone to take
his anger on.

Molly and Betty roll the dough on the table.

Mark shakes his head as he takes out trays and butters them.

MARK

One day, someone will outsmart that
evil man.

Harriet looks around.

HARRIET

Where is John?

MOLLY

He came home early and went to
sleep.

HARRIET

Who's going to watch the crackers
as they bake?

Molly beams as she continues to roll the dough.

MOLLY

Me. I will make sure they are
golden like my skin.

Molly hums and all follow her as they make crackers.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - FOYER STAIRCASE - DAY

Harriet walks down the stairs and stops when she hears
yelling and weeping.

She walks up a few steps and sneaks a peak below as she hides
between rails of the stairs.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

A white slave trader with a pipe in his mouth, bounds the
hands of a slave woman (black, 20s).

Another white slave trader bounds the hands of a slave man
(mulatto, 20s).

DR. JAMES NORCOM (white, 53), arrogant, cold, and religious.
He walks over to the slave traders. He hands them a paper.

The slave woman pounds her feet on the floor as she cries
loudly.

SLAVE WOMAN

You promised to take care of me.

The slave man turns to the slave woman.

SLAVE MAN

You told me those babies were mine.
I took care of white people.

Dr. Norcom slaps the slave man and knocks him to the floor.

DR. NORCOM

Mu are not white people.

Dr. Norcom's wife, MARIA HORIBLOW NORCOM (white, 34), jealous and shameless, walks into the foyer dressed in Sunday clothes. She puts her gloves on and sighs.

MARIA

We'll be late for church.

Dr. Norcom looks at the slave traders.

DR. NORCOM

Get me a good price for the three
kids.

The slave woman screams and hollers.

SLAVE WOMAN

You promised massa.

Maria walks towards the front door. She turns around and walks towards the slave woman. She punches her in her stomach. Maria walks out the door.

Dr. Norcom walks over to the slave woman.

DR. NORCOM

(whispers in her ear)
Tattletale.

He walks towards the door and looks up the stairs.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - FOYER STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

His gaze catches Harriet's stare. He grins and walks out the door.

Harriet tears up and runs towards her mistress' room.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - MARY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harriet walks in and closes the door.

She looks at her mistress, Mary Norcom (white, 6), sleeping.

Betty walks in quietly and taps Harriet on the shoulder.

Harriet flinches as she turns around. She relaxes when she sees her aunt.

Betty puts her hands around Harriet.

BETTY
You got scared, ha.

Harriet hugs Betty tightly. Betty releases her grip and stares into Harriet's eyes.

HARRIET
Why do you look at me like that?

Betty shakes her head as tears flow down her eyes.

BETTY
Are you hiding something?

Harriet nods.

HARRIET
Do you think granny will let me go
to the dance tonight?

Betty grins and kisses Harriet on her forehead.

BETTY
I will fix your hair.

HARRIET
Just like my mama used to.

Betty nods as she walks towards the door. She puts her hand on the knob and turns to face Harriet.

BETTY
Don't get caught in massa's
desires.

Betty walks out.

Harriet walks towards Mary's bed and watches her sleep.

She hears a knock. She walks towards the door and opens it. She freezes.

Dr. Norcom grabs her hand, marches in and closes the door behind him.

DR. NORCOM
You a spy!

She shakes her head as she lowers it.

HARRIET

Just taking care of my mistress.

He swiftly pulls her closer. His hands cover her breasts. He whispers in her ears.

DR. NORCOM

If you just say yes, I will make
you feel passion that will make you
cry for more.

She tries to break free, but he holds her tighter.

He slips his hand underneath her dress.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)

I can do whatever I want with you.

A knock on the door interrupts him. He releases her.

Harriet walks quickly and opens the door.

Betty looks at Harriet's face and then at Dr. Norcom.

BETTY

There is a patient waiting
downstairs.

DR. NORCOM

It better be an emergency. I need
to devote some time to the Lord.

Dr. Norcom storms out the door.

Betty looks at Harriet and gives her a hug.

BETTY

Uncle Stephen should be home in a
few days.

Harriet cries as she pulls her aunt tighter.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Harriet closes the door behind her as she walks into the unpaved street. She stops to let a wagon pass by, but it stops instead.

A man, SAMUEL TREDWELL SAWYER (white, 28), an ambitious politician with charisma, gets out of the wagon.

SAMUEL

Where are you off to this evening?

She smiles as he walks closer.

HARRIET

Home to help my granny.

He nods as he looks at her from top to bottom.

SAMUEL

I love those delicious crackers.

He offers his hand, and she takes it. He helps her cross the street. He releases her hand.

HARRIET

Thank you, sir.

He smiles and leans closer to her.

SAMUEL

Remember what I said before, my home is always open for you.

He winks at her and walks away. He gets back into the wagon.

Harriet stares at the wagon until it disappears. She then runs home.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Molly and Mark bake crackers.

Harriet's brother, JOHN (mulatto, 11), feisty and direct brings a bucket of water from the back door and sets it on the floor.

Harriet walks in and twirls around. Her Sunday dress with her hair in a bun.

Betty walks in behind her.

HARRIET

What do you think?

MOLLY

Tonight, you'll break hearts.

Betty nods and smiles as she puts her apron on.

HARRIET

Uncle Mark?

Mark looks up.

MARK
Just have fun.

Harriet walks towards John.

HARRIET
Let's go, my little chaperone.

John smiles and holds his sister's hand.

Molly walks over to them and puts a few shillings into Harriet's hand.

Harriet looks at them and hands the shillings back.

Molly refuses to take them and holds Harriet's hands.

MOLLY
Buy what you need.

Harriet hugs Molly.

HARRIET
I won't ever disappoint you.

Molly pushes her away and nudges her out the front door.

Harriet and John wave as they walk out the door.

MOLLY
My precious Delilah. Your daughter
is all grown up.

Betty hugs Molly.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - SLAVE QUARTERS - LATER

Harriet and John walk around. They stop and watch the cakewalk dance. They mimic the dancers on the sideline.

A man, ROY (black, 20s), who's looks captivate the eyes of every girl walks next to them and joins them.

Harriet stops and steps aside.

John continues to dance with Roy for a few more steps. They stop and slap their hands together.

Roy walks over to Harriet and offers his hand. She shakes it and looks up at his face with a grin.

John pulls at her sleeve.

JOHN
Can I hang out with my friends?

Harriet looks at her brother and gives him a slight push. She watches John run towards his friends.

ROY
Look how you've grown.

Harriet stares at Roy and frowns.

HARRIET
Do I know you?

ROY
I was one of your father's apprentices.

HARRIET
When?

ROY
About five years ago.

She chuckles.

HARRIET
Seriously!

He nods.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
How come I have never seen you before?

She begins to walk towards the punch stand. He follows her and walks beside her.

ROY
I was the apprentice when your father worked on the other side of the plantation.

She looks at him with a frown.

HARRIET
Your massa allowed that!

He shakes his head and spins around in front of her.

ROY
You're looking at a free man.

She stops walking as her eyes widen.

He stops spinning and stands across from her.

HARRIET

How?

ROY

Born free.

She laughs at him and continues to walk.

HARRIET

You know, my father acted like he was free.

Roy bows in front of her.

ROY

That's because nobody could match his carpentry skills.

She looks around and then gives him a soft push on his shoulder.

HARRIET

I miss him.

He glides next to her, and they walk beside each other.

ROY

Me too. Best man I ever met.

She looks to the heavens above.

HARRIET

You hear that mama!

She kicks her feet around the dirt as she walks.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Why don't you go to a free state?

ROY

That's the plan.

She stops walking and folds her hands against her chest.

HARRIET

When?

ROY

Soon.

They smile at each other and resume their walk.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - FOOD AND DRINK - CONTINUOUS

Harriet and Roy giggle when they reach the punch stand.

A bucket of punch sits on a wooden table.

Empty tin cups sit next to the bucket.

Harriet recognizes the pregnant girl, FANNY (black, 15), selling punch. They wave at each other.

FANNY
Special occasion.

Harriet shakes her head.

HARRIET
Just wanted to see what the dance
is like. One punch.

Roy steps in front of her and puts his two fingers up.

Fanny smiles at them. She fills two cups with punch. She hands Harriet her cup.

Fanny reaches inside of her sleeve and gets a handkerchief. She hands Roy his cup with the handkerchief at the bottom.

Roy smiles as he takes the cup with the handkerchief.

He turns to Harriet who notices the handkerchief and points to it.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
You need to return that hanky.

Roy nods. He turns to Fanny and removes the hidden money inside the handkerchief before handing it back to her.

Harriet notices him putting the money in his pocket.

Roy and Harriet gulp the punch and hand Fanny the tin cups.

They walk back towards the dancers. He leans close to her ear.

ROY
Everyone deserves to be free.

He turns towards her as she nods.

HARRIET

Race you.

She runs and he passes her. They laugh together as they head towards the dancers.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Books sit on shelves against one wall. A big cross hangs down the mantel of the fireplace.

On a desk lays a copy of St. James bible.

Next to the desk sits a round table with five white men drinking liquor and smoking cigars.

Dr. Norcom stands and walks towards the desk. He takes the bible in his hands and then closes it as the men watch him.

DR. NORCOM

The Whig Party can count on me.

The men clap their hands with joy.

A slave trader, CLAY (white, 50s), walks over to Dr. Norcom and they shake hands.

CLAY

Success requires money.

Dr. Norcom smiles at him and pats his shoulders.

DR. NORCOM

You know where to find me.

Clay walks back to his seat and grabs his cup. He drinks what's left in a gulp.

CLAY

A toast to God.

Dr. Norcom kisses the bible and puts it back on the desk. He walks back to his seat, and he picks up his glass.

DR. NORCOM

To God and the best slave trader in the South.

Clay pours more liquor into his cup and grins before he gulps the drink in one shot down his throat.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - JOHN/HARRIET'S ROOM - DAY

Two cots sit against the wall. Patched up sacks dangle down wooden hooks above the cots.

Harriet takes down a sack and takes out crumbled sheets of paper in different sizes. Some torn in half while others filled with writing.

She organizes the paper by size. She uses a needle to make a hole in one corner. She puts thick thread through the holes and ties it.

HARRIET

My new journal. I'm going to fill
you up with new memories.

She kisses the journal and puts it under the cot. She throws the empty sack on a cot and walks out of the room.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

A blanket lays on the floor with a basket on it.

Harriet sits on the grass. She sews a dress while MARY NORCOM plays with a ball on the grass.

MARY

Look at how fast I can run.

Harriet puts the dress in a basket. She looks at Mary who pushes the ball ahead of her.

Dr. Norcom walks behind her and slips his hands between her breasts.

Harriet jumps. She runs towards Mary.

HARRIET

Let's play together.

Dr. Norcom grins as he stands and watches them play.

He joins them. He takes the ball from Mary and throws it far.

DR. NORCOM

Run after it Mary.

Mary runs after the ball.

Dr. Norcom grabs Harriet by her waist. He pulls her closer.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)
(sternly)
Don't you ever forget who you
belong to.

Mary runs back giggling.

Dr. Norcom releases Harriet.

MARY
Do that again.

Mary hands him the ball and he throws it.

Harriet runs after the ball.

HARRIET
Race you, Mary.

Harriet looks back and finds Dr. Norcom staring at her. He waves. He turns and heads towards the house.

Harriet looks up and finds Maria watching them from a window.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - MARIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maria's lips quiver as she looks down at Harriet. She snaps the curtains shut.

She walks towards a standing mirror. She stands on a stool.

She looks in the mirror and wipes tears with her hand. She smiles as she puts her hand around her baby bump.

MARIA
I'll show those sluts how to never
mess with wife number two.

She leans towards the mirror and blows herself a kiss.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Harriet walks down the stairs. She watches Maria pace.

Harriet quickly walks down and heads towards the kitchen. But Maria grabs her by her dress.

MARIA
I have been waiting for you.

Harriet trembles.

Maria pulls Harriet towards her.

HARRIET

Ma'am.

Maria holds Harriet by her shoulders and shakes her. She then throws her to the floor.

MARIA

I see how you look at my husband.

Harriet shakes her head. Tears flow down her face.

Betty walks in and stares at Maria.

BETTY

Massa is waiting for you in his study.

Maria waves her index finger at Harriet.

MARIA

If I see you touching my husband,
you will join your parents
underground.

Maria kicks her with her foot and leaves.

Betty rushes to Harriet and helps her up.

Harriet wipes her tears.

HARRIET

Don't tell granny.

Betty hugs Harriet as she shakes her head.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Harriet walks out of the house with Betty. They look ahead and find Betty's charming and comedic husband, STEPHEN (black, 40s), running towards them.

Betty jumps into his arms.

Then Harriet runs and hugs him.

BETTY

Finally. Did you see mama?

He nods and grins at Harriet.

STEPHEN

And a fine young man.

Harriet blushes as she lowers her head.

HARRIET

Do you like him?

Stephen walks towards her.

STEPHEN

You know how to pick them.

Harriet giggles as she watches Betty and Stephen hold hands and walk away.

Betty turns and looks back at Harriet.

BETTY

Come on.

Samuel's wagon rides between them and separates Harriet from Betty.

Harriet catches Samuel's wink. She smiles and quickly runs towards Betty.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

SUPER "NOVEMBER 1830"

Dr. Norcom sits at his desk and writes in a notebook. He does not hear the door knock until Maria puts her hand on his.

He looks up with a slight grin.

DR. NORCOM

I decided to hand the plantation to
John since cold sprung upon us
early.

She straightens up and massages her baby bump.

MARIA

This means you will be around us
more.

