

ABBY

~~Kate's eyes hang on Byrne's for long moments; he's not allowed to let everyone see how he feels--but the other women don't give up, envying Kate while wanting to poison her.~~

~~ADA~~

~~Kate, thank you for including us,
this is simply the best party of
the year! Your dress is SO lovely!~~

~~LOUISA~~

~~And it's so good of you to chase
away all this talk of war!~~

Mrs. Murphy butts back in.

MRS. MURPHY

Personally I'm more afraid of the
slaves in my yard than of the
Yankees up north.

INT. POINT OF HONOR - KITCHEN - DAY

SC #1

The slaves are bustling--cooking, making drinks and canapes.
An older slave, ADOLPHUS, 75, drops a tray of glasses, and as
Abby enters he looks up to her in shame.

Start →

ADOLPHUS

I'm so sorry...

ABBY

It's okay, Adolphus, don't worry...

As she hurries to clean up the mess--Abby manages every mess--
her younger sister Phoebe meets her anxiously.

PHOEBE

Did she say?! What'd she say?!

ABBY

She said beaucoup hoo blah blah
blah. I'll ask her, don't worry!

Abby looks out the back windows, heavy burdens on her brain.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I just heard Miz Murphy say, "I'm
more scared of the Blacks in my
fields than the Yankees up North."
When the white folks are afraid, we
better be too. Let me know the
minute you see Elijah.

END

1/8

~~Cutler puts one hand on the whip at his left hip and one hand on the butt of his pistol on his right hip, and shouts out --~~

~~CUTLER~~

~~ON THE ROAD OUTSIDE THE SWANN PLANTATION, TWO RUNAWAYS ARE HANGING FROM TREES!! You want to be like them, listen to the Yankees.~~

INT. MANSION - PRIVATE PARLOR - DAY

Kate sees the slaves and Cutler... and Kate is so agitated by her secret dilemma that she hasn't noticed that Abby and Phoebe have moved into the room behind her.

ABBY

Miz Kate! I'm so sorry to trouble you but I gotta! Mr. Cutler, he says he's gonna sell my sister to the Swann Plantation!

SC# 2

Kate turns to the two slave sisters and stiffens.

KATE

Cutler is the overseer, he does not own this plantation. But your information is correct, Phoebe has been sold.

~~PHOEBE~~

~~But you can't! I was born here!~~

Kate is not accustomed to back talk; her eyes flash.

KATE

We need a shoemaker; you lack that skill so we're trading Swann for one.

~~PHOEBE~~

~~But~~

ABBY

Please, Miz Kate! I'll make her learn!

KATE

That's what you said a year ago. She moons over Elijah and won't keep her mind on her task.

2/8

ABBY
She's seventeen, she --

PHOEBE
You can't sell me! You CAN'T --

Abby SLAPS Phoebe sharply across the face!

ABBY
Don't ever speak to the Missus that way!

Kate glares at Phoebe, and walks out. Phoebe begins to cry.

PHOEBE
How could you --?

ABBY
She could have you whipped! What's wrong with you?!

PHOEBE
I'm just so scared! The Swanns hang slaves for lookin' at 'em wrong!

ABBY
That's just a story they tell to scare people! I'll keep trying -- and you keep your mouth SHUT!

/END

~~INT. MANSION BEDROOM RALSTON RHODES' ROOM DAY~~

~~Ralston Rhodes is reclined on the sofa of his sitting room/bedroom, in a laudanum-and-bourbon-induced haze as Kate enters and looks at him.~~

~~KATE
Daddy, can you hear me?~~

~~RALSTON
Kate... call your mother.~~

~~KATE
Mama's dead, Daddy.~~

~~RALSTON
I know, that's why I drink.~~

3/8

~~Locals—the kind who would be in a tavern in the morning, are celebrating the birth of the Confederacy. Swann is behind the bar, revving up the crowd.~~

~~SWANN~~

~~The Yankees say they won't let us go--as if it were in their power to choose! Who does Lincoln think he is, King Lincoln?~~

~~The crowd whoops and laughs.~~

~~SWANN (CONT'D)~~

~~I hope the Yankees prove they're as stupid as I know them to be! Let them come! Let them learn what Southern steel is all about!!!~~

~~The drunks cheer, reaching a frenzy. Suddenly the door bangs open with such violence they all turn to look. Cutler stands there, filling the doorway, his eyes brimming with fury...~~

INT. VIRGIL'S SLAVE CABIN - POINT OF HONOR - DAY

SC # 3

Abby, Elijah and Virgil have gathered again in private, as the others wait outside. They are sobered by all that has just happened. In this setting, Abby displays the strength and confident presence she hides in front of slave owners.

ABBY

Free... I couldn't even say it before. And I'm almost afraid to say it now.

VIRGIL

Maybe we should go, all of us, tonight. Slip into the mountains, hide days, travel north by the stars. Ohio, maybe.

ABBY

We've got little ones, and old ones. We can't leave 'em, and we can't travel fast with 'em. Ragland, the slave trader? Men like that, they'd follow us on horses. And sell us all back into slavery. Or hang us all.

