

FADE IN:

INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

The countryside blurs past in a kaleidoscope of early spring, bouncing with the motion of the CARRIAGE. On either side of a dusty road, black WORKERS bend in endless rows of green-brown. Tobacco. Slaves.

The carriage DRIVER is also of African descent. His sole passenger is a groomed gentleman, a member of the upper-class judging from the quality of his travel. This is JOSEPH CRAWFORD (60).

Joseph clicks open the face of his gold pocket-watch, removing his eyes from the passing fields.

INT. OWENS' FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Small, simple. Wooden floor, wooden walls, and one large wooden bed. ISABELLE (11) pokes out from under the quilts.

ANTONIA (17), pretty despite the abject plainness of her clothing, is already awake. Her side of the is bed already made.

After inspecting it for holes, she lays out a small BLACK DRESS. Antonia kisses her sister once on the forehead, gently as not to wake her, before she leaves the room.

EXT. OWENS' FARM - DAY

There are no workers in these fields. Some distance from the modest farmhouse, EDWARD (21) stands knee-deep in earth. Muddy sweat tumbles down his bare chest as he digs.

Beside the growing pile of dirt lies a yet-to-be erected GRAVESTONE. Its engraving reads "William Owens, beloved father, born January 1809, died April 1861."

Edward plants the shovel in the ground and pauses to take a large mouthful of water from a tin cup. He wipes his brow with the back of his wrist. Without thinking, he turns his head to the side and SPITS.

Edward pauses, staring at the tiny pool of desecration at his feet. He frowns, but does not rub it away. Instead, he sets down his cup and takes back up the shovel.

INT. OWENS' FARMHOUSE - DAY

Skirt and sleeves hiked up, Antonia struggles to open the door while carrying two heavy buckets of milk.

She looks around, but there is no one there to assist her. Finally, she does it, but not without sloshing quite a bit onto herself and the floor.

Antonia sighs and sets the buckets down, then tosses a cloth over the spill. She looks at her beet red hands and flexes her fingers a few times.

No rest for the weary. Immediately, she returns to a waiting lump of bread dough. Antonia kneads it methodically. She looks like she might cry.

The sound of HORSE HOOVES draws closer.

EXT. OWENS' FARM - DAY

Outside of the house, a SHABBIER CARRIAGE pulls up. Not Joseph's. PIERCE (23) steps down. He is tall and thin. Antonia rushes out to greet him.

They stand before each other for a moment, as though unsure what to say. Then, at once, Antonia licks her thumb and reaches out as though to wipe some smudge from Pierce's face.

He playfully bats her away and fingers his moustache.

PIERCE
You don't like it?

He leans forward and kisses her on the cheek.

ANTONIA
I'll get your things.

She returns his kiss, then goes for the luggage in the back of the cart.

INT. OWENS' FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Edward, cleaned up and dressed in a simple black suit, looks up as Pierce and Antonia enter. Next to his brother, Edward looks even more sun-browned and muscled.

Edward steps up and looks Pierce in the eye. They shake hands, then pull each other into a fierce hug.

EXT. OWENS' FARM - DAY

The fancy carriage rolls to a stop. The driver hurries down to open the door.

Isabelle, awake and dressed, waits to greet Joseph as he climbs out.

He looks over their immediate surroundings, then examines the young girl as an afterthought. This arrival lacks all the warmth of Pierce's.

Isabelle looks down the road, but there are no more carriages coming. She shows Joseph toward the house as the driver sets to work unhitching the horses.

EXT. OWENS' FARM - DAY

A light wind flutters the pages of the PASTOR's worn Bible. He murmurs the LAST RITES over the freshly filled grave. The horses graze in the background.

Joseph stands beside the clergyman on one side, while the children rim the other. No one else attends the funeral.

As all join in the solemn chorus of "Amen," Pierce slips a hand onto Antonia's shoulder and gives it a gentle squeeze.

INT. OWENS' FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

A white apron splashes contrast against Antonia's austere frock. She crouches over a large basin in the middle of the floor. Scrubbing dishes.

Isabelle lingers near the door.

ISABELLE

Are you sure you don't want any help?

Antonia waves her off.

Isabelle waits a moment, unsure. Soon the approach of heavy FOOTSTEPS guides her away.

Joseph enters from the hall and looks upon Antonia. He softly CLUCKS HIS TONGUE. She pauses her washing.

ANTONIA

I made up his room for you...It's the only one open.

JOSEPH

You shouldn't have troubled yourself. I won't be staying the night.

ANTONIA

You won't?

JOSEPH

Don't worry. I'll send someone back for everything soon. You won't have to live in this wretchedness much longer.

Antonia grabs a towel to dry.

ANTONIA

I don't mind it.

JOSEPH

That's only because you don't know any better.

(off her look)

Not that you girls or your brothers are to be blamed for your upbringing.

ANTONIA

Father brought us up just fine.

Joseph eyes the small kitchen disparagingly, in clear disagreement.

JOSEPH

Tell me, girl, can you read and write?

ANTONIA

Yes. And so can Isabelle.

JOSEPH

I noticed no one else came out for the services.

Silent, Antonia rises to put the dishes away.

JOSEPH

Let me help you with that. A young woman shouldn't have to do such chores, especially when she is grieving.

He reaches out and takes the stack from her, stealing a glance at her callouses.

JOSEPH

We'll have to get you some gloves, too.

As Joseph turns his back to place the dishes in the cabinet, Antonia rubs her hands self-consciously.

INT. OWENS' FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Antonia shuffles down the hall, exhausted. Her path is lit by a single candle.

She stops at a door and peers in. Her father's room is empty and immaculate. After a moment, she continues toward her own.

Across the hall, dim light seeps out beneath the door to yet another room. Antonia listens. She can hear her brothers TALKING QUIETLY, but there is an edge to it, as though they may be arguing. Her hand instinctively reaches for the doorknob, but she changes her mind.

Antonia gingerly sets the candle down on the floor, then lays down on the hard wood. Curled up outside the door, she drowsily listens in.

INSIDE BOYS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The tiny bedroom is littered with the items of their meager estate. Pierce's bag remains packed on one of two beds.

Numerous candles and a few lanterns bathe the walls with a dull glow. Pierce sits at a desk, examining papers. Edward is on his bed, surrounded with books, clothing, and other odds and ends that he sorts into piles.

They are still dressed in their black suits, but jackets are off, shirts untucked, suspenders hanging loose.

EDWARD

Worth what? We barely grew enough this year to keep us fed. I reckon we could turn a higher profit selling off this junk.

PIERCE

Farms always have their bad seasons. Give it another year and it will turn around.

EDWARD

Well maybe I don't want to spend the rest of my days tilling. And I'll wager that fancy law degree means you don't, either.

PIERCE

It's still our property by right. Nobody gives up a piece of land.

(MORE)

PIERCE (cont'd)
Anyway, even if you don't want to
work it, Antonia might. Or
Isabelle when she grows a little
older.

Edward snaps a book closed with excessive force and throws it
down on the stack.

EDWARD
For god's sake. We already had
this discussion. And lay off that
lamp, we need the kerosene for
tomorrow.

Pierce frowns and sets the lamp down, begrudgingly bringing a
document closer to his eyes to read.

PIERCE
I'm sorry, Edward, but you know how
I feel about him. I still don't
see why they can't stay with one of
us until it comes time to marry.

EDWARD
Going with Uncle Joseph's the best
thing for those girls, an' you know
it! He can buy them anything they
want, take them to the Governor's
ball an' the like. They'll never
have to spend another day in the
fields.

PIERCE
Because he has slaves.

EDWARD
Come off it! It ain't about that.

Pierce raises his voice.

PIERCE
Father would have rather died than
allow...

Edward raises his even higher, cutting his brother off.

EDWARD
Well he did, Pierce! And left us
nothing but a plot of barren dust
and a blackened name!

They stew in angry silence for a minute before Edward cools
off and speaks.

EDWARD

Anyway, if you want to tell Antonia that you want her to live the kind of life pop lived, go right ahead. She's sitting outside the door.

Pierce looks up, taken slightly aback. He gets up and crosses to the door, opening it.

Antonia, now sitting up against the wall, looks up at him tired, but alert. Pierce's frown softens and he takes her hand, helping her up.

She closes the door behind them, yawning.

ANTONIA

I wish you wouldn't fight with each other.

EDWARD

Nobody's fighting, Chickadee.

Pierce turns to one of Edward's piles and digs something out.

PIERCE

Come here, Antonia.

She obliges. Pierce sets something in her arms.

PIERCE

Father wanted you to have this.

Antonia unfurls the item. It is a large, majestic UNITED STATES FLAG. Its blue and red dyes are old, but rich. Antonia runs her fingers over it, moved.

PIERCE

Given to him by his dad after '12.

ANTONIA

I know.

She carefully folds it back up.

ANTONIA

Are you really going to (yawn) sell this place?

EDWARD

Get to bed, sis. And don't you worry. Pierce and I are going to make sure everything works out the way it oughta.

PIERCE

Leave everything to your big
brothers, okay?

Antonia nods sleepily.

ANTONIA

Okay.

She gives each brother a kiss on the cheek and turns out of the room, holding the flag against her chest.

EXT. DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE - DAY

The streets near the Harbor teem with life. Isabelle and Antonia take in the urban bustle with a certain wonder; it's been some time since they were last this far into the city.

Uncle Joseph leads the children through the crowds like a flock of black sheep. Every now and again, passersby greet Joseph aloud, addressing him as "Senator Crawford."

Antonia looks longingly at a GROUP OF GIRLS about her own age. Their skin is fair, their dresses new, and their hair all done-up. When they glance in her direction, Antonia swiftly removes her gaze.

Edward, watching out of the corner of his eye, sees the fancy girls stare at the siblings for a moment before one whispers something to another. Edward shrinks even more than Antonia does. It is not just their all-black clothing that makes them stand out.

As they approach the center of town, the city girls disappear behind them and the giant BOATS on the harbor rise into view.

Joseph looks at them with disdain.

ISABELLE

Ooh, what are those?

PIERCE

Union gunships.

JOSEPH

These Federal aggressors mean to bring blood to us all, you mark my words.

PIERCE

(derisive)

Yet it was the secessionists who fired first at Sumter, wasn't it?

(MORE)

PIERCE (cont'd)
 And now that Virginia's gone
 Rebel...

Joseph raises a brow at Pierce's gall, but lets it go.
 Edward, on the other hand, casts his brother a challenging
 look.

EDWARD
 Not everyone is content to rot in
 intolerable circumstances, Pierce.

Joseph gives an approving smile.

JOSEPH
 Well spoken, lad. You haven't had
 the privilege of higher education
 like your brother, have you?

EDWARD
 No, sir.

JOSEPH
 I've already extended the offer to
 him, but how would you like to join
 me at the General Assembly? See if
 some old graying lawmakers can't
 teach you more than any puffed up
 New Jersey professor. Think you're
 up to it?

Edward beams.

EDWARD
 Very much. Thank you, Sir.

Joseph smiles and claps him on the shoulder.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 They're going to regret voting down
 my bill. If Mr. Lincoln thinks he
 can use Maryland to wage his war,
 he's got another thing coming.

Edward stares out at the ships...

EXT. DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE - THE NEXT DAY

INSERT

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND - APRIL 19, 1861.

Edward is back in the city, this time by himself. A stack of
 flyers tucked under one arm.

With the other he nails one to a public bulletin board, announcing that their property is for sale.

The sun bears down with the intensity of a lingering summer, and Edward tugs bitterly at the collar of his black suit.

When someone steps up next to him to read the notice, Edward quickly ducks away and turns a corner.

EXT. PRATT STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Edward emerges on Pratt Street, where, to his surprise, there are many more people than usual. The attention of the forming CROWD is focused on something specific, but he can't tell what.

Edward tries to push his way through to the front. When close, he sees a string of detached LOCOMOTIVE CARS being pulled by horses. This is not out of the ordinary.

What is are the hundreds of armed soldiers that can be seen aboard.

Edward turns to the LADY next to him.

EDWARD

What's going on?

LADY

Sixth Massachusetts militia.
Transferring at Camden station on
their way south to fight Carolina.

She is as fascinated as he, but other bystanders have a different reaction.

A few men in the very front start SHOUTING and throwing ROCKS. Edward's ears pick out bits and pieces. "Go back to New York," "Lincoln's dogs," "Stay out of Maryland." Edward looks for the soldiers' reactions. They do nothing, but Edward maintains his caution and hangs back.

With each passing moment more civilians are drawn to the scene. Some have come to mount their protest. Others just to watch. Sensing the danger, the front train car urges its horses into a trot.

It is quickly headed off by a small procession of people. A man proudly waving a large Confederate flag positions himself in front of the train, leading a march in gross mockery of the troops. But still, the soldiers restrain themselves.

In time the numbers spread well into the hundreds, packing the vicinity like a great swelling beast. Shrinking space equals rising temperatures.

The beast boos when one train car manages to escape, disappearing around the corner on the way to its destination. Flying insults reach a new pitch. Some men wave pistols high in the air.

The masses immobilize Edward's ability to move in either direction. Four men roughly push past him. They carry an ANCHOR, which they proceed to lay on the tracks to block the last three train cars from advancing.

Edward stares, amazed. On other parts of the track someone else pours a cartload of sand.

Suddenly, a GUNSHOT silences the disorganized chanting. A window on one of the train cars EXPLODES, and the soldier behind it dies instantly. Frenzy. A superior officer yells at his men to restrain themselves.

The crowd has no such leadership. It closes in, hurling every rudimentary projectile available. Two more soldiers stagger, wounded. This is when the Sixth Massachusetts finally OPENS FIRE.

Three civilians collapse. Simultaneously half of the crowd tries to flee while the other half screams for justice. Edward stands frozen in shock until a BULLET whizzing over his head revives him. Nearby shouting mingles with the moans of those in pain.

Exchanged fire volleys in every direction. More on both sides are wounded. Some are killed. Hysteria sets in. Many bystanders are injured just by the mob rushing to escape.

It is a full-fledged riot. Even if there are police, it is impossible to discern them among the chaos. Clouds of smoke rise from the militia guns, adding to the confusion.

Someone knocks into Edward. Then someone else. Then something sharp scrapes his arm. Even if he wanted to go back, walls of arms and torsos bump him forward into the middle of the fray.

There is nowhere else to go. Nothing else to do. He grimaces when something jabs him in the back. Everyone's heart is pumping with blood ready to be spilt.

Edward picks up a BRICK and charges at the train, yelling at the top of his lungs.