

LINCOLN BUYS SLAVES PREVENTS WAR

Written by

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Original Script

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OPENING CREDITS

Over current 50 Star American Flag
flowing in a breeze with AMERICA
THE BEAUTIFUL instrumental playing
softly.

MALE (V.O.)

When Abraham Lincoln was running
for office, Southern Plantation
Owners were upset with his promise
to free the slaves if elected. This
is one way the war between the
states may have been prevented
thereby saving hundreds of
thousands lives and millions of
dollars.

FADE IN:

EXT. ATHENS GEORGIA - COFFEE SHOP - DAY (MAY 1859)

JOHN LEWIS ADAMS, 22, muscular, and tall waits in a Coffee &
Snack Shop across Broad Street from the main gate to
University of Georgia where he graduated top of class, 1859,
School of Journalism. He has an appointment with EZRA Clark
owner of National Telegraphy News Service, Washington, D.C.
John stands to greet Clark as he approaches.

JOHN

Mister Clark, I'm John Adams.

EZRA

Hi John, Call me Ezra, glad to meet
you, I must say I was expecting a
short skinny man wearing glasses
based on your perfect academic
record.

JOHN

(grinning)

I appreciate you traveling all the
way down here to Georgia.

EZRA

My pleasure, I enjoy getting away
from the office occasionally. Uh,
do you have any questions about my
news service?

JOHN

My journalism professor taught us a great deal but can you give a run down on what my specific duties will be?

EZRA

Sure, NTSC uses telegraph lines to receive articles from field reporters like yourself. You write the stories on paper then telegraph the stories to us, my editors make corrections and as quickly as possible, we send edited pieces to our print shops in a great many parts of the nation. We use International Morse Code to receive and send. That way our readers get overnight news the next day.

JOHN

Amazing how is your service funded?

EZRA

Individuals pay an annual subscription rate to receive our printed papers. We insert local and nation advertizing for a fee. We make a lot of money and pay the highest wages for our workers.

JOHN

How much would that be in my case?

Ezra writes a figure on paper and slides it to John.

JOHN (CONT'D)

WOW, that is a lot. When can I start?

EZRA

Right away. I have a code instructor with me to start teaching you this afternoon.

John grins

JOHN

That won't be necessary. I began learning code the week our professor informed us of your news service.

EZRA

Now I like that. Are there other surprises you'd like to tell me?

John nods his head.

JOHN

As a matter of fact there is.

(beat)

The country is on the brink of a civil war.

EZRA

Yes, how well I know.

JOHN

And I've come up with a way to prevent it.

This excites Ezra Clark. A war would be detrimental to his growing news business.

EZRA

Tell me more John.

JOHN

The south won't stand a chance of winning. The north has factories and a treasury while we have cotton fields and rutabagas.

EZRA CLARK

Must say I agree with you John, one hundred percent. So what's your plan?

JOHN

Well it's like this if the new president were to pay all slave owners the average cost of a healthy field hand slave which is eight hundred dollars...

EZRA

That would take a great deal of money, John.

JOHN

Yes, but nowhere near the cost of a civil war on both sides and that's part of the plan.

EZRA

What do ya mean?

JOHN

Well, right now, there's a battery of canons aimed at Fort Sumter over in Charleston Harbor When Lincoln is elected next year, which everyone knows he will, and if we can stall Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation until after my plan has a chance to work then a civil war will be prevented. It will take at least two years to get the state's slave owners signed up and the plan would still have to be implemented over several years.

EZRA

And do you think all slave owners will go along with it?

JOHN

Oh yes I do. Using slave labor is expensive. First of all you must purchase them. Then you must provide food, shelter, medical care, and medicine not only for the field hands but his family as well. They all know it's expensive to own slaves.

EZRA

But how do you reach thousands of slave owners in so short a time?

JOHN

There's only one way, you start with a small group of owners and teach them how to solicit other owners. It's a snowball effect. Say you start with ten owners, teach them how to hold training sessions and each of those hold a training session and that's a hundred slave owners in a very short time frame.

EZRA

And those hundred add on ten each that's a thousand also in a very short time. John you are a remarkable young man. I think this will work and you can call on me for any assistance I may be able to give you.

JOHN

I will and thanks for your interest and support. My first assignment should be in Atlanta and Governor Joseph Black my first attempt at convincing slave owners to sign on.

EZRA

Don't you think you should run this by Lincoln first?

JOHN

No, I'm leaving that up to you. I'm going to need all the help I can muster.

EZRA

Young man you are wise beyond your ears. Consider it done.

INT. WASHINGTON - LINCOLN'S CAMPAIGN HDQS - MORNING

ABE LINCOLN sits at desk piled with papers. There's a KNOCK on the door.

LINCOLN

Come in!

EZRA enters.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Ezra Clark, good to see ya. And thanks again for all your support of my candidacy. Care for a shot of toddy?

EZRA

No thanks, a bit early for that dynamite in a bottle you call toddy. (Both laugh)

LINCOLN

It softens up those who come to complain about this and that. Well then now tell me something good.

EZRA

Okay, reason I'm here, I just hired a new reporter, straight out of college, a brilliant young man and he's come up with a solution to prevent a civil war.

LINCOLN

Ya don't say, when can I meet this gift from God?

EZRA

Soon, but for right now I have his notes he sends to you.

Ezra takes John's notes from a satchel and hands them to Lincoln, then sits back while Lincoln peruses the papers.

(beat)

LINCOLN

Great ideas Ezra but we won't have that kind of money to even begin this project.

EZRA

You won't need a penny to begin. That's the beauty of John's remarkable idea. My news service will pay John to travel and write his progress as he contacts the Governors in each slave owner state beginning with Georgia's Governor Joseph Black.

LINCOLN

Good Grady's Goats, Ezra, Black is a staunch supporter of states rights. It's gonna be a hard sell, young Adams.

EZRA

Most states will be a hard sell at first and John knows it however this young feller has grit and I put my money on him to come out the winner.

LINCOLN

All right, send him a telegram at once that I'm behind him all the way.

EZRA

Thanks Abe, I knew you would be once you heard the complete plan.

LINCOLN

How's the news service doing?

EZRA

Great, as long as I can keep the telegraph poles up and working.

LINCOLN

You know Ezra, Morse code's not that difficult. I can read over twenty words a minute myself.

EZRA

I didn't know that. You want a part time job?

LINCOLN

No thanks, I have a feeling the full time one I'm working on will leave no room for part time anything.

TALL CEDARS PLANTATION

OVER PHOTO of LARGE SOUTHERN HOME

MALE (V.O.)

John got word of a big annual Bar-B-Q to be held at Tall Cedars Plantation just 10 miles south of Atlanta. So he's traveling by horseback arriving at 11:30.

EXT. TALL CEDARS PLANTATION - DAY

John stands in back of the HOWARD McIntosh mansion watching some ducks on a pond and being watched by a beautiful young lady, SARA ANN.

SARA ANN

Howdy stranger. Haven't seen ya at one of our get-togethers before. I'm Sara Ann.

JOHN

Howdy back at ya Sara Ann, I'm John Adams with National Telegrapher News Service. Glad to meet ya.

SARA ANN

Oh, a newspaper reporter, is there a Misses Adams?

JOHN

Oh no, I'm single, a recent graduate from the University of Georgia. To be honest, this is my first assignment. How bout you.

SARA ANN

Oh I'm single too. My father owns O'Hanlon Plantation on further south toward Macon.

JOHN

So you're Sara Ann O'Hanlon of Irish decent I presume.

SARA ANN

You're right John. You any kin to John Quincy Adams?

JOHN

Oh yes, my great grandfather John Quincy was a bootlegger up in them thar hills of Tennessee.

SARA ANN

You're joshing me now aren't you John Adams?

JOHN

I suppose I am pretty lady. You caught me red handed. Say would you make my day by being my escort at this shindig today?

SARA ANN

Are you asking me for a date, John Adams.

JOHN

Ah shore is mah Dear.

SARA ANN

Well then Ah accept, Mister John Adams.

Sara Ann removes large blanket from her bag. Spreads it on grass, sits and takes his hand, pulling him down to join her. Some hugs and kisses follows.

JOHN

Sara Ann, can you tell me anything about Howard McIntosh?

SARA ANN

Why Unca Howard is a marvelous man. And he treats everybody the same, even his slaves. He's awfully handsome for his age and everyone thinks highly of Unca Howard. If it were left up to him, all slaves would be set free.

JOHN

Sounds like someone I'd like to meet, can you arrange it?

SARA ANN

Of course Ah kin, mah Sweetie.

Suddenly the aroma of cooking pork reaches their nostrils.

JOHN

Whoa, that smells delicious, Sara Ann.

SARA ANN

Oh yeah and just you wait till you taste that slow cooked over hickory wood all night long little piggy. It's so tender it almost chews itself. Ah believe ah kin hear yore tummy growling already. (She snickers.)

JOHN

Now who's joshing who? My stomach is being a perfectly gentle tummy and making no sound a'tall.

She quickly pokes her tongue at him. John grabs and kisses her. She returns passionately.

SARA ANN

John do you really - really think I'm likable?

JOHN

Maybe I should see you all dressed up in something other than a britches tight riding habit.

SARA ANN

Shucks, after chunking down today's pork, women here in their Sunday go to meeting dresses will gather upstairs, unlace their belly choking corsets, and flop down for a nap.

JOHN

Do you ever get all dressed up in your Sunday go to meeting dress and wear belly choking corsets?

SARA ANN

NO, of course not fa-sho. Ah wear nice dresses but never-never a corset. Ah watch what ah eat and exercise daily to keep myself in shape. Ah believe you've noticed my shape, haven't ya John?

JOHN

Yes Mam, of course I have. You have a beautiful shape and a pretty face to go with it.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That reminds me of a funny, Sara Ann. If I said you have a nice shape would you hold it against me?

SARA ANN

Oh John, that joke came out of Noah's Ark.

JOHN

Good thing I'm a writer and not a speaker. Huh?

SARA ANN

I should say so.

She leans over and kisses him on the lips. He responds.

JOHN

If I said you were a nice kisser would you kiss me again?

She responds with her lips leading to several minutes of making out on the blanket, kissing and hugging.

SARA ANN

John will you excuse me. I have to go powder my nose.

JOHN

Of course, does my nose need powdering?

SARA ANN

NO silly, I won't be gone long.

Sara Ann leaves and John tosses pebbles in the duck pond to pass the time.

EXT. TALL CEDARS MANSION - BACKYARD - SHORT TIME LATER

Sara Ann walks hand in hand with her Uncle HOWARD toward John.

SARA ANN

John, I've got someone for you to meet.

John turns around to face Howard McIntosh.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)

This is my Uncle Howard McIntosh.

HOWARD

Howdy John, my niece here is really impressed with you. (Extends hand to John)

JOHN

Mister McIntosh, so glad to meet you, Sir. I have a major request. I've been given permission by Abe Lincoln to call on Governor Black and explain a plan to avoid a civil war.

HOWARD

Well now John I know Joe Black about as well as anyone. We hunt together when he's at his home in Atlanta. Would you care to meet him right away?

JOHN

I sure would.

SARA ANN

Well now look here, if you two are gonna discuss war, I'll just mosey around a bit and come back in a few minutes.

JOHN

Give us about five minutes, Sara Ann. (She leaves)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Sir, Lincoln has accepted my plan of buying all field hand slaves to prevent a civil war.

