

BOOTH

written by

Christopher McQuarrie

&

Dylan Kussman

BLACK

TITLE: GOOD FRIDAY - APRIL 14, 1865

VOICE (O.S.)

Ah, Mr. Trenchard. We were just saying how you always seem sure of hitting your mark.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - DRAWING ROOM SET - NIGHT

LIGHTS UP ON: MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON, an elderly aristocrat in a crinoline skirt, entering with her 14 year-old daughter, AUGUSTA. She is addressing ASA TRENCHARD, a country bumpkin, confused by her remark.

MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON

The gold ring, I mean.

ASA

Why, it's very easy, you see. I guess it's like most things in life. You fix your eyes upon the target, look straight, pull strong, calculate the distance and twang. You're sure to hit the mark.

Some LAUGHTER from an AUDIENCE O.S. Hearing the lines out of context, we don't find them funny. We're not meant to.

As our eyes adjust we see the footlights and the velvet curtain. We are watching a play. One we've heard mentioned many times but never been forced to endure.

Our American Cousin.

Up with QUIET, DARK, RHYTHMIC SCORE in sharp contrast to the fluff on stage. Something terrible is coming.

(Note: The play continues in voice over through the intercut scenes. You can ignore the dialogue on stage. It is background noise, in a moment, lost to history.)

INT. KIRKWOOD HOUSE HOTEL - NIGHT

A STATELY GENTLEMAN strides up to the front desk of this upscale Washington D.C. hotel. A VALET hands him a key.

MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON (V.O.)

Oh, Mr. Trenchard, you are so clever.

AUGUSTA (V.O.)

Yes, so clever.

VALET

Good evening, Mr. Vice President.

The stately gent - VICE PRESIDENT JOHNSON - tips his hat and heads for the hallway.

*MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON (V.O.)
So clever, so eccentric and so
rich. But what are riches compared
to affection? People sometimes
look a great way off for that
which is near at hand.*

The Vice President passes GEORGE ATZERODT, a besotted, unshaven German immigrant, hiding behind a newspaper. He watches with the eyes of a killer before downing a full glass of rye and following the Vice President.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

On stage, *Our American Cousin* continues...

*ASA
-you wouldn't treat me as some
folks do when they find out I
wasn't heir to the fortune.*

*MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON
You're joking.*

*AUGUSTA
Yes, you are joking.*

Augusta forces a LOUD LAUGH. The audience joins her from the surrounding blackness.

ANGLE ON: A spectator box about twelve feet above stage left - THE PRESIDENTIAL BOX. An American flag is draped underneath it. We can make out four people sitting inside, but shadows deny us a clear look.

(Note: At no time in the film is the President clearly visible. He is either out of focus or in shadow.)

EXT. SEWARD RESIDENCE - NIGHT

The play continues over an upscale residence in D.C.

*ASA (V.O.)
So you see I've no money but I'm
boiling over with love and
affection...*

LEWIS PAINE (AKA POWELL), tall and gentle of face, emerges from the shadows, up to no good. He wears a long trench-coat and slouch hat and carries a small package.

*ASA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...and ready to pour it out like
apple sass over roast pork.*

More LAUGHTER from the AUDIENCE.

Paine hesitates at the front door of the upscale residence before quietly knocking.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON
Mr. Trenchard, please remember you
are addressing my daughter, in my
presence.

ASA
Yes, I'm offering my hand - with
nothing in it.

The audience ROARS, really enjoying it now.

CRANE UP TO the balcony high above. A DARK FIGURE moves
across the back - headed toward the Presidential box.

The laughter fades, the score intensifies. The world will
change tonight. For better or worse is debatable.

INT. KIRKWOOD HOUSE HOTEL - NIGHT

A BARMAN passes Atzerodt - flask in hand - as he tries to
look like he is searching for a room key. When the Barman
is gone, Atzerodt backtracks to a specific doorway,
reaching into his coat and producing a long knife. He
staggers, steadying himself against the door-frame with
the tip of the blade, trying to focus.

INT. KIRKWOOD HOUSE HOTEL - JOHNSON SUITE - NIGHT

On the other side of the door Vice President Johnson is
sitting at a desk scribbling a late night missive.

EXT. SEWARD RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Back to the upscale residence where Lewis Paine's eyes
adjust to the light inside as A SERVANT opens the door.

PAINE
(offering the package)
I was told to bring this medicine
to the Secretary of State.

"Medicine? What medicine?" The Servant seems confused.

PULL BACK to see this exchange from across the street.

Here we find Paine's thick-headed and furtive accomplice,
DAVID HEROLD, watching nervously from the shadows. He
sees a brief, civil exchange we cannot hear, but when the
Servant tries to close the door, Paine violently shoves
his way past - a sudden and shocking change in demeanor.

Herold's eyes widen - unable to believe this is really
happening. He fidgets - eager to run.

INT. SEWARD RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

SECRETARY OF STATE WILLIAM H. SEWARD lies in bed, resting fitfully. The elderly man's neck is wrapped in a thick brace - the result of an accident.

He stirs to the SOUND OF A STRUGGLE and some YELLING in the hallway. A loud CRASH and LIGHT FROM THE HALLWAY FLOODS THE ROOM. Seward squints, unable to make out more than a madman's silhouette looming in the doorway.

Paine produces a knife and charges. As Seward SCREAMS:

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

The dreaded moment of this fateful production is fast approaching.

MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON
Sir, your vulgarity renders you
intolerable in polite society.

Mrs. Mountchessington exits. Asa calls after her.

ASA
Maybe I don't know the manners of
polite society. But I guess I know
enough to turn you inside out, old
gal - you sockdologizing old
mantrap.

RIOTOUS LAUGHTER, then CRACK.

A gunshot? MUTED YELLING from the Presidential box. A struggle. Asa hesitates on stage, confused along with the audience, along with us. He looks up and sees:

THE PRESIDENTIAL BOX. A YOUNG MAN - dressed in a black cloak and riding boots to match his black hair and eyes - throws his legs over the railing. We see a bloody dagger in his hand.

VOICE
(from the box)
STOP THAT MAN.

The young man leaps to the stage. His left spur snags on the flag, ruining his grace. He lands with a painful stumble. The audience watches silently in confused shock. Is this part of the play? The young man slowly straightens into CLOSE UP and turns to face them, his eyes ablaze. He is 26 years-old and strikingly handsome. Some have said the handsomest man in America.

A PRETTY YOUNG GIRL in the front gasps, "John Wilkes".

JOHN WILKES BOOTH raises the dagger above his head. After the slightest hesitation:

BOOTH
SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS.

He turns, speaking more to himself than anyone else:

BOOTH (CONT'D)
I have done it.

A WOMAN'S SCREAM comes from the box. A couple of MALE AUDIENCE MEMBERS stand. Booth rushes through the upstage curtains. The SCREAMING from above becomes discernible.

WOMAN'S VOICE
HE HAS SHOT THE PRESIDENT.

The audience is slowly realizing this is not theater, but real life. The chaos we would expect finally erupts. ONE MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER is collected enough to leap on the stage in pursuit of Booth.

EXT. SEWARD RESIDENCE - NIGHT

David Herold watches from across the street and through the open front door. He sees Paine fighting with Seward's staff - struggling but unable to clear the door.

PAINE
I'M MAD, I'M MAD. MAD, I TELL YOU.

David Herold panics and runs.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - ACTOR'S ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A door simply marked STAGE crashes open and Booth rushes into the dark alleyway - limping badly from his landing.

A STABLE BOY is holding the reins of a small BAY MARE.
Booth grabs the reins, leaps onto the horse and spurs it.

HYA. BOOTH HEY... STABLE BOY

But Booth is gone.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - PRESIDENTIAL BOX - NIGHT

One MAJOR HENRY REED RATHBONE - a Union officer badly bleeding from one arm - struggles to remove a brace from the inside of the box door. Pressure from outside makes it difficult. Then the door EXPLODES inward. Rathbone is thrown back into the arms of his HYSTERICAL FIANCEE.

MEN IN SUITS, OTHERS IN UNIFORM, flood the box. They find a scene that stops them in their tracks:

A tall, thin man in black with dark wavy hair is slumped over in a red velvet chair with his back to us, cradled by his screaming wife. We cannot see his face.

ABRAHAM and MARY TODD LINCOLN in their last public appearance together. On her hands...

MARY TODD
His blood... HIS BLOOD.

EXT. F STREET - NIGHT

Booth comes galloping around an intersection. He is joined by David Herold riding a roan horse.

BOOTH
Where's Paine?

HEROLD
He's been captured.

BOOTH
Are you sure?

HEROLD
H... he said to go on. Go on...

They spur their horses off into the darkness.

INT. PETERSEN BOARDING HOUSE - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

A BOARDER throws open the door of a small back bedroom.

BOARDER
Bring him in here.

Lincoln is carried head first into an impossibly small room and laid on a bed too short for him. The room fills with men - some official, some not. One is heard to say:

VOICE
Where is the Vice President?

INT. KIRKWOOD HOUSE HOTEL - JOHNSON SUITE - NIGHT

A KNOCK at the door. Johnson, slightly annoyed, stands up from his writing and moves to answer it. STAY ON HIS FACE as he opens the door quickly, eyes wide at the sight O.S.

JOHNSON
Wh... What is it, man?

Before the inevitable reply we:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Booth and David Herold fly past us on their horses, making their escape. CRANE UP TO REVEAL BEHIND THEM:

Est. Looking back at Washington D.C. It is not the city we know. None of the monuments have been erected yet, the streets are unpaved and muddy, the Capitol dome is only half finished - giving it the look of some ancient ruin.

Inexplicable columns of noxious yellow smoke rise up from all over the city.

INT. KIRKWOOD HOUSE HOTEL - ROOM 126 - NIGHT

CRASH. A door is kicked in even as the HOTEL MANAGER is trying to get the key out of the lock. SEVERAL UNION SOLDIERS enter a hotel room similar to Johnson's.

The RANKING OFFICER stays out in the hallway with the Manager and the Barman as SOLDIERS rifle the room.

RANKING SOLDIER
And you're certain you saw this
man outside the Vice President's
room?

BARMAN
I thought nothing of it at the
time, but...

Soldiers tear through the belongings of the absent occupant, finding a large knife under the mattress; a revolver under the pillow. On the desk they find scrawled notes, half-eaten food, whiskey bottles. They ignore one detail that catches the Ranking Officer's eye:

A TINTYPE PHOTOGRAPH OF A MAN IN HIS FIFTIES. A haunted face looking at us with a curious mixture of torment and indifference. It is a face we should remember.

MANAGER
(re: the picture)
Isn't that-

FIRST SOLDIER
Sir.

One of the soldiers hands The Ranking Officer a bank-book. We find the name inscribed inside.

J. Wilkes Booth

BOOTH (V.O.)
(screaming)
A HORSE.

EXT. TOBACCO BARN - PRE-DAWN

A rickety tobacco barn deep in the Virginia back-country. The sky is murky and turbulent. Nightmarish.

BOOTH (O.S.)
MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE.

From the shadows, UNION SOLDIERS creep closer to the barn. A SINGLE TORCH IGNITES, passing its flame to another and another still. As the number of torches grow:

SOLDIER (O.S.)
 BOOTH... WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE.
 COME ON OUT.

The last thing we expect to hear is APPLAUSE.

EXT. RICHMOND THEATRE - DAY

A door simply marked STAGE opens slowly and John Wilkes Booth emerges to an adoring crowd. Scores of star-struck FANS are cheering and waving playbills. Just not for him.

TITLE: RICHMOND, VIRGINIA - FIVE YEARS EARLIER

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Booth is actually the second one to come through the door. A few paces in front of him is MAGGIE MITCHELL, 24 and luminous - the real star. She catches sight of Booth and smiles. He smiles back - sincere but sidelined. She blows him a kiss before returning to her adoring fans.

CLOSE ON BOOTH. Only when she is not looking do we see it in his eyes. We cannot tell if it is Maggie he covets or her fame, but covet he does.

INT. BEAL HOME - FOYER - NIGHT

Booth enters, removes his hat. A BLACK SERVANT takes it. Booth shares a few words that we cannot hear and the servant laughs loudly. Then Booth walks in to find:

INT. BEAL HOME - RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT

Jubilation.

We have come to a grand home for a grand feast in the grandest of Southern style. There is a warmth, a Southern charm to the gathering, and it makes Booth smile. AN ORCHESTRA plays raucous music. Colors are bright and vibrant - the scene is almost technicolor. Magnificent YOUNG SOUTHERN WOMEN dressed in hoop-skirts and finery mingle with COIFFED MEN from another era.

Many COMELY YOUNG WOMEN have spied the handsome Booth, whispering to each other. But he does not see them. He only has eyes for Maggie - off in the corner talking to some MIDDLE-AGED SUITOR.

If this bothers Booth, we can't see it. Outwardly he is, as his sister described him, "a singular combination of gravity and joy." But just as that smile starts to fade:

VOICE (O.S.)
 The man of the hour.

Booth turns to DR. JAMES BEAL, a dignified Southern aristocrat. The two men shake hands - good friends.

BOOTH
 Dr. Beal. Good to see y-

VOICE (O.S.)

JOHN.

Booth turns to see MARY BEAL, age seven and precious, running over. He drops to his knees and catches her.

BOOTH

Mary. Did you see the play?

MARY

It was very long.

BOOTH

(laughing)

It was indeed.

MARY

But I was good. I didn't fidget a single bit.

Booth looks at her, playfully skeptical.

BOOTH

Not a bit?

She shakes her head, emphatic. Dr. Beal concurs.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Then I must honor our agreement.

MARY

My prize, my prize. What is it?

Booth produces a delicate gold ring. He slips it onto Mary's tiny finger and she smiles with awe.

Booth points out the engraving: *For Mary Beal. JWB.*

Then he wipes a smudge of stage make-up from the back of his hand revealing a small, faded tattoo there: *J.W.B.*

He winks. She nods. They share a secret we do not yet understand.

BOOTH

So long as you have this, we are family.

MARY

I'll keep it forever.

And she hugs Booth tightly around the neck. He hugs her back, his heart swelling.

MARY (CONT'D)

I love you, Uncle John.

BOOTH

I love you, Mary.

She kisses Booth on the cheek and runs off into the party. Dr. Beal and Booth laugh.

BEAL
It was a wonderful performance
tonight, John.

BOOTH
Hmmm. Richmond is a small role but
a vital one.

BEAL
Essential, I would say. Richmond
gets to kill the villain.

BOOTH
Ahhh, yes. But the villain gets
the applause.

Beal laughs. Booth smiles, joking away his actor's
frustration.

BEAL
Your time will come, John.

BOOTH
So I've been told. Many times.

A chorus of voices shout, "WILKES." Beal slaps Booth on
the back - urging him toward a group of ROWDY GENTS.
Booth reaches them and they hand him a drink and a cigar.
(All the while he watches Maggie and her Suitor.)

BOOTH (CONT'D)
A miscreant lot if ever there was.

They jeer him the way only friends can.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
What's the news, gents?

GENT #1
Been some killing up at Harper's
Ferry.

BOOTH
The armory?

GENT #2
(nodding)
Fella name'a John Brown thought
he'd steal enough weapons to start
himself a slave army.

BOOTH
You can't be serious.

GENT #3
Oh yes. Hoping to free the negro.

The gents laugh at such a preposterous thought.

GENT #2

Some abolitionists they turned out to be. First man they killed was a freed slave.

GENT #4

Wrong place, wrong time.

BOOTH

To be free, anyhow.

That gets everyone laughing.

GENT #1

I, for one, am glad the whole thing happened. Putting them down like that sends a clear message as to where the nation's heart really lies.

VOICE (O.S.)

A man's state and nation are two very different things these days. Don't confuse the two.

Everyone turns and sees a quiet and unimposing MAN WITH SPECTACLES. A man we'll call TURNER.

GENT #4

Abolition is the stuff of New York parlor chat. Nothing more.

TURNER

It was more than just chat in Harper's Ferry.

BOOTH

Chat or no, I'd say Virginia had the last word.

All of Booth's friends laugh. "Here-here."

TURNER

I wouldn't be too sure.

GENT #2

(stepping forward, angry)
Now see here, friend-

BOOTH

(holding the gent back)
Easy, easy now. Man has a right to speak his mind.

(to Turner)

I take it you're not from around here, friend.

TURNER
On the contrary. I was born in
Richmond, Mr. Booth.

Booth blinks - his charming smile flickers.

GENT #1
Booth?

TURNER
(realizing)
You mean they don't-

BOOTH
You seem to have me mistaken for
some-

TURNER
Gentlemen, I don't think you
understand. You are in the
presence of greatness unrealized.
(But they still don't get it.)
Why the man you know as Mr. Wilkes
here is none other than John
Wilkes Booth. Brother of Edwin,
son of the great Junius Brutus.

Booth's friends look at him, long pause, then:

GENT #2
Naaaaaaaaaaaaah.

They laugh, disbelieving, turning away. Booth is relieved
- his cover intact. He takes Turner by the arm and guides
him away from the other gents to speak in private.

BOOTH
Do I know you?

TURNER
Just a lover of theater. And I
must say - with all sincerity -
your Lord Richmond is the most
passionate I've seen, Mr. Boo-

BOOTH
Wilkes. The name is Wilkes.

TURNER
Just why is that?

BOOTH
It's as much as I've earned.

TURNER
Nonsense. You just haven't found
your role yet. I've no doubt
you'll be on the other end of
Richmond's sword soon enough.

TURNER (CONT'D)
 Might even make as good a Hamlet
 as your father some day.

He turns to leave but Booth stops him. For the first time something has gotten to the actor.

BOOTH
 You saw my- You saw him perform?
 (Turner nods)
 Tell me. What was it like?

TURNER
 To be honest? Nothing as good as
 your brother. But that's just me.
 Good night... Mr. Wilkes.

Turner winks and slips through the crowd. Before Booth can process this exchange he is suddenly grabbed by the arm. He turns to find SEVERAL COMELY YOUNG LADIES have come to claim him as a dance partner. With a last look at Turner, Booth allows himself to be pulled toward the dance floor, slipping effortlessly back into character:

A young man of passion without a care in the world.

INT. BEAL HOME - BALLROOM - NIGHT

Booth is sucked into the technicolor whirlpool of Richmond society. The music is loud and enthralling - everyone is laughing. Booth finds himself in the company of one scrumptious partner after another - each with a devilish look in her eye. He handles it well - ever polite, a gentleman. Taking the world as it comes. Then:

Booth spies Maggie and her Middle-Aged Suitor standing too close. Booth leaves the dance and comes face to face with Maggie, smiling warmly. She gestures to the guests in their swirling circle.

MAGGIE
 Look what a stir you've caused.

BOOTH
 It can't be helped.

Ugly pause. Booth turns to the Suitor extending a hand.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 John Wilkes.

Again we notice the faded tattoo on his hand: *J.W.B.*

MAGGIE
 Ah. Where are my manners? John
 this is-

BOOTH
 Something wrong with my hand, sir?

Because the Suitor will not take it. He is staring at Booth, but his eyes are no match for the young actor's.

Maggie places a hand on her Suitor's arm and smiles reassuringly: "I'll handle this." The Suitor bows out, knowing he'll return. Booth stays cool.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
What should I make of this,
Maggie?

MAGGIE
As you see.

It doesn't take a genius to see the way Maggie and her Suitor look at one another. Booth laughs.

BOOTH
So all this time I was merely...

MAGGIE
No, no. All this time you've been
wonderful. *Tonight* you are merely.

Booth's sharp eyes soften ever so slightly.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, that was cruel.

BOOTH
But well said.

Maggie touches his face - tender, pitying.

MAGGIE
Dear John... You're every woman's
fantasy... But romance ends with
the first kiss...

She nods to her older, wealthier, waiting Suitor.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Then comes reality.

Booth takes her hand. He kisses it and bows politely. Then he steps aside so that Maggie can join her Suitor. She looks back, perhaps hoping to see Booth suffering. But he smiles warmly. Taking it like a man.

EXT. STREETS OF RICHMOND - NIGHT

Cold November. Booth walks the dark and empty streets of Richmond, alone. Only now do we see he is truly crushed.

He passes several homes, looking in the warm and softly lit windows as if standing outside a painting. Upon closer inspection...

At this late hour it is mostly HOUSE-SLAVES moving about inside. Nary a white face is visible. Booth unaware, passes a brick wall and an old election poster.

SLAVERY IS A STATE RIGHT

This is barely legible due to the wide, white graffiti sprawling across it:

SECESSION NOW

EXT. RICHMOND THEATRE - NIGHT

The marquee of the Richmond Theatre reads:

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *RICHARD III*

A poster beside the box office reads:

STARRING MISS MAGGIE MITCHELL and E.L. DAVENPORT

And in smaller print, buried among the supporting cast, we see two thirds of a name we recognize:

Lord Richmond John Wilkes

RACK FOCUS to Booth's reflection in the glass, half in shadow, hard to read... But then he turns, looking up at the moon. He closes his eyes, inhaling deep the cold night air, donning a determined smile.

