

John Brown's Body

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - CHARLES TOWN, VIRGINIA - EARLY MORNING

A rough-hewn board CRASHES down on a sawhorse. The THUNDER from the lumber reverberates into the distance like a late summer storm.

SUPER: December 2, 1859

A blistered black hand places a saw on the pine board. It moves slowly back and forth.

Tiny particles of sawdust filter through the breaking morning light.

The CRACK of a whip.

SOLDIER (O.C.)
Hurry it along.

The saw speeds up.

Two African American men. One BIG AND STRONG, wields the saw. Another, OLDER, could be his father, holds a hammer.

A SOLDIER stands over them with a whip.

OLDER MAN
(to the big strong man)
It cain't be stopped. It's God's will.

The two men continue HAMMERING and SAWING.

A GALLOWS takes shape behind them.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANTIETAM CREEK CALVINIST CHURCH - DAY

A modest white clapboard church on a dirt road outside of Harpers Ferry, Virginia.

SUPER: Three months earlier.

A SIGN: ANTIETAM CREEK CALVINIST CHURCH. REVEREND ISAAC SMITH.

A HYMN rises from inside.

SINGERS (O.C.)

*Arise, come ye forth, and be slaves
to sin no more, how oft your
Deliv'rer has called on you
before...*

INT. ANTIETAM CREEK CALVINIST CHURCH - DAY

A group of local PARISHIONERS sing from the hymnal.

SINGERS

*Come forth from your bonds, and
your liberty receive,
Your willing hearts to Jesus give;
repent, believe.*

REVEREND ISAAC SMITH (59) sings along. His deep blue eyes flash a fire of incredible youth; a few healed over scars mix in with the deep wrinkles on his face.

Among the congregation:

DOCTOR RICHARD STARRY (36), vital and fit, his black bag always by his side.

THOMAS BOERLY (29), the town butcher. He's a giant troll of a man who can never seem to fully wash the blood from his hands.

MAYOR FONTAINE BECKHAM (43), a portly man who's all politician and always projects like he's talking to a crowd.

The HYMN ends and the Reverend takes his place behind the pulpit.

REVEREND SMITH

*When I was twelve I watched in
horror as a boy was beaten to death
with an iron shovel.*

GASPS and CRIES from the congregation.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. BARN - MICHIGAN - DAY

Young Reverend Smith watches as a fat, drunk, WHITE MAN hauls off and strikes a thirteen year-old African American BOY with an iron shovel. The Boy falls to the ground.

REVEREND SMITH (V.O.)
 The man who beat the boy had not
 done so to protect himself. Or
 because the boy had done him harm.
 No!

The Boy struggles to get up but is struck down again.

Young Reverend Smith is terrified and hides himself in a
 paddock, but he also can't stop watching.

REVEREND SMITH (V.O.)
 He had not beaten him because the
 boy had stolen from him. Or
 threatened his family. No!

The young African American Boy crumples up on the ground.

YOUNG BOY
 (screaming)
 Please stop, masser, please stop.

As the Man lands blows upon the boy, blood splatters the
 boards that young Reverend Smith peers through.

REVEREND SMITH (V.O.)
 He had beaten him simply because it
 was his right to. The young boy was
 a black slave and therefore
 property of the white man.

The White Man's anger is felt with each blow.

REVEREND SMITH (V.O.)
 As the blows rained down on the
 poor boy's head, I was petrified.
 Unable to act. And that moment
 still burns within me today.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. ANTIETAM CREEK CALVINIST CHURCH - DAY

Parishioners shift in their seats. Dry COUGHS and MURMURS.

REVEREND SMITH
 It burns within all of us. But
 regardless of where our nation, or
 our state stands on this issue, God
 has already spoken...

Smith opens his bible but doesn't look at it. He walks in
 front of the pulpit.

REVEREND SMITH
 Hebrews thirteen three. Remember
 them that are in bonds, as bound
 with them; and them which suffer
 adversity, as being yourselves also
 in the body.

EXT. ANTIETAM CREEK CALVINIST CHURCH - DAY

As the Parishioners file out, they shake the Reverend's hand
 and leave small donations of bread or cakes.

Boerly offers up a cut of beef.

BOERLY
 You should keep that on ice,
 Reverend.

REVEREND SMITH
 It shall be eaten long before it
 has a chance to spoil I can assure
 you of that.

Doctor Starry gives him a loaf of bread.

DOCTOR STARRY
 Staff of life, am I right Reverend?

REVEREND SMITH
 Indeed you are, Doctor.

Mayor Beckham offers up a tray of biscuits.

MAYOR BECKHAM
 These are as light as an angel and
 as filling as your sermon.

REVEREND SMITH
 Thank you, Mister Mayor.

A BEARDED MAN approaches after the crowd disperses.

BEARDED MAN
 Reverend Smith, what do you believe
 Jesus would do if he were here with
 us today?

Smith lays his hand on his shoulder.

REVEREND SMITH
 The question is, what will you do?

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

A meager farm house near a grove of trees. The leaves are nearing peak colors but the grass is already brown.

Weeds grow in untilled fields except for a small patch of soil near the front porch which serves as a vegetable garden.

Reverend Smith lugs the offerings from the church inside.

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The Reverend backs into the kitchen carrying his heavy load-- a rifle is thrust into his back.

JOHN KAGI (24), a bandana around his neck, is on the other end-- finger on the trigger.

REVEREND SMITH
Careful there, Lieutenant.

Kagi quickly withdraws his gun.

KAGI
Sorry, Captain, you surprised me.

He helps the Reverend put everything on the table.

REVEREND SMITH
I hope I still have a few surprises left.

The Reverend pokes his head into the...

LIVING ROOM

TWENTY MEN (ages 20 to 35) await his return. They are tired and unwashed. A row of SHARP'S RIFLES line the rear wall.

REVEREND SMITH
Breakfast is served, men.

The men waste no time getting to the table.

KAGI
I've heard from Higgenson.

REVEREND SMITH
(anxious to hear)
And?

KAGI
There are no more coming.

The Reverend's face drops. He surveys the rag-tag men scurrying for their vittles.

REVEREND SMITH
This is it?

KAGI
I'm afraid so.

REVEREND SMITH
I will go ask Frederick. He will help us.

The Reverend takes off his clerical collar and dons a drab oil-cloth coat. He pulls a floppy fisherman's hat down low over his head concealing his identity.

He takes a pistol off a table and conceals it in his trousers.

KAGI
Should I go with you?

REVEREND SMITH
You stay here and keep them out of sight.

EXT. STONE QUARRY - CHAMBERSBURG, PA - DAY

Giant slabs of granite jut out of the walls of an old stone quarry.

Rocks CRUNCH beneath the Reverend's feet as he makes his way cautiously down a weedy limestone path. He clutches the pistol tightly under his coat.

When he gets deep into the pit, he checks his POCKET WATCH and then WHISTLES.

He listens. Then WHISTLES again.

His whistle is returned.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (41), aging with a grey beard...

and SHIELDS GREEN (23), African American, ragged, missing teeth, step out from behind a limestone outcropping.

DOUGLASS (V.O.)
When I met John Brown for the last time, he looked like you'd expect a man to look after a long hard life of constant failure.

The Reverend takes off his hat and smiles. But, now we know this is no reverend-- it's the abolitionist JOHN BROWN.

DOUGLASS (V.O.)

His skin was dry and hardened like a steer driven too far to the slaughterhouse. The wrinkles on his face were cracked and made deeper with each of his fruitless vocations.

Brown walks toward Douglass.

DOUGLASS (V.O.)

And he had many: sheep herder, hide tanner, farmer, miner and shop keep to name but a few.

The men look warily around. They make sure they are alone.

DOUGLASS (V.O.)

Yet he still possessed a fire in his eyes that would belie his fifty-nine inglorious years. And it was with this fire that he came to an old stone quarry outside Chambersburg, Pennsylvania to try and enlist me in his last, greatest failure, of them all...

BROWN

Frederick, thank you for coming.

Douglass notes his wardrobe.

DOUGLASS

First a reverend, now a fisherman?

BROWN

I am fishing for souls.

DOUGLASS

May I introduce my friend Shields Green?

Brown holds out his hand. But Shields doesn't shake it.

DOUGLASS

You'll have to pardon him. He is recently free from his bondage in South Carolina. Quite frankly, he's more accustomed to the thin end of a whip.

Douglass nods to Shields "It's all right," and he shakes Brown's hand. Brown covers Shields' hand with his.

BROWN
Welcome, my brother.

Shields marvels at Brown's hands still clutching his.

DOUGLASS
Why have you called me here?

BROWN
I need you to help me enlist more men.

DOUGLASS
What for?

BROWN
I have a new plan.

DOUGLASS
What is wrong with your old plan?

BROWN
I'm being hunted from Kansas to Kentucky. I'm afraid I don't have much time left.

DOUGLASS
What do you have in mind?

Brown looks at Douglass a moment, knowing he's about to drop a bomb...

BROWN
I am going to seize the Armory at Harpers Ferry.

DOUGLASS
Are you insane? You can't attack the Government of the United States.

BROWN
But I must.

DOUGLASS
Why?

BROWN
To wake up the people.

DOUGLASS

Well, that will certainly do it.

Brown becomes highly animated.

BROWN

And then we will arm the slaves with the hundred thousand muskets and rifles that lie within its walls. We will march south, field to field, plantation to plantation, liberating the slaves with an army of their own men. And when our numbers are big enough, we will declare our own free state and adopt our own constitution.

He produces a document on parchment.

BROWN

I've written it myself.

Douglass looks at it.

BROWN

What do you think?

DOUGLASS

I think you should stick to your original plan.

Brown considers his advice.

BROWN

When I was a young man working in my father's tannery...

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. TANNERY - 1815 - DAY

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD BROWN dips animal skins in a vat of dye.

BROWN (V.O.)

My job was to dye skins different colors. To get a nice dark tone, I would have to dip the hide in the dye several times.

Young Brown pulls a hide out, then submerges it again.

BROWN (V.O.)
Each time I dipped the hide, it
gradually grew darker.

Young Brown pulls out the hide. His hands have turned brown.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. STONE QUARRY - DAY

Douglass looks at Brown's hands as he mimics pulling the hide from the dye.

DOUGLASS
Gradually, yes.

BROWN
No. Gradually, and no one will
notice. We can't parcel out slaves
one by one anymore.

DOUGLASS
Even if I agreed with you on this
strategy, which I don't, Harpers
Ferry is a spit of land with rivers
on two sides, the military would
surround it and no one would get
out alive.

BROWN
Not if I have hostages.

DOUGLASS
Hostages? Virginia will blow you
sky high if you try to hold Harpers
Ferry for even one hour.

BROWN
We'll be out of town with the guns
and an army of slaves before Wise
or Buchanan can react. Will you
help me?

DOUGLASS
I'm sorry my friend, although I
support your intentions, I can not
support your means.

Brown is disappointed. He looks over to Shields.

BROWN
And what about you?

Shields swells with pride upon being asked.

SHIELDS

Me?

DOUGLASS

You've heard the Captain's plan.
You're free to choose. What will
you do?

Shields looks to Douglass. Then back at Brown.

SHIELDS

I b'leve I'll go wid de ole man.

EXT. HARPERS FERRY - DAY

A crisp autumn morning. People bustle in the streets. Wagons and horses go about their business.

Smoke rises from the morning fires in the homes.

Two bridges span the rivers that surround the town.

A long brick building with a strong iron fence serves as the Armory. Train tracks border the perimeter of the city, a hotel and a train station stand between the Potomac River bridge and the Armory.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Steam BLOWS from a locomotive as it GRINDS to a stop.

HAYWARD SHEPHERD (58), an African American baggage attendant, assists PASSENGERS as they climb off the train.

SHEPHERD

Welcome to Harpers Ferry.

The Passengers make their way to the Wager House Hotel next door.

Shepherd pulls bags off the train and lines them up on the platform of the station.

A tired BUSINESSMAN (32) spots his bag and picks it up.

A HANDICAPPED BOY (16) runs up to the Businessman and tries to wrestle the suitcase from his hands.

BOY

I take. I take.

The Businessman pulls back and a struggle ensues.

BUSINESSMAN

What are you doing? Let go. I said
let go.

Shepherd runs over and gives the boy a nickel. The Boy runs off with delight.

SHEPHERD

It's okay. He just wanted to help
you with your bag.

BUSINESSMAN

Take my bag Negro.

SHEPHERD

I'm a free man, sir.

BUSINESSMAN

You're also a baggage man.

Shepherd grabs his bag and follows him to the hotel.

INT. WAGER HOUSE HOTEL - DAY

A pretty clerk, CLARA (23), welcomes people from behind the registration desk. The Businessman signs in.

CLARA

Welcome to the Wager House Hotel.
Are you staying with us long?

BUSINESSMAN

Just a couple of days. I have
business here, then I'm on my way
to Baltimore.

CLARA

We're pleased to have you.

BUSINESSMAN

Thank you. Looks like a quiet
little town.

CLARA

(dispirited)

Oh yes, nothing ever happens here.

Mayor Beckham enters the room in a grand gesture to any and all voters who might be in attendance.

MAYOR BECKHAM
Morning everyone!

CLARA
Morning Mayor Beckham.

Beckham looks around to make sure people notice him.

CLARA
How is everything in town today?

MAYOR BECKHAM
There's a crispness to the air and
a hint of winter coming on. Better
make me some extra sausages.

CLARA
Right this way.

INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM - DAY

Clara leads him to a table as a WAITRESS brings out a plate
of sausages, biscuits and eggs for the mayor.

MAYOR BECKHAM
If everyone of your guests were to
have one of your breakfasts, I
swear they would never leave.

