

COVERAGE

TITLE: Reconstruction **AUTHOR: Sarah Kraus**
FORM: Screenplay **DRAFT DATE/PAGES: 57**
SUBMITTED TO: Carolyn Kras **SUBMITTED BY: N/A**
SUBMITTED FOR: Open Casting **STUDIO: N/A**
PRODUCER: N/A **DIRECTOR: N/A**
TALENT: N/A **PERIOD: American Civil War (1865)**
LOCATION: Virginia **GENRE: Historical Drama**
DATE: 3/10/19 **READER: Olivia Szymanski**

LOGLINE: In an alternate-universe version of the American Civil War, the Confederacy chooses an unlikely new President: widow Harper Bridge.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN:

HARPER BRIDGE: (30s) – Wife of deceased LELAND BRIDGE. Mourning, but also strong and keeping up the plantation. She is kind to her servants, and a well-liked figure in the community. She is nominated for the presidency, due to her Union connections and her business savvy. She accepts.

LELAND BRIDGE: (40) – Deceased. JACK’s brother and HARPER’s husband.

GENERAL JACK BRIDGE: (30s) – Union General. Brother of LELAND. Jack is set to become the Secretary of State. He is unfaithful to his pregnant wife, to whom he acts distant. He has sex with prostitutes and with his brother’s widow HARPER, among others. He seems to have delusional feelings for HARPER, and forces himself on her after she’s said no. Jack lacks empathy and emotion, and seems to be filling that void with sex.

VIOLET BRIDGE: (20s) – JACK’s pregnant wife. Seems to know that something is going on with Jack, but is too submissive to him to find out what.

WINSTON: (15) – Union soldier. Earnest, serves JACK directly. He is also close with the BRIDGE family, and is well-liked by all of them.

HYLAS EARLY: (40s) – Speaker during the sessions of Congress. Calls the members to order and take his role seriously.

BERNARD PRYOR: (60s) – An irritable and stubborn member of Congress. Bernard is the only other person to be nominated for the presidency other than HARPER, who he doesn't believe can do the job. He is eager to contest anything said by HYLAS.

JODY PIERCE: (17) – A young member of Congress. Speaks without a filter.

ADELE FILMORE: (60s) – A “formidable” woman. A widow, Adele lost multiple sons to the war. She is respected in the community, and speaks for them. She is in charge of coming up with the presidential nominations – she chooses HARPER. She is determined to make HARPER see that she has a duty to her country.

HARRIET: (30s) – ADELE's servant. Loyal and close to Adele – she's sleeping with her, but it seems to be more than just sex.

MILLIE TOWNSEND: (50s) – PAULINE's mother. Millie is strong-willed and wants to help her daughter get over her heartbreak. She supports HARPER as President.

PAULINE TOWNSEND: (18) – MILLIE's daughter. Beautiful and a bit dramatic, and grieving her beloved BEAU who has died.

BEAU: (late teens) – Deceased. PAULINE's lost love.

FANNY TROLLOPE: (30s) – Prostitute who is fond of JACK. They seem to have a history, and she shares her opinion openly.

VARY: (20) – Prostitute. Kind and bashful.

ROGER GREENHOW: (30s) – Meets Jack at the brothel.

FRANKLIN MILES: (60s) – Meets Jack at the brothel.

MERCY: (30s) – Driver for HARPER and LELAND BRIDGE.

ONA: (30s) – Freed slave from the Ashland Plantation. Ona has a soft spot for MERCY, and may have feelings for him. However, she gets frustrated when he can't see that the BRIDGES weren't great masters to all of their slaves, just the privileged ones.

DINN, AXEL, RILEY: (20s, teens) – Irish travelers who ransack the TOWNSENDS' carriage.

MACK: (50s) – Irish traveler and father to the boys and MARY. Quick-tempered but well-intentioned. Mack is very protective of his daughter MARY, and just wants her to be safe and happy.

AOIFE: (50s) Wife of MACK. Aoife has a grounded and calming presence, and always is able to talk MACK down when he gets worked up about something.

MARY: (15) – Daughter of AOIFE and MACK, wife of JONNY. Mary seems to be curious about her own sexuality, but it is unclear how she feels about getting married. She is close with her mother.