BOOTH
Virginia... Virginia... Just to
breathe your air is delicious.

And he walks back the way he came, humming a quiet tune to himself. Just as we think he had shaken things off:

VOICE (V.O.)
Now is the winter of our
discontent...

EXT. RICHMOND THEATRE - BACK ALLEY - DAY

Booth, wearing a sword-belt, leans against the brick wall of the theater. TWO ACTORS - CLARENCE AND HIS ASSASSIN - bicker nearby. E.L. DAVENPORT - a journeyman actor of the day - limps about, wearing King Richard's cloak.

E.L.
Now... is the winter of our
discontent
Made glorious summer...

Booth rolls his eyes. E.L. is a hack. Meanwhile:

ASSASSIN
You're not a martyr, you're a
victim.

CLARENCE
A martyr is someone who dies for
the cause in which he believes.

ASSASSIN

But you're not dying *for* anything.
You're being assassinated.

CLARENCE

Because I represent everything the
villain cannot have.

ASSASSIN

Christ, you'd think the play was
about you and not him.

CLARENCE

I'm an actor.

BOOTH'S P.O.V. A group of COCKY YOUNG SOLDIERS - Richmond
Grays - walk by. They are infinitely more interesting
than these two chowder-heads, so he calls out to them.

BOOTH

What brings the militia?

ONE PIMPLE-FACED PRIVATE - an outcast if ever there was
one - responds.

PRIVATE

They're hanging John Brown in
Charlestown. Militia's been called
in to keep the public out.

BOOTH

Why deny them a good spectacle?

PRIVATE

'Fraid of sympathizers making to
set him loose, I suppose.

BOOTH

This is Virginia, man. I doubt
you'll find even one sympathizer
for a murdering abolitionist.

The Private just shrugs and walks on.

ASSASSIN

How did hope get into this? It's
an assassination. What hope is
there in that?

CLARENCE

The audience *has* to have hope that
you'll listen to reason. They
cannot have hope if I show fear.

E.L. (O.S.)

NOW IS THE WINTER OF OUR
DISCONTENT.

E.L.'s new choice is a bold one. And equally awful.

ASSASSIN

And I say any man with a knife to his throat would be begging for his life.

BOOTH

You blowhards could both learn a lot more about death just by watching a man die.

Both actors turn to face him.

ASSASSIN

And I suppose you have.

Booth thinks about this. He unbuckles his sword-belt and drops it before walking towards the soldiers.

ASSASSIN (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

BOOTH

To see a hanging.

CLARENCE

But... Who will play Richmond?

BOOTH

I don't give a damn.

EXT. RICHMOND TRAIN STATION - DAY

Richmond Grays swarm the platform, shoving and shouting as they board boxcars attached to a steaming locomotive.

ANGLE ON: THE YOUNG PIMPLE-FACED PRIVATE. A hand takes him by the arm. He turns to find a smiling Booth.

PULL BACK, watching from a distance as Booth pulls a few bills out of his pocket, leaning in and whispering into the Private's ear like a pal...

The blasting train's whistle gives way to a bugle.

EXT. CHARLESTOWN YARD - DUSK

TIGHT ON: The state flag of Virginia and its motto:

SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS (Thus Always to Tyrants)

CRANE DOWN TO REVEAL: A mass of Richmond Grays sitting around the flag pole smoking, chewing tobacco, bored. The bugle calls them to their feet and they move en masse toward a lonely gallows.

EXT. CHARLESTOWN GALLOWS - SUNSET

Several rows of Richmond Grays surround the gallows like a wall - packed shoulder to shoulder.

A MAGISTRATE stands on the gallows, reading aloud.

MAGISTRATE
 -that he did arm and orchestrate
 the uprising of over 200 slaves
 and attempt a revolution and
 forcible overthrow of the Federal
 Government has been indubitably
 proven-

PAN DOWN the line of Richmond Grays. Along with their uniforms, the grass, their skin and the surrounding sky all seem to have a gray, ghostly hue.

We are shocked then to find Booth's clean, healthy face among the militia - wearing a borrowed uniform.

MAGISTRATE (CONT'D)
 And thus the Federal Government of
 these United States does decree
 that he be hanged without delay.
 Lead him forward.

Stay on Booth for the reaction - fascinated when he sees:

The badly limping JOHN BROWN is led by TWO SOLDIERS onto the gallows platform. His long gray beard and fierce eyes give him the look of a mad messiah. A hood is placed over Brown's head as:

MAGISTRATE (CONT'D)
 (reading from a paper)
 "I, John Brown, am now quite
 certain that the crimes of this
 guilty land will never be purged
 away but with blood. I had, as I
 now think, vainly flattered myself
 that without much bloodshed it
 might be done."

From under the hood, the heartbroken old man SCREAMS:

JOHN BROWN
 WELL MY BRAVE BOYS, YOU CAN
 PREPARE A STRETCHER FOR ME. ONE
 MORE STAIN ON THE OLD BANNER.

Booth has the presence of mind to look around him at the faces of all the Richmond Grays - faces filled with anticipation or, worse yet, indifference.

BOOTH
 (whispering)
 "And if I die, no soul will pity
 me..."

CLOSE ON: Hands pulling a lever. John Brown drops out of frame. The rope snaps taught and Booth flinches. Then the strangest look crosses his face. Revelation.

John Brown's swinging body takes us to:

INT. TUDOR HALL - SITTING ROOM - DAY

The pendulum of a clock, swaying gently on a mantle beneath a tintype photograph of a madman. (*Note: It is also the photograph found by the Ranking Officer on page 8.*) His deep, haunted eyes stare at us with a curious mixture of torment and indifference - immediately similar to the eyes of John Brown in his last moments.

It is the face of the late JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH, SR.

The silence is shattered when the front door bursts open.

BOOTH
MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Booth comes crashing into the room, filthy from the road. His mother, MARY ANN, is sitting quietly with his sister, ASIA. They leap to their feet and rush to hug him.

MARY ANN
JOHNNY. YOU'RE HOME.

ASIA
We thought you weren't coming.

BOOTH
Nothing could keep me away.

As he hugs Asia, a SLAVE - invisible to the family - steps up behind Booth and removes his coat.

(*Note: Slaves are an eerie presence in Tudor Hall - silent and demure, barely acknowledged.*)

BOOTH (CONT'D)
I've had a revelation, Asia. I come to you a man inspired.

More hugs, more kisses from Mary Ann. Over her shoulder we catch sight of Booth's eyes as they find the picture of Junius Sr. on the mantle. It sends a slight chill through Booth's smile. Mary Ann pulls away now - her eyes filled with tears as she touches his face. "Is he real?"

MARY ANN
My darling boy. We've missed you so. I've had dreams, Johnny. So many dreams.

BOOTH
Well, here I am, Mother-bunch. Healthy and happy as ever.

Mary Ann studies his eyes.

MARY ANN
You're in love.

His smile takes a slight dip.

BOOTH
I am, yes... Once again.

Asia takes his hand, always understanding. But before sadness can take a hold of him:

BOOTH (CONT'D)
JUNIUS.

JUNIUS BOOTH, JR. - the eldest of the brood - enters. Hardly the image of his father, Junius Jr. is somewhat slight. Booth is thrilled to see him. They embrace.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
I thought you were in California.

JUNIUS JR.
So did Mother until this morning.

MARY ANN
Today I am doubly blessed.

Booth hugs her tightly, making her laugh. Then he sees a face that may haunt him more than his father's.

We follow his eyes to EDWIN BOOTH, late twenties and already old beyond his years. Not as handsome as John, but certainly wiser. He stands in the doorway to the dining room, a glass in his hand. There is an immediate and ever-present tension as they regard one another, something hanging over their relationship. They love one another but cannot seem to coexist. It effects the whole family.

BOOTH
Edwin.

EDWIN
John...

Long pause. Who will say it first?

BOOTH
Merry Christmas.

EDWIN
Let's hope so.

EXT. TUDOR HALL - MARYLAND - NIGHT

Est. The Booth farm in the Maryland countryside. We are at once reminded of - and longing for - Richmond. Tudor Hall is a haunted place - cold and forboding inside and out. The dining room is the only light in the house.

INT. TUDOR HALL - DINING ROOM - LATER

The family eats under the stern eye of another portrait of Junius Sr. THREE SLAVES silently serve dinner.

BOOTH

I can't say I wasn't risking my neck. They were constantly on the look for insurgents, but they never suspected. I gave a most convincing performance.

Edwin and Junius Jr. share a look, amused by John's tall tale. But Asia and Mary Ann are hooked.

MARY ANN

What were you *thinking*?

BOOTH

I don't really know. I just... I had to see it for myself. And Mother, what an experience.

ASIA

I think I would have fainted.

BOOTH

I tell you I might have if it hadn't struck me that I was watching King Richard, himself, limping toward his damnation...

Junius laughs. While Edwin seems amused, he doesn't really smile. Edwin never smiles.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

It's true, I tell you. I took it as a sign. I have found my role.

(to Asia)

And I've found a benefactor. When I return to Richmond, I will direct and star in *Richard III*.

ASIA

John, that's wonderful.

JUNIUS JR.

It's about time.

Mary Ann smiles, but says nothing. She is emotionally torn on the subject. Edwin is outwardly displeased.

BOOTH

You don't approve, Edwin?

EDWIN

You need more training, John. Without it your voice will never-

BOOTH
 (ignoring this)
 You would have been proud, Mother.
 Why, just last week I was the
 toast of Richmond. They positively
 love me there. And I them.

EDWIN
 Richmond is not New York.

BOOTH
 That's just the sort of high-
 minded outlook that will always
 keep you from being a star, Edwin.

EDWIN
 Is *that* why you're an actor, then?

BOOTH
 So you admit I am one.

EDWIN
 Tell me, John. When you saw that
 old man hang... Did it move you?

MARY ANN
 Please, Ned.

EDWIN
 He was eyewitness to an important
 event, Mother. I want to know what
 it was like - how it felt. You are
 not just my eyes and ears now -
 you're my heart. My guts, John.
 Take me there.

Booth tries, but he cannot find the words. The family is
 suddenly uncomfortable. It's an old family scene.

ASIA
 You've won, Edwin. Satisfied?

Edwin seems very lonely at his end of the table suddenly.

BOOTH
 He was a brave old man. His heart
 must have broken when he felt
 himself deserted.

Edwin realizes Booth is looking at (referring to?) the
 portrait of Junius Sr. It is some sort of stab at Edwin
 we don't yet understand, but it makes Edwin angry.

EDWIN
 You said yourself that you were
 inspired. You, of all people...
inspired by an abolitionist. Have
 you given a moment's thought to
 what that *means*?

Everyone waits while a YOUNG SLAVE GIRL puts more food on Booth's plate. It is the first time any of his family acknowledges the "help" even if it is silently. Then:

BOOTH

I didn't say as I thought his convictions were right. I respect that he took action.

EDWIN

But his convictions were right, John. It is the action for which he will be damned.

BOOTH

You've been in New York too long, Ned. You're starting to sound like a Yankee.

EDWIN

As a matter of fact, brother, I-

MARY ANN

None of that talk. Not tonight.

Edwin withdraws, regroupes.

EDWIN

Come with me, John. Back to New York. Train with my company. In a year, maybe two, we can-

BOOTH

We? We, Edwin? You and I? Or you and your company?

MARY ANN

Your father never wanted any of you boys to end up in this business and this is why.

EDWIN

This isn't why, mother. Trust me.

BOOTH

I think it was all the travel that concerned him. Very dangerous.

Another stab at Edwin we don't quite get.

EDWIN

Will you be taking the name?

Booth blinks. Edwin knew right where to hit back.

BOOTH

I... I had hoped to do it with your blessing.

All eyes turn to Edwin. He is like stone.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 I'll take the name, then. And the
 day will come when it is mine to
 share with you.

He leaves the room. Asia, with a scowl at Edwin, follows.

INT. TUDOR HALL - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

Asia finds John staring at his father's picture.

ASIA
 He only wants what's best for you,
 John. A long career.

BOOTH
 You remember when we were young...
 That day I came home in such a
 terrible fright-

ASIA
 (smiling)
 You'd spent all your money on that
 gypsy fortune teller. I seem to
 recall her saying your star would
 burn bright. That you would blaze
 a trail across the heavens.

BOOTH
 "You've a bad hand," she said.
 "And you will die very young."

He pries himself from his father's gaze to look at Asia.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 I often wonder if she was right.
 How would a long career serve me
 then?

ASIA
 A man can choose his destiny,
 John.

Booth is drawn to the portrait of Junius Sr. once more.

BOOTH
 Tell that to him.

They both end up looking at the haunted face of Junius Sr. on the mantle. Then Booth, true to form, shakes it off, taking Asia by the hands and smiling reassuringly.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 Let us not be sad.

ASIA
 (smiling, wicked)
 Life is too short.

Booth laughs. And they embrace, saying together:

ASIA/BOOTH
Just to breathe is delicious.

They continue to laugh. Neither one sees Edwin in the doorway. He too is looking at the portrait of Junius Sr. From Edwin's deeply troubled face we go to:

EXT. BALTIMORE STREETS - DAY

Booth carries his suitcase toward the train station in the distance, walking casually through his hometown - decked out for the season. The OCCASIONAL PASSERBY sees him and calls out. He smiles and waves, just another kid from the neighborhood - well liked.

VARIOUS
Little Johnny Booth - where the
devil have you been?/Johnny Booth,
you're looking well./Merry
Christmas Mr. Booth. Welcome home.

And then WHACK. A snowball smashes into the back of his head. Booth turns only to be hit again.

TWO YOUNG MEN about his age sit on a nearby stoop. They have assembled an impressive arsenal of snowballs.

SAM ARNOLD and MICHAEL O'LAUGHLIN - boyhood friends of Booth - have been lying in wait. Booth scrambles to scoop up some snow and return fire. He manages to throw one snowball but hits nothing.

SAM
ONE SHOT, JOHNNY? IS THAT ALL
YOU'VE GOT?

Sam and Michael charge, each with an armload of snowballs. They laugh as they mercilessly drill Booth into the ground. Booth finds his feet and charges, slamming into Sam and Michael. All three of them collapse. Booth rubs huge handfuls of snow in each of their faces. The entire melee ends with the old friends laughing and shivering. They get to their feet.

SAM (CONT'D)
They'll be throwing tomatoes in
Richmond.

MICHAEL
You'll be ready for them now.

Booth puts an arm around each of his friends, smiling.

BOOTH
Sam... Michael... It seems nothing
in Baltimore will ever change.

The three friends walk off, talking and laughing.

EXT. RAILROAD PLATFORM - BALTIMORE - DAY

Booth, Sam and Michael sit on the otherwise empty platform, sharing a flask - looking very much like mischievous boys. The mood is a little somber now. Awkward. That feeling of coming home and having less in common than you used to. You know how it is.

SAM

When will you be back?

BOOTH

(shrugs)

Might stay in Richmond a while.

MICHAEL

We could come and see you.

Booth smiles and nods, but the moment reeks of "that will never be." Sam changes the subject.

SAM

I can remember - seems like weeks of my life - waiting here with your family for your father and Edwin to come home from some tour or another.

Booth's smile fades. He nods.

BOOTH

Yes... yes I remember.

(turns and points)

And sometimes my father's wife would be standing right over there... calling my mother a whore. Calling the rest of us...

Sam and Michael share an awkward glance. But before the memory can take hold, Booth shakes it off and toasts.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

It's good to see you, my friends.
It's good to be home.

And, one by one, they drink.

EXT. RAILROAD PLATFORM - BALTIMORE - LATER

The blast of a train's whistle.

The platform is transformed by hissing steam and bustling PASSENGERS. Sam, Michael and Booth say their goodbyes, shaking hands. The moment lingers when no one knows what to say. The train lurches and starts to pull away.

Finally, and to Booth's surprise, Michael hugs him.

MICHAEL

Break a leg, Johnny.

SAM

Make us proud.

Booth smiles and leaps onto the train. He turns back and waves, only to be hit in the face with a snowball. Booth laughs with tears in his eyes as the train leaves Baltimore and his waving friends behind. Over this:

BOOTH (V.O.)

This hand, which for thy love did
kill thy love,
Shall for thy love kill a far
truer love;

INT. RICHMOND THEATRE - DAY

The gaslights burn low on the Richmond Theatre stage, witnessing *Richard III*. Booth is, of course, the hunchbacked, crippled lead while Maggie Mitchell stands as Lady Anne. Booth is on his knees, chest bare, dagger in his hand. He does his best to make Maggie take it.

MAGGIE

I would I knew thy heart.

BOOTH

'Tis figured in my tongue.

MAGGIE

I fear me both are false.

BOOTH

Then never man was true.

MAGGIE

Well, well, put up your sword.

Booth drops the dagger. He stands, containing eagerness.

BOOTH

Say then my peace is made.

MAGGIE

That shalt thou know hereafter.

BOOTH

But shall I live in hope?

MAGGIE

All men, I hope, live so.

Booth slips a ring from his finger.

BOOTH

Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

MAGGIE

To take is not to give.

Booth slips the ring onto Maggie's finger, looking deep into her eyes. Are they in character, or out, as he smiles? She moves slowly to kiss him. Suddenly:

BOOTH

No.

(stepping back)

You give in too easily, Maggie.

Maggie is confused - a bit offended. She steals a glance at the audience.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Only THE CAST is there. Rehearsal.

MAGGIE

But... Richard and Lady Anne
always kiss here. In every
production I've-

BOOTH

And I've never once believed it.
They won't kiss in my play. Ever.

MAGGIE

But how can they-

BOOTH

Are you a whore?

GASPS from the ladies of the cast.

MAGGIE

I beg your pardon?

BOOTH

Lady Anne. Is Lady Anne a whore? I
have killed your husband and your
father-in-law. I have left you in
ruin - walking the streets with a
corpse. Yet with some crafty words
and a ring you will give yourself
to me...

He assumes King Richard's limp and hunchback.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

To *me*?

The cast LAUGHS. Booth smiles.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

This is Lady Anne's defining
moment. To give in now - so easily
- well, she is an idiot or a
whore. But to withhold. To *deny*
me...

Booth grabs Maggie around the waist and moves to kiss her. Of course, she pulls away.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 YES. You see? Now you are worthy.
 Now you are an *adversary*.

Maggie's eyes narrow. Does he mean the role or the relationship? He lets her go.

MAGGIE
 But there must *always* be romance.

BOOTH
 Romance? *Romance*? This is not
Romeo and Juliet. I am King
 Richard - a man whose only
 happiness is civil war. In peace I
 am all but impotent.

The very word shocks the ladies. Booth bows to them.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 I beg your pardon, but where is
 the romance in that?

Booth thumbs through his worn, leather-bound text of *Richard III*. We are allowed to catch a glimpse of the pages and the many handwritten notes that cover them.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 What exists between adversaries
cannot be love. It is seduction.
 And just as I seduce you, you must
 seduce me.
 (finding the page/pointing)
 "I will have her," he says as she
 leaves. "*I will*." Not, "*I do*." In
 this scene the seduction has only
 just begun. And *seduction* ends
 with the first kiss, does it not?

He drops the book. It lands flat with a startling bang.
 Maggie's look: "The balls on this guy."

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 In this play, your very life
 depends on me wanting you. And you
 should be smart enough to know
 that... Lady Anne.

But he means Maggie and she knows it. Booth turns to the suckered cast, performing now.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 I will have her... I will have
 her...
 (laughing wickedly)
 But I shall not keep her long.

The cast laughs as he dances a jig on his stagey, lame leg. Only Maggie is not laughing with him. She smiles alright, but she does not think it's funny.

And then the LAUGHTER of the cast gives way to the SOUND OF EXCITED APPLAUSE OVER:

EXT. RICHMOND THEATRE - POSTER - NIGHT

A single word in bold face.

JOHN

Come down slowly to:

WILKES

And further still to:

BOOTH

Richard III gets billing on the poster, but not nearly as large. Shakespeare is mentioned below that. It is when we reach the bottom of the poster that we have to stop.

"I have no brother, I am no brother. I AM MYSELF ALONE."

Yes, he really did that.

INT. RICHMOND THEATRE - NIGHT

Silence. A packed house. Booth limps lamely across the stage, reminiscent of John Brown's walk to the gallows.

He waits, stopping to study every face in the crowd (also clearly inspired by Brown). A pause stretches on too long until we feel concern that this might be stage fright or a man who forgot to read the script. But suddenly:

BOOTH

NOW...

He says this feigning a lunge at a PRETTY YOUNG THING in the first row. Several people are startled. A flutter of nervous laughter. Booth smiles shamelessly. Cocky. Mischievous. A villain in love with his craft.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

...is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this Son
of York;
And all the clouds that lowered
upon our house...
In the deep *bosom* of the ocean
buried.

ANGLE ON: The front row. A line of beautiful YOUNG SOUTHERN BELLES, enraptured, said bosoms swelling.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Our bruised arms hung up for
monuments,
Our stern alarums changed to merry
meetings,

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 Our dreadful marches of delightful
 measures.
 Grim-visaged war hath smoothed his
 wrinkled front...

ANGLE ON: Turner - the lover of theater from the party -
 bathed in shadow now. Only his spectacles catch any
 light, making eerie, owl-like reflections. Remember him.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 And now...

Booth spies Maggie's Middle-Aged Suitor in the front row.
 Booth smiles and turns - looking at Maggie in the wings.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 ...instead of *mounting* barbed
 steeds;
 To fright the souls of fearful
adversaries...

He winks. Maggie rolls her eyes.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 He capers nimbly in a lady's
 chamber;
 To the lascivious pleasing of a
 lute.

Booth turns back to the ladies in the first row - he can
 have his pick of the lot. And he knows it.

BOOTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 A HORSE. MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE.

INT. RICHMOND THEATRE - LATER

Booth and the ACTOR PLAYING RICHMOND clash with swords in
 the climax of *Richard III*. Stagey. Safe. But then...

Booth charges, using the broadside of the blade to slap
 Richmond on the thigh. Hard. Richmond recoils, shocked.
 Booth laughs and charges, slapping him again - provoking.
 This has gone off book. Richard might just win tonight.

SLAP. That does it. Richmond attacks. The sword fight
 intensifies, becoming very real. With each blow the
 audience tenses. Soon they are GASPING AUDIBLY.

Suddenly, Booth recoils, placing a hand to his forehead.
 He takes his hand away to reveal a smear of bright red. A
 LADY in the front row shrieks. Booth charges, furious.

Richmond fights for his very life now, the audience
 begins cheering for him. Finally, he slays Booth's
 Richard to the SOUND OF RANCOROUS APPLAUSE.

INT. RICHMOND THEATRE - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE continues O.S. as Booth rushes into
 his dressing room, his face and clothes bloody.

He spits the blood-packs from his cheek, then opens his cloak and removes a blood bladder - used to make a convincing death when stabbed. Early special effects.

He flops down in his makeup chair and pours himself a glass of port - toasting a tintype portrait on his dressing table; the haunting face of his father.

Maggie enters.

MAGGIE

My God, is that your blood?

Booth touches his face. The cut above his eye is real.

VOICE (O.S.)

MR. BOOTH, MY GOD - I'M SORRY
ABOUT THE-

Richmond comes rushing in. He sees Booth and goes white.

RICHMOND

God in heaven.

Booth LAUGHS. Maggie grabs a rag, tending the wound.

BOOTH

Self defense, old man. You had to do it.

RICHMOND

I didn't mean to- None of that was what we had- You were like a madman out there with that sword and... Well, I suppose we both got carried away.

Booth leaps to his feet, fresh blood streaming.

BOOTH

It was *combat*, man. It was raw, it was ugly. It was magnificent.

He puts a hand on Richmond's shoulder.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

You know my first time on this stage was in the role of Richmond. I dare say my performance pales in comparison.

Richmond - something of a pansy, we sense - smiles, charmed into forgetting that Booth attacked him.

CLOSE ON: Maggie, standing by Booth's chair, happens to notice Booth's leather-bound copy of *Richard III*. She turns a few pages and we get a better look at the pages of this ancient-looking book. Each line, each scene has been meticulously annotated by the hand of a genius, again and again. Over this:

BOOTH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 I expect the same intensity every
 night. And if I feel for an
 instant you might be holding
 back... well... this play might
 have a very different ending...

Then something in particular catches Maggie's eye. CLOSE
 ON MAGGIE, her eyes *almost* sad, *almost* sympathetic. But
 she brushes those thoughts away, shaking her head.

CLOSE IN ON Booth's copy of *Richard III* laying open to
 the title page where we find an inscription:

From Junius Booth,

To my beloved son Edwin...

EXT. RICHMOND THEATRE - STAGE DOOR - NIGHT

The same door as before, a similar exit, but when Booth
 comes out this time, the CHEERING is for him. It is
 intense. He bathes in it. A star. The crowd consists
 largely of WOMEN and all of them are mad for Booth.

We notice, too, that the alley wall is plastered with
 posters - many of them. Among other things they read:

SECESSION NOW or NO TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION or
 STATES' RIGHTS. For the moment they are ignored.

Booth shakes hands, deflects kisses and tries to kindly
 address dozens of admirers at once. ONE YOUNG GIRL faints
 right in front of him. He smiles, amazed. Then a tall,
 startling figure stops Booth in his tracks.

CLOSE ON: A haunted face. An eager, lonely smile. A man
 we recognize from his savage attack on the Secretary of
 State (page 4). Now demure, LEWIS PAINE extends a hand
 and holds it there, waiting. Finally, Booth shakes it.

PAINE

Paine.

BOOTH

I beg your pardon.

PAINE

Paine. Lewis Paine.

Booth nods. But Paine will not let go of his hand.

PAINE (CONT'D)

I never seen acting like that
 before.

Where others might pull away, Booth squares off on Paine,
 bearing a smile of sympathy. A friend to all.

BOOTH
Are you a fan of the theater?

PAINE
Well... I've seen some.

BOOTH
You should consider acting
yourself. You've quite a striking
face.

PAINE
You think?

BOOTH
Friend... it is stamped on the
sight of my mind.

Paine is stunned. Touched. Moved.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
An honor to have met you, Paine. I
hope we meet again someday.

Booth speaks with such quiet sincerity that we actually believe him. Only when he walks away does Booth raise an eyebrow. "Spooky." We stay on the quiet, unsettling face of Paine as he watches his new hero depart.

EXT. FORT SUMTER - DAY

TITLE: ONE YEAR LATER

Then: FORT SUMTER, SOUTH CAROLINA - APRIL 12, 1861

An island fort in the distance. The battlements are lined with SOLDIERS IN UNION BLUE.

CRANE DOWN TO REVEAL: A row of artillery on the mainland beach in the foreground and SOLDIERS IN CONFEDERATE GRAY.

AN ARTILLERY SERGEANT - hand raised, ready to give the order - hesitates, turning to A STOIC COMMANDING OFFICER.

COMMANDING OFFICER
They were given ample warning to
leave, Sergeant. The order is
given.

The Artillery Sergeant nods. He turns and now we see the ARTILLERY GUNNERS. They are troubled. But orders are orders. And the order is:

SERGEANT
FIRE.

The Gunners reluctantly bring flame to fuse unaware that they are about to fire the first shots of the Civil War.

And just as we expect the cannons to roar:

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

A fiery locomotive blasts out of a mountainside tunnel, hurtling right past us.

INT. RESTAURANT CAR - DAY

Booth is silent, staring out at the rolling countryside passing him by. He is dressed elegantly. A half-written letter and a whiskey flask rest beside his newspaper.

What first catches our eye is the headline:

YOUNGER BOOTH PALES IN COMPARISON

But on the edges of the screen, less important news is peeking out from the papers underneath:

SOUTH CAROLINA TROOPS FIRE ON FORT SUMTER

MARYLAND VOWS TO JOIN CONFEDERACY

NATION'S CAPITAL COULD FIND ITSELF CUT OFF FROM UNION

All of this is underscored by the loud conversation O.S.

WILSON (O.S.)
*States' rights, friend. Protected
by the Constitution.*

ALEXANDER (O.S.)
Treason is what it is.

WILSON (O.S.)
Was it treason when the founding
fathers seceded from England? The
slave-owning founding fathers,
might I add?

ALEXANDER (O.S.)
Entirely different.

WILSON (O.S.)
And just how is that? We're not
part of your so-called Union
anymore, so why should we pay
Union tax? And why should we
tolerate those Blue-Bellies at
Fort Sumter trying to collect it?

Booth looks across the aisle at A YOUNG WOMAN, trying to enjoy a quiet meal. She happens to make eyes at Booth. He smiles politely and she nods before looking away.

ANGLE ON: The far end of the car where we find ALEXANDER (a Yankee) and WILSON (a Southerner). Both middle-fifties, both stuffed into expensive suits.

ALEXANDER

Two weeks. I give it *two weeks* before you're dragged back into the Union. And then you can all choke on abolition.

LOUD LAUGHTER O.S. Alexander and Wilson both turn to find COX - about their age and also in a nice suit. He cuts the tip from a cigar.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

Did I say something funny, friend?

COX

Do you know what an abolitionist sees when he looks to the South?
(off their confused looks)
Money. Same as anybody else.

ALEXANDER

Sir, I must take exception to your-

COX

And you know why they don't have slavery up North?

WILSON

Because you can't grow cotton and tobacco in-

COX

Because they don't want niggers.

Both Alexander and Wilson are taken aback.

COX (CONT'D)

And if the common man were smart he'd *insist* we let the South secede. But the common man don't vote for anything. He votes *from*. From his gut, from his heart... or to get from where he is now to where he wants to be. 'Course he never gets there. Because the common man don't see much past his own front fence. It never occurs to him that abolition is just gonna set those niggers free. Free to go anywhere they please so long as they don't have to stay down south - the only place they were wanted to begin with.

(before Alexander can respond)
You say you believe in equality?
Alright. But when this war is over you'll wish we'd let the South go.

WILSON

Who said anything about war?

COX

Oh, no one's gonna say it, boys...
But make no mistake. We're at war.

Pause. Then Wilson and Alexander laugh, dismissing.

COX (CONT'D)

Abraham Lincoln doesn't care about your right to secede. He doesn't care about abolition. He himself has said he cares only about the *Union*, and he'll stop at nothing to preserve it. Fort Sumter means war, boys. A long and bloody, Civil War. And not a war about slavery or states' rights. But a war about wealth. Power. Preserving the American Empire at any and all costs. Thus a war the South will most certainly lose.

(off Wilson's reaction)

Not that I wish to disparage your resolve. But let's be practical, man. You may grow all the cotton and tobacco but we make the steel.

ANGLE ON: Booth, hearing these words and taking note. Just then, a BLACK PORTER approaches Cox.

BLACK PORTER

Washington in one hour, Senator.

COX

Thank you, Thomas.

(standing, turning to Wilson)
You're wasting your time trying to change minds in Washington. You should be back home selling your land and telling your kin to do the same. The future is cast in stone, friend. And your way of life is doomed to history.

(to Alexander)

'Course it'll cost you dearly.

Cox leaves, walking past Booth who darkly considers the man's troublesome speech. Then he notices the YOUNG WOMAN across from him is trying to hide her tears. He crosses to her table and offers a kerchief.

BOOTH

Carolina?

YOUNG WOMAN

Alabama.

BOOTH

Don't you believe a word of what he says. The Southern states have every right to-

YOUNG WOMAN
Are you from the South?

BOOTH
I - If you'll consider Baltimore
the South.

YOUNG WOMAN
I might if I was from New York.

BOOTH
I hope I didn't disturb you,
Miss...

YOUNG WOMAN
Isabel.

She offers a hand. He takes it. Before he can speak:

ISABEL (CONT'D)
I know who you are.

She indicates his hand and the tattooed initials *J.W.B.*
Booth smiles again, taking a seat.

BOOTH
My bad hand. The impulsive act of
a young boy.

She takes both his hands, inspecting them.

ISABEL
That is a shame. They are
otherwise perfect... Soft.

Their eyes meet. Pause.

BOOTH
Do you have a last name, Isabel?

ISABEL
Not until Birmingham.

INT. BOOTH'S PRIVATE BERTH - DAY

Booth slips in and shuts the door behind him, considering his quandary.

ANGLE ON: Letters. Dozens upon dozens of letters all over his bed and the small writing desk. Most of them include pictures of young women - adoring fans.

Booth scrambles to scoop them all up, finally stuffing them in his already overstuffed luggage. He stashes the bag and does his best to tidy up. Then he opens the door.

Isabel waits in the corridor, inspecting the compartment with a discerning eye. She smiles wickedly, then:

ISABEL

What are your intentions, Mr. Booth?

BOOTH

Please. John. And I have no intentions, ma'am. I am purely a reactionary.

Booth takes her around the waist, pulls her in and slams the door. The train's whistle SHRIEKS, taking us to:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Est. The young capital in daylight.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

Booth steps off the train into a wall of steam. A PORTER hands him his luggage. Booth takes a deep breath, smiling. He turns and sees Isabel on the train, sitting by the window just as she was when they met - eyes down, prim and proper. A lady.

Booth smiles, waiting for her to turn her head. But she doesn't. The train lurches, Booth trots alongside as it picks up speed. But still she does not see him.

BOOTH

ISABEL.

She turns - not toward him, but away - putting her back to the window. She knew he was there all along and was avoiding his gaze. She is done with him. Booth stops in his tracks, stunned. Used. The train gains speed and heads south, leaving him behind.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

And then comes reality.

He manages a laugh at his lot in life. But a SCREAM OF RAGE O.S. takes us to:

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - NIGHT

Booth, as King Richard, collapses on the stage, blood gushing from his belly and mouth. A NEW RICHMOND pulls his sword from Booth's gut and lets him fall.

TIGHT ON BOOTH: Lying there, he listens to the ADULATION, not just for him but for New Richmond. A hero made all the greater by the villain he has slain. This is not lost on Booth. He steals a look at the faces in the crowd looking not at him but at New Richmond.

His eyes move to the stage left box. The box from which he will one day leap as an assassin. The Presidential box.

Booth can make out A MATRONLY WOMAN on her feet, applauding. A TALL MAN IN A BLACK GREATCOAT stands beside her, his bearded face in shadow. But his hands are in bright relief, clapping with great enthusiasm.

Booth has earned the praise of President Abraham Lincoln.

EXT. BALTIMORE - PRATT STREET - DAY

TITLE: BALTIMORE, MARYLAND - APRIL 19, 1861

A FULL REGIMENT OF MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEERS IN UNION BLUE walk in formation down a central boulevard toward a waiting train, surrounded by rabble-rousing CITIZENS. One citizen hoists a makeshift CONFEDERATE FLAG on a pole.

CITIZEN (CONT'D)
WHAT IS THIS, A MILITARY PARADE?

SECOND CITIZEN
LOOKS MORE LIKE A GOD DAMNED
FOREIGN INVASION.

The crowd grows angry, soldiers push them out of the way.

ANOTHER CITIZEN
DOWN WITH THE DICTATORSHIP.

An empty bottle flies out of the civilian ranks, smashing on a Union volunteer's head. Another bottle, and then a stone. ENRAGED SHOUTING and suddenly the air is filled with anything on hand. The Union volunteers do their best to ignore the attack, but their ranks are splintering.

CLOSE ON: A LINE OF LOWERING RIFLE BARRELS - BAYONETS FIXED. The order to, "HOLD YOUR FIRE," is shouted. More bottles fly. The soldiers attempt an orderly withdrawal.

A BOTTLE STRIKES a YOUNG UNION SOLDIER in the eye and he recoils - his rifle going off in the process. CRACK.

Then everyone opens fire. CA-CRACK-AK-ACK. A volley rakes the crowd, and several civilians crumple into the muddy street, mortally wounded.

FROM ABOVE, it is obvious the situation is devolving into mass hysteria. Citizens charge the soldiers with sticks and fists, some firing pistols. The smoke of black powder fills the air, quickly obscuring all...

The Baltimore Riots.

The war between the states has claimed its first victims.

EXT. BALTIMORE STREETS - NIGHT

Eerie silence. The smoke has given way to evening fog. In the wake of the riots, Baltimore has become a city under martial law. The mood is tense, paranoid.

The sound of footsteps on cobblestone, tentative. From the fog emerges Booth in his black finery carrying a small travel bag. He looks at his hometown, stunned. Baltimore has become a quiet, almost ghostly city with all the earmarks of a police state. SOLDIERS are stationed everywhere - watching.

Booth passes the offices of THE DAILY BALTIMORE REPUBLICAN. The newspaper has been boarded up. TWO SOLDIERS smoke on the steps, standing guard. Nearby:

TWO UNION OFFICERS train rifles on A HANDFUL OF RIOTERS, forcing them to scrub a whitewash graffiti from a wall.

-SSION NOW

BOOTH
(realizing)
My God... Mother...

Booth walks faster, then runs. Suddenly:

VOICE (O.S.)
YOU THERE.

Booth halts and turns. From out of the fog comes a FIVE MAN UNION PATROL - tense and determined.

UNION PATROLMAN #1
PUT UP YOUR HANDS.

Booth hesitates. All five men level rifles at him.

UNION PATROLMAN #2
DO IT NOW.

BOOTH
What is the meaning of this?

Booth drops his bag and raises his hands slowly - a little too cavalier for their liking. They surround him, menacing with bayonets, talking over each other.

UNION PATROLMAN #1
State your name.

UNION PATROLMAN #2
State your business.

UNION PATROLMAN #1
Where are you going? Why are you running?

One of the Patrolmen grabs Booth's bag and dumps the contents on the ground, searching roughly with his bayonet. Booth moves to stop him. The other Patrolmen grab Booth and slam him into a wall. Four bayonets are pointed just inches from his face.

BOOTH
FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, I LIVE HERE.
THIS IS MY HOME.

UNION PATROLMAN #2
I seen this face before.

BOOTH
I doubt that.

UNION PATROLMAN #2
Naw, I'm sure of it. I know you.

UNION PATROLMAN #1
'Zat right? You an outlaw, maybe?

BOOTH
I'm an actor, you idiot. I'd say
you'd seen me in the paper if I
thought you could read. Maybe you
came to the wrong theater looking
for burlesque. Or a puppet show,
perhaps?

The Second Patrolman jabs a rifle butt in Booth's belly.
He doubles over.

UNION PATROLMAN #2
An actor, eh? That why your face
is so pretty? What say I take out
your eye, funnyman? What sort of
actor would you be then?

The tip of the Patrolman's bayonet comes fearfully close
to Booth's eye. The other Patrolmen grab him and hold him
fast. Booth struggles in vain. The bayonet inches closer.

SMASH. The sound of breaking glass. The Patrolmen all
turn. A LONE, SHADOWY FIGURE stands at the end of the
street throwing bottles at them.

LONE FIGURE
COME RETRIBUTION, YOU BLUE-BELLY
BASTARDS. THE SOUTH SHALL PREVAIL.

The Patrolmen level their rifles and open fire, but not
before the Lone Figure vanishes around a corner. They
charge after him. All but the First Patrolman.

UNION PATROLMAN #1
Don't let us catch you out here
again.

He drops Booth with a fist to the belly before running to
catch his comrades. Booth recovers, slowly picking up his
scattered belongings and stuffing them back in his bag.
He is shocked when another pair of hands join in.

Booth looks up with a start to find a familiar face.

BOOTH

Michael.

MICHAEL

Don't have much time. They'll be back soon.

Michael O'Laughlen jams Booth's things into his bag and scrunches the case closed. He takes Booth by the arm, nodding to a dark alley, whisking him away into the night.

INT. O'LAUGHLEN HOME - NIGHT

A small, dimly lit townhouse. A winded Michael and Booth rush in and slam the door. Michael parts the drawn curtains to see if they were followed. Meanwhile:

BOOTH

They shut down the Daily Republican.

MICHAEL

Republican was a pro-Southern paper. And ain't just the press been censored. Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus. Any man speaks out against him or the Union finds himself in jail.

BOOTH

For God's sake, Michael. Baltimore. What's happened?

Michael turns to find a very angry Booth simmering at the kitchen table. Michael moves to the sideboard and produces a bottle and three glasses. Booth regards the third glass with some curiosity, but before he can ask:

MICHAEL

Few days ago, a Union brigade was marching down Main Street in full dress. Things got... well, they got outta hand. We got four Yankees. They got twelve of us. We been garrisoned ever since. Union's got artillery aimed at the city on all sides.

BOOTH

What were troops even doing here?

MICHAEL

Changing trains to head south, so they say. But they's just looking for an excuse to take Baltimore, you ask me.

BOOTH

You don't really believe that-

MICHAEL

You got eyes, John. You see what's going on here. Maryland's north of Washington. If Lincoln lets us secede then the Union Capitol is surrounded by Confederate states.

Booth realizes Michael is right.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Our home is hostage now, John. We're gonna have to fight to get her back.

BOOTH

They- The Union can't do this.

VOICE (O.S.)

Ain't the Union. It's Lincoln. He's fixed it so he can do as he pleases. Might as well be king.

