

AMISTAD

BLACK MUTINY

by

David Franzoni

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First Rewrite

INT. HOLD OF LA AMISTAD, JULY 1, 1839 - NIGHT

In the shadows, bloody fingers struggle to twist a rusty nail from a plank. Fear hushed Voices drift through the air.

Creaking boards, shifting light and the persistent hiss of water make it clear we're in the belly of a ship. From far off comes an ominous thunder roll.

SEEN IN THE DULL LIGHT

A ten year old AFRICAN GIRL cowers in the dark with a barely seen group of AFRICAN MEN. Her name is KHILA and, like the others, she's watching the shadowy figure of the man tugging at the nail.

AS IF DRIVEN BY THE POWER OF LIGHTNING

the man wrenches the nail loose as the thunder bolt reveals him to be a strong young AFRICAN. The man is named CINQUE. Cinque shoves the nail into the crude keyhole of a MANACLE on his wrist, furiously twisting the point right, left, and CLICK -- the manacle SNAPS OPEN.

THAT NAIL

Cinque holds it up like it was a gift from God -- then passes it to the next hand in the dark.

EXT. SHIP'S DECK - NIGHT

The hatch wings back and Cinque explodes onto the deck as the thunderstorm lights his way. More Africans surge out behind him like unleashed lions.

A SPANISH SAILOR turns in the dark. Cinque throttles the sailor, hammers him down onto the deck until he's dead. He grabs the man's cutlass and races on.

STORE ROOM DOOR

Cinque hacks away the lock with the cutlass and kicks the door open revealing a rack of machete-like CANE KNIVES...

Keeping the cutlass he rushes ahead leaving the others to grab cane knives.

ON DECK

Another Spaniard screams a warning, but before he can draw his dagger, Cinque chops him down and they all rush on waving cane knives and SCREAMING a blood-chilling war cry.

FORECASTLE

The panicked crew stumbles topside but Cinque charges into them, furiously slashing left and right as if he harbored a personal hatred for each one. A Sailor charges Cinque with a sabre but Cinque slashes the man's throat, tosses him aside and picks up the dead man's sabre.

STARBOARD

four sailors hold some Africans back as they retreat into a life boat.

CINQUE

reaches the Quarter-deck in time to intercept the SPANISH CAPTAIN -- FERRER -- trying to cross for a life boat. Cinque slashes at him -- but Ferrer fights back and they cross swords five times before the Captain drops, screaming in Spanish for mercy. Cinque straddles him and drives the sabre straight into the man's chest.

STARBOARD

Three surviving Sailors chop lines and get their life boat away. The boat angles askew, one of the sailors is cut down from behind as the last two leap into the boat. The life boat drops, slams the waves and the survivors row off into the storm as the Africans pelt them with anything they find loose on the deck.

INT. GALLEY

A COOK -- plump as a goose -- spins to face the door with a cleaver in his hand. Opposite stands Cinque with his sabre, torso drenched in blood. Cinque impales him on the long sword.

The cook swings at him once with the cleaver, and sags dead. Cinque lets him drop...

EXT. ON DECK

The storm rages its full fury, tossing the ship like a toy. To yelps of joy, four Africans drag a pair of begging SPANIARDS on deck; their names are RUIZ and MONTES. Ruiz is in his mid-forties, Montes younger; both are well dressed, maybe business men.

Cinque rears over the pair with his sword, but two Africans -- TU-AR and BURNA grab Cinque, wrestling him to the deck. Burna is stocky of the Temne tribe; Tu-Ar lean, Mende like Cinque.

BURNA
(Mende w/subtitles)
No! Cinque!

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
They're murdering animals!

BURNA
(Mende w/subtitles)
But we need them!

TU-AR
(Mende w/subtitles)
They can get us home...

Ruiz and Montes cower together, drenched, watching Cinque like he held their fate in his hands. With a sweep of his powerful arm Cinque shoves Tu-Ar aside.

BURNA
(Mende w/subtitles)
Mende! Mende Land!

RUIZ
(Spanish w/subtitles)
They want to go home!

MONTES
Sí! Sí! Mende! Mende!

Ruiz cautiously gets to his feet, points off toward the horizon, gesturing so that they understand he means to sail that way.

RUIZ
(Spanish w/subtitles)
I swear to God -- we will
sail until we arrive at your
home again! Mende-Land!

Furious and frustrated, Cinque grabs Ruiz by the collar, lifts him up so they're eye-to-eye, then throws him down on the deck and stomps off into the dark.

INT. GALLEY

The Africans tear through the kitchen, smashing open crates, wrenching doors off cabinets -- Grabbing anything that looks good.

EXT. FORECASTLE

Cinque leaps onto the prow with a bottle of rum clutched in his hand, a huge loaf of bread stuffed under his arm. He half-hangs from a halyard as the wind from the storm blows through his hair, then the black clouds crack and the moon shines through. Cinque raises his bottle suddenly elated.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
Hey moon! We're free! Free!
Drink with me!

Taking a last swig, Cinque hurls the bottle up into the sky.

URSA MAJOR

breaks through the cloud cover for a few seconds, then seems to swing wildly away.

FOR A MOMENT CINQUE'S CONFUSED

He walks in a circle keeping the constellation in sight until he suddenly realizes the ship is circling out of control.

INT. BRIDGE

Cinque enters the lantern lit room, sees the wheel but its movement confuses him.

Tucking his bread safely under his arm again he scans the mysterious charts and navigational tools.

Then he crosses to the ship's COMPASS that's slowly REVOLVING and puts his hands on the domed top, squeaking the glass with his fingers as if he could stop the ship movement by stopping the compass.

Frustrated he notices the rolling motion of the ship matches the vertical motion of the wheel. He grabs it and yanks it in the opposite direction and is startled to see the ship STOP TURNING. Cinque barks a little laugh.

ON DECK

Ruiz and Montes swap looks as they see the ship STEADY. The Africans don't seem to notice as they continue arguing over food and clothing.

BRIDGE

Cinque sets his bread down, puts both hands on the wheel and slowly revolves it the opposite direction. Outside one of the AFRICAN MEN skitters by backwards in the dark as the ship shifts to port. Cinque thinks it's the funniest damned thing in the world. He turns the wheel the opposite way and the poor guy outside skitters helplessly to starboard.

THE SAILS FILL WITH A THUMP

as Amistad stabilizes right at the moon. Instantly the ship LURCHES FORWARD dumping the arguing Africans backward onto the deck.

AND CINQUE

Now, really proud of himself, he tears a piece of bread off with his teeth and sails on into the night.

AND THE MOON

a glowing, friendly face on the horizon, beckoning him on...

FADE TO:

INT. BRIDGE/TIGHT ON SHIP CHARTS - MORNING

as a finger traces the outline of Cuba, comes to rest on the image of a TINY SHIP, then on a COMPASS ROSE...

CINQUE (O.S.)
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 The secret to getting home is hidden here...

BIG ANGLE

Montes at the wheel, Ruiz by his side, both men shackled by their ankles. The ship limps along in windless foggy seas. Two Africans guard the Spaniards while nearby Cinque, Burna and YULA -- a Temne -- crowd around the chart.

YULA
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 That secret is very well hidden.

In a FLASH of revelation Cinque sees the compass on the chart looks like the real compass. He lays his hand on the glass.

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 This mark stands for this machine...

The others see but don't understand. Yet the Spaniards watch, nervous.

BURNA
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 This is all dark magic!

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 There's no magic here; this is a tattoo on paper. See! Perhaps we just follow the points toward the land...

BURNA
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Which way? What land? How would we know? I say sail toward the moon.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

You can't even see sun today!
And moon's not always awake!
Where ever the whites are
taking us, is death! Better
that we learn to use the
tattoos then trust the
whites.

BURNA

(Mende w/subtitles)

You Mende aren't the only
tribes! We Temne have a
voice in this.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

And so have the Yoruba and
the Limba... we'll sail in
circles trying to please
everyone...

BURNA

(Mende w/subtitles)

We have to use the whites and
trust in the will of the gods.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

If the will of the gods is
that we die then I defy them!
My will is to eat and laugh
and live to hold my sweet wife
and son in my arms again!

Cinque throws the chart down in disgust and
leaves. The Spaniards are visibly relieved.

EXT. ON DECK

Cinque passes Tu-Ar who sits in the cool mist
with some children.

TU-AR

(Mende w/subtitles)

Cinque? Have you see the
water tank? Nearly empty.
The fruit is gone. Bread and
a little tough meat is all
that's left.

Cinque sits beside Tu-Ar, starts to say
something but is so angry he just shakes his
head.

One of the young girls is SULAH, a fourteen year old Mende girl. Cinque sees she's locked eyes with a BOY just a few years older of the Temne tribe sitting with his people across the deck. His name is URAR.

Burna and Yula rejoin the Temne and Burna motions for Urar to turn away.

CINQUE TAKES THIS IN

Then looks around the rest of the deck and sees the Mende, Yoruba and the Limba arguing as they make separate 'camps'.

TU-AR
(Mende w/subtitles)
Cinque? What do you think?

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
I think... its going to be a long time before we get home.

EXT. BOW - NIGHT

Cinque takes a mist-soaked rag off the halyard, sits back in the cool night sucking water out of the rag as the sound of a Temne chant drifts through the air. Then a LOUD YORUBA VOICE cracks the serenity.

YORUBA (O.S.)
(Mende w/subtitles)
You Temne are shrieking loud!

Then the Yoruba begins singing and he's joined by more. The Temne only sing LOUDER. Cinque sees SOMETHING off the bow...

LIGHTS

seem to evolve from the disappearing moon.

CINQUE

leaps up, then rushes back across the deck. As he does he passes through a virtual bivouac of Africans rolled up and sleeping in everything from blankets to flags. Tu-Ar shakes off sleep and falls in with Cinque...

TU-AR
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 What is it?

In answer Cinque beats with all his might on the brass deck bell with his sabre until everyone is gawks at him. To their questioning looks he points forward...

IT'S A SHIP

... coming straight for them.

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Be quiet! A white man's ship!

THE BRIDGE

Cinque shoves Montes and Ruiz back from the window and shackles them to the table. He blows out the oil lamps. In silence they watch the ship approach. The Spaniards whisper.

MONTES
 (Spanish w/subtitles)
 We've got to signal them!

RUIZ
 (Spanish w/subtitles)
 When the ship gets close these dumb niggers will run and hide. Then we both start screaming as loud as we can.

MONTES
 (Spanish w/subtitles)
 The manifest? What if the ship gets searched?

Cinque's not looking, Ruiz pulls a THIN LEATHER POUCH out from under the charts, lays it on the floor and kicks it between the chart case just as Cinque turns; but he doesn't see.

THE STRANGE SHIP LOOMS

A CLOUD covers the moon; darkness now hides *Amistad*. The danger of ramming increases...

RUIZ & MONTES

RUIZ
(Spanish w/subtitles)
Get ready.

A musket muzzle comes into the picture and presses right against Ruiz's head. They turn to see Cinque looking at them down the barrel.

MONTES
(Spanish w/subtitles)
He doesn't know how to use it...

Cinque COCKS the old flint lock, then puts his finger to his lips.

CINQUE
Shhhh....

The Spaniards swap looks: so much for Plan 'A'...

THE STRANGE SHIP

blots out the sky -- VOICES and the sound of a BRASS BAND playing *Yankee Doodle* wafts down with the following breeze as the huge ship rides before the wind, just misses and rushes away into the night.

CINQUE

steps off the bridge watching this apparition as its lights blend into the sky full of stars. Burna comes up from behind, puts a hand on his shoulder; he points toward the bow.

BURNA
(Mende w/subtitles)
Cinque, we only have the whites now...

THE MOON

the moon itself fades away into the stars...

MATCH DISSOLVE:

EXT. AMISTAD - TWO WEEKS LATER, NEAR DAWN

Wisps of red remain of a sunset against a fast-blackening sky. A fog rises out of the sea...

THE SAILS

edges frayed from flapping nearly useless; the ship is beginning to look like a Flying Dutchman.

THE DECKS

Each tribal cluster huddled even more tightly together. But now they simply look pitifully desperate. Burna and Tu-Ar along with two other Temne carry baskets and carefully hand out what are literally stale crusts of bread as another gives each a carefully measured half cup of water.

CINQUE

joins Sulah who sits near the edge huddled in a blanket wrapped over her shoulders.

SULAH

(Mende w/subtitles)

It's cold. Cinque? Are we going to die on the ocean?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Sulah! It's Moon!

She sits up, sees he's indicating a crescent of light barely edging the horizon. A breeze gusts in their faces.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Feel his breath!

SULAH

(Mende w/subtitles)

He knows we're lost! Can he help us, Cinque?

THE MOON

quickly as it appeared it starts to sink behind the horizon as the dawn just seems to grow out of the ocean.

CINQUE (O.S.)

(Mende w/subtitles)

No matter where we end up,
Moon will never desert us...

CINQUE AND SULAH

They sit together, the wind growing, watching the last of the moon as if their last hope were fading...

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
Mende-Land!

THEY LOOK BACK

as everyone rushes for the opposite side of the ship. Ruiz and Montes stand in the bridge, staring off through the mist and the OUTLINE OF A DISTANT SHORE. Can tell by Cinque's sad smirk that he doesn't believe they're home, not for one second.

EXT. SEA - LATE MORNING

Cinque, Urar and FOUR OTHER YOUNG MEN ground one of the life boats. The beach is narrow, rocky and on the edge of a woods. They step ashore, watching the shadows for danger. Most are terrified. Cinque carries his sabre.

They heft a huge water barrel and set in on solid ground. Each man has a cutlass in his belt and each carries two or three bottles.

Cinque picks up some dirt, rubs it between his fingers. Then he stands and looks up at the forbidding forest. Urar almost whispers.

URAR
(Mende w/subtitles)
Where are we?

Cinque just takes his bottles and heads into the forest. After a moment, Urar follows and then the others.

DEEP IN THE FOREST

a fat RACCOON squats at the edge of a stream, dexterously washing a piece of fallen apple with it's human-like hands.

OPPOSITE

The Africans lined up on the other side watch this curious animal. Done, the raccoon takes its apple and disappears into the underbrush.

CINQUE

leans way over and puts his lips in the cold-running stream. He spits it out disgusted.

EDGE OF WOODS

The Africans seeing that the stream flows straight out of a PASTURE filled with CATTLE. A COW lifts its tail and drops a real steamer KA-SPLAT in the stream. As Urar gathers fallen green apples, Cinque carefully puts his hand on a cow, then puts his arms around its flanks to test its heft. He's impressed. Then he rips up some grass, starts chewing it.

At that moment a Limba SCREAMS.

They run to the Limba who crouches in the tall grass holding his hands over his eyes. As they descend on him a SKUNK rushes off in the opposite direction. Suddenly they're overwhelmed by the Limba's stench and they scatter away from the sprayed man.

DIRT ROAD

The Africans moving up the road in a group... except the Limba who follows at an odor-safe fifty paces. Cinque stops, spits out the grass, continues walking.

URAR

Cinque?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Rich grass. Doesn't taste like Africa.

Cinque stops and ahead they can see something approaching FAST up the road. A BICYCLE hurtles past and they just glimpse a WHITE MAN in full-fashion bike gear -- he sends back a shocked stare as he passes and disappears. Then one of the men points up the road.

THEIR POV

a black swirling mass of CROWS circles a cloud of dust that's moving toward them.

THE AFRICANS

instinctively edge back, beginning a very slow retreat. But whatever is on the road comes on FAST.

Then, from ahead comes a sound like the fast rhythmic jingling of coins.

A PROCESSION OF CHAINED PRISONERS appears -- BLACKS AND WHITES -- flanked by ARMED MOUNTED MEN. Two with BULLWHIPS brutally drive the prisoners along at a half-run.

One of the Africans panics. The rest start edging after their friend. Then a full stampede and Cinque is reluctantly swept along.

THE SHORE

The Africans race back to the shore in time to see a CUTTER in full sail maneuvering to reach Amistad.

Cinque leaps in the life boat and grabs an oar -- the rest jump in and they struggle with all their might to row back to the Amistad. On the deck they can see Burna and others waving for them to hurry.

AHEAD --

a longboat lowers from the Cutter... UNIFORMED MEN with muskets row straight for the Amistad.

CINQUE

leaps to the prow, screams a war-cry whirling his sabre overhead. Three keep rowing straight for the Longboat while the others leap up howling and waving cutlasses.

THE LONGBOAT ROWERS

madly back paddle.

CINQUE --

throws down his sword and grabs an oar and together the Africans pull for the *Amistad*.

IN THE LONG BOAT --

An OFFICER yells for the men to reverse and the race is on to reach *Amistad*.

INT. AMISTAD BRIDGE

Montes springs across the floor, grabs the wheel, wrestling for control from Burna.

EXT. AMISTAD

Cinque brings the lifeboat alongside as the ship picks up speed in a fresh wind. Urar hurls a rope up onto the *Amistad* deck and a Limba snags it, secures it and others pull the boat against the hull.

INT. BRIDGE

Montes gets control away from Burna just long enough for Ruiz to yank the wheel to starboard.

EXT. AMISTAD

the ship turns into the life boat, threatening to crush it. Cinque and Urar cling to the rope trying to hold the bow against *Amistad*'s hull...

INT. BRIDGE

Burna slams Montes against the map case, dives for the wheel and straightens the ship.

EXT. AMISTAD

But too late: her sails drop limp and she dies in the water. As the Cutter positions to cut them off, the longboat comes on with a vengeance.

All the Africans except Cinque scramble up the line to the *Amistad*. But Cinque takes one look at those drooping sails and knows the *Amistad* doesn't stand a chance. He frantically rows the life boat toward the open sea as the longboat bores in on him.

For a moment Cinque turns on the power and actually pulls away -- the longboat Officer is flabbergasted -- he BANGS the gunnel and his rowers pick it up.

OPEN SEA

Cinque waits for the last second -- hurls an oar at the longboat like a spear and dives overboard. An OFFICER stands in the bow, stops a sailor from firing at Cinque. Suddenly Cinque surfaces and they frantically row after him. Cinque dives again...

CINQUE UNDERWATER

suspended in shafts of sunlight over the abyss, not trying to swim. Then, he opts for life.

SURFACE

Cinque gasps into the sunlight -- hands grab him and hold him back against the bow of the long boat which bears the name of the Cutter: *Washington*...

EXT. DECK OF AMISTAD - AFTERNOON

Chaos of shouts and screaming children as the Africans are pushed into line by the armed sailors from the *Washington*. Commands bark as *Amistad* is de-rigged. There's a flurry of activity as a self-important old man strides aboard the *Amistad* clunking along on an ornate walking stick.

SAILOR

Make way for Magistrate
Wills! Move back!

