

CHASING BOOTH

Written by

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Based on the True Story

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The evil men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones.

- William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

I believe it is universally understood and acknowledged that all men will ever act correctly, unless they have a motive to do otherwise.

- Abraham Lincoln, 1837

CLOSE ON the CONFEDERATE FLAG.

The infamous Battle Flag flies proudly in the breeze against a clear BLUE SKY. Just as we wonder why we're seeing this --

DOZENS OF HANDS tear the flag to shreds. *RRRRIP!* The pieces get tossed like confetti, fluttering down to reveal:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - MAIN STREET - MORNING

A huge festival already deep in progress. Bright banners and streamers adorn every lamp post and store front. VENDORS pass out treats to the jubilant crowd as MUSIC fills the air.

And in the bg: THE WHITE HOUSE. But it's obvious from the BUILDINGS and the CLOTHING that this is not the present.

LEGEND: APRIL 14, 1865. FIVE DAYS SINCE END OF THE CIVIL WAR.

The citizens of the North are out in force to celebrate. Now UNION TROOPS, orderly in their blue uniforms, come marching down the street to the delight of all. CHEERS ring out.

INT. BOSTON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

A typical, if sparse, room. Paneled walls and one ensconced GAS LAMP, unlit. The CURTAINS help block out most of the sun.

The only bit of decoration is a framed and polished old-timey PHOTO of a WOMAN. She peers out with a Mona Lisa-esque smile.

THOMAS "BOSTON" CORBETT, 30s, gazes at the picture from his seat on the unmade bed. A clever, sturdy man who nevertheless suffers from some past PAIN he hasn't yet overcome. From the looks of things, he's been awake for hours.

That jaunty music can be heard outside but Boston doesn't even register it. His whole being is fixed on the woman.

Boston rests his hand on the night stand where the photograph resides. Not *quite* touching the frame. A solemn beat.

Then Boston rouses himself. Crosses to a BLUE SERGEANT'S UNIFORM hanging from a hook. The outfit is clean and pressed. Boston dresses meticulously, respecting the uniform.

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - STREET - MORNING

An outfitted Boston strides along the avenue, passes the festivities without slowing as he heads for the White House.

In fact Boston seems fairly disengaged from the happy people all around him. Pre-occupied.

That is until ranks of those marching Soldiers catch sight of him then break into grins. A few even salute and there are accompanying barks of "Sergeant" as he ambles past. The Troops are inspired just seeing him.

Boston has a smile and nod for every man. Pats one Soldier's arm in a brotherly fashion.

As the men parade on, Boston approaches TWO SOLDIERS. They join him. One is LUTHER BAKER, 30s, a free African American private, strong yet sincere, and Boston's closest friend.

They clasp hands warmly, pleased to see each other. Boston glances back at the marching troops. Shakes his head.

BOSTON
Celebrating already.

LUTHER
With Lee's surrender nearly a week old, Boston? Overdue, I'd say.

BOSTON
Or premature, Luther. Recalling, as I do, there remain Rebels waging war down Texas.

The second Soldier, PVT. DANIEL RHODES, waves it away.

PVT. RHODES
They'll fall soon enough without a leader to rally behind.

LUTHER
(nods)
A snake lacking a head.

PVT. RHODES
A headless chicken, more like.

LUTHER
Indeed. A headless cock.

Luther and Pvt. Rhodes share a chuckle. Boston merely smiles. But Luther can tell Boston thinks otherwise and gives him a friendly look -- *alright, spit it out.*

BOSTON
The Union will prevail, agreed. But the thing must be done properly. We cannot act recklessly.
(MORE)

BOSTON (CONT'D)
 (his point)
 We must not give the South any
 cause to prolong the conflict.

Boston lets that marinate with his men a moment. Finally they
 nod. Lesson learned.

PVT. RHODES
 What will you do when the fighting
 is officially over, Sergeant?

BOSTON
 (arches an eyebrow)
 A soldier is a soldier, Private
 Rhodes.

Luther's not surprised. Shrugs at Rhodes as if to say "what
 did you expect?" Then:

LUTHER
 I confess myself enamored with the
 farmer's life. Rising early to tend
 my own flock. Watching the sun set
 on my fields.

PVT. RHODES
 Go to your crops, then. It's the
 whorehouse trade for me. My stock
 will be far prettier than yours.
 (off their amusement)
 Keep that up and your visit will
 cost double, so help me!

Resolved Boston eyes the prominent White House.

BOSTON
 If you desire to grow fat and
 complacent, by all means proceed.
 Yet while you clamor for wages
 spreading cow manure -- or its
 equivalent in the brothels -- I
 shall remain gainfully employed.
 (then, simply)
 Soldiering is the one profession
 that will always be hiring.

With that parting remark, Boston and his men salute each
 other before he moves on.

EXT. WAR DEPARTMENT - MAIN ENTRANCE - MORNING

Establishing. A bold edifice where several SOLDIERS stand
 watch. The nearby White House is just visible OVER the roof.

INT. WAR DEPARTMENT - ANTECHAMBER

A well-appointed, austere space with rich wood desks and imperious couches. Military SECRETARIES scurry about holding documents. All rather intimidating.

But Boston's here on duty, not fazed one bit. No one stops him for identification as Boston proceeds into --

INT. WAR DEPARTMENT - HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Larger and even more impressive than the last chamber. MAPS and CHARTS overlap on the walls, cover the one long table. It feels like the Civil War was won or lost in this room.

Boston threads between HIGH-RANKING OFFICERS until he finds Secretary of War EDWIN STANTON, 50s. Lincoln's trusted "God of War". Bearded, bespectacled, and burly.

Stanton pores over documents with his retinue of ADJUTANTS. Boston stands at attention but his eyes rove over the space. He glances at a map of Washington. Notices one Adjutant stash away some LEAFLETS. Each new piece means something to Boston.

Finally Stanton spots him and nods -- *at ease*. Boston adjusts his stance as Stanton dismisses his Adjutants.

BOSTON

Good morning, Mr. Secretary.
Reporting as notified.

STANTON

Oh ho, Sergeant Corbett. Right on time. Good man.

Stanton downshifts into straight business talk.

STANTON (CONT'D)

A new assignment for you. But... well, know firstly I hold you in high esteem from what I've heard of your heroics at Gettysburg, to say nothing of your uncovering of that Confederate spy.

BOSTON

You humble me, sir.

STANTON

However, such accounts can become exaggerated over time. So before I conscript you, I must ascertain your capabilities for myself.

BOSTON

Pardon my boldness, Mr. Secretary, but I presume you intend for me to guard President Lincoln tonight at Ford's Theatre.

STANTON

(shocked)

How could you possibly come by that information?

BOSTON

Plainly, sir? The principles of deduction. You see, I understand the President to be a great admirer of the theater. And as with all of Washington, I am profoundly aware of the performance this evening at Mr. Ford's playhouse featuring the great Laura Keene herself. Thus the President is predisposed to attend such an event, particularly as his presence could signify a return to peace and normalcy after the war.

If Stanton could show amazement, he would do so now.

STANTON

Hell and damnation, Sergeant. But explain the discovery of your task.

BOSTON

I observed that your map displays the location of the playhouse. And your adjutant? He was sorting play bills. As this is hardly the place for frivolity, I concluded that it must pertain to my detail.

(realizes)

Yet from all I surmise of the President it is probable that given his, forgive me, apparent utter lack of interest in his personal security, that I should deploy my men outside the Theatre so as not to impose upon his person.

STANTON

Remarkable. And you are right. The President and Mrs. Lincoln will be accompanied by guests, as well as a bodyguard at my insistence. So your troops must keep distant or he'll harbor issues with my "meddling".

BOSTON

I shall abide by the President's directive.

Stanton considers Boston.

STANTON

I hope you do not deem this detail to be devoid of prestige, Sergeant.

BOSTON

It is my duty and honor, sir.

STANTON

Good. The President's first public outing since the Confederate Army surrendered will, as you noted, be a significant night for the Union.

Boston nods once. Stanton treats him to a rare half-smile.

STANTON (CONT'D)

No doubt this will be a memory to share with your children someday.

The arrival of an AIDE diverts Stanton's attention and so he misses the flicker of emotion that crosses Boston's face. The mention of "children" touched something deep in our hero.

But the moment passes quickly and Boston is himself again. The consummate soldier. Boston salutes sharply then departs at once, basking in his new important duty.

EXT. HOUSE - STREET - MORNING

The parade is just passing this two-story home. Bystanders hurry to keep pace with the marching band and soldiers.

A MAN rides into FRAME atop a lean and powerful HORSE. His back is TO US so we can't see his face, but damn he makes for a heroic figure. Like an Old West gunslinger.

The Man dismounts in front of the House, eyes the procession. But suddenly several Bystanders point him out and gather all around him -- whoever he is, he must be pretty famous. The Man hitches his steed then bows to them, low and friendly.

The Girls squeal in delight as the Boys clap their hands. They're starstruck. Over the moon. The crowd disperses, not wanting to bother the Man further. He turns to watch them go, revealing his FACE at last.

TIGHT ON the infamous moustached profile of JOHN WILKES BOOTH, late 20s. Charming, handsome, dramatic, witty. This guy is THE A-List star of his time.

Booth hefts a small BAG, makes for the door. But something in the street catches his eye. Booth stoops to pick up a SCRAP of the Confederate Flag. Dozens more litter the ground.

Booth runs a finger over its torn edge, grim. He carefully pockets the fabric.

INT. HOUSE - STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Booth strides along, passing PHOTOS of himself in costume on stage. More frames show cut-out NEWSPAPER COLUMNS -- reviews of his successful performances. All in all, Booth's built quite a life here.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

The large bed dominates the space. Its sheer size dwarfs its only occupant: Booth's MOTHER, frail and elderly. She HACKS loudly for several painful moments. Poor thing.

Her coughing even rouses the family DOG from its post at the foot of the bed. The dog WHINES, sympathetic.

A young woman perched in a bedside chair reaches out with a HANDKERCHIEF, tending the older woman with the love and care only a daughter can provide. And indeed she's Booth's sister, ASIA. Stoic and strong in the face of her mother's condition.

Medicinal BOTTLES and OINTMENTS are clustered on the night stand, evidence of a long illness. The silence is heavy now.

Then the dog springs up to greet the newly arrived Booth. He scratches the happy mutt under its chin, behind its ears. But Booth can't quite muster the same joy in here.

Now Booth crosses to the bed. Asia shifts back so her brother can gently sink onto the blankets. Their Mother glances up, tired yet pleased to see him. Booth takes her limp, trembling hand and caresses it.

Asia rustles in Booth's bag for a tiny TONIC BOTTLE. More medicine. Asia rises as if to prepare it... but Booth places his free hand on her arm, stopping her.

For one long, perfect beat the Booth Family finds solace in one another. A moment Booth half-wishes could last forever.

But Booth breaks the spell when he stands to kiss his mother and sister. His Mother sinks back in her pillows, content.

Yet Asia gives him a quizzical look -- *leaving already?* Booth places a hand over his heart, waves away her concern with his other -- *I'll be back soon.* Satisfied, Asia returns to fixing her Mother's new medicine. Booth admires them both, searing the image into his brain. A private, final farewell.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - FRONT ENTRANCE - NOON

A hive of activity surges before the tall red and white brick playhouse: WORKERS scour the stones clean while others post up BILLS advertising *Our American Cousin*, this night's show. More Workers gather to help erect an elevated WOOD PLATFORM.

A grand spectacle. We FOLLOW one Laborer as he hauls supplies THROUGH the front door and into --

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - HOUSE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Ahead is THE STAGE where painted BACKDROPS are wheeled into position while STAGEHANDS dodge about carrying various PROPS.

On the HOUSE FLOOR, USHERS sweep furiously as Workers unload and arrange hundreds of CHAIRS in exact rows. Slowly PAN UP off the hustle and bustle to observe THE PRESIDENTIAL BOX.

More Stagehands decorate the Box. Red, white, and blue banners are strung along the balcony. Curtains are fluffed.

Lastly four COMFY CHAIRS are set side-by-side with Lincoln's high-backed seat placed on the end nearest the door.

The Stagehands exit, leaving the Box deserted. It all looks charming and official but there's something about those empty seats. HOLD ON the Box *just* long enough to consider the fate that awaits Lincoln here. Off this ominous tableau:

INT. MARY'S BOARDING HOUSE - LOBBY - NIGHT

Dim yet tidy with comfortable furniture and a STAIRCASE leading to the upper floors. Two or three night-owl BOARDERS recline on available seats smoking pipes.

Behind the counter MARY SURRATT, 40s, the efficient proprietor, busies herself sorting bills by candlelight.

Every so often Mary's eyes flick to the door, done casually so none of the Boarders notice or indeed care. A few beats.

Then the front door opens to admit none other than Booth. He saunters over to Mary.

BOOTH
Mary, my dove, my beauty. I trust
this evening finds you well?

MARY
Same as ever I was, John Booth.

The Boarders glance over at this. They want to see the celebrity. If Booth's aware of them he gives no sign.

BOOTH
Ah, that warms my blood on this
cold night. And speaking of, might
you have a spare bed? Mine's taken.
(mock pleading)
Don't turn away this poor soul.

MARY
I suppose we can accommodate you.
But the rate is non-negotiable.

Booth, grateful, counts out BILLS as Mary selects a ROOM KEY. Collects the money then beckons Booth to follow. All routine.

INT. MARY'S BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mary and Booth climb the stairs to step into the hall. Booth glances easily over his shoulder, checking on the Boarders in the lobby. Once he's sure it's clear he nods to Mary.

Their demeanor changes instantly. Serious, urgent. Booth takes the key and proceeds to the correct room as Mary tails close behind. All part of the plan.

Booth *KNOCK-KNOCKS* on the door, pauses, then unlocks it.

INT. MARY'S BOARDING HOUSE - ROOM

The conspirators are assembled in these cramped quarters.

DAVID "DAVEY" HEROLD, late 20s, Booth's right hand man, wears a calm, thoughtful look. LEWIS POWELL, 20s, the loyal muscle, stands apart. SAMUEL ARNOLD, 30s, and GEORGE ATZERODT, also 30s, whisper together. They're all waiting on their leader.

THUNK. The door closing draws every eye to BOOTH. He surveys them back. Davey wanders over and --

DAVEY
My captain.

The rest echo him, showing their loyalty.

BOOTH
None of that, Davey.

They embrace. Old friends. Closer than brothers.

Booth the thespian pivots to address the room:

BOOTH (CONT'D)
You've all come. Ready to act,
every detail set. I chose well.

The conspirators bask in his praise. Booth lets the moment linger for maximum impact, proud.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
So there are no misgivings, any and
all of you are free to depart now,
should you wish to come no further.
Your names will never be whispered.

A pregnant pause. No one moves.

DAVEY
You do us wrong to suggest that.

SAMUEL
Hear, hear!

BOOTH
So then our roles are unaltered.
(to each in turn)
Powell, the Secretary of State.
George, the Vice President. Samuel
and Mary, secure our quarters here.
Davey, the alleyway. I will deal
with the tyrant myself. My window
is narrow yet I must make it.
(then; deliberate)
However. If I am pursued or killed,
do not waste your lives. Hide here
till your safety is assured.

Now Booth lays it all out.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
I have loved the Union beyond
expression. But this forced Union
is not that which held my heart.
Like a beautiful woman from afar...
(MORE)

BOOTH (CONT'D)

until you close the distance and
see her more plainly!

(off their grins)

For four years I have waited,
hoped, and prayed for a restoration
of that former sunshine. But now we
are to be subjugated by a vengeful,
victorious North. To wait longer
would be a crime.

(a beat)

Many will blame me for what I am
about to do. Yet posterity, I am
sure, will justify me. All of us.
We that love our country better
than life and gold. Country.

(now hear this)

I have no more words. My voice is
in my sword!

The conspirators can't cheer (not wanting to attract unwanted attention) but their profound silence speaks volumes.

Booth gazes at them, approving. *We can do this. We WILL do this!*

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A lively night at the theatre.

WIDE ON the big crowd out here. Some waiting to enter with tickets, most just hoping for a glimpse of the President.

Horse-drawn CARRIAGES pull up to the entrance as their PASSENGERS disembark, each one looking their fashionable best. An excited buzz fills the air with every arrival.

NEW ANGLE -- Boston and his troops, including Luther and Pvt. Rhodes, stand guard with their MUSKETS.

They surround the raised platform. Boston scans the masses with a practiced eye, sizing up potential threats. So far, so good. He'd be just fine with a boring and uneventful night.

Now a grand STAGECOACH approaches. The crowd senses what's coming -- *that's got to be HIM!!* They surge forward, eager.

Boston calmly -- yet firmly -- shoves the people back to prevent them climbing the stage. His Soldiers follow suit, careful not to injure anyone unnecessarily.

The stagecoach halts at the platform. BELOW, Boston now gestures to his troops -- *spread out*. The men disperse so they will not be in LINE OF SIGHT of the Lincoln party.

Just in time. A COACHMAN hops from the carriage to open the door... and there he is. ABRAHAM LINCOLN, 50s, tall and kind, steps from the carriage to WILD APPLAUSE. Humbly sweeps his TOP HAT from his head in recognition. Holds his hand out to:

MARY TODD LINCOLN, serene yet glowing in a puffy dress. Takes her husband's hand as she descends the coach. The Lincolns wave once more to the crowd then head inside the playhouse.

Boston signals again and his Soldiers resume their posts as the Lincolns' guests clamber onto the stage. MAJOR RATHBONE and fiancée CLARA HARRIS hurriedly follow after their hosts.

The multitudes continue to wave UNION FLAGS and SHOUT their excitement.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - REAR ENTRANCE - LATER

Apartment buildings box it in all sides. Further down, a corner leads off into an ALLEYWAY. Nothing else here except --

A spiffy-looking Booth RAPS on the door. It opens almost at once to display a BIG STAGEHAND. Booth doesn't tip his hand.

BOOTH

John Peanut, how the hell are you?

The Stagehand (henceforth PEANUT) shrugs amicably.

PEANUT

How may I assist you, Mr. Booth?

BOOTH

Need to gain entry, matter of fact.
Has the performance begun yet?

Booth knows the answer is "yes" but it's part of his act.

PEANUT

Yes, sir. So, regrettably, no one
is allowed backstage at present.

BOOTH

I won't breathe a word of it, my
fine man. Only aim to wish my dear
friend Laura Keene a good show.
(almost an afterthought)
If you haven't had the pleasure,
I'd be delighted to bring her round
after the final curtain for a chat.

Booth smiles, charming. But --

PEANUT

Mr. Booth, I beg pardon, yet I say
again: no one is to come backstage.

Very aware of the time, trying to keep his cool, Booth
presses a little harder.

BOOTH

Oh, stuff! Be reasonable now.

PEANUT

Mr. Booth --

BOOTH

It will be the work of a moment.
Before Laura takes the stage and
thinks I've neglected her.

PEANUT

Then perhaps you should have
arrived in a timely fashion.

Booth stares at Peanut, stymied. But Booth has a deadline he
MUST make. Every moment counts. So when Peanut attempts to
shut the door Booth PUSHES back.

BOOTH

Then, Peanut, I'll be calling on
Mr. Ford at the first opportunity
and we can discuss how one of his
stagehands denied the request of
his most coveted performer.

Precious seconds ticks away as Peanut considers him. But
Booth is not taking "no" for an answer. Though Peanut looms
over him, Booth's INTENSITY -- quiet, fierce -- intimidates
the big man. So Peanut steps back and opens the door wide:

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Booth picks his way along a series of tight passageways. All
bare wood walls and jutting beams. Thick anchoring ROPES hang
heavy overhead. But Booth never falters.

