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12 Years a Slave

By John Ridley

CARD:

FADE IN:

1 INT. TOWNHOUSE/STUDY - DAY 1

-EARLY APRIL, 1841

We are close on a PAIR OF BLACK HANDS as they open AFINELY WRAPPED PACKET OF VIOLIN STRINGS.

WE CUT TO the hands stringing a VIOLIN. It's not a highend piece, but it is quite nice.

WE CUT TO a wide shot of the study. Sitting in a chairwith violin in hand is SOLOMON NORTHUP; a man in his latetwenties. Everything about Solomon, his mien and manner,

is distinguished. But he, too, seems a hardy individual.

Someone who has known manual labor in his time.

Solomon begins to lightly play his violin, as if testingthe strings, their tuning. Satisfied, Solomon begins toplay vigorously. As he does, we make a HARD CUT TO:

2 INT. HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - EVENING 2

We come in on a lively affair. A dinner party is beingthrown within the confines of a fairly stately house. In

attendance are EIGHT COUPLES. All are WHITE and all are FAIRLY YOUNG, in their early twenties. The men and women

are dressed in very fine attire. We should get the sensethat for the most part they are people of means.

The furniture has been set aside in the living room. At the moment the couples are engaged in the dancing of aREEL.

The music they are dancing to is being played by Solomon, having cut directly from the tune he was previouslyplaying. He plays with a light determination, and in noway seems possessed with empty servitude.

Solomon concludes the reel, and the dancers break intoenthusiastic applause, which is followed by personalthanks and congratulations from all. It should be clear

that despite their respective races there is muchadmiration and appreciation for Solomon's abilities.

3 INT. NORTHUP HOUSE/BEDROOM - MORNING 3

It is a Saturday morning. Clad in her finest attire is

ANNE; Solomon's wife, a few years younger than he. We

see also the Northup children: MARGARET who is eight, andALONZO who is five. They are handsome, and well groomedkids. Anne straightens up the children. She finishes,

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 2.

3 CONTINUED:

she rises up and stands behind them, almost as if preparing to pose for a portrait.

They all wait a moment, then Solomon enters the foyer.

He stands and looks admiringly at his family. ADMIRINGLY stressed. It isn't that he doesn't have love for them, he does as well. But in the moment, he truly admires his greatest accomplishment: a family that is healthy and well and provided for. He goes to his children, and hands each a coin, then goes to Anne. Gives her a kiss on the cheek. The children giggle at the sight.

4 EXT. STREET -DAY 4

Solomon and his family are out walking along the streets and groves of Saratoga.

The streets are well populated this morning with many people out strolling. Most are WHITE, but there are BLACKS as well. They are FREED BLACKS who mingle fairly easily - though not always completely - with the whites.

We see, too, a few BLACK SLAVES who travel with their WHITE MASTERS. These pairings are largely from the south and - despite the fact the blacks are slaves - they are not physically downtrodden, not field hands. They are well dressed and "leading apparently an easy life" - comparatively speaking - as they trail their masters.

As they walk, Solomon and his family arrive to an intersection well-worn and muddied from horse and cart

traffic. Solomon and his children easily jump across the muck. Anne stands at the lip of the puddle, calls for Solomon to help her across.

ANNE :

Solomon...

Solomon, turning back to his wife with a broad smile waving her forward:

SOLOMON :

Come, Anne. Jump.

The children, now smiling as well, egg their mother on.

ALONZO MARGARET

Jump. You can make it. I've done it. You can make it.

ANNE:

I will not ruin my dress. Catch me!

Solomon moves close, holds out his arms. Yet, there's still just a bit of mischievousness in his eyes. Anne gives her husband a lightly stern look to which Solomon replies.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON :

I will catch you, Anne.

(beat)

I will.

Again, lightly stern:

ANNE :

You will.

And with that Anne takes the leap. Solomon catches her, swings her around grandly and sets her down lightly to the delighted applause of the children. That done,

Solomon takes Anne's hand and leads her on.

As Solomon and his family make their way, among the slaves on the street, we see one in particular; JASPER.

As he trails his MASTER he can't help but note Solomon and his family as they enter A STORE. His intrigue of this most handsome and harmonious group should be obvious.

With his Master occupied, Jasper moves slyly toward the STORE. Frozen on the spot, Jasper looks on admiringly.

Suddenly a voice barks out-

A VOICE (O.S.)

Jasper! Come on!

5 INT. STORE -LATER 5

We are inside the store of MR. CEPHAS PARKER; a white man and a supplier of general goods. Solomon greets him with:

SOLOMON :

Mr. Parker.

PARKER :

Mr. Northup. Mrs. Northup.

With money in hand the Northup children move quickly about the store looking for items to purchase.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

Anne looks over some silks and fabrics. Parker suggests to Solomon:

PARKER (CONT'D)

A new cravat, Solomon? Pure silk

by way of the French.

SOLOMON :

We are in need of a fresh carryall for the Mrs's travels.

PARKER :

A year's passed? Off to Sandy Hill?

ANNE :

I am.

Using a long pole, Mr. Parker fetches down a CARRY ALL from an upper shelf.

PARKER :

Something to suit your style, but sturdy enough for the forty miles round trip.

Handing the Bag to Anne, she is immediately taken by it.

ANNE :

It's beautiful.

SOLOMON :

(cautiously)

At what price?

ANNE :

We will take it. Children, come see what your father has just purchased for me.

As the children run over - chattering excitedly about the new gift - they RUN PAST JASPER who has quietly entered the store.

At the checkout counter sits a portrait of WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON, the edges draped in black crepe. Before the

book sits a LEDGER. Mr. Parker asks of Solomon:

PARKER :

If you would sign our condolence book. My hope is to find a way to forward it to the Widow Harrison.

Sad days for the nation.

SOLOMON :

Yes, certainly. Poor Mrs. Harrison and her children. I hope brighter times ahead.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 4A.

5 CONTINUED:

Jasper looks scared, timid. It's as though he'd like to engage, but is unsure of as to how. Noting Jasper, Parker says:

PARKER :

A moment, sir, and you will be assisted.

SOLOMON :

If we could discuss the price...

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 5.

5 CONTINUED:

PARKER:

Forgive me, Mrs. Northup. A customer waits. Welcome, sir.
To Jasper, with good nature:

SOLOMON :

Shop well, but mind your wallet.

PARKER:

Ignore the gentleman's nonsense.
Now, may I interest you in a new cravat? Pure silk by way of the--
Before Parker can finish, the door opens. It's Jasper's Master, FITZGERALD. He's stern, clearly displeased.

FITZGERALD :

Jasper!
(to Parker)
My regrets for the intrusion.

SOLOMON :

No intrusion.
Fitzgerald looks to Solomon. It is a cold glare as though he wasn't speaking to, and has no interest in a response from a black man. Looking back to Parker:

FITZGERALD :

Good day, sir.
6 INT. NORTHUP HOUSE/DINING ROOM - EVENING 6
Anne, busy in the kitchen, puts the final touches to the meal, which is just

about to begin. Solomon, in the meanwhile, sits at the head of the table reading from a NEWSPAPER. He reads to his children solemn news of the funeral arrangements for the recently deceased President Harrison.

SOLOMON:

"Thus has passed away from earth
our late President."

Solomon starts from the top of the article.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

"During the morning, from sunrise,
the heavy bells had been pealing
forth their slow and solemn toll
while the minute guns announced
that soon the grave would receive
its trust. Our city as well as
our entire nation has been called
to weep over the fall of a great
and good man. One who was by the
wishes of a large majority of our

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 5A.

6 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

people raised to fill the highest place of trust within their gift.
William Henry Harrison."

A long moment of quiet, the family continuing to eat.

Then, from Margaret:

MARGARET :

Will you read it again?

ANNE :

Not just now, darling.

Anne enters the dining room and places a large chicken at the center of the table. As she takes a seat, all heads are bowed.

MARGARET :

For food that stays our hunger,
For rest that brings us ease,
For homes where memories linger,
We give our thanks for these.

ALL :

Amen.

SOLOMON :

Margaret, that was wonderful.

MARGARET :

Thank you, Papa.

SOLOMON :

Alonzo, do you have something to say?

ALONZO :

Yes, I helped Momma make this.

ANNE :

Yes, and you were such a good help. Especially making the gravy.

MARGARET :

Papa, I would very much like to learn how to play the violin.
Could you teach me?

ALONZO :

Me too!

MARGARET :

Yes, but I asked Papa first.

SOLOMON :

Both of you, calm down. We will have our first lesson after this
wonderful dinner. And on that
note, let's start eating.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 5B.

6 CONTINUED:

The family all tuck in to their meal. The scene is one of warmth and
happiness.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 6. 6.

7 INT. NORTHUP HOUSE - NIGHT 7

Solomon and Anne have fun and difficulty putting the unruly children to bed.
They are tucked in, and each given a kiss good night. As Margaret lays down
to sleep,
Anne blows out the candle darkening the room.

Silhouetted in the doorway, Solomon takes Anne in his arms, holds her tightly as they both luxuriate in the simple, beautiful gift that is their children.

7A INT. NORTHUP HOUSE - NIGHT 7A *

Now alone together, we see Anne and Solomon wrapped in each other's arms. Beyond being physically close, emotionally close, they are just so very comfortable with one another. They are the very representation of a couple who are made for each other. They look at each other for a prolonged time. *

SOLOMON :

(comically forlorn)

Three weeks. Two days.

*

*

*

ANNE :

It is the custom. I wonder what you'll do without me?

*

*

*

SOLOMON :

I won't stay idle.

*

*

SOLOMON's eyes lower. *

ANNE :

Darling, it's good money.

*

*

SOLOMON :

If only I didn't have to share your cooking with other people.

*

*

*

ANNE holds his gaze. *

You don't.

ANNE *

*

They kiss. *

8 OMIT 8

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 7.

9 EXT. NORTHUP HOUSE - MORNING 9

We are just outside the Northup house. A CARRIAGE waits with a DRIVER. Anne and the children are dressed for travel - Anne sporting HER NEW CARRY ALL. The Driver loads bags into the carriage.

For her parting gift, Anne gives her husband a kiss.

SOLOMON :

Travel safely.

ANNE :

Stay safely.

Anne and the children loaded up, the Driver chides the horse and the carriage heads off. Solomon waves a hearty good bye to his wife and children.

10 EXT. PARK -DAY 10

Solomon is now out for a stroll. He passes two men - two in particular - who stand outside conversing with MR.

MOON himself:

is about 40, with a countenance indicating shrewdness and intelligence. Hamilton is closer to 25, a man of fair complexion and light eyes. Both are finely, if perhaps a bit garishly, dressed. Hamilton, as Solomon describes him, slightly effeminate.

Moon, spotting Solomon:

MR. MOON

Call the Devil's name... There he is now. Mr. Northup...! I have two gentlemen who should make your acquaintance. Messrs. Brown and Hamilton.

BROWN :

Sir.

MR. MOON

Mr. Northup, these two gentlemen were inquiring about distinguished individuals, and I was just this very moment telling them that Solomon Northup is an expert player on the violin.

HAMILTON :

He was indeed.

SOLOMON :

Mr. Moon is being overly gracious.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 8.

10 CONTINUED:

BROWN :

Taking into consideration his graciousness and your modesty, may we trouble you for a moment of your time to converse, sir?

11 EXT. PARK/PAVILION - LATER 11

We make a jump to a green space. Solomon, Brown and Hamilton are sitting at a bench.

SOLOMON :

A circus?

HAMILTON :

That is our usual employee. The company currently in the city of Washington.

BROWN :

Circus too constricting a word to describe the talented and merry band with which we travel. It is

a spectacle unlike most have ever witnessed. Creatures from the darkest Africa as yet unseen by civilized man. Acrobats from the Orient able to contort themselves in the most confounding manners.

HAMILTON :

And I myself in aid of Mr. Brown; an internationally renowned practitioner in the art of prestidigitation.

BROWN :

We are on our way thither to rejoin the company having left for a short time to make a small profit from our own exhibitions.

HAMILTON :

The reason for our inquiry with Mr. Moon...

BROWN :

Yes. We had just a devil of a time in procuring music for our
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 9.

11 CONTINUED:

BROWN (CONT'D)

entertainments. Men of true
talent seemingly in short supply.

SOLOMON :

Thank you sir...

BROWN :

If we could persuade you to accompany us as far as New York...
We would give you one dollar for each day's service and three dollars
for every night played at our performances. In addition we would provide
sufficient pay for the expenses of your return from New York here to
Saratoga.

SOLOMON :

You understand this is all very sudden.

HAMILTON :

Consider it an opportunity to see the country-

SOLOMON :

It's intriguing...

HAMILTON :

If there is any way in which you would give consideration to the offer...
Solomon gives the whole deal one last consideration.

SOLOMON :

The payment offered is enticement enough, as is my desire to visit the
metropolis.

HAMILTON :

We are delighted, sir. So
delighted. Though we would add that our travel plans-

BROWN :

We would like to depart with haste.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 10.

11 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON:

As luck would have it, my wife and children are traveling. I will write her of our plans.

BROWN:

Excellent! I would beg you collect yourself, then we may proceed.

12 INT. NORTHUP HOUSE/BEDROOM - LATER 12

Back in his house, we see Solomon packing: putting some clothes in a travel case, and collecting his violin as well.

13 INT. NORTHUP HOUSE/STUDY - LATER 13

Solomon sits down to write a letter; pen poised over paper with already a few lines written. But Solomon thinks better of it. WITH LITTLE THOUGHT HE TEARS THE PAPER AND SETS IT ASIDE. WE SHOULD GET THE SENSE THAT THE ABSOLUTE VALUE OF BEING ABLE TO COMMUNICATE BY LETTER IS LOST ON SOLOMON. THIS FACT WILL HAVE GREAT WEIGHT IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

14 EXT. SOLOMON'S HOUSE/INT. COVERED CARRIAGE - LATER 14

Solomon enters the buggy, carpet bag in hand. Brown and Hamilton are waiting. They ride in a covered carriage led by a pair of "noble" horses.

HAMILTON :

No letter to post?

SOLOMON:

No need. My return will coincide with my family's.

BROWN :

We're off then.

15 INT. PUB -EVENING 15

-MID TO LATE APRIL, 1841

We find ourselves in a roadside pub. It serves the purpose of drinking and diversion, and little more. As

Solomon plays his violin, Brown and Hamilton perform a decent, paired magic routine before a SPARSE AUDIENCE NOT OF "SELECT CHARACTER."

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 11.

16 INT. PUB -LATER 16

After the show, the pub now fairly empty, Solomon, Hamilton and Brown sit down to eat. Hamilton and Brown drink, but again Solomon abstains. Though Solomon remains cool, Hamilton and Brown put up a great show of being disappointed as Hamilton counts out what little money was collected.

HAMILTON :

Not an additional tip from a one of them. They expect to be entertained for nothing.

BROWN :

And not satisfied a bit despite giving them more than what they paid for.

SOLOMON :

It's the national mood. There's too much grief to make room for frivolity.

HAMILTON :

My sincerest apologies, Solomon.

You were promised opportunity, and you were given none.

BROWN :

The opportunity is with the circus. A two man show poorly promoted, what were we to expect?

But the circus bills itself.

HAMILTON :

True.

BROWN :

I have told you of the circus with which we are connected. Creatures from the darkest of Africa.

Acrobats from the Orient who--

SOLOMON :

You have described it, yes.

BROWN :

Yes. We need to return immediately to Washington.

Solomon...I believe us familiar
enough now, but forgive me if I am bold...would you consider making the trip
with us?

Solomon gives a bit of a laugh at the idea.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT

CONTINUED:

HAMILTON:

Entertaining at pubs and inns has
its place, but a man of your
skills deserves better.

BROWN :

Hear, hear.

HAMILTON:

And more importantly you would
build your own name and following.
The circus tends to attract those
with the highest of reputations.
An introduction here and there
could amount to a lifetime of
reward. Now would be the time.
With your family away, an
opportunity presents itself.

BROWN:

Said as fellow artists as well as
businessmen. Well worth the
effort at least.

SOLOMON:

You present a flattering
representation. As my family will
be traveling back shortly, perhaps
I might commit only to one trial
engagement.

HAMILTON:

Oh, very good, sir. Very good. I
cannot recall being so excited.

BROWN:

There is a practical concern. If you are to continue on with us you should obtain your free papers.

SOLOMON :

Not necessary.

BROWN:

Here in New York, no. But we will be entering slave states and as a matter of precaution... It's to all our benefit we should not have to come to account for your well being.

HAMILTON:

Six shillings worth of effort could well save much trouble later.

12.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 12A.

16 CONTINUED:

BROWN :

We'll go to the Customs House in the morning, then travel on. Good business all around.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 13.

17 OMIT 17

18 EXT. WASHINGTON -DAY 18

The city is a swarm of people. At the moment the populace is displaying both sorrow and anticipation. Sorrow for the loss of the President. Many are dressed in black, and black crepe hangs nearly everywhere. Black armbands are frequently seen, and the occasional American flag hung at half mast. As well, there are portraits of Harrison at varying locations.

Having arrived in Washington, Solomon, Hamilton and Brown RIDE ONWARD IN THEIR CARRIAGE.

19 INT. GADSBY HOTEL/DINNING ROOM - EVENING 19

A decent though crowded, boisterous and smoke-filled joint. Very lively. Solomon, Hamilton and Brown are among several parties drinking in the hotel's bar. As

with seemingly everywhere in the city black crepes accessorize the background. Brown counts out \$43.00 IN COIN on the tabletop. Solomon is astonished by the amount.

BROWN :

Forty-three dollars. All to you.

SOLOMON:

That...it's far more than my wages amount to.

BROWN:

Consider the remainder an advance from the circus. I cannot tell you...I honestly wish you had seen the expression of our director when I described your abilities. He was fairly overcome with excitement.

HAMILTON:

You should have invited him to sup with us.

BROWN:

I did. I did, but so many preparations before the company is to depart.

SOLOMON :

Gentlemen-

BROWN:

Tomorrow we shall prepare for our Washington debut. But tonight, our thoughts are with the great man

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 13A.

19 CONTINUED:

BROWN (CONT'D)

for whom this city prepared solemn memorial. He has passed from the

praise of men to receive the
plaudit of his heavenly father. A
fine man has passed. Let us
remember him with a drink.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 14.

19 CONTINUED:

Both Hamilton and Brown hold up their tankards to drink.
Solomon, a bit reluctantly, does the same.

HAMILTON :

Cheers.

BROWN:

Another. Our departed President
deserves all the salutation we can
imbibe.

Hamilton and Brown drink again, and Solomon does as well.

20 OMIT 20

21 OMIT 21

22 EXT. ALLEY -LATER 22

WE MAKE A HARD CUT to Solomon outside of the Pub, in analley, with Brown
and Hamilton in silhouette, back-lit bythe street lights. He is violently
ill, hunched over andretching horribly.

HAMILTON:

That's all right Solomon. No
shame in it. No shame at all.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 15.

A23 INT. GADSBY HOTEL - STAIRCASE A23

Hamilton and Brown help Solomon to lumber up the spiralstaircase, passing
the occasional bemused guest.

23 INT. GADSBY HOTEL/SOLOMON'S ROOM - NIGHT 23

Hamilton is placing a spittoon near Solomon's bed, wherea prone and
reeling Solomon lays. Hamilton sits on the
bed. As he strokes Solomon's sweaty face, Hamiltonspeaks sweetly.

HAMILTON:

I'm afraid that Brown and I
haven't brought you much luck.

But rough waters bring smooth
sailing. Eventually they do.

SOLOMON :

....So...so sorry...

HAMILTON:

Shhh. We won't hear it. We
won't.

BROWN :

Let him sleep.

HAMILTON:

Hmm. A good night's sleep. And
tomorrow...tomorrow you will feel
as well and refreshed as though
the earth were new again.

Hamilton lingers a bit too long and a bit too close to Solomon for
Brown's taste. With more than a bit of

signification:

BROWN:

Hamilton! Nothing more we can do
for him.

HAMILTON :

Such is the pity.

Displaying an odd sort of disappointment, Hamilton slinks away from the bed.
He crosses to, and BLOWS OUT A CANDLE. The room goes dark with a blackness
more than night. Brown and Hamilton exit. Solomon lays in the dark and moans.
His sounds becoming MORE AND MORE DISTRESSED.

24 INT. BURCH'S DUNGEON - DAWN 24

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 16.

