

SALTWATER

a short film
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Assignment #3
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FADE IN:

INT. PLANTATION - PARLOR

On a mantle above a fireplace, a DAFFODIL sits in FLOWER VASE filled with fresh water. Also on the mantle is a BOX OF MATCHES and a proudly displayed COLT ARMY MODEL 1860.

A coffee table lies centered, two arm chairs on either side. Next to one arm chair is a side table with a SALT SHAKER and PEPPER SHAKER, a GRAY CLOTH, and a PORTRAIT.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLANTATION - NOON

THUNDERCLAP.

SUPER IN: Virginia, 1864.

Rain pours down on JANE (19-21) who approaches a run down antebellum home. The once white walls are now a bleak gray covered in black vines and yellow stains.

SUPER OUT:

Jane reaches the front door and knocks. Abigail (23-25) opens the door.

ABIGAIL

Jane?

Jane stares at her silently.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Come in!

JANE

Is that really necessary?

Jane removes her wet hat and rings out her long brown hair.

JANE (CONT'D)

What is it you needed help with?

ABIGAIL

Please, I insist.

JANE

Well, if you must insist.

Abigail leads Jane inside and shuts the door.

INT. PLANTATION - VESTIBULE/PARLOR - NOON - TRACKING

Soot and grime cover the once grand mansion. Abigail leads Jane down the vestibule hallway and into the parlor.

Abigail pulls a chair out, motioning for Jane to sit. Jane sees this and seats herself in a different chair.

Jane shivers in her soaked blouse and skirt. Abigail notices and reaches her twitching hand to take a MATCH from the mantle, lighting the fire place.

One petal remains on the daffodil, little water remains.

JANE

I won't be staying long.

Abigail sits in a chair close to Jane; she stares at Abigail's baby blue eyes and the contrasting dark circles underneath them.

ABIGAIL

I've missed you, Jane... So much.

Jane then stares at the colt army model 1860 on the mantle. Abigail sinks in her seat.

JANE

A decoration?

Abigail sighs.

JANE (CONT'D)

He was all I had left.

ABIGAIL

Besides me, that is.

JANE

No... I lost you a long time ago.

ABIGAIL

You have Henry.

JANE

Henry's not coming back.

Jane stands to leave.

ABIGAIL

That's why I sent for you.

JANE

What do you know about him?

ABIGAIL

He's here, Jane. I'm caring for his wounds-

JANE

What?

ABIGAIL

I found him about a mile eastward. He's injured; I'm holding him safe for now, but he needs serious medical care.

Jane returns to her seat.

JANE

Abigail, no-

ABIGAIL

I didn't think you would actually come.

JANE

I didn't know he deserted.

ABIGAIL

It's worse than that.

JANE

You shouldn't have done this.

ABIGAIL

What is it with you, don't you want to see him?

JANE

Home Guard, Abigail! I'm sure they're very well aware that Henry's been accused of cowardice, and when they find out he's here-

ABIGAIL

"When"? You didn't let them see you, did you?

Jane gulps and nods.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

I thought I made it clear enough in my letter not to-

JANE

"Not to let the Home Guard notice me".
Of course I read it, it was suspicious
enough.

ABIGAIL

Are you saying-?

JANE

Yes. And dammit, Abigail, Henry means
nothing to you, he never has.

ABIGAIL

Some people can think beyond just what
something means to them. I couldn't risk
putting it in writing. You know I
thought you came because you finally
realized that deep down you still wanted
me. But no... I was wrong.

Abigail stands.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

You have to leave.

Jane stands.

JANE

I can't leave him.

ABIGAIL

I can't watch them hurt you.

JANE

Why do you even still care about me so
much? After all of this?

ABIGAIL

What did you tell them?

JANE

It was Captain Williams. I told him you
sent for me for help with something, and
that you seemed suspicious.

ABIGAIL

You sure that's all you said?

JANE

Yes.

Abigail takes the colt off the mantle.

JANE (CONT'D)

And just what are you planning to do with that?

ABIGAIL

You want to stand here and watch as they drag Henry to the firing squad? I didn't think so.

Abigail opens a drawer to reveal BULLETS. She proceeds to load the colt.

JANE

I know why you did this.