Booth soon emerges into BACKSTAGE PROPER, far more in line
with what one expects a thriving theatre to look like.

Unused, colorful BACKDROPS are stacked high. Furniture of all
shapes and sizes scattered about as if dropped and forgotten.
ACTORS in various states of costume readiness scurry past as
VETERAN STAGEHANDS half-whisper, half-shout directions. The
correct phrase for all this is "organized chaos".

A few experienced men and women notice Booth walking by. No problem -- he's a staple of the playhouse.

Booth acknowledges several of their *hellos*, maybe shakes a hand or two. But he never stops moving.

Booth reaches a LADDER leading to the CATWALK above. He scales it quickly even in his fine suit.

ON THE CATWALK Booth scans the ground for prying eyes. Nobody appears to have noticed or cared that he's disappeared.

ON STAGE the play is well underway. It's a comedy and the AUDIENCE bursts out LAUGHING at regular intervals.

Heart beating a little faster, Booth keeps to the shadows as he crosses the walkway only to stop short. From here Booth looks straight into the PRESIDENTIAL BOX.

A tense beat. A few PEOPLE are seated yet Booth's too far away to discern their faces. No choice but to go on. Booth hustles along the catwalk.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - HALLWAY

The hall is bright yet deserted. Now a SIDE DOOR eases open and after a moment Booth steps into the light. Glances about then proceeds along, senses tingling.

At last Booth reaches his destination: the VESTIBULE that leads directly into the President's Box. But what Booth sees outside causes him confusion. Or rather, what he doesn't see.

No guards. A single nearby STOOL suggests someone was posted here but left. Hardly daring to believe his good fortune, not waiting for an explanation, Booth slips inside --

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - VESTIBULE - CONTINUOUS

Booth shuts the door fully, letting his eyes adjust to the near-total darkness. He bends to grope at the carpet. Probing for something. *Where is it..?*

Aha! Booth lifts the loose rug and withdraws a short, sturdy POLE -- clearly planted at an earlier point. Braces the pole against the door frame thus BARRICADING it from THE INSIDE.

Now Booth sneaks to the THICK CURTAINS framing the second door, the one leading to the Box itself. He pulls back the fabric to expose a PEEPHOLE (again set up beforehand). Small. Easily overlooked. Booth has planned the entire thing to a T.

Even in here the O.S. Actors' loud LINES can readily be heard. Ditto the audience's hearty LAUGHTER. Booth checks over his shoulder then presses one eye to the peephole.

Booth's POV -- the side of LINCOLN'S HEAD. Unsuspecting.

Adrenaline pumping, Booth sinks back. His hand drifts to the tiny DERRINGER PISTOL and DAGGER inside his jacket.

Booth cocks his EAR to the door, listens hard. And as the Actors recite their lines, he MOUTHS THE WORDS along with them. Silent. Poised for the perfect moment to strike.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - FRONT ENTRANCE

The spectators have thinned out but Boston and his Troops remain on alert, unaware of the would-be assassin inside.

Boston scans the neighboring buildings for the umpteenth time. But try as he might to shake it, he's got an uneasy feeling in the pit of his stomach. A soldier's intuition.

It's not going away. *Screw it.* Boston shifts his rifle and marches off around the platform to secure the perimeter.

Seeing this, Luther catches up to him. Luther peers at his friend -- *something wrong?* Boston shrugs, jerks his head at the alley -- *just looking around.* Luther nods and steps back.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - ALLEYWAY

The alley is dark and quite lengthy. Shadowy DOORWAYS yawn every couple yards along the way, leading into the apartments next door. Anything could be waiting in that blackness.

Vigilant Boston patrols down the alleyway, deeper and deeper, which further ahead rounds the theatre's corner and leads to the REAR ENTRANCE. But just before Boston reaches that bend he discovers a strange sight:

Two unattended HORSES paw the ground restlessly. Saddled and bridled so somebody must own them. This all just feels *wrong*.

A NEW ANGLE from BEHIND Boston shows someone watching him. The watcher is tucked into one of the dark doorways. Slowly inches forward till we see it's -- DAVEY HEROLD.

Davey's not about to attack a soldier and risk the plan without good reason. *But if this Union dog stays too long...* Boston, musket in hand, cautiously pokes around.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - VESTIBULE

O.S. LAUGHING. The play's close to its hilarious climax, a nice contrast with the unbearable tension in here as Booth continues to non-vocally recount the lines. He knows A BIG JOKE is coming up. Now Booth withdraws the pistol. It carries just one shot. Grips it tighter. Waiting. *Waiting...*

Sharp, quick *KNOCKS* blare behind him. Someone is trying to enter the vestibule!

REVERSE -- in the HALLWAY that absent BODYGUARD has returned. Finding the door blocked, he BANGS on it more urgently.

The pole holds but the NOISE could alert Lincoln. Booth quickly considers his options then stalks to the hall. Removes the wood bar and opens the door. The Bodyguard, naturally, is surprised to see Booth. *What the..?*

TH-WHACK! Booth clubs the Bodyguard with the wood pole! Seizes the man's uniform to haul him inside out of sight. Dazed, the Bodyguard still manages to put up a good fight as Booth CLAMPS HIS HAND over the soldier's mouth so he can't raise the alarm. They scuffle, furious yet quiet.

INTERCUT WITH:

THE PRESIDENTIAL BOX -- The Lincoln party is focused on the ACTOR on stage. But Mary pauses and turns to the door. She hears something. Mary Todd rises, intent on investigating.

BOOTH -- struggles to subdue the Bodyguard. Unable to reach his knife with the man pinning his arm, Booth instead hits the Bodyguard again and again with the pole. Desperate. His short window to assassinate the President is almost up.

Mary Todd nears the door. Moves to open it --

But Lincoln touches his wife's arm, gentle. Silently urges her to sit and watch the play. A beat. Then Mary Todd returns to her seat without complaint.

Now Booth drags the Bodyguard to the carpet. Delivers a final THWACK to his head. The Bodyguard's out cold.

Breathing hard, Booth presses his ear to the door. But Booth realizes he's got time. Nobody heard him. Eases the door open and steps inside --

Inches from the President. Raises the pistol. Nothing malicious in his expression. Pure will.

A potent beat. The Big Joke happens. As BOOMING LAUGHTER fills the theatre... Booth FIRES!!

Incredibly, and *factually*, almost as if he has a sixth-sense, Lincoln picks that EXACT moment to bow his head.

For one heart-stopping, brick-shitting second Booth thinks he missed. But then Lincoln's lifeless body falls forward.

And yet the play rolls along (the loud laughter covered the gunshot). No one below shows any hint they noticed the huge event that just occurred. But the survivors in the Box do.

Mary Todd WAILS and grabs her husband's limp form, futilely shielding him. Booth springs past her, prompting Major Rathbone to jump up and block his way. Booth and Rathbone grapple wildly a moment until the Major threatens to toss Booth off the balcony. Booth manages to wriggle out his dagger. *SSSLICE*. Cuts the Major's arm, deep but non-fatal. Free, Booth turns, *LEAPS* --

Lands ON STAGE. Hard. Something in his leg SNAPS but Booth ignores it. Panting, amazed at what he's just done.

But not as stunned as the audience. People glance around, confused. *Is this still part of the show?* A few even CLAP.

Booth gazes back. The SPOTLIGHT is literally on him now. Seizing the moment, the actor in him raises the BLOODY KNIFE.

BOOTH

Sic semper tyrannis! I have done
it!

And before anyone realizes what's actually happened, Booth spins on his heel and *runs off* BACKSTAGE.

In one long manic TRACKING SHOT we follow Booth's escape: he barrels past those stowed sets; half sprinting, half limping on his injured leg. Dashes into a narrow CORRIDOR and ducks the low wood beams. Booth's momentum takes him past a sharp turn -- SMACK! -- into a wall. Rebounds off it, keeps going.

Booth glances madly over his shoulder once or twice to check if he's being pursued (but we STAY TIGHT ON Booth and never see behind him). Bursts into the passage leading to the rear door, to freedom. He surprises a few idling Stagehands. They dodge aside on instinct, getting the hell outta his path. Rounding a final corner, Booth spies the door ahead.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - ALLEYWAY

Boston strokes the horses to calm them. Suddenly he hears the SOUND of a door BANGING open around the corner.

BOOTH (O.S.)
A horse! My kingdom for a horse!

Booth hurtles into view but stops at the sight of Boston. Boston recognizes famous Booth at once but maintains his professional demeanor. Notices Booth's obvious limp.

BOSTON
Sir, are you well? What's happened?

Then he spots Booth's pistol. His bloody dagger. Boston clutches his musket tight but raises one pacifying hand.

BOSTON (CONT'D)
Steady. Please. I wish to talk.

Booth's eyes dart to the horses. Alert Boston sees it. Now at last he aims his musket at Booth.

BOSTON (CONT'D)
I implore you, sir. Do not force me
to fire. Lay your weapons down. I
have no desire to harm...

Suddenly Boston senses someone behind him. Wheels about --

As Davey slashes DOWN with a BLADE! Boston deflects the killing blow with his musket -- CLANG! Backpedals to fire but Davey is all over him, stabbing. Boston dodges away.

He feints one way and Davey bites, misses his thrust. Swift Boston knocks the knife out of his attacker's hands. He's got the shot now but Davey lunges forward and clamps down on the gun's barrel! They struggle for possession --

BANG!! The rifle discharges with a PUFF of smoke. The musket ball flies harmlessly up into the sky. But Davey's assault bought his friend and captain precious seconds.

Booth awkwardly clambers onto one horse with his wounded leg stuck out at an odd angle. To Davey:

BOOTH
Now, Davey! We away!!

Boston seizes Davey. Oh, he's going nowhere. So Booth hurls his own empty pistol at Boston, striking him in the temple and causing him to release Davey. Davey mounts a horse.

BOSTON
HALT!

Boston grabs his fallen musket, chases them out to --

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - FRONT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Boston, bleeding a little, runs full-tilt into the street. But of course he can't catch the speeding horses. *Goddamn it!*

Luther and the other Soldiers converge on him, drawn by the errant gunshot. Notices the CUT on Boston's head.

LUTHER
Boston, what -- ?

BOSTON
Horses! Someone fetch horses. We must catch those men.

His Soldiers stare back helplessly -- *what* horses?

As Boston formulates a plan, the Theatre doors EXPLODE OPEN. Hundreds stampede out with shouts of terror.

The Soldiers look stunned. But Boston won't succumb to despair just yet. Rapidly --

BOSTON (CONT'D)
Luther, take three men, secure as many steeds, and pursue the riders.
(Luther nods, does so)
The rest upstairs with me! We go to attend the President.

Boston charges off with his men in a race against time.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - CITY SQUARE - NIGHT

GALLOPING. Thunderous, breakneck. Seems to be coming from everywhere. Now PAN AROUND as Booth and Davey ride past. But strangely Booth reins to a stop. Davey copies him, uneasy.

DAVEY
Soldiers?

He glances about, expecting an army to materialize.

BOOTH
Far behind. But more will come.

DAVEY
Then we should not delay here.

BOOTH
We cannot outrun a city, lead or no. And they have our descriptions. They'll be hunting for two men.
(MORE)

BOOTH (CONT'D)
(*get it?*)
For two men.

Davey's no fool. He knows they must separate. Nods.

Booth returns it then GRITS his teeth against the throbbing pain in his leg. Brushes off Davey's concern -- *I'm fine.*

DAVEY
(relents)
To the bridge, my captain?

Booth reaches for Davey and they grasp arms in agreement. Then they ride away in opposite directions.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - SIDE STREET

Luther and his hand-picked Soldiers gallop along this remote stretch of D.C. Luther rides in the lead, head on a swivel for any sign of his prey.

The patrol stops at a broad INTERSECTION. Luther considers their next move. SCREAMS. Distant, echoing. Luther gestures and the Soldiers swing around to charge off after the noise.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A somber vigil at Lincoln's deathbed. DOCTORS bend over him (obscuring him from our view) but there's nothing to be done.

Behind the Doctors wait Stanton, various GENERALS, and CABINET MEMBERS. Stanton gazes at Lincoln's body -- it's the closest he gets to emotional. Gas lamps FLICKER weakly.

Mary Todd sits near her husband's bedside. Her grief is palpable. Hard to watch. She seems beyond tears right now.

CLOSE ON Boston posed in the doorway. A spare Doctor fusses over Boston's head wound. The Doctor dabs at it with a clean RAG. But Boston soon waves him away like an irritating fly.

Boston stares at Lincoln's prone form for several long moments, the weight of the entire night on his shoulders. *What I could have done differently. What I should have done.*

MOTION draws Boston's attention as Stanton and a General break away from the mourners to hold a whispered conference. Distracted Boston can't help but tune in. In undertone:

STANTON
(to General)
Have we apprehended the third
culprit?

Third culprit? Boston leans a little closer.

GENERAL
The assailant was spotted fleeing
the Secretary of State's home but
remains at large.

STANTON
Blast it. Has there been any change
in Seward's condition?

GENERAL
Uncertain. The Secretary may
recover, he may not.

STANTON
(sighs, then)
The Vice President should prepare
to be sworn in...

Stanton and the General bow their heads, troubled. But
Boston, though as upset as anyone, registers this new info.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - SECOND SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Booth rides alone through this quiet area. Nevertheless he's
on high alert. The Capitol Building's DOME looms distantly.

At last Booth spies A BRIDGE not far away. The bridge spans
the Potomac River below and leads out of the city. Booth
steers his horse straight for it.

Suddenly a mounted UNION SQUAD canters into view ahead. They
head Booth's way.

But Booth doesn't cower and run. Neither does he draw his
dagger for an attack. Instead Booth walks his horse casually
towards the Patrol. A few tense beats.

Then Booth saunters right past the Squad. Even mimes tipping
his cap -- *Officers*. Then he rides off freely for the bridge.

INT. WAR DEPARTMENT - HEADQUARTERS - DAWN

The chamber is packed with Military Officers of many ranks
rushing about with speed. No one here has slept all night but
the activity is busier than ever.

ANGLE DOWN on a BLUEPRINT of Ford's Theatre with all the adjoining street names neatly printed. PULL BACK to --

Boston. Briefing Stanton and his Adjutants on the aftermath of Lincoln's assassination. Going through last night's events for what could be the second or tenth time.

BOSTON

After which the conspirators, John Booth and his accomplice, were able to make their escape here.

Boston indicates the street. Stanton snorts.

STANTON

Nothing more you or your men could have done. Do not burden yourself.

BOSTON

Sir, I'm obliged to point out Booth was hurt. I should've been able --

STANTON

Sergeant. Our great leader is dead. Catching those responsible must be our sole focus. No time for guilt.

Boston pauses then nods. Stanton peers over his glasses.

STANTON (CONT'D)

Word of his death has torn through the Capitol, yet how is a mystery. Ten-thousand telegraphs could not have conveyed the news so rapidly. God help us when it spreads beyond Washington. There will be a post-war panic as never before.

BOSTON

More's the reason to capture Booth with all speed.

STANTON

Indeed. The President's killer cannot, and will not, go free one day longer. But much must be undertaken to prevent disorder here, Sergeant. That falls to you and your troops.

BOSTON

Sir? I --

STANTON

This may have been mere prelude to a far larger assault. The surviving cabinet members must be protected at all costs. Therefore, take your men to secure vulnerable points of attack. I want us prepared for any hint of a new Southern uprising.

Stanton turns back to his Adjutants, closing the matter. Boston doesn't move an inch. It was his duty to guard the President and now, having failed, Boston WILL make amends.

BOSTON

Mr. Secretary, I request to lead a small company in this manhunt.

Stanton doesn't bother to consider it.

STANTON

I haven't forgotten your military record. But your request is denied, Sergeant, as it is neither your proper rank nor command.

But Boston doesn't back down. In fact he steps even closer.

BOSTON

I understand, sir. And if you'll hear no more, then I let the matter rest, though I beg you to listen.

Stanton's silence says it all -- *go ahead*.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

This is a tragic and extraordinary situation without precedent. Yet if apprehending Booth is our priority, then should we not use every man and resource available? I know the South better than any Union man. Its landscape, its people. So if you deem me loyal and capable, sir, then I insist on joining the chase.

It's quiet. Even a few Officers working nearby crane their necks around to hear Stanton's verdict. Finally:

STANTON

It's done. You are hereby ordered to capture and return the assassin, John Wilkes Booth, to the Capitol.

BOSTON

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

STANTON

Use any means or methods at your disposal, yet the assassin must return alive to stand trial.

BOSTON

Yes, sir.

STANTON

Catch him, Sergeant. I have faith you will not allow Booth's legacy to tarnish your own. Hunt well.

EXT. MILITARY BARRACKS - PARADE GROUNDS - MORNING

WIDE ON the expansive military grounds replete with FLAG POLE and squat BUNKER HOUSES. Several wheeled CANNONS idle in bg.

Boston faces a company of his own handpicked Soldiers, about 25-50 men arranged in perfect rows. Luther stands at Boston's side in support.

BOSTON

The Union has lost its compass. Its guide, straight and true, was taken from the nation this past night.

The Soldiers shift a little -- they all feel Lincoln's loss. Boston lets the shuffling subside.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

Yet we are soldiers. Our compass is the mission. And by God, we have one now.

That gets their attention.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

To find the assassin Booth and deliver him to Washington to face trial for his unpardonable crime.

UNION SOLDIER

(calling)

Has he gone South, sir?

BOSTON

We'll know soon enough.

Low mutters of agreement follow this. Now one soldier -- call him LYLE, 30s -- speaks up louder in high spirits.

LYLE

What if he has made it, sir?

SECOND UNION SOLDIER

Aye, they'll shelter him, no doubt.
Their cowardly savior.

LYLE

Then we'll cut a bloody swath of
destruction through the South till
we've unearthed him!

Some of the Soldiers HOLLER, ready to do just that. Boston raises his hand to restore order. But the other Soldiers chime in their own opinions until their many voices are CACOPHONOUS. So Boston glances meaningfully to Luther.

LUTHER

(to the Soldiers)

Atten-tion!!

When Luther shouts the men *listen*. Boston paces before them, shaking his head in gentle humor.

BOSTON

Oh, I envy those men at Fort
Fisher: a hundred shells a minute
bombarding the walls would've been
softer on the ears than you boys!

The Soldiers crack up. Boston takes his time before --

BOSTON (CONT'D)

Our orders do not expressly forbid
violence against the South states.
However, I do. We won't harm so
much as a chicken coop in our
search. To do so would play into
the villain Booth's hands. Why else
would he strike down our President
when the War is done? To upset our
stability. To provoke us. And if we
retaliate with force, what would we
be but oppressors treading on the
weak, recovering South?

Lyle opens his mouth to argue, then closes it. His support is gone. All the Troops are rapt on Boston.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

Rash action will only inspire the last Rebels to keep fighting, thus perpetuating this conflict. Any more bloodshed is too much.

(then)

Our efforts are for Booth, lest he become a symbol for the broken Confederacy to rally behind. We'll make a meal of him, yet him alone.

UNION SOLDIER

Yes, sir!

SECOND UNION SOLDIER

Yes, sir!!

The other Soldiers echo this chant.

BOSTON

It's what our late President would wish. We hunt Booth, yes, but we leave the South untouched. For then we can ensure our fragmented nation will heal. For then... we will have fulfilled our duty.