24 CONTINUED:

Solomon stirs, then slowly awakes to his new circumstances. He finds himself
in a nearly lightless room about twelve feet square with walls of solid
masonry. There is a thick and well-locked door, a small window covered with
iron bars and a shutter. The only furniture is a wood stool and an old
fashioned, dirty boxstove. As Solomon rises he sees that his HANDS are
CUFFED - the chain running to a bolt in the ground - and his LEGS IN IRONS.
At first Solomon is incredulous. But
that emotion is replaced first by fury and then panic.
He begins to pull on the chains, fight against them. He

does so with increasing desperation. Solomon flails about, the sounds of the steel chains whipping and beating against the masonry. He grunts and screams without regard as the cuffs and irons bite into his flesh, but he cannot pull himself free.

After several minutes of intense effort, Solomon tires, slows, then finally he collapses. And in this collapsed state he remains.

25 INT. BURCH'S DUNGEON - MORNING 25

Solomon again awakens. He hears sounds beyond the door...footsteps.

Eventually the door opens. Enter

JAMES BURCH - who runs the slave pen - and EBENEZER RADBURN who works as a turnkey and overseer.

As the door opens, this is the first light to seep into the otherwise near-black room. The shine is painful to Solomon's eyes. With no salutation whatsoever, Burch asks:

BURCH :

Well, my boy, how yah feel now?

Solomon rises up as best he can. With all the resolve he can put together he states what he considers to be fact:

SOLOMON:

I am Solomon Northup. I am a free man; a resident of Saratoga, New York. The residence also of my wife and children who are equally free. I have papers. You have no right whatsoever to detain me-

BURCH :

Yah not any-

SOLOMON:

And I promise you -I promise upon my liberation I will have satisfaction for this wrong.

BURCH:

Resolve this. Produce your papers.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 17.

25 CONTINUED:

With confidence Solomon goes to the pocket of his trousers. He searches one,

then the other, but they are empty. He feels quickly about himself, but clearly his papers have been lifted. Solomon's confidence shifts, but to resolve rather than fear. Papers or none, he will not be easily cowed. Still, Burch asserts:

BURCH (CONT'D)

Yah no free man. And yah ain't from Saratoga. Yah from Georgia.

A moment. Not a word spoken among the trio, but Solomon and Burch do some serious eye fucking, neither manyielding. Burch says again:

BURCH (CONT'D)

Yah ain't a free man. Yah nuthin' but a Georgia runaway.

Burch waits for Solomon to acquiesce. Solomon does not in any way. Both men exchange a long and daring stare.

The two are clearly at an intellectual stand off. Burch, leans to Radburn, SAYS SOMETHING WHICH WE CANNOT DISTINGUISH.

Radburn walks off-camera and returns with a pair of "instruments:" a PADDLE - the flattened portion, which is about the size in circumference of two open hands, and bored with a small auger in numerous places. He also carries a WHIP. A cat-o-nine tails; a large rope of many strands. The strands unraveled and a knot tied at the extremity of each. Burch says again:

BURCH (CONT'D)

Yah a runaway nigger from Georgia.

Solomon stands with a quiet stoicism. He will say nothing of the kind.

As that is the case, Solomon is seized by both men. He is pulled over the bench, face downward, shirt still on his back. Radburn then STEPS ON HIS CHAINS, holding Solomon down in a bent position.

With no preamble, Burch begins to beat Solomon about the back with the paddle. Burch strikes him wordlessly - not taunting, no sneering. Solomon screaming against each blow. His back immediately SWELLING WITH WELTS AND BRUISES.

This beating continues on and on and on until quite literally Burch WEARS HIMSELF OUT with the effort.

Dripping in sweat and panting:

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 18.

25 CONTINUED:

BURCH (CONT'D)

Yah still insist yah a free man?

SOLOMON :

...I...I insist...

Burch regrets hearing this. Not from sympathy, but rather because he's nearly too tired to go back to beating Solomon. Yet, as if returning to work, Burch returns to pummeling Solomon. Burch punctuates the blow with:

BURCH :

Yah a slave. Yah a Georgia slave!

Burch continues to strike, and strike... This time until the paddle SNAPS IN HALF. Burch then GRABS THE WHIP.

Hardly missing a stroke, he whips Solomon relentlessly, the flails cutting into Solomon's back. Again, Burch's arm tires before Solomon "breaks."

BURCH (CONT'D)

Are yah slave?

SOLOMON :

...No...

Burch goes back to whipping and whipping, and whipping...

SOLOMON'S BACK IS NOW TORN OPEN WITH LACERATIONS AND OOZING WITH BLOOD. Finally Burch can whip no more. He

pours sweat and sucks air, leaving himself just enough energy to take up his instruments and EXIT. Radburn

lingers for a moment. He takes the irons off Solomon's legs. Opens the window some. As he makes these gestures, in a patronizing and confidential manner, one wrought with poor sincerity::

RADBURN :

I seen a good many of the black kind just where yah're. Sick.

Make me sick. Often times the

situation was resolved, and I think; what was all the beatin' and abuse for? Things end as they should, and the violence was for naught. So why cause trouble when they ain't no cause for it? Be of

a cooperative nature, and things don't need be particularly unpleasant. (beat)

Or, yah can carry on like yah been, and I fear yah won't live to see Sunday next.

With that thought, Radburn exits. Solomon rests. But to rest seems like giving in to defeat. He begins pulling

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 19.

25 CONTINUED:

on his chains. But for all his struggling, the chain loosens none. Solomon calls out:

SOLOMON :

Help me! Someone help me!

If anyone at all hears him, they do not respond. Solomon continues his plaintive cry for assistance.

26 EXT. BURCH'S DUNGEON - CONTINUOUS 26

Beginning with a TIGHT SHOT on the shuttered, barred window of Burch's dungeon - Solomon's cries barely eking beyond the space - THE CAMERA PULLS BACK from the building, onto the city until clearly visible is the Nation's capital. It's icon's of freedom - the WHITE HOUSE, the CAPITOL BUILDING - fairly mocking Solomon's captivity. Simultaneously, barren at the early hour and cluttered with litter and the remains of previous day's procession, the city is a bleak and forboding sight.

27 INT. BURCH'S DUNGEON - DAY 27

IT IS DAY NOW. The door to the yard is thrown open. The harsh white light floods all over Solomon.

28 OMITTED 28

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 20.

28 CONTINUED:

29 MOVED TO SC. A32 29

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 21.

30 EXT. BURCH'S DUNGEON/YARD - DAY 30

It is a yard just beyond Burch's. The yard is hemmed in by a brick wall. In the yard are two men, and a boy.

The oldest is CLEMENS RAY a man of about 25 years of age.

He is well educated. JOHN WILLIAMS is about 20 years old. He is born and bred a slave, is lacking in education, and overwhelmed with fear of the situation.

Finally there is a child about 10 years of age who answers to the name of Randall.

Solomon, Clemens Ray, John and Randall ALL STAND NAKED.

Though they try to cover their privates a bit, they are all aware of the uselessness of modesty. Radburn is

present. He has before him A COUPLE OF BUCKETS OF COLD

WATER. He throws water on the naked men.

RADBURN :

Go on. Wash up.

The men, soaking in humility as well as water, begin to scrub with A SINGLE BAR OF HARSH SOAP passed among them.

RADBURN (CONT'D)

The boy, too. Get him clean.

Solomon takes some soap and rubs it over Randall.

RADBURN (CONT'D)

Scrub now. Git 'em clean.

Solomon scrubs harder. Randall - clearly cold anduncomfortable - appeals to Solomon.

RANDALL:

Do you know when my Mama will come?

RADBURN :

Hush him up!

Seeing Solomon has no answer for him, Randall begins to cry.

RANDALL:

Mama ..! Mama! Is she going to come?

Doing all he can to spare the child from a certainbeating:

SOLOMON :

Quiet, please.

Randall is becoming nearly inconsolable.

RANDALL :

Mama!

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 21A.

30 CONTINUED:

Saying anything to keep the boy quiet:

SOLOMON:

Your mother will come, I swear she will, but you must be silent.

Please. Be silent!

On the seeming strength of Solomon's promise, Randallgoes silent. Solomon looks to Radburn, who just throwswater on the soapy men.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 22.

31 OMITTED 31

A32 INT. BURCH'S DUNGEON - EVENING A32

Radburn brings food in to Solomon; a shriveled piece ofmeat and some water. Just barely enough to sustainSolomon. Radburn also has a SHIRT.

RADBURN:

That old thing of yours is just rags and tatters. Need something proper to wear.

Solomon doesn't move for the clothing.

RADBURN (CONT'D)

Go on. Put it on.

With slow defiance, Solomon does as instructed. He removes what remains of his old shirt - the one he was wearing when first kidnapped - and puts on the one Radburn brought him. The shirt's ill-fitting and dirty.

Despite that, Radburn says:

RADBURN (CONT'D)

There. That's fine. That's fine. Got no gratitude?

SOLOMON :

...Thank you...

RADBURN:

Yah keep bein' proper, yah'll see how things work out.

Radburn starts to take the old shirt.

SOLOMON :

No! It was from my wife.

RADBURN:

Rags and tatters. Rags and tatters.

Taking the shirt, the "rags and tatters" as he callsthem, Radburn exits, locking the door behind him.

Solomon sits with the plate of food before him. He pushes the plate away rather than eat.

32 EXT. BURCH'S DUNGEON/YARD - DAY 32

Sitting together out in the yard are Clemens Ray, Johnand Solomon. Over time they have drawn trustworthyenough to speak with one another. At the moment Solomon

is still trying to apply reason to the situation.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 22A.

32 CONTINUED:

Randall wanders about in the background. As usual, he calls out for his "Mama." By now, however, his call should feel like little more than background noise.

SOLOMON :

This can't stand. It is a crime.
I believe now someone lay in wait for me. My drink was altered...
We are free men. They have...they have no right to hold us.
Solomon waits for a response from the others. They give none.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

We need a sympathetic ear. If we have an opportunity to explain our situation-

CLEMENS :

Who in your estimation is that sympathetic ear?

SOLOMON :

The two men I journeyed with. I'm certain they're making inquiries at this very moment.

CLEMENS :

I would be just as certain they are counting the money paid for delivering you to this place.

SOLOMON :

They were not kidnappers. They were artists. Fellow performers.

CLEMENS :

You know that? You know for certain who they were?

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 23.

32 CONTINUED:

The fact is, Solomon can't say for certain.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

How I reckon the situation:
whatever past we had...well,
that's done now. The reality to come is us being transported southward.
New Orleans if I were
to venture. After we arrive,
we'll be put to market. Beyond that... Well, once in a slave state I
suppose there's only one outcome.

JOHN :

No.

CLEMENS :

I don't say that to give you empty agitation, John...

JOHN :

For y'all. For y'all they ain't nothin' but that! But John was'n kidnapped. John bein' hold as debt, tha's all. Massa pay his debt, and John be redeemed-

CLEMENS :

Boy, our masters will not come for us.

John is nearly beside himself with panic.

JOHN :

Now John's...John's sorry for y'all, but tha's how it be. Where y'all goin', yah goin' witout John. Massa take care of me. Massa take care.

RANDALL :

Mama!

All three men turn and look. At the moment Randall doesn't call out emptily. At the door to the yard is Burch along with two women. One in her late twenties;

ELIZA. She is "arrayed in silk, with rings upon her fingers, and golden ornaments suspended from her ears."

Though a slave, Eliza was a mistress and has - to this point - lived well. This is reflected in her airs and

her speech. The other is a little girl, light in skin color, of about seven or eight. This is EMILY, Randall's half sister.

As she enters the yard Eliza squeals with high delight, then breaks into tears of both sorrow and joy. Clearly this is mother and child being reunited.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 24.

32 CONTINUED:

As Burch locks the yard door, Eliza clutches Randall. She is overcome with emotion.

ELIZA :

My darling. My sweet, sweet baby.

33 INT. BURCH'S DUNGEON - EVENING 33

Later in the evening. Solomon now shares his space with Eliza and her children. As the children rest, Eliza drops into a lament as if pleading her case to Solomon who lends a sympathetic ear.

Both slyly, and with a bit of aggrandizement:

ELIZA:

When I say I had my master's favor, you understand. Above even his own wife, I had it. Do you know that he built a house for me? Built it on the sole condition that I reside there with him. The added promise in time I would be emancipated. And for nine years he blessed me with every comfort and luxury in life.

Displaying the finery she still wears:

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Silks and jewels and even servants to wait upon us. Such was our life, and the life of this beautiful girl I bore for him.

But Master Berry's daughter...she always looked at me with an unkind nature. She hated Emily no matter she and Emily were flesh of flesh. As Master Berry's health failed, she gained power in the household. Eventually, I was brought to the city on the false pretense of our free papers being executed. If I had known what waited; to be sent south? I swear I would not have come here alive.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 25.

33 CONTINUED:

Eliza turns to her children:

ELIZA (CONT'D)

My poor, poor babies.

34 INT. BURCH'S DUNGEON - NIGHT 34

It's the deep of night, all are sleeping. A KEY TURNS IN THE LOCK AND THE DOOR OPENS. Burch enters with Radburn beside him. Both carry LANTERNS with them. Hardly giving Solomon and Eliza a moment to rouse themselves,

Burch demands:

BURCH:

Come on. Get yer blankets. Get up.
Sensing that things will not end well:

ELIZA :

No, please don't...

BURCH:

I don't want to hear yer talk.
Get in the yard.

ELIZA :

Please...

RADBURN :

Ain't no need for all that.
Puttin' hand to Randall's head.
RADBURN (CONT'D)
Jus takin' a lil' trip, tha's all.
Don't want to frighten the
children none over a lil' boat
ride, do yah?
Eliza gives a shake of her head to the negative.
RADBURN (CONT'D)
Alright then. Git yerselves up.

35 EXT. BURCH'S DUNGEON/YARD - NIGHT 35

We now have Solomon, Clemens, John, Eliza and the children. They are being cuffed together. As John is cuffed, he pulls back. Scared. He begins in desperation:

JOHN:

John's massa gunna pay his debt.
John's massa gunna come for him.
(CONTINUED)

A36

36

37

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 26-28.

CONTINUED:

Not wanting to hear any of this talk, Burch strikes John several times in the head with a sap-like instrument.

Weakened, but again:

JOHN (CONT'D)

John's massa gunna-

Burch again strikes John until he's quiet. Curiously,

Emily and Randall don't even flinch. Why would they?

They are quite used to seeing this kind of violence.

BURCH:

Not a word out of none a yah. Not a word.

Burch and Radburn begin driving the shackled slaves from the yard.

EXT. BURCH'S DUNGEON/INT. WAGON/FLAT BED - LATER A36

The slaves are lead to a flat bed of the horse and carriage. They are made to lay down side-by-side. We stay with them as some sort of cloth is flung over them, obscuring and blacking out their view.

At that moment, the screen is BLACKENED and we hear the sound of the cart moving in haste.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. DOCK - NIGHT 36

Led by Burch, the group of slaves arrive to a dock. They are taken quickly up a gangplank and onto the steamboat ORLEANS as the CAPTAIN, CREW and a MULATTO WOMAN WATCH, but do not interfere.

INT. ORLEANS/HOLD - CONTINUOUS 37

The slaves are hustled down one at a time into a dark, dank hold among barrels and boxes of freight...and RATS.

Burch comes around and "checks" the chains; makes sure they are all secure and locked.

Satisfied, he heads up out of the hold. Radburn follows.

Alone in the dark in the hold, John cries, as does Eliza.

Solomon stares down Burch for as long as he can, as if wishing bad things.

As if wanting to exact some measure of revenge. But the greater insult is that Burch and Radburn, engaged in conversation, take no notice of Solomon whatsoever. He is that insignificant to them.

That fact, that reality, makes Solomon boil with a rage he cannot express in

words.

OMIT 38

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 26-28A. 26-28A.

38A INT. STEAMBOAT - NIGHT 38A *

We are now in the engine room of the steamboat, pistons *
pumping, black oily cogs turning, the power and the *
rhythm are both aggressive and hypnotic. A shovel comes *
into view, feeding the furnace. *

38B EXT. SEA - DUSK/DAWN 38B *

The steamboat is en route between Washington and Norfolk. *
We tilt up from the violent water foam to the powering *
paddles of the boat. *

39 MOVED TO 43A 39 *

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 29.

40 OMIT 40 *

41 OMIT 41

42 OMIT 42

43 INT. ORLEANS/HOLD - LATER - NIGHT 43

Down in the hold the slaves eat, pray. The MULATTO WOMAN moves among them,
catching ELIZA's eye.

MULATTO WOMAN :

Cheer up and don't be so cast down.

*

Clemens Ray and Solomon watch as the Mulatto Woman returns to top deck, the
trapdoor locked firmly behind her. Clemens Ray turns to Solomon with a
deadpan stern expression.

CLEMENS RAY :

If you want to survive, do and say as little as possible. Tell no
one who you really are and tell no one that you can read and write.

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(CONTINUED)

43

1/24/13

CONTINUED:

FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 30.

43

Clemens Ray turns away from Solomon, eyes lost into the distance.

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CLEMENS RAY (CONT'D)

(slowly)

Unless you want to be a dead nigger.

Solomon's face is one of a confused despair.

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43A EXT. NORFOLK/PORT - DAY 43A

We see a flat overhead view of the port of Norfolk.

Sardines are laid out to dry in rows, glittering in the day's sun as if like silver pennies. A chain of slaves enter the frame and are led one by one on to the docked vessel.

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MORE SLAVES - about 15 in all, of various genders and ages - are brought on board. Chief among them is ROBERT who fights viciously with his captors.

"With all haste"

is shoved down into the hold.

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Having taken their cargo as far as they care or need to,

Burch and Radburn depart. They do so without a word spoken to Solomon or the others.

With this new and sizable batch of slaves on board, the crew again CASTS OFF, and the Orleans makes its way again.

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44 INT. ORLEANS/GALLEY 44

Solomon is back cleaning in the galley. As he cleans, he again watches Robert prep food. Robert's skill with a knife is not lost on Solomon.

45 INT. HOLD - LATER - DAY 45 *

The hold is packed tighter now.

Muzzle covering his face, Robert is shackled with his hands tied behind his back. Solomon and Clemens Ray look on.

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A sailor descends the staircase and takes off Robert's muzzle, shooting him a forbidding look. He leaves.

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(CONTINUED)

45

1/24/13

CONTINUED:

FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 31.

45

CUT TO:

Solomon, Clemens Ray and Robert, now in mid-conversation.

ROBERT :

I say we fight.

Robert delivers this in a hushed voice.

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SOLOMON :

The crew is fairly small. If it were well planned, I believe they could be strong armed.

CLEMENS RAY :

Three can't stand against a whole crew. The rest here are niggers,

born and bred slaves. Niggersain't got the stomach for a fight,
not a damn one.

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ROBERT :

All I know, we get where wetravelling we'll wish we'd died
trying.

CLEMENS RAY :

Survival is not about certain
death, it is about keeping yourhead down.

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Solomon looks at Clemens Ray, agitated -- his voice nowraised above the
previous whispers. Grits his teeth.

SOLOMON :

Days ago I was with my family, inmy home. Now you tell me all islost. "Tell
no one who I really
am" if I want to survive. I don't
want to survive, I want to live.

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46 OMIT 46 *

47 OMIT 47 *

47A EXT. SEA -DAY 47A *

The steamboat paddles pound the water, filling the wholeframe. The vessel ploughs on south.

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1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 32. 32.

48 OMIT 48 *

48A INT. HOLD -NIGHT 48A *

The slaves are asleep.

A Sailor descends the ladder approaching Eliza. He bends down and attempts to wake the daughter by caressing herface.

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Solomon rouses, and looks across to witness the scene.

From his vantage point, we see Eliza stand to interruptthe Sailor. The Sailor looks at Eliza, Eliza looks backat him. Knowingly she leads him off into a corner of thehold.

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As she does so, Eliza passes Robert who jumps up to standbetween Eliza and the Sailor. Stretching out a firm handto the sailor's shoulder, Robert's look says "No you don't."

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Clemens Ray is awake now, watching.

There is an odd moment of stillness between the Sailor and Robert, an impasse.

We focus on the Sailor's face. Slowly, a greasy smileerupts upon it. Back now to Robert's face, a look of incomprehension.

Robert looks down. We follow his gaze to the knife thathas already been jabbed unseen between Robert's ribs.

The sailor withdraws the bloody blade.

A wide shot of the two men. Robert collapses to thefloor like a sack of

potatoes.

Clemens Ray and Solomon react. Complete horror.

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49 OMIT 49 *

50 OMIT 50 *

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 33.

51 EXT. ORLEANS/DECK - DAY 51

We are back up on the deck of the ship. SOLOMON AND CLEMENS RAY dump ROBERT's body over the side of the ship. Solomon watches as the body churns for a moment in the wake of the vessel... then sinks beneath the water. Clemens Ray, with no sentimentality:

CLEMENS RAY :

Better off. Better than us.