WAITRESS
You're too kind, Mister Mayor.

EXT. HARPERS FERRY - DAY

Doctor Starry strides toward his office. His black bag firmly
in hand.

He spots Thomas Boerly outside his butcher shop. Boerly wears
a blood stained apron and holds a meat cleaver.

DOCTOR STARRY
Morning Thomas.

BOERLY
Morning, Richard. How's business?

DOCTOR STARRY
I don't wish anyone to get sick,
but I could use a fever or good
cough about now.

BOERLY

Remember, It's not the town with
the muskets that needs a doctor.
It's the town with the musket
balls.

DOCTOR STARRY

Yes, I've been told. So tell me,
what did you think of the
Reverend's sermon last Sunday?

BOERLY

I thought it was inspiring. Imagine
that someday the Negro could be as
free as you and I.

DOCTOR STARRY

Not in our lifetime, I'm afraid.

BOERLY

You must have hope.

DOCTOR STARRY

Hope will do you no good. You must
have the will of the people. And
right now, it's all too easy for
people to look the other way.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Brown (dressed as Reverend Smith) and Kagi harvest the last
few remaining carrots and cucumbers from the small garden.

BROWN

I was hoping for more.

KAGI

With the addition of Shields we
have twenty-one.

BROWN

Well, twenty-one isn't nearly
enough. And winter is coming soon.

Brown picks the last cucumber.

BROWN

And we are out of food.

Brown stands up.

BROWN
(Reluctantly)
Tell the men to go back home to
their families until spring. We
shall reassemble then.

Kagi goes inside to inform the men.

ROAD

A group of SLAVES are herded past the house by a nasty SLAVE
CATCHER (36) who rides high on a horse.

The Slaves are exhausted, parched, bound by ankle chains and
are being whipped indiscriminately.

Brown immediately races toward them.

BROWN
You there! There's no need for
whipping.

SLAVE CATCHER
It's none of your business,
Reverend.

BROWN
Do you call yourself a Christian?

SLAVE CATCHER
I call myself a Capitalist. And I'm
returning each one of these escaped
slaves for a pretty penny.

BROWN
But they can't escape now.

INT. FARM HOUSE

Kagi and the men watch Brown through the windows. Their black
and white faces peek out from behind the ragged curtains.

EXT. ROAD

Brown draws nearer.

BROWN
They are not doing anything to
warrant a whipping.

SLAVE CATCHER
They don't need to.

He CRACKS one of the Slaves.

BROWN

Please, I beg you. Let me get them some water.

SLAVE CATCHER

They can go all day without water. They're like camels.

BROWN

They are men.

SLAVE CATCHER

Who's side are you on, preacher?

BROWN

I'm on God's side.

SLAVE CATCHER

Well, then answer this: why did God make the nigger dumb and stupid like an animal?

He WHIPS the slave again and he goes down.

BROWN

Please stop!

The Slave Catcher looks beyond Brown and toward his house. He dismounts.

SLAVE CATCHER

That your house?

BROWN

I rent it.

The Slave Catcher looks it over. The men watching in the windows withdraw.

SLAVE CATCHER

Maybe you hiding some slaves of your own. Maybe I ought to take a look around inside.

He WHIPS the fallen Slave once more.

SLAVE CATCHER

(to the Slave)
Get up!

BROWN

There's no one here but me.

SLAVE CATCHER

That's a big house for just one man. Big enough for a railroad to go through, wouldn't you say?

He takes a pistol out of a holster. Brown stands his ground.

BROWN

There's none of that here.

He stares Brown down before pointing the gun to the Slave's head.

SLAVE CATCHER

Get up!

Brown rushes over and helps the poor man back to his feet. He hands him a carrot from his garden. Then passes out the last of the vegetables to the others.

SLAVE CATCHER

I ain't payin' you for that.

BROWN

There's no need.

The Slave Catcher mounts his horse.

SLAVE CATCHER

I smell something here, Reverend. As soon as I get these niggers into town, I'll be back. For yours.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

The men turn from the windows as Brown rushes in. He's filled with rage.

BROWN

We will not wait a moment longer!
Our army will have God on its side
and that's more than enough.

The men CHEER and raise their rifles.

CUT TO:

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

Brown unrolls a map as his Raiders squeeze in around him.

BROWN

There are two bridges that lead into town. It is imperative we secure these first.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. POTOMAC BRIDGE - DAY

Brown, disguised as Reverend Smith, cases the town.

BROWN (V.O.)

The first is the Potomac River Bridge.

He makes a sketch of the bridge.

BROWN (V.O.)

Kagi and Stevens will disarm the night watchman while we follow close behind with the wagon.

EXT. ARMORY - DAY

Brown watches the GUARDS of the Armory come and go.

BROWN (V.O.)

As we make our way toward the Armory, Stevens will lead a group to the Washington farm...

EXT. WASHINGTON FARM HOUSE - DAY

A beautiful expansive plantation. SLAVES work outside. PIANO MUSIC can be heard coming from the residence.

INT. WASHINGTON FARM HOUSE - DAY

COLONEL LEWIS WASHINGTON (47), sits in his parlor listening to his DAUGHTER (12) play piano.

A large sword hangs above the fireplace.

BROWN (V.O.)

There is a sword. It hangs above the fireplace.

His daughter is quite good, but makes a few mistakes which the doting father points out by CLEARING his throat.

BROWN (V.O.)
It was the sword given to George
Washington by Frederick the Great.

A SERVANT brings the Colonel a cold drink.

BROWN (V.O.)
You must bring both the sword and
the Colonel to me.

EXT. HALL RIFLE WORKS - DAY

Brown surveys another large brick building. A SIGN: Hall
Rifle Works.

BROWN (V.O.)
Lieutenant Kagi, Copeland and Leary
will secure the rifle works.

EXT. SHENANDOAH BRIDGE - DAY

Brown walks across the Shenandoah Bridge.

BROWN (V.O.)
Newby and Oliver will be charged
with holding the Shenandoah Bridge.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Brown stands in front of his mesmerized Raiders.

BROWN
We must strike quickly and avoid
any bloodshed. You may fire only if
you are forced to defend yourself.
And if one of us is to die...
remember, it will perhaps do more
for the cause than our lives would
be worth any other way. Now prepare
yourselves, we leave at nightfall.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

The Men are now scattered about the house: writing letters,
packing sacks, loading guns, etc.

Brown sits quietly reading his bible.

FRANCIS MERIAM (21), blind in one eye and wearing an eye patch, runs through in a panic.

MERIAM

We'll never make it!

Brown looks up and sees Meriam charging but he doesn't flinch. Meriam gets about a foot away from Brown when Kagi snatches him away.

Meriam continues to SCREAM and fight.

MERIAM

We need more men!

JOHN COPELAND (25) a freed African American and his uncle LEWIS LEARY (24) jump in to help Kagi subdue him.

Brown resumes reading.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Kagi, Copeland and Leary dunk Meriam's head in a horse trough.

They hold him under a moment, then pull him up.

He struggles to get air into his lungs. Kagi checks to see if he has regained control. Meriam relaxes a bit, then slumps.

KAGI

That's better. Now, the Captain doesn't mind an opposing point of view. In fact, he welcomes it. But perhaps you serve it to him with a little less enthusiasm.

Kagi lets him go and he rises to his feet.

MERIAM

I had a vision. I saw us being gunned down at the bridge.

KAGI

Better to keep that to yourself right now.

Kagi looks over to Copeland. Copeland has his head down.

KAGI

Not you too? Does anyone else feel this way?

Copeland is silent. Kagi looks to Leary.

KAGI
Lewis?

LEARY
There are a few.

KAGI
And you?

LEARY
We're short-handed as it is. And
what if the slaves don't come?

KAGI
Of course they'll come. What man,
given the chance, wouldn't rise up
and grab his own liberty?

COPELAND
Can you talk to him? Just ask him
if he's certain of this plan.

Kagi looks them over.

KAGI
I'll talk to him, but I think we
know what he'll say.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY

DANGERFIELD NEWBY (35), a freed African American slave,
furiously scribbles a letter.

OLIVER BROWN (21), the youngest of Brown's sons, watches.

OLIVER
You write a lot of letters.

NEWBY
I got a lot to say.

OLIVER
To who?

NEWBY
Harriet. She's my wife. And we got
seven kids too. You got a girl?

OLIVER
I'm married.

NEWBY

A young boy like you, married?

OLIVER

All us Brown children get married young. You never know how long you have. (laughs) Where is your family?

NEWBY

Manassas. As soon as The Captain gets up his army, I'm going to go get them.

He takes a tattered letter from his pocket and unfolds it.

NEWBY

(reading)

Dear Husband, I want you to buy me as soon as possible, for if you do not get me somebody else will.

He collects himself before continuing...

NEWBY

(reading)

The last two years have been like a troubled dream to me. It is said Master is in want of money. If so, I know not what time he may sell me, and then all my hopes of the future are blasted, for there has been one bright hope to cheer me in all my troubles, that is to be with you, for if I thought I should never see you, this earth would have no charms for me. Do all you can for me, which I have no doubt you will. I want to see you so much.

He lowers the letter. Oliver checks the sight on his gun.

OLIVER

We will free them Dangerfield. You will see them again.

Newby smiles at the thought and goes back to his letter.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

OWEN BROWN (34), one of Brown's sons-- he has a deformed left arm-- and JOHN COOK (30) work on a wagon. They stretch a tarp over the top and nail it down.

OWEN

Why do I have to stay behind?

COOK

I've been with your father since Kansas and he has a good reason for everything.

OWEN

Does he think I can't handle it?

COOK

I think he'd like to feel at least one of his sons was safe.

OWEN

It's because of my arm, isn't it?

COOK

He knows you're quite capable.

OWEN

Then why can't I go?

COOK

If you do your job as planned, you will be there in time.

INT. CELLAR - DAY

Brown removes tarps from large wooden crates. The crates are marked: REV ISAAC SMITH - BIBLES.

He pries the lid off one of them and pulls out a sleek black Sharp's rifle. He checks the barrel, it is straight and true.

Kagi joins him.

BROWN

Our friends in New York have provided well.

KAGI

John, I hate enslavement as much as you. And you know I'd fight to my last breath to stop it, but is this the best way?

Brown looks over at him. Confused by his doubt.

BROWN

Ever since I can remember, I have devoted my life to ending slavery. I feel it is what I am meant to do. And now, as I near the end of my life, and it is still with us, I can tell you for certain that this issue will not end without bloodshed.

KAGI

But will they come?

Brown tosses him the rifle.

BROWN

In numbers greater than you can imagine.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DUSK

Brown is in an upstairs room alone. He writes a letter at a rickety desk.

A picture of his wife, MARY BROWN (43), stands in a battered frame. She's plain and unremarkable but when you meet her you will feel her strength.

Rain TAPS lightly on the windows.

BROWN (V.O.)

Dearest Mary, these past few months have tried my soul. I had hoped for many more to join me, but did God not arm David with just one stone?

A dirty, old button lies next to the letter. He picks it up and runs it through his fingers.

BROWN (V.O.)

But I am not alone. This evening, I think of our young son Frederick...

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. POTTAWATOMIE, KS - DAY

Brown and a garrison of his FIGHTERS hide behind rocks, trees and fence posts on a dirt road outside of town as they FIRE relentlessly at an attacking company of MISSOURIANS.

SUPER: Kansas 1856

Brown and his men hold their line ably at first, but they are sorely outnumbered and soon begin to fall.

BROWN
Retreat! Pull back!

Brown, his son FREDERICK (25), and a handful of his men peel off and head toward a thick grove of trees.

Frederick takes a bullet to the back and goes down. Brown races back to him.

BROWN
Frederick! Frederick!

Blood spurts from his back and Brown jams a handkerchief in the wound as he rolls him over.

BROWN
Son!

Kagi returns FIRE in an attempt to give Brown more time.

KAGI
John, hurry!

Frederick is dying fast as bullets fly past.

FREDERICK
(struggling)
You must win this war, father.

BROWN
No!

Frederick's eyes close and he's gone. Kagi continues to hold the Missourians at bay.

KAGI
Now, John! We must go.

Brown shakes his son.

BROWN
Frederick! Frederick!

He SLAPS him in the face, but there's no life left in him. Brown tries to pick him up and carry him, but he loses his balance and tumbles over into the dirt.

KAGI
Captain!

Brown desperately tries to drag Frederick's body, but he can't. As he pulls, his hands lose their grip and the body slips out. He opens his hand to find a button from Frederick's coat was all he could hold onto.

KAGI

We'll come back for him, John. Run!

A bullet grazes Brown's shoulder and snaps him into the urgency of the situation.

Filled with rage, Brown rises up and begins to FIRE back. Each bullet strikes successfully, and the advancing army begins to drop.

BROWN

Come take me you Philistines! I shall send all your souls to hell!

Kagi can't believe his eyes at this bold turn. Brown is bigger than life, seething with hate, and as deadly as a Gatling gun.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Brown continues writing his letter. The button still in his hand.

BROWN (V.O.)

I can wait no longer, the days grow colder and I older. The time to finish this fight, once and for all, has come.

He leans back and peers out the window at the brown, rain-soaked fields of Maryland.

BROWN (V.O.)

I feel this may be the last time I look at this land in peace. Good bye. With great love, your John.

Brown folds the letter and stashes it in an old carpetbag. He checks his POCKET WATCH then stands up.

INT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Brown walks down the stairs, the men snap out of their idle chat to look at him.

BROWN

Men... get on your arms!

The men CHEER and begin to put on heavy black shawls.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

The men load the wagon with pikes, tools and guns.

Brown grabs the reins and hops on top.