The Soldiers erupt in rounds of "HUZZAHS!!" Even Lyle eventually joins in, though with less enthusiasm. Boston surveys his men as their cheers rise up and UP.

INT. FORD'S THEATRE - THE PRESIDENTIAL BOX - MORNING

Boston and Luther stare down at the dried blood. Lincoln's blood. Boston opens and consults his FOLDER containing pages of notes and a clipped PHOTO OF JOHN WILKES BOOTH. It's Boston's personal case file on his target.

In a slick sequence we observe Boston's investigation:

-- Boston and Luther reenact Lincoln's assassination.

-- in the VESTIBULE, Boston inspects the now-splintered wood pole.

-- he peers through Booth's peephole. Boston grunts his grudging respect. *Clever*.

-- Boston the detective jots down notes, working to get inside Booth's head.

-- now OUTSIDE, Boston scans the Theatre from this new perspective. Luther points out key features of the building.

- Boston interviews several WITNESSES. Not much help.
- Boston detains and questions: PEANUT. The man spills his whole story. Now Boston's getting somewhere.
- notepad in hand, he questions a few costumed ACTORS.
- Boston addresses a WOMAN who points at the ALLEYWAY. The gears click in his head. Judging from Boston's reaction, this Woman is a very significant witness.

INT. MILITARY BARRACKS - OFFICER'S QUARTERS - EVENING

A PORTRAIT of the late Lincoln adorns one wall. Calm and contemplative. Watching over us from Beyond.

We GLIDE OVER assembled evidence: a MAP of Washington D.C. DIAGRAMS of the escape route. The dented wood POLE. Booth's PISTOL, the murder weapon itself. Pages of witness TESTIMONY.

Boston holds court before Luther and other seated Soldiers. He lifts up a sheet of testimony (it's that Woman's).

BOSTON

Miss Anderson's account shows us the rare virtue of tardiness. Late to the Theatre, she uses a shortcut past Mrs. Mary Surratt's boarding house. And what should she see? A man matching our description of Booth's accomplice... leading two horses along! Then, arriving well into Act Two, she is astounded to observe *that same man*, horses and all, disappearing into the alley.

Luther waves this away with mild amusement.

LUTHER

So she witnessed the accomplice. How does this benefit us?

BOSTON

We now have a rough time and route for one conspirator. Now, couple that with what I told you of Secretary Stanton's clandestine chat with the Brigadier General. The attempt on Seward's life must have occurred at nearly the precise moment as the President's murder.

(MORE)

BOSTON (CONT'D)

An attack of such impeccable coordination would've required a base, so the killers could conspire prior to the deed. Yet where?

LUTHER

(a thoughtful beat)

Those screams I heard... the woman responsible told me of a blood-soaked man fleeing Seward's home, but she lost sight of the scoundrel at the crossing of 7th and H St.

BOSTON

7th and H..?

LUTHER

Yes. The "third culprit", no doubt.

But inspired Boston seizes the map. Hastily examines it.

BOSTON

By God... we've found it!

Luther and the Soldiers straighten up -- *really?!*

BOSTON (CONT'D)

That crossing contains a landmark we already know: Mrs. Surratt's boarding house.

Luther and the others jump up to prepare. Then Luther realizes Boston is still hunched over his file, scribbling.

LUTHER

Boston? This is a matter of some urgency. Why bother with your notes on the villain now?

The other Soldiers shrug, uncertain. So Boston closes the folder over Booth's picture. He shakes the wood pole.

BOSTON

Booth is clever and determined. One step ahead always. We mistake that at our peril. Thus it won't suffice simply to chase after him.

Drops the pole on the table with a conclusive *CLUNK*.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

My duty is to capture this man. And to catch him, I must know him.

EXT. STASH HOUSE - DUSK

Establishing. A nondescript dwelling in the rural Maryland countryside. The Sun hangs low.

INT. STASH HOUSE - BEDROOM - DUSK

Modest, without decoration. No photos or paraphernalia on the walls. The house might even have been abandoned if not for:

Booth and Davey posed a little apart. Waiting for cover of darkness. Booth, restless, peeks through the closed shutters.

Davey sits on the bed with a veritable arsenal arrayed before him -- two PISTOLS, a long CARBINE RIFLE, and several rounds of AMMUNITION. Davey cleans and examines the rifle, giving it a thorough once-over.

Booth squints at the descending orange light outside as Davey starts to inspect the pistols.

BOOTH

Set. Set, damn you.

Davey glances up but not at the Sun. Instead he observes his captain. Notices how Booth sweats slightly, how he massages his injured leg. Davey considers, working up to something. Finally he lays the cleaned weapons on the floor beside two cloth RUCKSACKS. *Here goes nothing.*

DAVEY

My captain, we ought to seek the aid of the physician.

Booth snorts, not unkind.

BOOTH

I value your continued concern. But I think not.

DAVEY

Not to belabor, but your discomfort is more than apparent. If only --

BOOTH

Davey. With the Union no doubt on our heels, when we must stall here for cover of dark, you'd postpone our escape further with a costly and, bluntly, unnecessary detour?
(sighs; firm)
Put this idea from your mind.

But Davey does something unusual now: he opposes Booth.

DAVEY

Nay, my captain. If we are to reach the safety of Virginia, then traveling on such an injury raises our risk of capture, as it did with that soldier at the theatre. You'd undo all our work for... pride?

Booth stares Davey down. Feeling he may have overstepped, Davey averts his gaze. Risks another look... and sees Booth smiling back at him.

BOOTH

I yield to your sage wisdom. So I suppose we're blessed the Good Lord bestowed upon me the heady notion of the contingency plan.

Davey nods then gathers up the supplies. Booth moves to help but wavers on his bad leg. Davey offers a supporting arm.

INT. MARY'S BOARDING HOUSE - LOBBY - NIGHT

The night owl Boarders gossip away in one corner. Huddled close, heads together, no doubt discussing Lincoln's death.

Mary works the counter, occupied with whatever bit of business is near at hand. But really she's trying to suppress her nerves since the whole plan has gone to hell. A beat.

Then Mary looks up and notices FIGURES through the glass. Mary instinctively circles the lobby to check on the other windows. Yep, more figures. SOLDIERS. Surrounding her hotel. Knowing what this means, she races upstairs to:

INT. MARY'S BOARDING HOUSE - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The last three conspirators drift aimlessly -- as per Booth's orders, they're hiding till it's safe to escape the Capitol. Powell still wears his blood-soaked clothes from his botched attempt on Secretary Seward's life. No one talks.

Suddenly Mary barges inside. George nearly falls off his chair in fright as Samuel rounds on Mary, alert.

MARY

Union soldiers! All around!

For a moment everyone's frozen. But as Mary's warning hangs in the air, FOOTSTEPS are heard. Pounding up the stairs.

Closer every second until... BOOM!! The door busts off a hinge as BOSTON kicks it in and it's on!

Boston and his men surge into the room. Samuel grabs a sharp LETTER OPENER, turns to fight before -- OOMPH! -- he vanishes under a dog-pile of Soldiers.

Mary SHRIEKS and throws herself at Lyle. Claws at his face. Lyle SLAMS her back against a wall. Ouch. She thrashes and flails anyway.

But big, strong Lewis Powell is another story. One Soldier rushes him with a musket, bayonet first. Powell ducks, wraps his huge hands around the rifle barrel. Wrenches it away from the soldier, nearly breaking the man's arm in the process. Ignoring the trigger, Powell swings the musket like a club. BAM! Drops another Soldier with a vicious blow to the head.

Boston dances around Powell. *Hurls* himself aside as the bigger man swings the makeshift bat at him. Powell bellows like a bull and raises the rifle in both hands -- KR-RRACK! Brings it down where Boston stood a second before, splitting the musket in half. Boston leaps at Powell, manages to slip an arm around his throat. PULLS.

Powell tosses himself about. Trying to buck Boston off. CRASH! Night stands and coat racks hit the ground. But his strength is waning. Reaches over his shoulder to get at Boston's eyes --

As Luther dives at Powell's legs! Unbalances him as Boston heaves. Topples them all to the ground, cracking Powell's head on the bed post. He rolls over, half-conscious. Done.

Gasping, Boston and Luther rise as one. Turn to watch the Soldiers drag a cringing, sobbing George Atzerodt from his hiding spot in the closet -- he's clearly the weak link. The conspirators are HANDCUFFED. A big victory.

EXT. DR. MUDD'S HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

KNOCK-KNOCK, KNOCK-KNOCK. Booth and Davey wait for a response, Booth still hanging on Davey for support. They've smartly left their weapons back with the horses out of sight.

After a moment or two the door opens to reveal DR. MUDD, 30s, with a heavy goatee and in his night shirt. To Booth:

DR. MUDD
John Wilkes Booth? Why, this is an
unexpected delight.

Davey glances around to make sure no one overheard.

BOOTH

Forgive our imposition at this hour, Dr. Mudd.

DR. MUDD

Not at all! You are always welcome. How long has it been? Six months or thereabouts? That Confederate rally down Georgia, if memory serves.

(off Booth's limp)

Dear. What service may I provide?

BOOTH

A brace, good Doctor. A brace and, if it please, a razor.

Mudd scratches his neck, confused.

INT. DR. MUDD'S HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - LATER

CLOSE ON a straight-edge RAZOR scraping against skin.

PULL BACK to Booth shaving his identifiable moustache in a MIRROR. A BASIN of water rests before him. Booth pats his wet face dry with a towel then peers at his reflection. A new man. More inconspicuous, at any rate.

Booth shuffles to a sofa then stretches out on it. Davey props some PILLOWS under Booth's leg as Mudd finishes laying out his medical supplies -- splints, bandages, the works.

Now Mudd's WIFE and YOUNG DAUGHTER, both in modesty-saving nightclothes, glide in with three tumblers of WHISKEY. Booth, Davey, and Mudd gratefully accept the amber liquid.

Dr. Mudd holds a thick leather BRACE up to Booth's leg. Judges the fit with an expert eye. *Yes, this will do.* Booth swigs his whiskey, leans back. Dr. Mudd adjusts Booth's leg then fastens the brace around it.

DR. MUDD

Regrettably, I have nothing to administer you for the pain. My usual supplies are... scarce.

Booth swirls his drink.

BOOTH

This will suffice. Much obliged, ladies.

(he "toasts" them)

We share the same burden, Doctor.

(MORE)

BOOTH (CONT'D)

For months the Union has stockpiled medicines for its army rather than its citizens. No small coincidence your remedies are in short supply.

DR. MUDD

I'd heard rumors, to be sure...

Mudd looks to Booth, who nods -- do it. Mudd YANKS on the straps to tighten the brace. This *hurts* but Booth won't even whimper. However, when he speaks his voice is strained.

BOOTH

More than rumors. Merely procuring my mother's tonic has proven taxing beyond belief. Her illness has been prolonged to no end as a result. She suffers so.

Mudd cinches the brace tight. He's seething now.

DR. MUDD

It is all the fault of that Negro-loving Lincoln.

Booth and Davey share a covert look -- *he doesn't know*.

DR. MUDD (CONT'D)

Lacking supplies, I cannot treat my patients. Now my practice, my very livelihood, is endangered. How can I provide for my family? Damn him!

Disgusted Mudd turns away to clean up his gear, but Booth feels his own excitement rising.

BOOTH

Your venom is understandable. Yet might I inquire why you then relocated this far North?

DR. MUDD

The war, what else? It was on my very doorstep and I prioritized my family's security.

(a beat)

But I remain then, thenceforth, and forever more a Southerner at heart.

Booth leans forward in anticipation.

BOOTH

So you've not heard the news?

Mudd cocks his head, curious. But Davey shakes his head meaningfully at Booth. Don't. *What are you thinking?*

BOOTH (CONT'D)

(ignores Herold)

Then allow me to lift your despair.
For my injury was not sustained
falling from my horse as I led you
to believe. No, this is a battle
scar, a badge of honor I obtained
as I leapt on stage.

DR. MUDD

I-I'm afraid I don't --

BOOTH

Rejoice, Doctor! Embrace your loved
ones as never before. The dictator
is dead... for I shot him down!

A stunned silence from the Mudd family greets this. Booth waits for the praise he's sure will come.

But instead Mudd backs away as if Booth has an infectious disease. Moves to shield his family from Booth's view.

DR. MUDD

Get out. Leave my house, sir.

BOOTH

Pardon?

DR. MUDD

Say no more. Remove yourself now.

Booth rises stiffly, can't believe his ears.

BOOTH

Doctor...

DR. MUDD

I shall not repeat myself! Y-your
very presence threatens my family!

Now Booth advances. He expected a hero's welcome, not this.

BOOTH

You call yourself a Southerner. Yet
what hospitality is this for the
man that felled our common foe?

Mudd draws his family even further back.

DR. MUDD

If you are not gone this instant...
I'll notify the authorities!

Booth stares Mudd down. Sees the doctor means it. So Booth whips out a concealed PISTOL and points it directly at Mudd's chest. Mudd's Wife and Daughter gasp in terror.

A beat. Never taking his eyes off Mudd, Booth rummages in his own pockets. Calm, to Mudd:

BOOTH

How much for the brace, Doctor?

Mudd just gapes at him.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

The brace. Services were rendered
and payment will be given.

Mudd mumbles some number that we can't make out. Doesn't matter as Booth pulls out several BILLS and drops them on the couch, the portrait of the honorable Southern gentleman.

Still aiming at Mudd, Booth gestures to Davey and they move to the door. The leg brace CLUMPS with every other step. They slip outside, shutting the door firmly behind them.

EXT. MARYLAND - ROAD - DAWN

The early, pre-light calm. Vast countryside abounds all around. A lonely SHEPHERD tends his flock of SHEEP.

TIGHT on a MUD PUDDLE. Then a soldier's BOOT splashes right into it. Before the ripples have abated, a second boot hits the water. Then another. Boot after boot plunges down.

NEW ANGLE shows Boston leading his whole company. Marching with purpose. Arranged in orderly file, the Soldiers are an impressive sight to behold. The Shepherd watches them go.

EXT. MARYLAND - COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Booth and Davey ride over rolling green fields far off the main road. They sag in their saddles, bone-tired.

Yet Booth is still reeling from Mudd's reaction. Lost in disturbed, confused thought. Davey shakes himself, scans the landscape then glances up at the bright Sun overhead. Booth notices and snaps out of his reverie.

BOOTH

How often must you do that?

DAVEY

Apologies, my captain. But
traveling in daylight...

BOOTH

Oh? And how else are we to make up
time lost with our little detour?
We are alone here. All's well. So
will you, please, desist?

Realizing it's useless to argue now, Davey fixes his eyes ahead as Booth lapses back into silence. He knows he went overboard. Davey was only being cautious, after all. So Booth turns to make amends.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Davey...

When he notices Davey staring intently at a distant ridge. There, just at the crest, are many MOUNTED FIGURES. Booth and Davey rein to an abrupt stop.

DAVEY

Bounty hunters?

Even from here, we can see the Figures' RIFLES. And they vastly outnumber the two fugitives. The Hunters haven't seen them yet but that won't last.

Booth quickly casts about. Spots a TREE THICKET nearby, points it out to Davey. They steer their horses for the shelter. On the ridge, the Bounty Hunters start down the hill. Nearer. Nearer...

Too late. Booth and Davey reach the trees and dismount at once (Booth with more difficulty owing to his brace). They lead their steeds on foot until they're all hidden.

The horses WHINNY nervously. Booth soothes them with pats as Davey spies on the manhunters.

Booth and Davey check their weapons -- they have no hope of winning a shootout but best to be prepared. A grim silence.

Until the horses WHINNY! again. Louder. No amount of comforting will calm them. Booth and Davey tug hard on the leads but the horses won't budge. Davey shoots a hurried glance at the Hunters.

Still no sign they've noticed but at this close distance it won't be long till they hear those NOISES. That leaves only one, brutal option. Pragmatic as ever:

DAVEY (CONT'D)
I'll keep watch, my captain. But
you must silence the beasts.

Booth is openly shocked.

BOOTH
(in undertone)
Have you taken leave of your
senses, man? Slaughter these steeds
after they carried us so loyally?

DAVEY
(in undertone; insistent)
Their cries will be our end! Do it
now or we bear the punishment!

But Booth shakes his head. To him, a man must have a code and his doesn't include killing innocent animals.

So before Booth can stop him, Davey withdraws a long HUNTING KNIFE from his rucksack. Steps to the horses and --

SLISSS. SLISSS. Davey slits both animals' throats! He feels wretched yet it's for the best. But Booth clenches his jaw. Furious. Horrified. Watches their BLOOD stream out.

The horses sink to the dirt, lifeless. Davey clutches at Booth's arm and Booth allows himself to be led away. Off the dying horses:

INT. DR. MUDD'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mudd and his Wife sleep in their cozy bed. Soon faint RUSTLING can be heard O.S. The couple slumbers on. Then -- *CREEEAK*. The bedroom door eases open as Boston's Soldiers file stealthily inside and surround the bed.

Mudd rolls over, opens one bleary eye. Finds himself staring at several MUSKET BARRELS pointed at his face.

INT. DR. MUDD'S HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - LATER

Blazing candles provide just enough illumination to see by. Mudd is seated with Luther standing guard over him. Lyle and several Troops wait beside Mudd's Wife and Daughter.

Boston examines the doctor's BOOKCASE. Thick, leather-bound volumes are stacked neatly on every shelf.

DR. MUDD
I demand to know the meaning of
this intrusion!

Boston ignores him. Runs his hands along the clean shelves.

DR. MUDD (CONT'D)
How dare your men frighten my
family, sir? Have they no decency?

Boston checks his fingers for dust but they're spotless.
Turns to Mudd as his gaze falls on the three tumblers left
over from Booth and Davey's visit. This registers with him.

DR. MUDD (CONT'D)
You're here without my due consent!
I insist you leave or --

BOSTON
This is an impressive collection of
literature, Dr. Mudd.

DR. MUDD
You know me? How?

BOSTON
(as if he didn't hear)
You must be a lover of the written
word to have amassed it all.

DR. MUDD
What? What lawyer's ruse is this?!

BOSTON
No ruse, doctor.
(then)
A learned man. Are you acquainted
with the tale of Androcles?

Suspicious Mudd keeps quiet. So Boston simply proceeds:

BOSTON (CONT'D)
Androcles was the slave of a Roman
Consul in Africa, who escaped from
his master by taking refuge in the
den of a man-eating lion. Yet the
lion had a thorn impaled in one paw
and it was festering. So Androcles
extracted the spike, thus gaining
the lion's loyalty and sparing both
their lives.

(MORE)

BOSTON (CONT'D)

But now let us suppose once
Androcles removed the thorn, the
lion, rather than becoming tame,
slaughtered a town.

(a long beat)

Should not Androcles receive part
of that blame? He knew the lion's
nature but chose to aid it heedless
of the outcome.

DR. MUDD

I fail to see the relevance --

BOSTON

You aided and abetted John Booth
and his accomplice Davey Herold.

Caught dead to rights, Mudd still puts up a strong front.

DR. MUDD

That is false! Absolute hearsay!

BOSTON

Every Union citizen will seek your
demise. But I shall not allow that.

(quiet)

I've had my fill of violence
between neighbors. If the Union is
to be rebuilt, we must show mercy
to those that have made mistakes.

Luther looks on, proud of Boston's sentiment.

DR. MUDD

This is mere intimidation. This...

BOSTON

Nay. The previous night my company
arrested Booth's co-conspirators. I
interrogated each till Mr. George
Atzerodt, bargaining for clemency,
disclosed his captain had devised a
contingency plan in case of injury.
He informed me Booth would call on
an old friend, a Dr. Samuel Mudd,
for treatment if the need arose.