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51A EXT. NEW ORLEANS HARBOUR - DAY 51A *

Solomon's POV from the back of the steamship of Robert's corpse slipping gracefully into the water.

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52 EXT. NEW ORLEANS/PORT - DAY

-MID MAY, 184152

A white male, fairly smart, with broad shoulders, stands and bellows-

RAY :

Clemens...! Clemens Ray!

We are in the port of New Orleans, one of the busiest in the young nation.

On the dock itself there is a bustle of activity as goods are loaded and unloaded from a various ships. It's a bit of controlled chaos as a VARIETY OF LANGUAGES are spoken and shouted while slaves are shuttled from the Orleans to a holding pen. Solomon, and all the slaves are overwhelmed by all that is happening around them.

Two men - among many - are awaiting the arrival of the Orleans. They are JONUS RAY - Clemens Ray's master - and DAVIS who is the solicitor of Mr. Ray. They both look like they mean business. The moment the gangplank is laid, Ray yells for Clemens.

Clemens, seeing his master, is nearly crazy with delight. He is, uncharacteristically beside himself. Ironically, his master now represents "freedom."

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 34.

52 CONTINUED:

CLEMENS :

...My master... Master Ray, sir!

Master Ray!

Clemens pulls on his chain. As he does so, Several other slaves collapse in his effort to reach his master, like dominos.

RAY :

Who is in charge of this vessel?

CAPTAIN :

I am the Captain.

RAY :

I am Mr. Jonus Ray. My solicitor has documentation verifying that the Negro named Clemens Ray is my property.

As he reads PAPERS handed to him by Davis:

CAPTAIN :

I know nothing of-

RAY :

You are ordered by court to return that property immediately, or face charges of thievery.

CAPTAIN :

My duty is to transport goods. I

am not responsible for their origin.

RAY :

Remove these contraptions!

To his mate:

CAPTAIN :

Free him!

Biddee does as ordered. Once free, Clemens hugs and sob over his master as would a lost and then found child.

RAY :

It's all well, now, Clemens. You will return home with me.

(to the Captain)

Consider this notice and warning.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 35.

52 CONTINUED:

Ray, Davis and Clemens head away. Solomon seems both desperate and hopeful of some aid from Clemens and Ray.

But there is none forthcoming. Ray and Clemens continue on - Clemens not so much as even looking back in Solomon's direction. Solomon stands and watches as they fade into the environs and are gone from sight.

53 EXT. NEW ORLEANS/PORT - LATER 53

Hours later. The slaves sit off on one side of the dock, baking in the sun, awaiting their fate.

THEOPHILUS FREEMAN - a tall, thin-faced man with light complexion and a little bent - moves along the deck calling out names from a list. The slaves STAND as they are called.

FREEMAN:

Oren. John. Lethe. Eliza.

Randall. Emily. Platt... Platt!

Solomon does not respond. Freeman looks around. He spots Solomon.

FREEMAN (CONT'D)

Captain, who shipped that nigger?

CAPTAIN :

Burch.

Freeman steps to Solomon. He gives him a looking over.

FREEMAN :

Stand up.

Solomon does as told.

FREEMAN (CONT'D)

You fit the description given.

Why didn't you answer when called?

SOLOMON :

My name is not Platt. My name is-

Freeman strikes Solomon hard across the face.

FREEMAN:

Your name is Platt, and I will
teach you your name so that you
don't forget.

(to the Captain)

Shackle my niggers. Get them to
my cart.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 36.

54 I/E. CART -LATER 54

Solomon is carted off along with the rest of "Burch's stock:" Eliza and
her children, John and Solomon.

As they move off from the port in a make-shift cart, it opens up to the
frenzic, busy port.

For the first time Solomon sees true and severe slavery.

These are not visiting servants, such as Jasper was back in Saratoga. These
are humans held in strict bondage -

herded like cattle, chained together as if in a "chaingang." Slaves are
evident not merely by the color of their skin. The residue and accessories
of slavery are everywhere. Blacks almost universally display scars -

THICK AND HEAVY DEAD TISSUE FROM LACERATIONS LEFT

UNTREATED - brands, and are often missing limbs. Blacks

are held in all types of shackles, from simple chains to elaborate bindings,
to neck collars that are spiked.

Some are muzzled or forced to wear bits. One slave is

attacked by a dog and the slave owner. The dog pulls and tears at the
slave's clothes. THESE IMAGES SHOULD BE A

CONSTANT AND CONTINUAL CANVAS TO THE PIECE. EVER

PRESENT, BUT NOT REALLY COMMENTED ON AS THEY ARE THE NORM. They should be a
reminder that not only are people being oppressed, but that there is an
entire system of oppression in place.

55 EXT. FREEMAN'S SLAVE PEN - LATER 55

"Burch's stock:" arrive at Freeman's slave pen. They are led in by

Freeman and his house slave CAPE - a mulatto.

The yard is enclosed by plank, standing upright, with ends sharpened instead of brick walls as with Burch's.

Including Burch's group there are about 30 SLAVES in the pen.

Solomon and the others look around and see nothing but down-trodden and despondent faces. Three men sit next to each other with muzzles and quietly stare back at this new batch of arrivals. One attempts to speak, but all that comes out is a muffled, unintelligible sound.

56 EXT. FREEMAN'S SLAVE PEN - LATER 56

The slaves are in various states of undress, men and women alike. They clean themselves, scrubbing with soap and water. Women wash their hair. Men shave, skin soiled. Freeman walks among them, inspecting them as they primp themselves.

57 INT. FREEMAN'S SLAVE PEN - LATER 57

The slaves are given new clothes by Cape. The men are given hat, coat, shirt, pants and shoes. The women
(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 37.

57 CONTINUED:

frocks of calico and handkerchiefs to bind about their heads.

58 INT. FREEMAN'S/GREAT ROOM - LATER 58

It's an odd, ironic scene. The slaves are in a large and fairly ornate room within Freeman's house. CAPE PLAYS A PAINFUL TUNE ON A FIDDLE - background music - as Freeman tries to line up A SMALL GROUP OF THE SLAVES, he becomes less patient, jittery and nervous, knowing that his livelihood is at stake, he wants his slaves to make a good impression. Sometimes his patience gets the better of him, and his hands move freely in direction of the slaves.

The business has the air of an etiquette class, though what Freeman is trying to do is coach the slaves into being more "sellable." He works with them in groups of five or so.

FREEMAN:

Tallest to smallest, understand?
Are you taller than her? Then
you'd go before her. Do it.
Move.

(to the group)

Keep your heads up. A sense of
direction; that's how you look
smart. None of those saucer eyes.

Rid yourself of that smile. Look like a goddamn grinnin'; monkey. Put the least thought in your head. C'mon, now. Think of somethin';.

Weary of Cape's playing, Solomon moves to Cape. He asks:

SOLOMON :

Can you play a reel?

CAPE :

(dismissive)

Nah. I don't know no reel.

SOLOMON :

If I may...?

Cape looks to Freeman:

FREEMAN:

He sick of your caterwaulin'. Let him play, boy. Let's see what he can do.

Cape reluctantly hands the fiddle over to Solomon.

Solomon tunes it a bit, then begins to play. His fingers stiff at first, he takes a moment to warm up. But as he warms up he is, despite the circumstances, masterful.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 38.

58 CONTINUED:

THE SLAVES ALL CLAP ALONG. SOME DANCE ALONG. All admire his work. Freeman chief among them.

FREEMAN (CONT'D)

Keep on. Keep on.

Solomon continues to play.

FREEMAN (CONT'D)

A damn sight better than you,

Cape. A damn sight better.

Cape looks bitter as Solomon plays on.

59 INT. FREEMAN'S/GREAT ROOM - DAY 59

We come in on an odd sort of sight; A JUMBLE OF ACTIVITY.

CUSTOMERS have come to see Freeman's lot - the room all gussied up with flowers. Freeman moves among them, displaying them as a rancher would prize chattel.

Freeman makes the slaves hold their heads up - "looksmart" as he previously admonished them. They are made to walk briskly back and forth while customers feel their hands and arms and bodies, turn them about and ask what skills they possess. The Customers routinely make the slaves open their mouths and show their teeth.

At times a MALE or FEMALE SLAVE are taken off to the side, stripped and inspected more minutely.

One of them, John, is stripped and inspected.

Cape, as he's done previously, plays his fiddle.

A buyer - WILLIAM FORD; a man of middle age, and an attractive nature in his tone of voice - consults a list he's drawn up and asks of Freeman:

FORD:

What is the price for the ones Platt and Eliza?

FREEMAN:

A thousand for Platt; he is a nigger of talent. Seven hundred for Eliza. My fairest price.

FORD :

You will accept a note?

FREEMAN :

As always, from you, Mr. Ford.

Eliza is beside herself as it seems she is about to be separated from her family. She begs of Ford:

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 39.

59 CONTINUED:

ELIZA :

Please, sir... Please don't divide my family. Don't take me unless you take my children as well.

FREEMAN :

Eliza, quiet!

ELIZA :

You will have the most faithful

slave in me, sir. The most faithful slave that has ever lived, but I beg that you do not separate us. A BUYER interrupts the skirmish and approaches Freeman and delivers coolly, eyeing Randall-

BUYER :

Your price for the child?

FREEMAN :

You see how fit the boy is. Like ripe fruit. He will grow into a fine beast. Randall is made to run, and jump by FREEMAN - exhibiting his activity and his condition.

FREEMAN (CONT'D)

Six hundred, and that's fair and final.

BUYER :

Done.

He reaches into his waistcoat and retrieves his wallet, counting out six hundred dollars, placing them into the already extended hand of Freeman.

Ford sees the distress and panic in Eliza; it visibly touches him. He now tries to buy EMILY to console her.

FORD :

How much for the little girl? You have no need for her. One so young will bring you no profit.

FREEMAN :

I will not sell the girl. There's sheaps 'n piles of money to be made off her. She is a beauty. One of the regular bloods. None of your thick-lipped, bullet headed, cotton picking niggers.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 39A.

59 CONTINUED:

FORD :

Her child, man. For God's sake, are you not sentimental in the least?

FREEMAN :

My sentimentality stretches the length of a coin. Do you want the lot, Mr. Ford, or do you pass on them all?

FORD :

I will take the ones Platt and Eliza.
Eliza grips her children tight.

ELIZA :

I will not go without my children.
You will not take them from me.
(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 40.

59 CONTINUED:

As if to prove her wrong, Freeman puts a foot to Eliza and harshly kicks her away from Emily.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Please, don't. No!
Freeman, to Cape:

FREEMAN :

Take her out of here.

Cape DROPS HIS FIDDLE, begins to pull Eliza away toward the door of the room, but her screaming and pleading do not abate. IT IS CLEARLY UNSETTLING TO THE OTHER BUYERS.

FREEMAN (CONT'D)

Keep her quiet.

Cape tries to muzzle her with his hand, but Eliza continues to scream for her children as Emily does for her mother.

EMILY :

Mama... Mama!

FREEMAN:

(to Solomon)

Play something! Get the fiddle and play.

As ordered, Solomon takes up Cape's fiddle and begins to play lightly.

FREEMAN (CONT'D)

Play!

Solomon plays harder and more loudly. Still, it is barely enough to drown out Eliza's cries. Freeman gets the other slaves to clap along with Solomon's playing.

Emily frees herself and runs back, crying but endeavoring to be strong-

EMILY:

Don't cry, Mama. I will be a good girl. Don't cry. I will keep my head up and I will look smart. I will always look smart.

FREEMAN:

Make merry, all of you! Goddamn it, Cape! Keep her quiet or it's your damned hide I will take it out of!

Cape pulls a rag, stuffs it in Eliza's mouth. Clamping both hands over her mouth, he hauls Eliza from the room by the head. IT IS AN UGLY, UGLY SCENE.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 40A.

60 EXT. FORD PLANTATION - LATER 60

Driven in a horse drawn wagon by Ford are Solomon and Eliza. Eliza is sullen to say the least. With the loss of her two children she has dropped into a depression she will not be able to pull out of.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 41.

60 CONTINUED:

They arrive to the FORD PLANTATION. The main house of the plantation - the GREAT HOUSE as they are commonly called - is sizable. Two stories high with a piazza in front. In the rear are also a log kitchen, poultryhouse, corncribs and several slave cabins. The plantation is described as "a green spot in the wilderness." With the arrival of Master Ford there is a flurry of activity - the "excitement" of a new delivery. MR. CHAPIN, a white overseer, instructs a slave named SAM.

CHAPIN :

Sam, call to the Mistress.

SAM :

Mistress! Mistress, they arrivn'.

MISTRESS FORD EXITS the house - along with her attending slave, RACHEL, who is a cook AS WELL AS SAM'S WIFE - and travels to her husband, kisses him, then laughingly inquires:

MRS. FORD

Did you bring all those niggers?
Two of them? You got two?

FORD :

Make me something to eat, dear.
The day has taken it from me.
MRS. FORD
Let me get a look at them...

FORD :

Mr. Chapin-
MRS. FORD

(re:

This one's cryin'. Why is this one cryin'?

FORD :

Separated from her children.
MRS. FORD
Oh, dear.

FORD :

It couldn't be helped.
MRS. FORD
Poor, poor woman.

FORD :

Mr. Chapin, tomorrow you will take these two up to the mill and start them
workin'. For now make them

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

60

adequate; fix them a meal, and have them rest themselves.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT

CONTINUED:

FORD (CONT'D)

42.

60

CHAPIN :

Yes, sir.

(to the slaves:

C'mon, now. C'mon. Don't dawdle.

MRS. FORD

(to Eliza:

Something to eat and some rest;

your children will soon enough be forgotten.

A61A EXT. FORD'S WORK AREA - DAY A61A *

John Tibeats, stands before the slaves. Chapin hovers to one side.

*

*

TIBEATS :

My name is John Tibeats, William Ford's chief carpenter. You will refer to me as Master.

*

*

*

*

Tibeats nods in Chapin's direction: *

TIBEATS (CONT'D)

Mister Chapin is the overseer on this plantation. He is responsible for all of Ford's property. You too will refer to him as Master.

*

*

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*

This plantation covers many hundreds of acres, and you will traverse the Texas road between

the forest site and the sawmill in

double time. Any clever nigger on that path that gets a little lightfooted, I will remind him that on one side men and

bloodhounds patrol the border and on the other the bayou provides a hard living, with alligators and little to eat or drink that won't

kill you. No slave has escaped here with his life. You're here to work niggers, so let's

commence.

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Tibeats begins to sing the song "Run Nigger, Run" mockingly.

*
*

We cut to Solomon chopping logs and into the montage of the slaves doing manual labor and arriving back to the sawmill.

*
*
*

Lyrics for "Run Nigger, Run"
(CONTINUED)

*
A61A

1/24/13

CONTINUED:

FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 42A.

A61A

Oh run nigger run well the pattyroller will get youRun nigger run well you better get awayRun nigger run well the pattyroller will get youRun nigger run well you better get away

Nigger run nigger flewNigger tore his shirt in twoRun run the pattyroller will get youRun nigger run well you better get away

Nigger run, run so fastStoved his head in a hornets nest

Run nigger run well the pattyroller will get youRun nigger run well you better get away

Nigger run through the fieldBlack slick coal and barley heelRun nigger run the pattyroller will get youRun nigger run well you better get away

Some folks say a nigger won't stealI caught three in my corn fieldOne has a bushel? And one has a peckOne had a rope and it was hung around his neck

Run nigger run well the pattyroller will get youRun nigger run well you better get awayRun nigger run well the pattyroller will get youRun nigger

*
*

61 EXT. WOODS -DAY 61

-END OF MAY THROUGH EARLY JUNE, 1841

We are in a wooded area. There is A GANG OF SLAVES chopping trees into timber. It is hard, laborious work made no more easy by the sweltering heat. Solomon is among them as well as Sam.

62 EXT. WOODS -LATER 62

The slaves now load the timber onto a horse drawn wagon. Again, hard work done under the ever present sun.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 42B.

63 EXT. ROAD -LATER 63

As Sam drives the wagon, the other slaves trudge alongside by foot. We should get the sense the travel is long and tedious.

64 EXT. FORD'S WORK AREA - LATER 64

It is a sizable work area on the edge of Indian Creek. There is much work being done, the slaves primarily employed in piling the timber and chopping it into lumber. As before, there is little doubt about the rigors of the job at hand.

Working as a carpenter at the work area is JOHN TIBBETS.

There are also various CUSTOMERS who move about placing orders.

65 EXT. FORD PLANTATION - DAY 65

-EARLY TO MID JUNE, 1841

It's Sunday morning. All of Ford's slaves are dressed with their "finest" clothes - brightly colored and as free as possible of defect. The slaves are gathered on

(CONTINUED)

66

67

68

67

68

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 43.

CONTINUED:

the lawn just beyond the piazza. Mistress Ford is present as well. As the slaves listen, Ford reads to them Scripture. His tone is of a man trying to preach by way of compassion.

FORD:

"But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God,

saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Despite the lightness with which Ford speaks and the hope in his words, ELIZA SITS OFF TO THE SIDE - SELF-SECLUDED A BIT - WEEPING GENTLY. We should be able to see in Mistress Ford's eyes that Eliza's constant crying is unsettling.

OMITTED 66

OMIT 67

OMITTED 68

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 44.

69 OMIT 69

70 EXT. FORD'S WORK AREA - DAY 70

-MID JUNE, 1841

The slaves have broken for lunch. They snack on smoked meat and drink water from gourds. As they lunch Solomon reads from Sam's Bible to the other slaves.

SOLOMON:

But he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he

that serveth.

A white customer - WINSLOW - irate at the sight and sound of slaves reading Scripture, crosses over. He grabs the Bible.

WINSLOW :

From where did you thief this?

SAM :

Suh, the book is my property.

The White Customer has no interest in Sam's answer. With flailing hands he STARTS BEATING ON SAM. Solomon tries to stop him. That only makes the situation worse, Solomon now the target of the man's ire.

WINSLOW :

Take your hands from me!

Ford comes running over.

FORD :

What is the commotion?

WINSLOW:

Your niggers are either brazen or rebellious. This one was reading Scripture, and this one claims it to be his.

FORD :

It is. A gift from his Mistress.

WINSLOW :

You condone this?

FORD:

I encourage it. As a Christian I can do no less.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 45.

70 CONTINUED:

WINSLOW:

You can do no worse, Ford. A slave that reads is dangerous.

Winslow moves off. He yells back at Ford:

WINSLOW (CONT'D)

And the man who would allow a
slave to read is unfit to own
niggers!

Handing the Bible back to Sam, very matter of factly:

FORD:

Pay him no mind. The word of God
applies to all. In that you may
take comfort.

71 OMITTED 71

72 EXT. ROAD -DAY 72

Sam is at the reigns of the wagon carrying the timber toFord's WORK
AREA. Slaves trudge alongside, same as it

ever was. Only...it's not quite the same. Sam bringsthe wagon to a
halt. He, and the slaves look up the roadahead of them.

Standing in the middle of the road is a group ofCHICKASAWS INDIANS. They
are in their "usual" dress ofbuckskin breeches and calico hunting shirts of
fantasticcolors, buttoned from belt to chin. They have with themDOGS and
HORSES. They carry with them the carcass of adeer.

The two groups stare at each other for a long moment.

73 EXT. FIELD - DUSK/END OF DAY 73

The groups of slaves and Chickasaws are now intermingled.

They "break bread" - actually they work on the carcass ofthe deer which is
now roasting over a large fire. As

well the group share a smoke on a pipe.

One of the Chickasaws is playing a tune on an "INDIANFIDDLE." The
Chickasaws perform a customary dance;

trotting after each other, and giving utterance to aguttural, sing-song
noise.

The slaves enjoy the respite from work, Solomonparticularly taken by the
music...if not entirelyenthralled by it.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 46.

73 CONTINUED:

After a bit, Solomon rights himself and heads from the
group.

74 EXT. RIVER BANK - CONTINUOUS 74

Solomon arrives to some tall grass at the edge of theriver. Lowering his
trousers, SOLOMON SQUATS TODEFECATE. As he does, he stares out toward the
flowingwaters of Indian Creek. After a few moments, as though athought far
greater than relieving himself has come tohim, Solomon stands and replaces

his pants.

Oddly, Solomon stares out at the water as though he were a man possessed.

75 EXT. FORD'S WORK AREA - DAY 75

Just beyond the WORK AREA Solomon speaks with Ford as Tibeats listens.

Solomon is drawing in the dirt, making rough diagrams for Ford as he explains himself.

SOLOMON:

The creek is plenty deep enough to sail, even with a boat full of load. The distance from the WORK AREA to the point on the latter bayou is several miles by water fewer than land. It occurs to me that the expense of the transportation would be materially diminished-

TIBEATS :

"Materially diminished?"

