*SWEET SOUNDS*

FADE IN

1. EXT British naval ship *HARWICH* DECK. DAY
MARINES paraded on poopdeck facing company mustered on maindeck below.

CAPT CARTERET
Men, we're to remain in the Downs for a while longer. England has declared war on France. Soon we sail to the Cape of Good Hope & the East Indies. This voyage is expected to last—
—five years.

MR HEDGE & GEORGE MURRIS stand either side of bound NEWTON stripped to waist. NEWTON shocked, imagines (SUPER)MARY turning her head away from him. Speaking from quarterdeck,

CAPT CARTERET
John Newton's foolish desertion of the *Harwich* has forfeited him the rank of midshipman. Twice he deserted the ship during a time of war. All crew, officers & companions are forbidden to show him the least favour, nor even to speak to him. Mr Hedge, 12 lashes.

CU: NEWTON'S terrified face, FLOGGER HEDGE'S face, whip, CULLPACK, sneering. HEDGE flogs NEWTON.
NEWTON'S screams recede, sailor's lament,(V/O)
'By your Honour's command,
A culprit I stand, An example to all the ship's crew;I'm pinioned & stripp'd And if I am flogg'ed
'tis my due.'

2. EXT *HARWICH* DECK. BLEAK OVERCAST AFTERNOON
Nerve-grating, flapping sounds from sails. CREW & CULLPACK, TARRANT, WHEELER, CRAVEN, laugh & drink in b.g. Outcast NEWTON sits on box,

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

bloodstained cloth around shoulders, pauses sewing sails, to gaze at disappearing English coast. Spray wets his face, knuckles white. Bitter rage & black despair etch his face. Discordant music. NEWTON looks at boiling wake & land, leans on the gunwale.(SUPER)on water,

CAPT CARTERET (V/O)
Voyage is expected to last five years.

NEWTON clasps rigging, stands as if to jump overboard. CREW peer.

NEWTON (V/O)
I'll kill you, Carteret. Or should I die instead?

TARRANT
Jump ye bloody cur. Rid us.

Others laugh & jeer at him. NEWTON flinches, then sinks onto box, crying, defeated.

CULLPACK
Can't jump? A coward, are ye?

MARY'S face (SUPER).

MARY
They said John suicided. I could never marry a coward.

3. EXT *HARWICH* MESS DECK. MORNING
On screen: Off the Madeira coast.
CREW stowing hammocks. NEWTON sleeping in bloodstained shirt in hammock. MIDSHIPMAN shakes him. No response so he cuts hammock lanyard with knife. NEWTON falls to deck on still-tender back. Furious, NEWTON dresses & goes on deck. He sees a foreign longboat & MESSMATE preparing to embark. Puzzled, he asks,

NEWTON
Mate, where are you bound?

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

MESSMATE
Cap’n impressed two ‘ands from this ‘ere Guinea ship, to ter *Harwich* so *Harwich* will exchange two men back. I’m one, Cap’n’ll send another——

NEWTON
Thinks, shouts to sailors in the longboat, Hold the boat.

NEWTON runs to FIRST LT. RUFFIN on quarterdeck.

NEWTON
Sir, I want to be discharged onto the Guinea ship. Please intercede with the Captain on my behalf. Exchanged.

Quizzically LT. RUFFIN looks at him & MESSMATE.

LT. THOMAS RUFFIN
Very well.

DISSOLVE. LT. RUFFIN returns & hands discharge papers to NEWTON.

LT. RUFFIN
Capt’n discharges you from the *Harwich* to be exchanged onto the *Pegasus*. I hope you know what’s in store——.

NEWTON
Thank you sir——& Captain Carteret.

Longboat OARSMEN row CREW & NEWTON to *Pegasus*.

NEWTON
What’s the ship’s name?

MESSMATE
*Pegasus*.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
*Pegasus*? Winged horse? Flying us to freedom from His Majesty's bastards. Let your instincts fly, mate. From now on we choose what we do.

NEWTON Laughs, MESSMATE frowns.

*PEGASUS* SAILOR
Freedom? *Pegasus,* she's a slave ship! No freedom on 'er.

CREW laugh derisively. Boat POV: *Pegasus'* hull. Ominous music.

On Screen: 'Once off the coast the ship became half bedlam and half brothel.'Captain Drake of the slave ship, *Gloria*.

4. INT CAPT PENROSE'S CABIN, *PEGASUS*. DAY
NEWTON, MESSMATE, JOSIAH BLUNT, (Ist mate),

CAPT GUY PENROSE
John Newton, eh? I know a Capt John Newton of ter Royal African Company. Used t' sail ter Mediterranean trade.

NEWTON
He is my father, sir.

CAPT PENROSE
Well, is 'e now? It's a 'appy chance for ter *Pegasus* you came aboard. For yer father's sake I offer friendship to 'is son.

NEWTON
I am most indebted to you, sir.

CAPT PENROSE
So work 'ard & you'll see yer pockets fill up. Sit down. Josiah leave us.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

JOSIAH exits. NEWTON, MESSMATE sit. Papers fly off desk, as PENROSE unfurls charts. ECU: dirty finger pointing to places on chart. Speaking matter-of-factly,

CAPT PENROSE (V/O)
We're in a triangular trade with England, Winward Coast; (like Afric's Sierra Leone) & West Indies. We're 'ere off Madeira. My passenger, Amos Clow, runs a slave depot on Plantain Island, Sierra Leone, 'ere.

MONTAGE: rough handling of SLAVES, *PEGASUS* CREW grabbing WOMEN, BOYS. SLAVE MEN lie shackled together in cramped holds, SLAVES sing laments.

CAPT PENROSE (V/O) CONT'D
Rivers feed ter African coasts: we row up 'em t' buy stock—— slaves——from white traders & local chiefs. We sell guns, pots & pans as currency called 'bars'. One gun equals 10 bars.

NEWTON
What restraints do you use?

PENROSE opens trunk. NEWTON cringes, handling shackles, steeling himself to his job.

CAPT PENROSE
Jaw-opener, thumscrews, chains, leg-irons. Women aren't shackled, they're free for ter men. When ter 'olds' full, we sail ter middle passage (7 wks) to Antigua & St Kitts in ter West Indies. Sell stock to sugar plantation owners.

NEWTON
How well do the men——the stock—— work on plantations?

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

EXT CANEFIELD, WEST INDIES. HOT DAY
ESTABLISHING
WOMEN & MEN SLAVES toil hoeing weeds in clearing. A BABY on the ground cries. BABY'S MOTHER glances at OVERSEER'S back, picks up BABY. OVERSEER sees her, cracks cartwhip, she returns BABY & continues weeding, sobbing.

CAPT PENROSE (V/O)
Africans are built to work canefields, can take ter sun. Then we fumigate ter Pegasus, buy supplies, load sugar, rum & all & 'ead for civilised England. Work hard, man. I'll give yer every assistance.

5. EXT *PEGASUS* DECK. LATER IN VOYAGE. DAY
NEWTON & *PEGASUS* CREW up rigging, singing NEWTON'S *Pegasus Ditty*. Chorus:

'——Small he is, in every part
Small-brained, mean, cruel of heart.
Slaves' cartwhip lay your art,
Brand him at the negroes' mart.'

NEWTON grins down at BLUNT'S & CAPT PENROSE'S angry faces on deck. Yelling,

CAPT PENROSE
Radical blackguard, Newton, teaching my crew ye mutinous ditty. I'll exchange ye back on ter first man o'war I see.

NEWTON worried, gazes towards horizon. BEAT. Says to himself, hardening his face,

NEWTON
No. I'll make my fortune in Africa.

6. INT CAPT PENROSE'S CABIN DAY
NEWTON enters. Capt at desk.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

CAPT PENROSE
Newton, you will join the crew collecting wood & filling water casks each afternoon. Return to the ship next morning. Blunt will give orders. With luck a wild animal will eat you overnight. Dismissed.

NEWTON
Aye, aye Captain.

EXT *PEGASUS* DECK. LATE AFTERNOON.
CAPT PENROSE strides to gunwale, peers down at NEWTON & CREW in longboat.

CAPT PENROSE
Newton, come back onboard. Out.

NEWTON
But why Captain? I always go out with the crew for wood. Can't do without me? (Sarcastic)

CAPT PENROSE
(Uncertain)I just have a notion you shouldn't go tonight. Up NOW.

Turning to REPLACEMENT SAILOR nearby,

You, replace Newton in his duty. You'll stay overnight. Return with wood and water on the tide tomorrow morning.

EXT *PEGASUS* DECK. NOON NEXT DAY.
BLUNT & CAPT PENROSE pace deck, worried.

CAPT PENROSE
The longboat should be back by now. Waited enough. Send a search party ashore.

EXT *PEGASUS* DECK. SAME DAY SUNSET.
CAPT PENROSE gazes towards land. BLUNT boards.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

BLUNT
Capt, we found wreckage of the longboat & all the bodies of the crew. Washed ashore.

BLUNT, CAPT PENROSE & NEWTON exchange glances.

7. EXT *PEGASUS* DECK. DAY
On Screen: Rio Nuna, six months later.
*PEGASUS* CREW watch CAPT PENROSE'S body, being draped in flag. NEWTON & MESSMATE tog. as body slides into sea, in b.g. BLUNT recites lord's prayer. BLUNT dismisses company, turns, scowls towards NEWTON. MESSMATE sees BLUNT'S scowl.

MESSMATE
John, in two days we leave Africa. Penrose is dead. Blunt, e's Capt'n now—'e 'ates yer. 'eard yer song mocking Penrose. Obey Capt Blunt or he'll throw ye back on a man o' war in ter West Indies!

NEWTON stares at MESSMATE, panics, searches the sea & ship. He spies AMOS CLOW: ruby ring on finger, gold buttons on dirty coat; wealthy slave-trader but no gentleman. NEWTON approaches CLOW who eyes him suspiciously.

NEWTON
Excuse me, Mr Clow. May I speak with you? Name's Newton, John Newton. On landfall in Sierra Leone, would you be needing an extra hand with your slaves?

CLOW
Maybe. How long yer bin at sea?

NEWTON
Since I was eleven. My father was a merchant ship captain.

CLOW
Skinny wretch, aren't ye? Could ye 'andle male slaves? Women?

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
Yes, I'm sure, sir. Give me a chance?

CLOW ponders as NEWTON fidgets.

CLOW
You'll be useful——perhaps. See if yer can stand up t'fevers, the rains——. No work contract is needed.

NEWTON
Thank you. How do you capture the slaves?

8. EXT BEACH, PLANTAIN IS, SIERRA LEONE. DAY ESTABLISHING
On screen: Plantain Island, off Sierra Leone coast, West Africa.
CLOW & NEWTON walk on beach. NEWTON, barefoot, swings small swag & book, Barrow's *Euclidis Elementa* tied with a leather strap.

CLOW (V/O)
I don't capture them. We sail up the Sherbro River 2 miles away, on mainland. Meet local chief t' see what stock 'e has to sell—— price is counted in 'bars' that's iron, guns, pots & pans, cloth. Don't buy an adult male for less than 70 'bars'.

NEWTON (V/O)
What if the chief doesn't have stock?

EXT DAY B/W MONTAGE: AFRICAN TRADERS march AFRICAN MEN & WOMEN, shackled neck/hands, through savannah.

CLOW (V/O)
We start fireworks between tribes up country——sell guns t' one tribe only. Chief sells

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

survivors to us. Easy. The chief profits, we profit selling stock to slave ships. We keep slaves here until ships come. A second trader, Williams, visits here. He owns a trading depot up Kittam River.

9. EXT PLANTAIN IS. DAY

CLOW & NEWTON carry coconut logs & banana trees between huts.

CLOW (V/O)
Have to build a depot, a homestead, huts for slaves & we trade goods: guns, knives, livestock. I've bought slaves for heavy work. I'll get me woman––PI. She's a tribal princess: useful in getting stock &––getting wealthy.

DISSOLVE.

10. EXT PLANTAIN IS. LATER. DAY

PI, haughty African princess with 1ST & 2ND SLAVE WOMEN, in gaudy western clothes inspects NEWTON, tugs at his tattered shirt, overt instant dislike.

CLOW
PI, he's Newton 'e's working with me.

PI
He's too weak for panyarring. Is this my house?

PI struts with PI'S SLAVES towards her new house. NEWTON turns to Clow,

NEWTON
What's panyarring?

CLOW
Man-stealing. We also trade in women & children.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

11. INT CLOW'S HOUSE. DAY
PI & PI'S SLAVE watch CLOW gather his swag & gun. NEWTON, feverish, sits. To PI,

CLOW
Goin' up river to buy stock. Be away weeks. Feed NEWTON, 'e'll recover.

CLOW exits. NEWTON whispers,

NEWTON
Water?

PI
I'm not yer slave to command.

PI'S 1st SLAVE gives him water. NEWTON drinks. PI'S SLAVES carry him to shed. He lies on filthy mat on a chest. Tossing in delirium on wood pillow, MONTAGE: NEWTON'S face, MOTHER, FATHER'S fury, CAPT CARTERET ordering lashes, MARY.