DR. MUDD

The rambling of one unstable... you
have no proof Booth ever arrived!

BOSTON

The proof is plain. It is in the
neatness of your household.

(MORE)

BOSTON (CONT'D)
Top to bottom, spick and span...
save for those glasses.

Mudd's gaze automatically flickers to the dirty tumblers.

BOSTON (CONT'D)
Is it common for you and your Wife
to imbibe with your young daughter?
No? Then why three whiskeys?

A beat as Mudd sweats bullets. Boston presses his advantage.

BOSTON (CONT'D)
You hosted guests. Yet I surmise
the encounter did not end to your
liking and the strain banished all
notion of cleaning from your mind.
(gentle)
Maintaining your deception now not
only risks yourself but your family
as well. Please, Doctor. Assist me
so that I may aid you all in turn.

Mudd stiffens, falters, and then finally cracks.

DR. MUDD
I-I did tend John Booth. Yet I
swear I did so without any prior
knowledge of his scheme!

Boston surveys Mudd with relief. Gives the doctor's trembling
knee several hard, reassuring PATS.

BOSTON
I believe you. But why did you not
alert authorities after Booth left?

DR. MUDD
And incriminate myself, sir? I have
done far too much. But I can make
amends! I assure you the traitor
Booth will head South for refuge.
Thus he must cross the Potomac...

BOSTON
And there is but one viable place
for him to make that attempt. Yes,
I know it, Doctor. The war took me
thence and back again.

Boston signals his men and they move out. But Boston pauses
at the door as a new idea occurs to him.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

As a Southern sympathizer, I'd have wagered you'd stand by Booth even under duress. Yet you give him up?

DR. MUDD

No, Sergeant. Since the assassin quit my house, I've heard much news from the South, which expresses its populace's willingness to assist in his capture. They fear his act will incur the Union's wrath upon them.

BOSTON

Indeed? How that must have alarmed him. A blow to his very psyche...

Mudd shrugs but it's a revelation for Boston, now one big step closer to understanding Lincoln's assassin.

EXT. RURAL TOWN - STREET - DAWN

This quaint settlement is devoid of life so early. A stack of NEWSPAPERS tied with twine idles on one corner, ready to be handed out.

Now a SHOE steps INTO FRAME near the stack. Male hands reach down to undo the string. The top paper is removed as we TILT UP to find: Davey. He browses the headlines, all of which are about the manhunt for Booth and the recent arrests.

Davey stows the paper under an arm then turns to go. But he lingers when he notices a WANTED POSTER, big reward and all, plastered to a building. Pictures of himself and Booth glare back at him. So Davey rips it down and takes it as well.

INT. CABIN - DAWN

Layers of dust and sprawling cobwebs suggest the cabin has been deserted for some time. A filthy, bare fireplace. Maybe a hole in the roof. In other words, the perfect hiding spot.

Davey sorts supplies as Booth intensely scans the newspaper. The wanted poster lays nearby, crumpled.

BOOTH

Johnson lives. Seward recovers.
(reads, deflating)
They've... all been apprehended.
Even Mary...

Davey nods solemnly.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

That craven, impotent Atzerodt! I trusted him. Yet by all accounts, he never even approached Johnson.

(turns a page)

"Southerners denounce esteemed actor turned..." And here: "Pursuit of murderer continues..." Another: "A cowardly act of desperation. A vile crime without merit or..."

Booth's hands SHAKE so hard he can't read the words. Drops the paper, sick to his stomach.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

My own countrymen. Not only those in the North, but *my own countrymen* renounce and spit on me. I struck for my country, that alone. Yet now behold the cold hand it extends me!

Davey now kneels beside Booth, tries to comfort him --

DAVEY

My captain. Ah, right or wrong only God can judge us, not man, n-not...

BOOTH

God cannot pardon me if I have done wrong. Yet I cannot see any wrong, except...

Booth trails off. Whatever's tearing at him, he can't voice it. Not yet. Instead he smooths out the wanted poster. Peers at his own moustached photo. As if to convince himself:

BOOTH (CONT'D)

I do not repent the blow I struck, though I hated to kill. But... what did it achieve? What new day have I wrought?

EXT. CITY - VARIOUS LOCATIONS

We now observe the ripples of Lincoln's death spreading across the North. Prevalent throughout the sequence is a strong NATIONAL MOOD of confusion, rage, and despair:

TIGHT on a PICTURE of Lincoln. Then HANDS rip it apart! The people responsible -- call them BOOTH SYMPATHIZERS -- cheer, vindicated. But suddenly a larger MOB descends on them. These new arrivals wear BLACK RIBBONS and ARMBANDS. They're LINCOLN SUPPORTERS. They attack the Booth Sympathizers with ferocity.

A CITY SQUARE: a massive rally is in progress as crude EFFIGIES of Booth are hanged and burned. Northerners shout, rave. Vengeful as all hell.

A PHOTOGRAPHY STORE: the shop rests on a commercial street. Big, beautiful WINDOWS show off the store's many wares, including several photos of BOOTH on stage. *SMASH!!* A BRICK sails right through those elegant windows. Armed with torches and bricks, more Northerners force their way inside. Ransack the store and its inventory. Shatter the photos of Booth.

THE COUNTRYSIDE: UNION SOLDIERS scour the landscape. Search riverbanks and undergrowth for signs of Booth. BLOODHOUNDS tug their leashes as the Soldiers try to pick up his trail.

A CITY STREET: More of those black ribbon Northerners shepherd along a dozen or so Booth Sympathizers. The captives all wear bulky signs round their necks reading: "Assassin Sympathizer". The Northerners taunt their prisoners, throw garbage at them. Barbaric.

A CITY PARK: Full scale riot. It's anarchy as both sides go at it *pell-mell*. Soldiers arrive to establish order. Warning shots are fired. BANG-BANG-BANG! Arrests are made seemingly at random. The Union is threatening to unravel.

EXT. MARYLAND - CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Boston's entire company is spread out under the stars. Tents and crackling campfires dot the area.

The Soldiers not on guard duty cluster round the fires. A big group includes Luther, Lyle, and Pvt. Rhodes engaged in a heated debate.

PVT. RHODES

Well, I can't rightly say which is the worse: the news or the rumors.

LYLE

To my mind, seems the sympathizers deserve their comeuppance.

A few Soldiers grumble their agreement.

PVT. RHODES

(over them)

Is this not the very predicament the Sergeant prophesied? See how the assassin's deeds provoke us?

LYLE

Piss on that. Those that support him are nigh as wicked. What more should traitors expect?!

LUTHER

Yet if the riots in the North are so appalling, it only heightens the mission we have before us here.

The spectating Soldiers nod at this.

LUTHER (CONT'D)

Our aim is not vengeance, but rather to ensure the Union can continue to mend. As a whole.

PVT. RHODES

For our families.

UNION SOLDIER

(catching on)

For our children.

PVT. RHODES

Aye, and for theirs!

The argument grows even louder. Sensing there won't be a consensus anytime soon, Luther breaks away from the campfire. Doesn't get far before he spies Boston outside a tent.

Seated at his own small fire, Boston merely listens to his men fight. Aloof. Wearing that same troubled look he had when Stanton mentioned "children".

Luther hangs back. Happy to give his friend space. But after a moment, Boston sees Luther there and invites him to sit.

LUTHER

A rambunctious lot, aren't they?

Boston half-grins but it quickly fades.

LUTHER (CONT'D)

What ails you, Boston?

BOSTON

I was reflecting on our duty. Pondering where the assassin Booth may be this moment, what he must be experiencing. I find the exercise stimulating, albeit troubling.

Said convincingly. Still Luther intuits there's more here. He notices how Boston watches the Soldiers' quarrel.

LUTHER

Does their clamor disturb you so?

A pointed moment, then --

BOSTON

My mind is preoccupied unto...
distraction... with thoughts of my
wife.

Patient Luther just listens.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

Dead these eight years. Issues
during childbirth. You recall.

LUTHER

A nobler, more enchanting woman
I've never met.

BOSTON

I wanted to crawl under the dirt
with her. Her and our unborn child
both. I still do.

LUTHER

And yet that accomplishes nothing.

Boston lowers his head.

BOSTON

My wife's passing was intolerable.
But... I never had the privilege to
so much as meet my child before it
was snatched away. When I think of
what might have been?

(a beat)

For whom do I now struggle to
preserve the Union? To whom will I
pass on what little legacy I have?

LUTHER

(carefully)

Could you not begin again? She
would wish you happiness, I know. A
new family..?

BOSTON

My family is dead.

Luther doesn't push. Sees Boston made his choice here.

LUTHER

Still, apprehending John Booth is first. All else may yet fall into alignment in the time that follows.

When Boston speaks, it comes from deep within -- perhaps even he didn't realize how long he's been waiting to say this.

BOSTON

When we've arrested the villain -- and mark my words, we shall -- and he's cowering, prostrate, before a jury of honest Americans, then our duty will be concluded. Each man in this company will return to his own household secure in the knowledge that he, through this tireless pursuit, had a hand in avenging our deceased Great Father. Each will tell this tale to their children. And they will pass it to theirs.

(then)

But I have no one to carry it on. My family is gone from the Earth. No son or daughter of mine will ever recount this venture to their children. There will be no story of me, Luther. Not a shred of memory. And so I must contribute greater than any man here. I must be the one to catch him.

LUTHER

But... is it not enough that he will have been caught? It'd make any difference who does the deed. Our purpose is the unification of the Union, as you yourself said.

BOSTON

The Union. Yes, of course.

Luther still looks concerned, doesn't quite believe him. HOLD ON a few SPARKS from the fire drifting up into the night sky.

EXT. MARYLAND - ROAD - DAY

Boston marches at the head of the company. Reaching a fork in the road, Boston ignores the SIGNPOST and leads his Troops down one path -- he really knows the land.

Suddenly a SCOUT scurries to the front. Salutes smartly to Boston, who signals for the company to halt. The Scout whispers in Boston's ear then points down the road.

A few MESSENGERS in Union blue gallop on horses towards the company but don't slow till they reach Boston. One dismounts.

MESSENGER

Sergeant Corbett, sir?

BOSTON

Present and accounted for.

MESSENGER

Sir, I carry a message from Secretary of War Stanton.

Boston stretches out a hand.

BOSTON

Let's have it.

MESSENGER

Beg pardon, sir. But the Secretary deemed the contents too important to inscribe on paper.

The nearest Soldiers shift a little -- *more bad news?*

BOSTON

Then proceed, Private.

MESSENGER

The Secretary charged me to convey that the situation and stability in the Union is untenable as long as the assassin John Booth roams free. He therefore requests an immediate capture of the criminal. I am to report that you have apprehended Booth, if this proves accurate.

BOSTON

At this moment... the assassin is not in hand. But you may assure Secretary Stanton I have a firm conviction that Booth is no further than fifteen miles ahead, half a day's hard march at the most.

MESSENGER

I regret, Sergeant, that the Secretary was explicit in his orders.

(MORE)

MESSENGER (CONT'D)

If you have neither the criminal in custody, nor can indicate precisely his current location, I am empowered to offer you conditions. Will you hear them?

Boston grits his teeth.

BOSTON

I will.

MESSENGER

If you proceed in your pursuit yet Booth escapes to Virginia, or even if his arrest comes by other means, the Secretary's trust in you will have been extinguished. You shall be demoted and publicly disgraced.

(then)

But should you elect to abdicate your command now, permit another to oversee the manhunt, your rank and honor will be preserved intact.

This feels really close. A long pause as Boston wrestles internally. The silence is almost too much.

Just as it seems Boston's sense of duty will win out --

BOSTON

Inform the Secretary I will retain my command, until such time as I am unfit in body or mind to do so.

The Messenger nods then hops on his horse. They ride away. Not wasting anymore time, Boston gestures for his Soldiers to *double-time*. They march briskly after him. Off Boston, ready to make good on his choice, knowing he can't turn back.

EXT. THE POTOMAC RIVER - RIVERBANK - DAY

Tall, thick REEDS and water plants cover the embankment as BIRDS soar overhead. The river runs gently past.

Further along stands a short PIER, probably privately owned. A FISHERMAN dangles his line in the water. Just savoring the lazy day. Tied to the pier, his tiny SKIFF bobs in the water.

We find Booth and Davey literally laying low amidst the dense plants. So low in fact, that the river laps right up against their shoes and soaks their trousers. A swarm of pesky GNATS flit about their heads. Irritating.

Adding to their discomfort is the blazing SUN, which causes both fugitives to sweat profusely.

Booth swats away some bugs then belly-crawls over to spy on that Fisherman and his boat -- they're staking it out until the guy leaves his craft unguarded. Now Booth cranes his neck around to observe the opposite shore:

Virginia. Only one broad river separates Booth and Davey from (hopefully) friendlier Southerners and safety. Being so close, yet so far, does nothing to improve Booth's mood.

NEW ANGLE as Davey arches his stiff back. He rummages in those rucksacks to check their rations.

Booth drags himself to his partner, quietly cursing their situation. Davey notices Booth approaching.

DAVEY
(re: the Fisherman)
He remains still, my captain?

BOOTH
Damn idiot hasn't caught so much as
a minnow all day. What keeps him?!

Davey examines the bags again, grim. Booth picks up on it.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
It occurs to me our rations may be
dwindling. Disprove me, Davey.

He can't. So Davey offers Booth a BREAD CRUST from their stock but Booth doesn't even want it. Instead he nestles into the reeds, shuts his eyes. Settling in for the loooong wait.

EXT. THE POTOMAC RIVER - UNION DOCKS - EVENING

A busy port staffed with all manner of Union Soldiers. An impressive GUNBOAT is anchored at the dock. Its ramp is down as CREW MEMBERS load supplies and munitions.

Boston -- with Luther, Lyle, and others in tow -- confronts the ship's rigid CAPTAIN at the ramp's base.

BOSTON
... As such, Captain, I have
authority from the Secretary of War
to commandeer any resource I judge
useful to the pursuit.

CAPTAIN
And again, you'll not have my ship.

BOSTON

You would impede the search?

CAPTAIN

I would impede nothing, Sergeant.
If your senses haven't left you,
observe the other vessels docked
here. Requisition one of them.

There are indeed several other small SHIPS moored at the dock. Yet the Captain's is easily the largest and best.

BOSTON

Those craft, stalwart though they
may be, cannot bear my entire
company. Slipperier still, should
we encounter resistance...

CAPTAIN

Resistance? From two men? For two
fugitives you illegally appropriate
my ship? Nay, sir!

BOSTON

This is not horse-trading --

CAPTAIN

No, it is theft!

Boston and the Captain lock eyes. No other choice now.

BOSTON

You force my hand at your peril.
(to his Soldiers)
Present.

At once his Soldiers raise their muskets. The dock ERUPTS in a frenzy of surprise but nobody risks interfering.

CAPTAIN

You would not dare --

BOSTON

Do we not desire the same end, as
loyal servants of the Union? The
arrest and trial of the President's
assassin is paramount. So in point
of fact that mission, my mission,
supersedes your admirable devotion
to your vessel. Oh, I dare do much.

A beat. Then the Captain backs down. Boston's Troops march up the gangplank in orderly fashion. As Boston moves to join them, Luther darts in for a private word.

LUTHER

That did not seem prudent, Boston.

BOSTON

Prudent? The man was too stubborn by half and we needed his vessel.

LUTHER

But to use threat of force 'gainst Union men. Might that not hazard making enemies of our allies?

BOSTON

It pains me, to be sure. Yet in this most unprecedented situation, with the President's murderer at large, such drastic action is now necessary. To not act would have been the greater crime. Our cause is just. Take solace, Luther.

Boston steps on deck and is immediately swallowed in the hustle and bustle. Luther can only stare after him.

EXT. THE POTOMAC RIVER - RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Booth STARTLES awake in a cold sweat, reeling from some bad dream. Gets his bearings then glances around for Davey --

But he's gone! Booth hunts about, realizes the rucksacks and rifle are missing, too. Booth's breath comes hard and fast. A vulnerable moment.

A soft CRUNCHING alerts Booth that someone's coming. On edge, he seizes the pistols, waits... but it's Davey. Yet Booth doesn't relax as Davey drops the gun and now-full rucksacks.

DAVEY

Urgent news.

Booth merely stares. Quiet yet dangerous:

BOOTH

What in God's name possessed you to leave without a word?

DAVEY

My-my captain? Once you slept, I ventured to the nearby farm to scavenge supplies. This... took longer than anticipated, I confess.

BOOTH
I wonder. Perhaps something more
potent than loyalty drew you back.

DAVEY
Are-are you suggesting... and when
none but I would have returned...

BOOTH
Oh, spare us both! Out with it!

DAVEY
(explodes)
All your false promises?! Your
pretensions that-that we'd be
vindicated?! All for naught --

But Davey is cut off as Booth lunges! They wrestle in the
grass. Clumsy. Like rowdy kids in the schoolyard. All their
fears and frustrations channeled into this fight.

At last Davey throws the injured Booth off. They roll onto
their backs, winded. Finally both men start to settle down.

BOOTH
Get-get on with your news.

DAVEY
Soldiers. I... spied them boarding
a gunboat... headed this way.

BOOTH
Then we dare not linger. To the
boat, at once.

As Davey watches Booth struggle to stand -- not helping him
for once -- TIME CUT TO:

EXT. THE POTOMAC RIVER - PIER - NIGHT

Booth hunkers in the skiff's prow as Davey SAWS the rope with
his hunting knife. SNAP. Hops in then shoves the boat out
onto the river proper. Davey hefts the oars and starts to
row, careful to make as little noise as possible.

Booth, pistol in hand, navigates in the deep dark of night.
Wary for rocks and logs. Off this slow, dangerous crossing:

EXT. THE POTOMAC RIVER - GUNBOAT - NIGHT

CHUGGA-CHUGGA-CHUGGA. The steamship surges through the water.

ON DECK Boston stands beside Luther, who steers the craft. The few Soldiers up here (the majority are below deck) peer over the side for unusual activity. INTERCUT as needed with:

THE SKIFF -- as Booth and Davey struggle on. In the dark, it's almost impossible to tell how far they've gone.

Suddenly Booth holds up a hand to Davey -- *you hear that?* Davey stops rowing as they listen hard. There! The distant yet distinct SOUNDS of a big steamship. Coming their way.

The CHUGGA-CHUGGA grows louder. A dear in the headlights, Davey looks to Booth for a plan. Booth thinks fast as:

BOSTON -- scans the river again. Though he can't see the skiff, he's energized. Eager. Some instinct tells Boston he's close to something.

Back in the skiff Davey grips his rifle tight, watching Booth for instructions. One second... two... three...

The CHUGGA-CHUGGA is almost deafening. Then Booth nods pointedly at the black river. Davey understands at once.

SPLOOSH! Into the water they dive. Booth clings to the frayed ROPE as the heavy brace threatens to drag him down. Davey treads water on the boat's other side. They draw long, deep breaths. HOLD them. Then they duck under the surface --

Just as a Soldier notices the boat! Boston and his Troops hurry to join the spotter, lighting torches for vision.

Empty. The Soldiers are disappointed, mutter darkly. But Boston continues to watch the skiff. And watch it. And --

Finally even Boston returns to his post. The gunboat's bulk shunts the smaller ship aside, rocking it wildly. UNDER THE WATER, Booth fights to hold onto his lifeline. Nearly drowns.

