

## Journey To The North

Characters:

Walter  
Lia (Walter's Friend)  
James (Master)  
Fannie (Walter's Mother)  
Miss Mary (Master's Wife)  
Ernest (Walter's Father)  
Old John  
Granny (Oldest Servant on the Plantation)  
Servants  
Hunting Party  
Man #1 (Abolitionist)  
Man #2 (Abolitionist)

### Scene I

*Narrator:*

*Between 1850 and 1860 the Underground Railroad was at its height. Slaves of African descent in the United States escaped through a network of secret routes and safe houses to Free states with the help of abolitionists who were sympathetic to their cause. This is the story of Walter and his family and how they left behind plantation life in search of a free one.*

*Walter and his friends are playing by the river, chasing each other. Suddenly they hear a shout and look to see the Overseer and another man headed their way. Walter grabs Lia's hand and runs in the opposite direction while the other children scatter.*

(In the kitchens)

Walter: (Rushing through the back door of the 'big house' kitchen) Mama! Mama!

(All servants in the kitchen stop what they are doing... frozen)

Fannie: (Startled) Hush child! (Wraps him in her bosom) What's with all this ruckus?

Walter: Mama... I was near the river playin with Lia, Joseph and some of the other chil'ren and the overseer came and done dragged em off. Me an' Lia got scared we was gonna get grabbed too.

Fannie: (Looks around at the other servants) Where's Lia now?

Walter: We split up by the big oak out back. She went lookin' for her mama.

Fannie: Don't you worry your head, boy. Ain't nobody gonna bother you in here. You can stay with me if you want.

Walter: (Nods his head and hurriedly finds a stool in a corner to sit)

Fannie: (Waves to get a kitchen servant's attention) Girl...hand that there boy a piece of the leftover bread

(Servant rushes off to get the bread)

Walter: (Sits quietly after he gets his bread and water)

## *Scene II*

*Walter and his friends are hiding outside the window of a small wooden cabin eavesdropping on a meeting being held by a few of the field servants. Old John and Walter's father are among them, talking in low voices.*

Old John: Er'body! (He holds up his hand for quiet) Ernest has somethin' to say, so y'all just hush up and listen. (Looks at Ernest and nods for him to start)

Ernest: Thanks, Old John. Er'body...I got some news from one of the traders came by the house today. He heard talk of some free white and black folk helping slaves to get to the free nations.

(Loud whispers erupt)

(Old John harrumphs and stomps his foot)

(The whispers get quiet)

Old John: Go on, Ernest.

Ernest: I ain't got all the details yet, but it sound legit. Ain't the first I heard bout it neither. I heard Master Wyatt from the plantation over talkin to Master James bout some slaves who done gone missin. Talked bout some folks who be helpin' the servants get up North to the free country.

*(A servant comes rushing through the door)*

Servant: Suh James is heading this way. Him and the mistress.

*(Servants quickly and quietly get up and leave the wooden cabin before they are seen)*

*(Ernest and Old John remain and make their way to the door to stand and watch)*

*(Walter and his friends, still hiding, peek out from behind a barrel)*

*(Master James and his wife are on horseback coming around the bend)*

Master James: Ernest boy! Come over here will yuh.

*(Ernest moves forward until he stands just in front of Master James' horse)*

Ernest: Yes suh?

Master James: One of my neighbors came to call and said a bunch of his servants done up and vanished. Missin he said. I know a lot of the servants look to you for direction out here in the fields. Have you seen or heard anything about them runaways?

Ernest: No, suh. I ain't seen a thing. Ain't heard nothing neither.

*(Master James nods his head)*

Master James: Well, Ernest, I want you to keep an ear low to the ground. Report to me directly if anything reaches you, ya heard?

*(Ernest nods in agreement)*

*(Behind the barrel Walter and his friends are whispering about what they just heard)*

*(Granny comes hobbling around the corner and goes over to Old John)*

Granny: Ernest, that man was fishin'.

Ernest: Yes ma'am

Granny: You make sure you be careful when you ask them questions o' yours. And no more big meetin's. If all a y'all bundle together it's gonna draw attention. Be discreet and have a care when you're talking around the chil'ren. *(She looks pointedly towards the barrel where Walter and his friends are peeking still)*

Ernest: Walter... you go on to your mama now.

*(Walter and his friends rush off)*

*(Ernest turns to Granny and Old John)*

Ernest: I'll let y'all know what I heard and find a way to set up anotha meetin.

