

# Harriet: Texas Lake Country Pioneer

## 1. The Miscreant Husband.

*Text on Screen: New Orleans, Louisiana August 1834*

*Setting: Thunderstorm. Harriet writing on a desk.*

*Camera: Focuses on Harriet writing.*

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(Harriet is writing in her diary, perspiring from the summer heat, and the soundtrack of her letter comes through)

**Harriet**<sup>1</sup>: Dear Isabel: Your peach orchards, Bermuda grass, the palladium window to survey your lake—How exquisite, and cool your estate is, escaping the mildew and mosquitos of New Orleans. While I labor here with Solomon, Solomon, my husband . . . . O why is he such a foolish jackass? (she crosses out the last line in anger as she has ruined the letter).

**Child** (screams)

**Harriet** (attends it in another unseen room)

**Child**: “Where’s Daddy?”

**Harriet**: “How should I know? Look, Momma has to put her store together tomorrow, and she needs her sleep. Be brave.”

(Harriet returns letter, shakes her head, goes to bed, uneasy, obviously awake).

**Camera**: Studies Harriet’s face, and refocuses on door with noise of Solomon coming in)

**Harriet**: (sits up, and snaps) What are you looking for?

**Solomon**: (partly drunk and angry) Your wedding ring, my dear woman.

**Harriet**: Git out of that drawer!

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<sup>1</sup> This letter would not need to be memorized but spoken into a microphone. Harriet needs only to act out the writing of it.

**Solomon:** (continues to look, slurs words slightly) Its amazing. You want blooded horses, and servants with pea-green waistcoats, but you don't want to risk anything.

**Harriet:** Have you forgotten what happened in Nashville? (almost spitting it out). You have crossed the line, you careless, callow. . .

**Solomon:** You have crossed the line, you over-pampered, lace-curtain daughter . . .

**Harriet:** (getting out of bed, gesticulating) You need to remember! . . . .

**Solomon:** (gesticulating and syncretizing her movement) You need to forgit!

(Harriet throws shoes or something with every point as if she is trying to get a possum out of the room) Get away, get out! Why is the queen of hearts more precious than your wife? What about the children? Do you remember when we had only potatoes because . . .

**Solomon:** (dodging the projectiles, and occasionally being hit) Because I see life (bang, gets hit in the eye, and wipes his eye ) the way it is.

**Harriet:** You don't work hard enough to know what life is.

**Solomon:** And you have never really realized what a hypocritical coward you are.

**Harriet:** (collapsing in tears) I am only surprised you haven't wagered us.

## 2. The Shop:

*Text on Screen: New Orleans, Louisiana, January 1835*

*Setting: Store*

*Camera: Focuses on the smiling face of Nancy holding up the shawl.*

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**Nancy:** (Fits on a cashmere shawl, and talks warmly to Harriet) Such an elegant shawl. The last time I bought such fine silk as this was at the outdoor market of Jean Laffite. We later learned that he was a pirate! (laughs) Did you know him?

**Harriet:** We have only been in New Orleans for two years (Harriet takes it to the counter and begins to fold it).

**Nancy:** "Harriet, why do you have a store when you are married?"

**Harriet:** My husband has a business that involves short-term investments, tempting large dividends, and sometimes, major losses. We need to offset the risks (smiles).

**Nancy:** Don't take this wrong—but does your husband work the slave market?

**Harriet:** Oh no!

**Nancy:** He is that tall, well-built young man, with black hair. . . . Solomon, right?

**Harriet:** Yes, that's him!

**Nancy:** Well Mary Overton, who I think is very jealous, told me something about your husband associating with smugglers.

**Harriet:** Oh fie on Mary Overton! (sighs) Yes my husband's work brings him face to face with some unsavory philistines. But he's not breaking any laws.

**Nancy:** So what kind of deals is he making then?

### 3. The Game

*Text on Screen: New Orleans, Louisiana February 1835*

*Setting: Gambling Table, Solomon wears gloves. Men take chewing tobacco and spit into cuspidor.*

*Camera: On Cards, Solomon is centered, flanked by Tobiah, and Zeke. Sophie flutters in and out.*

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**Zeke:** (sings his next line while playing a straight, with a joker as the highest card which he waves and puts down last, then taking in the pot) “Oh my bug,<sup>2</sup> my beautiful slug! (laughing) My brother, Zed's just back from Taxis . . .

**Tobiah:** “What, did that new Santa Anney dictator chase him out?”

**Zeke:** Naw, in fact, He says Taxis is the place to be. Mr. Stephen Austin the pioneer is proclaimin home rule.

**Solomon:** (to Tobaiah)Just deahl, will ya?

(Tobiah shuffles cards, Sophie enters to provide drink)

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<sup>2</sup> A bug refers to a joker in poker.

**Tobiah** (puts cards down, to Sophie) thank you darlin.

**Solomon:** the signals you're given us Sophie (passes her some gold) are beautifully discreet!

**Sophie:** (focusing on Solomon) Well, for such gentlemen, a girl kin do a lot.

**Zeke:** Zed says thar's a Mexkin Law that's prohibitin settlers. And that (laughs) is the best reason to go to Taxis. (laughs) That country is richer in . . . land than any other, and its just sittin thar, fallow. Bottom land has plummeted to under 75 cents an acre (Zeke cuts).

**Solomon:** (sarcastically as if we knew this) You don't say.

**Tobiah:** Well Solly, maybe you should consider Taxis, Git that pretty wife of yers off the mercantile business. (Tobiah deals as Zeke talks but cards are left down)

**Zeke:** I hear, no one forces the law down thar. Only a few Mexkins in sight. Shoot, one lucky kicker,<sup>3</sup> and you could own a plantation.

**Solomon:** (concentrating) jes may consider it.

**Zeke:** (sighs) Mebbe now that the greenhorns are gone, lets jes take what we have.

**Solomon:** Very well, we'll speed up. \$400 gentlemen! (looks both in eyes) No draw.

**Zeke:** (with cold shock, spitting out words) I don't bet blind.

**Solomon:** (sarcastically) My word, (laughing) are you such a fraud that you've lost all faith in Lady Luck?

**Tobiah:** (looks questioningly at Zeke) I'm in cause I know Zeke is goin to lose.

**Zeke:** This is beyond yer bend. You two are crazy.

**Solomon:** Jes think, Zeky boy, you win this, and you can buy the Guadalupe.

**Zeke:** Unnecessary. (Solomon, and Zeke pick up cards, Zeke follows)

**Tobiah:** Zeke, you've got to learn to fall in love with your chances. And if you lose, you kin stay here in New Orleans (New Oh LEENS).

(Silently, each takes a look at their hand. They linger, sweat, look around)

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<sup>3</sup> A card that does not count for card rank, but can help in the event of a tie.

**Solomon** (smiling) I'll raise it \$200!

**Zeke** (lunges toward him his neck—Solomon prevents this). We're playing flat!

**Solomon:** (commanding, and calm) Zeky, Zeky. Where's your nerve?

**Zeke** (unsettled like he saw a ghost): Its not right.

**Tobiah:** Solly, we're playing it flat.

**Solomon:** Very well then, Gentlemen, I present you with the unvarnished truth (lays).

**Tobiah** (slaps his cards on the table furiously) Hell!

#### 4. The Call

*Text on Screen: New Orleans, Louisiana February 1835*

*Setting: Harriet's Store*

*Camera: Empty store, and Harriet apprehensive*

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**Solomon:** (bursting into the store) Hattie, Hattie! We're going to Texas!

**Harriet:** What are you talking about?

**Solomon:** I'm talkin our way is clear, We are goin to have a plantation!

**Harriet:** I can't have a store in a country like that (turns away).

**Solomon:** (still with the enthusiasm of a boy) But Hattie, that's just it. You won't need a store. I've got the money

**Harriet:** What are going to do, pull cotton? He he he he. (puts hand to her face, laughter).

**Solomon:** (badboy swagger) Look it here woman (shows her his banknotes and money)

**Harriet** (looks at it carefully, fingers through it, abruptly, increasingly impressed)  
Solomon, you . . . do amaze me (now wide-eyed).

**Solomon:** (fingering and looking at the money himself) This is land, Hattie. And there ain't no insurance against any kind o bad luck like a plantation.

**Harriet:** (looks at him with respect and feeling of possibility) Why Texas?

**Solomon:** Land is there for the askin . . . virgin soil. . . . 50 cents an acre. Each'll give two bales. Buy land cheap and sell dear. We'll have a barouche (bah ROOSH),<sup>4</sup> a colonnaded home, and scullery maids before you know it!

**Harriet:** To start, though, we'll also need a quadroon overseer, and a blackamoor slave. . . . And how can we secure the travel and the children?

**Solomon:** I jes talked to the captain of the *Amos Wright*: you've heard of those Eastern Clippers. . . well the *Amos Wright* is jest a cloud of billowing canvas, we'll travel like the wind; right from here in New Ore-leens, to the rich Brazos river. We kin even visit your father and brother and git adjusted by visitin them for a spell.

**Harriet:** Tell me one more thing Solomon. Now that youv'e made it, Tell me that your life with cards will now end.

**Solomon:** (looking earnestly) Hattie, Texas is the last gamble we're goin to need to make.

## 5. The Reunion

*Text on Screen: Dr. Moore's Brazos River Farm, Texas April 1835*

*Setting: Farm House*

*Camera: The happy smile of Hattie's father sitting beside Harriet*

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**Dr. Moore** (Goes to and cries out the door). . . . "John . . . . John, your sister is here!

**John Moore:** (runs, hugs Harriet) Sis, I never knew for sure I was going to see you again!

**Harriet:** Well who is this strong man? –with this wonderful inheritance (looking around), just spangled all over with wildflowers.

**John:** (a little puzzled) Where's Solomon?

**Harriet:** O he's waiting at the port to get a wagon for our things. Daddy here took us so we could see you as soon as possible.

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<sup>4</sup> A fancy open air carriage.

