

DR MARY WALKER

John Royan

OVER BLACK

"It is the times which are behind me."

Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, 1864

FADE IN:

THE MEDAL OF HONOR

The 1904 version of our nation's highest honor, lying on a chiffonier next to an old Bible, a silver pocket watch and a pair of wire-rimmed glasses. The impressive medal embossed in gold with a single word:

"VALOR"

AN OLD WOMAN'S TREMBLING HANDS

Pick it up and pin it to a black short coat. We stay on the hands as the old woman finishes dressing.

She slips on a pair of boots under her black pants.

Clips the pocket watch to her vest and checks the time.

Buttons her coat and adjusts her bow tie and the upright collar of her white shirt, just so.

Dons a black top hat.

Finally puts on the glasses and a BLURRED IMAGE comes into focus giving us our first good look at

DR. MARY EDWARDS WALKER (84)

A venerable, declining, pillar of dignity, gazing stoically at herself in the mirror of the chiffonier.

INT. MARY'S HOME - DAY (1917)

Mary, dressed like a well-to-do man, enters her foyer and takes a black umbrella from a rack by the door.

She stands there a moment thinking, steeling herself for the world outside, finally opens the door and steps out into a blaze of sunlight.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Mary walks down a sidewalk past two fashionably dressed LADIES who look askance at her masculine clothing, TITTING.

Farther on, a group of BUSINESS MEN at an OUTDOOR CAFE notice Mary approaching.

BUSINESS MAN #1
What in God's name is that?

BUSINESS MAN #2
That, gentlemen, is our local lady
doctor. Fancies herself a man.

BUSINESS MAN #3
A lunatic's more like it.

They burst out in derisive LAUGHTER.

Mary hears them but doesn't break stride.

EXT. CITY STREET - FARTHER ON - SAME

Mary proceeds proudly down the busy street, waddling a little
with age, her umbrella-cane CLICKING off the sidewalk.

People in horse-drawn carriages and WWI era cars do double-
takes. A RUDE BOY SHOUTS an insult from a car.

Across the street, a bearded OLD SOLDIER outside a shop
watches Mary. Stares at her in vague recognition then comes
after her, limping through traffic.

OLD SOLDIER
Pardon me, ma'am...

Mary keeps walking.

OLD SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Ma'am... Doctor Walker!

Mary stops and turns. The man doffs his cap and approaches.

OLD SOLDIER (CONT'D)
I thought it was you. You are Doctor
Walker, aren't you?

MARY
Do I know you, sir?

The Old Soldier, who has a birthmark under his eye, cracks a
toothless smile.

OLD SOLDIER
Well, no, not rightly, ma'am, but if
not for you I woulda lost this leg.
(taps his bum leg)
You told me not to let em amputate,
told me to threaten to shoot em if
they did. And by God it worked,
they let me alone... Don't you
recall?

Mary moves toward the trolley as it approaches.

MARY

I'm sorry, but the war was a long time ago and I gave that advice to many young men.

(off his disappointment)

But I'm glad for you, sir, very glad... Where was it we met?

OLD SOLDIER

Georgia, ma'am... Chickamauga.

Mary looks gravely at the Old Soldier, nods knowingly then boards the trolley.

Mary takes a seat. Looks out at the Old Soldier limping away. Stares after him a moment then looks off into space with faraway eyes, REMEMBERING...

EXT. HORSESHOE RIDGE - CHICKAMAUGA WOODS - DAY

Legions of trees... and FOG, like white soup blanketing the ground where through a veil of light and shadow we see

UNION SOLDIERS. Scores of them. Crouching in the brush. Hiding among the trees. Old and young alike poised for battle. Their war-weary faces grim, alert or terrified.

A boot steps in mud raising bloody water out of the ground.

A CAPTAIN

Moves along a line of soldiers kneeling half in and out of the fog. The trees around them mutilated from battle. Bullet-ridden trunks, shredded branches, perforated leaves.

He stops at a Napoleon 12 pounder and her crew. Nods to one of the CANNONEERS.

THEIR POINT OF VIEW

Of the Rebel side of the woods, the ominous shadows moving among the trees. The gleams of bayonets. The phantom-like silhouettes of infantry and horsemen.

THE CAPTAIN

Checks behind him. The entire woods speckled with blue. A battered company of Union regulars waiting among the trees.

CANNONEER

(whispered)

Hey, Captain.

The Captain turns to a CANNONEER beside him, a beardless boy of seventeen.

CANNONEER (CONT'D)

What the hell does Chickamauga mean, anyway? If I'm gonna die here, I'd sure like to know.

CAPTAIN

Chicka's an old Cherokee word... means blood.

CANNONEER

And Mauga?

CAPTAIN

More blood.

A moment of quiet then suddenly BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM! Confederate cannons unload on the Union line.

BALLS OF FIRE engulfing the men. Flames and splintered wood spewing everywhere. Ripping men apart. Their CRIES drowned by the DEAFENING EXPLOSIONS.

One blast blows a hole in a line of men. Another sends a cannon barrel spinning through the air.

Trees fall. Mud soars. Bodies thrown all over the place. The torrents of hell unleashed on earth.

THE UNION SIDE RETURNS FIRE

Greets the charging Confederates and their REBEL-YELLS with grapeshot and a hail of hot lead.

The front line falls, but the REBEL FORCE sweeps in like a wave. Swords raised. Guns blazing.

A slaughter beyond intense. Men fighting like lions. Shooting, stabbing, stumbling over roots and dead comrades. Killing with atavistic hatred at point blank range.

Swords slice through arms.

Gun stocks bash in faces.

The Union Captain in the middle of the fight grappling with a Rebel Soldier. Hands squeezing. Feet shifting. Their grimacing faces just inches apart.

A CANNONBALL EXPLODES and rockets a branch through the head of the Rebel Soldier. Knocks the Union Captain to the ground.

He lies under the fog, stunned. Soldiers rushing by.

SUDDENLY AN ENRAGED REBEL

looms over him, bayonet plunging.

The Captain rolls. Draws a pistol and fires.

Puts a hole in the Rebel's face.

He drops on the Captain. Who hides under the corpse from the wave of Rebel soldiers overrunning the position.

AN OVERVIEW SHOWS

the Rebels advancing all across Horseshoe Ridge. The CACOPHONY OF BATTLE FADING as we...

PULL UP AND AWAY to an expanded view of the numerous engagements on either side of Chickamauga Creek - site of one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Under a weak winter sun a travel-weary troop of UNION CAVALRY escorts a dozen supply wagons through the woods.

DR. MARY WALKER (31)

in one of the wagons, bundled against the cold in a black overcoat and felt hat, a FAT SERGEANT riding beside her.

Mary's pretty, plainly so, with brown, sensitive eyes that gleam with intelligence. Hands in her pockets, she sits in a torpor brought on by the monotony of the long bumpy ride.

An OFFICER rides up alongside the wagon and looks contemptuously at Mary's pants in view below her coat.

Shares a look with the Sergeant who spits tobacco juice on Mary's boot. The two men taking amusement at Mary's expense.

With perfect aplomb Mary wipes her boot on the Sergeant's pant leg then plants two firm eyes on the Officer.

He scoffs and rides on.

Mary looks at the Sergeant who doesn't dare turn his head.

EXT. UNION CAMP - CHICKAMAUGA - NIGHT

Rain. The cavalry and wagons enter a sea of white tents surrounded by trees.

Soldiers emerging from the canvas homes and from around drowned campfires to unload the wagons. OFFICER COMMANDS heard over the pattering rain.

Mary surveys the harsh camp conditions. Looks to her driver who has climbed off the wagon.

MARY

Sergeant.

She goes after him as he walks away.

MARY (CONT'D)

Sergeant!

Fat Sergeant turns and holds his hat against the rain.

MARY (CONT'D)

Excuse me, but you were suppose to take me to Colonel McCook? This is a bivouac. I have to report to headquarters.

FAT SERGEANT

And I have to report to a latrine, ma'am. No one said nothin bout no headquarters. Haul you to the 52nd Ohio, those were my orders.

(re: the tents)

Well, here tis. Night now. And mind the mud. Don't wanna meet the Colonel with your *pants* mucked up.

He SNICKERS and walks off.

Leaves Mary alone in the rain. She goes to the wagon bed. Pulls her surgeon's kit and suitcase from under a tarp and walks off through the mud.

EXT. LEE AND GORDON'S MILL - UNION HQ - NIGHT

Mary slogs through the downpour toward a white, two-story grist mill on the banks of Chickamauga Creek.

She steps onto the porch and scrapes mud from her boots. A Sentry staring at her like she's a being from another planet.

MARY

Good evening.

(offering her orders)

I'm to report to Colonel McCook.

I'm your new surgeon.

The Sentry stares rudely then takes the orders and reads. Leads her inside without a word.

INT. LEE AND GORDON'S MILL - UNION HQ - NIGHT

Mary stands dripping wet in the middle of a lantern-lit, field headquarters on the "stone floor" of the mill. STAFF, tables, free-standing maps and cots crowding the room.

Exhausted officers doze against the idle mill stones. Some play cards. Others warm themselves around iron stoves.

Off in a corner a handsome officer with a goatee goes over an operation map with his junior officers. This is COLONEL DANIEL MCCOOK JR. (29) commander of the 52nd Ohio.

The Sentry speaks to him then motions Mary forward.

Mary approaches unnoticed by the other officers until she removes her wet hat and reveals her shoulder-length curls.

A stunned silence fills the room as all eyes turn to Mary.

Then, as if to compound their astonishment, Mary removes her coat and reveals her outfit: black pants under a pleated skirt, a man's shirt with gold buttons down the front and a Colt revolver tucked into her belt.

CUT TO:

Colonel McCook at a table paging through Mary's orders while she waits. An outburst of LAUGHTER directed at Mary from the junior officers across the room.

Colonel McCook stifles it with a look then turns to the diminutive, dripping wet woman before him, far from impressed.

COLONEL MCCOOK

Says here you were turned down for this appointment by the examining board. So why is it you're here?

MARY

General Thomas overruled them. He had a different opinion of my qualifications.

(indicates her papers)

His orders are there.

Colonel McCook finds the orders. Looks them over and sets them down. Picks up the first report.

COLONEL MCCOOK

Yeah, that may be, ma'am, but General Thomas isn't a medical man. These men are...

(holds up the report)

I'm more concern with this.

He reads.

COLONEL MCCOOK (CONT'D)

"We find her so inadequate as to render it doubtful whether she has actually pursued the study of medicine at all... that her practical acquaintance with diseases and the use of remedies is not greater than what most housewives possess."

Colonel Nathan Cooper, Board Examiner.

He lets the words hang in the air.

MARY

Colonel Cooper is an ignoramus.

COLONEL MCCOOK

He's a doctor.

MARY

So am I.

COLONEL MCCOOK

Not much of one, according to him.

McCook leans back in his chair and awaits an explanation.

MARY

Doctor Cooper's board was a farce. I knew it as soon as I entered the room. They hadn't the slightest intention of giving me a surgeon's appointment, so they marked the time by amusing themselves at my expense, asking me questions of a personal nature.

COLONEL MCCOOK

Such as?

Mary hesitates, wondering if she's in for a repeat experience.

MARY

They asked me how it was I thought I could work in a man's profession, how my monthly cycle affected my work, if I was inclined toward loose relations. It was an outrage. Not once did they bring up anything even remotely connected to medicine or the diseases and wounds of soldiers.

Colonel McCook weighs Mary's answer then drops the report in a rubbish can.

COLONEL MCCOOK

I'm sure wearing men's clothes didn't help your case.

MARY

I don't wear men's clothes, Colonel.
I wear my own.

INT. KITCHEN - LEE AND GORDON'S MILL - NIGHT

ELIZABETH LEE, a short, spare woman of thirty, holds out a lantern and leads Mary into a kitchen past two small boys asleep on a mattress on the floor.

ELIZABETH

It's far from comfortable, but you'll have a spot of privacy. I put a cot out for you. There. And you can get out of those wet clothes behind the screen.

Mary notes a cot against the wall and a screen at the back of the room. One of the boys turns over in bed.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

My boys, Gordon and Tom. You hungry?

MARY

No, thank you, just tired.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, I expect after such a long trip. Well if you need anything.

She looks at Mary's masculine clothes with mild skepticism.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

It's nice to have another woman around, so many men.

LATER - MARY

lies on her cot, thinking. Her eyes fall on the two boys across the room now asleep at their mother's side.

FLASHBACK TO:

NINE-YEAR-OLD MARY running away from a group of KIDS in a FIELD. Great big tears rolling down her cheeks.

INT. WALKER HOME - 1839 - DAY

ALVAH WALKER, a tall, rawboned man of forty sits at a desk reading Buchan's "*Domestic Medicine*". Young Mary storms into the house and runs into her room.

Alvah looks out the window at the children in the field.
Sighs and puts down his book.

INT. BEDROOM - WALKER HOME - DAY

Mary pulls off her pants and hurls them in a corner. Shirt too. She climbs in bed and curls up under the quilt.

Alvah KNOCKS and enters. Comes and sits by Mary.

MARY

I don't ever wanna wear pants again,
Daddy. Ever!

ALVAH

Alright then no more pants. If that's
what you want, first thing in the
morning we'll go into town and buy
you some dresses.

Mary calms a little, assuaged. She thinks on it.

MARY

But I hate dresses, Daddy, hate them!
They make me feel like I'm in a
spider's web, all bound up... always
catching on fences and picking up
dirt.

She rolls over in frustration.

MARY (CONT'D)

Oh, why won't they just leave me
alone.

Alvah lets her sulk a moment then turns her toward him.

ALVAH

Hey now, it's not as bad as all that.
What do I always say, hmm?

Mary sniffles. Looks up at her Dad with her big brown eyes.

MARY

Be your own person, walk to the beat
of your own drum... But it's hard,
Daddy, it's so hard, they laugh at
me all the time.

ALVAH

I know they do. And I'll tell you
now it'll only get harder. It's no
picnic going against the crowd. But
let me ask you this: Do you want
other people to decide what you do?

Mary shakes her head.

MARY

No... never.

Alvah looks about as proud as a father can be.

ALVAH

That's my girl.

(adds with a smile)

Alright then, consider this: If a group of jackasses were laughing at you, would it bother you?

MARY

No, course not.

ALVAH

Why not?

MARY

Cause they're stupid.

ALVAH

When those boys and girls laugh at you, when anybody laughs at you for dressing in what is a comfortable and practical manner, in that moment they're jackasses. Remember that.

Young Mary reaches up and hugs her Father. Holds him as if to never let him go.

END FLASHBACK - RESUME MARY ON THE COT

Reflecting on her past. She rolls over and goes to sleep.

EXT. FIELD HOSPITAL - UNION CAMP - DAY

Blood. Pools of it on an old door used as an operating table. An ORDERLY scrapes the blood into a bucket and hauls it away.

LEADS US THROUGH THE FIELD HOSPITAL

The unholy mess. Unmasked SURGEONS sawing. Amputated limbs dropped into crates at the sides of the operating tables.

Harried NURSES in blood-stained aprons binding wounds, soothing terrified PATIENTS.

Overtaxed ORDERLIES rushing in with new patients on litters. Carting dead ones out.

Wounded soldiers lie along the side of the tent calling out to anyone. Cries to "GOD!" and "MAMA!" heard again and again.

In the midst of the chaos Mary calmly performs surgery, removing grapeshot from a soldier's thigh.

She binds the wound then turns to an orderly who takes the patient away. A young Drummer Boy with a crushed face set immediately in his place.

CLOSE ON MARY

Her face awash with empathetic pain.

She buries it and sets to work.

LATER THAT NIGHT

amid the glow of torches, Mary performs triage on wounded soldiers laid out on the ground OUTSIDE THE FIELD HOSPITAL.

She kneels between two soldiers and examines their wounds.

MARY

(to an orderly)

Bring him inside. This one too.

She goes to a man under a blanket. Checks him. His belly split open. She puts the blanket back in place. Wipes the man's brow then looks at an orderly and shakes her head.

Moves on to the next soldier, a YOUNG MAN on his side with a shattered calf. He turns and looks at Mary, a birthmark under his eye. It's the old soldier who approached Mary at the trolley stop, only now barely out of his teens.

Mary inspects his wound, a broken bone under the skin.

MARY (CONT'D)

Listen to me. I won't be the surgeon who treats you, but if you do what I say you can probably keep this leg.

YOUNG MAN

Oh, no, ma'am, please, for God's sake, don't take my leg!

