

1865

a play in two acts

by

Michael Perlmutter

Michael Perlmutter
1719 N. 6th St
Port Hueneme, CA 93041
805-469-2897
lmjdj@msn.com

CHARACTERS
(in order of appearance)

JENNA LaFLEUR	.....	a stock company actress for Ford's Theatre in her early/mid thirties
SUZANNE HATTERSON	.....	a stock company actress for Ford's Theatre in her late fifties
CAPTAIN DONNESSEY	.....	a Captain of the Union army in his late twenties/early thirties
JACOB RITTER	.....	a stagehand for Ford's Theatre in his late twenties
CYNTHIA LEWIS	.....	a stock company actress for Ford's Theatre in her late teens/approaching twenty
FRANK MATTHEWS	.....	a stock company actor for Ford's Theatre in his mid forties/early fifties
MARTIN OSBOURNE	.....	a stock company actor for Ford's Theatre in his mid forties to mid fifties
PETER DANIELS	.....	a stock company actor for Ford's Theatre in his late early/mid thirties
NED SPRANG	.....	a stagehand for Ford's Theatre in his mid/late thirties

SETTING

Ford's Theatre, Washington D.C.

TIME

April 14, 1865.

Good Friday

ACT I

Scene 1	April 14, 1865	11:45 pm.
Scene 2	April 15, 1865	1:30 am

ACT II

Scene 1	April 15, 1865	3:20 am
Scene 2	April 15, 1865	7:10 am
Scene 3	Epilogue	

"America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves."

— Abraham Lincoln

The following story though based on true events is fictitious. All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead is purely coincidental.

ACT I

(At rise:

The curtain is already up as the audience enters. The stage is that of a traditional theatre circa 1860. The space itself is high enough to allow scenery to be flown in from above. A set of painted Parlor room backdrops hang, as if floating in the air, six to eight feet above the floor, offering a clear view to the backstage brick wall. A stage door can be found up right. The stage left and right wing curtains have been torn and various props, furniture and tables are strewn about what is left of the stage. Footlights lay broken, while others cast an ominous light across the floor boards. Flags that once adorned the far left box droop, wilted, torn and frail, over the stage. A copy of the famous unfinished portrait of President George Washington hangs between the flags in silent witness to the pandemonium that has preceded this hour.

JENNA LaFLEUR, an actress in her early/mid thirties enters stage from the wings and surveys the broken carnage before her. She looks out into the audience, we can see the overturned and broken seats here through her eyes. Lost in thought she looks up into the far left box and watches as her mind replays the moments from earlier this night. Her attention drifts from the now broken railing hanging over the far left box seats--to center stage-- to the orchestra then back out the wings and off through the now locked stage door. She wipes a tear from her cheek as she looks back out into the audience.

JENNA

What a . . . waste.

(JENNA reaches into her purse to find a cigarette. She looks from side to side to see if anyone else is there. She stoops down to a foot lamp but just before she lights up:)

Hello?

(No reply.)

Hello?

JENNA (Cont.)

(No reply.)

Can we go home yet?

(Again no reply. JENNA shrugs and lights up. She surveys the stage again; she repeats the only words that come to mind:)

Wasteful.

SUZANNE (offstage)

Miss La Fleur?

(JENNA quickly extinguishes the cigarette, but carefully so as to save its remnants for later as SUZANNE HATTERSON, a matronly woman in her spry fifties enters from the right wings.)

SUZANNE

(Entering; There is a hint of a British accent to her speech:)

You're best off not being alo--Is that a cigarette you're holding?

JENNA

Tidying up.

(She drops the butt in her purse.)

SUZANNE

Let the men do that. How long've you been detained out here?

JENNA

Does it matter?

SUZANNE

(Thinks on it a moment:)

No. No, I guess it doesn't. Have you heard anything?

(JENNA shakes her head: no.)

SUZANNE

It's just as well. We're safer here than anywhere else tonight, I should guess.

JENNA

I'd feel much safer in my own bed.

SUZANNE

Then you should have left when you had the opportunity.

(Moves to an overturned sofa)

Help me with this, will you?

JENNA

I thought you said to leave the tidying up to the men.

SUZANNE

Cleaning, yes. I had in mind to sit down.

(The two women aright the sofa. SUZANNE sits on one end, leaving ample room for JENNA who remains standing looking out.)

SUZANNE

For the love of Mike, dear, please, rest your feet.

JENNA

(Looking out toward the lobby:)

I saw something--I thought. Hello? Hello!?

SUZANNE

Hello!?

JENNA

Hello!!

SUZANNE

Hello!

(At the back of the audience one of the lobby doors open up. Looking toward the doorway all that can be seen is the silhouette of a soldier [CAPTAIN DONNESSEY], encased in the fire light of the lobby.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

You--Ladies? Yes?

SUZANNE

Good evening, private.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
Captain.

SUZANNE
My apologies.

JENNA
Any word?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
On?

JENNA
(Isn't it obvious:)
... When we'll be allowed out of here?

SUZANNE
The President. Any word on the President?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
No news as yet. They've set him up across the street. Doctor's are seeing to him over there.

SUZANNE
And your orders Captain?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
We're stationed here, Ma'am. Holding down the theatre.
(Acknowledging Jenna:)
Miss.

SUZANNE
No one in; no one out?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
Basically. Yes, Ma'am.
(His attention is diverted off to someone else in the lobby.)
Yes, Sir.

(The door closes. The women are left again to fend for themselves. Pause.)

SUZANNE
Might as well have that seat.

JENNA

All because I wanted to change out of my costume.

SUZANNE

Me? I'm just too slow.

(JENNA takes a seat beside SUZANNE. SUZANNE sits quietly still. JENNA says nothing. She fidgets and sighs none of which affect SUZANNE's stance at all. The pause continues.)

JENNA

What are you doing?

SUZANNE

(Unflinching, eyes still closed.)

Praying, child. Times like these call for prayer.

JENNA

Yes, well, that's what we get for doing a play on Good Friday. Mock God and he'll mock you back.

SUZANNE

(Still in prayer:)

He doesn't work like that.

JENNA

Mhmmm.

(Pause.)

SUZANNE

Amen.

JENNA

Amen.

SUZANNE

Have your cigarette.

JENNA

I beg your pardon?

SUZANNE

God told me. You need to relax.

JENNA

"God" told you?

SUZANNE

(It was) a joke. You think I haven't kept watch on you girls? I know which ones of you smoke and which of you . . . well--smoking's the lesser sin if you get my meaning.

JENNA

Maybe later.

SUZANNE

You should give it up, you know. Nasty habit. It smells terrible. And the men . . . well . . .

JENNA

Were you there? Did you see it happen?

SUZANNE

Almost. I was over there by the fly ropes. I had just made my exit when I heard something or someone hit the stage. He was gone before I turned around.

JENNA

Mr. Hawk was alone onstage then.

SUZANNE

From what I hear told. And then everyone was on the stage. Half the audience. Doctors. Looters. All clamoring to get to the President's box. I do believe I saw one young man steal away the cushions from the rocking chair Mr. Lincoln was sitting in when he was shot. It's not right.

JENNA

So what does this mean then?

SUZANNE

Are we back at war?

JENNA

Are we?

SUZANNE

As I said, we're safer in here than out there right now. No one out; No one in.
(JENNA, still fidgeting, rises and begins to move around.)

SUZANNE

You have someone out there waiting for you?

JENNA

No. You?

SUZANNE

No. My husband should be fast asleep by now. He won't wake till the sun shines. Military canons couldn't stir him.

JENNA

Aren't you bothered for his safety?

SUZANNE

You're right: I should be, shouldn't I?

JENNA

And your children?

SUZANNE

California. Heard there was gold.

(No reply.)

You never asked me of my children before. You never asked me much of anything before tonight.

JENNA

It outcasts the silence.

SUZANNE

Curious way of putting it.

(Slight pause.)

JENNA

They're saying it was Wilkes Booth.

SUZANNE

They do say that, yes.

JENNA

But you didn't see him.

SUZANNE

Nor do I have no reason to believe anyone was lying when they said they did.

JENNA

Well, I choose not to believe it.

SUZANNE

So I gathered. You fancy Mr. Booth?

(No reply.)

I've seen him watching you too.

(No reply.)

I see a lot of things.

JENNA

Yes, well . . . you can keep those ideas to yourself, thank you.

SUZANNE

Do you know where he went?

JENNA

Who?

SUZANNE

Wilkes Booth.

JENNA

I don't keep company with Wilkes Booth.

SUZANNE

He was here earlier today.

JENNA

Collecting his mail. The Fords let him use the address here.

SUZANNE

Don't misunderstand me: he's a right looking man. If I were your age, I wouldn't be shy to admit it.

JENNA

Mrs. Hatterson.

SUZANNE

Before tonight, of course.

JENNA

Mrs. Hatterson . . .

SUZANNE

Whatever's happened in the past between you two: best you not mention it.

JENNA

There is nothing to tell.

SUZANNE

Good. We will just leave it at that.

(JACOB RITTER and CYNTHIA LEWIS enter from the wings. JACOB, is a stagehand in his mid thirties and CYNTHIA a young actress, barely old enough to be holding down a job. Their attraction to each other is warily apparent although they themselves are acutely unaware the rest of the world can see through their lackluster efforts of keeping their affair a secret.)

JACOB

How in the love of God do you get out of this place?

SUZANNE

Excuse me? Are you addressing us?

CYNTHIA

Mrs. Hatterson. Miss LaFleur.

JACOB

Are all the exits blocked?

FRANK

(entering after them, FRANK, an actor, forty-fifty)

Kicked you two out of the costume room finally, did they?

(JACOB says nothing; but clearly looks to FRANK, noting his own arrival at their heels. There is an awkward silence.)

CYNTHIA

Mr. Ritter was kind enough to wake me.

JACOB

Is there a way--

SUZANNE

There is no passage out, my dears. They've bolted us in for the night.

JACOB

(Moves out top the edge of the stage.)

Not a chance of it.

FRANK

I knew I shoulda called on that last hand.

SUZANNE

For our own good, I'm afraid. It would seem we are a threat to the nation.

JENNA

Please, be still.

CYNTHIA

But I have to go home. My parents . . .

SUZANNE

I'm afraid your parents will have to wait, my dear.

(JACOB hops off stage into the audience and heads off to the lobby.)

SUZANNE

It won't do you any good, sir.

JENNA

We've tried.

(But JACOB ignores them and pulls open the door only to be blocked by CAPTAIN DONNESSEY.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Back in, Sir.

JACOB

(Attempting instead to move past him:)

Sorry.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
(Holding firm:)

I'm sorry.

JACOB

I'm going home.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
I'm afraid you're not. Not on my watch.

JACOB

You'll have to stop me.

(And with that JACOB is marched back into the theatre at
rifle point by CAPTAIN DONNESSEY.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
(Hollering back to the lobby:)

I've got this.

(To the group inside:)

Is this everyone?

FRANK

. . . There are two more men upstairs.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
Get them down here. Stay away from windows. Better yet stay together in
here.

JENNA

What's happening out there?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
There's a bit of a mob gathered outside, Miss. Has everyone here made your
statements?

JACOB

Statements? Yeah, I'll make a statement. It was John Wilkes Booth. I saw him--
now can I go home?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
My orders are to keep you here.

FRANK

I recall you said the plan was to escort us across the street for questioning then to let us go.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Plans change.

(A beat.)

We don't need another incident.

FRANK

Incident?

CYNTHIA

Did someone get hurt?

SUZANNE

Other than the President?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

And they're being attended to. For the time being I suggest you all stay here: in this room.

FRANK

I'll go get--

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

You do that.

(To JACOB as FRANK exits)

You don't want to push your way out there, sir. It isn't safe.

JACOB

I've done nothing wrong. We've--

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Then let's just keep it that way.

(He backs himself out into the lobby.)

(Pause. JACOB, from the aisle, stares out at the group onstage, who in turn stare back.)

SUZANNE

You're outnumbered.

JACOB

"Bully."

CYNTHIA

(Offering him to sit next to her on some of the strewn furniture as JACOB travels back down the aisle to the stage.)

Jake--Mr. Ritter.

JENNA

Oh, don't even pretend.