HOWARD

Well John, how much is Abe willing to pay.

JOHN

The average price for a healthy field hand is eight hundred dollars.

HOWARD

Whoa John, that's a staggering amount considering the number of slave owners throughout the south.

JOHN

But only a fraction of what a civil war would cost, not to mention all the lives lost or maimed on both sides.

HOWARD

Well actually, I've never liked the idea of one man owning another but it was passed down to me by my father when he passed away.

JOHN

I'm sure glad to hear you say you dislike owning slaves. Do many slave owners you know feel as you?

HOWARD

Oh no, most would give me down the country if I were to let them know how I really feel.

JOHN

I can understand that.

HOWARD

When would you like to see my friend, the long bearded one?

JOHN

Tomorrow would be fine if it's convenient for you, Sir?

HOWARD

John, call me Howard. What say we meet at the Boar's Head Inn on Peachtree at nine in the morning, have breakfast first?

JOHN

Fine by me, Howard.

INT. ATLANTA - BOAR'S HEAD INN - 10:00 A.M.

Howard is late but John stays busy making notes till Howard arrives.

HOWARD

John, I'm really sorry I'm late, had a problem that had to be worked out, always something on a cotton farm needing attending to.

JOHN

No bother to me, I had more time to make some notes for the meeting. You want to head on out for the Governor's home?

Howard nods head, they walk out together.

EXT. JOSEPH BLACK'S HOME - FRONT PORCH - MORNING

Front door opens before Howard reaches for handle and a young part colored beautiful girl, NADINE is smiling at them.

NADINE

Oh, Mister McIntosh, come right on in.

HOWARD

Hey there Nadine. This is John Adams, John, Nadine is personal aid to the Governor.

JOHN

Hi there Nadine. It's nice to make your acquaintance.

NADINE

And the same here, John. Y'all come right on in. The Governor's in his office upstairs. You here to go hunting?

HOWARD

Oh no, John and I are here on business.

On the way up the stairs Nadine leans over to Howard and whispers, 'John is real cute.'

Howard leans back to Nadine and whispers, 'He's in love with my niece Sara Ann.'

NADINE

Ah, really?

John wonders what they whispered.

INT. JOSEPH BLACK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Nadine escorts the two callers in.

NADINE

Sir, two nice looking gentlemen here to see you.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Howard you ole reprobate. Got ya hunting gear with ya?

HOWARD

Not this time Joe. This is John Adams, reporter for NTNS, the paper that comes out the next day with yesterday's news.

Governor shakes John's hand.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Pleasure to meet you John Adams.

HOWARD

John's here on a mission from God to save the nation from a bloody civil war.

GOVERNOR BLACK

The heck you say. Have a seat and explain, John.

JOHN

Well Sir, as everyone knows Lincoln will probably be elected our next president and he makes no bones about his desire to free the slaves.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Yes, how well Ah know and he's a troublesome sort. The rascal needs to keep his big nose out of our state's affairs. Why he's nothing short of a dictator Ah'm here to tell ya.

JOHN

I have a plan that will prevent a civil war and appease the slave owners at the same time.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Why ya must be a master magician and if ya be talking about giving in to Abe Lincoln's whims, forget about it. Ah'm sure Howard here informed you where I stand regarding this matter.

HOWARD

Now just a minute Joe. Give John a chance to explain.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Well alright, but no promises, ya hear?

HOWARD

None expected, Joe. Go ahead John.

JOHN

Sir, the average cost of a healthy field hand slave runs eight hundred dollars. Lincoln will purchase all field hand slaves and set them free if the slave owners agree.

GOVERNOR BLACK

My Gawd young man that would amount to a whopping sum.

JOHN

Yes but not nearly as expensive as fighting a civil war. There would be tremendous losses on both sides. Think of the lives lost or maimed, factories - homes - schools destroyed, even this fine home we're in right now.

John pauses to let that sink in. The governor is rubbing his long beard, in deep thought as John waits.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Does the country have the funds to complete this huge buyout?

JOHN

Oh no, certainly not all at once. It will take several years to complete this plan, but what does it matter. A war between the states will be avoided, slaves will remain slaves until the last one is purchased.

GOVERNOR BLACK

And just how ya gonna git word to all the slave owners.

JOHN

How do you reach them now?

Howard is impressed with how well young John Adams is handling his friend, Joe Black.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Some by telegram but we don't have near the number of lines as the northern states so we use pony express mostly. We have a hundred thirty nine counties in Georgia. It's a slow and tedious process informing every nook and cranny. You got a quicker way, John?

JOHN

Oh yes.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Ah thought so.

Smiling, sounding somewhat pleased with the tenacity of this young John Adams.

JOHN

We set up meeting places like a church or courthouse by sending wires or letters to county chairmen from Governor Joseph Black. We explain just enough of our plan to build interest and the county chairman sets up a in a courthouse, school, or church to hold a seminar for interested slave owners.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Okay, and then what...?

JOHN

I begin with two or three men to assist me in explaining and signing up ten or more slave owners. They are taught how to conduct heir own seminars for slave owners and the chain begins to grow like a snow ball until the entire state is covered. We do the same in each state starting with the governors.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Well Sir, Howard I do believe this young man has a plan. You signed up with him already?

HOWARD

I'm with him all the way. I also talked with my daughter Millie's beau Gerald Glascock and he might be helping John and me travel to the different states.

GOVERNOR BLACK

You mean that jester you brought here once to go hunting?

HOWARD

Yes that one. We laughed so much it scared all the birds before we could shoot'um.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Well one thing fer dang sure, he knows how to get folks in a good mood.

(beat)

GOVERNOR BLACK (CONT'D)

Tell you what, let's head for my dining room table and see what kind of plans we can conjure up?

EXT. TALL CEDARS MANSION - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Gerald and MILLIE are sitting on swing, talking.

MILLIE

Gerald do you really think there'll be war with the north?

GERALD

Just don't you worry your pretty little head, Millie my darling. Your daddy is working with a young college smart feller who thinks he can prevent a war between the states.

MILLIE

Yeah, Daddy told me about him but still'n all I worry myself somethin fierce... I can't help it, Gerald.

GERALD

Now jes you stop that worrying. Ain't you heard what most folks worry about never even happens? Besides you got your handsome as all git-out beau Gerald to take care of you Honey Child. (She laughs)

He leans over and brushes a kiss to her soft lips.

INT. JOSEPH BLACK'S MANSION - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Governor Black turns to his two visitors.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Well it looks like you two have talked me into going along with your slave buying plan, but how will it set with our Georgia slave owners when I reverse my position and agree to something so downright countermanding?

HOWARD

A great deal better than fighting the inevitable Joe and hey! You'll be a hero, the Savior of our country. Why you might even run for president if you'd shave your beard.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Now Don't you go put'n down my beard Howard McIntosh, its been like a friend for many years and been on my face too long now to part with.

INT. JOSEPH BLACK'S MANSION - DINING ROOM - LATER

JABBO, Governor Black's personal colored attendant walks into the room.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Jabbo, go down in the basement and bring up my map of Georgia and while you're at it, look in my desk and get my list of County Chairman.

JABBO

Yessuh, Gov'ner.

GOVERNOR BLACK

And make haste about it.

Turns to his two guests.

GOVERNOR BLACK (CONT'D)

You know John if you expect the slave owners to teach others, you could use some printed booklets, wouldn't ya think?

JOHN

That's a terrific idea, Sir.

GOVERNOR BLACK

I have a friend here in Atlanta who does some printing for me from time to time. Nadine does shorthand real well and you can dictate the instructions to her for the printer.

This pleases Nadine to be close to John.

NADINE
This way John.

She takes his hand, leads to adjoining room, smiling.

NADINE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

She takes a seat.

NADINE (CONT'D)
Sit here next to me, John. Talk as
fast as you want, I can keep up.

DISSOLVE TO:

DINNING ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Howard and the governor are still talking hunting when John returns.

HOWARD
And that's why I say my shotgun is
more accurate than yours, Joe
Black.

GOVERNOR BLACK
Hey John, that didn't take long, I
told you my Nadine was good.

Turns to Howard.

GOVERNOR BLACK (CONT'D)
Howard, did you tell John the way
Ah attained Nadine?

HOWARD
No, I didn't Joe.

GOVERNOR BLACK
John, Nadine's mother was a slave,
owned by a good fer nothing
drunkard who beat her, took
advantage of her, and raped her
repeatedly. When Nadine was fifteen
I got wind of the braggart saying
what he intended to do to Nadine.
Well ah had'm arrested and brought
Nadine here to be safe. When he got
out of jail he went straight home
and killed her mother. Nadine's
been here ever since.

JOHN

What happened to her daddy?

GOVERNOR BLACK

He was found hanging by the neck
with his privates removed.

JOHN

Did they ever find out who did the
lynching?

GOVERNOR BLACK

No, no one ever gave it much
thought.

JOHN

Sir, I'm glad you helped her. The
majority of slave owners definitely
aren't like that.

INT. GOVERNOR'S HOME - DINING ROOM - LATER

The trio's going over Georgia map as Jabbo enters with Millie
McIntosh and beau, Gerald.

GERALD

What's going on here, you planning
a big party for me?

MILLIE

You'll have to overlook Gerald, he
keeps party on the mind constantly.

HOWARD

Millie, I'm glad you and Gerald
came, you can help us out. We're
getting ready to contact all
Georgia counties about this young
man's plan for Lincoln to buy all
field hand slaves to prevent a
civil war.

MILLIE

REALLY? Then Gerald was right when
he said you had a plan to prevent
war, I am so glad to see this. Tell
me... What can I do to help?

HOWARD

You can start by addressing these
envelopes to County Chairmen from
this list.

MILLIE

John I'm Millie McIntosh, Howard's daughter and this is my noisy beau, Gerald.

JOHN

Glad to meet you both.

Three days later booklets are ready for initialization of John's plan.

EXT/INT. MACON GEORGIA - CHURCH - DAY - 11 A.M.

John, Howard, and Gerald walking up steps. Three men dressed in sheets force them in stagecoach, curtains cover windows. TALL MAN gives orders.

STAGECOACH - MOVING

GERALD

Who are you people, is this some kind of joke?

TALL MAN

No joke. Be quiet.

HOWARD

Where are you taking us?

TALL MAN

You find out when we git thar.

GERALD

Well you don't have to dress like spooks in white sheets, we'll be more than glad to sit down and talk with you like civilized men, you are men right?

(Gerald irritates TALL MAN)

TALL MAN

Sheddup.

HOWARD WHISPERS TO JOHN

Do you know who these men represent?

JOHN

I've heard rumors of a radical racist outfit organized in Alabama. This must be part of that group.

HOWARD

You think they're planning on
killing us?

JOHN

Not sure. Guess we'll have to wait
and see.

EXT. OUTSIDE MACON - OPEN FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Two dozen men standing in front of burning cross, three
captives shoved to LEADER of group.

LEADER

The word is (beat) You three are
working with Yankee dogs to free
our southern slaves. Is this true?

JOHN

We are working with Governor Joseph
Black trying to reach a peaceful
solution to prevent a civil war. We
are talking with owners of slaves
in Georgia, not hooded men who hide
behind sheets and masks like scared
children.

The leader is furious and yells.

LEADER

And just who are you Big Mouth?

JOHN

John Adams, news reporter for the
National Telegrapher headquartered
in Washington, D.C.

LEADER

Never heard of ya.

JOHN

That's probably because you can't
read.

