

ABOLITION

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OVER BLACK

I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANTATION - NIGHT

SUPER: KANSAS TERRITORY - 1856

Small wooden cabins against a sprawling field of cotton.

At the far end of the field, the big house. Glowing ghostly white beneath a pale Kansas moon.

The air is still.

INT. PLANTATION - NIGHT

Nobody stirs.

Beams of soft moonlight stream through the front window, illuminate the lavish foyer and grand staircase.

Up the stairs and to the left, a LONG HALLWAY leads into darkness. Forward, to a door at the end of the hall.

INT. PLANTATION BEDROOM - NIGHT

A MAN (40s) and his WIFE (20s), both white, sleep soundly in their comfortable feather bed.

A pale BONEY HAND clasps the man over his mouth. His eyes open wide with terror. Next to him, a second pair of hands grasp his wife.

The couple are dragged from their bed. The Man struggles with his attacker, but a hard punch to the gut doubles him over.

His Wife kicks wildly at her attacker, who holds her from behind. He reeks like a WET DOG. She struggles with all her might, but his grip is too tight.

The men drag the couple out into THE HALLWAY.

A THUD, then another, and then...

MALE VOICE (O.S)
Hey! Hey! Let go! Father!

Movement at the FAR END of the hallway. Large figures, concealed in shadow, moving in the darkness.

WIFE

NO!

BONEY HANDS and WET DOG remain silent. Wet Dog's hands tighten their hold.

MALE VOICE

Mother!

WIFE

Daniel!!

The two groups meet in the middle. Boney Hands and Wet Dog hold the Man and his wife.

Two other men, one BIG, bearded, one SMALL, shaved, both white, hold the couple's son, DANIEL (15).

BONEY HANDS

That's all of em'?

The Big Bearded Man nods, Boney Hands nods in return and the group make their way down the stairs.

EXT. PLANTATION - NIGHT

The Man, his Wife, and their son Daniel stand huddled together, shivering in their bedclothes.

Across from them, their four attackers, now fully visible the light of the moon.

At their feet, a large brown blanket, folded neatly. Wet Dog holds a musket at the ready.

Boney Hands, the tallest of the bunch, steps forward. Sunken eyes and cheeks cast menacing shadows over his gaunt face.

BONEY HANDS

Thomas Hastings.

The Man stands up straight.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)

You are accused of supplying aid and shelter to Border Ruffians, as well as facilitating the massacre which took place in this territory a fortnight ago.

Thomas begins to interject, but Boney Hands is not finished.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
Daniel Hastings...

Mrs. Hastings goes pale.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
You too are accused of supplying
information and--

THOMAS HASTINGS
--Accused? By whom?

BONEY HANDS
Silence!

Thomas complies.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
--Information and aid to the same
men, helping to facilitate the
murder of free and innocent men and
women, as well as the destruction
of thousands of dollars in
property, and for these crimes, I
do sentence you both to death.

Boney Hands' three companions unfold the tattered blanket,
revealing three large BROADSWORDS.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
Mrs. Hastings. Please step away and
avert your eyes.

MRS. HASTINGS
No! No, I will not!

BONEY HANDS
Owen.

OWEN (24), hard jaw shaved clean, slings his musket over his
back and moves to where Mrs. Hastings holds her son tight.

The Wet Dog smell reaches her before he does, she begins to
cry.

MRS. HASTINGS
No, no, please, no you can't.

Owen wrenches her arms from her son and pulls her away. She
kicks and screams and bites but none of it is any use.

Thomas Hastings and his son, Daniel, stand before Boney Hands, The Big Man and The Small Man.

The Big Man steps forward and presents Boney Hands with one of the broadswords.

Big and Small each pick up a broadsword of their own and step forward. The three are a menacing sight, their six foot blades pointing high into the night sky.

BONEY HANDS

He who kidnaps a man and sells him,
or if he is found in his hand,
shall surely be put to death.

Thomas Hastings stands between The men and his son.

THOMAS HASTINGS

Please, please spare my son.

BONEY HANDS

The Judgement has been passed.

MRS. HASTINGS

No!!

The men bring their swords down upon Thomas and Daniel.

Thomas dies instantly. Daniel dodges the first swing and attempts to run, but is cut down by the second. Mrs. Hastings, sobs hysterically.

Again and again the three men hack away at Thomas and Daniel's bodies until they are certain the pair are dead.

Owen releases Mrs. Hastings, who falls to her knees.

Boney Hands, face spattered with the blood, closes his eyes and breathes deeply.

The air is still but for Mrs. Hastings moans of agony.

EXT. KANSAS TRAIL - DAY

SUPER: CHAPTER ONE - SUBJUGATION

The sun, high in the sky, beats down on a wagon making its way slowly up the trail, cedar rail fences on either side.

Driving the wagon, a slave. ETON GREENE (20s).

A GROUSE scares in the bushes, his lead horse rears. He soothes her, squinting as the bird flies off, watching until it disappears.

A flick of the reins, a CLICK of his tongue, and the wagon jolts forward once again.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - DAY

Eton leads his wagon up a long driveway, surrounded on all sides by ancient trees.

Above his head, sunlight attempts in vain to pierce the canopy.

The trees finally give way to a large cotton field; row upon row leading to a large white house.

Out here, the heat is oppressive. Eton makes the last leg of his journey with the sun beating down on his neck.

He leads the wagons up next to the house where CUMBERLAND BRIGGS (30s), black, leans against a rail. Tall, well built, he chews a piece of long grass.

Eton hops off the wagon.

CUMBERLAND
You're late.

ETON
Yeah yeah.

CUMBERLAND
Any trouble?

Eton shakes his head, no. Together, they pull a large canvas blanket from the cart, revealing crates of dried goods and liquor; sacks of grain, rice and flour.

The two men get to unloading the cart.

ETON
How's Cecilia?

CUMBERLAND
Be a lot better soon.

Eton looks at Cumberland, who continues unloading the wagon. Stacking the boxes and sacks haphazardly next to the house.

ETON
Best not let Mr. Day see that.

Cumberland doesn't stop working. Eton eyes the poorly stacked crates. Finally Cumberland stops, sweat on his brow.

He looks to Eton, then to the crates.

ETON (CONT'D)
I'm just sayin'--

Cumberland drops a crate where he stands.

CUMBERLAND
--Oh you always just sayin'.
(looks around)
You finish up here you're such a
good boy.

Cumberland pushes past Eton.

ETON
What's that s'posed to mean?

CUMBERLAND
You a good friend Eton, but you
ain't got no spine. "Yes Massa,
please Massa, thank you Massa."

ETON
You best watch your mouth.

CUMBERLAND
Like I said, you my friend. But boy
does this life suit you.

With that, he turns.

ETON
Where you goin'?

Cumberland disappears around the side of the house, leaving Eton to finish on his own.

INT. KING PLANTATION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

THE SITTING ROOM.

ANNABELLE GREENE (20s), black, hair tied up, a cream colored dress, moves around the lavish room. Sun streams in through large windows onto paintings of landscapes and hunts.

She FLUFFS the ornate pillows on the couches. She DUSTS beneath photographs on a large stone mantelpiece. She SCRUBS the windows, and the floors.

Somewhere, a bell RINGS. Annabelle continues scrubbing.

The bell RINGS again. Annabelle rolls her eyes, stops scrubbing, and gets to her feet.

THE VERANDA

Long and spacious, wraps halfway around the house.

ANGELA KING (20s), white, a sky blue dress, hair pulled back into a bun, sits at a small round table with her daughter, MARY (7), a similar blue dress and an innocent smile.

On the table, an empty tray of crumbs, two empty glasses, a small bell.

ANGELA KING
Annabelle. I was expecting Cecelia.

ANNABELLE
She probly on the far side of the house is all. Ain't no trouble. What can I do for ya?

ANGELA KING
Well, Mary and I were hoping to have our tea refreshed.

ANNABELLE
Of course.

MARY KING
Hello Annabelle.

Annabelle smiles wide.

ANNABELLE
Why Hello Miss Mary, thats a beautiful dress you're wearing.

Mary blushes.

MARY KING
Can we please have more tea?

ANGELA KING
A lady sits up straight when she speaks darling.

Mary does as she's told, sitting up unnaturally straight.

ANGELA KING (CONT'D)
Very good manners sweetheart! Isn't she just so polite?

ANNABELLE
A fine young lady.

Annabelle collects the tray of crumbs and empty pitcher.

ANGELA KING
But while we are on the topic. I
have been meaning to ask you about
Cecelia.

ANNABELLE
What about her?

ANGELA KING
How is she fairing? As far as the
housework goes?

ANNABELLE
She doin' fine. Managing.

ANGELA KING
How far along now?

ANNABELLE
Goin' on seven months.

Angela King considers this.

ANGELA KING
I had asked her to see to the table
in the dining room. Though perhaps
you should do it. In fact, it may
be time for Cecelia to take leave.
Of course you and Paulina will
inherit her duties while she is
away.

ANNABELLE
Very good Missus. Anything else?

ANGELA KING
What have you left to do?

ANNABELLE
Only the parlor. Girls workin' on
the kitchen right now.

ANGELA KING
And the table.

ANNABELLE
Yes, of course.

ANGELA KING
Then that will be all.

Annabelle bows her head, smiles at Mary - who smiles back - and makes her way back around the Veranda.

THE FOYER

Annabelle enters with the tray and pitcher. CECELIA BRIGGS (28), black, pregnant belly protruding from beneath an identical cream colored dress, hobbles down the stairs.

ANNABELLE
You need a hand?

CECELIA
No I got it. They ringin' that
damned bell again?
(Noticing the tray in
Annabelle's hands)
Sorry, just so damn hard to move.

Cecelia reaches the bottom, where Annabelle stands waiting. Together they make their way down

THE HALLWAY.

CECELIA (CONT'D)
What she want this time?

ANNABELLE
More tea.

CECELIA
Huh, should get they own damn tea.
Clean they own damn house too.

ANNABELLE
Girl hush. You move that table yet?

CECELIA
Damn near had the child tryin'.

ANNABELLE
You gotta be careful.

CECELIA
I am careful.

A sly smile, then through a set of doors and into

THE KITCHEN

Where four WOMEN (20s - 60s) all black, white aprons, bustle away making dinner.

Annabelle approaches one of the WOMEN (20s) stains on her smock.

ANNABELLE

Missus wants more sweet tea.

The Woman nods, takes the pitcher and gets to refilling it.

Annabelle turns back to Cecelia, who has found a large bag of flour to sit on.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Well you ain't gotta try again with the table. Missus says you takin' time off 'till you have the baby.

Cecelia looks up, bemused.

CECELIA

She said that?

Annabelle nods.

CECELIA (CONT'D)

Well shit. What am I gonna do all day?

The Woman returns with a new pitcher, full to the brim, already perspiring in the heat of the kitchen.

ANNABELLE

Thank you.

(Back to Cecelia)

I don't know, relax. She don't want you hurtin' yourself. I don't want that neither.

CECELIA

You best be gettin' that tea out there 'for they whip ya.

Some of the OLDER WOMEN roll their eyes. Annabelle laughs.

ANNABELLE

Ooh girl you have a dark side. Now go relax.

CECELIA

(Gesturing to the sack of flour)

I am relaxed.

Annabelle smiles, shakes her head and exits. Cecelia looks around.

CECELIA (CONT'D)
Ooh that smells mighty fine. Which
one a ya'll is feedin' me?

The Women chuckle, shake their heads. One throws a hush puppy at her.

Cecelia catches it, takes a bite, and chews it thoughtfully.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - NIGHT

A great BONFIRE rages in the darkness. Sparks CRACKLE up into the sky illuminating the wooden walls of the slave cabins nearby. In the distance, the plantation house looms.

A half-dozen slaves hammer out a driving RHYTHM on homemade skin drums. All around the fire, MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN, all black, dance and sing: kicking, jumping, stomping the ground.

Eton and Annabelle dance around the fire, playfully CHANTING along to their daughter, ELLIE GREENE (6), short nappy hair, she swings on their arms as they dance round the fire.

SOME TIME LATER

The fire rages on, a different RHYTHM hammering away.

Eton and Annabelle sit next to one another, watching Ellie run around the fire with a few other children.

Across the fire, Eton eyes Cumberland, sitting next to Cecelia. She leans her head on her husband's shoulder, arms wrapped around her enlarged belly.

Eton watches Cumberland whispers something in his wife's ear, she smiles, fire reflected in her eyes.

INT. ETON & ANNABELLE'S CABIN - NIGHT

Eton and Annabelle lay next to one another in a small cot on the floor, Ellie lies between them, already fast asleep.

ETON
Talk with Cecelia lately?

ANNABELLE
Some, why?

ETON

No reason. Cumberland said
somethin' odd today is all.

ANNABELLE

What kinda odd?

ETON

I asked how she was. He said she'd
be a lot better soon.

ANNABELLE

He's talkin' bout the child.

ETON

I ain't so sure.

ANNABELLE

Well it's true.

(Thinking)

What else could he mean?

ETON

I don't know. How was the house
today?

Annabelle rolls her eyes.

ANNABELLE

I don't mind tellin' you it's back
breakin'. Whole damned place needs
to be cleaned on account o' some
big party the master's havin'. And
now Missus says Cecelia can't work
no more so me and Paulina gonna be
doin' her work till she's back.

ETON

Paulina?

ANNABELLE

Ugh, the girl means well but I
swear she don't ever shut her
mouth.

Eton laughs quietly.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

I swear I wish she were the
pregnant one. Cecelia ain't even
been gone a day and I already can't
wait for her to come back.

ETON
What's the party for?

ANNABELLE
Think they told me? Few men came by
week before last.

ETON
I remember.

ANNABELLE
Stayed in the study near seven
hours. Talkin' all quiet. Heard em'
say somethin' bout celebratin'
while I was bringin' the drinks in.
Then got all hushed, real quick,
like there was some big secret.

Eton furrows his brow.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)
I know!

Between them, Ellie stirs.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)
(Quieter)
You into town again tomorrow?

Eton shakes his head.

ETON
Fields, and the day after.

Annabelle gives her husband a sympathetic look.

ANNABELLE
You know I could say somethi--

ETON
--We talked about this.

ANNABELLE
I know, but the fields--

ETON
--Is good enough for everyone else.
So they good enough for me. Can't
be gettin' no special treatment
cause you in the house.

A moment of silence, only the CRICKETS outside.

ANNABELLE

Jacob said it's supposed to be
reasonable this week. Might even
rain some.

ETON

Yeah, he also said Jesus was comin'
last year.

Another quiet laugh. Eton leans over and kisses his wife.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - DAY

Eton crosses the yard toward the row of wooden cabins. Ahead of him, Cecelia makes her way from The Big House to the cabins.

Eton watches as several small objects fall from a cloth she carries.

Cecelia bends down and frantically collects all the pieces before looking around nervously and continuing on her way.

Once she has reached her Cabin, Eton walks to where Cecelia was just crouched. He looks for a moment, before spotting a small round ball in the grass a little ways away.

He looks around to make sure nobody is watching, then stoops down to pick it up.

In his hand, a hush puppy. Eton looks to The Big House, then to Cecelia's Cabin.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - DAY

Eton picks cotton from a stock among a line of other SLAVES doing the same.

Next to him, Cumberland picks up a huge bag of cotton, moves it aside and replaces it with an empty one.

Eton glances around, then returns his eyes to his work.

ETON

I know what you're doin'.

Cumberland looks at Eton. Eton looks back.

ETON (CONT'D)

It's a mistake.

CUMBERLAND

Not here.

The pair return to their work as ALTON DAY (40s), the property overseer, pale skin, neck red with sun, trots causally by on horseback.

EXT. CECELIA'S CABIN - EVENING

Cumberland and Eton stand around back of the rickety wooden cabin.

CUMBERLAND

How can you be happy livin' this life?

ETON

I ain't!

CUMBERLAND

Then what business you got stoppin' me? Stoppin' us?

ETON

I'm trying to look out for you. For Cecelia. Annabelle tells me she ain't fit to travel.

CUMBERLAND

Ya'll don't know a damn thing. You think you know my wife better than I do? Better than she knows her damn self? Ya'll may be fine bringing your child up here but we ain't.

ETON

You think I don't want the same thing you want? Freedom? A real life for my daughter?

CUMBERLAND

Yeah but you won't take it.

ETON

I can't right now. And you can't either, not right now, that's what I'm sayin.

CUMBERLAND

I'm done bein' told what I can and can't do. So you and Annabelle best mind your own.

Cumberland takes a step toward Eton.

CUMBERLAND (CONT'D)
 And Boy, listen to me when I say.
 If you tell anyone bout this, if
 Mr. Day come sniffin' round my
 door. I'll kill you.

Cumberland stares deep into Eton's eyes, then turns and walks away.

INT. ETON & ANNABELLE'S CABIN - DAWN

Eton opens his eyes. In the distance, BARKING DOGS. Outside the cabin, the sun just cresting the treetops.

MALES VOICE (O.S.)
 Fan out!

Eton sits up, next to him, Annabelle stirs.

ANNABELLE
 What's going on?

Eton moves to the cabin door.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)
 Eton! What's--

ETON
 --Quiet!

ELLIE
 (Waking)
 Mama?

ANNABELLE
 It's alright sweetie.

EXT. ETON & ANNABELLE'S CABIN - DAWN

Eton, wearing only his trousers, steps out into the dawn light.

ETON
 Wait here.

To his left and right, others emerge from their own cabins.

In the far distance, two WHITE MEN on horseback gallop through the cotton along the tree line.

Eton sees two slaves, MORGAN (30s), barrel chested, and LUCIOUS (50s), a thin tree branch of a man, speaking about twenty paces from his cabin. He makes his way over to them.

ETON (CONT'D)
Morgan, Lucious.

	MORGAN		LUCIOUS
Eton		Eton.	

ETON
What's goin' on?

MORGAN
Cumberland's gone.

Lucious shakes his head.

LUCIOUS
Damn fool.

Eton heads back towards the cabins, passing Annabelle standing in the doorway of their own.

