

A. Lincoln

By

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INT. UNIVERSITY HALL- DAY

We are on the campus of the University of Illinois. We enter University Hall, the center of the History Department. The hall is a living monument to the very essence of history. The tile on the floor is clean and bright. The woodwork detailing of the wainscoting is immaculate, a leftover treasure from another time, still present for future generations to enjoy.

As we move through the building, passing stately doorway after doorway, we pass through a set of beautiful raised panel double doors. This is the lecture hall where Professor Johnathan Davidson, professor of American history, is teaching today. Davidson is an intellectual man. He gets it naturally, his father Johnathan Sr, was a history buff. Not a teacher or professor just an enthusiast. The true root of his love for History from his Grandfather, a high school history teacher. He taught Professor Davidson when he was in high school. This began what they both loved about History and what they both disagreed on.

Professor Davidson is winding down one of his passionate lectures. He encourages the class to participate by asking questions, today is no different.

FEMALE STUDENT

What about the Civil War?

Professor Davidson peers over the top of his wire rimmed glasses in the direction of the females voice.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

Out of all the times frames in American History, you had to bring this one up.

(Pause)

I asked for an example of how a conflict has helped our society. With the exception of the abolishment of slavery, nothing worthwhile came to pass as a result of the Civil War.

MALE STUDENT

You don't feel that the country was made stronger as a result of the Reconstruction?

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

Not at all. It was a forced reconstruction. The general public in the North did not want it. The South sure as hell didn't want it.

(Pause)

Progress is rarely achieved as a result of force.

Professor Davidson, walks over and places both hands on the desk before him. He looks out across the room, pauses for a few seconds and then speaks in a solemn yet firm tone.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

The American Civil War was fought not for or against slavery but over a small group of people trying to force their beliefs onto another group of people. In doing so, over six hundred thousand people died.

He stares out over the students. For some reason this is very personal for him.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

In my personal opinion, I place the blame for all of those deaths on one person...Abraham Lincoln.

Many of the students appear stunned by this statement. From the back of the room, we hear a female student speak.

FEMALE STUDENT

Lincoln started the movement to bring Civil Rights to all people. Most people consider him to be one of the most important men in American History.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

If what Lincoln did was the right thing, why then, one hundred years later were blacks still being lynched, hanged and sometimes worse?

(Pause)

You cannot force someone to do the right thing. They have to want to do it.

Davidson walks from behind his desk and stands in front of the crowd.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

The abolishment of slavery was the right thing to do, that's not the debate. Its the force used by the President on the people of his own

(MORE)

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON (CONT)
country that I have the problem
with.

Davidson looks at the clock on the wall and realizes that class is done for the day.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON
OK, class is over for the day. Next
time I will try not to bore you
with my personal opinion of someone
most, if not all of you consider a
hero.

Students begin to grab their books, computers and belongings and make their way out of the lecture hall. Professor Davidson puts his material into his briefcase, walks out as well and heads to his office.

CUT TO:

INT. PROFESSOR DAVIDSONS OFFICE - DAY

Davidson sits his briefcase down on his very cluttered desk and sits in the chair behind it. As he sits catching his breath, Mrs. Tuttle, his secretary walks in the door.

MRS. TUTTLE
Did you have a safe drive this
weekend?

Davidson stares off in a daze. He looks surprised as he hears Mrs. Tuttle.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON
Yes...yes I did. Not that driving
to a funeral was on my list of
things to do this weekend, or any
other for that matter.

MRS. TUTTLE
Well I'm glad you finally decided
to go. Once again, I am sorry about
your Grandfather.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON
Thank you for that Mary. It did
make my mother happy that I went.
Got to say though, I don't know
that it helped me any.

MRS. TUTTLE

Well good or bad, maybe having gone
will give you some peace with your
grandfather, something you never
had when he was alive.

Mrs. Tuttle turns to leave but stops and speaks as she
remembers something.

MRS. TUTTLE

I almost forgot, a package came for
you this morning. I sat it on your
desk.

Davidson looks over at the edge of his desk. Among the
clutter he sees something new. A large, thick envelope. He
reaches over and picks it up. He sits back in his chair as
he looks at the front of the envelope. It has his name and
office address but no return address. He grabs his letter
opener, a miniature replica of a early American Gentleman's
sword and slices it open. He reaches inside and pulls out
the contents. It is a single piece of paper and another
envelope, just as thick as the original one. He looks at the
first page and an immediate look of shock covers his face.
It is a letter from his Grandfather.