He nods and looks back at his notebook.

DR. NORCOM

It will be an awfully cold winter.

She smirks as she puts her hand on his.

MARIA

I am the luckiest girl in the South, married to a doctor, a scientist, and a plantation owner all wrapped into one.

He quickly shifts his hand away. His focus returns to his notebook.

She walks out with misty eyes.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Norcom walks in and finds Harriet feeding Mary.

He moves quickly and sits next to Harriet.

DR. NORCOM

Do you know what I could do to you?

He puts his hand between her inner thighs. He whispers in her ear.

She flinches against the chair. He releases her when he sees Maria walk in.

A cook, ELLEN (black, 20s), enters the room with a tray of food. She sets the tray on the table.

She walks to the back door and leans against it. She gazes at her large baby bump.

Dr. Norcom stands and walks to the head of the table.

Maria sits next to Harriet. Maria watches Harriet and notices her hands trembling.

MARIA

Why do your hands tremble? Do you have a disease?

Harriet shakes her head.

Dr. Norcom ushers Ellen to serve his dinner.

Ellen places ham and potatoes on his plate.

Dr. Norcom takes a bite. He spits it out.

DR. NORCOM

This is overcooked.

He stands while Maria watches.

MARIA

I will take Mary upstairs.

Maria holds Mary's hand and walks her out of the room.

Harriet cleans up after Mary.

DR. NORCOM

Kneel.

Ellen cries and shudders.

ELLEN

No massa. I will fix it.

Dr. Norcom strikes her with a blow. She falls to the ground.

DR. NORCOM

Kneel!

Ellen kneels.

He shoves the food down her throat without stopping.

She spits some out and he picks it and continue to shove it until she falls to the ground.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)

A man like me deserves perfectly
cooked food.

He walks out of the room.

Harriet runs to Ellen and pats her back to stop her from choking. Two black slave men come out and help.

John walks in and performs CPR.

Ellen coughs and breathes. She looks at John and gives him a big hug.

HARRIET

Where did you learn that?

JOHN

I saw massa do this to a patient.

The two men pat him on his back and take Ellen away.

Dr. Norcom walks in and stands by the door.

Harriet looks at John suspiciously.

HARRIET

You learned that by watching it one time?

He shakes his head.

JOHN

You are silly. I read the book he was using.

She shushes him.

HARRIET

Nobody should know you can read.

He gives her a confused look.

JOHN

But everyone knows your first mistress taught you how to read, write, and sew.

She quickly puts her hand on his mouth.

HARRIET

Let's keep it a family secret.

John nods and she releases her hand. John takes a step and stops.

Harriet watches his face turn deathly. She looks behind her.

Dr. Norcom gives them a big smile.

DR. NORCOM

Harriet, you bring my dinner to my study.

Dr. Norcom walks out.

Harriet claps her hand on John's mouth.

HARRIET

Not a peep.

They walk out of the room and into the kitchen.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - LATER

Harriet walks through the open door with the tray of food.

Dr. Norcom stands by the window with a bible in his hands.

HARRIET

Sir.

He turns around and smiles. He looks at the tray.

DR. NORCOM

I hope this is better.

She stands straight.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)

Do you know that the perfect
temperature of food keeps diseases
away?

She shakes her head.

He sets the bible on the mantel. He walks towards her. He
pulls her closer and kisses her neck.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)

You've been hiding something from
me.

She tries to move away but he holds her tight.

HARRIET

No sir.

He takes out a piece of paper and slips it through the top of
her dress. He pushes the paper in between her breasts.

She takes out the piece of paper and opens it.

INSERT - PIECE OF PAPER

"Come by my room before you leave."

BACK TO HARRIET

She hands it back to him.

DR. NORCOM

Take it and think about the words.

HARRIET

I don't know how to read well.

He pulls her closer and then pushes her away.

DR. NORCOM
Your brother can read it for you.

He waves her to leave.

She takes the paper and runs out.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Molly, Betty, and John make crackers.

Harriet walks in from the back door with tears in her eyes.

Molly wipes her hands with her apron and walks towards Harriet. She lifts her chin.

MOLLY
What's wrong child?

HARRIET
I was just thinking of my parents.

Harriet grins as she wipes tears. She picks an apron from the hook and puts it over her head.

MOLLY
My quiet little baby. Always
thinking of others.

John jumps up and down.

JOHN
Tell her.

She smiles as she looks at John's happy face.

HARRIET
Tell me what.

JOHN
It's a gift.

Molly walks towards the China cabinet and takes out a package. She turns around and hands it to Harriet.

MOLLY
Every girl being courted deserves
something new.

Stephen and Mark walk in through the back door.

Harriet looks at the package and pushes Molly's hands away.

HARRIET

No granny, you saving to free your children.

Molly shakes her head and smiles. She forcefully pushes the package towards Harriet.

MOLLY

You are my child too.

Harriet relaxes and opens the package. She beams as she takes out a black pair of shoes.

HARRIET

They must have cost a fortune.

MOLLY

My old mistress threw them away and I took them.

Harriet flips the shoes front and back.

HARRIET

Who fixed them?

Mark and Stephen chuckle as they look at her.

STEPHEN

That fella of yours did a good job.

Harriet frowns as she looks at Molly.

JOHN

Roy!

Harriet laughs as she looks at all of them.

HARRIET

We just talk, that's all.

John folds his hands over his chest.

JOHN

You say you love him in your writings.

She gives John a stern look.

HARRIET

What did daddy tell you about my personal stuff?

John pouts as he lowers his head.

JOHN

I'm sorry.

Molly winks at John.

MOLLY

That's my good boy.

HARRIET

I will wear them on Christmas.

Harriet kisses Molly and then twirls while holding the shoes.

They all laugh as they return to making crackers.

EXT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

Harriet walks out and finds Roy waiting for her.

He bows playfully before standing straight.

ROY

I will escort you to Dr. Norcom's house.

She stops him by putting her hand on his chest.

HARRIET

No. My massa will get mad.

He frowns.

She begins to walk.

Roy runs to walk beside her.

ROY

What if I want to marry you?

Harriet stops and stares at him.

HARRIET

Marry me!

He nods and gets closer to her. He holds her hands.

ROY

I got some money saved and can use it to buy your freedom.

She laughs and stops when he kisses her on her cheek.

HARRIET

Why don't you wait until Christmas
time?

He makes a heart shape with his hands.

ROY

Festive times bring the best in
everyone.

He waves and leaves her. She smiles as she walks to work.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - FRONT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Harriet walks quickly and stops when she sees Samuel's wagon.

Samuel opens the door and grins widely.

SAMUEL

When are you going to visit me?

She smiles at him.

HARRIET

Still thinking about it.

He winks and closes the wagon door.

She runs to the house.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - LATER

Dr. Norcom sets a notebook in front of him with the title:
"Recorded careful observations of weather, temperature, and
barometric pressure."

He takes a pen and opens the notebook. Before he begins, a
door knock interrupts him.

DR. NORCOM

Come in.

Betty opens the door with her might.

BETTY

My mistress had the baby early.

He sets the pen down and looks up.

DR. NORCOM

Let me know when I can visit.

BETTY

In an hour.

He picks up his pen again.

DR. NORCOM

Have my dinner sent here.

Betty's lips quiver as she looks at him.

BETTY

Ellen also had her baby today. I
will fix your dinner.

Betty hurries out and closes the door.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

SUPER "CHRISTMAS EVE 1830"

Dr. Norcom sits on a chair facing the blazing fireplace. He holds the bible in his hands. He reads the bible.

A knock on the door interrupts him. He closes the bible.

DR. NORCOM

Come in.

His gaze glares at the door. He stands up.

Roy removes his hat as he walks in with a big smile. He reaches out for a handshake, but Dr. Norcom dismisses it.

ROY

Good evening, sir.

Roy confidently looks at Dr. Norcom's stern face.

DR. NORCOM

It better be. It's Christmas Eve.

ROY

I promise I will not be long.

Roy fidgets with his hat.

DR. NORCOM

Then get to the point.

ROY

I would like to purchase Harriet.

Dr. Norcom looks at Roy from head to toe with a disgust face.

DR. NORCOM
I cannot sell her. She is my
daughter's slave.

Roy continues to fidget with his hat.

ROY
But you can make the decision for
your daughter.

Dr. Norcom walks closer to Roy, and he stares at his eyes.

Roy takes a few steps back.

DR. NORCOM
Only my daughter can. She is too
young now to make those decisions.

Roy takes one step forward.

ROY
Can I at least marry her?

Dr. Norcom walks back to his seat and picks the bible.

DR. NORCOM
I suggest you find your next home
in another.

He gives Roy a grim look.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)
Am I making myself clear?

Roy nods and walks out.

EXT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - GARDEN - LATER

Roy paces as he kicks the dirt with his feet.

Harriet walks towards him and stops when she sees him.

HARRIET
He said no. I knew it.

Roy walks towards her and hugs her.

ROY
I don't know how that man can be a
slaveholder and a Christian at the
same time.

Harriet's tears trickle down her cheeks.

HARRIET
 Don't forget a doctor.
 (chuckle)
 What else did he say?

Roy steps back and looks at her. He lowers his head.

ROY
 Leave town.

Harriet straightens up and stares in his eyes.

HARRIET
 You go. Find another love.

He shakes his head and wipes tears from her face.

ROY
 Run away with me.

She puts her hand on his mouth.

HARRIET
 My grandmother has suffered enough.

He kisses her hand and holds it in his.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
 Don't forget me. Ever.

She kisses him on his cheek and walks away.

EXT./INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Harriet knocks on the door with hands trembling.

The door opens which startles her. A black maid (70s) stares at Harriet.

HARRIET
 Is your master home?

The maid nods. She waves Harriet inside and closes the door.

INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

The maid leads Harriet from the foyer directly to the study. The foyer has a wide staircase to one side with paintings of political leaders on the wall.

The maid knocks on the door.

INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS

A sofa perches against one wall with a fireplace blazing with fire across from it.

A glass door leads to a garden.

A big desk looks out into the garden. Two chairs face the desk. Behind the desk is a bookshelf.

Samuel sits at his desk with legislative books in front of him. He writes in a notebook.

A knock on the door interrupts him.

SAMUEL

Come in.

The maid opens the door and Harriet walks in.

Samuel looks up and smiles.

HARRIET

Hello.

The maid leaves and closes the door behind her.

Harriet looks at him and lowers her head.

He puts his pen down and pushes his notebook away.

SAMUEL

How could I be of service to you?

Harriet stands by the door.

HARRIET

I have a private matter to discuss
with you.

He motions her to take a seat in front of him.

She sits across from him. She hands him a crumbled piece of paper.

He unwraps it and reads it.

INSERT - PIECE OF PAPER

"I want to sleep with you."

BACK TO HARRIET

He hands it back to her.

SAMUEL

Are you sure you want to do this?

She nods as she puts the paper in her pocket.

He reaches to the bottom drawer. He takes out a key and holds it in his hand.

She sits up and stares at him.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

There will be consequences.

She relaxes and sits back further in the chair.

HARRIET

I am prepared for it.

He sets the key on the desk and pushes it towards her.

She takes it and holds it up.

SAMUEL

(points to the door)

The key to that door.

She nods and puts the key in her pocket.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Are you keeping that note?

She walks over to the fireplace and throws the note into the fire. She quickly walks out of the back door and locks it behind her.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Dr. Norcom stares into the blazing fireplace.

A knock on the door disrupts his thoughts. He turns to look at the door.

DR. NORCOM

Come in and close the door.

Harriet walks in calmly and closes the door.

He gives her an evil look as he looks at her from top to bottom.

Harriet focuses her gaze on the bible sitting on the mantel.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)
So you want to be married, do you?
And to a free nigger.

HARRIET
Yes, sir.

He continues to give her a harsh look.

DR. NORCOM
If you must have a husband, you may
take up with one of my slaves.

She turns her gaze towards him as he walks towards her. Her posture straight.

HARRIET
Don't you suppose, sir, that a
slave can have some preference
about marrying? Do you suppose that
all men are alike to her?

He walks around her and touches her hair. He lowers his face towards her neck.

DR. NORCOM
Do you love this nigger?

HARRIET
Yes, sir.

He pulls her hair and breathes down her neck. He releases his grip and stands in front of her.

DR. NORCOM
How dare you tell me so! I
supposed...you felt above the
insults of such puppies.

She remains calm as tears flow down her eyes.

HARRIET
If he is a puppy, I am a puppy, for
we are both of the negro race.

He strikes her a hard blow.

She falls to the ground. Blood rushes down her nose. She wipes her nose with her sleeve.

He stands watching her as she slowly gets up. She continues to wipe her face as she lowers her head.

DR. NORCOM

Do you know what you have said?

She nods as she looks up at him.

HARRIET

Your treatment drove me to it.

He walks towards the mantel and picks up the bible. He holds the bible against his chest and turns to face her.

DR. NORCOM

Do you know that I have a right to do as I like with you, that I can kill you, if I please?

She continues to wipe blood and tears from her face.

HARRIET

You have tried to kill me, and I wish you had, but you have no right to do as you like with me.

DR. NORCOM

Silence!

He puts the bible back on the mantel. He paces in front of the fireplace.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)

How would you like to be sent to jail for your insolence?

HARRIET

I have been disrespectful...as for the jail, there would be more peace for me there than there is here.

He stops pacing and walks back to his desk. He sits and stares at her.

DR. NORCOM

You have been the plague of my life. I have wanted to make you happy, but you are ungrateful. Get out.