Unable to wait any longer, Booth and Davey BREAK the surface. Gasping, exhausted. The gunboat has sailed on but is still too close for comfort. Off the desperate fugitives:

INT. ELIZABETH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A KNIFE plunges down into a FISH -- THUNK. Takes off its head in one stroke. THUNK. Another fish, another head. Reveal:

The knife's wielder. ELIZABETH QUEENSBERRY, mid 20s, a homespun yet idealistic Southern gal. Good with her hands if that chopping is any indication. The kitchen is small yet well-kempt. Downright homey.

Her daughter, LUCY, 8, looks on with enthusiasm as Elizabeth scrapes off the fish's SCALES with her blade.

ELIZABETH
Alright, hack away.

Lucy takes the knife as Elizabeth places a new fish before her. Lucy squints, takes aim -- THUNK. Yay! One more cleanly decapitated fish.

Elizabeth smiles at Lucy looking pleased with herself.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
You ain't done yet. Finish cleaning it, now.

Copying her mother, Lucy scrapes off the scales. Then Lucy spots her mother stashing the HEADS in a covered PAIL.

LUCY
We keeping all them fish heads?

ELIZABETH
Sure are, Lucy dear. They're gifts.

Lucy wrinkles her nose -- eww!

LUCY
Gifts? For what, Mama?

ELIZABETH
Why, we're gonna send them upriver, all the way to Washington, for our victorious Northern conquerors.

Lucy giggles. She likes "playing Rebels". Elizabeth sweeps the trash into a BUCKET, passes it to Lucy to toss outside.

EXT. ELIZABETH'S HOUSE - BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Overlooking the river, right on the bank. But just below --

We find Booth and Davey. Their skiff has run aground deep amongst the reeds. They scramble up the riverbank but it's muddy, treacherous. They slide back down in defeat. They pause at the sound of FOOTSTEPS on the porch above.

Knowing they need help and fast, Booth seizes the moment and pokes his head out. Sees Lucy with her bucket. She sees him.

Before the girl can scream, Booth raises a finger to his lips. Still Lucy wavers between fear and curiosity. So Booth takes a chance.

BOOTH
 (low; urgent)
 Please, my dear, hide us. Soldiers,
 terrible fiends, pursue us. Please.

IN THE HOUSE: Elizabeth prepares their fish supper. She glances up when alarmed Lucy reenters. Off Elizabeth, about to receive some shocking news --

BELOW THE PORCH: Booth and Davey wait with bated breath for Lucy, for someone, to come.

Suddenly Elizabeth appears at the railing. Takes in the scene at a glance then peers down the river where the gunboat still prowls the waters. And so Elizabeth, a strong woman of the South, makes a quick decision. Ducks behind the rail.

Now a long ROPE drops over the sill. Elizabeth rises, fastens it around a porch post. Davey immediately ascends, clothes DRIPPING, to help her haul Booth up after.

EXT. THE POTOMAC RIVER - GUNBOAT

The search continues. The Soldiers lean over the side, thrusting their torches as close to the water as possible.

Boston looks on, debating. Turns to Luther at the helm.

BOSTON
 Take us around, Luther.

Luther twists the wheel but gives Boston a quizzical glance.

BOSTON (CONT'D)
 Booth is too clever to sail far in treacherous waters. He hopes we'll venture onwards and pass him by.
 (to Pvt. Rhodes)
 Rouse the men. I want as many vigilant eyes as can be mustered. No one slumbers till the criminals are found.

Rhodes loyally hurries away.

EXT. THE POTOMAC RIVER - TOWN - AFTERNOON

A new day. Now in daylight, we see Elizabeth's is one of a handful of HOUSES built along the mighty river. A sleepy, peaceful settlement.

INT. ELIZABETH'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Booth wakes from a deep slumber. He leans forward in bed and peers around, disoriented.

The CURTAINS are drawn so the light is dim. A chest of drawers squats nearby while shelves line the walls. Then Booth spots a FRAMED PHOTO of a distinguished CONFEDERATE SOLIDER hanging in prominence above the shelves.

As Booth examines the picture, Elizabeth steps inside with a CUP of hot tea. Notices Booth studying the photograph.

ELIZABETH

My late husband. He was felled at
Antietam, that bloody day.

Booth sits up straighter and tries to look more presentable.

BOOTH

My deepest condolences, madam.
(re: the photo)
It was not my intent to pry, nor to
outstay my welcome. And me, in your
marital bed...

ELIZABETH

I decided it best we seclude you
here, if by chance any unwanted
guests had come calling.

She hands him the tea as Booth stares, not following.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I know you, sir.

Booth just manages to cover his shock. Sets the tea aside.

BOOTH

I fear we've never been acquainted.
Thus I think you mistaken --

ELIZABETH

I recognize your face. This charade
is unwarranted, Mr. Booth.

It takes a second for Booth to recall how to breathe.

BOOTH

Then you know the peril my presence
places you under. I take my leave.

ELIZABETH

Not a soul outside my house knows
of your habitation here. And Lucy,
my daughter, watches over that
rather jumpy-looking man in the
drawing room. Mr. Herold I presume,
if all those posters are reliable.
He'd give a frog stiff competition.

Booth scoffs. Sensing issues here, Elizabeth changes subject.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I instructed Lucy to conceal your
boat and anchor it tight as she's
been learned, so it won't drift
away and expose you.

BOOTH

Well... I must sincerely thank
Lucy. And you as well, Miss--?

ELIZABETH

"Elizabeth" will do just fine, if I
may address you as "John".

BOOTH

Then, Elizabeth, I am indebted to
you and will repay this kindness at
the first opportunity... though I
am... poor in pocket at the moment.

But Elizabeth slowly shakes her head.

ELIZABETH

You've done more for me and mine
than I could ever match.

(off Booth's look)

To strike down the orchestrator of
this terrible war? The oppressor
that enabled the deaths of so many,
my husband included? No, sir. No
favor or repayment is needed.

Booth's touched. Still he can't fight his growing doubt.

BOOTH

I am humbled. Yet I accomplished
little. Worse, I martyred the man.

(a beat)

There will be no glory for me.

ELIZABETH

Glory, John?

Booth is exhausted. Not just from the stress and constant running, but from SOMETHING DEEPER.

BOOTH

After being hunted through woods and rivers like a dog, with every man's hand against me... I am here in despair. And why? For doing what Brutus was honored for. And yet I, for striking down a greater tyrant than he ever knew, am now looked upon as a common cutthroat.

ELIZABETH

By the rabble! What are the mutterings of folk *now* when our actions speak louder *for all coming time*? And for your great deed, John, I see rewards in paradise.

Booth wants so badly to believe her. But:

BOOTH

I am sure there is no pardon in Heaven since man condemns me so.
(*for example*)
Behold. After years of devotion, even my lone companion waiting without... thinks to desert me.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Herold? He stands behind you. Why would he tarry here, if not?

Booth gives a short, rueful laugh.

BOOTH

I saw the change come over him upon reading the South's denouncement of me. Not a day past, I woke to find Davey had gone. He rejoined me with amendments and apologies... but I know his heart. The length of his absence was too great to have been scavenging, as he claimed. Nay, he considered leaving me then but knew there would be no shelter for him. He returned out of cowardice.

(then)

Yet... how can I fault him? We are without allies, without hope. Never have I been so alone. Hiding from bounty hunters.

(MORE)

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 Near drowned in escape. Why should
 I endure such suffering when I
 cannot succeed?!

Elizabeth sits beside him on the bed, thinking hard.

ELIZABETH
 Your plight is not insignificant.
 Yet to suggest you are alone? This
 surely devalues and disgraces those
 still praying for your victory.

BOOTH
 But there are no such persons! My
 fellows are locked away. My family?
 I have no doubt brought misery upon
 them, to my everlasting shame! I
 have a mind and greater desire to
return to Washington and --

ELIZABETH
 Then you, John, are the greatest
 coward I have ever encountered! Is
 your self-pity without end?!

BOOTH
 I am ABANDONED! With the curse of
 Cain upon me! Not embraced as a
 patriot but scorned for a murderer!
 And yet I am selfish, for if...

Now the idea that's been weighing on him *forces* its way out:

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 If the world knew my heart, that
 one blow should have made me *great*.

The confession of his selfish desire causes Booth to break
 down. A heavy beat. Booth curls up, the picture of defeat.

ELIZABETH
 If you acted only under the belief
 that you would be lauded in the
 South, christened a champion of the
 people, then you are a damned fool.

Unused to hearing a lady talk this way, Booth glances up.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Yet I surmise deep in your soul,
 outside your waking thoughts, you
 knew you'd never be received as a
 hero. Surely you ain't that blind.

BOOTH

I... only...

ELIZABETH

Stuff! The South did not wish to surrender, to be sure. But now that it has, its people are much too wary of earning the North's wrath to ever publicly support you.

Booth casts his eyes to the floor, admonished. But Elizabeth seizes his chin and TILTS his face back up to her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

But you struck heedless of this. You claim your act was selfish? And now perhaps your guilt impels you to consider capture and hanging as suitable punishments?

(then)

No. You laid the tyrant low. You aimed to grant the South one final chance, though it meant risking your life and reputation. A selfish act, John? This is the decision of a selfless man, indeed. Had I but the means, I'd have done the same.

A charged moment. Then it seems Elizabeth's words finally reach Booth. Booth turns to her with a hint of his old self.

BOOTH

You are too noble for this world, Elizabeth. Your example is a wonder to behold. Those Union Soldiers are near yet they shan't take me alive.

ELIZABETH

The citizens of this town are a different breed. No docile sheep here. Should those Yankees pursue, our militia can buy you time.

Booth gently, gratefully, takes Elizabeth's HANDS in his own.

BOOTH

Hear this now. I will fight the course. Tis all that's left me, yet by God it shall more than suffice.

Off Booth and Elizabeth sharing this victory.

EXT. THE POTOMAC RIVER - GUNBOAT - EVENING

The Soldiers stagger about their duties as the ship continues to sail the river. No one has slept and tensions are running dangerously high. Boston rubs fiercely at his eyes and scans the river again.

LYLE (O.S.)
Sergeant, this is madness.

Nerves already frayed, Lyle is the LAST guy Boston wants to deal with now. Trying to remain civil and professional --

BOSTON
Your objections have been noted,
Private Lyle.

LYLE
Likely as not, the criminals have
crossed into Virginia by now.

BOSTON
But until we locate their vessel,
we can't know where to begin our
search. Patience.

A few tired Soldiers amble over to stand behind Lyle. Their presence only boosts his confidence.

LYLE
Not a man among us has slept, yet
our quarry remains elusive.

BOSTON
(*enough*)
Return to your post.

But Lyle doesn't move. The other Soldiers look on, wondering how far he'll take this. Lyle gestures at Elizabeth's town on the riverbank.

LYLE
Perhaps if we were to "interrogate"
the inhabitants of this town, we
may secure our answer.

Now Boston faces him.

BOSTON
Private. You overstep. Do not
suggest such an absurdity again.

Most people would flinch under the glare Boston gives Lyle. But Lyle, worked up, is beyond caring.

LYLE

What are a few Reb sympathizers
compared to catching the assassin?
You protect them before the Union --

BOSTON

Temper your enthusiasm, sir.

LYLE

-- The Union my beloved brother
Alvin died fighting to defend?!
(frenzy)
Slaughtered at Petersburg by the
Rebs! Days before the War was
ended, one of only a hundred
casualties. A mere hundred!!

Boston keeps his eyes fixed on Lyle while his hand slips
behind his back to unlatch his holstered PISTOL.

Beside Boston, Luther slowly reaches for his own weapon.

LYLE (CONT'D)

The Rebs'd been beaten by then!
Why... why did they have to fight?
Why did they take my brother when
their cause was lost?!

Boston approaches him -- a lion tamer facing the beast.

BOSTON

We've all suffered terribly. The
War did that. But if you desire to
uphold your brother's memory, you
must not strike a blow that will
undo his brave sacrifice. Now
restrain yourself, Private... or
I'll have you in chains, I swear.

Lyle just stares. A tense beat. Then Lyle's comrades lead him
away. Still his demeanor makes it clear this is not over.

Now Boston drifts to the railing. Luther joins him and they
just watch the bank roll past. Those long reeds WAVE in the
breeze. Wait. Boston double-takes, squints at the reeds.

Boston's POV -- a stationery patch of reeds. These DON'T SWAY
with all the rest. Weird. And then the hammer drops for him.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

(to Soldiers)

Come about! Prepare to disembark!

The Troops jump to it. Luther examines the spot.

LUTHER

Well, they did a fine job
concealing it till now.

TIGHT on the SKIFF, one corner just *barely* peeking out. In the b.g. the gunboat sails TOWARDS it. Closing in.

INT. ELIZABETH'S HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - EVENING

Davey sits apart, anxious, checking and rechecking their supplies while Booth plays with Lucy. She pokes and prods at his brace. Suddenly Booth rises, CLUMPS after her like some Frankenstein monster. A sweet moment.

Elizabeth watches their horseplay, amused. Swivels in her chair to resume looking out the window. Off the sinking sun:

ELIZABETH

Aught to be sufficient dark to
travel soon.

Booth glances over from where he's cornered the laughing Lucy and nods. Enjoying the last minutes of comfort he has left.

EXT. TOWN - MAIN ROAD - EVENING

Curtains are drawn in all the windows. CANDLES burn softly in houses as their inhabitants settle in for the end of another day. The streets are deserted.

That is, until the RUSTLING of leaves reveals it's not so empty after all. A moment later, a Union Soldier emerges from the undergrowth. Peers around then beckons over his shoulder.

More Soldiers creep from the surrounding vegetation, their movements deliberate so as not to make too much noise.

Now Boston and Luther appear. Like their troops, Boston and Luther hold their muskets ready. Boston motions his Soldiers to search. But as they spread out through the quiet town, they are unaware of --

INT. ELIZABETH'S HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - SAME

Elizabeth watching them! She sweeps the drapes closed then dashes to the KITCHEN, digs through some drawers. Her obvious alarm causes Booth to hobble over fast as he can.

BOOTH

What did you see?

ELIZABETH
The Soldiers. They've arrived.

Davey peeps through the window.

DAVEY
Dear God... how are we to flee now?
Miss Queensberry..?

Elizabeth finds what she's looking for: a hand BELL, the kind used to signal the family for supper. Strides to the door --

EXT. ELIZABETH'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth steps boldly outside. Most of the Soldiers have moved on but a few are still searching around. They haven't spotted her yet.

In one fluid motion, Elizabeth raises the bell over her head and *DING-DING-DING-DING-DING-DING!!*

She's raising the alarm! The Soldiers stare wildly around as SHOUTS now echo from the houses.

EXT. TOWN - MAIN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Boston pivots around as the distant bell rings. Uh, oh. The surrounding homes come alive with noise and movement glimpsed through the curtains -- the citizens are answering the call.

Realizing what this could mean, Boston signals his Troops.

BOSTON
To me, men!

The Soldiers gather in formation as the TOWNSFOLK emerge from their domiciles. Surprised, angry to find invading Union Troops here.

More shouting and swearing. It's getting ugly fast. As Boston's company turns to address the new threat --

INT. ELIZABETH'S HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM

Booth grabs his loaded pistols as Elizabeth bursts into the room. Booth rushes to confront her, furious.

BOOTH
Have you taken leave of your wits?!
Those innocent people out there owe
me nothing!

ELIZABETH

(to Lucy)

Under the bed, and stay!

Elizabeth hustles past Booth. He dogs her steps.

BOOTH

They can't sacrifice their lives
for this! For me!

ELIZABETH

(rounding on him)

I thought I impressed upon you that
we here are not easily trampled. An
attack on one of us, on you, is an
assault on all.

She hoists a window open as Davey, all packed, joins them.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

There are marshes nearby that can
secrete you for a time. Then get
far South as it goes. Rally what's
left of the Confederacy. Lead them.

(off Booth's hesitation)

Get! Our militia can't hold 'em off
forever.

Davey tosses their rucksacks out then squeezes through the
window with his carbine rifle. Holds out an urgent hand to
help Booth, who ignores him. Stoic, to Elizabeth:

BOOTH

I've done nothing but run these
past few days. No more. I'll not
abandon you to this fight alone.

The yells of the villagers and the answering calls from the
Soldiers are just audible O.S.

ELIZABETH

Lucy and I'll keep fine. Yet what
if you are captured because you
delayed, here and now?

(her point)

That conflict brewing outside will
serve no purpose! Would you render
their struggle meaningless?

Booth can't argue with that. So he reluctantly clambers out
the window. Glances back at Elizabeth.

BOOTH

Stay safe, the both of you.

Elizabeth nods -- *of course*. Shuts the window and disappears from sight. Booth turns and limps away with Davey.

REVERSE -- Elizabeth lingers until she's sure the fugitives are gone. Then she slides over to a WARDROBE, grips the knobs tight. Opens it, though we don't see what's inside just yet.

ELIZABETH
(calling)
Lucy, stay hid, you hear?

NEW ANGLE shows inside the wardrobe: a folded CONFEDERATE UNIFORM and a clean MUSKET. Elizabeth hefts the rifle and examines it. Looks good.

Despite her assurances to Booth, Elizabeth won't stand by while her neighbors fight. Off brave Elizabeth --

EXT. TOWN - MAIN ROAD

CRASH! Boston stoops low as a BOTTLE sails past, shatters against a wall. The crowd has swelled and is more aggressive than ever. Plenty of PISTOLS and RIFLES are in evidence among them, identifying them as the MILITIAMEN. To his Troops:

BOSTON
Hold, hold now.

Outnumbered at least two to one, Boston's company keeps a tight perimeter as they survey the enraged Militiamen.

CLOSE ON Lyle. Finger clenched around his gun's TRIGGER. Just waiting for an excuse.

The other Soldiers exchange nervous glances. Not wanting to make a wrong move but not ready to die, either.

Another improvised PROJECTILE hurtles towards Boston's men. It strikes a Soldier with a dull THUNK.

BOSTON (CONT'D)
(to the Militiamen)
Lay down your arms! We have not
come for you! We --

BANG!! A gunshot rips the air, fired by none other than Lyle. A stunned beat. And then all hell breaks loose.

The Militiamen FIRE. Most of the shots go wide but some find their targets. Arghh! Several unlucky Union Soldiers drop dead before they even know what happened.

Now the Union survivors level their muskets, take aim, and fire. Accurate. Deadly.

Their answering salvo CUTS THROUGH the Militia. They fall in a wave. But the resilient Militiamen, brandishing knives and hatchets, surge forward to charge the Union line.

They SMASH into the Soldiers. Bodies fly end over end.

It's a free-for-all melee. Boston weaves around one fighter. Deflects the man's stab then -- WHACK! -- counters with a rifle butt to his attacker's head. The Militiaman falls, out cold. Boston twists around, alert.

Luther and another Militia member slug it out, their weapons lost or forgotten. Luther seizes his opponent's hair. WHAM. Yanks his head down as Luther drives UP with a knee.

The Soldiers' training and discipline gives them a clear advantage. But the unorganized Militiamen aren't done yet.

Pvt. Rhodes fires point-blank with his pistol. Right into a Militiaman's chest. Blood SPRAYS.

But he doesn't notice more Militia running up behind him. Rhodes starts to quickly reload as they POUNCE him --

Stabbing. He goes down, SCREAMING, under this onslaught.

Boston fights free of the carnage. *Must regroup, must stop this*. Yells to be heard over the din.

BOSTON (CONT'D)
Retreat! Retreat!

The Union Soldiers shove their attackers away then fall back. Rush to take up positions and form new firing lines.

