

Lincoln and God

by
ANTHONY E. GALLO

Anthony E. Gallo
Box 15414
Washington, DC 20003

202 544 6973
Agallo2368@verizon.net

ACT 1

SCENE 1 EAST WING OF THE WHITE HOUSE MARCH 1 1861

Sculptor Thomas Jones is working on a bust of Abraham Lincoln. John "Nico" Hay, late twenties, is hanging portraits of the Lincoln family.

JONES

You work too hard, Mr. Hay.

NICO

I work all day and accomplish nothing. Now look at this letter. A man claims he is the Son of God and that he has a peace plan.

JONES

And how will you answer him

NICO

I told him to check with his father and then come back.

The US Marine Band begins playing patriotic music. A loud roar of applause is heard followed by tumultuous shouts of "LINCOLN, LINCOLN, WE WANT LINCOLN." A smaller sound reverberates sounding like "Traitor, Traitor, Traitor." Then the band begins playing the Star Spangled Banner.

JONES

The President must be coming.

NICO

How can you sculpt from memory?

JONES

Walt Whitman said "Lincoln has a face like a Hoosier Michelangelo, so awful it becomes beautiful" Makes it an easy face to sculpt.

NICO

Mrs. Lincoln better not hear that.

JONES

Hellcat Mary? I hear his footsteps.

Nico goes to window and shouts to the US. Marine Band

Begin the polka. NICO

Immediately the band begins playing the *Mary Todd Lincoln Polka*. Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln appears at the door.

MARY
What is that music they're playing?

LINCOLN
A polka!

NICO
The *Mary Todd Lincoln Polka*, as composed by the US Marine Band.

LINCOLN
Well, Mrs. Lincoln, let's go at it. Abe the Dancer as they call me.

MARY
Remember what you said the first time you met me: "Miss Todd, I want to dance with you in the worst way."

LINCOLN
Let's DANCE, Mrs. Lincoln!

He grabs her and they begin dancing. He dances awkwardly. Jones and Nico clap their hands to the beat of the polka.

NICO
Go! Go!

JONES
GO! GO! What a sight to behold!

NICO
Dance! Dance! Dance!

LINCOLN
Quite a dancer I am. Right, Molly?

MARY
The President-Elect is the world's best dancer.

They almost trip.

LINCOLN
Sorry, my fault.

MARY

The fault was mine. I have less strength and energy than my husband does.

LINCOLN

We'll have to continue later, Mother.

Nico motions the band to stop. Jones exits.

LINCOLN

Have all our bags arrived?

NICO

I believe so.

MARY

Where is Edward's picture?

NICO

Mr. Lincoln said he did not want it hanging with the living children.

MARY

If that is Mr. Lincoln's wish, so be it.

LINCOLN

On second thought, yes, include it with the other children. Mrs. Lincoln is right.

MARY

Now let us see Mr. Jones' bust of my husband.

NICO

I hope you like it ma'am.

MARY

(Examining)

Delightful. Thomas Jones, you have captured the essence of my husband.

LINCOLN

Makes me look a wee tad too handsome.

MARY

My husband is the handsomest man on the planet.

LINCOLN

Not quite. Nico, any comments on the inauguration speech?

NICO

Six grammatical errors.

LINCOLN
Audiences cannot detect grammatical errors.

NICO
Newspapers can.

LINCOLN
Anything else?

NICO
Too long. Thirty five hundred words.

LINCOLN
You counted?

NICO
Thirty five hundred and two.

LINCOLN
I have to get my message across: No compromise on slavery,
the Union will not be disbanded, and I love both the South
and the North.

NICO
You just did it in sixteen words.

LINCOLN
People wearing their inaugural finery want their money's
worth.

MARY
Nico should write some of your speeches.

LINCOLN
Nope.

NICO
Why not?

LINCOLN
When you write your own, they're easier to understand.

NICO
I think hear the Helms's coming. I need to have some lunch.

Nico exits. Benjamin and Emily Helm,
late twenties, enter. Emily carries a
leather bound Bible.

LINCOLN
My Brother-In-Law!

MARY
You arrive at last!

EMILY

You gave us your best bedroom.

MARY

Nothing is good enough for my sister and Ben.

EMILY

Sister, May I call your husband Mr. President?

MARY

Tomorrow. Mr. Buchanan is still President. He let us move in a day early.

EMILY

Here is a gift from the Helm family to you, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN

A leather bound King James Bible. A very limited edition.

EMILY

We want the best for you.

MARY

Will our other twelve siblings be here?

EMILY

I hope so.

MARY

My sister and I have much to chat about. You men take care of your business. (Mary and Emily exit)

HELM

I too must be off too.

LINCOLN

Please remain.

HELM

If you wish.

LINCOLN

You've accomplished much, Ben. And not yet even thirty?

HELM

Next week.

LINCOLN

And the kids?

HELM

Another is on the way.

LINCOLN

Makes seven. Your being here means a lot to me.

HELM

I'm glad we could come.

LINCOLN

And the other Todds? Most were vague about coming.

HELM

Last word, they were all planning to come. But plans can change at the last minute. WE'RE here. You have so much else on your plate. You WERE duly elected President of the United States.

LINCOLN

And on January first of this year, a umber of states left the Union.

HELM

No surprise, of course? And I must leave you alone now. Inauguration eve is not the day for the President-elect to idly chat with brothers-in-law.

LINCOLN

This is not idle chat. We have been the best of friends since I was best man at your wedding.

HELM

Ah, yes.

LINCOLN

I need your help.

HELM

However humbly I can contribute to...

LINCOLN

You would make a fine pay master of the US Army.

HELM

There are tens of thousands of men more qualified than I.

LINCOLN

The position is only that of a major.

HELM

I am still not qualified.

LINCOLN

Not so. In fact, I think you are capable of being the Commander of the Armed Services.

HELM
I must, respectfully decline.

LINCOLN
Why?

HELM
I would not enjoy being court martialled.

LINCOLN
For what?

HELM
Treason.

LINCOLN
Your heart is still with those folks?

HELM
Yes, Mr. L.

LINCOLN
The slaveholders?

HELM
Neither I nor any of the Todds own slaves.

LINCOLN
Then accept my offer.

HELM
I was born a Southerner, I live as a Southerner. And I will die a Southerner. I can not abandon the way of life that I and all of my ancestors have known. Slavery will be dead in fifty years.

LINCOLN
Why?

HELM
Economics. And a whole lot of other reasons.

Lincoln hands him a book.

LINCOLN
Here's a book that agrees with you do by one of this Nation's distinguished social commentators. It says slavery will be dead in a few years.

HELM
Well then no need for what will be a civil war.

LINCOLN
The book was written 150 years ago.

HELM

But this is a different day and a different age.

LINCOLN

That same sentence appears in this book.

HELM

But after that time, we signed a very sacred document called the Constitution of the United States. And we all agreed to certain principles. Now you are violating that oath of agreement. You're being "unconstitutional", brother.

LINCOLN

Our founding fathers whom I believe were chosen by God made a mistake.

HELM

But they agreed to a set of principles that put together a great republic and now you want to change the original set of rules.

LINCOLN

They were flawed.

HELM

Correcting this flaw may result in hundreds of thousands of deaths.

LINCOLN

I do not intend to abolish slavery.

HELM

Would you have won this election without the abolitionist vote?

LINCOLN

No, but..

HELM

Abraham! It's only a matter of time....

LINCOLN

The first shot will not come from Federal forces.

HELM

So you agree that slavery must go, either now or sometime.

LINCOLN

Can you reconcile slavery with democracy?

HELM

We do not live in a perfect world. The ancient Greeks..

LINCOLN

This is America! We can not say we are the world's greatest democracy and yet enslave one four of our population. Are you willing to keep a Nation in slavery when your heart tells you it's wrong?

HELM

I listened to your debates with Douglas. And I was awed and saddened at the same time. Abe Lincoln, you are no mass murderer. But as many as a million deaths..

LINCOLN

Mass murderer?

HELM

We Americans have lost a total of 25 thousand men in all of our wars combined. This changing of our Constitution will result in a bloodbath. The violation of an oath. But come let us celebrate. I look forward to the festivities. And I'm no match for even Mr. Douglas.

LINCOLN

One difference. Lincoln-Douglas was for the ears of voters.

HELM

And this discussion?

LINCOLN

Is between you and me and the lamp post.

HELM

Is the lamp post God?

LINCOLN

Yes.

HELM

You can not change course now.

LINCOLN

Nor do I want to.

HELM

But you don't need the stamp of affirmation of a "poh' country cousin. If you are convinced that God disapproves of slavery.

LINCOLN

I am.

HELM

Then can you not be an agent of reconciliation and thus serve God's will. Promote peace as Jesus would.

LINCOLN

Jesus was not an agent of reconciliation which is why he died on the cross, if my memory serves me right.

HELM

There are biblical references that condone slavery.

LINCOLN

There are 302 references to slavery. Of which only two are not negative. And even some question there. More important, it's written in my heart. Not yours?

HELM

My brother, my brother! Can those nine God-fearing men on the Supreme Court be wrong? Chief Justice Taney among them.

LINCOLN

Please think over my offer.

HELM

How about Lighthouse Harry's grandson for your Army commander?

LINCOLN

Robert Lee? A thought.

HELM

We have come to a parting of the ways, Brother. But though we fight on opposing sides, I will pray for you always.

LINCOLN

My brother-in-law!

HELM

You are a very different man, Sir. When I was at Harvard, I was with some of the brightest and most educated men in America. And you sound better than any of them. Have you any formal education at all.

LINCOLN

I attended "Lincoln" University. That's all.

HELM

And yet the golden oratory I have heard leads me to believe that you may have been set aside by our Creator to do what you are doing.

LINCOLN

And yet you will not join me?

HELM

I might be wrong but I believe God is telling me to fight for what is right.

LINCOLN

Do you believe God will judge who is the victor?

HELM

I do. And I believe that both of us may perish in this conflict.

LINCOLN

Now , now.

HELM

Let's cheer up. We must prepare for tomorrow. I must be off.

LINCOLN

And if you change your mind..

HELM

I won't. And again, consider Robert E. Lee. He doesn't feel as strongly about his heritage as I do. These Virginians are different from the rest of us Southerners. I don't trust them.

LINCOLN

I shall consider.

Helm exits and Nico enters.

NICO

Two more thoughts about the speech. You mention nothing about equality.

LINCOLN

I believe in neither slavery, nor equality.

NICO

Also, you only mentioned God twice.

LINCOLN

But I also mentioned angels once. Doesn't that count?

A knock is heard at the door and the Reverend Phineas Densmore Gurley enters

GURLEY

Excuse the intrusion, but there appears to be no guard on duty.

NICO

He's gone to lunch. Who are you?

GURLEY

Phin Gurley.

NICO

Wasn't your appointment for this day next week?

GURLEY

Excuse me. My assistant must have made a mistake. Sorry, I shall return next week.

LINCOLN

No. Stay.

GURLEY

Surely the President-Elect of the United States of America has more important things to do on Inaugural Eve.

LINCOLN

The speech is written, the arrangements have been made, I've been listening to your choir, and it's nice to welcome the neighbors. Please have a seat.

Nico exits

LINCOLN

The Reverend Phineas Densmore Gurley, Pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian and distinguished And Chaplain of the United States Senate.

GURLEY

Distinguished? A Chaplaincy I humbly accepted. I am unworthy of the job.

LINCOLN

I don't think so. You've been late in coming.

GURLEY

How so?

LINCOLN

The Episcopalians, Baptists, other Presbyterians, and a whole slew of other churches have already either written or visited.

GURLEY

A President is always the prime catch. In fact I'm surprised that the Mormons, Jews, and Catholics haven't made a pitch too.

LINCOLN

I'm a hard fish to catch. I had an uncle who became a Catholic and was as happy as a ball bat.

GURLEY

Oh?

LINCOLN

But he was as happy as a ball bat before he converted too.

GURLEY

You might try St. John's Episcopal Church across from Lafayette Park. It's a bit closer.

LINCOLN

I have a lot of people in my cabinet who are Episcopalians and they all do three things I don't like. They drink and smoke and cuss. And I don't drink and smoke and cuss. Like Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase and Secretary of State William Seward.

GURLEY

Perhaps you should consider our church.

LINCOLN

Do you have dance police?

GURLEY

Of course not. But...

LINCOLN

Two women at our Presbyterian church in Springfield were punished for dancing. I'm a dancer.

GURLEY

Then dance.

LINCOLN

Will you dance to the Mary Todd Lincoln Polka?

GURLEY

I do not dance.

LINCOLN

I will show you.

GURLEY

You will fit into our church nicely.

LINCOLN

How long are your sermons?

GURLEY

I cut them short after the third yawn.

LINCOLN

Political?

GURLEY

Never directly. But I reject any Bless America theology that fails to come to grips with evil. Like the hypocrisy of our Puritan churches who for so long tolerated slavery.

LINCOLN

Bet your sermons can get spicy?

GURLEY

Not too many yawns.

LINCOLN

But I don't like to hear politicians giving sermons from the podium, nor clergy giving political speeches from the pulpit.

GURLEY

Mr. Lincoln has given his share of sermons from the podium. That is why I voted for him and so did a majority of Americans.

LINCOLN

And I like to hear sermons delivered by a mouth full of bees.

GURLEY

I'm afraid of bees.

LINCOLN

Any other requirements?

GURLEY

The Nicene Creed, our essential Christian belief.

LINCOLN

Never even thought about it, and don't intend to either.

GURLEY

And the Trinity?

LINCOLN

I have enough trouble believing in one God let alone three.

GURLEY

The Eucharist?

LINCOLN

Eating blood and body? Sounds cannibalistic. I have one thing going for me. I never stop doubting.

GURLEY

Well you at least believe in God.

LINCOLN

Why wouldn't I?

GURLEY

Well Mr. Herdnon, your partner and office mate of 14 years, says he has never known you to have a belief in God.

LINCOLN

Proves one thing! Never share an office with a lawyer! They either lie or get it wrong. (Shouting out) Do you hear that, Nico..

NICO (O.S.)

I was always hoping you were the exception, SIR. But I'm always on guard.

LINCOLN

And I claim no modesty, Reverend Gurley.

GURLEY

No one can run for the presidency and claim any modesty of any kind. I find it interesting that you have used the name of God more often than any other character in history. Is God that much of a political convenience?

LINCOLN

It helps. But we need God more than any time in history.