She quickly runs out.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Betty paces. She hears a noise and turns around. She runs towards Harriet when she walks into the foyer.

Harriet gives Betty a firm look.

BETTY

What happened? You are bleeding!

Betty tries to wipe Harriet's face, but Harriet pushes her hand away.

HARRIET

I finally spoke my truth in the atmosphere of hell.

Betty puts her hand on Harriet's mouth and looks around.

BETTY

You will get killed for saying that.

Harriet pushes her aunt away.

HARRIET

I'd rather be dead than be a slave.

She walks towards the back of the house with Betty staring at her.

INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Harriet puts her clothes on while Samuel sits by the fire and lights a cigar.

She walks to the door as he looks at her.

SAMUEL

Are you feeling bad?

She opens the door.

HARRIET

I feel cheap.

She walks out and closes the door behind her.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Molly hums as she puts a tray of potatoes on the kitchen table.

Mark sets the ham on the table.

John sets the table with dinnerware from the China cabinet.

Harriet walks in followed by Betty. Harriet hugs Molly

Molly, Mark, and John look at Betty.

MOLLY

You'll get over it child.

Betty nods and walks over to help Molly.

MARK

At least she can pour her heart out
in her journals.

Molly nods as Harriet looks up and smiles.

MOLLY

Why don't you get your shoes out?
It's Christmas already.

Betty walks over to the cabinet and hands her the package.

Harriet hugs her aunt.

HARRIET

I will wear them tomorrow.

MOLLY

Just remember, life goes on no
matter what happens today.

Harriet twirls with her shoes and they all clap.

BETTY

Well I have some good news.

Betty touches her stomach. Molly opens her hands. They all
gather in a circle and hold hands.

MOLLY

Oh God of heaven and earth, please
let us see this child with our eyes
before you make him an angel.

Molly hums and all hum with her as they sit to eat.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - MARIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mary sits on the bed with Maria lying upwards.

Dr. Norcom stands against the window.

Harriet stands by the door and smiles as she looks down at her new shoes.

DR. NORCOM
Five dresses for Christmas!

The baby cries and Maria rolls her eyes and looks at Harriet.

MARIA
Take good care of these dresses.

Harriet nods. She walks towards the bed. Her shoes bring loud noise. She picks up the dresses.

HARRIET
Come Mary.

Maria pulls Harriet by her hand.

MARIA
What is that noise?

Harriet grins and looks down at her shoes.

HARRIET
My new shoes.

Maria laughs and then scowls.

MARIA
Remove them and those hideous
patched up socks.

Harriet removes her shoes and socks.

HARRIET
I'm sorry ma'am.

Maria grins as she puts her hand out.

Harriet hands her the shoes and socks.

Maria hands the shoes and socks to Dr. Norcom.

DR. NORCOM
Take Mary to her room and run to
the plantation and bring Ellen to
nurse my baby.

Harriet nods. She gathers Mary's dresses and holds Mary's hand. They walk out the door.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - FRONT ENTRANCE - LATER

Harriet walks out in the cold and snow barefoot.

She looks up and clasps her hands in prayer. Then she takes a deep breath and runs towards the plantation.

EXT./INT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - ELLEN'S SHACK - LATER

Harriet shivers and limps close to the door. She pounds on the door.

Ellen opens the door with a blanket over her shoulders. She looks at Harriet and drags her inside.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - ELLEN'S SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Ellen takes off the blanket and covers Harriet with it.

ELLEN

Did you walk six miles barefoot?

Harriet nods as she drops to her knees on the floor. She takes slow breaths.

HARRIET

Mistress...wants you to come...
feed her child.

Ellen walks to a small pot on a fire. She pours hot liquid in a tin cup. She hands it to Harriet.

ELLEN

Drink this. My uncle will take us
back with his cart.

Harriet holds the hot liquid with both hands.

HARRIET

We need to go.

Ellen turns around and walks away.

ELLEN

(loudly)
Uncle, take us to town.

Ellen returns with an old pair of shoes and socks. She helps Harriet put them on.

HARRIET

I will return them tomorrow.

ELLEN
Do not get sick on us.

HARRIET
What about your child?

Ellen's eyes welt as she looks up to heaven.

ELLEN
Ma'am used all my milk for her
child.

Harriet cries as she buries her head on Ellen's shoulders.

HARRIET
I'm so sorry.

Ellen releases Harriet and shakes her head.

ELLEN
That child is better off being an
angel.

Ellen and Harriet embrace as they cry together.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Molly makes medicine from dried herbs. She puts some in a cup
and adds hot water.

She takes the cup to Harriet who lays on blankets in front of
the fireplace.

Molly feels Harriet's forehead with her hand.

MOLLY
The fever is breaking.

Harriet opens her eyes partially.

HARRIET
Is ma'am upset I did not go back?

Molly shakes her head.

MOLLY
Betty took your spot.

Harriet's squints her eyes.

HARRIET
But it's her day off.

Molly helps Harriet sit up and drink the hot liquid.

MOLLY

She took one look at you, and she
marched into that house to tend to
your mistress.

Harriet puts her hand on her granny's shoulder.

HARRIET

She needs rest. That's why she keep
loosing those babies.

Molly's eyes well up with tears.

MOLLY

Hush. You need to get better.

Harriet frowns as she drinks more of the hot liquid.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Harriet walks in and finds Betty sitting on a stool next to
the back door. She quickly walks towards Betty. She sits by
her and looks at her red eyes.

HARRIET

It's all my fault.

Betty shakes her head.

BETTY

We can count on another angel to
answer our prayers.

Molly walks in with a sack of vegetables.

MOLLY

Harriet, you better go to your
mistress before them folks come
after you.

Harriet kisses Betty on her forehead and walks towards Molly.

HARRIET

You take care of her granny.

Molly looks at Betty and then at Harriet.

MOLLY

The Lord already did. No parent
wants their child to be a slave.

Harriet looks at Betty and then Molly. She then runs out.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

SUPER "NEW YEAR'S EVE 1830"

Molly, Mark, Betty, and John sit at the table and pass food around.

Harriet walks in and sits with them. They all stare at her.

MARK

Ain't you got something to share?

She looks at them and smiles.

HARRIET

I was not on the sale list.

They all exclaim with joy. She puts her hands on Betty's.

BETTY

Don't you tell me that man changed
his mind?

Harriet shakes her head.

HARRIET

You're safe.

Molly grins and breathes a sigh of relief.

BETTY

Who is it?

Harriet shakes her head.

Molly puts her hands in prayer and looks up.

MOLLY

Another new year with pure evil
deeds.

They all nod.

JOHN

Isn't this a bad world? Everybody
seems so cross and unhappy. I wish
I had died when poor father did.

They all stare at him with Molly giving him a stern look.

MOLLY

Boy, don't you ever speak of death.

Mark puts his hands on John's shoulders.

MARK

Or escape.

MOLLY

Not that either.

Betty holds her hands up.

BETTY

Let's enjoy our New Year's Eve
dinner.

All smile and fill a plate for Harriet.

EXT. EDENTON - SLAVE AUCTION - DAY

People gather around an open area. A platform sits in the middle with several steps leading to a stage.

White people gather on one side and just a few feet away from the platform.

Black people huddle across from them.

Clay walks around and greets white men and women.

Dr. Norcom and Maria walk in and join their white friends.

Samuel walks around and greets everyone except Dr. Norcom and Maria. He ignores them.

Molly, Harriet, Mark, and Betty join the black crowd.

Clay walks up the stage where he overlooks the crowd.

CLAY

Happy New Year's Day.

The white crowd cheers.

The black crowd sneers.

MOLLY

It's only happy for white folk.

All the blacks around Molly nod.

CLAY

Let the auction begin.

Hands tied with ropes behind their back. Ellen along with her six siblings and mother are pushed to the platform.

Samuel steps closer to them.

SAMUEL

I will purchase all.

Clay looks at Dr. Norcom who shakes his head.

CLAY

All seven members are to be sold to different owners in separate towns.

SAMUEL

Then I will take Ellen.

Ellen cries as she looks at her siblings and mother.

CLAY

Four hundred dollars.

Samuel nods.

Clay shoves Ellen towards Samuel.

Samuel holds her up.

Clay looks at his helpers.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Chain the rest and take them out.

Molly points her finger at Dr. Norcom and Maria.

MOLLY

You call yourself Christian! You separating another family on New Year's day.

Mark pulls Molly back.

DR. NORCOM

It's all business.

Molly's lips quiver as Betty clutches her hand.

Ellen screams and hollers when her mother and siblings are taken away.

ELLEN

Oh God, take me now. Not tomorrow,
not the next day. Now!

Harriet quickly walks towards Ellen and cradles her friend.

Clay hands Dr. Norcom money as the crowd watches Maria leave the auction with a smile.

Clay walks back to the platform. He waves his hands and more slaves walk into the auction.

INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Harriet and Samuel finish putting their clothes on.

Samuel straightens his suspenders. He walks over to Harriet who is putting her shoes on. He kisses her neck.

HARRIET

How come you bought Ellen?

He looks at her and his smile disappears. He walks over to the fireplace.

SAMUEL

I always felt bad for her.

She nods as she walks over to him. She stretches her hands close to the fire to warm them.

HARRIET

Why?

Samuel's face saddens as he stares into the blaze.

SAMUEL

Her father, Toby, was my slave and friend. The doctor rejected every offer he made to purchase his wife and kids.

He takes out a cigar and looks at it.

HARRIET

I thought he killed himself.

Samuel turns his gaze to her with eyes welting with tears.

SAMUEL

He was pushed to that end.

Harriet lights a long match from the fireplace and hands it to him.

He lights his cigar and takes a puff.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Every time Toby resisted the doctor's sexual abuse of his wife and daughters, he got a beating. During these sexual endeavors, Toby was forced to remain outside of the house and listen to his women's helpless cries.

Harriet takes a few steps back.

HARRIET

The Doctor is pure evil.

Samuel nods. He takes another puff of his cigar.

SAMUEL

One night after the doctor left his house, Toby went and jumped into the snake swamp. Later, we found him dead.

She trembles as she looks at his face.

He turns his gaze to her.

HARRIET

I am with child.

He holds his hands out.

She puts her hands in his.

SAMUEL

I will take care of this child.

She stands straight and stares at him.

HARRIET

Do you promise to give him freedom?

Samuel nods with a wide grin.

She smiles and walks out the back door.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Dr. Norcom sits behind his desk. He writes in his notebook.

Maria walks giggling.

He looks up and continues to write.

MARIA
She is with child.

Dr. Norcom puts his pen down. He raises his eyebrows as he looks up.

DR. NORCOM
Who?

She pounds her hands on the desk and leans close to his face.

MARIA
The one that cannot keep her hands
off you.

He frowns.

DR. NORCOM
Harriet!

She watches his hands tremble.

MARIA
Time for her to go.

He looks at Maria as he stands.

DR. NORCOM
Send her in.

She quickly walks out of the room.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - LATER

Dr. Norcom stands by the window. He turns his gaze when he hears a knock at the door.

Maria pulls Harriet in with her hand.

He remains in his place.

DR. NORCOM
I want to talk to her alone.

Maria huffs as she walks out and closes the door.

He walks over to Harriet and circles her. Then he slaps her with a hard blow.

She falls to the ground.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)
You have sinned against me. Who's
the father?

She remains on the floor with her head down.

HARRIET
I have sinned against God and
myself, but not against you.

He clinches his teeth and mutters.

DR. NORCOM
I could grind your bones to powder!
Your mistress forbids you to return
to this house.

He kneels and pulls her head closer. He breathes heavily into
her neck.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)
Is the father white or black!

She remains silent.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)
Do you love him?

He stands and kicks her belly.

HARRIET
I do not despise him.

DR. NORCOM
I will forgive your crime if you
promise never to see the father
again. This is the last act of
mercy I shall show towards you.

She tries to stand.

He pushes her down with his foot.

HARRIET
I do not want mercy from a man who
curses me and my child.

He gets closer to her and sinks his teeth into her neck and
releases her.

DR. NORCOM

A woman who sinks to a whore level
cannot expect anything from me.
Leave. Now!

She quickly gets up and walks out the door.

He grinds his teeth together as he slams his hands on his desk.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Molly kneads dough forcefully.

Betty holds Harriet's shoulders.

Mark and John stand by the back door.

Harriet puts her hands on the dough.

Molly slaps her hands away.

HARRIET

I know what I did is wrong. But I
want to protect my dignity.

Molly's face and hands tremble as she continues to knead.

MOLLY

No woman in my family has had a
child out of wedlock.

Betty hugs Harriet tightly.

BETTY

Please listen to her story before
passing judgement.

Molly adds more flour to the dough.

Mark walks closer to Molly and leans over.

MARK

Give her a chance to explain.

Molly looks up at Harriet.

MOLLY

You boys leave.

Mark and John walk out the back door.

HARRIET

It started when I turned fifteen...

Harriet tells her story while tears flow down her face.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Molly hugs Harriet and both cry.

MOLLY

I could have protected you.

Harriet lifts her head and stares at Molly.

HARRIET

I am the only one that can protect myself from him.

Molly touches Harriet's small baby bump.

MOLLY

Is the daddy going to give him his freedom?

Harriet nods.

HARRIET

A promise was made.

Molly looks up at Harriet and frowns.

MOLLY

Promises of freedom are broken all the time.

Harriet smiles as she shakes her head.

HARRIET

Your daddy kept his promise.

Molly nods as she hugs Harriet and Betty.

MONTAGE - HARRIET'S PREGNANCY AND DELIVERY

- - INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT - - Harriet and Samuel sleep by the fireplace covered by a blanket. He reaches out and touches Harriet's big belly.