## 6. The Confrontation

*Text on Screen: Dr. Moore's Brazos River Farm, Texas April 1835*

*Setting: Farm House*

*Camera: Will not take in a wagon, but will dwell on the human reactions to the situation.*

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**Solomon:** (Approaches the house with a hang-dog expression)

**John:** Well here he is, the man, Solomon, so good to see you!

**Solomon:** (looking nervous, insincere) Good to see you John. Is Hattie here?

**John:** Of course, what's the problem? Where are your barrels of supplies?

**Solomon:** I need to talk to Hattie about it.

**John:** Look if you had some problem with the porter, you can talk to me.

**Solomon** (ignoring him) Where is your father?

**John:** Well he's out in the fields, but as I said, I can deal with the problem.

**Solomon:** Well thar's a problem alright, but I'm goin to haf to talk to Hattie first.

**John:** Hattie, your husband is here.

**Harriet:** (bursts out the door and hugs Solomon) Solomon! (she then turns in confusion searching for the barrels of supplies) Where's our flour?

**Solomon:** That's why I want to talk to you in private.

**Harriet:** You talk to me now! What happened to the barrels?

**Solomon:** I lost them Hattie, and I am goin to get em back.

**Harriet:** What do you mean you lost them?

**Solomon:** I was cheated, Hattie.

**John:** You mean you were swindled? Tell me who did it!

**Solomon:** (even-tempered) It was in cards, and that's why I am the one to git them back.

**John:** Are you fixen to say, that you gambled away the supplies of your family?

**Solomon:** (almost demeaningly) Look, you don't know how this works . .

**John:** (getting aggressive) O so you think yer going to find some gambling parlors like in New Orleans, an win it all back?

**Solomon:** Look, this is not your affair, son

**John:** I can help you, sir, but I think you better move right fast

**Solomon:** (to John meanly) I must ask you not to tell me what to do.

**John:** You are a fool if you jes let all yer supplies go!

**Solomon:** (narrows his eyes) Don't even think of callen me that!

**Harriet:** John, Solomon, please stop, and please don't tell Daddy! Johnny, is there anything you can do to get some of our barrels back? Solomon, why don't you show some decency and go out to meet your father-in-law? Please John, please!

**John:** I'll do what I kin but I'm sure Daddy is goin to know one way or th'other!

**Harriet** (pleads) John, please don't tell Daddy!

## 7. The Revelation

*Text on Screen: Dr. Moore's Brazos River Farm, Texas April 1835*

*Camera: The group is seated around a table, the camera is at the head of the table.*

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**Dr. Francis Moore:** th'news from Anuhauc, Nacogdoches, Mexko is chillin. We Texians are gitten into a storm to protect our liberties, and we are going to need to ready.

**Solomon:** (syncrenizing with the movements of Dr. Moore) I'm ready to play my part. The Mexkins have lost this territory already, and its bout time they realized it.

**Dr. Moore:** Before you go runnin off though son, you're goin to half to provide for your family. I would git those barrels of yours from town if I were you and store them here.

**Sarah Moore:** Yes Hattie, its very fine to have your family, but we could use some help.

(They look around the room eying one another)



**Harriet:** Solomon has everything under control, and probably tomorrow, we'll have a dinner, on our account, isn't that right, Solomon?

**Solomon:** Harriet . . . give me some time!

**Dr. Moore:** What, to go into town . . . why I could . . .

**John:** There's no reason to go on like this. I'm won't play the fool any longer.

**Hattie:** (imploringly) John.

**John:** Hattie, its no use; We'll be fortunate now to get anything back. (pauses and looks at Solomon) Solomon, why don't you explain to your father-in-law what happened.

**Solomon:** Dad, we've had a business deal gone wrong, and it will take a while

**John:** Why don't you talk straight? You gambled away yer family's provisions.

**Solomon:** Tsk Tsk, Aren't we high minded, Isn't all business gamblin . . .?

**Sarah Moore:** Gamblin? Solomon—did you gamble away your family's furnishings? Harriet what are you two up to?

**Harriet:** (defensive to Sarah) You don't know the whole story.

**Solomon:** (Ignoring Sarah, trying to be winsome) Dr. Moore, you can understand me. You took your family to this wild country, on the verge of revolution, and in disobedience to the law. You took a risk! Business in our country is a risk. Life at its fullest is a risk.

**Dr. Moore:** "You gambled away your family's bread?"

**Solomon:** (stands up and looks away) I don't need this. You people don't trust me! Fine. Well then we don't need to trust you. Harriet, we're leavin . . .

**Harriet:** (pleading) Solomon, No!

## 8. The Departure:

*Setting: Dr. Moore's House*

*Camera: Harriet's forlorn face*

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**Dr. Moore** (to Harriet): Leave Page, Harriet, do the sensible thing!

**Sarah Moore:** But Francis, need we take on three more mouths to feed? Wonder if this . . . lunatic young man decides to . . .?

**Solomon** (Shouting from outside the house, loudly) Harriet, its time, we are leaving!

**Harriet** (resigned with tinge of unkindness to Sarah) O don't worry. We are leaving.

**Dr. Moore:** Women be sensible! What John got back from the merchants is not going to be enough. Hattie you go with that rogue in this wild country, and . . . I fear for you.

**Harriet:** Daddy, I love you. But we've gotten by before. I will not be (eying Sarah) a cause of want here.

**Dr. Moore:** You must have some potatoes!

**Sarah:** We though, do not have many to spare!

**Harriet:** (first flashing eyes of hostility toward Sarah) Good Bye father! (they hug).

## 9. The Waste House

*Setting: Dilapidated House*

*Camera: Harriet's Horror*

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**Harriet:** (to Solomon) So this is our house? And with meagre provisions? You fool!

**Solomon:** This is the wilderness Hattie, and land is really cheap.

**Harriet** (shaking her head) No, no!

**Solomon:** We'll make do fr a spell. I've heard, thar's a widow woman in that Cabin yonder, (points) and she could help you while I'm gone.

**Harriet:** yer leaving me?

**Solomon:** As you say, Hattie, this is no place to live in, and we're goin to do better. So I need to be off to cut some business, while you stay here with the children.

**Hattie:** Solomon, you are not going to leave us alone!

**Solomon:** Introduce yourself to the woman, her name is Embree

**Hattie:** Solomon you stop!

**Solomon:** I'm just doin what you and yer family's demandin. I'm workin to provide. . .

### 10. Conversation with Mrs. Henrietta Embree:

*Setting: Mrs. Embree's Home*

*Camera: Mrs. Embree's well-meaning face*

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**Hattie:** O Mrs. Embree you are so kind to take us in for the night, and to give us dinner.

**Embree:** (cough) What has your husband done in life?

**Hattie:** He's been a businessman.

**Embree:** And you have such fine clothes

**Hattie:** I had a shop for women in the Upper Faubourg District of New Orleans.

**Embree:** You two are a dashing couple. (cough) But why did you not bring down sufficient flower, beans potatoes—you have nothing but a basket of corn?

**Hattie:** My husband's deals went bad.

**Embree:** Well, you have lovely clothes! I had to clean and turn my calico dress upside down yesterday to have something new. And then I bathed this morning—don't I feel fine!

**Hattie:** I wish I felt that way.

**Embree:** (cough) Oh, Hattie--I know you know, but taking on a wild country is not a time to repair your fortunes(smiles). But poverty makes for good prayers, and I will pray for you.

**Hattie:** Thank you for your prayers, Henrietta, and I too shall pray. Still I worry (camera catching the anxiety on her face). In fact, I have never been so frightened in my life.

### 11. Departure to Austin Bayou

*Setting: Mrs. Embree's Home*

*Camera: Mrs. Embree's well-meaning face*

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**Embree:** Honey, thank you for coming over to see me again.

**Harriet:** Is your cough better?

**Embree:** I am afraid that this cough has gone on now for over a year.

**Harriet:** You poor soul. (Harriet comforts her)!

**Embree:** Thanks Harriet! Who knows what God will do—only that it will be best (smiles).

**Harriet:** I wanted to tell you that my husband found a nice home for us on Austin Bayou, owned by a Mr. Merrick. And we are leaving.

**Embree:** Austin Bayou? There is no one who lives there! (cough) Sweetie I must give you something, a bucket, blackeyed peas. Some potatoes. Is your husband a hunter?

**Harriet:** (evasive) He has a gun; he's talented.

**Embree:** Harriet, tell me the truth! It might be important!

**Harriet:** I wanted to give you something Mrs. Embree. Here are some needles and thread from my New Orleans shop.

**Embree:** O, these are wonderful. And I can use them (cough), for my nephew and his family visit all the time. Thank you Harriet. Tell your husband to visit me should you go hungry, and we will find something. In fact, if you could . . .

**Harriet:** I can not tarry any longer, my husband is impatient, and angry with me.

## 12. Mr. Merrick's Home

*Text on Screen: Austin Bayou, Texas, June 1835*

*Setting: Mr. Merrick's Home*

*Camera: Solomon's Elation*

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**Solomon:** Is this not a good home to start in, Mrs. Page (takes her hands looking into her eyes)?

**Hattie:** (doubtfully) And you mean to say that this Mr. Merrick is just letting us use this?

**Solomon:** Yes, he owns it. I will be working for him

**Hattie:** Solomon, Mrs. Embree told me that there is no-one living around here. We have not even seen chimney smoke. What are we supposed to do for Mr. Merrick out here?

**Solomon:** Actually, Hattie, I will have to return from whence we came.

**Hattie:** (angrily confrontational) What? You are not leaving us here, alone. You told me you would be working his cattle!

**Solomon:** He has no cattle here, as you can see. You just imagined it.

**Hattie:** We have less provisions, no neighbors, and now you desert us! How dare you!

**Solomon:** You don't trust me, do ya, you're just like your family.

**Hattie:** Well leave us the gun.

**Solomon:** I won't leave you the gun; you'd only hurt yourselves with it.

**Hattie:** we have a little corn and peas, but what else do we have to eat? Dare I take the children outside, with all the snakes and wildcats? Are you mad?

**Solomon:** I am not mad! Look, at this fine house (gestures as if showing her a fine place). I know what I'm doing. Do you want to go back with me, and live with your stepmother?

**Hattie:** O so this is why we came to Texas? So you could leave and starve us?

**Solomon:** Goodbye Mrs. Page. I advise you to stay put. I'll be back soon. Our life is going to start on a new keel, and the first thing I'm going to do is to teach you to trust me.

**Hattie** (cries) No!

### 13. The Letter

*Text on Screen: Austin Bayou, Texas, June 1835*

*Setting: Farm House on Austin Bayou*

*Camera: On Harriet Writing a Letter with voice-over*

*Audio: (wolf sounds in the background)*

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(Harriet voiceover) Dear Pa: I don't know if this letter will reach you, but Father, I have chosen wrong. My husband doesn't realize that courage without forethought is foolishness.

(rips up letter)

Dear Pa: I don't know if this letter will ever reach you. The children and I are now starving in the wilderness. We have exhausted our supply of black peas, and the only thing left to eat are parsley haws which we find around the house where we now are, on Austin Bayou. I don't know what has happened to my husband. I remember what you read me once from Robinson Crusoe—and Robinson said, O solitude where are thy charms? It would be better to dwell in the midst of alarm than alone in this terrible place. I cannot think of one benefit, and can barely write for want of food. Nor can sleep atone for the hunger. The howling of wolves at night here is enough to freeze my veins. Pa, Pa, I have always loved you, Help us! Now! Your daughter, Hattie.

#### **14. The Texas Revolution has begun**

*Text on Screen: Dr. Francis Moore's Brazos River Farm, Texas November 1835*

*Camera:*

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**Sarah Moore:** Amy I am so pleased that you and John decided to marry before he left to fight the Mexkins at San Antone. I never thought I'd lose both my husband and my stepson.

**Amy Moore:** If our last messenger was right, our men have performed gloriously against the Mexican general Cos. John said he could hoof it home round Christmas. I believe him!

**Sarah:** You have a good husband. Send him out with his double barrel shot gun, and he will return with a bear. He's the one who insisted we take the Kelly turning plow to Texas.

**Amy:** But your stepdaughter, Hattie, she's having some bad luck?

**Sarah:** Yes, her husband's a handsome fool. I warned her right from the beginning.

**Amy:** Where exactly are they now?

**Sarah:** I don't know. But what can I do? They say Santa Anna is about to depart for Texas with an army in Mexico City. We need all the menfolk we can git. We can't afford to send out expeditions every time she gets in a tangle!

#### **15. The Divorce: Solomon Returns Empty**

*Text on Screen: Farm House on Austin Bayou, July, 1835.*

**Solomon:** (returns to the house, finds her sleeping. Says softly) Hattie, I need some vittles!

**Hattie:** (Waking up slowly) what?

**Solomon:** (Going waywardly through the house as if looking for something.)

**Hattie:** (getting up upset) O, you're back. Not a word of greeting, and you need what?

**Solomon:** peas.

**Hattie:** You left us ten days ago, and with ten dollars, and you have brought back nothing? (in his face) We have been starving! How dare you come back with nothing!

**Solomon:** Well I checked out that Embree woman you told me about, and she wasn't home. (turns around, and sits on a chair the wrong way with his body against the rungs). You know when you married me, you liked my daring, and you said you didn't mind taking risks. You deceived me.

**Hattie:** You are starving us to death. Hear me Solomon Page, we need corn, potatoes, anything! . . . (Shaking him) You are the provider. . . .

**Solomon:** (pulling away) And I can't even talk to you now without getting so henpecked, I can't even think. . .

**Hattie:** (screaming) You are murdering us, . . .

**Solomon:** You found a way to make it in New Orleans, and you can find a way here! You only care about yourself anyway.

**Hattie:** Why do the children never figure in your calculations?

**Solomon:** Hattie, stop it!

**Hattie:** Where are you going?

**Solomon:** I've already agreed to join the Texian army. You're going to have to worry about the food. There won't be any eating if the Mexkins take over.

**Harriet:** You wretch!

**Solomon:** (self-righteously) I've had enough of your gum! (commences leaving) When you married me you wanted a plantation, and slaves, and now I've risked my whole life for it. I whipped the sharks of New Orleans. We moved for the land. And now I endure ticks, leaches, the shame of your family, your constant reproofs. Bullets and blood lie ahead.

**Harriet:** You gambled when you said you were through!

**Solomon:** Only because you needed more, Wench! Wench!

**Harriet:** No. No. (running to his face to establish eye contact) We will starve!

**Solomon:** Ingrate! You would deserve it. But for the children's sake, I will tell you that Mr. Merick's coming up here soon. You can give him a letter for you family.

**Solomon** (leaves).

**Harriet:** (shouting out the door) "A curse be on you Solomon Page" . . . .

**Solomon:** (Giving her the ultimate silent treatment, keeps heading away)

**Harriet:** (shouts out the door toward him) "I hope the first Mexican bullet hits you in the heart!"

## 16. Mr. Merrick's Rescue

*Text on Screen: Merrick's Home near Austin Bayou, August 1835.*

*Camera: (Harriet in bed, weak)*

*Scene: There should also be a set table near the couch where Harriet sleeps for the second part of this scene.*

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**Mr Merrick** (Enters the House): Is anyone home?

**Harriet** (sleeping and weak while waking) Who are you?

**Mr Merrick:** Rob Merrick, the owner of this house, and you are Mrs. Page?

**Harriet:** (In a weak voice) Oh, you saved us . . . We are . . . starving . . .!

**Mr. Merrick:** So that is why you are sleeping at midday . . And your husband?

**Hattie:** I don't know where . . . he . . .



**Mr. Merrick:** He left you?

**Hattie:** (very weak) Oh. . . . Oh . . . (blinks heavy, tries to get up, and then faints)

Scene (goes dark)

Scene (Harriet and Merrick at the table)

**Mr. Merrick:** I thought I was going to lose you as well as the children.

**Harriet:** For you to stay with us these days, to nurse us back to health, O Mr. Merrick you are our savior . . .

**Child:** (coughs in the background.) the two adults send ambiguous signals to the other.

**Mr. Merrick:** Well I am going to be needen to mosey on here

**Harriet:** Take us with you Mr. Merrick; we will starve!

**Mr. Merrick:** Well I am going to leave you with the jerky and game that I can give you. Certainly Solomon will be back soon.

**Harriet:** He has gone off to fight the Mexicans. He is probably dead. We are alone. We have nothing. We cannot live here--alone!

**Mr. Merrick:** Mrs. Page . . . (standing up, as if giving a rehearsed speech) I am very late in my endeavor to check on a sister and two nephews of my brother who is now dead. There is the war going on, it is winter, and everyone is growing short on provisions. You have my house. I will take you outside and teach you about quail eggs and Jerusalem Oak. But I can't take you all with me . . . . I have only one good horse, and not a day to spare.

**Harriet:** Please Mr. Merrick, we won't be trouble!

**Mr. Merrick:** Just listen to your daughter—she can't make this trip. I leave you with my knife. I will show you how to survive. Give me your letter, and I'll deliver it to your kin.

**Harriet:** I have the letter. But how do I know . . .

**Mr. Merrick:** In a time like this, you have to trust people, Harriet.

(Merrick moves to leave)

**Harriet:** O Mr. Merrick (stopping him by door) . . . you have no wife, right?

Mr. Merrick: My Emily died five years ago

Harriet: O Mr. Merrick (pleading eyes) My spouse is dead too. I dreamt it!

Mr. Merrick: (reluctantly, and very ambiguously; obviously tempted) What kin I do? Take you and your sick children on a three-day trip. . . Abandon my affairs to live with you?

### 17. Rev. Cloud and Mrs. Embree

Camera: On Mrs. Embree with yellow smudges on her face in bed dying

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Mrs. Embree: Weren't you going to tell me (cough) your verse (desperate smiles follow to encourage him)?

Cloud: (bending over, animated) Oh, yes, the one about the water and the tree! . . . .  
Mrs. Embree, (smiling) the Prophet Jeremiah says that trusting in the Lord is like being a tree planted by the stream. (waits to let her catch the vision) As Jesus later told the woman by the well, that stream is what you, and I want and need--the Living Water of God's Word. (laughing, speaking the next sentence very rapidly) Like the hart desires flowing water in the Psalms. And so, you do not fear when the heat comes (gesticulates) for the leaves of the tree (gesticulates) are always green. You do not fret (shows anxiety on face) during the time of drought, for the tree never ceases to bear fruit (folds hands together)!

**Mrs. Embree:** Reverend I know what this means (smile, cough). . . . .Thank you. . . .  
Yes . . . I have gone through several . . . stages . . . And in each . . . yes, it has happened (smile, cough) I continue to pray for this faith . . . . jes as Hezikiah prayed . . . for years. . . . and Solomon for . . . . (cough).

**Cloud:** Mrs. Embree, I have witnessed many who like you can no longer work (looks at her spread out in bed) but they panic, . . . sometimes even curse . . . .

**Mrs. Embree:** Though this trial I see (cough, cough) I see how much needless pride I affixed to my work. Must . . . I be proud to be happy? No, No, (smiling) a thousand times. . . . (smiling, cough, smiling, cough, finally covering one's mouth under the covers. The disability overtaking her smile)

Rev. Cloud: I want to talk with you more Mrs. Embree, and so I need now to give you some rest. There is one thing though, . . .you told me of a friend?

Mrs. Embree: Yes (coughing fit) . . . . . There's a woman. . . up in Austin Bayou . . .  
Harriet Page. (struggling for strength) I believe her husband . . . . . improvident. Can  
you see? Let her live here . . . . . she may . . . . . (struggling hard for the last word) .  
. starve . . . . (feints)

Rev. Cloud: No! . . . don't!(a look of alarm on his face, as he checks her forehead, and  
goes straight for her hand)

### **18. Rev. Cloud Encounters Harriet**

Text on Screen: Austin Bayou, December 1835

Camera: On an exhausted Harriet's face

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Harriet (digging in ground)

Rev. Cloud: (hovering above her, back to the camera) So what are you digging for?

Harriet: (swooning in weakness surprise and wonder)

### **19. Rev. Cloud converses with Harriet**

Camera: Table setting in Merrick Home

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Rev. Cloud: So your husband left you stranded?

Harriet: My husband is dead.

Rev. Cloud: Harriet, I am not here by accident. Your friend, Mrs. Embree, a wonderful  
Christian woman, told me on her deathbed that you would probably need help.

Harriet: (hand over face) Mrs. Embree died?

Rev. Cloud: She died in the name of our Lord Jesus, Harriet, knowing such Peace as the  
world cannot give.

Harriet: Oh . . . (cries)

Cloud: (puts hand on her shoulder)

Harriet: (sobbing) There doesn't seem to be any . . . justice.

Rev. Cloud: A bad winter, the menfolk away, the whole Mexkin army moving in, the Commanch comin from the West, Women like you stranded,. . . . the wages of sin is . . .

Harriet (sighs)

Rev. Cloud: Harriet, do you know the Lord? If you were dying like Mrs. Embree would you believe that. . .

Harriet: I have lived an upright life.

Rev. Cloud: (pauses, thinking) Jesus did not come for the righteous, Harriet. Please tell me how, how (speeding up) it came to be that you could be so separated by so many miles from people, how a woman who owned a fashionable lady's store in New Orleans could suddenly be alone in the middle of the Texas wilderness?

Harriet: Sir, I believe that God will help those who trust in Him.

## **20. Cloud Situates Harriet in Mrs. Embree's house**

Text on Screen: House of the Late Henrietta Embree, January, 1836

Camera: Cloud and Harriet having tea

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Rev. Cloud: Well I don't know much about this house, but with Mrs. Embree's corn crib, and barrels of flour and molasses, I'd say you are pretty well fixed.

Harriet: Rev. Cloud, I don't know how to thank you or Mrs. Embree. We were as good as dead, and now we have plenty. And I shall never eat another parsley haw as long as I live!

Rev. Cloud: Mrs. Page, (trying a laugh) this is a lot like what Jesus offers us (holding out bread), the Bread of Life, for spiritual strength, a mansion in heaven . . . (smiles)

Child (coughs in other room):

Harriet: O Reverend Cloud, I wish you could stay. I love hearing you speak.

Rev. Cloud: Maybe We can have a church here someday Mrs. Page. But my call is to reach many. At this moment when we pray for the safety of our men in the Alamo, facing the Mexican hordes, there are *many* who need reassurance and help.

Harriet (warmer) You will return and visit us, won't you?

Rev. Cloud: Now don't fret, I know two of your neighbors—they are only a mile away.

Harriet: My girl Ginny, is so sick. Could you teach her the Bible . . .

Rev. Cloud: Mam, I would love to . . . but, I must be leaving . . .

Harriet: O Reverend Cloud! (hugs him so that his eyes face the camera with surprise)

## 21. The Drunk, and the Runaway Scrape

Text on Screen: The Runaway Scrape, March 1836

Camera: On Norton approaching the house

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**Norton:** (who is drunk) Lady, git out iv your cabin. The Mexkins are comin!

**Harriet:** (opening the door, agitated) What do you mean, who are you?

**Norton:** Lady, I'm sayin, the Mex-xxxkins are comin, the Alamo's lost. Run, run!

**Harriet:** (disgusted) Thank you. We will take note of that. (closes the door)

**Neighbor:** (Knocks violently on the door)

Harriet: (from inside) Stay away!

Neighbor: Harriet, its me. He's right, the Mexikins are coming, flee for your lives!

Harriet (runs from the house. The camera focuses on her confirmed fright)

## 22. Campsite: Harriet's Desolation

Text on Screen: By Brazos Delta during the Texas Runaway Scrape of April 1836

Camera: Focuses on a circle of settlers by the water's edge, but not compromising the fact that they are by the Gulf of Mexico. First take in the conversation of Rachel and Samantha, then Deborah, and Martha. Extras (additional actors) join the circle.

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Rachel: (shivering with fear) I jes don't see how this wretched Mexican dictator, who slaughtered ah men at the Alamo will treat us bettah. .

Samantha: (turns to view the sea and is excited) Rachel, look at that ship way out yonder, it is ours and it is coming closer.

Camera: (takes in Samantha's and Rachel's confused, pondering faces)

Rachel: (slaps fly) I don't see any smaller boats though. How's that big ship goin to come here? I never knew a river delta could be so confusin.

Samantha: The folks are sayin we just have to be patient.

Rachel: (slap herself again) I wish these sandflies could be patient.

Camera (takes in larger circle, then focuses on Deborah and Martha)

Deborah: (fearful) I can't wait another hour. Those Mexican Charros will cut us to pieces.

Martha: Exactly! We can't race their cavalry. Our hope is the sea. We must wait here.

Harriet (approaches the group dressed exquisitely).

Martha (to Deborah) My, look at Miss Pretty. She's certainly dressed for the occasion!

Deborah: Do you think she is one of those . . . .?

Martha: Either that or she's tryin mighty hard to appease the enemy.

Camera (focuses back on Rachel and Samantha)

Rachel: My, look who jes entered, she is a sweet thing.

Samantha: She looks readier to dance a saucy number, than flee the Mexkins.

### **23. Discovered by Robert Potter**

Camera: Note concerns of last scene.

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Samantha (to Rachel) Rachel, I see him, I believe it's the man from the Navy! He must have landed to the north. We're saved!

The whole beach party: (staggered voices) Sir, Sir, (One person then all) Mr. Potter, Mr. Potter, you returned! Bless you Mr. Potter!

**Robert Potter** (boldly, and grandiloquently, smiling): What a terrible flight! But we are here to set it right!

**Rachel:** (running up to him as if he is Jesus Christ, and hugging his legs) you are my Savior. Could we have a place on the boat?

**Potter:** (politely) Please Madame.

**Rachel** (releases her grasp, and retreats a little)

**Robert Potter:** Ladies and Gentlemen, hear me! As the Navy Secretary of our beloved Texian people, I want to assure you that you will be safe with us. Whatever may be said of General Houston and his (spits our words like he hates Houston) habitual style of retreat, we in the navy have control of the seas, and can rescue anyone. We have a Dory on the North Shore, and I believe you can already see (points) the schooner, *Liberty*, also to the north. Thomas, a captain, in our Navy, will announce our procedure of evacuation:

Thomas: Now we can't take everyone at once, so we will begin with women who have smaller children:

**Rachel** (smiles, to Thomas and Potter—more desperate than flirtatious) My child is barely three. Can we get on the Dory?

**Deborah** (Running up, semi flirtatiously) I have a child who is two. What about us?

**Potter and Thomas** (speechless)

**Harriet** (approaches): (tears) O wonderful gentlemen, I have a child. She is one, and ill.

**Thomas:** This sounds . . .

**Potter:** Madame, considering the exigencies of your situation, I would like you to come with me on the Dory that is now ready.

**Camera** (focuses on the conversation between Harriet, and Potter)

**Harriet** (flirtatiously) O Kind Sir. You are like a delivering angel to me!

**Potter:** And what is your name, my good woman?

**Harriet:** Harriet . . . . Page.

**Potter:** (Smiling broadly) Maybe I will call you Hattie, it just happens to be a name I reserved for my dearest sister (smiles again).

(Camera focuses on Deborah and Martha)

**Deborah (to Martha):** Just look at her, operating already.

(Camera focuses on Rachel and Samantha)

**Rachel:** My, how, she's jumped to the front of the line.

#### **24. Potter and Harriet on Board**

Text on Screen: Aboard the Schooner, Liberty, Gulf of Mexico, April 1836

Camera: (getting the actors in a tight corner to simulate cramped conditions on board)

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Harriet: It was more than generous of you to allow us to use your berth.

Potter: Were I given a rare sapphire, I would be no less put out.

Harriet: To be rescued by a man of such courage; I feel overwhelmed. Thank you!

Potter: So, where is your husband—not buried by the fires of the Alamo, I hope.

Harriet: He probably is, but frankly, Mr. Potter, even if he isn't, I wouldn't care.

Potter: Why?

Harriet: He gambled away our lives, and he did it with a silly smile on his face.

Potter: And so he laughed at vice?

Harriet: Mr. Potter, It was like he was never wedded; he was married to his cards.

Potter: And he left you and two children on the Texas frontier?

Harriet: Worse than that. He left us on Austin Bayou, way to the west. We could not have walked two whole days and stumbled upon a neighbor. We nearly starved . . . twice.

Potter: Such a man like that is not fit to live. Should he return, give me the word, Hattie, and I will make sure he NEVER interferes with your affairs again.

#### **25. Two women in Galveston discuss Potter's past**

Text on Screen: Aboard the Schooner, Liberty, Gulf of Mexico, April 1836



Special Note: the visuals for part of scene 26 will fade out and show scene 27, giving action to the narration.

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**Deborah:** (Rushing to join Martha) The plot thickens. Did you hear the news? (smiles)

**Martha:** What?

**Deborah:** Well you know how our New Orleans damsel is married, if that isn't scandal enough, but I have learned something about her new beau as well, our rescuer.

**Martha:** Secretary Potter?

**Deborah:** Yes.

**Martha:** What? Is he is married too?

**Deborah:** He was in North Carolina! But the big news I heard from Margaret, who also speaks to Catharine, and who has got a letter about our government from her husband, Franklin, is that Potter has acted in the past . . . like a depraved animal.

**Martha:** What did he do?

**Deborah:** He tracked down two suspects who he thought had taken liberties with his wife, put them in nippers, and castrated them!

**Martha:** How vile!

**Deborah:** Yes—as if he was turning bulls to oxen. Catharine says that they even have a new word, in the Carolinas: to “Potterize,” to describe this strange atrocity.

**Martha:** Why wasn't he put in prison?

**Deborah:** He was, but he argued that his acts were affairs of honor, and that only those who abetted adultery could disagree with his barbarism.

**Martha:** Was it true that the two men had honey-fuggled with her?

**Deborah:** This is the most amazin part. Potter alleged that two cousins of the woman in question, one a forty-three-year-old minister, named Rev. Louis Taylor, and the other seventeen-year old boy, named Wiley, had defiled his marriage bed!

**Martha:** And he even disfigured the seventeen-year old boy?

**Deborah:** Yes, can you imagine?

## 26. Reenactment of Potter's actions with narration

**Camera:** Fixes on Potter's wild eyes, and then follows the action.

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**Potter:** (punches the Reverend Taylor wearing Geneva Bands, and he falls to the floor. Potter kicks him savagely. Potter puts a pistol to the prisoner's back. He takes out nippers (handcuffs), applies them, and then turns the prisoner around by kicking some more. He gets down on the prisoner, takes out a bowie knife and waves it). [Cut to women talking in scene 25 periodically] (Camera then gets Potter in same routine, beating up Wiley.)

## 27. Potter and Harriet

Text on Screen: Aboard the Schooner, Liberty, April 1836

**Camera:** Focuses initially for a time on Harriet's adoring face.

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**Harriet:** O Robert, I so treasure this time in the evenings when you come to see me.

