

Civil

By

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FADE IN

EXT. FIELD - DAY

THREE WOMEN pick crops as the sun beats down on their backs. They pick in unison, one by one.

A gunshot rings out from the tree line in the distance. ANNIE (white) and MARTHA (black), sprawl to the ground.

Silence.

We hear sputtering and gasping for breath. Annie looks over to Martha. She's fine. She turns to find PENNY (black), lying on her back. Blood escapes her mouth as she breathes.

ANNIE

Penny! Stay down, stay down. Can you hear me?

Penny lies limp, cold. Martha looks on in shock. Annie locks eyes with Penny.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Hey, hey. It's gonna be alright. Listen to my voice. Can you hear me?

Penny breathes heavily, sharply. She gasps one last time. She lies still.

Martha covers her mouth with her hands and begins to cry. Annie turns to Martha.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

We have to move. We can't stay here. Come on.

Martha nods, trying to hold back tears.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

We have to get to the barn.

Annie pulls Martha by the arm while staying low to the ground.

They crawl on their stomachs through the field. Shots fly past their heads. They flinch but keep moving.

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Annie and Martha make their way from the brush inside.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

They slip inside one of the stables, out of the light. They wait.

The sound of footsteps. Muffled conversation.

HARPER  
(muffled)  
Up here!

YOST  
(muffled)  
Where'd they go?

TILLMAN  
(muffled)  
I found somethin'! Over here!

The sound of the soldiers' voices grows closer.

HARPER  
Oh, no, no, no, no!

YOST  
What is it? You find somethin'?

TILLMAN  
It's...a woman.

YOST  
(beat) She alive?

TILLMAN  
No.

YOST  
Leave her! We gotta find the  
others! (beat) Harper! Get up!  
Let's go!

Three men walk inside the barn. Yost, a gruff white man peers inside, rifle raised. TILLMAN, a weathered white man, and HARPER, a young black man follow him inside. They wear Union Army uniforms.

They search the barn. Tillman is inches away from Annie and Martha. Martha begins to cry. Annie puts her hand over Martha's mouth, motioning for her to keep quiet.

(CONTINUED)

YOST  
Nothin'. Clear over there?

TILLMAN  
Clear.

Harper collapses against the wall. Yost looks back at him.

YOST  
What's a matter with you?

HARPER  
What's a matter!? I just killed  
that woman! What do you mean what's  
a matter!?

Yost marches over to Harper and gets in his face.

YOST  
You better suck it up, boy. There  
might be Rebel movement in this  
area. Stay sharp and ready.

Harper stares forward, barely acknowledging Yost. Tillman  
peers out the door, alert.

YOST (CONT'D)  
See anything?

TILLMAN  
Nothing yet.

YOST  
If they are here, they probably  
know we're here now too. Gunshot on  
top of Harper's fit'll make 'em  
keen to us.

Tillman makes his way back over to Yost.

TILLMAN  
Maybe the other two will come back  
to check on ol' lady out there.

YOST  
Not likely. Probably halfway to  
that creek by now. We gotta stay  
here regardless. If we alerted any  
greys we can defend from here.

Harper begins to moan. His emotions are taking over.

YOST (CONT'D)

I told you, son! You need to shut down whatever it is you're goin' through, right now! We're dead enough cooped in this shed!

HARPER

This ain't what I came here for!  
Not to kill no innocent woman!

Yost and Tillman exchange a glance of intolerance.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I'm fightin' for freedom! Not to take it away from nobody!

Yost pulls his pistol from his jacket and rests it on Harper's forehead. He cocks it.

Martha looks at Annie with despair. Annie looks back. She knows what Martha is about to do.

Martha stands up, arms raised.

MARTHA

Don't shoot! Please don't shoot!

Yost directs his gaze and gun at Martha.

YOST

Well. I thought the stables were clear, Tillman.

TILLMAN

What the hell? I did clear 'em!

Tillman raises his rifle toward Martha. Yost motions for him to lower it.

YOST

No, no. Let's put our guns away.  
Don't wanna frighten the lady.  
(beat) Where's your friend?

Annie stares at the ground intensely. She slowly gets up, arms raised.

YOST (CONT'D)

Aha. Thought so.

HARPER

(scared, hesitant)  
Maybe we should just let 'em go.

(CONTINUED)

YOST

And have 'em alert the Rebs? Naw, I don't think so. Got a better idea.

Yost flips his pistol around and holds it out for Harper to grasp. Harper looks up at it, confused.

YOST (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Take it.

Harper, his wits still amuck, grabs the gun.

YOST (CONT'D)

Stand up, boy.

Harper slowly stands, gun at his side.

YOST (CONT'D)

You don't want these women to get us into trouble now, do you? If we let 'em go, who knows what comes next. (beat) Shoot 'em.

Harper looks from Yost to Tillman. Tillman nods.

Annie and Martha stand still, arms still raised. They exchange a brief glance at each other. Maybe their last.

YOST (CONT'D)

Dammit, Harper. I'm not gonna tell you again. Do what your commanding officer has asked of you.

Harper slowly raises the gun. He points it at Annie. (long beat) He looks over to Yost. Yost looks back, unsympathetically.

Harper swings his gun hand over to Yost and fires. He smoothly pulls out his knife and charges Tillman. Tillman defends, and they scuffle.

Annie grabs a pitch fork from the wall, waits for her moment, and strikes directly into Tillman's back. He rolls over from atop Harper and sputters his last few breaths.

Harper and Annie look at each other. Martha, in shock, has her hands over her mouth.

Harper and Annie remain locked on each other's eyes.

Harper pulls out his rifle. He smoothly hands it to Annie. She takes it and looks back at him.

(CONTINUED)

HARPER

(sobbing)

Kill me. Please, just kill me.

Annie looks hard into Harper's soul for a few moments. This is the hardest decision she's ever had to make.

She drops the rifle onto the ground. She grabs Martha's hand, and they both walk out of the barn.

We hold on Harper for a few beats.

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

The women run through the field and out of sight.

FADE OUT