Mary takes his hand.

MARY

(confidentially)

Alright now, don't fret. I've treated many wounds like this and there's a good chance we can save it. So you mustn't let them amputate. I don't know if you're a man given to swearing but this is what you do.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

You swear up a storm and declare by God that if they force you to submit to an amputation that you will never rest after your recovery until you have tracked down the no account sawbones who took your leg and shot him dead. You understand?

YOUNG MAN

Yes-um, ma'am, I understand. God bless you, bless you!

Mary moves on to the next wounded soldier. Passing a tall SERGEANT MAJOR who overheard the conversation.

INT. MESS TENT - DAY

Mary enters the chow line and waits her turn.

The tall Sergeant Major sits at a table with other soldiers, their looks and muted cross-talk directed at Mary.

The Sergeant Major gets up and goes over to Mary.

SERGEANT MAJOR

Doctor Walker... this way.

He leads Mary up the line. Nudges the soldier at the front who curbs a reaction and steps aside.

MARY

I appreciate the gesture, Sergeant Major, but I prefer to wait my turn.

SERGEANT MAJOR

Wait your turn tomorrow. Today we're saying thanks.

Mary sees the soldiers at the table now standing in respect.

SERGEANT MAJOR (CONT'D)

Ain't none of us seen a surgeon like you, ma'am. Goes a long way with us.

Mary's humbled by their gratitude. She nods to the soldiers. Turns to get her food, hiding the rising tears in her eyes.

EXT. UNION CAMP - CHICKAMAUGA - DAY

A light snowfall flutters down on the sea of canvas tents.

EMILINE CLARK, a frail fifteen-year-old, wanders through camp with her shawl draped over her head.

She pauses and looks around, confused. Suddenly a troop of cavalry gallops by, the THUDDING hooves and JANGLING harnesses startling the girl who moves quickly out of the way.

EXT. LEE AND GORDON'S MILL - UNION HQ - DAY

Emiline climbs the muddy grade toward the mill. Slips and falls then gets to her feet and continues on.

INT. LEE AND GORDON'S MILL - UNION HQ - DAY

Emiline wipes her muddy hands with a towel. Takes a cup of coffee offered by Colonel McCook.

EMILINE

Much obliged.

The Colonel looks down on the shivering girl warming herself before an iron stove, a touch of compassion in his eyes.

He walks over to THREE ARMY DOCTORS across the room.

COLONEL MCCOOK

Poor thing walked twelve miles to get here. She's half-froze to death. Why the hell didn't anyone offer to help?

DOCTOR #1

Camp followers and strumpets are everywhere, Colonel. Who'd take notice of a fifteen-year-old girl?

Suddenly Mary comes in through the door behind them trailed by a gust of snow and blustery wind.

MARY

I'm sorry, I came as quick as I could. What seems to be the trouble?

COLONEL MCCOOK

That young lady there says her mama's having a hard labor, going on two days now. She needs a doctor.

MARY

Yes, and?

COLONEL MCCOOK

She lives behind enemy lines.

MARY

I see. And which of these brave souls has volunteered their services?

An awkward silence follows.

DOCTOR #1

I'd mind my tongue if I were you,
Miss Walker. Try our patience and
you won't like where it leads.

MARY

And where's that, pistols at dawn?
You three have given me nothing but
the cold shoulder since the day I
arrived. You extend no professional
courtesy, why expect any in return?

COLONEL MCCOOK

Alright cork it, squabble on your
own time. So what do I tell her?
Will any of you go?

DOCTOR #1

I certainly won't, the very notion
is preposterous.

DOCTOR #2

Sir, whoever goes is sure to be captured
and we're shorthanded as it is.

DOCTOR #3

And besides, we're all contracted to
provide service to Federalist
soldiers, not fast tricks and corn-
crackers.

Colonel McCook looks at the three with appropriate contempt.

MARY

I'll go.

DOCTOR #1

For God's sake the girl lives ten
miles behind enemy lines and you're
a woman. Have you any idea of the
danger involved?

MARY

Of course I do: a mother and child
may die.

(to Colonel McCook)

I'll need two fit horses, one for
the girl - and money for bribes. I
won't use my own, not with the trifle
I'm paid compared to these gentlemen.

DOCTOR #1

Woman, you're an abject fool! Capture
will be the least of your worries.

MARY

Calm yourself, Doctor. They're my worries, not yours.

(to Colonel McCook)

Why is it that it's always the skittish little souls who are the most ill-mannered?

(to all)

Gentlemen.

Mary goes to Emiline leaving the Doctor looking two inches tall. McCook stares after her, more than a little impressed.

INT. KITCHEN - LEE AND GORDON'S MILL - NIGHT

Mary's surgical kit lies open on a cot, lined with the medieval-looking instruments of Civil War era medicine.

She closes the case. Puts it, some food wrapped in paper and a couple candles into a travel bag. Puts on her coat.

Suddenly two men appear behind her - Colonel McCook and GENERAL WILLIAM TECUMSEH SHERMAN (43) commander of the Army of the Tennessee.

COLONEL MCCOOK

Doctor Walker. General Sherman would like a word with you.

You could knock Mary over with a feather.

EXT. LEE AND GORDON'S MILL - NIGHT

General Sherman and Mary walk behind the mill along the snow-laced banks of West Chickamauga Creek.

GENERAL SHERMAN

Colonel McCook tells me you're a first rate surgeon, though some of your methods are slightly unorthodox.

MARY

Slightly? I always thought them revolutionary.

General Sherman half-smiles.

GENERAL SHERMAN

The men treating you right? No nonsense?

MARY

None I wish to trouble a general with.

Sherman pauses and gazes at the creek, the swift black waters shimmering in the moonlight.

GENERAL SHERMAN

I admire you, Doctor Walker - you have spine... and purpose.

They share a moment of quiet respect.

GENERAL SHERMAN (CONT'D)

I need you to perform a service for me, one that will place you in great danger.

MARY

I'm about to embark behind enemy lines. How much more danger can I incur than that?

GENERAL SHERMAN

Considerable.

EXT. BACKWOODS ROADS - NIGHT

Mary and Emiline ride by moonlight through a dense woods dusted with snow.

Cross a snow-dappled GRASSLAND at SUNRISE.

Mary scans her surroundings. The vague fortifications of Confederate forces atop some bordering hills.

Emiline observes Mary, curious.

EMILINE

Ma'am. You a midwife?

MARY

No, a doctor.

EMILINE

That why you dress like a man?

MARY

I dress for comfort, child, and for the noblest of principles: freedom. No other reasons than that.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

White smoke spirals from the chimney of a dilapidated farmhouse reeking of poverty.

Mary arrives with Emiline. Takes in the sad conditions:

The crumbling shack of a home.

An old buckboard buried in weeds.

Bare chicken pens and an empty corral.

A bony dog with his nose to the ground searching for food.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

A WOMAN in her thirties lies drenched in sweat enduring the pangs of a difficult labor. Mary examines her. Emiline across the bed holding her Mother's hand.

MARY

The baby's breeched.

She turns to Emiline's THREE LITTLE BROTHERS huddled together in a corner of the one room home.

MARY (CONT'D)

You boys go fetch me a board, one big enough to put your Mama on. Go on now, hurry.

She stands and repositions the woman's legs.

MARY (CONT'D)

(to Emiline)

Here, help me get her on her side.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

A hill-lined horizon glows with the promise of a coming day.

Mary steps out of the farmhouse, the FAINT CRY of a newborn following her out. She wipes down a pair of bloodstained scissors and puts them in her coat.

Sits down on the front steps, exhausted. Watches a hazy red sun climb out of a bank of clouds, savoring her accomplishment in a moment of peaceful repose.

LATER

Mary preps her horse for the ride back. The little Boys watching her from the doorway of the home. She takes an orange from her saddle bag and tosses it to them.

The Boys fail to catch it and scramble after it LAUGHING.

Emiline approaches from the corral with the other horse.

EMILINE

I want to thank you so much for what you've done.

MARY

Remember now, get your mama on her feet as soon as you can, let her walk around some.

EMILINE

Yes, ma'am.

Emiline offers the reins of the other horse.

MARY

No, child, you keep her, she'd only slow me down.

EMILINE

But she's a beautiful mare.

MARY

That she is.

Mary mounts up.

MARY (CONT'D)

You look after your mama and that newborn. And do with that horse as you see fit.

Emiline's eyes well up with tears. She rushes over and takes Mary's hand, kisses it. Mary strokes the girl's cheek.

MARY (CONT'D)

Go on now.

Emiline backs away. Waves at Mary as she rides off.

EXT. ROAD - BEHIND ENEMY LINES - DAY

Mary travels a forest road.

CROSSES A PINE-CLAD RIDGE

In the valley below, beyond a winding blue creek, lies a Confederate camp.

Mary studies the area, committing it all to memory.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A mockingbird perched on a branch SINGS. Takes to the air when Mary approaches along a muddy track through a cathedral of trees.

Suddenly a TROOP OF REBEL RAIDERS comes around a bend up the road.

Mary wheels her horse and bolts into the trees.

Ducks low to avoid branches then dismounts and leads her horse by the reins behind a boulder.

Watches breathlessly as the Confederate cavalry gallops by. Once they pass she lays her head on the boulder and breathes.

DESERTER (O.S.)

Now what do we got here?

Mary turns. A gruff Rebel DESERTER lies on the ground a few feet away, his bedroll tucked under a nook in the boulder.

He rises. Approaches.

DESERTER (CONT'D)

What ya doin out here, little lady?
(looks around)
Who you with?

MARY

My companions. They're out on the road. I was looking for some privacy.

Deserter scans her face for the truth.

DESERTER

No need to lie, missy. I got ears, you know, and eyes.
(noticing her pants)
What're you dressed like that for?

MARY

I, sir, am no concern of yours. And I warn you: stay right where you are, I'm well-heeled.

The fearsome, filthy looking man strokes his straggly beard.

DESERTER

Pull in your horns, missy. I ain't gonna bother ya.
(grins wickedly)
Not so's it hurts much.

Mary backs up. Wheels and mounts her horse. Deserter lunges after her. Catches her hair and yanks her into his arms.

Mary fights back. Flailing wildly. Clawing at his eyes.

Deserter struggling for control, losing, until he yanks Mary's hair, spins her around and freight-trains her onto the ground.

He pulls up Mary's coat. Unfastens his pants.

Mary's face pressed hard to the ground. She tries to rise. Digs for her pocket. Finds the scissors. And JABS THEM WITH ALL HER MIGHT INTO HIS THIGH.

DESERTER (CONT'D)

AHHHHH!

Deserter rolls off of Mary holding his leg. Streams of blood seeping through his fingers.

Mary staggers to her feet.

DESERTER (CONT'D)

God Almighty, lady, ya stabbed me.
Stabbed me!

Mary wipes mud off her face. Breathes heavily.

MARY

You're damn right I did. Just as hard as I could.

She goes to her horse and mounts up.

DESERTER

You're not gonna leave me out here, are ya? I'll die!

Mary rides over and looks down on him.

MARY

Then crawl back to your unit. It'll befit your character. I'm sure they'll recognize you when they see you coming.

She lashes her horse and bolts away.

EXT. LEE AND GORDON'S MILL - NIGHT

Thick night. A solitary lantern-light illuminates a back window of the mill.

INT. LEE AND GORDON'S MILL - NIGHT

Mary studies a map, the disposition of Union and Confederate forces in north Georgia and eastern Tennessee.

MARY

No, no, this is all off.

(refers to the map)

There are no Rebel forces in this valley or on either side of these woods. But they're dug in like ticks along Rocky Face Ridge. And I saw another encampment here south of Snake Creek Gap.

She points it out to General Sherman and Colonel McCook standing beside her. Sherman's black eyes glued to the map.

GENERAL SHERMAN

(breathes out)

Excellent...

(turns to Mary)

Excellent work, Doctor Walker.

(to McCook)

Ole Bragg's a slippery one - we'd a walked right into a hornet's nest. Send out dispatches. I want every brigade commander here first thing in the morning. We'll have to revamp the entire battle plan.

COLONEL MCCOOK

Yes, sir.

McCook departs. General Sherman turns to Mary.

GENERAL SHERMAN

Doctor Walker, you may have just saved my 15th Corps from a major defeat. Well done.

Mary basks in the aura of Sherman's praise. He notes her soiled clothes, removes a bit of mud stuck to her collar.

GENERAL SHERMAN (CONT'D)

You look a little worse for wear.

Sherman probes Mary with a gaze. Her face as fathomless as an alpine pond.

MARY

Quite the trip. But I'm up to it.

GENERAL SHERMAN

You certainly are. And your mission of mercy, how'd that turn out?

MARY

Mother and child are doing fine.

EXT. HOSPITAL TENT - NIGHT

A HOSPITAL AIDE carries a lantern to a wagon. Hangs it from the sideboard and lowers the tailgate...

Revealing a load of dead soldiers in the bed. Two other men come up carrying a corpse, that they heave atop the stack.

A wagon-ambulance arrives with more WOUNDED SOLDIERS. ORDERLIES rushing out from a tent to attend them.

INT. HOSPITAL TENT - NIGHT

Under the dim light of lanterns Mary and the other surgeons work deep into the night.

Mary removes a musket ball from a soldier's back. Drops the bloody hunk of lead into a pan with a CLINK.

START MONTAGE OF MARY'S WORK IN CAMP AND BEHIND ENEMY LINES

A. She rides past a UNION PICKET on her way out of camp.

B. Tends to two feverish CHILDREN in a damaged FARMHOUSE drenched by rain. Half the roof blown away. Rain drops soaking the dirt floor.

C. Walks by JOHNNY REBS in a TOWN dressed as a Southern lady.

D. Shops at the GENERAL STORE. Noting a CONFEDERATE OFFICER'S insignia. Eavesdropping on his conversation.

E. Briefs Sherman and McCook with her latest intelligence.

F. Sets the broken leg of a BLACK BOY outside a SHACK. Gives a crutch to his MOTHER.

G. Sleeps under a lean-to in the rain.

H. Tends a LITTLE GIRL dying of pneumonia. Comforts the grieving MOTHER at the child's grave.

I. Performs surgery, using a crimper on a severed vein.

J. Stands by a TENT gazing at a setting sun. Weary. Turns to an arriving rail car packed with more WOUNDED SOLDIERS.

END MONTAGE

INT. HOSPITAL TENT - NIGHT

A bone-tired Mary makes her rounds in a ward. Stops by a DRUMMER BOY or what's left of him.

One leg is blown off below the knee, his right hand is missing and there's a bandaged cavity where his left shoulder should be. He is bathed in sweat. Trembling.

Mary's jaw tightens and she winces a little as if she can almost feel the boy's pain. A HOSPITAL AIDE happens by carrying a pail of bloody bandages.

HOSPITAL AIDE

One of yours, Doc?

MARY

He is.

HOSPITAL AIDE

I gave him more laudanum for the pain. Not much else we can do.

They both look down on the boy.

HOSPITAL AIDE (CONT'D)

Tough kid. Too tough for his own good.

The Aide moves on. Mary remains, watching the boy.

With what appears to be a great effort the boy's left hand turns over and opens. Mary sits and takes his hand. The dying boy's lips quivering an inaudible thanks.

EXT. HOSPITAL TENT - NIGHT

Mary emerges from the tent and walks off into the night. Stops and looks up at the heavens, hot tears streaming down her cheeks.

INT. KITCHEN - LEE AND GORDON'S MILL - DAY

CLOSE ON: A drawing of Lincoln on a desktop calendar open to "APRIL 1864".

Mary sets her medical kit down beside it. Goes for her coat hung near a window. Looks outside and sees...

Colonel McCook sitting under a tree writing a letter.

EXT. CREEKSIDE - LEE AND GORDON'S MILL - DAY

Mary approaches the Colonel, a dashing figure in blue relaxing by the rushing stream, a vast green countryside beyond.

MARY

I'm leaving now. Any last instructions?

COLONEL MCCOOK

Yeah. Don't get caught.

MARY

Don't worry, I'll do everything I can to stay out of Rebel hands. I can't stand Southern cooking.

COLONEL MCCOOK

What is it this time?

MARY

Spring fever, typhoid, I expect. It's running like wildfire through the farms around Tunnel Hill. I'll be gone overnight.

Colonel McCook looks curiously at Mary. Wonders out loud.

COLONEL MCCOOK

Why do you do it?

MARY

Because it's right, and no one else will bother. And because you allow it.

COLONEL MCCOOK

Sherman allows it. I've been against it from the start.