Mrs. Tuttle walks back into the room carrying a cup of
coffee. She walks over and sets it on Davidson's desk. She
cannot help but see the expression on his face.

MRS. TUTTLE

What is it Dr. Davidson?

Davidson stares at the contents in his hand as if he did not
hear her question. Suddenly, as if delayed, he hears what
she asked.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

It's from my grandfather.

Both turn and look at each other as if in disbelief.

MRS. TUTTLE

What does it say?

Davidson slowly leans back in his chair. As he starts to
read the letter, his hands begin to shake. It reads as
follows:

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

(From the letter)

My dearest Jonathan,

(MORE)

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON (CONT)

Many times I have thought of giving you this letter. I thought that in doing so it would mend many of the things that have driven us apart so many years ago. Somehow though I could not bring myself to do so, hoping that someday I could convince you that I was not just some raving lunatic, trying to convince you to believe as I did. I do so miss the days as you grew up, young and innocent, your mind open to anything new and unexplored. The way you listened as I taught you in high school. You were the one student that every teacher longs to teach. Then you factor in that you were my grandson and I could not have been more blessed. I blame myself for the turmoil that has driven you from my life. My own stubbornness has kept me from sharing years of happiness and joy with the one that I most wanted to. If you are reading this, I never found the courage and I have failed to mend that bridge. Only after my death could I have the will to tell you why I acted as I did. In the enclosed envelope you will find a journal. It belonged to my Grandfather, William Nathaniel Davidson. He was an amateur writer that wrote articles for a local newspaper just outside of Harrisburg Virginia during the time of the Civil War.

Davidson lifts up the second envelope with his left hand and looks at it. He looks across his desk at Mrs. Tuttle. She can see the emotion running through him. They both look at each other, stunned at the words being read. He turns back to the letter and continues to read.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

(From the letter)

No one but me has ever known of this journal's existence. I never even told your father. This subject was something that you and I shared a passion for and what ultimately drove a wedge between us. After you

(MORE)

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON (CONT)
read the first pages, I hope that you will understand the historical significance of its contents. Please read it in the order it is laid out. After you have finished reading it, you may do with it what you wish. I will never apologize for my beliefs nor would I ever expect you to. My only apology is for allowing this to tear us apart. I hope and pray that this journal will shed some light on why I hold to the beliefs that you and I disagreed on for so long. I was and will be forever proud of you for what you have become. I wish I would have told you that when I could.

Please forgive me.

William N. Davidson III

Davidson places the letter down on the desk as he looks again at the second envelop. Mrs. Tuttle stares at him, she could see the pain on his face with every word he read.

MRS. TUTTLE

You know something, I never fully understood what it was that drove you two apart.

Davidson looks of into the corner of the room, it's almost as if he is looking back in time, the memories he recalls are not pleasurable.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

It all started my junior year of college. I had a brand new professor for American History. He was passionate and full of energy. He had some very unique views of several events in America's past. One of which was the American Civil War. I was taken in by this man and I really started to believe many of his viewpoints.

Davidson begins to squirm in his seat as he talks, he is noticeably uncomfortably at the subject.

MRS. TUTTLE

If you don't want to talk about this, I understand.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

No, it's OK. You have worked for me for a number of years now, maybe it's time I talked to someone about it.

(Pause)

Kind of ironic actually. The class I just left, we got on this exact subject just before class let out.

Davidson sits back in his chair, relaxing a bit, and begins to tell his story.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

My Grandfather absolutely worshiped Abraham Lincoln. One of the views I adopted during the time I spent with this particular professor, was the belief that Lincoln was wrong in what he did to the country during the time of the Civil War.

Davidson's head lowers as he tells the tale.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

I was young and very easily influenced. As it turned out I too was extremely passionate about this, especially to my Grandfather because I knew how much he admired Lincoln.

(Pause)

As you can imagine, this caused a big problem between us.

Mrs. Tuttle looks at him with a bit of disbelief.