12. INT/EXT DINING ROOM, CLOW'S HOUSE. DAY
PI'S SLAVES attend PI eating. Bones, rinds, leftovers litter table.

PI
(Sarcastic)NEWTON come beg for yer dinner.

NEWTON'S POV: CAM swims. He staggers to PI. Kneeling,

NEWTON
I beg of you.

PI extends the plate to him. NEWTON is too weak, drops plate, shattering it. PI laughs. PI'S SLAVES look on pitying him.

PI
Yer waste my food? No more, yer starve.

DISSOLVE.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

13. BEACH, PLANTAIN IS. Weeks later. DAY
NEWTON, recovered, complains to CLOW.

NEWTON
PI starved me & slaves threw stones——. Nearly died.

CLOW
——PI is my woman, takes my orders. Act like a man, not a whining child, John. You've got t' 'andle man slaves. Yer can't even 'andle a woman! Scowbunkin' lubber!

NEWTON
I nearly died from fever! Starved——.

CLOW
Yer survived so ya fever was nothing. Men die from fevers in Africa. Wished ya 'ad died, be rid of ya.

14. INT NEWTON'S ROOM, PLANTAIN IS. AFTERNOON
PI'S 1ST SLAVE enters, smuggling tray of food, paper, quill, ink. Exits closing door. NEWTON (V/O) writes,

'Father, I'm captive of Amos Clow Plantain Is. . . Mary I yearn to see you——.'

15. BEACH, PLANTAIN IS. DAY
While CLOW speaks to WILLIAMS facing sea, 6 paces behind, PI'S 1st SLAVE stops McCRAIG & slyly slips NEWTON'S letters to him. McCRAIG walks towards WILLIAMS. DISSOLVE.

16. EXT RIVER SLAVE TRADING POST. DAY
ESTABLISHING
B.g. Branding upper backs of screaming SLAVES near round wooden prison full of adult & child SLAVES. English traders, WILLIAMS & MCCRAIG haggle with AFRICAN CHIEFS, buying SLAVES with

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

'bars': iron, pots, pans & guns. F.g. NEWTON counts guns & yards of cloth then enters numbers in account book. Annoyed by CHAINED WOMAN'S crying nearby he slaps her. ACCUSING TRADER & CLOW speak at distance, spying NEWTON. Fuming, CLOW marches to NEWTON & strikes him,

CLOW
Bin stealing me goods & guns at night, 'ave ya? Abusing me trust? After all I did for you! You're my slave now.

NEWTON
What? No, I swear.

CLOW thumps him. He collapses and blacks out.

17. EXT BEACH NEAR CLOW'S HOUSE, PLANTAIN IS. DAY
ECU: NEWTON'S raw, bitten, sandy face, after he's flung onto beach. Clamped in leg irons. CLOW, PI & HEAD SLAVE stand.

CLOW
Useless, thieving bastard.

PI
He stole my food.

CLOW
'ad to lock the cur on me ship when I went inland. For 8 weeks 'e caught fish at slack tide. Rained everyday. (laughs) Not even God can kill 'im.

PI
Pity he didn't catch fever and die. Useless stock.

CLOW spits, walks off. DISSOLVE.

18. EXT ISLAND LIME GROVE. HOT DAY
Manacled NEWTON is sweating in tattered clothes.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

HEAD SLAVE
Plant limes in straight rows.

He gives NEWTON baskets of seedlings, walks off. NEWTON'S face seethes with rage. DISSOLVE.

LIME GROVE. LATER IN DAY
PI & CLOW walk beside NEWTON, SLAVES.

CLOW
(Sarcastic)Who knows, Newton, by the time these trees grow up & bear, yer may sail home t' England, obtain command of a ship & return t' reap the fruits of yer labours? Sometimes strange things 'appen! Ha, ha.

PI & CLOW walk away cackling. NEWTON slumps in despair. SLAVES cast pitying looks at him.

19. EXT PLANTAIN IS. BEACH. DAY
NEWTON, manacled, ragged, limps along beach, dragging driftwood, slumps on sand. ECU: bare feet. Face shows almost deranged mind, staring, crying,

NEWTON
I'm a poor hulk left here on this shore. I will go mad! *No*, no, won't.

Stares at driftwood. Opens *Euclidis Elementa* & draws geometrical shapes in sand with stick. NEWTON'S unaware, walking above are McCRAIG & WILLIAMS. They see him & pause.

MCCRAIG
Seems Newton has a leaning to knowledge.

WILLIAM WILLIAMS
Knows mathematics. Newton may be useful to us. Waste of a white man to shackle 'im. I'll ask Clow again to release 'im to me.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

20. EXT BEACH, KITTAM R. DAY ESTABLISHING
On Screen: After almost a year of slavery, WILLIAMS gains NEWTON'S release. With health restored, NEWTON enjoys power & ease as overseer of WILLIAMS' trading depot on Kittam River. Believing MARY won't accept him nor his FATHER forgive him, he takes a MISTRESS & decides to trade in slaves in Africa permanently.
On a beach McCRAIG waves to inshore ship & lights a fire.

21. INT KITTAM RIVER. HOUSE, SIERRA LEONE. DAY
On screen: 1747
NEWTON, spruced & angry, cleans pistols as his distressed AFRICAN MISTRESS stands, watching him.

MISTRESS
Don't duel with him. He'll kill you. Stupid white ma——.

NEWTON slams down pistol, grabs her clothes. She screams.

NEWTON
(angrily)Watch your tongue or I'll slice it off. His insult demands satisfaction. I'll brook no quarter ——.

*GREYHOUND* CAPTAIN, merchant, & McCRAIG enter surprising them. He frees the girl.

NEWTON (CONT'D)
Who may you be? You're sailing late in the season in these waters——.

MCCRAIG
John, this is the Captain of the merchantman, *Greyhound*. He's procuring ivory & beeswax. I signalled him to trade.

GREYHOUND CAPTAIN
A quarter hour & we'd've left the coast. My employer, Joseph

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

Manesty from Liverpool,ordered me to seek a John Newton in Africa! From your letter your father yearns you return to England. Come with me. My humble cabin is yours on the voyage home——take a year. So we must go——now——favourable winds——

MISTRESS
Ye can't go John. No.

NEWTON is surprised by miraculous timing of CAPT'S arrival. Unsure whether to go with him.

NEWTON
*Quiet*. My father? England? Now?

22. INT *GREYHOUND* CAPT'S/NEWTON'S CABIN. DAY
On screen: Many months later.
NEWTON sits with feet on Capt's desk. *GREYHOUND* CAPT enters & shoves NEWTON'S feet off his desk.

GREYHOUND CAPTAIN
Vile creature. Cease ye profanities man. Ye sin with a high hand & break the Blasphemy Law. Lord knows I'm not a religious man, but I don't march me tongue into hell like ye.

NEWTON
'March me tongue into hell'? Our Capt's a literary wit!

GREYHOUND CAPTAIN
Newton, wi' ye black heart & mind, your thinking's——futile! Worthless son of ye mother. Wished I'd never allowed y'aboard. Should've let ye die of fever on African sand. None would've mourned ye passing.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

23. INT *GREYHOUN*D CAPT CABIN. EVE
On screen: Laden with cargo the *Greyhound* sails across the Atlantic until 9 March 1748.
NEWTON, bored, finds the Capt's book *The Imitation of Christ* Thomas à Kempis. He frowns,

THOMAS À KEMPIS (V/O)
'As a ship without a helm is tossed with the waves; so the man who leaves his purpose is tempted. Today man is flourishing, tomorrow cut down. How will you appear at heaven's tribunal? What plea to your sentence to Him who knows all your concealed sins?'

NEWTON
What if these things are true?

Conscience pricked briefly, he hears CREW'S banter (O/S). Slams book shut. Exiting cabin,

NEWTON
I'll accept the cost of my choices.

24. EXT *GREYHOUND* DECK. AFTERNOON
On screen: Next afternoon.
*Greyhound* tosses with violent storm, rolls in gigantic waves. Decks awash. Tattered sails, broken spas, side of hull broken off, exposing ribs. *GREYHOUND* CAPT lashed to wheel, steers ship. *GREYHOUND* SAILORS vainly bail with buckets.

25. INT/EXT BELOW DECKS *GREYHOUND*. EARLY MORNING
Wind has slackened but not stopped. 12 CREW strip off shirts, tearing bedding to plug holes in the ship's hull. John bearded, bare-chested, bearing scars of whipping, nails timber over his shirt to fill a hole. To OLD SAILOR,

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
In a few days this disaster will be conversation over a glass of wine!

OLD GREYHOUND SAILOR tugs NEWTON'S shoulder to peer at him. Shaking, wild-eyed, weeping,

OLD GREYHOUND SAILOR
No, no. It's too late now. What is it like to die?

NEWTON, suddenly terrified, shrugs him off & runs away. EXT. NEWTON struggles to walk along plunging deck, grabbing handholds on fo'c's'le. He pauses.

NEWTON
If this will not stop, the Lord have mercy on us!

NEWTON staggers further. Shaking with fear, he looks at waves crashing & wind howling & asks,

NEWTON (CONT'D)
What mercy can there be for me?

26. EXT *GREYHOUND* PUMP. LATER IN DAY
NEWTON & a *GREYHOUND* SAILOR push the pump, icy waves drench the frozen men. Pump arms creak. Push & release rhythm merge with antiphony:

ELIZABETH NEWTON (V/O)
John, what does Proverbs chapter one say about wisdom?

NEWTON (V/O AS 7 Y/O RECITING *PROVERBS 1:25-31*)
I know Wisdom. 'They would have none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity.'

Waves pour over him. Distressed by waves & words. FADE OUT.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

27. EXT *GREYHOUND* DECK. AFTERNOON
NEWTON steers while lashed to helm. Heavy seas & strong winds. With each line, MONTAGE: past sins; striking CHAINED FEMALE SLAVE, insolence to CAPTAINS, MOTHER'S face & ship breaking up.

(YOUNG NEWTON V/O)
Wisdom says,'I will mock when their fear comes. They hated knowledge & did not choose the fear of the Lord. Then shall they call upon me but I will not answer.'

Distressed, sobs into the wind,

NEWTON (V/O)
I sinned with a high hand. God won't forgive me.

(YOUNG NEWTON V/O)
'Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way. And be filled with their own devices.'

NEWTON winces and ducks as a spar breaks with a terrifying crack. Sails rip, boards splinter. DISSOLVE.

28. EXT *GREYHOUND* DECK. DAY
*GREYHOUND* CAPT look over gunwale. COOK, agitated, points to broken kegs floating away,

GREYHOUND COOK
Capt'n all livestock & provisions bin swept overboard. Only feed for hogs left. But 'ave full casks of water.

GREYHOUND CAPTAIN
Ration what remains. Cook the cod we caught off Newfoundland. The ship is free of water now.

29. INT GREYHOUND CAPT'S CABIN. EVE
Dimly lit, hear sea and wind roar. NEWTON searches his Bible.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
'A death for sins not His own, but for those who in their distress should put their trust in Him.' Where is the evidence for this? God help me understand. I want to believe——.

FADE IN/FADE OUT as reciting from Bishop William Beveridge's book, *The Merits of Christ's Passion*.

NEWTON CONT'D
(Emotional from revelation)
'Christ came to take away sins. The strength & guilt of sin: our liking to sin & punishments for it. Let's search our hearts, what sins we have committed against the eternal God for which the Son of God himself was betrayed, accused, condemned & crucified?' ——Jesus died for MY sins!

'When we are in trouble, & ready to sink under it; it is he who supports our spirits.' Support—— for me?! Oh, 'Our Father, um, which art in heaven, hallowed be your name…'

30. INT *GREYHOUND* MESS. DAY
Starving *GREYHOUND* CREW eat tiny cod rations.
DISSOLVE.

31. EXT/INT *GREYHOUND* DECK. AFTERNOON
On screen: Three weeks later.
Shredded sails, broken spars, decking, horizon, unkempt *GREYHOUND* CREW shiver. Seas boil.

NEWTON
Captain, we're likely to be the first ship in these waters this season.

*GREYHOUND* CAPT glances at *GREYHOUND* CREW on deck who paw menacingly towards NEWTON.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

GREYHOUND CAPTAIN
We're flung west off the Irish coast because of ye. A curse attends ye, Newton, wherever ye go. Should throw ye overboard then we'll be saved from this peril.

NEWTON
I'm not the cause of this calamity!

*GREYHOUND* CREW mumbles & stalk NEWTON who retreats, hearing,

GREYHOUND MIDSHIPMAN
No, don't waste 'is scrawny hide. Let's boil 'im up for dinner instead.

Terrified, NEWTON flees into Capt/Newton's Cabin. Shaking, locks the door & leans on it.

NEWTON
God of mercy, save us all. Command winds & waves to drive us to safety, I beg you before they kill me——.