VIRGIL

What do you say, Elijah?

4/8

Start →

They both look toward Elijah--a powerful, brooding presence. He is deep in his own thoughts. Abby moves close to him, to whisper--

ABBY
One by one, or two by two, is it
time to run for Rainbow?

END

Before Elijah answers there is a banging on their door; Virgil opens it and sees Phoebe and the others, frightened.

PHOEBE
There's a mob of men coming up the
road with guns and torches!

VIRGIL
Get the children and the old folks
into the trees!

Abby runs past him, toward the house. Elijah walks calmly toward the wood shed...

~~INT. POINT OF HONOR HOUSE - DAY~~

~~The sisters are in the sitting room, trying for the first time in their lives to confront economic realities.~~

~~LORELEI
How much do you want to pay them?~~

~~KATE
A fair wage...whatever that is.~~

~~LORELEI
We're going to be forced to sell
land to raise cash.~~

~~KATE
No, we don't sell land.~~

~~LORELEI
You exclude me from the decision,
then expect me to solve this! And
now you tie my hands!~~

~~KATE
We never sell the land.~~

~~Abby comes running into the room.~~

~~ABBY
There's a mob comin' up the hill!~~

5/8

JOHN

Most of you were born here, as all of us were. We had no choice in that matter. My mother, and most of my ancestors, and most of yours, are buried on this ground.

John gestures toward the fenced-in family cemetery fifty yards from the house; the Rhodes markers are stone, the slave markers are wood -- but they are all buried together.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I have always expected to die here, at Point of Honor. That is my choice. But where you lived or died has not been your choice. Until today.

Elijah is the first to understand, and the shift of his eyes is like the seismic shift of the earth: what did he just say?

JOHN (CONT'D)

I hereby renounce the institution of slavery, and instruct that all slaves owned by my family are to be immediately and eternally set free.

SC #4

John takes a breath, looking at the faces staring at him --

Start →

JOHN (CONT'D)

You are all free.

Adolphus, nearly deaf, sees the women around him tremble, and the men go stiff. In his ancient voice, he bellows--

ADOLPHUS

What?! What did she say?!

Abby can barely get out the words...

ABBY

He says we free.

ADOLPHUS

WHAT??

ABBY

Free!

ADOLPHUS

Free to what??!!

Abby looks into his eyes, slowly mouthing the word:

6/8

ABBY

Free.

Adolphus begins to weep.

/END

And the Rhodes siblings have never before felt such shame of being slave owners as they feel at that moment, seeing the old slave's reaction to the moment of his freedom.

But for Cutler it is different. Rage burns in his eyes, and a hatred -- directed toward John and his sisters even more than to the slaves. He glares murderously at them, then storms away on his horse.

Phoebe falls against Abby, crying with relief. Most of the other slaves seemed stunned.

VIRGIL

Where do we go, sir?

John has no answer for that right now.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

(then to Kate)

Miz Kate?...

Kate glances toward her dazed sisters before responding --

KATE

You may stay here as long as you wish. We have no experience running a plantation with paid labor. But we will do what we must do.

JOHN

(dismissing the slaves)

Thank you. That is all.

And with that, he turns and heads back inside the house.

The sisters look about at the faces of the slaves, and then move back into the house also.

Off Virgil, Abby and Elijah, surrounded by the stunned emotions of the other now-freed slaves, find themselves looking at each other. Freedom! What will it mean?

EXT. POINT OF HONOR - FAMILY CEMETERY - MORNING

John stands alone beside a grave. On its marker is a single name: MOLLY. He stands and contemplates it.

7/8

~~Kate feels something in the pocket of her dress, pulls out the NECKLACE. She'd forgotten about it. Lorelei sees it, and turns away so Kate won't see her TEARS.~~

~~Estella puts her arms around Lorelei as Kate clasps the necklace back around her neck. Then Kate puts her arms around both of her sisters. And as they stand there holding each other in strength and love... We CUT TO~~

INT. SLAVE CABIN - NIGHT

SC. #5

Where Abby and Phoebe and Virgil and several other slaves sit in the yellow CANDLELIGHT. Virgil turns to Abby --

VIRGIL

Cutler's gonna be comin' for ya.

ABBY

Maybe.

VIRGIL

There's no maybe. Just a matter of him pickin' when and how. We need to get outta here...

(plaintive)

But we got no place to go.

ABBY

Yes we do. Rainbow.

VIRGIL

Rainbow. How many times you gonna say it without ever explainin' it?!

Abby pauses a moment, thinking about if she should reveal what she knows. Then --

ABBY

Rainbow is an old farm just across the county line. Used to be called Gidding's Farm... Now it's on the Murphy plantation.

And while Virgil and the others merely listen intently, that NAME LANDS HARD for us because we heard Byrne Murphy start to tell Kate this EXACT SAME STORY --

ABBY (CONT'D)

The people there, they secretly help slaves escape. Up into Ohio. And as soon as Elijah gets back, you, me, him -- all of us... We're gone.

END 8/8

Start →