ABIGAIL

Jane... Go see Henry. He's in your bedroom. Do anything you can to get yourselves out of here.

Jane exits the parlor. Abigail looks down at the colt and tosses it on the coffee table.

She returns to the mantle, this time picking up the flower vase. She places it on the floor in front of the side table.

Abigail takes the portrait clearly of herself, Jane, and their brother off the side table and places it where the flower was on the mantle. She struggles not to cry.

Forceful KNOCKS on the front door.

Abigail quickly grabs the gray cloth off the side table, knocking over the salt shaker. She places the gray cloth on top of the colt and exits the parlor.

The salt spills off the edge of the table and into the flower vase below it.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLANTATION - NOON

Abigail opens the door; CAPTAIN WILLIAMS (30-40), stands at the door armed with a LORENZ RIFLE.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

Afternoon, Miss Rivers.

ABIGAIL

Good afternoon, Captain.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS
I'm not sure if I'd go so far as to call
it "good" with the weather like this.

ABIGAIL
I suppose you're right.

Pause.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS
Well, ain't it a custom to be invited in?

ABIGAIL
Of course, yes, come in.

She leads him inside.

CUT TO:

INT. PLANTATION - BEDROOM - NOON

Jane and HENRY (25-30) grasp each other closely,
listening to the conversation.

ABIGAIL (O.S.)
It's been a long day, I apologize.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS (O.S.)
It's quite alright.

ABIGAIL (O.S.)
Here, have a seat.

CUT TO:

INT. PLANTATION - PARLOR - NOON

Abigail and Captain Williams sit across from each other;
the coffee table between them. Captain Williams adjusts
his confederate uniform.

ABIGAIL
Now, what can I do for you, sir?

Captain Williams stares at the portrait on the mantle.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS
Your brother was a fine man. It's a
shame you had to do what you did.

ABIGAIL

Not a day goes by where I don't think about it.

He notices the gray cloth and reaches for it; Abigail quickly places her hand over it first.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

You don't mind if I wipe the rain off my face?

ABIGAIL

Let me get you a clean cloth.

(she rises)

That is unless you want this old house's dust and soot all over you.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

You have always been most generous, Miss Rivers.

She forges a smile and exits the parlor.

CUT TO:

INT. PLANTATION - BEDROOM - NOON

Abigail's FOOTSTEPS work their way toward the bedroom. Jane drags Henry across the floor toward the bedroom window with his bandaged foot.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS (O.S.)

Now your brother: hard to believe it's been two years now.

Abigail opens the bedroom door, quickly grabs a WHITE CLOTH from inside, and quietly shuts the door.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS (O.S.)

(CONT'D)

There was nothing you could've done to save him. You did what was best.

Jane reaches down to Henry's waist and grabs his 1851 COLT REVOLVING NAVY PISTOL. She then continues to drag him toward the window.

CUT TO:

INT. PLANTATION - PARLOR - NOON

Abigail returns to her seat across from Captain Williams who hasn't moved. She hands him the white cloth.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

Thank you.

(he wipes his face)

On a similar note, guess who I saw today?

ABIGAIL

Who?

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

Your sister.

Captain Williams tosses the white cloth down on top of the gray one; he stares at them curiously.

ABIGAIL

She came to visit me.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

That so? Where is she now?

ABIGAIL

Bathing. You'll have to forgive.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

What's the occasion?

ABIGAIL

I beg your pardon?

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

What brings her to town after so long?

These are no times to be traveling.

ABIGAIL

Well I asked her to come help me go through our mother's old jewelry; we were hoping to sell most of it to help clean up the place a little. She'll be staying through tomorrow for my birthday.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

Well I'll be damned, happy birthday Miss Rivers.

ABIGAIL

Thank you.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

How old?

ABIGAIL

Pardon?

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

How old are you? Or am I being intrusive?

ABIGAIL

No no, um, 25.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

A fine year indeed.

ABIGAIL

Yes. Now if you don't mind, I really must-

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

(cutting her off)

I'm glad to hear the rumors are false.
Everyone's been saying she ain't ever
forgiven you for killing your brother. I
guess she thought he could've been saved.