With a slight tug, the horse begins to pull. The men follow behind, Sharp's rifles slung over their shoulders.

Three of them: Owen Brown, Francis Meriam, and BARCLAY COPPOC (20) stay behind and watch as the men proceed through the puddles and into the night.

EXT. MARYLAND HEIGHTS - NIGHT

A hilly, wooded area across the Potomac river from Harpers Ferry.

Pikes RATTLE in their crates as the wagon hits a bump. The wagon CREAKS.

Up ahead, a twinkle of lights through the fog.

Brown stops the cart. He motions toward Cook and CHARLES TIDD (25). They break formation and run off silently.

Brown points toward Kagi and AARON STEVENS (26). They uncover their rifles and head out in front of the wagon.

EXT. HILL - NIGHT

Cook and Tidd race down a hill toward a telegraph pole. Tidd trips and slides in the mud. Cook tries to hold back his laughter.

They playfully fling mud at each other. It's all a big game right now.

Tidd climbs up the pole and cuts the wire.

EXT. MARYLAND HEIGHTS - NIGHT

Kagi and Stevens hide behind bushes. Kagi looks toward the bridge. He checks his watch.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER BRIDGE - NIGHT

A BRIDGE GUARD walks the length of the covered bridge. As he WHISTLES quietly to himself, his hot breath steams into the chilly air.

As he nears the Maryland side, Kagi and Stevens appear out of the darkness.

BRIDGE GUARD
Evening gentlemen.

KAGI
Please come with us.

Kagi and Stevens level their rifles. The Bridge Guard reaches for his revolver, but Stevens thrusts his rifle into his belly.

Kagi snatches his weapon away.

Brown leads the wagon onto the bridge. The Bridge Guard squints to get a better view.

BRIDGE GUARD
Reverend? Reverend Isaac Smith, is that you?

Brown stops the wagon.

BRIDGE GUARD
What's a preacher man doing with guns?

Brown points toward STEWART TAYLOR (22) and WATSON BROWN (24). They peel out from behind the wagon and stand guard.

Brown pulls on the reins once more and the wagon moves toward Harpers Ferry.

Stevens prods The Bridge Guard along with his rifle.

BRIDGE GUARD
Is this some kind of a joke?

KAGI
Silence.

EXT. HARPERS FERRY - NIGHT

Brown leads the wagon and the men into town.

They walk past the hotel and run right into the Businessman who is out for a walk in the evening air.

Kagi grabs him.

BUSINESSMAN

What are you doing?

Kagi pokes a rifle in his back.

KAGI

Keep quiet.

EXT. ARMORY - FRONT GATE - NIGHT

Brown and his men rush the large iron gate.

The ARMORY WATCHMAN, hears the commotion, comes outside and walks right up to the gate.

ARMORY WATCHMAN

Who goes there?

BROWN

Open the gate!

ARMORY WATCHMAN

I don't have the key.

Some of the men climb the fence. Kagi grabs the Armory Watchman through the bars and pulls him close. A half a dozen rifles poke into his gut.

BROWN

Open the gate.

Oliver Brown grabs a crow bar from the wagon and shoves it into the lock.

OLIVER

We haven't got time for a key.

The gate SNAPS open and the men pour in and grab the Armory Watchman.

Brown leads the wagon into the armory grounds. He stands up on the wagon as the Bridge Guard, the Businessman and the Armory Watchman look on.

BROWN

I am John Brown. I have come from Kansas to free all the Negroes in the state.

He raises his rifle over his head.

BROWN

I now have possession of the United States Armory and if the citizens of Harpers Ferry interfere with me I must only burn down the town and have blood.

INT. GAULT HOUSE - NIGHT

A DRUNK swills his last tankard before falling off his stool.

The BARTENDER looks over the bar at him.

BARTENDER

Time for you to be getting on home, Richard. I don't want your wife coming in here looking for you again.

DRUNK

You think she'll find me down here?

BARTENDER

Go on home now.

EXT. GAULT HOUSE - NIGHT

The Drunk staggers out of the pub and right into Brown.

The Raiders draw their weapons as the Drunk squints to see.

DRUNK

(slurring)
You're not my wife.

Brown steps forward and looks him over.

BROWN

No, but I bet you'll fare better with me tonight.

The men share a laugh.

BROWN

Take him to the Armory.

EXT. U.S. ARSENAL - NIGHT

A strong-box building with a sign: U.S. ARSENAL

Brown and his men storm the front door.

INT. U.S. ARSENAL - NIGHT

A sleeping GUARD falls off his chair as Brown rushes in.

EDWIN COPPOC (24) quickly subdues him.

BROWN

No harm will come to you if you
cooperate.

Brown quickly dispatches his men.

BROWN

Coppoc, you hold the Arsenal. Kagi,
to the Rifle Works.

Kagi, Copeland and Leary rush out.

BROWN

Stevens, take your men to the
Colonel.

Stevens, Cook, Tidd, Shields and JEREMIAH ANDERSON (26) rush
out.

BROWN

Oliver and Newby, to the bridge.

EXT. SHENANDOAH BRIDGE - NIGHT

Oliver Brown and Newby run down the railroad tracks. Their
senses on overload. They point their guns in every direction.

EXT. HALL RIFLE WORKS - NIGHT

Kagi, Copeland, and Leary storm the door.

INT. HALL RIFLE WORKS - NIGHT

Kagi leaps on the GUARD and brings him to the ground.

The Guard dutifully fights back until Copeland presses his
rifle into his neck.

COPELAND

Please don't resist. I don't want
to have to shoot you.

The Guard relents.

KAGI
Take him to the Armory.

Copeland hustles him out. Kagi marvels at all the rifles.

KAGI
My god, there's enough firepower
here to liberate all the world.

LEARY
Now we just need the men to fire
them.

INT. ARMORY - NIGHT

DAUPHIN THOMPSON (21) guards the prisoners. WILLIAM THOMPSON
(26) guards the door.

Copeland enters with the Guard from the rifle works and two
more HOSTAGES he captured along the way.

BROWN
The rifle works is secure?

COPELAND
Yes, Captain.

Brown checks his POCKET WATCH: 11:30 PM.

BROWN
Gentlemen, either my watch is
fallow or we are well ahead of
plan.

Brown walks over toward the prisoners. The Drunk stretches
out on the floor but looks a bit worse than before.

BROWN
(to the Drunk)
How's your head?

DRUNK
Spinny...

His head drops back to the floor.

BROWN
Well, if my men are as swift as I,
you shall still be drunk while your
wife chides you.

DRUNK
Please... take your time.

All within earshot share a LAUGH.

EXT. CHARLES TOWN PIKE - NIGHT

Stevens hurries the men along. Cook at his side.

STEVENS
Do you think the Captain has spread
our forces a bit thin?

COOK
Soon there will be thousands of us.
A river of black men pouring from
the fields-- armed with our guns.
Freedom will be theirs tonight.

Stevens picks up the pace.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER BRIDGE - NIGHT

HIGGINS (33), another bridge guard, reports for his shift,
but sees that no one is at the post.

HIGGINS
Williams?

Higgins grabs a lantern and begins walking down the length of
the bridge.

HIGGINS
Williams?

He holds the lantern out to illuminate his path.

HIGGINS
Where are you?

Watson Brown steps out from behind the shadows and grabs
Higgins by the coat.

Higgins pulls back and Watson falls backward.

Higgins races back toward town as Watson aims his rifle.

WATSON
Halt!

Watson FIRES. Higgins' head snaps to the side but he
continues on.

INT. WASHINGTON FARM HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stevens throws open the door and charges Colonel Washington who rises in his bed.

Stevens points his rifle at him. Washington's WIFE SCREAMS.

COLONEL WASHINGTON
What is the meaning of this?

STEVENS
Colonel Washington, you are hereby
a prisoner of Captain John Brown.

COLONEL WASHINGTON
The abolitionist?

STEVENS
He would like to assure you that if
you cooperate, you and your family
will be perfectly safe.

Washington looks at the rifle.

COLONEL WASHINGTON
What is it he would like me to do?

STEVENS
You are to join him at Harpers
Ferry. I will allow you the
courtesy to get dressed.

INT. WASHINGTON FARM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Stevens leads the Colonel down the stairs. Cook and Anderson wait for him.

COOK
Shields is rounding up the Negroes.

Stevens sees the sword hanging above the fireplace.

STEVENS
There it is.

Cook reaches for it.

STEVENS
No.

Cook stops.

STEVENS

It's only fitting that a Negro brandish this weapon. Osborne, you take it.

COLONEL WASHINGTON

What do you want with it?

STEVENS

The Captain gave me orders to bring it to him.

COLONEL WASHINGTON

That has been in the family for years.

OSBORNE ANDERSON (29), a free African American, takes it off the wall.

STEVENS

Its services are required once more.

INT. WAGER HOUSE HOTEL - NIGHT

Higgins rushes up to Shepherd. His cheek is bloody, but he's otherwise fine.

SHEPHERD

Are you all right?

HIGGINS

There are men with guns on the bridge. I think they got Williams.

SHEPHERD

Who got Williams?

HIGGINS

I don't know. Could be one of those Armory workers. They've been threatening a strike for weeks now. And then you get a few drinks in them and they think they're the sheriff.

Shepherd hands him a towel.

SHEPHERD

I'll go have a look.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER BRIDGE - NIGHT

Shepherd proceeds down the bridge towards the fallen lantern.

SHEPHERD

Hello?

Watson Brown calls out from the darkness.

WATSON

Halt!

SHEPHERD

Listen, if you've got a
disagreement with management,
that's your business, but don't
bring your troubles to the
townsfolk.

Shepherd walks closer.

WATSON

I said halt!

Shepherd sees the barrel of Watson's rifle. He turns and runs back toward the hotel. A SHOT rings out and Shepherd stumbles.

He makes his way back to the platform before falling prostrate on the dusty planks. Blood oozes out from underneath his body.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - NIGHT

Starry races up with his black bag to find Higgins trying to revive Shepherd.

DOCTOR STARRY

I heard the shots.

HIGGINS

Do something Doc.

Starry quickly attends to him. He works feverishly, but he can't bring him back.

Clara rushes out of the hotel.

CLARA

The telegraph is dead.

Starry closes Shepherd's eyes.

DOCTOR STARRY
I'm afraid poor Hayward is as well.

They all cross themselves and mutter a quiet prayer.

CLARA
Oh, it's those Armory workers,
they're behind all this.

DOCTOR STARRY
Take him inside. I'm going to see
what this is all about.

INT. ARMORY

William Thompson spots Starry approaching from the hotel.

WILLIAM THOMPSON
Captain...

EXT. ARMORY GATE - NIGHT

Brown and Stevens walk out to meet Starry. Starry is surprised to see who he thinks is Reverend Smith.

DOCTOR STARRY
Reverend Smith? What is going on?

BROWN
My real name is John Brown. I posed
as a reverend and hid my identity
in order to gain advantage.

DOCTOR STARRY
I don't understand.

BROWN
I've come to town to free the
slaves.

DOCTOR STARRY
We have no slaves in this town.

BROWN
But you have guns.

Stevens buries his rifle in Starry's chest.

DOCTOR STARRY
I see. Do you have men on the
bridge?

BROWN

Yes we do.

DOCTOR STARRY

I'm afraid then, that they have
killed a man.

STEVENS

Who?

DOCTOR STARRY

Hayward Shepherd.

Brown lowers his head. Stevens watches Brown's reaction.

STEVENS

Did you know him?

BROWN

Yes. He was a good man.

DOCTOR STARRY

If it's the guns you want, take
them, but please don't take any
more lives.

Brown pulls Stevens rifle off Starry's chest.

BROWN

We have no desire for blood. Please
steer everyone clear of here and
make it known that if anyone should
interfere, we have hostages. We
will release them when we leave. We
have no quarrels with this town.

Brown and Stevens turn back to the Armory.

STEVENS

They'll get up a militia.

BROWN

We shall be deep in the mountains
by then.

EXT. THOMAS BOERLY'S FLAT - NIGHT

A small flat up the hill from the Armory and above the
butcher shop. Starry frantically POUNDS on the door until
Boerly answers.

BOERLY

What is it?

DOCTOR STARRY
Abolitionists have seized the
armory. And they have taken
hostages!

This snaps Boerly into action. He puts on his overalls, and
grabs his rifle.

BOERLY
Wake the mayor! I'll round the men.

DOCTOR STARRY
Thomas...

BOERLY
What is it?

DOCTOR STARRY
They shot Hayward.

BOERLY
What? Is he all right?

This is exceedingly hard news for Starry to convey.

DOCTOR STARRY
I'm afraid he's passed.

Boerly's knees buckle and he almost goes down. Starry doesn't
know how to console him.

DOCTOR STARRY
I'm so sorry.

Starry tries to put his arm around the big man, but Boerly
rises back up with rage. He cocks his rifle.

BOERLY
I will slaughter every last one of
those pigs.

INT. ARMORY - NIGHT

The doors open to let Colonel Washington's wagon inside.

Stevens and the raiding party deliver nine hostages: Colonel
Washington; a PLANTATION OWNER, his eighteen-year-old SON and
six SLAVES.

WILLIAM THOMPSON
They're back, Captain.

Colonel Washington jumps from the wagon and stands face to face with Brown.

COLONEL WASHINGTON
I demand an explanation.

BROWN
I took you first, Colonel Washington, because, as aide to the Governor, I knew you would do your duty, and perhaps prove troublesome. Apart from that, I wanted you for the effect it would give our cause, by having one with your illustrious name.

Brown approaches Washington's horses.

BROWN
Fine animals. I used to breed racehorses.

He runs his hand along one of the horse's withers and back.

BROWN
Why is it that we are kinder to animals than we are to our fellow men?