SOLOMON :

If we use the waterway.

TIBEATS:

It's a scheme. Plenty of engineers have schemed similarly. The passes are too tight.

SOLOMON:

I reckon them at more than twelve feet at their most narrow. Wide enough for a tub to traverse. A team of niggers can clear it out.

TIBEATS:

And you know what of transport and terra formin'?

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 47.

75 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON:

I labored repairing the Champlain canal, on the section over which William Van Nortwick was superintendent. With my earnings I hired several efficient hands to assist me, and I entered into contracts for the transportation of large rafts of timber from Lake Champlain to Troy.

FORD:

(to Tibeats)

I'll admit to being impressed even if you won't.

(to Solomon)

Collect a gang, see what good you can do.

76 EXT. CREEK -DAY 76

-END OF JUNE, 1841

WE HAVE A SERIES OF SCENES in which we see Solomon and a TEAM OF BLACKS working on the creek: CHOPPING TREES ALONG THE BANKS, widening out the shore... It's all just a trial for now. The work is diligent, but it is basic to this point. Still, under Solomon's direction, the slaves go at it like they've got something to prove. And rightly they do.

Solomon also works on a narrow raft of twelve cribs with which he will transport the timber.

Once this is constructed, HE PERSONALLY "SAILS" THEM UP THE CREEK WITH A TEST LOAD.

77 EXT. FORD'S WORK AREA - LATER 77

Ford and a group of slaves wait along the river banks just beyond the WORK AREA. All are expectant in their manner. A long moment passes with no sign of Solomon.

Then, from up river, we see Solomon's raft of lumber winding its way. SLAVES CHEER, and Ford literally applauds the effort. Tibeats looks pissed. He has just been shown up after all.

78 EXT. FORD PLANTATION/GREAT HOUSE - DAY 78

As we come into the scene, Ford is presenting Solomon with a fiddle. Not as grand as the one he previously owned in New York, but a fine instrument none the less.

It is a gift of thanks for his hard work. Solomon's gratitude is easily expressed.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON :

My great thanks, Master Ford.

FORD:

My thanks to you, and it is the least of it. My hope is that it brings us both much joy over the years.

Following the statement, Solomon's not sure how to react. He remains grateful, but the thought of "over the years" is just a reminder of the altered state in which he now finds himself.

79 EXT. FORD PLANATION/SLAVE SHACK - EVENING 79

-END OF JULY, 1841

The slaves eat. All tired from a days work they conduct themselves in silence. All except for Eliza who, SLIPPING INTO PERMANENT DEPRESSION, as always weeps. The sound of her sobbing edging him up - particularly after Master Ford's "over the years" observation. Solomon finally snaps:

SOLOMON :

Eliza. Eliza, stop!

Solomon goes to her, grabs Eliza. She does not stop. As if to force the misery from her, Solomon SHAKES ELIZA VIOLENTLY.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

Stop it! Stop!

ELIZA:

It's all I have to keep my loss present.

SOLOMON:

You let yourself be overcome by sorrow. You will drown in it.

ELIZA:

Have you stopped crying for your children? You make no sounds, but will you ever let them go in your heart?

SOLOMON :

...They are as my flesh...

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 49.

79 CONTINUED:

ELIZA:

Then who is distressed? Do I
upset the Mistress and the Master?
Do you care less for my loss than
their well being?

SOLOMON :

Master Ford is a decent man.

ELIZA :

He is a slaver.

SOLOMON :

Under the circumstances-

ELIZA:

Under the circumstances he is a
slaver! Christian only in his
proclamations. Separated me from
my precious babies for lack of a
few dollars. But you truckle at
his boot-

SOLOMON :

No...

ELIZA :

You luxuriate in his favor.

SOLOMON:

I survive. I will not fall into
despair. Woeful and crushed;
melancholy is the yolk I see most.
I will offer up my talents to
Master Ford. I will keep myself
hearty until freedom is opportune.

ELIZA:

Ford is your opportunity. Do you think he does not know that you are more than you suggest? But he does nothing for you. Nothing. You are no better than prized livestock. Call for him. Call, tell him of your previous circumstances and see what it earns you...Solomon.

Eliza uses Solomon's name quite pointedly as if to underscore his true self. Solomon get her meaning. Yet he says nothing. Again, pointedly:

ELIZA (CONT'D)

So, you've settled into your role as Platt, then?

SOLOMON :

(defensive)

My back is thick with scars from(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 50.

79 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

protesting my freedom. Do not accuse me--

ELIZA:

I accuse you of nothing. I cannot accuse. I too have done so many, many dishonorable things to survive. And for all of them I have ended up here... No better than if I had stood up for myself. Father, Lord and Savior forgive me... Forgive me. Oh, Solomon, let me weep for my children.

FORD (V.O.)

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

80 EXT. FORD PLANTATION - MORNING 80

-AUGUST, 1841

It's Sunday. The slaves are again gathered in the rose garden near the front of the house to hear the word of the Lord as read by Master Ford.

FORD:

And Jesus called a little child
unto him, and set him in the midst
of them, And said, Verily I say
unto you, Except ye be converted,
and become as little children, ye
shall not enter into the kingdom
of heaven.

The phrase seems to trigger Eliza's tears. She begins to sob uncontrollably.

Mrs. Ford turns to Rachel in a hushed whisper-

MRS. FORD

I cannot have that kind of
depression about.

Solomon, pretending not to have heard, slowly turns to Eliza with worry.
Ford continues to preach over Eliza's keening.

FORD:

But whoso shall offend one of
these little ones which believe in
me, it were better for him that a
millstone were hanged about his
neck, and that he were drowned in
the depth of the sea. Woe unto

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 50A.

80 CONTINUED:

FORD (CONT'D)

the world because of offences!

For it must needs be that offences

come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

BLACK:

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 51.

81 EXT. FORD PLANTATION - DAY 81

-JANUARY, 1842

Seasons have passed. It is winter now, and very grey out along the bayou.
Ford and Tibbeats - who we have seen

working around the WORK AREA - stand with Solomon, Tibeats giving Solomon an inspection. Ford carries much lament.

TIBEATS :

Raise yer shirt.

Solomon does as instructed. Tibeats looks at Solomon's back, at the scars from lashings he bears.

TIBEATS (CONT'D)

Troublesome.

FORD:

He's a good carpenter and quick-witted.

TIBEATS :

I am familiar with his cleverness.

FORD:

You won't find a nigger more humble.

TIBEATS:

Ain't found a nigger yet I cain't humble.

Tibeats heads off. Solomon, highly curious over the preceding.

SOLOMON :

Sir, have I done something wrong?

FORD:

Not your concern, Platt. I say with much...shame I have compiled debts. I have long preached austerity, but find myself hypocritical in that regard. You'll be in the ownership of Mr. Tibeats. You are his now. Serve him as you'd serve me.

SOLOMON :

Sir.

FORD:

And your faithfulness will not be forgotten.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 52.

81 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON :

Yes, sir.

FORD:

Pride and want have been my sin.

Loss of you is but one of my punishments.

82 EXT. FORD PLANATION - DAY 82

-END OF JANUARY, 1842- [OVER ONE DAY]

We see Solomon working as a carpenter, helping to erect aWeaving House that stands off to the side of theplantation's Great House.

At the moment Solomon is nailing on siding. Tibeats arrives and is immediately dissatisfied with the work.

TIBEATS :

Make them boards flush.

SOLOMON :

They are, sir.

TIBEATS :

They is no such thing.

Solomon runs his hands over the boards.

SOLOMON:

As smooth to the touch as a yearling's coat.

TIBEATS :

Callin's me a liar, boy?

SOLOMON:

Only a matter of perspective, sir.

From where you stand you may see differently. But the hands are not mistaken. I ask only that you employ all your senses before

rendering judgement.

What's Tibeats to do when faced with fact? All he can do is spew invectives.

TIBEATS:

You are a brute. You are a dog, and no better for followin' instruction.

SOLOMON :

I'll do as ordered, sir.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 53.

82 CONTINUED:

TIBEATS:

Then you'll be up at daybreak.

You will procure a keg of nails from Chapin and commence puttin' on clapboards.

Tibeats wheels away. Solomon goes back to his work.

After a few moments Solomon notices a bit of commotion in the drive of the great house. It involves an inconsolable Eliza who is being herded by Sam onto a cartDRIVEN BY A WHITE MAN. Mistress Ford and Rachel watch.

Solomon can only watch as the last connection to his days as a free man is driven away to a location unknown.

83 EXT. WEAVING HOUSE - MORNING 83

It is day break. As ordered, Solomon is up and working.

Chapin is rolling a keg of nails off a handcart for Solomon.

CHAPIN:

If Tibeats prefers a different size, I will endeavor to furnish them, but you may use those until further directed.

SOLOMON :

Yes, sir.

84 EXT. WEAVING HOUSE - LATER 84

As the day gets on to mid-morning, the sun already baking in the sky, Tibeats makes his way over to Solomon. Even

before arriving to Solomon his mien is one of belligerence; out of sorts and

something less than sober.

TIBEATS:

I thought I told yah ta commence
ta puttin' on clapboards this
morn'.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 54.

84 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON :

Yes, master. I am about it. I
have begun on the other side of the house.
Tibeats walks around to look over Solomon's work. He is
picayune, as if purposefully looking for fault.

TIBEATS :

Didn't I tell yah last night to get a keg of nails of Chapin?

SOLOMON :

And so I did; and Chapin said he would get another size for you, if you
wanted them when he came back from the field.
Tibeats walks to the keg and kicks it. Moving toward Solomon "with a great
passion:"

TIBEATS :

Goddamn yah! I thought yah knewed somethin'!
Solomon, perhaps inspired by his moment with Eliza, is in no mood for
Tibeats.

SOLOMON :

I did as instructed. If there's
something wrong, then it's wrong with your instructions.

TIBEATS :

Yah black bastard! Yah goddamn black bastard!
In an inconsolable rage, Tibeats runs off to the piazzato to fetch a whip.
Solomon looks around. He is alone other than Rachel and
Miss Ford who, shocked by that which she witnesses,
runs out to the field to fetch Chapin. Solomon's
instinct is to run, but he stands his ground as Tibeats marches back with
the whip in hand.

TIBEATS (CONT'D)

Strip yer clothes!

Solomon does no such thing.

TIBEATS (CONT'D)

Strip!

SOLOMON :

I will not.

With "concentrated vengeance," Tibeats springs for Solomon, seizing him by the throat with one hand and

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 55.

84 CONTINUED:

raising the whip with the other. Before he can strike the blow, however, Solomon catches Tibeats by the collar of his coat and pulls him in close. Reaching down, Solomon grabs Tibeats by the ankle and pushes him back with the other hand. Tibeats tumbles to the ground. A violent struggle takes place as Solomon puts a foot to Tibeats throat, and then in a frenzy of madness snatches the whip from Tibeats and begins to strike him with the handle again and again and again.

TIBEATS:

Yew will not live ta see another day, nigger! This is yer last, I swear it!

Solomon ignores the threats, continues to beat Tibeats.

Blow after blow falling fast and heavy on Tibeats'swriggling form. The stiff stock of the whip wraps around Tibeats's cringing body until Solomon's arm aches.

Tibeats's cries of vengeance turn to yelps for help and then pleas for mercy:

TIBEATS (CONT'D)

Murder! It's murder! Lord, God, help me. God be merciful!

And then suddenly, Tibeats shrieks-

TIBEATS (CONT'D)

Papa I'm sorry!

Chapin comes RIDING IN FROM THE FIELD fast and hard.

Solomon strikes Tibeats a blow or two more, then delivers a well-directed kick that sends Tibeats rolling over the ground.

CHAPIN :

What is the matter?

Tibeats struggles up and tries to present an air of dignity and control while he keeps a demonic eye on Solomon:

SOLOMON:

Master Tibeats wants to whip me
for using the nails you gave me.

CHAPIN :

What's the matter with the nails?
With a mix of shame, anger and embarrassment, Tibeats says, as if being
exposed-

TIBEATS :

They're...they're too large.

CHAPIN:

I am overseer here. I told Platt
to use them, and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 56.

84 CONTINUED:

CHAPIN (CONT'D)

I shall furnish such nails as I
please. Do you understand that,
Mr. Tibeats?

Tibeats answer is in the grinding of his teeth and the shaking of his fist.

TIBEATS:

This ain't done by half. I will
have flesh, and I will have all of
it.

Tibeats moves off toward, and then INTO THE HOUSE.

Chapin follows. A long moment, Solomon stands alone. He
looks around, not sure what to do; to stay or to flee.
Anxiety mounts on his features.

A moment more, and Tibeats EXITS the house. He saddles
his horse and rides off to beat the devil. Or, worse, to fetch him.
Chapin comes running back out of the house. He is
visibly excited, and when he speaks he is quite earnest.
Though he tries to project reasoned emotions he gives off an air of
impending trouble.

CHAPIN:

Do not stir. Do not attempt to leave the plantation on any account whatever. But if you run there is no protecting you.

SOLOMON :

Sir-

CHAPIN:

If you run, Platt, there is no protecting you. Rachel...!

Chapin runs off to join Rachel. The two converse at a distance from Solomon, then they head off for the logkitchen. Solomon is now very much alone, and he waits for what isto come. AND WE WAIT WITH HIM. And we wait, and wecontinue to wait... Moment by moment, the dread of theunexpected mounts.

Solomon's eyes begin to well. He has beaten a white man, and he knows that death awaits him.

A SLIGHT PRAYER TO THE HEAVENS BEGINS TO FORM IN HIS THROAT, but he is too choked up to fully speak it.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 57.

84 CONTINUED:

Chapin has now returned to the piazza. He stands and watches, but does not move to Solomon.

Solomon waits, and waits...

WE HEAR THE SOUND OF DISTANT HOOFS which grow louder andlouder in the manner of rolling thunder. It's Tibeats.

He returns with two accomplices; RAMSAY and COOK. Theycarry with them large whips and a coil of rope.

TIBEATS :

That's the one. That's him.

Dismounting, they move with menace that is tinged withperverse pleasure and wordless malevolence. Solomon

tries to fight back, but he is strong armed and tied byTIBEATS - his wrists, and then ankles bound in the same

manner. In the meantime the other two have slipped acord within

Solomon's elbows, running it across his backand tying it firmly.

Solomon is then dragged toward apeach tree. A lynching is in store. The naked horror of

it intensely palpable.

Solomon looks toward the piazza, but Chapin is now gone. Tears of fear flow down Solomon's cheeks. He is on the verge of panic; a man heading toward his own execution, he begins to struggle and fight.

A rope goes around Solomon's neck, then is tossed over the branch of the tree. The trio begin to hoist Solomon.

He gasps and gags as spittle flies from his mouth and the life is choked from him.

With suddenness, Chapin comes from the house brandishing a pistol in each hand - Colt Paterson .36 caliber "Holster" pistols with 9" barrels. Chapin moves with determination toward the lynch mob. He is sharp and matter of fact. With the guns in hand, he really doesn't need to be much more demonstrative.

CHAPIN :

Gentlemen... Whoever moves that nigger another foot from where he stands is a dead man. I am overseer of this plantation seven years, and in the absence of William Ford, my duty is to protect his interests. Ford holds a mortgage on Platt of four hundred dollars. If you hang him, he loses his debt. Until that is canceled you have no claim to his life.

Directing his attention to Ramsay and Cook:

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 58.

84 CONTINUED:

CHAPIN (CONT'D)

As for you two, if you have any regard for your own safety... I say, begone!

Ramsay and Cook don't need to be told twice. The pistols Chapin's gripping make the situation real clear. Without further word, they mount their horses and ride away. Tibbeats remains, and his anger with him.

TIBBEATS:

Yah got no cause. Platt is mine, and mine ta do with as I please. Yah touch my property, I will 'ave yah strung up as well.

Tibbeats mounts up and departs. There is a surreal moment as Chapin's not sure what to do about Solomon. He chooses to do nothing. Solomon is left dangling by the neck from the tree as

Chapin calls to Sam in the distance:

CHAPIN:

Sam! Get the mule. You must ride to Master Ford. Tell him to come here at once without a single moment's delay. Tell him they are trying to murder Platt. Hurry, boy. Bring him back if you must kill the mule to do so!

SAM :

Yes, suh!

Sam mounts up and rides off, the mule demonstrating much speed.

85 EXT. FORD PLANTATION - LATER 85

HOURS HAVE PASSED. The sun is now at its apex. The sight and smell of the red rose bush is more than vivid as Solomon remains tied and dangling exactly where he was left. The scene is both tranquil and horrific. Life on the plantation continues. The OTHER SLAVES work in the

field. CHILDREN make their way playfully in the yard.

It should all underscore the fact that a black, hanging even partially from a tree, is nothing unusual in this time and space.

(CONTINUED)

86

87 87

88

89

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 59.

CONTINUED:

Chapin walks back and forth with the pistols in his hands. Clearly he fears Tibbeats returning with more and better assistance. And yet, he does nothing to alleviate Solomon's suffering. He heeds Tibbeats words, and although caught up in the middle of nothing more than a property dispute, he offers no further aid.

Solomon's head lolls to one side. He looks toward the sun. The bright light flares off the leaves and branches of the tree from which Solomon hangs. The glare in Solomon's eyes offering him more pain than solace, but he cannot help but look upward. As he does, his eyes flutter between life and lifelessness...

OMIT 86

EXT. FORD PLANTATION - LATER 87

Solomon continues to hang. By now he is drenched in sweat, and nearly

delirious with dehydration. His lips dry and parched. He may not die from hanging, but he may very well expire before the day is over. Eventually Rachel comes over - timidly, and as though she were acting contrary to orders - and offers a drink of water from a tin cup, pouring it in Solomon's mouth for him. She then takes a small hand towel and dabs at the water which clings to his lips. Rachel then retreats, and leaves Solomon to hang.

EXT. FORD PLANTATION - EVENING 88

The sun is just now arching for the horizon. Solomon remains, as though his torture will not end. Ford, trailed by Sam, finally comes riding up. He dismounts, and moves swiftly over to Solomon. With great heartache:

FORD :

Platt... My poor Platt.

Ford produces a blade and cuts Solomon loose. Solomon attempts to carry himself, but he cannot. He falls to the ground and passes out.

INT. FORD PLANTATION/GREAT HOUSE - NIGHT 89

As we come into the scene, Solomon lays on a blanket on the floor. Eventually, his eyes flutter, then open. He is in the foyer of the Ford house. As he gets his bearings, he looks around the interior. THE SPACE IS HANDSOME, AND WELL DECORATED. It is sharp contrast to the bleak surroundings, shacks and dungeons Solomon has largely been accustomed to during his time of slavery. It will be the "first and last time such a sumptuous resting place was granted" during his twelve years of bondage.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 60.

89 CONTINUED:

Solomon doesn't have much chance to luxuriate in his surroundings. He hears a DOG BARKING just outside, and is unnerved. Has Tibbeats returned to finish what he started?

From a study, Master Ford appears with a gun in hand. He goes to the door, opens it and looks outside. He can see nothing. Satisfied, Ford crosses back over to Solomon. He is frank with Solomon regarding the situation.

FORD:

I believe Tibbeats is skulking

about the premises somewhere. He wants you dead, and he will attempt to have you so. It's no longer safe for you here. And I don't believe you will remain passive if Tibeats attacks. I have transferred my debt to Edwin Epps. He will take charge of you.

SOLOMON:

(desperate, urgent)

Master Ford, you must know; I am not a slave.

FORD :

I cannot hear that.

SOLOMON:

Before I came to you I was a freeman.

FORD:

I am trying to save your life! And...I have a debt to be mindful of. That, now, is to Edwin Epps. He is a hard man. Prides himself on being a "nigger breaker." But truthfully I could find no others who would have you. You've made a reputation of yourself. Whatever your circumstances, you are an exceptional nigger, Platt. I fear no good will come of it.

90 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/BACK PORCH - DAY 90

-END OF JANUARY, 1842

From the back porch, we come into the scene on EDWINEPPS; a repulsive and coarse man. His language gives speedy and unequivocal evidence that he has never enjoyed the advantages of an education.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 61.

90 CONTINUED:

Epps reads the Bible to his slaves, eight of them together. ABRAM; a tall, older slave of about sixty

years. WILEY, who is forty eight. PHEBE, who is married to Wiley. BOB and HENRY who are Phebe's children, EDWARD and PATSEY. Patsey is young, just 23 years old...though in the era, 23 not as young as in the present day. She

is the offspring of a "Guinea nigger," brought over to Cuba in a slave ship. She nearly brims with unconvulsant sexuality.