LEADER

So tell me about your part in
freeing our Georgia niggers, Big
Mouth.

JOHN

I already told you I'm working with
Governor Black.

LEADER

And that's the part Ah'm having difficulty believing cause Joe Black is a staunch supporter of secession.

JOHN

Was. (beat) would you like to see a state sealed letter he gave me to show non-believers like yourself?

LEADER

Yeah Ah most certainly would.

John reaches into his jacket pocket and retrieves the letter which is quickly jerked from his hand, opened and read.

LEADER (CONT'D)

I would never have believed Joe Black would stoop to the likes of this.

He hands the letter back to John and yells.

LEADER (CONT'D)

Take these men back to where you got them. Do not harm them or mess with their belongings, and I mean it.

He turns his back and shakes his head.

INT. MACON - CHURCH - DAY - ONE P.M.

Twelve slave owners sit on the front pew.

JOHN

Good afternoon gentlemen. Thank you for coming today. My name is John Adams, a reporter for the National Telegrapher News. The two gentlemen with me have large plantations and many slaves. Each of you were invited here by Governor Joseph Black who supports a plan for Lincoln to buy all field hand slaves at eight hundred dollars each. Since we have twelve of you, lets split up into three groups of four. Howard you pick your four first.

Howard confronts the first four and moves them to the back of the church while Gerald addresses the eight remaining.

GERALD

You lucky four gents get to hear my side of the story so follow me to a Sunday school room and the rest just stay where you are. (they do as instructed)

JOHN

As all of you know, having slaves is expensive. This is your chance to trim down that expense and get better production in the long run. The slave buyout plan is simple. The government buys your field hand slaves paying you Eight Hundred Dollars each. They become free men and available to work at the average daily rate for this type labor. Are there any questions?

OWNER 1

What about the non-field hand slaves?

JOHN

It's the same as any family. You keep the worker or let them go. It's up to you. If the field hand slave has a family he takes care of his family just like you or I. This is what freeing the slaves is all about, making citizens out of former slaves.

OWNER 2

When ya planning on git'n all this done?

JOHN

This will take a while. In the meantime your slaves will remain as slaves. All slave owners will have to sign up for this plan. Then it will take no less than two years for the completion here in Georgia.

OWNER 3

How in the world are ya gonna see thousands of slave owners to sign up?

JOHN

That's where you come in. When you leave here today, each of you will have a box of small booklets that explains the complete plan. You go back to your area and set up a seminar just like this one and recruit slave owners the same as we're doing today. When you four signup twelve or more it snowballs into thousands in a very short time.

OWNER 3

Yeah, Ah get it, like you say, slave labor gets expensive sign me up.

OWNER 1

Me too, Ah'm all for it.

OWNER 3

Looks like ya gonna git us all involved.

INT: MACON - CHURCH - LATER

All slave owners have left with their boxes of booklets with instructions on how to order more. The three from Atlanta are well pleased with results.

JOHN

You two did a bang up performance today. If you were being paid I'd give you both a raise.

They laugh.

GERALD

John I'll say one thing, you got some more guts standing up to that masked leader today. He was mad as a wet hen.

JOHN

If you could have seen my insides you'd know I was shaking to the bone.

JOHN (CONT'D)

So you two are renting a wagon team
and moving to the next location
further south.

HOWARD

Yeah, you gonna take the train home
I suppose, we'll meet you back in
Atlanta later.

JOHN

That's the plan.

EXT/INT. SARA ANN'S HOME - NIGHT

John's standing on front porch KNOCKING on door. Sara Ann
opens.

SARA ANN

John Darling, come on in.

He enters and immediately their arms are around each other,
hugging and kissing.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)

John, I've been expecting you. Good
to know you keep your promises.

They move to living room, sit on couch.

JOHN

We had really good luck with a
dozen slave owners, we also had a
run in with a white supremacy group
known as Ku Klux Klan in Alabama.

SARA ANN

Oh yeah! Tell me about it.

JOHN

We got a tip from Governor Black
about a group of men wearing white
sheets and hoods over their heads
and faces?

SARA ANN

I remember Daddy heard some locals
here talking about that.

JOHN

Well we were captured by three of
them, taken to a field where a
cross was erected and a couple of
dozen more of them were waiting.

SARA ANN

John, what did they do to you?

JOHN

Well they set fire to the cross and made a lot of jeering noise but let us go when I showed them a letter from the governor.

SARA ANN

Oh my John Darling, they could have hurt you. (she grabs his hands)

JOHN

I think they were just intimidating us was all. They took us back to town and let us go.

SARA ANN

And they traveled from Alabama to Macon?

JOHN

Not sure. They could have been a local group inducted by those from Alabama. I'm sure we haven't heard the last of them. I'm going to see Governor Black tomorrow and right now, I have something to ask you.

She's thinking marriage proposal, displays a glow.

JOHN (CONT'D)

We'll be traveling a lot during the coming months and I'd love to add you to our group. You'll be paid of course.

It wasn't what she's was thinking but a close second.

SARA ANN

Of course I'd love to go with you.

JOHN

Good, are your parents at home?

SARA ANN

They went to bed early but John I won't need their permission to go with you.

They hug and kiss, enjoying each other's company till bedtime. John stays the night in a guest room.

EXT. SARA ANN'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - MORNING

John and Sara Ann are dressed for riding. John borrows a horse and saddle. Her father KELL and mother are not glad to see their daughter go.

KELL

SARA ANN, I wish you be staying here and not tracing around the country. Please, stay here with Mama and Papa, Ya loving family, marry some nice local boy, and give us five wonderful grandchildren.

SARA ANN

Father, I have bigger plans for my life and I'll be eighteen in thirty days, legally old enough to make my own decisions. I love John and this is what I want to do. I love you and mom as well and respect your wisdom but I really want to go.

KELL

Well alright, but ya just be careful now. Ya be our only child and we worry and pray for your safety. (Turns to John) Ya be sure to watch over our little girl and keep her safe Mister Adams.

JOHN

Please call me John, and you can rest assured I will watch out for her, Sir.

They kiss their daughter goodbye and with tears, watch her ride away.

INT. GOVERNOR'S HOME - OFFICE - MORNING

Governor Black is seated at his desk when Nadine enters with John and Sara Ann.

NADINE

Sir, you have company.
Nadine unhappy having to bring Sara Ann with John

GOVERNOR BLACK

John, come in, y'all take a seat and who is this lovely creature you have with you?

JOHN
Governor Black, this is my girl
friend Sara Ann.

GOVERNOR BLACK
Golly, not Howard's niece Sara Ann,
my-my how you've blossomed my dear.
He gives Sara Ann a big hug. Nadine's in a corner pouting.

SARA ANN
Thank you, Sir.

GOVERNOR BLACK
Pardon me for being so forward,
Sara Ann, but are you two planning
on getting married anytime soon?

SARA ANN
Well uh, Sir...

GOVERNOR BLACK
The reason I'm asking is I have the
authority to marry couples and I
would really love to officiate your
nuptials while I'm in office.

John comes to her rescue.

JOHN
(Looking on Sara Ann's face, so
full of anxiety. Without warning He
suddenly drops to one knee)
Sara Ann, my darling and love of my
live, this is so unexpected, but
will you make me the happiest man
in the world by accepting my
proposal of marriage?

Oh yes! I accept your proposal my
dear John.

She kneels to the floor to be taken into his arms for sealing
with a kiss.

GOVERNOR BLACK
Wonderful, most wonderful. Would
you like a big blowout wedding or a
simple ceremony, my treat either
way?

SARA ANN
John, I think I'd prefer the
simple. How about you Darling?

JOHN

Simple is fine by me. Should I telegram your parents and have them here by Wednesday.

SARA ANN

No, they're still upset over me leaving with you. We can tell them later. What about your parents John?.

JOHN

I'll explain later.

SARA ANN

You want to get married this evening?

JOHN

Sooner the better if it suits you. I'll buy you a bouquet, what kind of flowers?

SARA ANN

Chrysanthemums are my favorite.

JOHN

And that is shall be.

SARA ANN

And I think we should wear riding habits, I have one with a skirt.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - FIRST FLOOR - EVENING

John and Sara Ann stand facing Governor Black, wife SCARLET acting as matron of honor at conclusion of ceremony.

GOVERNOR BLACK

And by the power invested in me by the state of Georgia, I pronounce you, husband and wife. John you may kiss your bride.

So John kisses his bride and she tosses her bouquet straight at Nadine who refuses to catch it and runs away in tears.

GOVERNOR BLACK (CONT'D)

Nadine can be temperamental sometimes.

INT. PEACHTREE STREET - ADAMS' HOME - LATER

The front door opens to inside. John has Sara Ann in his arms bringing her over the threshold inside the living room. Both are laughing as she kicks the door shut with a foot tap.

SARA ANN
Don't you drop me, John Adams.

He gives her a lip buzz on neck, she begins kicking and yelling.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)
Stop it John, I can't stand for anybody to do that to me.

He almost drops her and decides to let his bride down gently.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)
Ooo... I hate it when somebody blows on my neck like that.

She brings his lips down to hers.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)
That's what lips are for, John Adams.

JOHN
Very well my dear wife, here we are in our own home. What would you like to do first?

SARA ANN
Let's eat, I'm hungry.

JOHN
I was hoping for something else.

SARA ANN
Don't be so impatient. Anticipation is half the fun.

JOHN
Now who made that up?

SARA ANN
It's an old wives tale. Anyway is there any food in our home?

JOHN

As a matter of fact there's cornmeal, some pork in the salt box. I'd check the hen nests outside for some fresh eggs but I doubt there are any, fresh one's that is.

SARA ANN

Start a fire in the wood stove first and we should be good to go.

JOHN

Or we could walk down Peachtree to a restaurant.

SARA ANN

You talked me into it, let's go.

Hand in hand they walk out front door.

BOAR'S HEAD INN - HOUR LATER

The Adams' sit at table in back enjoying after dinner drink.

JOHN

You make a radiant bride my lovely.

SARA ANN

And you, a handsome stud muffin my husband. By the way where are we going on our honeymoon?

JOHN

Columbus, Georgia this coming weekend. We have a seminar planned there, Saturday, one o'clock.

SARA ANN

Some honeymoon...

JOHN

Best I could do on such short notice.

SARA ANN

Oh well, they do have a nice Hotel I should hope.

JOHN

The nicest I'm told. I've never been to Columbus.

INT. ADAMS' HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

John lies on bed in pajamas. Sara Ann sits beside him

SARA ANN

Now wasn't the waiting half the fun?

JOHN

Not even close, the old wives are flaky in the head.

SARA ANN

John, thanks for being so gentle.

JOHN

Darling, you will always be my top priority

INT. COLUMBUS - STATESMAN HOTEL - ROOM 102 - DAY

John and Sara Ann Adams are getting ready to conduct seminar at one o'clock. County Board CHAIRMAN is with them.

CHAIRMAN

I have twenty-five men signed up for today's meeting.

JOHN

Are they all slave owners?

CHAIRMAN

They claim to be.

JOHN

That doesn't seem right. How many did you invite to the meeting?

CHAIRMAN

We talked with twelve and told them they could invite others to the meeting, maybe they're all legit.

JOHN

Well I guess we can hope. Will the Sheriff be in his office today?

CHAIRMAN

Oh yeah, he works just about every Saturday. He'll be around if you should need him.

JOHN
Good we may need him.

INT. COLUMBUS COURTHOUSE - DAY - 1:00 P.M.