He stands, comes close to Mary.

COLONEL MCCOOK (CONT'D)

I wrote my wife about you. Told her a little angel had fallen into our midst.

MARY

You tell her I wear trousers?

COLONEL MCCOOK

Left it out. But I told her you're headstrong, capable... and rather pretty.

MARY

You shouldn't have. Sweethearts at home get all worked up over comments like that, even when they've got nothing to worry about.

There's a friendly air between them and perhaps a trace of something more.

COLONEL MCCOOK

Be careful, Mary, you hear me. I won't tell you this is no work for a woman, you've proved us all wrong about that. But all these trips behind enemy lines... Don't press your luck.

MARY

Wouldn't dream of it.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

A Confederate regiment travels a backwoods road. Cavalry. Artillery. Columns of men in hodgepodge uniforms.

After they pass, Mary rides out of the woods.

EXT. FARMHOUSE II - DAY

A humble farm at the base of a hill.

INT. FARMHOUSE II - DAY

A Little Boy racked with fever. Mary cools him with a cloth. Stands and goes to his MOTHER at the foot of the bed.

MARY

He's strong. He'll be fine. Pick some boneset for him, make a tea. That will keep the fever down. And here...

She opens her medical kit and hands the woman a bottle.

MARY (CONT'D)

Give him a touch of opium now and then. It'll slow the loss of fluid.

MOTHER

Ma'am, I don't know how to thank you.

MARY

You needn't bother. I'll be back this way in a week. He should be much improved by then.

Mary squeezes the Mother's hand to reassure her. Packs up her medical kit.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - TUNNEL HILL - DAY

A lonely dirt road splits a sea of towering pines like a backcountry version of Park Avenue.

Mary rides through the canyon of trees. Suddenly a CONFEDERATE RIDER comes out of the trees behind her and follows. Joined by a SECOND RIDER from across the road.

Mary senses their presence and looks back.

The two riders just trailing her at a casual pace.

She rides on. More REBELS walking out of the woods around her. And at a crossroads ahead a REBEL MAJOR on horseback and a dozen foot soldiers converging on her path.

Mary halts her horse. Stasis.

The Major rides up to Mary and looks her up and down. Draws his sword and raises the hem of her long coat revealing her pants underneath.

He looks at Mary with black intent. Puts the sword to her neck and makes a dimple in her skin.

REBEL MAJOR

You think you're clever. Don't ya,
miss flimflam? Too clever at that.

EXT. BRIDGE - GEORGIA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Sheets of rain. Mary rides under a blanket with her hands tied to the pommel. Soldiers on either side of her as they cross an old bridge spanning a stream.

Beneath the bridge, tucked up against a mule, is a young MOTHER with a shivering CHILD in her arms.

EXT. ROAD TO DALTON - NIGHT

Post rain, Mary's column marches past a line of Confederate TROOPS heading the other way, toward the glow of an artillery barrage flashing on the horizon.

EXT. DALTON, GEORGIA - DAY

Mary is led through the streets of Dalton, the sleepy little town now bursting at the seams with the (Confederate) Army of Tennessee.

CIVILIANS and SOLDIERS stop and stare at Mary.

INT. JAIL - DALTON, GEORGIA - DAY

A YOUNG PRIVATE (17) sleeps at his desk. Comes awake with a start when Rebel Major walks in with Mary.

REBEL MAJOR

Working hard, Private?

YOUNG PRIVATE
 No, sir... ah, yessir.
 (comes to his feet)
 Just thinkin with my eyes closed.
 What you got here?

REBEL MAJOR
 What's it look like?

YOUNG PRIVATE
 A woman... wearin pants.

REBEL MAJOR
 Yeah, one with sharp eyes.

He unties Mary who shakes out her hands.

REBEL MAJOR (CONT'D)
 She's been crossing our lines for
 months now. Finally bagged her up
 around Tunnel Hill.

The Young Private opens a log.

YOUNG PRIVATE
 Name?

REBEL MAJOR
 Mary Walker.

MARY
 Doctor Mary Walker, Captain. If you
 don't mind. I've earned the title.

YOUNG PRIVATE
 Got a sharp tongue too, don't she.
 Well, we'll fix her of that.

REBEL MAJOR
 She claims to be a civilian, some
 kind of second rate sawbones working
 for the Union. A first rate liar if
 you ask me.

He goes to the door. Casts a last bitter look at Mary.

REBEL MAJOR (CONT'D)
 She's all yours.

He walks out. Leaves Mary alone with the young man.

INT. JAIL - DALTON - LATER

The contents of Mary's medical kit are dumped on a desk.

Mary sits before an OLD COLONEL who looks over the contents of her kit. The Young Private standing nearby.

OLD COLONEL

What kind of doctor do you say you are?

MARY

I'm a civilian assistant surgeon contracted with the Union Army.

OLD COLONEL

Which regiment?

MARY

The 52nd Ohio. I was appointed by General Thomas.

Young Private looks skeptically at the Colonel.

YOUNG PRIVATE

Don't look like any doctor I've ever seen.

MARY

And just what have you seen, Private, besides your mama's apron?

(to the Colonel)

I have two medical degrees, Colonel, but I have as yet been unable to secure a commission with the Union Army. I am therefore a civilian and a non-combatant.

YOUNG PRIVATE

You mean you're pretending to be a civilian, like you're pretending to be a man.

MARY

No, it's you who's pretending to be a man, when all you are is a snot-nosed boy. Really, Colonel, if I'm to be interrogated must it be from an adolescent half-wit?

OLD COLONEL

Private, why don't you finish your report... Now.

Young Private slips out of the room.

OLD COLONEL (CONT'D)

For the present, *Doctor Walker*, I'm going to list you as a non-combatant, since you weren't armed when you

(MORE)

OLD COLONEL (CONT'D)
were captured. Unless of course I
want to count this scalpel as a
weapon.

(he holds it up)
In which case I could have you hanged
in the morning.

Mary takes the measure of this old wolf, a more dangerous
proposition than the dim-witted pup who just left the room.

Old Colonel leans back in his chair.

OLD COLONEL (CONT'D)
But I want the truth. I happen to
know there are no female surgeons in
the Union Army. And that in January
of this year, in Washington, a woman
fitting your description took a
meeting with Mister Allen Pinkerton
of the United States Secret Service.
Do you deny it was you?

MARY
That I am a female and a surgeon is
a fact, sir. Whether you believe it
or not. And, as it is, I happen to
be attached to the 52nd Ohio. Which
you could quite easily verify. But
I am not now, nor have I ever been,
in the employ of the United States
Secret Service. I am, however, a
Vice President of the Woman's Dress
Reform Movement, a staunch
abolitionist and a member of several
temperance societies. If that's of
any interest to you.

OLD COLONEL
Then what were you doing behind our
lines?

MARY
I'm a physician, I go where I'm
needed. And the need around here is
great. I've never seen people in
such wretched condition. When none
of our other surgeons would assume
the risk, it fell to me.

OLD COLONEL
So you think it's your responsibility
to help the civilian population of
Georgia?

MARY

No, sir, it's yours. But since you've stripped the land of every means of subsistence and left the women and children to root hog or die, I've done what little I could to assist them.

OLD COLONEL

The brave women of the Confederacy know full well our cause requires great sacrifices.

MARY

They certainly do. I've heard them say as much when I've helped them bury their children.

CLANG!

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

The door to Mary's cell is slammed shut.

The Young Private walks away from the cell and through a door, keys TINKLING.

Mary looks around at four bare walls. A ragged blanket and chamber pot on the hardwood floor.

She goes to a barred window and looks out on the street.

A TROOP of motley-attired Confederates march by out of step.

Passing them in the street is a Slave Trader leading a DOZEN SLAVES in chains, several children among them.

Mary focuses on a Little Boy in rags struggling to keep up. And SHE REMEMBERS...

FLASHBACK

INT. BEDROOM - WALKER HOME - 1845 - NIGHT

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD MARY peers out her bedroom window at her Father carrying a lantern toward the barn.

EXT. WALKER HOME - NIGHT

Mary comes out of the home wrapping her shawl around her. Hurries toward the barn below an orchard of stars.

INT. BARN - WALKER HOME - NIGHT

Mary slips through the cracked-open door. Moves tentatively through the dark toward a light in the last stall.

ALVAH WALKER

Kneels over a BLACK BOY on a blanket in the stall, a FAMILY of runaway slaves around him.

Mary appears behind them. Watches with interest as her Father stitches a gash in the Boy's calf, his careful technique.

Alvah smears honey on some gauze and applies it to the wound.

ALVAH
 (to the anxious Mother)
 Wash the wound every day. And here...
 (offers the gauze and
 honey)
 put this on afterward. It will help
 it heal.

The Woman looks to her Husband who stands between Two Girls. He nods and she takes the supplies.

Alvah turns to the Husband, noticing Mary.

ALVAH (CONT'D)
 You and your family can rest here
 till the boy's on his feet. I'll
 have my wife bring you out some food.

SLAVE FATHER
 Yessir. I'm much obliged.

ALVAH
 When you leave head northeast till
 you come to an old cemetery. Look
 for a house with a yellow weather
 vane out front. Ask for a man named
 Daniel. He'll take you into Oswego.
 There you can get a ship across the
 lake to Kingston... Canada.

The Mother's eyes light up at the word. She exchanges a glance with Mary and smiles.

EXT. BARN - WALKER HOME - NIGHT

Alvah and Mary walk back to their home.

MARY
 What's going to happen to them, Papa?
 Will they be safe in Canada?

ALVAH

I don't know, perhaps, others are.
But whatever their future I'm sure
it'll be far better than their past.

Alvah pauses before the porch and looks back at the barn.

ALVAH (CONT'D)

Such a brave family, a brave mother
and father. I can't imagine the
anguish they must feel when they
look upon their children in bondage,
knowing full well all the suffering
that lies ahead of them. No wonder
they risk their lives and run.

MARY

It's hateful, isn't it. How can
anyone abide with slavery? How do
you become part of something so evil?

ALVAH

People are strange, Mary. They can
be as cruel as cancer and yet they'll
always find some way to cast
themselves in the right. The whole
South clings to this barbarity under
the guise of economic survival. As
if they're the ones who'll suffer.
But the Southerners aren't unique.
It's just the way of the world. Men
make laws and noble proclamations
they've no intention of living up
to. And human beings have always
found reasons to be inhumane. Like
as not they always will.

END FLASHBACK

INT. MARY'S CELL - DALTON, GEORGIA - NIGHT

Drizzling rain streaks the barred window of the cell. Just
below Mary sleeps under her blanket on the unforgiving floor.

A door outside the cell opens and Young Private enters.
Slides a plate of cornbread under the bars.

Mary sits up and looks at her dinner.

MARY

How bout some water?

Young Private takes a canteen hung on the wall and fills a
cup. Passes it through the bars to Mary.

YOUNG PRIVATE

Hey lady, what's with you, huh?
What are you goin' around dressed
like a man for? That part of your
disguise?

Mary takes a drink and ignores the question.

MARY

How long are they going to keep me
here?

YOUNG PRIVATE

Who knows? No place else to put
you, unless you want in the bull pit
with all the other men.

He LAUGHS. Walks out and slams the door.

Mary picks up the cornbread and removes a worm.

LATER

Mary sits in a beam of moonlight coming through the window
like the finger of God pointing out the accused. She scratches
the floor with a stone, marks her 7th day in confinement.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUFF HOUSE - DAY

Young Private leads Mary down a lane toward one of the finer
houses in Dalton requisitioned by the Confederates.

INT. HUFF HOUSE - DAY

She enters a foyer. Is met by two towering INTERROGATORS
who escort her to a small room furnished with a single chair.

Mary takes a seat and they shut the door.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - HUFF HOUSE - LATER

GENERAL JOSEPH E. JOHNSTON (57), commander of the Army of
Tennessee, stands by a window gazing out at passing TROOPS.

General Johnston has a high brow and salt and pepper goatee
and as much dignified bearing as a 5'8" frame can contain.

The Two Interrogators come out of the room behind him. Shirts
out, faces drawn, clearly frustrated. Beyond them, in view
through the open door, is Mary looking mentally drained but
not physically abused.

The Interrogators walk up behind the General.

GENERAL JOHNSTON
(still gazing outside)
Well?

INTERROGATOR #1
That little thing's got some hard
bark on her... gave us nothin.

INTERROGATOR #2
You want us to be a little more
persuasive?

General Johnston turns and studies Interrogator #2 with a touch of disdain. Brushes past him and goes to Mary still in the chair.

GENERAL JOHNSTON
Doctor Walker, I'm General Joseph
Johnston, commander of the Army of
Tennessee.

MARY
I know who you are.

GENERAL JOHNSTON
My apologies for putting you through
all this, but in war such things are
necessary.

He walks over to a table. Pours a glass of water from a pitcher and brings it to Mary.

MARY
Thank you.

Mary takes a drink and sets the glass in her lap ready for another round.

GENERAL JOHNSTON
I want to assure you that under no
circumstances will you be harmed.
We don't treat women like that here
in the South.

MARY
White women, you mean.

Touche'. After a beat.

MARY (CONT'D)
So what will you do with me?

GENERAL JOHNSTON

The Confederacy has no use for a female doctor, it that's all you are.

MARY

It is.

General Johnston probes Mary with a gaze. Discovers nothing.

MARY (CONT'D)

Do you mind if I make a request?

(off his assent)

May I have a pallet bed or a cot?

They have me sleeping on the floor.

GENERAL JOHNSTON

I wouldn't worry about it. You won't be here much longer.

MARY

Am I to be exchanged?

GENERAL JOHNSTON

Arrangements are being made about your disposition, but that's all I'm at liberty to say.

Mary mines hope out of the cryptic comment.

MARY

Well then, is that all? May I return to my cell.

GENERAL JOHNSTON

Yes, of course. But first, one last question: What are you doing here? You're not a homely woman by any means. Haven't you a husband someplace?

MARY

I was married for six years. I'm divorced.

GENERAL JOHNSTON

Then he had some difficulty with you being a doctor?

MARY

Not at all. We had a practice together. Mister Miller was a surgeon like myself. He was also a libertine, a gifted orator and a first class cheat. I threw him out.

GENERAL JOHNSTON

Mister Miller? Then you didn't take his name.

MARY

No, nor did I take a marriage vow to obey. I think it a barbarous notion to make a wife promise to be a slave to her husband. And a woman's name is as dear to her as a man's is to him.

GENERAL JOHNSTON

But it's in the natural order of things for a woman to be subordinate to a man. That way she can be sheltered by him, looked after.

MARY

What you call shelter, I call bondage. You men have no concept of the degradation that a woman experiences, how her soul writhes under the chains that have inscribed upon them "this far, and no farther!" simply because she is a woman.

General Johnston mulls over her remarks.

GENERAL JOHNSTON

You're an interesting person, Doctor Walker, rather extraordinary in your own way. I couldn't be more opposed to your ideas, but under different circumstances I might enjoy getting better acquainted with you. I think you'd prove quite the conversationalist. Still, you surprise me by one thing.

MARY

And what is that?

GENERAL JOHNSTON

For one so educated you are hardly up with the times.

MARY

To the contrary, General. It is the times which are behind me.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DALTON - DAY

Mary is led back to jail by Young Private. Past town folk who ogle at her manly clothes.

OUTSIDE A TAVERN

THREE BAR GIRLS hang out on a porch. Bar Girl #1, in morning dishabille, uses a basin to wash up. The other two recline on a swing-chair nursing hangovers after another late night.

BAR-GIRL #1

My word, she is a sight, isn't she?
 Ula, wake up, look at this. You
 won't believe your eyes.

ULA, curled up sideways on the swing, mutters a response.

ULA

I've seen freaks before.

BAR-GIRL #2

(on the swing)

Not like this, you ain't. They say
 she's a doctor.

Ula rolls her head over and looks.

ULA

Nothing but the debased and depraved
 Yankee nation could produce such a
 thing as a female doctor.

Mary walks past them and Bar-Girl #1 kicks over a spittoon at her feet, splashing Mary's pants, launching the Bar-Girls into RAUCOUS LAUGHTER.

Mary stops and glares. Young Private takes her arm.

YOUNG PRIVATE

Come on, never mind them. Keep movin.

INT. MARY'S CELL - DALTON - DAY

Mary sits in her cell cleaning her pants with a rag. She pauses and stares at the stain. RECALLS...

FLASHBACKA SIGN

"*IT WILL BE A START*" in big bold letters. Below it in smaller script: "*The National Association for Dress Reform*".

Mary, dressed in pants and coat, stands on stage on a STREET IN NEW YORK addressing a CROWD of curious, skeptical and hostile onlookers.

MARY

(mid-speech)

And I tell you nearly every roof in America covers a debilitated woman. Across this country women young and old are being bound up like harnessed animals in layer upon layer of restrictive, unhealthy clothing. Under the tyranny of social propriety and acceptable fashion it is common for an American woman to be toting around twelve pounds of hoop skirts, crinolines, bustles and girdles, petticoats and dresses. Attire so encumbering to a woman's body it's a wonder she can move at all. You sir!...

She points to a MAN whose WIFE wears a hoop skirt.

MARY (CONT'D)

Could you do your profession wearing an outfit like that?

The crowd LAUGHS.

MARY (CONT'D)

(to another man)

And could you do yours bound up in petticoats?

(over more LAUGHTER)

Why I can hardly manage a hoop skirt around a kitchen to say nothing of an operating room. I know that dress reform is a bold step, but it is the first step on the long road to liberating women so they may pursue careers and professions of their own choosing, occupations that go beyond housewife, nurse-maid or charwoman.

She takes a moment and scans the crowd. Catches sight of FREDERICK DOUGLASS (41) smiling up at her from among the sea of white faces.

MARY (CONT'D)

And how many of you know of a woman who has been seriously injured while wearing these cumbersome clothes? How many have tripped on stairs or died in falls? Or gone up in flames because an errant spark from a fireplace found its way into her petticoat?

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

And how many sorrowful women
unwittingly brought diseases into
their homes in the filth swept off
the streets on the hem of their dress?
And how many children have died as a
result?

She pauses, changes tone, focuses on the men in the crowd.

MARY (CONT'D)

We women are distinct, separate
individuals in and out of marriage.
You husbands have no more right to
dictate the cut of our clothing than
we have to interfere with yours.
It's high time you set aside these
archaic, barbarous ideas and recognize
the inherent right of your mothers,
wives and daughters to do as they
please, and to dress as they please!

Mary's speech is greeted by a CHORUS OF CHEERS AND BOOS.
She leaves the stage. Encounters Frederick Douglass.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Bravo, Doctor Walker. Bravo! A
marvelous speech, your logic is
irrefutable. I expect tonight many
a New York husband will be cursing
your name across the dinner table.
Well done!

Mary LAUGHS.

MARY

Thank you, Reverend Douglass. You
should know I take my inspiration
from you. I first heard you speak
at Seneca Falls when I was sixteen
and I've been an ardent admirer ever
since.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Then I have persuaded you to the
abolitionist cause?

MARY

Certainly not. I was raised an
abolitionist. I've always been for
social justice in all its forms.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

I was hoping you'd feel that way.
(MORE)

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (CONT'D)

Right is of no sex and truth of no color...

MARY

(completing his motto)
 ...for God is Father to us all and we are all brethren. I read every issue of your paper too, twice over. I think yours is one of the most important voices of our times.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

I'm flattered. I'd heard you had a gift for fiery speeches but I wasn't aware you were such a charmer.

MARY

I charm only with the truth, sir.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

One could go quite far with truth in one hand and charm in the other.
 (hands her a pamphlet)
 May I count on you to join our march next Saturday.

Mary takes the notice of an anti-slavery march.

MARY

Save me a place at the front. It'll be an honor to march beside you.

A rude OLD WOMAN at the head of a pack of upper crust old biddies thrusts herself between them.

OLD WOMAN

Mary Walker?

MARY

Yes?

OLD WOMAN

Humph! I just wanted to get a look at you up close. I was curious by what chemical process does a proud ambitious girl of more than average intelligence coagulate into a side show freak?

MARY

I owe it all to unbridled determination, ma'am, and little else. I assure you.

The flustered Old Woman snorts and turns to go when SPLAT!
A rotten tomato smacks Mary right in the chest.

The old women burst out LAUGHING while the BOY who threw the
tomato darts into an alley with FRIENDS.

Frederick Douglass gives Mary a handkerchief, leads her away.

OLD WOMAN

(called after Mary)

Serves you right! You should be
ashamed of yourself, dressing like
that and consorting with negroes.

The Reverend and Mary pause away from the crowd where Mary
cleans her coat, embarrassed and a little shook up.

MARY

Thank you. I'm afraid this coat is
ruined.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Are you hurt?

MARY

No. Just my pride. But if I listen
to my critics I have plenty to spare.

Frederick Douglass looks at some angry protesters waving
chauvinistic signs among the crowd.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

It seems a discussion on the rights
of animals would be regarded with
more civility in this country than
the rights of women.

MARY

Or people of color.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Indeed, it seems our two great causes
are just branches on the same tree
of social justice.

He looks again at the crowd.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (CONT'D)

(a touch pessimistic)

God willing we live to see the day
when they both bear fruit.

The CLANG! of the jail door being thrown open ENDS THE
FLASHBACK and takes us to...

MARY'S CELL - DALTON - NIGHT

Where Young Private stands at the open door holding a lantern, spotlighting Mary in a corner under a blanket.

YOUNG PRIVATE

Get up!

Mary blinks from the light. Sits up.

YOUNG PRIVATE (CONT'D)

Come on, lady, break camp. You got a train to catch.

MARY

Where am I going?

YOUNG PRIVATE

Back where you came from. General Joe's arranged a prisoner exchange.

Mary puts on her coat and follows him out.

EXT. TRAIN DEPOT - DALTON - NIGHT

RAILROADERS strain to push a cannon up a ramp onto a flatbed.

The chaotic depot packed with artillery and departing TROOPS. Johnston's Army of Tennessee is retreating south.

Pickup Young Private leading Mary through the crowd toward a tall LIEUTENANT supervising the loading of a prisoner train.

LIEUTENANT

C'mon, move it! Get the lead out. Get em in there.

The UNION SOLDIERS climb and crawl into the first three cars of the train, the able-bodied men assisting the wounded.

Young Private waits to be noticed by the officer.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

What's this?

YOUNG PRIVATE

(hands him orders)

A Yankee spy...

(throws in)

who likes to wear pants.

The Lieutenant takes the odd comment deadpan. Notes Mary's pants then reads the paperwork.

MARY

I'm not a spy, sir. I'm a surgeon
and a non-combatant and I was
unlawfully seized. You should know
that--

LIEUTENANT

I should know my orders, ma'am, and
they say you're on this train.

The Lieutenant pockets the orders. Turns to a DEPOT SOLDIER.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

(points)
Last car.

The Depot Soldier reaches for Mary's arm but she breaks away.

MARY

Unhand me!
(to Lieutenant)
Where are you taking me?

LIEUTENANT

Richmond, ma'am, Castle Thunder.

MARY

Wait, there's been a mistake. He
said I was being exchanged.

YOUNG PRIVATE

I lied, ma'am.
(tips his hat)
Apologies.
(to the Lieutenant)
Works every time.

He walks off into the crowd.

MARY

(to the Lieutenant)
Where's General Johnston? I demand
to speak to him. He said himself he
was working on my release.

The Lieutenant looks at Depot Soldier who grabs Mary's arm.

DEPOT SOLDIER

C'mon, ma'am, don't make a fuss.

Mary struggles against him and SHOUTS but her words are
drowned out by the BLAST OF A TRAIN WHISTLE.

Depot Soldier pulls her over to the last car. Lifts her
inside and slams the door.

The WHISTLE BLOWS again. The wheels chug.

White smoke billowing from the engine.

INT. BOXCAR - PRISONER TRAIN - NIGHT

Mary gets off the floorboards and dusts herself off.

Looks at three other women in the car, two middle-aged prostitutes, DOLLY and IVY, and CECILIA, a teen-aged girl.

Mary peeks through slats in the boxcar door.

The Confederate troops moving through the train smoke like ghosts through the underworld.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - NORTH GEORGIA - NIGHT

The four-car train chugs up a grade through a pine forest.

INT. BOXCAR - NIGHT

Mary sits with her shoulder to the door, lulled to reflection by the steady RATTLE of the tracks.

She peers out through a slat. SEES...

A ridge of pines silhouetted against the sky.

Looks over at Dolly and Ivy asleep across the car, their heavy makeup and vampish clothes.

CECILIA (O.S.)

Aren't you tired?

Cecilia lies nearby on her side using her arm for a pillow.

MARY

Exhausted. Just can't sleep.

CECILIA

That happens to me sometimes. I just lie there worryin bout everything. For all the good it does.

Mary concurs with a smile.

CECILIA (CONT'D)

I'm Cecilia.

MARY

Mary.

CECILIA

Please to meet you. I thought you
were a boy when you first came in.
Till I saw the curls. No offense.

MARY

None taken.
(confides in her like
an older sister)
I get that a lot.

After a quiet moment.

MARY (CONT'D)

I don't suppose they've given any
food?

CECILIA

Nope. We'll get some corn poke and
water when they stop for wood. Not
that it's anything to look forward
to.

(after a beat)

They brought us on in Atlanta. And
God Almighty was I glad to get outta
there. I don't like cities much...
like a beehive. Everybody crawlin
over one another.

MARY

Where're you from?

CECILIA

My folks is from around Cow Creek...
Georgia. There's nothin there.

MARY

There's something there, I'm sure.
Perhaps you're just not the right
age to appreciate it.

CECILIA

I'm seventeen.

MARY

Oh, I see. Nearly all grown up.

CECILIA

Nearly.

MARY

So how did you end up here? If you
don't mind my asking.

CECILIA

Oh, I don't mind.

(looks at the two old
whores)

I put in with them. The fat one's Dolly. That's Iphigenia, Ivy. She's the boss. I work for em. Well, did. Till we was arrested for robbin soldiers. I didn't do no robbin really. I just acted friendly and brought em to em.

MARY

Doesn't sound like it was a very good choice.

CECILIA

It weren't. Do they hang girls for robbin?

MARY

I shouldn't think so.

EXT. DEPOT - NORTH CAROLINA - DAY

Rain drowns a rundown depot where drenched TRACK LABORERS load wood into the tender.

EXT./INT. BOXCAR

Two TRAIN GUARDS run alongside the train ducking the rain. They open the boxcar door and deliver breakfast.

TRAIN GUARD #1

Mornin, kittens! Rise and shine.

Mary is awake and nearest the door, across the car Ivy and Dolly are stirring, Cecilia sound asleep in a corner.

Mary takes a cloth bundle and water jug from Train Guard #1.

MARY

Where are we?

TRAIN GUARD #1

North Carolina. We crossed the border last night.

Ivy stands and approaches. Train Guard #2 following her movements with appreciative eyes.

IVY

So what is it this morning, more worm castles? When we gonna get some real food?

TRAIN GUARD #1

When pigs fly, that's when. What do you think this is, lady, a Pullman Special? This here's a prisoner train.

IVY

Not much gets passed you, does it, Tex?

TRAIN GUARD #2

Hey, doll, I'll bring ya some real food, steamin hot too. Salted pork, beans, grits. How's that sound?

IVY

What's the catch? No, let me guess. You wanna trade for some horizontal refreshments. Is that it?

Train Guard #2 looks from his buddy to Ivy, all smiles.

TRAIN GUARD #2

Yeah. So how bout it?

Ivy thinks it over.

IVY

I'm not opposed to bein friendly, not with brave young boys like you. What do you say, Dolly, you wanna oblige these boys?

DOLLY

Oh, Ivy, please, you'll just get us in more trouble.

IVY

(to Mary)

How bout you, sister sir? You game?

Mary challenges her with a sharp gaze.

MARY

Mind your mouth, madam. If you can't speak to me in a civil manner then don't speak to me at all. And if you do anything untoward with these boys I'll report you first chance I get.

IVY

Oh, look at you, little fireplug. Sure you'll report us. Go ahead, the officer will want some too.

(to Dolly)

Untoward? Who talks like that?

She looks to the Guards.

IVY (CONT'D)
 Alright, boys, you gotta deal. But
 first do me a favor.

Train Guard #2 practically fizzes with anticipation.

TRAIN GUARD #2
 Sure, name it.

Ivy picks up a chamber pot.

IVY
 Do something with this!

She tosses the contents of the pot out at them and they only
 just jump out of the way.

Ivy CACKLES.

TRAIN GUARD #1
 Damn lady! What's wrong with you?

Train Guard #2 takes hold of the boxcar door.

TRAIN GUARD #2
 Go ahead and keep it then, ya crazy
 witch! Keep it, for all I care.

He SLAMS shut the door.

Ivy drops the chamber pot. Picks up the water jug and drinks.

Ivy is a tall, robust woman, probably once quite beautiful,
 but a lifetime of sin takes its toll on a woman and it shows.

She looks down at Mary sitting on the floorboards with the
 corn poke in her lap.

IVY
 Just what the hell are you supposed
 to be?

DOLLY
 Now, Ivy, let her alone.

IVY
 Well, look at her. I've had fancy-
 man clients that liked to dress like
 women, but this?

Mary ignores Ivy and divides the breakfast into four pieces.

She offers Dolly a piece. Ivy kneels down and takes one too then reaches for a second.

MARY

(puts out her hand)

That's for Cecilia. She'll be hungry when she wakes.

IVY

It's not my problem if she sleeps away breakfast.

She takes the second piece and Mary grabs hold of her wrist.

MARY

I said to leave it.

Ivy glares, a torrent of rage behind her eyes.

IVY

Let go of me.

Mary releases her hand and Ivy drops the corn poke and goes and sits with Dolly. Mary takes the corn poke to Cecilia.

MARY

Cecilia, wake up.

Cecilia wakes. Looks sleepily at Mary.

CECILIA

Mornin.

MARY

Good morning, dear. Here, they brought breakfast.

Cecilia sits up and takes the corn poke.

IVY

That's lunch too, by the way.

(to Cecilia)

And you girl, best not be lollygagging all mornin if you want your share. I ain't looking after you no more, remember that. As of now our former arrangement is null and void.

CECILIA

I didn't think otherwise.

IVY

Girl, you don't think at all. So stop puttin on airs for your new friend.

MARY

Are you always so belligerent, Miss Ivy, or is this just a morning mood?

Ivy dismisses Mary with a sneer then digs into her food.

Mary and Cecilia eat in silence for a time.

CECILIA

(yawns)

Oh, my. I can't believe how well I slept. I ain't never been on a train before. Kinda soothing. You traveled much?

MARY

Yes, a great deal.

CECILIA

Where you from?

MARY

New York, a town called Oswego.

CECILIA

Must be cold up there.

MARY

It is.

CECILIA

I got a cousin in Illinois. She used to write me. She said it's real cold. Freezin. But she likes it. I haven't heard from her since her husband got killed. But we wasn't gettin on much anyway. She's a big fan of Lincoln and I can't stand the man. I know you're a Northerner and all, but you should know down here we think he's the most evil man on God's green earth.

MARY

President Lincoln's many things to many people, but I can assure you there isn't an evil bone in his body.

CECILIA

Maybe so, but we don't care for him. My cousin, she seen him, and she swears she's never seen an uglier or finer lookin man in all her life. Just what's that supposed to mean?

Mary just smiles and REMEMBERS...

FLASHBACK

EXT. SIXTH STREET WHARF - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

It is the aftermath of Chancellorsville, a cloudless, scorching hot day in May 1863.

The city wharf overflows with General Hooker's defeated Army of the Potomac, SCORES OF MEN around the piers and warehouses.

Assorted vessels clog the waterway: paddle steamers, barges, sailboats, et cetera.

An unfinished Capitol dome and Washington Monument visible in the distance.

MARY

dressed as always in pants, is at the water's edge working tirelessly in the exhausting heat, triaging WOUNDED SOLDIERS coming off a barge.

She checks a man on a stretcher with a head wound.

MARY

(to stretcher bearers)

Take him to the transports right away. And keep his head high.

She lets some walking wounded pass then stops a BLACK SOLDIER holding his arm covered with blood.

Through the crowd behind her comes LINCOLN under his stove top hat. He greets the men. Shakes hands. Gives pats on the back to some. Inaudible encouragement to others. His eyes turning time and again to Mary as he approaches through the crowd.

MARY (CONT'D)

(to Black Soldier)

You have a separated shoulder and broken arm. Get in line with those men by the warehouse.

BLACK SOLDIER

But them's white men.

MARY

You all bleed red. Go on, get going.

The Black Soldier walks off.

The last man off the barge files pass Mary and she takes a moment to breathe.

LINCOLN (O.S.)
Exhausting work, Doctor Walker,
isn't it?

Mary turns to Lincoln.

