



LINCOLN'S Mistake

THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE AND PECULIAR STORY
ABOUT HOW THE WRONG MAN BECAME PRESIDENT
A REASONABLE EXPLANATION FOR AMERICA'S
PERSISTENT RACISM

RUSS WOODY

EPISODE ONE
"BULLETS OVER LINCOLN"

First
A Word About Words

Use of the "N-word" was long considered and discussed, especially with African American writers and friends. The conclusion was that its absence would stand out far more than its inclusion, since it was used so prolifically in the 1860s. Though it appears sparingly in the script, it underscores the true tone of racism. Then. *And now.*

EPISODE ONE
The Starting Part

ON BLACK:

TITLE FADES IN:

LINCOLN'S MISTAKE

OVER WHICH we hear:

TRUMP (V.O.)
We will not let them silence your
voices!

DISSOLVE INTO:

EXT. U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING - NEWS FOOTAGE

HAZY SHOTS, JUMP CUTS of TRUMP SUPPORTERS breaking down barricades, climbing walls, smashing windows, clubbing cops.

TRUMP (V.O.)
You have to show strength!

INT. U.S. CAPITOL ROTUNDA - SAME TIME

TRUMP SUPPORTERS are moving in and through the rotunda.

CHYRON:

Washington, D.C.
January 6, 2021

TRUMP (V.O.)
You're allowed to go by very different
rules!

ANGLE ON: A WOMAN in a PINK MAGA SHIRT standing near a BLACK CAPITOL POLICEMAN.

BLACK POLICEMAN
Why you doin' this?

MAGA WOMAN
Because *nobody* voted for Biden!
Nobody!

BLACK POLICEMAN
I did.

The MAGA Woman squints at him, then turns to the others.

MAGA WOMAN
Hey! This nigger voted for Biden!

TRUMP (V.O.)
You have to be strong!

ANGLE ON: A SQUATTING TRUMPER grimaces as he takes a shit on the floor of the Capitol.

INT. ANTEROOM TO SENATE CHAMBER - SAME TIME

A TRUMP ENTHUSIAST carries a CONFEDERATE FLAG through the room.

PICTURE FREEZES on CONFEDERATE FLAG.

TRUMP (V.O.)
We fight like hell and if you don't
fight like hell, you're not going to
have a country anymore!

The FLAG'S IMAGE SLOWLY BLURS as it's then **FRAMED WITHIN** the **POV of FIELD GLASSES** where the flag comes **BACK INTO FOCUS** and **BACK TO LIFE**. Now we see it's being carried by a CONFEDERATE SOLDIER in the distance. He's fronting rows of CONFEDERATE TROOPS.

LINCOLN (PRE-LAP)
Well, gentlemen... it appears the
Rebels have indeed arrived.

EXT. FORT STEVENS, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY

Now we see that the man holding the FIELD GLASSES is PRESIDENT LINCOLN (55), standing atop the fort's massive PARAPET (an earthen wall surrounding the fort).

CHYRON:

FORT STEVENS, WASHINGTON D.C.

July 1864

The last time it happened

Lincoln is amongst a small contingent of CIVILIANS/
DIGNITARIES, including Secretary of War EDWIN STANTON and
DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD. They are being shown around the fort
by General HORATIO WRIGHT (44) and a young Capt. OLIVER W.
HOLMES (23).

GUNFIRE ERUPTS far off. A few of the men share concerned
looks. Lincoln, however, is oblivious as he continues to
squint into the field glasses.

CHYRON:

PART ONE

Bullets Over Lincoln

EXT. FARM HOUSE - SAME TIME

ESTABLISH a small two-story house in the distance.

INT. FARM HOUSE DORMER- DAY

A CONFEDERATE SHARPSHOOTER sits on a box and levers open the
breech of his rifle. A SECOND SHARPSHOOTER FIRES his. A THIRD
SOLDIER is looking through a MONOCULAR at the movement around
the fort. (The window of the dormer looks out at Fort
Stevens.)

MONOCULAR POV: Its ROUND IMAGE moves along the fort's
parapet, where it comes upon the group of men.

SHARPSHOOTER (V.O.)

Looks to be maybe seven or eight,
over to the right...

The image then MOVES PAST them along the wall before -- it
stops, WHIPS BACK to the TALL LANKY GUY with the beard and
the stovetop hat.

SHARPSHOOTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

No, no, no. Thah cain't be. Cain't be!

BACK TO: Sharpshooter

He slams the monocular into the arm of the next Sharpshooter
and scrambles for his own rifle.

SHARPSHOOTER (CONT'D)
Holy shit! The right wall there to
the right! The wall! You ain't gonna
fuckin' believe it!

The other Sharpshooter puts the eyeglass up, then:

SHARPSHOOTER #2
I'll be a sumbitch!

He quickly passes the monocular on and jerks his rifle up.

EXT. FORT STEVENS PARAPET- SAME TIME

GUNFIRE CONTINUES TO CRACK in the distance, when suddenly Dr. CHARLES CRAWFORD (standing next to Lincoln) is violently jolted. He looks down at his THIGH and sees it has BURST. As he drops, SCREAMING, the others see and quickly clamor for safety, one pulling him with them. As a couple of the men start tending to the injured doctor, we hear:

LINCOLN (O.C.)
General Wright!

The general looks up to see the president is *still* standing on the wall, still with the field glasses while bullets fly past him:

LINCOLN (CONT'D)
Some of our men in front there, they
need to fall back!

A VOICE (O.C.)

(shouts)
Get down, you damn fool!

Lincoln lowers the glasses, looks curiously at the YOUNG MAN who, in turn, looks around as though wondering who might've spoken so disrespectfully to the president.

CHYRON:

Captain Oliver Wendell Holmes

Lincoln turns back and lifts the field glasses again to watch the goings-on -- while more bullets whiz past his head.

GENERAL WRIGHT

(shouts)
Mr. President! Get down or I will
have you forcibly taken down!

Impulsively, the general reaches up, grabs Lincoln's arm and PULLS HIM DOWN to safety. Lincoln, a little surprised, reluctantly sits and adjusts his legs. Then:

LINCOLN
(disgruntled)
I thought I was the Commander in Chief...

General Wright decides to ignore the comment.

OLD HAMLIN (PRE-LAP)
To this day, nobody really knows why he'd been so careless...

LOUISE (PRE-LAP)
That didn't really happen, did it, Grampa?

EXT. ELDERLY HAMLIN'S HOUSE - 1890 - DAY

ESTABLISH a well-kept white two-story home with a garden.

OLD HAMLIN (PRE-LAP)
Yes. It really happened.

CHYRON:

Twenty-five years later

Bangor, Maine

1890

INT. ELDERLY HAMLIN'S STUDY - SAME TIME

An old man, HANNIBAL HAMLIN (80) is sitting in his rocking chair. Now we see he's addressing THREE YOUNG GIRLS (two great-granddaughters and a friend). They're sitting on the floor in front of, and beside him.

OLD HAMLIN
See those books over there...
(indicates book shelves)
A good many of them chronicle the life of our 16th president. Look it up.

SALLY
So, where were you, Grampa, when the president almost got shot?

OLD HAMLIN
In the army.

LOUISE
That's not true.

OLD HAMLIN
Look it up. Fort McClary, Maine.

LOUISE
Impossible.

OLD HAMLIN
I was a mess hall cook.

SALLY
I don't believe you, Grampa.

OLD HAMLIN
Look it up.

LOUISE
So, you had two jobs at once?

OLD HAMLIN
Look. It. Up.

SALLY
But why would you do --

OLD HAMLIN
I'll bet it's nearly lunchtime. Maybe
you girls should go check with grandma.

NOSY SOLDIER (PRE-LAP)
So, lemme ask you this...

EXT. KITTERY, MAINE - DAY

Beneath a dazzling summer sun, the placid water of Pepperrell Cove pushes small waves at the boulders of a rocky shoreline where tall grass sweeps uphill past a defensive battery to a proud HEXAGONAL BLOCKHOUSE atop the hill.

CHYRON:

Back to the past
FORT McCLARY, MAINE
July 1864

NOSY SOLDIER (V.O.)
...bein' as how you're somebody famous
an' well-known an' such... an' bein'
as how I got this opportunity at
conversin' with you...

INT. FORT MCCLARY KITCHEN - SAME TIME

LIGHT STREAMS into an otherwise gray kitchen, where industrial ovens along a back wall make this a virtual hot house.

HAMLIN (O.C.)
I'm listening...

The NOSY SOLDIER, scruffy-looking, is leaning back against a worn wooden PREP TABLE, picking at a scab on his elbow.

NOSY SOLDIER
See, I been scratchin' my head as to why it is you made this particular and peculiar choice...

He's talking to a younger HANNIBAL HAMLIN (55), an apron over his sweat-stained UNIFORM, while he skins a potato.

HAMLIN
And what choice is that?

NOSY SOLDIER
...the decidin' you made for yourself to be workin' here as a lowly dog robber, peelin' taters an' cookin' up sinkers for a buncha past-prime and pimply-faced grunts. It is perplexing.

HAMLIN
If you must know, Private Stark, I joined the military solely to answer my country's call to duty...

NOSY SOLDIER
Uh-huh, uh-huh... well, see I been contemplating 'bout that, an' about nearly the only concludin' I been able to surmise is that there is bitterness.

HAMLIN
I can assure you, private, there is no bitterness.

