

*4
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The cabin door opens slowly and Douglass steps through. His eyes meet hers and he surveys her: hair sleep ruffled, clothes twisted sideways, wild eyed, holding a loaded pistol in the corner of a room.

DOUGLASS (CONT'D)

I believe this freedom business does take a kind of toll.

He eases himself into a chair and tosses a fresh log onto the dying fire. Harriet takes a breath and starts pulling her clothes on.

HARRIET

Don't you turn around Fred Douglass.

Douglass eyes the fire. Touches Harriet's rucksack.

DOUGLASS

You're going then? To Harper's Ferry?

HARRIET

Tonight. Surprised as I am you're here, I'm mighty glad to see you. Spells been comin' on strong lately, and I could use the company on the way. Brown is always telling me...

Douglass stands and begins to pace, clearly agitated. Harriet observes and pours him coffee from a tin pot.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Yall have another fight?

Douglass stops pacing. His face looks tired, strained.

DOUGLASS

I have laboured with every mental strength I have to make a decision, Harriet. I admire John Brown, would want my sons to have his fire, but even my most ardent admiration of the man does not dismiss the fact that his plan for Harper's Ferry is perhaps lethally flawed!

HARRIET

So you're not going?

DOUGLASS

I have no right to go, and Harriet neither have you.

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CONTINUED: (2)

HARRIET

What do you mean?

DOUGLASS

I have half a nation counting on me to give voice to their need. I cannot willfully choose a hero's death and leave them all on their own. Think of yourself, Harriet! If you go, you will die, I know it. The mission will fail, you will die, and who will be our Moses then?

HARRIET

There will be another Moses.

DOUGLASS

When? We need you now. You are far more valuable to our cause alive than dead.

He pauses, taking her hands.

DOUGLASS (CONT'D)

The only part of death I fear is what I leave behind undone. I cannot leave our people now. My work is not near finished. I've no desire to be a martyr--

HARRIET

You sayin' that's what John wants?

DOUGLASS

He knows his plan will kill him!

Harriet gets up and starts pacing.

HARRIET

Two hundred and fifty two free so far. That's what I done, Frederick. Two hundred and fifty two free because of God, and me. And of them I done freed, I got no idea how many of 'em been sold right back to slavery. Don't know how many of 'em been taken right out of their free-state beds and been kidnapped, stole, or shot by bounty hunters. My work ain't meaning nothing while slavery's still alive. If I got to die for something, it's gonna be for my work.

DOUGLASS

I am begging you to reconsider, Harriet. As your comrade, as your friend.

Harriet comes to him, standing very close.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARRIET

Frederick, you are my dearest, truest friend. If I do die, and if there's anything like a heart in the next world, then mine will break from missing you.

DOUGLASS

I can't use your poetry Harriet! You are no good to anyone dead and Harpers Ferry is nothing less than suicide.

Douglass gathers his things. His face wears an anguish of grief and anger. He pauses by her cabin door.

DOUGLASS (CONT'D)

You and John Brown share something I have never had. You both have Divine madness. I am, quite sadly, rooted here on earth.

He leaves her.

↓ End

EXT. HARRIET'S VIRGINIA HIDEAWAY - NIGHT

Harriet moves out toward the woods. The night is deep with sounds of crickets. She stops at a small well to fill her water-skin, hauling the bucket up on its frayed rope. She fills her skin, then pauses to take a sip from the ladle, hooking the bucket high up on its squeaky pulley. As she drinks deep from the ladle...

HARRIET

Ahhhhh....nothing sweeter.

... the rope holding the bucket snaps, sending the wooden water bucket crashing down on her head. Harriet staggers, and grasps at the edge of the well.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

No...no, not now.

She staggers away, trying for her cabin as the sepia swirls start coming.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

No Lord. Lord I beg you--

She falls to her knees and groans as the pain in her head and the spiraling sepia madness take her completely down.

DISSOLVE TO: