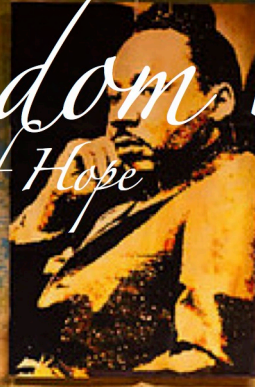


PERUSAL SCRIPT



Freedom Song
A Story of Hope



by Alexandra Grace Gaver

by
Alexandra Grace Gaver

With Thanks To Authors Of The Graphic Novel
“March”
by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell



Newport, Maine

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Freedom Song - A Story of Hope

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Characters

19m 4f 6either

Anne – A student in detention. She is bright but doesn't apply herself academically (African-American from Virginia/Maryland/Delaware)

Harriet Tubman – The famous African-American abolitionist and suffragette

The American Colonies – A human representation of the 18th century **AMERICAN COLONIES:** The British

Empire – A human representation of the 18th/19th century British empire

Attacker 1 – A dumb kidnapper

Attacker 2 – Another dumb kidnapper

Omar ibn Said – An Islamic scholar

Sheriff – A Southern sheriff, not very bright

Henry – An escaped slave living in the Great Dismal Swamp

James – A poor white man living in the Great Dismal Swamp

Old Quaker Man – An abolitionist and owner of a “station” of the Underground Railroad

Quaker Woman - An abolitionist and owner of a “station” of the Underground Railroad

Boat Captain - An abolitionist and owner of a “station” of the Underground Railroad

Ellen Craft – A slave in Macon, Georgia

William Craft – A slave in Macon, Georgia

Mr. Cray – A wealthy man from Georgia

W. C. Handy – The American songwriter known as the “Father of the Blues”

Elvis Presley – The King

Voter – A black Southern trying to vote

Poll Worker – A man working the polls

Soldier – A former WWII **SOLDIER:** John Lewis – The young leader of SNCC

Jim Lawson – Leader of the non-violence civil rights organization The Fellowship of Reconciliation

Charles – A young civil rights protester

Church Member – A young civil rights protester

James Farmer – Leader of the civil rights organization CORE

Various characters throughout the show will be played by FOUR performers (2f, 2m or 2either)

Actor 1 – American Colonies, Attacker 1, Omar ibn Said, Henry, Quaker Woman, William Craft, W. C. Handy, Voter, Soldier, **JOHN LEWIS:** Actor 2 – Teacher, British Empire, Attacker 2, Sheriff, James, Old Quaker Man, Boat Captain, Mr. Cray, Elvis Presley, Poll Worker, **CHURCH MEMBER:** Actor 3 – **Anne** – who plays: Ellen Craft, **JIM LAWSON:** Actor 4 – **Harriet** – who plays: Ticket Clerk, Charles, **JAMES FARMER:**

Staging

A main backdrop, which contains a portrait of HARRIET Tubman. The figure in the portrait will need to disappear and reappear during the play. It is up to the director to determine how they will do this according to their theater's resources. Hand props will all come from backstage.

Notes

About music used in this production – Other than the scene involving the 19th century, no stereotypical Southern slave music should be used. One purpose of this play is to show that the story of black America is not merely a slave narrative. Any house music should be from lesser known African American artists, in particular modern artists.

Alexandra Grace Gaver studied theater at the University of Virginia and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art with a focus in Shakespeare. She is a co-founder and current board member of The Children's Theatre of Hampton Roads and is, as of the publication of this script, attending the William & Mary Law School.

FREEDOM SONG A Story of Hope by *Alexandra Grace Gaver (TYA)* 19m 4f 6e (Doubling of roles recommended to 2f 2m, or 2f 2e) Fluid setting with multiple locations. Contemporary and mid-1800s costumes. *(For Professional, Community, College/University, Youth groups)* “Freedom Song” takes a young, present-day student, Anne, on a journey through time with her guide, the incomparable Harriet Tubman. As history unfolds around her, Anne discovers just a few of the different challenges and many triumphs of African-Americans, and meets a variety of individuals, including Ellen and William Craft and Martin Luther King, Jr. Join Anne on a journey through African-American history: the immense challenges, vital contributions, and unwavering courage. This play is educational, interactive and engagingly moving; a witty and exciting script to entertain and inspire both children and adults! **ORDER #3205**

Freedom Song - A Story of Hope

(A classroom anywhere in America. On the back wall hangs a portrait of Harriet Tubman. During this conversation she will “disappear” from the frame.)

TEACHER: *(from offstage)* Go!

(ANNE enters followed by the TEACHER played by Actor 2. She walks to the middle of the room and stands there sulking. The TEACHER points to the desk and finally ANNE walks over and sits down. The TEACHER and ANNE glare at each other before the TEACHER breaks the staring contest and brandishes a piece of paper.)

What is this?

(ANNE shrugs.)

Excuse me?

(ANNE grumbles something under her breath.)

Try again Anne. What is this?

ANNE: My report, ok?

TEACHER: Watch your tone! And this is what you call a report?!

ANNE: I guess.

TEACHER: And just what was your assignment again?

ANNE: *(Sighs)* Write a paper on an important part of African Americans in U.S. history.

TEACHER: All of American history and this is what you come up with?

(He displays the paper and begins to read from it.)

“My report on Martin Luther King Jr. by Anne Swanson. Black people were slaves. Then then were freed. But they didn’t have rights. Martin Luther King SAID we should have rights. Then he got killed. The End.”

ANNE: Well, it’s all true. I mean who else was I going to write about anyway? There’s him, the guy who invented peanut butter, and the woman from the Underground Railroad – what was her name? Hairy Tuba-man?

TEACHER: Hairy Tuba-man?! Are you kidding me?! You can’t think of anyone else?!

ANNE: ...No

TEACHER: *(Trying to get her to answer President Obama)* How about this? There’s this man. He’s really, really well known. Tall, well spoken, very smart. Was the most powerful person in whole world?

ANNE: ...LeBron?

TEACHER: ARGH. You know what? You are going to sit here and write an actual report on African American history and you are not leaving detention until you do. Understand?

(ANNE grumbles.)

What was that?

ANNE: Yes sir.

TEACHER: Good. Get to work.

(TEACHER exits. ANNE sighs and puts her head on her hand. She gradually gets sleepy and her head droops.)

HARRIET TUBMAN: *(from offstage)* Don’t be sleeping now, you’ve got a lot of work to do.

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ANNE: (*Jolting awake*) What?! Who's there?

HARRIET: Why, I am. And you'd better pick up a pencil unless you want to be stuck here forever.

ANNE: (*Stands and starts looking around*) Ok, this isn't funny. Who's there?

(ANNE asks the audience if they see anyone else. HARRIET enters during this. The audience will point her out but as ANNE turns around, HARRIET will move so she is always behind ANNE unseen.)

ANNE: Huh, guess I was hearing things.

HARRIET: (*Tapping ANNE on the shoulder*) Yes, me.

(ANNE sees her. Screams and runs across the stage. HARRIET watches bemused.)

ANNE: (*Breathlessly*) Who are you? You're not supposed to be here. I'll tell a Teacher. Who are you?! Say something!

HARRIET: I would if you would stop talking for half a second. Are you finished?

ANNE: Who are you?!

(HARRIET merely points at the now empty picture frame.)

ANNE: The picture? What-- it's empty?! How is that-- wait a minute, do you mean you're her?!

HARRIET: Yes, what did you say my name was again? Oh yes, Harry Tuba-man.

ANNE: Did you come out of that picture?

HARRIET: (*Ignoring her question*) Harriet Tubman, pleased to meet you. This is where you introduce yourself.

ANNE: Uh, I'm Anne.

HARRIET: Well then Anne, you have everything? Got a jacket, bag? No? Good, 'cause we have quite a day ahead of us, can't be waiting around here.

ANNE: Wait, wait, WAIT! What are you talking about?

HARRIET: Your report.

(She walks to the desk where it lies discarded.)

Such as it is.

ANNE: You're going to help me with my report?

HARRIET: You don't know nothing about your own history.

ANNE: My history.

HARRIET: Yes, your history. The history of black people, the history of America. Do you really think that all of African American history is summed up in three people?

ANNE: I guess not.

HARRIET: Of course not. Every person who has walked this land, been an American, free or not, is just one part of the American story. 'Course we don't have time to learn about them ALL, but I think I can help you.

ANNE: Great! Where do we start?!

HARRIET: At the beginning of course.

ANNE: The beginning of America?

HARRIET: Exactly. Black folk have been here since 1619 when Dutch traders brought the first Africans to the Jamestown colony.

ANNE: They were the first black slaves.

HARRIET: They were indentured servants. The change to slavery was gradual, but soon enough, British

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companies and African kings figured out a good system. Well, good for everyone but the slaves.

(Actor 1 as The AMERICAN COLONIES and Actor 2 as The BRITISH EMPIRE enter. They place on the floor the cut-outs of a molasses barrel, a bundle of cloth, and a person. They stop and stare at them.)

ANNE: Um, what are you doing?

BRITISH EMPIRE: We're trying to figure this out.

AMERICAN COLONIES: We know there's a way we can both benefit from this but we're not sure, how.

ANNE: Benefit from what?

AMERICAN COLONIES: Well, in the Caribbean and the colonies, we make lots of raw materials. Sugar, tobacco, cotton, but there's not much we can do with it.

BRITISH EMPIRE: And in Britain, we can take those raw materials, and make things out of it. Sugar to rum, cotton to cloth, but if we used everything America makes then we'd have too many goods and no one to sell them to.

AMERICAN COLONIES: Plus there's this piece we can't figure out.

(He points to the person cut-out.)

HARRIET: The Human Being?

ANNE: Oh! I know what this is! I remember this from class!

HARRIET: You do?

ANNE: Yes! This was called the Triangle Trade.

(As she explains, the cut-outs are traded back and forth.)

American materials were sold to Britain. Britain turned them into goods. Britain traded the goods for slaves and then sold the slaves to America.

BRITISH EMPIRE: Wait, we can do that?!

AMERICAN COLONIES: That sounds great! Let's do that!

(They exit. ANNE is left with the person cut-out.)

ANNE: Wait, what about

(She looks down at the person cut-out.)

the people?

HARRIET: Exactly. What about the people?

ANNE: They just became slaves.

HARRIET: It didn't just happen like that, like snapping your fingers. No, people had to endure the Middle Passage first.

ANNE: How did that happen?

HARRIET: Well, imagine a day, just a normal day. What do you do on a normal day?

ANNE: Well, I guess I'd play outside.

(HARRIET gestures for her to mime playing outside, ANNE does reluctantly.)

HARRIET: That's what you call playing?

(To the audience.)

What do you do outside?

(ANNE will act out a few of their suggestions.)

Ok, great! You're just playing outside, but then out of nowhere, you're attacked!

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(Nothing happens.)

I SAID, you're attacked!

(Actor 1 as ATTACKER 1 and Actor 2 as ATTACKER 2 run onstage.)

ATTACKER 1: Sorry, sorry, we were getting changed.

HARRIET: Well?

ATTACKER 2: Oh, right!

(They awkwardly capture ANNE.)

You're captured!

(They smile at HARRIET proudly.)

HARRIET: *(She sighs)* Good enough, moving on. Imagine you've been captured, by a tribe or kingdom not far from your own.

ATTACKER 1: Yes, you've been captured!

ATTACKER 2: Taken!

ATTACKER 1: Seized!

ATTACKER 2: Abducted!

ATTACKER 1: Aggressively appropriated!

HARRIET: ENOUGH!

ATTACKER 2: Sorry.

HARRIET: You're captured and taken aboard a ship.

ANNE: Where's it going?

HARRIET: You don't know. And it's FULL of other captives who are all chained together.

(She gestures for everyone to step closer together.)

Closer!

(They move closer.)

Closer!

(They squeeze closer again.)

Closer-

ANNE: Harriet, I don't think we can get closer.

ATTACKER 2: I can't breathe.

HARRIET: Oh OK, perfect then.

(The four actors sway together for a few beats like the rocking of a boat.)

ANNE: So now what?

HARRIET: So now we sail.

ANNE: For how long?

HARRIET: Oh, a few weeks.

ANNE: A few weeks?!

HARRIET: 5 to 12.

ANNE: What?! That's almost three months. What if I cough or get sick or you know..?

ATTACKER 1: Die?

(ATTACKER 2 "dies" and slumps onto ANNE.)

ANNE: Ah! Dead guy!

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HARRIET: Well, that's just how it was. Up to a third of slaves wouldn't even survive the voyage.

(The four actors, including the "dead" ATTACKER 2 sway together again.)

ANNE: Are we there yet?

HARRIET: No.

(They sway again for a shorter period of time.)

ANNE: Are we there yet?

HARRIET: Argh, no.

(They sway for an even shorter period of time.)

ANNE: Are we there-

HARRIET: Yes! Yes we're there!

(ANNE and ATTACKER 1 throw their hands up and cheer; ATTACKER 2 falls to the ground as there is no longer anyone holding him up.)

HARRIET: But it didn't get any easier.

(She notices ATTACKER 1 is still there. To ATTACKER 1.)

Go! Get ready for the next bit!

(ATTACKER 1 starts to exit)

HARRIET: *(Referring to ATTACKER 2)* And take him with you!

ATTACKER 1: Oh right!

(ANNE and HARRIET watch in silence as ATTACKER 1 struggles to pull ATTACKER 2 off stage. ATTACKER 2 doesn't make it any easier.)

HARRIET: Anyway – like I was saying--

ANNE: That it didn't get any easier? Well, yeah, they were slaves. They had to work in fields and on plantations. They were starved, beaten, and sold off, away from their families.

HARRIET: Well, it looks like you did listen a little in class. It wasn't only that, it was their language, their religion, it was, was – let me show you.

(Actor 1 as OMAR IBN SAID and Actor 2 as SHERIFF enter. SAID is in chains.)

HARRIET: There once was a man name Omar ibn Said.

SAID: Marhabann *(Translation: Hello)*

ANNE: What did you say?

SHERIFF: What'd he say?

(HARRIET waves them off, SAID rolls his eyes.)

HARRIET: He was captured from Africa.

SAID: Alssinighal *(Translation: Senegal)*

HARRIET: Oh, sorry. From Senegal in Africa –

SHERIFF: The what now?

SAID: Shukraan *(Translation: Thank you)*

HARRIET: Captured and taken to America. He was sold to a cruel master and ran away to escape. Unfortunately, he was soon recaptured and thrown in jail.

SHERIFF: Where he's been writing THIS

(He brandishes a piece of paper covered in Arabic writing.)

all over the walls.

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ANNE: What's that?

(She takes the piece of paper and examines it.)

SHERIFF: It's some kind of funny writing! It ain't normal writing, like you or me do, it don't go left to right.

NO, it goes right to left.

ANNE: That's because it's Arabic.

SHERIFF: What?

HARRIET: What?

SAID: Madha? *(Translation: What?)*

HARRIET: How did you know that?

ANNE: Hey! I know things. Not a lot of relevant things, but still...

HARRIET: No, sorry, you're right. It was Arabic. Everyone at the jail was amazed at this strange writing they had never seen before.

SAID: Mahillaan, ma zilt huna! *(Translation: Hey, I'm still here)*

SHERIFF: How'd he know to do that?

HARRIET: He was a scholar in Africa. He had studied arithmetic, business, theology from Timbuktu to Mecca.

SAID: Tawaqqaf ean alkalam waka'annani last huna! *(Translation: Stop talking like I'm not here!)*

HARRIET: And he wrote it all down. One of the only slave narratives in Arabic.

ANNE: But no one read Arabic.

HARRIET: Exactly.

SHERIFF: *(To SAID)* Come on you, gotta get you back to your master.

(He starts to drag SAID offstage.)

SAID: La 'ana la eawdat 'iilaa alwara' *(Translation: No I'm not going back!)*

(SHERIFF and SAID exit)

HARRIET: When you don't speak the language, don't pray the same, you're easy to ignore. Easy to abuse.

ANNE: People, didn't just lose their freedom did they? They lost their language, their culture, their religion.

HARRIET: Their identity. But eventually the spiders of forgetfulness spread their webs over the customs and their tongues with the passing of the ages.

ANNE: But didn't people fight back? Against losing their homeland, their culture, their freedom?!

HARRIET: Of course they did. There are always going to be those who fight back against injustice. Free black men and women joined forces with white Northerners to create Abolitionist societies.

ANNE: Wait! I've heard that word before. Abolitionist. That means someone who was against slavery, right?

HARRIET: Exactly. They wrote books and pamphlets and spoke out against slavery. And in the South, even here in Virginia, slaves would escape and form maroon communities.

ANNE: What are those?

(ACTOR 1 as HENRY enters. HARRIET exits.)

HENRY: A maroon was a black person who had escaped from slavery and lived with other escapees in a –

ANNE: Maroon community. Ok, I get it. And I'm guessing you're one?