A semblance of silence as Wills faces the Africans. He walks around, poking with his cane at the makeshift camp sites, blankets, the debris of people living for weeks at sea.

He takes out his handkerchief and covers his nose and mouth. Then he comes up with a SPANISH SAILOR'S CAP on his cane; the sight angers him.

He turns to face a pair of officers: LIEUTENANT MEADE and LIEUTENANT GADNEY. Meade is tall, thin; Gadney, short and plump. Only then does he take down his handkerchief. Meade hands Wills Cinque's sabre.

MEADE

Killed all but two, sir.

WILLS

Have these savages housed at the New Haven gaol!

EXT. NEW HAVEN - NIGHT

A COAST GUARD ESCORT with fixed bayonets marches the Africans into New Haven through a crowd of curious citizens. There is an overwhelming, appalling SILENCE as SPECTATORS gawk at the Africans. Most of the Africans huddle together in a wagon, the children with blankets over their shoulders.

The torches held by POLICE and onlookers create a glare that blots out their surroundings.

A well dressed man -- thin as a twig -- zeroes in on a sailor. He's DONALD HAYES.

HAYES

Excuse me, son, I'm Donald Hayes with the *New Haven Gazette*. Could you tell our readers where your prisoners came from?

SAILOR

I... I have no idea, sir.

Now the Africans pass the coach belonging to a WEALTHY GENTLEMAN. Perched on top, dressed in an amazingly ornate red and gold-trimmed livery, is his BLACK DRIVER. The Africans stare at him in disbelief and confusion. Sassy Sulah stands up in the wagon.

SULAH

(Mende w/subtitles)
Are you King!? Your majesty!

But as they pass Cinque sees the driver watching them with DEAD EYES. Two other BLACKS watch the Africans with the exact same fascination that the Africans are watching this strange world.

LYDIA MARIA CHILD -- a hardened but handsome Black Woman in her thirties -- and a tall, middle-aged BLACK MAN: SIMON JOCELYN. For a second, Jocelyn and Cinque LOCK EYES... Jocelyn moves close strides along side. For a moment they stop and Jocelyn gets real close.

JOCELYN

Who are you?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Who are you..?

The procession resumes and they pass though the doors of a high-walled building that is the New haven Jail.

INT. COURTYARD, NEW HAVEN PRISON - NIGHT

Cinque sits with the Africans on the ground, torch light playing on his face. A TALL BLACK MAN, about twenty-five -- JAMES HARLIN -- passes bread out to the children.

Tu-Ar indicates Hayes sitting cross-legged on the ground on the edge of the torch light, sketching in a large note pad.

TU-AR

(Mende w/subtitles)

What's that one doing? He keeps looking this way.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Tattooing paper. They love to tattoo paper.

Cinque looks around at the other Africans clustered in fear behind him -- to cheer them he tells them:

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Now I understand! They are too cowardly to tattoo their skin.

(MORE)

CINQUE (CONT'D)

So they tattoo the paper instead. Then they fold up the paper and keep it on them so when someone wants to know what tribe they're from -- they take out the paper and show them.

The Africans let out some nervous laughter, but it helps. Hayes approaches with his pad and holds it up. Cinque and Tu-Ar stare at what is an extremely flattering rendering of Cinque as the NOBLE WARRIOR. Cinque touches it.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Tattoo!

HAYES

Picture. Picture...

Before Cinque can respond Pendelton moves among the Africans, backed by four COPS with clubs.

PENDELTON

All right! Stand up savages!

Skinny Mrs. Pendelton separates the young girls as the Africans are kept back by POLICE. Nat Pendelton points out Sulah and the cops include her. Urar rushes forward, but at the last moment a fellow Temne holds him back.

Now police and hired thugs with clubs shove the Africans back toward a wall -- there's a moment of panic as the confused Africans are herded together, then shadowy CELL DOORS emerge.

INT. TINY CELL

Cinque is thrown into a pitch black cell and the door SLAMS. He frantically looks around: sees a bed, tiny table and a space like a closet. In the bad light Cinque sees what MAY BE A TINY WINDOW on the wall overhead. He rushes the door and yells with all his might.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

When we escape we'll cut all their filthy throats!

Cinque drops, panting, hands clinging to the bars. He angles to look up above the walls.

THE MOON

The Waning Crescent, like a sad smile.

INT. ARTHUR TAPPAN'S OFFICE, NEW YORK - MORNING

OPEN on the *New York Tribune* and Hayes' drawing of Cinque. The headline: 'MYSTERY SHIP LANDS ON LONG ISLAND!'

SIMON JOCELYN

folds the paper, sits impatiently in an outer office. He looks OFF through a half open door into the main office.

OFFICE

ARTHUR TAPPAN is an elegant American gentleman, fifty three years old. His office, paneled with American fir, is clean and uncluttered.

FIVE BANKERS range casually around Tappan's office, sitting or standing. Tappan is concise, formal to a fault.

TAPPAN

Where, gentlemen, is a man without his honor?; where is a corporation without its stability? To continue unimpaired the ebb and flow of the great mercantile sea, individual honor must succumb to a form of measure. We would not presume to suggest that one man has two times the honor of another, nor still another, half; yet our service would offer to recommend how much credit a particular quantity of honor may withstand.

Tappan's SECRETARY brings in Jocelyn's paper, leaves it nearby and exits without a word. Tappan eyes it like an irresistible candy.

MAN LEANING ON WALL

Your proposed service, this 'credit service' how can it possibly guarantee that a man will honor his debt?

Finally Tappan casually flips the paper open. Then folds it back with hardly a hint of reaction as he responds.

TAPPAN

Through faith, gentlemen, in our fellow man and in the well-observed truth that honor, once gotten, possess a man all his life.

INT./EXT. COACH - DEAD OF NIGHT

Tappan and Jocelyn clatter through the countryside. Finally they stop at a cross roads near a long covered bridge. Tappan and Jocelyn step down next to the shorting horses.

TAPPAN

We'll walk from here, Jimmy.

JIMMY -- the driver -- looks off into the ominous dark of the covered bridge.

COVERED BRIDGE

Jocelyn and Tappan enter the black opening, footfalls creaking the planks.

JOCELYN

The movement's near crisis, Arthur. The South is getting aggressive about runaways.

TAPPAN

I heard some of your people were hurt this week past.

JOCELYN

Professional slave catchers jumped them at Indian Neck, took a whole family back to hell in Georgia.

TAPPAN

Your sister?

JOCELYN

Lydia was there, of course. But unhurt and thank God she left Thomas to home. But he's getting big. He'll want to be along more and more.

(MORE)

JOCELYN (CONT'D)

We discovered it was a free black in South Port acting as paid informant for slavers. We retired him...

TAPPAN

Simon! Dear God in heaven!

JOCELYN

You know, Arthur, every time I get to the end of this bridge I wonder who will be waiting for me...

And as they reach the far end two FIGURES block their way. Both carry muskets. But when they see Jocelyn, they smile. They're FREE BLACKS.

INT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

As Tappan and Jocelyn enter they're besieged by a wave of people -- mostly Blacks. Nearby a hand-run PRESS coughs out news print as a NINE YEAR OLD BOY -- THOMAS -- ties papers into bundles. Lydia tries to quiet them but Jocelyn has to shout.

JOCELYN

The ship is Spanish, called *Amistad*, too small to be a transatlantic slaver. She's being towed into New Haven, we can have a look in a week.

LYDIA

A week?

JOCELYN

What's important now is the hearing tomorrow.

LYDIA

Thomas, finish up...

Thomas finds a seat.

JOCELYN

... we have to go in bearing a writ of habeas corpus.

JOSHUA, a Mulatto in his late forties, shouts.

JOSHUA

When's the last time that worked!? Are you sure we'll even have it by then?

TAPPAN

My attorney will be up half the night making sure...

JOCELYN

As usual Arthur has unhesitatingly thrown back the pearly gates to his... golden kingdom.

Gets a laugh, though Tappan's silent.

LYDIA

What are they going to be charged with?

JOCELYN

Mutiny and murder are the only logical charges. But, the ship is foreign...

LYDIA

So? They were in international waters.

JOCELYN

Not when they were captured.

JOSHUA

Then, who has jurisdiction?

JOCELYN

We don't know -- we'll have to wait to find out tomorrow.

LYDIA

Waiting is never a good idea.

Tappan holds up his hands, shouts to all:

TAPPAN

Stay with the law and trust in The Lord.

LYDIA

It's not God I don't trust. Has news reached the Southern papers yet?

JOCELYN

Yes... the south knows.

INT. NEW HAVEN JAIL - EARLY MORNING

A DAZZLING RAY OF SUNLIGHT blasts out from a small RECTANGULAR WINDOW near the top of a rear wall twenty feet overhead. Suddenly there's a RUSHING WIND-LIKE SOUND and the sunlight blots out...

CINQUE

Alone on his cot starts awake -- in a flash he's up, rushes toward the light from the door as a dense flock of BIRDS swirls into the yard. Cinque SLAMS into the bars of his cell door.

Stunned for a second, he clings to the bars and finally seems to remember where he really is. A SHOUT yanks his eyes back to earth.

CINQUE SEES

-- In the kitchen, Mrs. Pendelton yells at four of the Mende girls. Crying, one picks up a basket and balances it on her head. Outraged, Mrs. Pendelton slaps her and the basket drops.

CINQUE

Leans back, helpless. He turns to get a better look at that little window.

He props one end of his cot against the opposite wall and cautiously climbs up the underside slats like a ladder.

ON CINQUE

Squinting as the rising sun fills his face.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
Hey! I can see outside!

CELLS/VARIOUS

-- Burna is jammed with Tu-Ar and a LIMBA in a cell that's barely bigger than Cinque's...

-- Africans press to their barred doors and we see the small cells are crowded with at least THREE MEN. There's a TUSSELE for door position.

TU-AR
(Mende w/subtitles)
Can you see their village?

HE'S SEEING

an image of the world hidden by the glare of the rising sun in his face. Then a cloud crosses the sun and suddenly 19th Century New Haven is revealed: miles and miles of houses and buildings stretch to a port teeming with huge ships. Cinque is staggered...

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
Yes... I see their village.

TU-AR (O.S.)
(Mende w/subtitles)
What's it like?

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
Big...

THE AFRICANS

become absolutely still. 'BIG' means overwhelming, all-consuming. Tu-Ar cracks a smile, not impressed.

TU-AR (O.S.)
(Mende w/subtitles)
Yes, but are their huts any good?

CINQUE LOWERS HIS GAZE...

Close by is a packed-hard two lane dirt street cut by tall trees and nearby buildings. A house is in the early stages of being framed.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
They're like boxes. The walls are smooth and square but made from trees. I don't know how they get the trees so perfect and square.

TU-AR (O.S.)
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Can you see a forest of them?

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Of what?

TU-AR (O.S.)
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 The square trees?

Cinque smiles at Tu-Ar's wit.

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 No, they're just ordinary
 trees.

Now Cinque sees the African Children leaving with Harlin, all carry baskets. Khila hoists a basket onto her head and Harlin scolds her. She takes it down, not really understanding. But as Harlin walks on ahead ALL the girls balance their baskets on their heads and follow. Africa in Connecticut.

But then Cinque hears a familiar VOICE. He turns and leaps down.

THROUGH HIS BARRED DOOR

Cinque sees Harlin escort Ruiz and three OFFICIALS into the yard. Ruiz and Cinque lock eyes. Ruiz draws his thumb across his throat to let Cinque know he's going to be killed, then he points right at hi.

RUIZ
 Joseph!

One of the officials writes this down. Disdainfully Ruiz turns from Cinque to face the next cell holding Tu-Ar and Burna.

RUIZ
 Bernardo. Paco...

But as they pass Cinque 'experiments' with the language by repeating...

CINQUE
 Jo...sef...

Two POLICEMEN RUSH Cinque's cell, Pendelton yanks it opens it. They quickly loop a NOOSE around Cinque's neck, CUFF him and drag him into the yard.

EXT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE, NEW HAVEN - DAY

SIX POLICE flank the entrance to the quaint courthouse. Across the street ABOLITIONISTS led by Lydia stand ten strong, Thomas beside her. Though they sing and calmly pass out copies of their abolitionist paper, many PASSERSBY and PEOPLE entering the court glare at them, some shout insults.

Hayes approaches a STRANGER with a sketch pad much like his own.

HAYES

Don Hayes, *New Haven Gazette*.

STRANGER

Guy Pierson, *La Minerve*, Quebec.

HAYES

I think we're the only papers here.

STRANGER

You cover America, I'll cover Canada!

They turn to enter and hit a wall of PEOPLE.

INT. COURTHOUSE

CHAOS... Jocelyn and Tappan push through the small hall packed to over-flowing.

A pair of COURT OFFICERS carrying PIKES flank the small stage-like platform. Suddenly Jocelyn spots Cinque in chains standing near the back of the court under guard.

JOCELYN

Arthur! There he is!

Tappan looks for a second, but then the First Court Officer bangs the floor with a pike.

1ST COURT OFFICER
 Hear-ye, hear-ye! For the
 State-Commonwealth of
 Connecticut, in the Capital
 of Hartford-New Haven, and
 for the district court of the
 United States of America, in
 the year of our Lord,
 Eighteen hundred and thirty
 nine, his honor Emanuel Wills
 presiding.

ATTORNEY SAUNDERS stands even before the place
 has totally quieted down.

WILLS
 The bench recognizes federal
 prosecutor Saunders.

There's a scuffled at the door as POLICEMEN
 shove an opening in the crowd for JONATHAN
 FORSYTH who's as gaunt as an American Cassius;
 with him is SEÑOR CALDERON: plump, forty,
 goatee. Well dressed. Jocelyn and Cinque are
 now staring at each other.

JOCELYN
 I think that African knows me
 from the other night.

TAPPAN
 Well, I know that man:
 Jonathan Forsyth, U.S.
 Secretary of State!

JOCELYN
 What's his business here?

SAUNDERS
 Your honor, as United States
 district attorney I wish to
 present this court with the
 charges of murder and mutiny
 against one Mister Joseph
 Cinque and his fellow slaves.

Jocelyn stands, frantic to get Tappan to his
 feet.

JOCELYN
 Arthur! Now! Now!

TAPPAN
 Your honor if it please the
 court --

Jocelyn jumps right in, POINTS AT CINQUE.

JOCELYN

We have a writ of habeas
corpus on behalf of the
Africans!

CINQUE FIXES ON JOCELYN

... does he remember him? Though Cinque can't understand we get the sense that he's following the proceedings very carefully.

SAUNDERS HOLDS UP HIS PAPERS

trying to get Wills' attention back. But now Forsyth is beside Saunders whispering. Saunders looks back and sees Calderon.

FORSYTH

Your honor, my name is
Jonathan Forsyth.

Wills stiffens as if coming to attention.

WILLS

Mr. Secretary...

FORSYTH

I am here on behalf of the
President of the United
States representing the
claims of her majesty, Queen
Isabella of Spain as concerns
our mutual Treaty of the High
Seas.

Jocelyn's having nothing of this and moves straight for the bench.

JOCELYN

Your honor I demand this
court recognize our writ!

WILLS

You will be seated sir and
wait your turn!

JOCELYN

It is my turn and this man
shall be made to wait his!

FORSYTH

The Africans are by rights
property of the Queen of
Spain...

JOCELYN

They are human beings!

FORSYTH

... and as such are to be
returned under the terms of
our treaty...

JOCELYN

No one has had a chance to
talk to them! This is
America!

FORSYTH

... said treaty taking
precedence, all other causes
are without jurisdiction.

VOICE

Them Africans belong to me
and me mate, your majesty!

All heads swing to the back as the two COAST
GUARD OFFICERS Lieutenants Meade and Gadney
rush to the bench.

WILLS

Who be you... two gentlemen?

MEADE

(reads from a paper)
"As private citizens we --
James Meade and Holloway
Gadney, do claim salvage on
the high seas of the Spanish
ship *Amistad* and all her
cargo." Here you go your
majesty.

Meade hands up the paper to a rustle of
amazement in the audience. Wills reads the
document in disbelief. He lets loose a
bureaucrat's sigh.

WILLS

You wish to make this claim
over that of the Queen of
Spain?

GADNEY

Well, where was she when we was fighting the winds to bring this ship in!?

FORSYTH

The Queen of Spain was running a country, your honor! These officers' claims are absurd!

Wills bangs his gavel.

WILLS

Yes, yes. Your pleadings please, gentlemen. I'll need to study each one.

CINQUE

watching. He raises his manacled hand and one of the guards immediately points his musket at him. Cinque hesitates, then completes the action which was simply to scratch his cheek. Or was he checking on the guard's attention?

Then he notices a stranger watching him: a handsome man, about thirty-five, his name is ROGER BALDWIN.

BALDWIN

Are you trying to get yourself shot?

(pause)

You speak English? Hablé espanõle?

GUARD

No talking to the prisoner.

Jocelyn and Tappan approach, but now Cinque is tugged away. Jocelyn just has time to yell after them.

JOCELYN

We want to speak with the prisoner!

BALDWIN

You know his language? He doesn't speak Spanish or English far as I can tell.

JOCELYN

Who are you, sir?

BALDWIN

Mr. Tappan, Mr. Jocelyn? My name is Roger Baldwin. My card, sir. I'm an attorney. A property attorney.

TAPPAN

Property?

BALDWIN

I'm wonderful at getting people's property back for them -- or taking it away.

Jocelyn inspects Baldwin, unsure. Baldwin hands him a card, but Tappan dismisses him.

TAPPAN

Thank you for your interest, Mr. Baldwin.

Jocelyn and Tappan head out of the court.

BALDWIN

You'd better start looking for an interpreter, because you are going to trial!

EXT. STREET

Jocelyn and Tappan watch as Cinque is all but dragged off by a tether around his neck.

JOCELYN

This isn't about justice, this is politics. We need someone to intervene for the Africans the way the American Government is for Spain.

CINQUE

Now as he's yanked through the streets he's greeted by a few TAUNTS. When they stop to push through the crowd, THOMAS is by his side and hands him an apple. Cinque nods, just has time to take the fruit as he's tugged back into motion. Thomas runs back to join his mother.

For a second Cinque examine the apple. Suddenly on his right a YOUNG WHITE GUY shoves through the crowd -- just have time to see his right fist wrapped in leather as the SLUGS Cinque in the side of the head.

He runs to the opposite side of the street as the cops turn to get him -- but a group of FIVE YOUNG WHITE GUYS part and he disappears behind them.

Cinque staggers to one knee. The five white youths stand in line, arms folded smirking. Cinque looks back.

HE SEES

Lydia and Thomas walking away having not seen.

INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - MORNING

Seventy-two year old JOHN QUINCY ADAMS sits back in his seat in the House, eyes closed, possibly nodding off. HENRY LAURENS PINCKNEY, a menacing badger-faced REPRESENTATIVE from South Carolina and thirty years Adams' junior, wraps up a point.

PINCKNEY

... so I call upon our distinguished colleague, Representative -- pardon me -- former President -- Adams, to reweigh his unmeet and unprecedented attempt to convert this eccentric bequest of one James Smithsonian into a so-called 'national treasure.'

All eyes fall on the apparently dozing Adams..

JOCELYN & TAPPAN

in the audience, dismayed.

RESUME ADAMS

as he's surrounded by tittering from the floor of young delegates.

PINCKNEY

Perhaps President Adams is meditating on is response.

Adams immediately comes to life -- maybe wasn't dozing at all.

ADAMS

Had I thought your remarks
worthy of a riposte,
Representative Pinckney, you
would have heard from me.

JOCELYN

has a smile, Tappan remains firmly worried.

ADAMS RISES

He reaches into his coat pocket, then the other
side and finally finds a piece of paper in his
vest. He carefully unfolds it.

ADAMS

At this time I should like to
read into record a letter
from one James Silahs, a
slave in Alabama.

Before the first words are out of Adams' mouth
the House breaks into a tidal wave of jeers,
cat-calls and curses. Jocelyn and Tappan can
see Adams' lips moving, but it is impossible to
hear him. Finally he folds the letter and the
House as one falls SILENT.

ADAMS

Thank you.

HALLWAY

Adams coming up the long hall that's decorated
with enormous paintings of Founding Fathers and
Famous Battles. His SECRETARY -- Mr. WRIGHT --
trails behind embracing a mass of papers.
Wright looks even more ancient than Adams.

ADAMS

I am going to have to dodge
that dinner tonight.

WRIGHT

But you've dodged The
Governor twice already.

ADAMS

Practise makes perfect.

Now he sees they're approaching Jocelyn and
Tappan sitting at the end of the hall.

WRIGHT

You must see these gentlemen:
Mr. Tappan...

The pair rise, Adams already extending his hand
but still out of ear-shot.

ADAMS

Which Tappan?

WRIGHT

Arthur Tappan and Simon
Jocelyn...

ADAMS

Ah, Arthur, Simon...

JOCELYN/TAPPAN

Mr. Adams.

EXT. CONGRESSIONAL GARDENS

As they walk and talk, Adams attention
occasionally strays to examine a flower.

TAPPAN

The US attorney started to
ask for murder charges,
but...

JOCELYN

They don't want them seen as
human, just 'things' to be
given back to Spain.

TAPPAN

President Van Buren clearly
backs the Spanish claims.

ADAMS

Of course, of course; he's
running for reelection. The
South is watching this case,
waiting for him to get tough
on renegade slaves and their
supporters. So obviously, I
cannot help you.

JOCELYN

But President Adams..!

ADAMS

Mister Jocelyn, there is now
a gag rule in Congress
barring debate of slavery.

(MORE)

ADAMS (CONT'D)

If I am to open people's minds through rational discussion I must be moderate. I cannot be seen as an abolitionist or a friend to abolitionists. Good day, gentlemen.

Disappointed Jocelyn and Tappan stand aside to let Adams return inside. But Jocelyn tries one last pitch.

JOCELYN

I know you sir. You were a child at your father's side when he helped invent America. You've given your life for this country. And only one thing keeps you awake in that rats' nest, the only thing left undone: crushing slavery. You are an abolitionist, President Adams. You belong with us.

Adams and Jocelyn hold on each other.

TAPPAN

We aimed high coming to you, sir.

ADAMS

Well, aim lower. Get yourselves a property lawyer. Someone whose disposition is to become more inspired the more... you lose.

And he's gone. They swap devastated looks. Then Tappan slowly brings out a business card, hands it to Jocelyn.

INT. ROGER BALDWIN'S OFFICE - DAY

PEEKING THROUGH A PARTIALLY OPEN DOOR AT: an oppressively dingy but large basement office.

Jocelyn and Tappan sit amidst a SMALL CROWD of at least a dozen people. All seats are taken so some have to stand and one -- who looks like a MOUNTAIN MAN -- paces, muttering.

Exactly opposite Tappan sit a ROTUND WOMAN breast-feeding a baby, and a MAN who looks like a whaler desperately trying to wear a suit.

Tappan sees the man's right hand is MISSING, replaced by a badly carved IVORY FIST; the fisherman smiles, Tappan smiles back.

BEHIND THE OPEN DOOR

Baldwin and his eager young CLERK -- CLEMENS -- ease back as Baldwin closes the door.

BALDWIN
Extraordinary.

Baldwin straightens his tie, takes a breath and swings the door wide.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Baldwin leads Jocelyn and Tappan through the streets, arms flying in magnificent gestures.

BALDWIN
These old Dutch land grants are driving everyone absolutely mad! I'm working a case now where a Peekskill grant from 1680 deeded four thousand acres through the youngest heir -- a son -- and in perpetuity specifically forbids the transfer of any land through his sisters. Well, I was able to prove that said son in fact had carnal relations with his mother. You know those cold, lonely Upstate winters -- and thus, his sister was his daughter and a legal heir after all!

Can almost see Tappan's soul wince.

TAPPAN
Is that the sort of case you've been dealing with lately, Mr. Baldwin? Ah, Real-estate?

BALDWIN
Among other things...

A hunched-over OLD ABNAKI INDIAN passes lugging a huge sling of glass fish net bottles on his back.

OLD ABNAKI
Hey there, Mister Baldwin!

BALDWIN
Good day, Bomoseen.

Jocelyn seems charmed by Baldwin's street connections.

INT. LOCAL INN

Restaurant in a hotel packed with BUSINESSMEN, MERCHANTS, and other mid-level PROFESSIONALS power-lunching over fresh crab and dubious looking carafes of local ale. Tappan is tentative about his food, tea. Tappan may write the checks, but Jocelyn conducts the interview.

JOCELYN
Under the treaty of 1803, any property seized on the high seas by piracy, mutiny or any unlawful act that comes into American territory, must be returned to Spain. It's reciprocal, of course.

Tappan makes a tentative poke at his fish.

BALDWIN
The fish is fresh today here, Mr. Tappan, by the time it gets up town to your favorite restaurant, it's been on the cart for two days. Please go on...

JOCELYN
If the courts award the Africans to Spain, they'll be sent to Cuba to be executed. If the American sailors win they would likely sell them back to the Spaniards anyway.

BALDWIN
No chance they might free them?

TAPPAN
These are Yankees, they know what a slave is worth on the open market.

BALDWIN

I'm a little confused about how much they're worth to you. How's the ale, Mister Jocelyn?

JOCELYN

Excellent. What did you mean by that last remark?

BALDWIN

Mister Tappan, sir, you are a wealthy man, and everyone knows your passion for our... brothers. To be frank. At first I thought you might be cutting corners by hiring me.

JOCELYN

Arthur Tappan is one of the most generous human beings God ever made.

BALDWIN

Well, God makes all kinds. And most of the ones he makes won't touch this case, am I right?

JOCELYN

It could earn you serious enemies.

TAPPAN

But you do come with a strong reputation. We've inquired.

BALDWIN

Fine, then as I see it we ignore everything but the property issue -- forget murder, forget mutiny, forget morality altogether.

For the first time Tappan becomes agitated.

TAPPAN

Impossible. Sir, this war must be waged on the battlefield of righteousness.

BALDWIN

Hmm... please remember Mr. Tappan, this is a case, not a cause.

TAPPAN

It would be against everything I stand for to let this deteriorate into a squabble over technicalities. It's our destiny as Christians to save these people. Did Christ hire a lawyer to get him off on technicalities? He went to the cross, sir, nobly. And you know why? To make a statement. As must we.

BALDWIN

I'm not taking a case if I can't win it. Look, the only way you can legally buy slaves is if they're born slaves, like on a plantation. Like yourself, Mr. Jocelyn. Your daddy was a slave.

JOCELYN

That is correct.

Seeing Tappan is still reluctant, Baldwin carefully spells it out.

BALDWIN

We insist the Africans were illegally kidnapped from Africa. If that's true then they aren't slaves, that is, if they're are not slaves they are not property. Thus the treaty with Spain can not apply. And at the heart of the matter, that's all that counts.

(off Tappan's look)

Now, we haven't got much time, the trial is in one week; we need to find a translator -- I need to interview my clients... are we in business?

Baldwin offers his hand to Tappan who hesitates. But Jocelyn reaches over and shakes Baldwin's hand. Then Tappan finally grasps it.

INT. CINQUE'S CELL - DAWN

Cinque wakes to the sound of CHURCH BELLS.

EXT. COURTYARD

The Africans pressed to the bars.

BURNA
(Mende w/subtitles)
What's going on?

AT HIS WINDOW

Cinque watches church-goers walking to service. One cluster, in Basic Black, walk with heads low. They're CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
The streets are full of people!

URAR (O.S.)
(Mende w/subtitles)
Is there a war?

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
I don't know. They look miserable.

PENDELTON (O.S.)
Hey! Get your ass out here!

Cinque jumps down and lands right in front of Pendelton who starts back as if he'd been confronted by a wild cat. Pendelton throws a roll of linen in through the bars. Cinque opens it and finds white pants and shirt.

Seeing that Pendelton is still watching him, he moves into a dark corner for some privacy and takes off his filthy clothes.

INT. PENDELTON KITCHEN - MORNING

The African Girls left alone in the kitchen explore the spice rack. They open each little box, one tastes it, makes a face or a smile and passes it on as they chatter in Mende. Khila opens a box with the picture of a RED PEPPER, tastes the powder and points at it as if to say: "Wow, this is a good one!"

The door opens and they cool-it as Mrs. Pendelton shows Baldwin and Jocelyn inside.

MRS. PENDELTON
Here we are teaching the
children to bake pies.

As Baldwin and Jocelyn shake each tiny hand the girls giggle and joke in Mende.

As soon as they leave Khila takes a towel, opens the oven and pulls out a stuffed round bread that was cooking beside Pendelton's pies. She quickly breaks off a piece and tosses the hot bread to another girl -- and they make a game of breaking off a piece and tossing it before burning their fingers. Finally Khila takes a bite -- it's great!

INT. CINQUE'S CELL

As Cinque finishes buttoning up the linen, from O.S. come VOICES singing the Christian hymn: "Bright Jewel of Faith." Cinque moves to the door it pushes open and he goes out.

THE MISSIONARIES SINGING

With the African children gathered nearby under the smiling eyes of Tappan.

THE OTHER AFRICANS

Basking in the sun, but broken up into separate tribal groups. Tu-Ar sits with the Mende and even though it's warm he has a blanket over his shoulders. They're carrying out their own 'rituals': some sing, one Temne uses two colors of clay from the ground to decorate another's face.

EXT. JAIL COURTYARD

Harlin brings Cinque to a seat at an outside plank table facing Jocelyn and Baldwin. Cinque sits but with a reluctance that clearly says "whatever you're selling I ain't buying."

An OLDER MAN with tight-trimmed grey beard sits with Jocelyn; a blue-eyed mulatto. His name is PROFESSOR GIBBS.

Sulah helps Khila and two of the youngest African Girls VERY CAREFULLY serve coffee.

Jocelyn is unhappy to see them acting as servants, but Baldwin just takes the coffee as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

JOCELYN

Why is Cinque kept in a cell by himself?

JAMES HARLIN

Because Mr. Pendelton was told to keep him separate.

BALDWIN

Told by whom?

JAMES HARLIN

Some policeman.

Baldwin looks up but Gibbs.

DR. GIBBS

Just get him to talk.

Baldwin leans close to Cinque.

BALDWIN

Cinque, I am Baldwin, I am your lawyer. This is Simon Jocelyn of the Anti-Slavery Society, Professor Gibbs -- a linguist. We are here because we want to save you.

TU-AR (O.S.)

(Mende w/subtitles)

What does he want, Cinque?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

He wants to murder us.

BALDWIN

I understand you led the mutiny on the *Amistad* and killed Captain Ferrer. Is that correct?

TU-AR (O.S.)

(Mende w/subtitles)

He say he's going to kill us?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

How do I know what he said?

GIBBS

Some words... sound familiar.
Perhaps I'm imagining it...

TU-AR (O.S.)

(Mende w/subtitles)

If all the whites wanted us
dead, we'd be dead. Maybe
there's an argument over us.

TU-AR

coughs, wipes blood from his lips. After a
second he smiles at it, like fate.

TU-AR

(Mende w/subtitles)

Maybe this man is here to
help us. What is he like?

NOW CINQUE LEANS CLOSER TO BALDWIN

Their noses nearly touch. Baldwin forces
himself not to flinch. Sulah comes into the
courtyard carrying a basket of bread. Cinque
watches Pendelton molest her with his eyes.

THE AFRICANS

Each holds out his hand and Sulah leaves each
with a thick chunk of bread. But when she
passes Urar he finds a BIG slice of APPLE PIE
in his hand. The Africans crack-up as Sulah
sashays pasts working her hips. Urar finally
gets the picture.

BALDWIN

produces the sword Cinque used to kill Ferrer.
He holds it up emphasizes each word.

BALDWIN

Have you seen this before?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

He's like a man from my
village who hires himself to
scrape elephant shit from the
crop rows.

Baldwin uses exaggerated gestures, trying to communicate.

BALDWIN
You killed? Why? Were you
forced from your home?

CINQUE
Home.

BALDWIN
Home!

CINQUE
Home?

Frustrated Baldwin re-thinks this. Gibbs rises walks back to 'talk' to the other Africans as Jocelyn draws on a piece of paper.

TU-AR (O.S.)
(Mende w/subtitles)
But Cinque, I think someone who
can scrape away elephant shit
is the kind of man we need.

Roaring laughter from the other Africans. Jocelyn hands the paper to Baldwin who places it in front of Cinque.

Its a drawing of a SHIP with a sketch of LAND before and behind. Baldwin points to the LAND in front, then stands and points to the ground.

BALDWIN
Here! Here!
(touches the land
behind)
Home! Home!

Cinque looks at everyone, then disdainfully takes the pen and, as if he were correcting the homework of a mediocre pupil, draws a CROSS then SNAPS the picture with his finger.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
Tattoos! This is like the
ship-tattoos!

Baldwin enthusiastically repeats the Mende word for 'tattoo.' Cinque nods.

JOCELYN
Wonderful, he's got you
learning his language.

Pendelton comes out herding a couple of the young Mende girls ahead of him; to him they may as well be slaves.

Cinque grabs the sword and aims the tip right at Pendelton who FREEZES.

For the first time Baldwin sees how Pendelton's treatment of the little girls looks to Cinque. Cinque tosses the sword down on the table with a loud CLANG, rises and heads back for his cell; Harlin catches up fumbling with the keys.

Suddenly the Missionaries break into a jubilant song, they gather close, holding hands with the children, faces animated and smiling. Gibbs rejoins Jocelyn and Baldwin.

GIBBS

I swear their speech is West African, perhaps from Sierra Leone. But there are over twenty languages and a hundred dialects from there.

CINQUE'S CELL

Cinque begrudgingly meets Baldwin at the bars. Jocelyn and Gibbs stand back but listening as Baldwin holds up the drawing again.

BALDWIN

Where is home? Home?

Cinque touches the 'land' behind the ship.

CINQUE

Picture Mendeland, Baldwin.
Mendeland!

Baldwin's taken-aback; Cinque knew what Baldwin was after all along.

GIBBS

Mende...

JOCELYN

You've heard of it?

GIBBS

Barely...

BALDWIN

We'd better find someone who speaks it, we're running out of time.

INT. ROYAL PALACE, MADRID, SPAIN - DAY

Nine year old ISABELLA II, Queen of Spain, dictates a letter through her private SECRETARY. But clearly it's been composed in advance by her regent, GENERAL BALDOMERO ESPARTERO. Isabella is a pale, but beautiful nine year old girl, dressed and pressed into the trappings of a Queen. But the stiff forty-six year old military veteran, Espartero, runs her like a pretty marionette. It's the voice of a child, the words of a despot.

ISABELLA

... and so, as you may perceive, we wish you to act before this matter of the Africans becomes a weight on our two countries.

She looks to Espartero.

ESPARTERO

Great countries...

ISABELLA

Our great countries. After all, the business of great countries is to do business. Slavery is our pillar of commerce in the New World. Without it we might have been denied the glory of aiding you in your virtuous rebellion against the British. Without it, our good will and excellent mutual trade should be... imperiled. As slave-owning nations we must stand firm.

(pause)

Speak the words of humanness for the masses of citizens to hear, hold tightly to the power which protects them. And that power is their wealth. The Africans must never go free.

Now Isabella who arrogantly puffs herself up to show she takes credit for the letter.

ISABELLA

With sincerest admiration,
Isabella II, queen of all
Spain.

EXT. ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA - DAY

Fifty-seven year old President MARTIN VAN BUREN stands at middle of a wagon that's been brightly painted Red White and Blue stripes with a galaxy of Stars. Its wheel spokes are woven with crepe.

A HUGE BANNER drapes around the belly of the wagon like a ribbon bearing the words: "REELECT MARTIN VAN BUREN -- SLAVE STATES & FREE TOGETHER SHALL BE -- GOD BLESS AMERICA!"

As the wagon is slowly dragged through the streets of cheering VOTERS by four white horses, Van Buren waves and grips his hands together like a victorious boxer. LEDER HAMMOND -- his secretary -- clambers along side and gets yanked abroad by an AIDE.

VAN BUREN

keeps his cheery smile as he leans to hear what Hammond's got to say. At that moment people launch into "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" and Hammond has to yell in his ear.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM, BAR - NIGHT

Cigar smoke choked room with Van Buren, Hammond a three AIDES. Hammond takes dictation. Van Buren sits on the edge of a table holding a pint of beer, smoking the cigar. All around is the debris of a party.

VAN BUREN

"Your majesty, if I were king of America I might touch this case; however my hand is stayed by the Constitution. I cannot speak to the wisdom of this document, only to its power over me.

(MORE)

VAN BUREN (CONT'D)

(pause)

Nevertheless, your majesty should expect her property to be delivered into the hands of her trusted servant Señor Calderon within the month or so that it takes this drama to play itself out."

(to Hammond)

Shall I tell her it's a farce?

HAMMOND

I should pass over the obvious.

(some laughs)

Mr. President, why is this boat of blacks so important to her?

VAN BUREN

Honor, politics, fear. She's quite right, we have much in common. You never know when one little snow ball starts down hill how big it can get before... it runs over you.

(finishing)

"Sincerely, Martin Van Buren, President of the United States."