32. EXT *GREYHOUND* DECK. SUNNY DAY
On screen: Good Friday 1748.
Remaining tattered sails billow.

CROWSNEST SAILOR
Land ahoy! Land ahoy!

NEWTON & SAILORS gaze at sails, hopeful. GREYHOUND CAPTAIN peers through eye-glass towards land.

GREYHOUND CAPTAIN
That's Tory Island, we're off Donegal, lads.

Laughter, shouts. Near OLD SAILOR,

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
Thank God. What mercy!

33. EXT *GREYHOUND* DECK, ANCHORED, BUNCRANA CASTLE, LOUGH SWILLY. DAY ESTABLISHING *GREYHOUND* CREW lowering longboat, COOK rushes onto deck, carrying broken water cask, aghast.

GREYHOUND COOK
Cookin' our last rations now when I see six casks of water—— their backs' be broken! Not a drop in 'em. I never knew. We'd have died of thirst in a day——.

NEWTON & *GREYHOUND* CREW stare, amazed.

NEWTON
God saved——US!

34. EXT LONDONDERRY STREET. SUNNY DAY ESTABLISHING
Solo sings: Be Thou My Vision.
'Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art. Thou my best Thought, by day or by night, Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.'
NEWTON walks towards church. CAM ECU pans his legs to shoes. Cut to his shackled feet trudging along beach. Song & shackles fade. Entering church, he finds people seated. He humbly hesitates, doffs hat, sits in empty back pew near sunlit window. MONTAGE: (minister conducts service; speaks from pulpit, faces people, flowers.) When all kneel, NEWTON, contrite, rests head on arms, shoulders trembling. Raising his head, his POV stares at blurry empty cross, focus clears. Song fades.

NEWTON (V/O)
Almighty God. In shame & confusion, I'm a poor vile creature. Sinned. Jesus, thank you for your mercies, forgive me. I give you my life.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

CAM side view in sunshine, CG black shackled figure shrinking in size slides off Newton behind him, glides across floor & vanishes out the door. NEWTON sings lustily, smiling faces turn to him. DISSOLVE.

35. EXT LONDONDERRY CHURCH. DAY
CONGREGATION exits & chat outside church door. NEWTON leaves in contentment & joy, feeling sunshine on his face. Walks along street.

NEWTON (V/O)
'Mary, my first prayers were answered. He whom the winds and seas obey, miraculously brought me in safety to Ireland. I gave my whole life to him.' 'Father, I survived the tempest.'

CAPT NEWTON (V/O)
'Words can't express my relief that you are alive. I'd abandoned all hope. I sail shortly to Hudson's Bay.
To take up the post as Governor of York Fort. '

36. EXT RIVER MEDWAY, KENT. SUMMER DAY
ESTABLISHING
On screen: June 1748.
NEWTON, MARY & CATLETT CHILDREN walk & play happily beside the river. NEWTON reaches for MARY'S hand. She retreats, laughing.

37. INT NEWTON'S CABIN, *BROWNLOW* AT SEA. EVE
ESTABLISHING
On screen: In the summer, NEWTON left Liverpool as first mate on JOSEPH MANESTY'S *Brownlow* bound for Sierra Leone. MANESTY, like most people in Britain at the time saw no evil in slave trading.
Restless NEWTON, hears SLAVE WOMEN'S lament, *BROWNLOW* SAILORS' coarse banter, disrupting his prayers. Opens bible, flicks pages, slams it shut, pushes it aside, exits cabin. Ship rolls, bible falls off desk.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

38. EXT BEACH, PLANTAIN IS. DAY
With armed CREW behind, NEWTON marches along beach, ignoring 1ST & 2ND SLAVE WOMEN hanging PI's washing on line strung between palm trees.

FIRST SLAVE WOMAN
Look, there's NEWTON. What ye think,'e's got shoes on!

SECOND SLAVE WOMAN
Aye, & stockings too!

NEWTON overhearing, grins. At CLOW'S house,

NEWTON
(Commands)CLOW, COME OUT & TRADE.

CLOW emerges slowly, aghast to see him.

CLOW
Slave's become the slave trader! My. Strange things do 'appen!

NEWTON
Get your stock out for me.

On beach, 11 adult SLAVES, PREGNANT SLAVE & TERRIFIED GIRL SLAVE line up for NEWTON to choose. Tension.

CLOW
My fine males. 70 bars each.

NEWTON
70 bars! They're not worth 70!

CLOW
Times changed on the coast. Good stock is scarce.

NEWTON
65 bars final price.

CLOW
65, but 'ardly worth me time.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
60 bars for women, no more.

NEWTON points to crying PREGNANT SLAVE.

CLOW
63 bars. She's pregnant. Child'll fetch extra in St Kitts.

NEWTON
63 bars! They're all weak, Clow.

CLOW
Nothing wrong with stock. Their arms are strong enough t' work canefields.

CLOW squeezes PREGNANT SLAVE'S arm, who squeals. NEWTON jams his pistol into CLOW'S arm. Viciously,

NEWTON
*Leave. 61 for her.* I'll take 11 slaves——for prices agreed—— savvy?

CLOW releases PREGNANT SLAVE'S arm. SLAVES & CREW walk down beach. DISSOLVE.

39. EXT LIME GROVE, PLANTAIN IS. DAY
NEWTON strolls among 5 y/o limes-trees, stops to finger leaves. FLASHBACK:

CLOW (V/O)
'Who knows, Newton, by the time these trees grow up & bear, you may go home to England, obtain command of a ship & return to reap the fruits of your labours?'

40. INT FEVER ROOM, CLOW'S HOUSE. DAY
NEWTON abed, delirious with fever. 1st & 2nd WOMEN SLAVES at doorway, shake heads.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

FIRST SLAVE WOMAN
Fever's got 'im. He won't last.

END FLASHBACK

NEWTON (V/O)
(Remorseful, praying SILENTLY)
I broke all my vows to you I made in my own strength. I deserved death on the *Greyhound*. I'm a wretch. My sins——Lord, thank you for forgiving me. Healing. Praise you. Help me not to fall into sin again.

On screen: Following his rededication, God miraculously saves NEWTON'S life in a longboat accident in Rio Cestors. The *Brownlow* sails to Antigua in the West Indies. Unable to sell slaves there, they sail to Charles Town, South Carolina. At sea 62 slaves die.

41. EXT *BROWNLOW* DECK. AUTUMN DAY

BROWNLOW CROWSNEST SAILOR
Land ahoy. The Skerries ahead. England. We're home!

BROWNLOW CREW
'Don a tankard in Annie's Inn.
Find a whore in Liverpool
Waiting for ye stupid fools.'

42. INT PARLOUR CATLETT HOUSE. EVE

NEWTON, heart pounding, stuttering words & MARY sit.

MARY
I hesitate to marry you John.

NEWTON
Why? From first sight, I've felt affection for you which never abated a single moment. It equalled all that writers of romance imagine. BEAT. If money is your worry, Manesty says I'll

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

command my own ship next season—
—Polly why refuse me?

MARY
You're different, serious. I can't live up to your seriousness. You press me to become Mrs John Newton. I fear I'd look back with regret to 'happy Polly Catlett.'

NEWTON
(passionately)
Dear, you won't lose your pleasures, merely change them. Tell me. Do you——love me?

MARY
Yes I, I do love you, John, but.

NEWTON
Then marry me. Give me your hand——. What other impediment is there?

Pausing, MARY looks towards the window then gives her hand to John.

NEWTON
My sweet Mary. I WILL make you happy. What kindness the Lord gives me, to be granted your hand——.

NEWTON kisses MARY. DISSOLVE.

43. EXT ST MARGARET'S CHURCH, ROCHESTER. DAY ESTABLISHING
MONTAGE: MINISTER conducting NEWTON wedding; CATLETT FAMILY, FRIENDS in church, MINISTER speaking, Newtons' love. Romantic atmosphere. DISSOLVE.

44. INT NEWTON'S CABIN, *DUKE OF ARGYLE*. DAY ESTABLISHING
NEWTON writes, 'Journal of a voyage intended (by God's permission) in the *Duke of Argyle*,

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

snow, John Newton, Master, from Liverpool to the Winward Coast of Africa etc; commenced the 11th August 1750. It will be pleasant to remember these things afterwards.'

45. GANGWAY *ARGYLE*, SIERRA LEONE COAST. DAY
Cutlass, knives in waistband NEWTON stands with WELSH, First Mate. Manacled *Argyle* SLAVES branded 'JM' on upper back, shuffle along deck. Armed *Argyle* CREW jostle SLAVES. CLOW, PI & PI's MALE SLAVE step aboard. PI is wary, now subordinated.

NEWTON
CLOW, PI, welcome aboard my ship, the *Duke of Argyle*. I'm honoured——.

LEES throws carpenter's maul, grazing PI'S MALE SLAVE'S arm. CREW pounce on LEES.

NEWTON
STAPLE HIM. Lees, *HMS Surprize* is in these waters. Capt Baird'll tame your violence.

CLOW
I see your troublesome crewman my slaves caught on the island hasn't changed under your command.

PI
He tried to kill my slave. Pay me for his wound!

NEWTON plucks gaudy lacy bonnet from trunk, hands it to her.

NEWTON
Only a graze. I'm sure this will heal your wound.

PI grabs bonnet, strides towards gangway followed by CLOW & MALE SLAVE. NEWTON, CREW laugh at her.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

46. INT NEWTON'S CABIN, *ARGYLE*. EVE
ECU: At window NEWTON grieves reading Mary's letter.

NEWTON (V/O)
Had news of my dear father's drowning not come with word of your health & affection, I should have felt it more heavily, for I loved & revered him. I yearned to ask his forgiveness——.

On screen: Captain Newton anchors the *Duke of Argyle* off Liverpool in 1751. Though the Newtons dread hazardous voyages, since sailing is the only trade he knows, John leaves Liverpool on 30 June 1752 commanding the *African*. Prior to sailing Newton met Job Lewis. Remorseful for changing Job into a rebellious atheist on the *Harwich,* John offers him a berth as Captain's Commander. Adult male slaves now cost 102 bars on the coast.

47. EXT *AFRICAN* DECK, CALM NIGHT
CHORAL SONG: Sea of Berries. (Paul Jarman)
NEWTON on poop deck near 3 lamps, sadly gazes at North star.

48. EXT NEWTON'S HOUSE, LIVERPOOL - MOONLIT NIGHT
CHORAL SONG: Sea of Berries
MARY, lonely, sobs outside her front door, gazing at North Star.

49. EXT *AFRICAN* DECK, DAY AT SEA
MUSIC: Portsmouth.
MALE SLAVES sit chained by leg irons rings, locked to ring bolts fastened on deck. DOCTOR tends SLAVE'S wound. Unshackled males wash from buckets, rub skin with oil. WOMEN huddle. SAILOR plays a fiddle, another dances hornpipe. Guard pushes BOY SLAVE & DANCING MALE SLAVE into dancing. Scared, they copy SAILOR'S jig. Hard faces soften as more SLAVES dance & music speeds up. Everyone cheers & laughs. During

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

dancing, on deck unshackled MUTINY SLAVE BOY with leg ulcer slips a chisel & knife through grating to MALE RINGLEADERS below. DISSOLVE.

50. EXT *AFRICAN* DECK, SUNDAY, DAY
WOMEN SLAVES sit, CREW mustered, hear NEWTON read from a prayer book:

> '…——Almighty God, we your servants give you hearty thanks for all your loving kindness to us.'

CREW puzzled, JOB sneers at John's prayer, to crew nearby.

> ——Father, I commit to you my crew & slaves. We pray for your protection & destiny. Amen. Men, England has replaced the Julian calendar with the Gregorian calendar. The new year will now start on 1 January. Dismissed.

NEWTON walks past MUTINY SLAVE BOY, overhears JOB. To CREW,

JOB LEWIS
Men, our good Capt believes this redundant, bloody nonsens——.

As CREW murmur agreement, NEWTON drags JOB away from CREW, throws him onto the deck. Hisses,

NEWTON
Lewis, I command you not to infect my men with your mutinous, libertine views. Since Liverpool you've sought to undermine my authority at every turn. Yes I've come back to faith. I pray you do so——before God's judgement.

JOB LEWIS
Faith! Stupidity. God doesn't exist, John. Grow up!

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
CAPTAIN to you.

NEWTON is visibly grieved at LEWIS' attitude.
DISSOLVE.

51. INT *AFRICAN* NEWTON'S CABIN. DAY
On bookshelf: *Terence, Cicero* & *Virgil; The Life of Colonel James Gardiner*, *Psalmorum Davidis Paraphrasis Poetica*. MONTAGE: from books littering desk NEWTON studies Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Latin, French, Maths, *Euclid*.

NEWTON
Elohim, El Shaddai. Shekinah: the glory of God. Glory of God.

52. EXT/INT *AFRICAN* DECK. MORNING
CREW open hatch. NEWTON sees in near darkness RINGLEADERS staring up, unshackled. Surprised CREW shout. DISSOLVE. In iron collars, RINGLEADERS paraded before SLAVES on deck. WOMEN SLAVES sing lament.

NEWTON (V/O)
God save me from this life of chains & shackles. Grant me a humane calling to do some good in the world, I beg.

AFRICAN. DAY
NEWTON up rigging, gazes at sea.

NEWTON (V/O)
Mary, encircled by sea & sky, there is so much evidence of God. But there's no-one within a thousand miles who worships Him.

53. INT *AFRICAN* NEWTON'S CABIN. DAY
JOB, with insolent sneering face. NEWTON stands commanding, but anxious.

NEWTON
I've bought the *Racehorse.* Her Capt & crew were murdered. She's

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

your command, with Taylor as first mate. Take my surplus cargo, half my crew. Trade upriver for slaves & camwood. Rendezvous in 5 weeks.

LEWIS
My own command? I'm free to live——er, trade as I please?

NEWTON
Trade under my orders——and live——. Take solemn warning Job to guard your soul. Commit your life into God's hands & end your path to destruction.

LEWIS
Live under God's dictates? That's pious. On the *Harwich* you changed me into a freethinker. You said,'Why carry the burden of faith, Job? What did God do for you, Job?' I'll take command of the *Racehorse*, you keep your petty piety, Capt Newton.

54. INT *RACEHORSE* CAPT'CABIN. DAY
Lewis & RACEHORSE SAILORS very drunk, grab WOMEN SLAVES. FADE-OUT.

55. EXT *AFRICAN* DECK, SIERRA LEONE. DAY
NEWTON hears minute guns. Sees in eyeglass the *Racehorse* with colours half-mast. He's anxious.

*AFRICAN* CROWSNEST SAILOR
*Racehorse* ahead. Longboat approaches.

NEWTON
Prepare for boarding.

56. INT *AFRICAN* NEWTON'S CABIN. DAY
TAYLOR & NEWTON are distraught.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

TAYLOR
'Twas dreadful, Cap'n, fever got him in the end.

FLASHBACK: LEWIS, tosses feverishly in cot, yelling. TAYLOR watches, concerned. LEWIS grabs TAYLOR.

LEWIS
'I'm goin' to hell, hell. Help me——.'

CUT TO NEWTON'S CABIN. NEWTON turned to window.

NEWTON
Did he hope for——God's mercy?

TAYLOR
. . . No Captain.

NEWTON
——So he died, convinced but not changed. . . Thank you.

TAYLOR exits. NEWTON shakes and sits down.

NEWTON
Gone to hell unrepentant——before God's justice: Lewis & Mitchell. Thank God I didn't choose their path.

57. EXT *AFRICAN*. HOT DAY
On screen: Basse Terre, St Kitts in the West Indies, 1754.
NEWTON & armed CREW row scared SLAVES to shore in longboat.

58. INT PARLOUR, PLANTER'S MANSION, ST KITTS. WARM MAY NIGHT ESTABLISHING
B.g. Babble from PLANTERS, AGENTS, MERCHANTS, SLAVE SHIP CAPTAINS, HOSTESS, WEALTHY COUPLES, richly attired at soirée. BAREFOOT SLAVES serve tables, fan guests.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

SLAVE SHIP AGENT
(Pompous, emotionally detached)
——concerning calculations whether it's more economical to give slaves moderate work, good food & treatment so they live to old age. Or, by rigorously taxing their strength to the utmost by hard usage, wear them out before they become——useless——then buy new stock. What's your opinion?

PLANTER
Wear them out. Why waste your efforts on old stock when young ones are so cheap? And they bear sons.

SLAVE SHIP CAPTAIN
(Confident, persuasive but drunk)
'owever long they live don't matter. We extend their lives by a few years, don't us? We rescue ter miserable beggars from death at the 'ands of their own chiefs.

CAPT ALEX CLUNIE, merchant Scot 30s, enters. NEWTON stands in earshot of CLUNIE.

HOSTESS
Capt Clunie, welcome to St Kitts. Enjoy the entertainment St Kitts affords you weary sailors. Soirées every night——.

ALEX CLUNIE
Honoured by your hospitality. I'll enjoy St Kitts' soirées but I must confess, weeks of sailors' talk of brothels, gives me a taste for serious debate—— philosophy, faith——.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON, overhearing *faith,* drifts towards CLUNIE, but PLANTER HOST elbows NEWTON. To guests loudly,

PLANTER HOST
Ladies & gentlemen St Kitts welcomes you all. NEWTON, sing us a song.

NEWTON in front of guests, sings,

NEWTON
'Comely, yet such beauty rare,
My love's sweet face and radiant hair. Beguile me still, now we're apart, Distract me still, my lonely heart. Laughter bright, I hear as new
But tis months since mirth we knew.'

SLAVE SHIP AGENT
John, you sing about loving one wife. Why so attached to just one? Why spare yourself, man?

SLAVE SHIP CAPTAIN
I 'ad 200 women on me last voyage. Why be a slave to one woman, Newton, when yer can command a hundred?

MALE GUESTS laugh agreement.

NEWTON
Slave to one woman? I deny it. By your own admission I think *you're* the slaves to these hundreds of women.

SLAVES' cautiously smiles. Some Guests laugh, others derisive,

Impertinent bastard. Self-righteous——

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

PLANTER HOST
Now gentlemen, friendly gathering. Capt Newton was only jesting. More wine, wine.

He waves to SLAVES to attend guests' drinks. SLAVES jump to.

59. EXT MANSION VERANDA. LATER
B.g. drunken party mirth. NEWTON approaches seated CLUNIE.

CAPT ALEX CLUNIE
Newton, sit awhile. I'm Alex Clunie,merchant. Sail out of London. What's your port?

NEWTON
Liverpool, but I was born in Wapping.

CAPT ALEX CLUNIE
Wapping! A man travels to godless ends of the earth only to meet a man from a few leagues from his own home! My wife & I attend Samuel Brewer's Independent church in Stepney.

NEWTON
Samuel Brewer? My mother took me to Dr David Jennings' chapel, near Brewer's church.

CAPT ALEX CLUNIE
You correspond with Dr Jennings?

NEWTON
Yes, his notes on religion are illuminating but there's so much I don't know——about God. Surrounded by blasphemous lechers I call my crew I thought I wouldn't meet a Christian before landfall in England.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

CAPT ALEX CLUNIE
I'd be pleased to answer any spiritual questions. I sail in a month, so business permitting——.

NEWTON
——You'll find me an ardent disciple. Teach me the Bible & how to live as a believer. Meeting you is fortuitous.

Breeze blows. CLUNIE covers his nose.

That's my ship's odour. My crew hasn't finished fumigating after the slaves left. I'd ask you aboar——.

CLUNIE
Come to my ship.

60. INT CLUNIE'S CABIN. NIGHT
Men relaxed. Jackets off. Open Bible on desk.

NEWTON
The illustrious clergyman in St Kitts couldn't answer my questions. His only distinction as a minister was his gown & surplice!

CLUNIE
John, who do you think God is? Do you understand the sinner's salvation?

NEWTON
God is the Creator, potentate we must obey: our Captain. Salvation——I own an evil heart. I fear lapsing into disbelief, like my crew. I've trodden their path too hard. I had a dream once. I was in Venice.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

61. INT MESS DECK. NIGHT DREAM SCENE
CREW asleep & NEWTON tosses in hammock. Scene dissolves into an eerie, misty dream.

62. EXT DECK, VENICE WHARF. EVE
On watch NEWTON paces deck alone, sees alps behind harbour. A friendly STRANGER, gentleman, holds out a ring to him.

STRANGER
Friend this precious ring is for you. Preserve it carefully & you'll be happy & successful.

NEWTON, doubtful, takes the ring.

STRANGER
If you lose it, expect only misery & trouble.

NEWTON slips on ring, smiles, sees STRANGER has vanished. TEMPTER, ragged Gollum-like man sneaks from behind. NEWTON jumps when slimy TEMPTER paws his shoulder. Circling,

TEMPTER
Why'd HE give ye such a pretty ring?

NEWTON
He said I must keep this ring to be happy and successful. If I lose it, only misery & trouble will come my way.

TEMPTER
Who can make promises on a ring? Ye don't believe such foolish promises, do ye? Renounce those empty promises. Throw away this worthless trinket.

NEWTON recoils, but throws ring into sea. The alps burst into a raging inferno.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

TEMPTER (CONT'D)
(laughs)
All the mercy God had in store for ye was gathered in that ring but ye wilfully threw it away! Now ye must go with me to that burning mountain. Those flames have been kindled because of yer sins!

NEWTON shrinks against gunwale, gaping at flaming alps, trembling as TEMPTER reaches out to grab him. NEWTON screams, shielding face with hands. STRANGER'S hand grabs NEWTON'S wrist as TEMPTER stands behind the STRANGER, lunging for NEWTON. STRANGER casually flings a back cut, decking TEMPTER.

STRANGER
(Roaring)
Deliver him from going to the flames. I have found a ransom instead.

Terrified, TEMPTER shrinks away. To NEWTON, gently,

Friend, why shake in fear?

NEWTON
Ring. I threw it in the sea. I've lost God's mercy for my sins. I deserve no pity. That fire's for——me.

STRANGER
No, why did you throw the ring away? Would you be wiser if you have the ring again?

STRANGER dives overboard & while climbing onto the deck a second later with the ring, the inferno melts & TEMPTER flees terrified, overboard. NEWTON, sobbing relieved, reaches for the ring. The stranger withholds it.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

STRANGER
If entrusted with this ring you'd soon bring yourself into the same distress. I'll preserve it. Whenever it's needed I'll produce it for you.

63. INT MESS DECK. EVE
NEWTON awakens suddenly, shaking. End of dream.

CLUNIE
Remarkable dream. A successful life can only be had through Christ. God's our captain so salvation is by God's initiative. Jesus never changes——always our saviour. 'By grace are ye saved through faith'——it is a gift of God, John, not by our own efforts. Ephesians 2:8.

NEWTON Reads Eph 2:8, amazed by revelation.

NEWTON
Saved so easily from sins——just by faith in Jesus! Alex, my sins——women I've abused. A slave to every vice. My obstinate contempt of the gospel. Ruined the morals of everyone I met.

CLUNIE

'Though your sins are like scarlet, John, they shall be as white as snow. As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our sins from us.' Salvation gained, is never lost except by choice.

NEWTON
I can't fathom he chooses to forgive me. I don't deserve such kindness.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

FADE OUT. FADE IN.

CLUNIE
Such grace. God isn't a potentate who created the universe thousands of years ago——then deserted us. Draw near to God John——feel the joy of his presence, his strength & wisdom.

FADE OUT. FADE IN.

CLUNIE
——Pray out loud what's in your heart. Show people your faith openly in what you say & do.

NEWTON
I will. Alex you've taught me so much. How can I repay you?

CLUNIE
Perhaps we'll meet in England? And I'll meet your Mary?

64. INT MANESTY'S PARLOUR. SUNNY NOVEMBER DAY ESTABLISHING
On screen: The *African* returns to Liverpool in August 1754.
Expensive furniture. Vase on mantelpiece painted with lavender. NEWTONS enter & NEWTON hands *African's* log to eager MANESTY. Relaxed atmosphere. ECU full sugar bowl and tea service.

MANESTY
Welcome. How pleasant to have you both——. A profitable voyage, I hope? I'm fitting out a new, faster ship—— called the *Bee* for your next voy——.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
Slave prices soared this season. Be hard to profit from the next voyage.

BUTLER enters.

MANESTY BUTLER
Excuse me sir, a gentleman requests you see him on an urgent matter concerning sugar orders.

MANESTY
Are matters ever settled? Excuse me.

MANESTY, BUTLER exit. MARY caresses NEWTON'S hair.

MARY
So good to have you here. We talk so easily to each other these days.

She laughs. NEWTON finishes his cup.

JOHN
I could hardly speak to you before. Your friends must have sneered——'What! The accomplished Miss C, married to that awkward piece of formality. His ridiculous behaviour——.'

NEWTON stands to replace cup on table, presses temple, drops cup, collapses. MARY rushes to him. NEWTON hears muted yelling for servants.

65. EXT CATLETT HOME, KENT. DAY
On screen: NEWTON recovers but relinquishes his command of the *Bee*. MARY, shocked by his collapse, suffers severe headaches for months so returns to her parents in Chatham.

NEWTON (V/O)
Please don't take my beloved, I beg you, Lord. Strengthen my

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

rebellious heart to keep trusting you. I pray for Mary's soul. Show yourself to her. We're penniless——.

66. INT CATLETT HOME. DAY
NEWTON'S POV drifting through home past sad GEORGE (JNR) into MARY'S bedroom. She's listless.

MARY
My head pains. Can't bear you—— walk across floor.

NEWTON
I constantly pray for your healing. Wait patiently for the Lord, Mary.

He kisses her hand and holds it.

67. EXT LIVERPOOL QUAYSIDE. DAY ESTABLISHING
On Screen: 1755. While Mary is recovering, through odd events, MANESTY secures for John the position of tide surveyor in Liverpool for customs. He checked incoming vessels for illicit goods.

68. EXT CUSTOMS OFFICE. DAY.
NEWTON locks customs office door. Walks away.

NEWTON (V/O)
I like this position, Mary. £50/year plus my share of seizures of contraband means I can settle you here in comfort. I see the Lord's kindness every day.

69. INT CATLETT HOUSE BEDROOM. DAY
MARY, sobbing at window in nightgown.

NEWTON (V/O)
I pray your loneliness & suffering for loyalty to me be rewarded by sharing the comfort of my faith.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

MARY
Jesus, I commit my life, my body into your keeping. Please heal me from this infirmity. I yearn to travel to my John. Please God, have mercy——.

70. EXT FIELD, LIVERPOOL. DAY ESTABLISHING NEWTON hears GEORGE WHITEFIELD, 40's in clerical garb, preach passionately to small pokerfaced CROWD.

WHITEFIELD
——'Verily I say, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Friends salvation is a work of God. Allow the Holy Spirit to awaken you to faith in God, who loves you.

NEWTON looks to the sky & sees a vivid vision of the transfigured Christ. CROWD murmurs & disperses. WHITEFIELD closes Bible & joins CROWD & NEWTON. Walking,

WHITEFIELD
Newton, good to see a welcoming face. Liverpool's the most spiritually dry place in the kingdom. Thousands responded to my message in London.

NEWTON
Aye, Liverpool's grown satisfied on the slave trade & deaf to salvation. As you preached I saw a vision of the transfigured Christ. I was filled with love & zeal to know Christ better & serve him.

WHITEFIELD
Is God calling you into ministry, perhaps?

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

71. INT EDMUND ST HOUSE, LIVERPOOL. DAY ESTABLISHING

NEWTON closes front door then twirls MARY into his arms. He plants a passionate kiss.

NEWTON
My precious Mary. Home at last.

MARY
Missed you.

NEWTON
You're so beautiful——& healthy. I left you as a listless waif. What wrought this wonderful change?

MARY
I don't doubt my salvation anymore, John. I have assurance. I prayed & the great physician did me more good than all my medicines.

NEWTON
My highest wishes are answered! I prayed you'd find this hope with me.

MARY
I couldn't stand another day parted. At last we're together & have what we've desired—— employment, a fine house. Dearest, are you happy?

NEWTON
Happy yes——um, our future. Whitefield advised I become a minister. I ponder the verse 'They heard that he who persecuted us in times past, now preaches the faith which he once destroyed. They glorified God in me.'

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

MARY sinks on settee, surprised.

MARY
I've just arrived at this house. So many changes——ministry? Church of England or Dissenting church?

NEWTON
Established church. As Whitefield preached I saw a vision of Jesus transfigured! My heart breaks for people bereft of hope & forgiveness. The Lord proved his grace to me, I yearn to prove that grace to others.

MARY
You saw a vision! Wherever He leads let's resolve to declare God's goodness by the course of our lives; God will show us how to do this.

NEWTON
And take every trouble to Him & see his grace to rescue us——yet again.

MARY
John, I want our house for sharing joy & hospitality to the needy.

Excited, they embrace.

72. INT PARLOUR EDMUND STREET. DAY
CLUNIE enters, wigless but wearing sea jacket. NEWTON greets him. MARY is seated.

NEWTON
Alex Clunie, welcome. Enjoying being a landlubber again?

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

CLUNIE
I'm greatly enjoying shorelife with my wife. This must be your Mary.

MARY
How lovely to meet you at last. I must thank you for reforming my John!

NEWTON
Reformation that's overdue! Please seat yourself Alex.

CLUNIE sits down.

CLUNIE
We loved reading your incredible story in those 14 letters, John. Must insist you publish them. Adventures & your conversion will astound readers. This *Authentic Narrative* would place the truth of God's sovereignty before people who won't listen to Whitfield or Wesley.

NEWTON
Publish? Well, why not? Let's call it *An Authentic Narrative of Some Remarkable Particulars in the Life of … communicated, in a series of letters to the Rev. T. Haweis.*

MARY
Phew. John, the title is too long! And why omit your name?

NEWTON
To protect our privacy.

CLUNIE
Settled. I'll arrange printing.

MARY
And John *will* shorten the title.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTONS & CLUNIE laugh. DISSOLVE.

73. INT PARLOUR, EDMUND ST HOUSE. DAY
MARY & NEWTON sip tea. MARY gives NEWTON letters. He breaks a fine seal & reads letter, mystified.

NEWTON
Strange hand? Lord Dartmouth! He read my letters: *Authentic Narrative*. He's impressed & offers me the curacy of the church of St Peter & St Paul—— Olney in Buckinghamshire.

MARY
Who is this? Curacy in Olney? On the Bedford Road? But the archbishop refused you ordination because you haven't a degree.

NEWTON
Lord Dartmouth says he'll write to the Bishop of Lincoln about ordination. God is just so good, Mary. Why did we ever doubt his faithfulness?

They embrace, happy. DISSOLVE.

74. INT PARLOUR DARTMOUTH'S HOME, LONDON. DAY
NEWTON, DARTMOUTH 33 richly-attired. JOHN THORNTON & WEALTHY MEN chatter in friendly atmosphere.

LORD DARTMOUTH
I read your *Authentic Narrative* with great curiosity. Extraordinary experiences. The Almighty rescued you time and time again. Tell me about yourself.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
I was a wild beast in Africa; shame to own I was a slave trader but the Lord caught & tamed me. I've studied Hebrew, Greek, Syriac & the Bible. I have preached in receptive villages & published sermons.

DARTMOUTH
You've prepared for ministry with commendable effort. I've a friend, John Thornton, I'd like you to meet. A Director of the Bank of England.

DARTMOUTH signals to THORNTON.

DARTMOUTH (CONT'D)
Thornton, meet John Newton, writer of *An Authentic Narrative*. I've offered him the living of Olney parish. I will enlarge the vicarage for you, John. Thornton has a keen interest in the problems of this nation.

THORNTON
Ah, Newton, I read you were once in the slave trade?

NEWTON
Please don't hold that against me. I wonder how I didn't start with horror at my own employment. A vile traffic.

THORNTON
We've all sinned. Sin is sin to God, whether great or small. But great are God's mercies, are they not? We will speak again, Newton. Excuse me.

THORNTON joins crowd.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
(Astonished)
Thornton is——your friends here——my lord——are as approachable as Yorkshire cottagers——and so cheerful.

DARTMOUTH
Thornton is one of the wealthiest men in England. Converted through George Whitefield's preaching. Don't think that God only loves sailors & not men with power to influence England's future.

NEWTON
Thornton? No——any limitations must be in our thinking, not in God's power to move people's hearts. My circle is growing.

75. INT CHURCH, OLNEY. DAY ESTABLISHING
On screen: St Peter & St Paul's Anglican Church, Olney. May 1764.
NEWTON speaks from the pulpit to small, poor congregation.

NEWTON
Psalm 80:1 'Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you that lead Joseph like a flock.'I don't trust my own abilities but our Shepherd who leads & blesses us. I desire to be faithful, honest & to lead you all into deeper knowledge of God's redeeming love.

People lean forward, approving.

76. EXT OLNEY LANE. GREY DAY
Distraught GRIEVING FATHER & GRIEVING SON 14 carry a DEAD BOY on a dirty blanket down a lane.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

77. EXT POOR FARM COTTAGE. DAY
NEWTON hears wailing inside. Entering open door, finds GRIEVING FATHER sobbing, GRIEVING MOTHER hysterical, teary GRIEVING SON peering around inner door. Seeing NEWTON, MOTHER calms & sits down. Weeping SON accepts NEWTON'S motion to join him.

NEWTON
Son, what happened?

GRIEVING SON
Me brother jumped onto haycart. 'orses fright, overturned cart. 'e fell——under the wheels.

NEWTON, sits, hugs sobbing boy.

NEWTON
Heavenly father, you know the pain of losing a son. In this terrible hour please comfort this grieving family. Bring your peace into their pain.

DISSOLVE.

78. INT DINING ROOM, NEWTON VICARAGE, OLNEY. EVE
NEWTONS, WILLIAM COWPER 36, MRS UNWIN 43, HER SON WILLIAM 22 & DAUGHTER SUSANNA 17, middle class family, enjoy dinner.

MRS UNWIN
——after my Morley died we came to Olney to feel the warmth of Christian people. Hoped to meet the author of the *Authentic Narrative*. Mr Cowper's poetry has blossomed since staying with us. Recite your poem——.

COWPER
It's only a few lines, it's nothing——

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

SUSANNA
Please William, recite your verse.

COWPER
I, I read Genesis 5 about Enoch walking with God, so:
‘Oh for a closer walk with God,
A calm and Heavenly frame,
A Light to shine upon the Road
That leads to the Lamb.’ ——And so on. I wrote six verses more.

NEWTON
Ah, God has granted you talent. May we hear more verses coming from Orchard Side! I write hymns for my church. What are your ambitions?

COWPER
I, I have hope that having opened my mouth, the Lord will never close it again. I yearn he makes my stammering tongue the pen of a ready writer!

NEWTON
The Lord will never leave you, William. He will bless you more than you could ever hope or desire. Whenever you want ears to hear verses just cross the garden & come in.

MARY
We are exceedingly delighted to have you all as our neighbours. John appreciates company while visiting farms outside Olney. As for the children——.

COWPER
I’ll assist, any, any way.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

79. EXT OLNEY CHURCH. DAY
COWPER, UNWINS, PARISHIONERS stand grouped. FRANCES, MARGARET, & KATHERINE 7 f.g. hold *An Authentic Narrative* casting stunned glances at book & Newton.

FRANCES
Says the Navy flogged him. He bought slaves——in chains but says the slave trade is morally unlawful. Became a slave himself. Here.'Whenever he left the vessel I was locked upon deck with a pint of rice for my day's allowance.' *And* he didn't wear shoes!

MARGARET
No? Surely not?

The group, aghast, gaze at NEWTON talking to GRIEVING WOMAN & SON.

80. EXT/INT LACEMAKERS' HOVEL. WINTER'S DAY ESTABLISHING
MARY & NEWTON, in sea jacket, carrying sack of vegetables and blankets pause outside as ragged LACEMAKERS sing 'lace tell'(O/S).

'Get to the field by one,
Gather the rod by two,
Tie it up by three,
send it down home by four,
Make her work hard at five,
Give her her supper at six.'

NEWTON knocks. IVY opens it, excited, ushers them inside.

IVY
Rev'n, grand surprise——& with ye wife. Come in. Sir Cowper prayed wif us this week. Fancy lettered man like 'im enterin' our cottage! Bless 'im. Sit awhile.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

They see: beds, table, candle-stool, 2 pots, empty hearth. TINA, bent over lace-cushion, looks up: chilled & despairing. NEWTON deposits sack of food & reaches glassy-eyed JESS.

NEWTON
Greetings Ivy, Tina. How are you Jess? Jess, this is my wife, Mary.

JESS
Mary? 'Mary is goin' to Lon'on to meet a prince——.'

MARY
Beautiful lace you make Jess.

MARY handles lace, touches JESS' hand. JESS cries. MARY gives JESS her hanky. JESS sobs into it.

IVY
Lacemaking 12 'ours a day 'as addled 'er brain. Dere be dozen like 'er in Olney. Don' know what to do. Better wages would 'elp. We do wifout fires to keep lace clean——winter an all.

MARY
Fresh air may clear her mind a little, Ivy. This is——not much.

IVY takes MARY'S purse, weeps. MARY wraps blanket & her arm around IVY.

NEWTON
Wish it was more. Let's pray.

TINA
Jess, the rev'n goin' t' pray for us.

NEWTON
Heavenly father of mercy, we thank you for these dear women. Please bring them your

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

comforting presence & grace. Lord, remember the bitter cold they endure with a cold hearth. We trust in your provision for winter.

DISSOLVE.

On street. NEWTONS walk through snowflakes.

MARY
I wish our stipend stretched to help those women further. Can nothing else be done to put more food on their table? Collect from the wealthier townsfolk—— few they are.

NEWTON
Aye, constant trial dividing meagre provisions among so many poor. But when one spring dries up, the Lord opens another.

MARY
There's not only slaves in the West Indies! Lacemaking's slavery on English soil. Now I'm talking about slavery——every day——like you.

NEWTON
Slavery, England's shame. The slave trade batters my brain. It must be thwarted Mary or England will bear God's wrath for her sins.

81. EXT/INT OLNEY CHURCH. AFTERNOON
NEWTON, JOHN THORNTON walk along church path.

NEWTON
A rare privilege to have you at our meeting. The children are harder to handle than my *Duke of Argyle* crew.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

JOHN THORNTON
Perhaps view from a safe distance?

Laughing, they reach the church.

CHANCEL, OLNEY CHURCH - AFTERNOON
NEWTON, standing in pulpit with a Bible, faces 50 restless, SHABBILY-DRESSED CHILDREN in pews. In front row KATHERINE & YOUNG WILBERFORCE 12. COWPER folds a paper boat for child. THORNTON peeps from behind CHILDREN.

NEWTON
QUIET. Everyone, listen, QUIET. William Wilberforce, come read a verse.

YOUNG WILBERFORCE reads from NEWTON'S Bible.

YOUNG WILBERFORCE
'Then children were brought that he might lay his hands on them & pray. The disciples rebuked the people; but Jesus said,"Let the children come to me, & do not hinder them; for such belongs the kingdom of heaven." He laid hands on them & went away.'

NEWTON
Thank you William. Perhaps a story?

YOUNG WILBERFORCE sits. Children noisy. NEWTON takes COWPER'S ship & plunges ship up & down, children still. MONTAGE: *Greyhound* battling stormy seas,

NEWTON
Imagine waves, higher than a house & a great chasm before you. The *Greyhound* lunges into the pit & speeds to the top of the other side as the mountain behind, overtakes her. This is

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

repeated as fast as you count 1,2,3,4.

CHILDREN, YOUNG WILBERFORCE riveted on ship. MONTAGE cont.

NEWTON (CONT'D)
Jesus met me in a huge storm. Waves like mountains crashing our decks, splitting masts. Ship breaking up, food——overboard. I cried to God——*save us*! He heard me, blew the storm away.

His ship undulates on calm seas.

NEWTON (CONT'D)
We sailed on for a month—— starving. God brought us to safe harbour with our last fish cooking in the pot. Jesus saved me & he's my friend. He wants to be your friend too——in calm times & rough times.

CHILDREN, WILBERFORCE open-mouthed, touched. NEWTON smiles. As CHILDREN leave, YOUNG WILBERFORCE rushes to THORNTON.

THORNTON
Nephew, very well read.

YOUNG WILBERFORCE grins, walks off with COWPER. THORNTON turns to NEWTON fingering an envelope.

THORNTON
Many ragged paupers among your flock.

NEWTON
Aye, & desperately aching to know if God still loves them.

THORNTON
Hospitality & giving to the poor must be a constant strain on your stipend. I will give 200

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

pounds to supply an open house & help the poor. Ask for more.

NEWTON
How bene——what to say? Thank you——. Mary wants to give lunch to those who walk six miles or more to church on Sundays.

82. INT MANESTY'S PARLOUR. NIGHT
Seated, teary, haggard, MANESTY'S blurry gaze lingers on sugar bowl. CUT to NEWTON in study reading Manesty's letter.

MANESTY (V/O)
'Dear John & Mary, I regret to say my sugar-refining enterprise has failed. My creditors have filed against me. I am bankrupt. Your small investment you entrusted to me has gone.'

MONTAGE of pastoral care by NEWTON, MARY & COWPER. NEWTON counseling, sharing scripture with people in study, farmers on their farms, praying at graveside. Visiting prisons.

83. EXT LACEMAKERS HOVEL. MORNING
3 Lacemakers leave hovel. Tina locks door. Jess, blinks in sunshine, confused. IVY takes her arm, walks down street.

JESS
Must work me lace. Where we goin'?

IVY
No Jess, today's Shrove Tuesday. No lacemaking today.

TINA
'Er ladyship can wait a day for 'er lace. Goin' to watch the pancake race, Jess.

They stroll down street overtaken by KATHERINE, PLAYMATES, running with little frying-pans,

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

laughing. ADULTS join happy throng as all move up street.

84. EXT BULL HOTEL, OLNEY. FEBRUARY MORNING ESTABLISHING
Happy crowd incl: NEWTONS & SERVANTS, GRIEVING FAMILY, LORD DARTMOUTH & WIFE, ALEX & JANE CLUNIE, KATHERINE, PLAYMATES, UNWINS, COWPER. NEWTON meets 3 DRUNKEN MATES in bits of militia uniforms. As DRUNKEN LAD swigs from ale jug, NEWTON clasps his wrist, shaking head. Youth shocked, lowers jug & all MATES leave. Female RIVALS & MARY poise with frying pans. *'Go'* (OOV). They run down street past LACEMAKERS. The WINNER & others reach NEWTON'S church. Cheering.

85. INT VICARAGE STUDY, OLNEY. NIGHT
Candle lights wall inscription, service schedule & map on desk. NEWTON writes as Mary enters in a nightgown & carrying a candle.

MARY
Writing so late? Come to bed.

NEWTON
A tortured soul seeks my counsel. I must respond to all who show interest in godly matters. Who knows what'll happen to them tomorrow——where they'll spend eternity?

MARY
I know my love. You rise early, retire late & give so much to the poor. We can't repay our debts for sin. You aren't punishing yourself for sins by working so hard, are you?

NEWTON
No. My mind is clear on this. I work out of gratitude because God forgave my sins. Not out of guilt. Around Olney there's a spiritual awakening, a reviving

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

work. Dartmouth suggested because the church is so full we should build a balcony——.

MARY
——That's wonderful John but this awakening will pass you by if you aren't awake tomorrow to see it. Come, to bed!

NEWTON
I love you so much, quartermaster. Not even separations or my licentiousness destroyed my first glorious impression of you.

MARY
Are you disappointed we have no child? I long——.

NEWTON
I yearn for children too but let's be content without. I've heard enough wrenching sobs of young men after their wives die giving birth. Oh I couldn't bear you suffer & die, Mary.

They embrace & kiss. FADE OUT.

86. INT NEWTON IN PULPIT CHURCH, OLNEY. DAY
On screen: 1 January 1773
NEWTON'S POV to larger congregation. He shakes his head, remembering his past.

NEWTON
King David said: 'Who am I, O Lord God? You have spoken of Your servant's house, & have regarded me as … a man of high degree.' David reviewed his life:, his escaping King Saul, troubles with the Philistines. God saved David.
What has the Lord has done for us? What pit did we come from?

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

Miserable under law & unbelief, rebellious, undeserving. Only God can take a profane sailor & transform him into his child. I have captured these thoughts in a hymn I will teach you.

NEWTON, tears welling, pauses, sings from a page. MONTAGE: flashbacks: Whacking female slave's face, cornering slave to rape her, his mother's teaching & gentle face, *Greyhound* in storm, hand holding out the ring.

Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound!)That sav'd a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind but now I see.'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears reliev'd; How precious did that grace appear, The hour I first believ'd! The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, The sun forbear to shine, But God, who called me here below, Will be for ever mine.

People nod, smile, comforted.

87. INT OLNEY VICARAGE. GREY DAY
Mary enters home. ECU: wan face of BETSY CATLETT 5. BETSY'S POV: sadly gazes at home & servants: PHOEBE 39 & SALLY JOHNSON.

MARY
Sally and Phoebe, meet Betsy, my brother George's child.

SALLY
Little mite, sad losing both parents.

PHOEBE
Betsy, we 'ave a happy 'ousehold 'ere. Your aunt & uncle love you & cook'll get some flesh on those skinny bones.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

SALLY
We'll find you something to eat.

BETSY, dazed from grief, looks to MARY, who warmly nods for her to take SALLY'S hand, exit.

88. INT OLNEY VICARAGE BEDROOM. MORNING
Unseen by NEWTON, BETSY tiptoes out of their bedroom clutching NEWTON'S shoes, passes them to PHOEBE, smiling. Unaware, NEWTON bare-chested CU: shirt falls onto his scarred back. Searches his wardrobe, nothing. Puzzled, from doorway he calls,

NEWTON
Phoebe, my jacket's missing. Shoes too?

PHOEBE, bustling, carrying linen past his door.

PHOEBE
Doin' all the 'ouse mending today. Turn 'em sheets & sew up yer ripped jacket pocket——.

NEWTON
Pocket? I want to wear that jacket today.

MARY arrives at door, propels him to wardrobe.

MARY
Phoebe must mend your sea-jacket. You'll wear your other clothes today.

She holds out his clerical garb from wardrobe.

NEWTON
My jacket's still serviceable. That's Sunday clothes, today is Monday.

MARY adamant, so cornered, he takes the clothes. She hands him new shoes.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

MARY
There, *now be* my handsome gentleman to meet William Bull, not a rough sailor. You meet important people these days: Lord Dartmouth, John Thornton, so you must dress properly. And get used to dressing properly. Who'd have thought the likes of an earl and a director of the Bank of England would befriend us!

NEWTON grunts. He grins indulgently behind her back. Later, dressed, he strides through house to front door, past smug MARY, SALLY, PHOEBE & BETSY, complaining,

NEWTON
Sometimes I wonder if I married one woman——or three.

Bending to BETSY, growls with mock severity.

NEWTON (CONT'D)
——with one young conspirator.

BETSY giggles, hugs him. NEWTON, grabs her into a twirl in the air laughing. Kisses her & puts her down. NEWTON turns, walks from house, grinning. WOMEN giggle: mission accomplished.

89. EXT COWPER'S GARDEN. MORNING ESTABLISHING NEWTON & WILLIAM BULL stroll in garden.

BULL
Where's your old jacket got to?

NEWTON
They said the jacket needed repairs. The women——Mary—— contrive to make me respectable.

NEWTON shakes head. Both laugh. BULL peers at NEWTON.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

BULL
You wear weariness like your clothes, John. Revival's God's outpouring of wonderful grace, but taxing on us——.

NEWTON
Every week people are converted or challenged. I've seldom an hour free from interruption by sick & afflicted souls. Come Friday, according to the state of my business, it should be Tuesday!

Laughing, they enter summerhouse.

NEWTON
Dartmouth's building a gallery in my church to take the newcomers. England needs more preachers of your intellect to explain the bible. People flock to your sermons.

To get his pipe Bull pulls up floorboards. In darkness below NEWTON sees FLASHBACK: RINGLEADERS stare up at him from *Argyle's* hold. Shaken, NEWTON recovers, tossing his head. END FLASKBACK.

BULL
Ah, my pipe. To that end, I propose another interruption. I'm opening a Dissenting Academy at Newport-Pagnell to train men for ministry. Would you kindly write the curriculum?

NEWTON
Me? My intellectual powers aren't yours! You have nearer access to the Lord than myself! I will accept, of course——since the need is so great.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

BULL
And timely. Dark clouds coming. I fear persecution will increase for us Dissenters. Idle militia mobs rob England of her fragile stability. Ale & smart comrades matter to them more than the plough. I fear the French will invade England——. People question what side Dissenters are on.

90. EXT VICARAGE STUDY. MORNING
As COWPER enters, NEWTON eagerly holds out COWPER'S hymns. Rushes up,

NEWTON

William, good morning. Sit. I have a suggestion. Why don't we publish our hymns for the church congregation to sing?

COWPER
My contribution can only be minor.

NEWTON
Your hymns touch people with great truths. They enjoy your 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear!' Let's call the collection simply 'Olney Hymns'?

COWPER
I don't always feel spiritual——.

NEWTON
Take heart in your own words, (reading):'Sometimes a light surprises The Christian while he sings; It is the risen Lord who rises With healing in his wings.'

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

91. EXT COWPER GARDEN. SUNNY DAY
COWPER sits with pets: guinea pigs, magpie & dog. He feeds rabbits grass, staring, depression etching his face. Grinning, NEWTON approaches, noticing notebook open on grass.

NEWTON
William, how do you feel this glorious morning? Where's Bess?

NEWTON looks for hare & reads notebook aloud, worried:

'What peaceful hours I once enjoyed! How sweet their memory still! But they have left an aching void The world can never fill.'

COWPER
Feel! I feel unutterable despair. I feel myself damned below Judas——buried above ground. Today, everyday.

NEWTON
What ails your soul? Such despair? Bright sunshine to cheer us——.

COWPER
Sunshine? I can't feel it——could be midnight. No light reaches this black void God left me. Why his desertion & perpetual misery? God forgives all——except me.

NEWTON searches, finds BESS & places hare on COWPER'S lap. He sits beside COWPER.

NEWTON
Bess was there all the time, hiding under flowers. God too hasn't hidden himself. Don't let your 'voices' say God has deserted you. Grasp with all your might God's promise that

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

he'll never abandon you,
William, never——.

COWPER
Never, yes never.

92. EXT RIVER OUSE, OLNEY. SUNNY DAY
ESTABLISHING
On screen: 1779.
NEWTONS & THORNTON meander along river.

THORNTON
Do you know the churches, St Mary Woolnoth & St Mary Haw in the heart of London? The vicar died recently & I've acquired the churches' presentation.

NEWTON
Sad. Which minister do you propose to fill the vacancy?

THORNTON
I earnestly pray you would, John.

MARY
No, no. We love woods, streams—— not London's smoke & grime. It's the last city we'd choose to live in——.

NEWTON
Mary's health is——delicate.

THORNTON
I understand, Mary but consider. I know only one minister in London who preaches the gospel.

NEWTON
St Mary's is near Mansion House: the Lord Mayor wouldn't listen to a former slave trader!

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

THORNTON
Preach as you've preached these past 16 yrs——of God's grace. If the Mayor won't listen——others are desperate to know God cares for them. Please pray on this, both of you.

93. EXT OLNEY WOODS. SUNNY DAY
NEWTON, COWPER, BULL say emotional farewells. To Bull,

NEWTON
I've enjoyed many a religious debate with you, William. And friendships so rich——. But we can carry on our debates by letter. God guide you both always, my dear, dear friends.

BULL
When you go to London, my friend, I'll call it one of the greatest trials of my life.

COWPER
You & Mary are so greatly loved in Olney. We'll all miss you——me esp——.

MONTAGE: NEWTONS say emotional farewell to PARISHIONERS at church door. MARY farewells LACEMAKERS. JESS cries, clasping MARY'S hand.

94. EXT/INT MRS TRINDER'S BOARDING SCHOOL, NORTHAMPTON. SUNNY DAY ESTABLISHING
School vestibule. TEACHER hands letter to BETSY.

BETSY 10 takes letter, grinning. Reads,

NEWTON (V/O)
'London, noise & smoke! I have no garden, no pretty walks amongst trees, no birds except in cages. But the same sun

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

shines in Northampton & London & Lord Jesus, like the sun, is in all places at once. Loving you with a father's affection, I——.'

BETSY hears bell, hastens to class. DISSOLVE.

95. ST MARY WOOLNOTH DAY ESTABLISHING
On screen: St Mary Woolnoth Anglican Church. 1780. *'My connections have enlarged—my little name is spread'* John Newton, London.
NEWTON 55, preaches from pulpit,

NEWTON
——Ephesians 4:15 says, 'For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning.'

I'm humbled to become your rector. I'm awe-struck that I—— once an abandoned slave should be plucked from his forlorn exile in Africa & today——to be appointed minister of this fine church——in London!

LORD MAYOR, dignified, JOHN THORNTON 60 & MARY NEWTON 52 smile from pews.

Why does God shower his mercy on me? Perhaps to show, with Him, 'nothing is impossible.' Let's all draw near & experience God's grace to transform us.

CONGREGATION nods assent, looks thoughtful.

96. INT PORCH, ST MARY WOOLNOTH, LONDON. SUNDAY MORNING
On screen: December 1785.
CONGREGATION rich & poor shake NEWTON'S 60 & MARY'S 56 hands.
Back view of hooded WILLIAM WILBERFORCE 26 glides between people, slyly presses note into

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON'S hand, turns & vanishes. NEWTON puts note into pocket, shakes hands of DEPARTING COUPLE. Alone & delighted, he reads,

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE ((V/O))
'I'd like to call for serious conversation. I must be secret. The gallery of the House is now so universally attended, that the face of a Member of Parliament is pretty well known.'

97. INT VICARAGE STUDY, CHARLES SQ, HOXTON. DAY ESTABLISHING
NEWTON, 60 enthusiastically greets WILLIAM WILBERFORCE 26. They sit.

NEWTON
William, such a surprise after all these years. Welcome. You're well? How's your family?

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE
Yes they are well, thank you though I don't see them often. Parliament restricts my time so.

NEWTON
I've heard of your popularity. I'd heard the Prince of Wales said he'd visit any party just to hear you sing.

WILBERFORCE
I've heard your reputation for singing & writing 'Olney Hymns', letters and your *Authentic Narrative.*

NEWTON
Years ago I wrote a ditty ridiculing my ship's captain. Taught the crew to rebel against him.

WILBERFORCE

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

It's hard to imagine you inciting rebellion.

NEWTON
Enslaved to every vice was the lightest part of my character. I was never an hour with a man without corrupting his morals. The crew heard my contempt for the gospel. I was blinded to the damage I was sowing into others' lives——& consequences.

WILBERFORCE
We're all blind. Doddridge's *Rise & Progress of Religion* opened my eyes to my great blindness. I know God promises to heal these defects.

WILBERFORCE slumps dejectedly back in chair.

WILBERFORCE (CONT'D)
Once I'd be flattered by popularity. Anymore parties & I'll look as corpse-like as George Selwyn——that connoisseur of public executions! And as empty. I need Christ to forgive my sins, change this stony heart to flesh! I need direction——!

NEWTON
William, God urged me pray for you. Don't despair, Jesus will give you a new start & the Holy Spirit will lead you into the great work God plans for you to accomplish.

FADE OUT.

98. INT VICARAGE STUDY, HOXTON, LONDON. NIGHT
On screen: Wilberforce spoke with John Newton frequently concerning his yearning to live for God. By 1786 he was a different man and increasingly sensitive to the social ills of society. NEWTON & WILBERFORCE sit.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

WILBERFORCE
——I see storms blackening heaven. England's universal corruption——. Rising among the rich it spreads its poison through the whole population. There's no remedy but amputation. Should I leave political life?

NEWTON
Leave? No. Your greatest influence is through Parliament. God placed you there for his high purposes. William I pray the Lord will make you a blessing both as a Christian and as a statesman. How seldom do these characters coincide!

WILBERFORCE
I need a special purpose——out of the common way——. There's no end of social ills to reform: prostitution, 16 year olds proposition men at their theatre boxes! Drunkenness, immorality, brutality——.

NEWTON
Attack one vice. Attack the slave trade.

WILBERFORCE
Slave trade? You too! Ramsay, Sir Charles & Lady Middleton—— everyone's pressing me to be the parliamentary spokesman for abolition——.

NEWTON
Good! Slavery's cruelties cry out to me as often as the chimes of a clock. I hear God's heart of justice broken for England's

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

sins. Your speeches grip audiences——sway parliament towards abolition.

WILBERFORCE
But public opinion must turn before any gains can be made. Educate the populace. Huge task.

NEWTON
Most people sugaring their tea don't think about the trade's injustices. Be the voice for slaves languishing in ships' holds. God will bring in like-minded men to help you fight.

WILBERFORCE
The task is overwhelming, so great a change to society. Where would I start?

NEWTON
I'll give you all my experiences of the trade, my journal, you've read my *Authentic Narrative* & we'll pray fervently. God's grace will sustain you through all the stinging opposition.

WILBERFORCE
It will be bad enough confessing to be a Christian but to openly oppose the trade that underpins England's economy, the colonies.

NEWTON
God will guide you. William, pray earnestly for God's confirmation that this is your life's task. STAY AN MP.

99. EXT VALE OF KESTON. DAY
WILBERFORCE & WILLIAM PITT, PM, sit beneath trees while their horses graze.

PITT

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

I understand you need a cause to justify your parliamentary seat. So attack the slave trade. Jamaican planters'll battle fiercely. We must set the example for other nations.

WILBERFORCE
Pitt, they'll argue French holdings in the Caribbean are larger than ours. Sugar production's double Jamaica's. If we abolished our slave trade the French would scoop up our trade share & still this evil would continue.

WILBERFORCE paces, agonizing, then decides.

WILBERFORCE
But I must try. I'll give notice in the House of Commons of my intention to bring the subject forward.

PITT
Don't waste time or the ground may be occupied by another. You'll be a superb advocate in the House, William.

100. INT VICARAGE STUDY. HOXTON. DAY
NEWTON eases into a chair. WILBERFORCE barely contains his energy & zeal. Rushes out,

WILBERFORCE

The Anti-Slave Trade Society urged me to be their spokesman in parliament. I've accepted.

NEWTON
Congratulations. You'll be a powerful advocate. Who's in this Society?

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

WILBERFORCE
Chairman, Granville Sharp. Remember the Somerset case? Also, Thomas Clarkson: he won the Cambridge competition: *Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade*—— he's appalled by his discoveries. He tries to speak to sailors, ship captains, anyone in Bristol, London, Liverpool——. Many with slave knowledge are scared to speak out. Most of the society are Quakers with three Anglicans.

NEWTON
You're in company with worthy men with powers of persuasion.

WILBERFORCE
The road I'll tread in Parliament is thorny beyond measure. I can't be a party man because I'd bow to party pressures, I must be independent to secure support from all factions.

NEWTON
Trust your abilities. Armed with knowledge of the trade, & passion of your convictions, you'll arouse anger, disgust in hearts of even hardened opponents. You must unmask the slave traders' LIES for the public.

WILBERFORCE
Huge responsibility. Slaves' lives will depend on my success. What if I fail?

NEWTON
Compare troubles to a bundle of sticks, too large to lift. God doesn't ask us to carry the

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

bundle at once; He mercifully unties the bundle & gives one stick to carry today & another to carry tomorrow. Easily managed if we'd take one day's burden; but we increase our troubles by carrying yesterday's stick again today, adding tomorrow's burden to our load before we have to bear it.

101. INT WILBERFORCE'S STUDY, 4 PALACE YARD. ESTABLISHING DAY
WILBERFORCE reads letter, grasps his stomach. WILBERFORCE'S BUTLER enters.

WILBERFORCE'S BUTLER
Mr Thomas Clarkson sir.

THOMAS CLARKSON 27 rushes in, breathless. WILBERFORCE'S BUTLER leaves.

CLARKSON
I rushed down. Are you ill? How?

WILBERFORCE waves dismissively, holding letter.

WILBERFORCE
Welcome Thomas. I pay doctors to bring me bad tidings. They call me 'calico guts'! Here's my medicine. A Privy Council committee——.

CLARKSON sits, eager to hear.

WILBERFORCE (CONT'D)
'——to consider the present state of the African Trade, practice & manner of obtaining slaves on the African coast. Importation & sale in British colonies, settlements, America or the West Indies; effects & consequences of the trade in Africa, colonies——.'

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

CLARKSON
Good news——at last.

WILBERFORCE
‘They should offer observations from the evidence.’Your reports?

CLARKSON
Whatever branch of the system I turned to I found it equally barbarous. Appalling stories. Trade’s an iniquity from beginning to end. Indirectly the trade props up many of England’s industries——sugar refining, textiles, shipbuilding & firearms——.

WILBERFORCE
Livelihoods depend on it. But iniquities can no longer be hidden under stinking hatches. Please inform the Society of this inquiry & speak with William Pitt.

CLARKSON
Our Prime Minister’s surrounded by men with colonial interests. They won’t curb their plantation overseers from abusing slaves. The West Indies lobby——Stephen Fuller’s campaign——is calling us ‘enthusiasts & fanaticks.’

WILBERFORCE
They’re afraid of the French revolution flooding England. We’ll present abolition as essential for the long-term future economic propsperity of England. Poverty touches a man’s mind more than injustices meted against foreigners.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

CLARKSON
True. Seamen may be too scared to testify publicly.

WILBERFORCE
Rev Newton will give us information. His accounts will unquestionably change hearts & minds.

102. INT MEETING ROOM, 18 OLD JEWRY ST, LONDON. EVE ESTABLISHING
ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY MEMBERS seated as CLARKSON 27 enters, takes seat & writes at a desk. Chairman GRANVILLE SHARP 52, WILLIAM DILLWYN 36,SAMUEL HOARE 36, JOSEPH WOODS SNR 49, GEORGE HARRISON 40, JAMES PHILLIPS 42

WILLIAM DILLWYN
——I agree with David Hartley—— slavery is contrary to God’s laws & man’s rights. The human horrors——.

SHARP waves John Wesley letter.

GRANVILLE SHARP
From John Wesley. Our Society may be small but we aren’t alone: Adam Smith, Evangelicals, Methodists, Dr. Johnson, all attacked slavery.

SAMUEL HOARE
We must decide what to tackle first: the slave trade or slavery itself? It doesn’t matter which we take as far as the end is——abolition.

JOSEPH WOODS SNR
Logically if we get rid of the British slave trade then the institution of slavery should dwindle because the supply has ceased.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

WILBERFORCE
When the Trade is abolished, planters would be forced to treat their slaves properly so they wouldn’t die. Surely greater leniency must grow into greater rights & eventually—— freedom?

GRANVILLE SHARP
Agreed. Must push to abolish both.

WILBERFORCE
Pushing for abolition of slavery assumes slaves are ready for freedom. Sadly, I doubt they are at present. Abolition & this committee will be blamed for slave revolts.

GRANVILLE SHARP
We’ll only succeed if we uproot the underlying attitude that slaves are man’s ‘property’.

GEORGE HARRISON
We must advocate a gradual approach to emancipation to avoid enormous social problems for the slaves, the colonies and Britain.

JAMES PHILLIPS
We must devise counterarguments to the planters’ argument that they need a ready supply of slave labour to supply England with raw materials——.

SAMUEL HOARE
A freed slave’d be a more productive worker. Emancipation would create a working class who’d use goods in the colonies.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

JAMES PHILLIPS
We must prove that it is morally wrong under God & hence not in the national interest. The opposition would claim that slavery is vital for England to remain competitive against Spain, France in——.

GEORGE HARRISON
——Here's the rub. They'd say we can't free slaves & keep competitive trading prices unless freedom is universal: France, Spain, the Arabs——all nations should free their slaves———together. We must gather evidence for ours and their trading.

THOMAS CLARKSON
I'll buy tools of torture: chains, leg-shackles, thumb screws——.

GRANVILLE SHARP
We gratefully accept your willingness & acknowledge your enormous risks, Thomas. Those to assist Thomas?

Hands up. CLARKSON writes names.