ABIGAIL

Captain, I don't mean to be rude, but I
would like to change the subject.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

Yes, of course, my apologies...

CUT TO:

INT. PLANTATION - BEDROOM - NOON

Jane, at the windowsill, struggles to open up the window.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS (O.S.)

But I am glad she's put that aside and
joined you for celebration. It was most
delightful to see her once again today
after so long; Jane truly is a beauty.
Which reminds me of something: you do
remember Henry Johnson, don't you?

Jane freezes.

ABIGAIL (O.S.)

Henry Johnson...

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS (O.S.)

He and your sister have been together for
a few years now if I'm not mistaken.

CUT TO:

INT. PLANTATION - PARLOR - NOON

Abigail and Captain Williams continue their conversation.

ABIGAIL

Yes, I- I remember him.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

I received notice this morning that he has been accused of cowardice in the face of the enemy: fled General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia during the Battle of the Wilderness. I was wondering, with Private Johnson being so close to your sister, if you would happen to know any information regarding his whereabouts.

ABIGAIL

I'm sorry, Captain, I haven't seen Henry in two years.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

Two years? You haven't seen Jane in two years either. That poor girl couldn't stand the family she lived with no more. That poor girl had no idea of the generosity in your heart; no idea that you would even consider saving the life of the man she loves. I am sorry, Abigail. I truly am: I don't create the laws that pronounce cowardice in the face of the enemy as punishable by death. But I do believe that a man belongs on the battlefield, both by law and by duty.

ABIGAIL

Then why aren't you out there, Captain?

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

What the hell did you just say to me?

Silence.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Your birthday is in the winter, Miss Rivers; I remember my wife prepared you a cake. Don't you?

ABIGAIL

Captain, I-

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

Go on... Call me a liar. That was what you were going to do, wasn't it?

No response.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Do you mind if I have a look around? I
won't be long.

ABIGAIL
G-go... Go ahead.

Captain Williams rises.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS
I appreciate your cooperation.

He smacks her across the face with the barrel of his
Lorenz rifle.

Abigail falls onto the table, shifting the cloth off the
colt. Captain Williams and Abigail see this
simultaneously.

Abigail lunges for the colt as Captain Williams raises
his rifle. She grabs the colt, aims it Captain Williams;
Captain Williams aims his rifle at her.

CUT TO:

INT. PLANTATION - BEDROOM - NOON

BANG! A gunshot rings. Jane, who has opened the window,
stops at the sound and looks up at the door.

The sound of FOOTSTEPS slowly work their way down the
hall.

Jane and Henry look at each other; she raises the pistol
up at the door.

The door kicks open; Captain Williams and Jane aim their
guns at each other. Jane swiftly pulls the trigger.

CLICK. The pistol is empty. Captain Williams grins; he
walks over to where Jane stands. He takes the pistol
from her hands and tucks it into his belt.

JANE
Please... Please don't hurt him.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS
You know I can't abide to that.

Captain Williams proceeds to drag Henry.

JANE

What will you do to him?

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS

You can watch for yourself tomorrow.

HENRY

Jane... Jane...

Captain Williams drags Henry out of the room. Jane stands: alone. Her eyes stare warily, her posture sinks.

She slowly walks out of the bedroom.

INT. PLANTATION - VESTIBULE - NOON - TRACKING

Jane walks down the vestibule: she stares ahead down the hall and toward the open door to the plantation to see Captain Williams dragging Henry away.

INT. PLANTATION - PARLOR - NOON

Jane quickly rushes into the parlor. She sees Abigail clutching the wound in her stomach, and Jane takes up the colt which lies on the ground. Jane checks it: loaded.

INT. PLANTATION - VESTIBULE - NOON

Jane bolts to the vestibule door. She stares outside - seven armed Home Guard Soldiers meet Captain Williams.

Jane slowly closes the door; she stares at the colt, and then back into the parlor at Abigail.

She stands here, frozen.

INT. PLANTATION - PARLOR - NOON

Jane finally walks into the parlor and sits down in the seat across from Abigail; Jane aims the colt at her.

ABIGAIL

I'm sorry, Jane. I'm sorry.

Jane cocks the colt.

The last petal falls off the now completely wilted daffodil.

FADE OUT.