MARY
Mister President...

It takes her a moment to find herself. When she does, she looks skyward.

MARY (CONT'D)
What I wouldn't give for one good
cloud.
(it dawns on her)
Excuse me, sir, but how is it you
know my name?

Lincoln glances up the pier at an officer.

LINCOLN
General Hooker told me. I saw you
working here and commented on such a
dedicated nurse. He, of course,
corrected me. I've never met a lady
doctor. Naturally, I was curious to
make your acquaintance.

MARY
I'm honored. I've never met a
President.

Mary looks into his fatherly eyes, his dark, lined face streaming with perspiration. He offers to shake hands.

MARY (CONT'D)
(hesitates)
Your hand, Mister President, it's
swollen.

LINCOLN
And it throbs like a bullfrog's
throat. Seems every soldier I meet
feels compelled to convey his manhood
to me in his grip. A hazard of the
office.

He shakes Mary's hand.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

You should've seen what the ladies
at the inaugural ball did to my feet.

He grins with a twinkle in his eye. Mary quite taken with his charm.

Lincoln gazes out over the chaos of the shattered army.
Another barge arriving with more casualties.

MARY

It must have gone very badly at
Chancellorsville.

LINCOLN

(reflecting)

Very bad indeed. Those poor boys.
Yet another devastating loss.

Lincoln remembers himself. Reassures her.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

But the fight goes on. The cause of
liberty must not be surrendered at
the end of one or even a hundred
such defeats.

A COLUMN OF SOLDIERS marches by. From among them, a voice.

VOICE FROM THE COLUMN

Lookee there, a hermaphrodite talkin
to the President!

The whole column erupts with LAUGHTER.

Lincoln turns with fire in his eyes.

LINCOLN

Lieutenant!

MARY

Mister President, please.

A Lieutenant halts the column. Looks scared as a spring
lamb at the enraged President.

Mary begs Lincoln with her eyes: please, let it go.

President Lincoln reins in his anger.

LINCOLN

(waves them on)

Carry on.

The column marches on.

Lincoln turns to Mary, indignant and embarrassed for it.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry... It must be painful.

Mary quells a rising tide of emotions. Confesses.

MARY

It is... But I've learned to weather it.

(glances at the column)

When you have a thousand such arrows in you, what's one more. I prefer to focus my energies on more important things. A lifetime's too little time to advance the causes to which I'm dedicated. I would think it would be the same for you?

Lincoln looks at Mary from across a bridge of common experience. Steps forward and puts a hand on her shoulder.

LINCOLN

So it is.

Mary's touched by his tenderness. Lincoln changes tone, puts some optimism in his voice.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Carry on the good work, Doctor Walker. In the end we will not fail. How can we when we have women like you.

He tips his hat. Walks off. Leaves Mary beaming with pride.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. TRAIN STATION - RICHMOND - DAY

A bustling station. Mary, Cecilia, Ivy and Dolly are led from the train by two DETECTIVES past a crowd of CIVILIANS and SOLDIERS who gawk at Mary.

A group of BLACK CHILDREN following her, pointing and LAUGHING at the lady dressed like a man.

EXT. CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

Horse hooves CLIP-CLOP on a cobblestone street.

A paddy-wagon arrives at the prison, a rectangular brick monolith three stories high. An old tobacco factory converted into one of the most notorious prisons in the South.

The Detectives escort the four women from the wagon. Mary pausing to look up at the barred windows of the prison.

INT. FOYER - CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

Mary, Cecilia, Dolly and Ivy stand before a CLERK processing the Detectives' paperwork. TWO PRISON GUARDS waiting nearby:

PRIVATE COLBY, a gangly man about 40, shifty and pock-marked.

And SERGEANT GRAVES, a bearded, beefy Texan with feral eyes, 250 pounds of appetite and danger in the guise of a man.

Graves fixes a gaze on Cecilia.

The anxious girl avoids his eyes. Looks around at the cold surroundings. The stark walls closing in on her.

Mary notices and grips her arm in a reassuring manner.

CUT TO:

The four women led up STAIRS. Graves coming up last. His face inches from Cecilia's backside.

On the SECOND FLOOR they come upon a large room packed with BLACK PRISONERS, emaciated men in tattered clothing. A half-dozen of the poor souls bucked in the hall outside the door.

NOTE: "*Bucked*" is a punishment where one is bound with hands around the knees and a stick between the arms and legs.

They arrive on the THIRD FLOOR where the women are housed. Cross a common area with old tables and chairs.

Travel a hallway lined with CELLS. Curious and menacing faces at the barred portholes of the doors.

Colby opens a cell door and waves Mary and Cecilia into a windowless cube. Two cots. Ragged blankets. A chamber pot on the wood floor. Sergeant Graves appears in the doorway.

GRAVES

Welcome to Castle Thunder, ladies.
Be it ever so humble...

He LAUGHS and slams the door.

INT. MARY'S CELL - CASTLE THUNDER - NIGHT

Mary lies on her cot, thinking. Blanket to her chin against the cold. Cecilia's SOBS coming out of the dark around her.

NEXT MORNING

Mary sleeps. All of a sudden she throws off her blanket and kicks a rat away from her feet. Sits up and puts her head in her hands.

INT. CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

The FEMALE INMATES march down STAIRS.

File into the MESS HALL on the ground floor.

A GREEN PUDDLE OF FOOD

lies at the bottom of a small bowl.

Mary stares at the unappetizing meal. Looks around a table at a dozen women robotically eating the slop.

EXT. PRISON YARD - LATER

The women prisoners mill around a grassless dirt square enclosed by walls and guard towers. Some sit. Some walk for exercise. Most just huddle in small groups. While others line up before a couple of outhouses.

Mary ambles away from a group of women. Picks up a couple stones and pockets them.

MAGGIE, an older freckle-faced inmate, approaches.

MAGGIE

Hey. I heard you're a doctor. Is that right?

MARY

Who told you that?

MAGGIE

Around here we know everything but your shoe size before you get out of bed. I'm Maggie.

MARY

Mary. Pleased to meet you.

MAGGIE

Don't be. I'm not here to make friends, not with no Yankee.

MARY

Then what do you want?

MAGGIE

It's my ear. It's paining me somethin awful.

MARY

Isn't there a prison doctor?

MAGGIE

Old Boggs. I wouldn't let him doctor my goat.

MARY

Alright then, let me look at it.

MAGGIE

(with a glance at the guards)

Not here. Tonight, after supper. I'll get a guard to bring you to my cell.

Her eyes go from Mary to the line outside the latrine.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

That your cell mate?

Mary turns.

Cecilia waits to enter the outhouse. Sergeant Graves shadowing her from a few yards away.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Better watch yourself. Graves has it in for her. That's trouble for both of you.

She strolls off.

Mary looks again at Graves who now leans over Cecilia whispering in her ear. The frightened girl breaks out of line and runs away. Amusing Graves, who CHUCKLES.

INT. MARY'S CELL - NIGHT

Mary jams the two stones into a hole in the wall. Stands and looks down at Cecilia up to her nose in a Bible.

NOTE: *This is the Bible from the opening on Mary's chiffonier.*

MARY

That ought to keep the rats out.

Cecilia glances at the plugged hole.

CECILIA

Which ones?

FOOTSTEPS and the JANGLE OF KEYS transition us to a...

CORRIDOR OF CELLS - NIGHT

A BRIBED GUARD leading Mary down the narrow passageway.

He stops and opens a CELL door. Reveals Maggie on her cot. She rises and stuffs a coin in the Guard's hand.

BRIBED GUARD

(to Maggie)

Ya got ten minutes.

(glances at Mary)

And make sure she keeps her mouth shut.

He brushes past Mary and leaves.

CUT TO:

Mary on a cot holding a candle, examining Maggie's ear.

MARY

How long has it been bothering you?

MAGGIE

A few days. It started hurtin just after my roommate died.

Mary notes the bare cot across the cell.

MARY

What happened to her?

MAGGIE

She caught a chill. Didn't last a week after that.

Mary trades a meaningful glance with Maggie then focuses again on the ear. Probing.

MARY

I think there's something in here.

She picks at the ear with her nails. Pulls out a dead beetle smeared with blood.

MARY (CONT'D)

It must have crawled in there while you were sleeping and died.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Flush with water for a few days,
vinegar if you can get your hands on
some. That should clear it up.

She wipes blood off Maggie's ear with a rag.

MARY (CONT'D)

You should've seen the prison doctor,
this could have gotten much worse.

MAGGIE

Fat old Boggs. He's never around.
Besides, I'd rather my ear fall off
than have to put up with him. Clammy
hands... and a little too busy for
any doctor.

Mary looks across the cell at the bare cot.

MARY

Tell me something, do a lot of women
die in here?

MAGGIE

Does the sun come up in the east?

INT. DOCTOR BOGGS' OFFICE - CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

Fat old DOCTOR ADOLPHUS BOGGS packs his pipe at his desk.
After a KNOCK, Private Colby enters with Mary.

COLBY

Doc, ya got a visitor. A pretty
one... for a tom.

Boggs ignores Mary and fires his pipe.

BOGGS

Yes, young lady, something I can do
for you?

MARY

To start with you can stop making a
dent in that chair and do your job.

Boggs looks up, frozen still till the match burns his hand.

BOGGS

Damn!

(shakes his thumb)

Just who the hell are you? Get out
of my office before I call the warden.

MARY

Do so, please. I think he should know he has skunk masquerading as a physician in his charge.

Boggs takes a moment to think.

BOGGS

I know you. I know all about you, Miss Walker, the so-called doctor. Why you're nothing more than a glorified nurse, the laughing stock of the Union Army - and worst yet a spy. As far as I'm concerned you should be hung.

MARY

And you alongside me for selling the prisoners' medical supplies on the black market, and for general quackery.

BOGGS

That's quite the tongue you have, young lady. Careful you don't wake up one morning and find it stuffed in your pocket.

MARY

By whom? You know someone with the skill to remove it?

BOGGS

Have you any other purpose here besides making a nuisance of yourself, Miss Walker? If not... shoo! I've better things to do.

MARY

You have wantonly abrogated your responsibilities to these women. You're a disgrace to your profession.

BOGGS

And you're a disgrace to everything decent in a woman. Dressed like that! Who do you think you are?

MARY

I'm a harbinger, Doctor Boggs. One who bears bad news. Nearly the entire population of women in this prison are overcome with illness and malnutrition. I'm here to warn you, you will be held to account.

BOGGS

Duly noted? Anything else?

MARY

Yes. One day soon, sir, this war will end and the profane cause of the Confederacy will be relegated to the ash heap of history. On that day there will be a reckoning. A great light will shine upon all the foul deeds conducted under the cloud of war. And there will be no place low enough for the likes of you to hide.

Mary stands before him like Lady Justice herself. Boggs's pretense of strength withering under her gaze.

BOGGS

What is it you want?

MARY

Fresh bandages. And medicines--

BOGGS

There are none to be had--

MARY

Then find some! Buy them back off your friends in the black market. And while you're at it see that we get some fresh vegetables. This whole place is rife with scurvy.

A heavy silence falls over the room. Then...

BOGGS

Look at you, standing there like some great crusader. You fool yourself, Miss Walker. You're nothing more than a peculiar little woman with a lot of nerve. You won't change the way things are.

MARY

Not all at once I won't. But give me time.

CUT TO:

A VICIOUS DOG BARKING

A huge black hound menacing the women prisoners lined up in the PRISON YARD. Mary, Cecilia, Ivy and Dolly among them.

A bearded, barrel-chested man in his forties holds the dog on a leash. CAPTAIN GEORGE W. ANDERSON, the prison warden.

He reins in the dog. Signals a GUARD DETAIL across the yard.

The guards march a HALF-DOZEN MEN at bayonet-point toward a wooden structure where thin ropes hang from a crossbeam.

A grave silence falls over the yard. Mary and the other women gripped by the scene.

The men are brought under the crossbeam where their thumbs are tied to the ropes.

The Warden faces the women.

WARDEN ANDERSON

I want you ladies to know I am not naturally inclined toward corporal punishment. However, I have a duty to keep order in this institution and any misbehavior, any insubordination...

(he looks at Mary)

or any disregard for prison rules, however minor, will be met by the proper corrective punishment.

He looks to the detail and nods.

The guards yank on the ropes and the prisoners are raised onto their tiptoes. Their GROANS and SHUFFLING FEET cutting the silence in the yard.

The Warden watches the men dance on their toes. A sick gleam in his eye. He looks back at the women.

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)

I make no exceptions for women. Those of you who are new here...

He runs his eyes over Mary, Cecilia, Ivy and Dolly.

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)

will learn that I am a fair man. But I am not given to offering second chances, one offense will suffice.

He points to a black line in the dirt that circles the yard.

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)

You see that line there, ladies. That marks the boundaries of this exercise yard for all prisoners.

(MORE)

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)

It is there for the protection of prison personnel. You are forbidden to cross it. Should you do so, we will assume that you have malicious intent and thereby pose an immediate threat to the safety of the guards. You will therefore be shot. I call it a boundary. But for you newcomers here, it is referred to among our prisoners as the "line of death". I advise that you do not put it, or me, to the test.

He scans the glum faces of the women. Zeros in on Mary as if he knows this is one who will challenge authority.

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)

That is all.

The women are marched in past the Warden. When ALMA, a pretty young black woman, walks by the Warden spurs his dog with a flick of his wrist.

The huge dog lunges at Alma and bites her ankle. Alma SCREAMS and falls.

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Nero! Heel!

The big hound comes back to the Warden and Mary rushes to Alma's aid.

She tears off a piece of Alma's torn dress and stems the flow of blood on her leg. Looks defiantly at the Warden.

MARY

That was uncalled for!

WARDEN ANDERSON

Guess he just doesn't like her smell.
Can't say I blame him?

He smiles cruelly and walks away.

INT. COMMON AREA - WOMEN'S FLOOR - CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

The women prisoners file in to their floor. Mary and Cecilia assisting Alma to a chair.

MARY

(to Cecilia)

Bring me a wet cloth. And ask the guards for a needle and thread.

Cecilia hurries off, passing through a ring of women who have formed around Mary and her patient.

Mary raises Alma's torn skirt and examines the dog bite, an ugly gash in the leg.

Some women turn away. Others watch Mary with growing respect.

Ivy takes in their captivated faces. Resentful.

Cecilia returns with the wet cloth and needle.

MARY (CONT'D)

Thread that for me, then heat the tip. Does anyone have a match?

A WOMAN

No, ma'am, that's contraband.

IVY

(points at Alma)

There's your contraband.

Sporadic LAUGHTER from some of the women.

IVY (CONT'D)

What do you wanna help that nigger for anyway?

MARY

(stitching the wound)

Keep your ugly thoughts to yourself, Ivy. And get out of my light.

IVY

Don't tell me what to do or I'll open your head like that leg.

Mary ignores Ivy. Works on Alma who grits her teeth in pain.

IVY (CONT'D)

I know what this is all about.

She looks at Cecilia and Alma. Speaks to the room.

IVY (CONT'D)

Miss Man-Pants here goes in for girls. Don't you? Especially the young ones.

Some of the women SNICKER.

DOLLY

Oh, leave her be, Ivy. Stop making trouble.

Mary ties off the last stitch, to the relief of Alma.

MARY

(to Alma)

It's a nasty wound, but not deep.
Just keep it clean. You'll be fine.

ALMA

(fearful)

Ya think maybe I'll catch the water
sickness?

MARY

No, I don't think so. That dog wasn't
mad, just mean.

Alma nods, reassured. Mary stands and turns to Ivy.

MARY (CONT'D)

You, madam, are without a doubt the
most foul-mouthed woman I've ever
met. At first I took pity on you as
someone born in the gutter who didn't
know any better. But I see now that
you relish your low life. It suits
you just fine, like an old sow who
loves to wallow in her own filth!

Ivy at Mary and the fight is on...

The two women battle like wildcats.

Reeling around the room.

Knocking over chairs.

Tumbling to the ground and back to their feet.

Clutching one another.

Taking hold of anything they can... hair, clothes, hands.

They scratch and claw. Throw wild punches.

The women prisoners following the fight around the room.
EGGING them on.

Ivy is bigger, stronger. She whips Mary around like a rag
doll. Takes her hard to the floor.

But Mary's all tiger. Kicking and punching as they roll
across the floor. Scratching Ivy. Clutching her throat.

Then quick as a cat Mary whips around onto Ivy's back. Grabs
her hair and yanks on it with all her might.