**Potter:** (hides bracelet in right hand) I come my dear, with a present, guess which hand?

**Harriet:** O please no—don't tell me you have done more for me. . . (Harriet correctly picks his right hand.)

**Potter:** (Opens hand with bracelet) Something a little more special than wine or honey.

**Harriet:** Oh, its, gorgeous! (she eyes the real gold of this exquisite bracelet)

**Potter:** (with eyes fixed on her) Harriet . . . if I could bestride the world like the Colossus, if the sound of my name could summon the luster of a Washington or Alexander, if I could command a flotilla of 600 ships, I would trade all this to be your husband.

**Harriet:** O Robert, the Texas Secretary of the Navy cannot be consorting with a married woman, however tragically wedded. (she looks at him more deeply in his eyes, and says very tenderly) But I want you to know that you are the strongest, most courageous, and most handsome man I have ever met.

**Potter:** Hattie, as for you, (moves closer) your eyes set ablaze love's tinder in my heart, my mind reels with the noise of distant storms, (more excitedly) my limbs are enflamed . . . Oh if you would kiss me, it would be like some divine afflatus. . . . (he tries to kiss her).

**Harriet:** (slaps him in the face) Stop! (stands up) We cannot proceed like this, (sing songy but sternly) and you know why (turns her back to him and looks to camera).

**Potter:** I am going to find some way to marry you, Hattie, you can count on it.

**Hattie:** (turned completely away from Potter, but to the viewer, she gives the camera a subtle smile as in: "this is what I wanted all the time.")

## 28. Potter and Thomas take out Solomon

*Text on Screen: The Port of Anahuac, May 1836*

*Camera: On Solomon's approach, and his anxious face. Thomas is posted, loosely as a guard.*

*Scene: We might try the fight in slow motion, and speed it up in production?*

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**Solomon:** (in tatters, and somewhat drunk, to Thomas) I hear there is a Mrs. Harriet Page aboard the schooner yonder and I would like to see her, and indeed my two children.

**Thomas:** So you are Mr. Page then, Mr. Solomon Page?

**Solomon:** Yes, how would you know that?

**Thomas:** It will be a little wait. Secretary Potter would like to see you first. He is already ashore in the house yonder on some official business. In a few minutes I will summon him.

**Solomon:** Secretary Potter? Is my family well?

**Thomas:** They were, Sir, until last week ; I should tell you, your daughter died suddenly.

**Solomon** (Thomas departs scene. Solomon shows some tense emotion with hand to face): Its hard to think, that after fighting with General Houston, to make our country free, so that little Ginny could be free, that she has now departed this life (bites lower lip).

*Camera: focuses on Solomon's blustering face. Thomas informs Potter.*

Potter (emerges and enters scene) Mr. Page . . . Delighted to meet you. (shakes hands with Solomon) Thomas tells me that you fought by the San Jacinto a fortnight ago.

Solomon: Sure did, best turkey shoot ever.

Potter: I salute you sir, for your valor, but I also must inform you that your wife has conveyed to me her unalloyed desire that she not see you again (he holds out a letter).

Solomon: Whoa. Why are you telling me this? I demand to see my wife and children!

Potter: She wanted me to give you this letter.

Solomon: I don't need any letter (knocks the letter from Potter's hand).

Potter: Sir, only my forbearance for you as a fellow soldier of our cause detains me from arresting you. You forsook your family on Austin Bayou. They nearly starved- - twice. The result of your dereliction is now supremely evident in the case of your girl, Ginny,—I can attest that she never did recover from the fevers caused by that terrible, grinding famine.

Solomon: You liar—you probably just have designs on my wife! (Solomon begins punch)

Potter: Why you miserable (eyes Thomas for help; Blocks punch, and counter-punches).

Thomas (assists by holding back Solomon's hands. Solomon tumbles to the ground)

Potter (seizes Solomon's pistol, throws it to Thomas, and takes out a knife pointing at Solomon's neck) I want to tell you something, (shows contempt) Mr. Ace of Spades, . . . if I ever see you near Harriet or her children again . . . I will kill you. (draws away the knife), If I even hear of your plotting in this matter, I will use all the powers that I have as a servant of our new nation to have you hung as a murderer.

Solomon: (down, but maniacal, Thomas focuses pistol on him) I didn't murder anyone!

Potter: (standing up and kicking Solomon) You heinous tinhorn. You murdered your own daughter, . . . Virginia.

Thomas: Sir, should I make sure we get him a few miles away.

Potter: Please do that. And if he causes any trouble, shoot him.

## **29. Potter's Deception**

Text on Screen: On the Schooner, *Pocket*, Gulf of Mexico, June 1836

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**Thomas:** I thought I heard you tell ah, Mrs. Harriet, that you were going to New Orleans.

**Potter:** Right, but I want you to take the Schooner up through the Sabine Crossing, and leave us off in Texas instead.

**Thomas:** Don't you think she'll know the difference?

**Potter:** Just tell her if she asks, that we are going up a bayou near New Orleans. That's almost the truth. Tell her I would hate to have her or our other guests come down that Yellow Fever that's been raging through the French Quarter in recent weeks.

**Thomas:** And what about the contraband, You want me to take that to New Orleans?

**Potter:** I have written Richard Surrat of the Commerical Exchange Bank, and he knows the quantity, and the value of what we have. He's willing to hold it. I want a wagon, four barrels of flour, a barrel of molasses, two puncheons of the French wine, the dueling pistols, four colts, four Winchesters, mortar and pestle, all the kitchenware I set aside, saltpeter, the Mexican currency deposited with me up river. I'll gather the valuables from my compartment. Deposit the silver ingots, the British banknotes, the dubloons, and all other foreign currency we confiscated with Surrat. Thomas, you and are I are going to be able to help the people of Texas some day, and you know we can't let all this fall into the wrong hands. Remember my promises to you.

**Thomas:** (saluting) Aye, Aye, sir!

### 30. On the Sabine

Text on Screen: On the Sabine River, Texas, June 1836

Camera: Group sitting around a campfire

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**Rachel:** Secretary Potter, we thank you for takin me an my sister here, after the loss of my Richard, it will be a great consolation to see our brother again in Natchitoches (Louisiana)

**Samantha:** And whoever thought that you would have the foresight to send some men in advance to build two cabins for us. And you say we can pretty much go up the Sabine?

**Potter:** Yes, after a staying a few days here, we will make sure you go with some reliable people, due north.

**Harriet:** Wait a minute, I thought we were near New Orleans!

**Potter:** My dear, I neglected to tell you . . .

**Harriet:** Neglected to tell me?

**Potter:** There is a Yellow Fever Epidemic in New Orleans, I just couldn't let you . . .

**Rachel:** (lauging to Harriet) We are not even near New Orleans! We knew that.

**Potter:** Darling, we are going to New Orleans, but more importantly we are going to make sure that you and Joe are safe.

**Harriet:** (Standing up) Wait, you can't!

**Potter:** (motions) There are two cabins, one for you and the Preston sisters here, and one for me an Joe if you'll allow me to entertain your boy.

Harriet (angry): But how are we going to manage in such a desolate place?

Potter: My dear it will not be too difficult. I have an arsenal with me. Some of my men made the cabins just a week ago. They are for us. You saw the horses, and the cattle procured after we landed. We have barrels of everything, dry goods, leather, silk. Can I get you some Bordeaux wine before we dine tonight?

Harriet: (sits down again, but is concerned) Where did you get all this?

Potter (winks his eyes) Being Secretary of a Navy that spent its time during the war seizing Mexican and neutral vessles had its advantages!

### **31. Potter's Proposal**

Text on Screen: Woods by the Sabine, June 1836

Camera: Harriet alone in the forest.

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**Potter:** Well my dear, you are out thinking again. . .

**Harriet:** (demonstrative) Mr. Potter where is this going to lead? The Preston sisters are goin to leave us in a few days, and I will either have to go with them, or demand that you get a ship now for New Orleans. I will not be your . . .

**Potter:** (joyous) Harriet I too have been thinking, and an old law-book I have in my possession confirms my conviction.

**Harriet:** What are you talking about?

**Potter:** Harriet, now think very hard, and answer this question.

**Harriet** (gives blank stare)

**Potter:** Was your union with Page ever solemnized by a priest, once you came to Texas?

**Harriet:** Why no. We were married in Nashville.

**Potter:** And you never went before a priest as a couple?

**Harriet:** No.

**Potter:** Do you know that your marriage was not even legal then in the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas to which you moved, and that by the laws of Texas you are free?

**Harriet:** I . . . .

**Potter:** Do you know that, in the absence of clergy and judges we can be married by bond?

**Harriet:** What do you mean?

**Potter:** We will have witnesses sign a bond that the marriage took place. This will hold like iron in a court of law—Common Law marriages are accepted in every southern state. In a new nation such as ours, we can confidently aver that domestic laws will cleave to our most haloed traditions. I am so excited Harriet, I can hardly speak.

**Harriet:** The traveling party with the Prestons could sign, and we would be man and wife?

### **32. Time at Potter's Point**

Text on Screen: Potter's Point, Caddo Lake (Then Called, "Lake Soda"), August 1836

*Pause this a text a little more so that viewers understand that 'Caddo Lake' was not the original term.*

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**Potter:** I have not taken my new young bride to these parts just to sight see.

**Harriet:** (feigning impatience in a flirtatious way) Well then why did you take me all the way here?

Potter: Because dearest treasure, this is where we will build our mansion.

Harriet: right by this . . . . (almost as if ready to dance) gorgeous lake?

Potter: Lake Soda is the most enchanted part of our fair state, like a salacious secret, like a primrose appearing in the shadows, like you coming to me from nowhere in the midst of a wilderness, an ethereal bride in the midst of a fiery revolution.

(optional—he lurches forward and kisses her)

Harriet (breaking free): So . . . sir, you say a mansion, in the middle of a wilderness? (looking around) Certainly you jest.

Potter: Hattie, I have right now in a New Orleans bank, \$20,000. It may cost us to set up a little work camp here. But we are standing by the grandest timber belt in Texas. We'll ship in the paint, nails, glass. I would like to purchase some of those new silvered mirrors, the ones developed by that German chemist, what is his name, van Liebig, I think it is; large ones, for our bedroom, and for a sitting room of mirrors . . . . that will take us to infinity!