MRS. TUTTLE

You mean to tell me that you and your grandfathers relationship was destroyed over that? With all due respect Dr. Davidson, don't you think that's a bit childish?

Davidson looks up at her, head turned slightly.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

Perhaps, but you have to remember,
it was the 60's. Rebellion was
almost a requirement then.

(Long pause)

Then the trademark Davidson
stubbornness took over. I let it
consume me and it destroyed our
relationship.

Both Mrs. Tuttle and Dr. Davidson sit in silence as they both ponder what has happened over the past few minutes. Davidson takes the second envelope containing the journal and sits it on his desk directly in front of him. He slowly opens it and pulls out the contents. It is an old leather binder, dark brown in color. It has a flap that covers the front and a small button that at one time was used to secure it. As he lifts the flap, the leather cracks and begins to fall apart. It is quite obvious that this is the first time it has been opened in many years. Davidson reaches inside and pulls out it's contents. The first thing seen is an old piece of paper, yellow and faded. It is very fragile and dry. It appears to be a letter, hand written. The script is from another time and the style of writing has not been used in years. Davidson's eyes squint as he attempts to read the barely legible words, he adjust his glasses and looks hard at the document. Suddenly his eyes widen, like the look of a young child opening a present on Christmas morning.

MRS. TUTTLE

(Looking over to see)

What is it?

Davidson struggles to speak as he realizes what his Grandfather meant by "Historical significance."

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

This is a handwritten letter
addressed to my Great Great
Grandfather written by Abraham
Lincoln.

Feelings of shock and surprise seem to be the theme for the day as they again sit in complete amazement at what has happened.

MRS. TUTTLE

Well, what does it say?

Davidson's hands begin to shake again, his voice cracks as he reads the letter out loud.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON
(From the letter)
Executive Mansion, Washington DC.
March 6, 1865.

To Mr. William Davidson,

Harrisburg Virginia

Dear sir,

I have been an admirer of your writings for some time now. Although Virginia has been a Confederate state, you write your articles with an open mind and genuine regard for truth. As you are a member of the free press, I find this refreshing, as these past few years have been some of the darkest for our great country. I would request the honor of your presence at the Executive Mansion as your time would allow. If sir you would do me this honor, send word to the Chief Secretary as to when you may arrive.

Yours sincerely

A Lincoln

Davidson carefully lays the letter down on his desk. He and Mrs. Tuttle both stand, one on either side of the desk, just looking down at it. Neither one says a word, just taking in the treasure that lies before them. Davidson then picks up the remaining contents of the envelope. It is a stack of paper bound together by a string of twine. It has a cover, front and back that hides what is between. He slowly starts to untie the string but it immediately disintegrates as he touches it. He lifts the front cover and sees more handwritten pages.

MRS. TUTTLE
What else is there?

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON
A journal of some type. Only the handwriting is different.

He clears off a section of his desk so he can set the pages out one by one. He grabs his desk lamp and moves it over to illuminate the first page better. He slowly reads the first

few lines to himself. Suddenly he looks up at Mrs. Tuttle with an excited look on his face. She sees the look and can't help but respond.

MRS. TUTTLE

What is it?

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

This is my Great Great Grandfather's journal. Apparently after receiving this letter from President Lincoln, he went to Washington to meet with him.

MRS. TUTTLE

Well, what does he say about it?

Mrs. Tuttle grabs a chair from against the wall. Davidson sits down in his chair and slowly pulls it up flush with his desk. Both of his arms are resting just on either side of the papers he is looking at. He settles in and begins to read.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

(From the journal)

April 12, 1865 It has taken me two days by carriage to travel from my beloved Harrisburg to the Executive Mansion. I am honored and more than a bit curious as to why the President has requested to have a consultation with me. I am no one of consequence, a local writer for a small town newspaper. To have an audience requested by the Chief Executive Officer is a honor I would not dare pass upon.

Davidson notices the date of the entry. He looks up at Mrs. Tuttle.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

This is dated April 12, 1865. That's two days before Lincoln was shot.

He looks down at the paper and continues to read.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

(From the journal)

As I do not wish to forget anything that occurs, I will continue to write as I can. I now sit in the

(MORE)

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON (CONT)

parlor of the Executive Mansion. I have spoken to the Lead Secretary, informed him of my arrival and now have been asked to wait.

