

THE BIRTH OF A NATION

Screenplay by

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4/09/15 - White Draft
4/21/15 - Blue Draft
5/08/15 - Pink Draft
6/15/15 - Yellow Draft

1 BLACK, THEN-

1

Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever.

Thomas Jefferson, 1785

CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)

My mama, she was runnin'. Runnin'
fast as she could...

FADE IN

2 EXT. DISMAL SWAMP - NIGHT

2

Moonlight sifts through the tall pines, illuminating the fog-blanketed marsh.

CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)

But the white man, he caught her.
Caught her an' threwed her to the
ground...

Through the boscaje, two shrouded figures emerge, pacing stealthily through the brush.

CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)

But he ain't know that another man,
big like my daddy was behind him...

CLOSER to reveal the shadowed features of an African WOMAN. She pulls a YOUNG BOY alongside her- both of whom's features we cannot yet clearly see.

CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)

He took a big ol' stick and hit
that white man all about his head
with it...

3 INT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NANA'S CABIN - (NIGHT)

3

Three SLAVE CHILDREN sit together under candle light. They wear long TOW SHIRTS that reach to their knees. The smallest, YOUNG NAT TURNER (9) continues as the two others listen rapt.

YOUNG NAT

Then they dug a hole, roll him in
it and walked on back.

An UNKNOWN POV watches from outside the cracked cabin door. One of the other slave children, YOUNG HARK (10) pipes up.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

SLAVE CHILD

They got lynched?

YOUNG NAT

Naw. They went on back and didn't
never say nothing on it.

(he giggles)

Say they ain't seen master all day.

The cabin door opens to reveal NANCY TURNER (20's). She regards Nat, spooked.

NANCY

Who told you that?

No answer. She rushes to him, grabs him hard by the arm.

NANCY (CONT'D)

You tell me who told you that right
now, 'fo I tan your hide!

YOUNG NAT

Nobody, mama. I just... remember-

Nat winces against her grip, terrified. His eyes flood. Nancy releases her grip, pulls him into a hug. Her eyes mist.

NANCY

I'm sorry...

4 OMITTED

4 *

5 EXT. DISMAL SWAMP - CLEARING - NIGHT

5

Nancy and Nat step into the clearing to find a group of ELDERLY AFRICANS huddled around a humble fire in fervent prayer. Among the elders, we find EZEKIEL (90's). As if sensing their arrival, his eyes open. He motions them forward. Ezekiel speaks in his Native Ghanaian tongue.

*

EZEKIEL

(Remove his garb.)

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

Nat looks terrified as Nancy removes his shirt. Ezekiel inspects Nat's arms and back before arriving to his chest.

The Elders nudge in, the mouthing of passionate prayer never ceasing. Ezekiel points a thin finger to the boy's sternum. *

ANGLE ON THREE SLIGHTLY RAISED KNOTS.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

(In the time of our ancestors, the cycle of our people lay in the hands of the children... A man's position was left to the signs of the maker. Children bearing marks were presented before counsel. It was there they were given their assignments in the tribe-assignments that would last a lifetime...)

He points to the first bump on the Nat's chest.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

(Wisdom...)

(the second bump)

(Courage...)

(the third)

(Vision...)

(a long beat)

(This boy holds the Holy marks of our ancestors past... He was born to be a prophet.)

At the word **PROPHET**, the surrounding Elders' bodies arch and rock, the intensity of their prayers growing to fever pitch.

We PUSH IN on Nat as he struggles to digest the magnitude of his words. CLOSER. As divine exaltation fills the surrounding blur, we-

CUT TO BLACK

SUPER: BASED ON A TRUE STORY

6 INT. BARN/SLAVE CHURCH - DAY

6

Sunlight cuts through crooked slats, casting golden lines across the dirt floor. Whispers lead toward a corner where we find SEVERAL SHADOWED FIGURES crouched in the darkness. *

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

Their whispers cease when SOMETHING crosses outside, disrupting the light.

The broad barn door creeks open. An ugly shadow tracks across the barn floor. We drift up to reveal-

JOHN CLARKE TURNER (10, white)

His eyes snap toward a movement in the dark. He smiles big-

JOHN CLARKE
I see you!

7 EXT. BARN/SLAVE CHURCH - DAY

7

Giggling children, burst from the barn door, as John Clark gives chase. We lock in on Young Nat as he sprints ahead of the group.

SUPER: SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1809

8 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DAY

8

We follow him, as he passes the TURNER MANSION-

9 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - DAY

9

He cuts through the SLAVE QUARTERS, dodging a MALE BLACKSMITH SLAVE who shapes a piece of metal with a hammer, passes a MALE SLAVE leading a trudging mule and races through a plume of steam rising from a FEMALE SLAVE COOK's massive pot. *

10 OMITTED

10 *

11 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DAY

11

John Clarke stands in the courtyard resigned. He offers a final scan of the plantation.

JOHN CLARKE
Nat!
(no response)
All right, you win again! Come on out!

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

Several moments pass before Nat emerges. He and John Clarke share a smile as-

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

John Clarke!

ELIZABETH TURNER (40's) exits onto the 'Big House' porch.

ELIZABETH TURNER

Get in here for supper.

JOHN CLARKE

Yes'm! Bye Nat.

YOUNG NAT

Bye.

Nat watches as John Clarke bounds the porch stairs. He and Elizabeth disappear inside.

Nat lingers a moment, his eyes fixing on a hardcover BOOK draped on the back of a rocking chair.

12 OMITTED

12 *

13 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DAY

13

On the porch, the wooden rocking chair rocks lazily. The hardcover book, gone.

14 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - MEAL HOUSE - DAY

14

Nat arrives to a long table overcrowded with slave children, each holding a SHELL. A SLAVE MAN approaches, drops a LARGE BOWL of CORNMUSH at the table's center. As the children surge scooping at the mush, Nat struggles to push his way through. Within seconds, the kids disperse, leaving Nat in front of an empty bowl.

ANGLE ON

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

-a slave man across the courtyard. This is ISAAC TURNER. A leather apron shields his chest and legs as he wields a hammer over a hot scrap of iron. He watches as Nat meanders away.

15 INT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NANA'S CABIN - NIGHT

15

*

Isaac enters, caked in dirt and sweat. Bridget, Nancy and Nat lie asleep. Isaac hovers over a bucket of water in a near corner. As he rinses his face a soft MOAN rises from Nat's direction.

Isaac studies Nat a beat before grabbing a small wooden box from a shelf. Within, he finds a CRUMPLED SQUARE OF PAPER. He smooths it against his leg, before slipping out the cabin.

A long beat until- Nat stirs awake, sits up.

16 EXT. WOODS - OLD ROAD - NIGHT

16

Isaac pushes through the woods, staying close to the main road. A SOUND in the distances stops him in his tracks. He grips a bulky stash under his shirt as he squints into the dark. As his eyes focus on a shadowed figure ahead-

CLICK.

He turns to find three men, THE PATTY-ROLLERS, atop horses. They're dressed similarly in worn pea coats, each coat bearing a dull BRASS STAR. RAYMOND COBB (40's, the leader) holds a pistol leveled at Isaac's head.

*

*

*

COBB

You so much as bat your eyes I'll
blow you from here to hell.

Isaac stands frozen as he takes in the group of three men.

COBB (CONT'D)

What you doin' out here, boy?

ISAAC

Runnin' a errand for my massa, suh.
Massa Benjamin Turner.

He opens his shirt to reveal CANNED GOODS and SALT PORK.

COBB

Where yo' pass at?

Isaac produces a piece of paper we recognize as the CRUMPLED SQUARE from the cabin. He hands it to Cobb who studies it.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

COBB (CONT'D)

You think you're smarter than me,
don't you boy?

Cobb calls to one of his men, JESSE (20).

COBB (CONT'D)

Jesse, what we call a nigger, think
he can outsmart a white man?

JESSE

...a dead nigger.

COBB

(to Isaac)

Turn around. Get on your knees.

Isaac turns toward the woods. Cobb dismounts behind him. Isaac squints toward the shadowed figure. Recognition sets in his gaze. It's NAT.

COBB (CONT'D)

On yo' knees.

WITH ISAAC as he slowly lowers. Just as his knees touch the ground, he-

-lunges for the gun. BANG! The gun goes off, catching the third pattyroller in the chest. Isaac and Cobb wrestle for the pistol as Jesse struggles for a clean shot. Isaac head-butts Cobb, sending the gun flying. Before Cobb can recover, Isaac grabs a nearby branch, CLUBS him across the face. A gash opens, spilling blood. Isaac sprints into the woods. On Cobb and Jesse firing wildly into the treeline.

17 EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

17

Young Nat runs for his life. As he crashes through the brush a HAND scoops him up from behind. WIDER TO REVEAL Isaac sprinting, Nat dangling in his grip.

18 INT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NANA'S CABIN - NIGHT

18

BRIDGET "NANA" TURNER, sits in a rocking chair, in front of a modest fire, asleep. Isaac and Nat burst in. Bridget and Nancy jolt up to see Isaac, blood speckled clothes, Nat terrified at his side. *

BRIDGET
Oh, Jesus!

NANCY
What happened?!

Nat trembles as Isaac pulls rations from his pants. A few SEALED TIN CANS tumble to the floor. *

NANCY (CONT'D)
Isaac!-

Isaac grabs Nancy gently by the arms.

ISAAC
I hurt some white men. Didn't have no choice... *

NANCY
What you gon' do?

ISAAC
Only thing I can. I gotta go.

Nat breaks free, clings to his father's leg. Isaac kneels to Nat's level.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
You take care of your mama and Nana, hear?

NAT
When you comin' back, papa?

ISAAC
I'll be back, directly.

Isaac takes his son in.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
No matter what, you remember this:
You a child of God. You got purpose.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ISAAC (CONT'D)

(touches his chest)

It's in ya. The Lord put it there
and they ain't nothing nobody can
do to take it away, ya hear?

NAT

Yessir...

A dog is heard BARKING in the BG. Isaac hugs Bridget, moves
to Nancy who chokes back tears. *

ISAAC

I'll get back soon as I can for
y'all.

(then)

I love you, woman.

And with that, Isaac slips from the cabin. A deafening beat,
until- The sound of GALLOPING HOOVES approach in the BG.

Bridget hurries Nat onto his cot, ushers Nancy, who stands
catatonic, to hers. She quickly pulls back a corner mat,
pulls a board loose to reveal-

A SMALL COMPARTMENT

She hides the stolen food, replaces the board just as-

Benjamin Turner opens the cabin door. Cobb trails, holds a
blood-soaked handkerchief tight to his face.

BENJAMIN TURNER

Bridget, Nancy, get on up.
Isaac is in a lot of trouble. I
need y'all to tell me where he is.

BRIDGET

He ain't here massa. We ain't seen
him all night.

BENJAMIN TURNER

You sure-

COBB

Ben, I'm gonna ask you to step
outside. *

Benjamin hesitates. *

COBB (CONT'D)

A white man lost his life tonight.
You know like I do what that means. *

(MORE) *

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (2)

18

COBB (CONT'D)

Now I can do my questioning now, or
I can come back after I get my
posse rounded up. Do a **thorough**
search of the property.

*
*
*
*

A beat, until.

*

BENJAMIN TURNER

...any harm done'll be taken up
with the sheriff.

As Ben exits. Cobb removes the cloth to reveal an ugly gash.

COBB

None of y'all seen him, huh?

(CONTINUED)

OLD BRIDGET
No, suh.

NANCY
No, suh.

COBB (CONT'D)
(to Nat)
What about you, boy?

NANCY
He ain't seen nothin-

SMACK! Cobb backhands Nancy who lands across the room.

COBB
You seen yo' daddy?

No response. Cobb squats down nose to nose with Nat. Nat holds his gaze, seemingly unafraid. Shakes his head 'no'.

COBB (CONT'D)
You that nigger's boy, alright.

Cobb stands, still eyeing Nat. Bridget's eyes flit just past Cobb's boots. We follow her gaze to see a small WAX-SEALED GLASS JAR lies just several inches from his heel. Cobb uncurls a dirty index finger, points it to Nancy, then to Nat. As he leans in, his weight shifts on the wooden plank, the tin can slowly rolls towards his foot.

COBB (CONT'D)
If I find out y'all's is lying, I'm gonna come back here...

Bridget watches as the can picks up speed, rolls closer.

COBB (CONT'D)
...and the things I'm gon' do to y'all might not be so nice-

Inches away until-

Bridget dives at Cob's feet.

BRIDGET
Oh' massa please! Please! We don't know nothin'! Oh Lord!

COBB
Get off me!

Cobb struggles from her grip. Benjamin pushes in-

BENJAMIN TURNER
That's enough!

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (4)

18

Cobb straightens before eyeing Nancy. *

COBB
(straightens to exit,
then)

Teach that boy some manners. Next
time he looks me in the eyes, he's
gon' to get the same thing that's
waitin' for his pa.

With that, he turns and they're out the door. Bridget's
hysteria switches to a chilling calm in an instant. She sits
up on the floor, opens her palms to reveal the FOOD JAR. *

ON NAT as his mind struggles to process the night's events. *

19 EXT. WOODS - DAY (**VISION ONE**)

19

*Young Nat, his skin royal blue, fills the frame. He seems to
look directly at us. **

NAT'S POV *

*A shadow moves. Demonic voices permeate the forest around
him. A CLOAKED FIGURE hides in the distance. Nat senses
something behind him, turns. A MAN lies bowed in prayer, his
back to us. Nat turns back to see THE SHADOWED FIGURE IS ONLY
FEET AWAY. Off his demonic features- **

20 INT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NANA'S CABIN - NIGHT

20

Nat jerks awake, to find himself in Nancy's arms. Nat bursts
into tears as she holds him, rocking him in her grip.

NANCY
Shh... you're OK. It ain't real.
It's in your mind. It ain't real.
I'm here, now.

NAT
I want Papa...

NANCY
I know, baby...
(low)
Me too.

21 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

21

Nancy stretches wet cotton sheets across a long clothes line.
Nat can be seen in the BG tossing a ball mad of rags. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As she reaches into the basket, she rises to find a smiling Elizabeth Turner.

ELIZABETH TURNER

Mind if I help.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

No, ma'am.

Nancy and Elizabeth string the sheets in silence until-

ELIZABETH TURNER

How's Nat doin'?

NANCY

He doin' fine I reckon... Somethin' wrong, Missus?

ELIZABETH TURNER

No. Nothin' wrong.

(then)

John Clarke told me something this morning I thought I'd ask you about.

(beat)

He said Nat knows how to read.

NANCY

Read? Oh no. He don't know how to read. He don't know nothin'. He just pulling John Clarke's leg.

ELIZABETH TURNER

John Clarke said he found him with a book. Said he knew letters.

NANCY

Nat don't know nothing 'bout no books. He just shiftless. Act like he ain't got no sense half the time.

ELIZABETH TURNER

A part of me couldn't believe it either... So, I tested him.

A sheet slips from Nancy's grasp. She catches it before it hits the grass.

NANCY

Ma'am?

ELIZABETH TURNER

Sure enough, there he was sounding out letters.

An excruciating beat. The two continue hanging sheets in tandem. Nancy's hands tremble.

21 CONTINUED: (3)

21

ELIZABETH TURNER (CONT'D)

Have him come by the house tomorrow
after lunch-

*

NANCY

Please, Missus. He didn't mean no
harm. I'll whip him good when I see
him-

ELIZABETH TURNER

Whip him? Nonsense. I'm going to
teach him. If the good Lord gave
that boy a gift to read, we'd be
remiss to let it go to waste. Now
have him at the house tomorrow
after lunch, hear?