Booth turns to find Sam Arnold in the doorway. He is even more winded than Michael and Booth were.

BOOTH

Sam.

Booth stands. They rush to one another and embrace.

MICHAEL

I was starting to worry.

Sam takes the third glass and downs it, grinning.

SAM

Ah, that patrol'll be chasing my shadow 'til sunrise.

BOOTH

You mean that was-

SAM

THE SOUTH SHALL PREVAIL.

Booth realizes Sam was the Lone Figure throwing bottles at the Union Patrol. Sam and Michael laugh.

SAM (CONT'D)

You're lucky we come when we did, Johnny.

BOOTH

But how did you even-

MICHAEL

We got eyes everywhere. We knew you were in Baltimore the minute you got off the train.

SAM

You oughtn't 'a come back here.
What in the hell brought you?

BOOTH

I was worried about Mother. Do you
know if she's-

SAM

She's fine.

Booth is relieved but angrier now than ever.

BOOTH

I'd like to get my hands on just
one of those Blue-Bellies.

SAM

You're sure to have your chance if
you come with us.

MICHAEL

We're joining up. Want to get in
before all the Yankees is wiped
out.

BOOTH

(reality sinking in)
My God... We really are at war.

SAM

Confederate Army could use you.

Booth looks from the face of one old friend to the other -
clearly not excited by the idea, but he is trapped.

BOOTH

I'll... I'll need to tell my
mother. She'll want a chance to
say goodbye.

SAM

We'll go with you.

Booth was hoping that would not be the case.

EXT. TUDOR HALL - MARYLAND - DAY

Establishing shot of the Booth country home.

INT. TUDOR HALL - DAY

Mary Ann Booth sits in a rocking chair, staring at the
fireplace. From time to time she glances up at the
picture of her husband, Junius Sr., on the mantle. Booth
sits across from her, his expression strained.

MARY ANN

When you were born, I asked for a
sign.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

I sat right in this chair and
asked what your destiny would be.
The fire spelled out clear, in
burning letters, one word...

BOOTH

"Country," Mother, I know. You've
told me many times.

MARY ANN

I've had other visions, John.
Terrible visions. I wake up from
dreams unable to remember anything
but your suffering. Your anguish.

BOOTH

Mother-

MARY ANN

Promise me you won't take part,
John. Swear to me you won't ever
take up arms in this war.

Booth struggles, unable to answer.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

My heart cannot take it, John. Say
you swear.

BOOTH

If I must.

MARY ANN

Say the words.

BOOTH

I swear to you, Mother. I will not
fight.

She stretches her arms toward him. He kneels in front of
her and she hugs him tightly.

MARY ANN

My precious baby boy. My shining
light.

Booth sighs, perhaps relieved, until he looks up from his
mother's bosom to the open front door. Sam and Michael
stand there, waiting. He looks at them as if to say,
"What can I do?" They look at one another, disgusted, and
walk away. Booth goes after them.

BOOTH

Sam, Michael... WAIT.

But we remain with Mary Ann, TIGHT ON her troubled eyes
staring at the fire, reminded of her troubling vision.

PUSH INTO the flames, close enough to hear the low
burning rumble. Then:

BLACK

BOOTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
LET SLIP THE DOGS OF WAR.

FADING INTO a series of daguerreotype photographs showing battlefield after battlefield littered with Confederate and Union dead over rolling cornfields and grassy meadows - horses and cannons torn asunder.

Intermix these with headlines tracing the bloody progress of the Civil War, the controversial policy of Abraham Lincoln and the meteoric rise of John Wilkes Booth.

Titles assist us in understanding the carnage that was the next three years of bloody Civil War.

Antietam: 26,134 dead, Gettysburg: 51,112 dead,
Chickamauga: 34,633 dead.

Intercut this with Booth crisscrossing the country by train on tour - free to travel North and South. From his seat in first class he would have seen much of the country and the devastation brought on by war. He certainly saw the Confederate prisoners coming first as a trickle and then, as the war turned against the South, wave after wave of shattered men in Confederate Gray.

Everywhere he goes he is greeted by larger and more enthusiastic crowds. He emerges from stage door after stage door to mobs of adoring women. A seemingly endless stream of perfumed mail with breathless letters and always a pretty photograph enclosed.

The people love him. Especially the Southerners. (Even if the papers are not always so glowing.)

All of this is underscored by the raging voice of Booth in his many Shakespearean faces. Along with the twisted and trusty King Richard, Booth emerges from the shadows in the shocking black-face of Othello or the blood-drenched Coriolanus. He drinks poison as a heartbroken Romeo over the motionless Juliet. With every battle, the anger of these characters increases, the performances grow more passionate.

He toured almost without pause for the next three years as though trying to shut out the war. He drank more and more to cope with the intense pressure he put on himself, and his untrained voice began to show signs of strain...

INT. BAR - NIGHT

HEADLINE: *BOOTH TRIUMPHS AS HAMLET*

The sharper eyes will see Lincoln's face peeking out from the folded front page underneath. Date: NOVEMBER, 1864.

TITLE: BOSTON - THREE YEARS LATER

PULL BACK FROM THE PAPER TO REVEAL: Booth reading the review, strangely unsatisfied. We understand when he unfolds the paper to reveal the rest of the headline:

EDWIN BOOTH TRIUMPHS AS HAMLET

PULL BACK FURTHER to find Booth sitting at a corner table in a packed and noisy bar, coughing as he pours himself a dram of whiskey. A SLATTERLY WOMAN approaches his table.

SLATTERLY WOMAN

Say, Mr...

Booth unconsciously pulls his tell-tale tattooed hand under the table. He's not in the mood for fans.

BOOTH

I'm not him.

His voice is a little raspy. Overused.

SLATTERLY WOMAN

Not who?

He looks up. The woman is a whore. And she has no idea who Booth is. Long pause. He smiles.

BOOTH

No one. No one at all.

He slides over and offers her a seat. PULL BACK as she sits and the two of them begin talking. Booth says something we cannot hear and the woman laughs. Genuine. Her ignorance is his bliss.

INT. BAR - LATER

The whiskey bottle is empty now. Booth argues loudly with SEVERAL PATRONS. The WHORE is trying to get some distance from him, but Booth keeps pulling her back by the waist. He's certainly not doing his voice any good by yelling.

BOOTH

Am I mad? Am I the only one who sees him for what he truly is? He jails those who speak against him. He has taken the great state of Maryland hostage.

ANGRY REACTION from the mob.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Oh, he speaks of equality and tolerance. But look what the other hand is doing. How can you call this man your President? How can you call his war just?

ANGLE ON: A MAN WITH SPECTACLES watching Booth from the back of the bar. Waiting. We have seen him before.

DRUNKEN BOSTONIAN
We won't have that kind of talk in
here, traitor. Go back to
Richmond, where you belong.

BOOTH
I have the God-given right to say
what I like in this country. At
least I did until Lincoln stole
the election.

DRUNKEN BOSTONIAN #2
He has a war to win.

ANOTHER DRUNK
As far as I am concerned, he can
do as he pleases if it means
stamping out the rebels forever.
(turning to the crowd)
ABOLITION.

He gets the cheap applause he was after.

BOOTH
DO YOU KNOW WHAT AN ABOLITIONIST
SEES WHEN HE LOOKS TO THE SOUTH?

A brief silence, then:

DRUNKEN BOSTONIAN
Smoke?

Gut-busting laughter and a rousing CHEER OF SUPPORT from
the mob. The Whore wrenches herself free of Booth. He
tries to SHOUT over the mob, but his voice is failing.

BOOTH
It is the *right* of those states to
secede. Protected by *your*
Constitution. Just as it is your
right to overthrow the whole of
the rotten govern-

Someone takes Booth by the arm. He turns to find THE
BESPECTACLED MAN. Booth resists, but cannot pull away.

SPECTACLES
Your words are wasted here, Mr.
Wilkes.

BOOTH
I know you.

SPECTACLES
Just a lover of theater, friend.

It is Turner, the man who outed him as John Wilkes Booth
in Richmond all that time ago. He takes the drink from
Booth's hand and escorts him out. The mob CHEERS.

EXT. BOSTON STREET - NIGHT

Booth and Turner emerge from the bar.

TURNER
Still searching for your role, I
see.

BOOTH
I don't know what you mean-

TURNER
You're not alone, Mr. Booth. It
wasn't easy finding my part
either.

BOOTH
Is that so? And where do you stand
in the chorus?

TURNER
I'm a friend of Mr. Davis.

BOOTH
I don't think I know a Mr.-

TURNER
Jefferson Davis. My president.

BOOTH
And I thought I spoke boldly in
Boston.

TURNER
You have admirers everywhere, Mr.
Booth. Even here. Name's Turner.

He extends a hand. Booth won't take it.

BOOTH
It was nice to have met you
again... Turner. Now if you'll
excuse me. The hour is late.

TURNER
Indeed... very late for the cause.

BOOTH
What is it you want?

TURNER
The same thing you do, Mr. Booth.
To be of use.

We can see his words hit home. But Booth recovers.

BOOTH
You have my sympathies friend, but
I swore an oath not to fight.

TURNER

I understand your father was a pacifist as well. But there are other ways to serve your country.

BOOTH

I serve my country every night. Shakespeare is my rifle.

TURNER

Shakespeare is your excuse.

BOOTH

You go to Hell.

Booth turns to walk away but:

TURNER

We're not asking you to fight, Mr. Booth. We're offering a mission of mercy. A chance to save thousands of lives without firing a single shot.

He has Booth's attention now.

TURNER (CONT'D)

Infection has proved itself a worse killer than any cannonball. Medicine is in short supply below the line. It's easy enough to steal from Union supplies. Getting it to the field is another matter.

BOOTH

And what does this have to do with-

TURNER

You are an actor, Mr. Booth. A very famous actor on tour. One whose position grants him a certain... ease of transit, shall we say.

Turner stares at him calmly. After a moment.

BOOTH

You're asking me to smuggle medicine. For the Confederacy.

TURNER

You'll be keeping your oath, all the while putting words into action.

Turner offers a simple business card. Booth studies it, hesitating.

TURNER (CONT'D)
Should you decide... You'll be
expected.

Booth takes the card, reluctantly shaking Turner's hand.

TURNER (CONT'D)
You've grown since your days in
Richmond. Your father would be
proud.

And before Booth can respond, Turner leaves. When he is gone, Booth looks down at the card in his hand:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - STREET - DAY

PULL BACK FROM THE CARD TO REVEAL: The front of a small boarding house on 8th and H Streets. The door opens a crack, revealing the pale, spooky face of MARY SURRATT - a bloodless, middle-aged widow.

BOOTH
I'm... a friend of Mr. Davis.

Booth offers the card but Mary Surratt grabs his "bad hand" firmly by the wrist, instead. She turns it over to find the tattooed initials *J.W.B.* She knew to look there. Then she opens the door for Booth to enter his new world.

INT. SURRATT HOUSE - DAY

The front room of the boarding house is dark and eerie, lit only by the small fire in the hearth.

JOHN SURRATT (O.S.)
Thank you, Mother.

Mary Surratt closes the door behind Booth, leaving him with THREE SHADOWY FIGURES. Long silence. Then:

JOHN SURRATT (CONT'D)
I'm Surratt.
(pointing)
That's Atzerodt.

GEORGE ATZERODT grunts, nods. We remember him as the man stalking Vice President Johnson (page 2).

JOHN SURRATT (CONT'D)
That's Herold.

DAVID HEROLD we recall from the shadows outside the Secretary of State's house (page 4).

JOHN SURRATT (CONT'D)
What should we call you?

BOOTH
(thinks)
Wilkes.

HEROLD

I can't believe it's him.

JOHN SURRATT

You'll be performing in Albany
next month, yes?

(Booth nods)

You'll receive a shipment of
quinine on closing night. You need
only take the case as far as
Maryland. If anyone asks, you're
visiting family. Our man in
Baltimore will relieve you.

BOOTH

How will I find this man in-

JOHN SURRATT

You're the most famous man in
America, Mr. Wilkes. He'll find
you. Are you armed?

Booth shakes his head. John Surratt produces a small
Derringer and offers it to him. Booth looks at it -
almost puzzled. He refuses it. Surratt is amused.

JOHN SURRATT (CONT'D)

A pacifist...

After considering this for the first time, Booth nods.

JOHN SURRATT (CONT'D)

To the cause, Mr. Wilkes.

BOOTH

To the cause.

He leaves. THE SOUND OF APPLAUSE O.S. brings us to:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Booth's dressing room in Albany is filled with farewell
flowers, bottles of champagne, tokens of affection - all
with notes from adoring fans, photos of adoring women.

He comes in as King Richard, exhausted and covered in
blood - some of it stage and some of it real. He reads
the note on a bottle of whiskey, then opens it. He
notices in the mirror a very real cut on his face.

With blood still trickling from his gut, he wipes the cut
on his face clean before taking a slab of raw beef from a
waiting tray. He slaps the meat on the open wound and
sits - toasting a tintype of his father Junius Sr. It
seems we will never be rid of the old man's ghost.

Then what he sees reflected in the mirror makes him turn.

Amongst the flowers and gifts sits a simple leather
travel case. On the handle is a note. It reads simply:

Mr. Wilkes...

A voice startles him.

VOICE (O.S.)

"The young Mr. Booth is a
treasure. Full of genius. Fine
face and figure."

A stunned Booth turns to find Edwin in the doorway,
reading from the paper. Booth clears his raspy throat.

BOOTH

You never read notices, Ned.

EDWIN

I never read *mine*.

BOOTH

I'm sure you wouldn't have to look
as hard for one so glowing.

EDWIN

What do the critics know? The
people love you.

Booth stares at Edwin, waiting. Finally:

EDWIN (CONT'D)

It was a fine performance,
brother. Truly it was.

Booth is moved. He stands and the brothers embrace. Blood
spills to the floor at their feet. Both of them stand
back, realizing. Booth laughs and hands Edwin a rag to
clean himself up as he undoes his own kingly cloak to
reveal the leaking bladder.

BOOTH

I've ruined your suit.

EDWIN

I have others.

BOOTH

It's good to see you, brother.

Edwin hands him a small bundle of plain brown paper.
Curious, Booth opens it TO REVEAL:

A set of humble riding spurs. Booth is confused.

EDWIN

My first real performance... I was
touring with father. An actor
failed to appear and there was no
one to replace him. Someone said:
"Edwin knows the part. Let him
play it." Of course, father hated
the idea of his boys on the stage.

EDWIN (CONT'D)

He could have said no, I should have said no - but that would not have been good Shakespeare. For reasons I'll never understand he said:

(taking on Junius Sr.'s eyes)
"You had best prepare, then. This character is a rider," he said.
"You'll need a pair of spurs." And he gave me his to wear.

Booth looks down at the spurs, realizing. He is moved beyond words. Finally:

BOOTH

I am sure you made him proud.

EDWIN

I have no idea. When I came back to his dressing room, he was right where I had left him. He didn't ask me how it felt. He didn't say, "Well done." He just said: "Give me back my spurs."

Booth looks at the spurs again - they have new weight.

EDWIN (CONT'D)

I had hoped to be the heir to his crown. But seeing you up there tonight, I know that all the hard work in the world won't get me what God has given you. You are truly father's heir, John.

For the first time Booth genuinely lets his guard down, hearing words he never thought he would. He clears his throat again. This is not lost on Edwin.

BOOTH

I search the audience every night, looking for his face. For his approval. To hear it from you is the closest thing to-

EDWIN

I said you were his heir. I didn't say you were ready to wear those spurs.

Booth smiles, tossing the spurs on the table.

BOOTH

You're a bastard, Ned.

EDWIN

We both are, if you'll recall. And only one of us is fool enough to think fame will make him legitimate. It takes more than that.

BOOTH

Yes, yes. "Come back to New York, John. Train with the company, John. Learn to use your voice, John." Well you're wrong, Ned. I've done the work, God dammit. I'm as good an actor as you or-

EDWIN

You're not an actor. You're a star. A very bright, very popular star. Never confuse the two. Now, brother, please. Let me help you.

BOOTH

Like you helped father, Ned? Like you took care of him?

EDWIN

What happened to father was not my-

Booth rips the empty blood bladder from his belly and throws it to the floor.

BOOTH

YOU KILLED HIM, NED. YOU KILLED HIM. YOU ROBBED ME OF MY CHANCE TO KNOW HIM. YOU ROBBED ME OF HIS BLESSING.

Booth would take it back if he could. Edwin is stone.

EDWIN

Well now it's been said.

BOOTH

Edwin, I-

EDWIN

He was a dying man, John. Slowly destroying himself from the moment he became an actor. And when he'd finished all the whiskey on the riverboat home, he drank the Mississippi and it killed him. That was his doing, not mine.

BOOTH

You never should have let him go off on his own.

EDWIN

Maybe you're right... Maybe that's why I'm here now. Trying to save you from yourself. To keep history from repeating.

BOOTH

If I need saving, Ned, you're hardly the one qualified to do it.

EDWIN

John-

BOOTH

I appreciate your coming, Ned.
Give Mother my best.

Conversation's over. Edwin leaves. Only when he closes the door do we see the tears of anguish welling up in Booth's eyes. He turns away, only to be confronted with the case marked, "Mr. Wilkes." Booth contemplates it for some time, finally opening it to reveal:

Bottles of quinine. Row after precious row. Booth closes the case, backing away and picking up his drink...

EXT. RAILROAD PLATFORM - BALTIMORE - DAY

A BLACK PORTER piles Booth's luggage onto a cart. Booth, slightly nervous, studies his surroundings. Baltimore seems to have returned to normal. People go about their business, getting on and off the train. Perhaps he's home again. He breathes easy until the Porter tries to take the bag of quinine from his hand. Booth pulls it away.

BOOTH

I'll hold on to that.

Booth tips him handsomely. The Porter nods and leaves.

VOICE (O.S.)

You there.

An ashen Booth turns and comes face to face with A YOUNG UNION SOLDIER. MORE SOLDIERS search people at random.

FIRST SOLDIER

Are these your bags, sir?

BOOTH

Pardon?

FIRST SOLDIER

These bags here. Do they belong to you?

BOOTH

Why yes... In fact they do.

FIRST SOLDIER

If you don't mind, sir, we'll need to check them.

BOOTH

Check them? For what?

FIRST SOLDIER

Weapons, mostly.

BOOTH

Weapons?

FIRST SOLDIER

Confederate Secret Service has
been smuggling them by the ton.

BOOTH

(laughing)

You go right ahead, my good man.
Any weapons you find in those bags
are yours to keep.

Booth turns, but the Soldier stops him - pointing to the
suitcase in Booth's hand.

FIRST SOLDIER

That bag as well.

BOOTH

And just what army do you think I
could supply with this?

FIRST SOLDIER

I'll see it nonetheless.

Booth boldly fixes his handsome eyes on the Soldier.
Intense. Challenging.

BOOTH

These are my personal belongings.

FIRST SOLDIER

I'll have that bag.

And as the Soldier grabs for the handle:

SECOND SOLDIER (O.S.)

John Wilkes Booth.

Booth and the First Soldier turn. A SECOND SOLDIER is
pointing right at Booth, drawing the attention of every
single person on the platform.

SECOND SOLDIER (CONT'D)

You're John Wilkes Booth. The
actor.

People are moving in closer, surrounding. Everyone is
TALKING AT ONCE - pointing. Booth stays cool.

BOOTH

So it would seem.

FIRST SOLDIER

I was just explaining to Mr.
Booth, here, that we had to-

SECOND SOLDIER

You don't need to check him. It's
John Wilkes Booth, for God's sake.

(to Booth)

I saw you in *The Marble Heart*.
Fantastic show, I have to say.
Like nothing I've ever seen.

The First Soldier still has the bag by the handle.

SECOND SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Let it go, will you.

(to Booth)

He's always been a bit
overzealous.

But the First Soldier is staring hard at Booth,
undeterred. An OLDER WOMAN steps forward.

OLDER WOMAN

Mr. Booth, may I shake your hand?

The same hand holding the bag, you mean? Booth looks at
the First Soldier.

SECOND SOLDIER

Let the damn bag go.

But he won't. So Booth lets it go. He turns to the woman,
shaking her hand. Then another, then another. Booth is
shaking hands with his public, glancing over his shoulder
at the two soldiers arguing over his suitcase. The Second
Soldier is angrily poking a finger at the First Soldier's
chest. Milk it for all it's worth, then:

BOOTH

I would love to stay and meet with
you all, but the stage calls.

He tips his hat and turns as the Second Soldier walks off
in a rage. The First Soldier turns to walk off in another
direction - looking pretty browbeaten. He seems to have
forgotten he still has Booth's bag. Booth grabs it.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Your resilience is to be admired,
Private.

But still the Soldier hangs on. Booth glares now.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you, boy?