Howard handles opening.

HOWARD
It's good to see so many of you
interested in a peaceful solution
to avoid a war between the states.
With a show of hands, how many of
you are here by personal
invitation?

Twelve men toward front raise their hands.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
You twelve men move up in front of
me

HOWARD (CONT'D)
Now how many of you own at least
ten field hand slaves?

Those remaining in the court room stand and slip out the back door.

INT. COURTHOUSE - HALL - CONTINUOUS

They are surprised to see the SHERIFF and twelve large deputies with night sticks.

SHERIFF
You men come with us, we have a few
questions to ask you.

The LEADER of the group, a big muscular brute speaks up.

LEADER
We being arrested?

SHERIFF
Should you be?

The Sheriff and deputies are also big and muscular.

LEADER
Nawh, no reason.

SHERIFF

Then follow me, single file, hands
behind your necks.

INT. COURTHOUSE - SHERIFF OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Each man is searched as they enter office then handcuffed except for one who breaks to run. A nightstick to the head brings him down. When He's searched the CHIEF DEPUTY finds brass knuckles, and a thirty-eight snub nose pistol.

CHIEF DEPUTY

Now we know why he refused to
accept our warm hospitality.

The runner is taken to a cell. Others are handcuffed together except one who appears to be head knocker called SPIKE.

CHIEF DEPUTY (CONT'D)

Spike, your cohorts tell us you're
the fearless leader of this ugly
look'n pile of cow droppings.

SPIKE

If you say so, big shot.

Chief Deputy stands back, gives a nod, and his assistant slaps the living daylights out of the snarly bearded one. After Spike recovers the Chief Deputy continues.

CHIEF DEPUTY

Now spikey boy, you just got a
sample of what to expect if you
don't start squawking answers and
leaving out the cutesy. You've
already made me hate your stinking
guts and I'm about riled enough to
give your brain some lead
injection. You catch my drift,
stinky spikey boy?

Spikey boy nods he catches.

CHIEF DEPUTY (CONT'D)

Good, now where you from and why
you here in my peaceful little
corner of Blissfulness trying to
stir up a mess'a trouble?

A lady deputy is ready to scribe his statement by shorthand.

SPIKE

Alabama.

CHIEF DEPUTY

And?

SPIKE

We were sent over to find out more about the nigger lovers going all over Jaw-jah talking bout freeing all our slaves.

CHIEF DEPUTY

And just exactly how many slaves do you own, smart-butt?

SPIKE

Ah don't own any.

CHIEF DEPUTY

Well then, just exactly who sent you to interrupt the peacefulness of my pleasant town?

SPIKE

Don't know, they wuz wearing white sheets and covered faces.

CHIEF DEPUTY

Now don't you think that was a mite stupid of ya?

SPIKE

Wha-da-ya-mean?

CHIEF DEPUTY

You taking orders from men covered up like spooks, too scared to show their faces.

SPIKE

Ah know'm, least I know what dey is.

CHIEF DEPUTY

I'm listening.

SPIKE

Dey call dem'selves de Ku Klux Klan or KKK fer short.

CHIEF DEPUTY

You a member of this outfit?

SPIKE

Uh, well, er, yeah ah am.

CHIEF DEPUTY

I suggest you resign immediately,
Spikey Boy.

The Chief Deputy plays with a small length of rope forming a hangman noose. He calls a deputy over.

CHIEF DEPUTY (CONT'D)

Hey Gene, March this piece of Alabama horse droppings all the way to the state line and leave the rope tied to his hands around his back.

SPIKE

But hey now, I got a horse...

CHIEF DEPUTY

No, Spikey Boy, both your mount and your weapons are confiscated by the State of Georgia. Let it be a lesson to you, obey the law at all times and never waver even for a minute. And oh yeah, tomorrow the rest of your crew will make the same trip back to Alabama, walking, maybe barefoot, so consider yourself lucky.

INT. ATLANTA - GOVERNOR BLACK'S MANSION - MORNING

A month later and Office personnel have grown with the ever increasing number of information seekers. Howard's daughter Millie is in charge.

MILLIE

Everyone listen up. We're way behind on getting out letters and materials so I need all of you to work this weekend.

GROANS of displeasure.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

Nadine, take my booklet order to the printer, with this note to get it out as quickly as possible.

NADINE

Will do. The slave owners are signing up much faster than any of us ever expected.

MILLIE

That's true, now hurry.

EXT. STAGECOACH - DAY - MOVING

Traveling to more seminars.

JOHN (O.S.)

Sara Ann and I are in route to Austin, Texas to another courthouse meeting. This is the longest trip we've been on. After our meeting in Austin, we'll be working our way back toward Atlanta, stopping in Louisiana, Mississippi, and maybe parts of Alabama. Gerald and Howard are working states north of us while a newly formed team is working Virginia and westward. A good many slave owners are receiving the instructional booklets and beginning seminars on their own. This should be the last long trip Sara Ann and I have to make.

EXT. AUSTIN TX - LONE STAR HOTEL - DAY

Stagecoach pulls up to hotel. Adams' exit, walk toward front entrance.

INT. AUSTIN TX - LONE STAR HOTEL - DESK - DAY

Checking in hotel.

SARA ANN

This is exciting John, I've never been this far west before.

JOHN

Neither have I my dear. We should have a big slave owner turnout here.

DESK CLERK

Sign the guest book Sir, your room is on the first floor as you requested, Room 104. The BELLHOP will assist you with your baggage.

INT. ROOM 104 - MINUTES LATER

Bellhop places luggage on rack at foot of bed.

BELLHOP

We don't have many guests from Georgia.

SARA ANN

Oh yes, It's quite a long dusty trip that's for sure.

She tips the young boy and he's out the door quickly.

JOHN

Well Missus Adams do you care to take a stroll around town?

SARA ANN

Absolutely not. What I care for is a nice hot tub bath and plenty of time to soak in it.

JOHN

Can I join you.

SARA ANN

No thanks, I can handle it all by my lil-o-self my Darling.

Sara Ann leaves the bedroom. John unpacks.

JOHN (V.O.)

We have three days to kill before the meeting on Saturday at one o'clock. So we treat it like a second honeymoon. By Saturday we'll be more than ready to leave the hotel.

INT. AUSTIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM - DAY

A training class gets underway. John stands at podium. Sara Ann sits behind him to take notes.

JOHN

Gentlemen, please be seated so I can inform you about selling your slaves to the Federal Government when Lincoln goes in office, and preventing a devastating civil war.

A HOT HEAD jumps up and screams.

HOTHEAD

It's jes another trick by the Yankee gov'ment to free our slaves and leave us with naught cept prob'lums.

The Hothead in dirty overalls stands at the front row.

JOHN

How many slaves do you own Sir?

HOTHEAD

It don't mean a hill of beans bout owning slaves. Ah'm talk'n bout the Yankee gov'rn-ment run'n ovar us poor work'n folks and Ah'm fer one, fed up wid you.

He fires back in a threatening rage.

JOHN

(in stern voice)

Get this man out of here before he hurts someone.

A courthouse guard makes his way toward the raging man. A small 32-caliber pistol is withdrawn from dirty overall bib. Gun is fired at close range BANG and guard falls dead.

HOTHEAD

Stay back or ah'l shoot ya all.

Spectator in the back runs for Sheriff while a large muscular man standing near shooter catches him off guard, wrestles Hothead to the floor. Another man picks up the gun dropped by shooter.

HOTHEAD (CONT'D)

Ya turn me loose right now and Ah mean it.

Hothead continues yelling until three deputies arrive and handcuff him. John and Sara are standing close by.

DEPUTY

What happened here?

JOHN

Officer, I was conducting a meeting when this man jumps up and begins yelling, causing trouble. I asked the courtroom guard to remove the irate man and this shooter here in overalls reaches in his bib for a gun, shoots and kills the courthouse guard in cold blood.

DEPUTY

And your name Sir?

JOHN

John Adams with the National Telegraphy News Service.

DEPUTY

Apparently, he didn't like what was going on here, Mister Adams. You're lucky he didn't take a shot at you.

JOHN

Yes, I'm quite aware.

DEPUTY

Go ahead with the meeting. When you finish I need you to come to the Sheriff Office and sign a statement. Also bring the man who subdued the shooter and anyone else you think might have pertinent testimony.

JOHN

We'll be there just as soon as we finish up here.

The deputies escort Hothead out of the courtroom still yelling, two men with stretcher takes the deceased guard away and John conducts his meeting.

INT. STAGECOACH - DAY - MOVING

Traveling to more seminars. They sit side by side watching the scenery moving by.

SARA ANN

John, I'll sure be glad to get away from Texas.

JOHN

Yeah, you and me both.

SARA ANN

So what have you been writing on your note pad.

JOHN

My news article, want to read it?

He hands her the note pad.

SARA ANN

Austin, Texas, August twenty-ninth. A gunman attempts to close down a meeting of twenty-one East Texas slave owners gathered at the Travis County Courthouse to learn about selling their slaves to the Federal Government. Just as this reporter opens the meeting, a man in dirty overalls stands and begins a tirade of obscenities against the government. This reporter calls for the courthouse guard to escort the man out. As the guard approaches, the man in overalls draws a 32 caliber pistol from his bib and shoots the guard killing him instantly. Halley Wilson, a slave owner grabs the man in overalls and holds him down until the law arrives to arrest the shooter now charged with murder. Edward R. Booth is being held without bond awaiting trial. The meeting of slave owners was restarted and became one of the most successful to date. John this is one of your best articles. When are going to send it in?

JOHN

When we arrive at our next scheduled stop in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

INT. LOUISIANA GOVERNOR'S HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

Governor WELLS is seated behind his desk as the Adams' also seated, face the head of state.

JOHN

How's it going, Governor?

WELLS

Not so sure. My opponent, Thomas Jefferson Moore is making a lot of noise arousing his supporters into civil war chatter. Last week they built a huge bonfire out in front of this building, yelling Yankee Lover, nigger lover, and other obscenities at me.

JOHN

What brought that on?

WELLS

Mostly you and your news service. I'm for your plan and Moore knows it.

JOHN

Well, I'm sorry to hear that, but you are absolutely right in sticking to your guns, Governor. This country simply cannot afford a civil war.

WELLS

I know that and I back you all the way. (beat) But unless something happens, it looks mighty like Ah'll lose the election, even with your paper's strong support which I appreciate.

JOHN

Understand there's a lot of white supremacy feelings in Louisiana.

WELLS

Oh yeah, a lot of deep hatred but you know, it was bred into them by parents and grandparents. It's a rash that's hard to heal.

JOHN

Well, Sir. My news service will continue to support your bid for reelection including this conversation we're having. My wife copies everything we've said in shorthand. Most of it will be in our papers nationwide.

WELLS

Thank you John, I do appreciate all you're doing for me.

JOHN

Likewise Governor, and the same goes from me to you, I hope you win by a landslide.

NOISE outside the mansion, large gathering of demonstrators, some for and others against Governor Wells. Fighting breaks out as Wells and Adams' watch from Window.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Sir, I'm pretty sure this riot is being fueled by the Ku Klux Klan from Alabama. We've had a run-in with them twice before.

They continue to watch the fighting going on outside when Governor Wells' security CHIEF enters the room.

CHIEF

Sir, I've dispatched a rider to the State Police for help to stop the mess outside. Anything else you want me to do?