NOSY SOLDIER
Uh-huh, uh-huh...

A SOLDIER with a BASKET of potatoes has ENTERED, plops it down beside Hamlin.

POTATO SOLDIER
This here's the last of 'em, Mr. Hamlin, sir.

HAMLIN

Private Wiggins, you and I are the same rank. You needn't address me as anything more than Private Hamlin --

POTATO SOLDIER

Wull, okay, but it don't seem right, bein' as how you're presently the vice president of these United States.

HAMLIN

Nonetheless, at this fort, I am "Private Hamlin." Nothing more.

POTATO SOLDIER

(thinks about it)
Uh-huh. Wull, okay.

He then stiffens and whips into a brisk salute.

POTATO SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Thank you, Mr. Private Hamlin, sir!

As he EXITS, Hamlin drops the potato into a bucket of water.

CHYRON:

Vice President of the United States
Hannibal Hamlin

He wipes sweat off his brow and picks up another potato. The Nosy Soldier, is still picking at his scab and surmising.

NOSY SOLDIER

See, I'm guessin' this bitterness is 'cause dear Abraham has saw fit to pick that Southern fella 'steada you for this upcomin' electoral procession 'round November. What's that fella's name? John-ston. Somethin' John-ston.

HAMLIN

Andrew Johnson. And that decision, sir, was not made by the president, but at the convention in Baltimore. As well, Mr. Lincoln has assured me of as much. He made clear that he has, and has *had*, complete faith in me as his vice president.

NOSY SOLDIER

Uh-huh, uh-huh. So if he wins hisself a second go-round, you are officially mustered out. An' still, not no smidge a bitterness?

Hamlin stares at him, considers uncharacteristic violence.

HAMLIN

Private Stark... if we are done here, I have work to do...

NOSY SOLDIER

Uh-huh...

As the Nosy Soldier pulls the scab off his elbow and examines it intently, Hamlin snaps up another potato.

ANOTHER SOLDIER ENTERS with PANS and KETTLE POTS that CLINK and CLANG. He stops to announce:

SOLDIER WITH POTS

Hey, all! Heard the skunks squawkin' over at O.Q. -- Captain Morse sayin Ol' Father Abraham nearly got himself shot at Fort Stevens. Some Reb tree-frogs sendin' hornets right past his head.

(off their doubtful looks)

A bona fide fact, mother's grave. Check the grapevine ya don't believe me!

(*Grapevine* -- the telegraph.) The Pot Soldier EXITS into the back storage room.

NOSY SOLDIER

Well, if that don't beat the devil. Dirty Rebs shootin' at our commander's head.

HAMLIN

(a deep breath)

Thank God he's all right.

NOSY SOLDIER

(studies Hamlin)

Really?

(off his look)

Just seems like a particularly peculiar and unusual thing to say, bein' as how you almost nearly got to be the big bug.

HAMLIN

Mr. Stark... have you no
responsibilities around here?

The Nosy Soldier flicks the scab away and pushes off the
table. Then thinks to add:

NOSY SOLDIER

Hey, don't feel bad. Could be somebody
else'll shoot him...

He EXITS, as Hamlin considers hurling the knife after him.

INT. ELDERLY HAMLIN'S STUDY - RESUMING

Sally has returned, eating a sandwich.

SALLY

...Grandma says what you said, it's
all true.

OLD HAMLIN

Told you.

SALLY

But, I still don't understand why
you became a soldier?

OLD HAMLIN

As every responsible citizen must
do, I was serving my --

SALLY

(admonishing)
Grampa...

Hamlin takes in her stern look. Then:

OLD HAMLIN

Fine. But, this is just between you
and me...

SALLY

(nods)
Cross my heart, hope to die.

OLD HAMLIN

(leans forward)
I was a little bitter.

The OTHER TWO RETURN, one having overheard the last.

LOUISE

Bitter 'bout what?

OLD HAMLIN
Nothing. My life has been wonderful.

End of First Part

The Part After the First Part

EXT. ENCAMPMENT, BANGOR FAIRGROUNDS 1890 - DAY

WE MOVE TOWARD an arching sign with balloons and bunting that announces: "**G.A.R. ENCAMPMENT / REUNION.**"

CHYRON:

1890

As we PASS UNDER the arch, we see a field dotted with bivouacked tents, some in line, some askew. All amidst several polished Civil War cannons. Down the hill, RE-ENACTORS (Union and Confederate) are lined up opposite each other, taking aim.

WE MOVE TO FAMILIES casually milling about FOOD TABLES, as the FAKE RIFLES FIRE O.C. Around the tables, OLD VETERANS -- having squeezed themselves into their faded Union UNIFORMS -- are serving up picnic food to PLAIN FOLKS and other VETERANS.

CHYRON:

GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

Annual Reunion

Old Soldiers Never Die,

They Just Serve Potato Salad

ANGLE ON: OLD HAMLIN, at a table, serving potato salad to a line of VISITORS and some FORMER SOLDIERS. He's uncomfortably snug in his OLD UNIFORM as he spoons potato salad onto the plates of a WOMAN and her YOUNG DAUGHTER.

WOMAN

(smiles appreciatively)

Thank you so much, sir.

OLD HAMLIN
You're quite welcome, madam.

The Woman and her Daughter MOVE OFF -- STAY WITH THEM.

WOMAN
Do you know who that was, honey?

DAUGHTER
No, ma'am.

WOMAN
That was Abraham Lincoln's vice president.

DAUGHTER
Oh my. Was it really?

WOMAN
Yes, indeed.

DAUGHTER
I can't wait to tell Father! I just saw Andrew Johnson.

EXT. U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

Blossoms have popped out on the scrawny trees near the Capitol.

CHYRON:

March 1865

THE WAR'S ALMOST DONE

Almost Lincoln's Second Inauguration

INT. HAMLIN'S VICE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE - MORNING

Vice President Hamlin, in his swallowtail coat, stands in front of a glass cabinet's reflection as he finishes adjusting his neck sock.

There's a LIGHT RAP on the open door. Hamlin turns and sees ANDREW JOHNSON (56).

HAMLIN
Ah, Governor Johnson. Or should I say, "Vice President-Elect" Johnson?

Johnson makes a beeline for the couch, plops down, death warmed over.

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)
*There are times, I have found, when
the company of some can be challenging.*

JOHNSON
Hamlin... I need to know you harbor
no ill will toward me for taking
this place.

HAMLIN
(acting)
No, of course not. Certainly not.

Johnson drops his head in his hands, massages his temples.

HAMLIN (CONT'D)
In fact, when the president requested
I help you prepare for the ceremony,
I was happy to do so.

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)
*At times, honesty isn't always the
best policy.*

Hamlin moves to the door, closes it and turns back to Johnson,
who's still massaging his temples.

JOHNSON
I'm dreadfully ill...

HAMLIN
Yes, I was told you imbibed rather
liberally at the Forney house last night.

JOHNSON
I... it was an occasion thrown in my
honor, so I hardly had a choice. More
to the point, I have a slight case of
typhoid, so I'm feeling very weak.

CHYRON:

PART TWO

Just a Tad of the Dog's Hair

HAMLIN
A most unfortunate condition for
your inauguration.

JOHNSON
Have you got whiskey?

HAMLIN

I don't. As you know, I put a stop to all--

JOHNSON

-- Yes, yes, you stopped all alcohol in the Chamber, the restaurant. Though I'll be damned if I know why.

HAMLIN

Mr. Johnson, it's no secret that a full one-third of the Senate was most often wallpapered by mid-afternoon. In fact, it's my contention that all the drinking and its belligerent aftermath was a good reason for the war we have just gone through.

JOHNSON

The war, yes. That noble endeavor... the glorious sacrifice of precious white lives so that we might set all those dim-witted darkies free.

HAMLIN

Well, we may have a difference of opinion in that regard.

JOHNSON

There's whiskey at the shop across the street. Please send a page.

On Hamlin, irritated, considering his options...

INT. HAMLIN'S VICE-PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE - A SHORT TIME LATER

CLOSE ON: A TUMBLER (not a shotglass) as it's filled with whiskey.

Johnson sets the bottle down and lifts the glass.

JOHNSON

Gentlemen. Nothing like a little hair of that rabid dog.

He chugs it. Hamlin and the PAGE (who was sent for the whiskey) look on incredulously. Then:

PAGE

Okay, well... the street was pretty muddy, so I oughta go see if I can salvage my shoes.

He notices Johnson filling the glass again. Hamlin follows his gaze and sees Johnson lifting the glass again.

JOHNSON

Gentlemen, the dog is on the run.

In another swift tilt, Johnson downs the contents of the SECOND glass -- the Page's eyes widen. There's a LIGHT RAP on the door, ANOTHER PAGE sticks his head in to address Hamlin:

PAGE #2

Mr. Vice President...

(noticing)

Oh, Governor Johnson. Um... the inauguration is about to begin.

Page #2 DISAPPEARS. Hamlin looks to Johnson.

HAMLIN

Well then... I suppose it's time.

Johnson nods as Hamlin and the other Page move to the door. Johnson gets up and joins them. As they start to exit, Johnson stops, rethinks, and returns to fill a THIRD glass of whiskey. The Page is stunned.

PAGE

(a whisper to Hamlin)

Is he gonna be okay?

HAMLIN

Apparently, the man is...

(hesitant)

...well accustomed to hard liquor.