FIRST SOLDIER

(through his teeth)

I am a friend of Mr. Davis.

A shocked Booth instantly releases the bag. The Soldier
turns and vanishes into the crowd.

TIGHT ON BOOTH. Slowly, a smile creeps across his face. That was easy. And right here in Baltimore.

EXT. BALTIMORE STREETS - DAY

Booth is suddenly feeling very good again - having struck a blow for the cause and kept his oath to his mother. On top of this, Baltimore seems to have returned to normal. People recognize him, waving. He waves back. After a moment, our friend even has a spring in his step.

He passes a STREET MERCHANT selling fresh tomatoes from a hand-cart. Booth selects the ripest red tomato, smelling it, savoring. He flips a coin to the merchant and walks on, taking a bite from the tomato, relishing. But then:

Booth hears the sound of marching feet. He turns to find a heartbreaking sight.

A COLUMN OF CONFEDERATE PRISONERS, broken and weary, is marched toward the train station by a HANDFUL OF UNION GUARDS. The column of shuffling gray rags stretches on forever. Booth takes a handkerchief from his pocket and covers his nose and mouth - the stench unbearable.

Just then, he makes eye contact with a YOUNG CONFEDERATE PRISONER - the soldier's hollow eyes staring back at him.

Booth slowly extends his hand - holding out the half-eaten tomato. The prisoner takes it in his bound hands and devours it even as the SOLDIERS immediately around him try to snatch it away. As he watches them go:

BOOTH
It's not enough... It just isn't
enough...

EXT. STREET - WASHINGTON D.C. - SUNSET

Est. the nation's capital.

INT. GAUTIER'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Gautier's is an upscale restaurant in the middle of D.C. At this hour the place is all but empty. Booth sits at a secluded corner table with TWO TRASHY WOMEN - a bottle and three glasses in front of them. They are having a lavish meal and a wonderful time. He looks up to find:

Sam Arnold and Michael O'Laughlen. Booth smiles when he sees them, but he is met with dour expressions.

BOOTH
Ladies, if you'd be kind enough to
excuse us. But don't stray.

The Trashy Women stand, one kissing him as she does.

TRASHY WOMAN

Straying's what we do best,
Cassius.

They slink off. Booth pours whiskey for his friends. Michael and Sam look at one another before sitting. Booth studies their drab clothes and worn faces. They've seen a lot since Baltimore - or perhaps not enough.

They sit in silence. Michael reaches for his whiskey but draws back his hand when Sam clears his throat.

SAM

Looks like the road's risin' to
meet you... Cassius.
(stifles a cough)
We haven't fared as well. All we
got from the army was sick.

MICHAEL

Sam's only just got his discharge.
Me, I been home for more than-

SAM

What is it you called us here for,
John? Absolution? You had your
reasons for not taking up the
cause.

MICHAEL

Sam.

SAM

Shut up.
(to Booth)
Maybe you figured you'd buy back
your conscience. Couple train
tickets, few drinks, some whorin' -
it'll be like we was kids again.
And you can go back to your life
with a clear head. Forget you'sa
coward like you forgot you'sa bast-

Booth leaps up and punches Sam in the mouth. Sam staggers to his feet. Michael throws himself between them.

MICHAEL

FOR GOD SAKE WE'RE ALL FRIENDS
HERE.

(to Booth)

He's just mad, John. So was I for
a time. The sooner he says his
peace the sooner it's behind us.

Reluctantly, Booth nods and steps back. The whole bar is looking - even the Trashy Women. He stares at every nosey patron, one-by-one, until they look away from his intense gaze. Finally, the friends sit. Booth takes a drink.

BOOTH

I was hoping to see men with a little more faith in the cause.

SAM

Now see here-

BOOTH

You spoke your peace, Sam Arnold, and now I speak mine. I'm not here to beg forgiveness, nor to give you a God damn thing. Not even a free drink. I want to offer you proud sons of Maryland another chance to prove yourself worthy. But you'll earn it.

(leaning back in his chair)
Truth is, Sam, I found my way to serve. In fact some of our brothers are being saved right now with medicine I delivered.

MICHAEL

You mean to say...

BOOTH

I mean to say I've been working with some friends of Mr. Davis.

SAM

(looking around nervously)
You best save talk like that for when you're safely in the South.

BOOTH

(raising his voice)
This *is* the South. If Lincoln hadn't stolen our home we'd be behind Confederate lines right now.

He dares the patrons with his eyes. They mind their business. Only then does he lower his voice.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

They've taken me at my word that you're good men, despite your less than glorious records. They've agreed to let me bring you in.

MICHAEL

In on what, Johnny?

BOOTH

On whatever we desire. Whatever we can do to hurt the Union most and avenge our beloved Maryland. Whatever is born at this table between the three of us... and the bottom of that bottle.

Booth raises his glass, waiting. Sam takes a glass, then Michael. After a pause, they TOAST and pound the glasses dry. Then, with his tattooed hand, Booth pours another.

JOHN SURRATT (V.O.)
Kidnap the president?

EXT. STREETS OF WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

Booth, Sam and Michael are walking with John Surratt - Booth's first contact as a "friend of Mr. Davis."

There is no effort made to hide the fact that the four conspirators are walking among the shadows and marble pillars that make up the streets of a modern Rome. It is a moment lifted directly from *Julius Caesar*.

BOOTH
We'll need help, of course.

JOHN SURRATT
You can't just *kidnap* the
President of the United States.

Booth leans in, ever the seducer.

BOOTH
You only say that because no one
ever has.

JOHN SURRATT
He's a *civilian*, John.

BOOTH
He stopped being a civilian when
he approved the assassination of
Jefferson Davis and the
Confederate Cabinet.

SAM
He's lucky we're not talking about
the same for him.

JOHN SURRATT
Look, as a statement it's grand, I
admit. But what purpose would it
serve?

BOOTH
Prisoners.

JOHN SURRATT
Prisoners?

SAM
The Union Army is holding thirty-
five thousand Confederate
prisoners - officers and enlisted
men.

BOOTH

Men who are desperately needed in the field.

MICHAEL

Men they have refused to exchange for their own.

BOOTH

But the Union would give back every prisoner they have in exchange for Lincoln.

Surratt starts to see the light. He nods.

BOOTH

With this one act we could change the course of the entire war.

JOHN SURRATT

In one... dramatic gesture.

BOOTH

Well... The play's the thing.

John Surratt smiles. "The balls on this guy."

JOHN SURRATT

I'll take this to Turner for his blessing.

BOOTH

I already have. He's behind it all the way. He'll even fund it.

John Surratt is surprised, maybe a bit offended that Booth has gone around him. As he is about to respond:

MICHAEL

Sssst. Blue.

Everyone turns to see a HANDFUL OF UNION SOLDIERS headed their way. Booth and his cohorts try to look casual, at the same time trying not to speak. Booth notices John Surratt dipping a hand into his pocket. Then Sam. We hear the click as each cocks the pistol he is hiding there.

Tense moment as the Union Soldiers pass them, sizing them up. Just as we think they might stop to ask questions:

BOOTH

At which point he said to me, "Do you know what an abolitionist sees when he looks to the South?" To which I replied... "Smoke?"

Booth laughs loudly at his own joke. The others catch on and do the same. Booth turns to the soldiers and smiles the most charming of smiles. Then he salutes.

The soldiers all nod and salute back, walking on. Sam and John Surratt de-cock their guns. The conspiracy resumes.

JOHN SURRATT

So if Turner approves of your plan, what do you need from me?

SAM

Safe passage across the Potomac.

MICHAEL

And a guide to Richmond. Someone who knows the back country.

JOHN SURRATT

That'll be Herold and Atzerodt. Anything else?

BOOTH

Someone on the inside. Someone who knows where Lincoln will be at any given time.

John Surratt thinks about this. Tough. Then he laughs.

JOHN SURRATT

You'll have an easier time getting that than I.

(Booth is confused)

You live in the National Hotel. Half of Washington society is living there. Along with their sons, their wives... and their daughters.

INT. NATIONAL HOTEL - LOUNGE - DAY

A splendid lounge filled with WELL-HEELED D.C. SOCIETY CROWD enjoying afternoon tea. Booth, Sam and Michael stand in the doorway. Of course, most people recognize Booth right away. He finds A GAGGLE OF YOUNG LADIES at a table in the corner. He smiles. Sam smooths out his hair and starts toward the ladies but Booth grabs his arm.

BOOTH

To catch a bird, Sam... one must become a tree.

Booth gestures to a table in the opposite corner of the lounge. He moves to it and sits with his back to the women. Sam and Michael reluctantly join him.

MICHAEL

They're not even looking this way.

BOOTH

I assure you, Michael. They most certainly are.

Then we realize that Booth is seated facing a mirror. Anyone in the room can see his reflection.

It takes less than a second before the talking at the ladies' table stops and all of their heads turn. Sam and Michael are looking down the barrel at six young ladies looking at Booth's back. Booth smiles.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Excellent, wretch...

They stand and approach. The ladies are nervous, giggling, a little breathless. Booth arrives at their table with a charming smile and piercing stare.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Good afternoon, ladies.

They all answer in unison. "Good afternoon."

BOOTH (CONT'D)
My friends and I were wondering if
we might join you.

A low laugh rises from the table. Booth extends a hand.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
John Wilkes Booth.

We scan the faces of the lovely, anonymous ladies as Booth shakes their hands, one by one. We barely hear their names until he reaches the last young lady.

LUCY HALE - early twenties - is by far the plainest of the lot and perhaps the least impressed.

LUCY
Your name again, sir?

LUCY'S FRIEND
Why Lucy, don't you know who this
is?

Lucy shakes her head. No idea. Her friends all laugh. Even Sam and Michael enjoy it. Booth finds it refreshing.

LUCY'S FRIEND (CONT'D)
It's John Wilkes Booth, for God
sake. The actor.

Lucy shakes her head. Doesn't ring a bell. Clearly doesn't mean she doesn't find him attractive, though.

LUCY
I've heard of an Edwin Booth. Any
relation?

BOOTH
(beat/smiling)
A distant one.

LUCY
You must excuse me. I'm not one
for the theater.

She extends a hand. He takes it with a smile.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Lucy Hale.

BOOTH
I've heard of a Senator Hale...
Any relation?

Her friends laugh. Lucy looks at Booth's hand, still holding hers. She smiles.

EXT. NATIONAL HOTEL - LATER

Outside looking in. The ladies are having a wonderful time with Sam and Michael - laughing and drinking tea. But Booth and Lucy are absent from the scene.

ANGLE ON: Booth and Lucy come down the steps of the National Hotel. Neither one notices as they pass A FILTHY BEGGAR - eyes averted and his hand out. Remember this.

Booth turns to Lucy. The two exchange a wordless, coy smile. Just as the real seduction is about to begin, Booth laughs, unable to keep up the act.

BOOTH
You really don't know who I am?

She shakes her head. Really, no.

LUCY
But I have the afternoon to learn.

Pause. Booth smiles, extending an arm. Lucy takes it and they turn to walk off.

ANGLE ON: The window of the National Hotel. Sam and Michael watch Booth and Lucy depart. They share a smile.

EXT. PARK - OPPOSITE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Lucy and Booth walk along a garden path, talking and smiling. Comfortable. If Booth has a mission here, he seems to have put it aside. They come to a bench and sit.

The White House looms in the background.

LUCY
How much longer will you be in Washington?

BOOTH
I have some business to finish here. Then I shall be heading back to Richmond.

LUCY
(suddenly uneasy)
Richmond...

BOOTH

Yes?

LUCY

It's just that... Well, Richmond is the Confederate Capital.

BOOTH

To a Confederate, perhaps.

LUCY

And what is Richmond to you?

BOOTH

Something like the home I always wanted. A place where I am welcome. And I suppose you could say my star was born there.

As Booth looks into the past we realize this is no line.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Have you ever been to Richmond?

(she shakes her head)

Ah, but you must. Just to breathe the air is delicious. Perhaps you'll visit me there someday.

LUCY

(blushing)

Perhaps... After the war.

Booth's smile falters. He glances at the White House.

BOOTH

Yes... perhaps then.

Lucy smiles. She looks down at Booth's soft hands and takes them gently, covering the *J.W.B.*

EXT. NATIONAL HOTEL - SIDEWALK - DAY

Booth and Lucy return to the hotel, arm in arm. He says something we cannot hear and she laughs.

LUCY

I am sorry if I offended you earlier. Not knowing who you were.

BOOTH

To be perfectly honest it was refreshing. You have no idea how rare a fruit is anonymity to a man in my line.

LUCY

You forget I am a Senator's daughter.

Pause. Booth's smile fades as it dawns on him.

BOOTH
Yes... I suppose I had.

She smiles, but Booth seems guilty about what he had intended to do. He takes a deep breath.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Miss Hale... I must confess to
you... I- Paine?

Lucy is confused. Booth steps past her and addresses the beggar on the hotel steps. The one we passed earlier. He averts his eyes, realizing Booth is talking to him.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Paine.

BEGGAR
Don't know no Paine. Name's
Powell.

BOOTH
You don't recognize me, do you?

The beggar looks up and we see through the filth that it is indeed Lewis Paine - the fan from outside the theater in Richmond years ago. His eyes widen.

PAINE
Mr... Booth...

BOOTH
You've been to war, Paine.

Paine nods, his haunted eyes reflecting the horror of it all. Booth extends a hand and helps the poor bastard to his feet - Paine suddenly towering.

PAINE
You... remember me?

BOOTH
Miss Hale, I do beg your pardon.
This man is a friend. I should
help him.

Paine is as shocked to hear this as Lucy.

LUCY
Of course. I understand.

BOOTH
May I call on you?

LUCY
Of course.

BOOTH
I'll say good-day, then.
(to Paine)
You look starved, man.

Paine nods. Booth takes him by the arm and walks, leaving Lucy to watch them go. She is moved by the entire scene.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Booth looks at Paine with an expression of pure pity. All around the restaurant OTHER PEOPLE are looking, too - the most famous man in America feeding a filthy beggar. This is not lost on Paine as he shovels food into his mouth.

PAINE
Hadn't seen much action a'tall
before Gettysburg. Got myself shot
in the wrist and captured early
on.

BOOTH
You were a prisoner, then. Tell
me. Are the camps as terrible as
they say?

PAINE
Didn't see the camps much. They
put me to work in the infirmary
and that was bad enough. Worst I
seen was the itch - a fearsome lot
of lice in the field. Man's hands
would swell up three times over
and turn yellow - the skin
cracking. We'd have to tie men
down to keep them from scratching
flesh from bone.

BOOTH
God in heaven.

PAINE
A nurse took kind to me and helped
me escape. From there I linked up
with Mosby's Cavalry in Virginia.

BOOTH
Mosby. You served with *Mosby*, man?

PAINE
Well... a lotta men did.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
But how did you end up here?

PAINE
They's gonna shoot two Yankee
prisoners in Richmond without more
cause than the uniform.

PAINÉ (CONT'D)
I took pity like that nurse pitied
me. I helped them escape.

BOOTH
Not an ounce of spite or
vengeance.

PAINÉ
Yeah, well... Virginia was plenty
spiteful after that.

BOOTH
Well you're safe with me, Paine.
I'm going to take care of you from
now on.

Long pause. Deeply moved, Paine struggles for words.

BOOTH
I'll be straight with you, Paine.
The meal isn't free.

Paine seems to know just what this means. He nods.

INT. SURRATT HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Herold, Atzerodt, Sam, Michael, Booth and John Surratt
huddle in the tiny kitchen. Just before Sam closes the
door we see Paine sitting in the other room, waiting.

SAM
We're not casting some God damn
summer stock, John.

BOOTH
Paine served. More importantly, he
was a prisoner. Isn't that what
this is all about, Sam? I tell
you, it's a sign. It would be bad
luck to turn him out.

SAM
Bad lu- He swore the Union oath,
for Christ's sake.

BOOTH
So did Michael.

MICHAEL
Easy enough to fake, I'll say
that.

SAM
Shut up.
(to Booth)
We're talking about espionage.
Sedition.
(to John Surratt)
I'm alright with you, but the rest
of this mob is shaping up to be a
comedy.

He means Atzerodt and Herold.

BOOTH

You wanted a guide to Richmond, yes? Well, Mr. Herold here knows the back country well as anyone. And Mr. Atzerodt is your river-man. They are vital to our plan's success.

All eyes look at Atzerodt and Herold - mouth breathers both. Atzerodt is taking a huge pull from a bottle of rye. He burps, drunk. Then there is David Herold.

SAM

Herold, go fetch me a pail of steam. Careful not to spill any.

Herold nods and runs out of the kitchen. Idiot.

SAM (CONT'D)

Vital, you say.

BOOTH

Sam-

SAM

John, for Christ sake. Give me some time to find men we can-

JOHN SURRATT

There is no time. They'll be exchanging prisoners soon.

Stunning news.

BOOTH

Turner's confirmed it. General Grant has agreed to exchange three thousand prisoners a month.

ATZERODT

Why don't we kill him then?

Everyone looks at the normally silent Atzerodt, confused.

ATZERODT (CONT'D)

The President. It would be so much simpler just to kill him.

Long pause. Everyone looks at this animal, dumbfounded.

SAM

This is your accomplice. For *kidnapping the President*.

BOOTH

Sam, listen-

SAM

No, you listen, John. If there's going to be an exchange there's no point to any of this. If you truly want to make a difference you should go back to smuggling medicine for men who need it.

BOOTH

If Grant has his way he'll be putting thousands of Blue-Coats back in the fight. *We can't let that happen.* By kidnapping Lincoln we can rebuild the army of Virginia in exchange *for just one man.* Don't you see... Our mission is more urgent than ever.

Sam looks to Surratt who has to agree. Sam calms some.

SAM

It would help if we had a plan, John. It's hard enough even knowing where the President is going to be.

JOHN SURRATT

He makes a point, John. What about your Senator's daughter?

BOOTH

That will take some time, finesse.

SAM

Jesus Christ. To think the whole of this plan hinges on this one using head above heart.

BOOTH

My heart was taken out long ago, Sam. Have no fear... I am married to the cause.

INT. NATIONAL HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

A deeply troubled Booth walks down the hallway reading the front page of a newspaper. The headline:

UNION TROOPS BURN ATLANTA

Booth halts suddenly when he finds the door to his room already open. He can hear someone inside. We are shocked when he reaches into his coat and produces a small Derringer pistol. He cocks it and puts it back in his pocket - keeping a hand on it. Then he opens the door.

INT. NATIONAL HOTEL - BOOTH'S ROOM - NIGHT

A woman sits at his desk, sifting through his papers.

BOOTH

What is the meaning of th-?

The woman turns. Booth's eyes widen. ASIA, Booth's sister, turns, holding a handful of letters. On the desk behind her are more of the same along with tintype portraits of several women.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Asia. What are you doing here?

ASIA

Johnny, I-

TIGHT ON: The sound of the gun being de-cocked before Booth takes his hand out of his pocket.

BOOTH

I thought you were in New York.

He is not at all outraged. Just embarrassed. He takes the letters from her, trying to put them in some order as:

ASIA

I was in Baltimore to collect Mother. I thought I'd come and vis-

BOOTH

Collect Mother?

ASIA

Maryland just isn't safe. The family thought it best that she move to New York. At least until the Union has...

BOOTH

Yes, yes. A foregone conclusion. We grow the cotton but they make the steel.

ASIA

John... What's happening here? Who are all these women?

BOOTH

Those are personal.

ASIA

How personal can they be? You seem to be telling half a dozen women the same thing.

BOOTH

It's how I feel. For all of them.

ASIA

But this girl in Boston... She can't be more than sixteen.

BOOTH

And how old was Juliet, eh? Love
is never that important, never
that real again.

Asia takes a hold of him, touching his cheek, pitying.
Perhaps the woman closest to truly understanding him.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

It's how I feel, Asia. Every word
of it is true. It's just... It's
just that there's so much love to
give... No one alone can take
enough.

ASIA

Take enough? Or give enough?
(off Booth's reaction)
We're all Father's children.

BOOTH

I haven't lied to any of them.

ASIA

John, when will you realize... No
matter what they say, they don't
love you. Not that way.

BOOTH

And just how should they love me?
Like Ned? Like Father?

ASIA

I love you, John. I have always
loved you without question. I only
wish it were enough.

Booth smiles bitterly, they embrace. After a moment.

ASIA

Mother has been worried sick about
you. She keeps having dreams.

BOOTH

(laughs)

Don't tell me Mother has fallen
for that old gypsy fortune, too.

ASIA (CONT'D)

And your voice sounds terrible.

BOOTH

I'm just a little ill.

ASIA

No one has heard from you in
weeks. You haven't been
performing... It was as if...
Johnny, whatever it is you're
doing, you can tell me.