He points to where the hostages are being held.

BROWN
You will find a warm fire. It is rather cold this morning.

Stevens reappears.

STEVENS
The hostages are secure, Captain.

BROWN
Very well. Arm the slaves if they are able to fire a weapon. If not, give them knives.

Osborne Anderson offers Brown Washington's sword.

OSBORNE ANDERSON
As you requested, sir.

A flash from the fire reflects off its blade. Brown gently wraps his hands around it.

BROWN

This sword was used in our country's fight for freedom. And now it shall be used to finish the work of ensuring that all men, not just the white man, are created, and treated, equal.

He turns to Cook.

BROWN

Now go and gather our army.

Cook and Tidd are off in a flash.

Brown checks his POCKET WATCH.

BROWN

We shall be on our way before sunrise.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HARPERS FERRY - DAY

The sun breaks over the steamy river. Shadows disappear.

INT. WAGER HOUSE HOTEL - DAY

Boerly and Starry have assembled a group of RAG-TAG MEN from the town to form a militia. Mayor Beckham joins them.

MAYOR BECKHAM

What have we?

DOCTOR STARRY

As near as I can tell a group of abolitionists led by Reverend Smith have taken control of the Armory, the Arsenal and the rifle works.

MAYOR BECKHAM

Our Reverend Smith?

DOCTOR STARRY

He hid his true identity under the banner of God. His real name is John Brown.

MAYOR BECKHAM

I know that name. He's the Kansas killer, isn't he?

DOCTOR STARRY

Yes.

MAYOR BECKHAM

So we've been harboring and provisioning him and his men?

DOCTOR STARRY

It would appear so.

MAYOR BECKHAM

How many are with him?

DOCTOR STARRY

I don't know.

MAYOR BECKHAM

Guess.

DOCTOR STARRY

Forty? Fifty? And they've taken hostages.

MAYOR BECKHAM

Jesus Christ.

Boerly is seething with anger and hungry for blood.

BOERLY

They killed Hayward.

The mayor crosses himself and mutters a prayer.

BOERLY

I will send them to Hell, Mr. Mayor.

MAYOR BECKHAM

No one fires a shot unless I say so, you hear?

BOERLY

Sir...

MAYOR BECKHAM

We shall not endanger any more lives. (to Clara over at the desk) Now, Clara, see what you can do about rustling up some breakfast.

CLARA

Excuse me, Mr. Mayor, but there's been a bit of a problem...

INT. ARMORY - DAY

Stevens enters with breakfast.

BROWN
Any sign of Cook and Tidd?

STEVENS
Not yet.

He places the food in front of Brown.

BROWN
Where did you find this?

Osborne Anderson enters with the COOK from the hotel.

BROWN
Sausages and hostages? This is a
pleasant surprise.

Brown tucks a napkin in his shirt.

BROWN
This looks infinitely more
appetizing than the snouts,
knuckles and joints that are the
diet of a wanted man.

Brown digs in.

BROWN
This is most excellent.
(loudly to the Cook)
Had I no business in this town that
requires me to leave shortly, I
think that this breakfast would
entice me to stay forever.

EXT. WAGER HOUSE HOTEL - DAY

Boerly addresses his small MILITIA in the early morning
chill. They are armed with knives, squirrel guns, and a few
rusty muskets.

BOERLY
Is this all we can muster?

The men stare back sheepishly.

BOERLY

We must enlist more force. Raymond, you get up to the church and sound the bell. Endicott, you must warn the Armory workers not to go inside for their shift. Doc, you ride to Charles Town and request help. The rest of you come with me.

Starry mounts his horse and is off.

INT. U.S. ARSENAL - DAY

Edwin Coppoc and ALBERT HAZLETT (22) wait in the dark entryway. Their rifles at the ready.

HAZLETT

Where are you from?

EDWIN COPPOC

Springdale.

HAZLETT

Where's that?

EDWIN COPPOC

Iowa.

HAZLETT

Never heard of it.

EDWIN COPPOC

It's a Quaker settlement.

HAZLETT

Quaker? You're a Quaker?

EDWIN COPPOC

I was adopted.

HAZLETT

So you're not a Quaker?

EDWIN COPPOC

I don't know. But I promised my mother I would not raise a gun while I did God's work.

HAZLETT

God's work never got done without a gun.

INT. HALL RIFLE WORKS - DAY

Leary and Copeland haul boxes of rifles forward.

Kagi breaks the locks on the boxes and begins to load them.

COPELAND

What happened in Kansas, Uncle Lewis?

LEARY

Well, as I heard it, the border ruffians rode in and sacked the town of Lawrence.

COPELAND

Why?

LEARY

So the people'd get scared and flee back to Missouri. That way they cain't vote. See, whatever side got the most votes determined if it was a free state or a slave state.

COPELAND

And the ruffians drove 'em out?

LEARY

Until the Captain came along. He fought off three thousand men by hiself.

COPELAND

Three thousand?

LEARY

I tell you, he cain't be killed.

EXT. SHENANDOAH BRIDGE - DAY

Oliver Brown and Newby shiver in the early morning air.

OLIVER

How much money do you need?

NEWBY

Seven hundred and forty two dollars. That's what Doctor Jennings told me anyway. He's their master. That was just enough for my wife and baby, he says.

The others I was going to have to still save for. But when I went back for them he raised the price. He said now it's a thousand dollars. So I knowed right there and then that no matter how much money I get it won't ever be enough. That I won't ever see my Harriet and children again. So that's when I decided to join your father.

The church bell TOLLS. Oliver swivels around and cocks his rifle.

NEWBY

What's that?

The bell PEELS through the still morning air.

OLIVER

That's war.

INT. HALL RIFLE WORKS - DAY

The bell RINGS again. Kagi, Leary and Copeland stop to listen.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER BRIDGE - DAY

BELL.

Watson Brown and Stewart Taylor are on high alert.

INT. ARMORY - DAY

BELL.

Brown gets up from his breakfast and rushes to the door, his napkin still tucked in his shirt.

EXT. ARMORY - DAY

BELL.

Brown and Stevens rush out onto the Armory grounds. They look in all directions.

BELL.

Brown yanks the napkin from his collar.

BROWN
Get everybody into the engine
house! Hurry!

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

The hostages are hustled toward a smaller building with three large doors where fire fighting equipment is stored.

The Drunk has a hard time keeping on his feet. He stumbles back and forth, to and fro, as Osborne Anderson prods him along. Before he enters, he stops to assess the situation.

DRUNK
(to Anderson)
How many doors are there?

OSBORNE ANDERSON
Aim for the middle one.

William Thompson and Stevens bring up the rear.

STEVENS
(to himself)
Where is our army?

EXT. GARRETS MILL ROAD PLANTATION - DAY

In the early morning light, a plantation house sits majestically on a hill.

A stable for horses, a carriage house and a grouping of dilapidated saddlebag shelters that serve as quarters for the SLAVES sit near a grove of woods by the edge of the fields.

Cook and Tidd hide behind a row of raspberry bushes as they eye the OVERSEER'S house. Their rifles are cocked.

COOK
Ready?

TIDD
Let's go.

Cook and Tidd race across the open field, keeping as low to the ground as they can.

INT. OVERSEER'S HOUSE - DAY

The OVERSEER of the plantation, a black man (46) with a scarred face dresses near the fire.

Cook and Tidd BLOW through the front door.

COOK
On the floor!

The Overseer makes a move for his rifle, but Tidd jumps him.

There's a brief struggle until Cook presses his gun barrel into the side of his head.

COOK
Be still!

The Overseer obliges while Tidd binds his hands to his bedpost.

OVERSEER
Who are you?

COOK
We are abolitionists, we've come to liberate the slaves.

TIDD
We'd take you too, if we thought you'd cooperate.

The Overseer tries to break his bonds.

TIDD
I thought so.

OVERSEER
They won't go with you. I've trained them.

TIDD
To fear.

OVERSEER
They belong to Mister Elijah Tyne.

Tidd gets in his face.

TIDD
Then he owns you too.

INT. SLAVE QUARTERS

A group of eighteen SLAVES are just waking up. They sleep on worn blankets and straw.

Cook and Tidd enter and the Slaves immediately rush to the back of the house.

TIDD
My name is Charles Tidd, Captain
John Brown has sent me to liberate
you. You will follow us to freedom.

The Slaves cower in the back. Mothers pull their children close.

Tidd becomes aware of their rifles. He motions to Cook to lay all three of them at their feet.

TIDD
Who speaks for you?

SILENCE.

TIDD
Your overseer will not interfere
with you anymore.

The Slaves tremble.

Tidd pushes the Overseer's rifle across the floor with his foot to ARCHIBALD (31), a slave with hideous scars.

TIDD
Take this weapon and join us in our
fight to free all those in bondage.

No one moves.

TIDD
Do you understand what I'm saying?

ARCHIBALD
Dat's Ben's gun.

TIDD
He can't hurt you now. Go ahead,
pick it up.

Archibald doesn't move. Everyone in the house looks to him.

COOK
What kind of a man are you?

Archibald doesn't know how to answer that.

COOK
We are fighting for your freedom.
You must march with us.

ARCHIBALD
I don't want no trouble.

COOK
We have guns. Thousands of guns. We
will arm you and you will help
liberate your people.

ARCHIBALD
I belong to Masser Tyne.

COOK
What's your name?

SLAVE
Archibald.

COOK
Well, Archibald, you are a free man
now. (Turning to the rest) All of
you are free. You don't have to
work for Mister Tyne any longer.

Archibald looks around, shaking. He doesn't understand.

ARCHIBALD
I belong to Masser Tyne.

Archibald eyes the door and makes a break for it.

COOK
Hey...

EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - DAY

Archibald runs toward the Overseer's house. Cook and Tidd are
on his heels.

ARCHIBALD
Ben! Ben! They's men wid guns!

Cook raises his rifle.

COOK
Halt!

ARCHIBALD

Ben!

Cook FIRES a shot over his head but it doesn't slow him.

COOK

What the hell is wrong with him?

INT. OVERSEER'S HOUSE

Ben has worked himself free of his bonds and reaches for another rifle in his closet.

EXT. OVERSEER'S HOUSE

Ben reaches the Overseer's house just as he steps outside and FIRES on Cook and Tidd who immediately retreat.

Bullets WHIZ past their ears as they narrowly escape.

EXT. CHARLES TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Starry rides into the square of a neighboring town.

DOCTOR STARRY

(yelling)

People of Charles Town, I have come from Harpers Ferry to enlist your militia. We are in desperate need of men and guns.

The CROWD BUZZES.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A young man grabs his rifle
- An old man puts on his faded army uniform
- A BUGLE BLOWER plays revelry by the town flagpole.
- Starry stands over a TELEGRAPH OPERATOR as he sends warnings over the wire.

INT. GAULT HOUSE - DAY

ARMORY WORKERS, with nowhere else to go, drink, and speculate on the morning's events.

A GRUBBY worker drinks. A BESPECTACLED worker approaches.

GRUBBY
What do you hear?

BESPECTACLED
I hear there are over one hundred
and fifty of them.

A PORTLY worker joins in.

PORTLY
I hear they are taking the women up
to the mountains.

A SKINNY worker interjects.

SKINNY
I hear they are going to burn down
the town.

GRUBBY
As long as they leave the whiskey
alone.

Boerly enters with his small group of men.

BOERLY
(yelling)
Who will join us in the fight to
put the abolitionists down?

No takers.

BOERLY
Surely one amongst you has the
courage.

Crickets.

BOERLY
Not one of you will rise up to help
win back our freedom?

Still nothing.

BOERLY
Well, I for one, will not back
down. I will show you now that it
is time for action. Before it is
too late.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Stevens approaches Brown. It's obvious he is on edge.

STEVENS

The streets are beginning to fill
with people. They are organizing.

Brown checks his POCKET WATCH.

BROWN

I don't understand. Cook should
have been back hours ago.

STEVENS

We can't wait any longer or we will
lose control of the bridges. We
must take the guns and the hostages
into the mountains now and regroup.

Brown paces back and forth.

BROWN

We can't carry all the arms without
them.

STEVENS

What if they were ambushed? What if
they don't come?

BROWN

They will come. Now get back to
your post.

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Jeremiah Anderson spots Boerly and his men approaching.
Without hesitation Boerly raises his rifle and SHOOTS.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Anderson quickly dives inside.

JEREMIAH ANDERSON

Captain, they're moving on us!

BROWN

Shut the doors!

All three doors of the Engine House SLAM shut: BAM, BAM, BAM,
sealing them all inside.

Brown looks over at the hostages huddled in the corner.
Colonel Washington looks back.

COLONEL WASHINGTON
How does freedom feel to you now?

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Mayor Beckham rushes past crowds of TOWNSPEOPLE that have gathered in the streets. He is keenly aware that they are registered voters as he rushes toward Boerly as fast as his stubby legs will carry him.

MAYOR BECKHAM
What the hell are you doing?

BOERLY
What no one in this town seems to
have the nerve to do!

MAYOR BECKHAM
Stand down!

BOERLY
You are not a general.

MAYOR BECKHAM
And you are not a soldier.

Beckham gets in front of Boerly and will not yield.

For a moment, neither the butcher nor the mayor flinch.

BOERLY
The longer you wait, the more time
they will have to react.

MAYOR BECKHAM
I am the mayor!

Finally, Boerly lowers his gun.

BOERLY
What shall we do then, Mayor. I
mean, besides eat breakfast?

The mayor isn't made for this. He's sweating and almost having a heart attack. Out of the corner of his eye he sees the bridges.

MAYOR BECKHAM
Secure the bridges. We must control
our bridges.

Boerly never takes his eyes off the mayor.