HENRY: Yes. You can call me Henry. I lived in the maroon community in the Great Dismal Swamp after I escaped from –

ANNE: Hold on a second! Escaped slaves lived in the Great Dismal Swamp?! In Chesapeake Bay?!

HENRY: Yes, thousands of people lived there from about 1700 until after the Civil War.

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ANNE: In the swamp? With all those bugs and snakes?

HENRY: Snakes?! Did you say snakes?! WHERE?!

(He frantically looks for the snakes.)

ANNE: There aren't any snakes here.

HENRY: *(Not fully convinced)* Well, if you're sure...

ANNE: I'm sure. So, you lived out in the swamp?

HENRY: Yes. We built towns there filled with escaped slaves, freemen –

(ACTOR 2 as JAMES enters.)

JAMES: -Native Americans, and poor white folk.

ANNE: You lived there too? With the heat and the mud and the snakes?

JAMES: Snakes?!

HENRY: Where?!

ANNE: Oh, no, not again.

JAMES: SNAKES!!!

ANNE: No, I just meant -

HENRY: *(Grabbing ANNE by the shoulders)* WHERE ARE THE SNAKES?!

ANNE: There are no snakes!

JAMES: No snakes?

ANNE: No snakes. *(To JAMES)* Why did you live out in the swamp if you weren't a slave?

JAMES: *(Ashamed)* Well, you see, there was a little bit of a misunderstanding involving me and someone else's property.

ANNE: You're a thief aren't you?

JAMES: I prefer the term kleptomaniac. Here's your wallet back.

ANNE: HEY! But why haven't I ever heard about this? Escaped slaves practically in my own backyard?

JAMES: *(To the audience)* Have any of you been to the Great Dismal Swamp?

(If performed in the Chesapeake Bay region continue with the following lines.)

What does it look like? What's there? Are there trees? How about rocks? Big rocks? Mountains?

(Trying to get the kids to say that the swamp is full of trees and no rock.)

(If not performed in the Chesapeake Bay Area, use these lines.)

No?! Well, let me tell you about it. It's a HUGE swamp full of murky water, dark mud, lots of dense trees and bushes and very little stone.

HENRY: *(To ANNE)* Think about it this way. What are all those old buildings in Washington, in Europe, made of?

ANNE: Stone. They're made of stone, of rock.

HENRY: Exactly. And since we only had trees to build with and no stone –

ANNE: All the wood has decayed. Stone buildings would still be there, but wood is long gone. And I bet historians didn't want to go into the swamp and dig what with all the thorns, and bears, and snakes.

JAMES: Snakes?! Did you just say snakes?

ANNE: Oops.

HENRY: What? WHERE?!

ANNE: No, no. I meant that snakes live in the woods –

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HENRY: (*Pointing at the wooden stage*) There are snakes in the wood?!

ANNE: No-

JAMES: AH Snake!

HENRY: SNAKE!!!!

(HENRY and JAMES exit scrambling over each other in a rush to escape. HARRIET enters.)

ANNE: Wow. I never knew escaped slaves lived right here. Or that anyone could be so afraid of snakes.

HENRY and JAMES: (*From backstage*) AHHH!

HARRIET: Other slaves had to run farther.

ANNE: Right! Before the Emancipation Proclamation, there was the –

HARRIET: Underground Railroad, yes there was.

ANNE: And you were a conductor on it.

HARRIET: Yes, I was. I got myself to freedom and then I became a conductor. Never lost a passenger either. I even got to be known as "Moses". Leading my people out of bondage into the promised land.

ANNE: The promised land?

HARRIET: Canada. You see, once you crossed the line over to Canada, you weren't a slave no more. It went like this – you know what? Instead of tellin' you, why don't I show you? Hmm, we're going to need some help though. (*To the audience*) Does anyone want to come up to the stage and help me?

(HARRIET and ANNE will pull two volunteers up on stage.)

(To the volunteers) All right, now you two are going to pretend to be slaves escaping to freedom, OK?

(To ANNE.)

You too.

ANNE: Ok, so what first? When would we leave the plantation? How would we know if it was safe to go?

HARRIET: We used songs to tell pass along information. The overseers didn't know what they meant, but we did. To escape, you'd wait until nightfall, and listen carefully.

(She beckons the others to the side and crouches down.)

If you heard:

(A song plays from off stage.)

