

1865

a play

by
Michael Perlmutter

READING SCRIPT



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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 twenties
JACOB RITTER	.....	a stagehand for Ford's Theatre in his late twenties/early thirties
CYNTHIA LEWIS	.....	a stock company actress for Ford's Theatre in her mid 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 early/mid thirties
NED SPRANG	.....	a stagehand for Ford's Theatre in his mid thirties/early forties

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 3 April 15, 1865 3:22 am

Scene 4 April 15, 1865 7:10 am

Scene 5 Epilogue

*"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."*

*—William Shakespeare
[Julius Caesar; Act 1, sc2]*

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.

A NOTE ON THE NOTATIONS:

1. A slash “ / “ indicates the character with the next line of dialogue begins his or her speech (overlapping dialogue).
2. Dialogue in parenthesis “ () ” is expressed aloud, as an aside or unintentionally.
3. Dialogue in brackets “ [] ” is not verbalized / MAY be expressed nonverbally.
4. Dialogue in brackets/parenthesis “ [()] ” is not verbalized / is an internal aside—purposely unspoken; nor expressed nonverbally; more likely disguised under a smile, stare or a glance.

A CLARIFICATION REGARDING TYPOS:

Nope. They aren't. Did I miss one (or two)?—probably. But for the most part, if you see a typo, such as a word repeated, a grammatical error, lower case or UPPER CASE used in place of common punctuation (even a few misspellings), it was, indeed, intended.

*STAGE DIRECTIONS to be read aloud are indicated by CHARACTER NAME: STAGE DIRECTIONS and are in written in **BOLD ARIEL FONT** indented far right (1" from edge of page)*

Conversely; Stage Directions in light grey Times Roman font are NOT read aloud, however should be assimilated into character portrayal.

i.e: page 1:

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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:**

All other Stage directions are to be assimilated into character portrayal.

i.e: page 2:

JENNA

[You caught me] tidying up.

(She slips the [*cigarette*] butt into her purse.)

In the interest of moving the story forward there will NOT necessarily be a STAGE DIRECTION read aloud to when a character exits or enters (first entrances/introductions being the notable exception).

ENTRANCES and EXITS are to be indicated by turning a character's video ON (entrance) and OFF (exit).

(Also, most of CAPTAIN DONNESSEY's entrances and exits ARE to be read aloud [as indicated].)

STAGE DIRECTIONS

SCENE 1

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

[damn ...What a waste ... How terribly sad.]

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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:**

JENNA

Hello?

Hello?

May we go home yet?

(Again, no reply. JENNA shrugs and lights up. She surveys the stage again; she exhales, looking out again, lost in thought and silence. After a timely pause:)

SUZANNE (offstage)

Miss La Fleur?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JENNA quickly extinguishes the cigarette, 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:)

It wasn't my aim to startle you, child. / Should you be—

JENNA

[You caught me] tidying up.

(She slips the butt into her purse.)

SUZANNE

Let the men [do that].

(As she too surveys the chaos:)

Has there been any news?

(JENNA shakes her head: no.)

SUZANNE

[Just as well.] I should believe we're safer here than anywhere else tonight.

JENNA

I'd prefer the safety of my own bed.

SUZANNE

Then you might'n have left when you had the opportunity. When we all [did].

(Moves to an overturned sofa)

Oblige me with this, would you, please?

JENNA

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

SUZANNE

Cleaning, [yes]. I had inclination to sit down.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

SUZANNE and JENNA aright an overturned sofa.

JENNA

(As they aright the sofa:)

Where was this ... ?

SUZANNE

From the box. They sailed it over to make room to carry Mr. Lincoln out.

(Once set right SUZANNE sits on one end, leaving ample room for JENNA who remains standing looking out.)

SUZANNE

For the love of Mike, dear, please, he [Lincoln] was in the rocker not this; rest your feet.

JENNA

(Looking out toward the lobby:)

No, I thought ... I saw [something]—I thought. Hello? Hello!?

SUZANNE

Hello!?

JENNA

Hello!!

SUZANNE

Hello!

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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—A bit young for an officer but these are desperate times after all), encased in the fire light of the lobby.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

You—Ladies? Yes?

SUZANNE

Good evening to you, private.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Captain.

SUZANNE

[Our] apologies.

JENNA

Any word?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

On?

JENNA

(Isn't it obvious?)

...When we may expect an escort out of here?

SUZANNE

The President; any word on the President?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

No changes to report. They've set him up across the street. Doctors 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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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

SUZANNE

Might reconsider lifting your legs.

JENNA

(Taking a seat after all:)

All I meant was to change out of my costume.

SUZANNE

I moved as quickly as I could fashion myself ... just . . . not brisk enough.

(JENNA says nothing. SUZANNE softly closes her eyes. Silence fills the room more than any words could.)

JENNA

Mrs. Hatterson? [What are you doing?]

SUZANNE

(Unflinching, eyes still closed.)

Praying, child. Times like these call for [prayer].

JENNA

Indeed, well ...this is what comes from presenting a play on Good Friday. Mock God and he'll mock you back.

SUZANNE

(Still in prayer:)

(He doesn't move in that spirit.)

JENNA

Mhmmm.

(Pause.)

SUZANNE

(Amen.)

JENNA

Amen.

SUZANNE

Continue your cigarette.

JENNA

...pardon?

SUZANNE

God told me. You need to settle your nerves?: carry on.

JENNA

"God" told you?

SUZANNE

[Forgive me for my subtle attempt at humor.] You think I haven't kept a watch on you girls? I'm aware of those of you who smoke and which of you ... well—smoking would be considered the lesser sin if you gather [what I'm saying] ...

JENNA

Later perhaps.

SUZANNE

You should refrain, my dear: nasty habit—smells terrible and all the money goes to support the South. And the men ... well ...

JENNA

Were you still there? Did you *see* it happen?

SUZANNE

Just exited. Quite nearly: over by the fly rope there—being my back was to the event when . . . I heard something or *someone* collide with the stage but the figure was gone before I turned around and then: all manner were 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 at the time he was shot; it's hardly right.

JENNA

Are we reengaged in war, then?

SUZANNE

Are we?

As I said, [we're] safer in here [than out there]: No one out; No one *in*.

(JENNA, still fidgeting, rises and begins to move around.)

SUZANNE

Someone waiting for you out there? Someone you're / worried about?

JENNA

No, sorry; You?

SUZANNE

[Not to speak of:] my husband should be fast asleep by now. He won't stir till the sun peaks. Military canons couldn't wake him.

JENNA

You're not bothered for his safety?

SUZANNE

... I should be, shouldn't I?

JENNA

And of your children? You have a son, I believe?

SUZANNE

California; followed the gold. You never asked of my family before. In fact, I can't recall us ever sharing anything more than pleasantries before this night.

JENNA

... I'm sorry. I mean no—...

SUZANNE

No, no, you're young; I'm old; We live in different circles; [Think nothing of it.]

(Slight pause.)

JENNA

They're saying it was Mr. Wilkes Booth.

SUZANNE

They do say that, yes.

JENNA

But you didn't see him?

SUZANNE

Nor do I have any reason to believe anyone was lying when they said they did.

You fancy Mr. Booth?

I've seen him cast an eye you as well. (I see a many things.)

JENNA

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

SUZANNE

Do you know where he was off to next?

JENNA

I don't ... keep company with Wilkes Booth.

SUZANNE

He was here earlier today; he wasn't calling?

JENNA

Collecting his mail, I would gather: the Fords let him use the address here. I have *nothing* to—I don't know where you've gotten / your notions ...

SUZANNE

Don't misunderstand me: he's a right looking man. If I were of your age, I wouldn't be shy to admit it. I mean nothing by it.