BOERLY
(barking to his men)
Men! Fall back. To the bridges!

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Owen Brown, Meriam and Barclay Coppoc wait inside an old one room schoolhouse.

Crates of guns and pikes lie open waiting for men.

OWEN BROWN
Maybe we should get closer in.

MERIAM
Your father said to wait for Cook
and his men here and that's exactly
what we're going to do.

OWEN BROWN
But what if something happened?

MERIAM
What if we leave and they show up?
What then?

OWEN BROWN
Maybe I should go out and scout.

MERIAM
We stick together. Just like your
father said.

Owen is dejected.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Colonel Washington stands up to talk with Brown. Dauphin Thompson holds his rifle up to stop him.

Brown waves him off.

COLONEL WASHINGTON
You're the one they call Osawatomie
Brown, are you not?

BROWN
I am.

COLONEL WASHINGTON

Are you going to kill us like you killed the others?

BROWN

Those men were murderers. They destroyed and burned the town. They drove people off their land. They shot abolitionists as they walked the streets.

COLONEL WASHINGTON

And so you killed them.

BROWN

We are at war.

COLONEL WASHINGTON

There's no war.

BROWN

Wasn't it war when your uncle led the colonies against Britain? Why was he made a hero for fighting for freedom, yet I am made out to be a murderer?

COLONEL WASHINGTON

Because you are a cold-blooded killer.

BROWN

Because I fight for the black man. I fight to finish the revolution that your uncle started.

COLONEL WASHINGTON

Your revolution will never get out of this building.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER BRIDGE - DAY

A group from Boerly's militia load their rusty rifles and open FIRE.

Taylor returns FIRE.

The shooting attracts the WORKERS in the Gault House and they pour out to see what's going on.

Two men, PORTLY AND SKINNY begin hurling rocks. Taylor takes cover behind a post.

TAYLOR
How long can we hold out?

WATSON
We must keep the bridge open.

EXT. MARYLAND HEIGHTS - DAY

A militia company from Sharpsburg marches down the road on the other side of the river. As they approach the Potomac river bridge, they jockey for position and begin to FIRE on Watson Brown and Taylor.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER BRIDGE - DAY

Bullets plug into the post too close for Taylor's liking.

TAYLOR
They got a militia up already?

WATSON
Stay low!

TAYLOR
Your father said we'd be gone by
now.

GUNFIRE increases in intensity. Watson and Taylor return fire but they are severely outnumbered.

A musket ball strikes the bridge two inches away from Taylor's head.

Taylor takes off down the bridge toward the armory.

WATSON
No!

Taylor dodges bullets as he zigzags back toward the Armory.

Watson holds out for a moment longer but soon he is shot from his cover and is forced to retreat.

EXT. FERRY LOT - DAY

Taylor makes it past the armory gate when a bullet drops him.

Watson nearly trips over his body as he turns the corner. He grabs Taylor's arms and drags him toward the Engine House.

EXT. SHENANDOAH RIVER BANK - DAY

A militia from Frederick has arrived on the opposite side of the river and SHOOT at Oliver Brown and Newby.

EXT. SHENANDOAH BRIDGE - DAY

Oliver Brown and Newby draw heavy fire. They load and FIRE. Load and FIRE. But the volleys are coming fast and furious.

NEWBY

I can't stand no more of this!

OLIVER

We must hold the bridge!

NEWBY

We don't need this bridge.

OLIVER

My father said not to leave our posts.

NEWBY

He's not my father.

OLIVER

Do not desert your post.

Bullets tear through the wood posts of the bridge. They rip it apart like it's balsa.

NEWBY

My wife and children!

OLIVER

If you want to see them again, you'll stay right here and fight!

NEWBY

I can't.

Oliver points past the militia.

OLIVER

Your family is out there, Dangerfield. Out there! You want to see them again, then we can't lose this bridge.

NEWBY

Then I'll take the other.

OLIVER
Don't you dare leave your post!

Newby runs back toward Harpers Ferry.

OLIVER
(yelling)
Dangerfield!

EXT. SHENANDOAH STREET - DAY

Newby ducks behind a few barrels by the Dry Goods Store.

He pulls the letter from his wife out of his pocket and begins to read it silently like the Rosary.

NEWBY
(out of breath, to himself)
For there has been one bright hope
to cheer me in all my troubles,
that is to be with you.

EXT. SHENANDOAH BRIDGE - DAY

Bullets and musket balls SCREAM past Oliver and he is forced from his cover and races back toward the Armory.

EXT. DRY GOODS STORE - DAY

Newby watches as the town's attention is focused on Watson, and Taylor as they scramble through the Armory gate.

When he is sure they are looking in the other direction, he tries to blend in and walk quietly across the Potomac Bridge.

NEWBY
(to himself)
I'm comin' for you, my darling.

He moves from group to group, never lingering, but making his way ever closer to the open bridge on the other side.

NEWBY
(to himself)
I'm comin' for you.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

A SHARPSHOOTER who had broken away from Boerly's men watches from a second story window. He positions Newby squarely in his sight.

EXT. FERRY LOT - DAY

Newby sees the empty Potomac River bridge and makes a break for it.

NEWBY
(to himself)
I'm comin'...

He gets closer...

NEWBY (cont'd)
(to himself)
I'm comin'...

A SHOT rings out. Newby drops to the ground.

His wife's letter mixes with the blood and mud in his cold limp hand until a gentle breeze spirits it away.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

William Thompson and Stevens help Watson Brown drag Taylor inside. Oliver rushes in behind them and SLAMS the door.

OLIVER
They got Newby!

BROWN
Why did you leave your posts?

WATSON
We're outnumbered.

BROWN
You were to hold your posts until Cook returned with the reinforcements.

OLIVER
We would have died there.

BROWN
You prefer to die here?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WAGER HOUSE - DAY

LEADERS of each militia meet with Mayor Beckham. A map of the town lies in front of them.

Boerly stands in the background. He's fuming because he wasn't invited to the adult table.

MAYOR BECKHAM

A noble effort from our townspeople has driven the aggressors from the bridges, but they still control the Rifle Works, the Arsenal and the Armory.

SHARPSBURG LEADER

What would you have us do?

MAYOR BECKHAM

How well are your men trained?

SHARPSBURG LEADER

They are eager to fight, sir.

MAYOR BECKHAM

Can they show restraint?

SHARPSBURG LEADER

They've come to fight.

MAYOR BECKHAM

Try to restrain any blood lust. They have hostages. For now, spread your men out and surround these buildings.

SHARPSBURG LEADER

Yes, Mister Mayor.

The leaders leave. Boerly approaches the mayor.

BOERLY

Let me go in there sir.

MAYOR BECKHAM

(stern)

We have this well in hand. Now please, let us do what needs to be done.

Boerly storms off.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE

Stevens and Thompson peer out of small cracks in the doors.

STEVENS

They are surrounding us sir.

Brown paces.

WILLIAM THOMPSON

They have men on the roofs, in the windows and on the ground.

Brown wheels around.

BROWN

Where is Cook?

Brown's voice THUNDERS through the Engine House.

Stevens gives him his space for a moment, then approaches.

STEVENS

We have to have a decision,
Captain.

Brown runs his hand along Washington's sword. He ponders deeply his next move. Finally...

BROWN

We shall negotiate. We'll trade our hostages for our freedom and make our getaway into the mountains. We'll regroup there with Cook and our army.

Brown points to one of the hostages, the Businessman from the train.

BROWN

You. Come here.

Dauphin Thompson lets him pass.

BROWN

I want you to take a message to the militia. Tell them we will release the hostages for safe passage to Maryland.

Brown signals to William Thompson.

BROWN

William, accompany him with the
white flag of truce.

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

William Thompson hoists a makeshift white flag as he and the
Businessman move out.

EXT. ARMORY GROUNDS - DAY

William Thompson looks about nervously as they make their way
out the gate and toward the Wager House and the Ferry lot.

All is quiet as the eyes from the militia men cut right
through them.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Brown watches as William Thompson and the Businessman
disappear out of sight.

EXT. WAGER HOUSE HOTEL - DAY

As soon as they get close to the hotel, a group of men rush
out, grab William Thompson and drag him into the hotel.

Thompson struggles but can't get away. The Businessman dashes
to safety.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Cook and Tidd arrive at the schoolhouse. They are dirty and
tired.

Three older, ragged AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN accompany them but
they don't look like much of an army.

Owen Brown, Meriam and Barclay Coppoc rush out.

MERIAM

This is it?

TIDD

We've been to three plantations.
They just don't trust us.

MERIAM

This is no good.

BARCLAY COPPOC
What are we going to do now?

MERIAM
We can't go back without more men.
The Captain will be furious.

BARCLAY COPPOC
He's most certainly furious
already.

OWEN
I'm going to find my father.

COOK
Wait...

Owen runs off. Cook after him.

MERIAM
(yelling)
What about our army? This was your
responsibility!

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Stevens looks outside.

STEVENS
It's been nearly an hour, Captain,
why don't I go out and find them?

Brown points to one of the hostages, KITZMILLER.

BROWN
You and Watson, take him. Gun to
his head this time.

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

The door swings open and a white flag waves.

A moment later, Stevens and Watson Brown walk out with a gun
buried into Kitzmiller's temple.

They walk steadily toward the Wager house.

Militia men from the windows and rooftops stare them down.

STEVENS
Nobody move!

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Brown watches through a hole in the wall.

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

From behind a building, TOWNSPEOPLE urge Kitzmiller over.

TOWNSPEOPLE
Over here! Run!

Kitzmiller sweats as the gun bangs against his head.

TOWNSPEOPLE
He won't shoot. Run!

Kitzmiller makes a break for safety.

SHOTS immediately rain down on them.

Stevens is hit and struggles against gunfire to make his way back to safety.

Watson manages to get a few steps closer to the Engine House when he is struck.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Brown opens the door as Stevens stumbles in.

BROWN
Barbarians! Do they not honor the
code of war?

Watson pulls himself back. When he gets close to the door Oliver darts out.

Gun SHOTS rain down once more. Oliver is hit but manages to get Watson back inside.

INT. ARMORY - ENGINE HOUSE

Brown attends to his sons, Oliver and Watson. He stuffs cloth in their wounds to stop the bleeding.

BROWN
How are you son?

But Watson is too weak to answer.

When Brown takes his hands up from Watson's belly, they are stained red and look very much like his dyed hands from his days in the tannery.

BROWN
(yelling toward the doors)
You shall not take these two!

INT. GAULT HOUSE - DAY

Boerly drowns his anger in bourbon. A BARFLY watches him closely.

BARFLY
It was only a nigger.

Boerly's eyes glow.

BOERLY
Quiet.

BARFLY
They just savages. Wild savages
that got no literate skills or god.

BOERLY
Hayward was a better man than you.

BARFLY
You a nigger lover?

BOERLY
He was a man.

BARFLY
You love that man?

The Barfly makes SMOOCHING noises.

BARFLY
You're sweet on him, ain't you?

Boerly rises up from his seat. He towers over the Barfly who knows he should have kept his yapper shut.

BARFLY
Hey, I don't want no...

In one blow from Boerly's massive fist, the Barfly crumples and drops to the floor.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - LATER

Brown turns to WILLIAM LEEMAN (20).

BROWN

We must find out where Cook has gone. For all we know he could be on the other side of the river waiting for us.

LEEMAN

I'll go, Captain.

BROWN

But you can't swim.

LEEMAN

The water is low.

Brown looks him in the eye.

BROWN

You will come back.

Leeman forces himself to look into Brown's stare.

LEEMAN

Yes, Captain.

BROWN

We'll need a diversion.

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Osborne Anderson runs outside with a white flag tied to a pike.

When he gets away from the Engine House, Leeman crawls out and makes his way past some low shrubs.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

A Militia man spots Leeman and FIRES.

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

The shot gets the attention of the others and they all begin SHOOTING.

Osborne Anderson runs back inside. Leeman races across the armory grounds and jumps into a culvert.

INT. U.S. ARSENAL - DAY

Edwin Coppoc and Albert Hazlett watch from the second story.

HAZLETT

Those sons of bitches are shooting
at the white flag of truce.

He raises his rifle.

HAZLETT

Well if that's the new rule then so
be it.

Hazlett begins to fire upon the militia.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

The Militia take cover from Hazlett's bullets. They try to
figure out where they are coming from.

People seek shelter from this new front.

EXT. CULVERT - DAY

Leeman races through the culvert and plunges into the river.

Bullets rain down on him as he frantically tries to cross. He
loses his footing and goes under.

He struggles and tries to surface.

A SOLDIER raises his revolver high, to keep it dry, and
begins to wade out in the water after him. The bullets from
above subside.

Leeman flails away.

LEEMAN

I can't swim!

The Soldier reaches him and points the gun at his face.

LEEMAN

Don't shoot. I surrender.

The Soldier pulls the trigger.

INT. U.S. ARSENAL - DAY

Hazlett reloads.

HAZLETT
Come on, Edwin, shoot.

Edwin Coppoc looks over his gun. He raises it up and aims it at a Militia man.

HAZLETT
Shoot, damn it!

Bullets now fly up toward their window. They rip through the walls.

HAZLETT
Kill or be killed!

Edwin Coppoc's hands tremble. He closes his eyes. He squeezes the trigger. The recoil BLOWS him backward and his gun off target.

He opens his eyes in time to see a MAN drop in the street.

HAZLETT
You got one you old Quaker, you got one.

Edwin Coppoc drops his gun and runs down the stairs.

HAZLETT
Where are you going?

Hazlett hangs tough, firing back.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Edwin Coppoc runs toward the Armory, tears streaming down his face like a little boy.