- - EXT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY - - Harriet teaches John how to write. John hugs her and kisses her belly.

- - INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - JOHN/HARRIET'S ROOM - NIGHT - -
 Betty holds a baby boy in her arms as she smiles wide and
 looks at Harriet (16) who lays on the bed. Molly walks in
 with a patched-up blanket. Molly and Harriet embrace.

BACK TO HARRIET

Betty hands Molly the baby.

MOLLY
 What shall we call you?

Harriet holds Betty's hands and looks at Molly.

HARRIET
 Joseph Jacobs.

Molly holds the baby in the air and smiles.

MOLLY
 Child, you have the legacy of my
 baby boy and your granddaddy. Make
 them proud.

Molly hands the baby to Harriet and kisses her on her
 forehead.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

SUPER "OCTOBER 1833"

Harriet (18) holds her daughter, Louisa Jacobs, while Molly
 holds Joseph. Mark, Betty, and John make the crackers.

Three white men push the door open. One man, BRUCE (40s),
 holds a whip as he walks close to Molly.

BRUCE
 Are you holding Nat Turner
 fugitives?

Molly shakes her head.

They check every room and ransack the house. Bruce walks to
 the China cabinet. He opens it.

BRUCE (CONT'D)
 Where did you get such fine things?

MOLLY
 Some were gifts and some I bought.

Bruce looks inside. His eyes catch the crosses. He snaps the cabinet door out and looks at it.

BRUCE

From now on, only white preachers
will teach you about God.

Bruce hands the door to one of his men who takes it outside. He turns to the cabinet and shakes it. He then pushes it the ground. All the cups and plates break into pieces.

Betty approaches Molly and holds her back.

Mark reaches for Joseph.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

You are not allowed to have such
fine things.

Bruce tips his hat and leaves with his men behind him.

Mark locks the front door after them.

MOLLY

Let's clean up.

John walks up to her and hugs her.

Molly cries as she holds him tight.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Maria paces while Dr. Norcom stands by the window.

MARIA

I don't understand why a servant is
needed. It's bad enough that our
little girl was uprooted and moved
to your apartment.

He remains calm while looking out the window.

DR. NORCOM

I am not repeating it again. I need
to know my child is safe at night.

She quickly walks towards him but takes a few steps back when he turns around with an angry face.

MARIA

We have other kids who don't have
this arrangement.

His lips quiver and his eyes squint in anger.

DR. NORCOM
Send the child's servant slave.

He opens the door and storms out.

Maria wipes away tears. She cracks a fake smile and opens the door.

EXT./INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Betty stands outside the door. She turns to face Maria.

Maria tries to grin.

MARIA
I want a word with Harriet.

BETTY
I'll let her know right away.

Betty nods and walks away.

Maria walks out.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - MARIA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Maria paces. A door knock jolts her to a stop.

MARIA
Come in.

Harriet walks in. She looks at Maria who quickly moves towards her.

Maria pushes Harriet to the ground.

HARRIET
I did nothing wrong.

MARIA
Did you know you were to sleep in
the doctor's room?

Harriet nods.

Maria kneels and stares at Harriet.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Who told you?

Harriet looks away from Maria's angry face.

HARRIET

My master.

Maria stands and paces again.

Harriet remains on the floor crying.

MARIA

You have caused a lot of pain in my marriage.

Harriet looks up.

HARRIET

I am innocent.

Maria walks to her bedside and picks up a bible from the nightstand.

She walks towards Harriet and holds it out to her.

MARIA

Lay your hand on this holy book.
Swear before God that you will tell
me the truth.

Harriet follows the instructions. She looks up at Maria.

HARRIET

I only tell the truth.

Harriet tells her story while sitting on the floor.

Maria sits on her bed as she listens.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - MARIA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Maria hides her face between the pillows. She cries loudly.

Harriet stops.

HARRIET

I don't know why he comes after me.

Maria sits up. She throws the pillows on the bed. She looks at Harriet and stretches her hand.

Harriet stands and walks over to Maria's bed. She takes her hand.

MARIA

I promise to protect you.

Harriet looks up.

HARRIET

Thank you, ma'am.

MARIA

You may leave.

Harriet quickly walks out of the room.

Maria slumps onto her bed and screams into the pillows.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - NORCOM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A living area with a bedroom on each side. A sofa faces a fireplace.

LIVING ROOM

Dr. Norcom paces in the living room with a book in his hands.

Harriet knocks on the door. He runs to open it.

DR. NORCOM

Mary is sleeping.

She turns to leave but he pulls her in. He slams the door shut with his foot.

She takes a step, but he twists her arm. She turns to him in pain.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)

Why do you torment me this way?

She stares at him with lips pursed.

HARRIET

Me!

DR. NORCOM

You play the devil's game.

She shakes her head.

HARRIET

I just want to tend to my mistress.

He grabs her and throws her to the ground.

She rolls over.

He puts his foot on her belly and holds her down.

DR. NORCOM
I'm going to teach you a lesson you
will never forget.

She cries in pain.

HARRIET
Please let me go.

He chuckles and sits on top of her.

DR. NORCOM
Not before you feel me in every
human way possible.

Mary yells from her room.

MARY (O.S.)
I want water.

Dr. Norcom stands up and walks to his room. He slams the door shut.

Harriet stands up and walks to Mary's room.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - NORCOM'S APARTMENT - LATER

MARY'S ROOM

Harriet sleeps on a cot that sits next to Mary's bed.

Mary sleeps in her bed.

Maria walks in silently. She puts on men's gloves and a bracelet she wears falls off without her knowledge.

Harriet hears noises and jumps up.

Maria hides behind the door.

Harriet looks around the empty room. She lays her head back down on the cot.

Maria tiptoes towards Harriet and kneels next to her. She covers Harriet's eyes with one hand. She whispers in her ear.

MARIA
(fakes man's voice)
When will you satisfy me?

Harriet tries to push the hand from her eyes without success.

Maria runs her other hand down Harriet's back.

HARRIET
No. No.

Harriet squirms.

MARIA
(fakes man's voice)
I thought you like me touching you.

HARRIET
Please let me go.

Mary coughs.

MARIA
(fakes man's voice)
Count to ten before you open your
eyes.

Maria removes her hand from Harriet's eyes and glides out of the room.

Harriet waits and turns around to an empty room. She looks at Mary and finds her sleeping.

LIVING ROOM

Harriet tiptoes through the living room and finds it empty.

She tiptoes towards Dr. Norcom's bedroom. She finds the door closed. She puts her ear to the bottom and hears snoring.

She walks back to Mary's room.

MARY'S ROOM

She enters the room and closes the door. She finds the bracelet. She picks it up and puts it in her pocket. She lays back on the cot.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - MARIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Maria paces as Harriet stands by the door with her head lowered.

MARIA
You lied to me.

Harriet shakes her head.

HARRIET
I would never do that.

Maria stops and stands in front of Harriet.

MARIA
You took an oath on the holy book.

Harriet looks up with tears in her eyes and a frown.

HARRIET
I kept that oath.

Maria walks to the nightstand and picks up the bible and holds it.

MARIA
Tell me whose voice I heard last
night in that room?

Harriet takes out the bracelet and dangles it in front of Maria.

HARRIET
Yours.

Maria snaps the bracelet away and throws it on her bed.

MARIA
Get out of my room.

Harriet runs out of the room.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - LATER

Clay sits at the round table. He takes a puff from his cigar.

Dr. Norcom sits next to him with a grim look.

CLAY
What do you say doc?

Dr. Norcom looks at Clay and then at a paper in front of him.

DR. NORCOM

You want me to sell her for nine hundred dollars to an anonymous buyer.

Clay picks up the paper and writes on it

INSERT - PIECE OF PAPER

Clay scratches the words "Nine" and writes above it "Twelve."

BACK TO CLAY

Clay pushes the paper back to him.

Dr. Norcom stares at the paper. He picks it up and crumbles it.

CLAY

Twelve hundred for one slave. One!

Dr. Norcom stands and throws the paper into the blazing fire of the fireplace.

DR. NORCOM

She don't belong to me.

Clay stands and puts his hand on Dr. Norcom's shoulder.

CLAY

She already got two kids by...

Dr. Norcom gives Clay an icy look.

DR. NORCOM

Don't you say his name in my house.

Clay shakes his head as he takes a few steps back.

CLAY

Get her out of your system.

Dr. Norcom frowns and walks to the door.

DR. NORCOM

Good night.

Clay quickly walks out.

Dr. Norcom slams the door shut and walks towards his desk.

EXT./INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - LATER

Dr. Norcom pounds on the door.

Several people pass by and watch.

He turns to them and yells.

DR. NORCOM

What are you looking at?

He angrily pushes the door open. He marches into the kitchen.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Harriet feeds Joseph and Louisa who sit on wooden stools. She looks up when she hears the door slam.

She watches Dr. Norcom march towards her angrily. She shields the kids with her body.

DR. NORCOM

Who wants to buy you?

She shrugs her shoulders.

The kids cry.

She hushes them with her hands.

HARRIET

Did someone made an offer?

He frowns as he looks at her and then the kids.

DR. NORCOM

Your lover offered to buy you...but you are mine...for life. No human being can take you out of slavery.

HARRIET

I don't know anything about a purchase.

His face turns red with rage.

DR. NORCOM

You little wretch.

Joseph cries as he clinches to the bottom of Harriet's dress.

Dr. Norcom looks at Joseph. He grins as he picks Joseph up and throws him across the living area.

Joseph lands on the floor lifeless.

Harriet screams.

Dr. Norcom holds her back.

DR. NORCOM (CONT'D)
Let him lie there till he comes to.

Harriet screams louder.

HARRIET
Let me go! Let me go!

John opens the door. He rushes towards Joseph.

Dr. Norcom releases Harriet and walks out the front door.

Harriet anxiously runs over to Joseph who opens his eyes. She hugs him.

JOHN
What happened?

She shakes her head as she cradles her son while tears flow down her face.

Louisa runs to John and clutches his hands.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

SUPER "APRIL 1835"

Maria walks with Harriet to the front door.

MARIA
We need you to help our oldest son
at the plantation.

Harriet frowns as she looks at Maria.

HARRIET
When? What will I do there?

Maria puts her hands over her shoulders.

MARIA
He will give you your chores once
you arrive tomorrow.

Harriet nods.

HARRIET

How long will I be there?

Maria smiles and pats her on her back.

MARIA

You ask too many questions.

They reach the front door. Harriet turns towards Maria.

HARRIET

But I can leave my kids with my
granny. Right?

Maria shakes her head.

MARIA

Don't burden her. Take them with
you.

Harriet walks out the door.

Maria beams and sighs as she closes the door and walks
towards the stairs.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE - DAY

The house is smaller than the one in town. A few stairs lead
to a large porch.

Impoverished and thin black slave men clean the porch.

Harriet arrives holding Louisa in one hand and a sack in the
other hand. She stops in front of the house.

JOHN NORCOM (white, 35) walks arrogantly down the porch
stairs towards her.

Another white man follows him.

JOHN NORCOM

You finally decided to join us.

She stares at him.

HARRIET

For a short while.

John Norcom looks at her and then at Louisa.

JOHN NORCOM

Where is the other bastard?

She closes her eyes and opens them while staying calm.

HARRIET
He's very sick.

JOHN NORCOM
My father gives you too much
freedom. Had it been me, you would
have been under my power already.

She looks at him and clutches Louisa's hand tighter.

HARRIET
What are my chores?

He turns around and looks at the house.

JOHN NORCOM
Fix the inside of this house for my
new bride.

Harriet pulls Louisa with her and walks towards the house.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - KITCHEN - DAY

Harriet walks into a large country kitchen.

Fanny looks up and runs towards Harriet and hugs her.

FANNY
You know they brought you here to
break you and your kids in.

Harriet shakes her head with a grim look

HARRIET
I knew they were up to something.
I've been here before and it was
not this bad.

Fanny nods.

FANNY
They have no money. I'll tell you
all about it.

Harriet and Fanny continue to talk.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE - NIGHT

Harriet walks outside while holding Louisa's hand. She looks
below the stairs of the porch.

John Norcom sits on a chair while he hits slave children with a stick.

Their slave mothers weep as they stand a few feet away.

Overseers hold whips as they keep the slave women away.

JOHN NORCOM
These bastards need to know who
rules them.

John Norcom turns around and looks at Harriet and then at Louisa.

Harriet pulls Louisa closer to her.

HARRIET
My daughter ain't hurt you.

John Norcom shoves the kid in front of him with his hands. He stands and stares at Harriet.

All watch.

He gives her a stern look.

JOHN NORCOM
You are my slave now. I do as I
please with you and your bastards.

Harriet holds Louisa's hand and walks back into the house.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE - DAY

An old cart sits in front of the house.

Ellen's uncle sits on a horse.

Slave men fill the cart with shingles.

John Norcom comes out of the house with a stick in his hands. He counts the shingles as he moves things with his stick.

Harriet picks Louisa up and puts her on the cart.

John Norcom lays his stick on Louisa's shoulder.

JOHN NORCOM
Where is she going?

Harriet looks at him.

HARRIET

To my granny. She is sick.

He looks at Harriet and shifts the stick from Louisa to Harriet's shoulders.

JOHN NORCOM

Next time, you better ask me first.

He walks away with the stick in his hand. He slams the stick on the side of the cart.

The uncle rides the cart out into the dirt road.

Harriet watches and waves to Louisa.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE - NIGHT

Harriet paces in the dark. She hears footsteps and looks around. She relaxes when she sees Fannie and a black man, ELIJAH (20s), appear from the plantation.