MISTRESS EPPS, Epps's wife, is also present. She sits with, holds quite lovingly, some SLAVE CHILDREN. WITH THEM SHE IS VERY "MOTHERLY." We also see Epps's overseer TREACH. Treach constantly sports a LOADED PISTOL.

Though Epps reads the word of the Lord, he lacks the tone of compassion with which Ford read.

EPPS:

"And that servant which knew his Lord's will...WHICH KNEW HIS LORD'S WILL and prepared not himself...PREPARED NOT HIMSELF, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes..." D'ye hear that?

"Stripes." That nigger that don't take care, that don't obey his lord - that's his master - d'ye see? - that 'ere nigger shall be beaten with many stripes. Now, "many" signifies a great many.

Forty, a hundred, a hundred and fifty lashes... That's Scriptor!

91 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/FIELD - DAY 91
-AUGUST, 1842

WE START THE SCENE WITH A PAIR OF BLACK HANDS picking cotton ferociously. As we move out, we identify PATSEY, a 23 year old striking black woman. The camera moves out again to a wider shot. This reveals several lines of slaves picking cotton, with Patsey way out in the lead.

We cut to another pair of black hands. This time, revealing SOLOMON, clumsy and unskilled hands, picking cotton. A lash bears down on him.

It is August, "cotton picking" season.

We are looking out over a cotton field in full bloom. It presents a visual purity, like an immaculate expanse of light, new-fallen snow. The cotton grows from five to seven feet high, each stalk having a great many branches

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 62.

91 CONTINUED:

shooting out in all directions and lapping each other above the water furrow.

There is a slave to each side of the row. They have a sack around their necks that hangs to the ground, the mouth of the sack about breast high. Baskets are placed at the end of the furrows. Slaves dump their sacks of cotton in the baskets, then pick until their sacks are again filled.

EDWARDS :

Pick that cotton. Move along now.

THE SOUNDTRACK TO THE SCENE IS NOTHING MORE THAN THE RUSTLE OF LABOR, THE MALE CICADAS BUGS "TYMBALS" IN THE HEAT and a SPIRITUAL SONG BY THE SLAVES.

Despite the heat, there is no stopping for water. The slaves are "driven" by Edward, who is himself "driven" by Treach.

TREACH :

mon. Drive dem niggers.

Edward moves among the slaves, applying the whip to them without regard.

EDWARD:

Pick dat cotton. Move along now, hear?

92 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/GIN HOUSE - EVENING 92

The day's work is done. The slaves are now assembled in the gin house with their baskets of cotton which are being weighed by Treach. There is anxiety among the slave, the reason for which soon becomes apparent.

TREACH :

Two hundred forty pounds for Bob.

EPPS :

What yah got for James?

TREACH :

Two hundred ninety five pounds.

EPPS:

Tha's real good, boy. Tha's real good.

TREACH:

One hundred eighty two pounds for
Platt.

Epps does not look happy. Treach says again:

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 63.

92 CONTINUED:

TREACH (CONT'D)

One hundred eighty two.

EPPS :

How much can even an averagenigger pick a day?

TREACH :

Two hundred pounds.

EPPS :

This nigger ain't even average.

Epps pulls Solomon aside.

TREACH :

Five hundred twelve pounds forPatsey.

EPPS :

Five hundred twelve. Yah men folk

got no shame lettin' Patsey outpick yah? The day ain't yet
comeshe swung lower than five hundredpounds. Queen of the fields, sheis.

TREACH :

Two hundred six pou-

EPPS :

I ain't done, Treach. Ain't I
owed a minute to luxuriate on the
work Patsey done?

TREACH :

...Sir...

EPPS :

Damned Queen. Born and bred to
the field. A nigger amongniggers, and God give 'er to me.

A lesson in the rewards of
righteous livin''. All be
observant ta that. All!
(beat)
Now, Treach. Now speak.

TREACH :

One hundred thirty eight poundsfor Phebe.

EPPS :

Hit one forty five yesterday.
Pull her out.

TREACH :

Two hundred six pounds for Wiley.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 64.

92 CONTINUED:

EPPS :

How much he pick yesterday?

TREACH :

Two hundred twenty nine pounds.

Wiley is pulled from the line, huddled with Solomon.

93 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/YARD - EVENING 93

In the distance, a flogging is going on. Solomon, Phebe,
and Wiley are stripped, placed in a stockade and nowbeing given a
perfunctory whipping delivered by ANOTHERIDENTIFIED SLAVE.

94 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION - EVENING 94

Evening, but the day is not yet done. Slaves attend
their various evening chores; feeding livestock, doinglaundry, cooking
food. There is no respite from aslave's charge.

95 INT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/SLAVE SHACK - NIGHT 95

A fire is kindled in the cabin. The slaves finally fixtheir own dinner of
corn meal. Corn is ground in a smallhand mill. The corn meal is mixed with
a little water,
placed in the fire and baked. When it is "done brown"
the ashes are scraped off. Bacon is fried. As the
slaves eat, Abram goes on in great length and with muchemotion about
General Jackson.

UNCLE ABRAM:

Hold my words:

will forever be immortalized. His
bravery will be handed down to the
last posterity. If ever there be
a stain upon "raw militia," he
done wiped away on the eight of
January. I say da result a that
day's battle is of no importance
to our grand nation than any
occurrence before or since. Great
man. Great man in deed. We all
need pray to Heavenly Father da
General reign over us always.

96 INT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/SLAVE SHACK - NIGHT 96

The slaves are sleeping. There is a loud commotion.
Epps enters, drunkenly, forcing the slaves awake.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 65.

96 CONTINUED:

EPPS:

Get up! Get up, we dance tonight!
We will not waste the evening with
yer laziness. Get up.

97 INT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT 97

Despite the lateness of the hour, the slaves are up and now fully dressed.
They take up position in the middle of the floor. They wait, poised like
actors. Solomon
strikes up a tune; Henry joins in with a pan flute and the slaves dance.
They do so very wearily. The whole of
it certainly more torture than pleasure.
Epps, whip in hand:

EPPS:

Where's yah merriment? Move yer
feet.

As the slaves twirl about Epps keeps an attentive eye on Patsey. It should
be quite clear that his primary motivation for holding dances is so that he
may view Patsey twirl about the floor.

This fact is not lost on Mistress Epps. A few moments of
Epps's lust on display is all that the Mistress can bear.
Jealousy mounting, she snatches up a CARAFE. With all

her might she throws it at Patsey. It hits Patsey square in the face. TOO THICK TO SHATTER, IT LEAVES HER BLOODY AND WRITHING ON THE FLOOR. The dancing, the music stop.

The slaves, however, react as though it is not the first time they've seen as much from the Mistress.

Mistress Epps, screaming like a hellion:

MISTRESS EPPS :

Sell her!

EPPS :

Comon, now. Wha's this?

MISTRESS EPPS :

You will sell the negress!

EPPS:

You're talkin' foolish. Sell little Pats? She pick with more vigor than any other nigger! Choose another ta go.

MISTRESS EPPS :

No other. Sell her!

EPPS :

I will not!

(CONTINUED)

98

99

100

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 66.

CONTINUED:

MISTRESS EPPS :

You will remove that black bitch from this property, 'er I'll takemyself back to Cheneyville.

EPPS :

Back to that hog's trough where I found you? Oh, the idleness of that yarn washes over me. Do not set yourself up against Patsey, my dear. That's a wager on which you will not profit. Calm yerself.

And settle for my affection,
'cause my affection you got. Or,
go. 'Cause I will rid myself ofyah well before I do away withher!
Mistress Epps stands irate, lost in fury and unable toeven think of what to
do. Eventually, optionless, shestorms away.

For a few beats there is only the sound of Patseysobbing.

EPPS (CONT'D)

That damned woman! I won't have
my mood spoiled. I will not.

Dance!

Epps sends the whip in Solomon's direction. Solomon
responds by playing.

Treach literally drags the prone Patsey from the floor,
blood still spilling from her face. The slaves, asordered, return to
dancing.

EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION - MORNING 98

-AUGUST, 1843

The sun has only just risen above the horizon. FROM THE
GREAT HOUSE THE HORN IS BLOWN signaling the start ofanother day.

EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/FIELD - DAY 99

Slaves are in the field picking cotton. They accompanytheir work with a
SPIRITUAL.

EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/GREAT HOUSE - LATER 100

As the slaves make their way in from the field, theMistress calls to
Solomon. SHE HAS A PIECE OF PAPER IN
HAND.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 67.

100 CONTINUED:

MISTRESS EPPS :

Platt...

SOLOMON :

Yes, Mistress.

MISTRESS EPPS:

Can you find your way to
Bartholomew's?

SOLOMON :

I can, ma'am.

Handing Solomon a sheet of paper.

MISTRESS EPPS :

This is a list of goods and sundries. You will take it to be filled and return immediately. Tell Bartholomew to add it to our debt.

SOLOMON :

I will, Mistress.

Solomon looks at the list. In a careless moment, Solomon reads quietly from it. He catches himself, but not before the Mistress notes his action. With high inquisitiveness:

MISTRESS EPPS :

Where yah from, Platt?

SOLOMON :

I have told you.

MISTRESS EPPS :

Tell me again.

SOLOMON :

Washington.

MISTRESS EPPS :

Who were yah Master?

SOLOMON :

Master name of Freeman.

MISTRESS EPPS :

Was he a learned man?

SOLOMON :

I suppose so.

MISTRESS EPPS :

He learn yah ta read?

(CONTINUED)

100

1/24/13

Boy, where are you going?

*
*
*

SOLOMON :

(almost tripping over his words)

To the store, Sir, to Bartholomew's. I was sent there
by Mistress Epps.

*
*
*
*
*
*

The patroller reaches out for Solomon's free pass around his neck,
yanking him forward. He looks at it.

*
*

PATROLLER :

Get there and get there quick.

*
*

The patroller kicks Solomon hard, sending him on his way.
Solomon walks on, looking one more time at the two youngmen; again there is
a moment of connection.

*
*
*

Solomon turns. The two men are hoisted up, kicking and spitting, behind his
shoulder.

*
*

Solomon finds himself back on the trail walking towards Bartholomew's,
his face now full of shock and

(CONTINUED)

*
*

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 68A.

A101 CONTINUED:

trepidation. He walks, fighting to calm himself down. *
We move behind him as he continues his journey, a lonely *

figure. *

101 INT. BARTHOLOMEW'S - LATER 101

A general store in the township of Holmesville. Solomon stands at the counter as BARTHOLOMEW fills Mistress Epps's order. Among the items set before Solomon is a QUANTITY OF FOOLSCAP.

The items are collected for Solomon and placed in a sack. Solomon giving little thought to them other than getting them back to the mistress.

As he turns, he glimpses the regalia of slave restraints, of all different guises; chains, muzzles for sale.

102 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/GREAT HOUSE - LATER 102

Solomon returns and delivers the items to the Mistress.

MISTRESS EPPS :

Any trouble?

SOLOMON :

No, ma'am. No trouble.

103 OMIT -MOVED TO A105 103

104 EXT. SHAW'S HOUSE - DAY 104

-JULY, 1844

Sitting on the Grand house's Piazza, Patsey is having tea with MISTRESS HARRIET SHAW, WHO IS A BLACK WOMAN. Though once a slave, she is now comparatively refined though not wholly so. The table where they sit is adorned with white linens, and they are attended by a HOUSE NIGGER. It makes for a tranquil surreal scene.

MASTER SHAW, A WHITE MAN, IS ON THE LAWN GROOMING A HORSE.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 69.

A105 EXT. ROAD -DAY A105

Solomon is running flat out along the road. Running as though his life depended on getting to his destination in beyond a timely manner.

B105 EXT. SHAW'S HOUSE - DAY B105

Still running, slick with sweat, Solomon comes upon the SHAW HOUSE. As Solomon arrives:

MASTER SHAW :

Platt Epps, good Sunday morning.

SOLOMON :

Good morning, Master Shaw. I've been sent by Master to retrieve Patsey. May I approach?

MASTER SHAW :

You may.

Solomon makes his way over to the piazza.

SOLOMON :

Excuse me, Mistress Shaw.

MISTRESS SHAW :

Nigger Platt.

SOLOMON :

My apologies. Patsey, Master wishes you to return.

PATSEY :

Sabbath day. I's free ta roam.

SOLOMON :

Understood. But the Master sent me running to fetch you, and said no time should be wasted.

MISTRESS SHAW :

Drink tea?

SOLOMON :

Thank you, Mistress, but I don't dare.

MISTRESS SHAW :

Would you knowed Massa Epps's consternation ta be any lessened wit your timely return? Sit. Sit and drink the tea that offered.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 70.

B105 CONTINUED:

Solomon knows better, but he sits and the Mistress hastes poured for him.

MISTRESS SHAW (CONT'D)

What'n was Epps's concern?

SOLOMON :

...I'd rather not say...

MISTRESS SHAW:

I'il gossip on the Sabbath be fine. All things in moderation.

Solomon is not sure what to say. He struggles to be as diplomatic as

possible.

SOLOMON:

As you are aware, Master Epps can be a man of a hard countenance.

There are times when it is impossible to account for his logic. You know he has ill feelings toward your husband.

MISTRESS SHAW :

He do.

SOLOMON:

Master Epps has somehow come to believe, as incorrectly as it may be, that Master Shaw is... That he is something of a lothario and an unprincipled man. A misguided belief born out of their mutual competition as planters, no doubt.

MISTRESS SHAW:

No doubt...if not born outta truth itself.

The Mistress waves to Shaw. Shaw, unsuspecting of the conversation, waves back.

SOLOMON:

I'm certain Patsey's well being is Master Epps's only concern.

MISTRESS SHAW:

Nothin'; Epps desire come outta concern.

SOLOMON :

I meant no disrespect.

MISTRESS SHAW :

He ain't heard you.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 71.

B105 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON:

I meant no disrespect to you,
Mistress.

MISTRESS SHAW:

Ha! You worry for me? Got no
cause to worry for my
sensibilities. I ain't felt the
end of a lash in 'mo years than I
cain recall. Ain't worked a
field, neither. Where one time I
served, now I got others servin'
me. The cost to my current
existence be Massa Shaw
broadcasting his affections, 'n me
enjoyin' his pantomime of
fidelity. If that what keep me
from the cotton pickin' niggers,
that what it be. A small and
reasonable price to be paid 'fo
sure.

Looking toward Patsey, speaking with great empathy:

MISTRESS SHAW (CONT'D)

I knowed what it like to be the
object of Massa's predilections
and peculiarities. And I knowed
they can get expressed with
kindness or wit violence. A lusty
visit in the night, or a
visitation from the whip. And wit
my experience, if 'n I can give
comfort, then comfort I give. And
you take comfort, Patsey; the Good
Lord will manage Epps. In His own
time the Good Lord will manage dem
all. Yes, Lordy, there's a day
comin' that will burn as an oven.
It comin' as sure as the Lord is
just. When His will be done...the
curse on the Pharos is a poor
example of all that wait 'fo the
plantation class.

Mistress Shaw turns her head to the side, catching a slave's attention. As she does so, the slave, a YOUNGWOMAN, commences to pour tea. As if to punctuate her thought, the Mistress takes a sip of her tea.

105 EXT. EPPS'S PLANTATION - LATER 105

Solomon and Patsey are returning from Shaw's. Waiting on the porch of the Great House, a drunk Epps beckons for Patsey, his lewd intentions obvious.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 72.

105 CONTINUED:

EPPS :

Pats...! Patsey!

SOLOMON :

Do not look in his direction.

Continue on.

Epps does not care to be ignored. He lifts himself and moves toward the pair in a rage.

EPPS :

Patsey...!

Solomon moves between Epps and Patsey, cutting Epps off as Patsey continues on. Playing up his "ignorance" of the situation:

SOLOMON :

Found her, Master, and brought her back just as instructed.

EPPS :

What'd you jus now tell her?

What'd you say to Pats?

SOLOMON :

No words were spoken. None of consequence.

EPPS :

Lie! Damned liar! Saw you talkin' with her. Tell me!

SOLOMON :

I cannot speak of what did not occur.

Epps grabs Solomon.

EPPS :

I'll cut your black throat.

Solomon pulls away from Epps, RIPPING HIS SHIRT IN THE PROCESS. Epps gives chase. Solomon begins to run around the large pig sty, easily keeping his distance. Epps,

however is undeterred. He moves after Solomon as speedily as he can, which isn't very speedily at all.

And quickly he tires. Epps is forced to bend over and suck air. Solomon maintains his distance, barely breathing hard. His breath returned to him, Epps starts up the chase again. Solomon runs on out of reach.

Shortly, Epps again stops, gets his breath... And now in what should be quite comical, Epps again runs after Solomon. Again, Epps's vigor leaves him before he can even get close to the slave. Dropping down to the dirt, in a show of regret and piety:

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 73.

105 CONTINUED:

EPPS (CONT'D)

Platt... Platt, liquor filled me.

I admit that it did, and I done over reacted. It's the Lord's day. Ain't nothin' Christian in us carryin' on like this. Help me to my feet, and let us both pray to the Lord for forgiveness.

Epps extends a hand to Solomon. Cautiously, Solomon moves close, but not too close. As Solomon draws within striking distance, Epps lunges for him. He chases Solomon on until he is again out of breath and once more drops down. And again offering a treaty:

EPPS (CONT'D)

I'm all done in, Platt. I have

met my limitations, and I ain't equal to 'em. I concede to yah, but in the name of valor, help yer master to his feet.

Solomon cautiously moves closer to help. Again he is attacked by Epps - this time by knife. Sort of. Epps is too drunk and tired to fully open the folding blade - and chased far around the field by Epps. ALL OF THE PRECEDING SHOULD BE MORE FUNNY THAN SHOCKING. A CHANGE OF PACE FROM THE OTHERWISE NECESSARY BLEAKNESS OF SLAVE LIFE.

Mistress Epps comes running from the house to the pair.

MISTRESS EPPS :

What? What's the fuss?

SOLOMON :

A misunderstanding is all. It began when I was sent to retrieve Patsey from where she's taken sabbatical at Master Shaw's. Upon returning, Master Epps believed Patsey and me to be in conversation when we were not. I tried to explain, but it led to all this.

MISTRESS EPPS :

What is it? Ya can't remain the Sabbath without her under your eye? Ya are a no-account bastard.

EPPS :

Hold a moment...

MISTRESS EPPS :

A filthy, godless heathen. My bed is too holy for yah to share.
(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 74.

105 CONTINUED:

EPPS :

Wha's...wha's he been tellin' yah?

MISTRESS EPPS :

Of yer misbegotten ways.

EPPS:

And he would know what of anythin'?' I ain't even spoken with him today. Platt, yah lyin' nigger, have I? Have I? Discretion being the better part and all, Solomon remains silent.

EPPS (CONT'D)

There; there's all the truth he got. Damned nigger. Damn yah.

Epps pushes his way past the Mistress.

106 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/FIELD - DAY 106

-AUGUST, 1844

With the sun yet again high in the sky the slaves are working the field picking cotton. As before THEY SING A SPIRITUAL, the only thing that distracts them from the tedium at hand. But there is no distracting from the heat. We see Henry begin to falter

before it... And eventually collapse right in the dirt. Though the other slaves take note, none move to help him. None dare.
From Treach rather matter of factly:

TREACH :

Get him water.

Edward runs to fetch a gourd. He carries it to Henry,
DUMPS THE WATER ON HIM, BUT DOES NOT ACTUALLY GIVE HENRY ANYTHING TO DRINK.
Roused, Henry rights himself.

EDWARD :

Go on; won. Git up.

Unsteadily, Henry lifts himself and goes back to picking cotton. He joins in again with the spiritual, as if the song is all that can keep him going.

107 INT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/SLAVE SHACKS - NIGHT 107

-OCTOBER, 1844

(CONTINUED)

108

109

110

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 75.

CONTINUED:

The slaves are asleep. Epps arrives, again without knocking, with his whip in hand. The slaves stir. Uncle

Abram asks:

UNCLE ABRAM :

We dance tonight, massa?

Epps remains quietly focused on Patsey. And it's clear from her apprehensive expression just what it is he's come looking for. This time there is no escaping it. As if to acknowledge the badness to come, Phebe lightly cries.

EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/SMOKE HOUSE - NIGHT 108

On top of a wood pile, in the back of the smoke house -

Epps shoves Patsey. He stops, stands as if gathering his manhood, then he's all over Patsey. He is rough and clumsy. It looks like something between an awkward rape and a virgin attempting his first sexual encounter. Patsey does not respond in any way other than to continually turn her head from Epps, but otherwise remains still as possible. If there is such a thing, she is vicious with her passive aggressiveness.