He doesn't even notice her, continuing on past a few more cabins, the dogs still BARKING in the distance.

Eton reaches the second to last cabin in the row. He approaches the entrance cautiously and looks inside. Empty.

Eton walks slowly back to his own cabin, the morning sun now visible just above the trees. Annabelle still stands at the threshold, Ellie at her side.

Eton cannot find the words.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - DAY

The sun beats down from high as Eton bends down low, peels rough cotton from a spiny stock, and places it in the half-empty sack at his feet.

All down the line men and women do the same. Morgan leads the CHORUS in OLD RATTLER.

MORGAN
Oh Rattler!

CHORUS
Here, Rattler, Here! Here, here,
Rattler! Here, Rattler, Here!

MORGAN

Oh, please tell my soul that the
nigger is gone.

CHORUS

Here, Rattler, here!

MORGAN

Please tell my soul that the nigger
gone.

CHORUS

Here, Rattler, here!

MORGAN

Oh he went, right through the corn.

CHORUS

Here, Rattler, here!

MORGAN

I hear that horn blow.

CHORUS

Here, Rattler, here!

MORGAN

It said get your dog, man.

CHORUS

Here, Rattler, here, boy!

MORGAN

Go an' get yo' dog, man!

CHORUS

Here, Rattler, here boy!

MORGAN

Run that nigga to the river-side.

Eton and The Chorus keep pickin' the cotton.

EXT. ETON & ANNABELLE'S CABIN - EVENING

Eton and Annabelle watch Ellie run around in front of their
cabin with a few other CHILDREN, all black.

ETON

What if we went too?

ANNABELLE

Went? Eton are you crazy?

ETON

Keep your voice down. Why am I
crazy? Cumberland and Cecelia did
it.

ANNABELLE

Yeah they did it, they're gone, we
don't know where. Could be dead all
we know.

ETON

Or they coulda made it.

Annabelle glances to Ellie, lowers her voice to a harsh
whisper.

ANNABELLE

Be honest with yourself. She
pregnant, can barely move round the
house. He ain't got no sense takin'
her nowhere.

ETON

You aren't with child.

ANNABELLE

No, Eton, we have a child. And you
want to drag her through the woods
at night for Lord knows how long so
what? We can all be whipped and
then strung up? There ain't no way.

Another moment of silence.

ETON

He said somethin' to me before he
left. Said this life suited me.

ANNABELLE

He a damn fool Eton, don't you be
thinkin' on a word that man said.
We got a good life here.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Gotta put Ellie to bed.

(To Ellie)

Come on now, time to come in.

Ellie looks up from playing with the children and makes her
way to the cabin. Annabelle picks her up and heads inside.

Eton looks out over the darkened cotton field. In the
distance, the silhouette of a man on horseback, patrolling.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - DAY

The sun is hot on the back of Eton's neck. He bends down and strips a stalk of its cotton, throwing a handful in the sack.

Morgan leads The Chorus:

MORGAN
Lord, come around!

CHORUS
Come around, oh Lord.

MORGAN
I seen the Devil.

CHORUS
Seen The Devil oh, Lord--

SLAVE
Look! Hey, Look!

The Chorus stops. Eton and the others looks up.

SLAVE (CONT'D)
Over there!

A SLAVE (30s), points to four MEN ON HORSEBACK riding up the driveway. The final horse pulls along Cumberland and Cecelia, their hands bound, struggling to keep up.

Eton and the slaves look on as the horses stop in front of the house. Cumberland and Cecelia collapse into the dust.

Alton Day rides past on horseback to meet the procession.

MR. DAY
Back to work, all of ya!

He spurs his horse toward the house.

INT/EXT. KING PLANTATION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

THE DINING ROOM

Annabelle heaves with all her might against a long and sturdy oak table, managing to move it only a few inches.

She breaths heavily, dabs sweat from her brow and is setting up to try again when there is a COMMOTION outside the door.

Annabelle pokes her head out into

THE HALLWAY.

At the far end, in

THE FOYER

A few KITCHEN GIRLS peer through the front window, speaking in hushed voices.

Annabelle makes her way to them.

ANNABELLE

What's going--

KITCHEN GIRL 1

--Shh!!!

Annabelle pushes through to the window, and sees Cumberland and Cecelia, hands bound, kneeling in the dirt.

OUTSIDE

Mr. King and Alton Day watch as ARCHIBALD COOKE (50s), white skin, white hair, white goatee, beady black eyes, dismounts.

ARCHIBALD COOKE

Mornin' gentlemen. Couldn't ask for a finer day.

JOHN KING

Mr. Cooke, to what do I owe the pleasure?

Archibald smiles.

ARCHIBALD COOKE

Just so happens I think I found somethin' of yours.

He whistles and two of his FARMHANDS (Late Teens), real *Deliverance* vibes to both of them, bring Cumberland and Cecelia forward.

They are forced to their knees, Cumberland's eyes glassy, red from tears. Cecelia stares off somewhere far away.

John King looks down on the pair.

ARCHIBALD COOKE (CONT'D)

My boys found em in the veggie patch. Turned the hounds on em'.
Tried not to rough em up too bad.
(Sneering)
But when em' dogs get goin'.

John King notes gruesome bite wounds on Cecelia's arms and legs. She does not look at him.

ARCHIBALD COOKE (CONT'D)
Not much a man can say to civilize
em'. Not unlike these two I expect.

JOHN KING
(Frowning)
Thank you Archibald.

ARCHIBALD COOKE
Don't think nothin' of it; was the
Christian thing.

JOHN KING
Indeed.

Archibald looks around with his beady eyes, lingering on Cumberland before returning to John King.

ARCHIBALD COOKE
How you feelin' bout this one here?

JOHN KING
How's that?

ARCHIBALD COOKE
You'll be wantin' to punish'm I
expect, and that's more'n'fair. But
it occurs to me this could be an
opportunity for the both of us.

John looks to Cumberland kneeling in the dirt, then to Archibald, standing hat-in-hand.

JOHN KING
Have you time for a drink?

He sneers once again.

ARCHIBALD COOKE
I most certainly do.

JOHN KING
Very good. Alton.

Alton Day steps forward.

JOHN KING (CONT'D)
Tie these two up round back.

Alton nods, okay.

THE FOYER

Annabelle and The Kitchen Girls watch through the window as John King gesture toward the front steps. All The Girls scatter back down the hall.

Annabelle knocks a painting askew and busies herself correcting it just as John king and Archibald Cooke step through the front door.

JOHN KING (CONT'D)
Ah, Annabelle.

Annabelle bows her head.

ANNABELLE
Master.

JOHN KING
Prepare one of the spare rooms for our guest. Archibald, you remember Annabelle.

Archibald approaches, his beady eyes appraising every inch of Annabelle's body.

ARCHIBALD COOKE
I do indeed.

Inches away, he smells her neck. Annabelle does not flinch.

ARCHIBALD COOKE (CONT'D)
You are still a beauty, yes you are.

JOHN KING
Archibald.

Archibald turns. John King gestures toward THE SITTING ROOM.

Archibald gives Annabelle one last smile, moves back to John King, and saunters into the sitting room.

JOHN KING (CONT'D)
We are not to be disturbed.

Annabelle nods in understanding. John enters the room and closes the door behind him.

Silence. Annabelle looks both ways down the hall. Empty. She moves quietly, and presses her ear against the door.

THE SITTING ROOM

Archibald spreads out casually on one of the couches. John King hands him a drink and sits down opposite.

JOHN KING (CONT'D)
What can I do for you?

Archibald sips his drink.

ARCHIBALD COOKE
Oh, my. You do have good taste.

John eyes Archibald over his own drink.

THE FOYER

Annabelle's ear pressed to the door.

ARCHIBALD COOKE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
As I'm sure you know, good help is
hard to come by.

JOHN KING (O.S.)
Harder and harder every day.

THE SITTING ROOM

Archibald stands and meanders around.

ARCHIBALD COOKE
Right you are, which brings me to
why I'm here.

He takes in the hunt paintings.

Finally, he lands at a window, and gazes out over the SLAVES working John King's cotton fields.

ARCHIBALD COOKE (CONT'D)
I mean. I am here to return your
property, of course. Property
which, if I'm not mistaken, has
brought you worry and aggravation.
Now, as a man who has experienced
his own aggravations as of late,
believe me when I say I can
empathize.

John watches from the couch, waits for him to continue.
Archibald turns from the window and paces toward the door.

THE FOYER

Annabelle can hear the footsteps getting closer.

THE SITTING ROOM

Archibald still wanders around.

ARCHIBALD COOKE (CONT'D)
Now, where I'm from. When a man
finds himself sufficiently
agitated, with his property I mean,
there are many avenues at his
disposal.

He looks at a painting of a landscape next to the door. Then,
in one smooth motion OPENS THE DOOR and steps out into

THE FOYER

He looks both ways. The foyer is empty.

Archibald looks back to John King, now standing.

JOHN KING
What's the matter?

ARCHIBALD COOKE
Barely heard a thing.
(Admires the hinges)
Magnificent craftsmanship.

With one last look, he closes the door.

THE HALLWAY

Annabelle crouches behind a bookcase, hand over her mouth.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - MORNING

Sunbeams glance the tops of the cabins, casting long shadows
over The Slaves; gathered around to watch as Cumberland's
wrists are strapped to the wooden beam.

Off to the side, Archibald leans against a post, chewing an
apple with great satisfaction.

Alton Day finishes securing Cumberland's hands, steps back
and unfurls a large cat-o-nine-tails.

CRACK! Cumberland does not flinch the first time, Cecelia
stares at the ground.

CRACK! He gasps in agony. Blood trickles from his back.

CRACK! Eton grasps Annabelle's hand tightly.

CRACK! Blood sprays off the whip. Archibald sneers.

CRACK! Cumberland screams in agony, falling forward against the post.

ETON

Enough!

ALTON

Quiet boy.

CRACK! Cumberland falls to his knees, tears stream from his eyes.

Mr. Day rolls up the whip and pushes through the crowd.

Cecelia rushes to her husband, SOBBING, struggling with the ties around his wrist, Annabelle goes to help her.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - MORNING

Eton and Annabelle stand in the door of their cabin looking out at the scene. The other slaves do the same.

Archibald's Farmhands drag Cumberland across the grass toward a wagon covered in bars. Alton Day restrains Cecelia, whose SCREAMS of agony carry across the cotton field.

Eton's eyes wander to John King and the man standing next to him; Archibald Cooke looks down upon the scene wearing a satisfied smile.

Cecelia and Cumberland fight in vain to reach one another until Cumberland is forced into the wagon and locked inside.

The two Farmhands climb up onto the wagon, snap the reins and head off toward the laneway. Mr. Day remains behind to restrain Cecelia. Cumberland pounds on the bars hard as he can, tears in his eyes.

Eton watches the wagon stop short of John King and Archibald Cooke. The two men shake hands, and Archibald climbs up onto the wagon, which plods forward once again down the laneway.

Finally, the wagon disappears behind the trees. Alton Day releases Cecelia. She drops to her knees in the grass in front of her cabin.

Annabelle and a few other women cautiously approach. Eton, unable to look any longer, turns back inside his cabin.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - NIGHT

The massive bonfire CRACKS and POPS, sending sparks fluttering high up into the air.

The RHYTHM pounding, infectious; an anger deep within.

Dancing, singing, different this time, no joy.

Eton moves with a concentrated energy; pours his hatred, anger and sadness into every stomp, every kick every shout.

Tears in his eyes, Eton WAILS and MOANS along with his friends, his family.

The music stops, Eton stops with it, his trance broken, panting, exhausted.

He looks to Annabelle, seated next to the fire, Ellie on her lap. Eton moves to them.

ETON
Cecelia?

ANNABELLE
Still in her cabin.

Eton glances to the cabins, visible by the light of the fire.

ETON
You should talk to her.

ANNABELLE
Nothing I can say will bring him
back. All this is his fault far as
I'm concerned.

Eton considers this while the drummers bring a new, sombre RHYTHM to life.

He starts off towards the cabins.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)
Where you goin?

ETON
Maybe I can say something.

Annabelle watches him go, bouncing Ellie on her knee.

INT. CECELIA'S CABIN - NIGHT

Eton steps up to the door and peers inside. In the darkness, he can make out a silhouette laying on a cot.

Eton stares for a moment, and turns to leave when,

CECELIA

Why you just standin' there?

Eton swallows, mouth suddenly very dry. Cecelia turns over.

CECELIA (CONT'D)

That you Eton?

ETON

Uh-huh. Yeah it's me.

Eton steps inside the darkened cabin. Cecelia sits up, her face visible in the moonlight.

ETON (CONT'D)

How are you?

Cecelia blinks, as if confused by the question.

ETON (CONT'D)

How your legs?

CECELIA

Don't hardly feel em.

ETON

That's good I expect.

Cecelia just stares at him. Eton sits on the dirt floor across from her.

ETON (CONT'D)

That man, who took Cumberland.
Annabelle says she seen him here
before. Last name's Cooke. Means he
must not live far off.

CECELIA

So what that matter?

ETON

Matter plenty. Means he could come
back, means your baby might still
get to see his daddy.

Cecelia looks down to her stomach, shamed, then back to Eton.

ETON (CONT'D)

Oh, I...

He trails off, unable to find the words. Another moment of silence until.

CECELIA

Man did me a favor.

Eton stares.

CECELIA (CONT'D)

Bring a baby into this world.

She shakes her head, disgusted by the idea.

CECELIA (CONT'D)

I'm tired. You best be gettin' back to your family.

Eton nods, eyes wet.

INT. ETON & ANNABELLE'S CABIN - NIGHT

Eton and Annabelle lay in the dark cabin, Ellie fast asleep between them. Annabelle sleeps as well.

Eton stares up at the ceiling, deep in thought.

INT. KING PLANTATION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

THE PARLOR,

Annabelle dusts, sweeps, scrubs the floors and windows.

THE KITCHEN

She weaves through the bustling room, past delicious looking food, to throw out a sack of trash.

THE BACK HALL

Annabelle spots Cecelia, moving to the door leading OUTSIDE.

ANNABELLE

Cecelia!

Cecelia turns, surprised. Annabelle does not see her hide something up her sleeve.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Good to see you up.

Annabelle reaches Cecelia at the door, Cecelia's eyes are puffy, red. She leans on the doorframe, looks at her feet.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

You okay?

CECELIA

Yeah, yeah. Hungry. Thought one of the kitchen girls could... But they busy.

ANNABELLE

You head back to your cabin. I'll see if I can't bring ya somethin'.

Cecelia smiles weakly.

CECELIA

Don't trouble yourself none.

ANNABELLE

It ain't no trouble.

CECELIA

Really. I ain't hungry no more. Just gonna go lie down.

ANNABELLE

Okay. I'll see you tonight.

Annabelle watches her turn and go, lingers a moment, then returns to her work.

THE FOYER

Annabelle dusts a lamp, Angela enters.

ANGELA KING

Excellent. And the parlor?

ANNABELLE

Finished, Missus.

ANGELA KING

Very good. Once you've finished up here, go spend some time with your family, but return within the hour. I have laid some clothes out for you upstairs, I want you looking your best.

ANNABELLE

Yes, thank you Miss.

Annabelle bows her head, Mrs. King heads upstairs.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - DAY.

Annabelle makes her way from the house, down the sloping lawn to where the wooden cabins sit in a row. She carries some hushpuppies, wrapped in cloth.

As she gets closer, she sees a group gathering around the door of the second last cabin in the row.

Annabelle quickens her pace, closer and closer. Cecelia's cabin. A woman sobs, deep and forlorn.

Annabelle pushes through to the front door and looks

INSIDE

On the floor, Cecelia: Eyes staring up at the ceiling, wrists torn wide open, a jagged, ivory-handled steak knife in her open palm. Flies have already begun to swarm.

Annabelle GASPS in horror, drops the food, and backs out of the hot cabin. She pushes back through the group, right into Eton's arms.

He holds her as she WAILS and pounds his chest with her fists. Tears pour from her exhausted eyes. Eton stares at Cecelia's cabin.

INT. KING PLANTATION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The party is a small gathering of wealthy Kansas planters, friends of Mr. King. The MEN dressed in fine dinner jackets, the WOMEN ornate summer gowns.

Cigar smoke lingers. Annabelle and PAULINA (30s), black, stand at attention around the long dinner table.

The guests laugh and converse. Now and then one raises a hand, summoning one of the girls to refresh their drinks.

The door next to Annabelle opens slightly, a KITCHEN GIRL (19) peers through.

KITCHEN GIRL

Five minutes.

Annabelle nods and the door closes. She moves to Mr. King.

ANNABELLE
(Quietly)
Five minutes.

Mr. King nods, stands and clears his throat for quiet.
Annabelle retreats back to her post.

JOHN KING
Gentlemen, and ladies. I understand
our food is only moments away, so I
will be brief.

The dinner guests look on attentively.

INT. ETON & ANNABELLE'S CABIN - NIGHT

Eton lays on the cot with Ellie.

ELLIE
Bawk Bawk!

He laughs at Ellie's chicken impression.

ETON
That ain't bad. How 'bout a horse.

ELLIE
Neigghhh!

The pair erupt in silly LAUGHTER.

INT. KING PLANTATION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Annabelle tops up one of the Men's drinks.

JOHN KING
First, I would like to express my
sincerest gratitude to all of you.
For your patience, your support,
and most of all, your strength,
during this trying time.

INT. ETON & ANNABELLE'S CABIN - NIGHT

Eton and Ellie continue to play on the cot. Ellie SNORTS like
a pig and Eton tickles her. She SQUEALS and LAUGHS.

Eton stops, tilts his head.

INT. KING PLANTATION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The speech continues.

JOHN KING

With continued assistance from our
friends in Missouri and Arkansas,
and by the grace of God. Kansas
shall retain the good order on
which this great nation was
founded.

John raises his glass in a TOAST. The men and women at the
table all follow suit.

Almost on cue, several KITCHEN GIRLS enter, carrying plates
of roasted meat and vegetables.

INT/EXT. ETON & ANNABELLE'S CABIN - NIGHT

Eton gets up from the cot, Ellie still giggling. He moves to
the door and looks out.