GURLEY

Agreed. This is not a time to have a sweet Christian in the White House.

LINCOLN

A sweet Christian?

GURLEY

Like our current President, a member of our congregation. He is a beloved man, a pacifist, and works very hard at it. Not a single American military casualty during his Presidency. But we do not need a pacifist at this time. We need a warmonger. One who will divide rather keep together. One who will separate father from son, brother from brother, sister from sister.

LINCOLN

An abolitionist, I see.

GURLEY

Not at all. But I believe that the Constitution of the United States is a sacred document written by a chosen people for a chosen people. And the sin of slavery must be removed by whatever means.

LINCOLN

Does God allow us to go back on our word?

GURLEY

In this case yes. And the new Constitution will be stronger than ever. And it will be paid in blood.

LINCOLN

Blood?

GURLEY

That blood will be on your hands. Has God given you the strength to stand by what you believe he has instructed you to do?

LINCOLN

What is your answer?

GURLEY

In each age, God chooses his messenger to do his work. In 1861, you are that messenger.

LINCOLN

How do I know?

GURLEY

Look in your heart. And you can hear what I say.

LINCOLN

I'm another Moses?

GURLEY

Only more difficult. That was Israelite against Egyptian. This is American against American. Presbyterian will fight Presbyterian, Jew will fight Jew, Catholic will fight Catholic. All hope God is on their side.

LINCOLN

So this is a Holy War?

GURLEY

A sacred war. Each combattant believes God is on his side. My friend and fellow minister, the Reverend Moses Hog e in Richmond , thinks that God will determine the victor, and that they will win.

LINCOLN

Hasn't this been true of all our wars?

GURLEY

Not at all. In the past, each side thought they were right. But rarely claimed God.

LINCOLN

The Revolutionary War?

GURLEY

Naughty colonists fighting bossy Britain.

LINCOLN

The War of 1812?

GURLEY

The Brits showed us who was still boss.

LINCOLN

Mexican-American War?

GURLEY

We got all of Texas, didn't we. Do you believe that history is drama?

LINCOLN

I do.

GURLEY

And the history of the next years will be the most conflicted and important American drama ever. You are one of the two lead characters.

LINCOLN

And who is the other?

GURLEY

The unseen and unheard but omnipresent God.

LINCOLN

And where do we find him?

GURLEY

There is a little prayer I learned a long time ago. Can you memorize it? "Lord, open my heart. Let me see you in everything, in your word, in your people, in your creation, and in every situation I meet today.

LINCOLN

Lord, open my heart... I shall repeat it every morning. But how do I know that it is God I see?

GURLEY

Let me give you another little prayer that an old Episcopalian taught me years ago. "'God be in my head and in my understanding: God be in mine eyes, and in my looking: God be in my mouth, and in my speaking: God, be mine now and when I depart."

LINCOLN

I will repeat that one every day too.

GURLEY

I will pray for you every day, support you, and be there in every moment of need.

LINCOLN

I may consider attending your church if seats become available.

GURLEY

President Buchanan is giving up his seats, numbers 14 and 15. And we charge eleven dollars and seventy five cents a quarter. Other churches do not charge the President.

LINCOLN

Tell me about your church.

GURLEY

Four hundred families, 2 Sunday services, a bible class...

LINCOLN

One of my three favorite books.

GURLEY

The other two?

LINCOLN

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare and the Constitution of the United States. All three divinely inspired.

GURLEY

Agreed? But isn't the Bible central to your religion.

LINCOLN

Almost. But to me the experience of God is more important than the written word.

GURLEY

Agreed.

LINCOLN

My kind of minister. Any slaveholders?

GURLEY

None. We had two.

LINCOLN

What happened to them?

GURLEY

They were eyeballed out. You could also attend the Second Presbyterian Church in southwest Washington. It's not next door however.

LINCOLN

Mary and I enjoy a brisk walk or ride on Sunday mornings.

GURLEY

Sounds like this may be your church. Also, they do not charge for seats.

LINCOLN

Anything else about them?

GURLEY

Most of its members are pacifists, Democrats, Southerners, and slave holders.

LINCOLN

(shouting out) Nico, make out a check for eleven dollars and seventy five cents to the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, immediately. I will attend, and Mary will also join.

GURLEY

Welcome!

LINCOLN

Of course, I should check with Mary.

Nico enters.

GURLEY

She is only waiting for your approval to join. Mr. Nicolay, you would also be welcome.

NICO

Thank you. No.

GURLEY

Why not?

NICO

I would have to call myself a very happy non-church goer.

LINCOLN

What does a happy non-church goer mean?

NICO

An agnostic Episcopalian.

LINCOLN

Too cowardly to call yourself an Atheist?

NICO

If you insist, I will join a church.

LINCOLN

We have Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians hanging from the rafters. Stay as you are. We need a few honest agnostics and atheists around. They don't drink, they don't smoke and they don't cuss. And most are honest.

NICO

(exiting) As you say.

GURLEY

Your thinking confounds me.

LINCOLN

Tomorrow I need you on a matter that confounds me even more. Nico can reorganize the seating so that you are seated behind me during the Inauguration

GURLEY

Why?

LINCOLN

Chief Justice Roger Taney will be administering the Oath of office.

GURLEY

The Chief Justice always administers the Oath of Office.

LINCOLN

I can not face the man who wrote the Dred Scot decision.

GURLEY

Roger Taney is a good man.

LINCOLN

What! Perhaps I should take back my eleven dollars and seventy five cents.

GURLEY

Roger Brook Taney is a good Roman Catholic aristocrat from an old Maryland family. He is our first Catholic Chief Justice. His attitudes toward slavery are complex. He emancipated his own slaves at age 19, and gave pensions to those who were too old to work. The next year, he defended a Methodist minister who had been indicted for inciting slave insurrections by denouncing slavery in a camp meeting. He even condemns slavery as "a blot on our national character.

LINCOLN

And yet blacks are only sixty percent human!

GURLEY

You know he did not say that. His decision does not reflect what is in his heart, but what he thought our founding fathers agreed to. The problem is not our Chief Justice, but something in the American air. Blame Tom Jefferson and George Washington, and Ben Franklin and all those other Sacred folks. And that is why God sent us Abraham Lincoln.

LINCOLN

Just stand behind me.

GURLEY

Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. And I leave you with another prayer, more powerful than any sword.

LINCOLN

Yes.

GURLEY

Lord, work through me.

LINCOLN

Lord, work through me. And remember, Mr. Reverend, I am not a man of a very hopeful temperament. Do you know that?

GURLEY

I see it in your face, in your smile, in your eyes. But remember one thing: Not all of God's hopefuls are of a very helpful temperament.

SCENE 2 FIRST INAUGURATION, MARCH 4 1861

East Portico, U.S. Capitol of the Capitol. Lincoln, Gurley, Mary, and Nico, stand.

CROWD

Lincoln! Lincoln! Lincoln.

DEMONSTRATORS

Down with the Lincoln. Down with Lincoln.

CROWD

Long live Lincoln.

DEMONSTRATORS

Down! Down! Down! We want Douglas! We want Douglas!

CROWD

End Slavery! End slavery.

DEMONSTRATORS

Peace !Peace!

CROWD
Slavery must end. Slavery must end.

DEMONSTRATORS
Lincoln murders!

CROWD
Abe! Abe! Abe!