EXT. NEW HAVEN COURTHOUSE - MORNING

Cinque, along with Burna, one Yoruba and a Limba walk in chains and under guard to court. They all wear pure white cotton 'gowns'. On the near side of the street Lydia and the abolitionists pass out papers. On the far side a small mob of WHITES shout at the Africans and the abolitionists. Ten POLICE OFFICERS keep the two contingents apart.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

This is it! They're going to execute us! Let's take as many with us as we can!

Thomas comes up to the Africans and hands them flowers as they're pushed along. Cinque recognizes the kid. When they arrive at the door a Missionary holds up a Bible, takes Cinque's hand, puts it on the Bible, lets him pass, does the same with the others. Burna is terrified.

BURNA
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 They're going to sacrifice us
 to their gods!

INT. NEW HAVEN COURTHOUSE

ON A WIG -- a white formal barrister wig
 getting set on Magistrate Will's head.

THE AFRICANS

Burna and Cinque watch Wills, amazed.

BURNA
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 That hair is from his last
 victim.

The hated Ruiz and Montes enter and Cinque
 watches as they join a formidable group that
 includes Forsyth, Calderon and a pair of self-
 important ATTORNEYS.

Then Gadney & Meade sit near the rear with
 their shabby COUNSEL.

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 It's a judgment.

BURNA
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Doesn't look like a judgment.

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 That man, to look like a wise
 man puts on the hair of an
 elder.
 (the jury)
 Those whites are the smart
 people of the village. They
 advise the wise man.

BURNA
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 And Elephant Shit Man?

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 He talks for us.

Saunders rises...

FADE TO:

INT. COURT HOUSE - LATER

In on Saunders working the court like an actor.

SAUNDERS

... then, in the quietude of night, after the Spaniards had tended their vespers, and were deep in virtuous sleep, the savages broke loose their collars and stole like creatures of prey...

Baldwin rises.

BALDWIN

I object to this portrayal of my clients as nocturnal beasts of prey. We have plenty of Negroes living in our community and none range through the countryside attacking people in a blood lust.

SAUNDERS

Our Negroes have been tamed by years of exposure to whites. May I continue?

BALDWIN

Why bother? We already know the tale: the shrieking monsters escape, kill the sinless white crew and sail away.

CINQUE LAUGHS

He leans close to Burna.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
He is mocking that fool.

SAUNDERS (O.S.)

Your honor!

WILLS

bangs his gavel

JUDGE WILLS

Please continue.

SAUNDERS

These brutes falling on the crew in their sleep, massacred them, sparing not even the simple cook. But for the bravery of Señors Ruiz and Montes who fought their way to the bridge, these villains might have escaped the embrace of justice. Your justice, members of the jury. Thank you.

Baldwin bounds up.

BALDWIN

Members of the jury, you have the common sense to you know the difference between a cow and a cabbage, do you not? Between a brick and a bear?

(a glance to Forsyth)

A polecat and a president..? Well, the Spanish government hopes you don't have a whole lot of common sense and I'll tell you why: this case is not about murder or anything that dramatic. It's about knowing the difference between property and people.

(pause)

The Spanish Government says the Africans are their property. Lieutenants Gadney and Meade cry "No-no; they're our property!" Here's the truth and it's very simple: the Africans aren't anybody's property. Why? Because they're people. My God! Can that be so hard to comprehend? But here's their trick -- and watch out for it: they claim the Africans are slaves, and slaves are always somebody's property.

(MORE)

BALDWIN (CONT'D)
Tricky all right. But they
haven't tricked me and I know
they can't trick you.

Members of the jury and audience chuckle.

CINQUE LAUGHS

gets a smile out of Burna.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
It's going very well...

Baldwin turns around, waves and Jocelyn enters
with three of the youngest African children led
by Sulah.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
Watch! Now he's going to get
the smart whites to cry...

Baldwin greets them smiling, gets charming
smiles and musical Mende in return.

BALDWIN
Hello beautiful. How are you
sweetheart? That bow is so
pretty in your hair.

SAUNDERS
Your honor I object to this
disgusting pandering.

Baldwin ignores Saunders, stays focused on the
children.

BALDWIN
(Spanish w/subtitles)
Ladies, is it warm today?
(in English)
Would you say it's getting
colder at night in prison?
Since you have no heat...

SAUNDERS
Your honor..!

Baldwin faces the jury.

BALDWIN

The plain, simple truth is,
these lovely young ladies
neither speak, nor do they
understand English or Spanish
and yet they speak native
African! Why? Because
they're from Africa! Not a
Spanish plantation!

Chuckles from the jury.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Clever. Sadness, jokes; now
he must get serious again...

BALDWIN GETS DRAMATIC

facing each juror one by one.

BALDWIN

They were kidnapped from
their homes in Africa --
these men, these children!
Carried off by Spanish
slavers contrary to the laws
of humanity and all the great
nations of the earth. These
are free people! And being
people they cannot be
anybody's property; and if
they are not anybody's
property our treaty with
Spain has no bearing. The
Coast Guard sailors have no
claim. And, you must let my
clients go!

Saunders leaps out of his seat and launches
into the girls with a tirade of Spanish.

SAUNDERS

(Spanish w/subtitles)

Do you know what will happen
to you if you don't tell the
truth here today? Do you?

Jocelyn starts to rise but Tappan holds him
back as Baldwin motions them to stay seated.
Saunders continues in English.

SAUNDERS

These men coached you! They promised you would be freed if you pretended not to speak Spanish! Isn't that the truth? Isn't it!? Speak up!

One of the little girls breaks into tears and Sulah hugs her close comforting her.

IN THE BACK

With a jingle of manacles Cinque stands fire of hate in his eyes. EVERYONE focuses on Cinque. Then someone else in the court SOBS...

A MEMBER OF THE JURY

cries openly for the African children. Saunders struggles to get the jury back...

SAUNDERS

The Spanish Government has provided every proof necessary to satisfy the law.

BALDWIN

What? A list of Spanish names that none of my clients ever heard of? They have African names -- they speak African!

A couple of JURORS LAUGH and it looks like Baldwin has scored with his line of argument. But then a SECOND US ATTORNEY slowly stands.

CINQUE

leans forward, looking hard at the man.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
Here comes trouble.

2ND US ATTORNEY

On Spanish plantations these slaves always choose to live in hovels, surrounded by their own filth teaching each other their own ways and simple languages.

(MORE)

2ND US ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

Prey tell, what need they know in Spanish? 'Fetch', 'stop', 'carry'? Oft-times on plantations gestures suffice for slaves as they might for any beast of burden.

Baldwin leaps up, for a flash seems nearly as angry as Cinque.

BALDWIN

They are not beasts! The Spaniards who are trying to send these men and children to their deaths are the beasts!

Wills bangs away with his gavel.

WILLS

Gentlemen, it is getting on in the day. We'll adjourn until tomorrow at eight in the morning.

Baldwin collects himself and sits.

JOCELYN

How are we doing, council?

BALDWIN

Not well enough. We need solid proof. Something the jury can touch.

TAPPAN

You need to bring God into this, Mr. Baldwin.

BALDWIN

Would you please call me Roger?

TAPPAN

I... hardly know you...

Jocelyn leans into a quiet huddle so no one else can hear.

JOCELYN

When we showed that drawing to Cinque he kept slapping the paper. At first I thought it was because of the ship I drew.

(MORE)

JOCELYN (CONT'D)

But perhaps he meant the paper itself. My point: *Amistad* was towed into harbor this morning. Get a warrant. Go aboard. See what we find before the Spaniards do...

Baldwin's animated again moves to the bench and stops Wills as he's about to leave.

CINQUE

Baldwin!

Baldwin turns. Cinque just wants to make eye contact as he's taken away with Burna.

EXT. AMISTAD, NEW HAVEN HARBOR - NEAR DUSK

Looking beat-up and neglected *Amistad* rides at anchor. A longboat approaches the ship from shore.

EXT. AMISTAD

Baldwin, Jocelyn, Lydia and Clemens come aboard and are met by a COAST GUARD OFFICER. Baldwin produces his warrant.

INT. BRIDGE

Baldwin shoulders the warped door aside as Clemens follows holding a lamp. Dust and sea water have continued the process of decline. Baldwin unrolls a chart, hands it to Clemens. Unrolls another.

BALDWIN

Cuba. Cuba again; Lesser Antilles... Honduras.

CLEMENS

What should I be looking for?

BALDWIN

For God's sake, Clemens, a map of Africa will suffice.

ON DECK

Jocelyn and Lydia explore with the fear of people entering a haunted house. Jocelyn finds and opens the hatch to the slave quarters.

BELOW DECK

By flickering lantern light, Lydia kneels and carefully touches the manacles sprawled crazily on the floor. Jocelyn sits beside her and he too picks up a manacle. Sacred relics in a dark temple. What they must be feeling... Seeing that Lydia is torn-up, he embraces her.

BRIDGE

and TIGHT on the map of Cuba Cinque found. There's a tiny drawing up a ship and just above it a COMPASS ROSE.

BALDWIN (O.S.)

I found Cinque's 'picture'...

CLEMENS (O.S.)

Hey ho! Look what I found!

CLEMENS

proudly holds up THE LEATHER POUCH Ruiz hid under the chart case.

SLAVE QUARTERS

Jocelyn and Lydia sit in the shadows.

LYDIA

I can get fifty men willing to storm the jail, get the Africans to Vermont that night. And then to Canada...

JOCELYN

We've got to finish this; Lydia, you know what a court victory could mean.

LYDIA

How many chances have we had in court for a black man or woman and how many time have we won?

JOCELYN

All the more reason. Every time we help a slave escape...

LYDIA

They're justly freed!

Jocelyn picks up a manacle.

JOCELYN

To rid the world of these we
need law, not just justice.

Before she replies Baldwin and Clemens clamber
down the stairs like excited puppies.

BALDWIN

We've got it, by God!

INT. COURTHOUSE - MORNING

Baldwin stands before the jury holding up a
water stained papers with tattered edges tied
together with a chord.

BALDWIN

... these papers -- and I
shall ask you to examine them
-- are portions of a ship's
manifest which my colleagues
and I retrieved from *Amistad*
yesterday eve. They list all
the Spanish names which the
prosecution insists -- no
demands! -- represent my
clients. But... lo!, this is
not the manifest of *La*
Amistad at all! Rather a
portion of the cargo manifest
of a notorious transatlantic
slave ship called *The Tecora*!

A rush of distress sweeps the prosecution.
Calderon ejects from his seat and gets right in
Forsyth's face as onlookers actually GASP.

AND CINQUE

His hopes up again. Now even Burna seems swept
with enthusiasm.

BALDWIN

gets right up to the jury box and as he talks,
moves along, letting each juror look at the
document -- a few actually touch it.

BALDWIN

The mystery unravels! Members of the jury, this document establishes for once and for all that my clients are free men, ripped from their homes and families in Africa and unlawfully cast into slavery! By them!

He points at Ruiz and Montes who can only gawk.

BALDWIN

You have no choice, whatever these men say from now on doesn't matter because you can hear with your own ears, see with your own eyes that they are liars! And you know my clients have always been free men!

Everyone in the court looks back at Cinque and Burna, the jury, the audience, cops and Magistrate Wills. Calderon adamantly faces front with a stone cold expression.

BURNA

smiles for the first time. Cinque's reserved.

BURNA

(Mende w/subtitles)

This looks very good!

As Wills beats his gavel to close the day's proceedings, Tappan, Jocelyn and Baldwin cross straight to Cinque and Burna, their smiles echoing Burna's feeling.

BALDWIN

It's going to be all right.

Their words blend into an incomprehensible stew punctuated with smiles and handshakes. Jocelyn puts his hand on Cinque's arm.

But then a POLICEMAN slings the leash around Cinque's neck and Jocelyn smile vanishes as the Africans are pulled away toward the door. Cinque winces from the pain...

JOCELYN

Soon! You'll be free soon!

Clemens rushes up, half out of breath.

CLEMENS

Gentlemen, I've got a coach;
are we still going to the
harbor?

Baldwin considers.

JOCELYN

Roger, just to be safe...

INT. CINQUE'S CELL - LATE NIGHT

Cinque sits on the top of his ladder-bed like a leopard hanging out in a tree. His breath clouds and he wears a blanket on his shoulders. Tu-Ar's cough echoes through the complex.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
It's getting cold.

VARIOUS VOICES

(Mende w/subtitles)
We know that! Tell us
something we don't know.
What are the whites up to?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
They're quiet tonight.

URAR (O.S.)

(Mende w/subtitles)
Tell us more about the
judgment. Burna says the
wise men like what Shit-
Scraper has to say.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
Baldwin. His name is Baldwin.
But the others who hate us
seem very powerful. Baldwin
was good though.

TU-AR (O.S.)

(Mende w/subtitles)
What are you really thinking
Cinque?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
 I think he is home. In his
 warm bed. With his fat wife.
 Nice and safe. In the end
 are we so important to him?
 (pause)
 I am going to get out.

TU-AR

lies on his cot, blanket pulled up to his nose.

TU-AR

(Mende w/subtitles)
 How will you manage that?

CINQUE

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
 There will be a chance.

BURNA (O.S.)

(Mende w/subtitles)
 They watch us all the time.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
 One day there will be a chance.

URAR (O.S.)

(Mende w/subtitles)
 I'm going with you!

BURNA & URAR'S CELL

BURNA

(Mende w/subtitles)
 Crazy boy! They will kill you!

URAR

(Mende w/subtitles)
 I'm coming Cinque!

TU-AR'S CELL

TU-AR

(Mende w/subtitles)
 You said their village is
 huge. How could we hide?

CINQUE'S CELL

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Wait. Something strange...

Outside it's starting to SNOW. Cinque jerks upright nearly falls.

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 The sky is breaking up!

Cinque leaps down from his perch and rushes to the door. Snow is falling into the courtyard. But then VOICES are shouting in Mende. Tu-Ar's hacking cough is suddenly relentless and LOUD.

BURNA (O.S.)
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Cinque! Tu-Ar is shivering
 and coughing blood! He needs
 more blankets!

Cinque grabs his blanket, folds it tightly, then he reaches it out through the bars so it just makes the bars of the cell next to him.

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Take it -- pass this on!

A Temne face appears, then he sticks out his hand and takes the blanket.

TEMNE'S CELL

But instead of passing it on, the Temne just laughs at Cinque, pulls it over himself as his 'roommate' laughs.

CINQUE (O.S.)
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Pass the blanket on!

TEMNE
 (Temne w/subtitles)
 Stop troubling me you
 ignorant Mende...

BANG - something hits their mutual wall on Cinque's side so loud it nearly jars the Temne off his cot.

CINQUE

beats furiously on the wall with his brass piss-pot: BANG -- BANG -- BANG.

THE TEMNE

is truly freaked-out -- realizes Cinque will probably go on all night.

TEMNE

(Temne w/subtitles)

Shut up you fucking Mende!

He balls up the blanket and jams it out through the bars. Another hand reaches out, pulls it in, sticks it out the far end of that set of bars and still another hand grabs it. Only then does Cinque stop banging.

BURNA

passes the extra blanket to Tu-Ar's cell who just has enough strength to add it to his own blanket, trying to quell his shivering body.

CINQUE

pulls his cotton shirt on, lays back in his cot, eyes wide. In the distance he can hear the wind picking up. He hugs himself against the growing cold. Somewhere one of the Africans starts singing. Cinque smiles, enjoying the sound. But then other Africans yell, shout him down until the night fills with the scrannel sound.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Harlin arrives at the rear porch of a house perched on a hill far above the jail. Two other BLACK MEN, servants, beckon him to join them. AESOP about forty-five, smokes a pipe. His pal, LUKE, polishes silverware. Harlin opens a sack of squash. Flurries pick up.

HARLIN

Snow in October; not a good sign.

AESOP

What's the old crow what for these dried up gourds, Harlin?

HARLIN

Penny for two. This snow will kill what's left, so you're looking at a bargain.

Aesop scowls, studies them expertly.

LUKE

Your African murderers sure are a noisy pack of animals. What are they like?

HARLIN

Well, they look just like us.

LUKE

Hump! Imagine us running bare-ass through the jungle! Eatin' bugs and toads!

HARLIN

I wonder if the whites didn't run around in the jungle, once.

AESOP

Naw, white people is the children of God. If you go to heaven, you get to be a white person.

Harlin doesn't know what to say. Aesop is a beat-up an old man, driven to hate his existence and himself. Harlin unwraps a napkin of Khila's breads; he passes some to each man.

LUKE

What's this?

(takes a bite)

My goodness! Delicious! You can taste all the herbs -- you know? Not all mashed together? And it's strong. Who made this?

HARLIN

One of the animals; a little one.

EXT. HARBOR BAR - LATE NIGHT

The low-life bar and grill, clouded with grease smoke and steam from a kitchen that probably never stops cooking. Baldwin sits at a large table with five surly MULATTO or AFRICAN MERCHANT SAILORS stuffing themselves on soup, bread and ale.

A WAITER arrives with plates of potatoes and mutton and as Baldwin dives into his pocket for cash he points to a HUGE ritually scarred AFRICAN SAILOR who looks like Queequeg on a bad day. Very reluctantly Clemens rises to approach him.

Jocelyn returns to the table with a young BRITISH NAVAL OFFICER and a very young BLACK MAN -- really a BOY -- in a British Naval Uniform. The British Officer is CAPTAIN HAROLD SLOCUM, the young Black Man is nineteen year old JAMES COVEY. Baldwin rises, shakes hands and invites them to supper.

Clemens YOWLS as 'Queequeg' shouts and shoves him away.

EXT. JAIL COURTYARD - MORNING

Cinque and Burna outside digging a latrine as an armed GUARD walks among the Africans who are having a meal in the prison yard.

Most stare in wonder at the dusting of snow on the ground, watching as Missionaries make a snowman for the giggling little girls. A Missionary places a cap on the snowman.

MISSIONARY

Hat... this is a hat!

Some of the girls repeat the word. Then the Pendeltons appear; Mrs. wiping her hands on a towel, Mr. Pendelton with an ax over his shoulder.

MRS. PENDELTON

James, choose two men to go with you and Mr. Pendelton for firewood and send Khila in here to help Mrs. Dillard's cook!

INT. KITCHEN

SARAH, a corpulent BLACK WOMAN in her late thirties, sorts through a sack of onions as Khila rush in. Sarah bends over so they're eye-to-eye.

SARAH

Khila? I'm Sarah. I cook for a very, very rich family, do you understand?

Khila goes off into one of her musical torrents of Mende. Sarah keeps nodding, then produces one of Khila's bread cakes with a bite in it.

SARAH

You made this?
(lots of Mende back)
 Show me? Me? How you made this?

AT THE COUNTER

Khila pulls out one ingredient after another, going on and on in Mende as she measures them out in her hand -- here a pinch, there a fistful. Sarah writes fast as she can. She gets to the RED PEPPER -- measures out two big fists worth.