(JENNA is at a loss for what to say.)

SUZANNE

Before this night, of course.

JENNA

... Mrs. Hatterson ...

SUZANNE

Whatever has transpired in the past between the two of you: might be best not mention.

JENNA

...There is nothing there to speak of.

SUZANNE

Good, we'll just leave it lie there then.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 tries the back wall door, only to find it chained shut from the outside, he continues downstage, on a mission:

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?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

FRANK MATTHEWS, an actor in his late forties/mid fifties enters all but quietly after the young couple:

FRANK

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

Dislodged 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 here was gentleman enough to wake me.

JACOB

Is there a way—

SUZANNE

There are no passages out, my dears; they've bolted us in for the night.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB moves out to the edge of the stage.

JACOB

Not a chance of it.

FRANK

I knew I shoulda called on that last hand.

SUZANNE

For our own good, they would have us convinced. It would seem we are a threat to the nation.

JENNA

Please, be still.

CYNTHIA

I ... must go home. My parents ...

SUZANNE

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

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB hops off stage into the audience and heads toward the lobby.

SUZANNE

It won't do you any good [Mr.— .. what is his name?].

JENNA

We've already petitioned.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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:)

Step aside, please.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Stand down.

JACOB

I'm going home.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Not on my watch.

JACOB

I'm not asking.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 here everyone?

FRANK

... There are two more men upstairs. We were ... [in the middle of a card game.]

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Get them down here. Stay away from windows. I advise you stay together in here.

JENNA

What is happening out there?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

[Nothing to be concerned with]: a few gathering ... Civilians . . Soldiers—nothing to be— ... Has everyone here made your statements?

JACOB

[State—?: Yeah], I'll make a statement. It was John Wilkes Booth. I saw him—now can I go home?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Our orders are to keep you here.

FRANK

You'd announced the design was to escort us across the street for inquiry and then let us go.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Designs change.
We don't need another incident.

FRANK

Incident?

CYNTHIA

Did something happen—someone get hurt?

SUZANNE

Other than the President, of course?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

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

FRANK

That your polite way of saying that's an order? ...—I'll go assemble [the others] ...

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

If you would.

(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. Agreed?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY backs himself out into the lobby.

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

SUZANNE

I believe they have us 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, now, there's no need for pretense.

SUZANNE

Ohhh but there is: 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 yourself 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 many years on you?

Certainly old enough to know better. He's not even an actor; he's a stagehand.

CYNTHIA

I'm afraid I [haven't the faintest idea] what you're talking about.

SUZANNE

Appearances, honey. I'm addressing your reputation.
(As JACOB returns with a broom.)
Over there: the broken glass.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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. In contrast 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 being released?

JACOB

(yyyup)

MARTIN

Then it's true?

SUZANNE

The President is still alive, thank you very much [for your concern]; is it I am the only one interested in what is actually occurring here this night?

MARTIN

Where's Mr. Maddox?

SUZANNE

Whom?

MARTIN

The ... stage manager.

FRANK

Long gone.

MARTIN

I have a wife and children, if you please?

FRANK

We know. We know.

MARTIN

The little one's still teething.

FRANK

We know; we all know.

SUZANNE

Nobody else cares about history?

MARTIN

(Continuing his conversation with Frank:)

My apologies that you have no one but I do and I have 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 for their well-being.

JENNA

Then you should have left before, along with the others. We all / should ha—

MARTIN

Forgive me if I was packing my belongings. Lord knows when they'll ever let any of us 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 throwing papers along with the rest of us.

SUZANNE

(“Throwing papers”?)

PETER

Where is Mr. Maddox? And that boy, Peanut? and uh Mr. Sprang, I think his name was, they all come back?

JACOB

Sprang was there with you?

JENNA

(for Suzanne's benefit as asking:)

You were all playing cards?

FRANK

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

SUZANNE

The gentlemen you speak of never returned, I'm afraid.

PETER

Why not? Did they / let 'em—

JACOB

They let him go?

JENNA

They aren't speaking [on it].

SUZANNE

They were undoubtedly involved in the *incident* the Soldier was alluding to.

JACOB

Ahh.

MARTIN

What incident, ("other than")?

SUZANNE

Someone was presumably hurt; they're not saying who, they're not saying what.

PETER

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

JENNA

So, you saw things; you saw it was Booth.

PETER

I I .. didn't see anything. It's what I was told. Peanut was holding Wilke's horse at the backstage door there. He said Mr. Booth grabbed the reins and kicked him away without so much as a word.

CYNTHIA

Then that must be it then. They were 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 after the men and the boy were taken across for questioning—Something ensued and ... here we are.

MARTIN

For how long?

JENNA

(Shrugs.)

(I just wanted to feel the comfort of my own clothes.)

CYNTHIA

Yes. Exactly the same. Then I fell asleep.

JENNA

Ohh, [we know how you “fell asleep”.]

JACOB

(huh).

PETER

Seems we're all just going to have 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:)

[A game of] Chance anyone?

MARTIN

My apologies: you've already unburdened me of all my money. So now you have me trapped and penniless. Thank you, thank you.

PETER

They marching anyone else across the street?

MARTIN

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

SUZANNE

All manner left when the pandemonium started. All I can assure you is I would have been trampled through that sea of people had I made my attempt. The orchestra pulled foot when they carried out the President. Miss Keene, [herself], accompanied the first lady to where they took her husband. Miss Keene's dress skirt was awash with his [the President's blood]. I could only watch [that's what I do. Miss Keene is a] selfless woman.

JENNA

Yes, we are all aware: 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

All we can do is wait?

JENNA

Nothing much else [we can do.]

CYNTHIA

([most] excellent.)

(MARTIN starts offstage.)

SUZANNE

He advises us all to remain here. Onstage.

MARTIN

He?

JENNA

The Soldiers.

SUZANNE

The Captain.

JACOB

[He] pulled a firearm on me.

MARTIN

Well then by all means

(Returning onstage looking for a place to sit.)

we wouldn't want Mr. Ritter here to get shot.

JACOB

[ha-ha.]

PETER

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

JENNA

He didn't.

MARTIN

What time is it, anyone?

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 timepiece, thank you, I just wanted to verify it's accuracy.

FRANK

[And here] you said you no money [and yet] you have a watch.

MARTIN

He cheats at cards.

FRANK

Aww, for god/sake—

PETER

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

MARTIN

There were three others on the table.

FRANK

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

JENNA

Are you men serious?

FRANK

What?

JENNA

Look at what [happened here tonight]: Mr. Lincoln was shot here—not eighteen feet from us here—a fingerbreadth away in the back of the head—we could all be at war again, we're trapped inside here under armed guard, and no one knows what happened to Mr. Maddox, Peanut and Mr. Sprang and and and you're arguing about a game of chance?

(Slight pause ...)

FRANK

... And?

PETER

And?

FRANK

Cards are a serious business.

MARTIN

It should be.

FRANK

And a gentleman's game.

MARTIN

It should be.

FRANK

And a game of skill.

MARTIN

As I said—

I'll play.
CYNTHIA

It's a gentleman's game.
FRANK

It shou—
MARTIN

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

[Gentleman!] There are ladies present.
PETER

You're [correct]—He's correct; / forgive me, ladies—
JACOB

My sincerest apologies, ladies.
PETER

Granted.
SUZANNE

Thanks, Queeny.
FRANK

Why can't I play?
CYNTHIA

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

(JENNA smiles knowingly. JACOB avoids her glance.)

(I can see you.)
CYNTHIA

(Can you / now?)
JENNA

This is a / travesty—
MARTIN

PETER

Please. Please. Please.
It appears as if we may be here a while, / we needn't—

JACOB

So, we needn't to be on each other's ...
(Looks to Peter:)

PETER

At each other's backs.