*

(then)

And don't expect him back for a few
days. Reading can be tricky.
Lessons best not be disturbed in
the beginning.

Nancy forces a smile.

NANCY

Yes'm.

And Elizabeth saunters away as cheery as when she came. On
Nancy, her face falling.

22 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NANA'S CABIN - DAY

22

Nancy pulls a burlap shirt over Nat's head. WIDER to see Nat
wears a pair of sack cloth pants; the first time we've seen
him without his tow shirt.

*

*

Nancy and Bridget regard Nat as he studies his new outfit
with pride.

*

*

NANCY

Hold on.

*

*

Nancy disappears into the Cabin.

*

BRIDGET

Now you listen to everything Miss
Elizabeth say. Keep ya head down
and stay out the way, hear?

*

*

*

*

YOUNG NAT

Yes'm.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

Nancy emerges from inside, produces a folded piece of cloth. *
She and Bridget share a look before she kneels, hands it to
Nat.

NANCY

Yo' daddy gave me this... And yo'
Nana gave it to him.

Nat unfolds the cloth to reveal-

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (2)

22

A SMALL WOODEN RELIC. Tribal signs carved on its face.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Don't you go losin' it, ya' hear?

YOUNG NAT

Yes'm.

She gently takes his face in her hands, kisses his cheek before pulling him into a long hug. Bridget takes Nat's hand, leading him out of the quarters as we hold on Nancy's look of despair. *

23 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DAY

23

Bridget and Nat stand on the Big House porch. She knocks and a house servant JANICE (20's) pulls open the door.

JANICE

(over her shoulder)

Miss Elizabeth-

Elizabeth arrives, regards Nat with a smile.

ELIZABETH TURNER

There you are.

(to Bridget)

You tell Nancy not to worry, he'll be fine.

BRIDGET

Yes'm.

Bridget watches as Elizabeth guides Nat inside.

ELIZABETH TURNER

First, we gotta get you outta those rags...

Bridget and Nat share a fleeting look before he disappears inside, Janice pushing the door shut. And we HOLD on Bridget.

24 INT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

24

Hundreds of books line the walls. Nat wanders, mouth agape.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG NAT

This shol' is a lot of books.

ELIZABETH TURNER

They come from all over.

Nat reaches out to touch one when ELIZABETH CATCHES HIS HAND.

ELIZABETH TURNER (CONT'D)

These books in here are for white folks. They're full of things your kind wouldn't understand. But, I do have a special one, just for you.

She produces a worn HOLY BIBLE, hands it to Nat.

ELIZABETH TURNER (CONT'D)

And guess what? It's the best book ever written.

YOUNG NAT

Can I look?

ELIZABETH TURNER

Of course. It's yours.

YOUNG NAT

Thank you, Missus.

He flips delicately through the thin pages, his eyes scanning the foreign words.

ELIZABETH TURNER

You're a special boy, Nathaniel.

(beat)

Study hard and heed my instruction, hear? Your life, it'll never be the same. I'll see to that.

YOUNG NAT

Yes, Missus.

ELIZABETH TURNER

Well come on. The good book won't read itself. Let's start with the beginning.

Nat, all smiles, as he joins Elizabeth on a nearby couch.

25 INT. TURNER FAMILY CHURCH - DAY

25

Nat stands stark still in his black servants suit, chin high. His Bible rests in his White-gloved hands. Ben Turner stands just at his flank.

NAT

(reads)

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. James four, chapter eight and nine.

A thin white congregation offers polite applause. Elizabeth, beams. She gestures to Nat to take a bow. He obliges before joining her, John Clark and her daughter CATHERINE (4), in the FRONT PEW. Lead house servant, ISAIAH (40's) and Janice sit on a single BACK pew.

ON BENJAMIN who pours with sweat, wipes his neck, as he regains the pulpit. He coughs into a handkerchief, it spots with BLOOD. He quickly pockets it.

BENJAMIN TURNER

Bless His name. Might as well carry on in James. Turn with me to James one. 'Holding on to the goodness of the Lord.'

26 INT. BIG HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

26

TIGHT on Nat. Wider to find Nancy and Bridget standing in front of Benjamin who lies pale and dead in the bed. Elizabeth weeps quietly by his side. An UNKNOWN MAN, SAMUEL TURNER (17) is the only other person in the room. He leans against the wall in a far corner. Elizabeth smiles at Nat.

ELIZABETH TURNER

He was most proud of the young man you're becoming, Nat.

Nat glances toward Samuel. Elizabeth catches it.

ELIZABETH TURNER (CONT'D)

That's Samuel. You were a little young when he left.

(beat)

He won't be returning to school... but will be taking Ben's place as your earthly master.

(CONTINUED)

Bridget and Nancy offer Samuel smiles of acceptance. Nat looks to Samuel again, who stares back. Then-

SAMUEL TURNER

How old are you, boy?

YOUNG NAT

Ten, suh.

SAMUEL TURNER

(to Nancy)

Ima' want him in the field come mornin', ya hear?

NANCY

Yes'suh.

Nat's face falls. He looks to Elizabeth gut-punched. *

SAMUEL TURNER

(to Bridget and Nancy)

That's it, yall. Go on.

Bridget and Nancy start off, Nat lingers, bewildered. A final glance to Elizabeth before Nancy ushers him out. *

ELIZABETH TURNER

That boy, Nat. I've spent quite a bit of time with him. He reads, quotes scripture.

(beat)

John Clark's taken a liking to him. And so have I...

Samuel only looks forward. *

ELIZABETH TURNER (CONT'D)

Maybe the field isn't a place for a child of his ability.

(no response, then)

The young man he's becoming-

SAMUEL TURNER

He ain't no young man, mama. He's a foal. And if we're lucky, he'll grow to be a stud.

(beat)

We owe. We need more of that swamp drained so we can seed more crop. Maybe have a season that'll get us outta' this hole daddy left us in... A reading slave doesn't get that done.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: (2)

26

With that he strides out of the room. On Elizabeth, a portrait of defeat.

27 EXT. COTTON FIELD - DAWN

27

Nancy and Nat stand in a row that seems to stretch to eternity. Nat dons a cotton henley and burlap pants. She regards him with sad eyes.

NANCY

You gon' start here and work your way down yonder.

(motions to adjacent row)

I'll be right over there, ya hear.

Nancy pulls him into a helpless hug before crossing into the next row.

TIME PROGRESSION

*

28 EXT. COTTON FIELD - DAY

28

--On Nat's small hands as they feebly pick cotton, following them as they stuff blood speckled cotton into the long sack.

--STILL TIGHT on Nat's hands, SLIGHTLY BIGGER, as they move faster, separating the cotton from the bulb, following them down to a half filled sack.

--AND STILL TIGHT on Nat's hands, now FULL GROWN as they breeze expertly from bulb to bulb, stuffing the snow white tufts into a COMPLETELY FULL sack.

--We follow his hands up bulging forearms and a sweaty muscular torso to reveal- NAT IS NOW A TWENTY-SEVEN-YEAR-OLD MAN. Matured African features frame piercing eyes. Nat pulls two full sacks over his shoulder.

*

29	OMITTED	29	*
30	OMITTED	30	*
31	OMITTED	31	*
32	OMITTED	32	*
33	OMITTED	33	*
34	OMITTED	34	*
35	INT. BARN/SLAVE CHURCH- DAY	35	

Turner slaves populate the wooden benches. We spot Nancy, Bridget and Hark. ANGLE ON Nat who somberly addresses the small congregation.

NAT

Wait on the Lord: be of good
courage, and he shall strengthen
thine heart: wait, I say on the
Lord."

(beat)

Let us bow our heads.

36	INT. TURNER FAMILY CHURCH - DAY	36	
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TIGHT on a flaring match as its pressed into a tobacco pipe.

Wider to reveal a fleshy preacher REVEREND WALTHALL (60) inhaling smoke. He sits next to Samuel, their eyes fixed toward something we don't yet see. They speak in whispers.

REV. WALTHALL

She'll make a fine wife, indeed.
It's been a blessing seeing her
develop into the woman she has.

(CONTINUED)

SAMUEL TURNER

Will be an even better blessin'
seein' her and mama puttin' their
feet under his table 'stead of
mine.

They share a stifled laugh.

REVERSE to reveal CATHERINE TURNER (20's) in a white gown,
stands with her new husband GUILLES REESE (30's). They pose
next to a sunlit window. An ARTIST scribbles on a canvas,
capturing the moment.

Back to Samuel and Rev. Walthall.

REV. WALTHALL

She looks content enough.

SAMUEL TURNER

(scoffs)

Content? If I had a nickel for
every time she asked me to buy her
a handmaid for mama, I'd have
enough to have bought one by now.

Samuel rises, heads for the exit. Rev. Walthall follows

Samuel and Rev. Walthall exit to find Janice holding a
pitcher of water. She offers Walthall a glass.

*
*

REV. WALTHALL

Bless ya, honey.

(then)

How's John Clarke?

*
*
*

SAMUEL TURNER

Still in Richmond. Should graduate
next year. Volunteering in the
local militia on his off days.

*

REV. WALTHALL

The Lord rejoices over that.

SAMUEL TURNER

Yeah, so does my mama- Not so much
the militia part.

(sotto)

"Those boys running around with
guns'll find themselves a war."

*

As Walthall downs his water, Janice appears, fills his glass.
As he watches her go-

*
*

(CONTINUED)

REV. WALTHALL (CONT'D)

I gotta say, Sam, your slaves sure do know how to behave. More impressed by 'em ever' time I make it 'round.

(beat)

Old Ben would be proud.

SAMUEL TURNER

They God fearing. Simple as that. Gotta colored preacher that keeps 'em reminded.

REV. WALTHALL

A colored preacher? That the remedy?

SAMUEL TURNER

That's it.

REV. WALTHALL

Well, I don't gotta tell ya' times are tough. With the drought, it's getting harder for whites all over the county to feed and clothe they niggers good. Talks of insurrection's got folks scared. I'd think people'd pay good money to have 'em calmed down a bit. Especially by one of they own.

SAMUEL TURNER

Calmed down?

REV. WALTHALL

No different from what you got him doin' here.

(beat as Sam considers)

Just sayin' you might have an opportunity on your hands.

SAMUEL TURNER

Start askin' around about that.

REV. WALTHALL

Will do.

(then)

Guess I should git. Got a few other services in county.

SAMUEL TURNER

Busy man, Reverend.

REV. WALTHALL

Never too busy for the Lord's work.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED: (2)

37

On Samuel as he watches the Reverend off.

38 EXT. TURNER MAIN ROAD - DAY

38

Nat steers a colt, as he and Samuel ride in the front of a covered wagon. Samuel leans back, asleep.

In the distance- SEVERAL GUN SHOTS. The horses fidget.

NAT
(to horses)
Whoa. Whoa, now...

Samuel stirs awake, and we-

ANGLE ON

The far end of the road where three men approach on horses. PATTY-ROLLERS. Nat slows the wagon.

As the men arrive, we recognize the leader as Ray Cobb. A scar stretches from his right eye to his chin, his sun-aged skin looks more like tanned leather. Jesse and the other stop at his flank, bloodthirsty.

COBB
You seen a nigger run by here?

SAMUEL TURNER
Naw. Then again I dozed off a few...

COBB
(to Nat)
What about you, boy? You best not lie. I know when ya'll is lying.

NAT
No, Suh.

Cobb studies Nat through a familiar squint.

COBB
Couple niggers went missing off Bill Johnson's place this mornin'. Say they raised up on a overseer 'for they took off.

Cobb eyes the surrounding woods.

JESSE
Got one just back yonder. Swear I put one in the 'nother.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

38

COBB

He's close... I can smell him.
 (then)
 If y'all see somethin', let us
 know.

SAMUEL TURNER

Will do.

Cobb whistles, his horse snaps to. A moment before Sam lies back, covers his face. Nat loosens the reins. Cobb eyes him hard as they cross.

AS THE WAGON pushes forward Nat slows at something just off the road. We RACK FOCUS to reveal the body of a dead slave, his brains exposed from a head-shot. On Nat, eyes still fixed forward as he snaps the reins.

39 EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - WOOD AND SEED STORE - DAY

39

Nat and Samuel load the last wooden slats onto the wagon. Nat rests on the back as Samuel exits frame.

WIDER to reveal a well-dressed family of three crossing in the foreground. The MAN (30's), holds a lacquered cane, walks a pace ahead of the WOMAN (20's) who ushers their SON (5) along by the hand. CLOSER on the Son who carries a WOODEN HAND PUPPET. As the Mother hurries him along, it drops, unnoticed, in the dirt. A moment later-

VOICE (O.S.)

Ma'am...

The woman turns to find Nat, holding the doll.

NAT

The younglin' dropped it a step
 back.

The woman offers a warm smile.

WOMAN

Thank you.

Nat maneuvers the puppets arms, pulling a smile from the boy. Just as he reaches it back to him- WHAP! The husband's CANE comes down hard on Nat's wrist. The doll hits the dirt as he steps between Nat and his wife and child. *

MAN

What you think you're doing?!

WOMAN

He was just-

(CONTINUED)

MAN

(to Nat)

You spoke to my wife?! Where is
your owner, boy?

Nat offers no response. The man swings the cane down hard, its length striking Nat's arm. Nat eyes the dirt in rehearsed passivity.

MAN (CONT'D)

Do you hear me, boy?

The Man swings the cane again, it connects with a CRACK on Nat's elbow. Nat grits his teeth. The Man raises it once more. As he brings it down NAT CATCHES IT. His eyes just slightly connecting with the Man's. The man goes white with fear.

SAMUEL TURNER (O.S.)

(to the Man re: cane)

You best go on and put that down.

Nat lets go. The Man stumbles backward, but keeps the cane raised.

MAN

I want the sheriff. This boy
assaulted me! He assaulted my wife
and I'm bringin' charges.

SAMUEL TURNER

Sheriff Floyd? You can fetch him if
you like. In the meantime, I'ma
give you the count of three to put
that stick down, else I'ma have to
make sure you have some real
charges to bring to him when he
gets here.

MAN

You threatening me?

SAMUEL TURNER

One.

The Man flinches, lowers the cane. He regards Nat and Samuel with equal disdain before slinking away, pulling his wife along with him. Samuel helps Nat to his feet. Nat and the young boy catch eyes long enough to see the boy's innocent face curl into a scowl.

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

(to Nat)

You alright?

(Nat nods)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: (2)

39

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)
 Think they're higher than the
 Almighty himself... C'mon.

Samuel walks back toward the wagon. Nat eyes the PUPPET on
 the ground, it's painted brown eyes staring back. *

40 EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - ROAD - DAY

40

Samuel sits next to Nat who guides the wagon away from the
 wood store, passing fresh fruit stands, vegetables stacked on
 wagons, and crafts booths. Business men shout toward Samuel,
 begging for his business.

A FEW YARDS AHEAD

A YOUNG BOY (10) stands on the dirt road, bounces a wooden
 sign which reads "SLAVE SALE!".

ANGLE ON a seedy SLAVE DRIVER (50's) who conducts an
 impromptu slave sale off the back of an uncovered wagon. FOUR
 EXHAUSTED AND RAGGED SLAVES stand naked on the wagon-back. A
 few REDNECKS assemble. *

SAMUEL TURNER

Hold on.