Johnson downs the whiskey and sets the glasss back on the table before he heads for the door, EXITING past Hamlin and the Page. The Page looks at his stocking feet.

PAGE

If you don't mind, sir, maybe I'll clean my shoes later...

(off his look)

Could be this is more educational.

INT. U.S. SENATE CHAMBER - RESUME

With virtually no ventilation, the place is a hothouse. One side of the Chamber is well-attended by sweaty REPUBLICAN SENATORS. The other side, the Southern side, nada. In the balcony, DIGNITARIES/SPECTATORS endure the heat, while outgoing VP Hamlin is finishing his valedictory address.

HAMLIN

...and my hope is that the sunshine of peace will soon shed its rays across a united, happy and free people.

Some APPLAUSE.

HAMLIN (CONT'D)

Now, members of the Supreme Court, members of the 39th Congress and guests... may I present the honorable governor and soon-to-be vice president of the United States, Mr. Andrew Johnson.

APPLAUSE. Hamlin watches intently as Johnson makes his way to the podium and gets situated. He seems okay.

JOHNSON

I am honored to be standing before you today. I am, in fact, humbled.

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)

Remarkably, he seemed capable of the task before him.

JOHNSON

...after I take this oath of office, I will be your vice president.

Hamlin breathes more easily.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

But, more important... I want you to know that I am a plebeian. And after I am vice president, I will *still* be a plebeian.

He squints at his notes, then turns them right-side up. Hamlin is now a tad concerned.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

And it is the people who...
(squints at his notes)
...who made me a plebeian. And I am a-goin for to tell you here today, yes, I'm a-goin for to tell ya'll that I am a plebeian...

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)

However, I soon had to reassess my earlier assumption.

JOHNSON

...because the people of the United States have made me what I am. A plebeian!

Some SENATORS exchange looks.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

And I'm a-goin for to tell you, today, in this place, that the people are everything... everybody is the people... and they are plebeians...

SEVERAL SENATORS now look quite uncomfortable.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

And, as all of everyone knows, Tennessee has never... ever gone out of the Union! So I'm a-goin to talk exactly two and a half minutes on that point...

PRESIDENT LINCOLN ENTERS, stops to listen.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Tennessee -- always loyal! Always! Like a... loyal place. A loyal state. Like loyal people. Who are plebeians.

Hamlin, now very concerned, shares a look with Senate Secretary JOHN FORNEY (48).

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

But first, I must address the teemed members of... no, not teemed. Es-teemed!

SENATOR CHARLES SUMNER (54) puts his face in his hands and drops his head on his desk. Hamlin is now realizing he will have to do something.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

The *esteemed* members of the president's Cab-in-et...

Finally Hamlin leans forward and tugs on Johnson's coat.

HAMLIN

(whispers)
Johnson. Stop.

Undaunted, Johnson continues.

JOHNSON

Mr. Stanton and you gentlemen of the
Diplomatic Corps with all your fine
feathers and gewgaws...

He pauses, trying to collect his scrambled brain cells,
while, here and there, we see some SENATORS in the throes
of crippling embarrassment, lots of looking at feet.

HAMLIN

(a louder whisper)
Johnson!

ANGLE ON: Lincoln (now seated in the middle of the first
row) who seems to be looking on patiently.

JOHNSON

I say to you, Mr. Seca-trary Nelson,
and to you, Mr. Navy Sec-trary of
the, uh...

He's lost, leans to the Senate secretary.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(quietly)
Forney? Who's Sec-trary of Navy?

SENATE SECRETARY

Mr. Welles, sir.

JOHNSON

(back to the address)
And to you, Mr. Seca-trary Welles! I
would say, you all de-prive your
power from the people! The plebeians!
For you too are all plebeians!

At last, Hamlin steps up and firmly moves Johnson aside,
before taking lectern himself.

HAMLIN

So... I believe it is now time to
administer the oath of office.

INT. ENCAMPMENT, BANGOR FAIRGROUNDS 1890 - RESUMING

OLD HAMLIN is still working the food line at the fair as an
ELDERLY BLACK VETERAN, in uniform, steps up with his plate.

OLD HAMLIN

What'll it be? Potato salad, corn on
the cob? Both?

BLACK VETERAN
Just the potato salad, Mr. Hamlin.

Old Hamlin smiles and digs out some potato salad.

BLACK VETERAN (CONT'D)
And I wanna thank you, sir, for
putting me in this uniform way back
when.

OLD HAMLIN
Well, I certainly appreciate the
thought, but it was Mr. Lincoln who
made that decision.

BLACK VETERAN
Yes, he made the decision...

Hamlin spoons the potato salad onto the plate.

BLACK VETERAN (CONT'D)
...but I read an account of how he
came to that decision. And it was
you, sir, you were the one that talked
him into it.

The Black Veteran extends his hand to Hamlin's. Hamlin moves
the ladle and shakes the man's hand.

OLD HAMLIN
Appreciate it.

The Black Veteran starts to move off, then stops, turns back.

BLACK VETERAN
And, sir. I need to say something
else...
(off Hamlin's look)
It's a shame whatall came 'round after
Mr. Lincoln was killed. Damn shame.
Wish you'd been the one to...

Hamlin nods, knows what he's getting at. When the Black
Veteran MOVES OFF, Hamlin notices a **YOUNG BLACK BOY (8)**
standing a few feet away, staring at him, transfixed.

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - EVENING

ESTABLISHING. Light spills from the front entrances. A few
GAS LAMPS shine brightly in front of the building.

CHYRON

FORD'S THEATRE

EXT. ALLEY BESIDE FORD'S THEATRE - SAME TIME

JOHN BOOTH (26) stands impatiently outside the back door holding the reins of a CHESTNUT MARE. PEANUTS JOHN, a short young African American steps out of the side door.

PEANUTS

You lookin' to see me, Mr. Booth?

JOHN BOOTH

Peanuts, I need you to hold the horse. Ten, fifteen minutes is all.

PEANUTS

(perplexed)

You want me to hold that horse?

JOHN BOOTH

Something I gotta do inside.

Peanuts looks at the nearby railing, then back to Booth.

PEANUTS

Ya ever thoughta maybe usin' this railing here to hitch her?

JOHN BOOTH

I don't need smart lip from a backstage darky. The fellow at the stables said the horse gets crazy mad when she's tied up. Complete conniption. So just walk her around.

PEANUTS

Cain't do it. Ol' man Ford wants me up fronta the theatre -- gotta make sure nobody slips in without puttin' out nuff spondulix.

JOHN BOOTH

It's the third act. Who's gonna sneak in to see the last part of a play?

PEANUTS

Oh, folks do it, John. They don't know what they're seeing when they get in there, but folks do it.

JOHN BOOTH

Peanuts, I'm beggin' you.

PEANUTS

No, sir, not by a full jug.

Booth studies him a moment, then:

JOHN BOOTH
All right then -- it's your neck.

PEANUTS
So I'll be headin' back now.

He starts to leave, then turns back.

PEANUTS (CONT'D)
My neck?

JOHN BOOTH
Well, think about it -- I tie the mare to the railing, she goes crazy, ends up causing holy hell, interrupts the play -- old man Ford's gonna wanna hear what happened... *who* was responsible. And he's gonna have your hide.

Peanuts stands there a moment trying to decide whether Booth has a point or not. Finally he reaches for the mare's reins.

PEANUTS
Ten minutes?

JOHN BOOTH
Ten minutes. Maybe less.

Booth EXITS into the theatre. The mare WHINNIES.

PEANUTS
Shut up.

EXT. THE KIRKWOOD HOUSE HOTEL - EVENING

ESTABLISHING -- five-story newly-renovated hotel on Pennsylvania Ave.

CHYRON:

The Kirkwood House Hotel
Meanwhile...

BARTENDER (PRE-LAP)
What'd ya say, pal, 'nother one?

INT. KIRKWOOD HOUSE BAR - SAME TIME

A FEW PATRONS sit at tables.

GEORGE ATZERODT (30), a scruffy/greasy-looking guy sits at the bar, brooding, staring into an empty shot glass, doesn't respond to the Bartender's question.

NARRATOR/OLD HAMLIN (V.O.)

At the same time, a man named Atzerodt was building his up "courage" for a job he had to do.

Bartender MICHAEL HENRY stands behind the bar, drying a mug.

BARTENDER

So that's it then?

Atzerodt looks up.

ATZERODT

(German accent)

Huh? You said something?

BARTENDER

'Nuther shot?

ATZERODT

No, nah. I think it is time...

(rethinks)

Ja. Yes. I will have another drink.

The Bartender grabs the bottle from the back bar.

OLD HAMLIN (V.O.)

The new vice president was asleep upstairs. Atzerodt's had been told to go upstairs and kill him.

BARTENDER

(pouring)

You okay? You look like you got troubles.

ATZERODT

I am of troubles, yes. There is only something I must do... an errand for a friend.

Atzerodt runs a hand through his greasy hair, as the Bartender puts the bottle back and picks up a another mug to dry. Atzerodt downs the shot, puts the glass back on the bar.

ATZERODT (CONT'D)

(nods, then)

And now I will have another drink.

BARTENDER

Another one?

The Bartender eyeballs him, then turns, retrieves the bottle and is about to pour when Atzerodt changes his mind.

ATZERODT

No. No, drink. I must go upstairs.

BARTENDER

Uh-huh...

(sets the bottle down)

So... that'll be a buck-twenty.

Atzerodt stands rather unsteadily, begins to dig for cash, but stops, sits down again.

ATZERODT

No, I will have another drink.

The Bartender, irritated, looks at him a moment, then grabs the bottle and pours another. Atzerodt stares at the glass.

ATZERODT (CONT'D)

I think instead, I will just go walk.
I will walk around. No drink.

He stands.

BARTENDER

Fine. But you're payin' for this one too, 'cause I already poured it. Makes a dollar-fifty you owe.

Atzerodt decides to sit again.

ATZERODT

I will drink this first.

As Atzerodt downs another:

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)

He never got the "courage" to go upstairs...

CHYRON:

GEORGE ATZERODT

***Was hanged with the other conspirators
in July 1865***

EXT. ALLEY BESIDE FORD'S THEATRE - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

With great resentment, Peanuts (mumbling obscenities) walks the horse in a circle. Then:

A SINGLE GUN SHOT

Peanuts looks at the backstage door and hears a WOMAN SCREAM.

UNDER WHICH: PRE-LAP BANGING on a door.

INT. JOHNSON'S HOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

In DARKNESS:

Another DOOR KNOCK. Johnson rouses, grumbles, goes back to sleep. LOUD KNOCKING. He pulls a pillow over his head.

A VOICE (O.S.)
Mr. Vice president, if you are in
this room I must see you!

Johnson pulls the pillow off and looks at the door.

JOHNSON
Farwell? Is that you!?

FARWELL (O.S.)
Yes, let me in!

Johnson pushes the covers off, still in STREET CLOTHES, makes his way to the the door.

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)
*Johnson had been vice president for all
of six weeks. The first week he'd spent
in hiding after his inaugural
performance.*

He opens the door to find former Wisconsin governor LEONARD FARWELL (46), balding, a foreboding tone...

FARWELL
Mr. Vice President?

JOHNSON
What's it?

Farwell notices some mud clinging to Johnson's hair.

FARWELL
Oh, uh...
(MORE)

FARWELL (CONT'D)

(then)

I have just come from the theatre.
Ford's Theatre. The president has
been shot. It's bad. Perhaps mortally.

Johnson, stunned, takes in the news. He reaches for Farwell's hands and falls into him. When they break, Farwell continues:

FARWELL (CONT'D)

There are guards outside the hotel
here to protect you. In case you are
to be attacked as well.

Johnson nods, his mind whirling.

JOHNSON

Well, yes, of course...

FARWELL

And Secretary Seward, he's been
attacked. In his home. He's alive,
but I don't know yet his condition.

A SOLDIER shows up.

SOLDIER

Excuse me, Mr. Vice president. We
have guards outside the --

JOHNSON

-- I know, I know.

Farwell turns to speak quietly to the Soldier.

FARWELL

I think it might behoove us if you were
to find a doctor for Mr. Johnson...

(then)

...and perhaps a barber.

As the Soldier nods and MOVES OFF:

EXT. 10TH STREET - PETERSEN HOUSE - MORNING

ESTABLISH: the boarding house in the early morning sunlight.

CHYRON:

THE PETERSEN HOUSE

7:22 A.M.

April 15th, 1865

We HEAR a woman and several others crying.

INT. PETERSEN HOUSE BEDROOM - SAME TIME

The room is small. Packed. DOCTORS, MINISTERS, AIDS, GENERALS (Halleck, Meigs, Oglesby), Senator CHARLES SUMNER, Chief Justice SALMON CHASE. JOHN HAY (one of Lincoln's private secretaries). MARY LINCOLN (46) sits to the side, weeping. Her SON ROBERT (21) is beside her, while Lincoln lies unconscious, breathing faintly, his feet hanging over the end of the bed. Secretary of War EDWIN STANTON (51) stands at Lincoln's bedside.

JAMES TANNER (21), a double-amputee with peg legs (from the Second Battle of Bull Run), assigned to take notes/dictation, sits, writing furiously with a worn wooden pencil.

CLOSE ON: Lincoln for a moment before he quietly takes his last breath and then lies still. The MINISTER sees it and bows his head.

MINISTER

Thy will be done. Amen.

Mary bursts into LOUD SOBS. STANTON is weeping.

CLOSE ON: Tanner - scribbling, scribbling, until he feels the pencil lead SNAP. Not now. He tries desperately to expose enough lead to continue writing.

ANGLE ON: Stanton

EDWIN STANTON (V.O.)

Now he belongs...
(too quietly)
...tothahagers...

BACK TO TANNER: Beyond frustrated, he turns to a SOLDIER.

TANNER

(quickly)
What'd he say, what'd he say?

SOLDIER 1

(whispers)
Who?

TANNER

Stanton, what'd he say?

SOLDIER 1

Something about angels.

ANOTHER SOLDIER pipes in.

SOLDIER 2

(quietly)

No. "Ages." The ages. He belongs to the ages.

SOLDIER 1

(shakes his head)

Angels.

SOLDIER 2

Ages.

TANNER

Oh, come on. What'd he say?

Soldier 1

Soldier 2

Angels. Ages.

Tanner stares at them -- well shit.

PULL BACK to the room.

CHYRON:

10 a.m.

ANDREW JOHNSON

Became the Seventeenth President of the United States

End of Part Two

The Part after the Last Part

EXT. ENCAMPMENT, BANGOR FAIRGROUNDS 1890 - DAY

PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF -- as Old Hamlin finishes doling out scoops of potato salad for a WHITE FAMILY.

OLD HAMLIN
You're quite welcome. I hope you
enjoy your day.

As they MOVE ON, he sees the BLACK BOY is still standing there, still staring at him.

OLD HAMLIN (CONT'D)
Young man, would you like some potato
salad?

BOY
No, sir.

OLD HAMLIN
Something else I can do for you?

BOY
Yes, sir.

OLD HAMLIN
Well then, you're gonna have to come
on over here to ask me.

As the Boy moves toward the table, another OLD SOLDIER (WHITE) steps in front of him. The Boy moves to the side so he can talk to Hamlin.

BOY
I'm told you're Mr. Hamlin.

OLD HAMLIN
I am. And whom might you be?

BOY
Eldridge J. Willsworth III, sir. My
grandfather is --

OLD HAMLIN
Willsworth? The third?

BOY
(nods)
Yes, sir. My grampa is...

OLD HAMLIN
I know who your grampa is.

OLD SOLDIER
(jumping in)
Christ almighty, you're gonna stand
there yappin' with some little nigger
kid 'steada serving me?

Hamlin looks at him with stifled irritation.

OLD HAMLIN
I'm so sorry.

He scoops up a dollop of potato salad (gigantic) and plops it
down on the guy's plate so that it covers all of his other
food. The Old Soldier gives Hamlin a dirty look, MOVES OFF.

OLD HAMLIN (CONT'D)
(back to the Boy)
So, you're Eldridge Willsworth...
your grampa and I met many years ago.

EXT. OHIO COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A TRAIN barrels through Ohio's endless fields of corn,
its steam rising and disappearing in the brisk November air.

CHYRON:

PART THREE
Back Before the War
November 1860

BUSINESSMAN #1 (PRE-LAP)

Hey, boy!

INT. DINING CAR - SAME TIME

Nicely appointed, white table clothes, red velvet curtains drawn back, SEVERAL COUPLES (WHITE) at tables, FAMILIES (WHITE) being served by various WAIT STAFF (BLACK).

A BUSBOY sets a tray of DIRTY DISHES down at a bus station -- ELDRIDGE J. WILLSWORTH (Sr.), maybe 20. A BUSINESSMAN is leaning out from a table...

BUSINESSMAN #1

Boy!

Eldridge looks over, just as ANOTHER BUSBOY moves past him.

BUSBOY

I'll get it, Wills.

As the other Busboy does, Eldridge sees another PASSENGER finishing his breakfast. HANNIBAL HAMLIN (then 51).

ANGLE ON: Hamlin's table

Eldridge appears, picks up Hamlin's plate, pulls out a CRUM SCRAPER and begins to whisk away crumbs.

ELDRIDGE

(quietly)

Porter up inna front car tol' me you're Mr. Hamlin. Tol' me you're gonna be the very next vice president of our United States.

HAMLIN

Well, now my secret is out.

ELDRIDGE

I ain't never met nobody thah's gonna be no vice president.. This here's a day I won't never forget, no suh. Eldridge J. Willsworth's my name, suh.

HAMLIN

Eldridge, huh?

ELDRIDGE

Whooo-weee, you say "Eldridge." The actual gonna-be vice president of the United States, he jus' say my name.

HAMLIN

(laughs, then)

Well... Eldridge J. Willsworth, nice to meet you.

ELDRIDGE

There's it again. Man-oh-man...

(picking up butter dish)

So, you headed west, huh, Mr. Hamlin?

HAMLIN

(nods)

I'm meeting with the president-elect in Chicago, yes.

ELDRIDGE

Mr. Abraham Lincoln. Heard 'bout him.

HAMLIN

Yes, I have too.

ELDRIDGE

(chuckles, then)

You don't mind my askin', suh... if they's a war, we gonna be concludin' this whole nasty slavin' business?

HAMLIN

Hard to say.

ELDRIDGE

I got relatives down south cain't do nuthin' but work all day inna sun. Gotta live in an' ol' shack. Some of 'em get beat. It ain't right.

HAMLIN

Well, if there is war, I hope the institution dies in the process.

A WAITER has APPROACHED with a pot of coffee.

WAITER

Mr. Hamlin, more coffee?

HAMLIN

That would be wonderful. Thank you.

WAITER

(pouring)

Eldridge, table three, the elderly couple -- they've haven't had their water refilled since they were young. Buzzards are circling overhead.

HAMLIN
(to Waiter)
Thank you for the coffee.

WAITER
You're quite welcome.
(then)
Eldridge. Now, please.

As the Waiter MOVES OFF, Eldridge lingers.

ELDRIDGE
That there's Bobby Rob. He a funny,
funny man. Buzzards...
(shakes his head,
then)
Well, Mr. Hamlin, this here has been
a great honor.

As Eldridge MOVES ON, Hamlin smiles.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT, BANGOR FAIRGROUNDS 1890 - RESUME

Old Hamlin sits at a picnic table with Young Eldridge III.

OLD HAMLIN
Eight years old? Is that right? Well,
you look ten, if you look a day.

YOUNG ELDRIDGE
(beams)
And I'm strong as two oxes.

He shows Hamlin his toothpick biceps.

OLD HAMLIN
I'd say you're right as a fiddle.
(off the boy's smile)
Now, tell me, where is your grampa
these days?

YOUNG ELDRIDGE
He's out West, sir. St. Louis.
(with pride)
He's in charge of the whole railroad
station out there. My pa's workin'
with him. They're real important.

OLD HAMLIN
Well, I'll be. Young man, that is
such great--

A VOICE (O.C.)
Eldridge!

YOUNG BLACK WOMAN appears beside them, not happy.

THE BOY'S MOTHER

What'd I tell you 'bout botherin'
white folks. 'Specially Mr. Hamlin.

OLD HAMLIN

He's no bother. He was just...
(realizing)
Are you the boy's mother? Are you
Eldridge's daughter?

THE BOY'S MOTHER

No, sir, I am not. I married Mr.
Eldridge's son, Eldridge.
(turns to Young Eldridge)
'Less you wanna get a woopin', you
best get yourself up from that table
this very minute.
(to Old Hamlin)
Now then, I mean no disrespect, but
you don't need to know no more about
the boy's grampa. So, I will kindly
ask you to mind your business.

The mother grabs the Boy's hand and WHISKS HIM AWAY, leaving
Old Hamlin fairly bewildered.

EXT. HOTEL, CHICAGO ILLINOIS 1860 - LATE MORNING

ESTABLISH: A stately five-story hotel, Chicago's finest.

CHYRON:

THE TREMONT HOUSE HOTEL

Chicago, Illinois

INT. LINCOLN'S SUITE - FOYER - SAME TIME

PRESIDENT-ELECT LINCOLN (51) is on his knees, ass in the
air, his head beneath a floral settee, looking for something.

THE DOOR from the corridor opens and JOHN NICOLAY (22) --
slender, sketchy beard (one of Lincoln's private secretaries) --
brings Hamlin in. Nicolay stops when he sees the president-
elect's odd position.

NICOLAY

...Mr. Lincoln?

LINCOLN (O.C.)

(from under the settee)
I'll be with you in just...

NICOLAY

Can I help you find something, sir?

LINCOLN

Nonsense.

NICOLAY

Nonsense?

LINCOLN

My book. *Book of Nonsense*. Edward Lear. Quite funny... It seems to have disappeared.

As he shimmies his way out...

NICOLAY

I'll look for it, sir. In any event, Mr. Hamlin is here.

Lincoln emerges from beneath the settee empty-handed and stands, unabashed.

LINCOLN

So I see.
(extends his hand)
Mr. Hamlin, at long last.

HAMLIN

It is a pleasure to finally meet you, sir.

NICOLAY

(surprised)
You've never met?

HAMLIN

No, unfortunately we have not. It appears I was foist upon Mr. Lincoln by the national convention.

LINCOLN

And I'm sure it was a wise and fortunate foisting at that.

HAMLIN

As I recall, Mr. Lincoln, you didn't wear a beard when I saw you speak on the floor of the House.

LINCOLN

A suggestion from a young constituent.
(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

(rubs his chin)

It's the wonder of a face like mine --
any change is welcome.

HAMLIN

(laughs)

You remind me that your speech was
full of good humor and sharp points.

NICOLAY

(interjecting)

If you'll excuse me, I'll check with
the kitchen about lunch.

Nicolay starts to exit.

LINCOLN

Oh, John... see if they have the --

NICOLAY

-- the Chicken Fricassee, I know.
The chef knows, the staff knows. I
doubt they would have the courage to
send anything else.

Nicolay EXITS.

LINCOLN

(to Hamlin)

Hope you like Chicken Fricassee.

HAMLIN

It sounds as though I haven't a choice.

LINCOLN

(laughs)

Come. Let's sit.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - AFTERNOON

Congress is adjourning for the day. A few CARRIAGES lumber by on a wide dirt road (Pennsylvania Avenue) that narrows in the distance at the dome-less Capitol building. CONGRESSIONAL TYPES, wrapped tight for the winter chill, make their way to stables or WAITING CARRIAGES, some are boarding HORSECARS while avoiding muddy patches in the street. OTHERS head out past shops and scrawny trees that jut up beside the boarded walkways.

CHYRON:

WASHINGTON, D.C.
The Political Animal...

Among those taking leave for the day is SENATOR ANDREW JOHNSON (51), on the way to his hotel. He spots REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS NELSON (48) ahead of him.

JOHNSON

Nelson!

Nelson stops, sees Johnson approaching.

NELSON

Andy. Good to see you.

JOHNSON

If you're going past the St. Charles,
I'll walk with you.

NELSON

I am indeed.

They continue on.

JOHNSON

So, I assume the House is in as much
duress as the Chamber?

NELSON

Yes. All thundering about secession.
(then)

And... as I understand it, you intend
to remain in the Senate, no matter.

JOHNSON

I do. Secession is treason.
(veiled sarcasm)
Don't you know the principals of our
very Constitution are at stake!

NELSON

(humoring him)
Uh-huh...

JOHNSON

No, I'm staying right here, even if
war comes and I am the lone Southerner
in Congress!

NELSON
(tongue-in-cheek)
And, by doing so, of course, you
might find a number of political
opportunities wide open?

JOHNSON
It's an interesting point you make...
that I'll deny in any public discussion.

NELSON
(laughs)
And I'll just bet the new president
will be quite impressed with such
stalwart loyalty.

JOHNSON
That hadn't even occurred to me.

Nelson laughs again, as they continue on:

INT. LINCOLN'S SUITE - FOYER - RESUME

PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF: Hamlin is sitting opposite Lincoln,
while Lincoln looks over paperwork.

LINCOLN
Quite a bit of new grumbling by our
neighbors down south, none too pleased
with the election.

HAMLIN
South Carolina, in particular,
discussing secession.

MARY LINCOLN (41) ENTERS from the bedroom and sees them.

MARY
Don't you dare start your business
chatter before I have been introduced
to our vice president-elect.

LINCOLN
(turning)
Oh. Mollie...

HAMLIN
(standing)
Mrs. Lincoln...

Lincoln takes off his reading glasses and stands.

LINCOLN
This is Mr. Hamlin.

MARY

You don't have to tell me.
Mr. Hamlin, I have heard much
about you.

HAMLIN

I only hope some of it is good.

MARY

(laughs, then)
I understand you cut the pigeon's
wing like few others.

HAMLIN

Ellie and I do enjoy a turn or two
around the dance floor.

MARY

(with an eye to Lincoln)
Do please tell her there is no one
more envious than I.

LINCOLN

Least it go unnoticed, Mr. Hamlin,
the wife is referring to her husband's
lack of grace in such endeavors.

MARY

(to Hamlin)
The first time Mr. Lincoln saw me
was at a soiree in Springfield where
he traversed the floor and made a --

LINCOLN

(cutting her off)
-- beeline right for young Miss Mary
Todd. Informed her that I wanted to
dance with her in the worst way.

MARY

(annoyed)
Why don't you go ahead then and tell
the story, Abraham.

LINCOLN

(oblivious)
So she accepted my invitation, and
afterward informed me that I did *indeed*
dance in the worst possible way.

Lincoln laughs. Hamlin, sensing some tension, forces a laugh.

MARY

Well then... since my input is not altogether necessary, I am off to explore Chicago.

(with meaning)

I'm given to understand the city is replete with many fine apparel and dress shops.

LINCOLN

(with dread)

Mother...

She shoots him an icy look, then turns to Hamlin.

MARY

(smiling)

Mr. Hamlin, do extend to your wife my good wishes. I look forward to meeting her.

HAMLIN

I will be most happy to, Mrs. Lincoln.

MARY

(turns to Lincoln)

I shouldn't be more than an hour or two.

LINCOLN

That is all it takes, I'm afraid.

(then)

Oh, Mollie? Would you have seen my book? My joke book?

MARY

Your nonsense book? Yes, I used it to kill a bug in the other room. Now it has been of some good use.

(smiles benevolently)

Gentlemen...

She EXITS. A beat, Hamlin turns to Lincoln.

HAMLIN

She is... lovely.

LINCOLN

From time to time, yes, she can present as such.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - RESUME

As Johnson and Nelson continue along the walkway:

NELSON

No, I'm afraid war is inevitable, what with our fellow Southerners stoking the flames, sayin' Lincoln's an abolitionist, tellin' folks he's gonna bring about the end of slavery...