Ivy WAILS as a clump of bloody hair comes off in Mary's hand.

Guards arrive. Barreling through the women.

Pulling Mary off Ivy. The bigger woman left on the floor clutching her bleeding scalp, WHIMPERING in pain.

The guards drag Mary from the room, her face red with rage. The clump of hair still in her hand.

CUT TO:

THE CLUMP OF HAIR ON THE WARDEN'S DESK

Mary standing before him like a scolded pupil. Colby and Graves behind her near the door.

WARDEN ANDERSON

Just what kind of woman are you,
Miss Walker? You behave like an
animal.

MARY

I defended myself, she attacked me.

WARDEN ANDERSON

There are witnesses who say otherwise.

MARY

They're lying.

WARDEN ANDERSON

(skeptically)
Um hmm, they're lying.

The Warden looks Mary up and down.

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)

You know I've had nothing but bad
reports on you since you came here.
Apparently you're just one of those
women who doesn't seem to know her
place.

MARY

What place is that, Warden?

The Warden comes from behind his desk and up to Mary.

WARDEN ANDERSON

It's where I say it is. And while
you're in this institution it's under
my boot! Do you understand me?

Mary glares back at him eye to eye, like two boxers at a weigh-in. It's a clash of wills where Mary refuses to yield.

The Warden finally breaks it off and walks back to his chair.

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)
 (to Colby and Graves)
 Half rations.

COLBY
 For how long, Warden?

WARDEN ANDERSON
 Till I say otherwise! Now get her
 out of my sight.

The Two Guards escort Mary from the room.

After she's gone the Warden sits, troubled. He looks down at the clump of hair. Sweeps it off his desk.

EXT. CASTLE THUNDER - NIGHT

A spring downpour washes away all but the prisoner's sins.

INT. MESS HALL - CASTLE THUNDER - NIGHT

The FEMALE INMATES dine on greasy broth to the MUSIC OF THE RAIN. Two empty chairs where Mary and Ivy usually sit.

CUT TO:

MARY ALONE IN HER CELL

Spotlighted by the gas-light streaming through the porthole of her cell door, accentuating her isolation.

CUT TO:

WARDEN ANDERSON ALONE IN HIS OFFICE

Sipping whiskey. Reading a newspaper. The depressing headlines putting a scowl on his face.

INSERT: NEWSPAPER

"DAILY RICHMOND EXAMINER"

"Richmond, Virginia - Saturday, May 14, 1864"

A box table of headlines within the fine print READS:

"MAJOR GENERAL J.E.B. STUART FALLS AT YELLOW TAVERN"

"LEE STILL RETREATING"

"GALLANT 1ST VIRGINIA CAVALRY ROUTED BY SUPERIOR UNION FORCE"

The Warden balls up the paper and flings it into a fireplace.

The BURNING EMBERS of the headlines flutter into the chimney shoot, taking the dreams of the Confederacy with them.

MATCH CUT TO:

A COLD FIREPLACE

In the COMMON AREA on the Women's Floor of Castle Thunder.

MORNING sunlight spilling through a barred window onto Mary who kneels before Alma in a chair, removing her bandage.

The dog bite healed, now just a curved dark line of stitches.

MARY

These can come out now.

Alma looks down from her chair.

ALMA

That scar looks like a smile.

Mary tilts her head, jokes with Alma.

MARY

It's frowning at me.

Mary removes the stitches with scissors.

ALMA

How you holding up, Miss Mary? You look awfully pale.

MARY

I always look pale. Or beet red when my tempers up.

(warmly at Alma)

I'm fine. Don't worry about me.

Alma checks the guards. Takes a napkin out of her skirt.

ALMA

Here. Me and some of the other gals saved some hardtack for you. All we could spare.

MARY

You shouldn't have. It will only
get you in trouble.

ALMA

Shoot, trouble's my shadow. I ain't
never spent a day without em.
(offering the food)
Go on, before they see.

Mary stands and puts the napkin in her pocket.

MARY

You're a dear,
(points an admonishing
finger)
but don't do it again.

Mary walks off. Notices Dolly sitting by herself near a
window reading a book. She goes to her.

MARY (CONT'D)

How's Ivy?

DOLLY

I don't know. Don't care either.
Last I heard she was out of the
hospital. I think they sent her
south...
(adds humorously)
to stop Sherman.

This draws a smile from Mary.

MARY

What are you reading?

Dolly shows her the cover of an anthology of poetry.

DOLLY

Poems. I don't understand most of
em, but the words... something
comforting about em.

MARY

I'd say that's all the understanding
you need.

DOLLY

You like poetry, Doctor Walker?

Mary reflects on the question.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. U.S. PATENT OFFICE - NIGHT -

A high ponderous glass case crowded with models and miniatures of every kind of utensil, machine or invention the mind of man could conceive.

GO WIDE TO REVEAL THE 2ND FLOOR WARD

Where between the cases of patented items are rows of cots filled with WOUNDED MEN - the legless, armless, burned and blind. SOFT GROANS disturb the solemnity of the gas-lit hall. The worst cases RAMBLING IN PAIN, the more fortunate ones finding refuge in sleep.

MOVING THROUGH THE ROOM WE PASS

A WIFE comforting her WOUNDED HUSBAND.

An OLD PASTOR praying over a BLIND SOLDIER.

Tired NURSES moving among the cots.

One old gal dozing in a chair.

Arrive at Mary cot-side with a patient. A few feet away a bearded WALT WHITMAN (43) writes a letter for a DYING BOY.

DYING BOY

Tell Arletta to do up her hair and mend that blue dress, cause I'll be comin home soon, Mama... one way or another.

Walt Whitman hesitates then writes this down.

Mary gets up and walks down the aisle. Past a SOLDIER with a bandaged face clasping at his dressing.

Mary goes to him. Tries to restrain him.

MARY

(calm as well water)
Mister Whitman, could you please give me a hand.

Walt Whitman hurries over.

MARY (CONT'D)

Hold him still, his bandage is stuck to the wound.

Walt Whitman holds the boy's arms.

Mary takes a cup of water off a stand and drips it over the bandage. Carefully peels it away.

Revealing a face like raw hamburger with a black hole where an eye should be.

Walt Whitman falters. He lowers his eyes. Holds the boy until Mary replaces the dressing then walks out of the hall.

Mary watches him leave, understanding.

EXT. PATENT OFFICE - NIGHT

Walt Whitman sits at the feet of the huge columns out front. Mary comes out and sits beside him. After a quiet moment.

MARY

Don't be too hard on yourself, Mister Whitman. This takes some getting used to.

WALT WHITMAN

My God, must they all come back like this?

There is a moment here. Mary looks around.

MARY

Washington's different at night, isn't it? Doesn't even smell as bad.

She peeks at Walt Whitman mired in melancholy. Spots a piece of paper in his pocket.

MARY (CONT'D)

What have you got there, a poem?

Walt Whitman becomes conscious of his mood. He breaks it, for he is always polite.

WALT WHITMAN

The beginnings of one.

MARY

May I hear it?

WALT WHITMAN

I usually don't show a poem until it's finished.

MARY

Oh?

WALT WHITMAN

It's just bits and pieces.

MARY

I'll consider it an honor: the first
to hear a Walt Whitman poem.

He smiles, flattered. Reads.

WALT WHITMAN

An old man bending, I come, among
the new faces. To sit by the wounded
and soothe them or silently watch
them die. Bearing bandages, water
and sponge, straight and swift to my
wounded I go. To the long rows of
cots, to each and all one after
another I draw near, not one do I
miss. With hinged knee and steady
hands I dress their wounds. The
crushed head all matted with blood,
poor crazed hand tear not the bandage
away. From the stump of the arm,
the amputated hand, I undo the clotted
lint, remove the slough, wash off
the matter and blood. The young
man's eyes are closed, his face pale,
he dares not look on the bloody stump,
and has not yet looked on it. I
dress the perforated shoulder, the
foot with the bullet wound, cleanse
the one with the gnawing and putrid
gangrene, so sickening, so offensive.
He turns to me his appealing eyes -
poor boy! I never knew you. Yet I
think I could not refuse this moment
to die for you, if that would save
you.

He puts away the poem.

MARY

It's remarkable. What do you call
it?

WALT WHITMAN

I haven't decided. It isn't finished.

MARY

What brings you here, Mister Whitman?
Is it a calling?

WALT WHITMAN

No. I wish it was. A calling would
suggest I've heard the voice of God
in some capacity. All I've ever
experienced is His grand silence.

(MORE)

WALT WHITMAN (CONT'D)

He's very consistent in that... His silence.

He breaks out of his contemplation. Looks openly at Mary.

WALT WHITMAN (CONT'D)

I came down from Brooklyn to look for my younger brother, George. He was wounded at Fredericksburg.

MARY

Did you find him?

WALT WHITMAN

Yes, at Lacy House. He's on the mend, his wounds were minor. Once they transferred him up north I meant to go home.

MARY

But yet you're still here.

WALT WHITMAN

For all the good I do.

MARY

Mister Whitman, you are a well-regarded and famous man. And when your time comes it is likely you'll have the serene comfort of having a loving family and loyal friends around you. And an entire country will mourn your passing. But most of these boys lie here suffering in obscurity with nothing more to look forward to than the terror and abandonment of an anonymous death. Your tender care, your poems and cheerful disposition, supply them with a medicine which all the drugs and bottles and powders are helpless to yield. Whatever else you think of your time here, please never lose sight of that.

END FLASHBACK

INT. MARY'S CELL - CASTLE THUNDER - NIGHT

Mary sits on her cot in the dark. Cecilia slumbering nearby.

Mary takes out the napkin Alma gave her. Uncovers somehardtack. Eats it. Savoring every bite.

EXT. CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

Sunrise over Richmond. Spirals of black smoke from distant battlefields blot the red tint of the sky. The FAINT RUMBLE of the Union guns heralding the fall of the Old South.

INT. MESS HALL - CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

The WOMEN eat breakfast.

Cecilia takes half her cornbread and sets it in her lap. Suddenly a man's hand reaches in and grabs her arm. It's Graves. He brings his cruel face close to hers and squeezes her wrist.

CUT TO:

MARY LYING ON HER COT

The door CLANGS open and Graves shoves Cecilia into the room. She lands on her cot clutching her arm.

GRAVES

(to Mary)

Your friend here is breaking the rules on account of you. She should know better.

Mary goes to Cecilia.

GRAVES (CONT'D)

Hey! Never mind her. Let her be. You're wanted down in the yard.

MARY

What for?

GRAVES

Miss Man-Pants is gettin exchanged. What they want with you I'll never know.

Mary is stunned.

MARY

I'm being exchanged?

GRAVES

You heard me.

MARY

When did this happen?

GRAVES

How the hell show I know. I was just told to send you down to the yard. They're processing you this morning.

Mary looks to Cecilia.

CECILIA

Oh, Mary, I'm so happy for you! Don't worry about me, I'll be fine.

She hugs Mary.

GRAVES

C'mon! Get goin.

Mary looks dearly at Cecilia, emotionally torn.

CECILIA

Go on, Mary, go. And bless you for all your help. I don't know how I'll bear this place without you, but I will. Go on, it's okay.

Mary strokes her cheek.

MARY

Bye love. Take care.

Mary gives her another hug then walks over to Graves.

GRAVES

(towering over Mary)
Go straight to the yard, ya hear.
And make sure you see Private Colby.

Mary takes a last glance at Cecilia then walks out.

Graves stays in the doorway watching Mary walk off. Once she's gone he turns to Cecilia, steps in and shuts the door.

EXT. YARD - CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

Mary weaves through the WOMEN in the yard in search of Colby. Finds him.

MARY

Private, Sergeant Graves told me to report to you. He said I was being exchanged.

COLBY

Yeah, lucky you. C'mon.

INT. CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

Colby leads Mary down a narrow hall.

COLBY

I can't say I'm sorry to see you go,
all the trouble you've been.

He opens the door to a HOLDING ROOM furnished with just a table and chair. A cup of water and a pie on the table.

COLBY (CONT'D)

Wait here.

Mary looks into the room, a bit uncertain.

COLBY (CONT'D)

The pie's for you - the warden's
idea. Since you're going home, you're
off half-rations.

Mary walks in. Colby shuts the door and locks it.

Mary takes a seat. Waits. Thinks.

Looks at the pie.

Takes a fork on the table and probes it.

Uncovers baked apples loaded with worms.

She stares at it in horror, hit by a sudden realization.

She bolts to the door. Yanks on the lock.

MARY

Let me out of here! Private Colby!
PRIVATE!!

INT. MARY'S CELL - TWILIGHT

Cecilia sits on her cot with her knees drawn up against her. Her face is bruised. The cot disheveled. Her dress torn at the shoulder.

The cell door opens and Mary is let in by a GUARD.

She walks over to Cecilia who can't look at her. Sits down and holds her. There are no words. Just an air of pain and humiliation.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - CASTLE THUNDER - NIGHT

Warden Anderson sits at a side table away from his desk enjoying a glass of wine with his dinner.

After a KNOCK at the door a willowy man, the WARDEN'S SECRETARY, enters.

WARDEN'S SECRETARY

Excuse me, Warden, but prisoner Walker would like to see you.

WARDEN ANDERSON

Is it my habit to entertain prisoners while I'm having dinner?

WARDEN'S SECRETARY

No, sir. My apologies. I know better but she was just most insistent. I'll send her away.

He backs out and shuts the door. Through the door we hear the RUMBLING OF MARY IN HIGH VOICE arguing her point.

The Warden sips his wine and listens. Hears enough then goes and throws open the door.

WARDEN ANDERSON

Miss Walker! What is it now? Must I put you in irons to get some orderly behavior out of you?

Mary's fuming, and out of breath from her outburst.

MARY

(speaks as calmly as she can)

I'd just like a word with you, if I may.

The Warden hesitates then opens the door for her to enter.

CUT TO:

Mary standing across from the Warden at his desk.

MARY (CONT'D)

It is an outrage, and I swear I'll report it as soon as I'm released! If that man is not held to account and properly punished, if he is allowed to continue working here, I will-

WARDEN ANDERSON

(cuts her off)

You will what, Madam! You are a prisoner of war. Just what is it you think you're in a position to do?

Mary is trumped, face to face with her limitations. She plays her only card.

MARY

We've all heard that Atlanta is now under siege. The South is crumbling, Warden. It won't be much longer and the war will be over and when it is justice will win out. You will not escape it, none of you.

WARDEN ANDERSON

No, Miss Walker, we will. No matter who wins this war, no one will remember, and no one will care. Everything that happens here will just...

(waves his hand)
fade away.

Warden Anderson settles back in his chair, relaxed.

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Besides, this whole matter is ridiculous, the woman in question is incarcerated for prostitution. And you want me to believe she was raped.

MARY

She's no prostitute.

WARDEN ANDERSON

Her cohorts are, and birds of a feather. Now if there is nothing further.

MARY

This isn't over, Warden. I swear--

WARDEN ANDERSON

(slamming his fist on
the desk)

No, I swear! It is over! Over and done with! And you, Miss Walker, better tread carefully and stifle your threats or I shouldn't be surprised the same thing happens to you.

Mary is taken aback by the unmasked Warden, imbued with a new sense of danger.

INT. PRISON YARD - DAY

The WOMEN PRISONERS take their daily hour in the yard.

Near the building, under the shade of an overhang, Mary pulls a tooth from a Guard in a chair. A HALF DOZEN MALE PRISONERS lined up to see her, including some black soldiers.

Across the yard, Cecilia wanders by herself.

She comes upon a dandelion struggling for life in the dirt. Kneels and studies it, something oddly simpatico in her gaze.

Mary packs the Guard's mouth with cotton. He hands her two bits and leaves. Another patient sits down in his place.

Mary casually scans the yard. SEES...

Cecilia pluck the flower and wander off. Heading in the direction of the Line of Death.

Mary follows her movements with growing concern.

A TOWER GUARD watches too. Rifle in hand.

Cecilia walks as if in a trance toward the Line of Death.

Mary's eyes locked upon her.

MARY
(muted with fear)
No.

Mary moves briskly into the yard. Starts to run.

Warden Anderson - IN HIS OFFICE - looks out his window into the yard. Watching...

Cecilia approach the Line of Death.

Pickup Mary rushing frantically through the CROWD OF WOMEN.

MARY (CONT'D)
Cecilia! Cecilia, don't!

Tower Guard RINGS A BELL. Raises his rifle.

The women around the yard stop and stare.

Graves and Colby emerging from the prison with rifles.