SARAH

Ah! That's what gives it that breath!

Khila shrugs that she's done. Sarah pats her on the head and has a good laugh.

PRISON YARD

As they dig, Cinque notices Urar and Sulah sitting together in the sun near the children and the Missionaries.

BURNA

(Mende w/subtitles)
 Do you think those Missionaries have power?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
 Compared to us who hasn't?

BURNA

(Mende w/subtitles)
I mean power with God? Look
how powerful the whites are.
Their villages are huge.
They have Navies and Armies.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
You never hear of the
kingdoms of Oyo and Ife when
you were a child?

BURNA

(Mende w/subtitles)
Stories...

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
The great kingdom of our
ancestors. Big armies, big
navy, big Gods. Nothing but
a big desert now. And it's
children are in jail digging
holes to shit in.

BURNA

(Mende w/subtitles)
You don't believe in God?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
I believe. But I won't shame
myself by only running to him
when I am afraid.

Cinque starts another section with a pick.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
You think Sulah and Urar will
manage it?

BURNA

(Mende w/subtitles)
Manage what?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
To fuck. They're not talking
about God.

Burna gapes at the couple; apparently the
thought never crossed his mind.

INT. CINQUE'S CELL

He's watching the grey glow of the moon hidden behind the lead clouds; it's peaceful. Cinque probably comes up here every night just to breathe. The wind stirs his hair as he sings quietly so no one will hear; he drifts off...

DREAM OF AFRICA --

in the gorgeous, pure-sky savanna two giraffes sway like dancers as they move across the plain. In their hugeness, their litheness, their incredibleness, they embody freedom.

DRUMS, and then the melodious chanting of MENDE VOICES as a soothing accompaniment to the giraffes -- the voices, the drums and the movements of nature become a mystic 'one'...

TU-AR'S CELL

Burna sleeps but Tu-Ar is awake. He pokes his face between the door bars, his voice is 'husky' with disease.

TU-AR

(Mende w/subtitles)

Cinque! What can you see outside tonight?

CINQUE STIRS

He's cold, tired, but senses Tu-Ar's urgency.

TU-AR (O.S.)

Cinque?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

I'm looking -- I'm looking...

TU-AR (O.S.)

(Mende w/subtitles)

Tonight, find something beautiful. Not ugly or stupid.

CINQUE SEES

Perched in the branch of a tree across from the jail is a HUGE FORM.

The creature REVOLVES ITS HEAD like a turret and ENORMOUS EYES aim at him. It's an enormous OWL.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
Tu-Ar! A forest spirit!

The owl HOOTS, then spreads its giant wings and flies right toward the jail.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
It's flying right at us! Did you hear it!? Tu-Ar! Did you hear that?

INT. TU-AR'S CELL

Tu-Ar has died with his hands frozen reaching for the sky.

EXT. PRISON GRAVE YARD - DAY

An old field flanked by a forest and filled with marvelous headstones. Cinque and Burna dig Tu-Ar's grave under the eye of two armed GUARDS. Slowly the Mende file out into the field.

BURNA
(Mende w/subtitles)
Who can perform the ceremony of the poro?

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
Who cares? -- you do it!

BURNA
(Mende w/subtitles)
I'm not a priest or a chief.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
So? I won't tell anyone.

BURNA
(Mende w/subtitles)
It's not right...

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

It doesn't matter! We have
to help Tu-Ar move on! I'll
do it.

FROM THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE YARD

Harlin and Luke watch as the Africans assemble
around the fresh grave.

GRAVE SIDE

Cinque and the others hold hands sitting in a
circle around his grave. They are DEAD QUIET.
Suddenly a SHADOW moves over the group. They
all slowly turn their heads to see...

IN AN INSTANT --

for a flash of a moment it's Tu-Ar -- and he
melts into the forest.

THE MENDE

turn and smile to one another.

SULAH

(Mende w/subtitles)

You must sing now.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

What? Me? I can't sing.

SULAH

(Mende w/subtitles)

You liar; you sing beautifully.

Cinque gives her an odd look; how does she know?

BURNA

(Mende w/subtitles)

You have to sing, you led the
ceremony.

Cinque sees Sulah is counting on him then he
sings -- and his voice cracks. Pausing for a
deeper breath he tries again and this time his
voice is big and strong.

Khila and the other girls sneak some 'treats' they've cooked, pass them around. As they eat we can see the taste transports them.

JOCELYN BALDWIN ARRIVE

With some of the men they found in the bar. Cinque and the others are meandering back from the cemetery and stop to face this motley crew.

JOCELYN

Well, gentlemen: one at a time from left to right, please.

To the African's amusement, each man steps up and says something in an alien tongue.

SULAH

(Mende w/subtitles)
Who are these animals?

Urar is about to take this opportunity to move next to Sulah but Burna quickly steps between. Cinque smiles and greets Baldwin.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
Good day, Shit-Scraper.

Then from somewhere in the back, comes a young, strong voice.

VOICE

(Mende w/subtitles)
Does Baldwin know his pet-name?

The Africans FREEZE, simply stunned. Then the wall of strangers parts and young JAMES COVEY walks to the front followed by Captain Slocum. Now the Africans break into howls of joy and gather around. But Cinque grabs Covey by the sleeve, pulls him over to Baldwin.

CINQUE

(Covey translates)
How is our judgment going!?

Baldwin's surprised and impressed by Cinque's grasp of events.

BALDWIN

The people who decide the trial wanted to set you free.

CINQUE
 (Covey translates)
 White people said to free us?

BALDWIN
 But the person who leads our
 country -- President Van
 Buren -- thinks you should be
 returned to the Spaniards.

CINQUE
 (Covey translates)
 You said people wanted to
 free us?

BALDWIN
 Van Buren got rid of them.
 This time he will be much
 more careful. The judgment
 will continue without them.

SLOCUM
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 You must save yourselves.

All eyes turn to Slocum.

CINQUE
 (Covey translates)
 Ah, another genius!

SLOCUM
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 I speak just a little.

CINQUE
 (Covey translates)
 Why is he dressed up?

COVEY
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 He is a British Naval
 Officer, a warrior who fights
 at sea.

BALDWIN
 Cinque, we must have your
 help to get you free.

CINQUE
 (Covey translates)
 Why are we here!? We are
 free men now!! Why should I
 talk to another white man?

JOCELYN

What happens to you, happens
to all the Mende...

Mrs. Pendelton calls for the children, and as
Sulah turns to go, Cinque stops her.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
When did you hear me sing?

Sulah just says: "La-la-la", smiles and passes.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW HAVEN - MORNING

Lydia and volunteers pass out the
Abolitionist's paper, Thomas by her side.

LYDIA (V.O.)

"Citizen of America -- your
freedom is being pilfered!
The Queen of Spain and the
'King' of America will not
rest until your democracy has
been picked from your pocket
-- never to be seen again..."

INT. PALACE, MADRID - DAY

With Espartero unhappily listening, Isabella
reads the newspaper with her heavily accented
English.

ISABELLA

"If men are to be precluded
from offering their opinions
on a matter which may involve
the most serious and alarming
consequences, reason is of no
use to us..."

INT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Forsyth reads from the Abolitionist's paper as
Van Buren paces, fuming.

FORSYTH

"... the freedom of speech
may be taken away, and dumb
and silent we may be led like
sheep to the slaughter' --
George Washington."

VAN BUREN

George Washington is dead, no one cares what in hell he had to say. What infuriates me is that this got into the Gazette, not just the abolitionist rags. People are reading this -- real people, goddamn-it! And if it's in the Gazette you know it's going to be in Southern papers. I thought we were going to contain this 'mess' up north!

Van Buren pulls a cigar out of his desk and walks around aiming it like a gun.

FORSYTH

We're struggling to do that.

VAN BUREN

Struggle harder!

FORSYTH

The easiest way is to resolve this. And I think we've found a judge. He's a little young, but that means he has a career ahead of him -- no need for magnanimous last gestures for the sake of posterity...

VAN BUREN

Like that louse, Adams. What's this judge's name?

He passes Van Buren a file.

FORSYTH

Bertrand Coglin. He's terribly insecure about his Catholic heritage.

VAN BUREN

He's a Catholic!?

INT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Diminutive but sturdy thirty-five year old BERTRAND COGLIN rises as Secretary Forsyth greets him in the Presidential Lobby.

FORSYTH (V.O.)

Of course not, he's Protestant, but his grandfather was Catholic and he's struggled all his life to keep that quiet. Naturally, he would be willing to do anything to secure his fortunes in government.

Coglin is obviously overcome with excitement and hope, and Forsyth shakes his hand firmly, as if welcoming him to the Inside Circle.

INT. CINQUE'S CELL - NIGHT

Cinque seems to be asleep on his perch, but like the sleeping leopard, his senses are always peaked. There's just the slightest sound and Cinque's eyes OPEN. Does he hear VOICES, or the wind in the trees?

Twisting his head sideways, Cinque tries like hell to push his head through and does.

CINQUE SEES...

Where a section of the prison angles out beyond the main gate, Tu-Ar and Sulah are making love behind a maple tree.

INT. BURNA'S CELL - MORNING

The sound of BELLS explodes into the air. Burna immediately cover his ears. Right beside Burna's head are a set of bare feet belonging to his new cell mate YULA.

YULA

(Mende w/subtitles)
Bell day!

EXT. NEW HAVEN JAIL - AFTERNOON

The Africans are outside in the courtyard, most working on the prison: patching walls, digging latrines, two putting a fresh coat of paint on the Pendeltons' house. The sun seems likely to melt the new fallen snow.

CINQUE (O.S.)
'Slaves...'

KITCHEN

Cinque at the pantry table with Covey working on his English. He turns back from the window after just having called the working Africans 'slaves'. Covey points at Cinque.

COVEY
Mende. Not a slave.

Cinque rolls his eyes.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
To speak Whiteman Talk I have
to learn to lie all the time?

COVEY
Only English. No Mende.

Frustrated Cinque stands and walks around the kitchen rapid-fire naming everything he sees.

CINQUE
Butter, cup, plate, basin,
table, chair, fork, knife,
bread, oven, firewood.

He comes to a small wall mirror, pauses as he angles it to study his reflection.

COVEY
Leader.

Cinque looks at Covey, shakes his head.

CINQUE
No man needs a leader.

COVEY
Only a leader would say that.

Ignoring this, Cinque crosses to the window, watches Nat Pendelton watching Sulah's lithe body as she strides across the courtyard.

Then Urar stops house painting and crosses to greet Sulah as she returns with her empty tray. The two talk, smiling, flirting. Then they separate and Urar goes back to work. But Pendelton follows Sulah around toward the back of the house.

CINQUE
I'm going out, all right?

COVEY
I'll wait.

CINQUE

slowly walks out the pantry door into the yard. Mrs. Pendelton ushers THREE MISSIONARIES -- TWO MEN and a WOMAN -- into the yard. Curious, the rest of the Africans surround the three.

FIRST MISSIONARY
God's blessing on you this morning. We've come to teach you about the savior, Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

YULA
(Mende w/subtitles)
Do they have the black boxes?

The Missionaries start singing Psalm 1, the "New Version." While everyone is investigating the missionaries, Cinque crosses toward Urar.

MISSIONARIES
How blest is he who ne'er consents
by ill Advice to walk.
Nor stands in Sinners ways
nor sits
where Men prophanelly talk.

YULA
(Mende w/subtitles)
I'm going to have a shit --
but let me know what happens.

He heads for the pit...

NEW ANGLE

Cinque stands by Urar who paints.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
How did you get out last night?

URAR
(Mende w/subtitles)
You saw us!

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 I don't care what you do, how
 did you get out?

Urar hesitates...

URAR
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Sulah steals the key. It's
 Pendelton's main key.

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 I want it.

URAR
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 I don't have it. Only Sulah
 can get it.

Cinque takes the brush out of Urar's hand.

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Come on, let's find Sulah.

BEHIND THE HOUSE

Pendelton's got Sulah cornered as she tries to bring a handful of kindling into the house. He cuts her off and grabs her arms. She struggles -- drops the firewood -- he presses up against her, yanks her skirt up around her waist, hands groping.

PENDELTON
 That's all right, shhh. Just
 hold still...

Before Cinque can react, Urar rushes in and tackles Pendelton to the ground.

PENDELTON
 You goddamned nigger!

Pendelton grabs a LEATHER KINDLING STRAP, whips Urar once across the face -- Cinque grabs Pendelton's hand -- but in that instant Harlin arrives, aims a musket right at Cinque. Pendelton immediately spins and starts whaling on Urar with the strap.

By now everyone watches, the Missionaries just MOVE AWAY. Harlin's torn, hates what's happening to Urar. Cinque sees, points at Pendelton.

CINQUE

Shoot him!

Pendelton stops, afraid Harlin might do it, but laughs when he sees he's frozen. He starts lashing Urar again -- Harlin feels every blow but he's just too well 'broke' to interfere.

In a flash Cinque starts for Pendelton but is pinned from behind by two GUARDS who force him to his knees. Looks hopeless. Then out of nowhere like some avenging angel, Jocelyn picks Pendelton up by the shoulders and heaves him against the woodpile.

One of the guards pulls a lead sap and starts for Jocelyn but then another angel intervenes.

BALDWIN

You lay a finger on my clients and you'll spend the rest of your lives in court!

He may as well have pulled a gun -- instantly the guards back-off, even letting Cinque up. As Baldwin speaks he crosses to Cinque, slowly moves him back toward the other Africans.

BALDWIN

You will know your place, Mr. Pendelton or by God I'll see you in a cell of your own!

PENDELTON

You just keep that damned savage away from me!

Cinque yells at Covey in Mende as he rushes to help Urar up.

COVEY

This man was trying to rape this girl.

PENDELTON

Lying animal!

JOCELYN

I'm going for a doctor.

Cinque helps Urar. Urar frantically wipes away tears.

URAR
(Mende w/subtitles)
Don't let her see I cried.

Cinque holds Urar tight, face half buried in his shoulder.

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
I want that key -- tonight!

As Cinque and Urar walk to the yard, ALL THE AFRICANS watch him in silence and admiration.

Undaunted, the Missionaries pass out bits of candy to some Africans as they leave.

JAIL YARD

As Cinque sits with Urar, starts washing his lash burns with a rag in a bowl of water. Sulah wedges between them, takes the water from Cinque and tends to Urar herself. Cinque rises but Sulah stops him.

SULAH
(Mende w/subtitles)
I want to marry Urar.

URAR
(Mende w/subtitles)
Burna will never give me permission.

SULAH
(Mende w/subtitles)
I don't care!

CINQUE
(Mende w/subtitles)
Be calm, I'll talk to him.

He gives Tu-Ar a look to remind him of their conversation and leaves.

ACROSS THE YARD

Cinque joins a knot of Africans around Burna. Smiling like a little kid, Burna holds up a BIBLE. He leaves the others and joins Cinque.

BURNA
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Look, they gave me one of the
 black boxes!

Burna opens it and fans the pages.

BURNA
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 But every time you try to
 open it, there's always
 another cover!

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 Urar and Sulah want to marry.
 I don't see the harm --

Burna immediately becomes patriarchal.

BURNA
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 She must marry one of her
 own. These things are
 sacred.

Cinque nods, turns to leave, but then indicates
 the Bible in his hands.

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 A box that never opens? Be
 careful, the whites are very
 tricky.

INT. CINQUE'S CELL - LATE NIGHT

Urar rushes to Cinque's door and starts
 unlocking it -- Sulah rushes up behind, tries
 to stop him. But the door wings back and
 Cinque grabs Sulah covering her mouth. He
 glares at her, the wild eyes of a warrior.
 When he removes his hand she's silent.

CINQUE
 (Spanish w/subtitles)
 Urar open the doors of any
 who want to come.

SULAH
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 How far can you get?

CINQUE
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 We run until we escape or
 they kill us.

She pulls loose from Cinque and grabs Urar.

SULAH
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 You are my husband!

Cinque hasn't got time for this nicety.

URAR & SULAH

Urar holds Sulah back against the barred door.

SULAH
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 What are you doing?

URAR
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 I'm locking you in!

SULAH
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 No! I can fight! I am Mende
 like you -- I'll die with my
 husband!

CINQUE

pulls out a shiv made from a scrap of metal and moves toward the gate. He's joined by about eight Africans move cautiously toward the gate. Each carries some kind of makeshift prison weapon. Urar and Sulah catch up. As they near the door they stop as it sounds like a CROWD forming outside.

URAR
 (Mende w/subtitles)
 What is that sound?

Cinque shakes his head. Without warning the door opens -- hard to tell what's on the other side, but Cinque decides it's now or never. He lets out a HOWL and the Africans charge after him toward the open door.

SIX US MARINES enter and immediately form a defensive line, bayonets fixed. The Africans stop, confused. But Cinque waves them on.

MARINE COMMANDER
 Hold your fire! Order
 bayonets! Riot control!

In a liquid smooth motion the Marines REMOVE their bayonets, rise, hold their muskets level with their bodies and at arm's length as they advance on the Africans. Pendelton worries around their flanks like a furious terrier.

PENDELTON
 Shoot them! They're
 escaping!

MARINE COMMANDER
 I'm under orders to preserve
 the prisoners. At all costs.
 Move them back!

Using their musket butts and plenty of muscle, the Marines inexorably drive Cinque and the Africans back into the yard. Cinque charge at them.

CINQUE
 Shoot me! Kill! Kill me!

But it's futile, the Marines are just too good for the Africans and the prison doors slam and lock behind them. From outside, come the sounds of a SHOUTING mob.

EXT. JAIL - NIGHT

A mob has formed, men carrying torches, milling outside. Tappan's coach pulls up; Jocelyn, Tappan, Lydia, Covey and Baldwin dismount.

VOICE
 It's Tappan! The slave-
 lover!

Jeers and howls of hatred rain down on them. The five HOLD HANDS. Secure in this union, they walk straight through the angry crowd.

They're nearly to the door when a MAN leaps out of the mob, SLUGS Jocelyn in the side of the face and seems to instantly vanish back into the mob. As a ROARING CHEER goes up, Tappan grabs Jocelyn, moves to the end of the group sheltering Jocelyn between himself and Baldwin.

JAIL COURTYARD

Baldwin sizes up the situation and grabs Pendelton by the sleeve.

BALDWIN

I came to see my client. Now!

EXT. GUARD WALK - NIGHT

Jocelyn climbs onto a guards' walk on the roof of the New Haven jail. Though not pleasant, the guard doesn't interfere with him.

IN THE STREET

a panorama of madness unfolds -- the torch-carrying mob; grid-lock of wagons, carriages and riders; onlookers.

FAR OFF

in the harbor, a GUNSHIP rides at anchor, dwarfing the fishing and commercial ships.

JAIL YARD

Jocelyn climbs down to join Baldwin, Cinque, Lydia and Covey around a small fire.

JOCELYN

A gunship. That's their game. The Marines are here so that when the government wins in court they can put you right on that ship and take you to Cuba... before we can appeal.

Covey takes off his kerchief and hands it to Jocelyn. As he stanches his bloody wound, Cinque studies him with new eyes. Tonight they start truly talking with Cinque -- Covey a crutch -- but Cinque talks.

BALDWIN

Cinque, who are you? A hunter? Warrior?

Burna shouts from his cell.

BURNA
 (Covey translates)
 Cinque? Back home, he's a
 big land owner!

Another Mende sticks his face out.

MENDE
 (Covey translates)
 Yeah, I still owe him money!

Baldwin pulls out a pad, pen, warms his hands
 at the fire.

BALDWIN
 Cinque, tonight I am going to
 start writing down your
 statement. Your story.

CINQUE
 How I... got here.

BALDWIN
 Yes, how you got here.

JOCELYN
 Will you help us? We believe
 we can still get you free.

CINQUE
 But, you already proved we
 are free.

BALDWIN
 Yes, if you look at the law
 straight on, we have proved
 you are free. But I have
 always believed that truth
 and the law is all about
 stories and in court who ever
 tells the best story wins. I
 want to hear your story.

Cinque still seems skeptical.

JOCELYN
 You know, the others look up
 to you, Cinque and they know
 you are a man of means...
 they need a leader.

CINQUE
 Again? Where am I going to
 lead them -- to the shit-pit?
 I don't want to think for
 somebody else.
 (MORE)

CINQUE (CONT'D)

I always tell my son, think
don't follow.

LYDIA

Cinque, what's Africa like?

This question takes Cinque completely by
surprise. He cracks a scornful laughs, but
then sees how serious they really are.

CINQUE

Africa is a hard life. For
you it would be impossible.
You would need some leader
there!

LYDIA

If... when you go back...

CINQUE

Impossible! My wife is so
beautiful and soft, but she is
stronger than the strongest
man I have seen here. And she
is the only person on earth I
trust.

BALDWIN

You don't trust me at all?

Cinque offers a smile, pulls Covey -- his
portable translating device -- closer.

CINQUE

I trust you a little,
Baldwin. When I was a young
man we had a mad lion come
into our village. Everyone
was afraid of it, because
even if he just scratches
you, because he's sick, he
can kill you. But I was
ambitious and I went after
him with a couple of javelins
-- and I killed him. I
gained prestige, people
trusted me and I turned that
trust into good land, power;
I married the woman I really
desired...

(pause)

So, I think President Van
Buren is your lion.

Baldwin can only smile. He takes out his pen.

BALDWIN

You tell that very well. Now I want you to tell me another story, tell me how you got here... in your own words.

EXT. MENDE VILLAGE, SIERRA LEONE - DAY

An extraordinarily handsome, lithe MENDE WOMAN, about twenty-five years old. Beside her, is a MENDE BOY: her four year old son. There's a radiance about them, as if an idealized-truth. They are Cinque's wife and son.

Cinque embraces her like he would never let her go. Then his son, the same way. The buildings of the village are simple, thatched, but some very large and reminiscent of Iroquois long houses. The places BUSTLES, people and cattle and sacks of grain -- a healthy little town.

Her name is CAHI, his is SADKI.

SADKI

Why can't I come with you?

CINQUE

You won't like it...

SADKI

I know better about buying cows than you!

Cahi laughs, takes her son up into her arms.

CINQUE

All right, I'm not as smart as you -- but I'll do my best. And I'll just be gone a few days.

Cinque hugs and kisses them both. Then, he heads off down the road, stops a moment to turn back; his wife and son wave goodbye...

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - AFTERNOON

Cinque walks alone with a pack over his left shoulder. The day's bright, a wind kicking up dust on the road.

EXT. TRAIL - EVENING

Cinque sits before a fire, leaning back against an old baobab tree watching the sparks ascend to heaven.

Cinque instinctively sits up and looks around. At first the forest seems empty and black - then TORCHES emerge. He leaps up, sees he's surrounded and before he can react ARMED MEN jump him, slam him to the ground and pin his head in the dirt with a forked rod.

EXT. TRAIL - MORNING

Marched and pulled along a dusty coast road by a rope around his throat, Cinque finds himself part of a parade of newly captured AFRICANS. With armed BLACKS and WHITES leading them toward what appears to be a low, adobe fort.

ATOP A GUARD TOWER

From atop the wall four GUARDS with muskets watch the parade entering. One peels a fruit, scornfully throws the rind down on the prisoners. Behind them is a panorama of a bay with FOUR SHIPS at anchor.

INSIDE THE GATES

The Africans are led to a huge open space where other Africans -- men, women and children -- are lined up in chains and stripped of their clothes, then forced to sit on the filthy ground in the blazing sun.

Cinque looks around with terrified, childlike eyes and he sees:

-- CHILDREN huddled in their mothers' arms, all but melting in the heat.

-- A CRUCIFIX dangles from the throat of an armed man...

-- A STAR OF DAVID from another...

-- A MOSLEM CRESCENT on a dagger... They must look like occult symbols to Cinque.

-- AN AFRICAN showing ritual tattooing, kicks prisoners into line.

CINQUE...

on the ground, arms bound, sees all, appalled and fascinated.

DUSK

As torches are lit on the perimeter of the walls, pails of gruel are brought around and prisoners force-fed. A HUGE MUSCULAR man refuses to open his mouth -- guards shout and three sit on his chest as a fourth takes a hammer and brass dowel and smashes the prisoner's front teeth in -- they drive a funnel into his mouth, pour in the gruel. When they get to Cinque he reluctantly lets them feed him.

MORNING

chained with other Africans, Cinque is driven by whip wielding GUARDS down a bare hill.

PULLING BACK

to see rivers of Africans being driven down the slope toward the harbor with the horrible precision of a cattle drive. Each river streams off toward one of four ships drawn to the shore in deep water. In this apocalypse, the dirt thrown off by the hundreds of naked feet makes a DUST STORM.

BELOW DECKS/TECORA

As Cinque enters the Tecora's belly he confronts a horrific sight. Left and right HUNDREDS OF AFRICANS ARE LAYERED PRONE like the inhabitants of a giant beehive, packed so tight they can barely move. The screams/shouts/weeping become the echoing chorus of a supernatural AGONY.

Just as they get to Cinque's 'slot', prisoners from the opposite direction arrive first. Cinque is spun back around the way he came.

TOPSIDE

The deck of the huge ship packed solid with Africans baking in the sun. Cinque is chained next to a MOTHER who clutches her two young children -- a BOY and GIRL, no more than four years old.

THE SEA - DUSK.

Three ships follow *Tecora*, sails filled, decks crammed with human beings. Cinque looks at the young mother. He reaches up to touch a child but his chains only allow him to reach half way. The mother and Cinque lock eyes. Impossible to describe her terror.

DAWN

Spanish is being spoken. Black and white CREW move among the Africans, kicking prisoners awake. One of the Black Crew shouts -- holds up his hand and is joined by two Spaniards. They unlock the manacles of a YOUNG AFRICAN MAN who has died during the night and simply heave him overboard.

HIS BODY

flops into the sea and slowly sinks.

A HATCH FLIES BACK

More Spaniards and Blacks carry more corpses topside. They drop them on the deck, pull out a section of the rail and roll them off...

IN THE WAKE

all Cinque can see is just a SINGLE HUMAN HAND as it drifts beneath the waves.

ANOTHER DAWN

and more bodies cast into the wake. But now dorsal fins of SHARKS slice the water as the corpses are thrashed and torn before they can sink.

STORM AT NIGHT

Nearly naked in the pelting rain, Cinque balls himself up on the deck for warmth as huge swells rise and sweep over the gunnel.

The young mother hunches over her children, trying to keep them warm in the bitter spray. Then he sees she's ripped the flesh on her wrist to free herself. Now, with her own hand free the children are just held by the chain around her waist.

She looks at Cinque as if to say: "Understand!"

Suddenly she rises, clutching the children she closes her eyes and drops backward overboard. Cinque lurches out to try to grab them...

MOTHER AND CHILDREN

hit the water near the hull and are GONE.

CINQUE

flips through the open rail and dangles over the raging seas by his one manacled hand. With superhuman will he grasps a rail with his free hand and hauls himself aboard. He lies in the howling rain, panting, as if at that one moment he had made the decision to live at all costs.

ANOTHER DAY

Cinque sprawls in the blistering heat watching a fleet of sharks dog the ship. Far off to starboard, the other ships are making better wind and are now nearly out of sight.

Then he notices two Spaniards walking among the slaves doing a head count. They pass Cinque, then stop, make notes. One looks back over the expanse of prisoners, shakes his head in concern.

More Spaniards join them from below, and they compare notes. For a few seconds there's a heated exchange. Then an OFFICER arrives.

Black and White crew go among the Africans passing out food -- a ladle of rice goes into each outstretched hand -- then two more follow carrying pails, each man gets a drink from another ladle.

Cinque hauls himself up into a crouch to eat, watching as crew go below.

Then the double hatch fully opens and men armed with cutlasses emerge hauling on a chain -- in a BLACK CLOUD OF FLIES, AFRICANS are yanked out into the stark sunlight, staggered by the glare. As this procession increases, and the Africans are lined up on the starboard stern, six Spanish Sailors come on deck with muskets and fixed bayonets.

What looks like about fifty men, women and children are herded out onto the deck.

Then the Spaniards sort through them again: healthy specimens are traded for some chained above deck until an agreed on number stand. A Spaniard puts his hand on Cinque, starts to force him up when another waves him off and he shoves Cinque down again.

A WOODEN CHEST

gets dragged on deck and the crew inexplicably fills it with four large cannon balls, wraps it crisscross with a chain. At the same time the rails are pulled out from the gunnel. The crew moves in with bayonets as two blacks slip the end of the chain holding the African through the crisscrossed chain on the chest.

Suddenly the Africans realize what's about to happen and they panic -- those that fight back are simply bayoneted on the spot.

Cinque tries to stand but is yanked down by his own chain.

The sailors heave the chest off the side and for a horrible second there's an explosion of screams, flailing clutching hands -- bodies snatched overboard by the huge chain that rattles like a machine gun... then, silence.

Cinque looks back...

WAKE OF THE SHIP

froth on the water and the ship sails on as if nothing had happened.

THE SAILORS

put the rails back in place, pluck the bayonets off the ends of their muskets, joking, they head below as if they were just finishing up an average day's work.

CINQUE

cannot grasp what he just witnessed. Overwhelmed, he collapses to the deck, hunches over and weeps.

EXT. DECK - DAY

A gang plank SLAMS down onto a beach and armed crew run the Africans ashore, dragging them on by their chains.

Cinque's hair is longer; weeks have gone by. Without breaking stride they drive the Africans along a jungle trail with whips and bayonets.

EXT. TRAIL - NIGHT

Cinque chained with other Africans, still being driven at a good clip. More GUARDS arrive with muskets. As they trot along the trail, Cinque looks back over his shoulder.

A LIGHT

grows out of the black, seems to be chasing him; like a scared rabbit Cinque moves faster and faster, looking back again and again as the light grows and the whole world feels like it's going to rip loose at the hinges. A TRAIN HOWLS PAST -- Cinque blocks his ears and falls, gets dragged by his chain, tumbling over rocks. Then back on his feet again -- running, running, running...

EXT. VAST WALLED YARD - DAY

Cinque is hit by a fist-sized blob of grease. Africans are lined up naked as BLACK WOMEN SLAVES smear their haggard bodies with globs of lard.

Cinque looks down the line as prospective buyers examine the Africans -- a very pretty YOUNG GIRL gets pulled out of line by two Spaniards who fondle her and jokingly shove her back into place. The girl is SULAH, the men RUIZ and MONTES.

When they arrive at Cinque, Ruiz motions for him to turn around. Cinque doesn't. Two burly WHITE GUARDS grab Cinque and spin him around.

Ruiz pokes a stick around Cinque's buttock and his genitals, discuss him in Spanish. Cinque forces himself to stay calm, his earlier terror finally completely displaced by rage.

A GANG PLANK

slams down on a broad wharf and Cinque and others are driven up it onto a smaller ship. Cinque gets a shove as he stumbles, exhausted onto the deck. Burna and Tu-Ar sit nearby. A life boat beside them says *Amistad*...

BURNA

(Mende w/subtitles)

Mende?

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Yes. Do you know where we are going?

A BLACK CABIN BOY helps the COOK up the plank with sides of meat. He pauses to laugh at Cinque.

COOK

(Spanish w/subtitles)

What's he want?

CABIN BOY

(Spanish w/subtitles)

To know where we're going.

(Mende w/subtitles)

This is the cook. You see?

(MORE)

CABIN BOY (CONT'D)

We have a long journey ahead
and you and your friends are
being brought along as food!
You understand? The cook is
going to chop you up one by
one and make stew out of you!

Cabin Boy moves off with the Cook, laughing and telling him his joke in Spanish. Soon the Cook breaks into peals of laughter. More crew come aboard, and this time they're all Spanish.

LONG BOATS

manned by SLAVE ROWERS, tow the *Amistad* out of the harbor.

ON DECK

The *Amistad* Africans as we first met them stand on deck, chained in a cue. Cinque watches the passing of Havana Harbor.

ON THE SHORE HE SEES...

More Africans being driven up gang planks. CHILDREN, separated from their parents, crying out in anguish as they're pushed along by ARMED MEN... never to see their children again.

HANGED MEN

swing from a massive gallows lining the dirt road leading from the port. Smoke billows around them from pyres.

AND CINQUE

transfixed by this Bosch landscape as they drift past. Then the last fleeting glimpse of the sun and sky he's forced below deck and the hatch SHUTS.

THE HOLD

darkness, then... just the last ray of light filters down and illuminates a NAIL half driven into a timber beside Cinque.

INT. NEW HAVEN COURT - DAY

Dead silence in the court room. People just stunned to silence by his testimony. Cinque on the stand, Covey stands beside him to help when he needs it. Covey and Cinque do well with his English, but Cinque still needs clues from his tutor.

The usual players and government heavy-hitters cluster together in the seats.

The NEW JUDGE is Bertrand Coglin, Van Buren's fix. He takes a second, before:

JUDGE COGLIN

Counsel?

US Attorney Saunders rises, faces Cinque.

SAUNDERS

Quite a tale. Intrigue, abduction, courage in the face of unspeakable suffering... High drama! You didn't make it up, by any chance?

CINQUE

No.

SAUNDERS

Every word the absolute truth?

CINQUE

Yes.

SAUNDERS

All in support of the great cause against slavery? A little convenient, wouldn't you say? Of course, you're lying.

BALDWIN

Objection...

JUDGE COGLIN

Sustained.

SAUNDERS

But you were coached as to your testimony.

(MORE)

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)

Coached by two of the most outspoken abolitionists in the United States: Arthur Tappan and Simon Jocelyn. Am I right?

CINQUE

No one told me what to say.

SAUNDERS

Mister.. 'Cinque'... this whole description of the horrors on ship board are too fantastic to be real -- and that 'slave factory!', wonderful; but tell me, why would people treat their property in the manner you describe? If you owned a house, would you break down its walls? If you owned a horse would you beat it so it could no longer work?

CINQUE

It is my experience that people treat houses and animals better than people.

SAUNDERS

But legally you're not a person, are you? You're an investment, just like a strong horse.

Furious, Cinque leaps up.

CINQUE

I am not an animal! I am a man! Give me free!

Saunders recovers his composure.

SAUNDERS

Nothing more.

SLOCUM ON THE STAND

BALDWIN

Captain Slocum, would you please describe your duties in her majesty's navy?

SLOCUM

To patrol the Atlantic for
slave ships.

BALDWIN

Slavery is banned by
international law. Yet the
abduction of free men and their
illegal transporting to the New
World -- as described by Cinque
-- is not unheard of?

SLOCUM

Unfortunately, it's not even
unusual.

BALDWIN

Is there anything in your
experience that makes you
believe Cinque's account?

SLOCUM

Yes. The description of the
'slave factory' in Africa.
There is such a place.

BALDWIN

You've seen it?

SLOCUM

I've never been able to
locate it, but there is
overwhelming evidence that it
is real...

BALDWIN

Is there anything else that
particularly rings true about
Cinque's description?

SLOCUM

Yes. The treatment of
slaves. Often when a slaver
is intercepted they will
simply throw all the
prisoners overboard to get
rid of the evidence.

BALDWIN

Drown hundreds of human
beings?

SLOCUM

Yes.

BALDWIN

Cinque describes the cold blooded murder of a portion of the people on his ship. The *Tecora*? Is that right?

SLOCUM

The *Tecora* is a known slave ship and may well have been used to carry the prisoners from their home in Africa to Cuba where they changed to the smaller *Amistad*. I had a chance to examine the *Tecora* manifest and there is a curious entry. Apparently shortly after they left Africa the crew realized they'd made a miscalculation on food. This was made worse when they had a long period of poor wind.

BALDWIN

What's this got to do with Cinque's account?

SLOCUM

Well, I guess they corrected the problem by killing about fifty people. Apparently they just heaved them overboard. Because the next day's calculation suddenly balances.

BALDWIN

So, to correct a clerical error, they murdered fifty people?

SLOCUM

That's my guess. May 10. You can look at that date and see.

BALDWIN

Thank you, Captain Slocum.

Baldwin sits and Saunders takes over.

SAUNDERS

'Slave Factory?'

SLOCUM

That's right.

SAUNDERS

But you've never seen it?

SLOCUM

It's existence has been reported before.

SAUNDERS

I'm sure it has -- by zealous anti-slavery types. Tell me, Captain, how zealous an anti-slaver are you?

SLOCUM

Very zealous.

SAUNDERS

Is there anything you would not do to stop the practice?

SLOCUM

Nothing...

SAUNDERS

Including lie?

BALDWIN

Objection!

SAUNDERS

To what? If it be the truth that this man would lie to end a practice he despises, then so be it!

JUDGE COGLIN

Please answer, Captain.

SAUNDERS

Would you do anything to end slavery -- including lie?

SLOCUM

... yes.

SAUNDERS

And this log entry you cite, does it say "Today we threw fifty people overboard...?"

SLOCUM

No... it's in the mathematics -- you just have to read it: May 10...

SAUNDERS

And this log, does it refer to the occupants as 'slaves', or 'kidnapped Africans'?

SLOCUM

No.

SAUNDERS

Have you any proof the *Tecora* and the *Amistad* are related?

SLOCUM

No sir!

SAUNDERS

That will be all, Captain Slocum. Thank you for your candor.

SLOCUM

May 10! All you have to do is read the entry...

JUDGE COGLIN

Thank you, captain.

Slocum looks at the judge, then makes eye-contact with Cinque. Perhaps Slocum wonders if he's done more harm than good. No one feeling hopeful.

INT. DILLARD MANSIONS KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sarah supervising a massive dinner and an impressive number of mostly Black STAFF.

EXT. DILLARD MANSION

The portico of a gorgeous Greek Revival home overlooking Long Island Sound -- an 'A' Party in progress.

A string quartet plays as New Haven's foremost citizens sip champagne and patter. The US Attorneys are here, sipping with Calderon and other Spanish dignitaries. From here they can see New Haven Harbor and the American Gunboat.

A COACH PULLS UP

flanked by eight US CAVALRY officers.

President Van Buren steps down from the coach and is gently 'rushed' by the ladies of Proper Connecticut Society. Forsyth steps down after him and immediately introduces Van Buren to Señor Calderon.

INT. KITCHEN

As Sarah over-sees the sumptuous meal, whole racks of KHILA'S DESSERT CAKES come steaming from one of the ovens.

INT. NEW HAVEN JAIL - NIGHT

Cinque, Jocelyn, Baldwin, Slocum, Covey and the other Africans around a bonfire in the middle of the jail yard. Eerily silent, they munch on fruit, bread and roast chicken...

BALDWIN

I've prepared the papers for appeal. All we can do now is wait for the expected verdict.

CINQUE

They're going to put us on that ship, and that will be the end of Cinque, Burna, Sulah, Urar... all of us. Look at us; we're people, Baldwin.

BALDWIN

I know you are.

CINQUE

Tu-Ar who we buried over there? Never told us where he was from. Just a man. Where are his loved ones?

Sulah leans against Urar and he surrounds her with his arms.

INT. JUDGE COGLIN'S STUDY - NIGHT

A monastic silence rules here. Coglin opens a weathered ledger, runs his finger down the page...

THE TECORA LOG

his finger stops on an entry date MAY 10, 1839.

AND COGLIN

clearly uneasy about what he's reading.

INT. GREEK REVIVAL HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

A long table set with the best crystal, China and silver as New Haven's best party-goers get ready for their dessert. We see Khila's cakes being set at all the places. Calderon and Forsyth sit near the head of the table.

CALDERON

What's most confusing to Her Majesty, is this arrogant independence of the American courts. After all, if you cannot rule the courts you cannot rule.

VAN BUREN

Well, Señor Calderon, as any true American will tell you, the independence of our courts keeps us all equal.

CALDERON

Is that a good thing?

Appreciative laughter.

VAN BUREN

Nevertheless, it is a fact that when my predecessor and I count, good friend, President Jackson needed to enforce the Indian Removal Act, he went head-on with the Supreme Court. And though they ruled in favor of the Cherokee, President Jackson marched an army into Georgia and got the job done anyway.

Then a nice crisp SOUTHERN ACCENT rings out. It's Henry Laurens Pinckney, the Representative who chastised Adams in the House.

PINCKNEY

Well, sir, there was no 'popular outcry' over this. In fact I would hazard that one act brought the South more securely into the union than anything before... or since.

FORSYTH

I hope the South notices, Representative Pinckney, that President Van Buren has come to New Haven with an appetite... and a gunboat.

More appreciative high-end chortles.

PINCKNEY

Not lost, sir, I guarantee.

CALDERON

And in the mean time, what of this Judge Coglin?

VAN BUREN

Well sir, he's our man...

A toast and big smiles. Seeing that everyone's served the hostess, MRS. DILLARD, dips her fork into a desert cake -- and everyone more or less simultaneously does the same.

Everyone is SUDDENLY QUIET and mid-bite there's this polite, unhurried but concurrent and definite clinking and tinkling of WATER GLASSES and WATER PITCHERS. EVERYONE DRINKS...

KITCHEN

Sarah eating and loving her spicy dessert.

SARAH

Mm! There's that breath!

INT. JUDGE COGLIN'S HOME - LATE NIGHT

Coglin on his knees at the side of his bed praying and praying hard. In the secrecy of his bedroom there is a silver cross and a small icon of the Madonna. Clearly he's still a closet Catholic.

Coglin stops praying and his eyes open as if for one moment they were not looking at God, but at himself...

INT. NEW HAVEN COURT - MORNING

All the players, all in their places. Cinque sits near the front. MARINES guard the door, flank the bench, bayonets fixed.

Hayes turns to a NEW REPORTER who holds a pad and pen, offers his hand.

HAYES

Donald Hayes, *New Haven Gazette*.

Stranger looks 'down' on Hayes, does not offer his hand.

STRANGER

George Simms, *Tennessean*.

He looks away. Coglin stands.

JUDGE COGLIN

After careful review and thorough reflection of all evidence, I find it impossible to deny the power of the government's position. There is no doubt in my mind that Secretary Forsyth and District Attorney Saunders have proceeded with the utmost faith in the soundness of their case. Likewise, Her Majesty, Queen Isabella of Spain and her minister, Señor Calderon have proceeded with care veracity and fairness.

Baldwin closes his eyes... he can feel the hammer coming down.

JUDGE COGLIN

Nevertheless, I also believe that Señors Ruiz and Montes have misrepresented the origin of the prisoners. Since I must judge on truth and not intention, it is the finding of this court that the Africans were illegally abducted from their homes and as such are free souls, not property.

(MORE)

JUDGE COGLIN (CONT'D)

Therefore the Unites States treaty with Spain has no bearing. Likewise the claims of Gadney and Meade are rendered moot.

(pause)

I order the Africans free and the United States Government must, at it's earliest convenience, supply them with transportation back to their homes in Africa.

BANG -- he hits the gavel and Baldwin's eyes pop open. Tappan and Jocelyn are staggered with joy.

CINQUE

Free!? Africa! We are free!

Cinque grabs Baldwin and gives him a HUGE KISS right on the lips as the court room erupts in cheering.

EXT. NEW HAVEN JAIL YARD - NIGHT

Africans celebrate, singing and playing makeshift instruments around an enormous bonfire. Cinque is swaying, clapping his hands, looking loose for the first time.

SULAH

Come on Cinque! You sing so well, let's see if you can dance!

Cinque gives Sulah the hard stare, but then smiles and gets to his feet and dances -- suddenly really loose and really good and really fun. Cinque undulates his shoulders.

CINQUE

Baldwin! What am I?

BALDWIN

A mad man.

CINQUE

I'm zebra! Eee-he-ha!

Baldwin smiles: it's Mr. Cool himself doing the Ya-Hoo... Now Cinque seems to undulate his whole body. The rest of the Africans pick up the beat, back him with polyphonic singing.

CINQUE

Hey, Baldwin? Can you tell
what I am? What can I be?

BALDWIN

A... I think you're a fish.

CINQUE

What!?! Snake! Who would be
a fish?

Cinque sings again, the others joining in their voices go WAY up -- some of the Mende girls simply taking over the high notes -- then way down, so low they laugh trying to get there.

EXT. SERVANTS QUARTERS, LOCAL HOUSE

Aesop, Luke and a few other servants sit on the porch listening to the incomprehensible, alien but gorgeous singing drifting up from the prison.

INT. KITCHEN, DILLARD ESTATE

Sarah and other BLACK SERVANTS stop their work -- polishing, cleaning, repairing -- move to the tall windows at the end of the room to listen.

EXT. PORCH

Luke stands as if he would go on down the hill and join them... but holds back.

LUKE

Where's Harlin tonight?

INT. KITCHEN

Sarah, tries to sing with the distant voices; she gets two, then a few more joining in -- soft and melodious. Then below the prisoners break into howls and a primal CHANTING that shocks the servants to silence. They all move to the windows, fascinated.

EXT. JAIL COURTYARD

Now we know where Harlin is as he joins the Africans, clapping and stamping his feet with the wild, exotic rhythms.

CINQUE

Know what I am now, Baldwin?
No -- Well guess!

Baldwin feels the pressure, thinks.

BALDWIN

An eagle...

CINQUE

You're so right! And I am going to fly right over these walls and I'm not coming down until I am back in Africa!

Baldwin laughs, but sits apart, watching the festivities. He's got a bottle of rum in hand, sipping lightly. Clemens arrives, sorts through the crowd to find Baldwin... and he looks like a worried man.

CINQUE

watches Baldwin and Clemens, getting a bad feeling. Before he can react, Sulah and Urar stand before him. Finally Urar speaks up.

URAR

(Mende w/subtitles)
Cinque. We want to be married. Will you marry us? We want to do it tomorrow before the verdict.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)
What do your people say?

SULAH

(Mende w/subtitles)
It only matters what you say. Because if you don't, the Christians will.

That's about all Cinque really needs to hear. Cinque looks around, sees a lot of people watching him and the kids. But then Baldwin is at his side.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Yes. After Tu-Ar died I became head of our Connecticut poro. Isn't that right, Baldwin?

BALDWIN

Cinque... listen to me, Van Buren appealed the decision to the Supreme Court. That means, they get to try the case again.

CINQUE

You said we were free, Baldwin! You said we would have a trial and if we won we would go free!

BALDWIN

Cinque...

CINQUE

My wife! My son! That's why God put me here, Baldwin, to love them! Now I'm going to die in this filthy place and they will never know what became of me!

Cinque's shouting has shut down the festivities, everyone gathering around. This is really the first time Cinque has 'lost it' since he attacked the crew of *Amistad*. He yells to the rest in Mende.

CINQUE

They're not done with us! We must go back to trial! And this time they are going to kill us!

BALDWIN

That's not true...

CINQUE

Shut up! You're a liar just like any white man! You're friends were right -- we should have gone into the streets and let them shoot us down!

In a rage Cinque kicks the fire sending embers and flaming sticks helter-skelter. He crosses back to his cell and shuts himself in.

INT. CINQUE'S CELL - LATE NIGHT

Cinque is so rattled he just paces in the tiny space like a lion gone mad in a zoo. Outside the sound of HEAVY RAIN...

In his pacing, he's probably walked about ten miles before he too just drops to his knees, wasted. Cinque looks overhead at the tiny window but it doesn't interest him any more. He faces the wall.

Then he feels around desperately on the floor, picking through rocks until he comes up with a broken shard of limestone. Carefully he makes a mark on the wall, happy to see the limestone leaving a nice white line...

VARIOUS CELLS

One after the other, African prisoners consumed by despair -- some sit back against their cell walls, others sleep.

-- Sulah huddles with Khila and the other young girls, and Sulah cries quietly.

-- Burna is on his knees, clutching the missionaries' BIBLE in his hands.

CINQUE'S CELL

Cinque collapsed forward on his cot, still working on his drawing. On the wall before him, almost an altar and somewhere in skill between a cave drawing and an ancient mosaic, Cinque has drawn a portrait of his son, SADKI, his wife, CAHI, and himself.

INT. BALDWIN'S OFFICE - LATE NIGHT

Baldwin alone in the cavernous basement office. He sits at his desk staring at a blank piece of paper. Finally he writes.

BALDWIN (V.O.)
 "To his excellency, President
 John Quincy Adams,
 Massachusetts member House of
 Representatives."

INT. BALDWIN'S OFFICE - MORNING

Maybe fighting off second thoughts, Baldwin hands a letter to a BRIGHTLY UNIFORMED COURIER, who he pays with a handful of coins.

BALDWIN (V.O.)
 I have understood from Messrs.
 Jocelyn and Tappan that you
 are aquatinted with the plight
 of the *Amistad* Africans."

INT. TRANSFER HOUSE - MORNING

The Courier enters a bustling room, hands Baldwin's letter to a clerk who checks the address, tosses it into a sack and signals to a bench packed with out-of-work MEN. An OLD MAN -- unshaven, unwashed -- leaps up, takes the sack and a slip of paper and leaves. Clerk winces and fans away the man's putrid wake.

BALDWIN (V.O.)
 And, perhaps it would not be
 presumptuous of me to imagine
 you have followed our progress
 in the newspapers."

EXT. ROAD TO MASSACHUSETTS - DAY

The man proceeding Sancho Panza-like along a dirt road on his mule.

BALDWIN (V.O.)
 I want to give you to
 understand that I write this
 day not from a low position of
 need or distress, but from one
 of great strength indeed. You
 will have noticed that in
 every way we have been
 successful."

EXT. ROAD TO MASSACHUSETTS - DUSK

Our Sancho still plodding wearily passes a sign welcoming him to Massachusetts.

BALDWIN (V.O.)

However, despite this and despite the unlikelihood of President Van Buren's reelection, the President has appealed this case to the highest court in our land. As you are well aware seven of these nine noble justices themselves are southern slave owners. This presents the unhappy reality of our previous victory held hollow and the Africans threatened with death."

INT. MASSACHUSETTS COURIER HOUSE - DAWN

Sancho hands his sack over the counter and it's immediately sorted by three waiting CHILDREN. The CLERK fans away Sancho's stench, signals and an IMPECCABLY UNIFORMED COURIER who steps up as Sancho passes to take his place at the end of another bench.

BALDWIN (V.O.)

Sir, we need you. If ever a time there was for one man to cast aside his daily trappings and to array himself again for battle, then that time has come!"

EXT. ADAMS' GARDEN, QUINCY MASS. - DAY

As the perfect perky courier is shown out by LOUISA ADAMS, John leans back against a maple tree reading. Adams looks beat, suddenly a tried old man who looks like he can barely focus. On a nearby bench, a half-drunk bottle of wine.

BALDWIN (V.O.)

The Africans find themselves without hope on every side. Imperial forces of Spain and the anti-democratic slave forces of our own nation are arrayed against them.

(MORE)

BALDWIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Cicero once said, encouraging Caesar to the defense of the Republic: "that the whole result of this entire war depends on the life of one most brave and excellent man." That man is, is yourself. Sincerely, Roger Baldwin, attorney at law."

Adams crumples up the letter and leans back as a breeze takes it away.

CLOSE ON ADAMS

Hard to tell if it even registered.

FADE TO:

EXT. NEW HAVEN - DAY

View of the city under lead skies. Freezing rain and sleet drench the streets and trees which are losing their last fall colors. A lone coach splashes through the puddles and ruts and stops outside the jail. A MAN climbs down carrying an umbrella.

INT. CINQUE'S CELL

Cinque sits on his cot morosely eating a bowl of soup with chunks of bread. He doesn't even look up when his cell door is unlocked.

VOICE

Are you mister Cinque?
Mister Cinque? Good morning.

Cinque looks toward the door.

HE SEES

an MAN bent with age standing inside the cell admiring his drawings. Oddly, the Pendeltons stand behind, back in the rain, watching the man. It's Adams. He walks with a cane.

CINQUE

Are you death?

Surprised, Adams frowns.

ADAMS

Hell, no. I've come to save you!

Cinque laughs; this joke makes him feel better. Pendelton kicks the door.

INT. KITCHEN

Adams and Cinque sit at the tiny kitchen table while Khila brings them tea. Mrs. Pendelton, conscious she's got a celebrity in the house, brings them cake.

ADAMS

I wonder, Ma'am if I could be left alone with Mister Cinque? We need to discuss his case.

Mrs. Pendelton nods obsequiously and leaves.

CINQUE

You have some power.

ADAMS

I am respected.

CINQUE

How can you have power, you are so old?

ADAMS

Well, only good fighters live to get old.

CINQUE

And you've come here to fight for me? Just like Baldwin?

ADAMS

I understand you are going to the Supreme Court. Do you know what that is?

CINQUE

The place where they finally kill you.

ADAMS

I'm sorry you think that. Because if you win, you never have to be on trial again.

CINQUE
We'll be free?

ADAMS
Yes.

Jocelyn and Tappan enter, staggered to find Adams. Then Baldwin.

JOCELYN
Mr. Adams, sir.

TAPPAN
How wonderful to see you Mr. President.

BALDWIN
My God...

ADAMS
Thank you for your letter, Mr. Baldwin.

Adams straightens, summons all his strength to cover how he thinks he must look to the world: tired and beaten. But Jocelyn and Baldwin excitedly pull up whatever they can find to sit on, in Baldwin's case a milk pail.

ADAMS
Of course, I am here about your upcoming soiree at the Supreme Court.

BALDWIN
Sir, if our cause is to succeed, we need a great man.

TAPPAN
'Cause', Roger? I thought this was just a 'case'...

ADAMS
Whatever you care to call it, gentlemen, it needs a complete reevaluation.

Sulah stands at the kitchen door, gestures toward Cinque. He looks past her to see the sun actually breaking through... and the Africans have gathered for Sulah and Urar's wedding.

CINQUE

I have to be with the young ones this morning. I trust you three can save my life without me.

Pause to focus on Cinque as he rises.

EXT. JAIL YARD - MORNING

Cinque presides over the wedding of Sulah and Urar with the special irony and beauty of Christian Church Bells filling the air. The sun streaks aside the clouds.

Cinque is impressed and surprised to see that each tribe has produced -- from what materials they could get their hands on -- artistic expressions of their culture.

-- SEGONI-KUN MASKS are worn by Limba.

-- The YORUBA a human size sculpture from wadded newspaper and sticks is pieced together from parts secretly made by men in their cells.

-- Mende provide the music through FLUTES and DRUMS that they've made from stretching strips of leather over different size jars, filled to different levels with water.

-- KHILA and the girls provide their cakes.

First Cinque takes Urar aside into the shade of a Maple tree and they whisper. Urar nods, seriously, taking this to heart. Cinque walks Urar back.

Cinque then takes Sulah to the tree and they whisper. But as they do they both break into peals of laughter that makes Urar a bit uncomfortable.

As Cinque walks Sulah back to spots Harlin plastering a section of the prison wall.

CINQUE

Hey! African Man!

Harlin turns, sees nothing but warmth and acceptance in Cinque's face.

CINQUE

I don't see the whites work on Bell Day! Come be with us!

Harlin stops work and joins the Africans as they form a circle around the couple so that from outside, they're completely hidden from sight.

INSIDE THE CIRCLE

Urar and Sulah face to face, crowded together by the Africans.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Head of my poro, I join you.
Never part; never be bitter
for what you get is all you
were meant to have! You are
here, Urar; you are here,
Sulah. The world surrounds
you as your friends
surrounded you, and we and
the world are here only so
that you two may love and
have children. All the rest
is the noise of the hyena.

He slaps them both on the back of the head.

CINQUE

(Mende w/subtitles)

Get it!?
(pause)
You're married!

The circle pulls back, everyone cheering and singing. The Mende break loose with their instruments, Limba singing. The singing grows LOUDER... the singing becomes CHEERS and SHOUTS as we...