SUZANNE

Oh, do. Keeping up appearances is the first step to correcting behavior.

(JACOB chooses not to respond. He reaches the stage's apron and hops up onto stage without using the stairs. He looks around, choosing for the moment not to sit at all.)

SUZANNE

Could you procure a broom?

JACOB

I'm on my own time now, Mrs. Happerson, not the company's.

SUZANNE

Hatterson.

JACOB

That's what I said.

SUZANNE

Then your P's should be pronounced "tuh".

(A beat.)

JACOB

I'll find a broom.

SUZANNE

(To Cynthia:)

How old are you?

(No reply.)

Old enough to know better. He's not even an actor. He's a stagehand.

CYNTHIA

I'm afraid I don't have the faintest idea what you're talking about.

SUZANNE

Appearances, honey. I'm talking about your reputation.

(As JACOB returns with a broom.)

Over there: the broken glass.

(Pause: the women say nothing as JACOB sweeps up what debris he finds. FRANK, PETER and MARTIN enter from the wings. PETER, is an actor in his late twenties/mid thirties. MARTIN a character actor in his fifties. MARTIN is a shade, what shall we say, effeminate, but not what we would call "out of the closet"--if in fact he is gay. As opposed to our previously entered couple [Jacob & Cynthia] there is absolutely no chemistry between the two men. They each play for different teams as it were.)

CYNTHIA

My father's going to be worried sick.

MARTIN

What's this about none of us going home?

JACOB

Can you believe it?

MARTIN

Then it's true?

SUZANNE

He's still alive, thank you very much. Am I the only one interested in what actually happened here tonight?

MARTIN

Where's Mr. Maddox?

SUZANNE

Who?

MARTIN

The . . . stage manager.

FRANK

Gone.

MARTIN

I have a wife and kids, alright?

FRANK

We know. We all know.

SUZANNE

Nobody else cares about history?

MARTIN

(Continuing his conversation with Frank:)

I'm sorry you have no one but I do and need to get to them.

FRANK

Why? Are you paying them by the hour?

MARTIN

I happen to care about my family, thank you very much. And I'm worried for their well being.

JENNA

Then you should have left along with the others. We all should ha--

MARTIN

Forgive me if I was packing my things. Lord knows when they'll ever let anyone back in here again.

JACOB

No looting. No souvenirs.

(MARTIN eyes Cynthia in response to the same thought:
"who's taking souvenirs?"--meaning Cynthia herself.)

FRANK

(To Martin:)

You were playing cards just like the rest of us.

PETER

Where is Mr. Maddox? And that kid, Peanut? and Sprang, I think his name was.

JACOB

Sprang was with you?

JENNA

You were all playing cards?

FRANK

You need five for a good table. Six to keep it interesting.

SUZANNE

They didn't come back, I'm afraid.

PETER

Why not? Did they let 'em--

JACOB

They let him go?

JENNA

They aren't saying.

SUZANNE

They must've been involved in the incident the Soldier was talking about.

JACOB

Ahh.

MARTIN

Incident?

SUZANNE

Someone got hurt. They're not saying who. They're not saying what.

PETER

Peanut was kicked in the head when Wilkes jumped his horse getting away. Took it hard.

JENNA

So you saw it too. You saw it was Booth.

PETER

I . . . didn't see anything. But that's the talk. Peanut was holding Booth's horse at the backstage door there. He said Wilkes grabbed the reigns and kicked him away without a word.

CYNTHIA

Then that must be it. He was talking about Mr. Peanut.

JACOB

Peanut's just what he's called. He's not a "mister"; he's just a kid.

FRANK

No, I imagine the bluecoat was talking about something else. Peanut was playing cards with us up in the dressing room; he held a hand fine. Played better than . . .

(Indicates Martin)

JENNA

Never the less it seems the men were taken across for questioning-- Something happened and . . . here we are.

MARTIN

For how long?

JENNA

(Shrugs.)

I just wanted to get out of my costume.

CYNTHIA

Me too. Then I fell asleep.

JENNA

Oh, we know what you two were up to.

JACOB

Hey.

PETER

We were all here just trying to wait it out, never mind who was doing what.

FRANK

Which brings to mind:

(Pulls a deck of playing cards out of his pocket:)

Cards anyone?

MARTIN

You've already alleviated me of all my money. So now you have me trapped and penniless. Thank you, thank you.

PETER

Who else they take across the street?

MARTIN

I can't believe this. I've got to go home. I have got to go home.

SUZANNE

Most everyone left when the pandemonium started. The rest high tailed it when they carried out the President. Miss Keene, herself, escorted the first lady to where they took her husband.

(No reply.)

Selfless woman.

JENNA

Yes, we know. We were all dutifully impressed by Laura Keene's self importance.

SUZANNE

You would do better to treat her with a little respect; a woman in her position--

JENNA

Is from old British money. Yes, we know.

(SUZANNE chooses not to reply. Pause.)

CYNTHIA

So we just wait?

JENNA

Nothing much else we can do.

CYNTHIA

Great.

(MARTIN starts offstage.)

SUZANNE

He wants us all to stay here. Onstage.

MARTIN

He?

JENNA

The Soldiers.

SUZANNE

The Captain.

JACOB

He pulled a gun on me.

MARTIN

Well then by all means

(Returning onstage looking for a place to sit.)

we wouldn't want you to get shot.

JACOB

ha-ha.

PETER

How long'd he state we'd be here?

JENNA

He didn't.

(There is a pause.)

MARTIN

What time is it anyway?

FRANK

You don't know?

MARTIN

Do you?

FRANK

"I've got to go home, I've got to go home": and you don't even know what time it is?

MARTIN

I have a watch, thank you. I just wanted to check to see if it's accurate.

FRANK

I'll bet you wouldn't be so keen on leaving if you had my money.

MARTIN

He cheats at cards.

FRANK

Aww, for godsake--

PETER

It was a fair hand. I dealt him the queen myself.

MARTIN

There were three others on the table.

FRANK

Don't siddown if you can't pay out.

JENNA

Are you men serious?

FRANK

What?

JENNA

Look at what happened here tonight: Lincoln was shot here, I mean to say right here--might be dying--face the truth: he was hit point blank in the back of the head--; this country could be back at war again, we're trapped inside here under armed guard, who knows what happened to Mr. Maddox, Peanut and Mr. Sprang and you're arguing about a game of cards?

(Slight pause . . .)

FRANK

. . . And?

PETER

And?

FRANK

Cards are a serious business.

MARTIN

It should be.

FRANK

It's a gentleman's game.

MARTIN

It should be.

FRANK
And a game of skill.

MARTIN
Like I said--

CYNTHIA
I'll play.

FRANK
It's a gentleman's game.

MARTIN
It shou--

FRANK
You say, "it should be" one more time and I'll force this deck of cards right up y--

PETER
Hey. There are ladies present.

JACOB
You're right--He's right.

PETER
My apologies, ladies.

SUZANNE
Granted.

FRANK
Thanks Queeny.

CYNTHIA
Why can't I play?

MARTIN
They would be taking unfair advantage of you, my dear.

(JENNA smiles knowingly. JACOB avoids her glance.)

CYNTHIA
I saw that.

JENNA

Did you now?

MARTIN

This is a travesty--

PETER

Alright; everybody listen, please, it looks like we could be here a while, we don't to need--

JACOB

So we don't need to be on each other's . . .

(Looks to Peter:)

PETER

At each other's backs.

JACOB

We should make the best of things. As well we can.

FRANK

The man is right. Get a table.

MARTIN

Oh, my god, man.

SUZANNE

May as well make yourself comfortable, ladies. The gentlemen have spoken.

(A table is procured and chairs set in place by Frank, Peter and Cynthia.)

CYNTHIA

(Stating her case for playing:)

You need five.

FRANK

You need money.

(CAPTAIN DONNESSEY re-enters again from the lobby.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Everybody here?

FRANK

Hello again, sir. Would there be--

MARTIN

I need to get home to my wife and children--

CYNTHIA

My parents--

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Do any of you know of Secretary Seward?

MARTIN

In what way?

JENNA

State Secretary Seward? He had a carriage accident, didn't he?

PETER

Couple weeks ago, wasn't it?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

What else can you tell me about him?

JACOB

He lost the party election to Lincoln?

MARTIN

That was six years ago.

(No reply.)

FRANK

If we guess right do we get a cigar?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

He was attacked and almost killed in his home this evening.

(No reply.)

Same time as Mr. Lincoln was here, as close as we can tell.

(There is an awkward silence as no one responds.)

FRANK

Was he at Grover's Theatre?

PETER

Frank.

FRANK

Sorry. It's the whiskey talking.

JENNA

And the vice President?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

We're looking for him. Would any of you know where we can find him?

(No reply. There is a pause.)

CYNTHIA

How's the President doing?

(CAPTAIN DONNESSEY does not answer her.)

PETER

There were three men with us earlier. And I think a woman before that; they were taken across the street for questioning, what happened to them?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Their wounds are being seen to.

JENNA

What happened to them?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

They won't be coming back.

PETER

Are we going to be--

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

No one's going anywhere.

FRANK

Could we get something to eat, then? Some cheese maybe?

CYNTHIA

Could you get word to my parents?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

No one has anything else to report?

MARTIN

To report?: no. But if you could get word to our families.

(CAPTAIN DONNESSEY opens the lobby door and exits back inside.)

SUZANNE

(As he goes:)

We'll be here.

FRANK

I don't think he's telling us everything.

JENNA

How much have you had to drink?

FRANK

Tonight?

JACOB

This is wrong.

CYNTHIA

They're treating us like we had something to do with this.

FRANK

You got that feeling, did you?

PETER

We didn't.

JACOB

I know we didn't.

JENNA

Anybody who did: ran. Would of run--should have run.

JACOB

They did run. Booth did it: everybody knows Booth did it.

SUZANNE

Did you see him?

JACOB

Damned right I saw him. Saw him run across the stage. Said somethin' too, woulda stopped him myself if Sprang hadn't thrown me back.

SUZANNE

Sprang?

JACOB

Ned Sprang.

MARTIN

He's another stagehand. We were all playing cards. A little older than . . .

JACOB

Jacob--

CYNTHIA

(Simultaneously:)

Jake. Jake Ritter.

MARTIN

Older than Mister Ritter, here. Stocky fellow. A bit of a scruff.

PETER

Smells like fish.

JACOB

That's him.

PETER

I heard Wilkes had a knife.

CYNTHIA

He cut up Mr. Withers when he ran by him.

SUZANNE

Who?

JENNA

The orchestral conductor. Caught him in the . . .

(Indicates the side of his vest)

SUZANNE

Did all the musicians get out?

PETER

My point is maybe he was trying to keep you from getting hurt yourself.

JACOB

Who?

PETER

Mr. Sprang. He could have saved your life.

JACOB

You don't know Sprang.

CYNTHIA

Is he evil?

JACOB

He's lazy. Lazy as they get. Been a stagehand here for something like ten years.

MARTIN

You're a stagehand here.

JACOB

For two months. I've no intention of staying a stagehand.

JENNA

There's been a war on. Jobs are scarce.

JACOB

Not that scarce.

SUZANNE

Well, we'll all be out of a job tomorrow. You can bet your last penny on that.

(FRANK runs his thumb across the edge of the deck of cards.)

SUZANNE

Play your game, boys. We're going to be here awhile.

FRANK

(To JACOB ; referring to Martin;)

I'll front him.

(Referring to Cynthia:)

You front her.

(To Cynthia as they sit:)

You know how to play?

CYNTHIA

Just deal the cards.

FRANK

Martin, siddown.

(No reply.)

I'm not gonna give you your money back; you're gonna have to earn it.

(Puts money on the table:)

That's a loan.

(JENNA watches as the game begins. SUZANNE sits quietly on her sofa.)

JENNA

Why . . . are you so calm?

SUZANNE

History, my dear.

JENNA

(More repeating the word than anything else.)

History.

SUZANNE

Think about it: this is History. For the first time in my life--probably in any of our lives--we are part of history here. Not playing a character in some historical play; not reading about it, not even witnessing it: we ARE history. Soak it in, my dear. These moments pass.

(No reply.)