Long pause. Embracing, they cannot see one another's faces. Booth is dying to confess to his sister. Finally.

BOOTH

Asia, I've become... involved... I-

But then he has a thought. He pulls himself free of Asia so he can see her face.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Edwin sent you. Didn't he?

ASIA

It's not what you think, John.

BOOTH

That sonofabitch knew I would never come back for him so he used you-

ASIA

He wants you to perform with him-

BOOTH

Yes. In his little menagerie-

ASIA

DAMMIT, JOHN, just listen. He wants to perform *with* you. And Junius. A benefit performance to raise money for a statue of Shakespeare in Central Park.

BOOTH

And he couldn't ask me himself?

ASIA

He's afraid of you, John.

Booth laughs.

ASIA (CONT'D)

He's trained the whole of his life to get where he is. But you have a gift. A God-given power over people. Edwin knows he might very well be swept aside by it. Even still, he is willing to share the stage with you.

Booth is guarded, but moved. Asia can see that she is getting to him.

ASIA (CONT'D)

One night only. Edwin agrees that we can all survive that.

Long pause. Asia's pleading eyes soften him.

BOOTH
What's the play?

EXT. WINTER GARDEN THEATRE - NIGHT

JULIUS CAESAR

The name emblazoned across a poster. COME DOWN ON:

STARRING THE BROTHERS BOOTH - ONE NIGHT ONLY

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: The Winter Garden Theatre - its amazing, vintage 19th century facade nestled right in the heart of Manhattan. It is swarming with THEATERGOERS.

We pass through the crowd to find a newsstand - ignored for the moment. Only we make note of the headlines:

GEN. SHERMAN PRESSES MARCH TO THE SEA

SOUTH IN FLAMES

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

The same headline is laid out on the dressing room table.

Edwin and Junius Jr. sit shoulder to shoulder putting on make-up in front of their mirrors. They share concerned glances as Booth paces the floor clenching a prop dagger in his fist. They are all dressed in togas.

A tintype of Junius Booth, Sr. presides.

BOOTH
Imagine if it were the other way around. Imagine New York burned to the ground. Then Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Albany, Buffalo, hell even Baltimore. Ashes. Just imagine it. And to raise your voice in protest is a crime to be punished without charges or trial. Whatever an abolitionist sees when he looks to the South, he certainly won't see that.

It is clear he is aiming this at Edwin.

EDWIN
I can only speak for myself, John. And no matter which way I look I see injustice. Maybe one man could hope to change that - one way or the other. But not me. Why are you talking to me as if I can?

BOOTH
Because you voted for that sonofabitch.

JUNIUS JR.
So did I. And I'd do it again,
gladly.

Pause. Booth is shocked.

BOOTH
Et Tu, Junius? Don't you even care
what he's done to our home?

JUNIUS JR.
As far as I am concerned, he saved
Maryland from the torch. I say let
Lincoln do what he will to end the
war swiftly.

BOOTH
Oh, it's going to end, brother.
Just not the way you would hope.

Edwin stands now and turns to face Booth. Eyes lock.

EDWIN
And suppose the South does win,
John. Will you feel as though
you've beaten us somehow?

This infuriates Booth. He half raises the dagger in his
fist. Edwin just looks at it, unfazed. The two brothers
consider one another and the dagger as a lifetime of
unresolved anger passes between the two.

JUNIUS JR.
I'd much rather be talking about
Julius Caesar.

BOOTH
We are, Junius. We are.

CLOSE ON: A dagger stabs into a white toga, blood gushes.
The sound of a man screaming in agony takes us to:

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

Another dagger strikes, then another.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Junius Jr. among a group of
conspirators stabbing one after the other. Caesar gasps.
He staggers and falls in the arms of Edwin's Brutus.

Edwin looks at Caesar with a mixture of torment and
indifference, not unlike the portrait of his father,
before he too stabs Caesar, bringing another anguished
cry and gasps from the audience.

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATRE - BALCONY - NIGHT

Mary Ann Booth, sitting beside Asia, watches - thrilled
and horrified. She clutches Asia's hand.

Asia is not as taken with the play. She has other things on her mind. From where she sits she can see Booth peering out from behind the curtains offstage.

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATRE - OFFSTAGE - NIGHT

Booth watches his brothers murdering the tyrant Caesar with a mixture of emotions. Then he turns to watch the audience - scanning row after row of faces transfixed on the action. Much to his shock, he finds a familiar face in the front row.

Turner, a friend of Mr. Davis and a lover of theater, is the only one not looking at the action. He is looking right at Booth. Booth steps back into the shadows.

PLEBEIAN (V.O.)

Peace. Let us hear what Antony has to say.

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATRE - LATER

Staged SHOUTING from the PLEBEIANS.

BOOTH (O.S.)

My gentle Romans.

SECOND PLEBEIAN

PEACE. LET US HEAR HIM.

CLOSE ON Booth as he takes the stage. Whole sections of the audience applaud him just for entering. This is not lost on his brothers in the wings. Edwin especially. Booth lets the applause die down, taking a deep breath - Antony in his moment. A star in his element. Finally:

BOOTH

Friends, Romans, countrymen, LEND
ME YOUR EARS...

USHER (O.S.)

FIRE.

A COMMOTION in the audience - not part of the show.

BOOTH

I... I come to bury Caesar, not to
praise him.

USHER

FIRE. FIRE.

A woman SCREAMS O.S. People in the audience are getting up. Panic is spreading. Turner's seat is empty.

Booth sees Edwin in the wings, waving. "Do something." Booth freezes. He looks at the audience, searching for words. He is startled when Edwin appears beside him.

EDWIN
PLEASE. EVERYONE REMAIN CALM, I
BEG OF YOU.

Everyone calms immediately under Edwin's firm command.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
(to the usher)
Where exactly is the fire?

USHER
In... in the LeFarge Hotel.

EDWIN
Has a fire crew been called?

USHER
Y... yes, they're already here.
They were nearby. Luckily.

EDWIN
Yes, that is fortunate.

A small titter from the crowd, but they are not entirely
at ease. Booth just stands there, lost.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
Ladies and gentlemen, you are as
safe here as you would be outside
those doors. I would urge you to
take your seats for the moment.
(to the usher)
Go and check on the progress of
the crews for us, will you?

The usher runs out. Some people are sitting back down.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
Right. I'd seriously be surprised
if the ashes got out of the lobby.
Now please be calm, everyone. This
kind of thing happens all the time
during such incendiary theater.

A LAUGH from the crowd - at ease now. The only one not
amused is Booth - robbed of his moment. CLOSE ON his
angry face and over this:

SOLDIER (V.O.)
BOOTH... WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE.
COME ON OUT.

EXT. DREAM SEQUENCE - VARIOUS

A nightmare. The cuts fast and jarring. Mere glimpses of:

Booth riding like Hell in the dark of night on a black horse - chased/A doctor cutting the boot from Booth's terribly swollen and discolored leg/Booth's face twisted in unspeakable agony/Booth standing by a river, haggard and sweating, looking up at three mysterious horsemen in silhouette/A tobacco barn in flames.

Then Booth on stage as the crippled King Richard...

BOOTH
My conscience hath a thousand
several tongues,
And every tongue condemns me...
for a villain.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Mary Ann Booth sits upright in bed with a gasp, a hand to her breast. She looks around the room as the voice of her son still echoes.

MARY ANN
Johnny...

INT. TRAIN - DAY

TIGHT ON BOOTH. Expressionless. Demoralized. Bitter. He reads a newspaper, overlooking a review, focusing on:

CONFEDERATE ARSON

COORDINATED EFFORT BURNS 13 NEW YORK HOTELS

He looks out the window as a mass of RAGGED CONFEDERATE PRISONERS are marched in the opposite direction alongside the tracks. His eyes well with anger, then fade again.

Over this we hear a voice. A HIGH VOICE for a man.
"Ringing and somewhat shrill."

VOICE (V.O.)
While the inaugural address was
being delivered from this place -
devoted altogether to saving the
Union without war...

EXT. STREETS OF D.C. - DAY

TITLE: LINCOLN'S SECOND INAUGURAL - MARCH 4, 1865

It is a gray, drizzly day. Nevertheless, D.C. is decked out for the occasion. People dart around the streets, flags are flying, the atmosphere resplendent.

And while Lincoln speaks of the North and South, he might just as well be speaking about himself and Booth.

LINCOLN (V.O.)
Insurgent agents were in the city
seeking to destroy it without war.

EXT. U.S. SENATE - DAY

TIGHT ON BOOTH - an insurgent himself. He is standing at a high vantage - perhaps thirty feet above the crowd and behind Lincoln's podium. He is not really listening.

LINCOLN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Seeking to dissolve the Union and
divide effects by negotiation.

Lincoln's gestures seem to coincide with the voice speaking, but the shrill voice does not at all coincide with our common misconception of the Great Emancipator.

LINCOLN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Both parties deprecated war but
one of them would make war rather
than let the nation survive, and
the other would accept war rather
than let it perish.

Bored, unimpressed, Booth holds out a program, skimming it. Finally he absently puts it in his coat pocket.

ANGLE ON: Booth's "bad hand" as it finds something in his pocket he forgot he had.

LINCOLN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Neither party expected for the war
the magnitude or the duration
which it has already attained.
Neither anticipated the cause of
the conflict might cease with, or
even before, the conflict itself
should cease.

Booth looks down to find the butt of his pistol peeking out at him. He pulls his hand out, looking to see if anyone around him noticed. All eyes are fixed on Lincoln.

LINCOLN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Each looked for an easier triumph,
and a result less fundamental and
astounding.

ANGLE ON: The gray, drizzling clouds begin to part.

LINCOLN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Both read the same Bible and pray
to the same God; and each invokes
his aid against the other.

Lincoln's voice fades away now. Booth slips deep into his own thoughts. His face trembles slightly. Then something catches his eye in the crowd.

ANGLE ON: Lucy Hale. She is looking right at Booth, smiling warmly. He manages at last to smile back - feeling a little guilty? Lincoln's voice returns.

LINCOLN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 The prayers of both could not be
 answered. That of neither has been
 answered fully. And the war came.

Suddenly, SUNLIGHT BREAKS THROUGH THE CLOUD-COVER AND
 BATHES LINCOLN IN A HOLY LIGHT. The crowd watches, in
 awe. Even Booth is moved by the miraculous image. He
 stares agape - mesmerized by this moment in history.

LINCOLN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 With malice toward none, with
 charity for all, with firmness in
 the right, as God gives us to see
 the right, let us strive on to
 finish the war we are in...

TIGHT ON BOOTH. Does the sun anoint Lincoln or show Booth
 the way? Who knows, but everyone saw it happen that day.

CLOSE UP ON: Lucy in the crowd, also struck by the
 surreal moment. She turns again to see Booth. To see if
 he saw it, too. But he is gone.

INT. INAUGURAL BALL - NIGHT

The heart of the lion's den. Booth is surrounded by
 Lincoln's strongest supporters. All around we hear
 praises for Booth's nemesis. Lucy and Booth, along with
 hundreds of others, are dancing in a huge circle -
 reminiscent of the much smaller, happier gathering in
 Richmond so long ago. Here the whirlpool of dancers is
 ominous - black from the formal attire.

LUCY
 I didn't think you'd accept my
 invitation... Being from Maryland.

BOOTH
 I can pay no greater compliment
 than my presence and good manner.

LUCY
 There is hope for all mankind.

She smiles, but Booth seems distracted - uncomfortable.
 Lucy senses it but reads the reason incorrectly. People
 all around them are watching, whispering, even pointing.

LUCY (CONT'D)
 There's nowhere you can hide, is
 there?

Booth snaps out of his thoughts, realizing what she
 means. He shakes his head. Lucy tries to make small talk.

LUCY (CONT'D)
 Did you see the light today?

BOOTH

I did indeed.

LUCY

And what did you take it to mean?

BOOTH

If you think you can explain it, I would be obliged.

LUCY

I think it meant the war will be over. Very soon. And the country will be... cleansed somehow.

As Booth ponders this darkly:

VOICE (O.S.)

Lucy.

She and Booth turn to see A HEAVYSET, BEARDED MAN AND HIS ESCORT. The man is giving Booth the once over.

HEAVYSET MAN

Are we still going to the theater on Sunday? Father will be there.

This is awkward for Lucy. The man is clearly jealous.

LUCY

I... I may have another engagement.

The Heavyset Man looks at Booth again. "Who's this guy?"

LUCY (CONT'D)

I beg your pardon. John, this is Robert Lincoln.

BOOTH

Ah. The President's boy.

LUCY

Robert, this is John Wilkes Booth.

ROBERT LINCOLN

Ah... the "actor."

Robert Lincoln steers his dancing partner away - pissed. Booth smiles until an idea hits him and his face darkens.

BOOTH

(to himself, realizing)
The theater... My God, the Ford's.

LUCY

Pay no attention to him. He's just-

BOOTH

I understand. You're a woman of substance. Whereas I am an actor. Common as cats to a man like him.

LUCY

You're anything but common, John.

Booth looks at her, realizing the poor girl is deeply smitten. He feels horrible suddenly.

BOOTH

Lucy... I feel I've been... irresponsible.

LUCY

Irresponsible?

BOOTH

With you. I've put you in a most awkward situation and I-

Again she misunderstands - referring to the swirling, gossiping crowd dancing around them:

LUCY

I don't mind them staring. Truly.

As soon as she says it, she becomes uncomfortable. She has nowhere to set her eyes.

BOOTH

Look at me. Only at me.

And Lucy does. Their eyes lock. It is difficult at first, but it becomes easier. Soon enough it is comfortable despite the intensity of Booth's stare. Finally it is effortless. Booth smiles - a genuine smile. He whispers in her ear and she laughs.

Just then, the music picks up - FASTER, LOUDER, LOOSER. Booth and Lucy step up and dance away from us, surging into the crowd of those infinitely less passionate.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

No sound. Only QUIET, EERIE MUSIC.

From a distance, we see PRESIDENT AND MARY TODD LINCOLN getting into a covered carriage. Before we can get a good look at them, they are off, whipping past us and we:

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - STORE ROOM - NIGHT

TWO STAGE HANDS dust off the President's old and well-worn red velvet chair before hauling it up some stairs.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - NIGHT

People are lined up for the evening's performance. In the crowd we spy John Surratt, trying to act casual.

Lewis Paine passes - hiding his face with a wide-brimmed hat. He and John Surratt do not acknowledge one another.

A moment later, Sam Arnold appears with a ticket for the show. Michael O'Laughlen and David Herold fall into step with him.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - BALCONY - NIGHT

Booth and Paine are taking their seats in the balcony. They lean out as far as they dare, looking over at:

RAPID PAN TO: The empty Presidential box to the left - the red velvet chair and a rocker inside.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - NIGHT

The White House carriage pulls up in front of Ford's.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

A STAGE HAND comes in and starts to turn the gas valves.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

The house lights fade. Foot lights come up and bring the red curtain into warm relief. Then the curtain parts.

ANGLE ON: An anxious Sam Arnold hastily takes the only empty seat in the front row. The audience APPLAUDS. All eyes are on the stage, but Sam is looking up at:

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - PRESIDENTIAL BOX - NIGHT

The box is largely in shadow, but we can make out Lincoln helping his wife to her seat before taking his.

PAN OVER to the balcony. Booth and Paine are gone.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

John Surratt steers a small stage coach through a back alley. He takes out a pocket watch and checks the time.

He hops down and moves to a door marked STAGE. He taps gently. The door opens. Before we can see who opens it:

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER - NIGHT

George Atzerodt stands on the bank of the murky, mirror-flat river with three longboats, checking his watch.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

The Stage Hand is still minding the gas valves that control the house lights when suddenly:

David Herold attacks him from behind, beating the Stage Hand to the ground. Michael O'Laughlen appears. He has to restrain the savage Herold, reminding him of their job.

Leaving the unconscious Stage Hand, each man takes his place by a row of gas valves. Herold lights a lantern even though the room is well lit. Michael takes out a pocket watch and checks the time.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - FRONT ROW - NIGHT

Sam Arnold also checks the time.

ANGLE ON: PLAYERS take the stage - players we recognize from the opening scene performing *Our American Cousin*.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Michael keeps his eye on his watch, raising a hand to an anxious David Herold. When Michael's hand drops, they both start cranking down gas valves.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

The players on stage break character as the lights dim unexpectedly. Confusion in the audience as the theater blackens to near pitch.

ANGLE ON: Sam has a hand over his eyes, getting them ready for total darkness. He produces a small Derringer. He SCREAMS something we cannot hear, raises the gun in the air and FIRES.

IMMEDIATE PANIC. People stand and RUSH FOR THE EXITS - trampling one another in the DARKNESS AND CONFUSION.

Whatever side of history we may have heard about this night, we can now be certain we have departed from the popular notion. Sam heads for the stage.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - PRESIDENTIAL BOX - NIGHT

Booth and Paine BURST VIOLENTLY into the Presidential box, their dim lantern the only light in otherwise total darkness. Lincoln is seated just opposite the door in his red velvet chair, his face obscured as Booth looms.

With Lincoln and his wife are A UNION OFFICER and a YOUNG WOMAN. The Officer engages Paine. Paine draws a knife.

ANGLE ON: The Young Woman is spattered with the Officer's blood. She SCREAMS.

ANGLE ON: Lincoln's back is to us as Booth tries to get him to his feet. Mrs. Lincoln grabs him.

Paine BACK-HANDS HER TO THE FLOOR. Lincoln resists. Paine strikes him to the floor. Booth must restrain Paine from going further.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

Lincoln's limp body is draped over the railing - Booth and Paine holding him by the legs. Sam stretches to reach Lincoln's arms. Leaning over as far as they can, Booth and Paine let him go. Sam manages to break his fall, but not terribly well. Lincoln CRASHES to the stage.

Booth and Paine land on the stage an instant later. All three men drag Lincoln like a sack of grain toward the stage door. John Surratt beckons with a small lantern.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Booth, Paine and Sam throw Lincoln into the stage like so much laundry. John Surratt takes the reins.

EXT. ALLEY EXIT - NIGHT

The stage coach never stops as it reaches the street. David Herold and Michael O'Laughlen run from the shadows and catch up, jumping on.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER - NIGHT

Atzerodt stands as he sees the stage approaching. He rushes to get the boats ready.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER - VIRGINIA SIDE - SUNRISE

The conspirators beach their longboats on the bank with D.C. behind them. Lincoln - a black bag over his head now - is dragged, stumbling from the boat and:

EXT. VIRGINIA WOODS - DAY

A SIGN POST pointing, marked with one word: RICHMOND.

A mob of horses coming toward us like Hell. The conspirators and a bound Lincoln fly past us to:

EXT. RICHMOND, VIRGINIA - DAY

The conspirators trot to a halt on a hillside overlooking Richmond. They smile to one another, faces washed in the warmth of the setting sun.

SAM (V.O.)
That's your plan?

INT. GAUTIER'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The same place Booth met with Sam and Michael. John Surratt, Sam Arnold, Michael O'Laughlen, David Herold, George Atzerodt and a thoroughly cleaner Lewis Paine sit at a private table staring at an enthusiastic Booth.

BOOTH
You wanted to know where he would
be. He's at Ford's most any
Sunday. Why I didn't think of it
sooner...

Sam, Michael and Surratt are stunned.

SAM
This has to be a joke.

BOOTH
David? Inform them of your
observations.

David Herold looks at him dumbly. He needs reminding...

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Tell them about the security.

HEROLD
Oh. Yes. I've seen him from the
pharmacy. Lincoln's guard regiment
is thin when he takes a show.
Often none at all.

BOOTH
He makes a point of it.

SAM
You're not thinking straight. It's
suicide.

BOOTH
You haven't recognized the plan's
simplicity yet.

ATZERODT
Kill him. Simpler still.

He slurps down another oyster - ignored by the others.

SAM
I see it only for its ambition.

BOOTH
He attends Ford's regularly. He
goes there unprotected. Having
performed there, I know the layout
in the dark. It's perfect.

SAM
There's a thousand people on hand
to foul the works.

BOOTH
Not people, Sam. An audience. Much
easier to control.

MICHAEL

I think what Sam is trying to say is... Well... Shouldn't this be a more private affair?

BOOTH

We're kidnapping the *Union President*, Michael. He's not known for his solitude.

HEROLD

I think Atzerodt is right. We should kill him.

BOOTH

(snaps)

And how many prisoners do you think the North would exchange for a dead man, David? There's no *point* in killing Lincoln. What's wrong with you? Christ.

Pause. Everyone is surprised to see the normally cool Booth lose it. Finally:

SAM

It's a mess of a plan and I'll have none of it. I want a shadow of a chance for my life. Find somewhere else.

