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 ALLBRIGHT CHUCKLES. Cathy smiles. Allbright looks over at Cathy and LAUGHS EVEN HARDER. Cathy gives him a questioning look and HE COLLAPSES WITH LAUGHTER. He tries to get hold of himself. Cathy is offended.

CATHY (CONT'D)

What's so damned funny?

Allbright pulls himself together.

ALLBRIGHT

You sure gone the long way round to do it, but you have got to be the first soldier ever made the United States Army call him by his first name.

CATHY LAUGHS, then softly

CATHY

Her. Her name.

Allbright smiles, pulls Cathy closer.

ALLBRIGHT

Her. Oh, yes, very much her.

They kiss. The sunset burns gloriously in the distance.

EXT. WOODED AREA - DAWN

Allbright studies Cathy as she sleeps. Cathy wakes, smiles. Notices light. Sits up with a start.

START

CATHY

We have to get back to post before reveille.

ALLBRIGHT

We've got time.

He strokes her face, throat, touches the scars.

ALLBRIGHT (CONT'D)

Who did this to you?

CATHY

No one "did it" to me. My mama put them on me and my cousin. Just like her mama and her mama's mama back in Africa did.

ALLBRIGHT

Why?

CATHY

To be strong for what was coming.
Stronger than the pain. Especially
Clemmie.

ALLBRIGHT

Clemmie?

CATHY

My cousin.

She turns from him.

ALLBRIGHT

Cathy? What's wrong?

Cathy is distraught. He sits up, pulls her to him.

ALLBRIGHT (CONT'D)

You're with me, baby. You're safe
now. What is it?

CATHY

Clemmie. It hurts thinking about
her. How she kept the wickedness
away from us. Just like my
beautiful aunt did.

ALLBRIGHT

What wickedness?

CATHY

Mr. Williams.

ALLBRIGHT

Oh Lord god, no.

CATHY

Clemmie was his child. And she was
even more beautiful than my aunt.
She was barely ten when she caught
Old Mister's eye.

(crying)

ALLBRIGHT

Damn them. Damn them all. May they
rot in hell. Tell me, Cathy, let me
help you carry the pain.

CATHY

The night he came for her, my aunt was screaming and begging, tears running off her face. But Mama just went cold and hard. Didn't say a word. Not until he puts his hand on the door. Then she says, "Excuse me, Mr. Williams." Mama was his overseer. He'd never heard her talk sweet like that before. It was so strange that he stopped. Without another word, Mama stabbed her Bowie knife so deep into his hand that she pinned it to the door.

(Allbright reacts)

Only reason Mister didn't kill or sell all four us was his hand went bad. Had to be amputated. He hated black women, but black men terrified him. He needed mama. Couldn't run the place without her. So he had her whipped till she nearly died. Whipped me too. But not my aunt. She had to stay pretty so he could sell her to a whorehouse.

ALLBRIGHT

But Clemmie? Clemmie was safe?

Cathy sobs.

CATHY

He took her, Levi. He took my beautiful little cousin. Took her up to the house so he could do his nastiness where Mama couldn't protect her. But Mama knew the wickedness was coming, so she put the scars on both of us. Once we had them, no matter what they ever did, they couldn't ever make us forget who we really are.

Cathy dissolves in tears, Allbright rocks and comforts her.

ALLBRIGHT

Shh-shh-shh. They can't get you.
Can't get Clemmie. I got you. I'm
here now, baby.

LEND

He uses his yellow kerchief to dry her tears, hugs her. Cathy cuddling against the kerchief, snuggles into his embrace.