As we hear Davidson reading the words, we move around behind him and come in over his left shoulder. We slowly zoom in on the page he is reading from.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - DAY

SUPER: "APRIL 12, 1865"

We move through the Mansion's hallway, moving past door after door, very slowly and deliberately. The decorations are sparse, only a few small tables are seen with oil lamps on them. There are a few built in cabinets lining the walls. The floors are wooden and the walls have a bead board style wainscoting with a whitewash finish. It is not nearly the Mansion we know today. It is one of utilitarian simplicity. It has been used as an office, a residence and a place of solace during this difficult time. We come into the parlor. Sitting alone is William Nathaniel Davidson, author of the journal and great great great grandfather of Professor Davidson. William sits patiently as asked by the Lead Secretary. He is dressed in a simple suit, one that he has obviously owned for many years, worn a bit and with a few frayed edges. He sits with his brown leather binder on his lap, it is open and he is writing. The words now being read from the journal are not from Dr. Davidson but from William, being read as he writes them.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I feel out of place, a simple man among those of such importance and stature. It may sound small and petty but I do wish I could have acquired more appropriate attire for a meeting with someone of such importance. I must say though, I have been treated with nothing but respect since I walked in the door. Even being that I am from Virginia, a southern state. I can only assume that being an invited guest of President Lincoln affords one a bit more credibility than just a simple farmer.

As William sits patiently, writing, the Chief Secretary enters the parlor from an adjacent room.

CHIEF SECRETARY

Mr. Davidson, the President is ready for you sir. If you would please follow me.

William closes his journal and tucks it under his arm. He follows the gentleman from the parlor and down a short hallway. The Secretary stops at the door at the very end of the hallway. He takes a key from his vest pocket and unlocks the door. He holds the door open for William and motions for him to enter.

CHIEF SECRETARY

Please sir, make yourself comfortable. He will be with you momentarily.

William nods his head in acknowledgment as the Secretary leaves the room.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

The gentleman closed the door behind him. As the door shuts, I hear the door lock. This seems a bit odd to me. Why would they keep THIS door locked? Every other door I had passed since entering the Executive Mansion has been standing open. What makes this room so special? As I walk around the room I take a few minutes to try and find the rooms significance. It is a small room, poorly lit, only a couch, two small chairs and a small table are visible. There are no windows, only a glass pane double door that leads to the outside. The door has a curtain covering most of the glass. This provides the only illumination in the room, the mid-day sun peaking in from around the edges of the curtain. On the table between the chairs, I see two small pictures. I slowly walk over and look down. I squint to see them in the rooms dim light, it is only then that I begin to understand. The pictures are of Lincoln's two sons that have passed away. One is

(MORE)

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO) (CONT)
of Eddie Lincoln, just shy of his
fourth birthday. The other is of
Willie who died just 3 years ago at
age 11. I now begin to see that
this room is a shrine of sorts. As
I come to this revelation, I can
not bring myself to sit for fear of
disturbing any special place
reserved for a grieving parent.
Instead I stand reverently behind
one of the chairs, arms crossed at
my back.

As William stands waiting, he turns as he hears a rattling
noise from the double doors.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)
(From the journal)
As I stand there waiting, I hear
the rattling of one of the locks on
the double door. The door slowly
opens and the blinding sun floods
the darkened room. And then just as
quickly as the sunlight filled the
room, the door is shut and the
darkness returns. As my eyes
struggle to adjust to the changes
in light, I see him standing in the
closed doorway, locking the door
behind him, it is Abraham Lincoln.
He finishes locking the door and
places the key in his vest pocket.
He then turns and sees that I am
standing behind one of the chairs.

LINCOLN
Mr. Davidson, thank you for making
this trip to meet with me. I am
honored to have you in my home.

William is frozen. He was not prepared for this meeting as
he thought he was.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)
(From the letter)
I am completely speechless. He is
standing there, in front of me, the
President. As hard as I try to
speak, the words will not form on
my tongue. I struggle, then force
myself to speak.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Mr. President it is my honor to be here. Thank you so very much for the invitation.

Lincoln gestures towards the chair William is standing behind.

LINCOLN

Please sir have a seat any place you would like. It is important to me that you be comfortable.