For the rest of our lives people will be asking where were you when Mr. Lincoln was shot. How many of us will be able to say, "I was there"? "On stage"?

FRANK

Every two bit actor from here to Oregon.

MARTIN

(Pulling a stack of flyers from a coat pocket.)

That's why I got me some playbills.

FRANK

Good idea.

MARTIN

Got 'em all.

(FRANK just looks to him:)

MARTIN

Nickel a piece.

FRANK

Done.

(Slides him fifty cents or more. Takes half the stack.)

PETER

Shoulda held out for ten.

FRANK

I woulda paid it; it's his own money.

MARTIN

Had to sell mine b'fore you sold him yours.

PETER

I woulda held out for fifteen.

(There is a loud crash in the lobby followed by a cheer from the crowd outside. The sounds of the crowds increase as CAPTAIN DONNESSEY swings open the door just enough to address the group onstage:)

CAPTAIN

We've got everything under control. Just . . . stay where you are.

(The door closes again, muffling the noise of the crowd. SUZANNE takes this all in quietly as the game tries to continue under way. JENNA looks out to the closed lobby door.)

(Lights fade.)

SCENE 2

(At rise:
SUZANNE has fallen asleep on the sofa. JENNA
drapes a coat over her as JACOB , PETER and
MARTIN rise from the poker table to stretch their
legs while CYNTHIA and FRANK remain seated.
CYNTHIA studies the deck of cards as FRANK
finishes counting out his winnings.)

PETER

Don't bother pocketin' your money now. We're just getting started.

JACOB

I'm not lickin' my wounds yet.

FRANK

All I know is somebody owes me fourteen dollars and thirty-six cents.

JENNA

Shhhh.

(Pointing Suzanne out:)

"She's sleeping."

FRANK

Thank the Lord.

SUZANNE

(Not moving;)

I'm only resting my eyes.

FRANK

As long as you keep resting your mouth at the same time, I'm a happy man.

SUZANNE

You are a crude and vulgar specimen.

MARTIN

You got that right.

FRANK

Guess I placed my boot right into that one.

(No reply.)

FRANK (Cont.)

Well, don't everyone come to my rescue at once. Anybody have anything to drink?

PETER

If we had I'm sure you'd have emptied it by now.

FRANK

Good point.

(No reply. Again to Peter:)

So, where're you hiding it? I'll pay you back some of your own money.

PETER

I haven't lost anything yet.

FRANK

Then I'll pay you back some of their money.

SUZANNE

Once a lush always a--

FRANK

Hey, sister I liked it better when you were sleeping.

SUZANNE

I wasn't sleeping--

FRANK

Yeah, well, whatever you were doing: I liked that much better.

JACOB

(To Cynthia:)

You trying to will yourself a decent hand?

CYNTHIA

I'm trying to figure out how he marked them.

MARTIN

If you succeed I'll cover double your losses.

FRANK

The key to winning is very simple. Play with inferior card players. Works every time.

PETER

(To Jenna:)

Staring out at that door isn't going to make it open any faster.

JENNA

It's not as if I'm losing out on the greatest intellectual conversation of the ages.

FRANK

This could be as good as it gets, girlie.

JENNA

Don't refer to me in that tone.

FRANK

What tone?

JENNA

That lecherous old man looking down the top of my corset tone.

FRANK

You're wearing a corset?

(No reply.)

I didn't know. Usually they stick out--

JENNA

Oh, my word.

FRANK

The ribs on the corset. I wasn't talking about her--

SUZANNE

Somebody shut him up.

FRANK

Although I have nothing against--

MARTIN

Frank, if you shut up I'll find you a bottle.

FRANK

I knew someone was holding out on me.

MARTIN

I said I'd look for one not I know where one was.

FRANK

You said 'find'.

MARTIN

Which implies expected success--doesn't guarantee it.

FRANK

Well, start looking then.

CYNTHIA

Is that a pen marking?

PETER

(Courtingly to Jenna:)

So wha'd you want to talk about?

JENNA

Really?

PETER

What?

JENNA

Shouldn't you be fawning over little miss firecracker over there?

PETER

You said you didn't like our conversation, what would you like to talk about?

CYNTHIA

We can take turns.

(Slight pause.)

JENNA

You really don't want to know how that sounded.

CYNTHIA

Choosing a subject to talk about. Or we could play parlor games.

(No reply.)

The Alphabet game is very good.

(Slight pause.)

PETER

(To Jenna:)

I implore you, Pick a subject or we'll forced to play the alphabet game.

(JENNA just smiles.)

FRANK

Start with 'F': Find me that bottle.

CYNTHIA

Go and get it yourself.

JACOB

Hurry, he won't shut up till you do so.

JENNA

. . . I didn't offer.

SUZANNE

Just do it.

MARTIN

Could it kill you to--

FRANK

Baaaaaa! You're out.

PETER

Call me crazy--

FRANK

You're crazy--

CYNTHIA

Baaaa. Doesn't anybody know how to spell? K. K. As in Kangaroo and Kite and Kettle.

MARTIN

And in Killer as in We didn't KILL the President! Why won't you let us go home!!!!?

SUZANNE

Is he dead? Did he die?

(There is a crash of glass far offstage.)

CYNTHIA

What was that?

JACOB

I'll go check.

FRANK

Martin, did you find it?

(MARTIN just looks at him [Frank] as if to say, "I haven't even left the room". Meanwhile JACOB, followed by PETER exit into the right wings.)

CYNTHIA

Is someone there?

FRANK

I don't know.

(Staying put, yelling out:)

Is someone there?

(There is another crash. Followed by yet another.)

JENNA

What is going on out there?

CYNTHIA

Are we under attack?

SUZANNE

More than likely.

JACOB

(Entering with Peter:)

They're throwing rocks at the windows.

CYNTHIA

Who?

JENNA

What?

CYNTHIA

Why?

SUZANNE

Because they know there's someone in here.

MARTIN

We didn't do it!!

SUZANNE

We are guilty, sir. We are all guilty by association, don't you comprehend that? Wilkes is an actor. We're actors.

JACOB

I'm not an actor.

JENNA

Point taken, continue.

SUZANNE

Nothing else. We are guilty because we are here.

JENNA

Do you think it's just us or is the whole city under attack?

SUZANNE

Ask the gentlemen in the uniforms out in the lobby.

FRANK

You seem to know a lot about what's going on, why are we safer in here?

SUZANNE

Because we're actors.

FRANK

No lady, I think maybe you know something you're not telling us.

SUZANNE

About what? You're war? It's not mine. We gave up the colonies before any of us were born. Before your country was even weaned. So now you act like spoiled children fighting with each other over your toys; don't look to me for your problems.

CYNTHIA

My brother gave his life in this war.

MARTIN

I've lost two family and no telling how many friends.

PETER

We've all lost people.

SUZANNE

Don't get your breeches in a bunch, I was only explaining this is your war not mine.

MARTIN

Yeah but you'll suck on the teat for our wages, won't you?

SUZANNE

You are a vul--

(Realizing:)

Oh, new man; same class.

(There is another series of crashes.)

JACOB

That's going to cost a week's wages to replace all those.

SUZANNE

Maybe you can use some of Matthew Brady's stenographs. I hear he sells them to greenhouses after he's done with them.

PETER

(At lobby door:)

It's locked.

SUZANNE

Of course it's locked.

(PETER pounds on the door.)

(More crashes offstage.)

JACOB

Holy mother of--

CYNTHIA

What if they come in here?

JACOB

I've got you covered.

PETER

Hello!!? Hello!?? Hey!!! Hey!!

(CAPTAIN DONNESSEY opens the door.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Yes?

PETER

They're breaking out the windows back here.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

We'll get someone on it.

PETER

Is? Is this happening everywhere or--?

FRANK

Speak up, we can't hear you!

(A beat.)

Use your stage voice.

PETER

Is this just us? Or is the whole city under siege?

(No reply.)

MARTIN

Well?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

We have it . . . isolated right now. We'll look into the back of the building.

(Acknowledging the women:)

Ladies.

(He exits back again into the lobby. There is a shared silence as PETER makes his way back down the aisle to the stage.)

JENNA

He means us.

JACOB

Of course he means us.

SUZANNE

He means you: gentlemen. We 'ladies' are simply caught up in the fray.

JACOB

I had nothing to do with this.

MARTIN

You showed up--when? a month ago? Where were you before then?

JACOB

Sprang. He's been here for ten years. He knows Wilkes Booth on a first name basis.

FRANK

Half of us know Wilkes on a first name basis. Are you saying we're all in on this?

JACOB

Are you?

PETER

This is going to do no one any good.

MARTIN

(To Peter:)

You've only been here a few months yourself.

JACOB

And where 'id you come from?

PETER

Boston.

JACOB

That so? I hear tell they've got a real rebel stronghold underground in Boston.

PETER

The war is over.

JACOB

Is it? Because this sure looks like an act of war to me.

PETER

Lee surrendered to Grant last wee--

MARTIN

Did anybody bother to tell that to Wilkes Booth?

SUZANNE

Gentlemen, gentlemen--

(There is another crash followed by a slamming door.)

CYNTHIA

What was that?

JENNA

There's someone insi--

JACOB

Shhhh!

(The men pick up various items as sticks, broken glass, etc. MARTIN picks up the broom used by Jacob earlier. Anything lying about is picked up to be used as a weapon. JENNA and CYNTHIA follow suit. Only SUZANNE allows herself to remain weaponless; relying on the others to keep her from harm. The troupe begin to flank the edges of the stage, the wings etc. The silence grows as they take their stand; SUZANNE positioning herself center stage, bordered by all. Pause. FRANK looking to Martin, who brandishes the broom, does his best to stifle a laugh.)

PETER

What?

FRANK

Martin? Whatcha gonna do? Sweep him to death?

MARTIN

(Holding on dearly:)

Shut up.

CYNTHIA

(Pointing out the Presidential box:)

Up there!!

PETER

What?

SUZANNE

No.

(They are all staring up at the box now.)

JACOB

What? Wha'd you see?

PETER

Is there someone up there?

(Behind them, from the right wings, NED SPRANG enters. NED is a stagehand in his late thirties, unkempt and brandishing a broken chair leg. He stops, relieved when he sees the group, though he is still unseen by them.)

NED

(Loosening his grip on the chair leg:)

Oh, thank God.

(All jump. They turn around in reaction with a mixture of reactions. CYNTHIA lets out a startled shriek while the others add a bit more vocabulary to their responses:)

MARTIN

Jesus, Mary and Jose--

FRANK

God almighty--

JENNA

Who are--? Who is--?

JACOB

Sprang!?

SUZANNE

Mister . . ?

(NED now relifts the chair leg in self defense.)

JACOB

(Still holding firm:)

Sprang. Ned Sprang.

NED

What are you all still doing here?

MARTIN

(Unsure what to do with the broom:)

What are we doing here? What are you doing here?

NED

I sleep here.

JACOB

Sleep here?

NED

In the costume room. I've got a cot set up there.

(JACOB and CYNTHIA try not to share a look. Pause. NED does not advance, he seems no imminent threat. JENNA is the first to lower her guard, followed by CYNTHIA. Yet they still keep their distance with the men between themselves and Sprang.)

NED

Can I . . uh . . . Can we put down the weapons?

JACOB

Can we?

(There is a standoff. PETER watches as JENNA moves further away from the men.)

SUZANNE

Well?

(No response. PETER is the first of the men to lower his weapon of choice, followed by MARTIN and then FRANK. JACOB alone remains poised for NED's possible attack.)

SUZANNE

Boys. Boys. We don't need to do this now, do we?

NED

I'll . . . yes, ma'am.

(To Jacob:)

I don't mean to hurt no one . . . But I figure someone's trying to break in. They been smashin' windows.

MARTIN

Did you see anyone?

NED

No. You?

(No reply. There is a pause as attention turns to CYNTHIA.)

CYNTHIA

I believe I saw someone up there.

SUZANNE

Are you sure?

CYNTHIA

(No she's not:)

. . . I thought I did . . .

(Pause.)

NED

Can we put these things down then? I'm gonna just . . .

(NED tries to set down the chair leg but JACOB does not lower the piece of broken glass therefore NED doesn't let go of the chair leg either.)

PETER

Uh . . . let me . . .

(PETER moves into the two men and quietly takes Ned's chair leg then crossing to Jacob, he offers to take his weapon (broken glass) as well. There is a slight pause. JACOB relinquishes the item.)

SUZANNE

You two gentlemen know each other?

JACOB

This is the man I told you about earlier.

JENNA

The who?

JACOB

He stopped me from catching Booth.

NED

(Perplexed:)

What?

JACOB

You clapped me in the mouth.

(NED is at a loss for words.)

JENNA

A man rushes by you with a knife and he pulled you back?

JACOB

He hit me in the mouth.

PETER

It was a confusing moment for all of us here.

JACOB

(To Ned:)

You said, "Don't tell which way he went."

NED

. . . I don't know what I said.

FRANK

You struck him?

NED

I don't know. Maybe. The man was running--

JACOB

Booth. It was Wilkes Booth.

NED

I don't know. I just saw the knife.

(Slight pause.)

JACOB

You honestly believe this guy?

SUZANNE

I don't know. Shouldn't we? He's been here for ten years, you've been here for how long?: Two months?

(A beat.)

JACOB

You can't be serious.

(No reply.)

This is preposterous. I don't even know Wilkes Booth.

(No reply. A beat; he turns to Cynthia:)

Tell 'em.

CYNTHIA

. . . I just want to go home.

(Slight pause.)

MARTIN

Well . . . good luck on that.

(Pause. As the group starts to relax with each other JACOB watches NED stealing glimpses of Cynthia.)

JACOB

What're you lookin' at?

NED

Nuthin'.

JENNA

(To Cynthia:)

What did you think you saw?

JACOB

How much'd you see up there in the costume room?

NED

I wasn't in the costume room . . . I was . . . upstairs. In the prop's department.
There's some . . . I got some . . .

PETER

(to Jacob:)

Let him alone.

CYNTHIA

I don't know. A shadow.

FRANK

Any hooch?

NED

No. Sorry.

SUZANNE

Was it . . .

MARTIN

A ghost?

JENNA

Be serious.

MARTIN

I am. "There are more things in and Heaven and earth, Horatio."

PETER

Could be another looter.

JACOB

(Indicating the officers in the lobby:)

Or one of them.

FRANK

(To Ned:)

We're under surveillance.

NED

. . . For what?

JACOB

As if you don't know.

MARTIN

(Hollering up at the boxes:)

Hey!! Is anybody up there?

(No reply.)

FRANK

Unbelievable that nobody answered.

JACOB

Fetch a ladder.

MARTIN

You're the stagehand. I mean you know where they are.

JENNA

Why don't you just go around?

JACOB

(Starting offstage.)

You have to go through the lobby to go around.

MARTIN

There's a passage that runs below the stage.

CYNTHIA

Under the stage.

PETER

It empties into the lobby. If you're going to go into the lobby . . .
(He motions to just walk up the aisle.)

FRANK

It runs from one side of the stage to other, so actors can cross when the back's all the way open.

MARTIN

It also runs out to the lobby.

PETER

Up front.

FRANK

What's your point?

PETER

The passage under the stage doesn't lead to the boxes without going through the lobby.

FRANK

Who wants to get to the lobby?

PETER

You really don't need another drink.

JACOB

Could you all be quiet for a moment?

SUZANNE

I don't think we should go up there.

NED

In the office.

JACOB

What?

NED

The Ford's office.--

JACOB

There's a ladder in the House Manager's office?

(He exits stage left wings towards the offices.)

NED

Booze. He keep his booze there. Wife won't let him drink at home.

FRANK

Mr. Sprang, my man, you have a friend.

JACOB (offstage)

I ain't breakin' into nobody's office.

FRANK

Lead the way.

(NED heads offstage followed by FRANK. MARTIN and PETER watch them go.)

JENNA

They don't need three.

(Pause.)

JENNA

Oh, go on. It's not as if you've anything better to do.

(MARTIN pauses a moment then indeed follows after Ned and Frank.)

SUZANNE

Does anybody have the time?

(JENNA and CYNTHIA look to PETER who only shrugs.)

JENNA

Our watch just walked out.

CYNTHIA

How long've we been here?

SUZANNE

Not long enough.

(To Peter:)

You've been with this Theatre how long? Six months?

PETER

Four . . . and a half.

SUZANNE

Where you settle from?

PETER

Around. Vagabond basically.

JACOB

(Returning with a ladder)

You a rebel lover Daniels?

PETER

Sorry: I'm not the reason we're in here.

(To Jenna:)

What about you?

JACOB

Court her on your own time.

SUZANNE

Kettle meet Pot.

JACOB

(The ladder is set:)

Well? Here goes.

CYNTHIA

Wait.

(She gives him the broken chair leg Ned had been holding.)

Be careful.

JACOB

You hear me? If somebody's up there its best to present yourself.

CYNTHIA

What if he has a gun?

JACOB

If he has a gun he woulda showed himself a long time ago.

JENNA

(To Peter:)

Don't you have a wife and son?

PETER

Who told you that?

JACOB

Here I come.

MARTIN

(Rushing back in:)

Somebody got a hammer? Or a screwdriver?

(But before anyone [Jacob] can answer: we hear a thud and a crash. The group onstage start to react--)

FRANK (offstage)

Never mind.

MARTIN

Never mind.

(He heads offstage again.)

(JACOB starts up the ladder, it rocks a little.)

CYNTHIA

(Moving to hold the bottom of the ladder:)

You want me to? OK.

(CYNTHIA holds the ladder steady as JACOB continues up. He pauses only a moment before he reveals himself at the top.)

JACOB

Last chance.

(JACOB looks over and around inside.)

Nuthin'. Just a draft.

(JACOB grabs hold of the railing to pull himself over. It breaks and half of it falls to the stage.)

SUZANNE

My lord, we'll be destroyed from the inside before the outside gets us.

JACOB

(Decides not to go into the box:)

OK, well there's no one here.

PETER

It was prob'ly just a shadow.

JACOB

Whatever it was: it's gone.

(A beat.)

Hold on Nellie.

CYNTHIA

What? You see something?

JACOB

A hole? There's a shaft of light coming from somewhere.

JENNA

There's your ghost.

JACOB

Somebody . . .

(Checks the railing again, doesn't trust it.)

Somebody has whittled a hole in the door to box seven.

PETER

So?

JACOB

That's a solid door.

CYNTHIA

Come down afore you get hurt.

JACOB

Yeah.

(Starts down the ladder.)

That hole wasn't there this afternoon.

SUZANNE

So you're saying?

JACOB

So I'm saying, "that hole wasn't there this afternoon."

SUZANNE

How marvelously cryptic of you.

PETER

So the ghost did it.

JACOB

Somebody did.

(Pause. The silence on stage is suspended as a noise has begun outside [from the lobby].)

JENNA

What is that?

(No reply.)

Do you hear it?

PETER

I hear it.

(But the sound is undistinguishable. Voices. Many voices. JACOB finishes climbing down from the ladder. They all strain to listen. MARTIN and FRANK emerge with several bottles of liquor in tow.)

FRANK

We hit the mother lode.

JENNA, SUZANNE, PETER

Shhhhhhh.

FRANK

What? What is that?

(The lobby doors open, CAPTAIN DONNESSEY addresses the group. Behind him the voices from outside are now clearer.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

(Over the chanting:)

Everybody stays where they are.

(Notices the ladder:)

What are you doing?

JACOB

Cleaning up a bit.

FRANK

Housekeeping.

(The chant is clear: "BURN IT DOWN! BURN IT DOWN!
BURN IT DOWN! BURN IT DOWN! . . ." There is another
crash in the lobby. CAPTAIN DONNESSEY turns to the
crash.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Nobody leaves this room.

FRANK

Stage. It's called a stage.

JACOB

Shut up, Frank.

MARTIN

. . . Yeah, shut up, Frank.

(But CAPTAIN DONNESSEY is gone again. The chant is
remuffled by the closed door but now, knowing what it is
and perhaps a few more voices have added in, the chant
continues on. Slight pause. NED enters from the wings
unseen, carrying a corkscrew, glasses and another bottle.
He is stopped by the stillness of the rest.)

NED

I found some glasses for the ladies . . .

(But no one replies other than the chanting from outside:
"BURN IT DOWN!! BURN IT DOWN!! BURN IT DOWN!!
BURN IT DOWN!!".)

END ACT I

ACT II

(In the darkness the chanting picks up again. "BURN IT DOWN!! BURN IT DOWN! BURN IT DOWN . . ." As the lights come up we find the setting is the same as we left it. Only the positions have changed. Two or more bottles have been emptied while most of the rest have been uncorked. We have opened upon a silence among the group onstage, filled only by the voices from outside. Each of the group reflecting a moment on the news they've just received. Pause.)

MARTIN

. . . You're what?

SUZANNE

Oh, my . . .

JENNA

Really?

SUZANNE

Ohhhh, my, my, my, my, my . . .

FRANK

(Catches himself and stops himself from laughing.)

Sorry.

JACOB

. . . I didn't know.

MARTIN

(Taking the glass away from Cynthia:)

No more for you, I'm afraid.

SUZANNE

How many drinks have you already had?

JACOB

I really didn't --I had no idea.

CYNTHIA

It didn't concern you--

JACOB

Well, it does now. It would of then--believe me . . . I didn't -- . . .

FRANK

How old did you think she was?

CYNTHIA

I'm right here.

JACOB

Twenty. Twenty-two.

JENNA

Oh, in what light?

JACOB

Not sixteen.

MARTIN

The girl is still living with her parents.

PETER

That doesn't necessarily mean anything.

(Pause.)

JACOB

Oh, my god.

CYNTHIA

Nothing's changed . . .

JACOB

Oh, my god--

(Deflecting to the chanting outside:)

Will somebody shut them up out there?

PETER

They'll set off home.

(No reply.)

If they were going to do something they'd have done it by now.

JENNA
(Catches FRANK staring at her:)

What?

FRANK
I think I know you from somewhere.

JENNA
Oh, my lord, we're in the company together here.

FRANK
No.

JENNA
How many have *you* had?

FRANK
Stopped counting in sixty-three.

(There is another silence. Still filled with the chanting outside. JACOB stares over at Cynthia and looks away, catching sight now of NED, who says nothing.)

CYNTHIA
You can say what you want about me but I never lied to you.

JACOB
(Aside to her:)
You never told me you were sixteen.

CYNTHIA
I don't recall you asking.

JACOB
. . . Not now.

CYNTHIA
When then?

JACOB
Not now. Not here.
(By means of an explanation:)
You're drunk.

CYNTHIA

Sober enough to remember what you--

JACOB

Oh, my god.

SUZANNE

Must you continue to use the Lord's name in--

JENNA

Do we really need to go through this parlor comedy right now?

FRANK

I'm being entertained; I don't know about the rest of you--

SUZANNE

A little restraint--

FRANK

--but I'm perfectly happy--

SUZANNE

--might be in order--

FRANK

--at the moment.

SUZANNE

--if you please.

FRANK

Where's that corkscrew?

PETER

Finish a bottle before you open another.

FRANK

Why should I wait to get to the good stuff? You see, the way, the palate works--

(Receiving the corkscrew from Ned)

Thank you my good man.

(Starts opening a new bottle.)

--is the tastebuds require the most sensitivity in order to appreciate the finest
liqueur or sprit or--

FRANK (Cont.)

(Reads the bottle:)

Champagne 1802. Damn.

(He immediately waves his hand to the women: begging their apologies for his language. Then back on course:)

Once the tongue has been numbed, as it were, the tastes of each bouquet are essentially lost on each consequential effort. So it stands to reason that we find the best and--

(Giving Martin the bottle:)

Hold this.

(Starts to open another bottle.)

--continue to the second best and on until we leave the moonshine for last.

MARTIN

It scares me that he actually makes sense.

SUZANNE

(Taking the bottle from Frank:)

I am not going to just sit around while you . . .

FRANK

Go ahead: say it.

SUZANNE

(Choosing her word:)

'Men' drink yourselves to death.

FRANK

It beats being shot by corporal diapers out there.

JENNA

(Crossing over to Martin with her glass.)