Nat slows the wagon as he and Sam look on. The Slave Driver
 slaps the backside of a THIN MALE SLAVE. A bony nub at his
 right wrist, where a hand should be. The driver spins him.

SLAVE DRIVER

Strong as an ox! Nothing but good
 seed flowing from this here buck!
 (he fishhooks the slave)
 And look at them teeth! I'll start
 this one at two-hundred?

No response. ON NAT who witnesses the spectacle.

SLAVE DRIVER (CONT'D)

One fifty?
 (nothing)
 I gotta make livin' here gents.
 Dammit, a hundred? Seventy-five?

A REDNECK 1 raises a hand.

SLAVE DRIVER (CONT'D)

Sold!

The Driver motions to his helper who ambles over, ushers the
 newly sold slave to the Redneck. Nat watches as the Redneck
 roughly inspects him before handing over cash.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He then fits a shackle around the slave's neck, climbs atop his horse and trots off- the slave jogging behind him.

(CONTINUED)

Nat and Samuel watch the Slave Driver arrive to a YOUNG WOMAN. Matted hair. A thin worn dress hangs just below her knees. Nat looks away.

SLAVE DRIVER (CONT'D)
Consider this comely wench! Not a day over eighteen! We'll start her at one seventy-five.

A REDNECK #2 tips his hat.

SLAVE DRIVER (CONT'D)
Got one seventy-five, I hear two?

A REDNECK #3 raises his hand.

SLAVE DRIVER (CONT'D)
Now we talkin! Do I got two twenty-five?

ON NAT as he glances toward the bidding Rednecks. Studies their body language. He glances to the woman, her eyes deadened.

REDNECK #2, again tips his hat.

SLAVE DRIVER (CONT'D)
Two-twenty five! I hear two-fifty?!

Nat glances again to the mulling rednecks. Then-

NAT
Massa... That wench there'd sho' make a good weddin' gift to Ms. Catherine. You keep sayin' she been askin.

SLAVE DRIVER (O.S.)
Gimmie Two-fifty! C'mon nah!

A long beat. Until-

SAMUEL TURNER
The whole lot of 'em looks busted from here. Sides, she look right young if you ask me.

Angle on Redneck #3 who again raises his hand.

SLAVE DRIVER (O.S.)
There it is! Two seventy-five?!

40 CONTINUED: (2)

40

NAT

You right, suh. She young, but with
the right teachin', a wench like
that could be working a long time.

Nat steals a look to Samuel who squints toward the stage. The
Slave Driver spins the Slave Woman in a circle, fondles her
brest. She tenses.

SLAVE DRIVER

Now is you fella's seein' what I'm
seein'?! Take this one home, clean
her up, won't be long 'fore you
find yourself happier than a dog
with three balls!

A few chuckles in response. He spins her back forward.

SLAVE DRIVER (CONT'D)

(sotto, to slave woman)

Smile bitch!

(she weakly complies)

Now come on y'all, talk to me!

(to Redneck #2)

You got two seventy-five for me?

Redneck #2 mulls.

NAT

Massa, it'd shole' be a shame to
watch her go to waste for such a
low price.

SAMUEL TURNER

What you know about what's little
and what's a lot?

Nat falls quiet.

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

Ain't sure what's got into you, but
whatever it is, you need to quit
it.

NAT

Yes, suh.

SLAVE DRIVER

Alright! That's two-fifty goin'
once...

Nat glances back to the woman, when suddenly she GLANCES UP
TO CATCH HIS GAZE.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED: (4)

40

SLAVE DRIVER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Goin' twice!

Nat and the woman's eyes remain locked. The Slave Driver raises his hand high-

SAMUEL TURNER (O.S.)
Two seventy-five!

The auctioneer freezes. Nat's eyes flit to Samuel in disbelief. Redneck #3 eyes Samuel hard.

SLAVE DRIVER
(ecstatic)
We got two seventy-five! Do. I.
Hear. Three hundred?!

Redneck #2 ambles off. All eyes fix on Redneck #3.

SLAVE DRIVER (CONT'D)
Two seventy-five goin' once!

*

ON NAT who holds his breath.

SLAVE DRIVER (CONT'D)
Two seventy-five goin' twice!

*

Redneck #3 finally spits in rebuke, turns and walks off.

SLAVE DRIVER (CONT'D)
And SOLD to the fine gentleman in
the back!

*

Nat breaths relief, as he and Samuel make their way forward.

41 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DAY

41

The wagon grinds to a stop. Samuel pulls back the cowhide flap, peers into the back. He scrunches his face. Nat follows his gaze.

NAT
She'll be fine, Suh.

SAMUEL TURNER
Hope you right. Have your mama get
her cleaned up and fed; start
breaking her in.

NAT
Y'suh.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

SAMUEL TURNER

You and Hark get started on that fence first thing tomorrow.

NAT

Y'suh.

Samuel hops down, trudges toward the house.

41A EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - DAY

41A *

Nat scrambles to the back of the wagon, pulls back the flap to reveal the woman. He reaches for her and she recoils.

NAT

I ain't gonna' hurt you.

Cornered, she only stares. Her eyes weak, but wild.

NAT (CONT'D)

I'm gon' climb up. Help you out.
That's all.

Nat kneels on the back of the wagon. As he reaches out to her, SHE LUNGES INTO AN ATTACK, biting and clawing as they roll off the back of the wagon. Nat struggles to protect himself as Hark arrives, pulls her away. She collapses to her hands and knees sobbing and exhausted. As she heaves for air, Nat and Hark help to her feet, hurrying her toward the slave quarters.

42 INT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NANA'S CABIN - DUSK

42

Nancy hurries a pot of water onto the stove as Bridget prepares a cot. Nat steadies the faint woman in his arms.

BRIDGET

Lay her on over here.

Nat complies.

NAT

She's burning up.

Nancy pulls out a pouch of herbs, drops them into the boiling water on the stove. *

BRIDGET

(to Nancy)

Cut me three of those onions,
yonder. Bring 'em here.

(to Nat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

Go'on and stay with Hark a spell
'til we get this child right an' on
her feet.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

NAT

Yes'm.

As Bridget pulls at the filthy dress-

YOUNG WOMAN

No! No! This mine!

She clings to her dress.

BRIDGET

It's ok baby-

(to Nat)

Go 'on nah! Get.

Nat retreats toward the door, exits.

43 OMITTED

43 *

44 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DAY

44

Nat kneels, hidden in an inner corner of the front porch. He applies a fresh coat of white paint to a peeling column.

VOICE (O.C.)

Now you just smile ya' hear. Let them do all the talkin'.

VOICE 2 (O.C.)

Yes'm.

Nat stands to find Nancy and the SLAVE WOMAN climbing the front porch stairs. She stands unrecognizable, considering the time we last saw her. Her caramel skin covers full, healthy features. Her hair is combed and pulled into a braid.

Nat stands just out of their sight. Nancy knocks. Within seconds, Samuel emerges.

NANCY

Afternoon massa'.

(re: Slave Woman)

This here Cherry Anne.

CHERRY

(courtesies)

Massa'.

Samuel looks Cherry up and down.

(CONTINUED)

SAMUEL TURNER

They sure cleaned you up.

(then, into house)

Catherine! C'mon out here!

Samuel glances in Nat's direction. Nat quickly returns to work, watches from the corner of his eye. Catherine arrives.

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

This here is Cherry Anne.

CHERRY

(courtesies)

Missus.

CATHERINE

Hello.

(then, realizing)

She launches into a Samuel with a mammoth hug.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

She's perfect!

(then, re: Cherry)

Cherry... I bet they named you that because you're so sweet.

Cherry smiles politely, Catherine grabs her hand.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

C'mon, I want you to meet mama.

Catherine and Cherry disappear inside, followed by Samuel. Nancy stands on the porch for a beat. As she turns-

NAT (O.S.)

Mama.

NANCY

(turns, startled)

Boy, you scared me.

NAT

Sorry.

(then)

Thank you.

NANCY

For what?

NAT

For getting her better... For making her so beautiful.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED: (2)

44

NANCY

I didn't do nothin'. That child was brought into this world already as beautiful as she could be. But you knew that already, huh?

Nat smiles.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Love you, Nat.

NAT

Love you, mama.

Nancy descends the stairs. A BEAT before Nat returns to work.

45 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DAY (STEADY)

45 *

Guiles preps a covered wagon. Catherine hugs Janice as Samuel looks on. Isaiah loads an arm full of bags in the wagon-back.

JANICE

We shol' is sad to see you and the missus go.

CATHERINE

Oh, we'll be just down the road. After we get good and settled, we'll be back to visit. Sundays for church and that.

SAMUEL TURNER

Won't be a second too soon.

Catherine playfully jabs him in the arm.

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

I'm messin.

(then, sotto)

You need anything, or he ain't treatin' ya right, you let me know.

CATHERINE

Yes, "big brother".

(they embrace)

Love ya.

SAMUEL TURNER

You too.

Guiles helps Catherine onto the wagon as Cherry guides Elizabeth through the screen door.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

You ready mama?

ELIZABETH TURNER

I'm worried about you, Sam. It's a big place to be here all alone.

SAMUEL TURNER

I'll be fine.

They embrace. Guiles helps Elizabeth onto the wagon as Cherry climbs into the back.

GUILLES REESE

Well, guess we'll be getting on.

SAMUEL TURNER

All right, then. They give you any trouble... don't bring 'em back here.

A shared laugh. As Guiles climbs up, Nat arrives with two pails of horse feed.

NAT

Massa Sam.

(re: feed)

For their trip.

Samuel eyes the two buckets, then.

SAMUEL TURNER

Just one.

46 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BACK OF WAGON - MOMENTS LATER

46

Nat pulls back the canvas flap, sees Cherry sitting on a wooden box. Their eyes connect. He loads the bucket of feed.

NAT

Hi.

CHERRY

Hi.

NAT

I'm Nat.

CHERRY

I know.

Nat pulls a small bouquet of flowers from beneath his shirt, offers them. She accepts.

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED:

46

CHERRY (CONT'D)

They pretty.

NAT

Found them around here.

CHERRY

Thank you.

Nat nods, offers a gentle smile before he backs out. NAT stands on the dirt road, watches the wagon ride away.

VOICE (V.O.)

And the rib, which the Lord God had
taken from man, made he a woman,
and brought her unto the man...

47 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - DAY

47

ANGLE ON a straw broom until TWO PAIR OF FEET hop over it and into frame. WIDER to reveal Hark and a beautiful woman ESTER (20's).

A dozen slaves stand and clap as Hark and Ester kiss. A fiddler strikes up a tune and the other slaves form two parallel rows. NELSON (18), Ester's brother claps, as she dances down the middle. Hark pulls Nat onto the dance path and they dance down the path together.

*

48 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - DUSK

48

Its dusk. Hark sits on a hollow log. Nat approaches.

HARK

Hey, Nat.

NAT

Hey, brother...

Nat takes a seat next to him.

NAT (CONT'D)

Shouldn't you be somewhere *getting*
to *know* your new wife?

HARK

I'll be getting there directly...

NAT

It was beautiful today. Ester is a
good woman.

Hark studies the smoldering fire.

(CONTINUED)

HARK

I'm scared, Nat...

NAT

Of what?

(playful)

Ester?

HARK

Naw... It's just, I ain't never had no needs to look after nothing or nobody but massa's horses and pigs. Now I got a wife. And when she go on and get the 'big belly, I'll have that child too.

Nat pulls a measured breath, gathers his words.

NAT

The Bible says, "take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."

(re: Hark's blank look)

Means worrying ain't gon' do you no good. Trust in the Lord, and try to live your best for him, right now. And speaking of right now, you need to go and see to your wife, 'fore she go and change her mind.

Hark stands, noticeably relieved. A strong embrace before he heads off. On Nat, his confidence fading slightly, as he studies the floating embers.

Nat stands before a dozen brown faces.

NAT

Just as the planted crop is harvested in its own time, so too has the Lord planted us...

The back door opens and several slaves walk in. The last of them is Cherry. Nat stammers as he watches take her seat.

NAT (CONT'D)

Yes. The good Lord...

(glances to his Bible)

...the good Lord will finish his work in us.

(then, rushing)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

NAT (CONT'D)

As I close, I urge you, brothers
and sisters to take heart. For God
is at work in your life. And he
will not relent until the job is
done. Amen?

ALL

Amen-

NAT

Dismissed.

50 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DAY

50

Nat and Cherry arrive to an arching oak. Nat lies down his
vest for Cherry. They sit. *

*
*

NAT

I'm happy to see you.

CHERRY

I'm happy to see you.

NAT

You look beautiful.

CHERRY

Thank you... *

*

NAT

So much time passed... I battled
thoughts that you might've been
sold off...

(then)

How is it there?

CHERRY

It's fine. Nothing like what I come
from 'for here. Most days I'm just
tending to Missus Elizabeth, or
fetchin' this or that for Miss
Catherine.

NAT

You know if ya'll are coming back
next week for church?

CHERRY

I know as much as you. I s'pose if
Missus is suggestin' and Massa
Reese don't mind the trip.

(CONTINUED)

NAT

I surely wouldn't want to wait
another season to see you.

CHERRY

Me neither...

They study each other, spellbound. Nat extends his hand to her. ANGLE ON A CLOTH WRAPPED OBJECT. Cherry eyes Nat before unwrapping it to reveal NAT'S WOODEN TRIBAL RELIC.

NAT

My Nana got it from my granddaddy.
She brought it here when she was
taken from Africa.

CHERRY

Africa?

NAT

(nods)

She kept it hid. Said it was the
one thing that kept her mind free.

CHERRY

It's pretty.

She offers it back.

NAT

I want you to have it.

(then)

In case I don't see you for a
while, you'll have somethin'
reminds you of me.

CHERRY

I don't know if it's right I take
it. 'Sides I don't have nothin' to
give you to remind you of me.

NAT

I spend all my time thinking about
you already.

A frozen moment as they stare and smile. Until-

CATHERINE (O.C.)

Cherry?!

Cherry slowly stands. A warm smile before she disappears
toward the Big House.

We stay with Nat as he looks and longs after her.

51 EXT. REESE PLANTATION - NIGHT

51

A farm house stands adjacent to a small barn- both set before a vast field. We spot Cherry who empties plates into a slop bucket near the back door.

She suddenly stops, turns.

CHERRY

Who's there?

CHERRY'S POV as she gazes into a thicket of trees until-

NAT SLOWLY EMERGES FROM THE TREELINE ATOP THE COAL BLACK HORSE, JUPITER.

Cherry nearly drops the plates. Nat climbs down.

CHERRY (CONT'D)

Nat? What you doing here?

No answer. Nat walks boldly to her, his eyes glued to hers. He leans in, kisses her softly on her lips.

NAT

I shoulda' done that earlier today.

CHERRY

You came here to kiss me?

Nat slowly sinks to one knee.

NAT

I ain't got much. The Lord. My faith. Mamma. Nana. Up until now, it was enough. *

(beat)

Cherry, I'd feel right honored if you'd be my wife. I'd treat you right. I'd protect you with my life... if you'd have me.

CHERRY

(smiles)

Yes. I will.

Nat rises. Kisses her lips again.

CHERRY (CONT'D)

What now?

NAT

I'll talk it over with Samuel. Get a cabin set up for us.

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

CHERRY

OK.

A final kiss before Nat slowly backs away from her, shadows engulfing him into the night. Cherry smiles, breaths deep, as if for the first time.