FANNY

You remember my brother Elijah.

Harriet nods as she looks at the thin man in front of her.

HARRIET

Is it ok I sneak with you to town?

Elijah nods.

FANNY

He does not speak, but he will protect you.

Harriet looks at Elijah and then Fanny.

HARRIET

I thought he used to.

He lowers his gaze.

FANNY

He has not spoken in years. It's a long way back and forth.

Harriet nods.

HARRIET

Six miles each way.

Fannie hugs her brother and then Harriet.

FANNY

Elijah needs to be back early.

Elijah and Harriet run out into the unpaved road.

Fanny returns to her shack in the plantation.

MONTAGE - HARRIET AND ELIJAH

- - EXT. ROUTE TO TOWN - NIGHT - - Harriet and Elijah run through the fields. They take short breaks and continue.

- - INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT - - Harriet reunites with her family. She sits by the fire and eats crackers with her kids. She hugs her family members, grabs a sack, and walks out.

- - EXT. ROUTE TO NORCOM'S PLANTATION - DAWN - - Harriet and Elijah run through the fields. Halfway through, they hear horse's hoofs. They hide behind a big tree. They watch four patrol men hallooing and shouting. They breathe a sigh of relief when the men ride out in opposite direction.

BACK TO HARRIET AND ELIJAH

Harriet and Elijah arrive to sounds of grinding corn.

A horn summons the slaves to work.

Elijah cries as he hears the horn.

Harriet reaches into her sack and hands him a smaller sack.

HARRIET

You know my granny is a great cook.
Let me know when you go again.

He smiles and kisses her hand as he takes the sack and runs. She walks towards the porch with a smile.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE - NIGHT

Harriet and Fannie stand by the main door. They watch and listen.

Dr. Norcom and his son sit on the porch and drink fruit punch.

DR. NORCOM

Don't wait any longer. It's been weeks. Send for them tomorrow.

Harriet and Fanny look at each other.

JOHN NORCOM
Nothing would make me happier.

They watch John's new wife, ANNIE (26), who wickedly stands on the steps.

Below the steps are overseers distributing weekly food allowance to slaves.

JOHN NORCOM (CONT'D)
Annie, you have taken my most important role.

Annie turns to her husband.

ANNIE
It's now my favorite activity.

A black woman walks up with two kids. She is given a pound and a half of meat, a peck of corn, and a dozen herrings.

She holds the food in her hands and touches the kids' heads while she looks at John Norcom.

JOHN NORCOM
Do you want half of that portion?

The black woman quickly leaves.

Annie looks back at her husband and winks.

An old black man coughs as he hobbles to the front. He is handed three pounds of meat, a peck of corn, and a dozen herrings.

Annie walks over to him and takes the food away.

ANNIE
Do you work?

The old man shakes his head.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
(yelling)
You work, we feed you. Get it!

The man pleads as he cries and looks at Dr. Norcom and his son.

All the slaves watch.

DR. NORCOM
You heard the lady.

Elijah walks towards the man and leads him out of the line.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE FOYER - LATER

Harriet mops the floor.

John Norcom yells from his room.

JOHN NORCOM (O.S.)
Is the house locked up?

Harriet halts her mop to a stop.

HARRIET
Not yet.

She puts the mop against the front door.

JOHN NORCOM (O.S.)
What's taking you so long?

HARRIET
Finishing my work.

Harriet locks the door.

JOHN NORCOM (O.S.)
Lock it up!

Harriet leaves the mop in its place. She walks up the stairs.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE 3RD FLOOR - LATER

SUPER "JUNE 1835"

Harriet stands on the top step. She looks out the window.

A big clock towers a few feet away from her.

She turns to the clock, and it shows half past midnight. She steels down the stairs softly.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE 2ND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

She stops on the second floor. She hears a noise. She looks out the window. She sees large rain drops. She tiptoes down the stairs.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

She arrives at the foyer. She looks around her and smiles. She turns to the right and opens the parlor door.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Harriet closes the door behind her. She walks to the window. She raises the window up. She looks out and climbs out.

EXT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

She drops to her knees and looks up. She clasps her hands in prayer.

HARRIET

(whispers)

Lord, please guide and protect me.

She stands and runs at a lightning speed to town.

EXT./INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - BETTY'S ROOM - LATER

Harriet arrives at the back of the house soaked.

She looks into a small window and relaxes when she finds Betty sleeping. She taps the window.

Betty rolls to the side.

Harriet taps again.

Betty opens her sleepy eyes and frowns as she raises the window slightly.

BETTY

What are you doing?

HARRIET

I've run away.

Betty raises the window all the way up. She reaches out and pulls Harriet in. She dries Harriet with her blanket.

BETTY

You know what your granny would say if she heard this?

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - BETTY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harriet nods and quickly lowers the window all the way down.

HARRIET

Her favorite words 'You are killing me.'

Harriet turns to Betty with a helpless look.

BETTY

You know their father was here last week and he told her to go ahead and buy you and the kids.

Harriet shakes her head.

HARRIET

They will not sell us.

Betty pulls her closer.

BETTY

Where are you going to hide? They know every inch in this house and town.

Harriet nods.

HARRIET

I have a hiding-place. I need you to get my things from the trunk and put them in your trunk.

Betty gives her a suspicious look.

BETTY

Are you going alone?

Harriet shakes her head.

HARRIET

I will go see my kids one last time. I need to do this by myself.

She steals a blanket and wraps herself with it and turns around.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Don't forget my journals.

She walks out of the room.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - JOHN/HARRIET'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harriet walks in and kisses her kids. She walks away.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - BETTY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Betty throws Harriet's things inside her trunk.

Harriet walks up from behind and taps Betty on the back.

Betty hands her a sack with a few things and her journals.

Harriet gives Betty a hug.

Harriet walks towards the window. She pulls the window up.

HARRIET

Thank you for being the best aunt.

She jumps out of the window and runs.

Betty cries as she watches her. She lowers the window all the way down.

EXT./INT. FRIEND'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Harriet finds Ellen pacing behind the window. She taps on the window and Ellen immediately raises the window all the way up.

Ellen pulls Harriet in.

ELLEN

My granny will help you here.

Harriet holds Ellen's hand and stares at her.

HARRIET

I hope I'm no trouble.

Ellen shakes her head.

ELLEN

She said you got guts.

Harriet lowers the window and Ellen smiles.

INT. FRIEND'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ellen stands on a stool. She pulls down a door with a built-in ladder to the attic.

Harriet walks up the stairs and into the attic.

Ellen follows her.

INT. FRIEND'S HOUSE - ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Harriet throws her sack on the floor. She puts her hands out and touches the walls and ceiling. She looks on the floor and finds a cot, a pillow, and a blanket.

Harriet turns to Ellen and hugs her.

HARRIET

Thank you.

Ellen shakes her head.

ELLEN

It's not over.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

My granny will bring you food
later.

Harriet nods and lays down on the cot. She pats the pillow and covers her face with the blanket as she rests her head on the pillow.

Ellen leaves and walks down the steps.

Harriet pushes the cover from her face. She puts her hands in prayer and smiles.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE DINING AREA - DAY

Annie and John Norcom sit opposite each other as Fanny serves them eggs and bacon.

ANNIE

Where is that wretched slave?

Fanny looks at them.

FANNY

I don't know ma'am.

John Norcom looks at his wife and throws his napkin on the table. He gives Fanny an angry look.

JOHN NORCOM

Go check her room.

Fanny runs out of the room.

Annie looks at John.

ANNIE

Do you think she escaped.

He shakes his head.

JOHN NORCOM

She knows my father and I will find
her and kill her.

He stands up and paces as Annie looks at him.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S PLANTATION - HOUSE DINING AREA - LATER

Fanny returns.

He looks at Fanny who shakes her head. He walks towards the door.

ANNIE

Where are you going?

He turns around and stares at Fanny.

JOHN NORCOM

Tell my father and then look for
her.

He walks out with quick strides.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Molly kneads dough.

Harriet's kids knap on top of blankets nestled against a wall.

Dr. Norcom slams the door open startling Molly and the kids.

The kids cry.

Molly runs to them and hugs them.

He walks towards the kitchen.

DR. NORCOM

Where is she?

MOLLY

Who?

He walks over to her with a stick in his hand. He pokes the kids with the stick.

John walks in and runs towards the kids and shields them.

Molly stands and catches one end of the stick and holds it.

Dr. Norcom sneers.

DR. NORCOM

Those bastards' mother.

He looks at the kids angrily.

Molly frowns.

MOLLY

She's at the plantation. We aint seen her in days.

He gets closer and Molly breaks the stick.

She holds one part while he holds the other part.

His lips quiver as he scowls at Molly.

DR. NORCOM

I have been too nice to her.

She gets closer to him and holds her stick up.

MOLLY

You have terrorized her.

He takes a few steps back.

DR. NORCOM

My men are going to search this place now from top to bottom.

Molly holds her hand out towards John and the kids.

MOLLY

Go right ahead.

John and Molly hold Louisa and Joseph's hands as they walk out the front door.

Several men walk in and slam the door. They search the entire house. They pick things up and throw them.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Molly, John, and the kids stand in the kitchen.

Dr. Norcom shakes the men's hands. They leave the house a mess.

DR. NORCOM

She will pay a price for running away.

He walks over towards Molly.

She holds up the half stick in her hand.

MOLLY

Watch how you talk to me.

He chuckles.

Molly remains silent.

DR. NORCOM

Let her know that if I find out any of my niggers had anything to do with this, they will each get five hundred lashes.

He slams his stick on the wall and walks out.

John walks over and hugs Molly.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Molly, Betty, Mark, and John make crackers.

BETTY

They searched every vessel bound northward.

Mark nods while he looks at the kids who sleep by the fire.

MARK

The entire town is under watch.

MOLLY

Even if one of you know, I don't want to hear it. They will kill her when they find her.

John looks at them as he takes out a tray of crackers from the fire.

JOHN

It's about time she ran away.

Molly forcefully puts her hand on his.

MOLLY

Don't you say that.

John kisses Molly on her cheek.

JOHN

I love you but being a slave is not
a life anyone want to live.

Molly looks at him and then looks towards heaven.

MOLLY

The Lord will save us.

Mark leans over to Molly.

MARK

He sure is taking his time.

Molly nods as tears flow down her cheeks. She hums.

They all hum with her.

INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Samuel sits behind his desk. A tray of biscuits and coffee
sit next to him. He reads a book and makes notes in it.

Dr. Norcom slams the door open.

Samuel looks up.

DR. NORCOM

Where is she?

Samuel closes the book and leaves it on the desk. He stands
and puts his hands in his pockets. He leans from his desk.

SAMUEL

Who?

Dr. Norcom paces as he grimaces.

DR. NORCOM

Your whore.

Samuel stands straight and stares at Dr. Norcom.

SAMUEL

You mean the one girl who would not
give herself to you.

Dr. Norcom turns red as he clinches his jaw. He walks closer
to the desk. He slams his hands on the desk.

DR. NORCOM

She is my property. Where is she?

Samuel shakes his head.

SAMUEL

You're welcome to search my entire
house.

Dr. Norcom walks towards the door. He turns to Samuel and
smiles.

DR. NORCOM

When I find her, she and your
bastards will work in the
plantation until their last breath.

Samuel picks up a biscuit and holds it up.

SAMUEL

You are behind on your party dues.
Make sure you pay them ASAP.

DR. NORCOM

Had I known my money was going
towards your senate bid, I would
not have joined the Whig.

Samuel chuckles and sits down.

SAMUEL

Jealous!

Samuel takes a bite from the biscuit.

Dr. Norcom walks out and slams the door shut.

EXT. EDENTON - TOWN CENTER - DAY

Clay and his men walk around.

They hold reward ads in their hands. They stop people and
hold the ads in front of them.

Dr. Norcom walks up to Clay.

DR. NORCOM

Any leads?

Clay shakes his head.

Dr. Norcom snatches a reward ad from Clay. He stares at it.

INSERT - HARRIET'S REWARD

"\$300 Reward! Ran away from the subscriber...in all probability will try to get to the Free States. All persons are forbidden, under penalty of the law, to harbor or employ said slave..."

BACK TO DR. NORCOM

He rips the ad to pieces and throws it in the street.

INT. FRIEND'S HOUSE - ATTIC - NIGHT

SUPER "ONE WEEK LATER"

Harriet writes in her journal. She hears a tap on the door. She looks up.

Ellen opens the door.

ELLEN

They coming here to search the entire house.

Harriet puts her journal in her sack. She puts her shoes on.

HARRIET

Where do I go?

Ellen cringes.

ELLEN

I had to tell your uncle.

Harriet smiles.

HARRIET

It's ok.

Ellen relaxes.

ELLEN

He is working to find a hiding
place for you.

Ellen walks down.

Harriet follows her with her sack in her hand.

EXT. EDENTON - SNAKE SWAMP - NIGHT

Mark and Harriet stand next to a big tree above the swamp.

MARK

I will come to get you when the
coast is clear.

She hands him her sack. She climbs up the tree and sits on a
thick branch.

HARRIET

Take care of my journals and don't
tell granny.

He looks at her and smiles.

MARK

She thinks you already in the
North.

She settles into her spot.

HARRIET

I pray for that.

He blows her a kiss from below and runs out.

She hears a hissing sound. She looks around. She feels
something crawling around her leg.

She pushes it with her hands. A snake bites her leg before
disappearing into the swamp.

She snaps a leaf from the tree and puts it on the bite. She
squints from pain.