Epps's frustration mounts until - as the Mistress Shaw had cautioned -

he crosses the line from passion to violence. He begins slapping Patsey to get a response from her. When that fails, he punches her which only leads to him taking up his whip and lashing Patsey MERCILESSLY. Still, she gives him nothing. Beaten,

Patsey sits in the dirt among the cotton, Epps deepbreathing above her. The desire for sex now having left him.

Epps heads from the field. Patsey is left where she is.

INT. BARTHOLOMEW'S - DAY 109

-NOVEMBER, 1844

As before, Solomon waits as Bartholomew fills Mistress Epps order. Among the items set before Solomon is another quantity of foolscap.

EXT. ROAD - DAY 110

Solomon is making his way back to the Epps plantation.

He carries with him a sack filled with the goods from the store. As he walks, SOLOMON LOOKS AROUND CASUALLY. When

he is certain he is alone, he sets down the sack, opens it and appropriates A SINGLE SHEET OF THE PAPER which he folds and places in his pocket. That done, he cinches up the sack and continues on his way.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 76.

111 OMIT 111

112 INT. EPPS'S PLANTATION/SLAVE SHACK - DAY 112

Solomon takes the slip of paper and hides it within his fiddle. Perhaps the safest place he can think of. He

acts as though he's hiding away found gold. In reality it's more than that. For Solomon the paper is a first step toward freedom.

113 INT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT 113

-DECEMBER, 1844

It's another night of Epps's forced revelry. Coming in quick from the previous scene, we go from Solomon holding his fiddle, to playing it as the slaves are again made to dance.

Mistress Epps brings out a tray of freshly baked pastries. She sets them down on a table.

MISTRESS EPPS:

A moment from the dancing. Come sample what I baked for y'all.

The slaves, thankful for the rest as much as the food, file toward the tray reciting a chorus of "Thank you, Mistress." As Patsey moves toward the pastries:

MISTRESS EPPS (CONT'D)

There'll be none for you, Patsey.

Patsey merely turns away. Her non responsiveness, however, serves only to incite the Mistress. Screaming:

MISTRESS EPPS (CONT'D)

Yah see that? Did yah see the
look of insolence she give me?

EPPS :

Seen nothin' but her turn away.

MISTRESS EPPS:

Are you blind or ignorant? It was
hot, hateful scorn. It filled
that black face. Yah tell me yah
didn't see it, then yah choose not
to look, or yah sayin' I lie.

EPPS :

Whatever it was, it passed.

MISTRESS EPPS:

Is that how yah are with the
niggers? Let every ill thought
fester inside 'em. Look at 'em.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 77.

113 CONTINUED:

MISTRESS EPPS (CONT'D)

They foul with it; foul with their
hate. You let it be, it'll come
back to us in the dark a night.

Yah want that? Yah want them
black animals to leave us gut like
pigs in our own sleep?

Epps isn't sure how to respond to the inchoate berating.
It's an invitation for the Mistress to continue.

MISTRESS EPPS (CONT'D)

You are manless. A damned eunuch
if ever there was. And if yah
won't stand for me, I'd pray you'd
at least be a credit to yer own
kind and beat every foul thought
from 'em.

Epps does nothing. The Mistress lets her anger loose.

She moves quickly to Patsey, DRIVES HER NAILS INTO THEPATSEY'S FACE
AND DRAWS THEM DOWN ACROSS HER FEATURES.

FIVE DEEP AND BLOODY GASHES ARE LEFT IN PATSEY'S SKIN,
the moment marked with appropriate screams. Patsey collapses on the floor,
covering her bleeding face.

MISTRESS EPPS (CONT'D)

Beat it from 'em!

Thoroughly cuckolded by the Mistress's actions, Eppstakes his whip and
pulls Patsey out of the house. His
intentions are plain.

All the slaves remain silent. The Mistress, however,
displaying high satisfaction, entreats the others:

MISTRESS EPPS (CONT'D)

Eat. Fill yourselves. ...And
then we dance.

The slaves eat, but without a hint of levity.

114 INT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/SLAVE SHACK - NIGHT 114

We come up on the slaves who lay sleeping. All except for Patsey. She rises
from her bedding, goes to a corner of the cabin and removes something from a
secret location. She then moves over to Platt.

PATSEY :

Platt... Platt, you awake?

SOLOMON :

I am.

PATSEY:

I have a request; an act of
kindness.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 78.

114 CONTINUED:

Patsey displays what she took from hiding. It is a
LADY'S FINGER RING.

PATSEY (CONT'D)

I secreted it from the Mistress.

SOLOMON :

Return it!

PATSEY :

It yours, Platt.

SOLOMON :

For what cause?

PATSEY :

All I ask:

Solomon looks at Patsey as though she were insane.

SOLOMON :

No.

PATSEY :

Take me by the throat. Hold me
low in the water until I'm still
without life. Bury me in a lonely place of death.

SOLOMON :

No! I will do no such thing.
The...the gory detail with which you speak-

PATSEY :

I thought on it long and hard.

SOLOMON :

It is melancholia, nothing more.
How does such despair even come to you?

PATSEY :

How can you not know? I got no comfort in this life. If I can't
buy mercy from yah, I'll beg it.

SOLOMON :

There are others. Beg them.

PATSEY :

I'm begging you!

SOLOMON :

Why? Why would you consign me to damnation with such an un-Godly request?
(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 79.

114 CONTINUED:

PATSEY:

There is God here! God is merciful, and He forgive merciful acts. Won't be no hell for you. Do it. Do what I ain't got the strength ta do myself.

Solomon says nothing. Clearly he's not about to do the deed. With nothing else to do, knowing she is damned with every breath she draws, Patsey crawls back to her spot on the floor and lays herself down.

BLACK:

115 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/FIELD - DAY 115
-JULY, 1846

Hard times on the plantation. Where previously the field in bloom was a carpet of white, it is now patchy and undergrown.

The slaves move through the field picking not cotton, but rather COTTON WORMS from the plants. The cotton worms have dined on the cotton and nearly destroyed the crop.

We see the cotton worms in extreme close-up, moving among and destroying the cotton crop.

Epps is beside himself as he looks out over his ruined field.

EPPS :

It is a plague.

TREACH (O.S.)

Cotton worm.

EPPS:

A plague! It's damn Biblical.

Two seasons God done sent a plague to smite me. I am near ruination.

Why, Treach? What I done that God hate me so? Do I not preach His word?

TREACH (O.S.)

The whole Bayou sufferin'.

EPPS:

I don't care nothin' fer the damn Bayou. I'm sufferin'.

Epps looks among his slaves at work, his enmity growing.

EPPS (CONT'D)

It's that Godless lot. They

brought this on me. I bring 'em

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

116

117 117

118

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 80.

CONTINUED:

EPPS (CONT'D)

God's word, and heathens they are,
they brung me God's scorn.

Crazed, Epps runs into the field, taking himself from slave to slave
delivering a whipping to all he can lay his hands on.

EPPS (CONT'D)

Damn you! Damn you all! Damn
you!

RE-OMIT 116

EXT. JUDGE TURNER'S PLANTATION - EVENING 117

-OCTOBER, 1846

Henry, Bob, Uncle Abram and Solomon sit in the back of a cart. SOLOMON HAS
HIS FIDDLE WITH HIM. Epps has delivered the men to JUDGE TURNER, a
distinguished man and extensive planter whose large estate is situated
on Bayou Salle within a few miles of the gulf. Epps and Turner stand off to
one side engaged in bargaining as Henry, Bob, Uncle Abram and Solomon wait
and watch.

One of the slaves whisper under their breath.

EPPS' SLAVE

I hear cutting cane is twice as hard as picking cotton.

BOB :

But at least we'll be away from Master Epps.

UNCLE ABRAM :

Boy, you two have no sense.

Epps returns to his slaves and gives a parting salutation.

EPPS :

Yer Judge Turner's for the season.

More if need be, until my crop return. Yah'll bring no disrespect to me,
and yah'll bring no biblical plagues to him. Be
decent, ere mark my words, I will deliver an ungodly whippin'.

INT. SLAVE SHACK - NIGHT 118

(CONTINUED)

119

120

CONTINUED:

Slaves are crammed into the shack - LITERALLY ON TOP OF EACH OTHER - as they try to sleep. Some lay, some sit up. Packed in like cattle, there is barely room to movelet alone draw a deep, clean breath. There is a real risk of suffocating in the mass. Some cough and wheeze. A CHILD CRIES...

Among them is Solomon who must believe at this point thathis life has reached its very lowest point. The odds of survival are slight, let alone the chance of actuallyever returning to his family. This clearly weighs on himas he struggles to find anything like comfortable spacein the pen.

EXT. CANE FIELDS - DAY 119

An OVERSEER is explaining to the new slaves - SOLOMONAMONG THEM - how to cultivate cane. WITH A KNIFE IN HAND he demonstrates the process:

OVERSEER :

Draw the cane from the rick, cutthe top and flags from the stalk, understand? Leave only that partwhich is sound and healthy. Cast off the rest...

EXT. CANE FIELDS - DAY 120

-NOVEMBER, 1846

ABOUT THIRTY SLAVES are working the field. They aredivided into THREE GANGS. The first which draw the cane, the next lay the cane in the drill, the last then hoe therows after. Solomon is among a gang that draws and cuts, and he moveswith speed and skill. Certainly more so than hedisplayed picking cotton. Standing with his overseer, Judge Turner watches.

INT. SLAVE SHACK - NIGHT 121

Again, the slaves have been herded into the shack andpressed together. As he tries to rest - sleep is nearly impossible - Solomon finds himself face to face with a woman, ANNA. She is awake. For a few beats she avoids eye contactwith Solomon. She seems, like Solomon, to beunaccustomed to her surroundings and horribly frightenedby them. Eventually her eyes meet Solomon's. She makes no sound, but great apprehension spills from her eyes. Whatever's next, whatever horror awaits, she can barelystand to face. Fear, proximity... They drive her hand

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED:

to Solomon's. After a moment of seemingly reacquainting herself with genuine human contact, the woman TAKES
(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 82.

121 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON'S HAND AND PRESSES IT TO HER BREAST. Solomon tries to jerk his hand away, but ANNA HOLDS IT IN PLACE. Manipulating Solomon's hand, she begins to massage her breast. Solomon takes no real pleasure in the act - really, neither does Anna. THERE SHOULD BE A TRUE SENSE ANNA IS JUST SO VERY, VERY DESPERATE FOR HUMAN CONTACT, FOR THE NEED TO FEEL ALIVE AND LIKE A PERSON RATHER THAN AN ANIMAL THAT EMOTIONALLY SHE IS WILLING TO ENGAGE SOLOMON.

The need quickly compounds. Anna presses her lips to Solomon's. Eventually, SHE DIRECTS HIS HAND BENEATH HER DRESS AND BETWEEN HER LEGS. Solomon, with slightly more compassion than a guy making union wages, BEGINS TO MANIPULATE ANNA WITH HIS HAND. The act remains more perfunctory than passionate.

We can see Anna moving toward climax and eventual release. But more - or substantially less - than joyous sex, it is really just a drug-like inoculation against reality. But the feeling quickly fades. All that remains, as with most chance encounters, is regret.

And there is shame, too. This is put on display as Anna turns away from Solomon. As quickly as it began, it is as though the act had not happened at all.

122 OMIT 122

123 EXT. JUDGE TURNER'S PLANTATION/GREAT HOUSE - EVENING 123

Solomon waits outside the house on the porch. A house servant - ZACHARY - approaches and admonishes Solomon.

ZACHARY :

Off the porch. Get off.

Like a dog shooed away, Solomon steps down.

Eventually Judge Turner exits the house and crosses to Solomon.

SOLOMON :

...Sir...

JUDGE TURNER:

Platt is it? Have you cultivated

cane previously?

SOLOMON :

No, sir, I have not.

JUDGE TURNER:

You take to it quite naturally.

Are you educated?

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 83.

123 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON:

Niggers are hired to work, not to
read and write.

Turner gives that a bit of consideration as he gives Solomon a wary looking
over.

JUDGE TURNER :

You play the fiddle?

SOLOMON :

I do.

JUDGE TURNER:

Willard Yarney, a planter up the
bayou, celebrates his anniversary
in a three week's time. I will
hold out your name to him. What
you earn is yours to keep.

SOLOMON :

Sir.

JUDGE TURNER :

Mind yourself, Platt.

SOLOMON :

Yes, sir. *

124 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - LATER (MOVED FROM 124) 124 *

Work over, the slaves congregate to eat.

As Solomon eats, he takes note of the JUICE FROM SOME BERRIES ON HIS PLATE.

125 EXT. TURNER'S PLANTATION - EVENING (MOVED FROM 125) 125 *

Solomon plays with a piece of cane, fashions it into somekind of writing tool, testing it in the mud. He then brushes over the dirt with his hand.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 84.

126 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - NIGHT (MOVED FROM 126) 126 *

Secreted away out near the edge of the bayou and sitting by a small fire, Solomon takes the slip of paper from his fiddle. It is yellowed, showing age, but still usable.

Dipping the piece of cane - a quill - into the crushed berries, Solomon attempts to write a bit on the paper.

The berry juice, too free-flowing, is unusable as ink.

Solomon returns the paper to the fiddle. He has some scraps of food with him, which he snacks on.

A127 OMITTED A127 *

A127A INT. SLAVE SHACK - DAY A127A *

We see a sharp object scratching onto a surface. The tool moves on to form another mark. The sound is repetitive and almost unbearable. As we move out, we see the names Anne, Margaret, Alonzo. They are engraved onto the violin, in the hidden area where Solomon would rest his chin.

Solomon looks at it for a moment, moving his fingertips across the engraving. His face full of loss.

Sadly, he lifts his instrument under his chin and leaning his head to the side as if to play.

127 INT. YARNEY'S HOUSE - EVENING 127

A party has commenced at the noble home of one MR.

YARNEY. A group of REVELERS have gathered and are on the dance floor, in fancy dress. Their faces are covered with a variation of decorative masks. The party is a feast of celebration. As entertainment, SOLOMON ACCOMPANIES A GROUP OF MUSICIANS, no more than three. And as he does so, they all play with jovial liveliness. Clearly a good time is being had by all.

128 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT 128

His playing done for the evening, Solomon is returning to Judge Turner's on foot. There is only the moonlight with which to light the way. As he walks, Solomon eats from a HEARTY CHUCK OF BREAD. Obviously part of his haul from the evening. Solomon again hears noises coming from the brush just up ahead of him. Solomon tears off some of the bread, kneels and holds it out before him.

SOLOMON :

'mere. 'mon, boy.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 85.

128 CONTINUED:

This time, there is no dog. Instead, from the dark and the brush step TWO BLACK MEN. Solomon stands. He looks the men over - their clothes tatters and they themselves covered in dirt. It becomes quite clear they are not just slaves. A fact confirmed when they step menacingly toward Solomon, ONE WITH A SHIV IN HAND.

At first it seems they want Solomon's food or money.

Worse, THEY GO FOR HIS FIDDLE.

Solomon has but a moment to brace himself before he is attacked, TAKING A CUT TO THE ARM. Solomon fights back, PICKING UP A PINE KNOT and striking his attacker over the head. That takes the fight out of him, and both men retreat back the way they came leaving Solomon be.

A129 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - NIGHT A129

Outside of the slave shacks Solomon's wound tended by Uncle Abram. As he works on it:

UNCLE ABRAM:

Runaways I would expect. The Bayou full with 'em. They nothin' no dangerous than a nigger in flight.

SOLOMON :

They acted out of desperation.

UNCLE ABRAM:

Act outta lunacy. Heads fulla stories 'bout life up north. Yah ever been north, Platt?

SOLOMON :

...No...

UNCLE ABRAM:

And never should yah be. I hope that yah never bear witness the sorry condition of the northern black. Got neither no purpose, nor direction. They jus...they jus fall about the streets in search of sustenance of both body and spirit.

SOLOMON :

You know this to be so?

UNCLE ABRAM :

Two of my massas tolt me.

(CONTINUED)

A129

129

130

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 86.

CONTINUED:

OMIT 129

EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - NIGHT 130

-FEBRUARY/MARCH, 1847

Alone out on the edge of the Bayou, Solomon is playing a low air on his violin WHILE SNACKING ON SCRAPS OF BACON.

As he plays, something appears in the distance. From the edge of the bayou, coming forth like an apparition arisen from the earth, is CELESTE. She is a young woman of about 19 years of age and far whiter than most blacks.

"IT REQUIRED CLOSE INSPECTION TO DISTINGUISH IN HER FEATURE THE SLIGHTEST TRACE OF AFRICAN BLOOD." Beyond that, she is pale and haggard, but still lovely.

Dressed in a white gown, she emerges from the water.

Draped on her dress, her period. A line in her skirt.

It's very visible, but not shocking. A ribbon of red in her dress.

Celeste moves to Solomon without fear or hesitation. As Solomon, startled, takes her in, Celeste says quite plainly:

CELESTE :

I am hungry. Give me food.

SOLOMON :

Who are you?

CELESTE :

I'm hungry.

Solomon gives Celeste some of his food. Celeste, famished, devours it.

SOLOMON :

What is your name?

CELESTE :

My name is Celeste.

SOLOMON :

What are your circumstances?

CELESTE:

I belong ta Massa Carey, and I've
been two days among da palmettoes.
Celeste is sick and cain't work,
and would rather die in the swamp

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 87.

130 CONTINUED:

CELESTE (CONT'D)

than be whipped to death by the
overseer. So I took myself away.
Massa's dogs won't follow me. The
patrollers I've tried to set dem
on me. But dey a secret between
dem and Celeste, and dey won't
mind the devilish orders of the
overseer.

Celeste lifts her head from the food on which she gnaws.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Do you believe me?

SOLOMON :

Yes.

CELESTE :

Why?

SOLOMON:

There are some whose tracks the
hounds will refuse to follow.

CELESTE :

Give me more food. I'm starvin'.

SOLOMON:

This is all my allowance for the

rest of-

CELESTE :

Give it to me.

Almost as if compelled, Solomon does as ordered. As she eats, Celeste aggrandizes herself:

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Most slaves escape at night. The overseers are alert for such chicanes. But Celeste tricked dem
'n alight in the middle of the day wit the sun up at its highest.

The place of my concealment now deep in the swamp, not half a mile from Massa's plantation, and a world apart. A world a tall trees whose long arms make fo' a canopy so dense dey keep away even the beams of the sun. It twilight always in Celeste's world, even in the brightest day. I will live there, and I will live freely.

The overseers are a cowardly lot.

Dey will not go where their dogs show fear and where it always be night. Others will join me in the twilight, and we ain't gunna be slaves no 'mo forever.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 88.

130 CONTINUED:

Solomon isn't sure what to say. Before he can say anything:

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Celeste will come to you again in the night. You will have food for her.

Celeste departs the way she came; as though she were a vision.

131 INT. JUDGE TURNER'S PLANTATION/FOOD STORAGE - NIGHT 131

Solomon stealthfully makes his way into the storage shed.

Dried and smoked meats are hung, and milled corn is about. Taking out a handkerchief, Solomon begins to load it with food. Not too much. Not so much his thievery will be readily noticed, but he does avail himself.

132 EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - NIGHT 132

Solomon plays his violin, but plays it with an anxious nature as he waits. Then, as before, a figure appears in the distance. It is Celeste coming out of the night. She makes her way directly to Solomon. With no greeting, she says:

CELESTE :

I am hungry.

Solomon gives Celeste the handkerchief he's filled. She opens it, and begins to devour the food. As she eats:

CELESTE (CONT'D)

I was rude, and didn't even ask your name.

SOLOMON :

Platt.

(beat)

Solomon. Solomon is my true and free name.

CELESTE :

Was you free?

SOLOMON :

I was. I am.

Solomon exposes his wrist, displays his tattoo as he announces:

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

I remain free in my heart.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 89.

132 CONTINUED:

Giving a laugh as though it's the silliest thing she's heard:

CELESTE :

Free heart means nothin if'n yobody gunna die a slave.

SOLOMON :

I will not.

CELESTE :

How? Celeste knows you ain't gunna run. Celeste knows it ain't your nature.

SOLOMON :

I have a plan. I have a letter.

CELESTE :

A letter? How'll yah mail daletter? Who yah trust to post it?

A nigger that can read and writeis a nigger that'll hang.

There is a pause. Solomon can't answer this question. It

is the glaring hole in his plan.

Having finished eating:

(CONTINUED)

133

134

135

134

135

136

137

138

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 90.

CONTINUED:

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Celeste will come again in denight. You will bring her 'mofood.

SOLOMON :

I risk discovery to take more.

CELESTE :

You will bring Celeste 'mo food.

And with that Celeste again moves back into the darkness.

OMIT 133

OMIT 134

EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - EVENING 135

Solomon is picking at the bark off a WHITE MAPLE.

EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - EVENING 136

In a tin cup, over a fire, Solomon boils the white maplebark in just a bit of water.

INT. JUDGE TURNER'S PLANTATION/SLAVES CABIN - NIGHT 137

As others sleep, by the light of dying coals, Solomonuses the quill to test the boiled bark. The liquid holdsas a form of ink. It is no?t ideal, but it is legible onthe page. Armed with this, Solomon writes his letter.

EXT. TURNER PLANTATION - NIGHT 138

Solomon sits with Celeste. He relates his news to her.

SOLOMON :

I have my letter.

CELESTE :

Yah has your freedom then?

SOLOMON :

All that remains is to contrive
measures by which the letter cansafely be deposited in the postoffice.
When Celeste speaks she is quite melancholy.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 91.

138 CONTINUED:

CELESTE :

I have resolved to return to myMassa.
Solomon gives an unnerved look. This is not good news.

SOLOMON :

Is it more food you need?

CELESTE :

I live in fear.

SOLOMON :

None will come after you in the
swamps.

CELESTE :

It ain't the patrollers I scaredof... At all seasons the howlingof
wild animals can be heard at
night along the border of the
swamps. At first their calls were
welcomin'. Dey too was free, & Ithought dey greeted me like
asistah. Lately, dey cries haveturned horrifyin'. They mean tokill
Celeste.

SOLOMON :

The solitude plays tricks. It's
your impression, nothing more. Ifyou go back to your master youcould face
the same.

CELESTE :

My freedom been nothin' but a daydream. So was Celeste's thoughts of slaves conjoinin' in the bayou.

SOLOMON :

Better the loneliness. You have been free most of the summer. Return now and your master will make example of you.

CELESTE :

It is lonely dwellin' waiting for others who won't never come.
(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 92.

138 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON :

Go north. Make your way by night...

CELESTE :

It'll only be worse if Celeste don't go back of her own will.

SOLOMON :

You won't be caught. The dogs won't track you. You are... you are unique. Celeste...

CELESTE :

You got alternatives, Solomon.

SOLOMON :

To return is to die!

CELESTE :

Celeste got no one to write a letter to. As if to punctuate her resolve, without a word more Celeste departs toward the swamp. Solomon starts on into the swamp after her.

SOLOMON :

Celeste... Celeste!
Solomon continues after Celeste, wading deeper into the dark night and murky waters.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

Celeste, I will guide you north!

Wait, and I will take you.

Celeste is too nimble. She outpaces Solomon, continues on and disappears into the night.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

Let me take you! Let me go with you!

Solomon runs on, then splashes to a stop. He stumbles around disoriented, calling into the blackness:

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

Celeste...

Nothing. No answer. Not a human one. There are sounds and echoes - some in the distance, some perhaps moving closer - which, moment by moment, become more and more frightening. Soon, Solomon realizes he is in quite literally over his head; the water first chest deep, then neck deep. With no way to orient himself, no means to guide him in the dark, Solomon's reserve begins to crumble. He thrashes in the water trying to find his way

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 93.

138 CONTINUED:

back to shore. No longer trying to save Celeste, Solomon calls to her - desperately - for assistance.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

Celeste! Come to me, Celeste!

In that moment Solomon is quite certain he is nearly done; that he will not find land, nor aid and that this is his final moment. His panic should be that tangible.

It is either force of will, or survival instinct... or maybe just pure luck that carries Solomon on until he reaches first muddy ground, then firm footing. Hauling himself onto the swamp's edge, Solomon finally collapses in a drenched, worn heap. His life spared, but Celeste never to be seen again.

BLACK:

139 EXT. EPPS'S PLANTATION - DAY 139

-MAY/JUNE, 1847

We come up now outside of Master Epps's plantation. Epps stands in the drive. He's in surprisingly good spirits as Solomon, Uncle Abram, Henry and Bob trudge their way wearily toward Epps and his other slaves who are gathered.

The cotton field is in full bloom, the crop fully returned.

EPPS:

A joyous day. A joyous day. Dark times is behind us. Clean living;

'n prayer done lifted the plague.

Indicating to the cotton:

EPPS (CONT'D)

As thick 'n white as New England
snow. 'N now my niggers is
returned to me.

(to Solomon)

Heard Judge Turner gave you favor.

Oh, did you beguile him, Platt,
with your slick nigger ways?

Well, yah won't stand idle, boy.

Not on my land. Much work to do.

Days of old long since, eh?

Joyous! Joyous indeed!

Throughout Epps's welcome, Solomon's focus is on Patseywho is
lined up with the other slaves. SHE IS NOW MORE
HAGGARD THAN WHEN WE LAST SAW HER. Her face and arms
display many new scars. It's clear that in the
intervening years she has quite literally been a whippingboy for Epps and
the Mistress.

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 94.

140 EXT. EPPS'S PLANTATION/COTTON FIELD - DAY 140
-JULY, 1847

The slaves are out working on the field. White hands
appear, picking cotton: ARMSBY. He is wholly unskilled atpicking cotton,
and he puts little effort into the job.

As we meet him he seems a decent sort if a little short
on self-motivation. In anachronistic terminology, he'dbe called a
"slacker." He joins in with the slaves,
singing a spiritual.

141 INT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/GIN HOUSE - EVENING 141

As Epps said, it is days of long since. The slaves are
back to having their cotton weighed in the Gin House

EPPS :

Wiley...?

TREACH :

Two hundred sixty pounds.

EPPS :

Bob?

TREACH:

Three hundred forty pounds for
Bob.

EPPS :

Patsey?

TREACH :

Five hundred twenty pounds.

EPPS:

That's a girl. Don't never let me
down. Platt?

TREACH :

One hundred sixty pounds.

Before Treach is even done announcing the weight, Eppshas pulled Solomon
aside to where Uncle Abram alreadyawaits his fate.

EPPS :

Armsby?

TREACH :

Sixty four pounds.

Epps speaks to Armsby sternly, but nothing of the mannerin which he would
address the slaves.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 95.

141 CONTINUED:

EPPS:

A good days labor would average
two hundred pounds.

ARMSBY :

Yes, sir.

EPPS:

I'm sure in time y'll develope as
a picker, but it takes effort,
boy. Put some damn effort into
it.

ARMSBY :

Yes, sir.

To Treach, regarding Solomon and Abram:

EPPS :

Take 'em out. Get to whippin'.

No force is needed. The slaves understand the situation.

They follow Treach out of the Gin house.

142 EXT. EPPS'S PLANTATION/SLAVE SHACK - NIGHT 142

We come in after the punishment has been dealt. Patsey tends to Uncle Abram's back as Armsby applies liniment to Solomon's. As he does, Armsby muses:

ARMSBY:

It's a tragedy. How does such come to pass? Working a field and picking cotton like a lowly hand.

I'm of a damn sight better station. And my desires never lacked for a grandiose component, though I will admit they have at times been short on ingenuity.

But only at times. I've worked as an overseer, you know.

SOLOMON :

I did not, sir.

ARMSBY:

Not "sir." Just Armsby. Not owed more than any other in the field. I worked plantations from Virginia, down into Alabama. I could manage easy a hundred slaves and have done so. But to toil in the field? Never thought that would come to pass. Never. But times are desperate. Where once I had said "no" to Epps and his merger offerings, I returned cap
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT

142 CONTINUED:

ARMSBY (CONT'D)

in hand. ...Look at what I've become.

SOLOMON:

How did you arrive at such a place, if I may ask?

ARMSBY :

Ask. It's just conversation.
From a pocket Armsby produces a flask.
ARMSBY (CONT'D)
I became a little too dependant on the whisky, a little too undependable on the job. Before you say I'm just a sorry drunkard, let me state my case: As reliable employment as overseeing is, it's no easy chore on the spirit. I say no man of conscious can take the lash to another human day in, and day out without shredding at his own self. Takes him to a place where he either makes excuses within his mind to be unaffected... Or finds some way to trample his guilty sensations. Well, I trampled.
Armsby takes a drink.
ARMSBY (CONT'D)
And with frequency.

SOLOMON :

Where is your place of birth?

ARMSBY:

Maryland. Have you traveled there?

SOLOMON :

...I cannot say that I have.

ARMSBY:

Fine country. More seasonal than

the bayou. A deal less humid.

SOLOMON :

Why did you leave it?

ARMSBY:

To make my fortune, of course. I gave in to tales of wealth and prosperity that were the lore of the southern states: all that's needed being a patch of land and a few good growing seasons. Cotton,

(MORE)

96.

(CONTINUED)

143

144

145

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 97.

CONTINUED:

ARMSBY (CONT'D)

or tobacco. And then locating a proper bank in which to store your riches. But such profitable outcomes are reserved for the plantation masters. It's the lot of the rest of us to serve. So I settled on being an overseer, and failed as well at that. In the meantime my dreams gave way to reality. Now, I want nothing more than to earn a decent wage.

(beat)

And get myself home.

Armsby takes another drink and leans back.

INT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/SLAVE SHACKS - MORNING 143

-AUGUST, 1847

We again hear the sound of the HORN BLOWING signaling the start of the work day for the slave.

EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/FIELD - DAY 144

With the sun yet again high in the sky the slaves are working the field picking cotton. As before they sing a spiritual, the only thing that distracts them from the tedium at hand.

But there is no distracting from the heat. We see Uncle Abram begin to falter and finally drop down to the ground.

Treach calls to Edward:

TREACH :

Get him water.

Edward runs to fetch water which he carries to Abram and

DUMPS ON HIM...BUT ABRAM DOES NOT RISE. DOES NOT MOVE.

At this point, the sounds of the singing from the otherstapers off as they realize Abram isn't getting up.

EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/SLAVE CEMETERY - LATER 145

We are beyond the main of the plantation, the cottonfield in the background. We are at the slaves' cemetery, a mixture of crude crosses and unsettled ground.

Solomon, Bob and Henry, now much visually older than whenwe first saw them, are digging a grave in the dirt. The

uncovered body of Abram lays near. Having dug down anappropriate distance, the three men take the body and,

very unceremoniously, place it into the ground. Holding

(CONTINUED)

146

147

A148

147

A148

148

149

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 98.

CONTINUED:

the shovel in his hands, and resting it by his feet, Bobtilts his head down and closes his eyes. The others dothe same. Almost stutteringly, not really knowing what to

say-

BOB :

I just want to say something aboutUncle Abram. He was a good man andhe always looked out for us sincewe were little. God Bless him. God love him. And God keep him.

That done, they begin to cover it with dirt. It is all the more of a funeral that Abram will receive.

OMIT 146

OMIT 147

EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/SLAVE CEMETERY - LATER A148

A female voice appears out of the blackness and begins tosing solo, "Went down to the river Jordan." A response of "Oh Yeah" quickly follows. Again the singer continues,

"where John baptized three."

The same faces we have seen on Epps's plantation, but now filled with rapture, appear. It's as if the voices have created a new form of awakening and presence. It seems to transcend and translate in a strange way, joy. A joy which has un-yet been seen on screen. A joy which has been hidden, but a joy which is undoubtedly there. It's captivating, infectious.

This should be a moving part of the film, which stirs the audience and, for a moment, relieves them of this seemingly chastising environment.

The singer continues, "Well some say John was a Baptist, some say John was a Jew, but I say John was a preacher, because the Bible says so too, preach on Johnny." And with that, the rest of the congregation chant "I believe.

Oh, I believe."

INT. EPPS'S PLANTATION/WOODS - NIGHT 148

Solomon goes to RETRIEVE THE SMALL PACKAGE FROM UNDER A ROCK AT THE BASE OF A TREE. Solomon returns the letter to

hiding. He takes the money with him and cautiously moves from the area.

OMIT 149

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 99.

150 INT. EPPS'S PLANTATION/ARMSBY'S SHACK - LATER 150

The door opens. Solomon enters. Armsby is surprised to see him. So much so, he isn't sure what greeting to give. Solomon gives a blunt introduction. Re: the

coins:

SOLOMON:

The proceeds of my fiddling performances. A few picayunes, but all I have in the world. I promise them to you if you will do me the favor I require. But I beg you not to expose me if you cannot grant the request.

ARMSBY :

What do you ask?

SOLOMON :

First, your word, sir.

ARMSBY :

On my honor.

SOLOMON:

It is a simple enough request. I ask only that you deposit a letter in the Marksville post office. And that you keep the action an inviolable secret forever. The details of the letter are of no consequence. Even at that, there would be an imposition of much pain and suffering were it known I was the author. A patron is what I require, sir.

ARMSBY :

Where's the letter now?

SOLOMON:

...It is not yet written. I will have it in a day. Two at most, my skill with composition as poor as it is.

Armsby considers the request.

ARMSBY:

I will do it. And will accept whatever payment is offered.

Solomon hesitates. In the moment, he's not so sure he can wholly give himself over to trust.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 100.

150 CONTINUED:

ARMSBY (CONT'D)

To assist you, I put my own self at risk. I will do so, but fair compensation is all I ask.

Solomon hands over the money.

ARMSBY (CONT'D)

Draw up your letter. We will meet again. In two days?

SOLOMON :

In two days. ...Thank you.
Solomon exits.

151 EXT. EPPS'S PLANTATION/COTTON FIELD - DAY 151

Solomon and the slaves pick cotton. Armsby inconspicuously NOT laboring in the field. As Solomon works he is watched by Epps. Watched more than he normally is. For a moment it seems it might just be a matter of perspective; Solomon's unease over his actions.

But soon Epps is joined by Armsby. The two men stand and talk, their looks locked toward Solomon.

Whatever it is that is occurring between them continues for a long, long moment. But Epps makes no move toward Solomon. Solomon continues with his work.

152 INT. EPPS'S PLANTATION/SLAVE SHACK - NIGHT 152

The slaves are at rest. Gripping his whip Epps enters, without so much as a knock at the door. For a moment there's curiosity; is he there for a dance, for Patsey...? Looking right to Solomon:

EPPS :

Get up.

Solomon does. Epps heads back out into the dark. He says nothing, but his directive is clear: Follow me.

153 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/SLAVE SHACK - CONTINUOUS 153

Solomon comes out into the dark. Nearly hidden in the shadows is a bitter Epps. Despite the lack of light, Epps's malevolence is quite clear. His whip attached to his hip. As he speaks, he stokes himself with swigs from a FLASK. Epps puts his arm around Solomon, as if consoling a friend, and guides him into the woods.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 100A.

153 CONTINUED:

EPPS :

Well, boy. I understand I've got a larned nigger that writes
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 101.

153 CONTINUED:

EPPS (CONT'D)

letters and tries to get white fellows to mail 'em.

Solomon, hardly missing a beat, plays this off.

EPPS (CONT'D)

Well, Armsby tol' me today the devil was among my niggers. That I had one that needed close watchin' or he would run away. When I axed him why, he said you come over to him and waked him up in the middle of the night and wanted him to carry a letter to Marksville. What have yah got to say to that?

SOLOMON:

All I have to say, master, is all that need be said. There is no truth in it.

EPPS :

You say.

SOLOMON:

How could I write a letter without ink or paper? There is nobody I want to write to 'cause I hain't got no friends living as I know of. That Armsby is a lying drunken fellow. You know this, just as you know that I am constant in truth. Now, master, I can see what that Armsby is after, plain enough. Didn't he want you to hire him for an overseer?

A beat.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

That's it. He wants to make you believe we're all going to run away and then he thinks you'll hire an overseer to watch us. He believes you are soft soap. He's given to such talk. I believe he's just made this story out of whole cloth, 'cause he wants to get a situation. It's all a lie, master, you may depend on't. It's

all a lie.

For a tense moment we are unsure which way Epps'll go.

Increasingly it become apparent that, shallow minded and equally soused, Solomon has been able to fold Epps's thoughts. In a low curse that clearly states his ill intentions.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 102.

153 CONTINUED:

Revealed is a pocket knife, which all through the conversation, unknown to us the audience, was pushed up against Solomon's stomach. As Epps speaks, he closes it and taps it on Solomon's shoulder.

EPPS:

I'm damned. I'll be god... Were he not free and white, Platt.

Were he not free and white.

Epps heads off. Solomon is left to exhale a deep breath.

154 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/WOODS - NIGHT 154

Having found a lonely spot, Solomon has struck a SMALL FIRE. He has in his hand his letter. With no ceremony,

he casts the letter upon the flames and watches it burn.

And with it, at this time, seems all chance of him ever being free. He stands and looks at it as if forever, as ashes descend into the night sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

A155 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/GREAT HOUSE - DAY A155
-MARCH, 1852

The slaves are now employed working on an extension to the Great House. The slaves work under the direction of

MR. SAMUEL BASS, a between forty and fifty years old, of light complexion and light hair. He is cool and self-

possessed, fond of argument, but always speaking with extreme deliberation as well as a Canadian accent.

B155 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/GREAT HOUSE - DAY B155

As the slaves continue to work, there is a conversation going on between Epps and Bass. Bass much skilled in the

art of sophistry, while Epps's arguments are fueled mostly by emotion alone. Though at first Epps does little more than joke his way around the facts.

Solomon, working still, can't help but overhear as Epps offers Bass a drink, which Bass waves away.

EPPS :

Take it. You look unsettled.

BASS :

I'm well.

EPPS:

No shame in taking respite from the heat; drink, shade. It's ungodly for travelers. Hearty, or otherwise.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 102A.

B155 CONTINUED:

Bass gives a laugh.

EPPS (CONT'D)

I meant no joke.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 103.

B155 CONTINUED:

BASS :

Your humor is inadvertent.

Sensing perhaps Bass's laughter might be at his expense, Epps presses.

EPPS :

Then share what's funny. Or what ill's you.

BASS :

I'm here to complete the work at hand. As requested, and as paid.

EPPS :

Something rubs you wrongly.

Before I take further offense, I offer you the opportunity to speak on it.

BASS :

You ask plainly, I will tell you plainly. What I find amusing: You worry about my well being in the heat but, quite frankly, the condition of your laborers-

EPPS :

"The condition of my..." What in

the hell are you-

BASS :

It is horrid. It's all wrong.
All wrong, sir.

EPPS :

They ain't hired help. They're myslaves.

BASS :

You say that with pride.

EPPS :

I say it as fact.

BASS :

If the conversation concerns what
is factual and what is not;
there's no justice norrighteousness in slavery. I
wouldn't own a slave if I was rich
as Croesus, which I am not, as isperfectly well understood. More
particularly among my creditors.
There's another humbug: the creditsystem. Humbug, sir. No credit,
no debt. Credit leads a man into
temptation. Cash down is the onlything that will deliver him from
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT

B155 CONTINUED:

BASS (CONT'D)

evil. But this question of
slavery; what right have you to
your niggers when you come down to
the point?

EPPS:

What right? I bought 'em. I paid
for 'em.

BASS:

Of course you did. The law says
you have the right to hold a
nigger, but begging the law's

pardon...it lies. Is everything right because the law allows it? Suppose they'd pass a law taking away your liberty and making you a slave?

EPPS :

Ha!

BASS:

Suppose.

EPPS :

That ain't a supposable case.

BASS:

Because the law states that your liberties are undeniable? Because society deems it so? Laws change. Social systems crumble. Universal truths are constant. It is a fact, it is a plain fact that what is true and right is true and right for all. White and black alike.

EPPS:

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Yah compare me to a nigger, Bass? Yah might as well ask what the difference is between a white man and a baboon. Now, I seen one of them critters in Orleans that knowed just as much as any nigger I got. Yah'd call them fellers citizens, I s'pose?

BASS:

Look here; you can't laugh me down in that way. These niggers are human beings. If they are allowed to scale no higher than brute animals, you and men like you will have to answer for it. There's an

ill-

104.

B155

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 105.

B155 CONTINUED:

EPPS :

Ahhh!

BASS :

A fearful ill, resting on this nation-

EPPS :

You betray yourself a foreigner!

BASS :

That will not go unpunished forever. There will be a reckoning yet.

EPPS :

You like to hear yourself talk,

Bass, better than any man I know of. Yah'd argue that black was white, or white black if anybody would contradict you. A fine supposition if yah lived among Yankees in New England. But yah don't. (pointed)

You most assuredly do not.

155 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION - DAY 155

It's the Sabbath. The slaves are left to themselves to do their own chores. At the moment the female slaves are washing their clothes in large cauldrons, slapping their clothes against washing boards and hanging them up to dry near to their living quarters behind the plantation. It is a sight of ritual. Missing from the field of labor is Patsey, for whom Epps hollers.

EPPS :

Patsey... Patsey!

A drunk Epps asks of the slaves:

EPPS (CONT'D)

Where is she? Where is Patsey?

No one answers.

EPPS (CONT'D)

Talk, Damn you!

PHEBE :

We know nothin' of her, Massa.

EPPS :

The hell you don't! You know where she is! She run off, ain't she? She's escaped, and you miserable black dogs stand like

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 106.