WELLS

Make sure all the entrances to the building are covered. Don't allow anyone in even if you have to wound them in the leg.

BOSS

I have my men already stationed and ready.

WELLS

Good work and keep me posted.

BOSS

Yessir...

Within minutes the Louisiana State Police arrive, rioters run away.

JOHN

They didn't take long to disperse the crowd.

WELLS

Yes, we have a strong State Police barracks here.

(MORE)

WELLS (CONT'D)

You and Missus Adams should stay here tonight just in case there are some hangers on out there.

SARA ANN

Thanks Governor Wells, we will be more than happy to accept your hospitality, won't we John?

JOHN

Absolutely!

WELLS

Do you think it's safe to hold your meeting in the high school auditorium Saturday?

JOHN

Sir, if you can have those State police there I think we'll be safe enough.

WELLS

You can take that to the bank, John.

EXT. BATON ROUGE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Fifty uniformed state police surround the school as the Adams' approach entrance to auditorium. There's some protest jeering from a long distance as John and Sara Ann walk to building.

INT. BATON ROUGE HIGH SCHOOL GYM - CONTINUOUS

SARA ANN

Looks like the troopers made it safe as a Sunday School picnic.

JOHN

Oh yeah, they're a force to reckon with. Let's set up in front of the stage, not on it.

Thirty slave owners are arriving as John and Sara Ann set up

JOHN (CONT'D)

Would you look at that Sarah Ann. This looks like a successful seminar in the making.

SARA ANN

I hope we have enough booklets to hand out.

When all slave owners are seated the seminar begins.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)

Good morning Gentlemen and you two ladies in the audience. I'm Sara Ann Adams and this is my husband John.

They stand and applaud. The Adams' are surprised since this had never happened before. Both smile.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)

Thank you. At this time John will conduct the seminar.

JOHN

Needless to say, this is the first seminar we've conducted where we've gotten a standing ovation. We just left Austin, Texas a few days ago where the courthouse guard was killed in cold blood by an irate mad man.

(beat)

I formulated this plan of slave buy out while attending school at the University of Georgia. I knew if a war between the states broke out over slavery, it would be devastating for both sides. Millions of dollars in property and worse, millions of lives killed needlessly. I was fortunate to be hired by Mister Ezra Clark, owner of National Telegrapher News Service who felt the same as me. And so from there we began, with a whole lot of help like you folks here today spreading the word and signing up slave owners.

LADY SLAVE OWNER

Hey John, we already know your plan and we're all here to sign up and get out there to sign up others. We also brought refreshments, so this should be your easiest and quickest seminar yet.

They all stand and move forward to signup and receive their booklets. Afterwards refreshments are served and small talk commences. A large majority of Louisiana slave owners are in attendance.

INT. STAGECOACH - DAY - MOVING

On the road to Mississippi.

JOHN (O.S.)

We stopped at the Mississippi Governor's Mansion and learned most of the slave owners in his state have already signed up and those remaining are being contacting so there's little point in setting up a seminar. That suited Sara Ann and myself immensely. It seems the only state left to get to work on is South Carolina and we know that won't be an easy task.

INT. COLUMBIA SC - GOVERNOR PICKEN'S OFFICE - DAY

John and Sara Ann are escorted in the governor's office by ZEB, the governor's aid.

ZEB

Your honor, Mister and Missus Adams.

PICKENS

Good afternoon Mister and Missus Adams, welcome to Columbia.

JOHN

Thank you Governor Pickens for seeing us on such short notice.

PICKENS

Ah'm pleased to meet the highly popular NTNS journalist. I read your column religiously, but must say I disagree with most of it. Please take a seat. Care for something to drink?

JOHN

No thank you.

SARA ANN

Nor me, thank you.

PICKENS

Very well, now how can I be of service?

JOHN

Well Sir, if you've been reading my reporting, you must know that we have almost every state with slave owners signed and ready to sell to Lincoln.

PICKENS

By the way what liberal northern college did you attend John?

JOHN

The University of Georgia which is in north Georgia.

Governor Pickens grins.

PICKENS

I've already decided I can't fight a war with just one state. So being outnumbered, I've invited Mayor XAVIER from Charleston to meet you this afternoon for a powwow. He should be here any minute

JOHN

Well alright that is great news, Governor, I'm glad to hear this.

Sara Ann gives Pickens a hug and kiss on the cheek.

PICKENS

Well don't get too mushy, I still have my deep rooted views that only time will heal. Follow me to the dining room

DINING ROOM - MOVING

Pickens and his two guests are seated at table, already spread with lunch.

PICKENS

Which state will you begin the slave buyout?

JOHN

Two states, Georgia and South Carolina.

PICKENS

Glad to hear South Carolina is one of the first. I'm going to issue an executive order that all slave owners must agree to sell their slaves.

JOHN

Well that will certainly save some time.

PICKENS

You may still have a nut to crack.

JOHN

And what will that be.

PICKENS

A place called Session Hill in Abbeville County over near the Georgia-South Carolina border. They've been holding regular meetings there waiting for me to give the word to secede from the Nation.

ZEB

(appearing at door)

Sir, your visitors have arrived.

Mayor XAVIER enters followed by a General UAGARD whom Pickens has never seen nor heard of before.

PICKENS

Mayor Xavier, good to see you. How was your trip.

XAVIER

We had a good trip, Governor Pickens. This is General Uagard.

PICKENS

And just exactly what are you general of, or rather what country?

XAVIER

(snaps to and salutes the governor)
I have a company of men near Charleston Harbor ready to fire on Fort Sumter when you give the word, Sir.

PICKENS

Xavier, there won't be any word given to fire on Sumter, now or ever.

Pickens gives Zeb a preplanned signal. Zeb leaves room.

XAVIER

I don't understand!

PICKENS

Evidently you haven't been keeping up with the news, Mayor. Slave owners in all states other than this one have signed up to sell their field hand slaves to Lincoln.

XAVIER

Sir, I had no idea. When did this happen?

PICKENS

Apparently while you and this toy soldier were playing war games down in Charleston.

Unseen by Mayor or General Zeb enters room with four Governor Pickens' bodyguards.

UAGARD

Sir, I resent your outlandish remark.

PICKENS

And I resent you impersonating an officer of the state. Guards take this lawbreaker to the holding cell down in the basement and contact the State Solicitor General for charges to be filed immediately.

UAGARD (CONT'D)

You can't do this to me.

XAVIER

Governor Pickens, Sir, will I be arrested too?

PICKENS

Not if you follow my orders to the letter.

XAVIER

That I promise, Sir.

PICKENS

Alright, Take the next train to Charleston, clean out the illegal troops from whatever building they occupy, confiscate any weapons and uniforms and send them home in their underwear.

Sara Ann covers her mouth to hide her grin and snickers.

XAVIER

Anything else, Sir?

PICKENS

Issue a proclamation that there will be no war between the states and for everyone to stop squawking about it. So ordered by South Carolina Governor Pickens. Mayor you may now leave for the train station,

XAVIER

I-I'm on my way, Sir.

JOHN

What are you thinking, Honey?

SARA ANN

I don't want Pickens angry at me.

FADE TO:

INT. CHARLESTON - CITY HALL - NIGHT

Uagard's forty men stand in uniform with rifles before the Mayor.

XAVIER

You men have been ordered here by Governor Pickens. Your self-designated General Uagard is now incarcerated up in Columbia facing serious charges. I have been ordered by Governor Pickens to confiscate your uniforms and weapons, abolish your unauthorized company and send you back to where you came from. Police Chief, order your men to retrieve their weapons.

Ten policemen gather all rifles and stack them in a corner.

XAVIER (CONT'D)

Now you men strip down to your underwear.

Clothing is collected by policemen to be burned. Men in undies escorted to barracks building and allowed to retrieve civilian clothing and other personal items.

FADE TO:

EXT. ABBEVILLE - SECESSION HILL - DAY

A speech is underway by professional speaker, ZEKE Hawkins.

JOHN (V.O.)

Abbeville, South Carolina - The people in this area are being whipped into a frenzy about making their town the first to secede from the Union. Rebel rousers from a number of western counties gather for the event every weekend. They are also pushed to donate money for the cause, the actual cause is for the pocket lining of one Zeke Hawkins. Ever since Hawkins gave his first blistering speech, Secession Hill has gained increasingly more interest from slave owners. Hawkins is preaching the North is too scared to fight the experienced gun toting Southerners who can lick anybody, anywhere, anytime, and be quick about it. Of course he's lying but if you throw enough mud on a wall some of it is bound to stick and eventually cover the wall. Hawkins is a mud thrower, has a magnetic personality, and the gift of persuasion to hypnotize a crowd into believers. It's almost unholy the way he manipulates the minds of these followers. This is going to be tough going for me and would be much easier if Pickens were here to help me. I feel like I've been thrown in a lions den.

ZEKE

My fellow secessionists, come
election time, the North will
easily appoint their man of choice
and our nemesis, Abraham Lincoln.

A thundering cry of acrimony arises from the large crowd.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Can any one of you give one
qualifying reason why we should
allow Lincoln to purchase our
slaves and abolish our
constitutional granted state's
rights?

CROWD

NO...

The crowd screams loud and long - when it dies down a lone
voice is heard.

JOHN

I can!

ZEKE

Who said that?

JOHN

I said that.

John makes his way up the wooden steps on the wooden stage to
stand next to Hawkins. No one has ever dared challenge Zeke
before. The crowd, deafly quiet watches fearless tall
muscular man approach Zeke Hawkins.

ZEKE

(snarling)

And just exactly who do you think
you are?

JOHN

John Adams, reporter for the
National Telegrapher News Service.

ZEKE

So Adams, at last we meet. Ladies
and gentlemen, this is Lincoln's
right hand crony, going around the
South spreading lies about how
you'll benefit by selling your
slaves to Lincoln. This will of
course break you financially in
less than six months.

JOHN

Hawkins, are you an owner of
slaves on your large plantation?

John stands firm, legs apart, and hands on side of belt. He's
a tall striking figure.

ZEKE

Of course not, I'm a profession
public speaker.

JOHN

Then you know absolutely nothing
about the high costs of a
plantation with fifty or more field
hand slaves. Costs like feeding,
medicine, and medical expenses,
plus...

ZEKE

Are you trying to make me look
stupid?

John ignores question.

JOHN

I noticed before you began ranting
and raving, you had donation boxes
placed here in front of this stage
for people to donate money to you.

ZEKE

That's correct; I have expenses,
travel, food, hotels...

JOHN

And exactly what do these hard
working people receive from giving
you money?

ZEKE

That's none of your concern, John
Adams, Lincoln crony.

Hawkins is now red faced, put on a spot. He begins to shake
with anger, eyebrows lowered, looking mean. John points to
the crowd.

JOHN

It's their business. Tell them
exactly what they get for their
money you lowdown thieving blow
hard. TELL THEM...

John prepares to be thrown a punch. Instead Zeke Hawkins pulls a two-shot derringer from his coat and fires twice striking John in left shoulder and missing with the second shot. Blood oozing, A young nurse removes her cotton head scarf, jumps to the stage, and applies it to John's wound to help stop the blood flow. Several men storm the stage and subdue Hawkins, now raving mad. A deputy on horseback rides to the stage and handcuffs Hawkins, then ties a rope around his neck. He forces Hawkins to walk the short distance to the county jail.

SARA ANN

John, is the pain bad? What can I do to help you?

JOHN

Don't worry, I'll be alright, Sara Ann.