EXT. EDENTON - SNAKE SWAMP - LATER

Harriet winces and cries from pain. She pushes the leaf hard
on the bite.

She removes the leaf and cringes as she sees the swelling.

She snaps a few more leaves from the tree. She bites on them and jumps down. She hops back to town towards her friend's house.

EXT. FRIEND'S HOUSE - BACK DOOR - LATER

She arrives and finds Ellen pacing.

Harriet cries out.

Ellen rushes towards her and puts her hands over her mouth.

ELLEN

Shush. You will get us in trouble.

Harriet spits out the leaves and grinds her teeth.

HARRIET

A snake bit me.

Ellen looks at Harriet's leg and gasps.

ELLEN

Come on back to the attic.

Harriet stops her.

HARRIET

Prepare poultice of warm ashes and vinegar.

Ellen nods as she holds her and takes her inside.

INT. FRIEND'S HOUSE - ATTIC - LATER

Ellen and Harriet apply the potion to Harriet's leg.

ELLEN

That swelling is not going away.

Harriet looks at her leg and cries.

HARRIET

They are going to cut my leg off.

Ellen shakes her head.

ELLEN

I will ask some of the older folks about snake bites.

Harriet slumps her head on the cot.

HARRIET

How am I going to face my massa?

Ellen crashes next to her.

ELLEN

You're not going to. We will find a way to heal this.

Ellen stands up and walks towards the door.

HARRIET

Thank you, my dear friend.

ELLEN

I'll be back soon.

Ellen walks down a few steps and locks the door.

Harriet lays her head on the cot as she continues to cry.

INT. FRIEND'S HOUSE - ATTIC - DAY

Harriet tosses and turns while holding her leg down.

Ellen taps on the door. She steps in. She sets a covered bowl on the floor. She hands Harriet a sack.

Harriet opens the sack and takes out a piece of bread. She eats and looks at the bowl.

HARRIET

What is that?

Ellen uncovers the bowl and a dozen copper sit steep in vinegar.

Harriet sits up and frowns at the bowl.

ELLEN

I asked an old medicine woman, and this is what she told me to use.

Harriet sinks her hand in the bowl.

HARRIET

How is that going to help?

Ellen kneels next to Harriet.

ELLEN

Leave the copper in the vinegar overnight and then use the vinegar over the swelling.

Harriet's eyes bulge as she looks at Ellen.

HARRIET

Overnight! It's still morning.

Ellen puts her hands on Harriet's shoulders.

ELLEN

Wait a few hours and then use the vinegar.

Harriet takes a deep breath. She takes some vinegar from the bowl and drizzles it on the swelling.

HARRIET

Did you relay the message?

Ellen nods.

ELLEN

Your granny said you should return and ask for forgiveness.

Harriet smiles as she rubs the vinegar up and down her leg.

HARRIET

What about the rest?

Ellen stands up and walks towards the door.

ELLEN

Betty agrees with your granny. Mark and John say never go back.

HARRIET

I started this journey and will end it in liberty or death.

Harriet looks up and puts her hands in prayer.

ELLEN

Your journals are safe.

Ellen points to a sack against the wall. Harriet looks at the sack and smiles.

HARRIET

I am blessed to have a friend like you.

Ellen walks down and closes the door.

INT. FRIEND'S HOUSE - ATTIC - NIGHT

Harriet lays on the cot while elevating her leg on the pillow.

Ellen taps on the door.

Harriet lifts her head.

Ellen steps in with Betty. They both hold sacks of food.

Harriet beams when Betty runs to hug her.

Ellen uncovers Harriet's leg and clasps her hands together.

ELLEN

It worked.

Betty rubs Harriet's leg with her hands.

BETTY

The Lord answered our prayers.

Harriet looks at Betty and smiles.

HARRIET

What are you doing here?

Ellen walks over and hands her a sack with bread in it.

Betty hands her a sack with Molly's crackers.

Harriet grabs crackers from the sack and eats them.

Betty and Ellen laugh.

BETTY

We knew you missed them crackers.

Harriet smiles as she chews.

ELLEN

Listen to your aunt.

Harriet stops eating.

HARRIET

Do you want me to go back?

Betty shakes her head.

ELLEN

They are searching these houses
again.

Harriet frowns as she drops the crackers from her hand.

HARRIET

Where do I go now?

BETTY

We have a plan.

Betty shares the details of the plan.

EXT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - GARDEN - LATER

Betty and Ellen help Harriet stand by a big tree.

HARRIET

How long before I meet this person?

Betty shakes her head.

BETTY

We only know your granny fixed this
for you.

Ellen hugs Harriet and walks away. Harriet pulls Betty close.

HARRIET

Only granny knows!

Betty nods as she drops Harriet's journal sack on the floor.

Betty kisses Harriet on her forehead and walks away.

Harriet scowls as she looks around.

A woman, HANNA (50s), warm and loving walks up from behind
her. She puts her arm on Harriet's shoulder.

Harriet freezes.

Hanna walks around and faces Harriet.

Harriet smiles and relaxes into Hanna's arms.

HANNA

You are safe with me.

HARRIET

Where are we going?

Hanna smiles and looks up at the house in front of them.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
Your misses' home!

Hanna nods as she picks up Harriet's sack and helps Harriet hop inside the house.

EXT./INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Hanna opens the door and Harriet peeps inside.

HARRIET
Does your mistress know?

Hanna smiles as she helps Harriet hop in.

HANNA
Who do you think came up with the
idea? But nobody else knows.

Harriet smiles as she looks around.

HARRIET
The Lord really loves me.

Hanna helps Harriet sit on a chair and hands her the sack.

HANNA
I will be right back.

Hanna walks and closes the door to the house.

INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She comes back and helps Harriet up.

HARRIET
(whispers)
You have a place for me.

Hanna nods and helps Harriet hop up the stairs.

INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hanna closes the door as Harriet hops in.

Harriet throws her sack on top of old clothes.

HANNA
I will bring you supper.

Harriet smiles as she looks around. She throws herself on top of old cots and clothes. She stretches her legs in front of her.

HARRIET
Who's below me?

HANNA
My mistress' apartment so don't
make too much noise.

Hanna walks away and locks the door.

INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harriet looks around the old clothes, feather pillows, blankets, and books.

She grins as she kneels by a small opening that looks out into the streets of the town.

She sets pillows and blankets on old cots. She lays her head on the pillows and closes her eyes.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Molly, Betty, John, and Mark bake crackers while Louisa and Joseph sleep.

They hear loud noise outside.

MARK
They after somebody.

Their faces turn to fear when they hear a pounding knock on their front door.

A patrol man pushes the door open.

Dr. Norcom leads the patrol group inside.

DR. NORCOM
Take those sleeping bastards. Her
brother and her aunt too.

Molly tries to protest but Mark holds her back.

Betty runs to the kids and tries to shield them.

Several white patrol men walk towards Betty and John.

They tie their hands with ropes and lead them out.

MOLLY

What you gonna do with them?

Dr. Norcom walks towards her and stares at her with bulging eyes.

DR. NORCOM

They are going to jail.

The men return and pick up the kids.

Molly gasps as she watches the kids cry and stretch their hands to her.

MOLLY

What did they do?

Dr. Norcom lifts up her chin.

DR. NORCOM

They are hostages until she returns.

Molly pushes his hand away.

MOLLY

We told you several times that we believe she went to the North.

DR. NORCOM

How do you know that?

She stares at him confidently.

MOLLY

That was her dream.

He flips a bowl of flour on the floor and walks away and out the door.

INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - STORAGE ROOM - DAY

Hanna opens the door and walks in with a plate of food. She sits next to Harriet on the cot.

Harriet takes a bite from the bread.

HANNA

I got some bad news.

Harriet stops chewing.

HARRIET

Is your mistress gonna turn me in?

Hanna shakes her head.

HANNA

Your kids, brother, and aunt are in jail.

Harriet drops her bread and frowns.

HARRIET

Why?

Hanna points to Harriet.

HANNA

That man is crazy. How he is a doctor I'll never know?

Harriet stands and walks towards the gaping hole.

Hanna pulls her back quickly.

Harriet scowls as she turns to her.

HARRIET

What?

HANNA

Someone might see you.

Harriet sits back on the cot. She pulls a pillow over her face and cries.

Hanna puts her head next to Harriet's and hums to sooth her.

INT. JAIL HOUSE - CELL - DAY

SUPER "ONE MONTH LATER"

Old torn cots sit on dirty wooden floor. The cell hold two people sleeping.

A jarred small window sheds light into the room.

A barred door leads to a small hallway.

Betty and John cradle Louisa and Joseph as they wiggle the chains on their hands and feet.

Maria walks in with a patrol man behind her.

Betty and John look up.

MARIA

I hope you've come to your senses
in the last month.

Betty gives her a puzzling look.

BETTY

Please believe us when we say we
don't know where she is.

Maria scowls at Betty.

MARIA

You lucky I need you back.

Maria looks at the patrol man and he opens the lock to the
door cell.

Betty looks at John and the kids. They hug each other.

The patrol man unchains Betty and she walks out of the cell.
He locks the cell door again.

Betty walks behind Maria and cries when she hears Louisa's
cry after her.

INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - STORAGE ROOM - DAY

Harriet writes in her journal when she hears noises. She puts
her journal away.

She hears Dr. Norcom's voice. She panics. She covers her
mouth with pillow and lays her ear to the floor.

DR. NORCOM (O.S.)

I will return.

She hears the sound of drawers close.

DR. NORCOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I cannot thank you enough.

She then hears footsteps and doors closing.

INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - STORAGE ROOM - LATER

A tap on the door jolts her up. Hanna walks in.

HANNA

I thought you might have heard your
massa's voice.

Harriet nods as her lips quiver.

HARRIET

What did he want?

Hanna walks closer and grins.

HANNA

Five hundred dollars. He is going
to New York to look for you.

Harriet relaxes and signs.

HARRIET

I fooled him.

Hanna chuckles.

HANNA

He is lucky my mistress has a big
heart.

They laugh together.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Dr. Norcom paces by the fireplace.

Clay stands close by with a cigar in his hand.

DR. NORCOM

How could a negro escape me? I
searched all over for months.

Clay frowns as he takes a puff from his cigar.

CLAY

Are you selling them negroes or
what?

Dr. Norcom turns to Clay.

DR. NORCOM

Your last offer was nine hundred
dollars for the boy and eight
hundred for the two bastards.

Clay nods as he pulls out a contract from his pocket.

CLAY

Got the contract with me if you
ready to deal.

Dr. Norcom snatches the contract. He peers at Clay's eyes.

DR. NORCOM

We've been friends for a long time.
Why can't you tell me who is buying
them?

Clay takes another puff from his cigar.

CLAY

It's business.

Dr. Norcom shakes his head. He pushes the contract against
Clay's chest.

DR. NORCOM

I counter the offer at nineteen
hundred dollars.

Clay takes the contract and picks a pen from the desk. He
changes the amount and hands it back to Dr. Norcom.

Dr. Norcom takes the contract and looks at it. He signs it.

CLAY

It's one of your better decisions.

Clay takes out money from his pocket and holds it in one
hand.

DR. NORCOM

I will find her.

Dr. Norcom takes the money and hands Clay the contract.

CLAY

She's gone. You are wasting your
money going to New York.

Clay looks at the contract, folds it and puts it in his
pocket.

DR. NORCOM

I will never give up until I bring
her back.

Clay shakes his head and walks out of the room.

INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Harriet sits on a cot. She smiles as she listens to music playing outside.

She walks to the crack and sneaks a peak. She listens to "Home, sweet home" as tears flow down her face.

She stands up and looks out into the sky.

EXT./INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Her eyes catch images of two kids on the moon.

She shrieks and falls to the ground. She fails to hear the tap at the door.

Hanna walks in with a big tray covered. She finds Harriet and quickly sets the tray on the floor. She runs towards Harriet.

HANNA

What happened?

Harriet holds Hanna tight.

HARRIET

Are my kids ok?

Hanna releases Harriet. She then walks to the door and closes it.

INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hanna walks back and sits next to Harriet.

HANNA

Your kids and brother are out of jail.

Harriet frowns as she pulls Hanna closer.

HARRIET

Really!

Hanna smiles.

HANNA

Your old massa sold them.

HARRIET

Sold!

Hanna nods.

HANNA
He was tricked.

Harriet grins.

HARRIET
By who?

Hanna pouts as she folds her hands against her chest.

HANNA
Their daddy and your granny.

Hanna stands and brings the tray to Harriet.

HARRIET
How much?

Hanna uncovers the tray.

HANNA
Nineteen hundred dollars. I think
your granny paid some of it.

Harriet reaches for her granny's crackers and puts one in her mouth.

HARRIET
My brother too.

Hanna nods as she takes a cracker in her hand.

HANNA
Best thing is that brother of yours
taught your son how to count.

HARRIET
Tell me everything that happened.

They eat and giggle together.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Molly holds Louisa and Joseph closely.

John and Mark walk in from the front door.

MARK
They searching all the white folks'
houses.

Molly's hands jitter. She looks at Mark.

MOLLY
Can you watch the kids?

He nods.

JOHN
I can also watch them.

Molly gives him a stern look.

MOLLY
You supposed to be at Samuel's
house.

John shrugs his shoulders.

JOHN
I'm not going.

Molly walks towards John and pulls his chin up.

MOLLY
Get going!

John looks at Molly and then at Mark who nods.

JOHN
Sometimes I think jail was better.

MOLLY
You can go back if you want.

John walks out the back door.

MARK
Be careful mama.

She nods as she walks out the back door.

INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - STORAGE ROOM - LATER

Harriet sits on the cot and reads her journal when Hanna thrusts the door open.

HARRIET
What's wrong?

Hanna grabs Harriet's sack and hands it to Harriet.

HANNA

They are checking all the white
people homes.

Harriet jumps up and puts her journal inside her sack.

HARRIET

Same hiding place.

Hanna nods and they walk out together.

THROUGH MARTHA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Hanna and Harriet tiptoe from the third floor to the lower level. They walk through the study and exit through the back door.

THROUGH MARTHA'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

They walk quickly through the yard.

THROUGH MARTHA'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Hanna opens the door and locks it once Harriet walks in with her sack.

Hanna lifts up a plank in the floor.

Harriet walks down a few steps and lays down on a carpet spread on the floor.

HANNA

Stay here until I get you.

Harriet nods.

Hanna closes the plank and covers it with carpet.

EXT./INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - STORAGE ROOM - DAY

Hanna opens the door for Dr. Norcom. He looks around as Hanna stands next to the door.

DR. NORCOM

You do know it is against the law
to hide a run away slave.

HANNA

Yes, sir.

He walks to the cot and picks it up. He slams it down.

He then rummages through the old clothes.

He then walks out the door.

Hanna pulls the door shut.

INT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - STORAGE ROOM - DAY

Harriet paces as Hanna sits on the cot.

HANNA

They must be taking you to a free
state.

Harriet stops.

HARRIET

You think so!

Hanna nods.

HANNA

Only thing I can think of. But you
know it's not safe for so many
folks to know the truth.

Harriet nods as she walks to a pile of clothes. She holds a sailor's suit including a jacket, trousers, and a tarpaulin hat.

HARRIET

With these clothes, it must be that
I am heading into a free state.

Hanna smiles as she stands and hugs Harriet.

HANNA

Don't forget me when you are free.

Harriet shakes her head.

HARRIET

I will never forget your goodness.

HANNA

You will make us proud on the other
side. I just feel it in my heart.

HARRIET

Will you help me put them on.

Hanna nods and unbuttons the jacket.

Harriet's eyes welt as she puts on the jacket.

EXT. MARTHA BLOUNT'S HOUSE - GARDEN - NIGHT

Hanna and Harriet embrace. Hanna kisses her on the cheek and walks away.

Harriet holds her sack against her chest.

Mark walks from behind her and taps her on her back.

She jumps and turns around. She shrieks with excitement.

He hushes her with his hand.

He pulls her hand, and they quickly walk out of the garden.

EXT. EDENTON - SNAKE SWAMP - NIGHT

Mark and Harriet arrive at the same big tree as before.

She squeals and cries.

HARRIET

You brought me here to die!

He shakes his head.

MARK

Be strong for a little longer. I
will be back for you.

She puts her hands on his shoulders.

HARRIET

Don't leave.

He pushes her away.

MARK

You are not alone.

He looks into the swamp as Stephen arrives in a small boat.

She turns around and smiles when she sees Stephen.

HARRIET

He gonna take me to a free state!

Mark shakes his head.

MARK

Not yet. We need a new hiding place.

She turns to Mark as tears flow down her face.

HARRIET

Another one! So many hiding places! How much pain will I cause you and granny?

He kisses her on her forehead.

MARK

We love you.

Stephen's boat reaches them.

She jumps in while holding her sack.

She watches Mark run out of the swamp.

Stephen hands her a stick.

STEPHEN

This is to push away the snakes.

She looks around the small boat and find snakes in the water.

She pushes a snake down.

HARRIET

I hate these reptiles.

STEPHEN

Easy, we don't want them to attack us.

She watches him gently row away from the snakes. She replicates his moves.

EXT. EDENTON - SNAKE SWAMP - LATER

Harriet and Stephen row in circles in the swamp.

Mark runs towards them. He throws a small rock into the swamp.

They look up.

STEPHEN

Your new place is ready.

She looks at him and then at Mark. They begin to row closer to Mark. She hands the stick to Stephen and hugs him.

HARRIET

Thank you.

He smiles.

She grabs her sack and jumps into Mark's arms.

They run out of the swamp.

Stephen rows away.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

SUPER "SEPTEMBER 1835"

Harriet looks at Mark.

HARRIET

This is my new hiding place.

Molly walks in and hugs her tightly.

MOLLY

Come with me, child.

She pulls Harriet by her hand and opens the storage room door.

Molly pulls on a rope to reveal a ladder leading to an attic.

EXT./INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - GARRET - CONTINUOUS

John peeps from the garret.

JOHN

You will like it up here.

She frowns at John and then at Molly.

HARRIET

I never knew we had that space.

JOHN

Come see it. The kids don't know.

She takes the steps up.

She reaches the top and John walks down. She peeps down to them.

HARRIET
This is small.

MOLLY
But you are close to us.

She nods.

JOHN
We measured you and made it nine feet long, seven feet wide, and three feet high.

HARRIET
We!

Mark points to John and himself.

She looks at the steps and pulls the door shut.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
Good night.

She finds a cot, a pillow, and a blanket. She rests her head on the pillow and closes her eyes.

EXT./INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - GARRET - DAY

Harriet looks out of a peep hole. She watches people walk by.

She smiles when she sees Joseph and Louisa play with other kids.

She slumps down when she sees Dr. Norcom walking in the street.

EXT./INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - GARRET - NIGHT

Betty opens the shoot and hands Harriet food. Betty sits on the stairs as Harriet eats and looks down.

BETTY
That man ain't going to give you up.

HARRIET
He has an ego.

Betty smiles and nods.

BETTY

He went to New York and came back
more determined.

Harriet shakes her head.

HARRIET

What about the misses?

Betty turns to Harriet.

BETTY

She is happy you are gone.

Betty continue to talk as Harriet eats.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - GARRET - LATER

Harries takes out her journal from her sack. She begins to write.

MONTAGE - HARRIET SIX YEARS IN HIDING

- - INT. ATTIC - SEASONS - - Harriet gets wet from spring rains. She sweats from the summer heat. She shivers from autumn coolness. She fights frostbites from winter freeze.

- - INT. KITCHEN - PHYSICAL CHANGES - - She comes down at night into the storage room. She shakes her limbs and stretches her body.

- - INT. ATTIC - KIDS GROW - - Harriet watches Joseph and Louisa grow from six and four to thirteen and eleven. She laughs and cries when she looks at them.

- - INT. KITCHEN - ONE CHRISTMAS - - Molly and her family sit for Christmas dinner with two male guests (one white and one black). After dinner, Molly and Mark show them the entire house. Including the storage room with the rope leading to the garret removed for the occasion. Dr. Norcom walks in and they report to him. All three leave together.

- - INT. KITCHEN - FAMILY DYNAMIC CHANGES - - John heads to the North with Samuel and escapes. Samuel informs Molly and lets John be free. Louisa leaves with Samuel's new sister-in-law for New York. Betty passes away.

BACK TO HARRIET

Harriet puts her journal away and looks out the peephole.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Dr. Norcom paces by the fireplace.

John Norcom stands by the door.

JOHN NORCOM

We have no other choice. We need
the money.

Dr. Norcom picks the bible from the mantel and holds it
against his chest.

DR. NORCOM

Do it.

Dr. Norcom kisses the bible.

EXT./INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - GARRET - NIGHT

SUPER "JUNE 1842"

Harriet sleeps.

Molly stands on the top step and touches her head.

MOLLY

Your day has come.

Harriet opens her eyes and looks at Molly.

HARRIET

Please tell me this is not a dream.

Molly shakes her head.

MOLLY

You need to leave now.

Harriet sits up and walks down.

Molly grabs her sack and throws it down to her.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Molly walks down and pushes the garret door up. She reaches
into her apron pocket and hands a small sack of money to
Harriet.

Harriet hands it back.

Molly pushes it back to Harriet.

MOLLY
You need this to start your new
life.

Harriet lowers her head and kisses her grandmother's hands.
She looks up at Molly.

HARRIET
I heard some chatter in the street
about Fanny. What happened?

Molly shakes her head.

MOLLY
They sold her and her kids. She ran
away from her new owner.

Harriet grins as she looks up.

HARRIET
I'm gonna miss that garret.

Molly slaps her on her wrist playfully.

MOLLY
And me?

HARRIET
You will always be in my heart.

Molly and Harriet embrace.

Mark walks in through the back door.

MARK
We need to go.

Harriet looks at him.

HARRIET
I want to see Joseph.

Mark opens the back door and Joseph (13) runs to her.

MARK
He's a smart one.

Harriet smiles and hugs Joseph.

HARRIET
Take care of granny and I will see
you soon in the free states.

She kisses Joseph. Then she turns and kisses Molly's cheek before limping out the back door.

Molly wipes tears from her cheeks.

Joseph hugs Molly.

She releases him and hands him an apron. She pulls the apron over her head as they hum together.

EXT. VESSEL - EDENTON STREAM - LATER

Mark and Harriet arrive inside the vessel breathless.

A captain approaches Mark. They talk and Mark hands him money.

The captain waves Harriet to a cabin below the deck.

She hugs Mark and runs to the cabin with her sack.

Mark jumps off the vessel and runs back home.

INT. VESSEL - CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Harriet walks down with her sack. She finds Fanny sitting on the floor.

They hug each other and giggle.

MONTAGE - HARRIET AND FANNIE RIDE TO FREEDOM

- - INT. CABIN - - Harriet and Fanny share their food together. They talk and laugh. The captain peeps in and ushers them to go up to the deck.

- - EXT. DECK - - Harriet and Fanny run up to the deck. Fanny helps Harriet exercise. They look around them with big smiles. The captain watches them with a grin.

- - INT. CABIN - - Harriet teaches Fanny how to sew.

BACK TO HARRIET AND FANNY

Harriet watches as Fanny sews a dress.

EXT./INT. VESSEL - CABIN - DAY

They hear a tap. They look up.

The captain ushers them to leave.

They quickly gather their things and walk up.

EXT. VESSEL - DECK - DAY

They look out and giggle as Harriet reads a sign.

HARRIET

Welcome to Philadelphia.

They shake hands with the captain and walk off the vessel and into a rowboat.

They take their seats and beam as they look around them.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - SHORE - LATER

They walk around. They ask people for help, but nobody stops.

The captain taps Harriet on her shoulder.

She turns around and a cheerful black man, REV. JEREMIAH (50s), takes his hat off and bows before them.

REV. JEREMIAH

I'm Rev. Jeremiah. We are happy you made it to the free state.

Harriet and Fanny exchange looks and stand closer to each other.

HARRIET

I'm Harriet. This is Fanny. We want to go to New York.

REV. JEREMIAH

Follow me. I will help you.

Rev. Jeremiah swiftly walks ahead of them.

They look at the captain who smiles and walks away.

They walk behind Rev. Jeremiah.

HARRIET

How fast can we get to New York?

Rev. Jeremiah continues to walk and wave at people as he passes by them.

REV. JEREMIAH
Give us a few days to make the
arrangements.

Harriet and Fanny clutch their sacks as they follow him.

HARRIET
Where can we stay today?

REV. JEREMIAH
We have a place for you.

They grin and follow him.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - TRAIN STATION - DAY

SUPER "A WEEK LATER"

Harriet and Fanny walk behind Rev. Jeremiah to their train
cart. Each holds a suitcase in her hand.

He turns to them and hands them their tickets.

REV. JEREMIAH
I'm sorry I could not get you
better seats.

Harriet takes out a sack and hands him more money.

He pushes it away.

HARRIET
You mean this is not enough?

He shakes his head.

REV. JEREMIAH
Colored people cannot sit in first
class.

Harriet looks at him with a frown.

HARRIET
You mean the Free North has
segregation.

He nods and lowers his head.

FANNY
In the South, we sit in the back,
but we do not pay.

He leans over to them.

REV. JEREMIAH
We will overcome this one day. For
now, we fight for freedom.

They smile and shake his hand.

He helps them get their suitcases into their cart.

They wave to him as he walks away.

INT. MOLLY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Molly kneads dough and hums.

Dr. Norcom storms through the front door. He holds a letter
and waves it at Molly's face.

DR. NORCOM
She wants to come back. I knew she
would miss us.

Molly wipes her hands with her apron and frowns at him.

MOLLY
Who?

He opens the letter wide and puts it against Molly's face.

DR. NORCOM
That whore granddaughter of yours.

MOLLY
She's a grown woman and can do what
she wants.

Molly goes back to kneading dough.

He storms out of the house.

EXT. NEW YORK - BROOKLYN - DAY

Harriet and Fanny stand in front of an apartment building.
Their suitcases sit on the floor next to them.

HARRIET
I guess this is our goodbye.

Harriet smiles and hugs Fanny.

FANNY

I hope you join the Anti-Slavery Society in the future.

Harriet nods.

HARRIET

I would love nothing more. For today, it's all about seeing my daughter again.

Fanny nods as she picks up her suitcase and walks into the building.

Harriet waves to Fanny. She turns around and smiles. A woman, Sara (black, 29), runs towards her.

They embrace.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Where is she?

Sara points to Louisa (11). Harriet runs to her.

Louisa meets her halfway. Harriet kisses Louisa all over her face.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

How are you? How is school?

Louisa frowns and looks at the floor.

LOUISA

I don't go to school. I do chores.

Harriet hugs her daughter.

HARRIET

Don't worry. I will get a job and make sure we are together soon.

LOUISA

What about Joseph?

Harriet releases Louisa and looks into her eyes.

HARRIET

He will join us.

Louisa looks at Sara who stands by.

LOUISA

I need to finish my chores.