SHARP
Time's pressing. Decide which to attack first: slavery or the slave trade? Those in favour of abolishing the slave trade?

Most hands rise. (voting)

SHARP (CONT'D)
Attack the slave trade. Pray God brings us victory within the year. Now we must discuss ways

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

to publicise our cause right across Britain.

WILBERFORCE
And beyond——colonies, Europe. Send petitions all over the country, to ministers & men of influence——.

103. MONTAGE: CLARKSON researching slavery; dictating seamen's tales, one hidden behind screen; tavern debate; African artifacts, torture tools.
On screen: At risk to his life, CLARKSON investigates slavery in slave ports: Bristol, London and Liverpool and gained the names of 20,000 seamen, noting what happened to them. Records revealed 20% of seamen die on slaving voyages. From seamen he writes thousands of accounts of horrific abuse of slaves and seamen alike. He interviews merchants, captains, naval officers, ship doctors and John Newton, though many others refuse to risk their livelihoods by speaking. He debates the issue in taverns and sets up local abolitionist committees wherever he goes.

MONTAGE: A man gives CLARKSON a diagram of the *Brookes* carrying 482 slaves & note: '740 slaves on a previous voyage.' CLARKSON gathers samples of alternative African trade products: ivory, cloth, gum etc. A Manchester church urges him to preach on the slave trade.

104. INT JOSIAH WEDGWOOD'S OFFICE. DAY ESTABLISHING
WEDGWOOD 58 at desk as POTTER knocks, enters door inscribed 'WEDGWOOD'. Shows medallion.

POTTER
Finished the seal, Mr Wedgwood.

ECU of seal in Wedgwood's hand. He reads its inscription.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

WEDGWOOD
'Am I not a man and a brother?' Make this into medallions, cameos, cufflinks, snuffboxes so on. Excellent work!

105. DISSOLVE to MONTAGE: rich women wear abolition cameos & pins in streets & St Mary Woolnoth and St Mary Woolchurch. CU: Hands set up petitions in pubs, banks, hotels, halls. A MAYOR signs a petition, his COUNCILLORS follow. Rich & barely literate hands sign petitions as 20 others queue. ECUs: Newspaper clips, letters to the editor against slavery. GEORGE MORLAND oversees hanging of his painting *Execrable Human Traffick* at The Royal Academy. The *Brookes'* poster pinned up in pubs & in SAMUEL HOARE'S dining room, seen by shocked HOARE'S DAUGHTER. Audience applauds WOMAN DEBATER speaking on the trade at a London debating society.

106. INT ST MARY WOOLNOTH. SUNDAY
As CONGREGATION is departing, irate PENRHYN & HARRIS approach Newton.

PENRHYN
You talk endlessly about our slave trade. All exaggerations. It's absurd that men whose profit depended on healthy Africans would torment them during their voyage! I place no reliance on Wilberforce's speeches on the slave trade, either.

HARRIS
God has sanctioned slavery. It's dangerous to apply the Golden Rule of loving one's neighbour to social status as it forbids subordination of one human to another. Think of that!

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
MAN'S CRUELTIES TO MAN—ORDAINED BY GOD? GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE *OUT* OF SLAVERY IN EGYPT!

PENRHYN & HARRIS storm off, passing playwright, HANNAH MORE.

HANNAH MORE
Not everyone is seeking to please God through righting injustices, it seems.

NEWTON
Hannah, the slave trade hardens the heart like steel. It effaces the moral sense & robs the heart of every gentle & humane disposition.

Noticing her slave cameo, ECU,

NEWTON (CONT'D)
So you've joined Josiah Wedgwood's efforts. The Anti-Slavery Society applauds your labours. Your opinion as a popular playwright will sway many.

HANNAH MORE
I've just published a poem entitled 'Slavery'thanks to your books. They filled my sleep with nightmares but my pen with knowledge about slavery. My heart-felt thanks also for guiding me to salvation in Jesus.

NEWTON
Hannah, know our prayers are with you in your new faith & in your writing—.

107. MONTAGE: In a bookshop eager buyers grab More's *Slavery: A Poem,* Newton's book, *Thoughts*

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

*upon the African Slave Trade,* William Cowper's *The Negro's Complaint*. John Wesley's pamphlets, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* handled by dirty plus lace-cuffed hands.
On screen: In 1788 Parliament was flooded with 103 petitions against the slave trade, including from cities reliant on the trade: 2,000 signatures from Sheffield and 10,639 from Manchester. Wilberforce, before raising the slave trade issue in Parliament, falls ill.

108. INT CORRIDOR, ST JAMES' PALACE. DAY ESTABLISHING
On screen: During 1789-1790, witnesses for & against abolition give evidence before the Privy Council Committee on Trade and Plantations. Only five witnesses bravely testify against the trade so John Newton's first-hand accounts are of paramount importance to the investigation.

COUNCILLORS, WILBERFORCE file into a meeting room and sit around a table. LORD HAWKESBURY, ROBERT NORRIS, PRO WITNESS, WILLIAM PITT, LORD RODNEY, SIR PETER PARKER, THOMAS CLARKSON.

LORD HAWKESBURY
As Chairman I will be thorough & will request statistics & reports from slave traders, missionaries, colonial legislatures etc on conditions for slaves & seamen on these ships——.

ROBERT NORRIS
The trade is so humane! It rescues natives from human sacrifice. King of Dahomey kills prisoners of war. What Christian allows such violence against hapless men? Women? And Children? I ask you?

PRO WITNESS
Criminals are enslaved, others captured in 'just' wars. No-one

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

kidnaps or foments wars just to enslave. In the West Indies they're doubly happy––they're well & enjoying a better life.

WILLIAM PITT
Large numbers of slaves perish during the middle passage to the colonies. Describe conditions on the ships.

ROBERT NORRIS
The transatlantic voyage is a happy time. Slaves eat meals with the best African sauces. Apartments perfumed with frankincense & lime juice. They sing, dance––

LORD HAWKESBURY
Lord Rodney, in your naval experience have you heard or seen atrocities perpetrated against slaves?

LORD RODNEY
Never. I'll rejoice if English labourers were half so happy as West Indian slaves. The trade's also a nursery for seamen. I attribute the French naval strength in the American War to her growing slave trade.

SIR PETER PARKER
Abolition would cause despondency among negroes, gradually decrease the population & island produce. In time destroy half our commerce & steal Great Britain's rank as the first maritime power in the world.

CLARKSON
Here are instruments of torture.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

He shows thumbscrews, shackles & *Brookes* poster. COUNCILLORS gasp.

This diagram is not exaggerated. It shows 482 slaves. On previous voyages captains carried 609 to 740 slaves!

SIR PETER PARKER
No. Monstrous calumnies!

CLARKSON
——To replace this monstrous tragedy, we can trade in proper goods with Africans. I have African: rice, ivory, cinnamon, pepper, dried fruits, cotton, ornaments.

CLARKSON shows African samples, loom & spindle. COUNCILLORS are very interested.

109. INT ST JAMES'S PALACE. MAY DAY
NEWTON, on BETSY'S arm, walks corridor. Then sit. ECU: 2 books on his lap; *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade by John Newton* on top.

BETSY
These grand people staring——at us!

NEWTON
ECU: He opens book.

Betsy, I penned this, 'Journal of a voyage in the *Duke of Argyle*, August 1750. It will be pleasant to remember these things afterwards.'Shameful voyage! But the Lord brought me here today!

BETSY
Uncle, think not of shame, think what good you'll be doing speaking today.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

USHER enters corridor & yells,

USHER
The Reverend John Newton.

NEWTON & BETSY walk to chamber. USHER opens door. BETSY remains outside. PITT PM rises, so WILBERFORCE & others rise. PITT bows, walks to NEWTON, takes his arm. BISHOP PORTEOUS.

WILLIAM PITT
May I introduce Wilberforce's friend, the Rev. John Newton.

PITT guides awed NEWTON to chair. NEWTON opens his journal.

WILLIAM PITT
We are most privileged to hear your experiences of the slave trade.

NEWTON
My heart shudders I was engaged in it. I'd have quitted the trade sooner had I deemed it unlawful & wrong. But I never had a scruple at the time; nor was this thought ever suggested by any friend. Slaving is accounted a genteel employment but I was a gaoler——with chains, bolts, shackles.

MONTAGE: CU of slave faces.

A 100-ton vessel buys 220-250 slaves. Holds are 5' high. This height is divided for slaves to lie in two rows, like books on a shelf. Irons cramp their hands & feet. Injuries are many.

WILLIAM PITT
Such extreme suffering.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
English ships buy 60,000 slaves annually & lose 15,000. They're kept down, by rough weather, to breathe hot & corrupt air for a week in galling irons. Mornings find living & dead locked together.

CU of SAILORS' faces.

NEWTON (CONT'D)
Gained cheaply through press-gangs, sailors are more expendable than slaves. I estimate one-fifth of crews die annually——. Wretches die from disease, drink, slave revolts——.

Heated, trying to control his anger,

NEWTON (CONT'D)
I must, as a minister, relate slavery to biblical principles. God forbid we reap profit from Africans'agonies. Coins in British banks are like the silver Judas returned to the temple.

BISHOP PORTEOUS
Rev Newton, what do you know about the African wars?

NEWTON
Most African wars would cease if Europeans would cease tempting them with goods for sale. Captives for sale are fewer than the slain.

PITT
Is the trade profitable to merchants?

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

NEWTON
Some gainful ones but more losing voyages. If the trade continues while we delay——year to year to stop it, the blood of thousands of our injured fellow creatures is crying against us. The pitiable state of survivors, torn from their relatives, & their native land——. THE TRADE MUST BE ABOLISHED.

110. INT WILBERFORCE'S HOUSE. AFTERNOON
WILBERFORCE'S BUTLER helps ill WILBERFORCE into his coat.

WILBERFORCE BUTLER
Sir, are you well enough to speak in the House? This satchel weighs——

WILBERFORCE
Heavy, yes it is. But lie abed & miss our victory? NO.

111. INT HOUSE OF COMMONS. DAY
WILBERFORCE enters, gaining strength. MP's seated.
On screen: House of Commons 1789.

WILBERFORCE
Members of the House of Commons, I move 12 resolutions to abolish the British slave trade. Myself, us, are all guilty. African innocents are condemned, wars are fomented & countries ravaged——all to gain slaves.

He coughs, sways, gains strength.

WILBERFORCE (CONT'D)
The Middle Passage from Africa to the colonies is the most wretched part. So much misery condensed in so little room is

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

more than human imagination has ever before conceived.

MONTAGE: Slaves dancing on deck with CU whip.

WILBERFORCE (CONT'D)
Evidence damns this despicable trade. Robert Norris from Liverpool told the Privy Council slaves 'danced' on board——but it's under the lash! Of slaves shipped, 12½% die onboard, ⅓ landed in the West Indies die within a few months. Many suicide.

MPs are shocked.

WILBERFORCE (CONT'D)
Without fresh slaves, planters must treat their slaves better. Abolition would marginally upset Liverpool as only 13,000 of its 170,000 tons of shipping sailed on the Triangular Trade. The wickedness of the slave trade is so enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable, there is no solution but abolition. Justice demands it be stopped——at once.

MPs argue. DISSOLVE.

Elimination will cause economic losses——at first. But it must be done out of fidelity to European law & biblical principles. What should make any man contradict the dictates of his conscience, principles of justice, laws of religion & of God?

112. EXT LONDON STREET. DUSK
LAMPLIGHTER lights a street gaslight as CURIOUS CHILDREN & CURIOUS SAILOR gaze at it, amazed, while solo female V/O sings *Amazing Grace*. DISSOLVE.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

Window in Olney Church depicting NEWTON with 2 slaves: one in chains, the other set free. CU travels down his epitaph on the marble tablet, St Mary Woolnoth church, London.
V/O CHOIRS sing Newton & Cowper hymns.

LEFT: On screen: The greatest speakers of the day: Pitt, Fox, Burke, Sheridan and Wilberforce presented the abolitionist cause. However, the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was not passed in Parliament until 1807 by 283 votes to 16. This act made slave trading by any English vessel illegal. Nevertheless, 500,000 Africans were still suffering enslavement on West Indian sugar plantations. Not until 26 July 1833 were all British-owned slaves set free throughout the Empire. Three days later William Wilberforce died.

John Newton lived to see the abolition of the slave trade, dying the same year on 21 December 1807, aged 82. His last words were: 'My memory is nearly gone but I remember two things: That I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Saviour.'

Mary Newton died on 15 December 1790, aged 61, after 40 happy years of marriage.

William Cowper and Hannah More became two of the most renowned literary figures of their day.

The hymn *Amazing Grace* was later set to an American folk tune and continues to be sung throughout the world.

The congregation of the Church of St Peter & St Paul in Olney still run pancake races on Shrove Tuesday.

Slavery didn't die out centuries ago. In this century, 50 million slaves (victims of human trafficking) across the world still languish, waiting for their freedom.

FADE OUT.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.

©2025 Wendy Bytheway, SWEET SOUNDS, all rights reserved.