

BLUE RIVER

Written by

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SUPER: Between 1854 and 1861 thousands of Northern immigrants flood the Kansas Territory to help prevent it from becoming a slave state.

SUPER: Based on true events from Augusta Stewart's Journal.

FADE IN:

INT. ADDA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: Detroit, April 1858

ADDA (17) has auburn hair in loose curls around her face. She is pretty in a natural way.

She sits on her bed and pulls a large blue button from under her pillow. She smiles and tears form in the corner of her eyes.

AUGUSTA (O.S.)

Adda, it's time for dinner!

Adda deftly replaces the button. She moves to the closet and picks out a dress.

Her sister, AUGUSTA (19) enters. Though shorter and not as striking, she is beautiful in her own way. She finds Adda in the closet.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Is that what you are going to wear to the Spring Social?

ADDA

Maybe. Whatever you wear, Jeremiah will be fawning all over you.

Augusta pretends not to hear her.

AUGUSTA

That color looks good on you.

Augusta pulls the dress out and holds it next to Adda.

ADDA

Do you remember which was her favorite...

SAM (O.S.)

Augusta, can you come help me? I've lost the battle with these potatoes!

AUGUSTA
Be right there, Papa.

Augusta turns back to Adda.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
What were you saying?

ADDA
Do you ever, I mean to say, are
there times when...

SAM (O.S.)
If you don't help me, we are going
to lose dinner!

Augusta steps to the door. Adda turns away visibly upset.

AUGUSTA
I'm coming!

Augusta turns back to Adda.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
Are you coming down to dinner?

ADDA
I suppose.

AUGUSTA
What's the matter?

ADDA
Nothing!

Augusta takes a step toward Adda and starts to say something.

SAM (O.S.)
Augusta!

Augusta looks at Adda for a moment then turns and leaves Adda alone.

INT. STEWART HOME - NIGHT

Adda sits at the dinner table picking at her plate.

Their father, SAM STEWART (39) sits at the head of the table. There is an air of youth to his appearance and the resemblance can be seen in both girls.

Above him is a portrait of a beautiful woman with a blue button adorning her dress.

SAM

What a wonderful meal. Augusta, you saved the potatoes and you saved me.

Augusta smiles and starts clearing the table. Adda doesn't move to help and just looks down at her uneaten food.

SAM (CONT'D)

Adda, what's the matter? You haven't touched your food and you've hardly said a word.

ADDA

I don't know. I...

AUGUSTA (O.S.)

Are you ready for desert? I'm going to need some help here.

Sam stands up and grabs a plate.

SAM

I'll be right there.

Sam smiles and turns back to Adda.

SAM (CONT'D)

Now finish your dinner. We can talk some more latter. Right now, it's my turn to save the cobbler.

Sam strides off to the kitchen. Adda listens as Sam and Augusta laugh together and put the finishing touches on desert.

Adda sits at the table holding back her emotion.

SAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Adda, can you come help us here? We need another set of hands.

Adda stands up and walks out of room. She turns and leans against the wall, listening.

Sam returns to find her gone. Augusta walks in with the cobbler.

AUGUSTA

Where's Adda?

SAM

She must have gone to bed. What's going on with her?

AUGUSTA

She's been different lately. I feel like she's holding something back when we talk.

SAM

If only your Mother was here.

AUGUSTA

I do try but, I'm her sister. It's not the same.

Adda fights back emotion. Sam hugs Augusta.

SAM

We're doing the best we can. What else can we do?

AUGUSTA

Anything to get her mind off whatever is bothering her.

Adda scoffs.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

What about those abolitionist meetings you have been going to?

SAM

What about them?

AUGUSTA

Maybe we should go as a family. It would give Adda, even myself something to think about.

Sam smiles at Augusta and gives her another hug.

SAM

Maybe you're right. Although, I may be in trouble here. I can't even get her to finish dinner.

Adda walks to her room in a huff.

INT. ADDA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Adda sits up reading in her bed. Sam tentatively knocks and enters.

SAM

May I come in?

ADDA
Looks like you already have.

Sam sits next to her, she keeps her eyes on her book.

SAM
Sweetheart, please? What's going on
with you?

ADDA
Nothing.

Sam sits a moment in awkward silence.

SAM
I think it's time to expand your
horizons. I want you to come to an
abolitionist meeting with me.

Adda lowers her book and looks quizzically at Sam.

ADDA
No, thank you.

SAM
People are suffering, really
suffering, this is a chance to
understand that better.

ADDA
I'm not stupid, Papa. I just want
to live my life.

Sam stands, turning his back to Adda.

SAM
I'm not asking you to go, I'm
telling you.

Sam exits. Adda slams her book shut and covers herself in her
blanket.

INT. STEWART HOME - NIGHT

Adda waits near the entrance to the kitchen with a handful of
flour. Traces of it are visible on her arm.

As footsteps approach, she hunkers down.