155 CONTINUED:

EPPS (CONT'D)

the deaf and dumb. Speak! Speak!

155 CONTINUED:

EPPS (CONT'D)

the deaf and dumb. Speak! Speak!

Not a word spoken.

EPPS (CONT'D)

My best cotton picking nigger! Mybest.

A beat.

EPPS (CONT'D)

I'd give yah all up for her.

Where she gone?

The slaves say nothing. There is nothing for them to

say. They don't know where she is. Eventually Epps drops into true sorrow.

EPPS (CONT'D)

She gone... My Pats gone.

156 EXT. EPPS'S PLANTATION - LATER 156

Epps sits on the piazza looking quite forlorn. He looks

up only to see PATSEY RETURNING TO THE PLANTATION. Epps steps up to greet her, with anger rather than relief.

As they hear his angry voice, the slaves step around from where they are hanging their laundry to dry. Treach is near as well.

EPPS :

Run off. Run off, did you?

PATSEY :

Massa Epps-

EPPS :

You miserable wench! Where youbeen?

PATSEY :

I been nowhere.

EPPS :

Lies to your misdeeds!

PATSEY :

The Sabbath day, Massa. I took me
a walk to commune wit da Lord.

EPPS :

Bring the Lord into yerdeceptions? Yah Godless...
Shaw's. Comin' from Shaw's
plantation weren't yah?

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 106A.

156 CONTINUED:

PATSEY:

...No...

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 107.

156 CONTINUED:

EPPS :

Yah took yerself ta pleasure Shaw.

Yah gave baser passion to thatunblushin' libertine!

Solomon tries to intervene:

SOLOMON :

Master Epps-

EPPS :

Now yah speak? Now that yah wantto add to 'er lies yah find yertongue.
Epps goes to strike Solomon, but Patsey pulls his armback.

PATSEY :

Do not strike him. I went to

Massa Shaw's plantation!

EPPS :

Yah admit it.

PATSEY :

Freely. And you know why.

Patsey takes soap from the pocket of her dress.

PATSEY (CONT'D)

I got this from Mistress Shaw.

Mistress Epps won't even grant meno soap ta clean with. Stink so much I make myself gag. Five

hundred pounds a cotton day in,

day out. More than any man here.

And fo that I will be clean; thatall I ax. Dis here what I went to Shaw's fo.

EPPS :

You lie...

PATSEY :

The Lord knows that's all.

EPPS :

You lie!

PATSEY :

And you blind wit yer own covetousness. I don't lie, Massa.

If you kill me, I'll stick tathat.

EPPS :

I'll learn you to go to Shaw's.

Treach, go get some line.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 108.

156 CONTINUED:

Treach runs quickly to the tool shed. In short order he returns with the rope in hand.

EPPS (CONT'D)

Strip her. Strike her bare in

lash her to the post.

Mistress Epps has now come from the Great House. She

gazes on the scene with an air of heartless satisfaction.
Now tied to the post, Epps stands behind Patsey with his whip.

EPPS (CONT'D)

Yah done this to yerself, Pats!

Epps hoists the whip to strike, holds it high...but nomatter his rage, Epps cannot bring himself to deliver the blow. He looks to Mistress Epps who now stands gloating and spurring him on.

MISTRESS EPPS :

Do it! Strike the life from her.

Epps again hoists the whip. It trembles in his hand ahead of the act... But he does not have it in him to deliver such a beating. Turning to Solomon, thrusting the whip at him:

EPPS :

Beat her.

Solomon doesn't move. Epps shoves the whip into his hand.

EPPS (CONT'D)

Give her the whip. Give it all to her!

Patsey, begging to Solomon:

PATSEY :

I'd rather it you, Platt.

EPPS:

Strike her, or yah'll get the same!

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 109.

156 CONTINUED:

Solomon takes a step back. He unfurls the whip... He begins to whip Patsey. Lash after lash, Patsey squirms before it. Epps eyes fill with tears, he is nearly too distraught to watch.

But the Mistress... She is not satisfied with Solomon's half-hearted effort.

MISTRESS EPPS:

He pantomimes. There ain't barely a welt on her. That's what your niggers make of yah; a fool fer the takin'.

Epps's grief is replaced by fury. EPPS GRABS THE PISTOL

FROM TREACH'S HOLSTER and draws down on the slaves.

EPPS:

Yah will strike her. Yah will
strike her until her flesh is rent
and meat and blood flow equal, or
I will kill every nigger in my
sight!

Solomon can't strike a blow, even if it means his life.
But from the ground, from Patsey:

PATSEY:

Do it, Platt. Don't stop until I
am dead.

What else can he do? Solomon begins to whip, to truly whip Patsey. Her back
welts, then tears... Patsey screams in agony. Solomon strikes again and
again...

After a full thirty lashes Solomon looks to Epps, who is not satisfied.

EPPS:

Until I say no more! I ain't said
nothing!

Solomon strikes another ten to fifteen times. By now, as promised,
Patsey's back has been reduced to LITTLE MORE THAN TORN MEAT AND BLOOD.
Finally, Solomon holds low the whip. He can and will do
no more.

EPPS (CONT'D)

Strike her! Strike her!

Solomon will not. Epps takes up the whip and whips Patsey with "ten fold"
greater force than he had. The
painfully loud and angry curses of Epps load the air.

Patsey by now is terribly lacerated, literally flayed.

The lash wet with blood which flowed down her sides and

dropped upon the ground. At length Patsey ceases struggling. Her head sinks
listlessly on the ground.

(CONTINUED)

157

158

159

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 110.

CONTINUED:

Her screams and supplications gradually decrease and die away into a low
moan. It would seem that she was dying.

Solomon, screaming at Epps:

SOLOMON :

Thou devil! Sooner or later,
somewhere in the course of eternal
justice thou shalt answer for thissin!
Though Epps fronts rage, there should be underlyinganguish for what he has
done to his beloved Pats.

EPPS :

No sin! There is no sin! A man
does how he pleases with hisproperty. At the moment, Platt, Iam of great
pleasure. You be
goddamn careful I don't come towantin' to lightenin' my mood
nofurther.

By contrast to this horror, the field of cotton smiles inthe warm sunlight.
The birds chirp merrily amidst thefoliage of the tress. Peace and happiness
seems to reigneverywhere.

Everywhere else.

Epps leaves Patsey to herself. He says not a word to theMistress as he
passes. The Mistress herself heads back
into the house.

Solomon unties Patsey, lifts her and takes her to thecabin.

INT. CABIN -LATER 157

Patsey is laid on some boards where she remains for along time with eyes
closed and groaning in agony. Phebe
applies melted tallow to her wounds, and all try toassist and console her.
In time Patsey opens her eyes. She looks to Solomon.
She does not say a word. She just looks at him...andthen her eyes close
again.

MOVED TO A155 158

MOVED TO B155 159

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 111.

160

INT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/GREAT HOUSE/ADDITION -160

EVENING:

-APRIL, 1852

Solomon and Bass are working together alone on theextension. From the
amount of work that's been done on
it, it should be obvious that days have now passed.
Solomon makes a cautious approach to Bass. As casuallyas he can he
inquires:

SOLOMON :

Master Bass, I want to ask you what part of the country you came from?

BASS :

No part of this land. I was born in Canada. Now guess where that is.

SOLOMON :

Oh, I know where Canada is. I have been there myself.

BASS :

Have you?

SOLOMON :

Montreal and Kingston and Queenston and a great many places. And I have been in York state, too. Buffalo and Rochester and Albany, and can tell you the names of the villages on the Erie canal and the Champlain canal. Bass gives Solomon a long and curious stare.

BASS :

Well traveled for a slave. How came you here?

SOLOMON :

Master Bass, if justice had been done I never would have been here.

BASS :

How's this? Tell me all about it.

SOLOMON :

I am afraid to tell you, though I don't believe you would tell Master Epps if I should.

BASS :

Every word you speak is a profound secret.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 112-115.

160 CONTINUED:

Solomon holds a moment. Hasn't he heard the same promise before? Prior to Solomon stating his case, WE FADE TO:

161 INT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION / ADDITION - DAY 161

Hours have passed. Bass reflects on the story that Eppshas told in the intervening.

BASS :

How many years all told?

SOLOMON :

Just nearly...just passed eleven.

BASS:

Your story is...it is amazing, and in no good way.

SOLOMON:

Do you believe, sir, in justice as you have said?

BASS :

I do.

SOLOMON:

That slavery is an evil that should befall none?

BASS :

I believe so.

SOLOMON:

If you truly do, I would ask...I would beg that you write my friends in the north, acquainting them with my situation and beseeching them to forward free papers, or take such steps as they might consider proper to secure my release.

Bass looks at Solomon, holding his gaze for more than a prolonged beat.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

My daughter Margaret is possibly now 19 and my son Alonzo, 16. I miss them so. It would be an unspeakable happiness to clasp my wife and my family again.

Bass hands Solomon an end of a long plank of wood and looks over his shoulder, as if to camouflage the conversation by work. They both lift it toward the floorboards. Finally Bass speaks.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 116.

161 CONTINUED:

BASS:

I have always forgone relationships and family. I did once have a sweetheart who I loved deeply.

Bass points to a measuring tool, which Solomon immediately hands over.

BASS (CONT'D)

But that was a long, long time ago. I've been traveling this country for the best part of twenty years. My freedom is everything. The fact that I can walk out of here tomorrow gives me most pleasure. I see the aching in your eyes, the pain of not being attached to your loved ones. My life doesn't mean much to anyone, but it seems your life means a lot to a lot of people. What you have just said to me scares me, and I must say, sir, I am afraid. Not just for you, but for me.

They continue working, fixing the floorboards in unison.

Solomon, slightly confused.

BASS (CONT'D)

I will write your letter sir, for if I could bring freedom to you, it will be more than a pleasure. It will be a duty. Now, would you be so kind as to pass me those nails, sir.

We pull back to reveal the two men dwarfed by the unfinished structure. They continue to work, as if the conversation had never occurred.

162 OMIT 162

163 OMIT 163

164 OMIT 164

A165 EXT. SWAMP TBD A165

Solomon walks a path he has walked a thousand times or more on his way back from Bartholomew's - sack familiarly slung over his right shoulder. Drearily he walks. His eyes acknowledge something we yet cannot see to his left.

Almost simultaneously, his eyes retract back to the path

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 116A.

A165 CONTINUED:

towards Epps's. As he passes out of shot, the evidence of what he was looking at is revealed.

FEET hang at the top right hand corner of the frame. A woman, who has been lynched.

165 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/ADDITION - DAY 165

-SEPTEMBER, 1852

SLOW DISSOLVE:

To a now virtually complete, half-painted white gazebo.

Slaves continue to work on it. As they do so, Bass peels away from the structure to have an overview. He beckons Solomon toward him, out of earshot from the slaves who are continuing to work on the gazebo. As Solomon approaches, Bass shouts-

BASS :

And bring those markers!

Solomon gathers a clutch of markers in his hands and approaches Bass.

BASS (CONT'D)

No letter yet.

SOLOMON :

You are certain?

Bass takes a marker from Solomon and slides it into the earth.

BASS:

I have inquired thoroughly. More than is safe for either of us.

Bass takes another and pokes it into the ground, improvising a pathway towards the gazebo.

BASS (CONT'D)

Solomon...I have a job or two on hand which will be completed shortly... The work here has

grown sparse.

(CONTINUED)

166

167 167

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 117.

CONTINUED:

Bass doesn't need to spell things out for Solomon.

Solomon's understanding of the finality of the situation should be very clear.

BASS (CONT'D)

You must know, wherever I am I will press your cause.

SOLOMON :

Five months. On top of these years. No cause remains.

BASS :

If there is any chance...

SOLOMON :

Mr. Bass...

BASS :

I will continue to write your people-

SOLOMON :

Go home knowing you have tried.

The weight of defeat should hang very heavily with both men. Nothing more to do, nothing more to say BASS TAKES SOLOMON'S HAND, GRIPS IT FIRMLY, BUT LOW AND SURREPTITIOUSLY knowing full well he cannot be seen making contact with a slave. But in the strength of their collective grip, in the emotion in which they hold each other's eyes, we should be able to easily see how greatly Bass wanted to be able to help Solomon.

Equally,

we can see the depth of regard Solomon has for Bass. The moment is made all the more powerful by the fact neither man can openly speak his regret or thanks. A moment longer, and then Bass releases his grip and makes his way marching toward the gazebo, pointing instructions. Solomon is left, markers in hand, alone.

OMIT 166

OMIT 167

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 118.

A168 EXT. ROAD BY EPPS'S PLANTATION - EVENING A168

Solomon sits on a secluded part of the road, fiddle in hand. He stares across the expanse. His eyes fixed on something that is a million miles away.

Slowly Solomon tunes his fiddle, turning the tuning peg tighter and tighter. As the strings are taut, the sound is almost unbearable as Solomon tightens bit by bit, as if bones are being cracked one by one. Just beyond the breaking point of sound, there is a snap.

He then repeats the action.

Solomon holds the neck of the violin. Sliding his thumb and forefinger down the neck, he methodically cracks it at the base. He carefully snaps the neck and removes it from the body, then snaps it in two, placing it on the ground. He then starts on the body. Heaving it on the ground, it falls apart.

Methodically he breaks the violin into small bits - silencing the instrument with a hushed display of violence, rather than aggressive. Seems almost to be, in an odd way, respectful.

168 EXT. MASTER EPPS'S PLANTATION/FIELD - DAY 168

-FEBRUARY, 1853

The slaves are sowing the heavily plowed field, making their way in the tiring soil. Solomon, too focused to note the arrival of two men by carriage: Parker and the Sheriff.

While the Sheriff makes his way to the field, Parker remains with the carriage. The Sheriff calls:

SHERIFF:

Platt...? Where is the boy called Platt?

SOLOMON :

...Sir...

The Sheriff crosses to him.

SHERIFF :

Your name is Platt, is it?

SOLOMON :

Yes, sir.

Pointing off to the distance.

SHERIFF :

Do you know that man?

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 118A.

168 CONTINUED:

Solomon looks toward the carriage. He has to shield his eyes from the sun. Recognition is slow coming to him. But when it does, it hits him as a rush.

SOLOMON :

Mr. Parker...?

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 119.

168 CONTINUED:

Solomon starts for Parker, but he is pulled back by the Sheriff who is keen to determine Solomon's true identity.

SHERIFF :

Say again?

SOLOMON :

Mr. Parker?

As he does, Epps makes his way over.

SHERIFF :

That man received a letter compiling many accusations. You look me in the eye and on your life answer me truthfully: have you any other name than Platt?

SOLOMON :

Solomon Northup is my name.

EPPS :

Sheriff...

SHERIFF :

Have you a family?

EPPS :

What's all this?

SHERIFF :

It's official business.

EPPS :

My nigger, my business.

SHERIFF :

Your business waits.

(to Solomon)

Tell me of your family.

SOLOMON :

I have a wife and two children.

SHERIFF :

What were your children's names?

SOLOMON :

Margaret and Alonzo.

SHERIFF :

And your wife's name before her marriage?

SOLOMON :

Anne Hampton. I am who I say.

Solomon pushes past the sheriff. As Solomon moves toward Parker, his pace quickens with each step until his

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 119A.

168 CONTINUED:

personal velocity has him nearly at a dead run. The two old friends make contact with each other, wrap each other in a long and emotional embrace. It is finally broken by Epps, who has moved over with the Sheriff.

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 120.

168 CONTINUED:

EPPS :

Nah... You will unhand 'em.

Platt is my nigger!

PARKER :

He is Solomon Northrup.

EPPS :

You say...

PARKER :

He belongs to no man.

EPPS :

You say! You come here,
unfamiliar to me, and make claims.

SHERIFF :

Not claims. I have no doubts.
This is Solomon Northup, a resident of Saratoga Springs, NY.

EPPS :

To hell with that! My nigger, and I'll fight you for 'em!

PARKER :

As is your right. As it will be
my pleasure to bankrupt you in the courts. Your decision.
By this time, the slaves in the plantation have overcome their fear of
penalty, and left their work and gathered in the yard as witnesses. They
stand behind the cabin,
out of sight of Epps.
Mistress Epps also bears witness, standing on the veranda next to her house
slave. Her face is of a strange mixed emotion.
Epps looks to Solomon. Solomon icily, stoically holds his ground. He makes
it quite clear in his countenance that nobody owns him. Sheriff, hand on his
gun, is there to back Solomon up. Epps, with no other recourse than to back
down:

EPPS :

You think this is the last you'll see of me, boy? It ain't.
(to Parker)
Whatever paper you hold about his freedom, it don't mean naught. He is
my nigger - and I will have my day in court, sir. As God as my witness, I
will have my day in court. Take 'em!
Epps calls to Bob

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 120A.

168 CONTINUED:

EPPS (CONT'D)

Saddle my horse! And bring her up here.
Epps walks back into the plantation.
The trio starts for the carriage. Solomon is pulled back by the call of

Patsey's voice:

PATSEY :

Platt...

Disregarding Parker, Solomon crosses over to Patsey.

Under the circumstances, neither really knows how to engage. Finally, suddenly, Patsey throws her arms around Solomon and they embrace.

Epps, now mounted on his horse, witness the encounter.

Kicking the stirrups hard into the sides of the horse, he rides off furiously.

Calling from the carriage, mindful of Epps:

PARKER :

Solomon...if we know what's wise,
we should depart.

A moment longer Solomon and Patsey hold each other. They separate, Solomon heading back to the carriage. He and

Parker alight. The Sheriff chides the horses and they

(CONTINUED)

A169

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 121.

CONTINUED:

start up. As they move on, Patsey sinks down to the ground, where she remains in a weary and half-reclining state, the other slaves around her.

WE STAY WITH Solomon as he travels further and further from the slaves - who are diminished by distance.

Solomon waves a hand to them, but the carriage rounds a bend and a thicket of trees hides them from his eyes forever more.

BLACK:

EXT. NORTHUP HOUSE - DAY A169

-MARCH, 1853

We now see Solomon in front of a door. A door we have

seen before at the very beginning of our story. Solomon, aged significantly since then, stands nervously,

swallowing, and adjusting his attire. He breathes in and holds his breath. He blows out and closes his eyes. A tear falls from his cheek, but this is not

the way he wants his family to see him. He gathers himself, and looks to his right. There stands Mr. Parker. He places his hand on Solomon's

shoulder. He says gently-

PARKER :

Are you ready?

Solomon swallows and nods.

INT. NORTHUP HOUSE - LATER 169

THE DOOR TO THE ROOM OPENS. Mr. Parker enters, Solomon behind. We first see Anne, in her finest attire; the Northup children: Alonzo, who is now seventeen and Margaret who is now twenty - SHE CARRIES WITH HER A BUNDLE. Also present is MARGARET'S HUSBAND. The family waits patiently, dutifully...but anxiously.

Anne rises to greet him, but holds back. All around, the body language of the family is stiff and awkward. They are, after all - after twelve years - little more than familiar strangers.

SOLOMON :

I apologize for my appearance. I have had a difficult time of things these past many years.

Solomon looks among his family; trying to recall them as much as they look to see familiarity within him. To his

children:

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

Alonzo... Margaret, yes? You do not recognize me, do you? Do

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 122.

169 CONTINUED:

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

you...do you even remember the last time we saw each other? I put you on a carriage with your mother...

Margaret, tearing, hugs her father. Solomon almost breaks, but he keeps himself together. Looking to the unknown man:

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

And who is this?

MARGARET :

He is my husband.

SOLOMON :

Husband?

MARGARET'S HUSBAND

It is very good to meet you, sir.

SOLOMON :

We have much acquainting to do.

Margaret rises, she presents her bundle to her father.

MARGARET:

And this is your grandson.

Solomon Northup Staunton.

SOLOMON :

...Solomon...

The fact his grandson carries his name, is overwhelming.

Solomon breaks down. Emotionally, physically... But

ANNE IS THERE TO CATCH HIM. As she holds him, Solomon says to Anne with all his heart:

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

Forgive me.

ANNE :

There is nothing to forgive.

The pair, joined now by the whole family, hold on to each other for life...and one would think for all the rest of their lives.

FADE TO:

BLACK:

CARD:

Upon gaining his freedom, Solomon Northup located and attempted to seek legal justice against the men who kidnapped him. The case was tried in Washington, DC where blacks were prohibited by law from testifying
(CONTINUED)

1/24/13 FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT 123.

169 CONTINUED:

against whites. The charges against the kidnappers were eventually dismissed.

Northup spent the rest of his life working as an abolitionist, and with the Underground Railroad.

Solomon Northup most likely died between 1863 and 1875.

The exact date, place, and circumstances of his death remain unknown.

- END