

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)