Swing low, sweet chariot,

Coming for to carry me home,

Swing low, sweet chariot,

Coming for to carry me home.

You'd know it was safe to leave. C'mon!

(They all run to the other side of the stage.)

You'd meet up with a conductor, that'd be me, who'd guide you. To find our way north through the woods, we'd use the Big Dipper constellation. Your conductor would take you to safe houses, places to wait during the day, we called them "stations".

(Actor 2 as OLD QUAKER MAN enters.)

HARRIET: Here's our first station. Hello sir.

OLD QUAKER MAN: Hello Moses. I see you got more passengers. Now you three are going to wait here during the day and then go to the next station at night, so it's harder for the slave catchers to find you.

HARRIET: So where will we hide?

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OLD QUAKER MAN: In plain sight. If we all look like we're working on the farm here, no one will bother us.

ANNE: Huh, that sounds like a good idea.

(HARRIET and the OLD QUAKER MAN instruct the volunteers and ANNE to mime actions of farming.)

HARRIET: This is actually what I had to do on my first stop when I escaped.

OLD QUAKER MAN: Now, you're going to have to go to the next station, but we'll have to disguise you along the way. Here take these.

(He hands them fancy hats and boas.)

Now act like you're fancy ladies while you're traveling to the next stop on the railroad.

ANNE: Why?

HARRIET: The slave catchers are looking for escaped slaves, not fancy ladies. C'mon.

(The OLD QUAKER MAN exits. HARRIET, ANNE, and the volunteers "travel" to the next stop while acting as fancy ladies.)

We're here!

(Actor 1 as The QUAKER WOMAN enters.)

HARRIET: Hello ma'am. Got some more passengers.

QUAKER WOMAN: Hello Moses. Those disguises worked to get you here, but you're going to have to do something different when you travel to the next station.

ANNE: What should we do?

QUAKER WOMAN: Take these.

(She hands them new hats and coats.)

Pretend to be old men as you go to the next stop.

HARRIET: Because the slave catchers are looking for escaped slaves, not old men.

QUAKER WOMAN: Good luck!

(She exits. They all mime being old men as they cross to the other side of the stage.)

HARRIET: We're here!

(Actor 2 as THE BOAT CAPTAIN enters.)

HARRIET: Hello sir!

BOAT CAPTAIN: Hello Moses! You're at your last stop before freedom. Just a bit farther and you'll be finished. But you're going to have to change disguises, when you travel this time, you'll have to pretend to be –

ANNE: *(Cutting him off)* NINJAS!

HARRIET/BOAT CAPTAIN: What?

ANNE: The slave catchers are looking for escaped slaves, they're definitely not going to be looking for ninjas!

HARRIET: Uh, Ok. We'll be ninjas.

BOAT CAPTAIN: Ayeh -- good luck with that.

(The BOAT CAPTAIN exits. They mime being ninjas as they cross to the other side of the stage)

HARRIET: And we're here! Canada.

ANNE: Freedom!

(They thank the volunteers and show them back to their seats.)

ANNE: How was it?

HARRIET: What?

ANNE: When you got your freedom?

HARRIET: Well, I just had to get to Pennsylvania, but when I crossed that line from Maryland, I felt like I was suddenly someone brand new. Not Harriet anymore, like someone else I had never met. But I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person. There was such a glory over everything; the sun came like gold through the trees, and over the fields, and I felt like I was in Heaven.

(Beat)

ANNE: Why did you go back?

HARRIET: I had to. My family was still enslaved. My father, my mother, my brothers, and sisters, and friends were in Maryland. But I was free, and they should be free.

ANNE: Did you get them?

HARRIET: Yes I did. And 70 others.

ANNE: Wow.

HARRIET: You know not everyone needed my help. Some got to freedom all on their own. Let me tell you the story of Ellen and William Craft.

ANNE: *(To herself)* Craft? Craft.

HARRIET: *(Louder, to the actors backstage)* ELLEN AND WILLIAM CRAFT.

(ACTOR 1 and ACTOR 2 enter. ACTOR 1 is dressed as WILLIAM CRAFT. ACTOR 2 is following angrily, carry the ELLEN CRAFT costume and a wig.)

ACTOR 2: No.

HARRIET: What's wrong? Why aren't you in costume?

ACTOR 2: I'm not playing ELLEN Craft.