HARRIET

I will be back soon. Sara, you look
out for my baby girl.

Sara nods and reaches for Louisa's hand. They walk away as
Harriet wipes tears from her eyes.

INT. WILLIS HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER "JUNE 1851"

The kitchen is large with space for cooking and eating.

Harriet paces.

A polite and smart woman, CORNELIA WILLIS (white, 27), walks
in and stops in front of Harriet.

CORNELIA

You wanted to see me.

Harriet nods.

HARRIET

I have to leave immediately.

Cornelia frowns.

CORNELIA

Why?

Harriet looks away as tears flow from her eyes.

Cornelia puts her hands on Harriet's shoulders.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

If you are in trouble, I can help
you.

Harriet turns to face Cornelia.

HARRIET

How can you help me from my demon?

Cornelia soothes Harriet's shoulders with her hands.

CORNELIA

What demon?

HARRIET

Slavery. I am a fugitive.

Cornelia holds Harriet's hands tight.

CORNELIA
Come with me.

They walk out of the kitchen.

EXT./INT. WILLIS HOUSE - FRONT - DAY

It's a townhouse with several floors. Brick pavement leads to a few stairs and into the front entrance.

Dr. Norcom gets out of a wagon. He looks at the address and smiles. He walks up the steps and knocks on the door.

Cornelia opens the door.

CORNELIA
Can I help you?

Dr. Norcom takes off his hat.

DR. NORCOM
I am looking for a fugitive slave.

She smiles.

CORNELIA
Here!

He nods and grins.

DR. NORCOM
Yes. Your kin informed me that she takes care of your kids.

CORNELIA
I can assure you there are no fugitives in my house.

He leans forward and smirks.

DR. NORCOM
You are aware of the fugitive law.

She nods.

CORNELIA
You are welcome to search my house.

He steps inside.

EXT./INT. WILLIS HOUSE - FRONT - LATER

Dr. Norcom walks outside.

Cornelia remains inside holding the open door.

DR. NORCOM
I'm sorry I disturbed you.

CORNELIA
Good day sir.

She closes the door.

He walks down the stairs and almost runs into Harriet holding a baby while wearing a bonnet and glasses.

He does not recognize her and steps inside the wagon. The wagon drives away.

Harriet turns around and watches the wagon until it turns away.

INT. WILLIS HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER "NOVEMBER 1850"

Harriet prepares food.

Cornelia walks in and sets a letter on the counter.

Harriet looks at it and smiles.

HARRIET
It's from my granny.

CORNELIA
I thought that would cheer you up.

Cornelia walks out with a smile.

Harriet picks up the letter rips it open.

INSERT - MOLLY'S LETTER

"Dr. Norcom is dead. He left a distressed family. I hope he made his peace with God.

Your loving granny"

BACK TO HARRIET

She wipes tears from her eyes.

HARRIET

You may forgive him granny, but I
don't know that I ever can.

She puts the letter in her pocket. She takes out a bowl from
a cabinet and puts food in it.

INT. DR. NORCOM'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

SUPER "MARCH 1852"

ADULT MARY NORCOM (30s) and her husband, DANIEL MESSMORE
(34s), pace. They both look up when they hear footsteps.

Maria walks down the stairs. She slows down when she reaches
the last step. She stares at them.

MARIA

You get one slave.

Mary stomps her feet on the ground. She purses her lips and
looks at her mother.

MARY

But father was wealthy.

Maria gives Mary a stern look.

MARIA

Was wealthy is correct.

Daniel walks towards Maria.

DANIEL

Which slave?

Maria grins as she looks at Mary.

MARIA

Harriet. Samuel's kin informed me
last week that she is back with the
Willis family in New York.

Daniel turns to Mary.

DANIEL

The law clearly states we own her
no matter where she lives.

Maria walks up the stairs.

MARY
Who gets everything else?

Maria turns around.

MARIA
You mean the debt. I'll be lucky to
afford this house in a year.

Mary shakes her head.

EXT. WILLIS HOUSE - FRONT - DAY

Harriet sits on a stair as she flips through the papers quickly. She throws the papers close to the door.

FANNY
(loudly)
Harriet! Harriet!

Harriet looks up and sees Fanny running towards her. They hug each other. They sit on the stairs.

HARRIET
Last time we saw each other was in
Boston.

FANNY
That was a big reunion.

Harriet grins and nods.

HARRIET
Yes it was with my kids and
brother. John and Joseph went to
California and Louisa is in school.

FANNY
There is nothing like being free.
You must've heard your old massa
died.

Harriet frowns.

HARRIET
Yes but it's not over for me.

Fanny shakes her head.

FANNY

Is that little girl coming after you?

Harriet points to the papers.

HARRIET

According to my granny, it's Mrs. Messmore these days. I check the papers every day.

Fanny leans towards her.

FANNY

How will she recognize you?

Harriet shrugs her shoulders and smiles.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Don't smile. That tooth gives you away. Better get back to work.

Fanny stands up and walks away.

Harriet picks up the papers and walks inside.

EXT. WILLIS HOUSE - FRONT - NIGHT

Harriet opens the paper. Her hands tremble.

INSERT - EVENING EXPRESS

"Third rate hotel section: Mr. and Mrs. Messmore arrive on this day at Courtland Hotel."

BACK TO HARRIET

She closes the paper and opens it again.

Cornelia walks out. She finds Harriet talking to herself.

HARRIET

How long will I keep running?

Cornelia taps her on her shoulder.

Harriet turns around. She freezes.

CORNELIA

Tell me what is troubling you.

Harriet stares at her.

HARRIET

I need to leave.

Cornelia stares at her eyes and smiles.

CORNELIA

You do not leave us again.

Harriet pleads with Cornelia.

HARRIET

How many times will you risk your
life to help me.

Cornelia shakes her head.

CORNELIA

My husband and I will help you.

Cornelia pulls Harriet gently and they walk into the house.

EXT. NEW YORK - COURTLAND HOTEL - DAY

A carriage stops in front of the hotel. It's a busy street
with people walking in both directions.

Daniel steps out of the carriage. He offers Mary his hand
which she accepts.

A hotel employee walks up to them. The carriage driver hands
the employee two suitcases.

DANIEL

You need to pay the driver.

She looks inside her sack and hands the driver the money.

The driver rides the carriage away.

MARY

I gave you some money when we left.

DANIEL

The money problem will be solved
soon.

She looks at him grimly.

MARY

I promised my mother that I will
take her back.

He leans closer to her.

DANIEL

I did not promise anything.

He smirks and tries to walk away but Mary holds his hand.

MARY

Do you know how much pain that
slave caused my family?

DANIEL

Sounds like she got even.

Mary slaps him, which almost knocks Daniel to the ground.

He chuckles and walks towards the hotel entrance.

Mary straightens up and looks around as people stare. She
huffs and walks behind him.

EXT./INT. WILLIS HOUSE - LATER

Daniel looks at the address on the wall and then the paper in
his hand. He puts the paper away.

Mary stands behind him.

MARY

Is this it?

He nods. He knocks on the door.

A black maid in uniform opens the door.

DANIEL

Hello, are Mr. and Mrs. Willis
available?

The maid shakes her head.

Mary pushes Daniel aside.

MARY

Is Harriet Jacobs here?

The maid shakes her head.

DANIEL
Does she stay in this house?

MAID
No sir.

The maid closes the door, but Daniel pushes it open.

DANIEL
Please let Mr. and Mrs. Willis know
that Mr. and Mrs. Messmore would
like to meet with them.

MAID
Yes, sir.

The maid closes the door.

MARY
I won't give up until I take her
back to my mother.

Daniel rolls his eyes as he walks down the stairs.

INT. WILLIS HOUSE - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Nathaniel sits on one sofa. Cornelia and Harriet sit on the
other sofa.

CORNELIA
Your slaveholder stopped by today.

Harriet cringes.

NATHANIEL
Not to worry. Everyone has been
following our instructions.

Cornelia rubs her back.

CORNELIA
You just make sure you do not go
outside until this is resolved.

HARRIET
They won't leave without me. I just
know it.

Nathaniel looks at her with a smile.

NATHANIEL
I inquired about them.

Cornelia looks up.

CORNELIA

And...

NATHANIEL

They are desperate for money.

Harriet looks up at him and then at Cornelia.

HARRIET

Do you think they will sell me? I
have some money saved.

CORNELIA

Just have faith in us.

Cornelia hugs Harriet.

EXT./INT. WILLIS HOUSE - DAY

Daniel knocks on the door.

Mary stands behind him.

The same black maid opens the door.

DANIEL

Hello, are Mr. and Mrs. Willis
available?

The maid nods and steps aside.

They walk in.

The maid closes the door.

INT. WILLIS HOUSE - LIVING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Cornelia knits as she sits on a sofa.

On the coffee table sit papers face down with a pen next to
them.

Cornelia looks up and smiles when the maid walks in with
Daniel and Mary. She puts her knitting aside and stands up.

Daniel offers his hand and Cornelia shakes it.

Mary sits on the sofa across from Cornelia.

DANIEL
Nice to meet you, Mrs. Willis.

CORNELIA
The pleasure is all mine Mr. and
Mrs. Messmore.

Daniel sits next to Mary.

MARY
We came for Harriet. She's my slave
you know.

Cornelia sits back on the sofa.

CORNELIA
I do know.

Mary stands and looks around.

MARY
Where is she?

Daniel holds Mary's hand and pulls her back down to sit next
to him.

CORNELIA
She is not here.

DANIEL
When will she return?

Mary fidgets with her dress.

CORNELIA
Later.

MARY
We can wait.

Daniel turns to Mary with a stern face.

DANIEL
We cannot afford to stay at that
hotel any longer.

Cornelia grins and picks the papers from the coffee table.

CORNELIA
Would you consider another option
so that you can start your journey
home today?

Mary and Daniel look at each other and then at Cornelia.

DANIEL

Depends.

Cornelia hands the papers to Daniel and holds a pen.

Daniel and Mary review the papers.

INSERT - MESSMORE DOCUMENT

“...enter into obligation to
relinquish all claim to Harriet Ann
Jacobs and her children forever
after.”

BACK TO MARY AND DANIEL

Daniel looks at Mary, who's lips quiver.

MARY

No.

CORNELIA

If you reject this offer you will
never get anything; for the woman
has friends who can take her and
her children out of the country.

Daniel reaches for the pen.

Cornelia pushes it towards him.

He signs and pushes the documents and pen towards Mary.

DANIEL

This maybe our only chance.

She stares at him and then at the papers.

He nudges her.

She looks up at Cornelia who smiles at her.

Mary signs and pushes the documents and pen towards Cornelia.

Cornelia picks the documents and reviews the signatures. She
stands up and takes out the money from her sleeve and hands
it to Daniel.

CORNELIA

Have a safe journey home.

Daniel stands and puts the money in his pocket.

Mary stands.

They walk behind Cornelia out of the room.

EXT./INT. WILLIS HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Cornelia opens the door for them.

Mary and Daniel walk out.

Mary turns back to Cornelia.

MARY

Tell her we love her.

Daniel shakes his head and walks down the stairs.

Cornelia grins as she looks at Mary.

CORNELIA

What a lovely message.

Mary walks down the stairs and looks up to the top of the floor. She stumbles and falls.

INT. WILLIS HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nathaniel and Harriet look down the window and onto the street. Harriet waves to Mary.

EXT. WILLIS HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Daniel pulls Mary up and they walk away.

INT. WILLIS HOUSE - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Cornelia and Nathaniel sit across from each other on the sofas.

Harriet walks in.

Cornelia pads the seat next to her.

Harriet sits down.

HARRIET

Where am I going next?

NATHANIEL
Anywhere you want.

Harriet looks at Cornelia and then at Nathaniel.

He hands Harriet documents.

Harriet's hands shake as she takes the documents and reads them.

She reads key words.

INSERT - KEY WORDS

"Recorder of City of New
York...Harriet Ann Jacobs is a free
woman...no claim can ever be made
to her or her children."

BACK TO HARRIET

Tears flow down Harriet's eyes and she hugs Cornelia.

CORNELIA
No more demons.

She quickly stands and runs to Nathaniel and hugs him. She lets go.

HARRIET
Where are my manners?

NATHANIEL
You are family.

She walks back to her seat and flips through the documents. She frowns and looks at Cornelia.

HARRIET
You paid three hundred dollars for
me!

Cornelia nods.

CORNELIA
You are free now.

Harriet turns her gaze back to the documents.

HARRIET

The bill of sale is on record, and future generations will learn from it that women were articles of traffic in New York.

Cornelia and Nathaniel stare at her with grim faces.

EXT. CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS - SIDE WALK BENCH - DAY

SUPER "JUNE 1873"

Harriet sits on a bench as she opens a sack and takes out a copy of her published book. She smiles as she flips through the pages.

HARRIET (V.O)

Even as a free woman, I never forgot the shame I brought to my granny. I wrote several anonymous letters about the plight of slavery in the New York Tribune. Just a year after I gained my freedom, my granny died. Her death and a lot of persuasion from my friend, Amy Post, led me to write my story. I did reunite with my brother for over ten years as we worked in the anti-slavery room. In 1857, my son joined my brother on a trip to Australia. With the exception of one letter, I never heard or saw from my son again. My uncle Mark died in 1858. My brother managed to publish his story in England and then in 1873, he and his family joined me in Cambridge, but he died that same year. My daughter finished her school and joined my activism where we opened schools and did relief work for freed slaves. All of this was possible because of my dear friend, Cornelia Willis, who always kept her door open for me and my daughter.

FADE OUT: