Haiku and Tanka for Harriet Tubman

By

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 ...

Imagine her words:
*Every great dream begins with a dreamer* ...

Imagine her saying:
*I freed a thousand slaves,*
could have freed
a thousand more if they
*only knew they were slaves* ...

Imagine her humming:
*How many days we got fore we taste freedom* ...

Imagine a woman
asking: *How many workers for this freedom quilt* ...

Picture her saying:
*A live runaway could do*  
great harm by going back

*but a dead runaway*  
*could tell no secrets* ...

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

Picture John Brown  
shaking her hands three times saying:  
Picture her words:
There's two things I got a right to: death or liberty ...

Picture her saying no
to a play called Uncle Tom’s Cabin:
I am the real thing ...

Picture a Black woman:
could not read or write
trailing freedom refrains ...

Picture her face
turning southward walking
down a Southern road ...

Picture this woman
freedom bound ... tasting a people’s preserved breath ...

Picture this woman
of royalty ... wearing a crown of morning air ...

Picture her walking,
running, reviving
a country’s breath ...

Picture black voices
leaving behind
lost tongues ...

Source: Poetry (April 2018)