EDWIN COPPOC
(softly, scared)
Mommy!

Bullets WHIZ past.

INT. U.S. ARSENAL - DAY

Hazlett spots a Militia man drawing a bead on Edwin Coppoc.

HAZLETT
Edwin!

He rises up to get a better shot and he is plugged in the chest with a musket ball.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

The drunk Armory Workers pour out of the Gault House and turn over the man whom Edward Coppoc shot... **It's Mayor Beckham.**

SKINNY
They got the mayor!

INT. WAGER HOUSE HOTEL - DAY

Skinny, Portly, Bespectacled and Grubby BURST into the hotel.

GRUBBY
Where is he?

Clara steps out from behind the desk.

CLARA
What are you planning on doing?

GRUBBY
What should be done to all of them.

Clara hurries to a closed door and stands in front of it.

CLARA
Leave him alone.

Portly shoves her aside. The men storm the room and grab William Thompson by the throat and drag him outside.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER BRIDGE - DAY

Other Militia men now gather around William Thompson as Grubby holds him over the bridge.

GRUBBY
Our mayor was worth ten thousand of
you vile pigs.

Grubby takes a pistol from a nearby Militia man, levels it on him and FIRES. William Thompson falls to the water below.

An angry crowd of men hurl everything they can find at his body as it drifts down stream.

EXT. FERRY LOT - DAY

Starry addresses a militia unit.

DOCTOR STARRY

We have confirmation that there are
no hostages in the rifle works.
Keep low and shoot only if
necessary. I do not wish for
anymore work today.

The men advance down Shenandoah Street.

INT. HALL RIFLE WORKS

Kagi, Copeland and Leary see the advancing mob.

KAGI

Fire!

Kagi and Copeland FIRE while Leary reloads their guns.

The militia FIRES back and bullets begin to RIP through wood
walls, EXPLODE through windows, and SHATTER bricks in a
confused fury.

After a few quick rounds, a hot barrel burns Leary and he
drops the gun.

LEARY

Damn!

COPELAND

Hurry Uncle Lewis!

Leary desperately tries to keep them supplied with loaded
guns but their ammunition is starting to run low.

LEARY

How many out there, sir?

KAGI

I don't know, they're swarming.

Leary hands more guns forward.

LEARY

Better make these count!

KAGI

How much more?

LEARY

The Captain said we'd be in the
mountains by now.

Kagi and Copeland fire off the last few rounds then their guns fall SILENT.

A few more shots RING OUT from the militia outside, then all goes QUIET.

Kagi looks back toward Leary to see the irony... a mountain of rifles but no bullets.

KAGI
We got to get back to help The
Captain. Out the back!

EXT. HALL RIFLE WORKS - DAY

Kagi, Copeland and Leary exit the back of the building.

KAGI
Split up and meet at the Armory!

Kagi makes a break down the Winchester and Potomac railroad tracks.

Copeland and Leary head down the river bank and toward the shallow Shenandoah river.

Starry sees the men flee.

DOCTOR STARRY
I'll go down the tracks... you take
the river!

A Militia fighter and a small group of men chase Copeland and Leary.

Starry and a small group of men pursue Kagi.

EXT. WINCHESTER AND POTOMAC RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY

Starry draws his gun and points it at Kagi.

DOCTOR STARRY
Halt!

Kagi keeps running.

DOCTOR STARRY
Stop or I'll shoot.

Kagi doesn't stop.

DOCTOR STARRY
Please stop!

Starry pursues him with his gun wildly aimed at his back but the doctor just can't seem to pull the trigger.

DOCTOR STARRY
You must stop! I beg you.

Out of nowhere, a gun SHOT. Kagi falls face down between the rails.

Starry looks at his gun barrel but there's no smoke. A MILITIA MAN sidles up next to him and holsters his gun.

MILITIA MAN
That ain't your job Doc. (Pointing to Kagi's writhing body) *That's* your job.

Starry rushes toward Kagi.

EXT. SHENANDOAH RIVER - DAY

A militia man, HOLT, and his MEN arrive at the bank of the river. Copeland and Leary are halfway across.

COPELAND
We supposed to go to the Armory!

The men begin to FIRE. Leary falls.

COPELAND
Uncle Lewis!

Blood begins to mix with the flowing water.

Copeland pulls his uncle to a mud and stone island.

COPELAND
No, please!

Holt and the men stop shooting. Holt wades across toward them.

Copeland draws Leary close.

COPELAND
Don't die, Uncle Lewis. Don't die.

LEARY

(weakly)

Tell the Captain I was on my way
back to him.

COPELAND

Uncle Lewis!

The life drains out of Leary and he goes limp.

Holt approaches with his pistol raised at Copeland. He presses it right to his forehead.

Copeland closes his eyes. Holt pulls the trigger, but the gun does not fire.

Holt immediately hits Copeland over the head with the gun handle.

BLACK.

EXT. MARYLAND HEIGHTS - DAY

Cook and Owen Brown sneak through the woods at the top of the hill overlooking Harpers Ferry.

They peer through the bush and see that the Potomac River Bridge is surrounded by militia, the town is filled with armed men of all kinds.

They sneak a little closer. Cook sees William Thompson's bullet riddled body awash on the shore.

COOK

Oh my God. This is all my fault.

He climbs a tree and begins to FIRE on the militia on the other side.

The Militia return FIRE.

Owen digs in and begins to SHOOT back.

OWEN

We can take them!

A huge volley of gunfire is returned. A musket ball hits Cook's tree branch and he falls to the ground.

Militia men begin to run across the bridge after them.

COOK
Come on, we've got to get out of
here.

They take off through the woods.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HARPERS FERRY - NIGHT

Militia men stand guard around the Armory. Bonfires burn in the streets.

Drunken Armory workers and Townspeople whoop it up in the streets.

The scene is more Mardi Gras than military action.

Random gun shots RING through the night air. Curious onlookers poke their heads out of doorways.

INT. GALT HOUSE - NIGHT

Boerly wakes up from his grog as Grubby sits down next to him.

GRUBBY
Poor thing about the mayor.

But Boerly hasn't heard yet.

BOERLY
What's that?

GRUBBY
Him getting killed.

This sobers him up.

GRUBBY
Took a bullet to the gut. Now I
hear the President is sending in
the army.

BOERLY
What?

GRUBBY
Yeah, they're on their way now.

Boerly SLAMS a few coins down and he's out the door.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - NIGHT

Occasional gunfire PELTS off the engine house.

Brown's men wait with their rifles. All of them are quiet.

Watson and Oliver Brown lie against a fire wagon, they cling to life. Their father watches over them.

The hostages lie down, but are not asleep.

A familiar voice from outside pierces the silence...

BOERLY (O.S.)
Come out of there you pigs!

EXT. FERRY LOT - NIGHT

Boerly sways back and forth as he tries to remain standing.

BOERLY
You don't surrender, I'm comin' in
and I'm gonna finish this.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - NIGHT

Everyone in the engine house listens in silence.

BOERLY (O.S.)
You got one minute.

Jeremiah Anderson quietly sneaks his rifle through a hole and draws a bead on Boerly.

BOERLY (O.S.)
Better come out now!

EXT. FERRY LOT - NIGHT

Boerly gets impatient and begins to move forward. He raises his gun as he approaches.

BOERLY
Time's up.

A SHOT.

He gets to within ten feet of the large wooden doors when blood slowly begins to appear on his shirt.

He struggles as he moves forward. A few more feet then he drops to his knees.

He squeezes off a SHOT but it flies errantly toward space.

As he realizes the finality of his wound, he lets go of his gun and falls face down on the ground. THUD.

Starry races out of the darkness...

DOCTOR STARRY
(yelling)
Don't shoot! I'm a doctor.

Starry turns him over and tries to stop the flow of blood.

DOCTOR STARRY
Thomas...

Boerly's losing it fast.

BOERLY
Mr. Shepherd...

DOCTOR STARRY
No, it's me, Richard.

BOERLY
I'm sorry...

DOCTOR STARRY
Don't talk.

BOERLY
I'm sorry.

Starry opens his bag...

DOCTOR STARRY
Hang in there.

BOERLY
I'm so sorry...

Boerly's eyes shut. He's gone.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - NIGHT

Brown hauls Anderson up by his belt exhibiting amazing strength for a near sixty year-old man.

BROWN
What are you doing?

ANDERSON
Protecting us from those savages.

Brown drops him.

BROWN
Nobody shoots until I give the
order!

From outside we hear the sound of BOOTS. Many, many boots.

EXT. FERRY LOT - NIGHT

Ninety MARINES march in formation and stop in the middle of the lot.

COLONEL ROBERT E. LEE (52), still dressed in civilian clothes, dismounts his horse and addresses his troops.

LEE
Men, we have hostages inside the Engine House. We do not know how many insurgents are inside, but we can be sure they are well armed. Lieutenant Green will assign you posts that you will guard through the night. We move at dawn.

LIEUTENANT ISRAEL GREEN (35), in his dress uniform, walks out toward Lee and salutes him.

LIEUTENANT GREEN
Colonel Lee.

Lee looks at his sword.

LEE
Your dress sword, Lieutenant? That will do you no good.

LIEUTENANT GREEN
I was in a bit of a hurry.

Lee is conscious of his attire.

LEE
Yes, I know what you mean. Now close down the saloons and clear the streets. It's a miracle every last one of them isn't dead.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - NIGHT

Shields walks over to Brown who attends to his sons.

SHIELDS

Sir?

Brown looks up.

SHIELDS (cont'd)

Looks like day got da whole army
out dere sir.

Brown doesn't reply.

SHIELDS (cont'd)

What do you s'pose day gonna do?

Brown pulls out Washington's sword and cradles it in his hands. He knows he is beaten.

BROWN

Why didn't they come, Shields? Why
didn't they come?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ARMORY - ENGINE HOUSE - DAWN

The sun begins to light over the hills. It's a beautiful crisp fall morning.

The Marines are lined up in two rows of twelve each. The men in the first row hold sledgehammers. The second row wields muskets and bayonets.

Other marines stand at the ready with rifles.

Behind the rows of Marines, almost all the TOWNSPEOPLE line the streets, inhabit the windows, and fill the rooftops. All trying to get a good view of what is about to happen.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Brown and Shields peer through holes in the wall.

Brown sees Lee walking across the Ferry Lot, talking with Lieutenant Israel Green and LIEUTENANT J.E.B STUART (26).

Shields levels his gun and puts Lee in his sights.

Brown places his hand on Shields' rifle.

BROWN
No. You mustn't.

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

J.E.B. Stuart approaches the doors of the Engine House carrying a letter and a white flag.

He KNOCKS.

Brown opens the door a crack, sticks his rifle into Stuart's face and snatches the note. He quickly reads it.

BROWN
If you want the hostages released alive then you must guarantee our safety.

STUART
I am not authorized to negotiate.

BROWN
Then you tell your commanding officer to come speak with me.

STUART
Colonel Lee will agree to no other terms. What is your answer?

Brown looks back on his brigade inside the engine house. They are tired and scared.

BROWN
We will not surrender.

Brown SLAMS the door shut.

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Stuart reports back to Robert E. Lee.

STUART
He will not surrender, Colonel.

LEE
Is he mad?

STUART
He looked rather calm.

LEE
Is he watching now?

STUART
Most assuredly.

LEE
Then we shall strike quickly and
spare no mercy.

Lee raises his sword...

LEE
Men!

... then points it toward the engine house.

LEE
Charge!

The Marines descend on the engine house, swinging their
sledge hammers at the thick oak doors.

A brigade of Marines runs forward with a large ladder to be
used as a battering ram.

The ladder hits the door and pushes it inward, but it does
not break.

LIEUTENANT GREEN
Again!

The Marines heave it at the door again. Splinters fly.

INT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Brown and his men push back on the door with all their might.

BROWN
Hold fast!

Another mighty heave from the outside and the hasp on the
door breaks.

The Marines are too strong for Brown's men and they push the
door open and begin to pour in.

BROWN
Sell your lives well, men!

GUNFIRE rains over their heads from the militia outside.

Brown's men RETURN FIRE.

The hostages hit the floor and take cover.

Brown rushes backward and kneels down next to Watson and Oliver. He holds his rifle in one hand and Watson's hand in the other.

BROWN
Fight 'til the end!

With each shot, the engine house fills with thick smoke, choking out the light and making it difficult to see.

Several Marines climb up on top of wagons and poles to get a better view.

Brown's men hide behind wagons and barrels for cover.

Colonel Washington retreats to a dark corner.

Dauphin Thompson charges toward the Marines. A bullet tears through his chest and he falls.

Washington scurries over and grabs Thompson's gun. He begins firing on Brown's men.

The smoke chokes the engine house. Bullets fly in all directions.

The freed and armed slaves put up little fight. They are confused and scared.

Brown's men SHOUT and SCREAM. Some in pain, others as a rally cry.

Brown fires off shots indiscriminately in all directions but hits no one. He is old and feeble now, no harm to anyone.

Jeremiah Anderson takes refuge behind a water barrel. A musket ball pierces the barrel and water begins to pour out.

For a moment he is spared. However, the next volley of shots explode through the empty barrel and hit his gut.

He crumples up and falls to the floor.

Lieutenant Green charges through the door and into the black smoke. He jumps up on a barrel in order to gain visibility.

LIEUTENANT GREEN
Where is Brown?

Out of the smoke, Brown aims his gun up at him. He has him dead in his sights.

Colonel Washington points toward Brown.

COLONEL WASHINGTON
There! That one is Osawatomie!

Brown pulls the trigger, but his gun is empty. CLICK.

Green jumps down and knocks Brown on the head with the handle of his dress sword. Brown staggers back and falls against the wall.