(Slight pause.)

FRANK

The mens is right. Mai I prevail on someone for a table.

MARTIN

Oh, my god, man.

SUZANNE

I suggest we make yourself languid, ladies: the gentlemen have spoken.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

A table is drawn and chairs set in place by Frank, Peter and Cynthia.

CYNTHIA

(Stating her case for playing:)

You need five.

FRANK

You need money.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY re-enters again from the lobby.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

[Is this] everybody here?

FRANK

Hello again, sir. Would / there be—

MARTIN

I wish to be released to return to my / wife and children—

CYNTHIA

My / parents—

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Do any of you know of Secretary Seward?

(A slight beat.)

MARTIN

In what way?

JENNA

State Secretary [Seward]? Mr. Seward had a carriage accident couple weeks past, did he not?

PETER

(Was it that long ago?)

FRANK

(Since our detourment here?: feels the same.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

What else can you speak of him?

JACOB

... "He lost the party election to Mr. Lincoln"?

MARTIN

That was six years ago.

FRANK

(Again—)

MARTIN

(Shut up, Frank.)

(There is a slightly awkward silence.)

FRANK

If we guess right do we get a cigar?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Mr. Seward was ambushed and almost killed in his own home this evening. Same hour as Mr. Lincoln was attacked here; as close as we can tell.

(Another silence.)

FRANK

Was he patronizing Grover's Theatre?

PETER
Frank.

CYNTHIA
(He was in his home.)

FRANK
Sorry: The whiskey talking.

JENNA
And the Vice President?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
What do you know about him?

JENNA
Nothing. Nothing / at all.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
What can you tell me [about him]?

FRANK
Why?: Did you lose him?

JACOB & MARTIN & PETER
Frank.

JENNA
Mr. Matthews.

(No reply. There is a pause.)

SUZANNE
How is the President fairing?

(CAPTAIN DONNESSEY doesn't respond.)

PETER
There were three other men here with us earlier. And I think a woman before that; we were told they they were each taken across the street to give statement, can you tell us what came of them?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
Nothing to be bothered by.

CYNTHIA
They're our friends.

(No response.)

JENNA

The people assembled outside? “Civilians” “Soldiers”? Would they be why we’re not being walked across the street for our witness?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

We’ll get your testimonies later. We know where you are. Your friends’ll be fine, Miss, their wounds are being seen to.

JENNA

Wha—what happened to them?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

[(.. The people outside—no, you’re better off not knowing.)]

JACOB

So, I presume you’re telling us, they won't be coming / back?

PETER

Are we / going to be—

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

No one's going anywhere.

FRANK

Could you harvest us something to eat, then? Some cheese maybe?

CYNTHIA

Can you send word to my parents?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

No one has anything else to report?

MARTIN

To report?: no. But if you would get communication to our families.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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?)

MARTIN
This is all wrong.

CYNTHIA
They're treating us like we had some[thing to do with this.]

FRANK
You got that irking, did you?

PETER
We didn't.

JACOB
I know we didn't.

JENNA
Because any body who did: ran—would of run—should have run.

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

SUZANNE
Did you see him, Mr. Ritter?

JACOB
Damned right I saw him. Saw him as he run across the stage. Said somethin',
woulda stopped him [too], if Mr. Sprang hadn't thrown me back.

SUZANNE
Mr. Sprang?

JACOB
Ned Sprang.

MARTIN
[He's] another stagehand. We were upstairs playing cards earlier. A little older
than ...

JACOB
Jacob—

CYNTHIA
Jake. Jake Ritter.

MARTIN

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

PETER

Smells like fish.

JACOB

That's him.

PETER

I heard Wilkes Booth had a knife.

CYNTHIA

Cut up Mr. Whithers when he ran by him.

SUZANNE

Who?

CYNTHIA

[The] orchestra conductor. Caught him in the ...
(Indicates the side of his vest)

SUZANNE

I thought all the musicians manage to get free?

PETER

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

JACOB

Who?

PETER

Mr. Sprang.

JENNA

That he may have saved your life, / Mr. Ritter.

JACOB

You don't know Sprang.

CYNTHIA

Is he evil?

JACOB

Lazy. As they get. Been a stagehand here for going past ten years.

MARTIN

Are you not a stagehand here?

JACOB

[For] two months. [I've] no designs on staying a stage/hand.

PETER

There are worse professions.

JENNA

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

JACOB

Not that scarce.

PETER

Why not just go see the elephant¹?

JACOB

Why not you?

SUZANNE

Well, I imagine we should all be out of jobs tomorrow; [you can] and we can all go see the elephant—bet your last farthing on that.

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

SUZANNE

Throw your papers, boys. We're set to be here awhile.

FRANK

(To JACOB; referring to Martin; then Cynthia:)

I'll front him. You front her.

(To Cynthia as they sit:)

You know how to play the game?

CYNTHIA

Just deal the cards.

FRANK

Martin, siddown.

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

(Puts money on the table:)

That, my man, is a loan; no usury. Show me your watch.

¹ 'going to see the elephant' slang for enlisting or being drafted into the war.

MARTIN

I'm not selling you my / watch.

FRANK

[Love the fortitude:] Earn it back then.

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

JENNA

How ... are you remaining so calm?

SUZANNE

History, my dear.

JENNA

(More repeating the word than anything else.)

("History.")

SUZANNE

Think of it: this is . . . History. For the first time in my life—most probably in any of our lives—we are part of history here. Not portraying a character in some historical entertainment; not reading on it, not even witnessing it: we ARE history. Breathe it in, my dears. These moments pass. For the remainder of our days people will be asking where were you when Mr. Lincoln was shot and how many of us will be able to answer, "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 managed me some playbills.

FRANK

Good logic.

MARTIN

[Between myself and Mr. Daniels, here:] we got 'em all.

(FRANK just looks to him:)

MARTIN

Half a dime a piece.

FRANK

Done.

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

PETER

Shoulda held out for the ten.

FRANK

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

MARTIN

(To Peter:)

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

PETER

I woulda held out for fifteen.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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

CAPTAIN

[We have] everything under control. Just ... Keep where you are.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 hitting stride.

JACOB

I'm not [lickin' my wounds yet.]

FRANK

All I know is somebody owes me seven 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 have that right.

FRANK

Guess I placed my boot right into that one.

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

PETER

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

FRANK

Fair thought.

(No reply. Again to Peter:)

So, where do you think they're hiding it?

SUZANNE

Hopeless inebriate ...

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 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, my friends, is simple. Play with lesser card players. Works every time.

PETER

(To Jenna:)

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

JENNA

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

FRANK

'Could be as good as it gets, girlie.

JENNA

Please, 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?
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 is.

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:)

What would you prefer to talk about?

JENNA

Sir?

PETER

What?

JENNA

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

PETER

You said you didn't like the conversation; I was only asking what you would promote we talk about?

CYNTHIA

We can take turns.

JENNA

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

CYNTHIA

We can all choose different subjects—write them down and put them in a hat. Or we could play parlor games.

The Alphabet game is very good, it's one of my favorites.

(Slight pause.)

PETER

(To Jenna:)

Please: select a subject or we'll forced to play the alphabet game.

(JENNA just smiles.)

FRANK

Starting with 'F': Find me that bottle.

CYNTHIA

Go and get it yourself.

FRANK

Hurry, I'm dying here.
I'm dying here..

JENNA

... I didn't offer.

SUZANNE

Just ... find it yourself.

MARTIN

Would it kill you to—

FRANK

Baaaaaa! You're done.

PETER

Are you enjoying this? Call me crazy / but if I—

FRANK

You're crazy—

CYNTHIA

Baaaa. Doesn't anybody know how to spell? “Call me” is a ‘C’; we’re on ‘K’—K: as in Kangaroo and Kite /and Kettle.

FRANK

You ever see a Kangaroo?

(To Suzanne:)

They got kangaroos /from where you’re from, don’t they?

CYNTHIA

Or you might have said “kookoo”

MARTIN

Or Killer as in We didn't KILL the President!

Why won't you let us go home!!!!?

SUZANNE

Is he dead; Did he die?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

There is a crash of glass far offstage. CYNTHIA jumps.

JACOB

I'll go.

FRANK

Martin, did you find it yet?

MARTIN

[I haven't even left the room.]

STAGE DIRECTIONS

Meanwhile JACOB, followed by PETER, exits into the right wings.

CYNTHIA

(Is someone there?)

FRANK

(I don't know.)

(Staying put, yelling out:)

IS SOMEONE THERE?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

There is another crash. Followed by yet another.

JENNA

What is going on / out there?

CYNTHIA

Are they attacking?

SUZANNE

More than likely.

FRANK

Depends on who you consider
“they”.

JACOB

(Entering with Peter:)

Someone's throwing rocks at the windows.

CYNTHIA

Who?

JENNA

What?

CYNTHIA

Why?

SUZANNE

Because they know someone's in here.

MARTIN

We're in here.

SUZANNE

Precisely.

MARTIN

We didn't do anything.

SUZANNE

We are guilty, sir. By mere association. We're actors. Mr. Wilkes Booth is an actor./

JACOB

I'm not an actor./

SUZANNE (Continuing:)

Ergo: we are all guilty because we are here.

JENNA

Do you think this is happening all over the city or just [here]?

FRANK

You know something we don't?

SUZANNE

Why would I ... ?.

FRANK

[I] just thinkin maybe you're knowing something you're not sharing with the rest of 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 members and no telling how many friends.

PETER

We've all lost / people.

SUZANNE

Don't get your breeches in a bunch, I was only saying 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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

There is another series of crashes.

JACOB

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

SUZANNE

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

STAGE DIRECTIONS

PETER Is now at the lobby door; it doesn't open.

PETER

(At lobby door:)

They locked it.

SUZANNE

Of course, they locked it.

PETER pounds on the lobby door as the crashes continue offstage.

JACOB

Holy mother / of—

SUZANNE

If you please.

CYNTHIA

What if they're already in here? / What if—?

PETER

Hello!!?

Hello!?? Hey!!!

Hey!!

JACOB

I've got you ... protected.

(CAPTAIN DONNESSEY opens the door.)

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Stop.

PETER

They're breaking out the windows back here.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

... We'll send someone out [there].

PETER

Is? Is this happening everywhere or just here?

FRANK

Speak up, we can't hear you!

(A beat; for dramatic purposes only:)

Use your stage voice.

PETER

What is happening out there?

(No reply.)

MARTIN

Well?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

We have ... everything ... is under control. [The] problem is isolated right now.
We'll look into the back of the building.

(Acknowledging the women:)

Ladies.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY 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

How do they know that: You showed up—when? a month ago? Where were you before then?

JACOB

Sprang. [He's] been here 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 his accomplices in this?

JACOB

Are you?

PETER

This isn't going to do anyone any good.

MARTIN

(To Peter:)

You've only been here a few months yourself.

JACOB

And where 'd you come from?

PETER

... Boston.

JACOB

[That so? I] hear tell they've got a real rebel stronghold underground in Boston. You a Copperhead²?

PETER

The war is over.

JACOB

Is it?

PETER

If you didn't hear: Lee surrendered to Grant last / week.

MARTIN

Anybody bother to tell that to Wilkes Booth?

SUZANNE

Gentlemen, gentlemen—

STAGE DIRECTIONS

There is another crash followed by a slamming door.

² Copperhead: a Northern group of pro-Southern sympathizers who referred to themselves as Peace Democrats.

CYNTHIA

I don't like this. Is there / someone—

JACOB

Shh!

STAGE DIRECTIONS

The men pick up various items for protection: sticks, broken glass, etc. MARTIN picks up the broom used by Jacob earlier. Anything lying about is taken 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:)

There! Up there!!

PETER

What?

JENNA

No.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

They are all staring up at the President's box now.

JACOB

Wha—what—Wha'd you see?

JENNA

Nothing.

PETER

Is there someone up there?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 re-lifts the chair leg in self-defense.)

JACOB

(Still holding firm:)

Sprang. Ned Sprang.

NED

What're you—whaddoyou all still doing here?

MARTIN

(Unsure what to do with the broom:)

What are *we* doing here?: What are *you* doing here?

NED

I I sleep here.

SUZANNE

Sleep?

NED

In the costume room. I 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 ... ?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

There is a standoff. PETER watches as CYNTHIA moves further away from the men.

JENNA

Well?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 really 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. 'Xcept you?

(There is a pause as attention turns to CYNTHIA.)

CYNTHIA

I saw someone up there.

SUZANNE

Are you positive?

CYNTHIA

(No she's not:)

... I want to say yes ...

(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 ...

STAGE DIRECTIONS

PETER moves in between 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 .. who I told you about earlier.

JENNA

The ... who?

JACOB

Stopped me from catching Booth.

NED

(Perplexed:)

...What?

PETER

The man who kept you from being knifed by Mr. Booth?

JENNA

Nobody knows whether / it was—

JACOB

It was Booth.

(To Ned:)

You clapped me in the mouth.

(NED is at a loss for words.)

JENNA

A man rushes at 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 involved.

JACOB

(To Ned:)

“Don’t tell which way he went.” You said, “Don’t tell which way he went.”

NED

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

JACOB

He hit me!

NED

I don't know what [I did.] Maybe. The man was running—

JACOB

Booth. It was Boo—it was Wilkes Booth AND YOU KNOW IT.

NED

I just I saw a knife.

(Slight pause.)

JACOB

You choosing honestly to believe this man?

SUZANNE

Why shouldn't we, sir? He's been here for ten years; you've been here for how long: Two months?

(A beat. JACOB is now the one at a loss for words. He considers his options in continuing his argument—then faces the futility of the moment:)

JACOB

(At last ... turning to Cynthia:)

Tell 'em.

CYNTHIA

... I just want to go home.

(Slight pause.)

JACOB

Well ... if you find a way, let us know.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

There is a moment's pause: as the group starts to settle back with each other, JACOB watches NED stealing glimpses of Cynthia.

JACOB

What're you fixin' at?

NED

[Nuthin'.]

MARTIN

I believe you owe the man an apology, Mr. Ritter. He very likely saved / your life.

JACOB

Stop. Just .. stop.

JENNA

(To Cynthia:)

(Slight pause between the men:)

What is it you believe you saw?

JACOB

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

PETER

(to Jacob:)

Let him alone.

NED

... I wasn't in the costume room—I was
... upstairs. I was up in props. There's
some ... I got some ...

CYNTHIA

I don't know. A shadow.

SUZANNE

Was it ...

FRANK

Any hooch up there??

MARTIN

A ghost?

JENNA

Please: Be serious.

NED

No. Sorry.

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.

SUZANNE

(To Ned:)

I'm sure we're being kept under surveillance. If you .. uh ...

NED

... For why?

JACOB

(As if you don't already know.)

MARTIN

(Hollering up at the boxes:)

Hey!! Is anybody up there?

(No reply.)

FRANK

I am flabbergast that nobody answered.

JACOB

Get me a ladder.

MARTIN

You're the stagehand.

I mean only that you know where they are.

JENNA

Why don't you just go around?

PETER

It's locked. They're all locked.

JACOB

(Starting offstage.)

You have to go through the lobby to go around.

