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Changing Her Mind

Alfred Dixon

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ELLEN CRAFT: FUGITIVE SLAVE ABOLITIONIST

I scribe myself with a bandage
I have tied from my wrist to my shoulder
I scribe myself with no scribe nor pen
I lie and say, I am looking for a doctor
Which is why you mistake me
As a good white man and not
the half-slave that I am, traveling,
Traveling I take my husband and tell you
He is my servant, I tell you I can't write
because my arm's been hurt
I scribe myself with injury
My injury I pretend for you
My injury my scribing
Naturally a good white gentleman can write
Naturally a half-slave wouldn't be a woman
Dressed as a white man traveling with a husband
Naturally, naturally I could never
write and naturally you would ask me to sign
My name at a hotel, at a train, at a bank
so naturally I bind my arm from the wrist to the shoulder
And so naturally my husband carries my bags
and calls me sir and naturally, so naturally
You let me pass to the north, to freedom, naturally.

by Elizabeth Burns