

Haiku and Tanka for Harriet Tubman

By Sonia Sanchez

1

Picture a woman
riding thunder on
the legs of slavery ...

2

Picture her kissing
our spines saying *no* to
the eyes of slavery ...

3

Picture her rotating
the earth into a shape
of lives becoming ...

4

Picture her leaning
into the eyes of our
birth clouds ...

5

Picture this woman
saying *no* to the constant
yes of slavery ...

6

Picture a woman
jumping rivers her
legs inhaling moons ...

7

Picture her ripe
with seasons of
legs ... running ...

8

Picture her tasting
the secret corners
of woods ...

9

Picture her saying:

*You have within you the strength,
the patience, and the passion*

to reach for the stars,

to change the world ...

10

Imagine her words:

*Every great dream begins
with a dreamer ...*

11

Imagine her saying:

*I freed a thousand slaves,
could have freed*

a thousand more if they

only knew they were slaves ...

12

Imagine her humming:

*How many days we got
fore we taste freedom ...*

13

Imagine a woman

asking: *How many workers
for this freedom quilt ...*

14

Picture her saying:

*A live runaway could do
great harm by going back*

but a dead runaway

could tell no secrets ...

15

Picture the daylight
bringing her to woods
full of birth moons ...

16

Picture John Brown

shaking her hands three times saying:
General Tubman. General Tubman. General Tubman.

17

Picture her words:

*There's two things I got a
right to: death or liberty ...*

18

Picture her saying *no*

to a play called *Uncle Tom's Cabin*:
I am the real thing ...

19

Picture a Black woman:

could not read or write
trailing freedom refrains ...

20

Picture her face

turning southward walking
down a Southern road ...

21

Picture this woman

freedom bound ... tasting a
people's preserved breath ...

22

Picture this woman

of royalty ... wearing a crown
of morning air ...

23

Picture her walking,

running, reviving
a country's breath ...

24

Picture black voices

leaving behind
lost tongues ...

Source: *Poetry* (April 2018)