William looks at the chairs and the couch, not knowing the correct place to sit.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Mr. President, you first please wherever you normally sit sir. I will take what ever seat is left.

LINCOLN

Very well then, I normally sit here on the couch so I can look outside. The view of the garden is quite good from here. Butterflies dance and play around the flowers just after dawn. Simple pleasures such as these mean a great deal to me.

William moves toward the chairs.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

As I start to make my way toward the chairs, I am still in awe. Hearing the President speak of something as simple as butterflies in that way, was a bit unexpected.

LINCOLN

I must apologize for locking the door, it has become a habit of sorts I'm afraid. These last few years have been a trying time for me. This small room has been a sanctuary for me. Although if I do not lock the doors I receive no peace and quiet I'm afraid.

(Pause)

If this is uncomfortable for you I will unlock them.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Not at all sir. I am quite fine with it.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I waited until Lincoln was seated on the couch before making my way over to one of the chairs. I sat in the one just off to Lincoln's left side, not wanting to sit directly in front of the President. He is dressed in a gray vest over a white shirt. He does not wear a tie or a coat today. His face is somber, tired in fact. He maintains a noble presence but somewhere, just off the surface, I can see a heaviness of heart about him.

LINCOLN

I wanted to tell you in person, as I did in my letter, how impressed I have been with your writings about the conflict our great nation has just endured.

(Pause)

Many of your southern colleagues in the press have not been as kind to the cause as you.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

I do thank you for your kind observations sir. Unfortunately many of my fellow writers do not see the long term consequences as I feel that I do.

(Pause)

They are blocked by their hatred and sometimes their ignorance to open their minds to other possibilities.

Lincoln stares deep into the darkness in the corner of the room.

LINCOLN

There are many, both in the North and South that would say that I to can be that way.

William looks puzzled at Lincoln's last statement.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON
I'm not sure of your meaning Mr.
President.

Lincoln, still staring off into the darkness of the corner,
starts to explain.

LINCOLN
Many have expressed concern as to
my motivation over the past years.

Lincoln turns towards William. He looks deep into his eyes
as he takes a heavy breath. A small smile creeps onto his
face, although it is obvious he has forced it to the
surface.

LINCOLN
But as I said, it was refreshing to
read your works.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON
So what is it that a simple
reporter can do for you Mr.
President?

Lincoln's smile slowly disappears. He stares again, this
time just past William as if looking into another time.

LINCOLN
Do you feel as if you have had a
blessed life?

William is taken back at such a strange question.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON
Yes sir, I believe I have.

The sliver of a smile returns to Lincoln's face.

LINCOLN
Tell me about your family Mr.
Davidson. If you don't mind
indulging me.

The smile has now migrated to William's face as he thinks of
his wife and son.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON
I have a beautiful wife named
Phyllis. We have a young son named
Jonathan. He is two years old.

LINCOLN

I can tell by the smile as you speak that you are a very happy man.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Yes sir I am, and very lucky.

LINCOLN

And what of your home in Harrisburg, tell me of that.

Again the pride escapes him.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Well sir, it is a humble abode. My wife and I have a two room house on nearly 20 acres. Not so big that I cannot work the land myself but I do look forward to the day when young Jonathan can step in and ease some of the chores.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

Lincoln smiles with me as I spoke of my home and family. As he does, his eyes slowly move to the photographs sitting on the table. He reaches over and picks up the photo of Willie. The smile disappears and is replaced by one of loss and sadness. With his right index finger, he begins to trace the photo as if stroking his late son's hair.

LINCOLN

Family is the most important thing in life Mr. Davidson. Other things come and go but your family will always be, even if God has deemed it necessary to take them home.

William sees the pain in the eyes, not that of the President but that of a father.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

(Softly)

Mr. President I was so very saddened to hear of your son's passing. Would that God would take that pain from you.

LINCOLN

I so pray that God would save you ever having to feel the pain of such a loss.

(Pause)

I believe it was Chaucer that stated, "Time heals all wounds." Sadly he could not have been more wrong. With each passing day, I feel the pain multiply of never again being able to hold them.

Lincoln pulls the photo of Willie close to his chest as he changes the subject.

LINCOLN

I see you have brought some type of satchel with you. As a writer, I assume you have some type of writing materials?

