

BALI & DEMBI SIDES - UNDERGROUND

Writer's Note - One of my goals when creating this story in 2010 was to portray our ancestors with as much dignity as possible in these tragic circumstances. Presenting them as smart, even though they may not have had formal education.

Though written in verse. The rhymes in the dialogue are not meant to be accented or emphasized. Rather spoken like prose.

BALI (30), Black - Tenor/Baritone, a skilled enslaved blacksmith with piercing eyes and a sturdy physique, whose greatest asset and detriment is his strength of will. EMALA is his young 9-year old daughter.

DEMBI (28), Black - Soprano, an attractive house enslaved woman who is comfortable with her station in life. She is a reluctant participant in this escape. Though not EMALA's mother, DEMBI helped to raise EMALA and feels strong maternal feelings towards her. Dembi thinks this foolish escape could result in EMALA's death.

GRANDMOTHER

(narrating)

They get a moment to rest after their near-capture by the river. Thorns scratched and cut EMALA's legs. BALI wraps them with care.

(their energy is coming down from an elevated state. They can start to catch their breath)

DEMBI

How... how you plan on... on getting through all this?

BALI

Can't trust any of these white folks we see round these parts.

We can let up on this ground here.

Then head north. Follow the trail to freedom.

(DEMBI shakes her head.)

DEMBI

It ain't that simple...

BALI

What do you know?

DEMBI

More than you think!

I was working in the field
for the family of Von Whittle.

Slavin' everyday,

craving water till my bones were brittle.

Under that hot sun, not a thing to drink.

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My eyes were dry beyond reason.
I couldn't blink.

I woulda done anything to get out of that field.
I was glad i was bought.
But while i lived there, some of the slaves started their
own journey, only to get caught.
They were tortured, till death.
To reveal plans, secrets, passageways
til' they had nothing left...

BALI
How much did you hear?

DEMBI
Enough to know the dangers, there is much to fear!

(BALI rubs his chin.)

DEMBI
I mean... its not nothin' you don't already know!

BALI
I need you here, to help us... you know where to go.

(DEMBI takes a look at the scars on EMALA's legs)

I'd hoped to let you go once we covered enough ground. But
you've got to stay with us, that way we cant be found.

DEMBI
Take my advice. I know your chances aren't good,
but I can't sacrifice my livelihood.
I can't live life out here in the woods.

(BALI finishes wrapping EMALA's legs.)

BALI
It's worth the risk. Anything is worth the risk for
freedom. Let us rest for the night.
We will start the journey again, after the sun rises at
first light.

I've heard that there are people that will help us along
the freedom trail. If we could just get to one of them,
they could abet and avail.

DEMBI
Master was complaining about white abolitionists.

BALI
They ain't to be trusted!
White folks is white folks, we must remain diligent!
I ain't mean to drag you along, but if you go back now, we
have no chance for survival.

DEMBI

Well... there's a town up north.
The sun can help us time our arrival.
Lets not travel when its bright out.
I'll help you find someone to assist and then my service
will be final.

BALI

Thank you. Your help will be vital.
And by then, we will have gotten far enough away.
He should have lost our trail.
I'm glad that you are choosing to stay.

But, if you go back, you're not afraid of what he might do
to you?

DEMBI

No, i don't think so...
And when i return he probably wont pursue you.

BALI

Maybe, maybe not... come on. Let's be on our way.

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(This is the singing portion of the
audition, you can sing this song, or a
spiritual of your own choosing.)

SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT, COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME. SWING
LOW, SWEET CHARIOT, COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME. OH, I LOOKED
OVER JORDAN AND WHAT DID I SEE? COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME.

A BAND OF ANGELS COMING AFTER ME. COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME.

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