JOHNSON

Bah, Lincoln's no abolitionist. It's not about that.

NELSON

(nods)

Tariffs, I know. Still, nothin' gets a young Southerner's dander up like talk of abolition. Even if Lincoln's got no intention of doing anything about it.

JOHNSON

No greater motivation for a Southern man to go to war than tellin' 'im a pack of ignorant darkies gonna be livin' down the street...

Nelson nods. As they continue on:

INT. LINCOLN'S SUITE - RESUME

PICKING UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF: Hamlin and Lincoln are sitting, as Lincoln, with his glasses on, peruses paperwork.

LINCOLN

Now then, with the party as fractious as it is, I will be depending on you more so, I imagine, than most presidents.

HAMLIN

Well, that is welcome news. As I'm sure you've heard, I was not keen on the idea of the vice presidency. I have had no desire to leave the Senate.

LINCOLN

(looks up, smiles)

Well, I'm glad you are.

(then)

So... our Southern neighbors?

HAMLIN

Yes. They're certain you're a threat to that most disgusting institution

(MORE)

HAMLIN (CONT'D)
of theirs. As I've asserted many
times, slavery is...

Lincoln goes back to the paperwork, half-listening.

HAMLIN (CONT'D)
...no less than a blight of mildew
upon any productive society. A moral
and social evil that does violence
to the rights of man...

LINCOLN
(absently)
Agreed, agreed.

HAMLIN
To any thinking, responsible man,
slavery *must* be eradicated.

LINCOLN
(making notes)
At the moment, however... my concern
is the preservation of the Union.

HAMLIN
Of course. But a Union without slavery
would be the better Union to preserve,
wouldn't you say?

LINCOLN
Yes, a union without slavery would
be fine. However...
(looks up)
...if I could save the Union without
freeing any slaves I would do it.
And if I could save it by freeing
all the slaves I would do it. And if
I could save it by freeing some, and
leaving others alone, I would also
do that. My paramount object in this
struggle is to save the Union, not
to save or destroy slavery.

HAMLIN
The Union is important, yes, but...

He decides not to press the issue.

HAMLIN (CONT'D)
Right.

End of Part Three

Here's the Last Part

EXT. U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

ESTABLISH: The building's dome is still unfinished.

OVER WHICH we hear:

JOHNSON (V.O.)
...and make no mistake, gentlemen, I
am a *true* Southerner! But... I am
first a citizen of this great nation!

CHYRON:

SENATE CHAMBER

February 1861

War Looming

INT. SENATE CHAMBER - DAY

Johnson stands at the lectern, in the midst of a long speech.

JOHNSON
Those who are no longer a part of this
great Chamber... those who have
abandoned our beloved country...

ANGLE ON: CHAMBER FLOOR

The right side of the aisle is spotty with 11 EMPTY SEATS.

JOHNSON (O.C.) (CONT'D)
...you are traitors all!

The left side of the aisle, Northern senators, burst into RAUCUS APPLAUSE, with many beginning to stand.

As Johnson continues, CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY to the other side of the aisle where those SOUTHERN SENATORS still present, sit with bottled outrage.

JOHNSON (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Secession is heresy! It is pure
anarchy!

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)
*I don't believe there was ever a more
disagreeable person than Mr. Johnson...*

CAMERA COMES TO REST on Southerner Senator LOUIS WIGFALL (44), a beefy guy, full beard and a jutting shock of hair.

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*...with the possible exception of
Mr. Wigfall...*

SMASH CUT TO:

WIGFALL: At the podium.

WIGFALL
The senator from Tennessee is nothing
but a Black Republican...

CHYRON:

Senator Louis Wigfall **Texas**

From WIGFALL'S P.O.V. we see that the Southern senators like what they're hearing.

WIGFALL (O.C.) (CONT'D)
This man is willing to let the honest
Southerner do his fighting for him!
He is no less than a coward!

Back to Wigfall.

WIGFALL (CONT'D)
And if this miserable mudsill is the
one and only Southern senator to stay
in this Chamber, he is to be loathed
by every Southern man with a true heart
and honest soul.

RAUCUS APPLAUSE from the Southerners.

WIGFALL (CONT'D)

Indeed, Senator Johnson is the real
traitor! A traitor to his section! A
traitor to the South!

As the Southern APPLAUSE THUNDERS.

ANGLE ON: Johnson in his seat... now he's the one fuming.

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)

*There was a rumor that Senator Wigfall
challenged Johnson to a duel. They
were both quite fond of the sport.
Unfortunately, it was just a rumor.*

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

A TRAIN sits idle, waiting to depart. An IMMENSE CROWD has
gathered around its BACK PLATFORM.

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)

*A few weeks later, I was on my way
to my new job...*

From the platform, Vice President-Elect Hamlin is finishing a
speech to the crowd. A COUPLE OF PORTERS stand behind him.

HAMLIN

...I thank you all. And now, I am on
my way to Washington, happy in the
knowledge that I will soon be sworn
into office with that good man, Mr.
Lincoln!

CHEERS/APPLAUSE as Hamlin reaches for the many OUT-STRETCHED
HANDS beneath him.

HAMLIN (CONT'D)

If I had as many arms as that ancient
fellow, what's his name -- Briareus? --
They say he had a hundred --

Suddenly the TRAIN LURCHES FORWARD and Hamlin is PULLED
BODILY over the railing onto the throng of admirers.

The Porters see that Hamlin has suddenly disappeared. As
they both stare in amazement:

PORTER

Somebody's gonna catch hell for this...

EXT. BALTIMORE TRAIN DEPOT - LATE EVENING

The TRAIN pulls in and stops with a blast of steam. PASSENGERS begin to BOARD and DISEMBARK.

CHYRON:

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

INT. TRAIN'S SLEEPER CAR - SAME TIME

A few WEARY PASSENGERS make their way down the aisle, passing curtained berths. When they pass a particular second-level berth, WE GO INSIDE.

INT. HAMLIN'S BERTH - SAME TIME

TIGHT ON HAMLIN, as he lies awake, listening to the night and the RUMBLINGS of a MOB outside.

SECESSIONIST (O.S.)

By God, we'll make sure no damn abolitionists like Lincoln or Hamlin ever get to the White House! Let's search the train!

Hamlin understandably looks concerned.

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)

All told, it was a most unpleasant journey.

INT. TRAIN'S SLEEPER CAR - SAME TIME

Several DRUNK REBELS move down the aisle with a LANTERN, STOPPING at each berth to whip back the curtain.

INT. HAMLIN'S BERTH - SAME TIME

Hamlin hears the men getting closer, slurring drunken invectives as they yank back curtain after curtain. Hamlin knows he has no way out. Then -- WHISH, A LANTERN juts at him -- he's now face-to-face with SEVERAL REBELS who study him intently. Finally:

SECESSIONIST

Eh, 'snobody.

The lantern and drunks MOVE ON. Hamlin leans back and breathes.

EXT. LYNCHBURG TRAIN STATION - DAY

A TRAIN grinds to a stop and breathes.

CHYRON:

LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)

*I suppose my experience on the
inaugural train wasn't as unpleasant
as the trip Mr. Johnson made a few
months later -- after he was the
only Southerner in the Senate.*

INT. PASSENGER CAR - SAME TIME

Johnson sits reading a newspaper (*The Dixie Democrat*), amongst a few other seated TRAVELERS. A MAN across the aisle stands to exit, accidentally/purposefully bumping Johnson as he does. Johnson adjusts, knows what it is. Suddenly there's a commotion ahead of him, he looks up from the paper and sees SEVERAL ANGRY MEN moving his way.

RINGLEADER

There's the cocksucker, right there!

THE RINGLEADER walks up to Johnson.

JOHNSON

(nods)
Gentlemen...

The Ringleader grabs Johnson by the nose, and pulls him to his feet. The others laugh as the Ringleader and Johnson are now face-to-face.

RINGLEADER

Looky here at this filthy traitor...

But Johnson indicates with his eyes that the Ringleader look down, where a GUN is pointed at his stomach. The Ringleader lets go of Johnson's nose and backs off. The others now see the gun, as the CONDUCTOR appears at the back of the car.

CONDUCTOR

Hey, you men!
(approaching)
Get off this train!

JOHNSON

(to them)
That's probably a good idea, fellas.

The men BACK AWAY and are gone.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
(to conductor)
Thank you.

CONDUCTOR
Don't thank me, it's my job -- even
if you're a goddamn lickfinger Yank.

The Conductor MOVES OFF. Johnson sits down again, picks up
the newspaper and opens it, none too rattled by any of it.

EXT. BRISTOL, TENNESSEE TRAIN STATION - DUSK

The train stands beside the platform while a few PASSENGERS
disembark...

CHYRON:

BRISTOL, TENNESSEE

Johnson is THROWN BODILY out of the train onto the platform.
SEVERAL MEN follow him out and forcefully subdue him.

MOB LEADER
(yells)
Who's got the rope!?

JOHNSON
Gentlemen, you are mistaken in this.
I am a Southerner through and through!

MOB LEADER
(yelling out)
Goddamnit, who's got the rope!?

JOHNSON
Yes, I stand with the Union, but I
will forever defend our time-honored
Southern traditions!

MOB LEADER
Somebody tie his wrists!

JOHNSON
I will protect the standards of our
civilized *white* society! I guarantee
you no niggers are gonna be freed
while I am in Washington!

A MAN steps up to bind Johnson's wrists, while ANOTHER MAN
appears with a hanging ROPE.