I'll have some of that Champagne if you don't mind.

(FRANK looks to Suzanne and smiles as if to say: "I win.")

CYNTHIA

What about me?

MARTIN

Don't even ask.

PETER

(To Martin, Frank or Ned:)

Did Harry Ford have any mixers in his office? Soda water? Ginger Ale?

CYNTHIA

Never mind.

JENNA

This is--Is this how this is supposed to taste?

PETER

(Joining her:)

Is something wrong with it?

JENNA

I don't know. I like it but I've never . . . My grandparents were more the moonshine clan.

PETER

Grandparents?

JENNA

Yes. My parents were caught up in the cholera blight in '42. My sister and I were shuffled off to Harrisburg when I was . . .

(To Cynthia:)

Much younger than you.

(Looks to JACOB chooses to say nothing.)

JACOB

Enough, alright?

SUZANNE

Mr. Sprang? You haven't said much to anyone. What's your history with this place?

NED

I've got nothing to really say, ma'am, but thank you all the same.

CYNTHIA

We should play a game?

SUZANNE

What time is it?

FRANK

(While Martin fishes for a pocket watch.)

Time to play a game, obviously.

MARTIN

3:27.

(Pause. And still the silence is filled with the outside chanting. JACOB and CYNTHIA sit estranged, the rest sitting slightly isolated from each other, only JENNA and PETER appear paired together. FRANK glances over at the two of them, followed by MARTIN and then the others looking on to see what is so interesting about PETER and JENNA seated together.)

JENNA

Drink your wine.

(Heads turn away. Pause. FRANK tries his best to keep to his own thoughts but finds himself drumming to the rhythm of the chant.)

SUZANNE

Can you please?

(FRANK obliges. The silence continues, JACOB joins the others in drink.)

FRANK

(To JENNA, as he absentmindedly begins to drum again.)

I know I know you. Just don't know where.

SUZANNE

Mr. Matthews?

FRANK

(Stops only a moment . . . then begins to smile . . . he debates a moment or so more then starts off to softly sing carrying the chant's beat as his underlying rhythm.)

Ohhhhhhh,
I wish I was in the land of cotton
Cinn'mon seed and sandy bottom
Burn it down
Burn it down

FRANK (Cont.)

Burn it down
Dixie land

MARTIN

I don't think that's the wisest move--

FRANK (Cont.)

(Continues on--playing it for all it's worth--threatening
always to be louder:)

In Dixie lan'
Where I was born
Early on some frosty mornin'
Look away
Burn it down
Burn it down
Dixie land

Oh, I wish I was in Dixie--

SUZANNE

So do we, believe me--

FRANK (Cont.)

--Away!!
Away!!
In Dixie land
We'll take our stand
To live and die in Dixie
Away!
Away!
AWAY--

(The lobby door is thrown open as CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
confronts them:)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Hey! HEY!! What the hell are you doing? Are you trying to get us shot at?

FRANK

Sorry. Could you hear us? I didn't know you could hear us.

MARTIN

You. Just you--Just him.

FRANK

Sorry.

(No reply. CAPTAIN DONNESSEY is looking at Ned.)

Lincoln said it was one of his favorites.

JENNA

How is the President doing?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

(Referring to Ned:)

Who's he?

(There is a silence: no one answers.)

NED

Ned. Nathaniel, Nathaniel Sprang. Most people call me Ned.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Where'd you come from?

NED

(Pointing backstage:)

Upstairs.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

What's your business here?

(No reply. NED stands there, a deer in the headlights.)

SUZANNE

He's a stagehand here, Captain.

NED

Going on ten years.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Where've you been all this time?

NED

Sleeping.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

When it happened?

(No reply.)

NED

Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

(To the rest:)

Anyone else here I don't know about? Yet?

PETER

We didn't know he was here either . . .

SUZANNE

Captain.

PETER

Captain. The breaking windows flushed him out.

(Slight pause.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

No more singing.

FRANK

I take requests.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

You don't understand this, do you? This isn't -- . . . That sound out there? They want someone to pay for this.

JENNA

Have they found Wilkes Booth?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

No, Ma'am. But they know we have you. Do I make myself clear?

MARTIN

Now, see here, sir--

JACOB

We have nothing to do with this!

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Right now: no one out there cares.

CYNTHIA

We're tired.

SUZANNE

We're all tired dear.

(To Captain Donnessey:)

She's only a child.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

No more.

(And with that CAPTAIN DONNESSEY exits back into the lobby. Silence but for the chanting outside. JACOB looks to NED, who doesn't return his gaze.)

MARTIN

Tell us again how this is the safest place to be.

CYNTHIA

I'm not a child.

SUZANNE

But you are. And be a child for as long as you can. Adulthood just leads to old age.

JENNA

Why did you lie to him, Mr. Sprang?

NED

I didn't lie . . . I was asleep.

JACOB

On the cot in the costume shop?

NED

No . . . I was--

JACOB

(Pointing to the wings:)

You were right there--with me--when it happened.

NED

It?

JACOB

When the President was shot.

NED

I didn't know that's what he . . . I didn't know anything about what Wilkes was going to do, I swear. I couldn't even swear that it was him. I didn't know that's what he was talking about.

JENNA

What else could he have been talking about?

NED

I don't know.

MARTIN

"I don't know", sir, isn't much of a defense.

PETER

Leave him be, he doesn't know anything.

JACOB

Who appointed you his guardian angel?

PETER

He would have run. Think about it. Everyone from the theatre got out but us. Anybody involved in this is far from here.

JACOB

(Attempting to quote Captain Donnessey:)

"Right now: no one out there cares."

PETER

May I suggest: no more drinking for anybody. We've got to think sober here. We keep our heads about us and everything'll be . . . fine. Agreed?

FRANK

(Referring to the bottle:)

Right now, this is the only thing keeping me fine. Agreed?

PETER

(To Jacob:)

We've all been through enough.

(Referring quietly to Cynthia:)

A word of advice? Stay young.

JACOB

What would you know of it?

PETER

Oh, I've been down a road or two myself, OK? Where you are. Not all this but--

(Referring to Jacob and Cynthia:)

--you two. I speak from experience.

(Silence.)

JENNA

Well, you have our attention.

PETER

Just . . . I know what I know.

(There is an awkward silence in the room--as best the
silence can be.)

PETER

(Pauses before saying more.)

I have a son, alright?

JENNA

. . . And a wife?

PETER

Not so much.

(No reply.)

It's a long story.

MARTIN

We have nothin' but time.

PETER

Yeah, right , well . . . Fine. Here goes: I was an actor working down south for a
while.

JACOB

I knew you was a reb.

PETER

There were jobs there. I hail from . . . OK, I'm from North Carolina--But that
doesn't mean I backed the war.

JENNA

How is it that you 'not so much' have a wife?

PETER

Oh, it's an age old story and a tale told by an idiot . . . Young girl falls in love with an eligible young actor flowing through town. Before long there comes news of a child. But afore there's an actual child there's an angry father and a wedding.

SUZANNE

(To Cynthia:)

Are you listening to this?

(No reply.)

This could be you.

CYNTHIA

I get it "mom".

PETER

The child is born but it turns out to be something wrong with him. The boy's feet won't work right. They're not clubbed but . . . it has something in the muscles. Time goes by and the child never learns to walk. So I travel from town to town, from doctor to doctor, playhouse to playhouse till all the theatre dries up down South. Then I headed myself north just to find work.

JENNA

Why didn't you just take up a real job?

PETER

What? And give up all this?

FRANK

Here, here.

MARTIN

Shut up, Frank.

PETER

And yet her father held notion to other plans.

JENNA

What's her name?

PETER

Whose?

JENNA

Your wife.

PETER

Victoria.

(Catches Jenna watching him closely.)

What?

JENNA

Say her name again.

PETER

Victoria.

JENNA

(Satisfied with what she's seen:)

Continue.

(Queuing him:)

Her father's plans.

PETER

Her father's name is Gerald. As is our son's. Father Gerald decides that the least I could do if I wasn't going to support his daughter was to support his cause. So he signs me up for the army. Augusta, Georgia.

JACOB

I knew it.

PETER

Well, I didn't go. Well, I went but . . . with no intention. Then I . . . I crossed paths with this kid, must've been all of fifteen at best: eager. Believes in the South, believes in Davis, buys the whole song and dance. But the boy's too young to join.

(Decides not to take the moment to remark on Cynthia's age)

So eager to fight for the new revolution--the kid just hopes the war'll last long enough for him to . . . be a part of it all. It all seemed so simple. I just had to make up a story: mixing fact with fiction. Told him how I wanted to go, wanted to serve and yet I needed to take care of my son, needing to take him the next doctor (that I couldn't afford). My crowning achievement in my body of work as an actor. As one of the greats. All written and performed for an audience of one. It was so easy to watch him get swept up in it all. We talked for what?: two hours. When we were done, he was begging me to sign up in my place. After all I was already signed up; it would serve no purpose to be branded as a traitor--all that had to be done was for someone to sign in with my name. So we exchanged

PETER (Cont.)

identities. The kid became a very young looking Clayton Thompson and I started my new life as Peter Daniels.

(Slight pause. FRANK just stares at him.)

SUZANNE

They traded names.

FRANK

Yeah, I got that..

JACOB

Sweet story. You know what I call that?

PETER

Being a coward. I've said it enough times myself, I don't need your voice in my head as well. The young are gullible. That is why there are laws and boundaries.

JENNA

What happened to the boy?

PETER

Which one?

JENNA

The one who went to war for you.

PETER

Peter; the actual Peter. He took my name, I took his. We kept correspondence with each other as best we could. I headed North and kept working. Sent money home when I had it. Then all but a month ago I received a copy of a letter telling me that the general counsel of the new Confederation of the Southern States regretted to inform me that Clayton Thompson was gone. That Clayton had been killed fighting bravely in the battle of . . . I don't remember the field--somebody's field. Fool kid wanted to be a hero. Didn't make it more than eight months. So . . . Victoria received word of her husband's death and . . uh . . that's how I have a 'not so much' wife. To her and to the world Clayton Thompson is dead. Long live Peter Daniels.

(No reply.)

I'm not proud of it.

MARTIN

Nor should you be.

JENNA

Do you still send them money?

PETER

When I can. "From a friend."

(Pause.)

FRANK

Well, that certainly threw a wet blanket on things.

PETER

So, when I said I've been where you are . . . I've been where you are. And the scenery isn't all that pretty. Be a kid as long as you can. Play games. Worry your parents. Just . . . don't grow up so fast.

SUZANNE

When it's too late; it's too late.

(Slight pause.)

JENNA

You miss them?

PETER

More every day. Him. If we're being honest here: Him.

FRANK

By all means let's be honest here.

JENNA

Little Gerald.

PETER

Yeah.

JENNA

And your birth name is Clayton?

PETER

I was.

JENNA

My actual birth name is Jennifer. Not Jenna. Morrison. Jenna LaFleur just sounded more poetic, I thought.

CYNTHIA

Oh: we could play guess your name. Put all our real names in a hat and . . .
(She trails off realizing no one is paying attention.)

PETER

Anyone ever call you Jenny?

JENNA

Not if they ever wanted to call on me again.

PETER

OK. I'll remember that.

JENNA

No, that's not what I meant. That, I believe, was the champagne.

(Another crash. No one really reacts by now. They just look out to the lobby to see if anything more will come of it. Nothing follows. All but CYNTHIA return to their vigil.)

CYNTHIA

Wait.

SUZANNE

What, dear, no one's in the mood for games?

CYNTHIA

(Getting up and moving downstage.)

Wait.

JACOB

What? What is it--?

MARTIN

What?

CYNTHIA

(Shushing them down:)

You hear that?

MARTIN
Hear what?

CYNTHIA
Exactly.

(They all listen. There is nothing but their silence now.
The Chanting outside has stopped.)

MARTIN
Where'd they go?

(They listen again: there is no sound from the lobby.)

FRANK
Don't hate me but I think this is the time to be nervous.

CYNTHIA
No. Listen. You hear that?
(Hearing something else:)
Wait a minute. Wait a minute.
(Runs to the backstage door.)

JACOB
Wha--?

MARTIN
Where are you--?

FRANK
Now she's lost it.

(JACOB watches as NED follows Cynthia's running around
the stage with his eyes.)

CYNTHIA
(Feeling the ground at the back door.)
It's wet. Is this wet? This is water, right?

MARTIN
What?

CYNTHIA
It's wet. I think it's raining. I think--
(Tries the door but it's locked.)

FRANK

How do you--?

JACOB

Let her go. She's just working off the stress.

(To Ned:)

Keep your eyes to yourself. She's sixteen.

NED

I wasn't doin' anything . . .

JACOB

Yeah. Right.

CYNTHIA

Hey! Hey!

(At the lobby door.)

Is it raining?

(She starts to push open the door--it opens enough for her to see then is slammed back shut.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY (from the lobby:)

Get yourself back in there!

CYNTHIA

(Opens the door a peak and looks outside.)

I just wanna see.

(And she has. She closes the door again and backs away, then turns in the aisle and announces her finding to the group:)

It's raining! It's raining!

(She starts triumphantly back down the aisle.)

It's raining.

(She steps back onto the stage with a hand from one of the men. She turns back and faces the lobby:)

Burn us down now you sons of a bitches. Sorry, ladies.

SUZANNE

Hopeless. Entirely hopeless.

CYNTHIA

Give me a drink.

(No one complies.)

CYNTHIA (Cont.)

Well, it was worth a shot.

(Lights fade.)

SCENE II

(At rise:

Everyone at this point appears to be asleep. FRANK clearly so as he is evidently snoring. JENNA, leaning on PETER, stirs, which opens his (PETER's) eyes. JENNA nestles back into his shoulder then somewhere in the back of her mind she realizes where she is. FRANK snores. JENNA sits up slowly, looking around, being watched by Peter.)

JENNA

How long was I . . . How long was I asleep?

PETER

I don't know. We all dozed off at some time or another.

JENNA

And you've been awake . . . ?

PETER

I didn't figure to disturb you--you were sleeping.

JENNA

(Pats him on the shoulder:)

You're still married.

PETER

Only in the eyes of God.

(JENNA gets up and stretches. She can feel the aftermath of her drinking begin to take hold.)

PETER

(Offers her a bottle:)

Hair of the dog?

JENNA

(She debates his offer.)

I don't usually do this.

(She takes the bottle and a swig then returns the bottle.)

Do you smoke?

PETER

I don't have any.--

(JENNA takes the cigarette out of her purse and offers it to him.)

PETER

(Taking the butt.)

Thank you.

(PETER lights up.)

You wouldn't have a sandwich in there somewhere too?

JENNA

I'm hoping you can keep a secret. One lost soul to another.

(She takes the cigarette from Peter and takes a long needed drag.)

PETER

(Flustered as she returns the cigarette to his possession.)

Women aren't supposed to smoke.

JENNA

And President's are supposed to get shot. It's been one helluva night.

PETER

Don't think I'll be returning this.

JENNA

Well, in that case . . .

PETER

In that case what?

JENNA

(Rolling her eyes verbally:)

You're such a man.

(And as PETER questions himself how to react to that last statement she snatches back the cigarette and takes one last draw. She returns the cigarette again.)

It's all yours.

(JENNA strolls the stage, checking on the others. FRANK, asleep at their makeshift poker table, lays across a bench as he continues to snore. MARTIN sleeps beside him, sitting on the floor with his back propped up against a

table leg. Something has fallen to the floor between the two men, presumably from out of a coat pocket. SUZANNE and CYNTHIA each sleep slumped back on the sofa. JACOB has set himself across three wooden folding chairs brought up from the audience section. NED lies curled up alone on the floor, his own coat tucked under his head as a pillow. She lingers a moment over NED.)

JENNA

You believe he had anything to do with this?

PETER

Not my call to make.

JENNA

Oh, that's right. You don't take sides.

PETER

I didn't say that.

JENNA

M-hmm.

PETER

You have a side?

JENNA

I'm not sure. I retain my woman's prerogative to change my mind. Can't say I agree with the South's position on slavery but I can't condemn them for simply having a position. As I learned it this country was formed by a group of men telling England to stay out of our business. Then we break up into two groups asking the same thing from each other. Seemed like the natural order of things. Then one group says, "let me go" and the other group says, "no, I won't let ya." Just sounds like too many marriages I know if you ask me.

PETER

Well, too bad you don't get a vote on things.

JENNA

Some day. Today the colored get their vote.

PETER

Two-thirds.

JENNA
Tomorrow, women.

PETER
Yeah . . . well . . .
(He finishes the cigarette and extinguishes it by grinding the rest out on the floor.)

(JENNA chooses not to remark on Peter's not offering her the last drag of tobacco.)

JENNA
You'll see.

PETER
Will I?

JACOB
(Unmoving from his position, precariously stretched across chairs.)
"Will I" what?

PETER
(Undaunted by Jacob's apparent listening in:)
See women get the vote.

JACOB
Hmmpf . . . not in my lifetime.

JENNA
How long you been awake?

JACOB
(Referring to Frank:)
Who can sleep through the fall of Richmond over there?
(No reply.)
Don't worry: you're secret's safe.

JENNA
Much obliged.

JACOB
(Finally moving from his resting position; referring to Ned:)
And yeah, I think he definitely had something to do with it.

JENNA

We all know your thoughts on the matter.

JACOB

So, why are you protecting him?

JENNA

(Shrugs:)

Somebody has to.

CYNTHIA

Jakey?

PETER

Now look what you've done.

CYNTHIA

Jakey, I'm sorry. I should have told you.

JACOB

(At a loss for words:)

It's . . . OK . . . alright?

JENNA

You two want a moment to yourselves?

JACOB

No. Thank you.

CYNTHIA

I had the worst dream.

JENNA

Sorry to spoil it for you but it wasn't a dream. We're still here.

CYNTHIA

Don't you believe in dreams?

JENNA

Ghosts? Dreams? No.

PETER

Hold onto your youth, little lady. Once it's spent: it's gone.

CYNTHIA

I dreamed there was a funeral parade as far as I could see: white horses and everything else was in black. And everyone was crying and I remember asking somebody, "what about us? What about us?" And you know what they said? They looked right through me like we weren't even there. Like we didn't even matter.

JENNA

So we were all in your dream?

CYNTHIA

I think so. But nobody cared. Nobody cared.

JENNA

(To JACOB:)

This is your cue to comfort her.

SUZANNE

(Also responding to Jenna's question.)

Not wise.

JACOB

Ah, she lives.

JENNA

Et tu Brute?

PETER

Is everybody here awake now?

(FRANK snores.)

PETER

I stand corrected.

(Pause. SUZANNE and CYNTHIA both adjust their positions on the sofa.)

SUZANNE

Have we heard anything yet?

PETER

Narry a peep.

SUZANNE

What time is it?

(No reply: no one has a time piece.)

CYNTHIA

Mr. Osbourne has a pocket watch. I saw him looking at it earlier.

JACOB

I'm not reachin' into his pocket.

JENNA

Aww, what a tainted childhood you must've had.

(To Cynthia:)

Which pocket, honey?

CYNTHIA

. . . Left . . . I think--I don't know.

JENNA

Jacket or pants?

CYNTHIA

Coat; it was definitely his coat.

JACOB

Thank the Lord.

JENNA

Oh, isn't it time you grew up?

(JENNA reaches in through his outside pockets and then to his inside. MARTIN opens his eyes warily:)

MARTIN

What do you think you're doing?

JENNA

(A beat.)

We didn't want to wake you.

JACOB

The time. She was looking for the time.

PETER
You dropped something.

JENNA
What?

PETER
Out of his pocket. A letter or something.

(JENNA picks up a pile the papers off the floor and offers it to Martin.)

JENNA
Flyers.

MARTIN
They're not mine.

JACOB
Must be Frank's then.

PETER
He won 'em fair and square.

CYNTHIA
That's still debatable.

JENNA
(Finding it among the flyers; asking if it's Martin's:)
Letter?

MARTIN
Also his.

JENNA
(Reading the outside of the envelope:)
It's addressed to the Newspaper: "To the editors of the National Intelligencer".

MARTIN
Hopefully announcing his retirement.

(JENNA moves to put the letter back in Frank's coat--then thinks again--reconsiders and finally places the letter on top of the sleeping man.)

JACOB

(To Martin:)

How could you possibly sleep next to that noise?

MARTIN

I have daughters. And a loud wife.

(Lifting himself up.)

Which I'd like to get back to.

PETER

And the time, sir?

MARTIN

(Checking his watch.)

Quarter after . . . seven.

PETER

Quarter after seven?

CYNTHIA

In the morning?

(No reply.)

My father's going to have such a tantrum.

JENNA

He'll understand, I'm sure.

(To Suzanne:)

And your husband should be getting up soon, what's he going to do when he finds you not there?

SUZANNE

My husband . . . should be . . . actually getting home just about now.

JENNA

Alright. I'm sorry, I thought last night you said he would be asleep.

SUZANNE

Yes, I did. And I'm sure he was. With her. I generally sleep in until nine. So he leaves her just after the sun's comes up so he can pretend to wake up with me. And he'll certainly be surprised to find I'm the one not there this time.

JENNA

I'm sorry.

(No reply.)

I didn't know.

SUZANNE

Yes, well, no need to feel pity for me my dear. There'll still be questioning to come.

JACOB

Meaning?

SUZANNE

Meaning we'll all have to answer to our associations with the Booth family, won't we?

JENNA

What do you think you're suggesting?

SUZANNE

I suggest nothing; only that they may be asking us some very personal questions, dear. Such as how well do you know the Booths. How intimately?

JENNA

Really? We're . . . doing . . . this?

SUZANNE

It's what they're going to ask.

JENNA

(Flustered:)

And . . . why?

SUZANNE

Better get your blushing done here, with friends, than under the microscope.

JENNA

I don't need a rehearsal.

JACOB

You're claiming you know Wilkes Booth in that way?

JENNA

(Debates her options before answering.)

It was once. Not recently. And it was a tragic mistake.

SUZANNE

Mistakes have a way of becoming very bad habits.

JENNA

I'm not going to even dignify that with a remark.

MARTIN

Ladies, please . . . be . . . ladies.

CYNTHIA

Oh, my lord, I don't believe you two. Are you both just a pair of hypocrites?

(No reply.)

And you called *me* a slut.

JENNA

And I am so much older than you.

CYNTHIA

Well, I don't see a ring on your finger.

PETER

(To Jacob regarding Cynthia:)

You hold her back and I'll--

JENNA

You'll do no such thing.

MARTIN

Ladies. Enough is enough. Nobody here is perfect.

(Referring to Suzanne:)

She's right: they're going to question us. And we all know that dalliances come with the . . . career choices we've made. Right or wrong we all have a past.

FRANK

Now I know I've died and gone to hell. When Martin here becomes the voice of reason-- . . .

(FRANK voice trails off as he recognizes the letter sitting atop his person. Non-committedly:)

Where'd you get this?

PETER

It fell out of your pocket.

FRANK

Did you read it?

MARTIN

No, should we have?

FRANK

No. No . . .

(He checks to be sure the envelope is still sealed then replaces into an inside coat pocket.)

Nearly forgot all about this in all the commotion.

(He sits up.)

So, what's news? When do we get out of this moth bitten flea hole? Anybody got a--

(Finds a bottle and takes a small nip, he swishes it around in his mouth to clean the palette.)

PETER

No news yet I'm afraid.

FRANK

The time?

SUZANNE

Quarter after--

PETER

Twenty somethin' after seven.

FRANK

Wha'd I miss?

(JENNA looks to Suzanne condemning her to hell if she utters a word.)

MARTIN

All depends. How long were you just laying there with your eyes closed?

FRANK

A gentleman never tells. Forty-five minutes and twelve seconds on the dot: never said I was a gentleman.

JACOB

It was your snoring that woke each of us up.

FRANK

And then I'm also been known to be a dubious liar to boot.

(To Jenna:)

I figured out where I know you from.

JENNA

(Uninterested:)

Do tell.

FRANK

Baltimore.

(A beat.)

JENNA

That's it? Baltimore?

FRANK

I saw you in Julius Caesar. You played Brutus' wife.

JENNA

Yes I did. Thank you for remembering.

FRANK

And guess who played Marc Anthony?

(Pronouncing it 'Antony'. A beat . . . for dramatic effect:)

Mister John Wilkes Booth.

JENNA

All three Booth brothers were in that production.

FRANK

Quite right. But interesting, isn't it? Such a small world.

JENNA

You . . . think that I'm involved in this somehow? Because I know a Booth? We all know the Booths. Find someone else to blame.

CYNTHIA

I don't know the Booths.

JENNA

You're sixteen. I find it hard to believe Wilkes didn't introduce himself to you a time or two.

(No reply.)

At the least.

(No reply.)

Consider yourself lucky.

JACOB

(To the sleeping Ned:)

Which leaves you.

(The lobby door opens up. a very somber CAPTAIN DONNESSEY stands again in it's light.)

SUZANNE

Yes? Captain, can we help you?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

He's dead.

SUZANNE

Excuse me?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Lincoln. He died. They couldn't save him.

(There is a deafening silence among the group.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

I thought you'd want to know.

(Again no reply. What can they say that won't make them appear guilty or could be somehow held against them? Silence being the only response that may get them by. CAPTAIN DONNESSEY waits a moment longer then exits back into the lobby. Pause.)

CYNTHIA

What does that mean?

MARTIN

It means we don't go home.

CYNTHIA

We haven't done anything--I haven't done anything.

JACOB

It doesn't matter. They want someone to blame.

(A beat. He kicks at Ned.)

Get up, Sprang.

PETER

Hey--

MARTIN

Sir, there's no need for--

JENNA

What do you think you're doing?

JACOB

I didn't hurt him.

(Pushes at Ned again.)

Wake up. C'mon, get up.

(To the others.)

He knows something and that's what we need to get out of here: information.

MARTIN

Holy mother of God, man, are you out of your mind?

JACOB

(Looks back at Martin: a beat.)

Are you?

(No reply.)

OK. I'll play nice, then:

(He nudges Ned.)

Sprang. Sprang, wake up.

(He looks back to the group for permission to nudge a little harder. He follows through with a measured push.)

Sprang. Get your sorry ass up.

NED

What? Wha--What is it? Am I late? Are we already in Act Two?

(He looks around. Starts to focus.)

What is it?

(A beat. Each of the group finds themselves waiting for someone else to speak up before:)

JACOB

Lincoln's dead.

NED

(Takes the news in for a moment.)

Oh . . . Do we get to go home?

MARTIN

Not quite yet.

(Stepping in to keep Jacob from taking lead:)

They think someone here knows something and . . . we've all been sharing what we know and we thought you could educate us on what history you might have.

NED

What?

(Looks from face to face.)

. . . I don't know nothin'.

(His eyes stop at Cynthia moment longer than on the others; searching for some compassion.)

PETER

Well, I believe him.

JACOB

I don't.

JENNA

We know you don't.

JACOB

(Lifts his hand to quiet the others and make his point with the following line of questions:)

Tell us what you did to that door.

NED

(Not following:)

The door?

JACOB

There's a hole in the door to box seven and somebody put it there. The door leading into the President's box. Somebody put a hole in it.

NED
Mr. Ford told me to.

SUZANNE
Harry Ford?

NED
Yes.

JACOB
Told you to drill through a perfectly good door?

NED
(Explaining himself mostly to Cynthia, as if her believing
him would turn the tides on the matter:)
So the President's man could see on him without bothering anybody.

JACOB
Or so Booth could see just where Lincoln was sitting without being noticed.

NED
. . . I . . . I don't know. The shooter could've looked through it too, I guess.

MARTIN
The "killer." He's dead.

JACOB
You mean Booth--he means Booth. You and Wilkes Booth? You're pretty
friendly, hunh?

NED
He treats me alright.

JACOB
Buys you drinks.

NED
He doesn't . . . look down on me, if that's what you mean. Treats me good . . .
better'n most.

JACOB
Look at me not her.
(to Cynthia)
Move away. He ain't safe.

(CYNTHIA moves away.)

JACOB

You like to watch her, don't you? Why? 'Cause she's innocent? Well, she ain't innocent, Sprang, she's just like you.

(No reply.)

What? You think she'd treat you nice, hunh? You'd like that wouldn't you? You like it when people treat you nice, right? Like Booth? So, if Booth asked you to do him a favor from time to time . . .

NED

I told Peanut to hold his horse is all. I didn't know--

JACOB

Why--What?

MARTIN

You told Peanut?

SUZANNE

The stage boy? Didn't he--?

MARTIN

The child was kicked in the head.

NED

I didn't have nothin'--

JACOB

Why did Peanut have to hold Booth's horse? Why didn't you just tie the animal up?

NED

I don't know. He asked me to . . .

JACOB

Cause he had to get away fast.

NED

I didn't know, alright? How many times do I have to say it?

(To Frank:)

You know him better'n me. He asked me to. It wasn't nothin' suspicious. He asks things, right? I just had Peanut hold his horse for him--

JACOB

So you knew it was Booth running across the stage.

(As the interrogation continues FRANK pulls the letter from his coat pocket and after debating a moment or so opens it and begins to read it to himself.)

NED

Somebody who looked like Booth, yes. But I couldn't swear it was him.

JACOB

That's what you said. You said, "don't say which way he ran."

NED

You said it was Booth, not me.

JACOB

Because it was Booth.

NED

But I didn't know wha'd he done.

(He finds himself lost to explain anymore. Nothing more is asked but the attention is still riveted on him. He tries to wait it out but is unable to do so:)

He asked me to hold his horse. Why would I say, "no"?

MARTIN

(To Frank:)

What are you reading that's so more important than this?

FRANK

(Still reading as he talks:)

He asked me something too. This afternoon. I ran into Wilkes a few blocks away where some soldiers were marching a troop of confederates up to the Old Capital Prison. There he handed me this letter and asked that I deliver it to the Editor's office of the paper in the morning.

JENNA

He tell you what was in it?

FRANK

No. Hand to God.

(Offers the letter to any taker.)

(JENNA takes the letter and begins to read it herself.)

SUZANNE

Read it for everybody.

JENNA

To the editor:

May this letter find you well. That you are reading this can only be that I have either carried out God's purpose or in our attempt have made our voices known. Either way I may presume I am beyond man's hand at this point. What I have done, for I will not assume failure, is deliver a blow to the North as an answer that we do not accept your terms to end this war. Would that our fathers had given up hope at Valley Forge when all looked lost? It is said that "As goes the king so goes the country". This self proclaimed king's reign must be ended. Lincoln has sold out this country to the scavengers of wall street and lined their pockets with Southern blood. Blood that cries out to us from the soil our forefathers fought and died for. As free men. This country was built for their children, for the white, not the black man, but King Abraham with his hidden agenda, to rape and pillage Southern soil under the guise of his own declared morality, has in truth bankrupt this country for his own pride and the prosperity of a few. God may censure me for what I've done but history will not. My life, my ambition, my own calling, is for a higher stage, for that of a new Country that has been fought and paid for ten times more than what we paid in blood during our suffering under England. May freedom ring in the heart of every true man. We are not heroes but only Soldiers in this war. As God may be our witness.

(He signed it)

Booth - Herold - Atzerodt - Payne

(Pause.)

NED

See? That proves what I'm saying. My--my name's not on it. My--my name's not on there anywhere.

MARTIN

Who are Herold, Azterodt and Payne?

FRANK

I've never seen this before in my life--I've never met them.

(Referring to Ned;)

Like *he* said Wilkes *asked me* to deliver this. Then I forgot about it.

SUZANNE

You don't just forget something like that.

FRANK

My dear, in my condition this evening, I can forget almost anything.

NED

So . . . That proves it, right? I'm not who you want.

(Pause.)

JACOB

Add his name to the list.

JENNA

What?

NED

No.

FRANK

I don't think--

JACOB

(To Frank:)

Add his or yours. You already have the letter.

MARTIN

We can't give them that. Be reasonable--

JACOB

Sure we can. Our names aren't on it.

(To Frank:)

Add his.

NED

Why!?

JENNA

It will only do exactly what you don't want it to do. It implicates us because we have it no matter whose name is on it.

JACOB

Who has a pen?

NED

I beg you, please.

MARTIN

Harry Ford's office is already open.

JACOB

Get one from in there.

(But MARTIN lags behind to watch the goings on onstage
as Jacob continues at Ned:)

JACOB

Then maybe you'll tell us what we need to know.

NED

Why are you doing this?

CYNTHIA

If there's something more you know I would suggest you tell him.

(No reply.)

Tell us, Mr. Sprang.

JACOB

(Referring to Cynthia:)

Tell her. Confess to her.

JENNA

(To Jacob:)

Don't.

JACOB

Give me your belts.

PETER

I doubt this man has any--

JACOB

Stay out of it, Reb.

(Having not received a belt he pulls a fabric decoration off
the wall and tears it into strips in order to bind Ned's feet
and hands.)

We're not getting out of here unless we give them what they want.

PETER

We can wait a bit longer.

JACOB

We've been waiting all night. Martin, you, lower fly three.

MARTIN

What?

JACOB

The ropes. Over there. Pull on the ropes and lower the fly.

MARTIN

Number three?

NED

You don't need to do this. I don't know anything more than I told you . . .
Honest.

JACOB

(To Frank:)

You. Help me.

(Aside to the women:)

I'm only going to tease it out of him.

(Frank and Cynthia hold Ned down as Jacob binds him. To
Martin offstage:)

That rope.

MARTIN (offstage)

This rope?

JACOB

That rope.

NED

A ROPE! A ROPE!! I stole him a rope. That's all I did but it wasn't recent. It was
last month. He was gonna kidnap him is all. That's what he wanted to do. I
swear. But nothing happened.

SUZANNE

He was going to kidnap him? The President? Here? On the stage; in front of a
whole audience?

FRANK

That's how Wilkes shot him, wasn't it?: In front of a whole audience

JENNA

Alright, Mr. Ritter, you have your information, now let him go.

JACOB

No, there's more. Who are Herold, Azterodt and Payne?

NED

He was gonna trade Lincoln for confederate soldiers. That was--that what he said but nothing happened.

JENNA

He doesn't know--

(Her words are stopped by the sight of the fly: a long heavy curtain rod on which scenery is generally raised and lowered onto the stage moves down into view for a matter of reaching distance. NED watches it wide eyed.)

JENNA

You can't be proposing to--

JACOB

Shut up. For all I know your one of them too. But I'm not and we're not.

FRANK

I'm not.

JACOB

Fetch me that rope.

(He is referring to a rope that is coiled up at one end of the fly. FRANK brings it to him and JACOB starts working a loop quickly into it.)

JENNA

You can't do this. Peter?

(But PETER is motionless to help.)

JACOB

Stay out of it, Daniels--or whatever your name is.

JACOB (Cont.)

(To Ned:)

You gonna talk now? You gonna tell us what we need to know?

JENNA

(Snatches up the letter:)

I'm burning the letter, alright.

(She takes it to the footlights and indeed sets it afire.)

See? So now you can't add anybody's name to it. We all know it can only hurt us and none of us--NONE of us are named in it.

SUZANNE

So then it's your word against ours.

JENNA

What?

JACOB

Sprang?

(He places the noose around Ned's throat. Before Ned can yell Jacob gags him with another strip of material. To Martin:)

Take him up.

JENNA

What?

(To Suzanne:)

Why're you . . . You were so busy trying to control us all earlier--what happened? Did we not feel bad enough for you that your husband has a mistress?

(No reply.)

Peter?

JACOB

Take him up!

MARTIN (offstage:)

He's too heavy.

JACOB

Add counterweight.

MARTIN (offstage:)

What?

(PETER runs offstage towards the back wings [up left.]
JACOB ungags Ned.)

JACOB

You hit me, you saw him run, you told me not to say which way he went. You had Peanut hold his horse. What else do you know?

NED

Pleeeeeeease.

(JACOB replaces the gag then signals Martin to take him higher.)

JENNA

This is not us!! This can't be us!! Think about what you're doing here!! They'll ask questions. The army will sort it all out!! Peter!? Where did-- . . . ?

SUZANNE

He ran, child. He's a runner.