BOOTH

(containing his anger)

It's the only way to know in advance when he is coming. We take him at the Ford's Theatre.

SAM

What good would it be without an audience, eh?

BOOTH

Watch your mouth, Sam.

SAM

You blind, ambitious bastard.

Booth rises, pulling the pistol from his pocket and slapping it on the table. The normally docile Paine launches from his seat and grabs Booth's gun-hand with one fist and his jacket with the other. Booth resists.

PAINE

Not here, Captain... Not now.

The look in Paine's eyes is calm but urging. Booth finally relaxes and sits down. After a moment.

BOOTH

That's the last time you talk to me that way, Sam. Ever.

SAM

(standing)

I committed to the cause and I remain so still. But I do not approve of your plan, "Captain." Either you find another way or you find another accomplice.

Sam leaves. One by one, the others stand and follow him until only Paine and Booth remain. Long pause.

PAINE

We'll get him, Captain. We'll find a way.

BOOTH

Paine, I tell you, I sometimes wish I'd never left Richmond.

Booth snaps out of his thoughts and smiles, hitting Paine on the shoulder.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Won't it be grand, though? Riding down Main Street with victory in our hands. The people lining the streets, cheering.

Booth regains his upbeat outlook.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

You're right, Paine. We will succeed. We *have* to succeed.

PAINE

Then what?

That stops Booth cold. Jesus.

BOOTH

I'd never given that a moment's thought.

PAINE

Settle down in Richmond, maybe. Get married?

Booth thinks about this.

BOOTH

You know, Paine... I think... I think then I could. I think then... That would be enough.

Stay on Booth considering his future and Paine fearing his part in it.

EXT. STREET - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Booth is walking quickly down the street - pushing his way through an unusually large crowd. Then he hears it:

LUCY (O.S.)

JOHN.

Lucy pushes her way through the crowd. They embrace.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I'm late. What was so urgent? Is everything alright?

BOOTH

Everything is fine. Just fine. Is there somewhere we can be alone?

LUCY

I can't be gone long.

Booth studies her. Something is wrong.

BOOTH

Lucy... what is it?

LUCY

It's my father. The President has appointed him Ambassador to Spain.

Booth thinks, realizes.

BOOTH

You're leaving...

LUCY

I don't want to. I'm afraid that if I leave now, I... John, I can't stop thinking about you.

BOOTH

Lucy...

LUCY

I'll tell father to go on without me. Gladly. But I... Well... What's going to happen with us, John? I need to know.

BOOTH

I... I had hoped to do this another way.

Booth reaches into his pocket with that "bad hand" of his. He produces a small velvet box. Lucy's eyes widen when he opens it to reveal a small diamond ring.

LUCY

Oh... oh, John.

BOOTH
So long as you have this, we are-

LUCY
Yes, John. Yes.

They embrace and kiss deeply. Lucy takes the ring out of the box.

Booth points out the engraving: *For Lucy Hale. JWB.*

She puts it on, tears in her eyes. Booth is smiling, more nervous than anything else. "Jesus, what am I doing?"

LUCY (CONT'D)
(laughing)
Are we mad?

Booth smiles nervously. "That's putting it mildly."

LUCY (CONT'D)
What will we do, John? How can we-

BOOTH
Tell no one about this. Not even your closest friends. When the time is right, I'll come for you. We'll go to Richmond.

Lucy loves the sound of this.

LUCY
When?

BOOTH
I'll need to put some things in order. It should only take a few days. Then I will come for you. You must be ready.

Lucy nods, excited.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Is this really what you want, Lucy? Am I?

LUCY
Yes, John. You and only you.

They embrace and kiss. After a moment, she reluctantly pulls herself away, walking on air. She slips the ring off and puts it back in the box.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I can't wear this. You understand?

BOOTH
Of course. Now go, don't be late.

LUCY

I love you, John Wilkes Booth.

She kisses him before he can answer. Lucy then turns and moves quickly through the crowd, tears of joy in her eyes.

TIGHT ON BOOTH, a wave of intense emotions washing over him. Fear. Regret. Love? Then guilt. Suddenly:

BOOTH

LUCY, WAIT.

But she does not hear him. Booth goes after her, pressing through an ever thickening crowd. People are stopping on the street now, massing together like cattle. Eventually, Lucy vanishes from sight altogether. Booth is frustrated - packed shoulder to shoulder with the masses.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

What in God's name...?

VOICE (O.S.)

Pardon me, but are you John Wilkes Booth?

John rolls his eyes and turns, ready to tear into an annoying fan. He stops, finding a KINDLY OLD WOMAN.

BOOTH

Yes. Yes I am.

KINDLY OLD WOMAN

(offering a hand)

I'm a great admirer.

Booth shakes her hand, still searching for Lucy.

KINDLY OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

Tell me, have the flags arrived yet, do you know?

(Booth is confused)

The flags. Captured from the Shenandoah Valley. President Lincoln is receiving them here today.

She points. Booth turns and sees a large crowd SWARMING over an arriving White House carriage at the front of the National Hotel. Lincoln gets out and the people go wild.

BOOTH

My hotel...

Booth puts a hand to his head, feeling like an idiot.

KINDLY OLD WOMAN

Will you be performing for the President tonight?

BOOTH

Ma'am?

KINDLY OLD WOMAN

At the Soldier's Home. Lincoln
will be there this evening.

BOOTH

You're sure of this?

The woman nods, craning her neck to see more of Lincoln.
Booth looks around at the wall of people that trapped him
next to this old woman.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

"All unavowed is the doom of
destiny..."

The old woman is too busy digging in her purse to hear
him. She comes out with a piece of paper and something to
write with.

KINDLY OLD WOMAN

Would you mind terribly-

But when she looks up, he is gone.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

A carriage leaves the White House, turning down
Pennsylvania Ave.

EXT. BACK ROAD - NIGHT

Thundering hooves. Booth and the conspirators ride Hell-
bent for leather through the dark back-country.

TIGHT ON BOOTH, his face determined.

EXT. THE SOLDIER'S HOME - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The backstage area of Campbells' Hospital, aka The
Soldier's Home, is a small garden area. An actor we
remember from the Richmond days, E.L. DAVENPORT, goes
over his lines - just as badly as he did back then. Booth
suddenly appears at the back gate, nervous, breathless.

E.L.

Wilkes?

BOOTH

Hello, E.L. Who is in the house
tonight? Anyone important?

E.L.

A couple of congressional leaders,
the Secretary of War. My God, man.
It's been ages. How have you-

BOOTH
Did the old man come?

E.L.
The - No, the President isn't here.

BOOTH
(dammit)
Thank you, Ned. Good to see you.
How've you been?

But in the same breath he turns to go, distracted.

E.L.
In a hurry, John?

BOOTH
Yes, I'm ... I'm trying a new horse. He's rather restive.

Booth disappears into the night. E.L. watches him go, perplexed. Then he shrugs and goes inside.

EXT. COPSE OF TREES - NIGHT

Booth joins the other conspirators hiding in the shadows.

BOOTH
He's not here.

SAM
You're joking.

BOOTH
Not here yet. He could be late.

SAM
You said your source was good.

BOOTH
This is meant to happen, Sam, and it will.

JOHN SURRATT
Someone's coming.

They quiet as a carriage approaches.

HEROLD
White House carriage.

Booth draws a dagger. Tense pause. This is it. But then:

HEROLD (CONT'D)
Not the President's.

Booth curses. They all watch as the occupants climb out, none resembling Lincoln.

JOHN SURRATT
It's a decoy.

MICHAEL
We're discovered.

BOOTH
He could still come.

SAM
You're a God damn *fool*, John.

MICHAEL
Split up now. This place will be crawling with blue any minute.

BOOTH
No... a chance still remains.

SAM
Of getting arrested, yes.

Booth pounds his fist, hissing.

BOOTH
What an *excellent* chance I had to kill him on inauguration day.

Silence. Everyone looks at Booth differently now. Atzerodt and Herold understand his thinking. But the others are white with concern. Booth tries to recover.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
That's not what I-

SAM
I am out for good.

He says it to Michael who reluctantly nods: "Me too."
Then Sam looks at John Surratt.

BOOTH
Sam.

John Surratt nods to Sam. He is out, too.

JOHN SURRATT
Meet at the house tomorrow. I'll sell the horses.

BOOTH
You're cowards - all of you.

SAM
Goodbye, John.

Everyone tears off in a different direction - only Paine remains.

BOOTH

Go.

PAINE

Come with me, Captain.

BOOTH

Go. Get out of here. Save yourself.

Reluctantly, Paine turns his horse and speeds off, leaving Booth alone in the shadows. Booth looks at The Soldier's Home, then his horse. CRANE UP as we wallow for a while in his indecision and finally:

BLACK

Then a single word fills the screen:

HAMLET

We are looking at yet another poster. Beneath the title:

AS PRESENTED BY EDWIN BOOTH

100TH CONSECUTIVE NIGHT

An Unprecedented Achievement. See History Unfold.

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATRE - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Edwin sits in a chair with his feet on a table. He rubs his brow, concentrating. Preparing. We hear him humming low, doing voice exercises. As always, a small tintype of Junius Sr. watches grimly.

The door flies open without a knock. It is Booth, of course, slightly drunk, flask in hand. Edwin waits while Booth sits. When Booth speaks his voice is raspy, ruined.

BOOTH

Well, if you haven't earned Father's spurs by now, you'll certainly earn them tonight.

EDWIN

I never wanted them, John. But you wouldn't take them from me-

BOOTH

Do you honestly believe I ever gave a good God damn about being like him? I realized a long time ago that fame - the kind of fame you're doomed to - by its very nature makes true love impossible. The truth is an audience can adore you, respect you, admire, even want. But they'll never love you.

EDWIN

Well that's the difference between us, John. I don't care.

BOOTH

Father would have said-

EDWIN

You have no *idea* what Father would have said-

BOOTH

THEN TELL ME, NED. Tell me what he would have said because now I need to know. I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS I AM SUPPOSED TO DO.

EDWIN

You're an actor. You're here to entertain. To move and inspire.

BOOTH

That's not enough.

EDWIN

And what is? Do you expect to save your country? Change the world?

BOOTH

TO GIVE MORE THAN JUST A GOOD PERFORMANCE. TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. TO BE OF USE.

Booth picks up the picture of their father and throws it at the mirror, shattering his and Edwin's reflections. He is more stunned by his actions than Edwin. After a beat:

EDWIN

Then maybe someone will love you.

BOOTH

Maybe... maybe.

EDWIN

And then what? The truth is you've never trusted *anyone's* love in your life, John. What makes you think you can trust everyone's?

It hits Booth right between the eyes. He turns to leave.

BOOTH

You're a damn fool, Ned.

EDWIN

Tell me, John. Has anyone's love ever been enough?

Booth stops. He has to think about it.

BOOTH
Mother's... And Asia's.

EDWIN
A boy's answer. Now let me hear
the man.

Booth moves to answer, but no words come.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
Why do you suppose Father never
wanted us to act? Why do you think
we never had his blessing? We are
all his children, John. No love in
the world will ever be enough for
any of us. What makes you
different from me, what makes you
so much like Father, is that you
care.

Edwin's words speak to something deep inside of Booth. He
sits, his eyes fill with tears, realizing:

BOOTH
You're right, you sonofabitch...
You're right.

Edwin kneels, putting a hand on his brother's shoulder.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
What do I do, Ned? What do I do?

EDWIN
I suppose if Father were here
right now... and sober enough to
speak... I think all he'd have to
say is, "Give me back my spurs."

Booth looks up at Edwin, confused.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
If you've come for an answer, for
Father's blessing... his
approval... you'll give up now. Be
nothing. That's all Father ever
really wanted for his sons.

CLOSE ON Booth. He manages a bitter smile before:

BOOTH
To be, or not to be...

CLOSE ON Edwin looking right at us:

EDWIN
...that is the question...

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATRE - NIGHT

We pull back and realize Edwin is on stage now. His voice is clear, intense, commanding. A voice of experience.

EDWIN
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to
suffer
The slings and arrows of
outrageous fortune

Booth is in the audience, in awe of his brother.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
Or to take arms against a sea of
troubles
And by opposing... end them.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

An unnamed city in flames - bearing the brunt of a horrendous artillery barrage. Chaos in the streets.

But silence, except for:

EDWIN (V.O.)
To die, to sleep-
No more - and by a sleep to say we
end
The heartache, and the thousand
natural shocks
That flesh is heir to.

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATRE - NIGHT

EDWIN
'Tis a consummation-

He stops dead, looking into the audience. Booth's seat is empty. Edwin takes a deep, trembling breath.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
Devoutly to be wished.

ANGLE ON: Booth walking up the center aisle. He breezes right past a man cleaning his glasses. When he puts them back on we realize it is Turner. If he ever sees Booth he doesn't show it. He is too involved in the show - a lover of theater, after all.

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATRE - LOBBY - NIGHT

Booth crosses the empty lobby, stopping at the poster we saw before. FOCUS ON:

See History Unfold.

RACK FOCUS to Booth's reflection in the glass of the poster box, smiling a bitter smile.

EXT. WINTER GARDEN THEATRE - NIGHT

Booth comes out of the theater to a wild celebration. People are cheering, drinking, hugging and kissing - as if it were New Year's Eve. He stops a PASSING YOUNG COUPLE.

BOOTH

What is it? What's going on?

YOUNG MAN

We've taken Richmond.

Booth stares as though he does not speak English.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Well don't you see, man? The Confederate Capital is in flames. It's all but over. What's the matter with you?

Booth just stares at the couple. They shrug and move on.

BOOTH

My God, I have no country...

CRANE UP AND AWAY from Booth as he moves into the CHEERING THRONG.

EXT. CITY IN FLAMES - NIGHT

The burning city is Richmond, of course, crumbling under a hail of artillery fire. PUSH INTO THE FLAMES AND:

INT. NATIONAL HOTEL - BOOTH'S SUITE - NIGHT

A handful of papers nearly smother the fire - letters and photographs of countless adoring women. A gentle knocking O.S. goes ignored. PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

Booth is in his room feeding the letters and pictures into the flames, vacantly watching them burn. He turns to get some more letters from the pile on the bed.

The gentle knocking comes again. Booth ignores it still, browsing the pictures and faces of his many loves before burning them. He stops on one picture in particular.

Lucy.

A scratching sound gets Booth's attention. A small envelope slips under the door. It reads simply:

ROMEO

Booth thinks and opens the door to find Lucy there, walking away, weeping. She turns, surprised to see him.

BOOTH

Lucy...

LUCY

John.

She rushes to him, throwing her arms around his neck.

LUCY (CONT'D)

John, where have you been? I thought you'd... It was terrible what I thought. To think I- No matter. Oh, John, I'm just so glad to see you. Where have you been?

She kisses him, but quickly senses something is not right. She pulls back, looking at him, realizing.

BOOTH

Lucy, listen to me. You have to go. I'll only hurt you if you stay.

LUCY

But I love you, John.

BOOTH

And I love you. Truly I do. But I've come to realize it isn't enough, you understand? It just isn't enough.

Her eyes fill with tears.

LUCY

But... what else is there?

BOOTH

For me? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

She looks down at his "bad hand." He is still holding a fistful of letters and pictures. Inside, she sees scores more on the bed. Once again, she makes a rational conclusion, if not the right one. She can't believe this.

LUCY

Whatever it is, John, we can-

BOOTH

Goodbye, Lucy.

INT. NATIONAL HOTEL - BOOTH'S SUITE - LATER

From his window Booth can see the street out front.

BOOTH'S P.O.V. Lucy is ushered into the carriage by her FATHER AND MOTHER. She hesitates, looking up at Booth, trying to muster a smile. And then she is gone.

Booth moves back to the fireplace and looks at the note from Lucy marked *Romeo*. Booth opens it. Along with a note, the ring he gave her falls into his palm. He reads:

*The saddest words of tongue or pen
Are these four words...
"It might have been."*

Booth manages an ironic smile.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
And then comes reality.

He moves to the bed, picking up the pictures in great handfuls, throwing them into the fire.

EXT. TOBACCO BARN - NIGHT

That same tobacco barn from the opening, from Mary Ann Booth's dream - surrounded by TORCH-BEARING SOLDIERS.

SOLDIER (O.S.)
BOOTH... WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE.
COME ON OUT.

INT. NATIONAL HOTEL - BOOTH'S SUITE - NIGHT

Booth is unhinged, tearing up pictures and letters in his fists and throwing them at the fire until finally he collapses in a chair, spent. He stares at the flames.

Over this, the now familiar, shrill voice of Lincoln giving a speech somewhere.

LINCOLN (V.O.)
...the new government of Louisiana
is only to what it should be as
the egg is to the fowl...

PUSH INTO THE FLAMES IN THE FIREPLACE, taking us to:

EXT. RICHMOND - NIGHT

The same city we saw a flash of during Edwin's performance. A living portrait of fire.

LINCOLN (V.O.)
...we shall sooner have the fowl
by hatching the egg than smashing
it.

A ROAR OF APPROVAL FROM A CROWD TAKES US TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

The President is delivering a speech from the steps of the White House. As always, he is in shadow or out of focus. Untouchable. Unreadable. Unknowable.

A near lifeless Booth stands with David Herold and Lewis Paine at the back of the crowd. He is not listening. Lincoln's speech echoes faintly in his ears.

EXT. RICHMOND - NIGHT

The city's arsenal explodes with unholy force. The destruction of Richmond was violent and total - a city wiped clean from the face of the Earth.

Lincoln's speech echoes over it, unclear.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

And then silence. TIGHT ON BOOTH, angry, lost. Hold for as long as you like. When you are ready:

Sound slowly returns. A ROAR OF APPLAUSE and faintly:

LINCOLN (O.S.)
On the troubling question of
giving the Negro the vote...

We cannot hear the rest of what he is saying. We don't need to. Then loud and clear, right in our ear.

HEROLD (O.S.)
My God.

All sound returns. We are suddenly wrenched back to reality as Booth snaps out of his trance to the sound of a cheering throng. What did Lincoln just say?

PAINE
He's talking about nigger
citizenship.

BOOTH
Kill him. *Kill him now.*

Booth jams a hand in his coat pocket. Shocked, Paine and Herold have to restrain him, hoping no one notices. Finally, Paine gives Booth a violent shake.

PAINE
Captain. CAPTAIN.

Their eyes lock. Paine sees in Booth's eyes that he is serious. In that terrible moment he realizes how far this thing could go. Finally:

PAINE (CONT'D)
Not here. Not now.

As if on cue, COLD RAIN BEGINS TO FALL - splashing Booth's face. He regains his composure as The President retreats into the White House.

BOOTH
That is the last speech he will
ever make. Now, by God, I'll put
him through.

Booth pulls himself free of Paine's grip and walks away. Paine and Herold share a terrified glance. The sound of applause rises to a crescendo and:

EXT. STREETS OF D.C. - DAY

TITLE: GOOD FRIDAY - APRIL 14, 1865

Though the clouds threaten rain, the capital still celebrates wildly. HAPPY CROWDS fill the streets.

EXT. NATIONAL HOTEL - DAY

A SMALL MOB has gathered around a man making a speech. We recognize him as Vice President Johnson.

VICE PRESIDENT JOHNSON
And while your President may speak
of forgiveness, of acceptance, of
brotherly love... Rest assured
that I do not. As Vice President I
will make it my mission to see
every drop of Northern blood
avenged. The South has only just
begun to burn.

Those people listening CHEER mightily.

ANGLE ON: Booth walking through the crowd like a ghost. He does not hear any of it.

EXT. SURRATT HOUSE - DAY

A fist knocks on a door. Mary Surratt opens it, freezing when she sees Booth.

BOOTH
I need to find the others. Will
you help me?

MARY SURRATT
My son is not here.

BOOTH
What about Sam? Michael? Atzerodt?

MARY SURRATT
My son is not here.

She tries to close the door but he won't let her.

BOOTH
Will you help me?

He continues to stare, slowly melting her iron exterior. Even Mary Surratt is not immune to Booth's eyes.

ANGLE ON: We watch from across the street as Booth steps closer - perhaps too close for propriety's sake - coaxing, seducing. It reminds us of that Soldier back in Richmond. The one Booth talked right out of his uniform.

Finally, Mary Surratt steps back and lets Booth inside.

INT. SURRATT HOME - DAY

Mary Surratt shows Paine in - shutting the door behind him - almost ashamed of her part.

He sees the mean-eyed Atzerodt. David Herold, too. Booth stands between the idiot remnants of the conspiracy in the very place John Surratt stood when Booth first came to be a "friend of Mr. Davis." This cannot be good.

PAINÉ

What is it, Capt-

BOOTH

General Lee and the Virginia army have surrendered. But as I understand it, General Mosby is still fighting. It is my firm belief that the South still has a chance to recover. Of course, there are too few of us to attempt a kidnapping now. Only one option remains...