The Militiamen retreat, too. They take cover in and behind houses. Wounded and dead litter the street, more Militia than Union. A blood bath.

EXT. TOWN - ALLEY

The SOUNDS of battle echo over the rooftops as Lyle wanders through the alleyway with several of his loyal Comrades. Moves with purpose, peering into windows as he goes.

At last he finds a good spot. Lyle and the others root through their knapsacks and come up with TORCHES.

They pry open the windows of a few different houses. Now they light those torches with flint and tinder. Lyle stands as the torchlight plays off his face.

Then Lyle HURLS his torches into the house!

The wood interior catches almost at once. Flames glow inside but no one's around to stop it. The other Soldiers hurry along and set fires in more houses.

For a beat or two Lyle savors his vengeance. Justice for his dead brother. Then Lyle and his Comrades scamper off. The fires burn unchecked.

EXT. TOWN - SQUARE - LATER

The fighting has shifted deeper into the town. Boston's company shelters behind a few low stone walls and trade shots with the Militiamen hiding in houses. A few Militia kneel on BALCONIES, firing down at the Soldiers from on high.

Suddenly a band of Militia burst from a side street on Boston's flank. *BANGBANGBANG!* Taken by surprise, several Soldiers are riddled with bullets. Drop where they stand.

BOSTON

About, face!

The Soldiers wheel around to face the Militia as both sides prepare another round. It's become a race to see who can reload and shoot first!

The Union Soldiers' training wins the day. They aim and *fire*. The ambush Militiamen absorb the rounds like sponges.

But the Militiamen crouching behind them are unharmed. The front line falls, revealing the survivors... and Elizabeth!

She and her fellow fighters sprint back down the side street. As many Union Soldiers dash after them to give chase. Boston starts to follow until Luther grabs his arm.

LUTHER

Boston!

Boston follows Luther's pointing finger and sees the SMOKE. Black, billowing. Rising over the town. And at once Boston knows: a fire of this size is deadly to the Militia and his own troops alike.

BOSTON
 (to his Soldiers)
 Break off defense! Staunch those
 fires and secure the civilians!

The Soldiers pause, afraid to expose themselves to gunfire.

But the Militiamen have stopped shooting. They've noticed the smoke and flames as well.

As if by unspoken agreement, both sides abandon their cover and hurry towards the blaze together.

EXT. TOWN - OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Booth and Davey trudge along far from the fighting. Only a few houses separate them from the open countryside beyond.

But Booth is conflicted. Sneaking off while others fight for him still doesn't feel right.

Davey sees Booth lagging behind. Turns to encourage him, but his mouth falls open. Booth notices Davey's astonishment and swings around to observe what's got Davey so worked up. Now he sees the smoke. His heart skips a beat.

Then, mind made up, Booth moves to return to town. Disbelieving Davey catches up to him. Clutches at Booth.

DAVEY
 St-stop!

BOOTH
 Unhand me.

DAVEY
 Stop! There is nothing to achieve going back but certain capture. Did you not hear Miss Queensberry?

BOOTH
 Indeed I did, else I'd never have gone this far. Union Soldiers are one matter. But I'll not leave her to face that remorseless inferno.

Booth shrugs out of Davey's grip. Almost an afterthought:

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 I don't ask you to follow, Davey.
 Wait for me in the marsh.

Not bothering to hear a response, Booth hurries away.

EXT. TOWN - ROAD - NIGHT

Booth hobbles along, a pistol in each hand. SHOUTS blare in the distance but he keeps going.

Sudden, hurried FOOTSTEPS behind him. Booth glances around then ducks out of sight down a narrow alley, his face angled away so he won't be recognized.

A few Union Soldiers rush past carrying a slopping WATER BUCKET between them. They don't even notice Booth.

Booth peers after them, makes sure they're gone. Then Booth hustles in the opposite direction. Hoping he's not too late for Elizabeth.

EXT. TOWN - HOUSES - SAME

Boston oversees a human chain of bucket-bearers. Fresh buckets are passed down the line, hand to hand, then tossed onto the fires. More men attempt to smother the blazes with thick BLANKETS. A real team effort.

What's more, this is a team of both Union Soldiers AND Militiamen. Not too friendly but forced to cooperate now.

Luther emerges from a burning house supporting an ELDERLY MAN. More Soldiers follow as they evacuate the house of its residents. Boston moves to Luther's side.

BOSTON

Manage discipline here, I'll resume the hunt. Booth may believe himself safe. Maybe he's made some mistake.

Luther nods. Boston slings his musket over one shoulder then sprints down the street.

EXT. TOWN - BACK ROADS

Booth continues his hunt. Getting desperate now.

GUNSHOTS, far off, grab his attention. With no other leads Booth changes course and stumbles towards the origin of those shots.

He rounds a few corners then *stops dead*. At the far end of this three-way junction:

Elizabeth. Pinned down behind a cart with the corpses of her fellow ambush Militiamen around her. Those Union Troops close in as she rapidly reloads her musket.

Booth hurries to her, tripping over his leg brace. Leans against a wall for balance. Still too far off to help.

Elizabeth finishes loading the gun. Braces against her cover.

The Troops advance, shark-like. Muskets aimed. Then, before Booth can warn her, Elizabeth POPS UP -- BANG!

Her shot strikes a Soldier in the arm. He HOWLS. But his allies open fire. BANG! BANG! Bullets rip into Elizabeth's chest. She collapses without a sound.

Booth crumples to his knees. Bites down on his fist to stifle an anguished cry. *No!*

The Soldiers retreat to rejoin their comrades. Booth rises and staggers to Elizabeth's body. Knows she's dead but has to confirm it for himself. TIGHT ON her blank expression.

Booth tears his eyes away to stare after the Soldiers. A single, overpowering thought fills his mind. *Catch them. Kill them. No matter what.*

EXT. TOWN - SIDE ROAD

An eerie silence. The fire has spread here, though only one house is badly engulfed in flames.

Boston trots INTO FRAME. Glances around then spots his missing Soldiers (the ones that killed Elizabeth). Boston waves them down then gestures for them to go help.

The Soldiers salute, run off. Boston turns to keep searching.

CLUMP. CLUMP. Boston spins as Booth lumbers into view. Intent on reaching those Soldiers. But Booth stops short when he notices Boston.

A frozen beat. Booth may not recognize Boston but Boston would know his target *anywhere*, moustache or no. And Booth, with his pistols already in hand, has the drop on him.

But Booth just sees Boston's UNION UNIFORM. All cold fury, Booth takes aim --

Boston *dives* to the ground as Booth FIRES. *PFFT!* The shot whizzes over Boston's head, blows a chunk of brick from a house. At this distance, it's no wonder Booth missed.

He doesn't care. He'll kill this Union bastard for Elizabeth.

So Booth draws a bead with his other pistol. Boston scrambles for some nearby PORCH STEPS. Ducks behind them --

PFFT! Booth's second shot drills into the steps but leaves Boston unhurt. Out of ammo, Booth turns on his heel and runs for the nearest cover: that BURNING HOUSE.

Boston sees Booth disappear inside. It's dangerous but he is not letting Booth escape.

INT. BURNING HOUSE - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Boston barges through the door, musket raised. Sweeps the hallway and adjoining rooms.

The fire courses throughout this place. Walls are scorched. Furniture burns. The thick SMOKE makes visibility almost impossible.

Boston creeps along, head low. Listening for Booth's distinct footsteps.

BOOTH -- crouched behind a table. Peeps over the top and sees Boston stalking past. Booth ducks low.

Boston rounds a corner. Suddenly FLAMES surge before him. Backpedals, shields his face from the intense heat. *CLUMP, CLUMP*. Boston pivots at the sound --

And spots Booth making a run for it! Boston crashes out into the hallway after him. A clear shot.

Realizing he won't make it to the front door, Booth instead rushes up the nearby STAIRCASE. Manages to break Boston's line of sight. Shit! Boston chases after him and --

INT. BURNING HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The smoke is even heavier up here. COUGHING, Boston blinks away involuntary tears. Despite Booth's injury, the smoke and flames are making it difficult for Boston to keep up.

Boston inches along, expecting Booth to jump him any second.

He reaches an open door leading to a bedroom. Boston grips his musket. Breathes. Steps through ready to shoot --

No Booth. So Boston retreats into the hall to continue his search. The next door is locked, its handle red-hot. No way is Booth hiding in there.

Flames crackle on the ceiling, licking the WOOD BEAMS. The whole house feels like it could collapse in an instant.

But Boston keeps going. Only one more door ahead. Boston uses his musket's barrel to ease it open.

INT. BURNING HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Boston squints through the smoke and fire. There. Booth stands at a window, coat sleeves BUNCHED around his hands so he can grip the hot metal frame. Wrenches it open then senses he's not alone.

Booth rotates slowly to find: Boston aiming right at him.

Boston can taste his victory. Jerks his head -- *come here*. Booth doesn't move. Boston motions again, more insistent.

Still Booth won't budge. So Boston takes a step closer --

CRAAAACK!! The wood beams above finally give under the fire. A large RAFTER splits, crashes to the floor! *Just* misses crushing Boston. But it forms a firey barrier he can't pass.

Booth seizes the moment and swings his legs out the window. A straight drop to the ground below.

And Booth pushes himself over the ledge! A sickening moment of FREE FALL... WHUMP. Booth hits the BUSHES beneath him, leg brace held stiffly to avoid worse damage.

Pain shoots through him. He screams yet drags himself upright with an almost superhuman effort. Knees buckling. But somehow Booth manages to start limping away.

IN THE BEDROOM: Boston can hardly believe what happened. Quickly regains his wits and *sprints* back down the hall.

Bumping into walls, half-blind with smoke. Losing precious seconds and feeling the pressure.

Reaches the stairs and takes them two at a time. But in his haste Boston misses the bottom stair --

SMACKS onto the floor. Scrambles to grab his musket then charges outside to:

EXT. TOWN - SIDE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Boston scans the road wildly, panting hard. Right as he's about to pick a direction and go:

Luther arrives leading about half the surviving company. Every man is covered in soot and most are just barely on their feet -- drained from the battle and lack of sleep.

LUTHER
Boston, at last!

BOSTON
Luther?

LUTHER
Good tidings: we managed the rescue
of the townsfolk and so the militia
permitted us to leave in peace --

BOSTON
I've found him!

LUTHER
But the flames burn still. So
perhaps we should...
(realizes)
How's that?

BOSTON
John Booth, he is here! Have the
company reunite south of town. We
pursue at once!
(off Luther not moving)
Why do you linger?!

But Luther knows his friend is not thinking clearly. Luther
glances at the tired Soldiers then steps close to Boston. In
undertone so he won't be overheard:

LUTHER
I feel compelled to advise a moment
of thought. Our reckless pursuit of
the criminal following his flight
from the theatre did not result in
his immediate capture.

BOSTON
Luther...

LUTHER
T'was days before we located his
trail again. Might be it behooves
us to hatch a plan now.

BOSTON
This-this is not as before! Now
time is against us. For I know of a
vast swamp to the South, and I have
an intuition Booth will endeavor to
conceal himself therein. One man
may traverse it with less trouble
than a company, so we cannot delay.

LUTHER

But the men! They're exhausted. It may be unwise to push them now.
(before Boston can argue)
Perhaps we should stay to quench the last fires. The townsfolk would be grateful and might assist in --

BOSTON

There is no time to spare for that!

LUTHER

(a strained beat)
You... truly mean to leave them?
This is not the Boston I know.

BOSTON

The mission comes first. Booth will have left a trail, but it shall not last. Now. Move the men out.

Worried for Boston, Luther nonetheless is loyal. He turns to the Soldiers and gestures. They all set out at once.

EXT. MARSH - OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

A vast, dank bog overrun with wild plant life. Bright moonlight allows us to just make out:

BOOTH. Delirious. Hardly able to go on. Pushes his solitary way through the tangled foliage. But his journey is made more difficult as his heavy brace sinks into the grass and muck.

Every few feet Booth HEAVES his brace from the ooze with a great, sucking *SH-LUUUP*. Step, step, *SH-LUUUP*, step.

At last the injured leg plunges into a particularly deep MUD HOLE. Booth jerks to a halt. Pulls with all his might -- no luck. He's firmly trapped.

And Booth LAUGHS. It's too much. Just as all seems hopeless:

DAVEY (O.S.)

My-my captain?

Davey emerges from the undergrowth. Despite all their mistrust, Booth is grateful to see him. Reaches out.

And Davey grabs his arms, yanks hard. But even together there's no budging that stuck brace. So Davey wades into the mud, drawing his hunting knife. Carefully cuts the straps.

Booth wraps his arms around Davey's neck for leverage. The brace is loosened and Davey steps back with Booth. Success!

They walk in silence. Booth places each foot gingerly. After a few solemn moments:

DAVEY (CONT'D)
Miss Queensberry?

Booth shakes his head -- *she's gone*.

DAVEY (CONT'D)
A terrible thing.

BOOTH
(a beat)
There will be time to grieve her.
But I'll not waste her selfless
sacrifice now. We must press on.

As Booth and Davey tramp away together:

EXT. MARSH - OUTSKIRTS - LATER

Boston's Soldiers scour the marshlands. But occasionally one or two men sink into the mud and must be rescued. And with so many soldiers, the whole company is forced to wait so the few narrow dry passages may be used. It's slow going.

Boston roams far ahead of the main force. Low to the ground, he's hunting for any tell-tale sign of Booth. Then --

Boston bends even lower to reveal: deep FOOT PRINTS in the grass. Tracks. His keen investigative mind working, Boston follows the imprints left from Booth's heavy brace, until:

TIGHT ON the BRACE itself, still sunk halfway in the mud. Boston fondles the leather like it's a priceless treasure.

BOSTON
(calling)
Here, boys! Here!

The Soldiers gradually converge on Boston. Once they're all assembled, Boston indicates the brace.

BOSTON (CONT'D)
The assassin passed through this
way.

LUTHER
And lacking his brace, his progress
must even now be slowed.

Boston gives with his instructions.

BOSTON

We shall divide to cover greater ground. Spread far yet stay within hailing distance. Should any man locate the assassin or his accomplices, if indeed any remain, raise the cry. Together, we give the villain no hope of escape.

Now Luther catches Boston's eye. He glances meaningfully at the weary Soldiers. Boston understands -- after everything they've endured, they need inspiration to keep going.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

Your weariness is not lost on me. The road thus far has been crooked and rough. We've lost dear friends along the way.

(a moment for the dead)

Yet we must not balk. Not when we are so near to accomplishing our mission. So to you I vow: the murderer shall be apprehended here, now. And we will return victorious to Washington. My word is my bond. Need you more?

The Soldiers salute him. Boston nods his approval back.

Yet in his peripheral view: Boston notices Lyle whisper to his Cohorts. None of them has saluted. Boston processes this, doesn't like it. But no time to deal with it now.

EXT. MARSH - THICKET - NIGHT

The fugitives are tucked securely among some dense plants. Booth hastily reloads his twin weapons as Davey peers behind them on look-out duty.

DAVEY

I discerned voices.

Booth finishes tamping down the gunpowder then stashes the POWDER HORN back inside his rucksack.

BOOTH

Those Union bloodhounds, no doubt. They are set upon us once more. Useless to run now.

Davey stares at him, agape.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

I do not mean to surrender. Yet consider: if we attempt to flee, we're sure to be seen. So rather we shall lay still. Bide our time. Let those curs pass us by.

DAVEY

And... and if we should be found?

Booth holds up his pistols in response.

Davey nods, hefts his rifle then vanishes into the plants to keep watch. Booth hunkers down, pistols aimed. Ready to shoot the first unlucky Union Soldier to cross his path.

EXT. MARSH - SAME

The gentle CLINK-CLINK of the Union Soldiers' knapsacks and buckles mixes with the loud CHIRPS of countless crickets.

WIDE ON the long, long line of Soldiers across the marsh. The Soldiers jab their bayonets into the thick undergrowth, check under bushes and rocks.

EXT. MARSH - THICKET

Booth lies prone. To the unobservant eye, he's just a bump in the moss. Barely breathing, eyes peeled for danger.

BACK TO BOSTON: who stalks alone. Taking his time. Missing nothing. He kneels to examine some snapped TWIGS -- a clue? Hard to say. But Boston winces as his metal fittings CLICK.

So Boston removes his uniform.

Swiftly and quietly unhooks the fastenings, stripping down to his UNDERSHIRT. Shrugs off his SUSPENDERS so they dangle limp at his sides.

BOOTH: piano-wire tense. Then some CLINKING alerts him to --

SOLDIERS. Coming closer. Booth crawls even further back into the plants, pistols out as the Troops stride into view. Way too many for him to fight. They march nearer.

A pulse-pounding beat. Their boots FILL our POV. The Soldiers are *so close* to Booth they could step on him. Booth aims...

But miraculously they pass right by. Booth turns around to keep his eyes on the Soldiers in case they return for another look. Yet it seems like the danger is finally over.

Nearby, Boston creeps cautiously through the undergrowth. He's careful, patient. Hungry. Boston brushes the last few plants aside.

And then he sees Booth! Lying alone with his back turned, Booth is a sitting duck.

Boston hazards a glance over to where his Troops are advancing further and further away. He could still easily call out to them. SHOULD call to them. Boston opens his mouth to sound the alarm. Any second now.

Then Boston closes his mouth. This is *his* chance to secure a legacy. So he's gonna take Booth alone.

Boston coils and SPRINGS. Tackles Booth -- *UNGH!* -- who gasps in pain and surprise.

Boston plants a knee in Booth's back. Booth squirms, one hand scrabbling mightily for his fallen pistol.

Boston swipes the gun out of reach. But he's overeager. Not thinking ahead. And Booth is determined, his strength primal. So as Boston raises his musket to deal Booth a hard blow --

Booth *twists* free and seizes a fistful of MUD. SPLAT. The whole slimy mess goes straight into Boston's face.

Boston sputters. Blind, he wipes hurriedly at his face to clear it. OOMPH! Booth drives an elbow into Boston's ribs. Doubling him like a bag of rice. Boston rolls off Booth.

And now Booth snatches up the other pistol. Presses it deep into Boston's CHEEK.

They sit inches apart, with the pistol muzzle between them, for what feels like an eternity (and when they finally speak, it is barely above a whisper).

BOSTON

Why postpone the deed?

BOOTH

Waiting for your comrades to blunder away.

NEW ANGLE shows the Soldiers marching off into the distance. Unaware of the life-threatening danger to their Sergeant. To fill the time:

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Your face is familiar to me, and not only from our escapades in that burning house. I know you.

(MORE)

BOOTH (CONT'D)
(remembers)
Was you outside Ford's, was it not?

Boston's stony silence is confirmation enough.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Yes, yes I recall you. Yet look how
our circumstances have shifted. Not
once, but twice, you had me under
the gun. And now...

He screws the muzzle into Boston's cheek.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
(off Boston's non-reply)
You asked why I delayed pulling
this trigger. So I must satisfy my
own curiosity in kind: why did you
not shoot me dead, thence or now?
You had time and opportunity.
(a beat)
Did your instructions demand me
returned alive? Or perhaps... you
did not have the stomach for it?

That cuts deep. Booth thinks him gutless. *Weak.* Boston buries
his fury, works to regain the upper hand.

BOSTON
If you possess even a trace of the
wits I believe you to have,
reconsider your position here.

BOOTH
Indeed?

BOSTON
Cast aside your weapon and I will
offer you fair terms of conditional
surrender.

Booth cocks his head.