ELLIE

Papa?

In the distance, torches, a dozen or so men on horseback,
approaching the house at great speed.

ETON

Wait here. Don't leave, no matter
what. You hear me?

Eton sprints from the cabin up toward the big house.

INT/EXT. KING PLANTATION - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

THE DINING ROOM

John and the guests enjoy the food and drink, laughing away
at jokes unheard.

Annabelle watches closely as one of the WOMEN tears into a
piece of red meat with an ivory steak knife.

The revelry is interrupted by Paulina in the doorway.

ANGELA KING

Yes Paulina what is it?

PAULINA
Master King, Sir. Some men outside,
to see you.

ANGELA KING
Can't you see we're in the middle
of dinner.

Paulina looks from Angela to her husband awkwardly.

PAULINA
They're quite insistent ma'am. Say
if he don't come out, they comin'
in.

John looks around at his guests, then stands. The other men
stand with him, a show of force.

ANGELA KING
John--

JOHN KING
--Stay here Darling I'm sure it's
nothing.

Annabelle looks on as the men casually file out of the room.

The women all look at one another a moment before standing as
well. They too exit, leaving Annabelle and Paulina alone.

Paulina glances at the door, then to Annabelle, then
cautiously approaches the table and picks up a piece of half
eaten meat with her hands and eats it, ravenous.

MALE VOICE (O.S)
John King!

Annabelle too exits the dining room.

OUTSIDE

The men file out one by one onto the veranda. Below them, a
dozen BANDITS, some on horseback, others on foot. Rifles and
muskets trained on the house.

John King steps forward.

JOHN KING
What is the meaning of this?

IN THE FOYER

Annabelle stands on her toes to try and see over the group of
Wives huddled around the front door.

ON THE LAWN

Eton crouches low in the shadows twenty paces away.

A TALL FIGURE steps forward from the Bandits, the torchlight casting ominous shadows over his sunken cheeks and eyes.

TALL FIGURE
Timothy Fraud.

A PORTLY MAN next to John King on the veranda goes pale.

TALL FIGURE (CONT'D)
Emerson McNair, William Olson,
Charles England.

Each man bristles as their names are called.

IN THE FOYER

The wives gasp and whisper.

OUTSIDE

TALL FIGURE (CONT'D)
Step forward.

The Portly Man next to John King takes a step forward, John stops him.

JOHN KING
We will do no such thing.
(To The Bandits)
I demand you leave this property at
once.

The Tall Figure raises one long, BONEY HAND.

Hammers are COCKED BACK. Two more Bandits, longswords slung over their backs, step forward and flank the Tall Figure in the middle.

The husbands on the deck look at one another in confusion. Slowly, cautiously, five of them make their way down the steps toward the Bandits below. John King leading the way.

Inside, one of the older WIVES runs forward onto the veranda.

WIFE
William don't!

One of the five husbands, WILLIAM OLSON (50s), handsome in his wool dinner suit, turns to his wife.

WILLIAM
Stay inside God damnit!

The five Husbands stand at the foot of the stairs, ten paces from the Tall Man with the boney hands. For a long moment there is silence.

BONEY HANDS
Emerson McNair, you have been charged with providing lodging and supplies, facilitating the massacre at Lawrence on the 21st of May.

EMERSON MCNAIR (40s), a small and thin man with an equally thin mustache, says nothing.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
William Olson, you have been charged with the recruitment of Border Ruffians for the express purpose of intimidation and murder.

WILLIAM
Murder? I have done no--

BONEY HANDS
--Charles England, Timothy Fraud, John King.

John King swallows, the remaining color drains from Timothy Fraud's face.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
You three have been charged with direct participation in the massacre at Lawrence, on the 21st of May.

JOHN KING
This is ridiculous, you have no proof.

ON THE LAWN

Eton crouches low, watches the events unfold. FOOTSTEPS behind him causes him to turn quickly.

Morgan and Lucious emerge from the shadows.

MORGAN
What's happenin'?

ETON
Dunno, stay low.

Eton glances back toward the slave cabins, silhouettes can be seen moving in the moonlight.

IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE

The Husbands and Bandits. The man with the boney hands steps forward.

BONEY HANDS
How do you plea?

JOHN KING
Plea? This is no court.

A SECOND WIFE (Late Teens), blonde hair, steps forward.

SECOND WIFE
Say nothing Charles!

BONEY HANDS
Watson.

The MAN next to Boney Hands steps forward, removing the longsword from the sheathe on his back.

ON THE LAWN

A small crowd of slaves form around Eton, Lucious and Morgan

IN THE FOYER

Annabelle peers over the heads of the wives in the doorframe, unable to see much of what's going on outside.

IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE

Boney Hands and the two Men at his side.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
Step forward and face the judgement
of The Lord.

Nobody moves, then, all at once, Timothy Fraud runs. He gets no more than ten paces before a MUSCLE BOUND BLACK MAN on horseback raises his rifle, and FIRES.

Timothy drops dead, his wife screams, some of the others CRY.

Everything that happens next seems to happen in slow motion: John King, Emerson McNair, Charles England and William Olson rush Boney Hands and the two men next to him.

The large one, called Watson, swings his longsword across, hacking Emerson's head clean off. More screams from the women, one FAINTS, his wife VOMITS.

BANG! A a flintlock pistol, smoke in the air. Charles England's brains are blown from the back of his head.

Only John King and William Olson remain, locked in struggle with Boney Hands and Watson, attempting to wrench the swords from their hands. None of the Bandits dare fire so close to their leader.

IN THE FOYER

Chaos; Wives and Kitchen Girls tripping over one another to get back inside.

Annabelle runs back down the hall.

IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE

The Small Man next to Boney Hands moves behind William Olson and drives a long dagger up into William's ribs. He grunts in agony and falls to the ground.

William's wife runs screaming down from the veranda and jumps on The Small Man's back, clawing at his face and eyes with her nails until he throws her to the ground.

John King, the last man standing, wrestles with Boney Hands for another moment. Boney Hands head butts John King, sending him reeling backwards, blood pouring from a broken nose.

ON THE LAWN

Eton and the crowd of slaves look on as John King is forced to his knees by Watson and the Short Man.

Boney Hands stands before John King, sword raised high.

The sword is brought down on John King's head with a sickening SPLITTING. He slumps to the ground, limp.

IN THE KITCHEN

Annabelle hides.

IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE

Boney Hands, blood on his face, turns to his men.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
Fire the house and barns.

The Bandits get to work, and spread out, tossing their torches through the windows of the great house.

IN THE KITCHEN

Annabelle hears GLASS SHATTER, the wives scream in another room.

CRASH! A lit torch flies through the window into the kitchen, landing feet from her. Flames climb a curtain to the ceiling.

ON THE LAWN

Eton watches smoke billow from the windows of the house. He takes off running toward it, and The Bandits out front.

Boney Hands turns to the crowd of slaves just in time to see Eton running towards the house full speed.

Watson steps between Eton and Boney Hands, once again unsheathing his giant longsword.

Eton goes right past them, up the steps of THE VERANDA and through the smoke. Disappearing into the burning house.

THE FOYER

The house CREAKS and GROANS as great tendrils of flame climb the walls to the ceiling. Black smoke fills the hallway, Eton coughs and chokes, fighting through the heat.

ETON

Annabelle!

A silhouette runs through the smoke toward him.

ETON (CONT'D)

Annabelle!

Two WIVES, dresses burned and stained with soot, push past him towards the door. Above him, a support beam collapses and comes CRASHING down a foot in front of him.

From somewhere upstairs, Eton hears a child scream. He runs to the stairs, halfway up he puts his foot through a step and yells out in pain, but continues.

THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Eton moves through the thick smoke. Faint cries push him toward the end.

Eton grabs the handle and yells out in pain, yanking his hand away. The skin on his palm bubbles and peels. He steps back, and with one mighty kick busts through the door.

There, in the corner, Annabelle, holding Mary King in her arms, both nearly unconscious.

Eton rushes over and falls to one knee, taking his wife's face gently in his hands.

ETON (CONT'D)

Annabelle!

Her eyes flutter. Eton looks to the door, high flames reaching into the room.

Eton looks around in a panic, THE WINDOW. He picks up a chair and throws it through the glass, it rolls out onto THE ROOF, smoke billowing out through the smashed window.

Eton takes Mary from his wife's arms and pushes her gently out the window, onto the thatched ROOF.

He then moves to Annabelle, puts her over his shoulder and steps out the window into the night.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - MOMENTS LATER

Eton hands Mary's body off the roof to a few slaves waiting below. They set her on the grass. He does the same with Annabelle, before being helped down off the roof himself.

He kneels by Annabelle's side, she coughs, then comes to.

ANNABELLE

Eton.

Eton looks down, eyes wet. He smiles.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Mary?

Eton looks over to where a few slaves tend to Mary, CRYING, in shock but awake.

Eton nods his head, Annabelle smiles.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Angela?

Eton looks around, behind them the house is entirely engulfed in flame, the structure collapsing.

ETON
I don't, I don't think so.

Annabelle nods, lays her head back down in the cool grass.

Morgan approaches from out of the darkness, almost dancing, a massive smile on his face.

MORGAN
Man says we're all free.

ETON
What?

MORGAN
Says we're free to do as we please.
Takin' anyone who wants to meet a
man named Moses, gonna take us up
to Canada.

ETON
Moses?

MORGAN
What you gonna do?

Eton looks down to his wife, staring up at him. Then, for the first time, Eton takes in the chaos; all round the property large fires rage in barns and storehouses

Bandits patrol the property on horseback.

EXT. KING PLANTATION - NIGHT

The Bandits, led by Boney Hands, make their way back down the laneway of The King Plantation. The procession now includes more than TWO DOZEN FREE SLAVES.

The Bandits set fire to the great cotton fields. The flames spread quickly, rise higher and higher.

Eton, Annabelle Ellie and Mary follow the group into the woods. Behind them only fire, Hell on Earth.

SUPER: CHAPTER TWO - EMANCIPATION

EXT. KANSAS TRAIL - MORNING

Boney Hands leads the procession down a dusty trail, open fields on either side. The Bandits, some black, some white, ride up and down the line of weary slaves.

One BANDIT, a scruffy looking black man, sneers down at Eton as he rides by on his horse. Eton stares him down, then looks off into the fields.

Ellie walks between Annabelle and Eton, holding both their hands. Mary holds Annabelle's other hand.

ELLIE

Where are we going?

ANNABELLE

Hush Dear, won't be much longer.

MARY KING

Where's Papa?

She looks to Mary, then her husband, still deep in thought.

ANNABELLE

Where are we anyways?

(No answer)

Eton?

ETON

Huh?

ANNABELLE

Where are we?

ETON

Oh, I dunno.

ANNABELLE

What's the matter?

ETON

Nothin, leg's sore.

Eton looks back to the fields, Annabelle stares at him for a moment before turning her attention back to Ellie

EXT. LAWRENCE, KANSAS - EVENING

MEN and WOMEN, black and white together, move every which way; carrying wooden beams over their shoulder, buckets of mortar and nails.

Everywhere, the SOUNDS OF RENEWAL; carts pass one another carrying bricks, HAMMERS and SHOUTS echo from all directions.

A two story brick building reduced to a burnt shell, empty lots with blackened soil, a makeshift shrine to the dead.

The procession makes its way down the main street, toward a two-story MANOR HOUSE on the edge of town. Windows smashed.

The Bandits dismount in front of the house, Boney Hands dictates orders to a few, who head off back into town.

Eton watches Boney Hands walk up toward the house. He is greeted in the doorway by a STOUT BLACK WOMEN (24). Boney Hands bows his head and they both disappear inside.

The tall man, Watson, makes his way toward the two dozen newly freed slaves waiting on the lawn.

WATSON

Listen up, gather round. Moses'll be takin' groups north, startin' tomorrow sundown. Ain't no one required to go, but the climate is more suitable there, for a free life.

He looks over the crowd, who stares back at him. Annabelle squeezes Eton's hand.

WATSON (CONT'D)

Now there's food n' water inside, for you. Those wantin' to go should be out here on the lawn for sundown. Any questions?

The faces stare back, silent.

WATSON (CONT'D)

Good, that is all.

Watson trudges back to where the Bandits feed and water their horses. Eton eyes the rugged looking men curiously.

The Free Slaves disperse. Most head toward the house, others back to the center of town. Some just lay down in the grass.

ANNABELLE

Well, what do we do now?

Eton catches himself staring and looks back at his wife.

ETON

Go inside, get some food. I'll be here.

Annabelle takes Ellie and Mary by the hand. Together they follow the group up toward the house.

Eton watches them go, then approaches the group of Bandits, two white men, two black. Filling buckets with water.

He stands there a moment, unnoticed. One of the men looks up.

ETON (CONT'D)
I just wanted to thank you.

The two others stop what they're doing and look over as well.

WATSON
It was the just thing.

ETON
Name's Eton.

Eton sticks out his hand.

WATSON BROWN
Watson Brown, my brother Oliver.

The short man, OLIVER BROWN (19), a skinny, clean shaven boy smiles awkwardly.

WATSON BROWN (CONT'D)
Anthony.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR. (20s), black, athletic, sticks out his hand.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
Pleasure to meet ya Eton.

They shake. From a step, the Grizzled Bandit eyes Eton hard.

WATSON BROWN
And that there's Lewis Leary.

Eton gives the man a nod, which goes unreturned.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
Goin' North with Moses?

Eton looks at the three men. LEWIS LEARY (50s), the grizzled Bandit, spits on the ground, eyes never leaving Eton's face.

ETON
You got a problem with me friend?

LEWIS LEARY
I ain't yo friend, boy.

OLIVER BROWN
Oh lay off him.

Lewis Leary now eyes Eton with disdain.

LEWIS LEARY
Ain't nobody talkin' to you!

Oliver turns his face back to the fire.

ETON
If you got somethin' to say, I
wanna hear it.

LEWIS LEARY
Look at me, boy.

Eton is looking.

LEWIS LEARY (CONT'D)
What you see?

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
An old house negro?

LEWIS LEARY
(Snapping)
I'll whoop yo ass boy sure as
Jesus.
(Back to Eton)
What you see boy?

For the first time, Eton really sees Lewis: Deep scars line his face, he is missing part of an ear, cloudy eyes look deep into Eton's soul.

LEWIS LEARY (CONT'D)
That's right. I'm still here. Gon'
die here too I s'spect. And what
you gon' do? Run and hide. You
wannna thank us? Huh?!

Eton doesn't know what to say, his eyes jump to each of the Bandits, none willing to step in on his behalf.

Eton stands, bows his head slightly, turns from the Bandits and starts back across

THE LAWN.

Behind him, Lewis WEEZES.

LEWIS LEARY (CONT'D)
Run and hide boy! Run and hide!

INT. MANOR HOME - DAY

Annabelle holds Ellie by the shoulders as they make their way through crowded HALLS. Black MEN and WOMEN sit on every available surface, children chase one another around.

They pass a SMALL ROOM, the door slightly ajar. Through it, Annabelle sees Boney Hands speaking with the stout black woman and a few OTHERS.

BONEY HANDS
--a small town in the Virginia
mountains--

A moment later, they are out of view, and Annabelle finds herself in a crowded KITCHEN; a line of FREE SLAVES and BANDITS waiting for hot food.

She leans down to the girls.

ANNABELLE
You hungry?

ELLIE
Ya!

MARY KING
Yes.

ANNABELLE
Let's get some food.

The line moves forward until Annabelle, Ellie and Mary reach the food. Hard tack and stew for the line of hungry people.

Ahead of them, one of the COOKS (50s), black, only one eye, calls out to a tall, muscle bound black man down the line.

COOK
Newby! Heard ya got one!

DANGERFIELD
I surely did!

DANGERFIELD NEWBY (30s), gives the LADY (40s), serving him a big smile and departs from the line.

COOK
Bout damn time!

Dangerfield laughs, waves his hand dismissively and leaves the kitchen. Annabelle, Ellie and Mary receive their food.

EXT. MANOR HOME - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

THE LAWN

Eton sits alone watching The Bandits from afar. In the distant light of the fire, Eton sees Lewis Leary rise and hobble off toward the house.

ANNABELLE (O.S.)
There he is! Go take your daddy his dinner.

Eton pulls his gaze from the men who freed him to see Ellie bounding toward him, bowl of stew in hand. Annabelle trails close behind, carrying Mary.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)
Careful!

Ellie plops down next to Eton and hands him the bowl.

ETON
Thank you love!

ELLIE
Save some for me daddy!

Eton chuckles.

ETON
No! It's all for me!

ELLIE
Mama!

ANNABELLE
Oh girl your Daddy's only messin' with ya.

Annabelle sits down next to them, Eton hands Ellie the bowl and she digs in.

Beside them, Annabelle holds a spoon to Mary's mouth. Eton's eyes wander back to The Bandits across the lawn.

MARY KING
Where's Mama? I wanna see my Mama.

Without thinking, Eton stands.

ANNABELLE
(To Mary)
Oh, baby... Your Mama and Papa...

Annabelle looks to her husband for help to see him standing.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)
What is it?

ETON
Wanna talk to those men.

ANNABELLE
Talk to em'? Bout what?

ETON
I, don't know.

Annabelle screws her face up.

ETON (CONT'D)
Just stay with the girls.

Eton crosses The Lawn to

THE BONFIRE

Where Watson, Oliver, Anthony and another Bandit, OSBORNE ANDERSON (30s), black, long hair, sit on stumps. Watson puffs away on a pipe. They stop talking when they see him.

ETON (CONT'D)
Can I sit?

Watson nods, Eton pulls up a stump.

Annabelle watches from afar as Eton sits down.

Eton joins the men around the fire. Nobody speaks.

ETON (CONT'D)
Eton, Eton G--

WATSON BROWN
--I remember.

They all stare into the fire a moment.

ETON
What ya'll did last night.

WATSON BROWN
What about it?

ETON
You ever do it before?

WATSON BROWN
We come across as amateurs?

ETON
No, I just...

Another moment of silence.

ETON (CONT'D)
You plan on doin' it again?

The three Bandits share glances.

OLIVER BROWN
Who wants to know?

Anthony and Watson appear slightly amused by this.

WATSON BROWN
A regular Pinkerton this one.

Watson looks at Eton hard. Anthony Copeland Jr eyes him with curiosity.

WATSON BROWN (CONT'D)
Why you wanna know?

ETON
It ain't my business. I know that
well enough. I just, there's a
place, a man. Mr. Cooke.
(a breath)
He deserves what ya'll do.

Oliver looks at his older brother, who takes a long puff of his pipe and stands.

WATSON BROWN
Best meet my father.

Watson taps out his pipe and makes toward the house. Eton looks to Anthony, then to Oliver, who gestures after his older brother. Eton follows, Anthony and Oliver in tow.

OSBORNE ANDERSON
I'll just wait here then.

Osborne pokes the fire with a stick.

Annabelle, still seated with Ellie and Mary, watches as the four silhouettes rise from the fire and head for the house.

INT. MANOR HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bedroom, lit by candles, is cramped and modestly decorated. A small clock TICKS away.

Eton stands in the center. Behind him, Watson Brown, Oliver Brown, and the third brother, Owen Brown.

To Eton's left, Dangerfield Newby watches Eton through cunning eyes. To Eton's right, Lewis Leary.

In front of Eton, facing the window, The Tall Man with the Bony Hands. For a long time, nobody speaks.

TICK.. TICK.. TICK..

The man turns to face Eton and studies him for a long moment. He is clean shaven, sunken cheeks, narrow eyes stare hard.

BONEY HANDS
You wish to join us.

Eton nods, yes.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
Why?

ETON
You gave me my freedom. My family
freedom. Can't go north.

Boney Hands studies Eton for a long moment.

BONEY HANDS
You told my son about a man.

ETON
I did. Name's Cooke.

Boney Hands nods.

BONEY HANDS
Archibald Cooke. I know him well.

ETON
You, know him?

BONEY HANDS
Know him. He and his ilk are
responsible for the state of things
here.

WATSON BROWN
You wanted to know if we planned on
doin' this again.

Watson gives Eton a hard look. Eton turns back to Boney Hands, whose eyes confirm what Eton has just put together.

BONEY HANDS
Are you willing to suffer for the
freedom of others?
(MORE)

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
To trade their freedom for your
own? To kill for it, to die for it?

Eton says nothing.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
Because those are the consequences
of what we do.

ETON
I understand.

LEWIS LEARY
You say you do.

WATSON BROWN
Quiet.

BONEY HANDS
Our mission will not end until the
stain of slavery has been cleansed
from every last state in The Union.

Behind them, Watson spits on the floor. Boney Hands walks
back to the window.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
For until that happens, every free
man and woman in this nation is
doomed to the fires of Hell, same
as the rest.

WATSON BROWN
Ever fired a gun?

Eton shakes his head, no. Dangerfield stifles a laugh.

BONEY HANDS
(Turning to Eton)
We'll have to change that.
(beat)
Owen.

Owen Brown steps forward.

OWEN BROWN
Father.

BONEY HANDS
Find our friend a place to sleep.

ETON
I already got one. Me, my wife and
girl out on the lawn.

Boney Hands looks to Owen.

OWEN BROWN
(Apologetic)
We've already got people in the
cellar.

BONEY HANDS
Does that suit you?

Eton nods, yes.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
Very well, some blankets then. The
shooting can wait until the
morning.

Boney Hands once again steps toward Eton, this time,
extending his hand.

BONEY HANDS (CONT'D)
John Brown.

Eton takes John's boney hand in his own.

ETON
Eton Thomas Greene.

JOHN BROWN
Welcome.
(Releasing Eton's hand)
You are already familiar with my
sons.

Eton turns, the three brothers nod. John gestures to the
older man on Eton's right

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Lewis Leary.

Lewis Leary bows his grey head just slightly.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Dangerfield Newby.

Dangerfield Newby continues to eye him suspiciously.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
The rest I'm sure you will meet in
time.
(beat)
Owen.

Owen opens the door into

THE HALL

And gestures for Eton to follow. He does, closing the door to THE STUDY behind him.

OWEN BROWN
Let's get ya'll some blankets.

Eton nods.

EXT. MANOR HOME - NIGHT

Eton walks across THE LAWN, careful to avoid the dozen other Freed Slaves sleeping and lounging around.

In his hands a stack of rough-spun wool blankets, on his face, dread.

Both Ellie and Mary are fast asleep. Ellie leans against a tree, watching Eton approach.

ETON
Gave us some blankets.

He sits, gingerly places a blanket over Ellie and Mary, and turns to his wife, who is looking out into the night, solemn.

For a moment, only CRICKETS.

ANNABELLE
You gon' stay then.

Eton swallows, mouth dry. Annabelle finally looks at him, and he nods, yes.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)
Say it.

ETON
Huh?

ANNABELLE
I wanna hear you say it. Say you
leavin' us behind.

Her eyes glisten in the moonlight.

ETON
I'm staying.

Annabelle looks surprised he actually said it.

ETON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

ANNABELLE

Well then I'm stayin' too. I ain't goin' anywhere without you.

ETON

You know that don't work.

ANNABELLE

We could stay here. I saw all kindsa black faces in town.

ETON

Then you also saw the burnt buildings, the graves.

Annabelle's eyes start to well.

ETON (CONT'D)

Nowhere is safe, not here.

ANNABELLE

Eton...

ETON

Listen to me. Take Ellie and Mary to Canada. You'll have a good life there, and I'll join you when I'm done.

Tears fall from Annabelle's eyes.

ETON (CONT'D)

I couldn't be strong for Cumberland, for Cecelia. But I can be, for the rest.

ANNABELLE

The rest?

ETON

All of us. What right do I got, goin' north?

ANNABELLE

Right? It ain't about right. It's about stayin' together! We made it! This what you always wanted. Now we got the right to our freedom, to make a life for ourselves, live out the rest of our days, together.

(MORE)

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

(beat)

Eton, our child, Mary.

For a long moment both are silent.

ETON

I have made up my mind. I'm sorry.

Annabelle wipes the tears from her eyes and takes a blanket from Eton's lap. Wordlessly, she rolls over. Eton looks at his wife, then back up to the house.

EXT. MANOR HOME - EVENING

A group of FREE SLAVES are gathered in front of the manor home. Eton, Annabelle and Ellie among them.

Black MEN and WOMEN move throughout the group distributing small packs to those preparing to make the journey.

Eton watches John Brown exit the house accompanied by Watson, Oliver and The Stout Black Woman. They make their way towards the crowd to hushed whispers of 'Moses'.

Eton watches John Brown and The Stout Woman exchange a private word before she breaks off and turns to the group.

Her voice is soft but powerful, and carries across the lawn.

MOSES

Evenin.' Now there ain't much time
so you must listen very closely.
We're headin' to Canada. Trip take
'bout thirty days. Once you're in
the free states you can do as ya
please, or continue on to the end.

(Looking over the crowd)

Come now.

Moses turns, and the crowd slowly follows. Eton kneels down to where Ellie and Mary cling to his wife's ankles.

ETON

Come here.

Ellie does. Eton takes his daughter in his arms.

ETON (CONT'D)

You go with your mother, and you
mind her now. I'll see you soon
baby, I love you.

ELLIE

Daddy?

Eton's eyes well too. He picks up his daughter and holds her tight for a long moment before handing her over to Annabelle.

ETON

I will see you again, I promise.
You have to go.

One last look to his wife.

ETON (CONT'D)

I love you.

Annabelle nods and turns to the group in the distance. Slowly, she makes her way toward them, Ellie in her arms, Mary walking along next to her.

Eton watches them go, then turns to the house and walks to the Bandits. A look back and Annabelle is gone.

INT. MANOR HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Oliver Brown leads Eton down a dark hallway towards a small room where three other men, including Osborne Anderson, sleep on thin mattresses on the floor.

Oliver points to the only vacant mattress.

OLIVER BROWN

We're up at dawn.

Oliver leaves. Eton lays his head down on the mattress, stares into the darkness, then closes his eyes.

EXT. OVERGROWN KANSAS TRAIL - DAY

A dozen Bandits, some on foot, others on horseback. John Brown leads the procession, flanked by his sons, a broadsword slung over his shoulder.

Eton, toward the back of the line, walks along, lost in thought, sweat drips down his forehead and into his eyes.

Dangerfield Newby trots up next to him on horseback.

DANGERFIELD

Ever killed a man?

Eton squints up at Dangerfield.

DANGERFIELD (CONT'D)

Have you?

ETON

No.

DANGERFIELD

Ever killed a squirrel?

ETON

No.

DANGERFIELD

That's a shame. Cause killin' a
man's much easier n' killin' a
squirrel.

LEWIS LEARY

How you figure that?

DANGERFIELD

Hell, man's bigger, slower; if I
had to survive, y'know if I was
starvin', I'd much rather have to
hunt a man than a squirrel.

Some of the Bandits shake their heads, others laugh to
themselves.

Dangerfield lets out a maniacal cackle and spurs his horse
forward quickly.

Anthony Copeland Jr moves up next to Eton.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.

Don't mind him.

ETON

I don't mind him much at all.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.

You miss your wife.

ETON

How you figure that?

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.

Damned if it isn't written all over
your face. You're thinkin'--Oooh
boy, you're thinkin';

(MORE)

ANTHONY COPELAND JR. (CONT'D)
What am I doin' here sweatin' in
the woods, marchin' in the heat
with a buncha negros, while my wife
and girl be coolin' their heels all
free in the north?
(beat)
Yeah, who'da thought freein'
slaves'd be so much like slavery?

Eton cracks a smile.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR. (CONT'D)
It's cause you got principals.
Couldn't run, knowin' what we had
had here.
(Looks around)
Same as the rest of us.

Eton looks Anthony up and down.

ETON
They free'd you too?

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
Me, no Sir. Me n' my uncle from
North Carolina way.

He gestures to Lewis Leary, trudging along a little ways
ahead of them.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR. (CONT'D)
Sold us off from the family, Spent
bout a month at the new place
before we freed our own damn selves--
-no offense meant, of course.

ETON
Did you...?

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
Kill anybody?
(beat)
Nah, we slipped away all quiet
after dark.

ETON
And you didn't go North.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
Me? Hell no. Rather be a hot slave
than a cold freeman.

He laughs.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR. (CONT'D)
 Was headed for California, made it
 far as Lawrence, met John there,
 and here I am.

They walk for another moment. A few distant CONVERSATIONS,
 FOOTSTEPS, rifles CLANGING against pots.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR. (CONT'D)
 What he's got planned. Ain't never
 been this excited in my life boy.

Eton studies Anthony, walking along beside him.

ETON
 What's he got planned?

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
 You heard the man, gonna free all
 the slaves.

Anthony smiles. Eton turns his attention to John Brown,
 riding in silence at the front of the line.

EXT. KANSAS WOODS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

THE CAMPFIRE

A half dozen BORDER RUFFIANS (20s - 50s), white, dirty,
 tattered clothes, sit around a CAMPFIRE in the middle of the
 woods. Their horses tied, muskets propped next to them.

On the ground, ten paces from their fire, an escaped slave,
 their PRISONER (19), his hands and feet bound.

The Ruffians around the fire tear flesh from an animal
 roasting over the flames.

THE UNDERBRUSH

Eton, crouched, watches the Border Ruffians down the barrel
 of a rifle, breath shaky. He wipes sweat from his brow.

Next to him, the faces of Dangerfield Newby, The Brown
 Brothers, Anthony Copeland and Lewis Leary, barely visible in
 the light of the distant fire.

THE CAMPFIRE

The Border Ruffians laugh and spit. One cuts a large piece
 from the roast.

BORDER RUFFIAN 1
You hungry, boy?

The Prisoner says nothing, hatred in his eyes.

BORDER RUFFIAN 1 (CONT'D)
Yeah I bet you are.

The Ruffian stuffs a large piece of the meat in his mouth, grease dripping into his beard and down his fingers.

BORDER RUFFIAN 1 (CONT'D)
It's real tasty.

He sucks the last of the meat from the bone and stands, wiping grease on his already dirty trousers.

BORDER RUFFIAN 1 (CONT'D)
How bout I give ya some.

Some of the other Ruffians laugh and hoot and shake their heads. The Ruffian with the bone makes his way from the fire toward their Prisoner.

BORDER RUFFIAN 1 (CONT'D)
Be a shame to hang a nigger on an empty stomach.

He now stands right over top of The Prisoner, who stares up at him defiantly. The Ruffian drops the bone on the ground next to his face.

BORDER RUFFIAN 1 (CONT'D)
Eat up, Bo--

CLICK. The Ruffian looks up.

THE UNDERBRUSH

Eton takes one last deep breath.

THE RUFFIAN

Squints into the darkness.

BOOM! The woods in front of him erupt in a FLASH of light and smoke. The Ruffian is torn to pieces by musket balls, falling backward in front of his Prisoner.

THE CAMPFIRE

The Ruffians are slow to react. One is struck in the side of the head and falls face first into the fire, sending sparks up into the air.

THE UNDERBRUSH

The Bandits fix their bayonets. Eton, hands shaking, struggles to affix his own. Dangerfield sees this.

DANGERFIELD

Take mine.

Dangerfield and Eton swap rifles. A BATTLE CRY, erupts from The Bandits and they charge out of the underbrush toward

THE CAMPFIRE

The remaining Ruffians reach for the muskets, but The Bandits are already upon them.

They are quickly overwhelmed and run through with bayonets.

Two survivors attempt to flee into the woods, but are cut off by John Brown and the remaining Bandits.

Eton watches John toss the Ruffian (30s) to the ground. Badly wounded, he tries to stand but is knocked to his knees once again by Dangerfield Newby.

BORDER RUFFIAN 3

Please God, mercy.

Dangerfield levels a flintlock pistol to the Ruffian's forehead and, in a flash of black powder, empties the contents of his skull onto the forest floor.

Eton watches the Ruffian slump forward.

OLIVER BROWN

Wanna help me here?

(On Eton's distraction)

Eton.

Eton looks up, Oliver Brown gestures to The Prisoner.

They step over the mangled body of the first Border Ruffian to the prisoner, slashing bonds from his wrists and ankles.

The Prisoner stands and immediately rushes the Ruffian's lifeless body. He kicks and stomps on The Ruffian's head with all his strength.

PRISONER

Hungry Nigger?! Hungry? Mother
Fucker!

He stomps and stomps until The Ruffian's skull under his foot collapses with the sound of a melon being SPLIT.

His chest heaving, he turns to Eton and Oliver, both looking quite pale. The Prisoner catches his breathe.

PRISONER (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Eton nods.

PRISONER (CONT'D)

Name's Jeremiah. Jeremiah Anderson.

ETON

Eton Greene.

They shake hands.

OLIVER BROWN

Oli... Oliver Brown.

JEREMIAH ANDERSON (19), fit, back laden with deep scars, looks around and surveys the scene: The Bandits looting the bodies of his captors.

JEREMIAH ANDERSON

Well, thanks again.

ETON

Where were you headed?

JEREMIAH ANDERSON

Heard California was mighty fine.

Dangerfield approaches the three men, carrying two stolen muskets over his shoulder.

DANGERFIELD

We're moving.

Eton nods. Oliver and Jeremiah follow The Bandits away from the fire, disappearing back into the woods.

Eton takes another look at the carnage, falls to his knees and vomits.

He stands, shaking, wipes his mouth and follows.

EXT. KANSAS WOODS - BANDIT ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

John, Owen, Watson, Eton, Dangerfield, Lewis, Anthony and Jeremiah sit around a CRACKLING fire. About twenty paces away, two other fires are lit, Bandits around them chatting.

WATSON BROWN

Canada.

ETON

Canada?

Eton tries to hide his excitement. John stares into the fire.

OWEN BROWN

Plenty of free men.

WATSON BROWN

And Irish.

DANGERFIELD

Irish?

WATSON BROWN

Irish been subjugated plenty.
They'll join the cause. Hundreds,
most like.

Eton stares into the fire, considering the prospect.

ETON

What you think, John?

JOHN BROWN

The Irish have suffered under a
similar tyranny it is true. How
many will join our cause, I cannot
say.

All around the fire, there is silence.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

But yes. We head north in two days
time. I have contacts there,
sympathetic to the cause. We will
convene in Toronto.

JEREMIAH ANDERSON

Then what?

JOHN BROWN

In due time.

For another long moment there is silence. Watson sprawls out
and gets comfortable.

WATSON BROWN

I'm gonna get some sleep. Reckon
you should all do the same.

A few of the group begin to sprawl out.

LEWIS LEARY
Toronto, too damn cold.

Eton lays his head on the ground next to Anthony.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
Isn't that where your wife and girl
was headed?

Eton stares into the flames, eyes wet.

OWEN BROWN (O.S)
I'll take first watch.

Eton closes his eyes.

EXT. KANSAS WOODS - NIGHT

Eton opens his eyes to see the fire almost dead. Everyone is asleep. If anybody is still keeping watch, they're gone.

In the distance, the WIND. And then, VOICES. A CHORUS of voices far away.

Eton gets to his feet. He looks around at his sleeping companions, barely visible in the light of the embers.

He does not wake them. Instead he moves quietly toward the voices, louder and clearer with every step he takes.

Deeper into the woods now, almost pitch black, and then a distant glimmer through the trees. Eton pushes onward.

Finally, Eton breaks through the tree line.

A RIVER OF FIRE, stretches out before him. Great flames lick up at the night sky. At the edge of the river, a CONGREGATION. Dressed in white. SINGING:

CONGREGATION
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
Soldiers of the cross.

The song is deep inside Eton. He walks down the hill towards where they stand, only feet from the flaming river.

ETON
 Children, do you love my
 Jesus?
 Children, do you love my
 Jesus?
 Children, do you love my
 Jesus?
 Soldiers of the cross.

CONGREGATION (CONT'D)
 Children, do you love my
 Jesus?
 Children, do you love my
 Jesus?
 Children, do you love my
 Jesus?
 Soldiers of the cross.