(And the fly is back on its way up. The rope begins to lose its slack as SUZANNE again begins to pray)

JENNA

You can't do this!!

(CAPTAIN DONNESSEY rushes in thru the lobby door with PETER in tow.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

What the hell is going on in here?

(JACOB immediately steps in front of Ned and grabs hold of the rope over Ned's head, catching it in his fist and holding its tautness away from Ned. FRANK, following JACOB's lead also steps in front of Ned, the two of them blocking Ned from Captain Donnessey's view.)

JACOB

Nothing, sir. Just tidying up. Things got broken up a bit here.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Where is everybody?

MARTIN (offstage:)

I can't hold it much more.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Who's that?

(JACOB winces as the rope burns into his hand.)

FRANK

Just Martin, sir. Getting a hammer and nails.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Get out here, Mr. Martin.

MARTIN

I can't . . .

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

I said, "now".

(A beat. MARTIN emerges from the wings.)

MARTIN

(As he enters:)

. . . find any nails. Or a hammer for that matter.

JENNA

No one is--

(But her words are cut short as JACOB's hand gives up its grip and Ned's body slowly starts to rise above the two men in front of him.)

CYNTHIA

Oh, my god . . .

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

What the--

FRANK

(Watching Ned rise:)

"And lo, he was lifted up for our transgressions."

PETER
(Overlapping:)

I told you.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
(Rushing forward:)

Bring that man down.

MARTIN

But you told me to--

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Now! Bring him--

MARTIN

I have to go--

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

NOW!

(JENNA, CYNTHIA and MARTIN all rush off stage to lower Ned back down. CAPTAIN DONNESSEY moves to attend to him.)

JACOB

He was helping Booth. He had a part of it.

JENNA

He said he didn't.

JACOB

He 'said' a lot of things.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

If this man dies . . . And this is just what I need now.

(The rope is removed from Ned's neck. He is still breathing but is at a semi conscious state at best.)

JACOB

(Referring to Peter:)

And I wouldn't be so sure about him, either.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Quiet.

JACOB

We weren't really going to hang him just scare the information out of him, that's all.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

If there's any hanging going to be done it'll be by a Military court and not a group of half crazed actors.

JACOB

I am more than willing to give my testimony.

PETER

That's enough from you.

JACOB

Really?

PETER

Really?

JACOB

Really?

PETER

Really.

(JENNA, CYNTHIA and MARTIN reenter as CAPTAIN DONNESSEY checks over Ned.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Find me some water--

SUZANNE

We don't have--

VOICE FROM THE LOBBY

Mike!

(CAPTAIN DONNESSEY looks up catches sight of another soldier from the lobby.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Get him some water. I'll be right back.

PETER

You can't just leave . . .

(CAPTAIN DONNESSEY looks over the situation--knows he has to go--)

PETER

They'll just do it again.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

(Pulls a revolver out from its holster and hands it to Peter with the instructions:)

Don't use it.

(He hurries out; back up the aisle and into the lobby.)

(Pause. PETER holds the gun out and stands over Ned.)

JACOB

So you are grey.

PETER

This has nothing to do with being blue or grey.

JACOB

Didn't think you had it in ya. I'll give you that.

(He starts to circle around, rubbing his wrist and hand.)

PETER

Don't move around.

JACOB

Or . . . what? You ever even used one of those before?

(NED begins to cough.)

PETER

Untie him.

JACOB

You untie him.

PETER
(To Martin:)

Untie him.

PETER (Cont.)
(To Frank as Martin moves in as ordered:)

Give him a drink.

JACOB
(Still circling:)

Don't.

PETER

Frank.

FRANK

Whatever you want.

(Holding up a bottle by the neck.)

All I got is--

(And he swings the bottle out at PETER who in reflex turns and shoots, hitting FRANK in the leg. JACOB takes the moment to jump Peter and wrestles him for the gun. The women react as the two men grapple but PETER is quickly overpowered by JACOB who gains the firearm and straddles himself over Peter holding the gun at Peter's face. There is a moment when anything could happen.)

CYNTHIA

NO!! Sprang!! Sprang!!

(But JACOB stays transfixed on Peter. JACOB then turns, while still holding down Peter by straddling his chest, and re-aims the gun on Ned, giving Martin the chance to move away as

A rifle is cocked in the lobby doorway.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Not a twitch.

(He holds the rifle aimed squarely on Jacob as he continues down the aisle.)

Not a muscle.

(JACOB complies. He continues to follow the rest of Captain Donnessey's directions:)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Lower it. Look at me. At me. Lay it on the ground. In the air; Hands.

(JACOB raises his hands into the air.)

Get up and back away.

(To Peter:)

You too. Back away.

(As he reaches the stage he gathers up and holster's the revolver.)

What happened?

JACOB

(Referring to Peter and indicating Frank:)

Your reb shot him.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

(Takes this all in and assesses priorities: Frank then Sprang:)

Someone get a bandage on that. Get him something to drink before he chokes to death then everybody--EVERYBODY is to be on this side of me. Where I can see you.

(CYNTHIA and SUZANNE tend to FRANK as JENNA tends to NED.)

SUZANNE

Do something for him--we need to--

(Gathers the playbills to dab at his leg.)

CYNTHIA

(Overlapping her:)

We need to stop the blood.

FRANK

Not the play bills.

FRANK (Cont.)

(On second thought:)

Yes, the play bills.

(CYNTHIA takes the fabric strips Martin removed from Ned and uses them to help Suzanne bind up Frank's leg as FRANK continues to dab each of the playbills with his blood.)

FRANK

(To Peter:)

Thank you, boy; I think you have just made me a very rich man.

MARTIN

(to Donnessey:)

In all due respect, sir, what will happen to us?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

That remains to be seen.

(To Frank:)

Can you walk?

FRANK

I'm feeling no pain, thank you for your concern.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Nothing happened here, you understand? Nothing. There's been enough gone on tonight without me having to explain all this.

(No reply.)

Understood?

(No reply. No objections.)

Good.

(Pause. CAPTAIN DONNESSEY breathes deep before issuing the next commands.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

When you're ready we are going to file out that door.

(Indicating the backstage door.)

JENNA

Where are we going? Home?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

. . . To jail.--

(The group react to the word 'jail' with questions of disbelief such as "What?" "You can't be serious?" "Jail?" "Haven't you done enough to us?" and the like as Captain Donnessey continues:)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY (continuing:)

--For questioning. About earlier only. Last night. Where you'll be held safe. If not from each other.

(Over their objections:)

I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear it.

(They quiet down.)

If you had anything to do with this--last night--we'll find it out. If you didn't--we'll figure that out too. We will decide.

(To Jacob and to Peter:)

Not you.

(To Martin, referring to Frank:)

Get him on his feet.

(To Peter referring to Jenna with Ned:)

Help them with him.

(He walks far upstage with his rifle still trained on the men. Once he arrives at the stage door he wraps on it to alert them outside:)

OK. We're ready.

(The door is opened and daylight streams in.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

One at a time.

SUZANNE

A common police buggy?

CYNTHIA

(The first to exit:)

Will you tell my father where I am? His name is William Lewis.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

We can talk about that later. Right now you're all under--

MARTIN

Could I trouble you to gather my--

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

--You're all under arrest for acts of treason against the government of the United States of America.

JENNA

This is not right . . . We're private citizens, we're not soldiers. We have rights--

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

This is an act of treason during a time of war. There are different rules. This is a military matter now: you have no rights.

(Before anyone else can object as they file out before him:)

We'll sort it out.

(JENNA is the last to leave, followed finally by CAPTAIN DONNESSEY himself. Pause. We can hear the chain rattle and the distinguishable clack of the padlock as the door is locked down shut again.)

(Lights dim as the scene ends).

EPILOGUE

(Without lights fading to black the cast and crew [CYNTHIA, SUZANNE, MARTIN, JACOB, NED, PETER, FRANK and JENNA re-enter in the order they left stage through the wings; each entering from a different location [four from the left and four from the right]. As they enter they each move to take a place in line running the breadth of the stage. Once all are in position lights alter to halo each of them in their own light. One by one they take a last step into the light as they address the audience:)

CYNTHIA

Ford's Theatre closed its doors following Lincoln's assassination and remained closed for three months while a country healed. The eventual announcement of the playhouse's reopening was met with angry threats again of burning the building to the ground. At which point the government stepped back in and closed the playhouse permanently. The cast and crew of Ford's Theatre, along with its owners and nearly a hundred of other suspected conspirators throughout the city, were arrested and held for questioning--although charges were eventually dropped for all suspects but eight. Among the eight was Ford's Theatre stagehand Ned Sprang. As for Cynthia Lewis, she ended her short career in the theatre and went on to marry a grocery store owner in Elkton, Maryland. She never spoke of her days on the stage nor her involvement on that night.

MARTIN

Martin Osbourne moved back to Ohio with his wife and daughters where he tried to continue his career but couldn't be cast due to what would come to be known as the Ford's Theatre curse. He began a delivery service and eventually ran a dairy farm in Akron. Meanwhile back on April 26th, 1865 (twelve days after the assassination), in another barn in Virginia surrounded by Union troops, a man believed to be John Wilkes Booth was shot and killed by Union Sergeant Boston Corbett.

FRANK

The names of Azterodt, Herold and Payne were soon to be known to the whole country. While even without the evidence of Booth's mysterious letter connections were made linking the three men to Wilkes Booth's plan. Also held for trial was Mary Surratt, in whose Boarding house Booth and his three immediate accomplices planned out the event. Frank Matthews survived his injuries, yet would walk with a limp for the rest of his days. Two years later he

FRANK (Cont.)

would admit to the existence of Booth's letter and to burning it himself, alone in his room in the boarding house he lived in at the time. Eventually he would sell his bloodied play bills of that night to what he'd hoped to be private collectors; never admitting the blood wasn't his own but insinuating it came from the great orator himself. Which resulted only in paying off his own gambling debts until the next town. His own romance with the bottle took his life in the Spring of 1884.

JACOB

The war of the states, although considered over with Lee's surrender to Grant five days prior to Lincoln's assassination, continued on. The last meeting of the Confederate Cabinet was held May 5, 1865. Confederate President Jefferson Davis was arrested while fleeing to Canada on May 10, 1865. Jacob Ritter became a key witness for the Government in regards to the case against Ned Sprang. He travelled further north and finally settled down in a small town in Vermont where he ran twice for City Council but never served.

SUZANNE

Suzanne Hatterson's husband passed away from complications of pneumonia six months following Abraham Lincoln's death. She travelled for a few years with a small touring company doing plays for children. She never found fame nor posterity. In 1873 she visited her son in California one last time before leaving America and returning to her mother England. The trial of the conspirators was met with guilty verdicts for all eight defendants. On July 7, 1865 four of the eight were hung in the courtyard of the Old Arsenal Penitentiary. George Atzerodt, David Herold, Lewis Payne and Mrs. Mary Surratt. Mary Surratt was the first woman to be executed by the United States of America.

NED

It was not until the morning of the hanging of the conspirators that Ned would find out his own life would be spared. Ned Sprang was sentenced to six years of hard labor at Fort Jefferson in Key West, Florida. He served four years as a model prisoner and was released early following an outbreak of yellow fever in the camp. Following his release Ned returned to work again for John T. Ford in a playhouse in Baltimore. Ford had always maintained Ned's innocence. Ned, suffered from health complications he'd picked up during his years in prison, and was baptized on his deathbed on February 7, 1875.

PETER

Peter Daniels disappeared from history shortly after being released. Not much more is there to say on the matter; I'd like to believe he headed south and resumed his old identity as Clayton Thompson.

JENNA

Jenna LaFleur moved to New York, where after a brief stint on the stage left the bright lights to marry a lawyer. In her later years she opened a dress shop on 43rd street where she met and became an avid supporter of Susan B. Anthony and the Women's National Suffragette movement. Ford's Theatre never reopened. It was eventually used by the government as an office building and records warehouse. It collapsed on June 9th, 1893, injuring 68 workers and killing twenty two men in the process.

(There is a pause. A moment of silence. Lights fade on the group leaving us a last look at the Presidential box but that too only lasts for a moment longer and then finally dims out fading to black.)

END