52 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - DAY

52

Nat and Cherry are knelt in front of Bridget who prays fervently. Nancy, Hark, Ester and a few others "lay hands" on Nat and Cherry's shoulders praying along silently in support.

53 INT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NAT'S CABIN - (NIGHT)

53

Nat and Cherry are in Nat's cabin. He gently **kisses** her as they make love. *

54 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DAY

54

Reverend Walthall climbs the porch steps. As he grabs the railing, it comes off into his hand. He carefully replaces it, continues to the door and knocks. Samuel arrives, pushes open the screen door.

SAMUEL TURNER

Reverend. What brings you around these parts during the week? Wouldn't expect to see you til Sunday.

REV. WALTHALL

There's never a wrong time to bring a blessing to a brother in Christ.

SAMUEL TURNER

Oh, Lord. Is this blessin' gonna cost me money?

REV. WALTHALL

Ha! Not a penny. The contrary in fact.

Sam joins him on the porch. They sit on adjacent rockers.

SAMUEL TURNER

Isaiah! Run some waters out here.

REV. WALTHALL

Gin, if you please.

(CONTINUED)

ISAIAH

(from inside)

Yes'suh.

REV. WALTHALL

I put the word out about your preacher. Got a couple farmers willing to turn a good coin.

SAMUEL TURNER

That right?

Isaiah serves the drinks, before disappearing into the house.

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

How much they offering.

REV. WALTHALL

A bit. And these days every bit counts.

(then)

If your boy does to these fellas' liking, you could bounce back from the drought, pay off some debt. Soon enough, find yourself riding the gravy train with biscuit wheels.

Samuel stares off as he considers.

SAMUEL TURNER

Whereabouts are we talkin'.

REV. WALTHALL

All in Southampton to start.

SAMUEL TURNER

An all I gotta do is have Nat preach?

REV. WALTHALL

That's it.

(beat)

Now, I'm not vouching for the character of these fellas, what business they running or how, I'm just telling you there's a opportunity here, one you got the means to capitalize on.

SAMUEL TURNER

(finally nods)

Sounds good enough.

(CONTINUED)

REV. WALTHALL

Alright, then. I'll send you the details- names, locations and dates by tomorrow.

SAMUEL TURNER

You already booked the dates?

REV. WALTHALL

I figured you'd say yes.

SAMUEL TURNER

You're going mighty far outta your way make sure my cabinets are stocked full. What's in all this for you.

REV. WALTHALL

Just the joy of knowing I'm helping my fellow brother. And...

SAMUEL TURNER

Here it comes...

REV. WALTHALL

If I were to receive a "gift offering" following the successful completion of such trips, I certainly would not object.

A shared smile.

SAMUEL TURNER

You are a caution Reverend.

*

REV. WALTHALL

I am but a servant.

(then, rising)

First trip'd be day after tomorrow, if you can pony up by then.

SAMUEL TURNER

Shouldn't be a problem.

REV. WALTHALL

Good.

The men shake hands before Rev. Walthall climbs into his carriage. His SLAVE snaps the reins and Samuel watches the carriage advance down the driveway.

55 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - MORNING 55

Nat loads the last of supplies onto the wagon. Bridget stands close. Nancy arrives with a cloth sack.

NANCY

Got some salt pork and tomatoes in here, for when you get hungry.

NAT

Thanks, mama.

(then)

If Miss Catherine brings Cherry on Sunday, tell her I'll be back directly.

Nancy nods solemnly.

NAT (CONT'D)

Don't y'all go getting worried, now. I'll be back soon enough.

BRIDGET

I know. The Lord bless you, child.

At that, Nat wraps Nancy and Bridget into a hug before heading off.

56 EXT. LANDSCAPE - DAY (BIRDSEYE) 56

--AERIAL SHOT of the wagon as it makes its way across the Eastern Virginia landscape.

57 EXT. RANDALL PLANTATION - MAIN HOUSE - DAY 57 *

As Nat guides the wagon toward a prosperous estate, he is met by a slave JASPER (13, tattered clothes, rail thin). *

JASPER

You Marse Turner's nigger?

NAT

I'm Nat.

(re: back of wagon)

Master Turner is restin' in here.

Jasper cranes his neck to see inside. He eyes Nat suspiciously, then-

JASPER

Come on. *

(CONTINUED)

Jasper leads them toward the porch stairs of the main house, before disappearing inside. Samuel emerges. Looks around. *

SAMUEL TURNER

We here?

NAT

Yes' suh. A youngin' just went inside to fetch Mister Randall. *

Seconds later a plump man, JOSEPH RANDALL (50's) emerges, followed by a muscular house servant ABNER (40'S) and Jasper.

JOSEPH RANDALL

Sam Turner. You made it. And right on time.

Randall sticks out his hand. Samuel shakes it.

ANGLE ON ABNER Who stares daggers into Nat.

JOSEPH RANDALL (CONT'D)

Joseph Randall.

(re: house servant)

This here's Abner. The little one there's Jasper.

(then, re: Nat)

This the 'nigger preacher'?

SAMUEL TURNER

(to Nat)

Nat?

NAT

Evenin' Suh-

JOSEPH RANDALL

A little young ain't he?

SAMUEL TURNER

He's old enough. Been studyin' the Word a while.

JOSEPH RANDALL

Studying? Hell, I can barely train my niggers to learn their own names... C'mon.

57A EXT. RANDALL PLANTATION - DAY 57A *

Samuel and Nat follow Joseph, Jasper and Abner along a wooded path. Joseph walks and talks. *

JOSEPH RANDALL

It's hard times for small farmers like you and myself. Breaking even is hard enough, gettin' ahead is impossible. To save some, I cut 'em down to a meal a day, per head. A few of 'em started gettin' fidgety, so I had Abner come down on 'em. *

The group approaches a dilapidated barn, a PADLOCK secures the door FROM THE OUTSIDE. Joseph stops short.

JOSEPH RANDALL (CONT'D)

Day or so back, had a few quit on work if ya' can believe it. Wouldn't even come out the quarter. So I locked 'em up, the lot of 'em. Hoping the heat and hunger would bring about their senses. All that said, Abner here's provin' my only real protection. *

Joseph turns to Nat. *

JOSEPH RANDALL (CONT'D)

Now, they needs to mind me, so you speak on that. They treasure in heaven from submittin' and all. (then) If they gets to moaning and carrying on, don't pay 'em no mind. They lazy as all hell and'll do anything to get out of work. *

JOSEPH RANDALL (CONT'D)

You ready, boy? *

SAMUEL TURNER

He's ready. *

With that Abner keys open the padlock; opens the barn door.

58 INT. RANDALL PLANTATION - BARN - DAY 58 *

Joseph and Abner lead Nat and Samuel in. Abner lights a lantern. Under its glow, we see nearly a dozen EMACIATED slaves- men, women and children. They scatter deep into a corner. Nat's jaw drops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSEPH RANDALL

Listen up. Got a preacher here
f'yall.

(to Nat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED: (2)

58

JOSEPH RANDALL (CONT'D)

Come here, boy.

(Nat slowly approaches)

He's a nigger just like yall, and
is going to talk to you about the
Lord. Listen to him and you just
might make it to heaven, ya hear?

Joseph rejoins Samuel and Abner, leaving Nat standing in the
center of the room. Nat looks to Samuel who looks away.
Through sad eyes, Nat studies the sea of skeletal faces and
festering whip wounds. He swallows, peels open his Bible.

NAT

...Brothers and sisters...

(re: slaves, unblinking)

I lead you to 1 Peter 2:18:

Slaves... submit yourselves to your
masters with all respect, not only
to those who are good and
considerate... but also to those
who are harsh...

Nat glances toward Randall who smiles and nods him on.

59 EXT. RANDALL PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DUSK

59 *

Nat pulls the wagon to the front, just as Samuel and Joseph
descend the porch stairs. Abner trails a few steps back.

JOSEPH RANDALL

You sure you don't want to stay the
night? Got some fine brandy and a
couple of choice wenches in the
cellar. We can get Abner to strike
up the fiddle, sit around the fire
and tell old lies.

*
*
*
*

Just then, Randall's daughter LILLY (9) emerges from inside.
She dons a white dress with a matching ribbon in her hair. As
she gleefully descends the stairs, we notice a tweed rope in
her grip. We follow its length to the opposite end to find-

It's tied around the neck of a NINE YEAR OLD SLAVE GIRL.

The slave child giggles as she follows Lilly to the front
yard where they frolic through a game of follow the leader.

ANGLE ON NAT who watches on, abashed.

SAMUEL TURNER

We best be gettin' back before
nightfall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSEPH RANDALL
Alright, suit yourself.

SAMUEL TURNER

But I would take a bottle of
whiskey if you can spare it.

JOSEPH RANDALL

Sure can.

Abner disappears inside. Randall produces a wad of bills,
hands it to Samuel. He studies it a beat, before pocketing.

JOSEPH RANDALL (CONT'D)

You're a smart man, Sam. Bound to
make a fortune off that boy.

(extends his hand)

Good doing business with ya.

SAMUEL TURNER

(shakes)

Sure.

As Samuel climbs onto the front of the wagon, Abner returns,
hands him a bottle of whiskey.

ANGLE ON ABNER

His eyes locked tight on Nat. Nat holds his gaze until he
spots Jasper further down the road waving goodbye. Nat snaps
the reins and the wagon lurches forward. Samuel wastes no
time popping the cork on the whiskey, pulling a desperate
swig. *

60 INT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NAT'S CABIN - (NIGHT)

60

A wooden muddler mixes grease in a wooden bowl. A hands
scoops at the substance and we follow it to reveal Cherry
applying it to Nat's back. She rubs at his muscles as he
stares absently into the flame of the fireplace. *

CHERRY

You alright?

Nat nods, his eyes settle on Cherry's dress draped across a
wooden table across the room.

NAT

That dress there. That the one you
were wearing that day?

CHERRY

Yes.

NAT

Mama didn't offer you one of hers?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHERRY

She did.

Nat looks to Cherry puzzled. A beat before Cherry rises, grabs the dress before returning to bed. She flips the bottom hem to reveal a square patch sewn into the fabric. A closer look to reveal TWO NAMES AND A DATE.

NAT
(reading)
Abigail Hayne

CHERRY
My momma.

NAT
Madison Hayne. Who's that?

CHERRY
That's me.
(beat)
My momma put this dress on me the day they took me from her. Showed me this here patch. Told me to never forget who I was. That I had a momma. And that she was somewhere missin' me and lovin' me. I was thirteen.

NAT
I can call you Madison if you like?

CHERRY
You can call me whatever you want.

NAT
I'll call you Queen.

Cherry smiles a beat before her look turns solemn.

NAT (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

CHERRY
...We gonna have a baby.

*

NAT
A baby? You sure?

Cherry nods. Nat slowly swings his feet off the bedside, closes his eyes.

CHERRY
You mad?

NAT
Mad? Naw.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (3)

60

He pulls her into a tight hug.

NAT (CONT'D)
I ain't mad.

He holds her close. We PUSH IN ON NAT, Feeling the weight of his fortune.

MONTAGE

61 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

61

-- Nat and Samuel navigate the wagon on a country road.

62 INT. SLAVE BARN/CHURCH - NAT'S CABIN - DAY

62

*

A very pregnant Cherry lies with Nat as she sounds out words from the bible. Nat smiles, nods approval.

63 OMITTED

63

64 OMITTED

64

65 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NANA'S CABIN - DAY

65

*

Cherry sleeps alone in a bed. Widen to reveal Nat in Nana's rocking chair. He holds an infant baby girl.

*

*

66 EXT. FOWLER PLANTATION - DAY

66

Nat pulls the wagon in front. Samuel looks around.

SAMUEL TURNER
Wait here.

He drops from the wagon, approaches the front door.

Nat climbs down, strokes Jupiter's mane when the horse suddenly backtracks, spooked. Nat instinctively turns to find-

A GERMAN SHEPHERD races toward him, full tilt!

(CONTINUED)

Nat falls to the ground, scurries backwards. Just as the dog lunges, canines peeled-

He's yanked back. The dog fights against the weight of a choke chain, inches from Nat who retreats, pinned against the wagon wheel.

Nat glances up to find HANK FOWLER (early 30's, a wad of chew wedged between rotted teeth). A bullwhip rests on one side of his hip, a pistol stowed against his other.

HANK FOWLER

(calm)

Nigger, what you doing on my land?

Samuel arrives as Nat pulls himself to his feet.

SAMUEL TURNER

He's with me.

HANK FOWLER

Who the hell are you?

SAMUEL TURNER

Samuel Turner. Reverend Walthall sent us.

HANK FOWLER

You the fella with the nigger preacher.

Hank regards Nat with a smug grin.

HANK FOWLER (CONT'D)

You lucky, boy. I like to've let Buster rip yo' ass to bits.

(then, to Samuel)

C'mon. Let's go find Earl.

Hank, dog close, heads toward the tobacco fields. Samuel and Nat follow.

Hank leads Samuel and Nat across the plantation grounds toward the tobacco field.

*

HANK FOWLER

Niggers is niggers, here. We don't treat none no different than another. Preacher or no preacher. We got rules.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED:

67

HANK FOWLER (CONT'D)

The cost of breakin' 'em: stealin' sassin'- or any other thing Earl or me thinks is worth dealin' with'll be paid for in skin. You interfere with that, we'll shoot you where you stand.

Hank stops, locks eyes with Samuel.

HANK FOWLER (CONT'D)

Any problems with that, you can stop right now and go on back to where you came from.

Nat looks to Samuel who doesn't budge.

HANK FOWLER (CONT'D)

Good.

PRELAP CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

68 EXT. FOWLER PLANTATION - TOBACCO FIELD - DAY

68

Hank, Samuel and Nat arrive to find EARL FOWLER (Early 40's) on horseback, hurling his whip down at toiling slaves. The whip snaps like gunfire inches from the ears of men, woman and children as they pull leaves from the tobacco plants.

CRACK! CRACK!

EARL FOWLER

Come on!

CRACK!

EARL FOWLER (CONT'D)

C'mon, nah!

CRACK! The whip cracks near the ear of a SLAVE TEEN MALE. The teen picks faster. Earl dismounts, holsters his whip.

HANK FOWLER

Earl, this here's Sam Turner. Fella with the nigger preacher. *

Earl hardly glances in their direction. A long beat until he dismounts, locks in on Samuel. *

EARL FOWLER

Where you say y'all come from? *

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

68

SAMUEL TURNER

Here in Southampton. South of
Nottaway.

EARL FOWLER

Nottaway huh? ...Lotta Yankees
makin' their way down those parts.
Come down here, rabble-rousin',
stirring shit on our way of life.

A quiet standoff as Earl locks eyes with Samuel, until- An
OVERSEER arrives on horseback, pulls Hank aside. Then-

HANK FOWLER

Earl, got a little problem.

69 INT. FOWLER PLANTATION - BARN - BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 69

Earl and Hank push in. Nat and Samuel freeze in the doorway,
their eyes fix on something we don't yet see.

EARL FOWLER (O.S.)

Which one?

HANK FOWLER (O.S.)

That one there.

EARL FOWLER (O.S.)

How long?

HANK FOWLER (O.S.)

Said it's been 'bout a day or so.

REVERSE TO REVEAL

TWO MALE SLAVES chained to the wall. One wears an IRON
COLLAR, bells on the tips of its reaching horns. A scar bends
from his temple to his cheek. The other wears an IRON MASK,
saliva seeping from its sides. Earl squares up with the
latter, unlatches his mask. The broken slave can hardly
stand.