MARTIN

There's another passage [that] runs below the stage. They lock that?

CYNTHIA

Under the stage?

PETER

It empties into the lobby: Where the soldiers are.
(But that's where the Soldiers are.)

MARTIN

Fair point.

FRANK

I thought it just ran 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.

FRANK

Whaddo you know: you actually know something.

PETER

It just courses up front: it won't get you to the box without passing through the [lobby].

FRANK

And and and what is your point?

PETER

I don't have one. You?
You really don't need another drink.

JACOB

(Re-entering with a ladder:)

If you ladies are done.

SUZANNE

I don't think we should venture up there.

NED

In the office.

JACOB

I've already got a ladder.

NED

The Ford's office.

House Manager's office: Mr. Harry, he keeps his shine in there. Wife won't let him drink at home.

FRANK

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

JACOB

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

FRANK

Climb your ladder, boy.

(To Ned:)

Lead us on, my man.

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

JENNA

Go. It's not as if we've anything better here 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 now?

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?

JACOB

Someone going to hold this for me?

PETER

(Moving along with Cynthia to assist Jacob:)

Bit of a nomad—or a ‘Vagabond’ I guess you’d call me.

JACOB

You a rebel lover Daniels?

PETER

Why do you keep ... ?

JACOB

Thought I heard a twang in your voice.

PETER

Sorry: I'm not the reason we're in here.
Where do you hail?

JACOB

Connecticut; born and bred. Got a ear for voices.

PETER

Well, I been a bit of everywhere so ...

(To Jenna:)

Where do *you* call home?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB begins climbing the ladder to box seven.

JACOB

(Climbing:)

She’s from Texas—Court her on your own time.

SUZANNE

Kettle meet Pot.

CYNTHIA

Wait.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CYNTHIA reaches up to give JACOB the broken chair leg Ned had been holding earlier.

CYNTHIA

Be cautious.

JACOB

You hear me? If somebody's up there it's best you present yourself.

CYNTHIA

What if he has a gun?

JACOB

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

JENNA

(To Peter:)

There's rumor you have a wife and son.

PETER

Who passed you that?

JACOB

Hey!! He's holding the ladder; this is not the best time / to rattle his cage.

MARTIN

(Rushing back in:)

Somebody have a hammer? Or a screwdriver?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

But before anyone 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.)

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB pauses a moment before revealing himself at the top of the railing.

JACOB

Last chance.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

And he's up. He looks over and around inside.

JACOB

Nuthin'. Just a draft.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 ever gets to us.

JACOB

(Decides not to go into the box:)

OK, well there's uh .. no one .. there.

PETER

Prob'ly just a shadow.

JACOB

Whatever it was: it's gone.
(Hold on Nellie.)

CYNTHIA

You can see something?

JACOB

There's a hole. I can see a shaft of light coming in from somewhere.

JENNA

There's your ghost.

JACOB

Somebody ...

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

Looks like somebody whittled a hole in the door to box seven.

PETER

So?

JACOB

That's a solid door.

CYNTHIA

Come down before you get hurt.

JACOB

Yeah ...

(Starting down the ladder.)

That hole wan't there this afternoon.

SUZANNE

So, you're suggesting?

JACOB

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

SUZANNE

How marvelously cryptic of you.

PETER

Maybe the ghost did it.

JACOB

Somebody did.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

There is a pause. The silence on stage is suspended as a noise has begun outside (from the lobby).

JENNA

What is that?

Do you hear that?

PETER

I hear it.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

But the sound is indistinguishable. 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 it?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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.

FRANK

Housekeeping.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

The chant is clear by now: "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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 women ...

STAGE DIRECTIONS

There is no reply other than the chanting from outside: "BURN IT DOWN!!

BURN IT DOWN!!

BURN IT DOWN!!

BURN IT DOWN!!

BURN IT DOWN!! ... ”

END ACT I

STAGE DIRECTIONS

SCENE 3

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; 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 ...)

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 abiding with her parents.

PETER
That doesn't necessarily mean anything.

(Pause.)

JACOB
Oh . . my [god]—

CYNTHIA
Nothing has changed ...

JACOB
Oh, my, [god]—
(Deflecting to the chanting outside:)
Will somebody shut them the hell up out there?

PETER
They'll set off home soon.
If they were going to do something they'd have done it by now.

JENNA
(Catches FRANK staring at her:)
[What?]

FRANK
I believe 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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

There is another silence, still filled with the chanting from outside. JACOB stares over at Cynthia then 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

(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 vain?

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. / Where's that corkscrew?

SUZANNE

—if you please.

PETER

Finish a bottle before you open another.

FRANK

Why should I delay feasting on the choicer vintages? You see, the way, the palate works—

(Receiving the corkscrew from Ned)

Thank you my good man.

(Starts opening a new bottle.)

—is the taste bumps along the flat of the tongue require the most sensitivity in order to appreciate the finest liqueur or spirit or—

(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, however, the flavors of each subsequent bouquet are essentially lost on each consequential effort. Therefore, it stands to reason that we select the very best spiritus fruminti and—

(Giving Martin the bottle:)

Hold this.

(Starts to open another bottle.)

—continue to the second best and on until we leave the rotgut for last.

MARTIN

It scares me that he actually makes sense.

SUZANNE

(Taking the bottle from Frank:)

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

FRANK

Go ahead: say it.

SUZANNE

(Choosing her word:)

'Men' drink yourselves to death.

FRANK

It prevails over being shot by corporal diapers out there.

JENNA

(Crossing over to Martin with her glass.)

I'll have a bit 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

Need you even ask.

PETER

(To Martin, Frank or Ned:)

Did Mr. 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:)

Something wrong with it?

JENNA

.. I don't know—I like it but I've never ... My grandparents were more the rotgut 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—then changing the subject:)

From Texas, you are correct, Mr. Ritter.

(JACOB offers a feign smile in return.)

SUZANNE

Mr. Sprang? You haven't said much to anyone here. What exactly is your history with this establishment?

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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 [and mind your own business].

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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

Would you mind terribly?

(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
BURN IT DOWN
DIXIE LAND

(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
AWAY!!
AWAY!!
IN DIXIE LAND
WE'LL TAKE OUR STAND
TO LIB AND DIE IN DIXIE
AWAY!
AWAY!
AWAY—

MARTIN

I don't think that is the
wisest move—

SUZANNE

So do we, believe me.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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

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

MARTIN

You. Just you—Just him.

FRANK

I am repentant.
Mr. Lincoln said it was one of his favorites.

JENNA

How is the President's condition?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

(Referring to Ned:)

Who is he?

(There is a silence: no one answers.)

NED

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

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Where'd you come from?

NED

(Pointing backstage:)

Upstairs.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

And your business here?

(NED stands frozen in the moment, unable to respond.)

SUZANNE

He's a stagehand, 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 of? Yet?

PETER

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

SUZANNE

Captain.

PETER

Captain. The window breaking 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.

SUZANNE

Have they caught 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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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

Be a child, dear, as long as you can. Adulthood only 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

Yeah—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 [was what he] ... I wasn't in the know about anything about what Wilkes was going to [do], I swear. I I couldn't even swear that it was him. I didn't know that's what he was speaking about. I didn't—...

JENNA

What else could he have been speaking about?

NED

[I] don't know.

MARTIN

"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, wouldn't he? Think about it. Everyone from the theatre got out but us. Anybody actually involved in this ... shooting is miles from here.

JACOB

(Attempting to quote Captain Donnessey:)

"Right now: no one out there cares."

PETER

(Taking a slight beat:)

I would suggest: no more drinking for anybody. We need to think sober now. 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—or whatever word you were referring to] Agreed?

PETER

(To Jacob:)

We've all been through enough.

