

Carry Me

Home

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The leather tail of the whip tore through Ada's flesh. Pain laced through her body and she screamed. Perhaps it was the pain inside her heart that was more intense.

Her Master growled and brought his anger down upon her with a vengeance.

Ada squeezed her eyes shut as she shuddered. Lash upon lash flicked her and all she could do was murmur a tiny prayer.

“You brought this on yourself!” Her master shouted loudly in anger, bringing the whip down again to tear through her flesh.

“Somebody stop this!” one of the other slave women cried.

A white man walked over and smacked the slave who had spoken out. She gasped and fell to the ground, holding her reddened cheek.

Lord please help me, Ada silently prayed. The burning pain intensified and Ada fell unconscious.

One year ago...

Ada stood up, stretching out her sore muscles from working in the cotton fields all day long. The hot, southern Alabama sun beamed down upon her, forming pools of sweat on her face and arms. The cotton tore at her skin, but after being a slave her whole life, Ada's skin had developed calluses. In a different life, perhaps, her skin would have been smooth and beautiful, but not now. No, Ada had the skin of a slave...

The heart and soul of one too.

“*Swing low...*” A male slave with skin several shades darker than Ada's, began singing the spiritual song. It was one of her favorites; not only did it pass the time but it also brought peace to her soul.

Three women kneeling near them, also picking cotton, joined in quietly in the background.

“*Sweet chariot... Hmm-mmmm...Comin' forth to carry me home... mmm!*”

“*Swing low....*” The man's bass voice was joined by a dozen other men, each working hard in the cotton fields, each one singing a deep bass, almost like a drum in the background of the song.

“Sweet chariot...” Ada’s high soprano voice echoed with the other women as she knelt down and continued the backbreaking work of picking cotton. Their burden was lightened by the reminder of their perfect home in Heaven. *“Hmm-mmmm...Comin’ forth to carry me... home. Mmm-mmmm...!”*

That was how Ada and the other slaves kept pace when they worked: they sang. More than that, singing kept them connected to each other and more importantly, to the Lord.

Believing in the Lord was what saw Ada through many dark times... and many more to come.

Mr. Johnson, the overseer, was a plump harsh man with a large nose and bushy eyebrows he often kept narrowed. “Move, slaves. Workday is over!” he called out. “Enough with your loudmouth yacking!”

Just like that, their singing all stopped. Ada stood to her feet and took a brief moment to stretch before she followed the other slaves back to the sheds on the back of the property. After she placed her pouch of cotton down on the barrel for the day, Mr. Johnson, satisfied that she'd met the quota, nodded his head and told her she could go.

Ada rushed out with a smile on her face, spreading her arms. It felt good to be free for the evening, to watch the sun as it slowly set below the horizon. The sky became a beautiful picture, one that Ada was thankful the Lord allowed her to see another day.

A hand grabbed her arm and yanked her inside one of the storerooms. Ada yelped but a hand came over her mouth. “Ada, it's me,” a calming and gentle voice murmured.

Relief flooded through her and happiness made her stomach dance. “You startled me, Jeremiah.”

“Sorry, but I had to see you.” Jeremiah smiled at her as the whispered words fluttered in the air between them. Ada knew what he meant. She had missed him all day... They had gone an entire week without contact to keep from being caught.

His brown hair curled at the tips slightly on the right side of his face. With his goatee and beard, he appeared rugged, but to Ada, he was as handsome as ever. He leaned in and paused, politely waiting for her.

Ada smiled warmly at him and kissed his cheek. He was the only man who made her feel special. He was white and she was black; she was just another slave. Ada wasn't worth anything and yet

he treated her as if she was a queen. Yet... loving each other, being happy... It was impossible for them.

His father was her master.

Present day...

As the overseer whipped Ada's flesh, bringing her to the brink of death, she reflected on the choices that had brought her to this moment.

Jeremiah.

Loving him... How much pain did it put her body in now? Yet, how much joy had it brought her in the past? All the memories they shared together, every dance, every stolen moment, every sweet kiss...

It had all been worth it.

"Father, no! Stop this!" Jeremiah came darting down the steps to the house, but Ada's master gripped his shoulders and threw him to the ground. Two of his father's friends pinned him down. "Leave her alone!"

Tears streamed down Ada's face like a mighty waterfall. "Jeremiah!" she sobbed.

"Ada! I love you!" Jeremiah grunted and threw off one of the men. When he started to charge toward the overseer, his father slammed his fist against his son's face.

She loved him with all her heart and soul. The Lord had blessed her with the brief time they had shared. The love they shared meant more than the pain. As the overseer continued to whip her, the pain intensified so deeply, Ada thought she would lose her mind.

Perhaps... perhaps they should not have been so careless, had not let their emotions get to them.

Then they never would have gotten caught.

Blackness clouded her vision and the last thing Ada heard was Jeremiah calling her name. The words of the sold spiritual song played in the back of her mind.

Swing low...

Sweet chariot...

Comin' forth to carry me

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