Augusta steps into the kitchen. POW! Adda hits her in the
face with the flour.

Augusta stops cold in her tracks. She shakes the flour from her head, wipes her mouth and COUGHS.

AUGUSTA

Adda! How could you? I just got dressed!

Smiling, Adda walks over to clear some lingering flour. She holds back a laugh.

Sam enters, gathers a few pamphlets on the table that read: "The Fight for Kansas!"

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Papa! Look what she did!

He glances up, holds in a laugh as he shakes his head.

SAM

Adda, be nice to your sister. Come on, I don't want to be late!

He hurries out the door.

ADDA

That's for making me go tonight.

AUGUSTA

I didn't make you go, that was Papa!

ADDA

With a little help from you.

Adda follows after Sam.

AUGUSTA

This is not over!

EXT. PLANTATION - NIGHT

SUPER: Missouri

Bounty hunters, BILLY (35) and SYLVESTER (25) carry torches as they approach a large plantation house dragging two slaves along with them.

MARY (15) is slight and frail but with strong eyes.

RUTH (32) is a bit more plump, but with the same small frame. Her face bleeds, swelling her eye shut.

A man walks ahead of all of them. WORLDLY (38) wears a brown hat with a silver ornament that keeps most of his face in shadow.

Worldly approaches the porch where a Plantation Owner sits smoking a pipe.

PLANTATION OWNER

I see you found them.

WORLDLY

That's what I do.

The Plantation Owner stands and passes Worldly a purse of coins, then rests his hand on Worldly's shoulder.

PLANTATION OWNER

I must inquire as to why the mother looks a little worse for wear.

Worldly turns, punching him in the nose. It starts to bleed and he barely keeps his feet.

Another man, the OVERSEER, steps from the house with a rifle on Worldly.

WORLDLY

She touched me.

Worldly looks up to the Overseer then back to the Plantation Owner.

WORLDLY (CONT'D)

Best tell him to lower that gun.

The Plantation Owner spits blood and wipes his mouth, looks to the Overseer and waves him off. Worldly starts to leave.

WORLDLY (CONT'D)

Let's go, boys.

The men carrying Mary and Ruth push them to the ground.

OVERSEER

Well, well, well. Seems you two can't keep a lesson learnt.

The Overseer helps Mary stand. The Plantation Owner watches on, tending to his nose.

Ruth manages to get to her feet. Mary looks at the Overseer defiantly.

A group of slaves emerge from their quarters. Ruth's brother PAUL (28) at the lead. Ruth sees Paul and waves him back.

RUTH

We's sorry, we won't run again. I swear.

The Overseer knocks Ruth down and drags Mary behind the house. Ruth turns to the Plantation Owner.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Massa, Massa, please!

He ignores her while the whip CRACKS again and again. Mary holds out for the first few, but then SCREAMS.

Paul makes a move to intervene, the man next to him grabs his arm. Paul fights him until the man's wife steps in front of him.

Trembling with anger, Paul watches on and Mary's voice fades as the whip CRACKS, again and again.

INT. MEETING HALL - NIGHT

Sam and the girls sit in the center of a crowded meeting hall filled with people from a variety of social classes.

Sam flips through the pamphlet.

SAM

I'm glad you both came.

Adda rolls her eyes and snatches the pamphlet away from Sam and fans herself.

GENERAL LANE (45) steps into the room. His unkempt hair frames a thin build and deep set eyes.

He looks intently at the men in the crowd as he walks to the pulpit.

GENERAL LANE

My friends, let me say this as clearly as I can. Slavery is an abomination to God and the founding principles of this country. Slavery, with all its evils must not be permitted to reach Kansas. We must make a stand!

CUT TO:

EXT. LAWRENCE - NIGHT

GENERAL LANE (V.O.)
 Eight hundred Pro-Slavers sack
 Lawrence, destroy three buildings,
 and murder an innocent man!

A mob of Pro-Slavers, some with torches, others with rifles
 run through a budding town.

They throw torches on the largest building in the town
 square.

A man runs from the building and is shot. The Pro-Slavers
 quickly disperse. Locals scramble with buckets of water.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

GENERAL LANE (V.O.)
 What does the U.S. Army do?
 Nothing, except take rifles from
 any and all Free-Staters. What
 shall we do? Keep pouring into
 Kansas! We will not be intimidated.

The U.S. Army, led by a young captain, stop a wagon train and
 aggressively disarm them.

INT. MEETING HALL - NIGHT

GENERAL LANE
 (Slams his fist down)
 Enough is enough!

Adda is awakened by the sound. Augusta notices and gives her
 nudge. Adda rolls her eyes.

Sam is on the edge of his seat.

GENERAL LANE (CONT'D)
 This will not be easy, but we will
 succeed. We can and we must meet
 the Pro-Slavers head on. Join our
 fight for Kansas.

The crowd bursts into applause. Lane waves and moves to the
 front of the stage where men line up to shake his hand.

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