(Referring quietly to Cynthia:)

And listen to her [Suzanne]: word of advice? Stay young.

JACOB

[What would you know of it?] Keep to own.

PETER

I've been down a road or two myself, OK? Where you are. Not all this but—
(Referring to Jacob and Cynthia:)
—you two

(Silence.)

JENNA

You have our attention.

PETER

Ju[st] ... Nothing.

JENNA

What?

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

PETER

Another time, perhaps
... I have a son, alright? : you heard rumor right.

JENNA

... And a wife?

PETER

Less than so.
It's a long tale.

MARTIN

And we have nothing but time.

PETER

Yeah ... Right, well ... Indeed. I'm not from .. Boston. But I did worked there.
Once. Like everybody here I uh jus ... where the work is right? [And I] did some
work down South—as we all did before the war.

JACOB

I knew you was a reb. Got the /ear.

PETER

.. I originally hail from North Carolina—But that don't make me a Copperhead and I not backed the South in the war. Most none of the theatres—why do you think they closed 'em down? To shut 'em up. Still People still need to get away—need to escape: 'specially with a war. But then the voice. The voice of the artist.

JACOB

[We] don't need your political rhetoric, right / now.

JENNA

Go back to how it is that you 'less than so' have a wife?

PETER

... An age old story and a tale told by an idiot ... Young girl falls in love with an eligible young actor touring through town. Before long [there comes] news of a child. [But a]fore there's an actual child there's an angry father and a wedding.

SUZANNE

(To Cynthia:)

Are you listening to this? This could be / you.

CYNTHIA

I gather, "mom".

PETER

The child is born but [it turns out to be] something wrong. [The boy's] feet won't work right. They're not clubbed but ... [it has to do with] something in the muscles. Time goes by: child never learns right to walk. [And] then comes the war. And "Dad" travels from town to town, doctor to doctor, playhouse to playhouse till all the theatre dries up down South. Then I headed myself north only 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 the girl's father, her father, held notion to other designs.

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.]
"Her father's designs":

PETER
And her father's name is Gerald. As is our son's. So, Father Gerald decides that the least his son-in-law could do is if he wasn't going to support his daughter was to support his cause; draft or no draft. So, he volunteers me up for the army. Augusta, Georgia.

JACOB
I told ya.

PETER
And I didn't go. Well, I went but ... with no *intention*. I wrestled with the notion, pacing this planked walk in front of Keenan's Grocery³—they had a back room they'd turned into a recruiting office. And I was waited to be picked up . . . or slip away . . . a traitor. And isn't a traitor to the wrong cause a patriot? And all these thoughts and lines run through your mind. If someone could script this. And then ...
Then I ... I crossed paths with this kid, must've been all of fourteen—fifteen at best: eager. Believes in *his* Daddy's cause, believes in Davis, buys into the whole puppet show along with every other failing Southerner blaming Wall Street—but the boy's just a boy. Still, we get to talkin'. Seems he's there waiting too, waiting

³ "Grocery" is a drinking establishment – often of low caliber.

PETER (Continued:)

for the troops—to just “feel” as if he’s a part of it all—as the Greys travel through pickin up new recruits. But acourse he’s too young..

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

Still and all, he’s eager to stand up for the new revolution—for something to believe in—the kid all but prays to god the war’ll extend long enough for him to ... not stand on the sidelines—be a part of it all and ... We just keep conversing and it all seems so simple. Crossed paths. [I] hardly required to change a thing—no mixing facts with fiction—just sculpted words. [I] told him how I was set to go too, getting’ my chance to serve and yet, dammit, I I needed to take care of my own son, needing to take him to the next physician (that I couldn’t afford) and duty, family, God, Country ... And there in front of Keenen’s Grocery, my crowning achievement in my body of work as an actor; as one of the greats: written and performed for an audience of one. I watched him sway . . swept up in it all. Watched him drift then brought him back. We talked for what?: right near two hours until *he* finally dawned with the grand idea: and *he* was begging *me* to sign up in my place. Didn’t I see: Didn’t it make sense: I was already volunteered; what purpose would it serve for me to be disgraced as a traitor and him to go home to waiting when—all that [had to] be done was for someone to set one’s hand to my name when the troops came. So: .. [we swapped.] 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 figured that.)

JACOB

Sweet story. You know what I call that?

JENNA

What happened to the boy?

CYNTHIA

Which one?

JENNA

The one who went to war for you.

MARTIN

Peter: the real one.

PETER

... Ahhh, I don't know his name. He took my name, I made up the name Peter Daniels. Reads good on a program. But we .. uh ... kept correspondence with each other best we could. I headed North and kept working. Sent money home when I had it through channels. Kept forwarding my mail to the next stop. Then all but a month ago .. [I] received a copy, back through sources, telling me that the general Council of the new Confederation of the Southern States regretted to inform those in relation to Clayton Thompson ... That Clayton had been killed fighting bravely in the battle of ... I don't know the field—somebody's field. Exactly where was not part of the news—or I forgot it. Fool kid had to be a hero. Didn't make it more than fourteen months. So ... Victoria received word of her husband's death and .. uh .. To her and to the world Clayton Thompson [is] dead. And that's how I have a 'less than so' a wife. Long live Peter Daniels.
I'm not proud of it.

MARTIN

No reason you should be.

SUZANNE

So a boy without a name died in a field without a name for a Country that seemed to have died in childbirth.

JACOB

Did it?

MARTIN

Lee Surrendered. It / should be.

FRANK

Walker's still fighting.

JACOB

How would you know this?

FRANK

You hear things. Don't paint with his brush.

CYNTHIA

(To Peter:)

Do you still send them money?

PETER

"From a friend." When I can.
So, my point, young lady: when I said I've been down your road—Been where you *are* ... I've *been* where you are. And the scenery isn't all that pretty.

PETER (Continued:)

So, like she [Suzanne] said: Be a kid as long as you can. Play games. Worry your parents. Just ... don't grow up so fast.

SUZANNE

When it is too late; it is 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 just be honest here.

JENNA

Little Gerald.

PETER

Indeed.

JENNA

And your birth name is Clayton?

PETER

[Was.]

JENNA

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

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

.. I'll [be sure to] remember that.

JENNA

No: that is not what I meant. That, I believe, was the champagne.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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

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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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

MARTIN

Where did 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 uncertain.

CYNTHIA

No. Listen. You hear that?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

Hearing something else—CYNTHIA runs to the backstage door:

CYNTHIA

Wait a minute, wait a minute.

JACOB

/ Wha—?

MARTIN

Where are / you—?

FRANK

Now she's lost her bearings.

(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, correct?

MARTIN

What?

CYNTHIA

It's wet. [I think] it's raining. I think—

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CYNTHIA tries the door but, of course, it's locked. She reverses directions and heads toward the lobby.

FRANK

How do you—?

JACOB

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

(To Ned:)

Keep your eyes to your own. She's sixteen.

NED

[I] wasn't doin' anything ...

JACOB

Yeah. Right.

CYNTHIA

Hey! Hey!

(At the lobby door.)

Is it raining?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CYNTHIA starts to push open the door—it gives way enough for her to see then is slammed back shut.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY (from the lobby:)

Get yourself back in there!

CYNTHIA

(Pushing open the door enough to a peak and look 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!

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CYNTHIA starts triumphantly back down the aisle.

CYNTHIA

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.)

Well, it was worth a shot.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

Lights fade.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

SCENE 4

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 a spell at some time or 'nother.

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 only smiles in consort as she gazes out into the wreckage that was once pristinely lined rows and columns of perfectly set chairs; every fiber in her being longing to stretch her limbs but circumstances [not wishing to encourage the man seated next to her] deny her even this. PETER, unaware, offers her a bottle, to quell the aftermath of their drinking from taking up permanent residence:)

PETER

Hair of the dog?

JENNA

(She accepts the bottle)

I don't usually do this.

(JENNA takes a swig then returns the bottle to PETER who does as the same as JENNA's attention returns to the house.)

JENNA

(What is it about an empty theatre, hm?)

PETER

Damned shame.

JENNA (Continued:)

(I look out and you see ..

PETER

Overtured/—

JENNA (Continued:)

(row after row of ..

PETER

I believe that one's broken of there.

JENNA (Continued:)

(wasting lives. Waiting to be entertained.)

PETER

Isn't that what they pay you f—us for ?

JENNA

(I do find myself partial to them being vacant. I believe myself more at peace in a stark emporium. [Time to be .. alone with the stillness.] Once you add .. just one person: "What next?" You have to dance.)

PETER

If it's a musical, I would presume, yes.

JENNA

(Don't you ever get tired of the dancing?)

PETER

excuse me, was that directed to me or ... [to yourself]?

JENNA

(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.)

Obliged.

(PETER lights up.)

You wouldn't have a hunk a bread or cheese in there somewhere wouldya?

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 aren't supposed to get shot. It's been one helluva night.

PETER

Don't think I'll be returning this.

JENNA

Well, that being the case ...

PETER

“being the case”?

JENNA

(Not a compliment:)

[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.)

All for you.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JENNA rises, covertly stretching best she can as she 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. JENNA lingers a moment over NED.

JENNA

You really believe he had anything to do with this?

PETER

Not my voice to call.

JENNA

Oh, indeed: You don't take sides.

PETER

[I] didn't say that.

JENNA

M-hmm.

PETER

You have a side. / Texas—

JENNA

I retain my woman's prerogative to change my mind. Can't say I agree with Texas or the whole damned South's position on slavery but . . . 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. 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

You ever been married?

JENNA

(Just smiles.)

[(If I say yes, you'll ask me too much more . . . if I say no, you'll tell me I can't have an opinion. So . . . I'll just smile.)]

PETER

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

JENNA

One day. Coloreds got their vote.

PETER

Two-thirds.

JENNA

Tomorrow: women.

PETER

Yes .. well ...

STAGE DIRECTIONS

PETER finishes the cigarette and extinguishes it by grinding the rest out on the stage floor.

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

JENNA

You will 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 the women get the vote.

JACOB

Hmmpf ... not in my lifetime.

JENNA

And 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. What you smoke is the least of my caring.

(Finally moving from his resting position; referring to Ned:)

And yeah, I think he definitely had something to do with it.

JENNA

We are all aware of your beliefs [on the current situation].

JACOB

So, why are you mother-hennin' him?

JENNA

(Shrugs:)

Somebody has to.

CYNTHIA

Jakey?

(Neither PETER nor JENNA stoop so low as to comment.)

CYNTHIA

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

JACOB

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

JENNA

We'll leave you two a moment to yourselves?

JACOB

No / need.

CYNTHIA

I had the awfulest dream.

JENNA

Sorry to worsen it for you, child, but it wasn't a dream: we're still here.

CYNTHIA

You don't put faith in dreams?

JENNA

In Ghosts? [Maybe] In Dreams? No.

CYNTHIA

It was so real: I visioned there was a funeral parade as far as the horizon: white horses [and] all manner else [was] in black. And all wrath was crying. [And] I remember asking a body, "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

[And] 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

(Eyes still closed for the moment.)

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 had any news yet?

JACOB

You mean / is he—?

SUZANNE

No. Don't.
What time is it?

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

CYNTHIA

Mr. Osbourne is the only one with a watch. You prefer me to wake him?

JACOB

I'm not reachin' [in]to his pocket.

JENNA

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

(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

.. Isn't it time you grew up?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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

MARTIN

What do you believe you're doing?

JENNA

We were trying not to arouse you.

JACOB

She was looking for the timepiece.

PETER

[You] dropped something.

JENNA

What?

PETER

Out of his pocket. [A] letter or something.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JENNA picks up a pile the papers off the floor and offers them to Martin.

JENNA

Playbills.

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 editors of the National Intelligencer".

MARTIN

Hopefully announcing his retirement.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 in damnation [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 past seven?

CYNTHIA

In the morning? (My father's going to have such a conniption.)

JENNA

I'm sure he'll understand. Not 'bout you two but ...

(To Suzanne:)

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

SUZANNE

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

JENNA

I'm—my apologies, I thought ... last night you said he should 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 emerges 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. I didn't know.

SUZANNE

No need [to feel pity for me, 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 is it 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 .. having .. this?

SUZANNE

It's what they're going to ask.

JENNA

(Flustered:)

And ... why?

SUZANNE

Better you 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.)

Maybe the once. It was an error. It wasn't repeated and it wasn't recently. When I first hired ... I'm not ... It was a tragic mistake.

SUZANNE

Mistakes have a way of becoming very bad habits.

JENNA

I'm not going to dignify that with an explanation.

MARTIN

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

CYNTHIA

Oh, my lord. You two are just uh both a pair of hypocrites?
And you called *me* a slut.

JENNA

And I am so much older than you.

CYNTHIA

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 nothing of the kind.

MARTIN

Ladies. If you'll [please].

Forgive me but she [Suzanne] is right: they're going to question us. And we all know that dalliances come with the⁴ ... career choices we have 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— ...

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

Where'd this come from?

PETER

It fell out of your pocket.

FRANK

(Remaining uncommitted:)

Did you read it?

MARTIN

No, should we have?

⁴ In another time, another 150 years away he might at this moment admit to his sexual orientation ... but it's not ... and some things can not be spoken ... not in 1865.

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 is the 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 pallette.)

PETER

No change 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 all of us up.

FRANK

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

(To Jenna:)

[I] remember where I know you from.

JENNA
(Uninterested:)

Do tell.

FRANK
Baltimore.

(A beat.)

JENNA
That is your entire recollection; Baltimore?

FRANK
I saw you perform in *Julius Caesar*. You portrayed Brutus' wife. Stunningly, I may add.

JENNA
Why, yes I was in that [production]. 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
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 hang your / accusations—

CYNTHIA
I don't know the Booths. I was always too faint before him.

JENNA
You really have to decide which age to play and when.

CYNTHIA
I said “faint” not “shy”.

JENNA
Consider yourself gifted.

JACOB
(To the sleeping Ned:)

Which leaves you.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

The lobby door opens up: a very somber CAPTAIN DONNESSEY stands again in its light.

SUZANNE
Yes? Captain, may we help you?

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
He's dead.

SUZANNE
Forgive 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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB kicks at Ned.

JACOB

Get up, Sprang.

PETER

Mr. Ritter—

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 senses?

JACOB

(Looks back at Martin: a beat.)

[Have] you?

[OK.] I'll play nice, [then]:

(He nudges Ned.)

Mr. Sprang.

Mr. 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?

(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.

JACOB

I thought you “lived” here.

NED

I just sleep here sometimes

JACOB

You’re such a liar.

MARTIN

They believe someone here knows something and ... we’ve all been sharing what we know and we thought you could educate us on your history.

NED

[What?]

(Looks from face to face.)

... I don't know nuthin'.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

NED’s eyes stop at Cynthia a moment longer than on the others; searching for some compassion.

PETER

(Sincerely:)

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:)

Admit to 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 set it there. [The] door leading into [the] President's box. Somebody bore a hole in it.

NED

... Harry Ford told me to [do it].

SUZANNE

Harry Ford?

NED

[Yes.]

(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 being a bother to 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

"Killer." He's dead.

JACOB

Booth—he means Booth. You and Wilkes Booth? [You're] pretty friendly together?