EARL FOWLER

You ain't gon' eat?

No response. Earl grabs the nearby bowl of cornmush, puts the
spoon to the slave's mouth. He turns away.

EARL FOWLER (CONT'D)

Aight.

(then, more to himself)

If it ain't one thing, it's the
other.

(CONTINUED)

Earl pushes past Nat and out of the room. ON NAT as he studies the tortured men. Earl returns carrying a thick CHISEL, HAMMER AND FUNNEL.

EARL FOWLER (CONT'D)

(to Samuel)

You wonderin' why we could use that nigger of yours, you're seeing it first hand.

EARL FOWLER (CONT'D)

(to Hank)

Open his mouth. Grab that cornmeal.

Nat and Samuel watch on horrified, as Earl hammers out the male slave's teeth.

EARL FOWLER (CONT'D)

If it ain't the Yanks, it's the drought...

Hank holds the slave's mouth open, as Earl forces the cornmeal through the funnel and into the man's throat. Blood, teeth and cornmeal seep as he gags.

EARL FOWLER (CONT'D)

If it ain't the drought, it's goddamn mutiny.

Earl wipes his hands, regards Nat without missing a beat.

EARL FOWLER (CONT'D)

Truth is, even the meanest nigger fears the gospel. A good word from your boy here... a disciplined word might go a lot further than my pistol would.

SAMUEL TURNER

Well, Nat... he's a good preacher.

EARL FOWLER

Don't right mind how good he is.

(pointed)

Long as he say what he s'pose to.

Nat stands on the wooden porch flanked by Earl who cradles a shotgun. Samuel is a bit further back.

A dozen slaves stare wide-eyed. In the BG Hank leads a shackled slave to join the others. This is WILL (30's, the scar-faced slave we recognizes from previous scene).

(CONTINUED)

Will stands marred and exhausted, his trembling legs struggling to support his body.

NAT regards the assembly, then turns to Earl, eyes averted.

NAT

(low)

Mr. Fowler, suh. Regarding my sermon, my plan is to foment in them concupiscence for song.

EARL

Concup what?

Samuel, out of earshot, looks on with growing concern.

NAT

Massa I'm askin' if you's opposed to me using singin' to keep yo' niggers down? As means to sing away any 'malignance.'

EARL FOWLER

That's fine. Ain't got no quarrel with singin'. Long as it don't interfere with they workin'.

NAT

Yes, suh. Thank you, suh.

Nat turns to the slaves, his subservience thaws, his jaw tightening slightly.

NAT (CONT'D)

Brethren... I pray you sing to the Lord a new song. Sing praise in the assembly of the righteous. Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in the mouths of the saints, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the demonic nations, and punishments on those peoples!

Nat builds, as Samuel studies Earl, who watches on seemingly oblivious to Nat's innuendos.

NAT (CONT'D)

To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of
iron; To execute on them this
written judgment—

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED: (2)

70

Crowd members observe, rapt. Will glances toward Nat.

NAT (CONT'D)

This honor have all His saints!
Praise the Lord! Sing to Him a new
song!

CROWD MEMBERS

-Hallelujah! -Amen! -Yes Lord!

On Nat, regaining his bearings. A female VOICE OS starts up a spiritual. *

*
*

71 EXT. REESE PLANTATION - BACK HOUSE - DAY

71

Cherry pumps water from a well near the forest's edge. As she fills a bucket, she hears a SOUND. She glances up to see-

COBB, eyes glued on hers.

COBB

What you doing out so late, girl?

CHERRY

Evenin', suh. I'm just pulling
water for the missus.

COBB

I don't suppose you got a pass
anywhere under that purty dress?

CHERRY

No suh. I belongs to Massa Guiles
and this here his property.

COBB

You sassin' me, girl?

CHERRY

No suh.

COBB

Anybody that knows nothing, knows
state law says "if a nigger is less
than ten paces from the treeline,
that nigger needs a pass."

Cherry eyes the treeline, which lies only a few feet away.

CHERRY

Well suh, I can go get one-

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

COBB

You aint goin' no where. Either
you're gonna show me a pass...
Or you gon' show me something else.

Cobb takes a step forward. Cherry steps back, right into-

JESSE

Another of Cobb's men emerges from the trees surrounding her.
Off Cobb's contorted smile, we-

CUT TO:

72 OMITTED

72 *

73 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DUSK

73

Isaiah pulls a robe tight as he reaches the front door. He
opens it to find Nat, distraught. Isaiah steps onto the
porch, closing the door behind him. They speak in whispers.

NAT

I need to talk to Samuel.

ISAIAH

Samuel has retired for the evenin'.

NAT

Cherry's been hurt. I need a pass
to go see her.

(CONTINUED)

ISAIAH

I just said, he's retired.

NAT

And I just said Cherry, my wife,
your sister in Christ has been hurt-

ISAIAH

It's going to have to wait til
mornin'.

NAT

Isaiah, if you don't go get Samuel,
right now, I'm gonna go get him
myself.

ISAIAH

And what if he doesn't let you go?

(re: Nat's no answer)

Let me guess, you gonna go anyway?

(no answer)

Nat, I'm real sorry for whatever
happened to Cherry, but you can't
run around here with your chest
poked out making demands. We are
niggers! I'd have thought you'd
learned by now.

NAT

We ain't niggers, Isaiah. We men.
I'd have thought you'd learn that
by now.

And with that, Nat reaches past Isaiah, opens the door and
strides into the house.

74 INT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - STAIRS - DUSK

74 *

Nat bounds the stairs, Isaiah races to get in front. Janice
emerges from her quarters, Isaiah waves her back in. At the
top of the stairs, Isaiah cuts off Nat's path.

ISAIAH

(harsh whisper)

Alright, damn it! I'll get him.

*

74A INT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - SAMUEL'S ROOM - DUSK 74A

Samuel lies passed out in his clothes. Liquor bottles litter
the night stand. A soft knock wakes him.

ISAIAH (O.S.)

Master Sam? Suh?

(CONTINUED)

74A CONTINUED:
Sam stirs.

What?

SAMUEL TURNER

CONTINUED: (2)

ISAIAH (O.S.)

(his best docile voice)

I'm so sorry to disturb you, suh,
but Nat needs to speak to you.

Something awful has happened.

SAMUEL TURNER

Whatever it is, tell him I'll get
to it in mornin'.

Silence, until-

ISAIAH (O.S.)

Suh?

(re: no answer)

Suh? If you could just see Nat for
one moment-

SAMUEL TURNER

God damn it Isaiah...

(swings his feet off the
side of the bed)

Tell him I'll meet him on the
porch.

NAT (O.S.)

I'm right here, suh.

SAMUEL TURNER

(beat)

Well you might as well come in.

Isaiah pushes the door open. Samuel lies on the bed fully
clothed. He swings his legs off the side of the bed.

Isaiah enters with a hesitant smile. Nat follows, takes in
the room he hasn't been in since his captivity was extended.

ISAIAH

Again, suh, I'm so sorry-

SAMUEL TURNER

What's wrong Nat?

NAT

Just got word from Reese's farm.
Cherry... she's been hurt real bad.

SAMUEL TURNER

Hurt?

NAT

Yes, suh... A group of men...

(CONTINUED)

6/15/15 - YELLOW

57A

74A CONTINUED: (3)

74A

SAMUEL TURNER

When'd this happen?

(CONTINUED)

74A CONTINUED: (4)

74A

NAT

Some time yesterday I reckon'.

*

SAMUEL TURNER

(beat)

Isaiah, fetch me some paper.

Isaiah promptly snaps to.

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

Don't you go down there stirrin' up trouble? Take Jupiter, stay the night, get on back in the mornin'.

NAT

Yes'suh.

Isaiah arrives with paper and pen. Samuel jots a note and hands it off to Nat.

NAT (CONT'D)

Thank you, suh.

Nat exits, followed by Isaiah who smiles, bows as he exits.

75 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

75

Nat rides like a man possessed, pulling every bit of speed possible from the colt.

76 INT. REESE PLANTATION - SERVANT QUARTERS - NIGHT

76

Cherry's bed sits draped by a translucent mosquito net.
Elizabeth, eyes wet, sways nearby in a rocking chair, Joanna
asleep in her arms. She stills as Nat follows Catherine.

*

*

*

ON NAT

*

Who halts when he sees the bed, its contents silhouetted by
the netting.

*

*

CATHERINE

We're prayin' for her, Nat. All of
us.

*

*

*

(beat)

*

Monsters...

*

Nat approaches the bedside, he pulls at the net's opening to
reveal-

*

*

CHERRY. Her face swollen and unrecognizable.

*

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

ELIZABETH (O.S.
God's going to punish whoever did
this. He will...

*
*

OFF NAT, catatonic, we-

FADE OUT

77 OMITTED

77 *

78 EXT. FIELD - DAY (**VISION 2**) 78 *

Nat's POV as he squeezes an ear of corn. Blood gushes over his hand. *
*

79 INT. REESE PLANTATION - SERVANT QUARTERS - (NIGHT) 79

Tight on Cherry's silhouetted profile as she stirs. Nat parts the draped netting, moves close to her. Her lips move slightly within her bloated face. *

CHERRY

Nat.

NAT

Love.

CHERRY

I'm sorry.

NAT

No. You don't apologize. You don't owe that to anyone.

CHERRY

Joanna OK?

NAT

She's here. She just fine.

CHERRY

Don't want her to see me like this.

NAT

She don't know no better.

(then)

Cherry, I need you to tell me who did this to ya. I'm gonna take care of it, ya hear. On my soul.

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

79

CHERRY

"Put up again thy sword into his
place: for all they that take the
sword shall perish with the sword."
You taught me that.

(beat)

I need you here. Joanna too.
Promise you'll leave this to the
Lord. Promise.

NAT

I promise.

He gently kisses her cheek, uses a nearby sponge to dab sweat
from her brow.

80 OMITTED

80 *

(CONTINUED)

5/8/15 - PINK

61
80

80 CONTINUED:

*

81 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

81

Nat arrives to find Samuel pacing on the porch.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

NAT

You wanted to see me suh?

SAMUEL TURNER

Yeah...

(then)

Cherry alright?

NAT

I believe she will be.

SAMUEL TURNER

Good. Not many would've let you go,
but...

NAT

Thank ya, suh.

SAMUEL TURNER

I'm having a get together tonight
for some important people. Kind
like when daddy was alive.

(then)

I'm gon' want you, couple of
others, in the house. You got
experience with servin' and respect
with the help.

NAT

Yes'suh.

SAMUEL TURNER

Can't tell ya' how important this
is for all of us. We get this
right, the Turner name'll mean
something again. We'll be back on
top.

NAT

Yes, suh.

And Samuel disappears into the house.

82 OMITTED

82 *

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

*

83 INT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER 83

Nat and Isaiah hold silver trays of hors d'oeuvres. Isaiah wears a curled PERIWIG. Several well-to-do guests populate the dinner table. We see Elizabeth, Catherine and Guiles. We recognize Reverend Walthall, as well as Joseph Randall and his WIFE (60's). GENERAL CHILDS (50's a commander of the state militia) is also present, his wife and DAUGHTER (20'S) at his flank. She eyes Samuel seductively. Samuel manages a nervous smile before clinking his fork against a crystal glass. The room settles.

SAMUEL TURNER

As you know, this annual dinner was a tradition of my daddy years ago. For all he believed, he made sure family, faith and tradition were at the top of his priority list. Now, near twenty years later, the same priorities have kept this property afloat.

JOSEPH RANDALL

That, and a cash cow of a colored preacher.

A few chuckles.

(CONTINUED)

SAMUEL TURNER

All right, that too.

Samuel smiles, nods to Reverend Walthall, who winks back. Samuel raises his glass high.

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

May God continue to bless us for more generations to come.

GUESTS

Here, here!

SAMUEL TURNER

Nat, lead us in prayer.

All bow their heads, eyes closed. Nat looks to the servants, at the perimeter of the table, then to the guests. He studies their pasty, smiling faces. Nat prays directly to them, HIS EYES OPEN.

NAT

Heavenly Father, we come to thank you for your word and your will. We understand it is written that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard- neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them, that love him." We pray for and thank you for your protection and your promise that in our obedience, you will be an enemy to our enemies that you will oppose those who oppose us.

Isaiah's eyes snap open, rack to Nat.

NAT (CONT'D)

Continue to guide us oh, Lord and we will continue to follow. Through fire and tribulation, we will push forward, recognizing you alone as our source and strength. In your Holy name we pray...

ALL

Amen.

The party has wound down. The women have retired, leaving only a group of inebriated men, Samuel being the worst off. Samuel covertly signals Isaiah who steps forward with a tray of cigars. *

*
*

(CONTINUED)

SAMUEL TURNER

Isaiah, here, served President Jackson once.

GENERAL CHILDS

That right?

ISAIAH

Yes, suh.

SAMUEL TURNER

Tell him Isaiah.

ISAIAH

(as he serves)

During the war of 1812. For a time, I was his personal servant. We called him "Ewo nan Nouvelle Orléans."

(re: their blank stares)

"The Hero of New Orleans."

GENERAL CHILDS

(boorish)

And now you're here serving me.

Childs holds up his glass. An awkward beat as Isaiah moves to him, fills his glass. Samuel, sensing the discomfort, signals Nat who steps forward, sets a bowl of peppercorn on the table. Samuel drops three into his glass of port wine.

SAMUEL TURNER

Daddy always said:

(sotto)

"Three black peppercorns to a glass of port, and you got yourself an excellent digestive."

Ester brings coffee as the men talk. Joseph Randall eyes her closely. *

JOSEPH RANDALL

Black is always tasty... Especially a nice piece of black meat. Juicy. Sweet...

As she pours for Joseph Randall, he runs his hand up her dress. She casually steps back from his reach. Nat notices. *

GUILS REESE

Pepper in my port is worth a try. But fornication of that kind... Frankly, I find it uncivilized.

(CONTINUED)

Joseph Randall blindly reaches back toward Ester, rubbing his hand along a leg. He glances toward the leg to find a pant-covered leg. His eyes dart up to find Nat wearing a wry smile. Randall recoils, turns sheepishly back to his drink. *

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED: (3)

84

GENERAL CHILDS

Give it time, son. I suspect it won't be long before you find yourself slipping from the banal chaise to find a tastier treat in mammy's harem.

SAMUEL TURNER

When that day comes, make sure you have some money saved. Cus' if my sister catches you and tosses you out, you won't be coming to stay here.

And another round of laughs.

85 OMITTED

85 *

86 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - HARK'S CABIN - NIGHT

86

Nat arrives to find Hark guarding his front door, arguing with Isaiah. They speak in whispers.

*

NAT

What's going on?

HARK

I ain't doin' it Nat! I'd have 'em lynch me first.

NAT

Doin' what?

Nat looks to Isaiah who hangs his head.

ISAIAH

One of Samuel's guests... has requested Ester.

NAT

Requested her for what?

(re: Isaiah's look)

No. Just go and tell Samuel. He'll straighten this out.

ISAIAH

Samuel sent me personally.

(CONTINUED)

HARK

I can't do it Nat. I won't.
 (to Isaiah)
 Who the hell you think you are?!

ISAIAH

You think I wanted to come out here
 for this?!

HARK

You here ain't ya?! You'd sell your
 soul if a white man told you!

Nat abruptly beelines for the Big House.

ISAIAH

Nat!

Isaiah catches up to Nat, who strides toward the back door.
 As they reach the back steps, the door swings open to reveal
 Samuel. He stumbles toward them. *

SAMUEL TURNER

Where is she?

ISAIAH

Oh, I'm fetchin' her directly, suh-

NAT

Samuel, please. You can't do this.

SAMUEL TURNER

The hell I can't!

Joseph Randall appears at the door, grips a glass of wine.

JOSEPH RANDALL

Everything alright?

87 CONTINUED:

87

SAMUEL TURNER

Everything's just fine. I'll be inside directly.

JOSEPH RANDALL

Hope you won't be alone.

SAMUEL TURNER

I certainly won't be.

Joseph Randall disappears inside. On Samuel, full of rage.

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

Boy, you mess this up for me, my hand to God, I'll have every goddamn one of ya' lynched come mornin'!

(then to Isaiah)

Fetch her. Now!

*
*

88 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - NIGHT

88

Nat, Nelson and Hark watch Isaiah walk Ester to the Big House. She glances back, eyes filled with sorrow, Hark's with shame.

*

89 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - NIGHT

89

Nat sits leaned against a tree. Looking out at-

Hark, who stands in the exact spot we last saw him, his eyes fixed on the Big House. A few long moments pass, before-

The back door of the Big House opens. Ester slowly emerges. She notices Hark and slows to a stop, hanging her head. Hark closes the gap, takes her into his arms.

As Hark walks her towards the slave quarters.

*

HARK

Where is He, Nat? Where God now?

*
*

ANGLE ON NAT

*

Something changing behind his eyes.

*

90 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - DAY

90

We open on a thick log, propped up on a tree stump.

THWACK!

An Axe splits the log in two, it tumbles off the stump.

WIDEN to find Nat, as he places another log on the stump. THWACK! He glances up to find a WHITE DOVE perched on the nearby fence-post. Nat squints at the bird which seems to look directly at him. Further away, Hark crosses, pushing a wheelbarrow.

NAT

Hark.

No response, as Hark continues on, his eyes fixed forward. As Nat watches Hark trudge away-

VOICE (O.S.)

Excuse me.

Nat turns to find a white man ETHELDRED "E.T." BRANTLEY (50'S), hat in hand.

E.T. BRANTLEY

I'm looking for a preacher called Nat.

91 INT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - FOYER - LATER

91

Nat stands before Elizabeth and Jethro. Just past Nat, Brantley mulls on the other side of the screen door.

NAT

He's been banned from every church in the county for his sins-

JETHRO

He's lucky it's all he got for what he done.

NAT

The world has its way with dealing with the immoral. Above all, those who cast that immorality onto children as he has. But, no one is without sin, Miss Elizabeth.

(lets that settle)

This man wants to repent and be delivered. As a shepherd of the Lord, it's my duty to serve... So, I'd like to baptise him.

(CONTINUED)

JETHRO

The hell you will!

ELIZABETH TURNER

Jethro, you will mind your mouth.

JETHRO

With respect, Ms. Elizabeth, a nigger can't baptise no white man.
(re: her no response)
I just think you should wait for Mr. Samuel to get back.

Elizabeth studies Nat.

JETHRO (CONT'D)

Ms. Elizabeth, you can't let this go on-

ELIZABETH TURNER

Jethro, go wait in the front yard.

JETHRO

But ma'am-

ELIZABETH TURNER

I won't ask you again.

Jethro seethes. A murderous glare as he passes Nat-

JETHRO

Boy, you gon' get it.

And he's out the door, leaving Nat and Elizabeth alone.

ELIZABETH TURNER

You sure you want to do this, Nat? Samuel may not like it, nor will a lot of other folks around here.

NAT

Don't think I have a choice, Missus. This man still belongs to God. And to stand between God and his people is a dangerous place to be.

A long beat, until-

ELIZABETH TURNER

You have my blessing.

NAT

Thank you, Missus.

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED: (2)

91

She watches him go, her eyes betraying a hint of melancholy.

92 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - RIVER - DAY

92

Nat stands in waist deep water, Brantley before him. Nancy, Bridget, Hark and others watch from the river bank. Jethro stands further back. If looks could kill.

*
*
*

NAT

Do you confess your sins before
God?

E.T. BRANTLEY

Yes, I do.

NAT

Cross your arms.

Brantley complies. Nat bends Brantley backwards into the water, covering his face before propping him back upright. A few slaves clap as Brantley wipes his face, offering Nat a misty-eyed smile.

E.T. BRANTLEY

Thank you, Sir.

NAT

Go and sin no more.

Brantley nods as he trudges back toward the riverbank. ON Nat as he stands alone in the water, staring toward the bank.

PRELAP

SAMUEL TURNER (O.S.)

I been good to you ain't I?

93 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NAT'S CABIN - DAY

93

Nat is sat on a narrow chopping block, stares forward. Samuel, Jethro and Reverend Walthall stand before him. A SHOTGUN rests in the crux of Jethro's arm. Angle on Hark unnoticed in the BG feigning work.

SAMUEL TURNER

My whole family has. And you go and
do this to me?! A nigger, baptizing
a white man on my property. You
know how this makes me look?!

Nat only stares forward.

(CONTINUED)

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

Boy, you had better say something and quick.

NAT

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Silence. Samuel and Rev. Walthall share an incredulous look.

REV. WALTHALL

"Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again--"

NAT

"You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men--"

REV. WALTHALL

"But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger--"

NAT

"Beware of false prophets who come in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravening wolves!"

REV. WALTHALL

YOU BLACK BASTARD!

SAMUEL TURNER

Nat!-

Nat looks Samuel straight in the eye.

NAT

"He that stealeth a man, and selleth him-

SAMUEL TURNER

Don't you eyeball me!-

NAT

(standing)

-or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death."

93 CONTINUED: (2)

93

In a flash, Samuel snatches Jethro's shotgun, smashing the hilt into Nat's mouth with a CRACK! Nat hits the ground stunned, blood spilling.

SAMUEL TURNER

(to Jethro)

Get him on the post.

Jethro snatches him by the shirt. On Hark who takes a step forward. Nat's look waves him off.

94 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - COURTYARD - POST - DAY

94

Nancy, Bridget and other slaves gather, as we reveal Nat strapped to a wooden post, centered in the middle of the courtyard. Hark and Nelson arrive, soon joined by another slave, SIMON. Jethro paces behind Nat, dragging a ten-foot long whip. He looks to Samuel who nods, then exits toward the Big House. Bridget leads Nancy away as Jethro goes to Nat and rips off his shirt.

JETHRO

Told ya' you was gon' get it.

95 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

95

Samuel bounds toward the Big House, spots Elizabeth. A sudden CRACK in the distance. Samuel stops, locks eyes with her. The cracking of the whip continues over their silence. She holds his gaze.

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

He strides past her and into the house, slamming the door SHUT.

96 OMITTED

96 *

97 EXT. COTTON FIELD - DAY (**VISION 3**)

97

TIGHT on Nat who floats on his back. As his eyes peel open, he squints up to see the figures silhouetted against the sun. One of the figures leans in close to reveal an angelic woman, blocking the sun.

VOICE (V.O.)

Hey, boy.

98 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - COURTYARD - POST - NIGHT

98 *

Nat's eyes open to find Jethro, hovering, drunk.

JETHRO

You best just go on' and die. It'd
be easier on you. You make it
outta' this alive, I'm gonna ride
you like hogs on slop.

(beat)

Die.

Jethro straightens, staggers away.

We move in CLOSE on Nat's near-lifeless eyes. His eyes slowly drift closed, until-

A FAINT GLOW OF LIGHT ILLUMINATES HIS FACE.

REVERSE to reveal-

A CANDLE HAS BEEN PLACED IN FRONT OF NANCY'S CABIN.

Nat wills his eyes open. THE LIGHT ACROSS HIS FACE BRIGHTENS.

We again REVERSE to reveal-

More candles have been placed in front of various slave cabins. We see the door of another slave cabin open, an arm produces a candle. Another cabin and another- until the entire courtyard glows.

Nat's body responds- his chin lifts, his muscles tighten, legs supporting his body's weight. Off Nat's determination-

CUT TO:

99 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - COURTYARD - POST - DAY

99

Samuel and Jethro arrive to find Nat alive and fully alert. Despite his gaunt features and the infected puss bubbles protruding from his back, he supports his own weight.

SAMUEL TURNER

You learned your lesson, boy?

Nat, wild eyed, looks just close enough to Samuel to avoid eye contact. Something unnerving about his subservience.

NAT

Oh, yes 'suh. I've learned.

(CONTINUED)

SAMUEL TURNER

(to Jethro)

Let him off.

Jethro unlocks the stock. Nat stands up straight for the first time in days, his entire body trembling involuntarily.

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

You done preachin' for a while.
Don't want you goin' off with no
groups unless me or Jethro is
there, ya hear?

NAT

Yes, suh.

SAMUEL TURNER

Go on and get cleaned up. Want you
back in the field come mornin'.

NAT

Yes, suh.

As Samuel and Jethro walk off, Hark approaches.

HARK

Nat, you alright?

Nat collapses, face-planting in the dirt.

Nat lies on a cot, his back covered with steaming strips of cotton. Bridget sits at his side. Nancy arrives with a thin blade and a bottle of brown liquid. Bridget slowly peels back a cotton strip to reveal an infested wound. She takes the blade, cuts a shallow incision into the bubbled flesh.

BRIDGET

I watched your grandfather die. In
the old land. Saw him give up the
ghost with my own eyes. And he saw
me. He harnessed the Holy Spirit
that day. Yes he did.

She applies pressure to the wounds, sending blood and puss oozing from his flesh.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

I was proud of him. So proud. I
still thank God he died that day.
That he didn't live to see what I
seen... To watch a strong man
broken down is a terrible thing.

(CONTINUED)

100 CONTINUED:

100

The brown liquid steams as she pours it across his wound.

101 INT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NANA'S CABIN - DUSK

101

Nat staggers in from the intense day of work. Sweat and dried blood crust his shirt to his back. He spots Bridget in her chair, faced toward the stove.

NAT

Hey Nana.

Nat grimaces as he peels off his shirt. Several lines of fresh stitches.

NAT (CONT'D)

Stitches held up good...

Nat rinses his hands and face in a nearby pot of water, suddenly stops. He looks to Bridget, walks to her.

NAT (CONT'D)

Nana?

Her lifeless eyes fixed forward. A needle and thread rests between her fingers, a half sewn pair of pants in her lap.

102 INT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NANA'S CABIN - DAY

102

TIGHT on Nat's face. His eyes cast down at something we don't yet see. We PULL BACK to reveal Bridget's body wrapped head to toe in linen on a plank table behind him. We continue to pull back to find his eyes set on his closed Bible. He flips toward the back.

"Ephesians 6:5-6 - Servants, be obedient to them that are masters..."

"Matthew 5:38 -If anyone strikes you on the right cheek..."

"Luke 6:27 Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you..."

ON NAT as fix forward.

A SERIES OF QUICK FLASHBACKS

-- The slave's teeth hammered out-

-- The young slave girl led on a leash-

-- Cherry beaten and bruised-

-- The blood seeping from the corn onto his hand-

WITH NAT as he flips the Bible again... His jaw tightens.

He slowly rises, moves to Bridget's wrapped body. He lifts it and carries her out of frame. We move in close on the Bible. Closer until a verse fills the frame:

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

102

"Samuel 15:3 Now go and strike... and devote to destruction all that they have... Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child..."

103 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - SLAVE CEMETARY - DAY

103

Bridget's funeral has long ended. Nat stands before her fresh grave. Dozens of single flowers litter a wooden cross. In the BG Hark arrives.

HARK

You alright?

NAT

Mostly.

(beat, then)

I need you to round up a few men we can trust. Have 'em meet us near the big cyprus at Cabin Pond, night after next.

Hark eyes him, nods. A beat before Hark turns to leave.

NAT (CONT'D)

Hark...

(Hark turns back)

He's still here, brother. Even now.

104 EXT. DISMAL SWAMP - CABIN POND - NIGHT

104

Nat sits alone in front of a small smoldering brush fire. A few seconds pass before Hark and THREE OTHER MEN emerge from the dark. Nat stands, meets them. Hark is flanked by SIMON (24), Nelson and WILL (THE SLAVE WE RECOGNIZE FROM FOWLER PLANTATION).

*
*

HARK

This is Simon. Samuel bought him a month back in Norfolk.

NAT

I remember.

HARK

You know Nelson. And this is Will.

(CONTINUED)

NAT
 (remembering)
 Word travels fast.
 (then)
 You weren't followed?

Will shakes his head 'no'.

NAT (CONT'D)
 Good. Welcome. Glad you're here.

SNAP

All eyes open and fix into the darkness towards the sound. Nat stands. A tense moment passes before JASPER emerges from the shadows.

HARK
 (to Jasper)
 This a grown folks meetin'. Get!

Jasper slowly backpedals, until.

NAT
 Hold on. You come from Randall's.

JASPER
 Yessuh.

HARK
 He just a boy.

NAT
 So was David.
 (then, to Jasper)
 Have a seat.

Jasper timidly complies. Nat studies the faces before him.

NAT (CONT'D)
 Let's pray... Heavenly father, we
 come to you this evening to thank
 you for the gift of your Word. We
 pray you guide our hearts and minds
 that we may follow your will alone.
 In Jesus' name...

ALL
 Amen.

NAT
 I been followin' the Lord a long
 time, now. Preachin'. Citin'
 scripture.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED: (2)

104

NAT (CONT'D)

Sharing the word through the few sections and pages I've been allowed...

Holds his worn Bible up high.

NAT (CONT'D)

But, I've gone back into this Word. All of it. With new eyes. I see now that for every verse they use to support our bondage, there is a truth demanding our freedom. For every line they use to justify our torture, there's another that damns them to hell for those actions.

(beat)

They say by the darkness of our skin, we've been cursed. That God's called our children and our children's children to be beast of burden until death. That He's called our wives and daughters to warm their bellies in the night...

(beat)

This isn't the word of the God I serve.

He lets this sink in.

NAT (CONT'D)

The Lord has spoken to me; visions of what is to come. A rise of good against evil. "The first will be last and the last will be first"...

(pointed)

We've been chosen.

NELSON

What we gon' do?

NAT

The same as David and Gideon-and Joshua and Sampson... We will fight.

SIMON

The six of us?

*

NAT

At first. But once it begins, our brothers and sisters'll join.

NELSON

They a lot of whites.

(CONTINUED)

NAT

How many slaves you think here? On all the plantations in-county?

NELSON

Whole lot.

NAT

How many white?

SIMON

But they got guns.

NAT

We'll take the armory in Jerusalem. We'll have guns too.

HARK

Jerusalem?

NAT

That's right. We'll start at Turner's, then fight our way there. By then we'll number in the hundreds- thousands even. The grapevine's ablaze with talk of fightin'. Slaves just like us, all over, havin' meetings. Waitin' for somethin'. Waitin' for us.

The others don't look so sure.

NAT (CONT'D)

If ever there was a time to have faith my brothers, it's now.

WILL

We make a stop at Fowler place?

NAT

We will.

WILL

I'm witchu.

HARK

(beat)

Me too.

NELSON

When we fight?

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED: (4)

104

NAT

Soon. The Lord will provide a sign.
 Until then, remain steadfast, ready
 to strike at the moment of the
 Lord's call.

(beat)

With the strength of our Father,
 we'll cut the head from the
 serpent... We'll destroy them all.