MARY
How I hate that name.

LINCOLN
They could call me worse.

NICO
They will!

MARY
I see the Chief Justice

Lincoln turns the other way.

NICO
The Cabinet is all here except Chase and Seward.

MARY
They arrive after Mr. Lincoln! The audacity!

LINCOLN
Holdups occur.

MARY
(To Lincoln)
Why do you have anything to do with these men! They are constantly using you and they are unworthy of my husband.

LINCOLN
You say that about all members of the cabinet.

MARY
Seward and Chase arrive at last! Twenty minutes late. I see Ben and Emily Helm. Oh, and look, there's Ninian and Elizabeth Edwards. But where are the other members of my family?

LINCOLN
They are not coming.

MARY
Says who.

LINCOLN
Ben Helm left me a note this morning.

Roger Taney walks towards the podium.

TANEY

Are you ready Mr. Lincoln?

LINCOLN

I am.

TANEY

Abraham Lincoln, I administer the oath of office to the sixteenth President of the United States. Please repeat the oath of office. "I, Abraham Lincoln...

LINCOLN

I, Abraham Lincoln, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.

Crowd roars with applause.

TANEY

Congratulations, President Lincoln.

A twenty one gun salute. Lincoln begins his First Inaugural address.

LINCOLN

In compliance with a custom as old as the Government itself, I appear before you to address you briefly.....

CROWD

LINCOLN! LINCOLN ! LINCOLN!

LINCOLN

The United States is an association of States. As a contract, can it be peaceably unmade, by less than all the parties who made it?

CROWD

LINCOLN! LINCOLN ! LINCOLN!

LINCOLN

There needs to be no bloodshed or violence; and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority.

CROWD

LINCOLN! LINCOLN ! LINCOLN!

LINCOLN

Must Congress protect slavery in the territories. The Constitution does not expressly say. Plainly, the central idea of secession, is the essence of anarchy.

CROWD

LINCOLN! LINCOLN ! LINCOLN!

LINCOLN

In conclusion, We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Applause.

TANEY

A fine speech, Mr. President.

MARY

Superb, my husband. You certainly made clear that the Union is indestructible

GURLEY

You only mentioned God twice.

LINCOLN

Correct. He was hiding between each paragraph

GURLEY

But a historic moment. You referred to angels.

LINCOLN

We need every bit of help we can get. And I referred to God's third Covenant six times

GURLEY

What's that?

LINCOLN

What this day and the next four years is all about. The Constitution of the United States.

GURLEY

I have often wondered why our Founding Fathers did not mention God in the Constitution.

LINCOLN

Hamilton says they plum forgot.

GURLEY

Ouch!

SCENE 3 WHITE HOUSE A MONTH LATER

The sound of heavy shooting is heard behind a torn American Flag

In the background he hears the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church Choir singing "Nearer My God to Thee" The music suddenly changes to "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

CROWD (O.S.)

War! War! War!

DEMONSTRATORS (O.S.)

Down with Lincoln!

CROWD

Slavery must end! Down with slavery!

DEMONSTRATORS

Kill no Americans!

CROWD

Defend Ft. Sumter.

Nico rushes into the room holding a document. Lincoln's head is buried in his hands.

LINCOLN

Old Glory is down. After 33 hours of bombardment, its food and ammunition nearly exhausted, Ft. Sumter fell on April 13, 1861, to the crushing fire power of the Rebels. Miraculously, no one on either side has been killed or seriously wounded.

NICO

Casualties?

LINCOLN

None. They allowed us to run up our flag for a hundred-gun salute before evacuation the fort the next day. An accidental explosion killed one of the gunners and mortally wounded another. They shall be treated as heroes on their return to the North. A special military decoration, is to be issued to all Union service members who defended our honor.

NICO

The declaration of war is ready. Here. Our generals may wish to revise.

LINCOLN

"Whereas, The laws of the United States have been for some time past and now are opposed, and the execution thereof obstructed..."

NICO

Stop! You punish yourself.

LINCOLN

One error. Seventy three thousand men, not seventy five.

NICO

You and Scott agreed on 75.

LINCOLN

I sign it this fifteenth day of April. A day that will always haunt me.

Gurley rushes in.

GURLEY

Mr. President.

LINCOLN

Thank you for coming.

GURLEY

You are only acting as directed by God in the great theatre of humanity.

LINCOLN

I wish I were sure.

GURLEY

But you ARE sure. The inevitable has occurred. Your selection by the American people and God assured that there would be a war.

LINCOLN

And GOD!

GURLEY

The American people voted with their hearts.

LINCOLN

Many may die.

GURLEY

The fight for truth has always been difficult.

LINCOLN

The motto of the Confederacy is "God will Avenge."

GURLEY

And ours is "In God We Trust"

LINCOLN

God leads this war.

GURLEY

It is what you have always said. But you are that human instrument to lead the war. A prophet arises. His name is Lincoln.

A sign appears at the window reading:

A MILLION BOYS WILL DIE IN THIS WAR.

HOW ABOUT YOUR SON? Nico rushes to the window.

NICO

Arrest that woman. Guards! Guards!

LINCOLN

I shall have to suspend habeas corpus. Americans now will have no rights, while having to send their sons to war.

GURLEY

The road to truth and salvation for the American people will not be an easy one. We will make many sacrifices. I announce my first one. My daughter was to be married in May to Lieutenant Ebbers, following his graduation from West Point. Since he will surely go to war, we will cancel the wedding.

LINCOLN

You will do no such thing. Life goes on with or without war. If invited, I will attend the wedding and stand by the married couple to receive guests.

GURLEY

Mr. President, you are a blessing indeed. My daughter will get married and they will love you forever.

SCENE 4 FEB. 20, 1862 -

The East Wing. A large picture of Willie Lincoln, partially draped in black, hangs above the mantel. Two candles flicker in the dark room. Mary, The President, Gurley, Nico, and Charles G. Colchester, early forties, are seated around a table.

MARY

Though he departed from this life six months ago, Willie comes to me every night, stands at the foot of my bed with the same sweet adorable smile he always had. He does not

always come alone, sometimes he brings little Eddie with him

GURLEY

Ah, yes. Mary. The departed are always with us in our thoughts, and thus they do not die. And Willie thought of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church too.

MARY

He bequeathed all of his \$5 in savings to the Sunday School at the church. And it was you who gave that beautiful eulogy at his funeral. But if you believe in the resurrection, you must also believe that we can communicate with those who have departed. Perhaps this seance will convince you otherwise.

Lincoln and Nico look askance at one another.

COLCHESTER

And now we must have absolute silence or Willie will be frightened away if he is in this room

MARY

Will little Eddie be with him?

COLCHESTER

We hope, but we can never be sure about these things. Remember we are dealing with the other world.

Gurley, Lincoln, and Nico look at one another skeptically.

NICO

We must be silent. And let Dr. Colchester do his work.

COLCHESTER

Please blow out all candles except one.

NICO

As you say.

COLCHESTER

Now silence.

Moment of silence.

COLCHESTER (cont'd)

Let us begin by joining hands and closing our eyes.

ALL

Yes Sir.

COLCHESTER

Since we are all of the Christian belief, can we have Dr. Gurley say a short invocation.

GURLEY

I would rather n...

LINCOLN

(interrupting)

Please, Reverend...

