

WITHERSPOON
 Carry on, young man.

Witherspoon disappears into the forest as the messenger starts to regain his consciousness, clueless as to what happened.

41 INT. MARY ESTHER'S HOME - SITTING ROOM - DAY

41

START

Francis watches out the window as Gabriel practices his swordsmanship in the field outside.

MARY ESTHER
 You have made quite a soldier out of him.

She enters by his side.

FRANCIS MARION
 He fights as a man. But he still has a boy's heart.

Francis regrets that Gabriel has gotten into this.

MARY ESTHER
 And your heart... is it only meant for battle?

His steady gaze meets hers. She cannot continue.

MARY ESTHER
 I should not have interrupted your privacy.

She starts to leave.

FRANCIS MARION
 Mary. Please stay.
 (tries to find the words)
 This has become uncommon for me.

MARY ESTHER
 The comfort of family?

FRANCIS MARION
 The company of a woman.

She sees now, confirming her own feelings.

MARY ESTHER
 You must have some private life

outside of the war?

FRANCIS MARION

I have forfeited all else until it is finished.

Tired, he comes towards a chair and sits, his stiff ankles causing him some pain.

MARY ESTHER

Peg can heat some water for your feet.

FRANCIS MARION

Please. Do not bother.

MARY ESTHER

Francis... allow me this.

He nods with hesitation.

CUT TO:

Peg helps Francis take his shoes and stockings off.

FRANCIS MARION

Thank you.

MARY ESTHER

You may go now, Peg.

As the housekeeper leaves, Mary descends to her knees and helps place Marion's twisted feet in the bowl of hot water.

FRANCIS MARION

(resisting)

No, Mary.

But she does not listen. Instead, she goes on to massage his ankles. He can not help but feel the relief from her touch.

MARY ESTHER

I was distraught when I received news of your accident.

FRANCIS MARION

It was no accident.

She knew this but says nothing, not wanting to upset him. Marion seems more vulnerable than usual in her presence.

FRANCIS MARION

I only added to my existing ailments.
My legs and feet have always been a
weakness.

MARY ESTHER

They have not prevented you from going
where you wanted.

He regards her with affection.

MARY ESTHER

Where will they take you after this?

FRANCIS MARION

Back to the woods. We will assemble
the men and continue our campaign.

MARY ESTHER

What I meant was, after the fighting
is done.

Francis had not considered it.

FRANCIS MARION

It is hard to see that far ahead.

She continues to bathe his feet, looking up at him as she
does.

MARY ESTHER

If there is nowhere else to go, you
may always return here.

Her gaze is full of love and desire.

MARY ESTHER

What I meant was, you may consider
this your home.

Through his stern expression, there is the hint of affection.

FRANCIS MARION

I know your meaning.

The moment lingers until they hear footsteps down the hall.
Peg appears in the doorway.

PEG

Mistress. A rider comin'.

END SCENE