In the center of The Congregation, at the edge of the river stands a FIGURE, tall, thin, boney. Eton cannot make him out.

A SMALL GIRL, white, no more than ten, steps forward to the bank of the river. Her MOTHER stands beside her. The Figure guides them as they take their first steps into the fire.

Together, still singing, the Mother and Daughter walk into the river. Slowly, they disappear into the flames.

ETON
 If you love Him, why not
 serve Him?
 If you love Him, why not
 serve Him?
 If you love Him, why not
 serve Him?
 Soldiers of the cross.

CONGREGATION (CONT'D)
 If you love Him, why not
 serve Him?
 If you love Him, why not
 serve Him?
 If you love Him, why not
 serve Him?
 Soldiers of the cross.

Next an OLD BLACK MAN, face scarred and pocked by the sun, The Figure helps him forward and anoints him. Then, he too steps forward and wades out into the flames. His white robe burning away until he is naked, before disappearing.

ETON
 Rise, shine, give God glory,
 Rise, shine, give God glory,
 Rise, shine, give God glory,
 Soldiers of the cross.

CONGREGATION (CONT'D)
 Rise, shine, give God glory,
 Rise, shine, give God glory,
 Rise, shine, give God glory,
 Soldiers of the cross.

Eton is upon the congregation now. They part for him, creating a path to the front. He is drawn forward to the Figure at the riverbank, singing.

The Figure turns, flames roaring behind him. John Brown's face stares into Eton's soul.

JOHN BROWN
 Eton.

EXT. KANSAS WOODS - BANDIT ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Eton stirs, a large hand on his shoulder.

WATSON BROWN
Eton. You're on watch.

Eton looks up to see Watson staring down at him. He rubs the sleep from his eyes and sits up.

John, still awake, reads his bible by the light of the fire.

LATER

Eton and John sit next to one another, the fire still CRACKLING away.

Eton stares into the flames. John scribbles in a small book.

JOHN BROWN
What do you see?

John closes the book and sets it on the ground next to him. Eton looks over to him.

ETON
My wife. My child.

The fire POPS and HISSES in front of them.

JOHN BROWN
They are safe.
(beat)
I have known Harriet a long time.
She has seen your family to safety,
as she has done for hundreds of
others. She is protected by God,
she cannot fail.

The pair sit in silence once more.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Neither can we. For God has
extended the same protection to
myself. And with his hand on all
our shoulders we will rid the Devil
from this land once and for all.
(beat)
I must prepare for tomorrow.

John stares deep into Eton's eyes. Eton nods, John gets to his feet and walks off into the darkness.

EXT. COOKE PLANTATION - NIGHT

In the moonlight, the Cooke Plantation looks nearly identical to that of The King's.

In place of cotton, tall rows of corn lead up to the great house. At end of the field opposite of the house, three dilapidated slave cabins.

For a moment, all is still, and then, The Bandits, tearing up the dirt path toward the house, torches lit.

INT. COOKE PLANTATION - SIMULTANEOUS

A party; WOMEN in colorful gowns, MEN in black suits and black ties. LIVELY MUSIC plays as the guests enjoy their drinks. They laugh and dance and enjoy themselves.

A MAID (40s) appears in the doorway. Archibald Cooke notices her with his beady eyes and strides over. The Maid leans in to speak over the music.

MAID
They're here.

ARCHIBALD COOKE
Thank you, Rose.

Archibald gestures to the guests. The Men gather round, the Women disappear through a door into an adjacent room.

EXT. COOKE PLANTATION - MOMENTS LATER

John and The Bandits line up in front of the two story plantation. Oliver, Eton, Dangerfield, Lewis, Anthony and a few others train their guns at the door.

John, Watson, Owen and a few others dismount their horses and step toward the house, where the men are already filing out onto the veranda.

JOHN BROWN
Archibald Cooke.

Archibald steps forward.

ARCHIBALD COOK
Who's askin'?

JOHN BROWN
Albert Hammond, Martin Sterling,
Edward P. Montgomery.

The men behind Archibald bristle as their names are called.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Step forward.

INT. COOKE PLANTATION - SIMULTANEOUS

In a darkened BEDROOM, a MAN next to a window overlooking the scene outside, rifle in hand.

At another window, two more MEN and two more rifles.

EXT. COOKE PLANTATION

ARCHIBALD COOK

I think we're quite comfortable up here.

A few of the men on the veranda chuckle. John Brown casually raises a bony hand.

Behind him, Eton and the rest of the Bandits pull back hammers on their muskets and rifles.

JOHN BROWN

You will step forward and answer for your crimes in the sight of God.

ARCHIBALD COOK

And when, may I ask, will you answer for your crimes, John Brown?

Archibald sneers, It is now John who bristles.

ARCHIBALD COOK (CONT'D)

Oh yes we all know you John. Everyone knows you. The Butcher of Pottawatomie.

Eton glances over at the others, nobody seems sure what to do.

ARCHIBALD COOK (CONT'D)

You claim to be a pious man. Tell me, Butcher, what man of God cuts a man and his child down in front of his mother's eyes? Surely not one I want on my pulpit.

Eton looks to John in disbelief, but something catches his eye in one of the second story windows.

JOHN BROWN

I do not pass the judgement, only carry it out at The Lord's behest.

ETON

John.

JOHN BROWN

Quiet!

ARCHIBALD COOKE

The Lord's behest.

(Laughs)

I know enough of God to know he
would not select a failure such as
you to do his bidding.

WATSON BROWN

Silence!

Archibald appraises Watson Brown with his beady eyes.

ARCHIBALD COOKE

You will have to remind me, from
which marriage are you from? Or do
you even know?

Watson Brown gestures at two of the Bandits, who dismount and
make their way toward the men on the veranda.

Eton glances to the second story window. A curtain flutters.

ETON

Jo--

The second story windows erupt with smoke and MUSKET FIRE.
Lead balls rain down on the Bandits, who FIRE randomly and
scatter.

On cue, the men on the porch remove flintlock pistols and
cavalry revolvers from inside their coats and OPEN FIRE.

The two Bandits headed for the veranda are killed instantly.

Total chaos. The Bandits scramble for their horses and push
them hard as they can back down the laneway, those on foot
flee into the corn.

The second story windows flash, GUNFIRE echoes into the
night.

Eton runs for the corn. Owen lies in the grass, musket balls
landing all around him, the left leg of his trousers soaked
in blood.

Eton dives on Owen, drags him into the cornfield and out of
sight. The Men on the porch make their way forward.

ARCHIBALD COOK (O.S)
Spread out, search the fields!

Owen breathes quickly. Eton places a hand over his mouth as one of the search party steps feet from where they are.

The pair lie there in silent prayer. The footsteps come closer. Four paces away, three paces, two paces.

A foot lands inches from where Eton and Owen lay hidden, and continues past them.

Once he is sure they are alone, Eton lifts Owen, who groans in agony.

ETON
Shh!!

OWEN BROWN
My leg.

Eton sets Owen down and checks his leg. Blood oozes from a fleshy hole in his thigh, large as a silver dollar.

Eton tears his own sleeve and wraps it around Owen's thigh just above the wound.

ETON
You're lucky.

OWEN BROWN
We must bet back to the camp.

ETON
Yeah. Gotta get away first. Come on.

Eton lifts Owen over his shoulder, carrying him deeper into the corn, away from the house.

EXT. KANSAS BACKCOUNTRY - LATER - CONTINUOUS

THE WOODS

Eton carries Owen over one shoulder through the dense brush. He slips in and out of consciousness, breathing shallow.

Behind them, BARKING DOGS, SHOUTING. Eton looks back, torchlight through the trees.

Eton, Owen still over his shoulder, slides awkwardly down an embankment into a STREAM. Owen groans.

THE OLD FARM

Is quiet, even in the moonlight its state of disrepair is evident. Eton carries Owen into a dilapidated

BARN

Closing the door behind them. The BARKING and VOICES grow louder.

Eton looks around, finds a hay-stack and lays Owen down beside it. The dogs are close.

VOICE (O.S.)
Check the barn!

OUTSIDE THE BARN

Three MEN (30s, 50s), and one HOUND (9), step through the overgrown field toward the barn.

In the distance, men on horseback, torches lit, scour the tree line.

INSIDE THE BARN

The door CREAKS open. The three men and their hound stand silhouetted in the moonlight, muskets at the ready.

The Men enter the barn, the hound sniffing around ahead.

LEAD MAN
Find em' boy.

The snout lands on the haystack, the hound BARKS. The Lead Man gestures to his companions, fix bayonets. They do.

The three men approach the hay stack. Then, all at once, THRUST their bayonets into it.

ON Eton and Owen, covered in hay, naked.

ON The three men, pulling their bayonets back, bloodless. They look at one another, confused.

The Lead Man reaches into the hay, throwing it aside until his hands land on, trousers?

The men eye the pants with confusion. The hound sniffs them and BARKS, tail wagging.

LEAD MAN (CONT'D)
What the?

Outside the barn, the other dogs BARK furiously, in a frenzy.

VOICE (O.S.)
Hey! We got summin!!

The three men and their dog turn heel and run from the barn, leaving the trousers and a second hay stack untouched.

The voices and barking fade, then, out from the second hay stack emerges Eton, then Owen, both naked as the day they were born.

Eton carries Owen to the first hay stack They retrieve their clothes and redress. Eton peers out the barn door.

Outside, quiet. Fireflies float lazily beneath an acorn tree. Eton turns back to Owen.

ETON
Best stay here for the night.

OWEN BROWN
We must meet back up with my
father, before they make for
Canada.

ETON
You his blood, won't be leavin'
without you.

Owen groans and slumps against a support beam, pale. Eton rushes toward him, lets him down gently.

ETON (CONT'D)
Nah, you ain't goin' anywhere
tonight. We'll head out first
light, they won't come back again.
(a look around)
I'll keep watch.

Owen nods, lays back, closes his eyes.

Eton crosses to the barn door, closes it and sits down against another support beam. He waits.

INT. KANSAS WOODS - BANDIT ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Eton peers through the brush into the clearing. One of the fires smolders away, the camp abandoned.

Owen looks to Eton, who can't seem to look away from the abandoned camp.

ETON
I don't understand.

OWEN BROWN
The path my father walks is greater
than any one man.

ETON
But, you are his son.

OWEN BROWN
You left your wife. Your little
girl. Why?

Eton stares.

OWEN BROWN (CONT'D)
Exactly.
(winces)
We best cover some ground 'for
sundown.

ETON
Cover some ground?

OWEN BROWN
They will convene in Toronto. We
are maybe a day behind.
(Gesturing to the camp)
Let's see if they left any scraps.

Eton takes Owen over his shoulder. Together, cautious, they
enter the abandoned camp.

They don't make it four paces out into the sun before, CLICK.

VOICE (O.S.)
Hold it.

They stop. Eton scans the empty clearing. An eternity passes.

From a line of trees to their left, Osborne Anderson emerges.
Left arm in a makeshift sling, flintlock pistol at the ready.

ETON
Osborne?

Osborne lowers his pistol.

OSBORNE ANDERSON
Where the rest o' ya'll?

ETON
We're it. That we know of.

OWEN BROWN

They will have gone north to
recruit with my father, as was the
plan.

OSBORNE ANDERSON

(spits)

Your father.

Osborne meanders closer to the smoldering fire pit.

OSBORNE ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Don't suppose he left us any food.

OWEN BROWN

There's little time.

Osborne prods the fire with a stick. No rush. Eton and Owen
exchange a glance.

ETON

The sooner we--

Osborne slams his stick into the fire, sending the remaining
embers fluttering into the air.

OSBORNE ANDERSON

--Ain't no we. Not no more. Probly
never was. That man's head ain't on
straight. Lead us straight into a
trap.

OWEN BROWN

That was not--

OSBORNE ANDERSON

--God ain't with him, no more than
he with any of us.

(then)

God ain't in this land.

ETON

Osborne--

OSBORNE ANDERSON

--He lied to us, bin lyin' the
whole time. You heard the man,
chopped up some young boy in front
of his mama.

Eton looks from Osborne to Owen. Owen looks down.

OSBORNE ANDERSON (CONT'D)

See, don't even deny it.

(shakes his head)

Ya'll can follow him to the grave.

Me, I'm goin' to California. Hear
there's gold there, honest work for
any man who wants it.

Eton and Owen watch wordlessly as Osborne takes one last look
around the abandoned camp, then walks off into the trees.

OWEN BROWN

Come, we'll stick to the deer
paths.

Owen breaks from Eton and limps off in the other direction.

Eton stands in the abandoned camp. Behind him, the last of
Osborne's steps fade. Before him, Owen limps onward.

He looks behind him. Then back to Owen.

Eton takes one heavy step forward, then another, and follows
Owen to the other side of the clearing.

EXT. INDIANA WOODS - NIGHT

SUPER: INDIANA

Eton and Owen huddle around a small fire.

ETON

Owen.

OWEN BROWN

Uh-huh.

ETON

Is it true? What that man said?
Bout the boy?

Owen looks into the fire a long moment.

OWEN BROWN

It is.

Eton swallows.

ETON

Why?

OWEN BROWN

Because...

(looking for the words)

It is what The Lord demands of us.
To stand by, to do nothing, that is
the sin.

Eton stares into the fire.

OWEN BROWN (CONT'D)

You have doubts.

(On Eton's expression)

You are not the only one, but my
father is a good man.

ETON

Man said he was a failure. What he
mean by that?

Owen's expression hardens.

OWEN BROWN

I don't know nothin' 'bout that

(then)

Best get some shuteye. I'll keep
watch first.

Eton stares into the fire another moment, then lays back.

EXT. ONTARIO TRAIL - DAY

Eton and Owen ride in the back of a cart. In front of them a
GRIZZLED MAN (40s), white, long beard, holds the reins of two
Clydesdales.

Eton, shivering, stares off into the snowy woods, Owen sleeps
in a pile of hay.

The cart plods around a bend in the trail. Eton sees
silhouettes in the trees up ahead.

As the cart moves closer, Eton's eyes go wide.

The silhouettes are black men, women, children; dozens of
them, all hanged, swaying in the cold breeze.

The cart driver pushes his horses along, seemingly unaware.

Past more and more black faces, staring into the abyss.

Annabelle, Ellie, Mary, Harriet, hanged side-by-side.

Eton opens his eyes to Owen shaking him. The cart driver looks back, concerned.

OWEN BROWN
You alright?

Eton blinks.

OWEN BROWN (CONT'D)
You was yellin' and screamin'
somethin' fierce.

Eton sits up, looks around. On either side of the trail, tall cedar trees and deep snow. No hanging bodies.

ETON
I, it's nothing. How far?

OWEN BROWN
See for yourself.

Owen gestures behind Eton's head. He turns. The city of Toronto looms up from an icy bay.

ETON
How we gon' find em'?

OWEN BROWN
There's a tavern. Proprietors are
sympathetic. Father stays there
when he visits.

Eton nods, marveling at the frozen buildings in the distance.

EXT. STREETS OF TORONTO - DAY

SUPER: TORONTO, PROVINCE OF CANADA - 1858

The Clydesdales plod down a main street sloppy with mud and snow melt.

Horses pull carts of goods in every direction, MEN and WOMEN, all races; jockey for position on the crowded sidewalks.

Eton marvels at the scene.

OWEN BROWN
Here's good.

The Grizzled cart driver flicks the reins, the cart comes to a stop. Eton hops down into the slop and helps Owen down off the back of the cart.

ETON

Thank you.

The cart driver nods, flicks the reins again, and the cart jolts forward.

Eton and Owen turn. In front of them, an old brick building, stairs leading down to a basement, an old wooden sign.

INT. TORONTO TAVERN - DAY

The tavern is decorated with old paintings, dark wooden accents, warm lighting.

Eton and Owen enter. A BARMAID (20s), wipes down the long oak bar. At a corner table, Anthony, Lewis, Dangerfield and Oliver sit drinking.

BARMAID

We're closed.

The Bandits at the table look over.

LEWIS LEARY

I'll be damned.

From a door behind the bar step John and Watson brown, deep in conversation.

OWEN BROWN

Father.

They stop and look to Owen and Eton, standing in the threshold.

WATSON BROWN

Owen!

JOHN BROWN

It can't be.

Oliver and Watson are upon Owen a moment later, embracing their brother. The Bandits around the table stand.

John crosses slowly to his son, but does not embrace him.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

You look well.

Owen nods. John turns, walks behind the bar and back through the door. A moment of silence, then,

WATSON BROWN

A round of drinks!

The Bandits whoop and cheer. Watson leads Eton and Owen to the table. The Bandits pull up some chairs.

ETON
(To Watson)
I need to speak with your father.

WATSON BROWN
He's very busy at present. Later
I'm sure.

He smiles, Eton smiles back. They sit.

OLIVER BROWN
So how'd ya do it?!

Owen starts into the story of his and Eton's journey.

EXT. STREETS OF TORONTO - DAY

Eton leans against a stone wall, wrapped in layers of tattered wool. The snow on the ground makes his boots wet.

Next to him, Lewis Leary and Anthony Copeland Jr seem to be having the same problem.

They stand there together, shivering.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
How the hell does any man call a
place like this home.

Eton laughs.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR. (CONT'D)
I'm serious. How long they been in
there anyway.

ETON
Near an hour.

Lewis shakes his head in disbelief. Suddenly, the door they are standing next to opens. John, Watson, Owen and Dangerfield emerge into the cold.

The group makes their way down the cobblestone streets. Lewis gestures to Dangerfield.

LEWIS LEARY
Well?

DANGERFIELD
Well what?

LEWIS LEARY

How many?

Watson turns.

WATSON BROWN

Not here!

When Watson turns back around, Lewis pokes Dangerfield behind his back and silently gestures 'how many?'

Dangerfield leans in close and lowers his voice.

DANGERFIELD

Five hundred total, maybe another thousand after our meet tomorrow.

LEWIS LEARY

Five hundred?!

DANGERFIELD

Keep quiet ya damn fool.