Cecilia reaches the Line of Death.

Tower Guard aiming. Sweating. Hesitating.

The Warden imploring the guard who can't possibly hear him.

WARDEN ANDERSON
Shoot her. Shoot!

Mary breaks through a group of women and stumbles to the ground. Calls out from her knees.

MARY

No, Cecilia, please! Stop!

Cecilia looks back at Mary, smiles then steps over the line.

Tower Guard holds his aim. His hand shaking on the trigger.

TOWER GUARD

Prisoner halt!

(his will weakening)

HALT!

Cecilia keeps walking. When BOOM! The SHARP REPORT of a rifle echoes around the yard.

Cecilia drops to her knees, the flower falling from her hand. Blood blossoming on the back of her dress as she falls face down in the dirt.

Sergeant Graves lowers his rifle, a wisp of smoke rising off the barrel.

Mary runs to Cecilia and cradles her in her arms.

BAM! BAM! Bullets slam into the dirt at Mary's feet. The Tower Guard has found his nerve.

TOWER GUARD (CONT'D)

Get behind that line, Miss Walker!

Now!

Mary just holds Cecilia. More GUARDS arriving. Guns drawn. They surround Mary, who puts her cheek against Cecilia's head and rocks her back and forth.

WARDEN ANDERSON

Turns from the window and goes back to his desk. Takes a candy from a bowl and plops it in his mouth.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mary walks down the hall to her cell with blood on her shirt, her face a gray mask.

She enters the CELL and finds a Bible on her cot. Picks it up. A note inside.

"DEAREST MARY, YOUR KINDNESS MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE TO ME.
LOVE C."

Mary sinks to the cot clutching the Bible. Weeps.

After a time.

WARDEN ANDERSON (O.S.)
Well, whattya know.

Mary looks up at the Warden standing in the doorway.

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)
Not so tough after all, are you?
You put on men's clothes and make a
big show of how strong you are, but
come right down to it you're just
like any other woman, fragile as
glass.

He LAUGHS cruelly. Mary, too broke up to respond. She turns away and lies down, Cecilia's Bible held to her breast.

She lies there perfectly still and REMEMBERS...

FLASHBACK

TO AN ARRAY OF CANNONS

Unleashing their fury into the night.

Mary watching the barrage from the flap of a HOSPITAL TENT.
She goes back inside.

INTO THE CHAOS OF A UNION FIELD HOSPITAL

Packed full with wounded SOLDIERS. Hustling ORDERLIES.
NURSES and SURGEONS up to their elbows in blood.

Mary checks on an injured man. Across the tent comes CLARA
(42), a nurse, who bypasses the male surgeons to get to Mary.

CLARA
(whispered)
Doctor Walker, I need you to come
with me right away.

MARY
I have my hands full here, Clara.
Can't you find someone else?

CLARA
No, ma'am, I can't.

A meeting of eyes. More here than Clara can say.

PICKUP MARY FOLLOWING CLARA

Out ONE TENT into ANOTHER where a DOZEN WOUNDED MEN have
been laid on the ground.

Clara leads Mary to a patient off by himself.

CLARA (CONT'D)
I didn't dare bring anyone else.

MARY
Why not? What's wrong with him?

CLARA
See for yourself.

Mary's irked by Clara's conduct but curious. She looks at the patient, a BLONDE TEENAGER still wearing his cap.

Mary opens his bloodstained jacket. Discovers a wound on a woman's breast. She turns sharply to Clara.

CLARA (CONT'D)
(keeping her voice low)
I didn't know what else to do.

Mary takes a rag off a table and dips it in a bucket beside the cot. Wipes blood from the wound and probes it.

MARY
Splinters, several of them. Bring me a forceps and tweezers. Hurry!

Clara rushes off.

Mary looks down on the frail young woman racked with pain, sweating profusely.

MARY (CONT'D)
What's your name, dear?

DOT
(through the pain)
Do-ro-thy. But my fri-ends call me Dot.

MARY
Now what have you gone and done, Dot? Hmm?
(strokes her)
Cut off your beautiful hair and enlisted? Pretty girl like you.

DOT
My Dad-dy, and my broth-er, Tom. They... they were killed at Seven Pines. I ju-just had to join up. Get in the fight.

MARY

(touched)

How brave of you... how very brave.

Mary looks at the wound oozing blood bubbling with air.

Clara returns with a forceps.

CLARA

(voice trailing off)

I couldn't find tweezers.

Mary shakes her head at Clara. Takes hold of Dot's hand.

MARY

Where's home, Dot? Where do you
hail from?

DOT

Oh my, but I'm so-so afraid.

MARY

Don't be, dear, don't be. You are
blessed with great courage. Wield
it just a little longer. I promise,
I won't leave you.

The terror in Dot's eyes subsides.

Mary notes a cross around the girl's neck.

MARY (CONT'D)

Do you have a favorite prayer, Dot?
A verse or psalm that comforts you?

DOT

No... hymns. I like hymns.

Mary speaks with a mother's warmth.

MARY

So do I.

Mary SINGS, soft and uncertain at first then, finding her
voice, with beautiful clarity.

Her singing accompanied by the SOUND OF CANNON FIRE.

CUT BETWEEN:

MARY, CLARA AND DOT... AND A BATTLEFIELD AT NIGHT

where UNION FORCES overrun a REBEL ENTRENCHMENT.

MARY

*There's a land that is fairer than
day. And by faith we can see it
afar. For the Father waits over the
way. To prepare us a dwelling place
there... In the sweet by and by we
shall meet on that beautiful shore.
In the sweet by and by we shall meet
on that beautiful shore.*

Suddenly Mary stops and looks down on Dot, doll-like in death, a serene calmness having fallen over the room.

Mary removes Dot's Union cap and covers the body with a blanket. Lays the cap on top of it and stands...

END FLASHBACK and MATCH CUT TO:

MARY RISING FROM THE COT IN HER CELL

Going to the window. Gazing out at the gray crenelated skyline of Richmond at dusk. A last golden arc of sun slipping below the horizon.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Blackness. A gas-light flares to life illuminating the Warden's face, nearly aglow with anger. A sullen Sergeant Graves before him taking a dressing down.

WARDEN ANDERSON

How stupid! How colossally stupid!
Any other woman and I wouldn't give
a damn. But her! Why did you have
to bother with her cell mate? Now
what do I do? They've been trying
to arrange her exchange. And you go
and do something like this!

GRAVES

She's just a woman. What can she
do?

WARDEN ANDERSON

(mocks him)

*What can she do? She can talk us
both into a court martial, you ass.
You think just cause she's a woman
that my enemies won't notice, that
they won't hear of the accounts in
the Northern papers, that they won't
dig into this like Gulf Coast ticks.
They'll gorge themselves on my soiled
reputation. And I'll have you to
thank for it!*

GRAVES

Suppose she had an accident?

The Warden weighs it. Mines something out of it.

WARDEN ANDERSON

No one would buy it. She's made too much noise already. No... No, I've a better idea. She's got too much spirit, this one. We need to wear her down a little. Isolate her, confine her to her cell, and make further cuts to her rations.

GRAVES

What she gets now won't feed a cat.

WARDEN ANDERSON

Precisely.

INT. MARY'S CELL - CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

Mary reads Cecilia's Bible. Her left eye swollen and red.

The door CREAKS open and a guard scuffs in and sets a metal pan of food on the edge of her cot.

Mary looks at a mere glob of brown porridge.

LATER

She is undressed to her undergarments dusting off her jacket with a rag. Her pale arms thin as twigs.

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAY

A blazing hot sun hits its zenith.

Mary is led into the empty PRISON YARD by a guard. Now forced to exercise. Alone. Without witnesses. Except for the Warden monitoring her from a doorway across the way.

Mary shields her eyes from the sun, her infected left eye now swollen shut.

She walks a bit. Wavers in the heat. Her exercise time now used as a form of torture.

She walks unsteadily. Nearly drops from the heat. But makes it back to the prison, to the shade of an overhang, where she plops down on a bench.

She squints defiantly at the Warden with her one good eye.

He glares back then turns and heads inside.

INT. HALLWAY - CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

Private Colby escorts Mary to her cell. Unlocks the door.

Mary enters. Sees her cot is gone.

MARY

What happened to my cot?

COLBY

We burned it. Termites.

He sneers and shuts the door.

INT. MARY'S CELL - CASTLE THUNDER - NIGHT

Mary sits on the floor writing a letter. Her infected left eye looking like a ripe strawberry.

MARY (V.O.)

(reading her letter)

Dearest Momma and Papa,

EXT - WALKER HOME - 1864 - NIGHT

The family farm more weathered and overgrown since we last saw it in the flashback from Mary's youth.

INT. WALKER HOME - SAME

Alvah Walker (73) and his wife, VESTA (63) sit at the kitchen table reading a letter by candlelight.

MARY (V.O.)

*I hope that you are not grieving
about me because I am a prisoner of
war.*

INTERCUT: An exterior shot of the cold prison walls.

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*I am living in a three story brick
castle, here in Richmond...*

CUT IN: Colby carrying a plate down the hall lined with cells.

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*With plenty to eat and a clean bed
to sleep in.*

Mary picks a maggot out of her porridge.

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*I have a room mate, a young lady of
 about eighteen years of age, from
 Georgia.*

Show Mary alone in her cell.

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*I am much happier than I might be in
 some relations of life where I might
 be envied by other ladies.*

Mary sleeps, shivering under a blanket on the floor.

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*The officers are gentlemanly and
 kind... And the general comportment
 of the institution is civilized.*

Sergeant Graves shoves Mary down a hall for moving too slow.

Another GUARD drags a woman by her hair.

TWO BLACK WOMEN hung by their thumbs in the prison yard.

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*And it will not be long before I am
 exchanged.*

RESUME MARY writing the letter on the floor of her cell.

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*Worry not for my welfare, and take
 care of each other. Always, your
 loving daughter, Mary...*

She finishes. Sits and stares at the blank walls. Her left eye oozing pus.

INT. WALKER HOME - 1864 - NIGHT

Alvah puts away the letter. Vesta drying the tears on her cheeks with a handkerchief.

EXT. WAR DEPARTMENT - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

A horse-drawn carriage appears through an early morning fog.

Turns off Pennsylvania Avenue up to the War Department, a four-story office building west of the White House.

SECRETARY OF WAR EDWIN M. STANTON (50)

Steps out into a throng of PETITIONERS. Threads his diminutive frame through them with the assistance of an AIDE.

One man waves a petition in his face.

PUSHY MAN

Secretary Stanton, sir! If you could hear my petition. It's about my son...

SECRETARY STANTON

(brushing by the man)

Not here, for God's sake! Now let me through.

INT. WAR DEPARTMENT - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Secretary Stanton is let into the building by another Aide who promptly shuts the door on the CLAMORING petitioners.

Secretary Stanton takes a moment to gather himself. He removes his coat, adjusts his spectacles. Speaks to a group of AIDES around him.

SECRETARY STANTON

Damn those people, they're getting here earlier every day. What must I do to avoid that crush, sleep here!

He points at a Senior Aide.

SECRETARY STANTON (CONT'D)

Let no one through that door before nine o'clock. I don't care who they are!

Senior Aide looks across the room at two petitioners already inside: GENERAL GEORGE THOMAS (48) a bearded, barrel-chested man who could pass as Grant's brother and Alvah Walker.

SECRETARY STANTON (CONT'D)

General Thomas...
(with a glance at
Alvah)
This better be important.

INT. MARY'S CELL - CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

Mary lies in bed weak from weight loss. Her inflamed left eye looking repulsive against the gray pallor of her face.

The cell door opens and Doctor Boggs walks in.

MOMENTS LATER

Doctor Boggs raises Mary's undershirt exposing her abdomen, every rib visible through the skin. He listens to her lungs with a monaural stethoscope.

MARY

Do they mean to starve me to death?
If so they're doing a fine job.

BOGGS

Your condition, madam, is entirely
your own doing.

He lowers her shirt, looks candidly at Mary.

BOGGS (CONT'D)

I don't like you, Doctor Walker. I
don't think many people do. But you
have fortitude and principle. And
for that you have my respect.

MARY

(as direct as a bullet
to the nose)

Well, you don't have mine.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - DAY

The Warden stands at the window gazing into the yard, Nero
beside him glaring at Doctor Boggs beyond the Warden's desk.

WARDEN ANDERSON

She'll die soon?

BOGGS

She's lost thirty pounds already.
Without an immediate change in diet,
yes, she'll die.

Warden Anderson turns.

WARDEN ANDERSON

You know they make a point of sending
me the worst of the prisoners: the
most rebellious ones, the escape
artists, the turncoats, the murderers,
the lowest of the low. And of course
the women, who by their very nature
are the most impossible to handle.
Still, I manage. For all the merit
it brings me.

He reaches down and picks up a document.

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)

General Gardner has worked out an
exchange for our female doctor.
Came through this morning.

(MORE)

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Those mudsill bastards up north are willing to hand over a major. A major! Can you believe it? For a woman! My God, what sort of country will this be if they win this war?

EXT. CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

The CLIP-CLOP of horse hooves disturbs the dawn. Another paddy-wagon arriving at the prison.

INT. MARY'S CELL - CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

Mary kneels on her blanket and prays. The cell door opens.

After a moment she looks up at Warden Anderson standing in the doorway with a Guard who holds a package.

WARDEN ANDERSON

Miss Walker, your prayers have been answered. I am releasing you this morning. You're to be exchanged.

Mary comes slowly to her feet, terribly weak.

MARY

Is that so?

WARDEN ANDERSON

You're to be taken up north with some other prisoners on a Union steamer flying under a flag of truce.

Mary looks a real mess standing there thin as a rail with her eye all aflame.

MARY

Well then, I suppose I should comb my hair.

The two rivals face one another for what is the last time:

The Warden's face like a kingdom at war with factions of admiration, hate and envy vying for the crown. For Mary, just fatigue, fatigue and perhaps a hint of satisfaction.

The Warden takes the package from the guard.

WARDEN ANDERSON

Apparently there's been quite a stir about your release. You can expect a crowd and members of the press to meet you up north.

(MORE)

WARDEN ANDERSON (CONT'D)

I took the liberty of providing you with some new clothes.

He hands them to Mary. She opens the package. Finds a dress and a shawl. She stares at them then offers them back.

MARY

Thank you, Warden, but I'll wear my own clothes.

Warden Anderson doesn't take the clothes. He just stands there looking like he's been slapped in the face.

WARDEN ANDERSON

I don't think you understand, madam. This is not a request. If you're to leave here, you will do so looking like a decent woman. I will not let you out of here in those filthy clothes. I will not allow you to parade through Richmond dressed in a manner that is an affront to every respectable woman in the South. Now you will cast off those filthy man-clothes or I will strip you bare and dress you myself!

MARY

So now we come to it. Is that what this is really all about, Warden? Your desire to see me unclothed?

Warden Anderson looks caught in a quicksand of truth.

MARY (CONT'D)

If you'll provide me with a wash basin and a brush, I'll do my best to look presentable... in my own clothes.

WARDEN ANDERSON

You dare to defy me?

MARY

Yes, Warden, I dare. As I have dared to defy men like you my entire life. And I shall continue to defy all of you, and the whole society, North and South, that propagates this outrageous male tyranny that has plagued women from the beginning of time.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

(coming forward on
shaky legs)

I will defy your hypocritical conventions. I will defy your unjust laws. I will defy every man, woman and child who thinks that a woman is even in one mote of measure anything less than a man. And I will never give in. NEVER! Not till they lay me in my grave... in clothes of my own choosing!

She throws the dress back at him.

WARDEN ANDERSON

You're mad, mad and impossible.

MARY

So I've heard.

WARDEN ANDERSON

Behold the fruit of Yankee corruption. My God, what kind of woman are you?

MARY

I'm like every other kind of woman, Warden. I'm just a hundred years ahead of my time.

EXT. CASTLE THUNDER - DAY

Mary emerges from the prison in a wheelchair, too weak to walk. A bandage over her left eye. Her guards take her to the paddy wagon waiting in the street. Help her inside.

At the wagon door Mary turns and with her one good eye takes a last look at Castle Thunder:

- The cold brick walls.
- The vague faces of the women at the upper floor windows.
- Alma waving goodbye.

Mary gets in and sits across from another guard. And with the CRACK OF A WHIP the wagon trundles away.

EXT. JAMES RIVER - WHARF - DAY

The paddle ship steamer NEW YORK is moored to the quay in the heart of Richmond. Her twin funnels spewing black smoke into the gray dome of the sky.