JONNY: (14) – Husband of MARY. Young and hesitant.

TALL JON: (50s) – Father of JONNY. Likes to cause trouble, which irritates MACK.

JANE BURRESS: (40s) – Clueless, wears ostentatious clothes.

HERCULES: (60s) – Freed slave. An older, respected man among the servants. He leaves the plantation for the freedmen's cottages.

ABBOTT: (30s) – Freed slave. Hated his master LELAND BRIDGE. Once he's dead, he leaves the plantation.

SALMON: (20s) – Freed slave.

SYNOPSIS:

Open on a Civil War battlefield strewn with corpses – the aftermath of the Battle of Sailor's Creek 1865. In a tent, Union General JACK BRIDGE is informed by a young soldier WINSTON his brother "LHB" passed on the battlefield – he hands him an engraved watch with a portrait of a woman inside.

At the Ashland Plantation, the same woman, HARPER BRIDGE, sleeps. The watch belongs to her husband, LELAND BRIDGE. In a carriage, Leland's body is being transported in a casket.

Harper jolts awake. She reaches for the bottle of wine next to her head, and hears a noise outside the door. She grabs a gun and opens the door, only to find a giggling black baby. A servant informs her that Master is coming.

Cut to the Confederate Capital's congressional hall. Women in black dresses speak quietly, accompanied by their servants, former slaves. Boys in their teens and a few older men are present as well. HYLAS EARLY tries to call the congress to order, and is interrupted by the objection of BERNARD PRYOR, who begrudgingly sits down but continues to make a fuss.

Hylas has called an emergency meeting of the Confederate Congress to discuss the armistice, which General Bridge organized. The Congress has to elect a new president within three days to submit to the Union for approval. They also must address the food

shortages and reopen supply lines with the Union. ADELE FILMORE, a respected and prominent widow, agrees to hand in a list of nominees the next day.

At the Norlina House, MILLIE TOWNSEND tries to get her daughter PAULINE to try on dresses. Pauline is distraught by the death of her beloved, BEAU, and doesn't want to go.

At the Trollope Brothel, Jack has sex with FANNY TROLLOPE. He is called to the parlor to meet ROGER GREENHOW and FRANKLIN MILES to play cards. They offer condolences for Leland, and commend his armistice decision. They ask him to be the new Secretary of State, and Jack says he'll think about it.

At the Ashland Plantation, MERCY the driver arrives with Leland's body. Harper thanks Mercy for looking after Leland, and welcomes him home. She asks him to stay at Ashland, and he agrees.

In the stable, Mercy is welcomed back by ONA, who tells him the elders will meet that night. Mercy says he wants to stay at Ashland, but Ona reminds him that he is now free.

On the road, Millie and Pauline's carriage – driven by PRESTON – is stopped by Irish travelers with a rifle. Millie is prepared with a revolver, and scares them off after they've stolen some items from the trunks.

At Carroll Hall, Adele serves the women from Congress. She notes that Harper would be first choice liaison because of her Union connections and her business knowledge. She wants to nominate her for the President of the Confederate States.

At the Bridge Mansion, Jack heads out for a trip. His pregnant wife VIOLET wants to accompany him, but he insists that she stay behind.

At the Ashland Plantation, Harper's been crying. Adele's servant HARRIET arrives to deliver a note asking her to be the President. She tells Harriet to tell Adele that she refuses.

In the Elder Cabin at Ashland, HERCULES and ABBOTT discuss leaving the plantation and working for wages. Mercy enters, and there is tension – he worked in the house, unlike the other slaves, and had special treatment. Mercy is upset that the other servants aren't affected by Leland's passing, and they are upset because he doesn't understand their experience.

Violet arrives at Ashland. Winston rubs her feet, and tells her he'll be around to help. They share a moment.

At Carroll Hall, Adele and Harriet share a kiss. They debate why Harper declined the nomination – Adele believes she has a duty to her country, and Harriet notes that the country has changed. They get into bed together.

