

SLAVERY BY ANOTHER NAME

by

Jeanne Veillette Bowerman & Douglas A. Blackmon

EXT. ALABAMA COTTON FIELD (1865)

SLAVES pluck cotton as SLAVE OWNER hovers with a SHOT GUN.

WHITE BOY (9) grabs BLACK GIRL's hand (6) and dashes between plants, LAUGHING, until a BOOM sounds off in the distance.

Everyone stops working and fixates on SMOKE billowing from a neighbor's.

BLACK UNION SOLDIERS swarm the plantation.

BLACK UNION SOLDIER #1
War be over!

BLACK UNION SOLDIER #2
Y'all be free!

Slaves' confusion morphs into CHEERS. They drop their bags and race after the celebrating soldiers. Tufts of loose cotton swirl in the air.

Slave Owner steps from the field with White Boy and Black Girl behind.

SLAVE OWNER
Get back here!

Several slaves LAUGH as they run for freedom -- more tufts dancing on thermals.

White Boy and Black Girl GIGGLE and dart in circles around Slave Owner, chasing floating cotton. Slave Owner snatches his son's arm, slaps him, and knocks him to the ground, lip bleeding.

White Boy's eyes well with tears as Black Girl steps back.

SLAVE OWNER
Who ya think's gonna pick cotton
now, Boy?

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER: "FORTY YEARS AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, RURAL ALABAMA 1903"

EXT. ALABAMA DIRT ROAD - DAY

Sprawling fields bulging with bolls of cotton adorn both sides of the road. A WHITE FARMER with his two young SONS inspect their crop.

A ROAR of an engine in the distance.

Sons dash out, anticipating what's heading toward them.

Dust billows as the ROAR grows louder -- the cloud expands until a MOTORCYCLE with sidecar EMERGES.

A dust-covered MOTORCYCLE RIDER, wearing a suit and goggles, respectfully gives them a nod as he races by, STARTLING them.

EXT. JON DAVIS SHACK

JON DAVIS (40s), a fit black man, wearing tattered overalls, steps out drying his hands on a rag. What he lacks in education, he more than makes up for with common sense.

DAVIS

Get on in for breakfast.

ALICE (8), arms mimicking an airplane, GIGGLES as she "flies."

Davis smiles and pats her head as she zooms past.

CHICKEN COOP LEAN-TO

ALBERT (11) cranks a primitive, homemade, table-top COTTON GIN. He tosses in COTTON BOLLS. Clean cotton spits out.

ALBERT

Look Papa, it works!

He throws in more cotton. The wheel jams. He picks up a small METAL FILE with his greasy hands and tinkers with it.

DAVIS

Work on ones people pay us to fix.
You can fiddle with your contraption
later.

ALBERT

Got Mista Goodman's fixed already.

DAVIS

Breakfast.

Albert sighs and stacks the cotton gin near other broken equipment and jogs to the shack.

INT. JON DAVIS SHACK - BEDROOM

A hanger with an UNFINISHED MAN'S SHIRT dangles on a dresser. Long-abandoned YARN, FABRIC, and KNITTING NEEDLES litter the room.

Time stands still.

Davis' sick and frail wife, NORA, lies in bed next to an incomplete NEEDLEPOINT of a green pasture and small shack.

Sitting next to her mother, Alice gobbles her breakfast.

ALICE
 ...an they say those Wright brothers
 gonna fly like birds!

DAVIS
 We'll see, Baby Girl.

Albert enters, sashes a RUSTY PAN of WATER on the NIGHTSTAND.

Davis dips the cloth and places it on Nora's forehead.

ALBERT
 Ain't this hot up North, Mama.

DAVIS
 (to Nora)
 When you better, we get on a big ol'
 train and visit your sister.

ALICE
 Or a flying machine!

Nora smiles.

ALBERT
 It's an aeroplane, Dummy.

DAVIS
 My lil' dreamer.

Davis draws close to Nora lifting his daughter onto his lap,
 holding her as if his life depends on it.

Nora can barely lift her arm as she reaches for his hand.

Alice grabs the needlepoint, pulls the needle.

ALICE
 Mama, I be stitchin' like you.

She pricks her finger.

ALICE
 Ow!

DAVIS
 Best let Mama finish it.

Davis kisses her finger, slides her off his lap. He grazes
 his lips over Nora's forehead, her nose, then her mouth.
 She opens her eyes to see his warm smile as he rises.

DAVIS
 (to Albert)
 Gonna deliver the eggs and git Mama's
 medicine. You be da man till I gets
 back.