GURLEY

May we please have the pleasure of communicating with young Willie Lincoln, and may he have a happy reunion with his mother and father.

COLCHESTER

Now let us all breath in slowly through the nose, out slowly through the mouth, while trying to keep our minds blank. We must all be calm, comfortable, and in touch with the greater reality.

All follow his directions.

COLCHESTER (cont'd)

Our beloved Willie, we ask that you commune with us and move among us. If you are with us, Willie, please rap once. Or if you want to remain in peace, we will leave you alone.

No sound

COLCHESTER (cont'd)

Let us hold hands tighter, and concentrate more on the great void.

They all hold hands tighter, and then two small taps are heard.

COLCHESTER (cont'd)

Is that you, Willie? One tap for yes, two taps for no.

One tap.

COLCHESTER

Are you alone?

Two taps.

COLCHESTER (cont'd)

Is Eddie with you?

One tap.

COLCHESTER

Ah. They are here.

MARY

My Willie! My Eddie! Look there is no such thing as death. Life is not fair. Clouds and darkness surround us, yet Heaven is just, and the day of triumph will surely come, when justice and truth will be vindicated. Our wrongs will be made right, and we will once more, taste the blessings of freedom. Say hello to Mother and Father, Willie and Eddie.

COLCHESTER

Let me see if I can get them to speak. Willie, can you speak?

One tap.

MARY

Then let me hear your voice, my beloved Willie.

Silence.

COLCHESTER

You will make your mother very happy if she hears your voice.

WILLIE

I love you, Mother.

MARY

There is no death! My son lives. Are you happy, Willie?

WILLIE

Yes, Mother. And I love you and Dad.

MARY

(Crying) Willie.

LINCOLN

Your voice sounds different from Willie's.

COLCHESTER

Voices from the other world never sound the same.

MARY

Give mother a kiss.

WILLIE

I throw a kiss, Mommy. (Giggles)

MARY

And Eddie?

EDDIE

I love you, Mommy.

MARY

How have you been all these years, Eddie?

EDDIE

I like it here. And now I can play with brother.

MARY

Now you be nice to Eddie, you hear that Willie.

WILLIE

We have one another, Mother. Now we must go.

MARY

Every day I visit one hundred soldiers and give them the consolation of a mother. Because of our visit tonight, my sons, I shall double the number of visits tomorrow.

COLCHESTER

The seance is over.

They let go of their hands and open their eyes.

MARY

There is no death. There is no death. Right, Reverend Phineas.

GURLEY

I certainly believe in Eternal life..

LINCOLN

(interrupting)

We can never thank you enough, Dr. Colchester.

MARY

You did not believe, Mr. Lincoln, and now you do.

LINCOLN

Nico, please make out a remuneration for Dr. Colchester's invaluable service.

NICO

Can you come back tomorrow morning for your check?

COLCHESTER

If you insist.

MARY

Let me accompany you to the door. The carriage shall drive you back to Capitol Hill. Willie and Eddie live again! (They exit)

GURLEY

Christianity strictly forbids seances. Have you gone mad!
That man is the devil!

NICO

Shall we have him arrested?

LINCOLN

No, double whatever payment he asks for.

GURLEY

Why.

LINCOLN

The devil can sometimes do more good than a hundred prayers.
You saw the joy and optimism in my wife. Even if it is a
lie. A little bit of relief to what has been months of
depression and hell.

NICO

He is a fraud! The Smithsonian says he's a convicted felon
with a long police record. And it's not "doctor" to boot.
Barely finished the eighth grade at a Massachusetts
reformatory before he escaped.

LINCOLN

No surprise.

NICO

AND! He is considered the best **ventriloquist** in the city.

GURLEY

Banish him.

LINCOLN

Pray that divine intervention will restore Mary's mental
health.

NICO

I worry about you YOU, too.

LINCOLN

How so?

NICO

The depression and despair on your face since Willie's
death.

LINCOLN

My boys are gone --they are actually gone. They were too
good to be on this earth. We loved them so go. And the signs
say "Now you taste what a hundred thousand mothers have
faced.

GURLEY

Stop!

LINCOLN

For a brief moment tonight, I was hoping those voices were Eddie and Willie.

The sound of gunfire is heard in the background, and the voices of dying young men are heard off stage.

SCENE 5 1862

Lincoln, Mary, and Gurley are seated around the President's desk with heads bowed.

MARY

And praise be to the Lord.

GURLEY

Amen. But now, sir, I must get some advice from you.

LINCOLN

Spiritual?

GURLEY

Partly.

LINCOLN

Are you raising a Presbyterian army?

GURLEY

No. But I have a Presbyterian friend named Dr. Moses Drury Hoge, a name you may not recognize.

LINCOLN

Second Presbyterian Church of Richmond.

GURLEY

A classmate of mine at both Princeton and Union.

LINCOLN

A spiritual chaplain to the Confederacy?

GURLEY

But a fine man. We had much in common, and if course he knows the evil of...

LINCOLN

(interrupting)

A chaplain to the Confederacy is also the enemy.

GURLEY

But he has a humane request. People are more dependent on the Bible than ever before in U.S. History. Bibles are selling at an all time high

LINCOLN

In war there is only humanity when the war is over.

GURLEY

I thought we were Christians.

LINCOLN

For whom did you say I was leading this battle?

GURLEY

Yes, but..

LINCOLN

And what is this insurgent's request?

GURLEY

The Contraband.

LINCOLN

That we should stop blocking Southern Ports?

GURLEY

Of course not. Simply the contraband of one item.

LINCOLN

What's that?

GURLEY

Bibles.

LINCOLN

What about them?

GURLEY

Because of the Blockade, Confederate soldiers can not get copies of the Bible.

LINCOLN

This is war.

GURLEY

Even the Bible?

LINCOLN

When Southern soldiers read the Book are they uplifted?

GURLEY

Yes.

LINCOLN

AND MORE WILLING TO FIGHT. Our Generals are therefore opposed to removing the Bible blockade. And I must respect my Generals.

GURLEY

You are the Chief of the U.S. Armed Forcers.

LINCOLN

I am, but I must respect my Generals. They too are religious men.

GURLEY

Religious, and yet denying fighting soldiers the word of God?

LINCOLN

A demoralized Confederate military will help end that war. Do you want to extend the war?

GURLEY

No.

LINCOLN

Then let us do what we must.

GURLEY

Yes, Mr. President.

LINCOLN

And pray for God's guidance.

GURLEY

Amen.

SCENE 6 EAST WING A MONTH LATER

Lincoln and Nico are working at their desks.

LINCOLN

So the rumors still continue?

NICO

They are more than rumors. Twenty six newspapers also question her allegiance.

LINCOLN

Which ones?

NICO

The regulars. One New England newspaper wrote a story about how the Lincoln family mourned the loss of three Confederate officers.

LINCOLN

The loss of Mary's three brothers!

NICO

But...

LINCOLN

They are her brothers and my brother-in-law!

NICO

You said you wanted to know. We know that she has no Southern sympathies.

Mary enters, obviously irritated, and carrying a military blanket.

LINCOLN

I thought you were visiting hospitals this morning.

MARY

I want a divorce!

LINCOLN

What!

MARY

I want a divorce!

LINCOLN

Why!

MARY

You know why!

LINCOLN

I do not. Why are you carrying that blanket?