BOSTON (CONT'D)
Give yourself up, John Booth. Or
there can be no outcome for you but
an early, unmarked grave.

BOOTH
And... how do you intend to
accomplish that? You appear
incapacitated at the moment.

Boston returns his gaze. Giving as good as he gets:

BOSTON

I have but to raise my voice and my
men will descend upon you.

Booth digs the pistol in further.

BOOTH

Yet not even a bolt of God's own
making could strike me down afore
I've pulled the trigger.

BOSTON

Yes. I'll not survive the night.
But the gun's report will betray
your location all the same. We will
exit this world together, though I
know our destinations shall differ
greatly thereafter.

Neither moves. Booth seems to be weighing his options.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

Surrender, sir. Return to stand
trial and you may extend your life.

BOOTH

A trial? In Washington? That is
equal to a death sentence. I may as
well fire now.

Realizing this is a negotiation he cannot win, Boston instead
turns it into a threat.

BOSTON

Then we shall learn firsthand: I
will call to my company!

A potent beat. Then another. Still nothing.

BOOTH

A man of the stage you are not,
Soldier, and your performance just
now suffered for it.

His bluff called, Boston can only stare back.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

You had an opportune moment, prior
to assaulting me, to alert your
company. Yet you did not raise the
alarm. Why? To what end?

BOSTON

If you value your life, stop now.

BOOTH

(a beat, then)

Ah. You thought to apprehend me yourself. The man that killed the President. The assassin. You would deliver me to the Capitol alone... and alone you would enjoy all the rewards what offered.

Booth rises, and keeps rising, till he seems ten feet tall.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Oh, you are deluded. For when has history ever recalled the man that *caught* the assassin? It is the *killer* that is remembered.

A profound beat. The words wash over Boston, rattle him to his core.

Then the nearby bushes part and Davey reappears. Surveys the strange scene in front of him. Taking Davey's arrival as his cue to go:

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Yet I will be in no man's debt. You spared me before. Thus...

CRACK! Booth swings the pistol, handle-first, into Boston's skull. Boston hits the dirt, stunned.

Booth RIPS his own coat into long strips. Boston stirs but Davey, seeing the plan, WHACKS him again. This time Boston stays down. Now Booth and Davey use the torn fabric to HOG-TIE Boston's wrists and ankles.

Finally, Booth stuffs some extra material into Boston's mouth. A crude yet effective GAG. Booth collects his own supplies and guns then slips away. Davey spares a single glance at Boston before stealing his pistol and musket and hurrying after his captain.

Still dazed, Boston struggles futilely against his bounds. Then he lies still, breathes slow. Thinking hard about what he just learned.

EXT. VIRGINIA - FIELDS - DAWN

Flat grasslands stretch far as the eye can see. After the violence of the previous night, it's rather peaceful. Serene.

WIDE ON two solitary figures stumbling across the plains. Nothing more than dark shadows at first.

A NEW ANGLE reveals those figures are Booth and Davey, weighed down with fatigue and all their supplies including Boston's guns. Booth uses the captured musket like a crutch to ease some of the pressure on his injured leg.

Acutely aware they are exposed here -- there's no cover of any sort for miles around -- the two fugitives stagger on in uncomfortable silence.

But after a few beats, Booth places a hand on Davey's shoulder to get his attention.

Booth waves to a point off in the distance. Just visible in the semi-darkness is a lone FARMHOUSE. It's a long way to the shelter with nothing but open ground ahead.

Realizing it's the best chance they have, Booth and Davey change course and trek towards the house.

EXT. MARSH - THICKET - DAWN

The entire Union company mills about. Torches are extinguished as the Sun begins to rise. There's a palpable feeling of disappointment in the air.

Boston rubs the raw, red BLISTERS on his wrists where his bonds chafed. Takes no notice of the activity all around him.

Having just freed Boston, Luther tosses the fabric strips into a puddle with disgust. But much as he'd like to resume the hunt, Luther first needs to know what happened here.

LUTHER

They were two, you say?

BOSTON

John Booth and his accomplice Davey Herold, yes.

LUTHER

Yet Herold's presence was not immediately known to you?

Boston keeps massaging his wrists, doesn't respond.

LUTHER (CONT'D)

(more insistent)

Boston?

BOSTON

I have divulged my account of the event, Luther. Do you have reason to suspect my recollection?

Luther glances around and observes the Troops tuning in. But Boston takes his hesitation as an answer.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

No? Then put this absurd interview
to rest.

If Boston seems a little prickly here, he is. Still stewing on his lost moment of glory. Luther regards him, then --

LUTHER

Have we a plan of action?

A beat as Boston gathers his thoughts, conscious of the whole company watching him now.

BOSTON

We have encountered a setback, but
our efforts have not been in vain.
The criminals cannot have sojourned
far. Thus we give chase at once --

VOICE (O.S.)

Nay, Sergeant!

A low, shocked murmur runs through the company. Boston peers around then pushes through his troops to discover:

Lyle, waiting defiantly with his loyal Cohorts. Totally unafraid. Boston instinctively senses some danger here.

BOSTON

You disobey a direct command?

Lyle's silence speaks volumes.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

I've asked you a question, Private,
and you must answer me.

LYLE

Your Southern sympathies labor
against you.

BOSTON

Have a care with your tone, sir.

LYLE

Your inclination to align not only
yourself, but also every man in the
company, with Southern traitors is
an affront to the Union itself.

BOSTON

Yet this outfit is mine to command,
and woe unto you if you dare --

LYLE

(interrupting)

You capitulated with Confederate militia to ensure the survival of their town, in direct opposition to safeguarding the very lives of your men. You risked us all to aid the enemy rather than allowing their houses to burn.

Now Lyle's Cohorts are not alone standing behind him. More and more of the Soldiers look like they agree.

LYLE (CONT'D)

You assured us the South harbors no love for the assassin. Still those militia died to give the murderer Booth time to escape. How are we to account for that?

BOSTON

To my eye the militia formed in reaction to our presence, not that of John Booth. And... it was not them that fired the first shot.

Boston steps closer.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

I looked for you once battle was joined, Private, yet I was stymied upon discovering your absence.

(a beat)

Tell me: what essential deed so demanded your attention elsewhere when we were engaged in combat?

Lyle doesn't flinch, holds Boston's gaze.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

Where were you, when your comrades were dying? You were setting the town ablaze --

LYLE

Yes.

Teeth clenched, Boston studies Lyle. *Explain yourself.*

LYLE (CONT'D)

Those Southern dogs had need of a lesson. They defended the assassin, and that could not be abided. I acted in service of our mission.

BOSTON

(furious)

You did no such thing. You desired only retribution for your brother.

Now Lyle plays to the crowd.

LYLE

And what of your own desire? The assassin was here, within our grasp, yet still he escaped.

Boston's taken aback but recovers.

BOSTON

What are you suggesting? As I stated, I was taken unawares --

LYLE

You would have us believe that fiction? That, with the entire company about, the conspirators elected to ambush one man that could have raised the alert if not silenced swiftly?

(then)

To what end would they act so rashly? I am utterly incredulous.

Plenty of the Soldiers seem to think Lyle has a point. But Boston's done arguing. So instead he pulls rank:

BOSTON

Soldiers! Clap this insubordinate man in irons!

Luther promptly moves forward with HANDCUFFS from his bag. But Lyle's Cohorts block his way! The outcry is immediate. Muskets are aimed. Soldiers SHOUT on all sides.

Boston waves the men down to restore order. The noise dies out. He and Lyle give each other prison-yard stares.

LYLE

You're unfit to command any longer. You swore we'd have Booth here but he has slipped us once more.

Boston stands his ground. But inside he is *boiling*.

LYLE (CONT'D)
 I will not die in the South in
 futile pursuit of one man. I, and
 any that would follow, set my
 course now for home.
 (then)
 We'll deliver our report and let
 some other company track Booth now.

Muskets raised, the Soldiers cling to Lyle's every word.

LYLE (CONT'D)
 What say you, men? We have already
 fulfilled the lion's share of the
 struggle. Do you trust this man...
 (gestures at Boston)
 With your lives now?! He'll lead us
 to ruination. I shit on that!

It's dead quiet. Having said his piece, Lyle turns his back on Boston and motions to his Cohorts to leave. More Soldiers start to follow. It looks to be a mass desertion.

BOSTON
 HALT!

The fury in his voice freezes the Soldiers in place.

BOSTON (CONT'D)
 The full consequences of desertion,
 of mutiny, will be carried out --

Now Lyle pauses, pivots for the last word.

LYLE
 We want only to return home for our
 services rendered. The assassin's
 fate is beyond us now.
 (turns his back)
 You are finished, and we shall not
 fall for your worthless cause.

Too far. Something in Boston's *snaps*. And so he strides up behind Lyle -- WHAM! A hard sucker punch to Lyle's head. Seen in real time, the blow feels that much more brutal.

Lyle spins like a top, drops his rifle. Stunned. Boston grips his foe's collar. Yanks him bodily forward as Boston drives a fist into Lyle's stomach. Lyle drops to his knees. WHEEZING.

But Boston's not done. Throws himself on Lyle, driving him into the mud. The other Soldiers are unwilling to interfere.

Lyle bats pathetically at Boston, who ignores the glancing punches. Boston cocks his fist, rears back, SWINGS. Plows right into Lyle's jaw. Then again. And again. And *again*.

At last Boston rises, panting like a winded animal. Lyle is splayed face-down in the mud. Unmoving. A long, tense beat.

BOSTON

Any man that yet wishes to follow
him... may do so.

Boston doesn't need to say what will happen to those that do. Instead he turns and stalks away without further delay.

Slowly the Soldiers join him. Even Lyle's Cohorts only spare a glance for their comrade. Lyle SPUTTERS and draws painful breaths as the company leaves him, alive but broken, behind.

EXT. THE GARRETT FARMHOUSE - YARD - MORNING

Large and well tended, with a broad front porch to match. Stables off to one side house all manner of FARM ANIMALS. Faint CLUCK-CLUCKS of O.S. chickens complete the scene.

A horse-drawn CART trundles into sight, following the long dirt road to the farmhouse. The driver is RICHARD GARRETT, 40s, African American, a well-weathered soul. His sons JOHN and WILLIAM, 11 and 8 respectively, ride in back with the cart's WARES -- a diverse assortment of items from market.

Richard guides the cart to a stop before the porch. John and William hop over the sides, working in tandem to unload the goods. Richard circles to the horse, strokes its mane then unhitches the harness. Suddenly Richard pauses. Listens.

CLUCK-CLUCK-CLUCK. For some reason the chickens' squawks puzzle him. Leaving his boys to it, Richard sets off around the house. WE STAY WITH him, the CLUCKS growing louder.

At last Richard rounds the corner and discovers about thirty CHICKENS clustered behind the house. The birds seem to be fighting over something. Flapping and screeching.

Confused, Richard ambles forward until he spots an overturned BASKET -- looks like someone dropped it and left in a hurry. CHICKENFEED is spilled across the ground and the hungry birds squabble over every single grain.

HOLD ON that basket as the very sight of it troubles Richard.

BACK OUT FRONT John and William stack their wares on the porch as Richard lopez into view. Not outright scared, he is nevertheless on edge.

Richard ushers his young sons inside the house then doubles back. Seizes a PITCHFORK leaning against a porch post.

INT. THE GARRETT FARMHOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

Richard prowls with his pitchfork ahead of his boys, both now a little spooked. The household is quiet.

RICHARD GARRETT
Fannie? You about?
(waits)
Fannie? Cora Lee? I's not playing,
yah hear?

No answer. Clutching his weapon tighter, Richard steps into:

INT. THE GARRETT FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Richard's POV -- his resilient wife FANNIE GARRETT, 40s, African American, and daughter CORA LEE GARRETT, 5, huddle at the kitchen table... at gunpoint from Davey!

Fannie's hands are balled into helpless fists on the tabletop. Cora Lee's face is streaked with TEARS, her fright so great she can't even whimper.

Richard's mouth falls open as every father's worst nightmare comes to life before him. Davey uneasily surveys him back.

Suddenly a RIFLE BARREL brushes Richard's temple as Booth eases out of THE PANTRY, finger on the trigger. Flashes a glance at John and William hiding in the hall.

BOOTH
Let go the fork, now.

Booth keeps Richard covered as the older man stoops to place the pitchfork on the floor. Richard slowly straightens up.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Over to yonder table, sir. Your
lads as well.

Richard steadies himself.

RICHARD GARRETT
Mister, got no cause to trouble
yah, nor yah me. Me and mine, we's
free, and I own this land legally.

Booth thrusts the rifle a little closer -- he's not asking. But Richard holds firm.

RICHARD GARRETT (CONT'D)

No right, none at all, to be comin' in here in such hostile manner.

(askew to Booth)

Got all the papers, signed and notarized, if'n yah need proof of my claim --

BOOTH

I don't give a damn for deeds or titles. Now sit yourself in that chair and don't move an eyelash.

With no other choice, Richard shepherds his sons to the table then joins his family. They stare back at their captors with that unmistakable cocktail of fear and anger.

Davey stands and creeps down the hallway, checking around corners and in adjoining rooms.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

This all? No more relatives planned to join us? Consider with care now.

Fannie shakes her head. Davey returns and shrugs at Booth. *Seems clear.* Now Booth gazes at little Cora Lee. Her terror bothers him. Finally:

BOOTH (CONT'D)

By happenstance... does the young lady possess a doll?

EXT. THE GARRETT FARMHOUSE - YARD - TIME LAPSE

The world *zooms* along at speed. The chickens scurry about the deserted yard as clouds wheel above. The Sun peaks then dips.

EXT. VIRGINIA - FIELDS - EVENING

Boston squats on his haunches to peer at the ground. Looking for any indication that Booth passed this way. A borrowed MUSKET lays beside him.

Further out Boston's Soldiers comb the landscape with noticeably less intensity. A few sink to their knees to catch their breath. They're all way past the point of endurance.

Finding nothing, Boston stands as Luther approaches. They share a brief, strained silence.

LUTHER

Not a sign.

Boston merely surveys his weary Troops.

LUTHER (CONT'D)

There's nothing for it. We must
have emerged from the swamp at a
different point than the villains.
How are we to locate their trail?

Boston might be made of wood for all the response he shows.
But just as Luther's about to speak again --

BOSTON

(distant)

He is near. He must be. I've come
so far...

LUTHER

We all have, my friend. Yet as I
laid claim: the men cannot proceed
at this pace. Days without sleep.
Should you insist --

BOSTON

The men are soldiers of the Union.

LUTHER

(tries again)

Should you insist on coercing them
to pursue, without strategy or --

BOSTON

And they will maintain military
preparedness until such time as
their assignment is done.

LUTHER

Then we may find ourselves
confronted with another attempt at
desertion or greater.

BOSTON

What of it?! Near a week now since
the President was murdered. Every
moment Booth walks free shakes the
Union to its very core! We go on.

So Boston dashes to his Troops, addresses each one rapidly.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

Get up now.

(the next)

On your feet, sir.

(the next)

Get up!

The Soldiers only stare feebly back. Boston labors to find some inspiring words but nothing comes. Now Luther lays a consoling hand on Boston's shoulder.

LUTHER

Boston, it's too hard. Too hard.

Boston shrugs him off. Looks wildly around for something, anything, that can point him in the right direction. *There.* Boston squints over at THE GARRETT FARMHOUSE.

BOSTON

Men, observe that house. That is our destination, that is where we'll find the assassin!

Several of the Troops halfheartedly look over but nothing about the distant farmhouse screams "John Booth here".

BOSTON (CONT'D)

The sole refuge we have encountered after hours of fruitless searching. So what better place for Booth and his accomplice to shelter?

Sensing his friend is grasping at straws, Luther answers for the company.

LUTHER

There are untold miles of uninhabited country around. It stands to reason the criminals would not seek to deliberately attract the notice of outsiders.

BOSTON

But I speak of John Booth! And an ordinary criminal he is not. Would not such a man then be capable of infinite daring? What is invading one occupied dwelling to the man that struck down the President of our United States?!

Boston's fired up, convinced he's right. But his Soldiers don't share his enthusiasm. Not one of them moves.

Realizing this, Boston holds his head high.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

As you will. I go alone.

Boston turns on his heel and marches away. Luther makes to follow, then hangs back -- there's no reasoning with Boston now. The Troops watch him retreat into the gathering dark.

INT. THE GARRETT FARMHOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - EVENING

The Garrett family sits stiffly together, prisoners in their own home. We notice Cora Lee now clutches a homemade DOLL. It seems to comfort her.

Across the room, Booth and Davey (still with their guns in hand) hunch over a COUNTY MAP. Davey points to one marker.

DAVEY

Bowling Green is nearest. A small town, shouldn't cause us any grief if we go clear round it by night.

Davey quickly examines the Garrett Family, making sure they can't overhear. Drops his voice lower.

DAVEY (CONT'D)

But once we're past... where are we to go? Or are we to simply hope yet another Miss Queensberry will come to our aid?

Booth surveys the map. Calculating. Suddenly his eyes fall on one particular SPOT, though we can't tell what it is.

BOOTH

It's as you say, Davey: we will find no hospitality in the South.

Booth traces a line with his fingertip.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

So perhaps it is time we quit this depraved country. Let us thus make our way... here.

(taps a spot)

Port Royal.

Davey blanches -- *keep quiet!* Shoots another look at the Garrett family but there's no way to pretend they didn't hear that. Davey faces an unconcerned Booth. Just stares back until Davey understands that Booth wanted them to hear.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

With luck, we may procure a vessel to...

Suddenly Booth peers out the window. The abrupt shift in his mood startles both Davey and the Garrett Family.

NEW ANGLE -- the road outside is empty. Then several HORSEBACK RIDERS strut PAST US. They carry torches but it's difficult to make out anything more about them.

Richard gently lays his daughter aside then shifts to see what's going on, prompting Davey to level his own musket at Richard just in case. But Booth clamps down on Davey's arm.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
No. No noise unless absolutely
required, or else those riders may
be provoked to investigate.

Following his own advice, Booth reaches down and withdraws Davey's hunting knife from the sack.

Captors and prisoners alike watch the distant Riders in tense silence. Richard exchanges a look with Fannie. Booth notices.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
If you value the well-being of your
family, sir, remain silent and
still as if attending church.

Booth and Davey rise to take up different positions, the better to watch the riders. Yet Booth's gait is labored and painful as his injury cramps from the prolonged sitting.

As the criminals assume their new posts, Richard urgently whispers in the ear of his eldest son John.

The flickering torches reveal the riders moving further away. Not long before they will be out of sight entirely.

NEW ANGLE: Booth and Davey maintain their laser-focus vigil.

Richard watches the criminals watching the road. Now or never. So while their backs are turned, Richard nudges John.

And John Garrett *bolts*. Races for the back door! Davey YELPS, dashes after him. But as Davey disappears down the hallway --

Richard takes off running, too! Booth limps to block him but strong Richard knocks Booth aside and flings himself outside. Booth staggers upright, tears after Richard.

THE KITCHEN: Davey seizes John Garrett round the middle and hauls him away from the door.

The boy allows himself to be lifted easily. In fact, he doesn't even struggle. Only then does Davey get it -- *this is just a diversion*. Off Davey realizing he's been duped --

EXT. THE GARRETT FARMHOUSE - YARD - CONTINUOUS

Booth hurtles after Richard, adrenaline letting him just keep pace on his injured leg.

RICHARD GARRETT
HELP! HERE, HELP US!

Shouts. Waves his arms. Doing everything to alert the Riders.

BOOTH
(hisses)
Stop! Stop this madness!

