

WALLACE
MOMMA! DADDY!

BISHOP
(cocks it)
NOW, GODDAMMIT!!

SARAH
BO!! HATTIE!! GET BACK!!

THE CHURCH BELL RINGS. **BLAM BLAM!!** He SHOTS BO AND HATTIE DEAD then takes aim at the two slaves. Wallace SCREAMS. Everyone SCREAMS. Ella SHRIEKS as the slaves SEIZE Sarah and WRESTLE her to the ground, their eyes begging her forgiveness.

Though harrowed beyond words, as the slaves hog-tie Sarah, she locks defiant eyes with Ella.

SARAH
As I faced the river, you in my arms, I heard the choir, the voices on the wind. They said, "Don't do it, Sarah; we have need of this child - far from here, far from you. Sing with us - 'Steal Away'." The voices were loud, but your tears were louder, and knowing that son of hell was making you his... This river's called out to me many times; tonight I was listening.
(looks at the river)
But God gave you back. The voices were right; he's going to set you free.

SC.1

START →

BISHOP
You're deluded!

SARAH
Free her or so help me this river will free us both.

BISHOP
I'll drown you myself first!

SARAH
(points to Myron)
And pretend to rear this boy when I'm gone, as if you had the first clue?! I've raised Myron as my own since missus' death, and he loves me as his own.

BISHOP
Let's remedy that.

STEAL AWAY

"BISHOP"
5/18/2022

Breathing fire, he hands Myron a SPIKED BULLWHIP.

BISHOP

Do her.

SARAH

Do it yourself! Myron's a good boy!

Myron bursts into tears. Bishop BASHES HIS FACE with the shotgun.

BISHOP

Craven!

Sarah SHRIEKS for Myron as the boy falls to the ground SCREAMING. Bracing for what's next, Sarah speaks to her baby girl as if for the last time.

SARAH

Go to the Seventh Street Church here in Nashville; ask anyone how to get there. Find old Mr. Dunley, the organist. He'll take you in.

(sweeping Ella's eyes)

Precious baby, you got a call on your life, God's word. Run your race, fast and far. Become everything your stupid mother wasn't. And don't ever turn back - *I won't let you.*

But Bishop shoves a rag into Sarah's mouth then seizes Ella's face and GLARES PIERCINGLY into her wide eyes.

BISHOP

Now you *hear* God's word, Ella Sheppard...

(gestures to the carnage)

That blood, those battered FACES - it's all your doing. You betrayed your people, bringing heaven's wrath on them; then betrayed me, damning your mother. Those FACES will haunt you the rest of your rotten days, and no matter how far or fast you run in your miserable life, you'll never escape the truth that you're worthless trash your mother *should have* drowned.

CLOSE ON ELLA - She gasps, her mouth violently agape as she silently SHRIEKS at his curse.

Bishop takes a stance over Sarah, winds back the bullwhip, then commands his bleeding son --

BISHOP

Take note.

END

2/2

STEAL AWAY

START →

SC.2

MAN (O.S.)Sarah, where the devil are you?!

SARAH

Foyer, sir.
 (shoos Ella)
 Go!

MAN (O.S.)Get your dirty hide back in that yard!

As Sarah pushes Ella to the door, the Man enters with a STRAP.

MAN

I've told you about coming in this
 house with those filthy --

He and Ella lay eyes on each other. Ella gasps. It's BISHOP.

ELLA

No...

BISHOP

Well, I'll be. Welcome home, Ella!

ELLA

Momma, you're free!

SARAH

(ashamed)
 He pays me a little. Go!

ELLA

I got us that house, Momma, just like
 I said I would. We can be together!

Sarah's eyes cascade with tears, but she clenches her fists and
 forces harrowing words from her mouth.

SARAH

Get out, Sam. Get out and don't come
 back. I don't ever want to see you
 again.

ELLA

No... please Jesus, no...

BISHOP

(taunting)
 "Sometimes I feel like a motherless
 child!" Haw!

SARAH

Stop it!

STEAL AWAY

END

1/1