At the traveler camp, one of the thieves MACK lies with his wife AOIFE. They talk about their daughter MARY who is about to be married. Aoife goes to her tent, where Mary is masturbating. She gets up, and joins her mother to go to the river. The women undress and walk into the river. They joke about how worried Mack is.

At Ashland, Adele talks to Harper at the receiving line for the funeral. Adele insists that the country needs Harper to lead. JODY, a young congress member, greets Pauline and makes comments that he thought Harper was her mother, because they are the two most beautiful women he's seen.

Mercy is agitated because Abbott didn't come, and because Hercules only came to see the Master in the ground. Jack arrives, and greets Harper with resigned affection. She tells him about the nomination.

At the traveler camp, a rowdy wedding reception is taking place. Mack is irked by Mary's new husband, JONNY, and his father TALL JON. Aoife reassures him.

At Ashland, Jack enters Harper's bedroom at night (a scandal.) They share wine, and Jack tries to kiss Harper. She backs away, and he undresses. He forces himself on her, and she goes quiet while he kisses her.

Down the hall, Pauline writes a letter to Jody Pierce. At the traveler camp, Jonny is drunk. His friends push him into the tent with Mary, and he promptly falls asleep. Mary turns over and goes to sleep.

When Jack and Harper wake up, Jack is happy – he thinks they are “meant to be.” Harper tells him that she's accepted the nomination. They argue, and Jack leaves.

Later, in the congressional hall, Hylas announces the nominations: Bernard and Harper. Everyone votes for Harper, and she is named the President of the Confederate States of America. She will be inaugurated at noon.

Harper receives the news of the nomination. In the Elder Cabin, Ona moves into Hercules' room. At the freedmen's cottages, Preston, Abbot, and SALMON help Hercules out of a carriage. Preston drives away. Jack meets a woman in a tavern. Harper gives her first address as President of the Confederate States of America.

COMMENTS:

This was an interesting script to read. It is a fictionalized, potentially alternate universe story set during the American Civil War – but there are no real historical figures in it. The main problem with the script is that it's not quite clear what the differences between the storyworld and reality are.

After the Battle of Sailor's Creek (a real battle), there is an armistice between the Union and the Confederacy. It appears that instead of rejoining the Union, the Confederacy is

allowed to break apart and form its own country, the Confederate States of America. However, slavery is abolished in the south. Also, women are allowed to hold high offices, like the presidency.

These ideas are interesting, but it is confusing as to what is happening and what specific differences are intentional in the script. Is this an alternate universe where women are allowed to have power? Where the Confederacy breaks apart and stays that way? If so, why are the slaves freed?

The plotlines between the characters were easy to follow, but the overarching context of this series feels underdeveloped.

The characters themselves were compelling and interesting, and their relationships and interactions kept the plot moving forward. Harper, the protagonist, is simultaneously soft, compassionate, and strong. Watching her take charge during this time of both emotional and political turmoil is fascinating, and the audience roots for her to succeed in both areas of her life.

I also found myself interested in Ona and Mercy's relationship. Not only is their chemistry and affection for each other fun to watch, but also their differences and disagreements brings a layer of depth to the slave experience. Mercy loved his masters because he was a higher class slave, working in the house. Ona wants him to see that he had a vastly different experience from most slaves. The dynamic between the two is complicated by their differing viewpoints, and their story is one that interests me the most.

I liked that the story includes the communities of the upper class whites, the black servants, and the Irish travelers. Each has a different tone, and switching between scenes keeps the pilot interesting. The upper class whites are currently dealing with personal drama, mourning, and leadership struggles. The blacks are dealing with their new freedom, and what it means for different people. The Irish travelers are a wild group, though they deal with universal issues like love and family.

Overall, I really enjoyed the writing and the atmosphere of this story. I just wish that the overarching context were clearer.

SUITABILITY FOR CONTINUATION:

I would not recommend this script as it is.

I really like the idea of an alternate universe take on a huge historical event like the Civil War, and I think it's a unique perspective. If the rules of the storyworld were clearer, I would be interested to see where this series goes. I like Harper as a character, and would be invested in seeing her grow as a leader. I think the relationships between characters, especially Ona and Mercy, are also well-rounded, and I could see the series growing from here.