NED

He treats me nice, respectful.

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. H'ain't safe.

JACOB (Continued:)

(As CYNTHIA moves away.)

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

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

NED

He t .. told me to tell Peanut to hold his horse is all. So I told Peanut—I / didn't know—

JACOB

Why?

MARTIN

You told / Peanut?

SUZANNE

The stage boy? To hold / Mr. Wilkes' horse?

MARTIN

The child was kicked in the head.

NED

I didn't have nuthin'—

JACOB

Why'd he have to hold the horse? Why didn't you just hitch the animal up?

NED

[I don't know.] He asked ...

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 Mr. Booth. Better'n me. He asked me. It wasn't nothin' .. I didn't ... He asks things, right? I just had Peanut hold his horse—

JACOB

You're saying you knew it was Booth running across the stage.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 run."

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 just asked me to hold a horse. Why would I say, "no"?

MARTIN

(To Frank:)

What are you reading you find more important than this?

FRANK

(Still reading as he talks:)

He asks things. Small favours. This afternoon. I run into Wilkes a few blocks away from here where some soldiers were marching a troop of confederates up to the Old Capital Prison. There he takes out this letter and hands it to me and asks me 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.)

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JENNA takes the letter and begins to read it to 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 our God given right to Secession. 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 kingdom". 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 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 these men.

(Referring to Ned:)

Like *he* said Mr. 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 letter.

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 won't do 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
Please.

MARTIN
Harry Ford's office is already open.

JACOB
Get one [from in there].

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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?

SUZANNE

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

CYNTHIA

Tell us, Mr. Sprang.

JACOB

(Referring to Cynthia:)

Tell her. Confess it to her.

JENNA

(To Jacob:)

Don't.

JACOB

Give me your belts.

PETER

I doubt this man has any—

JACOB

Stay out of it, Copperhead.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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

JACOB

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. Mr. Osbourne, 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 I I don't know anything more than I told you ... P-please.

JACOB

(To Frank:)

You. Help me.

(Aside to the women:)

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

STAGE DIRECTIONS

FRANK and CYNTHIA hold NED down as JACOB binds him.

JACOB

(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 ... It was more'n two months ago. He was wantin [to] kidnap him is all. That's what he was going to do. I swear. But then nothing happened.

SUZANNE

He was going to kidnap the President? From here? On the stage; in front of a whole audience?

FRANK

That's how Mr. 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 soldiers. That was—that what he said—that was what he was gonna—but nuthin nuthin happened.

JENNA

He doesn't / know—

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JENNA's words are stopped by the sight of the fly: a long heavy curtain pipe 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're not / proposing to—

JACOB

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

FRANK

I'm not.

JACOB

Fetch me that rope then.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB is referring to a rope that is coiled up at one end of the fly. FRANK slides the coil across the fly beam to JACOB, who starts working a loop quickly into the unattached end.

JENNA

You can't do this. Peter?

(But PETER is motionless to help.)

JACOB

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

(To Ned:)

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

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JENNA snatches up the letter.

JENNA

I'm burning the letter, alright.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JENNA takes it the letter to the footlights and indeed sets it on fire.

JENNA

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

Then it would be your word against ours.

JENNA

What?

JACOB

Sprang?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB places the noose around NED's throat. Before Ned can yell Jacob gags him with another strip of material.

JACOB

(To Martin:)

Take him up.

JENNA

What?

(To Suzanne:)

Why're you ... You were so busy trying to control us all earlier—What?: Did we not feel bad enough for you that your husband has a mistress?
Mr. Daniels?

JACOB

Take him up!

MARTIN (offstage:)

He's too heavy.

JACOB

Add counterweight.

MARTIN (offstage:)

What?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

PETER runs offstage towards the back wings (up left.)

JACOB

(Ungagging Ned only long enough for a reply:)

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

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB ungags Ned only long enough to reply:

NED

Pleeeeeeease.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB shoves the gag back in then signals Martin to take him higher.

JENNA

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

SUZANNE

He ran, child. He's a runner.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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!!

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

What the hell is going on in here?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB immediately steps in front of Ned and grabs hold of the rope stretching above Ned's head, catching the rope 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 in here. Making use / of our time.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
Where is everybody?

MARTIN (offstage:)
I can't hold it much more.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
Who's that?

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB winces as the rope burns into his hand.

FRANK
Just Mr. Osbourne, sir; getting a hammer and nails; fixing to repair / the railing.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY
Get out here, Mr. Osbourne.

MARTIN (offstage:)
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—

STAGE DIRECTIONS

But again JENNA's 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!

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JENNA, CYNTHIA and MARTIN all rush off stage to lower Ned back down. CAPTAIN DONNESSEY moves to attend to him. All then return through the following:

JACOB

He was aiding Booth. He was a part of it.

JENNA

He said he wasn't.

JACOB

He 'said' a lot of things.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

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

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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.

FRANK

He's not an actor.

JACOB

I am more than willing to give my testimony, sir.

PETER

That's enough from you.

JACOB

Pardon me?

PETER

Enough.

JACOB

Enough?

PETER

Enough.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JENNA, CYNTHIA and MARTIN re-enter as CAPTAIN DONNESSEY checks over Ned.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Fetch him some water—

SUZANNE

We don't have—

STAGE DIRECTIONS

**A VOICE FROM THE LOBBY calls out:
"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 all as likely do it again.)

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY pulls a revolver out from its holster and hands it to Peter with the instructions:

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

(Don't use it.)

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY 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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

JACOB starts to circle, 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.
(To Frank as Martin moves in as ordered:)
Give him a drink.

JACOB
(Still circling:)
Don't.

PETER
Mr. Matthews.

FRANK
Whatever you ask.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

FRANK is holding up a bottle by the neck.

FRANK
Don't got any water; all I got is—I

STAGE DIRECTIONS

And FRANK 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!! Mr. Sprang!! Mr. Sprang!!

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY holds the rifle aimed squarely on Jacob as he continues down the aisle.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Not a muscle.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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.)

Rise up and back away.

(To Peter:)

You as well. Back away.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

As CAPTAIN DONNESSEY reaches the stage he gathers up and holster's the revolver.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CYNTHIA and SUZANNE tend to FRANK as JENNA tends to NED. SUZANNE gathers the playbills to dab at Frank's wound.

SUZANNE

Do something for him—we need to—

CYNTHIA
(Overlapping her:)
We need to stop the blood.

FRANK
Not the play bills.
(On second thought:)
Yes, the play bills.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 become of 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. Enough gone on tonight without me having to explain all this.
Understood?
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
Why? Where are we going?

CYNTHIA

/ Home?

SUZANNE

Are you escorting / us to our residences, Captain?

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. Only. 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—with last night—we will determine that. If you didn't ... we'll determine that 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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY 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:

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Ready.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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 send word to my father where I am? His name is William Lewis.

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

Later, Miss; right now you are all under—

MARTIN

Could I trouble you to gather my—

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

—You are all under arrest for acts of treason against the Government of the United States of America.

JENNA

This is not right ... This is ... We are private citizens; we are not soldiers. We have rights—

CAPTAIN DONNESSEY

This is an act of treason during a time of war. Different rules apply. 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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

EPILOGUE

Without lights fading all the way to black the cast and crew (CYNTHIA, SUZANNE, MARTIN, JACOB, NED, PETER, FRANK and JENNA) re-enter from the stage wings in the same order they left the building; 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 her 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, even though for his part, he kept his secret; including never revealing his orientation to the day he died—as it was a time when things of this nature would not be—could not be discussed. He changed careers and 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 Mrs. 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 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 1874.

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 through Southern Georgia on May 10, 1865, camouflaged under his wife's shawl—make of that what you will. 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.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

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