LIEUTENANT GREEN
Your time has come old man.

Green lunges at Brown with his sword... his dress sword...

Brown closes his eyes to accept his fate, but the tip hits Brown's belt buckle and curls backward.

Emboldened by this turn of events Brown rises from the floor.

BROWN
I am still here!

He raises his rifle to strike him, but Green beats him to it.

Green hits Brown on the head with the hilt. Brown immediately drops to his knees.

Blood pours from a gash in his head. Brown struggles to stay up.

BROWN
I am Captain John Brown.

Green STRIKES him again.

LIEUTENANT GREEN
Die old man!

Brown fights off the BLOW.

BROWN
I have come...

Green STRIKES him again.

BROWN
to free the slaves.

Another BLOW. His eyes roll back, but he fights...

BROWN
I am...

Green CONNECTS again.

The rifle falls from Brown's hand.

BROWN

John Brown.

Green lands the final BLOW and Brown falls to the cold damp floor.

Brown and his raiders have been silenced.

Lieutenant Green collects himself and looks over the Engine House. The bodies of the fallen Raiders and Marines lie on the floor.

Gun smoke hangs heavy in the air.

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Lee looks at his watch.

LEE

Three minutes.

The crowd CHEERS.

LEE (cont'd)

Send in the doctor.

Starry enters the engine house with his black bag.

The crowd begins to draw nearer.

LEE (cont'd)

Keep them back!

The Marines form a line around the perimeter and keep onlookers away.

EXT. ENGINE HOUSE - DAY

Starry returns.

DOCTOR STARRY

Brown is mortally wounded, sir. He will not survive much longer.

The crowd pushes against the Marines.

LEE

Take him to the office before the
mob tears him apart.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WAGER HOUSE HOTEL - DAY

A vocal throng of TOWNSPEOPLE gather around a train as steam
hisses from underneath.

GOVERNOR WISE (53) of Virginia, SENATOR MASON (61) of
Virginia, and CONGRESSMAN VALLANDIGHAM (39), step off the
train, followed by a throng of REPORTERS.

Wise loves the attention the reporters give him and makes
sure the townspeople notice.

A reporter from BALTIMORE throws out questions.

BALTIMORE REPORTER

Governor Wise, who do you think was
behind this attack?

WISE

We're working on that right now.

BALTIMORE REPORTER

Any suspicions?

Wise stops and looks over at Mason and Vallandigham.

WISE

Well, I wouldn't be surprised if it
was a Republican sponsored attack.
They want to take away the rights
of the states.

A WASHINGTON REPORTER jumps in.

WASHINGTON REPORTER

Why would they want that?

MASON

Because they wish to enslave all of
us under their rule. States must be
left to govern as they see fit.

VALLANDIGHAM

And the slave question is one that
should be decided by the states.

Wise looks over at the townspeople.

WISE

And so should the question of
thirst. As Governor of this state,
I hereby announce the reopening of
the saloons.

The townspeople CHEER. Wise smiles and waves to them.

INT. ARMORY - OFFICE - DAY

Brown lies on the floor covered with a blanket. His wounds
have been bandaged but blood soaks through. He is near death
and speaks with difficulty.

SHOUTS from the angry CROWD outside can be heard.

CROWD (O.S.)

Hang him! Murderer! Thief!

A Marine opens the door and lets Wise, Mason, Vallandingham
and the Reporters in.

The men pull up chairs and look down on Brown.

WISE

Mister Brown, the silver of your
hair is reddened by the blood of
crime.

BROWN

There is no crime when one is at
war.

WISE

But we are not at war. It is time
you cast away these hard allusions
and begin to prepare for eternity.

BROWN

There is an eternity behind us and
an eternity before us, and the
little speck in the center that
finds us here together. It seems I
have about ten years head start on
you and therefore you will be here
long after I leave. It behooves you
to prepare more than it does me.

The reporters love this and write down every word.

Brown notices their note pads. Reporters write and draw
sketches.

BROWN

Is this going to be in the newspaper?

WASHINGTON REPORTER

Are you kidding? Every one of them.

WISE

If you would just tell us who sent you here, who provided the means, that would be information of some value.

Suddenly, Brown is infused with life again. He manages to sit up and looks over the reporters as if they are in his command. Then he speaks...

INT. HOUSE - BOSTON - DAY

A MAN reads the newspaper to his WIFE.

MAN

(reading)

I will answer freely about what concerns myself. I will answer anything I can with honor, but not about others.

INT. TAVERN - ST. LOUIS - DAY

A BARTENDER reads the newspaper to his PATRONS.

BARTENDER

(reading)

To answer your question, Senator, no one sent me here. It was my own prompting and that of my maker, or that of the devil, whichever you please to ascribe it to.

INT. TRAIN STATION - CHICAGO - DAY

A BAGGAGE MAN reads the newspaper to a CONDUCTOR

BAGGAGE MAN

(reading)

As for this issue, I think you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity.

INT. FIRE HOUSE - NEW YORK - DAY

A FIRE FIGHTER reads the newspaper to his COMPANY.

FIRE FIGHTER

(reading)

I say it without wishing to be offensive, that it would be perfectly right for anyone to interfere with you so far as to free those you willfully and wickedly hold in bondage.

EXT. LUMBER MILL - MICHIGAN - DAY

A LUMBERMAN reads the newspaper to a fellow WORKER.

LUMBERMAN

(reading)

I do not say this insultingly. I think I did right and that others will do right who interfere with you at any and all times.

INT. DRY GOODS STORE - WASHINGTON - DAY

A PATRON reads the newspaper to the CLERK.

PATRON

(reading)

I hold that the golden rule, "Do unto others as others should do unto you," applies to all who help others gain their liberty.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHARLES TOWN COURTHOUSE - DAY

The streets are packed with PEOPLE. Police hold back the crowd.

SUPER: Ten days later.

The SHERIFF of Charles Town guides Brown, Edwin Coppoc, Stevens, Cook, Copeland, Hazlett and Shields from the jail house across the street to the courthouse.

Brown is still in horrible pain, Edwin Coppoc helps him walk. Stevens shakes with a terrible fever. The crowd YELLS and throws garbage at them.

Mary Brown appears out of the crowd. She's weary from travel and obviously dirt poor.

MARY

John!

Brown can barely turn to greet her.

BROWN

What are you doing here?

MARY

I won't let you face this alone.

BROWN

How? You can't have but a penny left.

MARY

You still have many supporters.

BROWN

I don't think this is a safe place for you.

She helps support him.

MARY

There is no safe place left.

INT. CHARLES TOWN COURTHOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Everyone from Harpers Ferry is there: Clara, the Drunk, the Bridge Guard, Doctor Starry, Colonel Washington, the Businessman, Robert E. Lee and Mary. It's a packed house.

Brown lies on a cot in the middle of the room, still bandaged from his wounds. The other men sit behind their appointed counsel, THOMAS C. GREEN (45) and LAWSON BOTTS (42).

The Sheriff walks in.

SHERIFF

All rise.

Everyone stands except Brown.

SHERIFF

The right and honorable Judge Richard Parker.

JUDGE RICHARD PARKER (49) enters and takes his seat.

JUDGE PARKER

This court is now in session for the people of the commonwealth of Virginia versus John Brown. Has the court appointed you counsel, Mister Brown?

Brown looks over at Green and Botts.

BROWN

I do not want counsel. No man should be assigned that duty.

JUDGE PARKER

Nonetheless, I have asked Thomas Green and Lawson Botts to defend your case. Will the sheriff please read the charges.

SHERIFF

John Brown is hereby charged with three counts: treason, murder and inciting slave insurrection.

JUDGE PARKER

How do you plead, Mister Brown?

Brown looks out at the court from his cot. He sees the throngs of REPORTERS lined up waiting to deliver their story.

He rises up with great difficulty. The court hushes.

BROWN

Virginians: If you seek my blood, you can have it at any moment without the mockery of a trial. I am ready for my fate.

The crowd ERUPTS. Judge Parker SLAMS his gavel.

JUDGE PARKER

Order! Order please.

Governor Wise leans to Mason.

WISE

I want this done, and done quickly. The more time he has to live, the more trouble he can stir.

Lawson Botts stands.

BOTTS

We would like to enter a plea of
insanity, your honor.

The crowd ERUPTS once more. Brown spins around.

BROWN

(angry)

I reject any attempt to interfere
with me on that score.

Stevens whispers to Edwin Coppoc.

STEVENS

They're trying to discredit him.

Wise is furious.

MASON

They'll send him to the madhouse.

WISE

They can't do this. He must hang.

The Judge BANGS his gavel.

JUDGE PARKER

Order, we shall have order!

The crowd quiets down. Botts pulls a telegram from his
pocket.

BOTTS

I have here a telegram from Mister
Brown's own family back in Ohio
explaining how there is insanity
that runs deep in the family and
that the defendant suffers from
that very same malady.

MURMURS.

BOTTS

I ask the court, what sane man
would willingly lay his life down
for the life of a slave? It is the
defense's position that Mister
Brown is delusional and suffers
from severe emotional trauma which
renders him incapable of judging
his own actions. I hereby enter a
plea of insanity.

Brown is outraged.

BROWN

I am perfectly aware of my actions.
I don't want that man speaking for
me.

The court grows LOUDER.

JUDGE PARKER

Order, please. The court will not
allow an insanity plea to be
entered on Mister Brown's behalf.
The trial will proceed accordingly.

INT. CHARLES TOWN COURTHOUSE - DAY (LATER)

ANDREW HUNTER, the prosecuting attorney questions Dr. Starry.

HUNTER

Let's start at the beginning. Tell
me about the first man whom John
Brown killed.

BOTTS

Objection! There is no proof it was
Brown who pulled the trigger.

JUDGE PARKER

Overruled.

Botts is exasperated. He knows this is a kangaroo court.

HUNTER

Tell me about Hayward Shepherd.

DOCTOR STARRY

He was everyone's favorite down at
the Wager house.

HUNTER

That's the hotel by the train
station.

DOCTOR STARRY

Yes. He was a baggage man.

HUNTER

And when he was killed who did you
seek out first?

DOCTOR STARRY

Thomas Boerly.

HUNTER

Why?

DOCTOR STARRY

Because he was our local militia leader.

HUNTER

And...

DOCTOR STARRY

Because Mr. Boerly had a special relationship with the victim.

HUNTER

In what way?

DOCTOR STARRY

Before Mr. Shepherd was given his freedom, he was owned by Thomas Boerly's father, Thaddeus Boerly. Shepherd ran his plantation and had cared for Thomas ever since he was little. When Thomas grew up, and became a successful businessman, he bought Mr. Shepherd away from his father and granted him his freedom.

HUNTER

So Mr. Brown gunned down a man who actually accomplished the one thing he says he was fighting for.

BOTTS

Objection!

JUDGE PARKER

Overruled.

Botts slams his notebook on the table and HUFFS.

DISSOLVE TO:

The Businessman is now on the stand.

BUSINESSMAN

That's when I saw one of Brown's men in the window of the Arsenal put the Mayor in his gun sights.

HUNTER

Who was that man? Is he in this court room?

The Businessman points to Edwin Coppoc.

BUSINESSMAN
There. That's him.

HUNTER
For the record, let it be noted
that he pointed to Edwin Coppoc.

Brown can't stand it any longer.

BROWN
What about the death of William
Thompson? Was that not cold-blooded
as well?

HUNTER
The prosecution asks that Mister
Thompson's death not be admitted to
the record.

BROWN
On what grounds?

HUNTER
On the grounds that Mister
Thompson's death, while tragic, is
immaterial to your trial.

BROWN
Is it? Or is it because the man who
instigated this mob justice was
your own son?

The crowd GASPS.

BROWN
You stated you were going to
conduct a fair trial, but no one
speaks about the horrors committed
by anyone but my men.

The Reporters write furiously as Judge Parker glances over
toward them. Brown notices his concern for the press.

EXT. STREET CORNER - BOSTON - DAY

A PAPERBOY sells all his newspapers out in a moment.

PAPERBOY
John Brown Trial! Latest news!

CLOSE on Headline: CAPTAIN BROWN ON TRIAL! TALKS OF FREEING THE NEGRO.

INT. TRAIN STATION - NEW YORK - DAY

PASSENGERS sit on long benches reading the newspaper.

CLOSE on Headline: NEGRO QUESTION BROUGHT TO A BOIL AT HARPERS FERRY.

INT. PRINTING PRESS - CHICAGO - DAY

Newspapers roll through the presses.

CLOSE on Headline: BROWN: TRAITOR IN SOUTH, HERO IN NORTH

INT. CHARLES TOWN COURTHOUSE - DAY

Brown lies on his cot as Hunter questions him.

HUNTER

Tell me about the Mayor. Witnesses have told the court that he was gunned down, unarmed, in the middle of the street.

BROWN

I did not witness the death of the Mayor. If it was at the hand of one of my men, I am truly sorry.

Brown looks over at the press. The Reporters write down every word he says.

HUNTER

You did not witness the Mayor's death, therefore you are unaccountable? The Mayor was hunted down like an animal on the streets of his own home by one of your men.

BROWN

I did not see that.

HUNTER

Well it happened under your command. It happened as a direct result of your actions.

Brown remains silent.

HUNTER

Why did you choose to attack the Federal Armory?

BROWN

Is there a better place to find arms?

CHUCKLES, MURMURS.

HUNTER

Attacking the Federal Armory is akin to attacking the United States of America, wouldn't you agree?

BROWN

Yes.

GASPS.

HUNTER

Then you agree with the charges of treason filed against you?

BROWN

Is it treason to sell out the Declaration of Independence?

Brown BANGS on his cot.