FADE TO:

INT. VAN BUREN CAMPAIGN HQ/BACK ROOM - NIGHT

From OUTSIDE comes the sounds cheering citizens -- fireworks and an occasional fire arm go off. Van Buren sits with a few loyal supporters, quietly sipping champagne. Hammond enters looking disheveled, carrying stacks of papers. He tosses them all down on a table.

VAN BUREN

Tell me the worst, Leder.

HAMMOND

The south has gone generally
for Harrison.

VAN BUREN

Generally?

HAMMOND

Overwhelmingly.

Van Buren barks a laugh, pours Hammond a glass.

VAN BUREN

The goddamned south! Well,
we've all got to go get new
jobs.

(raises his glass)

Here's to shorter hours and
more money!

They drink.

VAN BUREN

I'm sorry Leder.

HAMMOND

Not your fault Mr. President.

(pause)

Sir, I only ask because we
have little time to decide,
but, sir, do you want to
continue with this appeal on
the *Amistad* Africans..?

VAN BUREN

Yes! Of course I do!

(pause)

Now, let's go out and break
the news... to our people.

INT. ADAM'S FARM - DAY

Adams yanking books from musty-dusty old
shelves in his personal library, handing them
to Baldwin who eyeballs them as if they were
moldy antiques. Stacks of books like little
islands of priorities totter on table tops,
chairs and even the floor.

ADAMS

I see the course of the
Amistad and the course of
this nation crossing briefly.

(MORE)

ADAMS (CONT'D)

But in this tiny historical time if we win at the Supreme Court it could mean the highest court in the nation will strike its first blow against slavery. A blow that no one else in this country has been able or been willing to deliver.

BALDWIN

I've never heard of some of these books.

ADAMS

Canons of treaty law. Most probably useless, but one never knows...

LOUISA ADAMS -- his handsome wife -- enters with a tray of tea, bread and jam, nearly topples a tower of books.

ADAMS

Careful my dear! That's our entire treaty history with European powers!

LOUISA

Oh dear...

ADAMS

And I think we are going to require the kitchen table...

LOUISA

Oh, dear!

LIBRARY - LATE NIGHT

Baldwin scours books on the large wooden table. With note pad in hand he goes from one to the other, scribbling, nodding, pondering... Adams sits near the fire frowning at a huge, blue volume; he reads back a long phrase in Latin. Then looks at Baldwin who hasn't a clue.

ADAMS

Well, what do you think about that?

LIBRARY - MORNING

Seemingly tireless, Adams and Baldwin remove books from the table, packing them in a crate. Louisa ushers Covey in.

BALDWIN

Good morning, Covey, what are you doing here?

COVEY

Cinque asked if you have thought about the question of jurisdiction.

ADAMS

What!?

BALDWIN

Yes, I explained the 'idea' of jurisdiction to him.

COVEY

That since they took over the ship far out at sea...

ADAMS

No, no; tell him the treaty recognizes no jurisdictional limitations.

(sees Covey hesitate)
Well?

COVEY

He will ask me why?

ADAMS

Because both parties agreed to it.

BALDWIN

If mutually agreed upon a contract can debar restitution by statute. All right?

LIBRARY - LATE NIGHT

Table has been boiled down to a handful of books. Adams and Baldwin looks up to find Covey again.

BALDWIN

What is it?

COVEY

If we are the legal property of Ruiz and Montes then how does the treaty apply since it is between America and Spain?

Catches Baldwin with his mouth open, but Adams is not caught, just annoyed.

ADAMS

"Or their citizens..." is included in the language.

BALDWIN

All right? Come on, I'll fix you some coffee.

Covey smiles and Baldwin rises, leads Covey back into the kitchen.

ADAMS

Good point though...

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Baldwin and Adams having their lunch at a small table in the back yard when suddenly they're aware of Covey who unhappily unfolds a long piece of paper.

COVEY

Does the American government have any treaties with Africa?

BALDWIN

No...

COVEY

Does Spain have any treaties with Africa?

ADAMS

No!

COVEY

Does Connecticut have any treaties with Africa?

Adams lurches to his feet, nearly burned out.

ADAMS

No! No! No!

COVEY

If we were the 'pirates' how could we also be the pirated property?

Adams SLAPS Covey across the face.

ADAMS

Stop this!

He gets a grip, puts his hand on the young man's arm.

ADAMS

I'm sorry... I... there's only one way to handle this.

LIBRARY - NEXT DAY

Cinque himself is ushered in by a cop, his hands manacled...

BALDWIN

You will uncuff our client.

COP

Sorry sir...

ADAMS

He is my guest you will uncuff him!

COP

Yes sir, Mister Adams!

And he does it. As the cop retires Cinque holds up his freed hands.

CINQUE

Like magic!

ADAMS

Mmm... if you're going to work with us on this I won't have you being sarcastic.

AT THE TABLE

Adams and Baldwin going down a list, Cinque attentive, Covey asleep in a corner chair.

BALDWIN

Henry Baldwin, from the north...

ADAMS
... believes in a strict
adherence to treaties...

BALDWIN
John McLean -- north, maybe
anti-slavery.

ADAMS
A real political animal;
unpredictable.

BALDWIN
Joseph Story -- north.

ADAMS
Supported fugitive slave
acts.

CINQUE
That's not good?

ADAMS
Terrible.

BALDWIN
Smith Thompson -- North.

ADAMS
Completely political, a big
supporter of State rights.
That's terrible too...

BALDWIN
Roger Brooke Taney -- South,
but very religious...

ADAMS
Owns slaves, though.

CINQUE
Terrible.

ADAMS
Of course that's terrible.

BALDWIN
Philip Pendelton Barbour --

ADAMS
Owns slaves.

BALDWIN
John Catron -- South; slave
owner...

ADAMS

And he directed the Tennessee
election campaign for Van
Buren...

BALDWIN/CINQUE

Terrible...

BALDWIN

James M. Wayne --

ADAMS

South; slaver.

BALDWIN

And John McKinley -- South;
slaver...

ADAMS

And appointed to the court by
Van Buren...

Cinque thinks a minute.

CINQUE

(Spanish w/subtitles)
So, then, where is the list
of men on our side?

ADAMS

I'm sorry, there is only one
list.

EXT. ADAM'S LIBRARY - EVENING

From Adam's porch a solid white disk-of-a moon
hangs on the pristine New England horizon
lighting the tops of the forest. Adams slowly
see-saws back and forth in a rocking chair
while Cinque paces.

Through the window Covey can be seen helping
Louisa stacking preserves on a pantry shelf.

CINQUE

What's going to happen in the
court?

ADAMS

I told you, we must
annihilate every single
argument the government has
or can imagine...

Cinque keeps pacing, not satisfied.

ADAMS

For God's sake, sit down,
man.

Cinque sits on the steps, but looks like he could explode from pent-up energy. Then, something strikes him.

CINQUE

What keeps you alive, Adams?
Because, I mean you're so
old, you should be dead by
now. It's disgusting.

Adams wags his head, by now used to Cinque.

ADAMS

My father died before he
could finish his work, and I
intend to finish it.

CINQUE

That's what you live for?

ADAMS

If I could -- using my
'magic' -- free you. Would
you leave for Africa this
second?

CINQUE

Yes!

ADAMS

... not knowing what would
become of your friends from
the Amistad?

CINQUE

Of course not.

ADAMS

You see? We have much in
common. Neither of us is
quite ready to leave...

Baldwin enters, looks like he's been running.

BALDWIN

The abolitionist press was
destroyed last night, the
house was shot up...

CINQUE

That woman -- Jocelyn!?

BALDWIN

Jocelyn was at the jail,
Lydia and her son escaped.
But here house was nearly
destroyed.

EXT. JAIL COURTYARD - DAY

Cinque is greeted like a celeb by the Africans.
But Urar whispers to him and points at a cell.

INT. BURNA'S CELL

Cinque enters to find Burna seated on his cot
dressed in black, a Bible in his hand.

CINQUE

I came to tell everyone I am
going to be at the Court for
the trial. I came to tell
everyone to get ready to
leave for Africa. But,
everyone tells me you are not
going. That you're a
Christian now?

BURNA

That's right. I have
received the true god. If we
are freed, I will stay here
and learn more about Him. If
we are executed, I will be
with him that day.

CINQUE

Oh...

Cinque turns to go.

BURNA

I believe, Cinque, and you
should think where your soul
will rest in the after-life.
Heaven or hell?

CINQUE

You don't 'believe', Burna,
you became a Christian
because you don't believe.
After-life? Heaven or hell?

(MORE)

CINQUE (CONT'D)

When I die my soul will stay
right here on earth. I will
run with the lion and the
zebra through the forests and
over the savannas. Just like
Tu-Ar! Before you go to this
heaven, better ask what color
this God is.

BURNA

There are no slaves in heaven!

CINQUE

Is that what the white man
told you?

With anger and regret, Cinque leaves, and SLAMS
his barred door.

INT. SUPREME COURT - AFTERNOON

John Quincy Adams, dressed in his finest suit,
stands before the longest court bench in
America. Behind it sit the NINE JUSTICES
lorded over by Chief Justice TANEY. All look
as solemn as chess men. Baldwin is seated just
behind Adams, Cinque by his side.

Cinque studies the inside of the hall: the
portraits, mahogany workmanship on the seats,
stained glass windows.

CINQUE

Do these people live here?

BALDWIN

Of course not.

Cinque just nods.

ADAMS

How is it conceivable that a
plain property issue should
find itself ennobled -- dare I
say exalted! -- to be argued
before the Supreme Court of
the United States of America?
It is not complex; a lower
court found for us easily.
How is it then, that this tiny
baby of a case should find
itself trembling before this
august body?

(MORE)

ADAMS (CONT'D)

(pause)

The truth is this case has been driven like a slave from court to court, wretched and destitute not because of the merits of the opposition, but through the strong arm of office -- brutally wielded by the President of the United States! This no mere property case, gentlemen. I put it to you thus: this is the most important case ever to come before this court and it is hard for me to envision it will ever hear its like again.

As justices swap looks, Adams raises his hand and Clemens -- feeling out of place and loving it -- carefully lays a packet before each judge.

ADAMS

After a great deal of effort, I have obtained copies of letters written between our chief executive, President Van Buren, and the Queen of Spain, Isabella II. I would only ask that you include their perusal as part of your deliberations.

The justices eye them suspiciously.

ADAMS

I would not touch on them now... that is, except to note a curious phrase which is much repeated. The Queen again and again refers to our "incompetent courts." What, I wonder, would be more to her majesty's liking? A court that would find against the Africans? I think not, and here is the fine point of it: what her majesty wants is a court that behaves just like her courts, the courts this nine year old girl gets to play with back home in her magical kingdom of Spain. In short, a court that will do what it is told, like a good dog.

(MORE)

ADAMS (CONT'D)

In the minds of our Congress there seems to be little doubt for to keep me and any other from departing the legitimacy or morality of slavery I have had the Constitution shoved in my mouth to shut me up! And what are we to do with this embarrassing Declaration of Independence: "all men are created equal..; unalienable rights..; life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?" I have a modest suggestion -- why not just tear them both up!? Why are we here!? I remind this court, that it is in fact the laws of nature that this document -- the Declaration of Independence is founded on: Not the laws of man, not the laws of gods, and certainly not the laws of a nine year old Queen or a bullying President! Why are we here!?

INT. TAVERN - LATE AFTERNOON

Packed to the seams -- like Super Bowl Sunday... waiting for something to happen down the street at the Supreme Court. Now there are at least a DOZEN MEN and WOMEN of the PRESS, speaking French, German, Italian...

VOICE

It's Clemens!

Bodies part as Clemens makes his way to the central table holding Tappan, Jocelyn, Lydia and Thomas. As he does, hands pat his shoulder and he grins at his new-found celebrity. He's surprised to see CAPTAIN SLOCUM here.

CLEMENS

President Adams is still talking.

JOCELYN

For four hours!?

TAPPAN

Has he finally gotten to the property issue of the treaty?

ADAMS (CONT'D)
(he pats the papers)
And judging from the evidence
she should be proud of Van
Buren's efforts.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE

Van Buren peeks out of his open office window.
A man wondering if he's about to get away with
murder.

INT. SUPREME COURT

ADAMS
There is a hint of threat in
these letters. And that tone
is echoed by a growing body of
letters and articles printed
in the press from advocates of
slavery and openly encouraged
by the President. One
appeared in the Executive
Review, a publication of the
office of the President
himself. The theme of this
letter, purportedly written by
a "keen mind" of the South, is
that war and antagonism is the
natural state of man and
slavery -- being but an end
product of this -- is
inevitable and natural.

(pause)

Gentlemen, I must say that I
differ from the keen minds of
the south and argue that the
natural state of mankind is
freedom! And the proof is the
lengths a man woman or child
will go regain and keep that
freedom! They will break
loose their chains, destroy
their enemies and try and try
and try to... get home.

With powerful strides, Adams crosses the court
to a framed reproduction of the Declaration of
Independence and the Constitution.

ADAMS
If the South is right, what
are we to do with these two
documents: the Declaration of
Independence and the
Constitution?

(MORE)

CLEMENS

No, hasn't mentioned it. You have to understand, it's about higher things...

(pause)

Captain Slocum sir? Are you here for the case?

Slocum puts an arm over Covey's shoulder.

SLOCUM

I've come for Mister Covey. Today we sail for Africa, and Mister Cinque has been giving James a detailed description of that slave factory.

(pause)

How is President Adams holding up?

CLEMENS

He is tired...

INT. SUPREME COURT - LATE AFTERNOON

And he does look exhausted, his hands are starting to tremble and at last using his cane.

ADAMS

Mr. Cinque told me that when his people, the Mende, a proud people, are in trouble, when they have encountered a situation where there appears to be no hope left at all, they invoke their ancestors.

(pause)

Because they believe that if you can invoke them then they have never left you; that if you can invoke them then their strength will join with your strength and all enemies will perish before you.

Adams smiles and a few justices smile back. Adams moves down the row of judges making sure to have eye-contact with each.

ADAMS

Thomas Jefferson. Benjamin Franklin. James Madison. Alexander Hamilton. George Washington. John Adams...

(MORE)

ADAMS (CONT'D)

Give us the strength to triumph over our fears, to triumph over our prejudices, to triumph over ourselves. Give us the courage to do what is right... even if it means a civil war. Yes! Let it come! Welcome it! And when it does, let it be the last battle of the American Revolution!

Adams stumbles back slightly over-wrought by his own enthusiasm. Baldwin leaps up to steady him but Adams waves him off and gets a grip.

ADAMS

Honorable Supreme Court Justices, the fates of history have laid this case at your door. And I warn you now, do not blink.

Once again, Adams gets in their faces.

ADAMS

For if you fail to honor those two documents, the testaments of our ancestors, one day perhaps -- no, without question! -- you, or your children, or your children's children will be pulled from their beds in the middle of the night, their sons and daughters ripped from their arms, iron collars clapped around their throats and they will be sold like animals on the block!

BAM -- he hits the side of the bench with his cane like an auctioneer's gavel slamming down. The sound reverberates through the court and the justices act like they've been struck by the lightning of revelation.

ADAMS

I must rest this case. In your hands. Thank you.

Adams turns and walks away from the bench.

EXT. TAVERN

Cinque and Covey touch foreheads.

CINQUE

Good-bye my friend. I will never forget you.

COVEY

See you in Africa!

They embrace...

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAY

The doors swing back and all the Africans who are outside exploring a SNOWY WORLD. Look up to find Baldwin, Jocelyn and Tappan. Everyone gathers around.

JOCELYN

The court will render its opinion at four o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

Dead silence. Cinque looks up and over the top of the walls.

INT. SUPREME COURT - DAY

Justice Taney stands. All the players are here. He doesn't bother to look at anyone. Adams sits in the front, Cinque and the rest in the rear.

TANEY

The United States of America
VS ... the Africans.

(pause)

We find that Cinque and all the Africans to be free individuals with the legal and moral right to fight to maintain their freedom. This decision is unanimous. I hereby order their release.

Adams leaps to his feet with the agility of a teenager -- he's immediately surrounded by well-wishers, but as quickly as he can, pushes through to the rear. Tappan, Jocelyn, Baldwin and Slocum paw Adams -- patting his back, shaking his hand. But then he and Cinque face-off. Cinque, nearly in tears, embraces him.

CINQUE

You are a wise man, Adams.
You are a great wise man...

EXT. SLAVE FACTORY - DAWN

From atop the GUARD TOWER, the same disdainful guard from Cinque's description is peeling another piece of fruit as dawn clears the mist from the harbor. He's just about to bite into the fruit when he looks out to see a BRITISH BATTLE CRUISER sitting smack in the middle of the bay. He drops his breakfast...

GUARD

SHHIITT!!

BELOW

a RED LINE of BRITISH MARINES charges them, bayonets fixed, SCREAMING as they charge, mowing down a line of slavers and guards caught outside -- with shocking precision the Marines BLOW the front gate and rush inside.

IN THE FACTORY

They immediately form and blast all resistance to bits -- and charge on...

CELLS...

Marines smash open cell doors, releasing and carrying African prisoners to freedom...

OUTSIDE THE GATE

Africans race to freedom as the Marines back out, firing behind them as they go.

EXT. BRITISH BATTLE CRUISER

Slocum stands on the deck of his ship, his red uniform glows in the dawn light. An OFFICER lowers his brass telescope.

OFFICER

Clear, sir!

SLOCUM
Fire damn-it!

OFFICER
FIRE!

The ship's flank erupts in cannon fire. Slocum
grabs the telescope.

HIS POV

the slave factory taking heavy rounds.

SLOCUM LOWERS THE SCOPE

his face lit up with a smile.

SLOCUM
Take a letter, mister Jones!

Covey steps up beside Slocum.

COVEY
Captain Slocum!

SLOCUM
To his honor, the United
States Secretary of State,
Jonathan Forsyth. My dear
Mister Forsyth, it is my
great pleasure to inform you
that you are correct, the
slave factory of Sierra Leone
does not exist!

THE SLAVE FACTORY

taking a final shell in the guts -- walls blast
outward and the central structure seems to drop
into the center of the earth.

SLOCUM & COVEY

very fulfilled men.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MERCHANT SHIP/DECK - DAY

On peaceful seas a peaceful ship sails toward
the shores of Africa.

On deck, embracing one another like a singular tribe, are Sulah, Urar and Cinque; behind them, the rest of the Amistad Africans. James Harlin is among them.

ON CINQUE

no holding back the tears as he finally nears his home.

TITLE: IN 1843, CINQUE FINALLY RETURNED TO AFRICA. IN HIS ABSENCE HIS VILLAGE HAD BEEN RANSACKED BY SLAVERS... HE SPENT THE REST OF HIS LIFE WANDERING AFRICA SEARCHING FOR HIS WIFE AND CHILD. HE NEVER SAW THEM AGAIN.

THE END