Crowd is broken up. A horse drawn ambulance wagon arrives and transports John, Sara Ann, and nurse to the county hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL - MINUTES LATER

The ambulance wagon stops at emergency room entrance. John is taken inside by two stretcher bearers. Nurse and Sara Ann follow.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

Sara Ann waits, head bowed. NURSE approaches.

NURSE

Mam, your husband is in surgery. Everything seems to be going well. I'll keep you informed of his progress.

SARA ANN

Thank you, I appreciate that.

SARA ANN (V.O.)

This would never have happened If that imbecile Governor Pickens hadn't sent us here. He should have come with John. I need to tell him off. My notebook, that's it, I'll send him a letter. Pickens, because of you and that madman Hawkins, my husband is fighting for his life in Abbeville hospital.

(MORE)

SARA ANN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He's been shot and you're
responsible... Signed Sara Ann
Adams.

She leaves the hospital long enough to walk to the post office across the town square and directly back to be with John. As soon as she arrives, the nurse is looking for her.

NURSE
Missus Adams, your husband John is
doing just fine. The bullet has
been removed and no internal organs
were damaged. Follow me and I'll
take you to him.

John's eyes are still closed and his color is good.

SARA ANN
Thank God his color is good. He
looks like he's just sleeping.

NURSE
Yes, and he's going to be just
fine. I'll be at the desk if you
need me.

SARA ANN
Thank you so much.

Sara Ann slides chair beside bed and stays until he opens his eyes.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)
Hey sleepy head, The doctor says
you're going to be just fine.

She leans over and kisses him on the forehead. John's asleep again.

INT. ABBEVILE JAIL - CONTINUOUS

Zeke Hawkins is throwing a tantrum.

ZEKE
I want my lawyer.

He screams at JAILOR

JAILOR
Oh yeah! People in hell want a
glass of water.

Jailor walks away leaving Zeke still yelling.

INT. ABBEVILLE HOSPITAL - JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John opens his eyes, feeling his wife's hand holding his and she squeezes gently.

SARA ANN
John darling, how do you feel.

JOHN
I'm feeling hungry.

SARA ANN
Oh, that's a good sign.

JOHN
What'd they do with Hawkins?

SARA ANN
He's locked up in the county jail awaiting charges. Local people are demanding the harshest penalties, including fraud and attempted homicide.

JOHN
Good, the book should be thrown at him, but he'll probably beat it.

SARA ANN
If so, maybe someone will kill him.

JOHN
Whoa girl, where'd that mean streak come from?

SARA ANN
When ya hurt my man, ya bring out the retribution in me.

She leans over and kisses John on the lips

SARA ANN (CONT'D)
Don't you think you should start carrying a weapon at least for defense?

JOHN
No, I'm a lover not a fighter, you should know that by now.

SARA ANN

Yes I do and a great lover too, I must say.

JOHN

Besides, I may have provoked Hawkins a tad too much getting him to fess up his wrong doings.

SARA ANN

I sent Pickens a nasty letter.

JOHN

You what?

SARA ANN

Yes, and I'm glad I did. He knew you would have a lot of trouble here.

JOHN

Well I knew it too. What did you write in your letter, super woman?

SARA ANN

I didn't address him as governor and certainly not a salutation of 'Dear'. I wrote, Pickens. Because of you and that mad man Hawkins, my husband is fighting for his life from a gunshot wound caused by you, and I signed it, Sara Ann Adams

John begins laughing but had to stop because of the pain in his left shoulder. Soon as he felt better, he's smiling.

JOHN

I didn't know I married a little fireball. I'd sure llike to see the governor's face when he gets that little love note.

INT. COLUMBIA SC - GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Pickens received Sara Ann's letter a few days later. He'd already heard that John was doing fine and he answers her letter.

PICKENS (V.O.)

Dear Missus Adams. Thank you for your letter. I wish to apologize for sending you and John into a life-threatening situation.

(MORE)

PICKENS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Please know that I had no idea Zeke Hawkins was capable of such acts. Please be assured that he will receive the maximum punishment even if I have to come and testify against him, personally. PS, today I signed the executive order accepting John's plan of peaceably freeing all South Carolina slaves thereby preventing a war between the states. He now has one hundred per cent of the slave holding states. Please congratulate him for me and also extend my sincere wishes for a speedy recovery, Yours Truly, Pickens.

INT. ABBEVILLE HOSPITAL - JOHN'S ROOM - 3 DAYS LATER

Pickens' letter is delivered by pony express RIDER.

RIDER

I have a letter from the Governor for a Missus Sara Ann Adams.

JOHN

Uh oh, Sara Ann, you want to take care of this?

Sara Ann signs for the letter and opens it, reading silently. Then her face begins to change from chagrin to grinning. She begins dancing around the room singing dah-da-daqh.

SARA ANN

(handing John the letter)
John you must read this immediately.

He reads to himself while she sits on side of bed.

JOHN

Sara Ann, we did it. We got all the slave owners to agree. Do you know what this means? We've prevented a Civil War.

He leaves the bed, grabs his wife and they're dancing around the room when his DOCTOR comes in.

DOCTOR
 (smiling)
 Well now, I've heard of speedy
 recovery, but this is beyond
 belief.

JOHN
 Morning Doc, we've just received
 some remarkable news. There will
 not be a war between the states. As
 of right now, all slave owners have
 agreed to sell their slaves to
 Lincoln beginning with South
 Carolina and Georgia.

DOCTOR
 Well that is good news. Can I join
 in your victory dance?

All three are dancing together, moving from hospital room
 into the hall.

As the celebration continues.

JOHN (V.O.)
 And so the little town of
 Abbeville, South Carolina where the
 first state was supposed to secede
 has now become instrumental as the
 last place to accept the slave
 buyout plan. It's nothing short of
 a miracle and I thank God above for
 making this happen.

A CHOIR of voices sing 'Glory-Glory Alleluia, His truth is
 marching on.'

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ABBEVILLE HOSPITAL - RECEPTIONIST DESK - DAY

John and Sara Ann approach the CLERK.

JOHN
 Howdy Mam, I'd like to pay my bill.

CLERK
 That won't be necessary Mister
 Adams.

JOHN
 I don't understand.

CLERK

Governor Pickens has paid
everything in full.

SARA ANN

Well how bout that, John. My dear
friend Pickens turns out be a nice
old man after all.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ATLANTA - GOVERNOR BLACK'S HOME - DAY

John and Sara Ann enter front door to a crowd of well-
wishers. Governor Black is first to greet them.

GOVERNOR BLACK

Congratulations John and Sara Ann.
You had a plan, worked that plan,
and got it done.

He shakes John's hand and hugs Sara Ann.

JOHN

But not without a whole lotta help
and you at the top if the list.
(beat) What's going on here?

GOVERNOR BLACK

We're having a victory celebration.
We heard about you get'n shot and
serving some time in the Abbeville
hospital, must'a been painful.

JOHN

Yeah, but they took good care of me
and it helped turn Pickens around.

Sara Ann is talking with her MOM and DAD.

MOM

We were mad at you for a while,
Sara Ann but we got over it.

DAD

Well I haven't, not all the way, me
only child, I still want to give
away the bride. (Hugs his daughter)
I spoke with the Governor and he's
all set to give you a full blown
wedding in his Rose Garden next
Spring.

SARA ANN

We'll see Dad, right now I'm bushed for any big whoop de do. It's been a long hard journey getting John's plan to work.

DAD

And we're both proud of your young man, Sara Ann. He's going to go places, that one. I hear Lincoln wants to appoint him a position in his new cabinet.

SARA ANN

A lot of firms are wanting John to join their organizations.

MOM

Well he should take his time in making a choice.

SARA ANN

He will Mom. John is nothing if not analytical. And best of all, a wonderful and loving husband.

Across the room John is gathered with his closest co-workers.

HOWARD

So what's the plan for right now, John?

JOHN

I'm going to take a break for a decent honeymoon and Missus Adams and I are going someplace quiet for at least a month.

GERALD

Can we come along, John?

JOHN

Of course (beat) NOT!

They all laugh.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Millie and I are getting married as soon as she sets the date. I've been ordered to stay close by.

JOHN

She's a good girl Gerald.

NADINE

And you will make a grand wedded couple, Gerald.

GERALD

Why thank you Nadine. You found mister right yet?

NADINE

No, your Millie has been keeping our noses to the grind stone. Haven't had time for anything but work. But now that it's over I'm going to miss getting out all those booklets and letters.

John leans over and kisses Nadine on the cheek.

JOHN

And I want to thank you for your dedication to our effort. You and the support team were a group of angels.

Nadine grabs John and hugs him really tight.

Millie walks over and hugs both of them

MILLIE

John, I was worried so before you came along and changed our lives. I was sure there would be war. But you and so many others turned it around. In my mind and heart you are a true hero.

She hugs him and kisses his cheek.

GERALD

Hey, what's going on here.

MILLIE

Nadine and I have decided to marry John and form a concubine with Sara Ann.

GERALD

WHAT..?

All but Gerald laugh hard.

INT. PEACHTREE STREET - ADAMS HOME - DAY

KNOCK heard on front door. John opens to see Ezra Clark.

JOHN

Ezra, come right on in this house.

EZRA

Hi John, came down to Georgia to congratulate you on a job well done.

JOHN

Thanks Ezra, I had a lot of good helpers working with me.

EZRA

I also came to give you this ten thousand dollar bonus.

John had never seen so much cash money.

JOHN

WOW! That's mighty generous of you Ezra. Hey Sara Ann come here quick.

Sara Ann comes running thinking something is wrong.

SARA ANN

What is it, John... Oh Hi Ezra.

John hands her the ten grand in cash.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)

Whose money is this?

JOHN

It's yours.

SARA ANN

WHAT? This is MY money? Why?

JOHN

Actually it's my bonus from Ezra.

SARA ANN

Oh thank you so much, Ezra.

She gives him a big hug.

EZRA

I can't thank you two enough for growing my business without even knowing it.

JOHN
How's that. Ezra?

EZRA
As you went about getting slave owners to sign up, you also wrote about it in your articles to me. As signups grew so did my circulation.

SARA ANN
That's remarkable.

EZRA
So I want to show my appreciation by giving you a raise of three times what you've been making.

JOHN
Whoa, that's mighty generous of you, Ezra. Thank you so much. WOW, this is hard to believe.

Sara Ann gives Ezra another big hug.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Come on in the living room and join us.

EZRA
I don't have much time, John. I have a train to catch in a few minutes.

JOHN
Well, I understand, but next time maybe you can stay a while.

They shake hands and Ezra leaves for the train station.

SARA ANN
Well John, where should we go for our second honeymoon, have you considered at all?

JOHN
Not really, I'm just enjoying the slowed down pace and reflecting on where we've been and done.

SARA ANN
Well, one thing for sure, we now have enough funds to go anywhere we choose.

She strokes his hair. He sips on coffee.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)
I never asked. You never mentioned
your parents.

JOHN
I never knew them.

SARA ANN
Really? (beat) That's so sad.

JOHN
According to the nuns at the
orphanage where I stayed until my
first year in high school. I was
placed on their front porch with a
note which read, This is John. We
are unable to care for him. They
knocked on the door and ran I was
told later.

SARA ANN
Oh John, I'm so sorry for your
ordeal.

She throws her arms around him.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)
And no one wanted to adopt you
until you were twelve or thirteen?

JOHN
No, I finally decided I'd have to
run away to get away from the nuns.
They were very strict, strong
believers in spare the rod - spoil
the child.