MARY

That whore's blanket! So you're denying it already.

LINCOLN

Denying what?

MARY

I will be the first Presidential wife to divorce her un-presidential husband.

LINCOLN

TELL ME WHY!

MARY

"Mrs. Rickerson". Here is the adulterous blanket with her name on it.

NICO
Mrs. Rickerson sleeps under a military blanket?

MARY
And my husband with her.

LINCOLN
I know no Mrs. Rickerson.

MARY
You slept with that whore.

LINCOLN
Where did you hear this nonsense?

MARY
My sister heard it in the Ladies Lounge at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church.

LINCOLN
God may dwell at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church but certainly not in the Ladies Lounge.

MARY
Not a time to be funny. It came from none other than the wife of the Secretary of the Navy.

NICO
My fiancée says she is the biggest gossip in Washington.

MARY
Nevertheless...

LINCOLN
I have not met Mrs. Rickerson! But I want you to send her a gift.

MARY
People are saying that I have lost my mind. Perhaps you are the one who has lost his mind.

LINCOLN
Well I admit that I have slept with Rickerson.

MARY
You will burn in hell. When, where, and how often have you slept with the whore.

LINCOLN
In the White House and at our summer cottage.

MARY
How often!

LINCOLN

Often! But you have one thing wrong.

MARY

Yes?

LINCOLN

There is no Mrs. Rickerson. Only a Captain Rickerson.

MARY

Who is he?

LINCOLN

My bodyguard Jamie. You know him.

MARY

Jamie!

LINCOLN

And on Thursday he returns to his farm in Meadville, Pennsylvania and will be married at the Methodist Church on Saturday. Have you not purchased them a gift yet?

MARY

I have, and spent more than I should. I bought them some very nice gifts. My dear, dear husband, please forgive me. I must now be on my way to the hospital.

LINCOLN

I love you, Molly.

MARY

And I you, Mr. President.

NICO

And may I relate another piece of gossip I heard in the men's room at the Metropolitan Club?

MARY

Yes.

NICO

The Secretary of the Navy's wife was seen making eyes at that handsome Captain Rickerson.

MARY

The vicious ladies lounge, indeed. And men are no better. Never again. (exits)

Mary exits. And Nico returns to his work. Lincoln glares at him a few times but Nico avoids his glare.

LINCOLN
You seem mighty silent there.

NICO
Busy. I must get this work done.

LINCOLN
You have no questions about the Captain and me?

NICO
What one does with his personal life is not my business.

LINCOLN
Any questions?

NICO
None.

LINCOLN
Nico! ANY QUESTIONS!

NICO
Do you have to sleep in the same bed?

LINCOLN
For protection, yes.

NICO
Fine.

LINCOLN
And I have no interest in men.

NICO
Well surely no one..

LINCOLN
But there is another reason why I like to have him in the same bed.

NICO
Yes?

LINCOLN
We talk for a while and then his voice puts me to sleep. And then I can sleep for a few hours, somewhat peacefully. And then in the echo of his voice I hear the voice of Willie. I hear the voice of Eddie. I hear the voices of three hundred thousand weeping mothers and then the death's of 300 hundred thousand soldiers. And then I hear Rickerson's voice. And the depression goes away. And then I fall asleep and into the arms of someone else.

NICO

Who?

LINCOLN

God. And then the depression goes away for a while.
A spirit comes over me, and I almost touch Jesus.

NICO

Sounds like the Trinity. Perhaps Atheists too are God's
messengers.

Act 2

SCENE 1 JANUARY 1, 1863

Lincoln, is seated. Gurley and Nico look over his shoulder. The window is open.

BLACK CROWD (O.S.)

Father Abraham! Father Abraham!

LINCOLN

I am not Father Abraham!

GURLEY

They think you're a deity.

LINCOLN

I am NO deity.

NICO

To them you are a prophet of God.

LINCOLN

Close the window.

GURLEY

Do not deprive them of the joy of freedom. I even was pleasantly shocked by your latest directive.

LINCOLN

Which one?

GURLEY

Pay for chaplains.

LINCOLN

What was shocking?

GURLEY

Equal pay for Black and White Military Chaplains.

LINCOLN

What was shocking?

GURLEY

Do you now believe in racial equality?

LINCOLN

I do not.

GURLEY

Then why equal pay?

LINCOLN

Because God DOES believe in that equality. (Winks)

GURLEY

And I hope the rumors that you tried to arrest Chief Justice Taney aren't true.

LINCOLN

Ministers should not listen to stale gossip.

GURLEY

But we do have an Emancipation Proclamation

LINCOLN

A moment I relish.

NICO

Would you call this a fulfillment of God's mission, kind Reverend?

LINCOLN

A vow I made to God. If the Confederate army is driven out of Frederick, I promised to my maker and myself to issue the Emancipation Proclamation.

GURLEY

Oh!

LINCOLN

A vow, a covenant that if God gave us victory in the approaching battle, I will consider it an indication of Divine will, and my duty to forge ahead with what I should do.

GURLEY

The freeing of American Slaves after three hundred years would certainly be pleasing to our Divine Creator.

LINCOLN

You say "would be" rather than "must be"

GURLEY

Well there's a good part and a bad part.

LINCOLN

And what is each.

GURLEY

The good part first. The meat of the Proclamation. "I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free;

GURLEY

and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons." Clearly you have freed the slaves.

LINCOLN

And what is the bad part?

GURLEY

The earlier sentences in that paragraph: "Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth[]), and which excepted parts, are for the present, and son on.

LINCOLN

Yes?

GURLEY

You have only freed the slaves in the rebellious states, which YOU DO NOT CONTROL.

LINCOLN

But we WILL control.

GURLEY

Moreover, you have not freed the slaves in the states you DO control. Kentucky, West Virginia, Delaware, and Maryland.

LINCOLN

So you want us to lose support of those four faithful Union states?

GURLEY

Of course not, but the Proclamation does not emancipate ANYONE. We have an empty Emancipation.

LINCOLN

I believe you are a Divine messenger.

GURLEY

Thank you, Sir.

LINCOLN

But you are something else.

GURLEY

What is that?

LINCOLN

A MAJOR pain in the but.

GURLEY

We all know that those types are the Creator's best messengers.

LINCOLN

Occasionally.

GURLEY

Why do you want to issue a worthless Proclamation?

LINCOLN

The message is clear. The evil of slavery must end. And this Proclamation is the first step. Can you not appreciate that simple fact.

GURLEY

I can. But what if...

LINCOLN

No what if's. Slavery will go.

GURLEY

I hope.

LINCOLN

Have faith. And we must also work together to rebuild this God-created Republic. For the Salvation of the American Republic and the American people. Will you support me all the way.

GURLEY

May I come to Antietam with you.

LINCOLN

My very special guest.

GURLEY

From a very special President.

LINCOLN

And a very special messenger.

GURLEY

And I want to offer a special prayer of forgiveness.

LINCOLN

Let us hear.

GURLEY

Dear God, please forgive me for being such a painin the President's.....nostril.

BLACK CROWD (O.S.)
 FREEDOM AT LAST! FREEDOM AT LAST! FREEDOM AT LAST! ABRAHAM
 IS OUR FATHER. SENT BY GOD.

SCENE 2 OCTOBER 1863

Lincoln, Nico, Mary and Gurley are
 seated.