MAN

Got it right here, Carl!

MOB LEADER

Okay then, get 'im up! Stand 'im up!
Put it 'round the sumvabitch's neck!

The others lift Johnson to his feet,

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)

*Now, as much as Johnson always seemed
to enjoy a fight, I have a feeling
this was one he didn't fancy.*

MOB LEADER

There's a rafter right there, boys!
Less go!

As the mob starts to drag Johnson to the rafter, a SMALL OLD MAN approaches and yells out.

OLD MAN

Hold on! Just hold on, fellas!

MOB LEADER

(exasperated)

What'd you want, Walt?

OLD MAN

You cain't do this!

MOB LEADER

Well, funny 'bout that, 'cause we're
goddamn well gonna do it.

OLD MAN

No, sir! It ain't right, Carl. It
ain't the right thing to do, and I
ain't gonna let ya do it. No, sir!

Johnson watches with some relief.

MOB LEADER

Well, if that don't beat the rag.
You're stickin' up for this
cockchafer. What's it, Walt, you
some kinda bluebelly now?

The Old Man boils, steps up to the Mob Leader and puts an angry finger in his face.

OLD MAN

Don't you never 'cuse me a somethin' like that! I'll knock ya into a goddamned cocked hat!

MOB LEADER

Well, what then? What're ya doin'?

OLD MAN

Folks in Greeneville -- that's where the sumvabitch come from -- they're waitin' to hang 'im themselves!

MOB LEADER

No, no, no. We already done all the hard work here, Walt. So you can tell 'em no deal, not by a jugful!

OLD MAN

Now be reasonable, Carl. The folks in Greeneville, they're good, honest, hard-workin' folks. Family folks. An' they been waitin' a long time for this...

(sincere)

You cain't take that 'way from 'em. Circumstance like this, ya gotta take accout a *their* feelin's.

The Mob Leader considers for a moment, softens.

MOB LEADER

Yeah, okay...

(then suddenly)

But we're comin' to watch!

OLD MAN

Hell, ever-body's comin' to watch. The wife's makin' a basket lunch.

MOB LEADER

(to the men)

Okay, boys, put 'im back on the train. We're goin' to Greeneville!

And, as they drag Johnson back to the train:

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)

Well, obviously, they didn't hang him. When they got to Greeneville, Jeff Davis, the Rebel president, sent a wire saying not to. Said it would look bad in the papers.

EXT. WASHINGTON, DC - MORNING

CONSTRUCTION PLATFORMS surround the DOME-LESS capitol.

OLD HAMLIN/NARRATOR (V.O.)
*Meanwhile, my new job was turning out to
be not all my boss said it would be...*

INT. VICE PRESIDENT HAMLIN'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Hamlin is asleep at his desk, head slumped, snoring lightly. There's a RAP on the door. He shifts and goes back to sleep. The door opens quietly and a SENATE PAGE (15), tie and slicked-back hair, POKES HIS HEAD IN, sees that Hamlin's asleep.

PAGE
(to himself)
Thank you, God...

He moves silently through the office with an armful of letters and a newspaper. Ever-so-gently he places them on Hamlin's desk. Hamlin snorts and stirs. The Page freezes.

PAGE (CONT'D)
(softly)
No, no, no...

Hamlin wakes, blinks a couple times, and sees the kid.

HAMLIN
Oh. Must've dozed off...

PAGE
It's okay, Mr. Hamlin. You can go back to sleep. I just put a few things on your desk... legislative agenda, some mail...

Hamlin picks them up and starts to look through.

HAMLIN
Anything from the president?

PAGE
The president? No, sir.

HAMLIN
You're sure?

PAGE
Yes, sir.
(then)
So if that's all...

HAMLIN

You'll let me know if you receive something from the president?

PAGE

Of course.

The Page starts for the door, but is stopped by:

HAMLIN

You know, son... before I was vice president, I was a senator, I could vote, I could write legislation...

PAGE

Yes, sir, I remember you mentioned that. So, I'll just...

HAMLIN

...I could *introduce* legislation, I could argue for legislation...

PAGE

Right. And you miss making decisions that matter, I know.

HAMLIN

Exactly.

PAGE

So then, I'll just finish my rounds and let you get to... your mail.

The Page EXITS. Hamlin sighs and tosses the last of the letters aside to find the NEWSPAPER.

INSERT: (*New York Times* Headline) "**ANDY JOHNSON -- HERO TO THE NORTH!**"

BACK TO Hamlin, as he contemplates how this asshole became a "HERO."

INT. BANGOR TRAIN STATION - 1890 - DAY

Old Hamlin stands in line behind a CUSTOMER at the TICKET BOOTH.

CHYRON:

Back to
1890

The customer steps away and Old Hamlin steps up to the cage.

STATION MASTER
Mr. Hamlin... haven't seen you an'
the missus 'round much.

OLD HAMLIN
Well, I'm not so fond of traveling
these days. But now I've got to go
to Washington...

The Station Master nods and turns to find the right tickets.

OLD HAMLIN (CONT'D)
Harrison's inauguration. So, I suppose
I've got no choice in the matter.

The Station Master turns back with the tickets.

STATION MASTER
Two for Washington. Leaves at three-
fifteen.

OLD HAMLIN
Listen... the station manager out in
St. Louis...
(hands him money)
His name's Willsworth... is he --

STATION MASTER
Willsworth?

OLD HAMLIN
Eldridge Willsworth. Black fella.

STATION MASTER
Station master in St. Louis is Carlson.
White guy. I'm out there once a month
for nearly 20 years. Ed Carlson.

OLD HAMLIN
What about the other stations?

STATION MASTER
(shakes his head)
No, sir. I'd know. Nobody on the
line named Willsworth.

On Hamlin's confused look:

End of Episode One

LINCOLN'S MISTAKE

WHAT'S TRUE
OPTIONAL READING

A WORD ABOUT OTHER WORDS

All expressions used herein, idioms and profanities, including the ones we use today, were around during the Civil War or earlier. • Much of the dialogue is directly quoted from the actual people—though some quotes were said or written on different occasions than the ones depicted. For instance, Lincoln's speech to Hamlin about slavery ("...if I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it.") is a quote from a letter Lincoln wrote in August 1862 to Horace Greeley (the influential publisher of the *New York Tribune*).

In researching the actual events, there were nearly always conflicting accounts. Some differed in their chronological order and a great many conflicted completely. For instance, the scene in Johnson's hotel room when he was told about Lincoln's grave condition, there were two prominent accounts: Newspapers reported that he was sleeping off a drunk with mud caked on the side of his head. Other accounts never mention it. The writer decided to go with the colorful version.

LINCOLN AT FORT STEVENS

TRUE: In July, 1864, 10,000 Confederate troops invaded Washington (coming in through the Shenandoah Valley) to attack Fort Stevens. Lincoln insisted on riding out to see the battle (a few miles north of the White House), though he was fervently advised not to. It was the last time a Confederate flag entered Washington -- until the insurrection in early 2021. • A young Sgt. Oliver Wendell Holmes was charged with showing the group of men around the fort. That he was the one who yelled, "Get down, you damn fool!" has long been the assumption, though Holmes himself never admitted as much. • Dr. Charles Crawford was standing next to Lincoln, when he (Crawford) was shot in the leg. Still, Lincoln remained standing while the rest scrambled for cover. • Confederate sharpshooters recognized Lincoln on the wall—he was 7-foot tall with his hat on. They quickly targeted him and started shooting. Lincoln continued to watch the battle, telling General Wright to reposition the Union troops—until General Wright demanded Lincoln get out of the line of fire, and instinctively pulled the president down to safety. Lincoln sat, disgruntled and said, "I thought I was the commander in chief." (Virtually all sources confirm this quote.)

HAMLIN AT FORT McCLARY

TRUE: Hamlin joined the State Guard as a private in the summer of 1864—while he was still sitting vice president of the United States. He served in Company A and was garrisoned at Fort McClary. • Though there is no direct reference to *why* Hamlin decided to join the military, it's pretty clear that he was unhappy as vice president (which he'll express more openly in future episodes). What's more, he probably felt

somewhat insulted by Lincoln's decision to replace him with Andrew Johnson on the upcoming November ticket. Publicly, however, Hamlin said *only* that he went into the military because it "is the duty of every responsible citizen." • Hamlin was issued a standard private's uniform and rifle. He marched with the other troops and took his shifts standing sentry. Eventually Captain Llewellyn Morse (referenced by the Soldier With Pots) assigned him to work in the mess hall kitchen. (Most sources say Hamlin never rose above private, though some insist he became a corporal).

• • •

TRUE: The following month, Hamlin was still working in the fort's kitchen when a gunman shot at Lincoln outside the family's summer cottage, barely missing his head. • The president was riding Old Abe (often confused with Old Bob, who was Lincoln's horse in Springfield, before he became president—Old Abe was named by one of the stable hands [Lincoln, btw, hated the name "Abe" for himself.]) • That the president was riding alone at night, was something he'd been (again) asked not to do. • A gunshot spooked Old Abe, who bolted up the hill to the cottage where they were met by Private John Nichols (part of the military detail assigned to escort the president). He and another soldier then went down the road to inspect the area, where they found Lincoln's hat with a bullet hole through its center. • Lincoln joked about how it probably was a new recruit and a misfired gun, then asked that it be kept quiet, and especially did not want Mary to find out.

LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION

TRUE: The evening John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln, he rented a skittish chestnut mare from a nearby stable. He was told that the horse went crazy when she was tied up, so Booth summoned a stagehand named "Peanuts" (called "Peanuts" not because he was short, though he was—but because he

sold peanuts.) Booth told him to hold the horse while he went inside for a few minutes. Peanuts did not want to do it.

• • •

TRUE: In the early hours of April 15, 1865, while Lincoln lay dying on a bed in the Petersen house, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton sent for a stenographer. As it turned out, one lived in the building: James Tanner, who walked on peg legs after losing both legs in battle. He was in the room taking notes with a pencil that broke just before Lincoln died. As a result Tanner missed Stanton's famous utterance: "Now he belongs to the ages." Though, by most reputable accounts at the time, Stanton said, "He belongs to the angels now." The former mostly gained popularity after Lincoln's two secretaries (John Hay, who was there, and John Nicolay, who wasn't) wrote a book in 1890 asserting that Stanton uttered the "ages" version. In the long run, "Now he belongs to the ages," probably won out because it sounded much more profound.

MARY LINCOLN

TRUE: Hamlin's first meeting with Mary was cordial, though she would later despise him, as she did many in Lincoln's circle (depicted later in the series). In Hamlin's case, her hatred for him began after she learned of a comment he made about her profligate "spending sprees during wartime." • Her spending also irritated Lincoln, though he died never having learned of its extent. Which was extreme.

JOHNSON'S DRUNKEN INAUGURAL SPEECH

TRUE: In 1865, before Lincoln's second inauguration, Hamlin (at Lincoln's request) was gracious enough to help Johnson get ready for his swearing in. • Johnson showed up at Hamlin's office, hung over from a party the night before (though he *claimed* much of his discomfort was due to a slight case of typhoid – sources vary on the validity of his claim). • There is obviously no written account of the conversation between Hamlin

and Johnson that day, but the details of the incident are fairly consistent, including the *three full tumblers* of whiskey. • Hamlin had indeed put a stop to alcohol in the Senate because too many senators were drunk by mid-afternoon. He speculated that drunkenness in the Senate Chamber was, more or less, to blame for the onset of the war. • Most of Johnson's vice presidential inauguration speech herein is quoted (generally) from Senate records. He talked at length about his being a plebeian. The dialogue, when he couldn't remember Gideon Welles' name (Secretary of the Navy), is verbatim.

• • •

TRUE: When Lincoln appeared in the Chamber to watch Johnson's inauguration – accounts of his reaction also vary greatly. While some insist he watched and listened patiently, others say they could see "unutterable sorrow." / "He bowed his head and looked at his shoes." / "He alone was unperturbed.")

JOHNSON'S NEAR ASSASSINATION

TRUE: Johnson was staying at the Kirkwood Hotel in Washington the night Lincoln was shot. • George Atzerodt, one of the conspirators, sat in the bar downstairs, intending to go upstairs and kill Johnson. • To muster courage, he drank. A lot. The courage never came and he ended up wandering the streets of Washington. • The bartender, Michael Henry, was a witness at Atzerodt's trial, who was hanged with the other conspirators on July 7, 1865.

• • •

TRUE: As mentioned, accounts vary of Johnson's condition when he was awakened by Wisconsin governor Leonard Farwell, who gave him the news about Lincoln. However, even accounts that don't support the idea of Johnson sleeping off a drunk, still mention that Farwell called for a doctor "and a barber" to help the vice president prepare for the day.

TRUE: Eldridge and his family are fictitious characters. They were included to show the effects of the country's racist policies and laws. While Hamlin did what he could to bring about emancipation and Black conscription, we'll see as well the effects of Johnson's racism. As suggested in the pilot, Eldridge's story and whereabouts, will become a larger mystery that will hopefully make an emotional point as the story goes forward.

LINCOLN/HAMLIN MEET

TRUE: Hamlin and Lincoln didn't meet each other until a few weeks after they had been elected. The previous summer (1860) Republicans at the convention in Chicago chose Hamlin as Lincoln's running mate. • Before his nomination, Hamlin wanted to stay in the Senate. Lincoln knew this and assured the vice president-elect that he would rely quite a bit on him. Which he did... until his Cabinet was assembled (with much effort on Hamlin's part). After that, Lincoln pretty much ignored Hamlin. Something Lincoln later apologized for. • Because he had nothing to do, Hamlin sometimes fell asleep at his desk. Though there's no account of a Page finding him asleep, a congressman from New York dropped by to invite him to lunch one day and found him sound asleep. • As most people know, Lincoln had an incredible ability to summon up jokes and stories. The story he tells about meeting Mary and wanting to dance with her "in the worst way," was a story he often told. (Btw, unlike Lincoln, Hamlin was an excellent dancer.) Another btw, Lincoln was also fond of telling filthy jokes and did so often—though only a few were recorded as it was thought improper to do so. • *The Book of Nonsense*, a joke book by Edward Lear, was one of Lincoln's favorites. One of his favorite dishes, if not his favorite, was Chicken Fricassee. He was also vastly fond of oysters.

HAMLIN'S TRAIN TRIP

TRUE: On the way to his inauguration in 1861, Hamlin was pulled bodily off the back of the train when it lurched forward while he was shaking hands with well-wishers. • There was a plot to kill both Lincoln and Hamlin while they were on their way to Washington for the inauguration. Hamlin's train was stopped and searched, and he would have been beaten and/or killed had his would-be assailants not passed him off as nobody (a harbinger of his eventual legacy).

FORT SUMTER

TRUE: The Union's commanding officer at Fort Sumter during the Confederate attack, Major Robert Anderson, was a good friend of opposing Confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard. Anderson was Beauregard's friend/teacher/mentor at West Point. Hence, their correspondence, before and during the attack, was rather affectionate. • Abner Doubleday (of later baseball fame – though much of that credit is faulty) was a soldier at the fort and a friend of Anderson's. • After reading Beauregard's note, Anderson told the men to get some sleep before the bombing began. Doubleday believed he'd found the safest place in the fort to do so. One of the first shots fired by the Confederates hit the wall next to his head and nearly killed him.

JOHNSON'S TRAIN RIDE

TRUE: A couple of weeks after the attack on Fort Sumter (while Johnson was still a senator in 1861) he made a trip to Greeneville, Tennessee, where he'd come from. At a stop in Lynchburg, Virginia, angry Southerners boarded the train, found Johnson, and the leader lifted Johnson out of his seat by his nose. Johnson indicated with his eyes that the leader look down, where Johnson had a gun pointed at the man's stomach. • Later, Johnson was nearly

hanged by a mob, when the train stopped in Bristol, Tennessee. But there was an objection—the people in Greeneville had first dibs. The mob agreed to take Johnson to Greeneville where, to their dismay, they received word that the president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, wired that they couldn't do it because it would look bad for the South.

ON SLAVERY

HAMLIN vs. JOHNSON

TRUE: Hamlin, a hardcore abolitionist (a “radical Republican”) from a family of abolitionists, consistently expressed his anti-slavery stance from the time he entered politics in the 1830s until his death.

- Lincoln, on the other hand, was a “colonist”—believing freed slaves, “contraband,” should be sent to live in other countries. Though Lincoln didn't like the institution, his priority (at the onset of the war) was not slavery, but saving the Union.
- Johnson was a slave owner with at least six slaves (accounts of the number vary). Eventually in this story, *President Johnson* will meet with abolitionist Frederick Douglass in the White House. Out of Douglass' earshot, Johnson told an aide: “That damned Douglass is just like any other (n-word). He'd sooner cut a white man's throat than not.”

• • •

TRUE: Hamlin was largely responsible for bringing about Black conscription as part of the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln was resistant to the idea until Hamlin showed up in Lincoln's office with 10 white officers willing to lead Black troops—the basis of the 1996 film *Glory*. (The scene between Lincoln and Hamlin will be depicted later.) As well, Hamlin, along with Secretary of State Seward, nagged Lincoln frequently about issuing an emancipation proclamation.

FLOTSAM

TRUE: Hamlin died in 1891, just shy of his 82nd birthday. Two of his grand-children were Louise and Sally Hamlin. • The former vice president was also a long-time member of the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic). The organization was formed by Union soldiers after the Civil War. Throughout the North they held annual picnics and battle reenactments.

• • •

TRUE: Louis Wigfall (1816-1874) was a staunch supporter of Southern secession and hated Johnson with a passion. He was, by almost all accounts, a miserable human being. After their senatorial arguments in early 1861, a rumor circulated that they'd challenged each other to a duel. Both men had taken part in past duels.

• • •

TRUE: The discussion about Johnson's staying with the Union only to gain political advantage was speculated by many in the South and North. As a result, Johnson became a hero to the North and a traitor to the South. A salient reason for Lincoln's decision later to Hamlin with Johnson. • Representative Thomas Nelson (1812 – 1873) had the same intention, but he was arrested by Southern authorities before he began his second term. • As to Southern leaders' drumming up slavery as a motivation for Southern men to fight, it is very likely true. The South was obviously concerned about threats to end slavery but, at the time, Lincoln really didn't pose any real threat to the institution (in fact, he promised to support the country's fugitive slave laws, that would return run-away slaves to their owners). A more likely reason for the South's break with the Union was because the Southern states had, for many years, been the country's breadwinners, and had long been paying nearly 80% of the country's tariffs.