HARRIET: But-

ACTOR 2: I'm not playing

(pointing to ACTOR 1)

his wife!

ACTOR 1: Please don't make him.

HARRIET: Come on, it's just pretend.

ACTOR 2: No! I'll humiliate myself with silly costumes, I'll play horrible people from the past, but this is where I draw the line!

ANNE: I'll do it!

ACTOR 1: Thank you.

ACTOR 2: Thank you.

HARRIET: Are you sure?

ANNE: Yeah, I actually know their story. I'll play Ellen.

ACTOR 2: You're my new favorite person.

(He hands her the costume and exits.)

HARRIET: Well if you're sure...

ANNE: I'd still like some help.

HARRIET: OK, I'll narrate, you play Ellen.

PERUSAL SCRIPT Freedom Song - A Story of Hope by Alexandra Grace Gaver

(ANNE puts on the costume and becomes ELLEN. They all get into position.)

This is the story of two clever, brave people who got themselves to freedom for the most important reason in the world. Love. This is the story of Ellen and William Craft. Ellen and William were in love.

ELLEN: I love you.

WILLIAM: I love you more sweetie.

ELLEN: I love you more than that pudding.

WILLIAM: Baby cakes.

ELLEN: Schmoopie.

WILLIAM: Cutie Patootie.

HARRIET: Ugh. Unfortunately, Ellen and William were slaves and while they happened to be married, their owner wouldn't allow them to live together. So they came up with a plan to escape. But they didn't have to get across one state like I did. They had to get to freedom all the way from Georgia.

WILLIAM: We'll pretend you're an old man traveling north and I'm your slave.

(He gives her an old coat and a top hat to disguise her hair.)

ELLEN: But how will we sign for things? Neither of us can write.

WILLIAM: Hmm, they will expect a white man to be able to write.

ELLEN: *(She gets an idea)* Unless there's a reason he can't! If we pretend my arm is hurt, no one will ask for a signature!

WILLIAM: Perfect!

(They put her arm in a sling.)

ELLEN: Oh no, but what about my voice? As soon as I start talking, they'll know I'm not a man.

WILLIAM: Unless there's a reason you can't talk! We'll say you're sick! If you cough and wheeze, they'll think you're too sick to talk and I'll speak for you as your slave.

(They put a scarf on her to partially hide her face.)

ELLEN: *(Not totally sure of the plan)* William...

WILLIAM: This will work.

ELLEN: But if it doesn't?

WILLIAM: It will.

HARRIET: So they took the little money they had and bought two tickets on a train going north. But they ran into problems as soon as they got onto that train.

(ELLEN and WILLIAM pretend to get situated on the train according to their disguises. MR CRAY enters with a newspaper and suitcase.)

MR CRAY: *(Only to ELLEN, ignoring WILLIAM)* Hello there. It looks like we'll be traveling together. My seat is right here!

ELLEN: *(Aside to WILLIAM)* Oh no! I know that man! He's Mr. Cray! He's friends with my master! He knows me! Once he realizes who I am, he'll tell the slave catchers and we'll go back!

WILLIAM: Just stick to the plan, it'll be fine!

(Then settle in and all "jolt" as the train starts moving. Beat.)

MR CRAY: *(To ELLEN)* It is a very fine morning, sir.

(ELLEN ignores him and continues to stare out the window.)

(Louder this time) It is a very fine morning, sir.

(ELLEN continues to ignore him.)

I will make him hear.

(Even louder.)

It is a very fine morning, sir.

ELLEN: *(As if she hadn't heard him at all up to this point.)* Yes?

WILLIAM: Begging your pardon sir, but my master is deaf and is feeling quite poorly.

MR CRAY: Oh, then I will not trouble that fellow any more.

(He opens a paper and begins to read, ELLEN and WILLIAM sigh in relief. After a beat, they all "jolt" again as the train stops.)

MR CRAY: *(Making small talk as he gathers his things)* Where are you going next?

WILLIAM: My master is planning on taking a steamship to Philadelphia.

MR CRAY: Oh no, the ships aren't running right now!

WILLIAM: What?

MR CRAY: It's too icy for the ships to run. Your master will have to take the train instead. Tell your master good luck on his journey.

(He exits.)

ELLEN: No ships!

WILLIAM: Its fine, we'll just have to buy more train tickets. Let's go.

(HARRIET enters as the TICKET CLERK.)

8 more pages to the end