I hereby sign the Proclamation of Thanksgiving, October 3,
 1863

MARY

That God intercedes in Human affairs. A national day of
 prayer and humiliation

LINCOLN

And today's battle? And the casualties?

NICO

Thirty thousand, 16 Union and 18 Confederacy.

LINCOLN

This will go down as one of our worst defeats.

GURLEY

God in his merciful providence has afforded another
 opportunity for counsel, for pause, for appeal to him for
 assistance before letting loose upon the land the direct
 scourge which he permits to visit to a people. Lose not the
 faith, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN

The news from every front is bad.

GURLEY

Ours is a living God. He will not abandon us.

LINCOLN

It is you who dictate that America has now come to its
 appointed course in history. America is the last hope of
 the Earth, and until that sin is removed...

NICO

I must report that the generals want to attack Southern
 Churches.

LINCOLN

Why?

NICO

They are spy and sedition centers.

LINCOLN

We get the spies. We leave the churches alone. The US government must not undertaker to run churches

GURLEY

So Southerners are allowed to have churches but not Bibles.

LINCOLN

The Bibles are destined for soldiers. The Churches for civilians. When the South is rebuilt..

GURLEY

But we are being attacked by clerics.

Nico answers knock at door.

LINCOLN

We can handle it. I had a wrestling match with God We can not stand another Fredericksburg.

GURLEY

The life of the Prophet is not an easy one.

LINCOLN

How many casualties when we add Chancellorsville, Champions Hill, Vicksburg, and Chickamauga.

NICO

150 thousand. A third Union. And Grant? Shall we change again?

LINCOLN

He drinks too much. But to tell the truth I like him He doesn't whine. He may make a fine commander.

NICO

I also have news of the Battle of Chickamauga.

LINCOLN

And.

NICO

Another Confederate victory. Our troops dispersed to the George countryside.

MARY

Casualties?

NICO

Thirty five thousand, Nineteen Thousand Confederate, and Sixteen thousand Union. One of the Confederate generals was killed in the Battle.

MARY

Who?

NICO

General Benjamin Helm, age 32.

Lincoln and Mary fall into one
another's arms.

SCENE 3

Gettysburg Battle Field. November 19,
1863 Lincoln is standing. In the
background we see hundreds of marked
graves. A large applause.

CROWD

Everett! Everett! Everett!

LINCOLN

I can never match my predecessor's speech. Ninety minutes of
golden oratory.

GURLEY

Don't be foolish. I feel the Holy Spirit in your breathing.
Speak.

LINCOLN

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on
this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and
dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.
Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that
nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long
endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We
have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final
resting place for those who here gave their lives that
nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that
we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -- we can not
consecrate -- we can not hallow -- this ground. The brave
men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated
it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world
will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it
can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living,
rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which
they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

LINCOLN

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Feint applause.

NICO

After the Gettysburg victory You looked like Moses coming down from Mt. Sinai. Not today.

GURLEY

This will be the greatest speech in American history. The Everett speech will be nothing more than an elegant obituary.

LINCOLN

Mine was just a short blurb.

GURLEY

So were the Ten Commandments.

SCENE 4

Shots are heard in the background. A full military battle is going on.

NICO (O.S.)

Must we remain here! All the Nation needs now is a felled President. And Johnson is too drunk to fill in your shoes.

GURLEY (O.S.)

Not a time for joking? Thou might get thine head blown off.

NICO

That's why I want to leave.

LINCOLN (O.S.)

Feel free to go.

NICO

Not without you.

LINCOLN

I am the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Armed Forces. I have the right to view my own troops in battle.

Two shots.

CAPTAIN

Duck! You idiot.

GURLEY

You just saved the President's life.

CAPTAIN

I'm sorry, Mr. President. You can now court martial me.

LINCOLN

For saving my life!

CAPTAIN

For insubordination to a military officer. The Commander in Chief of the United States Armed Forces.

LINCOLN

Captain, you'll get a medal.

CAPTAIN

Duck!

Another round of shots.

NICO

Captain. Please drive us off the battlefield.

CAPTAIN

I can only follow the orders of the Commander In chief.

LINCOLN

Drive us away, young man.

GURLEY

You know whose voice that was that called you an idiot?

LINCOLN

The Captain, here.

GURLEY

That was the voice of God...in disguise.

LINCOLN

Yep.

GURLEY

In this case God is a captain.

NICO

I forgot to tell you. Emily Todd Helm is at the White House.

LINCOLN

My sister in law! How did she get through the lines?

NICO

When you're Abraham Lincoln's sister-in-law, you're treated a little differently.

LINCOLN

But the danger.

NICO

She's a Todd, and better yet, Mary's half sister. Do you think that the Union and Confederate Armies combined could prevent her from doing what she wants.

LINCOLN

Captain, could you please drive faster.

GURLEY

What is your name, young man.

CAPTAIN

It is not God.

LINCOLN

What is your complete name, young man?

CAPTAIN

Captain Oliver Wendell Holmes.

SCENE 5

Shift to East Room

Mary is seated, when her sister, Emily Todd Helm enters.

MARY

The President shall be delighted to see you

EMILY

What you have been through, dearest sister.

MARY

I still have my husband. Your six children do not have a father now. You know how much Abe loved him.

EMILY

There was no man whom General Helm loved more than Abraham Lincoln. Only this tragic war could drive them apart.

MARY

And now we also have buried three brothers, three brothers-in-law, and a nephew.

EMILY

And you could not even attend any of their funerals.

MARY

That would not have lessened the pain.

EMILY

This dreadful war.

MARY

Some call it God's war.

EMILY

I call it the devil's war. Yet despite all the anguish, you have done so much that is laudable. At home they say you are frequently visiting hospitals, bringing food and flowers, reading to the soldiers, writing them letters, and once raising \$1,000 for a Christmas dinner.

MARY

I must do what I can, using all the abilities God has given me. Life is so hard. Oh, the insanity of war.

EMILY

I am proudest of you when I hear that you raised money for the thousands of Virginia slaves who had moved to Washington but lived in harsh conditions.

MARY

Elizabeth Keckley, my closest friend was a former slave, and she made me aware of their plight. Negroes have suffered the most because of this war.

Lincoln enters.

LINCOLN

My dearest sister-in-law.

EMILY

My brother, you look so tired.

LINCOLN

The rigors of war. How did you get through the lines.

EMILY

I'm a Todd. You wonder why I came?

LINCOLN

With all the dangers and so on.

EMILY

Wars can not keep families apart.

LINCOLN

I feel likewise.

EMILY

But I especially came to visit Willie's grave.

MARY

And we shall do so shortly.

LINCOLN

How long will you be staying?

EMILY

I must leave tomorrow.

LINCOLN

I shall see to it that you are given safe passage.

MARY

And now we must go, dearest sister. The cemetery closes at four.

EMILY

But first I must give the President something I know Ben would want him to have.

She pulls out a pocket watch.

MARY

Oh my dear.

EMILY

He once told me that if anything ever happened to him he would want Abe to have it.

LINCOLN

I shall hold it near and dear.

MARY

We must go now.

LINCOLN

And you will join us for dinner?

MARY

Why of course she will. Let us hurry off.

They exit, and Nico enters.

LINCOLN

What have you found.

NICO

We confiscated six contraband items from two of her bags.

LINCOLN

Any items of danger?