AT THE TOP OF A RAILED GANGPLANK

stands a short CONFEDERATE MAJOR under guard watching the paddy wagon arrive on the dock below.

Mary is let out and helped into the wheelchair. Rolled over to a UNION OFFICER. Once Mary is at his side he turns and signals to release the Major.

The Confederate officer comes down the gangplank. Stops and stares contemptuously at Mary then walks off in a huff.

MARY

(calls after him)

If it makes it any less painful, I was hoping for someone taller.

The Major looks back in anger. Mary smirks at the petulant man then turns to the Officer.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well now, sir, it's been awhile since I've seen that uniform. It's bluer than I remember.

The Officer wheels Mary onboard.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - FORT MONROE - DAY

Mary reclines in bed gazing out a window at Chesapeake Bay, the remnants of a meal beside the bed.

There is a fresh bandage on her eye, some color in her cheeks, and she seems rested, well on her way to a full recovery.

On her lap is an opened letter.

WE SEE GLIMPSES OF THE LETTER

A DEPARTMENT OF WAR heading...

Strings of words... *"Dear Dr. Walker... Regarding your request for an officer's commission... We regret to inform you... a lack of precedent... Army tradition... no merit in your case... request denied."*

Mary just sits there weathering another arrow, her eyes shaded with the pain of a lifetime of injustice.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A pale wooden headstone rises out of a shroud of snow. One of hundreds arrayed on the side of a hill.

A TRAIN passes by in the distance, crossing a ridgeline that divides the white landscape from a blue cloud-swept sky.

INT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DAY

Mary gazes out the window at this last lonely resting place of American patriots. Her own ghostly reflection staring back at her from out of the glass.

CUT TO:

"OSWEGO"

An old train station sign with chipped white paint.

ALVAH AND VESTA WALKER

Waiting below it at the side of the TRAIN. Their eyes glued to the passenger car steps.

An OLD COUPLE comes off the train, followed by a SOLDIER who is greeted by RELATIVES.

Seconds pass, like an eternity, then Mary exits the train with the aid of a cane, a small bandage over her left eye.

Vesta covers her mouth and bursts into tears.

Mary sees her parents. Tears up, as they come and embrace her with welcoming arms.

CUT TO:

A BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO OF LINCOLN AMONG TROOPS ON A PIER

A familiar sight, identified by an underlining text:

"LINCOLN GREETING SOLDIERS FROM CHANCELLORSVILLE AT THE 6TH STREET WHARF, WASHINGTON D.C. MAY, 1863."

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Mary and her Mother and Father dressed in black inside ST. JAMES HALL, a cavernous room with high stained-glass windows.

A superimposed title READS:

"BUFFALO, NEW YORK APRIL 27, 1865"

Mary studies the photograph. Comments absently to her parents.

MARY

It was so hot that day. His face was streaked with perspiration.

She and her parents move on. Threading their way through the large hall packed with MOURNERS and memorabilia of President Abraham Lincoln.

EXT. ST. JAMES HALL - NIGHT

The Walkers emerge from the building into a great CROWD that packs the gas-lit street as far as the eye can see.

They pause in solemn respect and watch as Lincoln's magnificent catafalque is placed onto a carriage drawn by six white horses dressed in black.

NOTE: *This is the same catafalque that's been used repeatedly since for Garfield, Kennedy, Rosa Parks, Reagan and others.*

The FUNERAL CORTEGE moves slowly down the street, the great crowd parting before it like the waters of the Red Sea.

VESTA

My God, what will we do without him?

Mary and Alvah take Vesta by the arm and proceed down the building steps.

EXT. WALKER HOME - DAY

Fall. The glory of autumn in upstate New York.

Alvah Walker crosses a field on horseback. Smoke from the chimney of his cottage guiding him home.

EXT. WALKER HOME - DAY

Mary, dressed as always in pants, reads Cecilia's Bible under a chestnut tree, bathed in a golden light that clarifies her understated loveliness and quiet nobility.

She pauses and looks up as her Father rides in and dismounts, looking every bit of his 74 years.

Alvah tethers his horse to a branch and comes over to Mary.

ALVAH

It's a glorious day, isn't it?

MARY

Much too beautiful to remain inside...

Mary closes the Bible and stands.

MARY (CONT'D)

but a little cold.

She and her Father share a moment of comfortable silence then Alvah pulls a telegram from his coat pocket.

ALVAH

This came for you just as I was leaving town, from Washington.

Mary takes it eagerly and reads, buoyed with optimism.

ALVAH (CONT'D)

Is it a commission?

Mary's whole aspect deflates as her eyes run across the page.

MARY

No... It's not a commission. General Sherman and General Thomas have recommended me for some kind of medal.

She passes the telegram to her Father with a languid hand and turns away, crestfallen.

Looks out over the field at a sea of fallen leaves fluttering in a breeze, hiding the pain in her eyes from her Father.

Alvah reads the telegram.

ALVAH

Mary... I don't think you understand.

He comes to her side and shows her the telegram.

ALVAH (CONT'D)

It's not just a medal.
(with rising joy)
It's the Medal of Honor!

Mary looks again at the telegram.

ALVAH (CONT'D)

Our nation's highest award... It's given by the President himself.

It takes a moment but then the full import of the news hits Mary and she breaks into a smile.

MARY

Then they haven't forgotten me after all, have they?

ALVAH

No, dear, they haven't. And, by God, now they never will.

He hugs his daughter. Holds her as if to never let her go.

INT. B & O DEPOT - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

A huge locomotive pulls slowly into the depot.

PASSENGERS STEPPING OFF THE TRAIN

The Walkers among them. Mary standing out in the crowd in her top coat and bow tie.

EXT. B & O DEPOT - SAME

Mary and her parents come out onto bustling NEW JERSEY AVENUE.

PEDESTRIANS and carriages going to and fro. The depot clock tower and an under construction Capitol dome part of the skyline behind her.

THEY BOARD A HORSE-DRAWN STREETCAR

Pay an old TICKET TAKER.

MARY
The Willard Hotel.

He gives Mary's outfit the once over and adjusts his glasses.

TICKET TAKER
Yes, ma'am.

Stares like everyone else on board as the little lady in pants takes a seat with her parents.

A TWO-YEAR-OLD GIRL seated next to her plays with Mary's shoulder-length curls.

Mary smiles at the child and her appalled MOTHER puts the Girl on her lap and turns her back on Mary.

Vesta looks from the rude woman to Mary whose expression tells her Mother - don't bother.

FARTHER ON

Mary looks out at post-war Washington in all its majesty and squalor. Sees a CROWD gathered around a dais in front of an impressive building. A black man on stage giving a speech.

Mary turns to her parents.

MARY
I need to get off here.
(points out the man)
There's someone I have to see. I'll
meet up with you at the hotel.

She rises and kisses her Mother on the cheek.

MARY (CONT'D)

(to Mom)

I won't be long.

Mary gets off the streetcar at the next stop, disappearing into the sidewalk traffic.

TICKET TAKER

(calls after her)

Ma'am, that's not the Willard Hotel!

(turns to the woman
with the little girl)

You see all kinds in this city.

Alvah Walker glares at the man, who cringes and turns away.

EXT. OUTDOOR DAIS - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Mary winds her way through a crowd up to the dais.

ON THE DAIS

Are seated a DOZEN dignified WHITE MEN AND WOMEN below a sign that reads: "*Our New Republic!*"

At the podium is the black man - Frederick Douglass.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Good people of Washington, I will not detain you here by any attempt at a speech. You have had speeches - eloquent speeches, glorious speeches, wise and patriotic speeches.

(glances back at the
other speakers)

Speeches in respect to the great principles for which you struggled, and for which the race to which I belong struggled on the battlefield, and poured out their blood.

He searches the faces of the crowd. Finds Mary and grins.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (CONT'D)

The thing, however, in which I feel the deepest interest, and the thing in which I believe this country feels the deepest interest, is, that the principles involved in the contest which carried yours sons and brothers to the battlefield, which draped our Northern churches with the weeds of

(MORE)

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (CONT'D)
mourning, and filled our towns and
cities with mere stumps of men, the
armless, legless...

He sees some of them among the crowd.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (CONT'D)
maimed and mutilated... that these
principles that sustained us through
this terrible conflict, as we define
them, with liberty for all, are now
called into question. And we are
left to ponder whether they can endure
into the future or fade with time
and render all this sacrifice in
vain.

He looks several listeners in the eye.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (CONT'D)
You say you have emancipated us.
You have. And I thank you for it.
But what is your emancipation? What
does it all amount to if the black
man, after having been freed from
the slaveholder's lash, is brought
to heel by the policeman's cudgel.
If after having been released from
the overseer's shackles he find's
himself bearing new chains of economic
deprivation, racial intolerance and
prejudicial laws? The question now
is, Do you mean to make good to us
the promises of your constitution?

He exchanges a meaningful gaze with Mary.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (CONT'D)
I believe there is honesty in the
American people, and wisdom, and I
think it understood that the white
man's happiness cannot be purchased
by the black man's misery. So tell
me, if your heart be as my heart,
that the liberty which you have
asserted for the black man in this
country shall be fostered, protected
and maintained. Or if we will lose
our way in the wilderness of the
years to come and allow our country
to slip back into a time of darkness
at noon.

AFTERWARD - WITH THE CROWD DISPERSING

Mary approaches Frederick Douglass. Gives him a hug. Some members of the crowd giving looks that she goes too far.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (CONT'D)
 Doctor Walker, how good to see you.

He examines her face, her marred left eye.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (CONT'D)
 I heard of your imprisonment. I
 said a prayer for the warden.

Mary LAUGHS.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (CONT'D)
 How long have you been in Washington?

MARY
 We just arrived. I'm with my parents.
 We were on our way to the Willard
 Hotel when I saw this fine cut of a
 man up on stage and I told them I
 just have to hear what he has to say.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS
 It's the same old tune, sadly.

MARY
 Why so melancholy? We won the war.
 There is hope in the wind, a new
 beginning.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS
 I wish I could share your optimism,
 but I fear this country will forever
 be plagued with the scourge of racial
 divide.

(changes tone)
 So what brings you to the capital?

MARY
 They're giving me a medal, tomorrow at
 the White House. Can you believe it?

FREDERICK DOUGLASS
 Actually, yes. I'd say it's long
 overdue. You are too modest, Mary.
 You have been for years the spearpoint
 of the women's movement in this country.
 And no single person has done more to
 advance the cause of self-determination
 for women than you.

Mary tears up.

MARY

My good Reverend Douglass, I have
the greatest admiration for you and
I am so proud to call you my friend.
But don't you dare make me cry in
public.

There's a moment here, they are kindred souls and deeply
fond of one another. In other times, perhaps more than that.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

A carriage crunches up the gravel walk before the pillared
north front of the White House.

INT. CARRIAGE - SAME

Mary, sitting across from her parents, looks out the window
at the rolled front lawn and D'Angers' statue of Thomas
Jefferson, which today resides in Statuary Hall.

INT. RED ROOM - WHITE HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON an American flag, circa 1865, hanging on the wall...

ABOVE MARY

Seated with two other HONOREES in uniform who have already
received their medal.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON (O.S.)

Doctor Mary Edwards Walker.

Mary walks over to the President at a podium passing an
audience of her parents and RELATIVES of the other Honorees.

PRESIDENT ANDREW JOHNSON (64) greets her, shakes her hand.
Mary faces the audience and the President reads her citation.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Whereas it appears from official
reports Doctor Mary Edwards Walker,
a graduate of medicine, has rendered
valuable service to the Government,
and her efforts having been earnest
and untiring in a variety of ways...

CUT IN: Mary exchanging looks with her Mother and Father,
all three of them proud as can be.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 having faithfully served as contract
 surgeon in the service of the United
 States, devoting herself with
 patriotic zeal to the sick and wounded
 soldiers...

FLASH to an HONOREE missing an arm... and an engaged Frederick
 Douglass standing near a painting of Lincoln.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 both in the field and in hospitals,
 to the detriment of her own health,
 and also having endured hardships as
 a prisoner of war in a Southern prison
 while in the service of the Union,
 and whereas in the opinion of the
 President an honorable recognition
 of her services and sufferings should
 be made. It is hereby ordered that
 the Medal of Honor for meritorious
 services be given her on this 11th
 day of November, 1865.

Mary scans the rapt faces of the WOMEN in attendance: the
 Mothers, Sisters and Daughters of the other honorees...

Her gaze lingering on a YOUNG GIRL who stares at her with
 unabashed admiration.

An AIDE comes forward and presents the President with a case
 holding the Medal.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 As President of the United States,
 in the name of the Congress, I take
 pleasure in presenting the Medal of
 of Honor to Doctor Mary Edwards
 Walker.

Mary beams with pride as the President pins the Medal of
 Honor to her coat.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 Congratulations.

The audience APPLAUDS. Mary tears up. Nods her thanks.

MOMENTS LATER

Family members surround the Honorees. The President comes
 up to Mary while her parents are engaged in conversation.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(with a Tennessee drawl)

We're going to have a couple more gatherings this week to introduce the honorees to members of Congress and the press. I do hope you can stay on in Washington to attend.

MARY

Certainly. I won't be going home for another week. I thought I'd show my parents around the capital. It's my mother's first time here.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON

Splendid... And where is home, Doctor Walker? I can't quite place your lovely accent.

MARY

Upstate New York, sir... And anywhere the Stars and Stripes fly.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON

Oh, I like that... very much.

He smiles warmly and moves on.

Mary has a moment alone. She catches sight of herself in a mirror, stares thoughtfully then adjusts her medal, just so.

CLOSE IN ON THE MEDAL OF HONOR

then PULL OUT to reveal EIGHTY-FOUR-YEAR-OLD MARY riding the trolley at the beginning of our story. Reflecting on her past.

The trolley stops. Mary gets to her feet with the help of her cane and steps onto the street.

INT. OFFICIAL'S OFFICE - DAY

A wall clock nears 9:00 a.m.

A YOUNG BUREAUCRAT checks it. Looks at TWO OTHER MEN seated in chairs adjacent to his desk.

Mary is let into the room by a MALE SECRETARY, with her top hat in one hand and her umbrella in the other. She comes and stands beside a chair. Scans the somber faces of the men.

MOMENTS LATER

The Young Bureaucrat stares across the desk at Mary seated before him, his beady little eyes like twin balls of lead.

YOUNG BUREAUCRAT

I'm sorry, Doctor Walker, but there can be no appeal. The War Department has completed their review of all previous Medal of Honor winners and, unfortunately, yours was one of the cases they deemed unwarranted. It has therefore been rescinded and the decision of the board is final.

Mary is stricken by the blow. A brief spasm of pain crosses her face followed by a flood of anger.

MARY

I earned this medal. And no group of men, who haven't the slightest idea of what I went through, are going to fifty years after the fact take it away from me. I won't have it!

The three officials look at one another in cold indifference.

MARY (CONT'D)

This medal was given to me by President Johnson himself long before you were born. And I have worn it every day since. And I don't give a damn what some pasty-face bureaucrat in Washington has to say about it now. I'm going to keep it. It's my medal. And if one of you jackals wants to take it, well then you just go ahead and try!

She clutches her umbrella in rage. There is a heavy pause. An air of smugness about the officials that makes this that much more enraging.

YOUNG BUREAUCRAT

You can keep the medal, ma'am. As it is it's nothing more than just a gold bauble. It has been stricken from the rolls and that's all that matters. It's meaningless now.

Mary stands shaking with rage.

MARY

Not to me!

She rakes the men with a defiant gaze, turns and storms out.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Mary comes out of the building and pauses by the entrance, struck to her core by this final arrow of injustice.

She holds back an emotional dam. Finally breaks down and cries. Removes her glasses and wipes the tears.

She breathes and thinks, recovers her composure then proceeds down a sidewalk, past PEDESTRIANS who naturally stare.

Mary walks right by them with her head held high, waddling a little with age, her umbrella-cane CLICKING off the sidewalk.

An EPILOGUE SCROLLS...

EPILOGUE

Dr. Mary Walker wore her Medal of Honor until the day she died and was buried with it in a fine black suit, shortly before the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote.

On June 10th, 1977 President Jimmy Carter reinstated Dr. Mary Walker's Medal of Honor. To this day she is the only woman to have received the nation's highest award for valor.

As the receding image of Mary is lost from view the SCENE DISSOLVES from a morning in 1917 to one TODAY where MODERN WOMEN go about their business dressed exactly as they please.

Mary would be so proud.

THE END