Lewis leans over to Eton as they continue walking. He lowers his voice dutifully.

LEWIS LEARY

Near two-thousand men, can ya believe it?

Eton smiles, distracted. He glances down every side-street they pass, searching for nothing in particular.

LEWIS LEARY (CONT'D)

Your wife?

Eton nods.

LEWIS LEARY (CONT'D)

Still here another few days, you'll find her, I know ya will.

He nods again and goes back to staring down another street, falling behind the group.

JOHN BROWN (O.S.)

Eton.

Eton turns. John walks beside him.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

I have another appointment. I'd like for you to accompany me.

ETON

Just me?

JOHN BROWN

My contact prefers smaller numbers.
That and I believe he would very
much like to meet you.

Eton nods, the pair turn down a side street, the group carries on.

INT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - FOYER - AFTERNOON

Eton and John sit next to one another on two wooden chairs. Across from them, an oaken door, one BODYGUARD (20s), black, muscular, suit and hat, stands sentry.

A clock TICKS away. Eton looks at John, John stares straight ahead. TICK, TICK, TICK, CLICK.

The oak door opens, a SECOND BODYGUARD, mirror image of the first, occupies the doorframe.

SECOND BODYGUARD

He's ready for you.

Eton and John stand.

INT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

The Second Bodyguard steps into the room, followed by John and Eton. The first shuts the door behind them.

The study is lined wall to wall with books. In front of a large window, a desk of maple. Behind the desk sits a MAN, black, hair greying, deep lines on his face.

MAN

John, welcome.

He stands, extends his hand.

JOHN BROWN

(Taking his hand)

Frederick.

(beat)

Eton Greene, Frederick Douglas.

Frederick Douglas releases John's hand, takes Eton's.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS

A pleasure to finally meet you, my friend.

(releases his hand)

Please, sit.

They all sit.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

John has made mention of you in his letters. I am always honored to meet men of such strength.

ETON

Thank you.

JOHN BROWN

Frederick is one of the causes most ardent supporters.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS

John flatters me. I merely speak for those who cannot yet speak for themselves.

JOHN BROWN

Their time is coming. I'm sure--

FREDERICK DOUGLAS

--Yes, John, before you begin I feel it best to be honest. I am unable to give what you have asked.

John sits stunned, Eton looks to both men in turn.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

This course of action, I cannot condone it.

JOHN BROWN

This is the only course of action if change is to come.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS

Change is coming, it has come.

JOHN BROWN

Every day your people suffer at the hands of tyrants.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS

And how many more will suffer
reprisals should you carry out your
plan? How many years of progress
will be erased?

JOHN BROWN

Progress. There is no progress.
Only appeasement, and concessions,
and sin. You have spent too much
time in the north. You have lost
sight of the situation.

Eton notices the Second Bodyguard tense.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS

John. You are of the strongest
wills, and in your heart burns a
love for my people's freedom I
myself find enviable.

(lets this sink in)

But blood only begets more blood,
and I cannot, I will not use my
influence to send men to their
deaths.

John stands, the second Bodyguard steps forward.

JOHN BROWN

Every day, inaction sends people to
their deaths.

John exits the room. Eton stands, turns to follow.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS

Eton.

Eton turns to face Frederick.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

John speaks very highly of you.
Says you are a man of conviction.

ETON

I'm just a man.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS

I see in your eyes a man who has
more than his life to give. John
Brown is a great man, but his path
leads only to death. Join me, join
us. Our progress is slower,
steadier, and like the tides,
cannot be stopped.

ETON

John gave me my freedom. I've given it to others.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS

Three or four at a time. We will free them all.

ETON

Been with em' a long time. What does it say of my conviction, if I leave them now?

Frederick nods.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS

John was not wrong about you.

(Sticks out his hand)

An honor to meet you Eton Greene. I wish you the best of luck.

Eton takes Frederick's hand.

ETON

And you.

Eton exits the study.

EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - AFTERNOON

John paces back and forth on the porch when Eton steps out. They stand in silence for a moment.

JOHN BROWN

I expect he asked you to talk me out of the raid.

ETON

No. Asked me to stay.

JOHN BROWN

Will you?

ETON

Told him I'm with you. But John. Maybe he's right.

John looks away.

ETON (CONT'D)

How many we gonna kill?

JOHN BROWN

As many as it takes. It is the only way.

ETON

When you freed me John, you burned the house, women inside, and a little girl.

(then)

The man and his boy, on that farm. Why did they have to die?

JOHN BROWN

They were complicit. Every one.

ETON

Who are you to decide?

JOHN BROWN

Watch yourself.

ETON

I believe in what we're doing, but John, women, children--

JOHN BROWN

--If you truly believed, you would understand! You would devote yourself, as I have! You would see there is no other way but this! The world is filled with men who speak boldly, who lend their support loudly, only to stand by and do nothing! I am sure of this,

(A hard look)

I will suffer these men no longer.

John storms off the deck. Eton does not follow.

EXT. STREETS OF TORONTO - AFTERNOON

Eton, alone, walks for some time, shivering in spite of his layers. He passes few TORONTONIANS, marvels at the grand brick houses and ancient trees lining the street.

Eton continues onward until the cobblestone becomes a well-worn dirt path, the red brick houses wooden ones.

Then, a almost familiar site; rows of small, one room, wood cabins. BLACK CHILDREN chase cats between them, laughing. Women watch Eton from porches, washing and hanging clothes.

A MAN, black, passes Eton carrying a large beam over his shoulder, in the distance, a dozen more cabins mid construction.

Eton walks for some time, watching the children closely as they pass by, searching for his wife's face in the women on their porches.

Eton makes his way up a hill, flanked on both sides by cabins. When he reaches the crest, he sees hundreds more cabins spread out below roofs covered in snow.

SOME TIME LATER

The setting sun casts long shadows over the cabins. Mothers call their children inside.

He stops at a crossroad, looking both ways down the empty streets. The wind picks up, snow swirls up around Eton.

INT. TORONTO TAVERN - NIGHT

Eton closes the wooden door behind him, shutting the wind and snow out. He shivers and looks around.

John Brown, Watson, Owen and Dangerfield sit around a large table in the corner.

At a table nearby, Lewis, Anthony, and Jeremiah try to see how much ale Oliver can take.

Lewis gestures Eton over to their table.

LEWIS LEARY

Boy's got more constitution than I expected.

(Looks Eton up and down)
How'd ya fare?

Eton shakes his head.

LEWIS LEARY (CONT'D)

There's always tomorrow. But tonight,

He grabs one of the ales designated for Oliver off the table and hands it to Eton, who drinks deep from the glass.

LEWIS LEARY (CONT'D)

There ya go, and there's plenty more where that came from.

Eton looks up from his beer.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
 Uh-huh, that's right, men ain't all
 we got. John there got us all kinds
 o' money. For rifles, powder--

JEREMIAH ANDERSON
 --Women.

The Men at the table laugh, except Oliver who only manages a
 loud burp. Eton finishes his ale.

LEWIS LEARY
 (Gesturing to Eton's
 glass)
 Want another?

ETON
 I sure do.

LEWIS LEARY
 That's right!

He slaps Eton on the back and heads for the bar. Eton eyes
 John and the others in deep discussion around a corner table.

LATER

Oliver and Jeremiah sit next to one another, face down on the
 table, surrounded by empty glasses.

At the bar, Anthony Copeland Jr chats up the Barmaid.

Eton sits at the table in the corner with John, Watson, Owen
 and Dangerfield. Owen stands.

OWEN BROWN
 That's it for me.

He looks to Oliver, still unconscious at the other table.

OWEN BROWN (CONT'D)
 Best get him to bed as well.

Owen nods to the table, picks his brother up over his
 shoulder, who starts babbling incoherently, and carries him
 back into the storage room.

WATSON BROWN
 He should have remained at home.

John says nothing.

WATSON BROWN (CONT'D)
 Father, he is not prepared.

JOHN BROWN

He says he is prepared so he is prepared. Your brother knows the risks.

WATSON BROWN

He will die!

JOHN BROWN

Nine-thousand men, boy. Do you think I will let him see action? Put your mind at ease, for once.

Watson takes a long drink of his beer and looks off into the tavern. A LITTLE MAN (30s) white, wiry, sitting alone at a table, quickly looks away.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

We must depart before the thaw, lest we be bogged down.

ETON

When?

JOHN BROWN

Two days. Harriet has offered the use of a safe house in Virginia. I have already dispatched a few men to take care of some business before we arrive.

Eton looks troubled, John notices.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

The men promised to us should be no more than a week behind. After we are all gathered, we move on Harper's Ferry. Once we have secured the weapons, we cut our way down through the mountains, striking at the heart of the beast.

Dangerfield rises from the table and is halfway across the room in the blink of an eye, rushing toward the Little Man

He grabs the man by the collar, knocks his beer to the floor.

DANGERFIELD

What you want?! What you want huh?!

John, Eton and Watson jump from their chairs and rush toward Dangerfield. Anthony turns from the Barmaid and does as well.

Eton and Watson reaches Dangerfield first and try to pull him off the man, but it's no use. Not until Anthony assists does Dangerfield even budge.

JOHN BROWN
What is it?

DANGERFIELD
Man been watchin' us, this whole time. Listenin' to every word leavin' your mouth. A spy!

Everyone looks down at the little man.

LITTLE MAN
No, please, mercy!

Dangerfield moves over the man's head and starts to drag him towards the door.

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)
Please, no! I'm not a spy!

John gestures for Dangerfield to stop, which he does, picking the man up to his feet.

JOHN BROWN
Speak.

The little man composes himself the best he can.

LITTLE MAN
I was listening--

Dangerfield gives him a shake.

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)
--No please. I was listening, because I recognize you.

JOHN BROWN
Recognize me?

The little man looks around and lowers his voice.

LITTLE MAN
Surely, you're John Brown.

John doesn't seem keen to be recognized.

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)
You and your men killed all those slave owners in Kansas two years back.

(MORE)

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)
I was there in New York, at the
time, saw your picture in the
paper.

WATSON BROWN
And so?

The little man swallows.

LITTLE MAN
I want to join you.
(holds out his hand)
Stewart Taylor.

John, Watson, Oliver, Jeremiah and Dangerfield all look
astonished.

EXT. STREETS OF TORONTO - DAY

Eton shivers outside a large stone building when John Brown
exits briskly. Together they walk down the bustling street,
Eton looks to John expectantly.

JOHN BROWN
They will not aid us.
(beat)
These men know nothing of risk.

They keep walking in silence.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
But you do.

Eton looks up, confused.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
You have fought, and suffered, and
bled against the tyranny of
slavery. You have done your part,
in my eyes and The Lord's.

ETON
I don't understand.

JOHN BROWN
I know you have doubts Eton. About
me. I know you have not yet found
your family. Should you choose to
remain, and seek them out, I, nor
any man here will think you a
coward.

John stares at Eton hard.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
The good Lord has shown me my path.
(beat)
And I trust that he will show you
yours.

Eton is momentarily stunned, John continues on.

EXT. STREETS OF TORONTO - DAY

Eton makes his way through the streets. The snow has melted, the trees and the grass are in full bloom. Eton is pleased to only need one layer.

He turns off the crowded main street; large stone buildings give way to old homes and even older trees.

He walks for some time, taking lefts and rights.

The large brick houses give way to rows of smaller wooden cabins, the cobblestone streets become a well-worn dirt path.

Women hanging laundry on their porch eye Eton as he passes. Children chase cats between cabins, laughing.

One of the GIRLS is familiar, Eton only gets a passing look as she runs by with the other children.

Eton watches them disappear around a cabin. He follows.

When he rounds the corner, he can see the children, running down the dirt path.

A WOMAN carries a bucket of water up toward a cabin, Eton cannot make out who she is. When the group of children reach her, the girl breaks from the group and walks to her mother.

Eton begins to walk too, one step at a time, as if his feet were still in chains. Only thirty paces away.

Twenty paces, ten paces.

INT. TORONTO TAVERN - STORAGE ROOM - DAWN

Eton opens his eyes, Anthony's hand on his shoulder.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
Time to go.

Eton sits up. In the dark storage room, the others stir.

EXT. ONTARIO TRAIL - DAY

The Bandits ride on horseback down the snowy trail. To their rear, the city of Toronto disappears behind the trees.

At the crest of a hill, Eton stops his horse to take one last look back at the city rising up from the icy bay.

Finally, he turns his horse, spurring her through the snow to catch up with the rest.

SUPER: CHAPTER THREE - ABOLITION**INT. VIRGINIA CABIN - NIGHT****SUPER: HARPER'S FERRY, VIRGINIA - 1859**

The cabin is large enough to hold more than two dozen men. Fewer than a dozen spread out around the room.

Eton, Watson, Lewis and Anthony sit around a table. A few other Bandits gathered around another. Dangerfield sprawled out on a couch, HUMS away to himself.

John reads the bible in a wooden chair. Oliver and Owen pace impatiently. Oliver glancing out the window now and then.

OLIVER BROWN
They've been captured.

WATSON BROWN
Quiet.

OWEN BROWN
He's right, they've been gone far too long.
(a glance out the window)
What was the purpose of sending them?

JOHN BROWN
Patience. You will see.

OLIVER BROWN
We are too few, what if the re--

WATSON BROWN
--I said stop it! Your cowardice is contagious.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK. A hush falls over the room. A few Bandits reach for their weapons.

ALBERT HAZLET
 (Through the door)
 It's Al!

John gestures to stand down. The door opens and three Bandits enter: ALBERT HAZLET (30s), white, WILLIAM THOMPSON (40s), white, and EDWIN COPPOCK, white (40s) shuffle inside.

They carry a heavy box.

JOHN BROWN
 Very good, set it over here.

The three men heave the box into the center of the room where John stands. The Bandits gather round.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
 Excellent work. No trouble?

William smirks.

WILLIAM THOMPSON
 Not for us.

John is already opening the box. Inside are THREE OBJECTS, which he removes with great care.

THE FIRST object, a tattered and moth-eaten Admiral's hat. Deep blue with gold tassels.

John hands the hat to Dangerfield, who puts it on his head. A few of the men laugh.

THE SECOND, a large cavalry sword with an ornate handle.

John hands the sword to Eton, who handles it delicately.

THE THIRD objects are a pair. Ancient flintlock pistols, beautifully decorated and untouched by time.

Every man in the room momentarily entranced by their beauty.

JOHN BROWN
 Gentlemen. These pistols, and this sword, gifts to General George Washington by the Marquis de Lafayette following the siege at Yorktown.

The sword and pistols are passed around, each man taking them delicately to admire them up close.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

They were gifts then, gestures to represent the great accomplishment of overthrowing tyranny. Now, I present them to you, as talismans, symbols of great power for you to hold on this eve, before we embark on overthrowing a far more brutal and sinister tyranny.

The Bandits nod in silence.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

Very good, that is all.

EXT. VIRGINIA CABIN - DAY

Eton washes his face in a bucket of water outside the cabin while Dangerfield lays in the grass next to him.

Elsewhere on the property, Bandits stretch out in the sun.

The sound of fast approaching hooves causes Dangerfield to sit up. Eton wipes the water from his face.

A RIDER on horseback pushes his mount up the dirt path toward the cabin, kicking up dust behind him.

DANGERFIELD

Can't be good.

Eton looks at Dangerfield, then back to the rider, who speaks with someone in front of the house before running off around the cabin, out of view, toward THE SHED.

Dangerfield and Eton stand and too head for the barn.

Rounding the corner of the house, they see the rider speaking with John and Watson Brown in front of the shed.

The pair arrive just as the conversation ends. The rider turns to leave, gives Eton an apologetic look as he passes.

Watson looks distraught, John like stone.

WATSON BROWN

We cannot possibly continue.

ETON

What's happened?

WATSON BROWN

It's none of your--

JOHN BROWN

--Watson.

Watson pipes down. John looks to Eton.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

They will not come.

ETON

Who?

JOHN BROWN

None of them.

WATSON BROWN

Cowards! The lot!

ETON

What now?

JOHN BROWN

I must think.

John walks off toward the cabin, leaving Watson, Eton and Dangerfield standing in front of the barn.

INT. VIRGINIA CABIN - EVENING

Just over one dozen men, everyone present, sit or stand inside the cabin. Owen paces back and forth in front of a closed door.

Everyone is silent, waiting. Every now and then, one of the men glances at the door. A clock TICKS away in the corner.

Owen is still pacing when the door opens a crack. He stops. Everyone looks up. John Brown stands in the threshold.

JOHN BROWN

Tonight, with The Lord's blessing,
we go to war.

A great cheer goes up in the cabin.

The room becomes a flurry of activity. Muskets loaded, bayonets slid into holsters. John Brown himself straps Washington's Sword around his waist.

Eton wordlessly fills a small pack, and stops on a small piece of cloth. He plays with it in his hand, smells it, then back in the bag.

Beside him, Dangerfield mock aims his gun out the window.

DANGERFIELD

Bang.

He smiles at Eton, Eton smiles back and grabs his musket.

EXT. HARPER'S FERRY - TELEGRAPH OFFICE - NIGHT

John, Oliver, Eton and Dangerfield crouch behind a stack of barrels. From their position, they can just make out the silhouettes of the other Bandits, spread out down the line.

Across the dark street, a small brick building and wooden sign which reads: HARPER'S FERRY TELEGRAPH OFFICE.

Lamplight flickers in the window.

Watson moves to where his Father's group waits in position.

WATSON BROWN

See anyone?

DANGERFIELD

Not yet.

WATSON BROWN

Can't be many. One, maybe two.

JOHN BROWN

The plan is this. Owen and myself will enter the office and cut the wire.

(To Watson)

Wait by the door, I'll signal if we require your assistance.

(To Dangerfield)

Tell the men to hold position down the line. Nobody moves until the wire is cut.

Dangerfield nods and makes his way to the other groups of Bandits crouching in the darkness.

John and Owen remove their muskets, handing them off to Eton and Oliver. A deep breath, then John and Owen stride out of the shadows toward the Telegraph Office.

Watson gives his father and brother a short head start, then follows, ten paces behind, keeping to the shadows.