Richard plows ahead, not even glancing back. His whole world is now about reaching those retreating Riders so they can save his family. Nothing else matters.

Behind, Booth fights to aim his gun and run at the same time. But it's too hard. So Booth ditches the pistol. Now armed with the blade, Booth actually manages to gain on Richard.

Just as Richard reaches the property border, Booth tackles him! Richard aims a wild kick, barely misses Booth's head. Scrambles in the dirt to get free.

Booth locks his arms around Richard's legs. Heaves himself further up on the man's body. Weighing him down. Booth brandishes the knife.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Stop... stop now. I... beg you.

But brave Richard Garrett won't quit. Locks his hands around Booth's throat. SQUEEZES. And so Booth levels the blade --

DRIVES it hard into Richard's stomach. *Ungh!* Richard's body convulses but he doesn't let go. So Booth rears back, stabs again. Richard GURGLES. His eyes go wide, then lose focus. His struggles slowly cease. Booth eases the knife out.

Richard goes still. Dead. Booth glances over to the Riders. They haven't noticed a thing. So Booth, panting, catches his breath atop the dead man.

INT. THE GARRETT FARMHOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - LATER

Davey, antsy, keeps the Garrett Family covered while they all wait for Booth and Richard to return.

FOOTSTEPS on the porch. Davey and the Garretts pivot around as Booth enters. Covered in dirt and dark, wet STAINS.

Seeing Booth alone, Fannie wavers for a heart beat. Hoping her husband is right behind him. But then the moment passes.

Fannie utters a choked SOB. John recoils in horror while William and Cora Lee, too young to fully understand, break into whimpers.

Booth strides past them, can't bear to look them in the eye now. Davey catches up to him as Booth hurriedly packs their rucksacks and gathers their guns.

DAVEY

My captain..?

BOOTH

We leave at once. Not a single moment to spare in debate.

Booth winces as Fannie and her children continue to wail. Davey registers Booth's unease. So he steers Booth into a private corner. Davey gathers his courage, then:

DAVEY

Perhaps we must at last consider...
surrender.

BOOTH

(flatly)

No.

DAVEY

Then how are we to proceed? We cannot take them with us and they will alert the authorities if we go. Will you murder them all?

Booth wilts.

BOOTH

No... I would not. Could never. It sickens my soul to imagine.

DAVEY

Then our fates are sealed. But if we turn ourselves in, there may yet be mercy! You must comprehend there is no alternate --

BOOTH

Oh, you are manless. Do not speak to me of submission again. I will suffer death first.

Booth trudges out as Davey reluctantly, nervously follows. Fannie cradles her children as we slowly PULL BACK on the family through the open front door.

The MOON and CLOUDS drift above showing THE PASSAGE OF TIME.

EXT. THE GARRETT FARMHOUSE - PORCH - LATER

Boston, musket in hand, steps onto the porch. Notices drops of BLOOD staining the wood. Anticipation rising, Boston scans around to make sure there's no ambush lying in wait. Then he eases his way into:

INT. THE GARRETT FARMHOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A scene of mourning meets Boston's eyes. Fannie and her children are huddled around Richard's corpse, which they've covered with a thick BLANKET.

Fannie startles at Boston's presence then relaxes slightly when she notices his Union Uniform. A potent beat.

BOSTON

Madam, I apologize for intruding upon your family's grief.

FANNIE GARRETT

(hollow)

Got no cause to fret 'bout my sensibilities. Yah had no hand in making our woes here.

Not wanting to be tactless, Boston is still here for info.

BOSTON

Those responsible... two men, by chance? One afflicted with a limp?

Fannie nods but her children's sobs draw her attention back to them. Yet now that Boston has a firm lead, he's eager.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

Madam. It is imperative you assist me. Your children will keep. But it's your duty as a citizen --

But Boston went too far. Fannie glares up at him.

FANNIE GARRETT

I got no comfort in this life now save for my children. But there ain't naught I can say or do to ease their own pain. Duty? Yah are devoid of feeling, ruthless as the men what performed this cruelty.

(with venom)

Leave us be.

Fannie bends over her husband's corpse. Realizing his mistake, Boston watches in respectful silence. Then he crouches beside the family and adopts a softer tone.

BOSTON

Forgive my transgression. It wasn't my aim to belittle your hardship. Your children have suffered enough.

(then)

Yet you are mistaken on one count. You, and you alone, might at least lighten their burden now. Impart to me any knowledge you have regarding the criminals' bearing.

(prompting)

Any fact, no matter how trivial it may appear, that will enable me to catch them and make your husband's loss have meaning... so your family might find some semblance of peace.

Boston waits with bated breath for Fannie to reply. Finally --

FANNIE GARRETT

Port Royal. They's traveling there to buy passage out the country, so I heard them talk.

But Boston cocks his head. Though he believes Fannie, something about this feels off. He glances around and spies the county map on the table where Booth left it. Walks over, picks it up, and examines it at length.

FANNIE GARRETT (CONT'D)

They was studying that. Please, take it if'n it serves your cause.

Boston nods. Carefully folds the paper and tucks it under an arm. Crosses the room but lingers at the door.

BOSTON

My condolences. Have courage now
and... and ensure your children
honor their father's memory always.

Cradling her kids, Fannie watches Boston slip outside.

EXT. THE GARRETT FARMHOUSE - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Boston leans against the door, head down. Whatever troubled him in the house has only gotten stronger.

LUTHER (O.S.)

Boston?

Boston rotates to find Luther with several torching-bearing Soldiers. Boston's surprised, yet pleased, to see them.

LUTHER (CONT'D)

What news?

BOSTON

The assassin and his accomplice
were here. Murdered the father then
fled, though the man's wife asserts
Booth travels to reach Port Royal.

Boston spreads out the map so Luther and the others can read it. They quickly locate the PORT ROYAL marker.

LUTHER

No mean journey on foot.

BOSTON

(distracted)

Miles, even...

UNION SOLDIER

Then aught we round up the company
now, Sergeant?

SECOND UNION SOLDIER

If the criminals secure a ship
afore we've arrived, they will be
lost to us for good and all.

Boston doesn't seem to hear them. So Luther takes charge.

LUTHER

Make preparations to depart. A long march awaits us yet --

BOSTON

(to himself)

This can't be.

Luther and the Soldiers glance over, puzzled.

LUTHER

Should-should we not pursue?

BOSTON

This... Booth would never take this cowardly course. He would not flee the country now, not when he may still fight to the last. No. He seeks only to bamboozle us.

Before the Soldiers can argue, Boston snatches the map back and hastily scans it till his eyes fall on a nearby marked BARN. Jabs it with a finger for emphasis.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

This is his true destination.

LUTHER

A-a barn? To what purpose? I cannot see what --

BOSTON

From its lonesome location, I judge this is an uninhabited structure. An excellent refuge in which to conspire. Yet if by some means they should be discovered therein, that shelter is like to be their grave. Thus to Booth, what better place for a last stand to be remembered forever? A monument to his cause.

Suspicious Luther studies Boston.

LUTHER

How? How did you come by this, ah, insight into the assassin's mind?

BOSTON

(a beat, simply)

I know him.

The Soldiers don't know WHAT to make of that. Boston intuits they need more persuasion if they are to follow him now.

BOSTON (CONT'D)

I know routes that will permit us to reach the barn first. We may rest there and bait our hook for their arrival. Yet if I am wrong and the criminals do not appear... I will concede my command. We'll venture home and pray another company accosts Booth before he sails. Will you follow me now?

Off Luther and the Soldiers, whose answers will be "yes".

EXT. BARN - CLEARING - EARLY MORNING

Thick BUSHES and TREES make this a rather secluded spot.

The barn itself is old. Peeling paint and weeds growing through the cracks. Just as Boston predicted, this building has clearly been deserted for a long time.

Now Booth, clutching his leg, and Davey tramp into the clearing. All seems quiet. Almost eerie but they are too weary to care. They head for the gaping barn doors.

INT. BARN - GROUND FLOOR - EARLY MORNING

Booth drops heavily into a moldy-looking HAY PILE as Davey closes and BARS the doors, the windows. A cautious habit.

Large BARRELS are crowded along one wall. Above, the upper level is shrouded in darkness and the LADDER lies cracked in half. Unusable. The empty stables give off a somewhat melancholy vibe.

Davey takes a seat near Booth and dumps his rucksack. Their muskets and pistols rest close-by.

EXT. BARN - CLEARING - INTERCUT

For a full beat nothing moves. Then the bushes RUSTLE and...

Boston's company rises from the undergrowth like Navy SEALS. They've stripped off their metal fittings and packs. Boston makes several gestures to his men -- *Forward. Quiet.*

Booth and Davey divide up their remaining rations. Maybe chew a few bites of some dried MEAT.

The Union Soldiers advance stealthily. Spread out in a wide semi-circle. Closer and closer. Finally Boston signals for them to halt.

BOSTON
(calling)
John Booth! Davey Herold!

REVERSE -- Booth and Davey freeze.

BOSTON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You are cornered and outnumbered.
Toss out any and all arms then exit
with your hands raised high.

As Boston gives his instructions, Davey steals over and peeks through the seam in the doors. What little color is left in his face drains at the sight of all those Soldiers.

BOSTON (CONT'D)
Relinquish yourselves to our charge
and you will not be harmed.

No response from within. The armed Troops exchange pointed, tense looks.

Still in shock, Davey turns to Booth -- and sees him silently LAUGHING. This frightens Davey even worse than the Soldiers.

DAVEY
(small)
My captain...

Booth throws his head back, shakes with mirth.

BOSTON (O.S.)
We know you are in there. Do not
prolong --

DAVEY
Wh-what are we to..?

OUTSIDE: the Soldiers adjust their aim, searching for a target. Boston's patience is wearing thin.

BOSTON
If you do not come out, you will be
shot dead. You must comply.

Luther glances to Boston, surprised. He recalls their orders to take Booth alive. But Boston doesn't meet his gaze.

BOOTH -- finally settles down though he continues to grin. But Davey has had enough. To hell with Booth and his suicidal mission. So Davey begins picking up the guns.

CLICK. He pivots at the sound of a pistol being cocked. Booth watches him with the gun trained at Davey's heart.

BOOTH

Might I inquire what you're doing?

Davey stares back. Petrified. Then some inner-strength fills him. He hugs the collected firearms tighter.

DAVEY

I will give myself up. I'm not-not you. I want to live. That's not wrong. And I want... want you to join me.

For a second it feels like Booth is just going to shoot Davey now. But then Booth lowers the pistol.

BOOTH

Then go, Davey.

Davey can't believe it. Opens his mouth --

BOOTH (CONT'D)

I release you from service. It would be simplicity to deem your choice the lowly act of a craven man. Yet for all your faults... you stayed by me. Whether by cowardice or circumstance, you stayed and did not betray me. Thus... go.

And Davey will. But he can't leave without one last attempt.

DAVEY

Follow me. Please. I beg you, John.

Said quietly, earnestly. But amused Booth shakes his head.

BOOTH

Surrender? To endure the indignity of being bound and paraded before an audience of jeering Northerners? To suffer bodily humiliations at the end of the hangman's noose? Blood vessels bursting, bowels loosening. The death of a common criminal. My final curtain call.

A profound beat.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Elizabeth, rest her soul, accepted me when none other would. Yet even she would not countenance the mere notion of my yielding to the Union.

(grins at the memory)

As she so cuttingly stated, to do so would disgrace all who supported my cause, and those that now exist as a conquered people in the South. And I feel it would shame the dead as well. Hundreds of thousands of Confederates that sacrificed all for their nation's traditions, heritage, and independency. How then can I do any less?

Davey relents, knows Booth will never quit. He glances at the barn doors then at the weapons in his arms.

Then Davey places the firearms at his feet and empties his rucksack of its spare bullets. Not many, not enough to win a shootout, but sufficient for Booth to make a stand.

Booth bows his head in gratitude. Then Davey turns his back and approaches the doors. Removes the bar, steps OUTSIDE.

He raises his arms as ordered. The Soldiers pounce on him, SHOUTING. Davey is swiftly cuffed and dragged aside. As they perp walk him by, Davey inclines his head to address Boston:

DAVEY

I was alone inside! I carried no weapons! There is no one else!

Boston ignores Davey's bluff as the Soldiers lead him away.

BOSTON

John Booth, we've arrested your accomplice. There will be no further warnings. Come out!

Now alone, Booth limps to the doors and slides the bar into place. Scoops up the rifles, pistols, and ammo, then retreats behind the big barrels. Lays his arsenal out in an orderly line for easy access. A deep calming breath, then --

BOOTH

(calling)

Come, then! One more stain on the old banner!

That's all Boston needed to hear. He lifts his arm, waits a solid beat, then brings it hurtling down. Charge.

The Soldiers HOLLER and stampede toward the doors. The first to arrive slam their weight against them. THUD. But the heavy bar holds firm. Booth braces his elbows on a barrel, aims Boston's captured musket. Recites:

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 "Romans, countrymen, and lovers.
 Hear me for my cause."

And Booth fires. The bullet *PUNCHES* through the wood and hits a Soldier's leg. The man falls against his comrades. SCREAMS.

Booth chucks the empty musket aside, seizes Davey's carbine rifle. Takes aim again.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 "Have respect to mine honor, that
 you may believe: censure me in your
 wisdom, and awake your senses, that
 you may better the judge."

BANG! Booth's shot strikes another Union Soldier. The other Troops scramble back, dragging the injured man away. Now the men form lines, aim, and FIRE.

Booth ducks low as their answering salvo TEARS through the barn. Luther waves his arms so the Soldiers lower their guns.

LUTHER
 Hold fire! He must be taken alive!

Crouched behind the barrels, Booth steadies himself.

BOOTH
 "Demand why Brutus rose against
 Caesar, this is my answer -- not
 that I loved Caesar less, but that
 I loved Rome more. Had you rather
 Caesar were living, and all die
 slaves..."

Booth rises, fires -- BANG! Then another. BANG! Another. BANG! The bullets miss the Soldiers but they're panicked.

A few intrepid Soldiers creep around to the barn's side windows. They push at the FLAPS, trying to force them open from BELOW so they are not easy targets.

Booth sees. Swivels his rifle to the bulging windows.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
 "Who is here so vile that will not
 love his country? If any, speak;
 (MORE)

BOOTH (CONT'D)
for him I have offended. I pause
for a reply."

He fires again. The Soldiers dive down as the rounds BURST out the window flaps. Booth shoots until the rifle CLICKS.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
"Then none have I offended. I have
done no more to Caesar than you
shall do to Brutus."

The Soldiers rejoin the main company. Looking for someone to lead them. Luther scans wildly around but Boston is gone.

Booth sets the empty rifle down, draws his last two pistols.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
"With this I depart -- that as I
slew my best lover for the good of
Rome, I have the same dagger for
myself, when it shall please my
country to need my death."

The Troops rush the door. As Booth readies to unleash hell --

EXT. BARN - BACK WALL - DAWN

Boston stalks around the barn alone. The faint BANGS of Booth's pistols are heard O.S.

Then Boston notices a small HOLE near the wall's base. Rot or termites have eaten through the wood to make an opening *just* large enough for him to enter. Adrenaline pumping, Boston slides his musket inside then SQUEEZES in after it.

INT. BARN - GROUND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Boston creeps forward, keeping to the shadows where possible.

BOOTH -- fires his last shots. It's time to reload.

Boston shuffles closer, cat-quiet. Musket raised. He spies Booth and steps into the dim light as Booth places his guns on the barrel tops to reload. He's now UNARMED.

But Booth's instinct kicks in as he feels he's got company. Slowly rotates on the spot to find Boston aiming at him.

A long, charged moment. Then before Booth can so much as dive for a weapon -- BANG.

And Booth crumples. Blood SPURTS from his neck. Tries to stifle it with his hands but it's futile.

Boston watches Booth bleed out, listens to his wet GASPS. Stone-faced. With the last of his strength, Booth manages to lift his blood-drenched hands. Regards them.

BOOTH
Useless, useless.

Then his hands drop. Booth dies.

CRASH! The Union Soldiers finally break down the bar and rush inside. They crowd around Boston as he stands over Booth.

And then they break into cheers. Embrace one another. The Soldiers mob Boston, thump his back.

Now the Soldiers hoist Booth's BODY onto their shoulders and carry him out. Luther casts a last look at Boston, who still hasn't moved. Neither knows what to say. Luther departs.

Finally Boston follows. Booth's blood STAINS the ground.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - VARIOUS LOCATIONS

The aftermath of Boston's successful manhunt:

-- Boston marches through CHEERING CROWDS with his company. A hero's welcome.

-- Boston delivers his report to a MILITARY TRIBUNAL. Stanton also sits on the panel and nods. Boston is cleared of blame.

-- Asia and her Mother (wearing all black) watch GRAVEDIGGERS lower a plain COFFIN into the ground. The last resting place of John Wilkes Booth. Asia's expression is hard to read.

-- Luther reads a newspaper to his WIFE and SON. On the front page is a photo of Boston with headline: "LINCOLN'S AVENGER".

-- At his apartment, Boston excitedly sifts through hundreds of FAN LETTERS piled Matterhorn high on his bed.

-- Davey and the other Conspirators are led to THE GALLOWS. Their hands are bound. The NOOSES are already waiting.

-- Boston, halfway dressed for some event, cradles his Wife's photo. Absorbed. We hear TINKLING glasses and polite CHATTER.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

A reception filled with D.C.'s political and social elite. Flags from Army divisions adorn walls. An orchestra plays.

A long, long line of DIGNITARIES and SENATORS leads up to well-dressed Boston. Each waiting to shake his hand.

Boston greets them all, every inch the proud hero. Spots Stanton standing nearby. Stanton lifts his GLASS in salute. Boston nods then turns back to his many waiting guests.

Now a PHOTOGRAPHER hustles up to Boston. The man indicates his set up TRIPOD CAMERA. Boston shakes a final hand then follows. The crowds turn to watch as Boston strikes a pose.

But in that brief moment before the Photographer snaps the picture, Boston's grin wavers. The ambient sounds become strangely MUTED.

Then Boston forces a fresh smile. The camera FLASHES.

FADE TO BLACK.

"THOMAS 'BOSTON' CORBETT RETIRED FROM DUTY IN AUGUST OF 1865. OF THE \$100,000 OFFERED FOR THE CAPTURE OF BOOTH AND HIS CONSPIRATORS, CORBETT RECEIVED JUST \$1,653.84."

"FIRST HAND ACCOUNTS FROM ACQUAINTANCES REVEAL CORBETT BECAME INCREASINGLY PARANOID, CONVINCED THAT 'BOOTH AVENGERS' IN THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT WANTED HIM DEAD."

"IN 1887, CORBETT WORKED AS ASSISTANT DOORKEEPER AT THE KANSAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BUT WAS ARRESTED FOR HOLDING THE LEGISLATURE AT GUNPOINT AND INCARCERATED AT THE TOPEKA ASYLUM FOR THE INSANE. A YEAR LATER, HE SUCCESSFULLY ESCAPED."

"CORBETT'S FATE IS UNKNOWN TO THIS DAY. IT IS BELIEVED HE DIED IN THE GREAT HINCKLEY FIRE ON SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1894."

"FOLLOWING HIS PRESUMED DEATH SEVERAL IMPOSTERS EMERGED TO CLAIM THE TITLE 'LINCOLN'S AVENGER'. OF THEM, TWO WERE JAILED FOR USING CORBETT'S NAME TO RECEIVE HIS PENSION BENEFITS."

THE END