105 INT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DEN - DAY

105

Janice, in the room alone, cleans. She moves to a bottom row
 of books, dusts them. As she dusts with one hand, the other
 pulls a book from her apron, sliding it onto the shelf. As
 she removes a different book-

*
*

A HAND catches her wrist. Startled, she looks up to find
 Isaiah. Off her terror, we-

CUT TO:

106 INT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NAT'S CABIN - MORNING

106

Nat, dressed for the day's work, pulls up suspenders before
 heading for the cabin's exit. He opens the door to find
 Isaiah.

ISAIAH

May I enter.

Nat allows him in, but not before a quick glance outside.

NAT

Something wrong?

ISAIAH

There's much wrong.

(beat, then)

Whether you consider me a friend or
 not, I don't know. But I care what
 happens to you. The same way I care
 about what happens to every other
 soul on this property...

NAT

If there's something you need to
 say, Isaiah, I'm listening.

ISAIAH

There was a meeting a few nights
 back.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

106

Nat offers no reaction.

ISAIAH (CONT'D)

While I'm not privy to what was said, I can assume by it's secrecy, it couldn't have been entirely... productive.

(no response)

Now, I don't know what ideas swirl in your head, but I've lived enough to know the result of *certain* ideas won't lead to what you want.

NAT

All I *want*, I want for the oppressed people of God.

ISAIAH

Do you want death for them? For your wife and daughter?

NAT

If it be God's will.

ISAIAH

God's will? Who's selected you the instrument of such things?

NAT

He has.

ISAIAH

You walk a dangerous line.

NAT

In his ordered steps.

ISAIAH

And you're sure it's him doing the "ordering".

Nat only stares.

ISAIAH (CONT'D)

I may live in the house, but my head isn't in a hole. I know whites are wrong for what they've done and continually do. But I also know a man of God is called to lead in love. Anything else will only leave us all worse off.

Isaiah studies him a beat before reaching into his suit jacket, pulling from it a BOOK. CLOSER to reveal it is the book Janice took from the shelf.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED: (2)

106

ISAIAH (CONT'D)

(pointed)

He is a God of love, Nat. Don't
forget that.

He hands him the book before turning towards the door.

NAT

I won't.

(beat)

Nor will I forget he is a God of
wrath.

Isaiah turns back locks eyes with Nat a beat, before slipping
from the cabin.

107 EXT. COTTON FIELD - DAY (**VISION 3 MANIFEST**)

107

Nat pulls a near full cotton bag through a row. He glances up
to notice several slaves have stopped picking, their gazes
directed upward. A shadow creeping across their faces. Nat
follows their eyes to see-

THE MOON PASSING IN FRONT OF THE SUN IN A BRILLIANT ECLIPSE.

ANGELIC VOICE (O.S.)

(to Nat, as if carried by
the wind)

The serpent is loosed.

The eclipse passes. As the enslaved go back to picking, Hark,
steps into Nat's row. Nat holds his gaze.

108 INT. REESE HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

108

Nat and Cherry lie opposite **each** other, eyes locked.

*

NAT

The Lord's called me... To stand
and fight.

A long beat, until-

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED:

108

CHERRY

I knew this day would come. I told myself I wouldn't be scared. All my life I been prayin' for the Lord to help us, or to send somebody who could. We all have. Just wasn't 'spectin it to be my own husband.

(beat)

If the Lord's called you to fight, you fight. You fight for me. For Joanna. Fight for us all.

Nat pulls her and Joanna into an embrace.

108A INT. REESE PLANTATION - BEDROOM - NIGHT

108A *

Cherry stirs awake to find Nat gone, a cloth-wrapped package lies in his place. She opens it to find A BEAUTIFUL DRESS. A moment before she flips the bottom hem to find: THE PATCH FROM HER PREVIOUS DRESS. Off her look, we-

CUT TO: *

108B INT. REESE PLANTATION - BEDROOM - NIGHT

108B *

Cherry lies asleep. As Elizabeth clears of dishes from Cherry's night stand, she tips a glass spilling water onto the floor. As she bends to towel it, reaching deep under the bed, her hand catches something. Tight on her face as she studies something we don't see. She eyes a sleeping Cherry with concern.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - NIGHT *

A candle dances within a dark room. An OC gust distinguishes it. *

109 OMITTED

109

110 OMITTED

110

111 OMITTED

111

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

*

112 OMITTED

112

*

113 INT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - SAMUEL'S ROOM - NIGHT 113

Samuel sleeps. A few seconds before he stirs awake, reaches for a glass of water. He suddenly freezes. As he squints into the dark, his eyes adjust and he sees the shape of a man.

SAMUEL TURNER

Who's there?

Nat takes a half step into a shard of moonlight.

SAMUEL TURNER (CONT'D)

Nat?

NAT

(directly into his eyes)

Yes.

Before Samuel can utter a response, the glint of a swinging axe.

114 INT. TURNER PLANTATION - OVERSEER'S BACKHOUSE - NIGHT 114

OVER BLACK we hear a KNOCK. Then another. A lantern flashes to reveal Jethro, sat up in bed. A YOUNG SLAVE GIRL (10) lies beside him. Jethro rubs his eyes-

KNOCK! KNOCK!

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

114

JETHRO

Wait a goddamn minute!

He staggers to the door, shirtless and half asleep. Just as he pulls the door open-

THWACK!!!! He's axed out of frame.

Will takes a step inside wielding a massive SLEDGEHAMMER. He lifts it high over his head. The finishing blow cuts us to-

115 INT. TURNER PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - HALLWAY - (NIGHT) 115

Samuel crawls along his stomach, blood seeping from mouth. Nat walks behind him, axe in his hand. Samuel props himself against the wall and we see the deep gash in his chest. Samuel and Nat's eyes stay locked a long beat. Nat turns, exits. On Samuel, left with his thoughts until his eyes slowly sag shut.

*

116 INT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NANA'S CABIN - (NIGHT) 116

Nancy lies asleep under dim candlelight. Nat sits bedside.

NAT

Mama.

She wakes; instinctively reaches for her field clothes.

NANCY

Nat? Oh, Lord, I slept too late?

Nat gently catches her hand.

NAT

You don't have to work today, mama.

NANCY

What?

NAT

You're free.

She stares closely at Nat, suddenly noticing the blood on his face, clothes and hands.

NAT (CONT'D)

The battle has begun, ma.
(toward the cabin door)
Simon.

Simon pokes his head in.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

116

NAT (CONT'D)

Simon's gonna take you to Reese's.
I need you to take care of Cherry
and Joanna until I return...

(re: Nancy's sad look)

What's wrong?

NANCY

Nothin'. I'm proud of you.

She pulls Nat into an embrace.

NANCY (CONT'D)

You fight. I'll pray.

PRELAP - SOUND of intense vomiting.

117 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NANA'S CABIN - NIGHT

117

Nat stands keeled over, steadying himself against a tree.

VOICE (O.S.)

Nat.

Nat turns to find Hark.

HARK

Everybody's ready.

118 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - COURTYARD - NIGHT

118

Nat, atop Jupiter, stares down at the many faces. Hark, Will, Nelson and Jasper are mounted at his flank. As Nat opens his mouth to speak- Isaiah arrives in his blood-streaked robe. Delirious, he CHARGES Nat, Will steps in his way.

ISAIAH

Boy, what did you do?!

No answer.

ISAIAH (CONT'D)

You killed him... You killed us!

(to all, in tears)

He's killed us! Every one of us is
already dead!

He lunges for Nat, but Will catches him, shoves him to the ground. Isaiah staggers away, distraught, leaving a somber feeling over the group.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

NAT

Your earthly master is gone.
 You are now free men and woman,
 servants of only the Lord.

A murmur spreads throughout.

NAT (CONT'D)

As the sword of the Lord bears down
 on our enemies, our ancestors and
 unborn children rejoice.

(beat)

Are we dead? No. I say we are now
 alive, seeing through eyes that
 have been denied us since being
 born into the darkness of bondage.
 Stand with us... that your other
 captive brothers and sisters may
 also know freedom. Stand, that our
 children, for generations to come
 will know that with the
 supernatural power of God, we
 straightened our backs against the
 works of the evil one.

A male steps forward. Then another. And other, until every
 able man has stepped up. Off their determined looks-

119	EXT. WOODS - NIGHT	119
	-- A group of torch-wielding REBELS gallop past camera.	*
120	INT. PLANTATION HOME - (NIGHT)	120
	-- TIGHT ON A LIT WALL to reveal SHADOWS axing down on a bed. BLOOD sprays against the wall with the last blow.	* *
121	OMITTED	121
122	INT. PLANTATION HOME - (NIGHT)	122
	-- Nat stands in a room of an estate, eyes a military sword mounted on the wall. A REBEL and a SLAVEOWNER wrestle in the BG.	

123 EXT. FOWLER PLANTATION - NIGHT

123

Nat, sword fitted to his hip, sits atop Jupiter amongst his men. They eye the Big House in the distance. Will trots up to Nat.

WILL

Can I do this m'sef?

Nat nods. Will dismounts, pulls a SHORT AXE from his belt. He walks calmly toward the Big House, casually climbs the porch steps before entering. *

Several long moments pass. Hark crosses past Jasper to Nat.

HARK

Should we go check on him?-

SMASH!

A BODY explodes through the second floor window, lands in a bloody, lifeless heap! Jasper nearly jumps out of his skin.

Before anyone else can react-

The front door crashes open and a man we recognize as Earl Fowler sprints toward us. Will bolts through the doorway in pursuit, gaining on him with every step.

EARL runs wildly, until he suddenly STOPS, realizing he stands in front of Nat and nearly forty armed rebels.

EARL FOWLER

No...

(stumbles backward)

NO!

Just as he turns, SHUNK!

Will's axe hacks into his neck. Will straddles Earl's body, raises his axe and chops with measured focus. He finally rises, holding Earl's steaming head by the hair. He tosses it into the nearby brush, before remounting his horse.

For a moment, no one even breathes. Then-

HARK

The boy!

All look around. Hark and Nat lock eyes.

124 EXT. WOODS - (R. PLANTATION) - NIGHT 124

A FIGURE sprints through the dark. He burst into a clearing, approaching the back section of a large, familiar house. As he arrives to the back door, he bangs repeatedly with all his might. The door finally swings open to reveal-

ABNER

We reverse to see our messenger is JASPER.

125 EXT. RANDALL PLANTATION - NIGHT 125

Nat and his men arrive to the plantation entrance. As the men push forward-

NAT
(hard whisper)
Wait.

The men stop. Nat stares out at the Big House and surrounding structures. He squints into the dark. Did something move?

BANG!

A bullet slams into Nelson's head. Gunfire erupts. *

The men scramble for cover. Will returns fire. Hark dismounts, scurries to Nelson who lies dead; a bullet hole cut into his temple.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

RANDALL (O.S.)
Hey, "preacher". I know you out there! C'mon. Me and my boys is ready!

Nat sees a dozen slaves appear on the lawn with guns.

RANDALL (O.S.)(CONT'D)
Ya'll gonna hang! You hear me?! All of ya!

NAT
Hark!

Hark dodges gunfire, joins him.

NAT (CONT'D)
Tell the men to fall back.

HARK
What?

(CONTINUED)

125 CONTINUED:

125

NAT

If we have a gun fight now, we'll never make it to Jerusalem-

HARK

That man had my wife- now her brother! I want my revenge, too!

NAT

This ain't about revenge, Hark. They have all had our wives and killed all our brothers!

(beat)

The root, not the branch. We must stay focused, brother.

A long beat before Hark nods.

HARK

(to others)

Pull back.

126 EXT. RANDALL PLANTATION - YARD - SAME

126 *

John Randall squats beside Abner and Jasper. They level rifles toward the trees.

TIGHT ON JASPER

His face, a picture of shame.

127 EXT. OLD ROAD - DAWN

127

Nat, followed by Will, Hark and others jogs from the dense forest, arriving to a clearing. Nat studies the treeline as men continue to trickle in. Nearly fifty men in all. Even as the last man emerges, Nat continues to eye the trees.

NAT

This all of us?

HARK

This it.

Hark studies the light part of the sky, smiles, then chuckles.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED:

127

HARK (CONT'D)

*

What?

NAT

By now, I'd be two row's down. Half bag full...

HARK

(smiles)

I'd be headed to the barn, gettin' the stock fed.

REBEL MAN 1

I be boilin' water fo' da' smokehouse... Thankin' on dumpin' it in on massa's head.

Laughter from the group.

REBEL MAN (O.C.)

I be tightnin' barrells, sealin' cracks.

WILL

Checkin' leaves is dry. Packin' an' stackin' 'em up. Dodgin' that cracka's lash...

(beat)

But not today.

*
*
*

NAT

No, suh.
(then, to the group)
On to Jerusalem?

*
*
*

HARK

On to Jerusalem.

The phrase echoing through the ranks as Nat and Hark share a look.

128 EXT. JERUSALEM - ARMORY - DAWN

128

A thick fog sits on the road. The Armory sits quietly on a cul-de-sac in the distance.

129 EXT. JERUSALEM - ARMORY ENTRANCE - DAWN

129

Nat and Hark, armed, stand on the main road. Dozens of rebels stand in ranks behind them, weapons ready.

(CONTINUED)

Nat squints in the distance.

SILENCE AS THEY WAIT

Finally, RAYMOND COBB steps from within a bricked archway, *
 JESSE steps out, loyal at his side. Cobb regards Nat across
 the hundred yard stretch.

COBB

Throw down them weapons! Lay on the
 ground!

CLOSER TO REVEAL-

Neither Nat, nor his men budge. A beat before A GROUP OF OVER
 FIFTY ARMED, LOCAL WHITES emerge from hidden positions within
 the brick cul-de-sac.

NAT

(to his men)

The LORD is our light and our
 salvation, whom shall we fear?

We slowly track across the faces of the rebels as they eye
 their adversaries. Cobb barks orders as the armed whites
 scramble to line themselves up.

NAT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

When the wicked, even our enemies
 and our foes, came upon us to eat
 up our flesh, they stumbled and
 fell...

A white man fastens a BAYONET onto his rifle. We pass Will...

NAT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Though a host should encamp against
 us, our hearts shall not fear:

Cobb unholsters his pistol. We pass Hark....

NAT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...though war should rise against
 us... in this will we be confident!

We arrive back to Nat, eyes focused and wild.

NAT (CONT'D)

REBEL!

Nat charges toward Cobb and his men, his rebels close behind.
 Cobb lets out his own battle cry as he and his men charge!

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

(CONTINUED)

Men from both sides are killed instantly.

The two sides slam into each other with the sound of thunder! Nat, fires his rifle, tosses it before pulling his axe and sword. He swings both, connecting with flesh.

Cobb wields a RIFLE with an attached BAYONET. He plunges its point into passing rebels.

Will crushes a white man's head with the broad side of his axe, before burying the sharp side into another man's chest.

Hark fights off two men, with an empty rifle. He smashes one unconscious with the butt before Jesse arrives, grabs him in a choke from behind. He holds Hark as another charges with his bayonet. Just as Hark is nearly pierced, he head-butts Jesse, spinning him in front and into the blade.

Nat, kicks a man in the groin, raises his sword to swipe when-

BANG! A bullet pieces his shoulder. He drops his sword, stumbling backward.

REVERSE to reveal Cobb holding a rifle. He rushes Nat, lunges at him with his bayonet. Nat catches the barrel, hip tosses him to the ground and pounces. The two roll until Cobb lands on top. Cobb locks both hands around Nat's neck in a choke. Nat spots his sword just feet away, but just out of reach. He fights at Cobb's grip, finally separating two fingers, breaking them backwards with a SNAP!