BROWN

Is it treason to turn the other way when the Declaration of Independence is enforced for some of the states, but not all of them?

GASPS.

BROWN

Is it treason to ignore the basic rights of our country all in the name of money?

HUNTER

The Declaration of Independence is not on trial here.

BROWN

It ought to be. Because every morning a slave wakes up, and is considered property of another man, one of our fundamental truths is cast aside: that all men are created equal.

The Reporters write feverishly.

HUNTER

Slavery is not the issue.

BROWN

Slavery is the entire issue. It is not a state issue, or a southern issue, it is a Federal issue, and therefore must be dealt with by the highest office in the land.

Brown gets off his cot. Struggles to his feet.

BROWN

The two most sacred documents in the world are the Bible and the Declaration of Independence. And it is better that a whole generation of men, women and children pass away by a violent death than a word of either should be violated.

The court ERUPTS. Judge Parker BANGS his gavel.

JUDGE PARKER

Order! Order, please.

INT. CHARLES TOWN COURTHOUSE - JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Attorneys, HIRAM GRISWOLD (60) AND SAMUEL CHILTON (54), speak with Judge Parker.

GRISWOLD

We were sent by supporters of Brown to provide him with adequate defense.

JUDGE PARKER

He has court appointed attorneys.

CHILTON

He has excused them your honor.

JUDGE PARKER

He can represent himself well.

GRISWOLD

But he wishes us to handle his case.

JUDGE PARKER

Very well.

GRISWOLD

We would like to request a week extension to review the facts of the case.

JUDGE PARKER

Under no circumstances will this trial be delayed.

GRISWOLD

With all due respect, the trial began the same day as the defendant was indicted.

JUDGE PARKER

Are you making an accusation?

GRISWOLD

No, your honor, I'm just trying to make sure my client's wounds can heal before he is sent to the gallows.

INT. CHARLES TOWN COURTHOUSE - DAY

Griswold questions Brown. Mary Brown sits eagerly on the edge of her chair. With each of Brown's answers, Mary tries to gauge audience reaction.

GRISWOLD

Did you shoot the Mayor, Mister Brown?

BROWN

No I did not.

GRISWOLD

Did you shoot Thomas Boerly?

BROWN

No sir.

GRISWOLD

What about Privates Quinn and Rupert?

BROWN

No sir.

GRISWOLD

And what say you of Mister Shepherd, the baggage man?

BROWN
Now, why would I shoot a Negro?

GRISWOLD
Yes, why would you shoot and kill
the very man you were trying to
help?

Griswold lets that question air up to the rafters.

GRISWOLD
But these men were shot.

BROWN
I am told they were.

GRISWOLD
But your men were under strict
orders not to shoot unless they
were defending themselves.

BROWN
I said that.

GRISWOLD
Did you shoot Colonel Robert Lee?

GASPS. TALKING.

JUDGE PARKER
Order please.

GRISWOLD
No, he wasn't shot. But your man,
Shields Green, had the Colonel in
his sights and you pulled his gun
away. Didn't you?

BROWN
Yes, sir.

The Reporters write feverishly. Mary takes some strength from
this.

GRISWOLD
Even though he was readying his
army to dispose of you?

BROWN
Yes.

GRISWOLD
Why was that?

BROWN
Because he was unarmed.

GRISWOLD
You don't shoot unarmed men, do
you?

BROWN
No sir.

A TOWNSPERSON stands up in his seat.

TOWNSPERSON
What about Kansas?

JUDGE PARKER
Order please!

Griswold continues on.

GRISWOLD
Colonel Lee described the situation
in Harpers Ferry, when he arrived,
as one of drunken chaos. He noted a
disorderly mob hell-bent for
justice. Like the one that took
Mister Thompson from the hotel and
shot him in the head. Were you the
aggressor, or were you acting in
self defense?

BROWN
I believe our actions, in each one
of these cases, was justified.

GRISWOLD
Have you ever in your life sworn
allegiance to Virginia?

BROWN
I have not.

GRISWOLD
And you are not a citizen of the
commonwealth?

BROWN
No sir.

GRISWOLD
Therefore, by law, you can not be
charged as a rebel against her
authority.

Nor, can you be guilty of treason.
At the most you resisted authority.

BROWN

I suppose.

GRISWOLD

So as to this court's claims of
treason, let them be made in a
Federal court, as the Armory falls
under the jurisdiction of the
Federal government.

Griswold walks over toward the jury.

GRISWOLD

Mister Brown, did you and your men
set out to incite a slave
insurrection?

BROWN

Yes, that was our goal.

GRISWOLD

Did the slaves ever revolt?

BROWN

No, they did not.

GRISWOLD

Did they arm themselves?

BROWN

No.

GRISWOLD

Did they assemble or riot?

BROWN

No.

GRISWOLD

Don't you need an insurrection to
be charged with one?

Griswold looks over to the jury.

GRISWOLD

So if no insurrection occurred, how
can you be charged with something
that was only a thought in your
mind? Are we to be charged with our
thoughts?

Are we to be held accountable for things we'd like to happen, but never happen?

Mary is quite pleased.

INT. JAILHOUSE - CHARLES TOWN - NIGHT

Brown and Edwin Coppoc share a cell. Brown lies on his cot. Coppoc sits in the corner WHIMPERING.

BROWN
Now what's that?

EDWIN COPPOC
I promised my mother I wouldn't use a gun.

Brown lies still for a moment. Looking up at the ceiling.

BROWN
Do you believe in God?

EDWIN COPPOC
Yes, sir.

BROWN
Do you believe he is peaceful and loving, or spiteful and malicious?

EDWIN COPPOC
Peaceful and loving.

BROWN
Then why does he arm us and our enemies?

EDWIN COPPOC
I don't know.

Brown rises up.

BROWN
Because God is a warrior. He is on the side of truth and righteousness and he wants those qualities to win in us.

Edwin Coppoc looks into Brown's fiery eyes.

BROWN
You know that Christ once armed Peter. And so he armed me.

He put a sword into my hand and left it there as long as he saw best.

EDWIN COPPOC

But you...

Edwin Coppoc immediately cuts himself off.

BROWN

Go on, son. You can say it.

EDWIN COPPOC

But you didn't win.

BROWN

Through all of it, the bullets, the swords, the years of struggle... I am still here, aren't I?

EDWIN COPPOC

Yes.

BROWN

Then the fight is not over yet.

INT. CHARLES TOWN COURTHOUSE - DAY

The Sheriff addresses a packed house. Brown lies on his cot.

SHERIFF

All rise. The right and honorable Judge Richard Parker.

Judge Parker walks in and turns to the jury.

JUDGE PARKER

Have you reached a verdict?

The FOREMAN of the jury stands.

FOREMAN

We have your honor.

JUDGE PARKER

What is it?

The Reporters are poised with their pads.

JURY

The jury finds the defendant, John Brown, guilty of treason.

Guilty of advising and conspiring with slaves and others in order to rebel. And guilty of murder in the first degree.

The crowd ERUPTS.

Judge Parker BANGS his gavel several times before he can quiet the room.

JUDGE PARKER

(to Brown)

Before I hand down your sentence is there anything you'd like to say?

Brown struggles to stand. He finally rises up.

BROWN

I deny everything but what I have admitted all along, my plan to free the slaves. I never intended murder, treason, the destruction of property, or to incite slaves to rebellion. I believe that to have interfered, as I have done, on behalf of God's despised poor, was not wrong, but right. Had I interfered on behalf of the rich or the powerful, it would have been seen as just. And every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of justice, and mingle my blood with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel and unjust enactments, I say, let it be done.

The crowd is SILENT.

JUDGE PARKER

I hereby sentence the defendant, John Brown, to be hung in public on Friday, the second of December.

He BANGS his gavel.

JUDGE PARKER

Court is adjourned.

INT. JAILHOUSE - CHARLES TOWN - DAY

Brown writes a letter. His wounds have healed somewhat, but are still visible.

The JAIL MASTER leads THOMAS HIGGENSON (36) a Harvard educated wealthy supporter of Brown, to Brown's cell.

JAIL MASTER

You have a visitor, Captain.

He lets Higgenson into Brown's cell and collects his dinner plates.

BROWN

Tell your wife it was the finest Thanksgiving meal I have ever eaten.

JAIL MASTER

Thank you. I will.

BROWN

(to Higgenson)
What is happening?

Higgenson makes sure that they are alone.

HIGGENSON

Fires burn late into the night. In New York, there is talk of a war between the states if you should die.

Higgenson checks to make sure the Jail Master has not returned.

HIGGENSON

(whispering)

We have a plan to set you free. We are going to kidnap Governor Wise and hold him on a boat off the shore until we hear that you've been released.

BROWN

I will not encourage any attempt to save my life.

HIGGENSON

What? Why?

BROWN

I have no doubt now that our disaster will ultimately result in a most glorious success.

HIGGENSON

But how if you are dead?

BROWN

I have failed many times in my life, but I'm sure I can recover all my lost capital by hanging for only a few moments by the neck.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - CHARLES TOWN - SUNSET

SAWING and HAMMERING echo through the cold winter landscape. The GALLOWS is nearly complete.

SUPER: One week later.

A whip CRACKS.

SOLDIER (O.C.)

Faster!

INT. JAILHOUSE - CHARLES TOWN - NIGHT

Mary Brown is in Brown's cell. There are two place settings of empty dishes on a small table.

Brown takes Mary's hand and opens it. Inside, he places three buttons. One is dirty and old. The other two are blood-soaked.

BROWN

This is Frederick. This is Oliver. And this is Watson. They brought me strength in my weakest moments.

He yanks a button off his jacket. Mary begins to cry.

MARY

No. No.

She doesn't want to take it, but he finally takes her hand and places the button with the others. He wraps his beaten, calloused hands around hers and holds them tight.

The Jail Master opens the door.

JAIL MASTER
Time to go now Mary.

They rise. He holds her a moment.

MARY
I can't be there tomorrow. They
won't let anyone in.

He looks into her eyes. He is tranquil and happy.

BROWN
It is finally about to begin.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HARPERS FERRY - 1881 - DAY

A much older Frederick Douglass gives a speech on a wooden platform near the Engine House.

DOUGLASS
Great God on what a slender thread
hang everlasting things.

He looks out at the huge crowd that has assembled, both white and African American. Many of the people there are young and weren't yet born when Brown raided their town.

DOUGLASS
Did John Brown fail? Did he draw
his sword against slavery and lose
his life in vain?

EXT. JAILHOUSE - CHARLES TOWN - DAY

John Brown is led down the steps of the jail by the Jail Master. A crowd has gathered outside. A buckboard with a casket on top, waits for him in the street.

SUPER: December 2, 1859

Brown spots an African American MOTHER holding her BABY.

DOUGLASS (V.O.)
Ask the young Negro who Brown
stopped to kiss in the hour of his
most extreme need.

Brown leans over to kiss the baby.

EXT. HARPERS FERRY - 1881 - DAY

CLOSE on a twenty-two year old African American MALE. Douglass continues from his podium.

DOUGLASS

The young Negro man who stands free
with us today.

EXT. ROAD - 1859 - DAY

The buckboard, with Brown perched on top, ambles away from the crowd. Brown sits straight and looks out over the countryside. The Jail Master sits at his side.

BROWN

This is a beautiful country. I have
never had the pleasure of seeing it
before.

EXT. GALLOWS - DAY

A regiment of the U.S. Army guards the grounds. They are the only witnesses.

CLOSE on Governor Wise.

DOUGLASS (V.O.)

Ask Henry Wise, Governor of
Virginia, whose house, less than
two years later, was turned into a
school for emancipated slaves.

Brown is led up the steps to the gallows. CLOSE on Senator Mason.

DOUGLASS (V.O.)

Ask Senator James Mason, the author
of the inhumane fugitive slave
bill, who was cooped up in Fort
Warren, as a traitor, less than two
years from the time he stood over
the prostrate body of John Brown.

The EXECUTIONER meets Brown with a rope and a hood. Brown checks his POCKET WATCH one last time and then gladly hands it over to the Executioner.

BROWN

Do not keep me waiting longer than
necessary.

The Executioner slips on the hood. Then the rope.

DOUGLASS (V.O.)
Was John Brown a failure?

The Executioner turns toward Governor Wise. Wise nods his head and the Executioner swings a cutlass.

John Brown drops through a hole in the floor. His neck snaps neatly and his body dangles gently above the ground. He offers no struggle.

EXT. HARPERS FERRY - 1881 - DAY

Frederick Douglass stands on his platform.

DOUGLASS
John Brown did not end slavery, but he did begin the war that ended it. If we look over the dates, places, and men for which the honor is claimed, we shall find that Virginia, not Carolina, Harpers Ferry, not Fort Sumter, John Brown, not Colonel Anderson, began the war that ended slavery. People have often credited me with being a great man. A man who spoke out for the equality of his race. But I am no great man compared to John Brown. For, while I could live for the slave... John Brown could die for them.

EXT. HARPERS FERRY - 1861 - DAY

Thousands of Union TROOPS march on Harpers Ferry.

SUPER: June 18, 1861

DOUGLASS (V.O.)
No, John Brown did not fail.

The Troops sing the song "John Brown's Body"

TROOPS
(singing)
*John Brown's body lies a-mouldering
in the grave,
While weep the sons of bondage whom
he ventured all to save;*

*But though he lost his life in
struggling for the slave,
His truth is marching on.*

The Troops cross the Potomac River Bridge.

DOUGLASS (V.O.)
Just a short eighteen months after
he was hanged, his men... in
numbers not even he could have
imagined... finally came.

The Troops pass the Armory.

TROOPS
(singing)
*Glory, glory, hallelujah,
His soul goes marching on...*

FADE TO BLACK.