*(Ernest walks off towards the field)*

### Scene III

*Walter and his family share a cabin with Lia's family. They are asleep when a sharp knock sounds on the door. Ernest stirs and gets up to answer. Old John is at the door with urgent news.*

Old John: All them questions you been askin boy.... there's someone here to see ya.

*(Ernest closes the door to the cabin and follows Old John)*

Narrator: *There is a small group gathered by a cabin at the opposite end from the big house. Ernest and Old John go over to the group. There is a skinny white couple standing in the shadows. With them is a huge black man. They quickly let the servants gathered know who they are. They were Ezra and Ruth Lincoln and they were sympathetic to the plight of the servants in the Southern states. They were part of a group who were helping them cross over to the North where they could live as free men and women.*

Ernest: When are you moving out again?

Ezra: In four days' time. We can't wait longer. Some other servants from a plantation nearby ran off and there are hunting parties all about looking for 'em. It's gonna make it harder if we wait around.

Ernest: I'll round up a few who won't be missed right away. Where's the meetin' point?

Narrator: *Ezra told him where to lead the servants who would be traveling and offered their goodbyes quickly before disappearing into the night.*

Old John: Ernest boy... Tomorrow we'll round up some of the little ones and their mamas, those who ain't noticed so much and tell 'em the plan. Then we gotta get some of the younguns to lead 'em out to the meetin' point, but don't tell em till we headin' out. Don't want no flappin lips to talk what they ain't supposed to.

*(Ernest nods his head in agreement before saying his goodnight and heading back to the cabin)*

## **Scene IV**

*Walter, Fannie and a few other servants are hiding under some hay in the back of a wagon. The driver is coming up to a small bridge and at one end on horseback is a hunting party out looking for runaway slaves.*

Leader (Hunting Party): Whoa there, driver

Wagon Driver: What can I do you for sir?

Leader (Hunting Party): What's in the wagon?

Wagon Driver: Just some hay I'm deliverin to the Moore plantation cross the bridge.

Leader (Hunting Party): (Rides around to back of wagon)

Wagon Driver: Somethin wrong?

Leader (Hunting Party): We're looking for some runaways. Heard tell they may try to come through these parts. (Leans across the back of the wagon and presses down on the hay)

Wagon Driver: Well suh... I ain't seen no runaways.

Leader (Hunting Party): Get on then with that there hay. And keep an eye out.

## **Scene IV**

*The runaways are in a small safe house. Walter is asleep on his mother's lap. His friend Lia and her mother are next to them. There are only a few from Master James plantation. Walter and Lia's fathers had stayed behind to help free other servants.*

(There is a knock on the door to the little house)

Fannie: (Whispers) Walter, wake up.

Walter: (Sits up quickly) What's happening, Mama?

Fannie: Somebody knocking at the door.

*(A white free woman moves across the room and knocks three times on the wood, then once, and again three times)*

*(The woman steps back and the door opens and two men one black, one white walk into the room.)*

Man #1: Evenin'. Y'all can get your belongins together so we can be on our way. We got wagons set up for ya from here til we reach the docks. There's a boat on the water that's gonna take y'all to the North.

Walter: *(Helps his mother pick up their two packs)*  
*(Looks over at Lia and holds a hand out to her.... She takes it)*

*(The men walk out the door and the people left in the room follow in groups.)*

*(Outside they quickly get into the wagons and lie flat before some empty crates are stacked over them and covered with hay.)*

*(The men finish loading the wagons and climb up to the driver's seat and they're off)*

## Scene V

Narrator: The runaways have made it to the North and have just arrived at a safe house in Florida after weeks of traveling.

Fannie: Walter... we almost there baby *(She hugs him close)*

Walter: When is pa comin'?

Fannie: Soon as he's done helping those folk still at Master James' place. Your daddy's a good man. He helping those who need to be free and he got us help to get this far. We just gotta pray baby.

*Lia and her mom stand behind Fannie listening to her speak to Walter. Lia wraps her arms tighter around her mom and cries quietly.*

Walter: We free now, Mama?

Fannie: Yes baby... we free. Ain't nobody own us now. This here North country is a new start for all of us. We can make a lot o' things happen for ourselves.

Walter: I can't hardly wait for pa to get here.

Fannie: He'll get here baby boy... Eventually.

*Other families are huddled together, crying softly, happy to have made it and the hope or a new beginning)*

*(Scene fades out)*