NICO

All six.

LINCOLN

Anything else?

NICO

The servants said she shipped one bag off to Maryland before they could get to it.

SCENE 6 SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS MARCH 4, 1865

East Portico, U.S. Capitol

CROWD

Lincoln! Lincoln! Lincoln! Long live Lincoln.

GURLEY

A joyous crowd.

CROWD

The Union is saved.

NICO

A happier inaugural than four years ago. First president in 32 years to be reelected

DEMONSTRATORS

Seven hundred thousand dead men.

MARY

A day we have so long awaited.

GURLEY

The city is filled with people. The Willard has no vacancies.

NICO

Men are sleeping ON COTS in the Metropolitan Club.

GURLEY

You see the Chief Justice walking up.

MARY

Why you appointed that untrustworthy Salmon Chase as Chief Justice is beyond my comprehension.

NICO

Kicking upstairs.

MARY

And into an even more powerful position. Taney was a scholar and a gentleman. Chase is neither, and that social butterfly daughter of his.

NICO

She married the richest man in the country.

LINCOLN

Stop the gossip!

John Wilkes Booth and a woman are at a distance

BOOTH

THIS IS THE LAST SPEECH THAT PRESIDENT WILL GIVE.

WOMAN

Do you HEAR that crazy man?

BOOTH

All the world is crazy.

WOMAN

You hateful man! I don't like the look in your eye. Wait a minute. Aren't you the actor, John Booth?

BOOTH

I am.

WOMAN

The best actor in Washington, they say. And why do you hate Mr. Lincoln? He did away with slavery.

BOOTH

Because I love America, and he destroyed America. He killed 700 thousand Americans, brought war between the races, destroyed the Constitution, and caused a Civil War.

WOMAN

A curse be on you.

BOOTH

I only do God's will. And I must do what God instructs.

WOMAN

And what does God tell you to do?

BOOTH

You will see.

WOMAN

God does not instruct you. The devil does!

BOOTH

Your President is the devil.

DEMONSTRATORS (O.S.)

Seven hundred thousand dead men!

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

No Slavery! No Slavery! No Slavery

DEMONSTRATORS

States rights! States rights!

LINCOLN

Mr. Gurley, you read the address?

GURLEY

Yes. God is not mentioned till the last paragraph.

LINCOLN

That's because the whole speech is directed to him. Where is Vice-President Johnson?

NICO

A bit drunk, sir.

CROWD

LINCOLN! LINCOLN! LINCOLN!

NICO

The Chief Justice is ready to administer the oath.

CHASE

Abraham Lincoln, I administer the oath of office to the sixteenth President of the United States.

LINCOLN

Four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, All sought to avert it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword.

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan-- to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

GURLEY

Amen.

SCENE 7 APRIL 14 1865 THE WHITE HOUSE GOOD FRIDAY APRIL 1865

The large White house windows are open as cool breezes enter the room. Guns are firing. Bells are ringing. Flags can be seen hanging from windows, cheering. Lincoln is seated at his desk signing documents.

CROWD (O.S.)

Lincoln! Lincoln! Savior of our Country! We want Lincoln.

Lincoln smiles and goes to window. Crowd shouts deliriously as he waves. Mary enters the room in a beautiful blue dress.

MARY

The Union is saved!

CROWD

Lincoln the savior! Lincoln the Savior!

MARY

Do you hear them? Willie and Eddie surely hear this. Let the people have their day in the sun.

Mary closes the window.

LINCOLN

I think we must celebrate.

MARY

Mrs. Hess has invited us to see a dramatic new play called *Aladdin! Or The Wonderful Lamp*.

LINCOLN

How about a farce. Ford's Theatre has a production of *Our American Cousin*, something light.

MARY

As my Lord wishes.

She exists and Nico enter.

LINCOLN

Can you check if Ford's Theater has any tickets for *Our American Cousin*?

NICO

They would be honored as usual. Besides, plenty of seats should be available this night. It's Good Friday.

LINCOLN

Perhaps I should not go?

NICO

Have you joined the Roman persuasion since we last spoke?

LINCOLN

I have some second thoughts about going.

NICO

Mr. President. You who have freed a people, saved a nation, suffered personal tragedy, have been ridiculed and libeled. Innocent relaxation is in order.

LINCOLN

And Mary told me this morning she has a headache.

NICO

And on Monday, there is much to be done. Meeting with the Cabinet, the question of reparations, demands of the abolitionists, several meetings with the Vice President. Our calendar has 19 meetings before evening.

LINCOLN

Ten days ago, I had a dream. I heard sobs of people weeping. I went from room to room, determined to find the cause until there, before me, was a coffin surrounded by soldier guards. "Who is dead in the White House," I demanded. "The President," a soldier said, "killed by assassins." I woke with the wail of grief still in my ear. Relieved it was a dream. Make the reservations. Whatever will be, will be. Who can buy a day like today? The sun is out. The trees are in bloom. And off we go the greet "My Country Cousin."

NICO

Is there anyone you fear.

LINCOLN

Only Count Gurowski. 'So far as my personal safety is concerned, Gurowski is the only man who has given me a serious thought of a personal nature. From the known disposition of this man, he is dangerous where ever he may be. I have sometimes thought that he might try to take my life. It would be just like him to do such a thing

NICO

He is out of the country. And rest up before you go, Mr. Lincoln.

He exits. Lincoln walks toward the window and looks out on the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church.

LINCOLN

God, be in my head and in my understanding: God, be in mine eyes, and in my looking: God, be in my mouth, and in my speaking: God, be mine and when I depart.

SCENE 8

A barely audible shot is heard. Then the choir sings a barely audible stanza of "Nearer my God to Thee"

CHOIR

Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee! Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down,
Darkness be over me, my rest a stone.
Yet in my dreams I'd be nearer, my God to Thee

SCENE 9 EASTER SUNDAY APRIL 19, 1865 NEW YORK AVENUE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Gurley, fully robed, stands on the Pulpit.

GURLEY

He said he was an accidental instrument of God's will. I do not believe he was accidental.

CONGREGATION

Amen.

GURLEY

And he felt that the American people are God's almost chosen people. And he lead those people.

CONGREGATION

Amen.

GURLEY

And these incredible oratorical skills of this uneducated man! Surely they were another sign of the Divine Will.

CONGREGATION

Amen.

GURLEY

On this Easter Sunday, The President of the United States is dead. Born on the Sabbath, he was assassinated on Good Friday, and died on Holy Saturday. At the hands of another American. Seats 14 and 15 are empty. They are filled with flowers. The flowers of the resurrection. Justice has triumphed. Slavery is dead The Union is saved. The Prophet, the Leader. A member of no Church but came to ours often.

GURLEY

A President to all Americans and surely a member of the body of Christ. We extend our deepest sympathy to Mary Todd Lincoln. On her finger she wears the ring Mr. Lincoln gave her with the inscription "Love is eternal."

CONGREGATION

Amen.

GURLEY

Just as Moses did not see the promised land, so Mr. Lincoln will not see the healing promise of our land.

CONGREGATION

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;

He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;

His truth is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory!

Glory! Hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me: As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free;
[originally ...let us die to make men free] While God is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! While God is marching on.

Gurley and the congregation exit as the light fades, leaving Thomas Jones statue of Lincoln bathed in a final glow upon the stage.

END OF PLAY

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