Eton looks on as John and Owen reach the door. John glances back to ensure Watson is in position, then to Owen.

John pushes open the door and the pair disappear inside.
Watson remains stationed outside the door, musket ready.

Eton, Oliver and Dangerfield look on from their position.
Half a minute goes by, then a minute.

DANGERFIELD
(To himself)
Come on, come on.

Eton sees the lamp flicker, silhouettes dance in the window,
then, darkness. A moment later, Watson moves quickly to the
door and he too disappears into the telegraph office.

Another thirty seconds go by. Oliver stands but Eton pulls
him back down, a hand on his shoulder.

ETON
Wait.

Ten seconds later, the door of the telegraph office opens.
John, Watson and Owen exit, shutting the door behind them.

They cross the street back to where Eton, Oliver and
Dangerfield hide.

DANGERFIELD
What happened?

OWEN BROWN
There were three in there.

ETON
You alright?

JOHN BROWN
It's no matter. The job is done.
Come, we have precious little time.

John leads the way, followed by his sons and Eton.
Dangerfield turns and gives the hand signal to move out.

EXT. HARPER'S FERRY - STREETS - NIGHT

The town is quiet. Small buildings stand in the pale Virginia
moonlight.

From between two houses, a figure darts across the street.
Then another, and another; crouched low.

John, Oliver, Owen, Watson and Eton lead. Behind them,
Dangerfield, Lewis, Anthony, Jeremiah, and Jacob. The rest
bring up the rear.

John raises his hand, stopping the procession. They crouch low. John turns to the men behind him.

OLIVER BROWN
How far to the Armory?

JOHN BROWN
Up the street aways. This moonlight
may prove more a curse than a
blessing.

John peers back around the corner into the darkened street. Empty. Harper's Ferry is a ghost town.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Very good. We move up the street
three at a time. Do not fire upon
anyone without my signal, is this
understood?

The Bandits nod in understanding. Eton grips his rifle.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
God is with us on this night.

John takes one last look around the corner, then, without hesitation, bolts quickly up the side of the street. Owen follows, then Oliver.

Eton, Watson and Dangerfield peer around the corner, watching the trio move quietly in and out of the shadows.

They stop someways up the street and give the signal.

WATSON BROWN
Ready?

Eton and Dangerfield nod, yes. Watson nods in return. A moment later they too run up the street, darting in and out of the shadows.

Eton crosses the train tracks, a TRAIN WHISTLE in the distance. He looks down the track into the darkness. A light.

Eton looks back up the street, he's fallen behind. Quickly, he catches up to Watson and Dangerfield just as they reach the new position.

ETON
Train's comin'.

OWEN BROWN
How far?

ETON

Half mile.

The half dozen men look back down the dark street to see Lewis, Anthony and Jeremiah already making their way up. Too late to stop them.

Just as the trio cross the tracks, they are lit up by the light of the train.

DANGERFIELD

(To himself)

Come on, get out the way.

Almost simultaneously, they dive from view of the train.

OLIVER BROWN

Maybe they didn't see em'.

A moment later and the second last group crouches down next to Eton, out of breath.

WATSON BROWN

Were you seen?

LEWIS LEARY

I dunno, don't think so.

WATSON BROWN

You must stop the others.

SCREECHING BREAKS and a SHRILL WHISTLE interrupts the conversation.

Back down the street, the final group is on their way, but are cut off by the engine, which comes to a stop in the middle of the road.

INT. TRAIN ENGINE - NIGHT - SIMULTANEOUS

The PORTER (50s), white, wears the uniform of the Union Pacific. From the engine he sees a group of three armed men making their way toward the train.

EXT. HARPERS FERRY - STREETS

John, Eton and the two groups who crossed the tracks watch the scene unfold.

OWEN BROWN

What do we do?

JOHN BROWN
We cannot be separated further, we
are too few as it is.

One last conflicted look to his men.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Come, quickly.

John moves from the darkness, followed by his sons, Eton, Dangerfield, Lewis, Anthony and Jeremiah.

They make for the train, still stopped dead in the road.

INT. TRAIN ENGINE

The Porter watches the three armed men approach from the left of the train.

ENGINEER (O.S.)
Shep, best look over here.

The Porter takes his eyes off the three men and moves to THE ENGINEER (50s), white, to look out the opposite window.

Another nine men approaching from the right, muskets ready.

Before he can turn back around, the first three Bandits are boarding the engine from the left side.

EXT. HARPER'S FERRY

John, Eton and the rest see William Thompson, Edwin Coppock and Albert Hazlet boarding the train.

OLIVER BROWN
Father, what are they doing?

JOHN BROWN
They have the right of it, we've
been seen, the train cannot be
allowed to alert the next town.

They continue towards the stopped train, steam bellowing from its undercarriage.

INT. TRAIN MAIL ROOM

HARLAND (30s), black, also clad in the Union Pacific uniform, listens through the door separating himself from the engine.

PORTER (O.S)
Ain't no need for muskets now
gentlemen.

In a panic, Harland barricades the door using whatever mail he can find.

EXT. HARPER'S FERRY

John's group rounds the front of the train. John stops and turns to his men.

JOHN BROWN
Oliver, Eton, with me.

Gesturing to the rest.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Create a picket around the engine.
Call out if you should see
anything.

WATSON BROWN
Father--

JOHN BROWN
--Do as I say!

Watson bites his tongue and nods. John, Oliver and Eton continue around to the engine while the rest of the Bandits fan out.

INT. TRAIN ENGINE

John and Eton climb the ladder into the already cramped engine house. Oliver stands guard below.

EDWIN COPPOCK
(Pushing on the door)
Let us in there god damnit!

ALBERT HAZLET
(On John)
There you are John.

JOHN BROWN
What's going on?

EDWIN COPPOCK
Porter's got the damn door locked.

John looks The Porter up and down.

JOHN BROWN
This train is being stopped here on
my orders.

PORTER
I can't--

JOHN BROWN
--You and your men will be
permitted to carry on your way in
the morning, you have my word.

The Porter nods.

PORTER
(loudly)
Harland.

INT. TRAIN MAIL ROOM

Harland moves slowly to the barricaded door.

PORTER (O.S.)
Harland, it's okay, open the door.

Harland hesitates a moment, unsure. He reaches for the mail
stacked against the door, pulls back his hand.

He looks around. At the rear of the mail car, a window.

INT. TRAIN ENGINE

All eyes in the crowded engine fixate on the door to the mail
car. The Porter wipes sweat from his brow.

EDWIN COPPOCK
What's takin' so long?!

The Porter knocks once again.

PORTER
Harland?

WILLIAM THOMPSON
John!

William points out the left window, revealing Harland, ten
paces from the train, running away down the darkened street.

Edwin, John and Eton step out of the engine house onto a thin
metal platform. Edwin raises his rifle, pinpoint accurate.

ETON
What are you doing?

JOHN BROWN
Do it!

Eton grabs the muzzle of Edwin's rifle with his hand,
lowering it.

EDWIN COPPOCK
What are you doing?

Harland keeps running, almost out of range.

ETON
This isn't right! Joh--

BANG! In the distance, Harland hits the dirt hard. John Brown
lowers a rifle and returns it to William Thompson.

WILLIAM THOMPSON
Nice shot.

The Porter and Engineer stare in stunned silence.

ETON
Why John?!

John looks at Eton, then turns back into the engine, deep in
thought.

EXT. HARPER'S FERRY

Oliver, still waiting at the foot of the ladder, hears
FOOTSTEPS approaching in the dark. Hands shaking, he trains
his musket on the source of the sound.

OLIVER BROWN
(Voice cracking)
Who goes there?

A silhouette freezes.

WATSON BROWN
It's me!

Watson moves out of the shadows, Oliver lowers his musket,
relieved.

WATSON BROWN (CONT'D)
What's happenin' up there?

OLIVER BROWN

Beats me.

WATSON BROWN

Gonna wake the whole town! Ain't got time for this.

Watson looks up into the engine house.

WATSON BROWN (CONT'D)

Father!

INT. TRAIN ENGINE

John, still trying to formulate a plan, hears his son's voice from outside. Out of time.

JOHN BROWN

We have to kill the others.

ETON

John, no!

JOHN BROWN

We do not have the man power to hold the train. Shots have been fired, the town will no doubt have been alerted.

ETON

You fired the shot! You alerted the town! This whole situation is your fault!

JOHN BROWN

Quiet!

ETON

Where they right about you John? You just a murderer? These men are innocent.

(Gestures to Harland)

He was innocent!

JOHN BROWN

Then what do you suggest?!

EDWIN COPPOCK

Ain't got time to negotiate!

ETON
 This ain't a negotiation.
 (then)
 We let the train continue on.

WILLIAM THOMPSON
 You're mad! John, tell em'!

Eton stares at John hard. John stares back. For a tense moment, nobody speaks.

EXT. HARPER'S FERRY - NIGHT

Owen Brown, Anthony Copland and Lewis Leary kneel behind some crates.

John, Eton, and The Bandits from the train move up behind.

LEWIS LEARY
 'Bout time.

OWEN BROWN
 What happened?

JOHN BROWN
 (A look to Eton)
 I'll explain when we reach the armory. Where are the rest of the men?

Owen peers over his crate down the street, gesturing in a few different directions.

OWEN BROWN
 Fanned out up ahead. Like ya said.

John nods in approval. Anthony Copeland Jr leans over to Eton.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
 What happened?

ETON
 Had to let the train go. John shot a free man.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
 Why'd he do that?

They are cut short by John's harsh whisper.

JOHN BROWN
 Let's go.

John leads the way, followed by his sons, Eton, Lewis, Anthony and William.

EXT. HARPER'S FERRY ARMORY - NIGHT

In groups of threes and fours, muskets at the ready, The Bandits move quietly through the streets.

Out of the darkness loom the high stone walls of THE ARMORY. John raises one boney hand and the Bandits hold their positions, crouching down in the darkness.

From where John and Eton are positioned, two GUARDS visible out front, another two stationed above.

John thinks for a moment then turns to Eton.

JOHN BROWN

Ready?

(To Eton)

Give Owen your rifle.

Eton does as he's told. John moves down the line to where Dangerfield and Jeremiah crouch low, deadly accurate Springfield Rifles slung over their backs.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

See the guards on high?

The pair nod.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

Think you can hit em'?

Dangerfield smiles a wicked smile.

DANGERFIELD

Oh I know I can.

JOHN BROWN

Good, you will wait for myself and Eton to act first. Then fire immediately understand?

DANGERFIELD

Yes Sir.

LEWIS LEARY

Yes Sir.

John moves back to where Eton and his Sons crouch close by.

JOHN BROWN

Once it has begun, there will be no turning back.

He looks at his sons.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

You must be ready to follow us in,
all of you, as soon as the shots
have been fired.

(beat)

Prisoners for ransom will benefit
our cause but you are ordained to
kill all who oppose you.
Understand?

OLIVER BROWN

Yes Father.

JOHN BROWN

Good, inform the men,
(beat)
Eton, with me.

John skulks off towards the side facing wall of the armory.
Oliver's breath shakes, Eton puts a hand on his shoulder
before following John.

JOHN AND ETON

In position. John peers around the corner where the two
Guards are stationed outside the gate.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

You must follow my lead, take the
man closest. Ready?

Eton hesitates.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

Not for me. For the cause.

Eton nods, okay.

One last look from John and they're off around the corner.
John in the lead, his stride confident. Eton shuffles behind.

DANGERFIELD AND LEWIS

Rifles resting on boxes, trained on the two guards above.

Dangerfield adjusts his sight and takes a deep breath.

JOHN AND ETON

Almost at the gate. One of the Guards glances over at the
pair. Eton stares at the ground.

Eight paces, four paces, two.

GUARD

Hold it--

John plunges his knife hard into the neck of the first guard.

Eton pushes his knife into the stomach of the second, who resists for a moment.

Eton looks deep into the man's frightened eyes, applying more force to the knife, sliding it in deeper.

ABOVE

The two other Guards take notice. The first opens his mouth to yell, only to have a hole blown clean through his jaw and out the back of his neck.

The second is struck in the chest and falls from the wall.

DANGERFIELD AND LEWIS

Smiling. A pat on the back and they're off.

Over one dozen men emerge from the darkness and rush the front gate, which Eton and John have just opened.

Owen hands Eton his gun and they charge through the gate.

EXT. ARMORY COURTYARD - DAWN

THE ARMORY consists of THREE BUILDINGS in a COURTYARD. To the left, SOLDIERS stream from the wooden BARRACKS, some barely dressed.

John's Bandits take aim and FIRE a volley into the confused soldiers, musket balls tear through flesh. Those soldiers with guns return fire and charge.

The Soldiers and Bandits meet in the middle of the courtyard for brutal close quarters combat.

EXT. ARMORY COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

John pulls his bayonet from the chest of a soldier on the ground, all around him is fierce fighting, men dying.

Eton comes upon a YOUNG SOLDIER, white, rifle trained right at him. The soldier fires, Eton braces, but nothing, a miss.

Eton charges, runs into him bayonet first, pushing the cold steel into his belly.

EXT. HARPER'S FERRY - DAWN

A ROAR OF GUNFIRE Echoes through the streets of Harper's Ferry.

People open their doors, peer from their windows.

Harper's Ferry is awake.

EXT. ARMORY COURTYARD - DAWN - CONTINUOUS

Watson and Owen usher two wounded prisoners into

THE BARRACKS

Where three additional prisoners are being held. One is unharmed, two badly bleeding, grey uniforms freshly stained.

THE COURTYARD

Lewis Leary approaches a dying COLONEL (40s). Gasping for breath, a sucking chest wound gushes blood.

COLONEL

Kill me.

Lewis looks down at the man.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Come on you god damned Nigger, Kill-

Lewis slides his bayonet casually into the man's chest, he goes quiet instantly, eyes wide with rage.

Lewis looks up to see Dangerfield escorting his own prisoner, watching him.

DANGERFIELD

Feels good, don't it?

He shoves the butt of his own musket hard into his prisoner's kidney. Dangerfield picks him up and pushes him forward.

Eton approaches John, who surveys the situation.

JOHN BROWN

We lose anyone?

ETON

None of ours. Edwin's cut on his arm, Jeremiah took a good knock to the head.

JOHN BROWN

We must stay steadfast, continue as planned. Have the men collect as much as they can carry on their backs.

Eton turns to leave.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

Eton.

Eton stops and turns again.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, if I let you down.

Eton nods and leaves.

ACROSS THE COURTYARD

Eton leads Watson, Owen, Dangerfield, Lewis and Jeremiah toward the wooden ARMORY.

Beside it, a stout, brick building. Chimney's protruding up into the air. THE BOILER HOUSE.

The group reach the front door of The Armory, a long wood building. Dangerfield busts the lock.

The door swings open to reveal hundreds of crates of muskets and rifles. The walls lined with weapons.

INSIDE THE ARMORY

They spread out around the room: Breaking open boxes, taking guns from the walls, arming themselves with all they can.

A few SHOTS ring out in the distance. Everyone freezes. Watson looks to Eton, Eton to Lewis.

Oliver appears at The Armory door, breathless.

OLIVER BROWN

Come... You have to come!

They look at one another, then the weapons, then rush from the room. Most carrying a musket in each hand.

THE COURTYARD

The half-dozen men run toward the barracks, following Oliver through the back door.

THE BARRACKS

John and the Bandits fight a small fire on the floor.

A musket ball flies through one of the windows, embedding itself in a wall feet from Dangerfield's head.

WATSON BROWN
What's happened?

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
Whole town's outside.

OWEN BROWN
Are they against us?

John nods solemnly.

WATSON BROWN
Father?

JOHN BROWN
He speaks the truth, they've
blocked the way out.

OLIVER BROWN
What do we do?

JOHN BROWN
We fight.

John looks to Eton and the men who have just entered.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
What else is that way?

LEWIS LEARY
Guns.

DANGERFIELD
Lotsa guns.

JOHN BROWN
Anything else?

ETON
A boiler room.

JOHN BROWN
Stone?

Eton nods, yes.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
We must go now, this place is untenable.

LEWIS LEARY
And then?

JOHN BROWN
We dig in, hold out, long as we can.

WATSON BROWN
Father, the prisoners.

John looks at the group of soldiers huddled in the corner.

JOHN BROWN
Leave them.

A second VOLLEY of musket fire hits the barracks. Dangerfield returns fire, striking a member of THE MILITIA in the neck.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Go! Now!

Everyone does as told.

Eton and Dangerfield provide COVERING FIRE through the broken windows. Eton hits another man in his chest.

Watson, Lewis and Jeremiah follow to the boiler house, leaving the wounded prisoners.

Once all others have left. Eton and Dangerfield follow.

The door is kicked open. A few members of The Militia enter cautiously, guns drawn, then move to help those left behind.

INT. THE BOILER HOUSE - MORNING

The heavy door opens and the Bandits stream inside. Eton, the last man in, closes the door, bolting its two iron locks.

He looks around, eying a heavy oak table and chair in the corner, he moves to it.

ETON
Help me here!

Watson helps Eton turn the table on its side. Together, they slide it in front of the door.

John surveys the room. It is cramped, few windows. Two large coal boilers occupy a third of the space.

JOHN BROWN

Take up positions in the windows.

Bandits move to the windows. Jeremiah looks through his. The glass is shattered by a musket ball, missing him by inches.

DANGERFIELD

Watch they don't blow off that head
of yours.

Watson approaches Eton and his father.

WATSON

Father. We cannot stay here. The
train. If word reaches Washington
the road will be closed for good.

JOHN BROWN

Yes but we're too few to fight them
and retain enough strength for our
mission.

WATSON BROWN

So what is it then?

John considers the options.

JOHN BROWN

Perhaps they can be negotiated
with.

WATSON BROWN

Father!?

JOHN BROWN

Listen to me. It may be our only
chance. As you say, the longer we
are trapped here, the worse our
situation becomes. Washington will
have been alerted by now. And rest
assured, The Army will not be
negotiated with.

WATSON BROWN

Then let me go.

JOHN BROWN

Don't be absurd, boy.

