



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

A SCREENPLAY

LINCOLN'S MISTAKE

But First:

A Word About Words

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

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 in
the corridor 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 in
Washington.*

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. 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 -- some of our men in front there...

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)

...they need to fall back!

A VOICE (O.C.)

(shouts)

Get down, you damn fool!

Lincoln lowers the field 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.

ELDERLY 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,
Grampapa?*

EXT. ELDERLY HAMLIN'S HOUSE - 1890 - DAY

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

ELDERLY HAMLIN (PRE-LAP)

Yes. It really happened.

CHYRON:

Twenty-five years later

Bangor, Maine

1890

INT. ELDERLY HAMLIN'S LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

An old man, HANNIBAL HAMLIN (80) is sitting in his rocking chair. A SMALL TERRIOR curled up beside the chair. Jack. Now we see Hamlin is addressing THREE YOUNG GIRLS (LOUISE, his great-granddaughter and her two friends). They're sitting on the floor in front of, and beside Elderly Hamlin, one of them is petting Jack.

ELDERLY 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, Mr. Hamlin, when the president almost got shot?

ELDERLY HAMLIN

In the army.

LOUISE

That's not true. That can't be true.

ELDERLY HAMLIN

Fort McClary, Maine. Look it up.

LOUISE

Impossible.

ELDERLY HAMLIN

I was a mess hall cook. Look it up.

SALLY

Oh, you're pulling our leg. xxxxxxxx

ELDERLY HAMLIN

Look it up.

LOUISE

So, you had two jobs at once?

ELDERLY HAMLIN

Look. It. Up.

LOUISE

But why in the world --

ELDERLY HAMLIN

Ya know, I'll bet it's nearly lunchtime. Maybe you girls should go check with Mrs. Hamlin?