Long pause. Paine's face twists in fear. "Jesus."

BOOTH (CONT'D)

The President will be at Ford's tonight. But he alone will not suffice. If we are to have any effect, we'll need the Vice President, as well. And, of course, the Secretary of State.

HEROLD

All of them? You expect to kidnap all of them?

Booth sighs, ready to choke this asshole.

BOOTH

No, David. As I said we are too few. We're going to kill them.

Atzerodt and Herold nod like it's nothing. Paine moves to protest but before he can:

BOOTH

We will behead the Union government with one sharp blow. No one to lead and no one to choose a successor.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 The Union will fall into chaos.
 The South will have one last
 chance to recover.

He warms his hands by the fire, staring into the flames.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 Atzerodt, you will take the Vice
 President.
 (to Atzerodt)
 He is at Kirkwood House. I've
 already booked you a room there.

Atzerodt nods - charged.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 (to Paine)
 You will take Secretary Seward. He
 is at his home, bedridden,
 recovering from a carriage
 accident.

PAINE
 I... Sir...?

BOOTH
 (to Herold)
 He'll need a guide to get him from
 Seward's to the river undetected.
 Go with him.
 (Herold nods)
 I will take the President myself.
 (with new life in his eyes)
 We'll rendezvous at the river and
 make our escape as planned.
 Obviously Richmond is no longer an
 option. We'll do our best to find
 General Mosby and what's left of
 the Confederate Army. We'll be
 safe with them.

PAINE
 Captain...

BOOTH
 It must be simultaneous. We don't
 want any of them to have warning.
 Strike your blows precisely at
 half-past ten and do not fail me.
 If we miss *any one* of them it will
 all have been for naught.

Booth walks out. Paine follows.

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE SURRATT HOME - DAY

PAINE
 Captain.

Booth stops and turns as Paine catches up to him.

PAINE (CONT'D)

I don't understand... This has never been about killing.

BOOTH

But don't you see, Paine? It *has*. It's been heading for this all along. As though we've been... pushed... toward this very moment.

PAINE

But murder...

BOOTH

To kill any one of them is murder, yes. But to kill them all is a coup. Killing for the cause.

He sees Paine is still not convinced.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

The South is in flames, Paine. That sonofabitch should be in a church on his knees tonight. A visit to the theater is an act of jubilation over fields of unburied dead. There's no pity in it. So let's have none for him.

PAINE

Don't do this, Captain.

Booth puts a hand on his shoulder.

BOOTH

You are committed to the cause, yes?

PAINE

I'm committed to you, Captain. You saved my li-

BOOTH

Then do this for me.

PAINE

But, Sir-

BOOTH

Do you love me, Paine?

Long pause. Painful. An admission beyond what the two words can express.

PAINE

I do.

Booth hugs him tightly - manipulating, seducing.

BOOTH

Then do this for me. Give me this one thing. It's all I ask.

CLOSE ON Paine as he thinks and, against all better judgement, nods. Booth smiles and puts a hand to his friend's cheek. Then he turns and walks away.

INT. PETER TALTAUL'S BAR - DAY

HARRY FORD, the owner of Ford's Theatre, enters the bar and finds Booth pontificating to a few PATRONS.

BOOTH

Well, by that time, the show was completely sold out, there wasn't a ticket to be had. Of course, I had a lady-friend in town who just had to see the show. So what did I do? I called on my good friend Harry Ford, and we seated her in the wing. Didn't we Harry?

FORD

Not quite sure what you're referring to, John.

BOOTH

My lady-friend... At *Richard III*.

FORD

Ah.

BOOTH

Have a drink, Harry. On me.

The BARTENDER pours Ford a brandy. Ford sips it.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

I was just telling my friends here how spectacular I was in that show. Wouldn't you agree?

FORD

Oh, yes, yes. Of course, that was quite some time ago.

BOOTH

What's the matter, Harry, you look worried.

FORD

I think I'd worry about any friend that turned his back on his God-given talent and started drinking a quart of brandy at a sitting.

BOOTH

You sounded a bit like my mother there, Harry.

FORD

Wonderful woman.

BOOTH

The way you talk, you'd think I wasn't the best actor to have ever walked the boards of your theater.

FORD

That would be your father. No one will ever be his equal.

That hits Booth like a boot in the chest. He stands and his voice chills the room.

BOOTH

Harry. When I leave the stage for good, I will be the most famous man in America.

Booth walks out. Ford downs the rest of his brandy, holding the empty glass for the other patrons to see.

FORD

Clouds the mind. Impairs judgement.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

Est. Washington - the waning celebration giving way to hangover. The capital was an eerie place that night - barrels of tar burning in celebration of the war's end, filling the sky with columns of noxious, yellow smoke.

INT. TUDOR HALL - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary Ann Booth wakes suddenly from a nightmare. After a pause, she starts breathing again, sitting up quickly.

MARY ANN

Johnny. My precious baby boy.

She looks up at the ever-present portrait of her madman/pacifist husband, Junius Brutus Booth, Sr. bathed in moonlight. He looks back with his curious mixture of torment and indifference. As we push in on the picture:

BOOTH (V.O.)

A HORSE. MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - ALLEY - NIGHT

From the stables behind the theater, Booth's bay mare is led out by A STABLE BOY.

BOOTH

Hold him here for a moment. I'll be right out.

INT. SEWARD RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Secretary of State Seward, in his night-shirt and neck-brace, stiffly maneuvers himself into his bed with the help of his MANSERVANT.

VOICE (V.O.)

Good evening, Mr. Vice President.

INT. KIRKWOOD HOUSE HOTEL - NIGHT

Vice President Johnson tips his hat to the Valet and heads across the lobby to his room. A moment later, George Atzerodt enters the frame, following...

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - NIGHT

Booth emerges from the alley beside Ford's. From across the way we watch him talk to the THEATER DOORMAN. A brief exchange and Booth is admitted without a ticket. He's the most famous man in America, after all.

EXT. TOBACCO BARN - NIGHT

FLASHING AHEAD to the tobacco barn where it all ends for Booth eleven days hence. It is surrounded by Union Soldiers, a weeping David Herold lashed to a tree nearby.

SOLDIER (O.S.)

I WANT NO SHOOTING, DO YOU HEAR? I
WANT THAT MAN ALIVE... BOOTH... WE
KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE. COME ON OUT.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - NIGHT

Booth walks calmly along the back wall to the stairway and climbs. A GUARD is sitting at the top. He is LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY at the play down below. Booth appears and whispers in his ear - showing the guard his calling card.

EXT. SEWARD RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Paine, in a trench-coat and hat drawn over his eyes, approaches the front door of the Seward home. He looks at an anxious David Herold across the street, watching.

A good soldier, Paine braces himself and mounts the steps as:

INT. KIRKWOOD HOUSE HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Where we found Atzerodt at the beginning of the story but from a different angle - pretending to search for a room key as a Barman passes by.

When the Barman is gone, Atzerodt backtracks a few paces to a specific doorway, reaching into his coat for the grip of his long knife. He works up the nerve to knock.

INT. KIRKWOOD HOUSE HOTEL - JOHNSON SUITE - NIGHT

Vice President Johnson is at his desk, writing. There is a knock at the door, but Johnson does not turn...

EXT. SEWARD RESIDENCE - NIGHT

We've been misdirected. It is Paine knocking on Seward's door. The Servant opens it, not recognizing Paine.

PAINE
(offering the package)
I was told to bring this medicine
to the Secretary of State.

ANGLE ON: David Herold watching the exchange from across the street. After a moment, Paine explodes, shoving the door open and forcing his way in. We stay out as the sounds of the violence inside take us to:

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - PRESIDENTIAL BOX - NIGHT

A cloud of pistol smoke hanging in the air. Booth throws his legs over the railing, his deed done.

Booth's P.O.V. A silent, confused audience looking up at him. They might recognize him, but none applaud his entrance now. He leaps from the Presidential box.

CLOSE ON: Booth's spurs - for his escape on horseback - snag the American flag draped just under the Presidential box. He loses his grace and falls hard to the stage.

There he finds his footing among the actors. He winces and turns to the still silent audience, raising his dagger to shout his famous line. But he hesitates.

Booth's P.O.V. looking at an audience of stone.

INT. SEWARD RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Seward - unable to even sit up in his bed - watches in horror as Paine crosses the room holding a huge knife. Both men seem stricken with terror. Then Seward screams.

Paine attacks, stabbing repeatedly.

PUSH IN TIGHT on his face. There are tears in his eyes as he drives the knife home, again and again.

INT. KIRKWOOD HOUSE HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Atzerodt uses the tip of his knife to steady himself on the door-frame. And then, as if by some miracle, he has a moment of clarity. "The hell am I doing?"

He blinks, almost soberly, and walks away.

EXT. SEWARD RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Outside looking in the open front door. Paine comes down the steps, knife in hand. He struggles with the staff but never thinks to use his weapon.

PAINE
I'M MAD, I'M MAD. MAD, I TELL YOU.

ANGLE ON: David Herold hiding in the shadows, panicking more with every second.

Paine lashes out violently with his fist - sending a servant down the steps. Free of the staff now, he runs out into the street.

He looks across the way. But Herold, his guide, is gone.

PAINE (CONT'D)
Herold... HEROLD.

Paine looks around wildly, the streets around him dark and confusing. Lights coming on all around.

PAINE (CONT'D)
I'm lost... I'm lost.

He picks a direction and runs to whatever awaits him.

INT. SEWARD RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

MRS. SEWARD, sobbing, rushes into the room and rips the sheets back from her husband's body to reveal his neck-brace, scratched and dented from the knife blows, allowing only one deep cut on the side of his face.

Alongside his frail body are several deep stab "wounds" in the mattress. In his tortured frenzy, Paine overshot Seward completely. The old man speaks though a wired jaw:

SEWARD
I'm alive... I'm alive. Fetch a surgeon.

Mrs. Seward runs from the room.

EXT. F STREET - NIGHT

Booth comes galloping around an intersection at a good clip. He is joined by David Herold riding a roan horse.

BOOTH
Where's Paine?

HEROLD
He's been captured.

BOOTH
Are you sure?

HEROLD

H... he said to go on. Go on...

Booth spurs his horse into the darkness. David Herold follows.

INT. KIRKWOOD HOUSE HOTEL - JOHNSON SUITE - NIGHT

A KNOCK at the door. An irritated Vice President Johnson pulls the door open to reveal what we had until now assumed was his assassin, Atzerodt.

Instead, the hallway is filled with UNION SOLDIERS. The Ranking Officer tries to speak but cannot find the words.

JOHNSON

Wh... What is it, man?

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - NIGHT

The street is choked with SILENT ONLOOKERS - not facing the theater but the humble Petersen Boarding House. Move through the crowd, up the front steps, past TWO SOLDIERS and through the front door...

INT. PETERSEN BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Slowly, ever so slowly, down the hallway past soldiers and dignitaries in silent vigil. Then into-

INT. PETERSEN BOARDING HOUSE - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

-a room so small and crowded we can barely move. A DOCTOR steps away from the bed and shakes his head before checking the time. There is a uniform shift in the room as everyone realizes it is over.

ANGLE ON: SECRETARY OF WAR STANTON - a beefy and oddly groomed man at best. He takes a deep breath and utters the words he would later amend to sound better:

STANTON

Now he belongs to the angels...

And we come around at last to find the deceased. For the first and only time, we are permitted a clear look at Abraham Lincoln. The moment of his death. The beginning of his immortality.

BOOTH (V.O.)

They're calling me a villain...

EXT. VIRGINIA BACK-ROADS - DAY

Miserable, drizzling rain in a dense and fetid swamp.

Booth and David Herold stand still on horseback. Herold is trying to find his bearings. Booth is reading a newspaper. His leg is causing him a great deal of pain.

TIGHT ON: A garish cartoon of Booth lurking outside the Presidential box. The Devil is whispering in his ear.

BOOTH
(re: paper)
...A *villain*. You'd think the man
a saint.

He looks up with tears in his eyes, genuinely shocked. He sees Herold looking about, confused. Then Booth realizes.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
You're lost, aren't you?

Herold cannot be sure.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
AREN'T YOU?

EXT. ARSENAL PRISON - DAY

CLOSE ON PAINE:

PAINE
MRS. SURRATT IS INNOCENT. SHE DOES
NOT BELONG HERE.

And a hood is pulled over his head. PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

A LARGE CROWD of men, women and children look up at the gallows waiting to consign the four conspirators.

Atzerodt, Herold, Paine and - most notably - Mary Surratt are bound tightly, mummy-like. An umbrella is held up to shield Mary Surratt from the sun.

Atzerodt is last to have a hood placed over his head, giving him the chance to see the others and to see his doom. Perhaps the most sober moment of his life will be his last.

EXT. RIVER INLET - DAY

A river crossing in the middle of nowhere. We wait as a small ferry approaches to carry passengers into Virginia.

Three horses stomp their feet impatiently by the riverside. THREE WAR WEARY RIDERS are silhouetted against the sky, looking like three of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. The horsemen from Mary Ann Booth's vision.

BOOTH
Good evening, gentlemen...

They look down to find Booth - David Herold just behind him. Booth is leaning on a cane, a pistol dangling from one hand. He manages to smile through the pain and bow.

Turning back to the riders we realize they are CONFEDERATE OFFICERS - weary from the war and on the run themselves. His audience if there ever was one.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
No doubt you know who I am and
what I have do-

WEARY CONFEDERATE
We do not condone your act, sir.

TIGHT ON BOOTH - stunned.

WEARY CONFEDERATE (CONT'D)
But you're welcome to cross into
Virginia with us.

EXT. RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER - FERRY - DAY

The ferry cruises slowly across the river. Booth looks back, his skin pale and slicked with cold sweat from the pain. He stares at the approaching riverbank, taking a deep breath and trying to smile through the pain.

BOOTH
Virginia... Virginia... Just to
breathe your air is delicious.

The Weary Confederate looks down.

WEARY CONFEDERATE
This leg will have to be
amputated.
(sniffing fingers)
Even that might not save you.
Gangrene is spreading up your leg.

Booth smiles. "Of course."

WEARY CONFEDERATE (CONT'D)
What could you have possibly hoped
to accomplish with such an act?

2ND CONFEDERATE
They'll make Johnson President now
- you watch. He'll see every rebel
hang.

3RD CONFEDERATE
At least with Lincoln we might
have had pardon. It was madness to
kill him. What were you thinking?

Booth turns and glares, just a flicker of the actor he once was.

BOOTH
Three men should have died that
night - not one.
(they don't understand)

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 No one left to lead, no one to
 choose a successor... the Union in
 chaos... Mosby still in the field.
 There was *hope for the cause*.
 Think what might have been, how
 close we came...
 (off their blank stares)
*Tell me you would have kept
 fighting.*

But these three soldiers have no fight left in them.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 I am *not* a madman. And he was
 never the man they say he is. Not
 until I...

And the realization for all of history to ponder strikes
 Booth right between the eyes. He made Lincoln a saint
 just as Lincoln made him an assassin. When that sets in:

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 Useless...

The Weary Confederate shakes his head: "Poor fool."

EXT. TOBACCO BARN - NIGHT

The barn we have seen in visions - now in stark reality.
 It is surrounded by Union Soldiers, a weeping David
 Herold lashed to a tree nearby.

SOLDIER (O.S.)
 I WANT NO SHOOTING, DO YOU HEAR? I
 WANT THAT MAN ALIVE...

ANGLE ON: The soldier whose voice we have been hearing -
 THE COMMANDING OFFICER of a Union Posse.

COMMANDING OFFICER
 BOOTH... WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE.
 COME ON OUT.

The Commanding Officer turns to the man beside him.

COMMANDING OFFICER (CONT'D)
 You're sure he's in there?

He is addressing none other than the Weary Confederate
 Soldier. He nods. He has betrayed Booth.

BOOTH (O.S.)
 (from inside the barn)
 A HORSE...

INT. TOBACCO BARN - NIGHT

BOOTH
 MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE.

Booth hobbles around in circles on a crutch, very much a King Richard without his mount. The sound of torches clattering on the roof and around the base-boards. Flames begin to crackle. Smoke wafts in from all sides of the rickety barn. Booth sees his doom coming clearly. And, as always, he manages a smile at the irony.

EXT. TOBACCO BARN - NIGHT

One by one, UNION SOLDIERS dare to come out from their places of cover to throw more torches at the barn.

COMMANDING OFFICER (O.S.)
I SAY AGAIN - NO SHOOTING. I WANT
THAT MAN ALIVE...

ANGLE ON: SERGEANT CORBETT - a man apart from the other soldiers. Small, eerie eyes and a slight, built-in smile. He glances around and moves toward the barn, rifle in hand. He approaches the back of the barn and a gaping slot between the boards - bringing his eye to it and:

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - NIGHT

A small eyehole in the darkness, then filled with Booth's eyeball.

BOOTH'S P.O.V. Lincoln and the First Lady are seated with their backs to us, watching the play, LAUGHING.

The eyeball blinks, and:

INT. TOBACCO BARN - NIGHT

Corbett's eye-ball peering in through the slats at Booth as the barn gets hotter.

A panicked Booth has a pistol in his hand - debating surrender, battle to the death or suicide.

CLOSE ON BOOTH'S FACE. Finally, he becomes very calm - making a decision. He cocks the pistol.

BOOTH
WELL... MY BRAVE BOYS... YOU CAN
PREPARE A STRETCHER FOR ME. ONE
MORE STAIN ON THE OLD BANNER.

CRACK. He drops from frame.

EXT. TOBACCO BARN - NIGHT

Booth is dragged roughly by his feet out of the burning barn, a seeping bullet hole in his neck. The man for whom breathing is delicious is choking on his own blood. His once powerful voice is a hideous rasp now.

BOOTH
Tell... tell my mother, I died for
my country.

EXT. HIGH HILLSIDE - OUTSIDE RICHMOND - DAY

Dr. James Beal and his daughter Mary - both older, both changed, but both alive - dig a small hole in the grass.

The smoldering ruins of Richmond are in the distance.

Mary takes a chain from around her neck, revealing the ring Booth gave her so long ago with the inscription:

For Mary Beal. JWB.

BOOTH (V.O.)
*So long as you have this, we are
family.*

She places it in the ground and her father buries it forever.

EXT. TOBACCO BARN - NIGHT

COMMANDING OFFICER (O.S.)
WHO FIRED THAT SHOT, DAMMIT? WHO
WAS IT?

From Booth's P.O.V. We can see that Corbett is one of the men dragging him. He studies Booth with grim fascination as he talks to the Commanding Officer.

CORBETT
I did, sir.

Maybe he did. We don't trust his eyes.

COMMANDING OFFICER (O.S.)
What on Earth compelled you?

CORBETT
God Almighty instructed me, sir.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - PRESIDENTIAL BOX - NIGHT

Booth slides a length of board into place - wedging the door shut. Then he parts a velvet curtain, looking at the President from behind. Lincoln is chuckling, holding his wife's hand on his left arm. To his right is MAJOR HENRY REED RATHBONE and his YOUNG FIANCEE.

(General Grant declined to attend that evening. It seems the wives didn't get along.)

TIGHT ON BOOTH'S hands as they reach into his jacket. One comes out with a dagger, the other a Derringer.

EXT. TOBACCO BARN - NIGHT

Booth is thrown unceremoniously onto a filthy mattress on the farmhouse porch - eyes stunned and glassy. Five photographs of YOUNG WOMEN spill out of his jacket. We recognize one of them as Lucy Hale.

BOOTH'S P.O.V. Looking up at his last audience. GAWKING SOLDIERS huddle around him to get a look. In the circle we see Corbett - his killer, his alternate, his equal. As they regard one another.

BOOTH
I can't... feel anything.

No one cares.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Please... let me see my hands.

EXT. ARSENAL PRISON - DAY

ANGLE ON: A pair of hands yank violently on a heavy wooden lever. The four conspirators drop. Four ropes snap taught. Paine and Herold suffer the indignity of a slow death, kicking violently for some time. More than five minutes for Paine. But we don't have time to wait.

EXT. TOBACCO BARN - NIGHT

Finally, Corbett leans down and takes Booth by the wrists, holding up his hands in front of his own face. Even now they are beautiful, marred only by the crude tattoo: *J.W.B.*

As Booth regards them:

BOOTH
Useless...

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - NIGHT

Booth raises his Derringer to the back of Lincoln's head as we hear the UPROARIOUS LAUGHTER from the audience below. We brace ourselves for the sound of the shot, but instead we hear only a whisper.

Off screen and far away, under the dark sky of his beloved Virginia, with his last breath Booth utters once more:

BOOTH (V.O.)
Useless...

BLACK