A monstrous left slumps Cobb to his side. Nat reaches, snagging his sword as he climbs atop Cobb. Cobb strains against Nat's weight as Nat presses the sword tip toward Cobb's neck.

IN THE BG a white man is seen rushing toward Nat. He raises his rifle and IS TACKLED out of the frame.

Nat's sword pierces Cobb's neck. He pushes it deeper, their eyes remaining locked. Finally the sword's hilt is pressed to Cobb's neck, pinning him into the ground below. Nat watches until the last sign of life is gone.

Nat rises, his shoulder stained red from the gun shot. As he looks around, we see only rebels stand- the ground littered with bodies, black and white. A few white men can be seen retreating in the distance. He locks eyes with Hark, both out of breath-

NAT (CONT'D)
(to all)
C'mon!

(CONTINUED)

129 CONTINUED: (3)

129

Nat pulls his sword, grabs a nearby weapon and sprints toward the Armory. Hark, Will and the remaining rebels, joining him.

130 EXT. JERUSALEM - ARMORY - MORNING

130

Nat and the rebels sprint into the cul-de-sac, arriving at the Armory door. Will steps forward, smashes the lock with an axe handle.

NAT

Line up!

HARK

Guns comin'!

The rebels toss axes and shovels aside as, line up as Nat and Hark surge the entrance.

131 INT. ARMORY - SAME

131

Nat, Hark and others storm in to find dozens of stacked crates.

NAT

Open em' up and pass 'em back!

The men begin cracking open the crates. Nat opens one himself and his face falls.

HIS POV to reveal-

The crates EMPTY, HEAVY STONES sit in place of guns.

NAT (CONT'D)

Get outside-

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Gunfire rips through the slat walls. *

NAT'S POV *

-Outside the armory door, bullets perforate the exposed rebels as they are attacked from every angle. *

Nat spots INFANTRY OF THE STATE MILITIA stand on rooftops and in widows of the surrounding cul-de-sac buildings. Their fire power continues to bear down on the rebels inside. *

Nat, Will, Hark and the remaining others crouch low, dodging fire. Without warning, Will stands, storms outside it is met with gunfire. *

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED:

131

He grabs a bayonet fitted musket, stands himself up with it. *
His silhouette looking more like an African statue. A final *
shot blows through his face. *

132 OMITTED

132 *

133 INT. ARMORY - CONTINUOUS

133

Nat crawls towards the open door. As he reaches to close it, he spots two MILITIA SOLDIERS wheeling a CANNON. As they aim it toward the armory door-

NAT

Get back!

SLOW MOTION as the cannon erupts, Nat diving for cover just before impact- BOOM!

BLACK

Nat emerges from beneath the loose rubble, his face and body covered in ash-like dust and dirt. Daylight pours in from the cannon's exit blast at the back of the room.

Nat spots Hark, a thick shard of shrapnel lodged deep between his collarbone. Nat crawls to him, struggles to drag him towards the exit. Hark waves him off as he holds his wound.

HARK(spits blood)

Go on. You gotta lead.

A beat before they embrace. Nat sees a few other rebels emerging from the debris.

NAT

Come on!

He helps three rebels through the opening, offers Hark a final look, before exiting.

We stay with Hark, blood gushing through his fingers with every breath.

134 INT. WOODS - DAY

134

Nat darts through the woods alongside a few of his men. Finally, they stop. Only three rebels remain. Gunshots ring out in the distance. The men crowd in. Nat barks instruction, using his finger to draw a map in the dirt.

NAT

OK, we're right here, about three miles away from Cabin Pond. That's there we'll regroup. Any other survivors'll meet us there...

Nat takes in the faces of his men. A closer look shows they aren't men at all, but boys.

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED:

134

NAT (CONT'D)

How old are you?

REBEL BOY 1

Fifteen, suh.

REBEL BOY 2

Fourteen, suh.

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED: (2)

134

Nat studies their scared faces. A long beat until-

NAT

You've done good. You've been brave
in fighting...

(beat)

But, it's time to go home. If you
get stopped on the way, tell them
you didn't have anything to do with
this. Tell them you ran when the
killing started.

The boys slowly stand, unsure.

NAT (CONT'D)

Go'on, now.

They run off into the woods, leaving Nat alone.

135 EXT. DISMAL SWAMP - DAY

135

Nat runs through the swamp, splashing through the soggy
marsh. He stops at a massive overturned tree, catches his
breath. He burrows beneath the tangled roots.

136 OMITTED

136 *

137 INT. ARMORY - DAY

137

ANGLE ON a YOUNG WHITE SOLDIER, musket raised, as he arrives
to Hark who holds his seeping wound. Hark, moments from
death, eyes the soldier.

HARK

John Clark?

JOHN CLARK

(lowers his weapon)

Hey, Hark.

A moment between them, before a passing MILITIAMAN impales
Hark with his bayonet. On John Clark, as he processes.

*

*

138 OMITTED 138

139 INT. REESE PLANTATION - BIG HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY 139

General Childs, joined by his LIEUTENANT, sits before Cherry who wears her new dress. Elizabeth stands close, flanked by John Clark. We notice their hands clasped. Catherine and Nancy hover just behind. Nancy holds Joanna who cries. *

GENERAL CHILDS

You don't know where he is?

CHERRY

No, suh. *

GENERAL CHILDS

And he never mentioned nothing on a insurrection.

CHERRY

No, suh.

General Childs eyes her hard. *

GENERAL CHILDS *

When's the last time you saw him? *

ELIZABETH TURNER

She's told you everything she knows. *

GENERAL CHILDS

Elizabeth, I've known you a long time, and got a lot of respect for you and your family, but you're interfering with something real important. A lot of people were killed the last twenty-four hours.

(CONTINUED)

ELIZABETH TURNER

I know. One of them was my son.

GENERAL CHILDS

(to Nancy)

So Samuel sent you here to 'help out'?

NANCY

Yes, suh.

GENERAL CHILDS

How long before the killin' did you and the boy leave? *

NANCY

Oh, suh, I don't know nothing about no killin- *

ELIZABETH TURNER *

General! *

GENERAL CHILDS

(to Lieutenant)

Go get me that boy...

(to Nancy)

Why would Samuel send a field hand to help in the house?

ELIZABETH TURNER *

Our hands often go from field to house when needed. Not every family treats their slaves with your level of savagery.

GENERAL CHILDS

Not every slave treats their masters with the level of savagery yours done.

Childs' lieutenant returns with a terrified Simon.

GENERAL CHILDS (CONT'D)

(to Simon)

Boy, what did Samuel tell you that night? You lie to me, I'll kill ya.

SIMON

Massa Samuel told me to bring Miss Nancy to help out for a day or two.

GENERAL CHILDS

And he gave you a pass?

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED: (2)

139

SIMON

Yes, suh.

(CONTINUED)

GENERAL CHILDS

You still got it?

Catherine goes to a nearby drawer, produces a crumpled piece of paper. General Childs examines it.

ELIZABETH TURNER

If you're done with your questions,
we'd like to get back to mourning.

General Childs tosses the paper, onto the table, along with several coins.

ELIZABETH TURNER (CONT'D)

What's that for?

GENERAL CHILDS

We're taking the boy.

Simon's face falls.

*

ELIZABETH TURNER

You most certainly are not!

GENERAL CHILDS

(to John Clark)
Let's go.

JOHN CLARK

Everything will be alright, mama.

As John Clark and Elizabeth embrace-

JOHN CLARK (CONT'D)

(whisper)
They ain't gon' find him. Not
unless he wants to be found.

He offers a solemn smile before he joins General Childs, his Lieutenant and Simon. They exit, leaving only silence, until-

A BANG OS.

Elizabeth rushes to the window to see Simon dead on the lawn. General Childs mounts his horse, tips his hat to Elizabeth before he and his men head off.

- 141 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY 141
 -- We track across a group of Rebels standing on a wooden platform. Nooses are fitted around their necks. Tight on a male slave, as he drops out of frame. The rope fills the frame, taut.
- 142 EXT. WOODS - DUSK 142 *
 -- Two black men sit beaten and tied to a tree. Liquid is splashed across their faces. A white hand, holding a lit match creeps into frame.
- 143 EXT. PLANTATION - FIELD - DAY 143 *
 -- We start in close on the pocket of a pair of overalls. We pull backwards to reveal a deceased BOY 11 wears them as he hangs by the neck. We continue our pull to reveal- Black bodies of all sizes hang like ornaments on the branches of a massive fallen oak tree. *
- 144 EXT. REESE PLANTATION - BACK YARD - DAY 144
 Cherry hangs clothes near the treeline. Catherine sits on the porch in the distance, drifting in a rocking chair.
- VOICE (O.S.)
 (whisper)
 Cherry...
- Cherry freezes.
- VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 It's Nat, love.
 (then)
 Keep on working.
- She quakes visibly as she returns to the hanging clothes.
- CHERRY
 They looking for you.
- NAT (O.S.)
 Did they hurt you?
- CHERRY
 No.
- NAT (O.S.)
 How is Joanna?

(CONTINUED)

5/8/15 - PINK

101A

144 CONTINUED:

144

CHERRY

She fine.

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED:

144

NAT (O.S.)

And Mama.

CHERRY

She fine too.

Cherry shoots a nervous glance toward Catherine.

NAT (O.S.)

You heard anything on the others?

CHERRY

They been hanged... All of them.
 They killing people everywhere. For
 no reason at all, but being black.
 Say the killin' won't stop til they
 get you...

(then)

All this time, I thought... I
 thought you were dead, too.

NAT (O.S.)

I'm here... I'll always be.

CHERRY

I miss you so much...

No answer. She stops.

CHERRY (CONT'D)

Nat?

CATHERINE (O.S.)

Cherry, who are you talking to?

Cherry turns to find Catherine just behind her. Cherry wipes her face. Catherine surveys the area, sees nothing.

CHERRY

I was just talking to myself...
 wishing things was different.

Catherine regards her with compassion.

CATHERINE

Me too...

A long beat until-

Catherine pulls a wet shirt from the clothes basket, pins it to the line. They silently work in tandem.

145 EXT. DISMAL SWAMP - DAY 145
 Militia men scour the swampy woods. We spot John Clark among them crossing a trickling creek. He slows to a stop, looks to his left and right.

146 EXT. DISMAL SWAMP - DAY (**VISION 4**) 146
Nat kneels in prayer. A SOUND from behind and his eyes open. He turns to find a YOUNG BOY we recognize as YOUNG NAT, painted royal blue. (The scene mirrors Nat's childhood vision). Demonic sounds permeate the forest. Nat stands, strides towards his younger self, placing a protective hand in front of him. WIDER to reveal Nat is alone. He stalks toward us and past camera. *

147 EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - WOOD AND SEED - DAY 147 *
 Several stores have reopened. General Childs sits under a military tent as his boots are shined. A few militia men loiter nearby. Scattered locals crisscross the dusty square. *
 FURTHER AWAY *
 Nat enters an empty frame. We take in his sunken eyes and gaunt frame as he lumbers forward. His bullet wound festers, spilling puss. *
 ANGLE ON *
 A WHITE MAN who spots Nat. *
 WHITE MAN *
 Hey! *

As he sprints toward Nat, others also recognize him, breaking into hysterics. The white man arrives to Nat, wasting no time in connecting a wild blow to Nat's face. *

Dozens more follow suit, until a massive mob has formed, raining blows onto Nat's body. A woman rips at his shirt as the energy of the lynch mob intensifies, until- *

BANG!

The crowd freezes. We REVERSE to reveal GENERAL CHILDS, holds the smoking gun. He's flanked by his lieutenant.

GENERAL CHILDS
 I know you're angry, trust me, I understand. But, this man has committed mass murder and will stand trial.

(CONTINUED)

As he approaches, the mob reluctantly backs off. General Childs arrives to Nat who lies in a bloody heap. The lieutenant and another soldier rip Nat to his feet and away.

*
*

148 OMITTED

148 *

(CONTINUED)

148 CONTINUED:

148

*

149 INT. JERUSALEM - CELL - DAY

149

Nat sits eyes fixed forward. A SHERIFF appears at the bars.

SHERIFF

It's time.

150 EXT. JERUSALEM - COURTHOUSE - DAY

150

Follow a YOUNG BOY (7) as he crosses cobblestone road, up a flight of stairs, pushing his way through a surrounding mob. As he steps onto a cross-bridge, we rise above him to reveal-

THE COURTHOUSE SQUARE. Hundreds crowd in front of a stage-like platform, others watch from roofs, windows and stairs.

151 EXT. JERUSALEM - COURTHOUSE - DAY

151

Nat is led up a narrow staircase and onto the wooden platform. He studies the multitude of people.

*

ANGLE ON

*

A viewing platform, where Nat spots John Clark who stands at the flank of General Childs. A million words unspoken. Nat's eyes then drift to Jasper who stands amongst patrons. Nat studies Jasper who struggles to hold his gaze.

*

*

*

Nat's face softens a beat, as he offers the faintest nod of forgiveness. The sheriff motions for the roaring crowd to settle. Within minutes, the area is near silent, save a few scattered slurs.

SHERIFF

(to Nat)

Somethin' you'd like to say to these people first?

*

*

Nat regards the people. Then, with a firm voice-

NAT

I'm ready.

The sheriff exits and the crowd's energy escalates to near fever pitch. The UNDERTAKER fits a noose around Nat's neck. Draws the rope of the pulley and Nat's body rises several feet above the platform.

SOUND DROPS. Not a limb or a muscle moves as Nat hangs still as a stone.

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

CLOSE On Nat's face as he stares forward, as if frozen. UNTIL

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED: (2)

151

-

Something above catches his eye. His eyes flit upward toward something we don't yet see.

Nat's POV to reveal-

A WHITE DOVE CIRCLES JUST ABOVE.

ON NAT. Even through the pain, the slightest smile grows. Seconds later, we watch his eyes slowly CLOSE.

ON JASPER, who squeezes his eyes shut, his body trembling through sobs.

PUSH IN on Jasper. CLOSER until his face fills the frame.

We watch as he AGES before our eyes. His features mature, his jaw widens, age lines crawl across his brow. He slowly opens his eyes and we see Jasper, now a grown man. The shame gone, only a fierceness remains.

We slowly pull back as sound gradually returns. Muffled blasts and explosions permeate. We continue our pull to reveal-

152 EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

152

Jasper dons a blue FORAGE HAT and SACK COAT, white-knuckling a bayonet-fitted rifle. We reveal other black soldiers on either side. A massive AMERICAN FLAG ripples in the BG. The explosions are now deafening as the group of men clinch their jaws in anticipation. After an arduous beat-

*

VOICE (O.C.)

CHARGE!

Jasper and his fellow soldiers belt out battle cries as they rush the camera, bayonets pointed. Jasper raises his rifle and BANG! A cloud of smoke takes us to-

BLACK

SUPER:

After Nat Turner's hanging, his body was skinned and dismembered. His skin was sewn into wallets and purses, his flesh churned into grease- all to be sold at the local market.

153 EXT. UNKNOWN - DAY

153

NAT TURNER, healthy and strong, stands staring into camera
for a long beat

(CONTINUED)

153 CONTINUED:

153

SUPER: A prophet. A preacher. An American hero. His flesh was destroyed, but Nat Turner's legacy of resistance will live on forever.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END