ETON

He's right.

(To John)

Can't be you. They take you, it's all over. Gotta be important though, important enough to talk to.

WATSON BROWN

I'm your first born son.

JOHN BROWN

And a fine hostage.

WATSON BROWN

What choice do we have?

Another moment to think. John looks to Eton, who stares back, determined.

JOHN BROWN

Very well. Watson, select someone to accompany you.

ETON

I volunteer.

JOHN BROWN

Very well.

EXT. ARMORY COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Outside the boiler house, around thirty armed men, The Militia, guns at the ready.

The door opens slightly, a white cloth appears through the crack.

Watson emerges, cloth above hid head. Eton follows.

Slowly, they approach the center of the militia, where a MILITIAMAN (50s), hard features, stands waiting.

Watson and Eton stop ten paces short of where he stands.

MILITIAMAN

Causin' quite a ruckus.

WATSON BROWN

I am speaking on behalf of my father, John Brown.

MILITIAMAN
Shot our mayor.

WATSON BROWN
How's that?

MILITIAMAN
Said you shot our mayor. Through
the neck, killed him like a hog in
the street.

WATSON BROWN
Well, he's with God now.
(beat)
As I said, I am here to negotiate
on--

MILITIAMAN
--On behalf of your father, I heard
ya.

WATSON BROWN
Well then--

MILITIAMAN
--Where is he?

Watson says nothing.

MILITIAMAN (CONT'D)
Why isn't he out here, negotiatin'?

He spits in the dirt.

WATSON BROWN
Perhaps we should discuss terms.

The Militiaman LAUGHS, raspy and cold.

MILITIAMAN
Terms? Boy, you and all them
niggers in there are gonna lay down
your arms and come out without
anymore fuss. Those are the terms.
(beat)
Now run back and tell your daddy
that any man who resists will be
shown no mercy.

Silence. Eton places his hand on Watson's shoulder. Together,
they turn and make their way back to the boiler house.

Twenty paces away, ten paces, Watson reaches for the handle.

Three SHOTS ring out almost simultaneously. The first hits Eton in the shoulder, he stumbles hard against the wall.

The second two both hit Watson in the back. He lets out a gasp and falls helplessly against the door.

Behind them, hoots and whistles. Eton grabs Watson, wrenches the door open and pulls him inside.

INT. THE BOILER HOUSE

Eton drags Watson into the middle of the room, Owen, Oliver and John are immediately by his side.

Blood already pools beneath Watson. The Bandits gather round.

OWEN BROWN
Those bastards!

JOHN BROWN
Watson, Watson my boy, can you hear me?

John takes Watson's pale face gently in his hands, he's conscious, but barely.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
(To the men)
Back to the windows, get back to the windows now!

The Bandits do as they're told.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Does anyone know medicine?!

Stewart Taylor steps forward.

STEWART TAYLOR
Some, but, I'm a veterinarian.

Stewart Taylor kneels down next to Watson. He pulls aside Watson's blood stained shirt revealing a nasty exit wound.

STEWART TAYLOR (CONT'D)
But these wounds are very severe...

Oliver and Owen are pale, looking down at their dying brother. John looks up from his son, to Stewart, to Eton.

JOHN BROWN
Your arm.

ETON
I'll be fine.

On the floor, Watson grows more and more pale from blood loss.

EXT. HARPER'S FERRY - SIMULTANEOUS

Two columns, fifty men each, clad in the deep blue uniform of the United States Army, march double time through the streets of the town.

They are led by two men on horseback, Lieutenant Colonel ROBERT E. LEE (50s), grey hair and a grey beard. And JEB STUART (40s), his Lieutenant and aid-de-camp, clean shaven.

TOWNSPEOPLE watch from porches and second story windows, CHEERING their arrival. The columns march up toward the armory.

INT. THE BOILER HOUSE - DAY

Watson's body has been moved from the center of the room to a corner. A pool of dried blood marks his first position.

Bandits watch the windows, but many sit or lay down. Loss and disillusionment on their faces.

Eton watches John, Owen and Oliver, knelt in silent prayer next to Watson. John pulls the blanket over his son's face and stands.

Eton looks out a small crack in the furniture piled up against the window, he can still see The Militia positioned outside, waiting.

A sound next to him causes Eton to look up. John stands over him, looking down. Eton goes to stand.

JOHN BROWN
No, please.

John sits down slowly next to Eton.

ETON
I'm sorry about your son, John.

JOHN BROWN
We all must make sacrifices in the name of duty.
(MORE)

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Watson died for a cause he believed
in, I know he has taken his
rightful place next to the King of
Kings.

ETON
The men--

JOHN BROWN
--Are losing faith, I see it too.
There is fight left in them yet. It
is always darkest before dawn.

VOICES and HORSES causes Eton to look back through the
window.

Outside, one hundred uniformed men march through the gate
into the armory courtyard.

ETON
John.

Eton moves aside to let John peek through the opening.

DANGERFIELD
Army's here!

This gets everyone's attention. They hurriedly stand and
collect their rifles. Lewis pulls his nephew to the side.

LEWIS LEARY
Now anything happen... You get the
chance, I want ya to run, y'hear
me?

Anthony nods his head, fear in his eyes. They embrace.

Muskets are loaded, sights adjusted. John moves from man to
man, making sure all are prepared.

Eton remains at the window, eyes trained on the two men on
horseback making their way toward the tall Militiaman.

EXT. ARMORY COURTYARD - DAY

Col. Lee and Lt. Stuart lead their horses to The Militiaman.
He steps forward as they approach, salutes their rank.

MILITIAMAN
Colonel, Lieutenant. Appreciate
ya'll gettin' down here so quick.
Quite the mess I'm afraid.

Lee surveys the situation from horseback. The courtyard still littered with bodies. The Militia looks ragged, tired. Lee points to the boiler house.

ROBERT E. LEE
They're in there?

MILITIAMAN
Yes Sir.

ROBERT E. LEE
How many, do you estimate?

MILITIAMAN
No more'n twenty.

ROBERT E. LEE
And your men?

MILITIAMAN
Sir?

ROBERT E. LEE
Are your men fit for an assault?

The Militiaman looks around at his Militia. Less than fighting fit.

MILITIAMAN
No Sir.

ROBERT E. LEE
Now there's no shame in it. You boys have done a fine job here.
(turns)
Lieutenant.

J.E.B STUART
Sir.

ROBERT E. LEE
Have half the company form a perimeter around the engine house here. And let's put a few men up on these walls here. Oh, and should any of these fine men require medicine, have the medical staff see to them.

JEB gets to work relaying the orders. The soldiers in uniform begin to move, bayonets glimmering in the afternoon sunlight.

Lee turns back to The Militiaman.

ROBERT E. LEE (CONT'D)
You are effectively relieved. Your
Government is grateful.

The Militiaman nods, turns to his men and gives the signal to wrap it up.

INT. THE BOILER HOUSE - DAY

Bandits watch through the windows as The Militia disperses toward the gate, tattered clothes replaced by crisp federal uniforms and a large U.S. Flag.

Dangerfield, positioned by a back window, pipes up.

DANGERFIELD
They're movin' round back.

OLIVER BROWN
We're surrounded!

Lewis, looking out another barricaded front window, turns to John and Eton.

LEWIS LEARY
Men comin' this way, carryin' a
white flag.

OWEN BROWN
Prepare to fire.

JOHN BROWN
No, hold your fire!

OWEN BROWN
But Father!

JOHN BROWN
Hold your fire I said!

Eton watches through the window as a half dozen soldiers, led by a clean shaven man in a cavalry hat, approach the front door. A white flag above their heads.

They come to a stop less than five paces from the door, still covered in Watson's blood. There is a brief pause.

J.E.B STUART
My name is Lieutenant James Ewell
Brown Stuart, United States Army,
serving under Colonel Robert E.
Lee.

John stands on the opposite side of the door, listening. Eton watches The Lieutenant through the same space in the window.

J.E.B STUART (CONT'D)

I have been ordered to inform you
and your men that any man who lays
down their arms in surrender will
be spared, and that they, Negro and
white, will face fair judgement
before the courts.

The Bandits look around at one another. All eyes fall upon John, standing motionless at the door.

John, looks to Eton. Eton shakes his head, no.

JOHN BROWN

My name is John Brown. My men and I
will not lay down our arms until
every last slave in the south has
been freed! If you want our guns,
you will have to take them from us!

Silence, then. An explosion of whooping and hollering from every soul in the boiler house.

Eton eyes John before looking back out the window at the men outside the door.

J.E.B STUART

Very well. The offer stands. You
have one half hour.

Lieutenant Stuart turns heel and returns to the line, his cohort in tow.

EXT. ARMORY COURTYARD - EVENING

The sun hangs low in the sky, casting long shadows across the yard.

IN THE BOILER HOUSE

Beams of soft orange light shine through cracks in the barricades windows.

Muskets are loaded and propped near windows for quick firing. Men jockey for the best position in the windows.

Eton and Oliver sit next to one another at Eton's window, through which they can see the blue uniforms buzzing outside.

Next to them, two pre-loaded muskets lean against the wall.

Eton looks at Oliver, pale and frightened. A comforting hand on his shoulder is all Eton can offer.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.

Here they come!

John moves to the window where Anthony and his uncle Lewis are stationed. Eton peers through his window just in time to see a line of soldiers, twenty-five long and two deep.

The first line drops to one knee, takes aim and, FIRES!

A violent volley of musket fire, then another. Glass shatters, barricades splinter as half-inch lead balls fly through the windows.

Those who do not duck fast enough are killed or badly wounded, including William Thompson and Albert Hazlett, who are shot through the face and neck.

The Bandits in windows return fire, handing off rifles and muskets to be reloaded between each shot.

It's a free-for-all now. Musket balls crash through the windows and into the bricks outside.

Eton trades Oliver his empty rifle for a loaded one, takes aim, and hits a soldier square in the chest.

At another window, Lewis fires a shot and reloads as Anthony ducks down, dodging a shot by inches.

John brown makes his way about the room, barking orders, FIRING out various windows with a large revolver.

IN THE COURTYARD

The soldiers advance, no more than twenty paces away.

IN THE BOILER HOUSE

Stewart Taylor turns from his window.

STEWART TAYLOR

More around back!

DANGERFIELD

I see em', I see em'.

Dangerfield fires a shot off with his rifle, direct hit! The soldiers drop to their knees and return fire, striking Dangerfield in the arm. He winces and ducks down.

Eton FIRES a shot, killing a soldier not ten paces from the window.

ETON

Load!

He hands his rifle off to Oliver, who is handing Eton the new one when a musket ball slams into Oliver just below the shoulder. The Boy tumbles backward.

ETON (CONT'D)

No!

Eton fires a shot for cover, then ducks low to examine Oliver's wound, a gaping hole in his upper chest.

ETON (CONT'D)

John!

John, still firing his revolver from a window, looks to see his youngest son gravely wounded.

John rushes over, all round him, Bandits are wounded, dying.

John kneels next to his son.

OLIVER BROWN

Father, father it hurts so badly.
Father I don't want to die.

The boy weeps and blubbers. He gasps and coughs blood, scaring him even more.

Seemingly annoyed by the musket balls, John stands and FIRES a few shots out the window at no one in particular.

LEWIS LEARY

They're comin' in!

Eton glances outside: A line of soldiers provide covering fire for a dozen soldiers rushing the door, carrying between them a twelve foot log.

ETON

The door! Hold the door!

While Dangerfield, Eton, Lewis and Anthony fire from the windows. Every able bodied man rushes the door, leaning against it with all their might.

Dangerfield tries his best to pick off the soldiers rushing the door, but every time one falls, they are replaced.

OLIVER BROWN
Father, father please help me.

JOHN BROWN
Silence boy. If you will die, I
will have you die like a man.

John fires more shots out the window, discards his revolver and picks up the bloody musket his son had been handing Eton.

He fires that as well then rushes to help support the door.

Just as he reaches it, BANG! The battering ram hits the door.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Hold!

BANG! Even with nine Bandits behind it the door bends inward.

BANG! Men fall to the floor.

Eton fires his last shot from his musket and looks over at John, who continues to support the door in vain.

John looks up, they lock eyes. Eton affixes his bayonet.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
Here they come!

Everyone scrambles from the door, picking up whatever blunt or sharp object they can find.

BANG! The door splinters and falls away with a CRASH. Soldiers pour into the boiler room. All around is total chaos, over two dozen men fighting nose to nose. Stepping over the wounded to kill one another.

J.E.B Stuart, leading the charge, cavalry sword in hand, singles out John Brown in the corner, pulling a bayonet from a soldier's chest. He moves towards him.

Anthony Copeland Jr fights next to the bloody body of his uncle, Lewis Leary. Lifeless cloudy eyes stare off into oblivion.

Anthony sees a few Bandits fleeing through a window and follows them outside into

THE ARMORY COURTYARD

The four Bandits make it five paces before walking into a half dozen soldiers. They all freeze, and a moment later are gunned down.

THE BOILER HOUSE

Dangerfield fights two soldiers with only a small knife. He kills one, then the other, then takes a bayonet in the back.

He turns on the soldier who did it, slitting his throat.

Two more bayonets bring him to his knees. A final one through the neck finishes Dangerfield Newby.

Eton drives the butt of his musket into a man's teeth, looks, and sees J.E.B Stuart pushing his way toward John, cutting down everyone in his way, including Stewart Taylor.

Eton pushes toward John, who doesn't notice Lieutenant Stuart raise his cavalry sword above his head.

ETON

John!

Eton takes the butt of a musket to the back of the head and falls to the floor. He looks up through blurred vision to see The Lieutenant bring his sword down on John Brown's head.

Everything goes black.

EXT. KANSAS WOODS - NIGHT

Eton wades through the river of fire. Behind him, THE CHORUS fades.

To his left and right, other souls wade through the flames. Too far off to see in any detail.

Deeper and deeper into the flames, Eton follows a silhouette in front of him.

A BLINDING LIGHT, the flames now behind him. Before him, sunshine, BIRDS SING, children laugh, Eton smiles.

INT. VIRGINIA PRISON - DAY

Eton opens his eyes, greeted by a cold concrete ceiling, wet with moisture. He rolls over.

Edwin Coppock still asleep, Anthony stares from his cot.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.

Bad dream?

Eton sits up and rubs the back of his head.

ETON
Good dream, actually.

ANTHONY COPELAND JR.
How's that?

He thinks for a moment.

ETON
Just a feelin' is all.

JOHN BROWN (O.S)
It was The Lord.

Eton looks over. In the cell across from them, John Brown sits on a cot of his own, bloody bandage wrapped around his own head, extending down over one eye.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
He revealed his plan to you. As he did to me.

The pair stare at John through their bars.

JOHN BROWN (CONT'D)
And one day it will all come to fruition.

The sound of footsteps causes the three woke men to look down the hall. Edwin stirs in his cot.

PRISON GUARD
Brown.

The PRISON GUARD (30s), white, wiry and ugly, approaches, flanked by two other MEN (50s), black suits.

The three men reach his cell. John looks up through the bars, his face gaunt beneath a large grey beard.

PRISON GUARD (CONT'D)
It's time.

He unlocks the cell and the two men enter. John stands, brushing himself off. He nods to Eton, Anthony and Edwin.

JOHN BROWN
Gentlemen.

Eton watches as John is led from his cell. The Guard turns to Eton.

PRISON GUARD
Your time'll come, boy.

Eton stares back defiantly, then looks to John, who looks back for a moment, before being led down the hallway and out of sight.

EXT. CHARLOTTE, VIRGINIA - DAY

John sits on the back of a horse drawn wagon surrounded by GUARDS. The procession makes its way through streets lined with JEERING ONLOOKERS.

ONLOOKER

Traitor!

ONLOOKER 2

Bastard!

Some throw trash from their balconies.

ONLOOKER 3

Burn in Hell!

John pays looks at the far off mountains, serene. The wagon continues up the crowded street to the center of town.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE GALLOWS - MOMENTS LATER

The Town Square is packed with people. A red brick city hall stands at one end, the Virginia State flag flying high above.

In the center of the square, a large gallows has been erected. The crowd parts ways for the wagon as it makes its way to the middle, YELLING, JEERING, SPITTING.

ONLOOKER 4

Nigger lover!

Two men stand waiting on the gallows: The MAYOR (60s), dressed in a finely tailored black suit and matching top hat. And The Executioner, dressed for his trade.

John is unloaded from the wagon. Soldiers push the crowd aside as he is led towards the gallows, and up the steps.

John Brown stands between The Mayor and The Executioner. The Mayor carefully unfolds a sheet of paper, clears his throat.

MAYOR

We are gathered here today, in the sight of God, to execute one John Brown, who has been convicted of treason by the State of Virginia, and is sentenced to hang by the neck until dead.

More INSULTS from the crowd. The Mayor gestures for calm.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Do you have any last words.

John reaches slowly into his jacket pocket and hands The Mayor a tattered note. He unravels it, reads it to himself, and stuffs the note in his pocket.

Wordlessly, he gestures to The Executioner, who steps forward binds John's hands. John does not resist.

He places the noose around John's neck.

John barely flinches as the noose is tightened.

He looks out into the mountains.

INT. VIRGINIA PRISON - DAWN

Eton and his fellow prisoners sit around the dank cell. The Prison Guard walking by sneers at him through the bars.

PRISON GUARD

Big day ahead of ya.

He laughs to himself as he walks away, dragging his baton against the cell bars as he goes.

Eton sits up, across from him, Edwin Coppock and Anthony Copeland Jr do the same. Anthony GROANS, a blood stained bandage wrapped around his head.

He notices Eton looking at him, and gives him a nod.

EXT. PRISON GALLOWS - MORNING

Eton, Edwin and Anthony are led out into the small courtyard surrounded by high stone walls.

In the centre of the yard, an old gallows prepared for three men.

There is no mayor, no jeering crowd as the three are lead unceremoniously up the steps where The Prison Executioner awaits them.

The nooses are slid around each of their necks in turn, and tightened.

The first trap door opens.

The second trap door opens.

Eton closes his eyes.

The End.