SARA ANN
So they were mean to you?

JOHN
Well (beat) not exactly, more like
overbearing.

SARA ANN
So what happened?

JOHN
By the time I was twelve, I had
grown tall and muscular.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

One day a Coach Adams from the Clark County High School brought some gifts to the nuns and he saw me. Who is that tall boy he asks. They told him I was John. How long has he been here, he asked. Since a small baby he was told. I want to adopt him Coach Adams said immediately.

Sara Ann is on the edge of her seat, clapping hands rapidly.

SARA ANN

Go on, you were adopted right then and there?

JOHN

No, it took a few days. Mom and Pop Adams treated me like a Prince. He taught me how to build my muscles, play sports. I got a full scholarship to the University Of Georgia to play rugby they were just beginning the program. I studied hard and graduated with honors with a degree in Journalism.

SARA ANN

And what about Mom and Pop Adams? Can I meet them?

JOHN

Fraid not Sara Ann, they were both murdered at our home while I was off playing rugby.

SARA ANN

Oh no, you must have been devastated.

JOHN

Yeah, I was very devastated

SARA ANN

How did you get by with no income?

JOHN

The house was left to me along with a large sum of money which kept me going until Ezra hired me as a reporter.

SARA ANN

Did they catch the murderers?

JOHN

No, they were never caught.

She has her arms around John and they sit silently on the couch. Tears trickle from their eyes.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. ADAMS' HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING

Sara Ann gently blows in John's ear to wake him. He awakes and instantly has both arms around her giving her a lip buzz on the neck which she can not stand.

SARA ANN

John, pleeezzzzeee stop. I can't take it.

He stops and begins kissing her lips, then all over her face, and down to her neck. They play around briefly.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)

I have an idea. Do you still own the house in Athens?

JOHN

Oh yeah, why?

SARA ANN

Why don't we go there for our second honeymoon?

JOHN

You sure?

SARA ANN

Very-very sure.

JOHN

Okay, since you're so very-very sure then we shall go to my place in Athens.

EXT/INT. ATHENS - JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

John and Sara Ann arrive on horseback at four P.M. He ties the horses and they approach the front door, discovering it has been broken into.

JOHN

Stand back, Sara Ann.

John removes the pistol from his gun belt holster and slowly pushes door. Moving inside he looks around. Living room is a mess.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Someone's been living here.

He cautions Sara Ann.

SARA ANN
Lets go get the Sheriff, John.

JOHN
I want to look around some more first.

They move from one room to another. The kitchen is really in high disarray.

SARA ANN
What a mess. Whoever's been here live worse than pigs. Wonder who did this.

JOHN
Have no idea, but I'm gonna find out.

SARA ANN
You think it might be the one's who killed your parents?

JOHN
I hope so and when I get my hands on them they'll wish they'd never been born.

They walk from room to room and it's the same throughout his house.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Looks like more than one person's been here.

SARA ANN
I think it's time we see go see the Clark County Sheriff.

JOHN
Ok, let's leave everything like we found it including the front door.

INT. CLARK COUNTY SHERIFF OFFICE - LATER

The Adams' are standing in front of a desk.

JOHN

We'd like to see the Sheriff.
There's been a break in at my
house.

DEPUTY

Alright, first I need you to fill
out this incident report as best
you can.

John and Sara Ann are almost finished when the sheriff comes
out and recognizes him.

SHERIFF

John.. John Adams as I live and
breathe. (extends hand for shake)

JOHN

Sheriff Rogers, good to see ya.

SHERIFF

And me, you. Say somebody broke
into your house?

JOHN

Yeah, I haven't been home in a
while, oh by the way this is my
wife Sara Ann.

SHERIFF

Howdy Sara Ann, imagine you had a
time corralling this young buck.

SARA ANN

Oh yes, he's a busy one alright.
Sheriff, his house is one big mess,
a pig sty if there ever was one.

SHERIFF

Okay, I'll grab my hat and we can
be on our way out to your house
John.

He takes the incident report to his office desk, grabs the
hat and comes back out ready to go.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LATER

As they approach a tall man runs out the back of the house headed for his horse. Immediately, John spurs his horse and breaks for the runner while Sheriff Rogers stays with Sara Ann in case someone's in the house. John fires one shot in the air BANG. The runner stops.

JOHN

Start walking toward the Sheriff,
with hands up high, SCUMBAG.
Anybody inside the house?

SCUMBAG

Ah don't know, Ah just got here.

JOHN

Liar, you were in the house when we
came up. Sheriff Rogers, ever seen
this scumbag before?

SHERIFF

Can't say as I have, John. Who are
you feller?

SCUMBAG

Says nothing, just looks stupid.

SHERIFF

We can make this hard or easy, it's
up to you feller. What were you
doing in this house?

(beat)

SCUMBAG

It's my brother's house?

SHERIFF

You know this man who brought you
to me?

SCUMBAG

Nope, never seen him before in mah
life.

SHERIFF

Well now that's strange, this is
John Adams, owner of this house.
Now tell me the truth or I might
just let him beat it out of ya?

SCUMBAG

You can't do that. Ah got mah rights ain't ah?

SHERIFF

This man's parents were murdered in this house no more'n five years ago and it just may be you that did the murdering or know who did.

SCUMBAG

Ah ain't done no murdering, Sheriff, Ah ain't never killed nobody, Ah swear on a stack of bibles.

SHERIFF

But ya know who did?

SCUMBAG

It was FELDON.

SHERIFF

Feldon who?

SCUMBAG

Feldon Johnson.

SHERIFF

When's he coming back here?

SCUMBAG

S'posed to be back tomorrow night.

SHERIFF

With anybody else?

SCUMBAG

Naw'sur, just him.

SHERIFF

How long you'n him been staying in this house.

SCUMBAG

Bout six months. He's planning on robbing another family.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You better be telling the Sweet Jesus Truth or I promise you a real quick neck stretching in a hangman's noose, ya got that good and clear?

SCUMBAG

Yes'suh, loud and clear.

SHERIFF

Alright, let's go saddle yore hoss
and mosey on down to my office.

JOHN

Sheriff, I'd like for Sara Ann and
me to stay here and try to
straighten up my house as much as
we can. We came from Atlanta to
spend some time here.

SHERIFF

Okay John, but be watchful this
Feldon don't sneak up on ya. I'll
be back tomorrow afternoon around
five with a couple of deputies.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

John and Sara Ann are busy getting the kitchen cleaned up
first.

JOHN

Well, my sweet woman, this is
someway to spend a second
honeymoon, eh?

SARA ANN

It won't be bad once your parent's
killers are apprehended. You don't
think that Feldon will slip back in
tonight do you?

JOHN

If he does, there won't be a need
for a hanging.

SARA ANN

This could turn out a blessing in
disguise, being able to solve your
parents' murders. I think you and I
should take turns staying awake
tonight. We don't want to be caught
off guard.

JOHN

I agree, Sweetie.

By ten o'clock the house looks presentable again, dishes
cleaned and put away.

SARA ANN

John I heard a horse whiney.

He blows out the lamp and peeks through the window, sees a lone rider hitching his horse at the barn.

JOHN

It must be Feldon coming in early.

SARA ANN

What are we gonna do?

JOHN

Just lay low and be real quiet.

John is keeping his eye on Feldon

FELDON

Hey Lefty, you awake in there?

No answer. Feldon moves to front door. John with pistol drawn, moves to hall. Sara Ann has bedroom door cracked, listening. Front door opens. All that can be seen is Feldon's outline in the doorway. John aims for Feldon's right leg fires one shot BANG to the thigh.

FELDON (CONT'D)

Yahough, Lefty ya shot me.

Sara Ann lights lantern, moves beside John. They make their way toward Feldon who is crying out in pain.

JOHN

I'm not Lefty, you murdering devil.

FELDON

Who are you?

JOHN

John Adams, you killed my parents in this house.

Silence, Feldon reaches for his knife, draws back to throw when BANG. The bullet hits him right between the eyes. John has finally found justice.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT/EXT. JOHN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - FRONT YARD - MOVING

John and Sara Ann drag Feldon's body to the grass and cover him with crocker sacks, then saddle their horses.

JOHN

I think we're ready to ride into town and inform the Sheriff Department?

SARA ANN

The sooner the better, I'm so glad this nightmare is over and now you've avenged your parents death. Do you think Lefty was in on the killing of your parents?

JOHN

Absolutely, and I'm going to see that he pays for it.

John and Sara Ann ride off into dark night.

SARA ANN (V.O.)

John and I enjoy a two-week second honeymoon and Lefty finally confessed to being an accessory to murder. He's awaiting trial in the Clark County Jail.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. WASHINGTON D.C. - NTNS BUILDING - DAY

Inauguration week, The Adams' are sitting in front of Ezra Clark's desk when Ezra enters. He shakes John's hand and hugs Sara Ann.

EZRA

Well John and Sara Ann, the big day is almost upon us. How do you feel?

JOHN

Overwhelmed by the resplendency of it all.

SARA ANN

Same here Ezra, everyone's in a festive mood everywhere you look, all excited about a new president taking office.

EZRA

John, as I've said before, you've been an immense asset to our news service and the key to it growing leaps and bounds. I've heard through the D.C.

(MORE)

EZRA (CONT'D)

Grapevine that Lincoln has created a post for you in his cabinet.

JOHN

Really..?

EZRA

Oh yes, and if you accept it, we can fill in with Richard Floyd and save your position with us for later on.

JOHN

Well Ezra, that's mighty nice of you. If I take his offer, it could take a long time...

EZRA

John, makes no difference, you're always welcome back here.

JOHN

Well that's good to know my friend, you're the reason my whole program reached fruition and I'm totally grateful.

SARA ANN

And what about me? I keep this tall drink of water going when he's worn to a frazzle.

JOHN

And you too my darling. You mean everything to me.

John kisses his wife on the cheek.

EZRA

And also, John we've planned a luncheon for you today. Hope you can stay for that.

JOHN

Now how could I possibly turn that down, Sara Ann, did you know about this?

SARA ANN

I plead the Fifth.

She sports a guilty grin.

INT. CAPITAL RESTAURANT - RESERVED ROOM - 12 NOON

John and Sara enter with Ezra and all stand applauding. The entire Washington NTNS news team and a dozen politicians are present to honor the man of the hour. As they stand, President Elect Lincoln enters and shakes John hand. As soon as the applause dies down, all take their seats to enjoy the meal.

JOHN

It's an honor to meet you Mister Lincoln.

LINCOLN

And an even bigger honor for me to meet you. I'm creating a special Cabinet position to handle the Slave Buyout Program. I want you in that position.

JOHN

It would be a great honor to serve in your Cabinet. Thank you Sir.

Ezra Clark stands, all quiet.

EZRA

It is a great pleasure to honor our NTNS Reporter and designer of the Slave Buy Out Plan, John Adams and his lovely wife, Sara Ann.

Everyone applauds.

EZRA (CONT'D)

It is also a great pleasure to welcome our next President of the United States, the Honorable Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln stands, removing the napkin from his vest as the applause builds.

LINCOLN

John and Sara Ann, I and the Nation as a whole, owe you a debt of gratitude we can never repay. You devised a plan to save our great Nation from fighting a civil war.

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Not only did you come up with a plan but you and Sara Ann worked long and hard traveling across the South setting up a chain reaction to cover all slave holding states, teaching how they could sell their slaves to the Federal Government and earn more income by paying their former slaves an average or even higher wage. And last but not least, the freeing of tens of thousands from bondage of being owned by others.