Hattiet: (hugging him) O Robert, I feel like I am in heaven already

### 33. Hattie's Triumphant Letter

*Text on Screen: Potter's Point, Caddo Lake, December, 1838*

*Camera: Hattie writing a letter, panning to some scenes of Caddo Lake, a stream, flowers. Trees.*

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Hattie (Her voicing of the letter is heard as the camera, however, just focuses on her writing). Dear Father, I have married the most wonderful man, Robert Potter, former Secretary of the Texas Navy. We are now building a large home beside *the most romantically beautiful lake I have ever beheld. For eight miles one can look across to the opposite shore over a great sheet of sparkling water that washes onto a white beach. Near our home, a spring of crystal clear water gushes out, from which it ripples into a small branch that feeds the lake. As I look out each morning, I see islands garlanded with loops of wildflowers, and graceful vines, like dainty fingers diving into the water to clasp their own beautiful reflection. Towering above the lake, the stately trees pantomime the landscape while at the same time admitting sunlit columns revealing the richest tints of emerald.*<sup>5</sup> If

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<sup>5</sup> This is taken almost verbatim from Harriet Potter Ames' diary.



*indeed you, or any that you know, would like to settle among us, I would heartily recommend it. We have provisions to help incoming wayfarers that could last for months.*

### **34. Harriet Visited by Nancy: Learns about Potter**

Text on Screen: Potter's Point by Lake Soda (Caddo Lake) April 1839

**Camera:** On a garden outside the Potter home

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**Nancy:** I love your garden, and this whole place by the lake is so . . . enchanted!

**Harriet:** Please have some more goodies. (tray of pecans, and Nancy takes some.) Nancy it is such a delight to have all this land! In New Orleans, there are doctors, apothecaries, saloons, the bustle of wagons, all kinds of noise. It's all necessary, but second-rate. Robert has procured seeds of every kind, and this land one day will be a beautiful garden that will answer every need with only the best. Even now, our garden has helped us to make great strides. If little Joe gets a cough we have him drink a tea of boiled Thyme. Rosemary aids their digestion, a touch of lavender puts them to sleep. Robert got fruit tree sprigs. And there is flowing water and springs everywhere.

(Go inside and sit at the table)

**Nancy:** I'm so pleased that we found you. Isaac was about to give up on me several times, but the great red rock on the main road was the best sign your Robert could have laid.

**Harriet:** Nancy, why don't you' an Isaac settle here, why don't you persuade him?

**Nancy:** I've gotten an earful already on that from Isaac!

*(scene shifts to Robert and Isaac walking through the woods)*

**Potter:** I could sell you some land real cheap to get you started.

**Isaac:** I've heard it said that this Neutral Strip between the Red and the Sabine has been a hideout for many years, a haven for outlaws, Indians, runaways. . . Considerin what I saw comin down here, I'd say civilization somehow leapfrogged to central Taxis.

**Potter:** True. Northeast Texas was a penumbra, between the Spanish and American domains, but that is changing Isaac!

**Isaac:** I have other reservations. Most of the land round here is full of roots, mire holes, and heaps of dead and decaying wood. The dense canopy of this forest has created a dark, mossy morass. *I* believes this land is probably full of miasmatic diseases.

**Potter:** Humbug!

*(scene shifts to Nancy and Harriet at the table)*

**Harriet:** You saw a party of Indians, and malcontents comin here? Why did you continue?

**Nancy:** By that time we were so far off the main road, we were frankly hoping for a place to stay. Our party is proceeding south to Nacogdoches.

**Harriet:** (almost offended) You took quite a risk then to tell me we shouldn't settle here?

**Nancy:** There is another reason why I am responding to your letters (look of consternation and worry, and now whispering), and why I want to tell you face to face.

**Harriet:** And what is that?

**Nancy:** When you told me you had married the Texas Navy Secretary, Robert Potter, well, there was a lady in our circle from the Carolinas, who knows about his previous life.

**Harriet:** I know that he had a love in Greensboro.

**Nancy:** Harriet, he was married.

**Harriet:** (put off, turns her eyes) What? He told me he was an old bachelor. . . .

**Nancy:** And do you know why your popular Congressman, was also controversial?

**Harriet:** (semi-hostile) Because he was so dashing with the women, I suppose . . .

**Nancy:** No, it was because he castrated two men who he thought had visited his wife's bed!

### **35. Harriet and Potter get past his past**

Camera: Harriet's troubled face. Potter turning away from her.

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(The two begin to stroll forward. Robert takes Harriet's hand, and she drops his in return)

**Harriet:** Robert, you are going to have to tell me something.

**Potter:** The truth my dear, is my next dearest consort to you.

**Harriet:** Why have you lied to me about your wife, and this . . . “potterizing” you supposedly engaged in back in Carolina.

**Potter:** Because Love finds it as convenient to conceal the truth, as to rage when defiled.

**Harriet:** Love is truth! I am learning how thick your webs of deceit can be.

**Potter:** I know you are going to be upset for a time, Harriet, but look at what we have! (kneels) Forget about bygones!! We have reached an empyrean height. You are going to become the happy queen of this whole new Texas Lake Country (looking around)!

### 36. Encounter with Runaway Slave

Text on Screen: Potter’s Point by Lake Soda (Caddo), October 1839

**Camera:** By the entrance of Potter Mansion, the two hugging, Harriet mildly pregnant.

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**Potter:** Goodbye my love

**Harriet:** You know you could stay another day. (they separate)

**Potter:** Hattie, my little junkets are totally necessary, as you know for the fulfillment of our dreams! I meet the people, get elected, shape the laws, and we will build a great new civilization right here in Northeast Texas. . . .

**Harriet:** Well you know, it will also be nice if you were on hand to meet your new child.

**Potter:** Hattie, I will not miss such a happy day . . . . (laughing)

(they stare into one another’s eyes, Harriet entreating, Potter trying to find a way out)

**Potter** (voice becomes more formal): Now Harriet, suspect all wayfarers! You must be doubly sure now that you know how to fire the Springfield, the Brown Bess, the Baker Rifle, and the British Calvary Pistol. The dirk is sheathed on the side of the mattress, and the French dagger by the underside of the settee.

**Harriet:** I have the swivel ramrod that goes to the pistol, with the Baker, the head will be bent for the powder to be lodged; for the Brown Bess, I need the balls that fit just right.

**Potter:** You are as bright as the sun, my dearest one, and O how dark will be the nights without you! I love and need you, Hattie dearest.

*Text on Screen: Four days later.*

**Camera:** focuses on runaway slave coming down path. He is depleted and dressed in rags. Harriet is singing while working in the kitchen. Runaway stealthily approaches. Camera simulates the eyes of the approaching runaway. Harriet investigates other room while Runaway hides by entrance. Runaway surprises her.

**Possum Perry:** Gib me som food. woman!

**Harriet** (half-scream, retreating rapidly into kitchen): Who are you?

**Possum Perry:** (sizing up Harriet): My name's Possum Perry an I needs me som vittles.

**Harriet:** (backing up) Who are you to come stealing in my house? You should be ashamed!

**Possum Perry:** Considerin, thar's no men folk here, an that I'se starvin, I sugges you git me somethin quick.

**Harriet:** (pleading, and still retreating) There are men folk here, and if I scream your life will be over.

**Possum Perry:** Mam, I know thar's no men folk roun here, and you scream, that will be yer last breath . . . Now (loud) Gibbe somethin! (keeps a close eye on her)

**Harriet** (takes out a pistol, and is about to fire)

**Possum Perry** (wrestles the pistol away, and takes it) pushes her to the ground.

**Harriet:** (Moans, screams)

**Possum Perry:** (exhausted, pointing the pistol at Harriet) so you would a killed me for trespassin, . . . can't you see I'm hungrih?

**Harriet:** (gets up cautiously) I have some things for you (she gathers some bread and fruit from a cupboard, puts it on a plate for him.)

**Possum Perry** (eats excessively greedily, while still pointing pistol)

**Harriet** (fetches a burlap bag of potatoes) Here an you can take this on yer journey.

**Possum Perry:** (said more as a compliment than as a threat) You'se a pretty woman.

**Harriet:** My name is Harriet Potter, I am the wife of the Secretary of the Texas Navy. My husband, Robert will have you hung if you so much as touch me. In fact, (thinking) he would probably do something far worse than that . . .

**Possum Perry:** Well now, this is funny. I'se holdin this fancy gun at ya. But because I'm jes poor old Perry, I'm supposed to put the gun down and let you shoot me, because if I don, yer husband will do something even worse.

**Harriet:** You are trespassin, and threatin, and I suggest you leave . . . now

**Possum Perry:** (sing songy) Yes, we colored folk, we'se always wrong. When die white man going to git himself bedder, dey say its honah. But a colored man try for something, and he git a lynched.

**Harriet:** (sharply) What do you expect me to do about it . . .?

Possum Perry: Maybe you could have som passion for ole Perry, maybe you could say you'se sorry you tried to kill me. Maybe you kin make up to me!

Harriet: (gulps) Look,. . . Perry, you are very nice to have not pulled that trigger. I thank you for that. (crying) Thank you!! (pleading) Now look, you've got a gun and food, leave here now while you can. Don't be a fool.

Possum Perry: Are you'se goin not say nothing bout me?

Harriet: I won't tell anyone, I promise.

Possum Perry: Swear it!

Harriet: I swear to God I will not speak to anyone about you being here.

Possum Perry: Don't forget "Jesus"

Harriet: I swear to Jesus I won't tell.

Possum Perry: You look like a good Christian woman who keeps her promises, and won't bat an eyelash about helpin ole Perry. Then good-day Ms. Harriet (Perry leaves quickly)

(screen blacks out, Thomas Enters)

Harriet: Where have you been? Do you not know I was almost killed? Take this gun, and read this note I wrote. Make sure you first circle the house!

(Harriet hands Thomas the gun and note)

Thomas: why do you want me to read a note?

Harriet: Just read it!

Thomas: (looks at note, surprised, hustles out ready to kill someone)

### **37. Potter courting Lucy Rose:**

*Text on Screen: Home of William Pinckney Rose, Northeast of Marshall, Texas, October 1839*

*Parlor Scene:*

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Lucy: Mr. Potter, what did Mr. Houston do when you told him that preserving Santa Anna's life would be like resuscitating Satan?

Potter: O tis a story I long to tell you with every detail. But I don't want to abuse your family's hospitality (softly) I must first ask, could you allow me to visit you personally?

Lucy: But Mr. Potter, (eyeing ambiguously) you are married I assume.

Potter: Oh no . . . I am just a bachelor.

### **38. Encounter with the Indians**

*Text on Screen: Potter's Point, Lake Soda (Caddo) January 1840*

*Camera: On approaching Indians*

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**Indians A and B:** (Mess with Harriet's Garden)

Harriet: (Comes out front door with gun) How dare you take all our sweet peas, get out of here! (fires rifle)

(Indians A and B scatter)

*Text on Screen: Four days later*

**Indian A:** (approaches Harriet's front porch and knocks) Hey we need help!

Harriet: What are you doing?

Indian B: People from my tribe starve, they need help

Harriet: (comes out with gun. Indians back up)

Indian B: (weeps) We poor Indians need help, we starve

Harriet: (relaxes gun)What do you expect from me?

(Chief lobbs rock from the side as in ambush, Harriet is hit in the side of the head, falling over the gun goes off. Indian A rushes to get her gun. Thomas appears. Indian A pulls gun from Harriet. Thomas fires; Caddo drop gun, and run off)

### **39. Potter kills off the Caddo**

Text on Screen: Potter's Point, January 1840

Camera: Harriet in Potter's arms, having cried.

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Harriet: I survived . . . , but can't you hire another man or two?

Potter: The problem, Harriet, is not getting someone to be here when I'm not, but of trusting people to serve us well. This should be less of a threat now that our neighbors, the Russells, have arrived.

(Harriet breaks free and begins to pace)

Harriet: Robert, we have so much land, that neighbors here are like people from another country—we need more slaves, and a good overseer, one that can oversee the other overseers. And while I am on this subject, we also need about five more sows that can root for water moccasins on the west beach, lumber for a new corn crib, and some butterfly root for the slaves.

Potter: I can work on that. But tell me again something of the people who threatened you. Wait till I get my hands on them!

Harriet: I wrote you a letter about them brimming with every detail I could think of (gives Potter the letter).

Potter: (impressed looking over the report) My angel, this reads like a police report!

(scene goes black)

(Potter with Thomas and rifles in woods spotting Caddo)

Potter: (aiming rifle) You over there, put your hands up or I'll shoot

(Caddo Indian throws gourd at Potter)

(Potter and Thomas shoot the Caddo, who fall over)

(Caddo lay on ground agonizing)

Potter: Why have you been stealing our horses and threatening my wife?

Caddo: Help us!

Potter (to Thomas) Thomas, to show mercy on them would be to catch their disease.

*Text on Screen: One Day Later*

(Potter and Thomas wander through forest with rifles, encounter Rose with Perry digging)

Potter: (smiles) So Mr. Rose, my old cousin from Greenville, North Carolina, we meet agin. (goes to shake his hand) How's yer 10 children, and wife? How is Lucy?

Rose: Potter, you know we're not related, though it is the damnest thing, ain't it, that two Greenville boys should end up by the same Texas lake.

Potter: It's a beautiful lake!

Rose: (turning to the side) Robert you are not gettin my vote for the Texas Congress. I'm with John Denton. And by the way, too, I don't preciate you playin court to my Lucy. You know full well you got a woman already.

Potter: My, you would think us Greenville boys would have more in common. But if you wanna blow on coals. . . : That big slave workin over thar yonder, how'd you git him?

Rose: Well Mr. Potter, why should I have to tell you that?

Potter: Cause it fits the description of a runaway who tried to kill . . . my . . . maidservant.

Rose: Casper, thar is one of the most trustworthy, hard workin slaves I have—I don't know what yer talkin about.



Potter: Did he ever go by the name of Possum Perry?

Rose: Not that I'm aware of.

Potter: Let me take em to the woman, and see what she says.

Rose: And if she says its him, what are you goin to do bout it?

Potter: Dismemberment, and 39 lashes would provide the best of all lessons for yer slaves.

Rose: Now hold on, Potter, I know real well what kind of man you were in North Carolina, and I wanna tell, you somethin—you are not goin to be the law here. I'll figure the sentence and do the punishin, if thar is anything to do.

Potter: But that's not the way we did it! You mean to tell me, you plucked a runaway off a road for yourself, and now, after he's committed a crime, yer not goin to let me at em?

Rose: (narrowing eyes) Look Mister, we've stablished our own laws here, cause there aint any. Don't you even begin to tell me about how to run my affairs! Authorities of any kind have never been here, and personally, that's why I'm here, cause I like it that way.

Thomas: Do you know who you're talkin to?

Rose: Yeah, . . . Yeah (figurin) the Pirate from Carolina who has unmanned men!

Potter: Rose, I give you my word—if you don't turn over that slave to me in a week, I'm going after you for slave-stealin, and obstructing justice, just for starters. There is probably a whole world of other things I could get you on—so think about it!

#### **40. The Household of Old Rose**

*Text on Screen: William Pinckney Rose Home, Northeast of Marshall, January 1840.*

*Camera: Lucy with three sons of Rose. The male Roses are all whittling with knives, as if they are constructing dowling rods.*

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**Old Rose:** Potter is interferin with my affairs.

**Jeb:** (catching Lamech's eye) I wish his wife would start a little shecoonery with my affairs!

**Lamech:** (giggling) he he he (Two sons (break into hysterical laughter)

**Lucy:** (with consternation) Boys, really!

**Old Rose:** (deceptive) he he hah. (quiets them) No you don't. Potter Pottificourus the First is an animal! (grabbing attention of his sons) He *castrated* men (waves knife) for even looking at his wife in Carolina, (exploding) and now he is here to control Northeast Texas.

**Lamech:** He what?

**Old Rose:** Back in Carolina—you can read about it. He potterized men into eunichs.

Lucy: huh... (putting hands to mouths). (Two sons assume a hang-dog expression).

**Jeb:** (a hint of compunction, his father has scored) But Daddy, why do we have to be playin with that copperhead? He long nouf away, let em go.

**Old Rose:** Potter is a former pirate, who went by the name of Commissioner of the Texas Navy. Now he's tryin to use the lever of the law to evict us.

**Lucy:** But how Daddy?

**Old Rose:** Thar are two things he's doin—hypnotizin, and legalizing (lee-gull-I'SE-en). Together with his hellcat New Orleans consort, he's winnin over people who think they need his help more than they need liberty. Then, with his ties to the Mirabeau Lamar camp in Austin, he's dredging up sopeanas, warrants, and commissions.

**Lamech:** But Daddy, how is that goin to hurt us?

**Old Rose:** Like any settlers of a land brimming with injins, criminals, and runaways, we had to make decisions. Thar has been no government here mind you. We parceled land, dealt with horse-thieves, and settled insults, such as were given your sister. Now Potter is goin to throw the book at us fr what we had to do.

**Jeb:** (ironically) nice reward.

**Lamech:** And what about his . . . woman?

**Jeb:** Yeah, I think she could use a little emancipatin,. . . (Lucy rifles a black stare)

**Old Rose:** That hellion, named Harriet, is Jezebel to his Ahab. Who do you think is pushin him to foreclose on all the little Naboths, and their little vinyards? She plays men like

cards. When first her husband did't bring diamonds, she decided on a new deal, and came up with the King of Spades—.

#### **41. Potter and helpers (his plan for old Rose)**

*Text on Screen: Potter's Point, Lake Soda (Caddo) February, 1840*

*Camera: Potter's Vigilante Army holding firearms, torches?*

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Potter (addressing a group): Old Rose has killed a sheriff, stolen slaves, and lives like he is a law unto himself. If we don't bring him and his socalled Moderators to justice, we will have him takin over all of Northeast Texas, like some despot.

#### **42. Potter and Ames (Potter wins the election)**

*Text on Screen: Clarksville, Texas Courthouse, November 1840*

Ames: (moves to shake his hand) Robert Potter you are our next Congressman!

Potter: (All Smiles) A capital development!

#### **43. Potter's dalliance in Austin**

*Text on Screen: Austin, Texas, the Inn of Angelina Eberly, April 1841.*

*Camera: In a drawing room.*

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Potter: Your beauty is like a Henna Blossom, from the vineyard of Engeddi. I am the most fortunate man in the world to know you.

Sophia Mayfield: Robert, how can you say that? You told me that my being married has made you crazy enough to want to shoot yourself!

Potter: With you Sophia, I burn with desire, and elation. (become demonstrative) Tell me to jump into the Colorado and I will! I am yours! How thankful I also am that you are such a force for good in my life (takes her hands) who I believe will help me to restrain myself, to keep me (takes her hand) from doing harm to my own body (looking intently into her eyes).

**Sophia:** (Drops his hands, checks windows, door) I thought heard someone! Robert, I know what your passion demands, and . . . (dramatically) I will not let you hurt yourself.

**Potter:** (trembles with excitement, voice breaks, eyes grow large) Sophia, what a self-sacrificing angel you are (hand reaches her shoulder). To come down from your perfection, and purity . . . and save me--right where I am!

**Sophia:** Robert, I have a love for you, and I esteem our friendship enough to do this thing. (takes his hand off her shoulder, but continues to hold his hand) But . . . before I give myself to you, you will want the inner satisfaction of knowing that your oaths of love are sincere. My improvident husband . . . (pseudo tears) is going to leave me penniless. I thank you so much already for your generous presents, but I'm also going to need assurances for later.

**Potter:** Sophia, Sophia. I was just going to turn in my will to the honorable Richard Rusk, esquire. Let me show you what I am going to do. (writes down a page)

**Sophia:** (rubbing his back, and reading what he writes) O you wonderful man!

**Potter:** There, I have just bequeathed to you 10,000 acres of the finest land in Texas, in the northeast by Lake Soda. Tomorrow, both of us can hand it in to Rusk.

**Sophia:** Robert, you and I both know where Mr. Rusk probably is. In the interests of our time together this evening (takes his hand). Let's do this now.

**Potter:** Ah, Sophia, how your virtue has given me a new lease on life!

#### **44. Potter goes after Old Rose**

Text on Screen: 1 March 1842, Potter's Assault on the Rose Estate, Harrison County.