Standing ovation.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

I have offered John a soon to be formed Cabinet position which he has accepted, to continue his work finalizing the actual slave buying process. Soon everyone will be free in the home of the brave and the land of the free. May God Bless America.

FADE TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

Swearing in ceremony.

JOHN (V.O.)

In a ceremony held on the Capitol's east portico, approximately twenty-five thousand people witnessed the swearing in of Abraham Lincoln as the nations sixteenth President, a former rail splitter who grew up in a log cabin.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - 8:00 AM

John's first order of business is to hire assistants to become validators in the field. Sara Ann will be his second in command.

JOHN

Ok Gents , the first two states we serve are Georgia and South Carolina, Governor Black and Governor Pickens, in that order.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Each slave owner will be visited to validate the total number of field hand slaves. We will have over a thousand before the final slave is bought. You Gents will be trained here to be validators five at a time and then sent out into the field to validate the number of field hand slaves each slave owner has. Any questions?

There are no questions.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Good... So pick up your training pack and start reading. An instructor will be in here within the hour to ask questions about what you've read. So get busy and study hard. No talking to each other. If you need to use the men's room raise your hand or forever hold your pee. (brief laughter)

No takers. John leaves the room.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - ONE HOUR LATER

John renters room.

JOHN

Okay Gentlemen, put your reading material away and your thinkers to one hundred percent full power. (beat) Raise your hand when I call your name. HUBERT, BOBBY, GENE, ROD, JEFF. So you're all present and accounted for. Hubert, how much are we paying for a field hand slave?

HUBERT

Eight hundred dollars...

JOHN

Correct... Bobby, what's the first thing you tell the slave owner?

BOBBY

He has to produce ownership papers, all slaves gathered in a group he intends to sell, all slaves must be present, or he does NOT get paid.

JOHN

Gene, what if he holds one back to remain a slave?

GENE

He had signed a legal document that he was bound to sell all field hand slaves and never attempt to purchase a human being again.

JOHN

Rod, what can happen to him if he doesn't comply with the legal document?

ROD

He is fined heavily and incarcerated in prison for five years for each offense.

JOHN

Jeff, to whom do you report any infractions of these rules?

JEFF

To a Mister John Adams who be standing in front of us this very minute.

JOHN

Great... Looks like our first class has tuned out to be well-endowed with learning skills. Let's hope you do as well on the job. By the way that will begin tomorrow morning at eight when we board the train for Atlanta. Any questions?

There are none.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Good, enclosed in your package you studied is an envelope marked, DO NOT OPEN. Can anyone tell me what's in that envelope?

No one can.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Very - very good. It contains your first months salary and train tickets to and from Georgia. Be sure to kiss your love one's goodbye.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

You'll be gone at least six weeks.
So get out of here and see you in
the morning at eight.

Sara Ann was sitting in the back of the room during the class.

SARA ANN

Now that went very well, Mister
Adams.

JOHN

Why thank you Missus Adams. I
thought it went quite well myself.

SARA ANN

Are you going to be away from your
lovely wife the whole time?

JOHN

No Mam, I'll probably be heading
back to your nice warm bed before
the week's out.

SARA ANN

Wonderful, I have a spot in said
bed tonight if you so desire to
join me.

JOHN

Well Honey Bunch, that's a given
but do we have to wait until
tonight?

She gives him a long hungry kiss that supplies all the answer
he needs and then some.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. TALL CEDARS PLANTATION - HOWARD MCINTOSH OFFICE - DAY

Howard is the first to be selected to sell his slaves.

HOWARD

Morning John, I saw you fellows
riding up on horseback.

JOHN

Hey Howard, did you get my wire?

HOWARD

I did, all sixty field hand slaves are outside waiting for you and here's a complete list of names and papers on each one.

JOHN

Great... If everyone is as thorough as you, the slave buyout will go really fine and dandy.

John passes the papers to Rod and the five trainees head outside for the count.

HOWARD

So how's my niece Sara Ann liking Washington?

JOHN

Taking to it like bees to pollen. She's right at home in the big city.

HOWARD

That's a big jump for a country girl.

JOHN

Oh yeah (beat) I suppose Gerald got his wire as well.

HOWARD

Oh yes, he's waiting for you this morning.

JOHN

When the crew outside is through here, I'll send them over to see Gerald.

HOWARD

Alright, say when can I expect payment for my former slaves?

JOHN

I have it with me.

HOWARD

Really?

John reaches into his pocket and hands Howard a check for \$49,600

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Forty-nine thousand six hundred dollars. I can't believe it was cut this quick. You doing this with everyone?

JOHN

The one's who have their papers in order.

HOWARD

That's remarkable for the government to act so quickly.

INT. TALL CEDARS PLANTATION - HOWARD MCINTOSH OFFICE - LATER

John looks out window and sees Gerald riding along with his buy out team.

JOHN

Here comes my men and Gerald is with them.

HOWARD

Is he smiling?

JOHN

Grinning like a Cheshire cat.

HOWARD

Then he got his big check too.

Gerald and John's men enter Howard's office.

JOHN

Why you smiling so, Gerald.

GERALD

I got a pocket full of money thanks to you and Howard.

HOWARD

And to you too. All that hard work we did is paying off.

JOHN

Gerald how did my trainees do over at your place?

GERALD

Well first of all you should have seen the joy and jubilation of my freed slaves when I told them.

(MORE)

GERALD (CONT'D)

They were jumping up and down, praising de Lawd, hugging and kissing one another, and I was right out there with them jumping up'n down. They just couldn't believe it after all those years they were free. John, you'll go down in the history books as being the reason.

JOHN

How did my trainees perform?

GERALD

They did great. I'd say they're ready to git'r done without you.

JOHN

I agree. (turns to Rod) Rod take the men on down to the next plantation, you're now on your own. When you finish with this trip I'll move you to training others and get this ball rolling.

They shake hands, bid farewell all around, and they're gone.

HOWARD

John, are they carrying checks to the other plantations?

JOHN

Oh yeah, every owner gets paid as soon as he meets the requirements.

GERALD

So what are your plans for now?

JOHN

I'm taking the next train back to Washington. I've got more training to do.

GERALD

So we're the first slave owners to sell our slaves to the government and get paid?

JOHN

That you are.

HOWARD

And you still got a long way to reach them all.

JOHN

Yep, but it prevented a war and time now is not an issue.

HOWARD

Alright John, thanks again for our windfall and you take care. Come see us anytime, ya hear?

JOHN

Will do Howard and Gerald.

There's a round of handshakes and John is on his way back to Sara Ann.

INT. WASHINGTON - JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

John is now spending all his time in office training new recruits to become trainers. The Adams' are sitting on a settee in his office. She's holding his hand.

SARA ANN

I like it much better with you working out of the office rather than on the road.

JOHN

So do I, but I miss being out where the action is. I'm getting a little plump around the middle.

SARA ANN

There's an exercise room down in the basement.

JOHN

Wanna start working out together?

SARA ANN

Sure if you'd like.

JOHN

I'd like. Wanna start this afternoon?

SARA ANN

Okay.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BASEMENT - EXERCISE ROOM - AFTERNOON

There's an exercise trainer SCOTT, helping the exercisers maintain proper schedule. The Adams' approach him.

JOHN

Hi Scott, we need firming up.
Sitting at a desk most of time
really brings on the flabby.

SCOTT

I get that a lot John. We'll begin
slow and easy and progress to fast
and sweaty. How's that sound?

JOHN

You da teach, we follow you.

SCOTT

Good, jog around the room following
that green line, give me 10
rotations.

SARA ANN

I thought I heard you say starting
easy.

John is doing some shadow boxing as he runs the circles. By the end of the tenth circle, he's bushed to a slow walk. His wife is still jogging the circle. When she completes, she grabs a spot on the bleachers next to John. She's breathing heavily.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)

How did we get so out of shape
John.

SCOTT

(overhearing)

Not enough exercise, too much
eating. I'm gonna let you two enjoy
a mild session today. Tomorrow I'll
treat you to a full hour of fund
and games.

SARA ANN

Yeah, I bet. I can hardly wait.

As the Adams' leave the exercise gym.

SARA ANN (CONT'D)

John, you can be here tomorrow.
I'll find an easier way to keep in
shape.

JOHN
Alright Sweetie, If I'm able I'll
be back.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BASEMENT - EXERCISE ROOM - 7 AM

New use of White House gym

John has requested White house Chief of Staff to grant him
full use of the gym from eight to ten each morning.

JOHN
Good morning. It's good to see such
a large gathering desiring to
assist us in the Lincoln slave
buyout program. According to my
list there are one hundred and
eight. How many of you gentlemen
are married?

No hands are raised.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Good, because this will entail a
lot of travel which we pay travel
expense. (beat) Under your seat is
a training pack. Leave it there for
the time being. This pack contains
all instructions. When I give you
the signal you will open the
training pack and study it for the
next hour. Do not speak to anyone.
You will be quizzed on what you've
studied following the hour. Any
questions before we start?

One hand is raised. John is surprised to see his friend, Ezra
Clark.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Yes, propound please Mister Clark.

EZRA
Could I have a moment of your time,
Sir?

JOHN
Of course. Okay everybody open your
training pack and get to studying.

John meets Ezra Clark in the hall.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What a surprise to see you here,
Ezra. How's it going with you?

EZRA

Couldn't be better, John. I've been talking with the President and he's very well pleased with your progress. You're validating sales purchases so fast, he's asked congress to approve a large loan to keep up with your success.

JOHN

Well that's good to hear. How about your news service?

EZRA

Unbelievable. Telegraph wires are being strung everywhere. Seems everyone wants to get the news overnight. I've had to double my staff. You ready to come back to work with us?

JOHN

Thanks for the offer Ezra. I'm ready to turn this position over to someone else, my desire is to write a book.

EZRA

Oh! What do you plan to write about?

JOHN

About how America was saved from a civil war.

EZRA

Well I like that. You can be assured I'll promote it. Got a publisher in mind?

JOHN

No, I'm just in the note taking planning stage right now. Why? Would you like to be my publisher?

EZRA

Well I just acquired a book printing firm that was about to go out of business, got it for a song.

JOHN

You got the first choice on my book, that is if you like what I write.

EZRA

Ha! I'm not at all concerned about your ability to write. I'll even give you a retainer right now.

JOHN

That won't be necessary. A handshake is sufficient.

Ezra immediately extends his hand for the shake.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm sure glad you came by this morning, Ezra. You know I think the world of you.

EZRA

And I, you, John Adams. Keep me posted on the book progress. I've got plenty of proofreaders ready to do whatever I tell them.

JOHN

Will do, Ezra and many thanks.

Ezra leaves John smiling.

NARRATOR

John Adams finishes his book and Ezra Clark Publishing is the publisher of 'Winning A War Without Fighting, by John Adams.' The book became a best seller and five years from the time his Slave Buyout Plan began, all field hand slaves were free. John and Sally Ann Adams had two children, a boy and a girl. Abraham Lincoln was elected for a second term and lived to be eighty-five. Because there was no American Civil War, the country grew even faster and stronger. Love of God, country, and fellow man made America even stronger and a force to reckon with. '

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

An Ounce of Prevention is worth a
Pound of Cure,' which incidentally
became John's second book.

FADE OUT.

THE END

(CONT'D)