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Potter: (waving the sheet of paper) I have here a commission from Mirabeau Lamar, President of the Great State of Texas, for the arrest of said William Rose. Onward, fellow Regulators, out with the outlaws.

(Potter's people move on, screen blacks out for a moment, Camera catches Rose)

Rose: (spots them coming, runs to side) Perry they're comin for me, where should I go?

Possum Perry: Here, masta, get under da fire pile: we'll pretend we'se about to burn ya . . .

(Rose does so, Perry helps conceal him, Potter comes with army)

Potter: Where's Rose?

Perry: No one here boss, but us slaves.

Potter: Weren't you the one who visited our home?

Perry: No boss.

Potter (to Thomas) take him back with us. I'll deal with him later.

#### **45. The Moderators kill Potter**

Text on Screen: 2 March 1842. the Potter Estate on Lake Soda

Camera: Harriet and Potter in bed.

---

**Harriet:** You should have killed Old Rose

**Potter:** He could not be found, and my posse could not last forever.

(Potter and Harriet fade back to sleep, shot sounds)

**Harriet:** (gets up, checks the window) Wait, there are people outside! Robert, Rose is here! Get up and defend us.

**Potter:** (checks the windows, frantically)

**Harriet:** Let us get the guns

**Potter:** No time! (rushes toward window, camera resumes with him fallen, getting up, and running for the lake)

Harriet (screams)

Camera (takes the death of Potter in slow motion)

Rose: takes rifle and aims, shot is heard)

Potter: (falls down by the foot of the lake)

(camera then get's Potter's vantage point as Possum Perry stabs him)

Possum Perry: (Comes in with knife and finishes the job) He's dyin massa!

Rose: Perry, get one of his boats and dump him in the middle of the Lake!

## 46. Charles Dickens Interlude:

*Text on Screen: Charles Dickens, Eminent Author, From his American Notes, Chapter 17, 1842*

*Scene Production: Show image of Charles Dickens with name below and narrate (British accent).*

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[I refer now to atrocities in areas] where slavery is the law; and [note how various forms of] outrages [thrive] in slave districts, [where all men are] brutalised by slave customs.

[Case 4:] The Terrible Death of Robert Potter.

‘From the “Caddo Gazette,” of the 12th instance, we learn the frightful death of Colonel Robert Potter. . . . He was beset in his house by an enemy, named Rose. He sprang from his couch, seized his gun, and, in his night-clothes, rushed from the house. . . . His first impulse was to jump in the water and dive for it, which he did. Rose was close behind him, and formed his men on the bank ready to shoot him as he rose. In a few seconds he came up to breathe; and scarce had his head reached the surface of the water when it was completely riddled with the shot of their guns, and he sunk, to rise no more!’

## 47. Harriet reads her household

Text on Screen: Potter’s Point, March 1842

Camera: Thomas, and female overseers huddle near Harriet who is weeping.

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**Thomas:** (to Harriet) Ruthy Ann has something to tell you mam

**Ruthy Ann:** Miss Potter something else happened in the gunfire

**Harriet:** (crying) Don’t, I can’t, bear any more

**Ruthy Ann:** Harriet, your daughter, Lakeann, is dead.

**Harriet** (all out screams, and leaves room)<sup>6</sup>

**Thomas** (to the others) Do we have any more of that Laudanum?

---

<sup>6</sup> In her reminiscences, Harriet says this almost made her a “manic.”

**Patsy:** (rushes in to comfort Harriet)

**Natchez:** We could use it. Harriet may be seized by a delirium. Her husband, dead, and now her daughter. . .

**Ruthy Ann:** And lets not mention that Old Rose might want to silence her as a witness.

**Harriet** (returns, wide eyed): We have to defend ourselves, and this place!

**Ruthy Ann:** I'm not here for that kind of thing

**Harriet** (aims pistol) O No! We hang together or the Moderators will hang us separately.

**Rest:** (stare at Harriet in shock for her threatening to shoot Ruthy Ann)

#### 48. Courthouse Scene

Text on Screen: Nacogdoches Court House, March 1842

Camera: Takes in Harriet with her attorney, and Thomas on the other side, the judge and Rose on the Witness stand.

---

**Defense Attorney:** Mr. Rose, this woman here, Harriet Page

**Prosecuting Attorney:** Objection, your honor

**Defense Attorney:** But I am about to show that this woman who claims to have seen the murder of her husband, Robert Potter, has lied to the court about her marriage to this man!

**Harriet:** What?

**Thomas and Prosecutor:** (looks at her with surprise)

**Defense Attorney:** I would like the judge and jury to examine (he starts walking up and down) the will of the late Robert Potter which was in the files of Richard Rusk esquire in Austin. In it we note that he does not refer to Harriet here as his wife, but as Harriet Page, and that he also in his will, refers to another woman, Sophia Mayfield to whom he bequeathes his Lake Soda estate.

**Harriet:** There must be some mistake! This is a lie!

#### 49. Ames Falls for Harriet

Text on Screen: Daingerfield, Texas Law Office of Charles Ames, November 1842

Camera: Ames and Harriet, initially separated by a lawyer's desk which she bridges

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**Charles Ames:** There are two problems, Mrs. Potter. Rose knows the war hero Thomas Rusk of Nacogdoches, and other patriots, and inspires too much fear to get a good trial, and though this Sophia Mayfield is not pressing the case for your property, she or her estate can at any time.

**Harriet:** Earlier in my life, I would have been impelled to have moved on, hearing of these perils. But I have fallen in love with this lake country, in a state that has been born again in freedom. Look! (She gets Ames to look out the window with her) Where else in the world can one have such ancient bald cypress trees, and enchanted lakes, and still be in Texas? I see now that my life has the purpose to bring others to liberate this land from its bondage to outlaws, to inspire roads, schools, a whole civilization based on freedom and beauty! . . . Do you think I am, a fool (turns her back to him)?

**Ames:** (blushes) No Mrs. Potter, I have tremendous respect and regard for you.

Harriet (stares him boldly in the eye, then turns away from him): Then, I think you should call me Harriet. . . (turns aside) Charles--as I have respect and regard for you as well--I want you to know that your advice in my trials has given me something like a will, something to stand for, (moves up to him again, eyeball to eyeball) you have rescued me from despair!

Ames: Oh Mrs. Potter, I mean Harriet, I . . .

Harriet: (comes closer) But now, in sight of this dream Charles, I also feel so dreadfully alone. Like a milk-white lamb, able only to bleat for protection. (starts to get teary eyed)

Ames: (Looks at them) Don't cry. . . . why cloud such beautiful eyes!

Harriet (takes both his hands) Why do I find your eyes so attractive as well?

## 50. Rose Dies

*Text on Screen: Estate of William Rose, Northeast of Marshall, Texas, 22 January 1850*

Camera: Rose laying lifeless in bed.

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Lamech: Daddy what's wrong? Why don't you wake up? Lucy!!



Lucy: (comes running, checks pulse, looks at face, feels temples) Daddy is dead!!

## 51. Ames Drinking with Daughters

Text on Screen: Jefferson, Texas, 1851

Camera: (three around table, camera fixed on quizzical Katy for a moment before asking:)

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**Katy:** So Daddy, how is married life with Mrs. Harriet?

**Charles:** Well my womanish daughters, As Aristotle said, by all means marry. If your wife is devoted, you will live happily ever after, but if not, you'll become a philosopher.

**Lucille:** Well Daddy we knew you were happy with mom, may she rest in peace. And your new young wife is like Charm on Fire, everyone loves her.

**Charles:** Yes, everyone loves her, and yes, I've been doin a lot of thinkin (slurps wine).

**Katy:** O Daddy come now, you were always the complainer. You have a beautiful home, a beautiful lake, a beautiful queen, and more land than anyone in Northeast Texas.

**Charles:** Huh. . . our Lake Soda land's not goin to be ours forever.

**Katy:** And why not?

**Charles:** Because Harriet's husband, Potter, didn't leave it to her in his will.

**Lucille:** That's strange. . . . But still you'll hold it. Everyone round here knew she was married to him—aren't you the best lawyer around?

**Charles:** Yeah, and why do you think Harriet married me? She now has her own private lawyer on call, 24 hours a day, ready at every moment to do pro bono work on her behalf!

**Katy:** O Daddy, yer jes tired. And I bet you have a good plan in your mind already.

**Charles:** Naah. We just haven't been pressed yet from this Sophia Mayfield woman in Austin, to whom Potter bequeathed the land, and who, I hear, is on her deathbed for some reason! But that just means that her estate is likely to pull the carpet from under us.

**Lucille:** Well so what? You've got other lands.

**Charles:** Yes, but I have a wife who is has set her claws in this Soda Lake land.

**Katy:** You need to give Harriet a good talk . . .

**Charles:** Yeah, I need to give a rosebush a good hug. Ouch. She is so engaged in settling this country, and making the land profitable. Stephen F. Austin never did it better. And she does attract people, she begets children, she gets slaves to grub. . . . Still, I should have known what grog her love would be. . . she wants new roads, a new taxing district, to sell land she doesn't own, another lawsuit against the Rose family, it is one web of legal gossamer after another!

But I cannot scold or even chide her, her position is unassailable. . . She is always right and I wrong in every conversation, (mimic her voice) *for how else will this wild country be subdued!* This country of northeast Texas has been so forsaken, so overgrown with desperate men. I mean, the people of Northeast Texas should one day look, look, look at this woman Harriet in the face! She will be, indeed she is, their mother! She is land-hungriest woman alive, and it took that in order for this country to be redeemed!

**Lucille:** (trying to take glass away) Daddy, I think you've had too much to drink!

**Charles:** To wrestle this wild country out of the hands of savages, it took someone willing to use men as pawns, and to fire them to do the unthinkable. Potter was dissolute, but she used him. She was the gambler, not her first husband. She's the pioneer, the dreamer.

She was willing to risk all I tell you, her marriages, her children, herself . . . If it took populating the land with her offspring, she would do that, if it took pointing a gun at a slave, she would do that, if it meant marrying a lawyer she would do that!

**Katy:** Daddy, Lucille has been nice enough to have you for the night, why not get some sleep!

**Charles:** Her savage will is making her a legend, and me, a gray-haired wretch (weeps)!