William grabs his binder as Lincoln comments on it.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Yes sir I do. I was hoping to document what we discussed today if that is satisfactory with you sir.

LINCOLN

I would take great pleasure in that. I did hope you would write something of our meeting in your paper.

(Long pause)

These are tumultuous times for our country. The reconstruction of our nation will be hard and long. Many in the South, as well as the North, need to understand a great many things. Many of these matters, I feel have been greatly misunderstood.

William brings out his journal and places it on his lap, pen in hand and ink well beside his leg. He sits in anticipation, realizing all too well the great gift he has been given.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

What is it you would like to tell, Mr. President?

Lincoln sits back on the couch, removes the photo of Willie from his chest and places it by his leg.

LINCOLN

I think it is more of what I would like to know than anything else.

William looks at Lincoln with a puzzled look.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

I'm not sure what you mean sir.
What is it you would like to know?

Lincoln takes a long deep breath. He hesitates as if he does not really want to know the answer to his question.

LINCOLN

When I began in politics, I never wanted to be anything more than a servant of the people. Never wanted to be remembered other than someone who did what he could for the people that had honored me with any position I was in.

Again, Lincoln takes a deep breath.

LINCOLN

I guess my question will be,
(Pause)
How will I be remembered? A savior?
A tyrant? A leader that his men followed freely or one that men followed only because of my position?

William writes as he hears Lincoln speak. He stops in anticipation.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

I know one can never chose how others think but what would you like to be remembered as?

Lincoln gathers himself as if he knows exactly what to say.

LINCOLN

Just a man. One who did what he thought was right and for the right reasons. I never asked to be the savior of our great nation but it became my task to heal what was hurt, to mend that had been torn apart.

(Pause)

A mans life is defined by moments he is thrust into with no time to

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT)

prepare. These are the tests of a true leader. I only pray that God has lead me down the right path.

William writes at a feverish pace, not wanting to miss one word uttered from the President. He stops, looks up at Lincoln and asks.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

What is it that you feel the country has misunderstood?

LINCOLN

I feel that everyone is unaware of the real reason for the war.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

And what was the real reason sir?

Lincoln's face grows emotionless, a dead stare as he gives his answer.

LINCOLN

Our great nation has lost sight of itself. Our founding fathers wanted a nation were all men are equal. They felt that everyone should prosper and live their lives to the fullest. Sadly, many have become bitter and selfish, only looking out for what they have or can obtain.

(Pause)

Often the ambitions of men have caused others to suffer. This has caused us to become two nations, both with different ideas of where we should be and where we should go.

William continues to write as the President tells his tale.

LINCOLN

There have been many issues that have divided us over the past years. It seems the issue of slavery was the final test of our country's resolve.

Lincoln lowers his head

LINCOLN
 Sadly we failed that test.

Lincoln takes a long breath and continues.

LINCOLN
 I feel as if I am the father of two feuding siblings. Although I feel as if one is right and the other has strayed, I love them both and must do what I can to bring them together again.

(Pause)

The passion that built this great nation is now the very thing that tears it apart.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)
 (From the journal)

I can see that this is a difficult subject for Mr. Lincoln to discuss. He tells his tale with such conviction and steadfastness that one can not help but know what it is he believes. This has become his calling; he did not seek it out or even want for it. But it has become what he was meant to do.

(Pause)

But at what cost to him.

Lincoln shuffles in his seat. He is obviously uncomfortable with this subject. Yet for some reason, he is compelled to talk to William about it.

LINCOLN
 Men are forced to make hard choices at times. I would have so longed to have been given the opportunity to make some other contribution to the history of our nation.

(Pause)

Sadly this was not to be.

William takes a break from writing for a moment. He looks into the eyes of the President, eyes so tired and beaten down by the burden he has shouldered for so many years.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON
 Mr. President. You seem like there is more you want to say. Something heavy on your heart you need to share.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)
 (From the journal)

As he heard the question I had posed, his eyes lifted and locked with mine. They looked right through me, his head did not move. I had struck a nerve. There was something more, something deep and painful that he was carrying. Suddenly an uncomfortable feeling comes over me. I may not be prepared for what I might hear. Lincoln takes the picture of Willie and places it back on its spot on the table.

Lincoln sat deep in thought, staring off as if looking into the past. The reporter in William came rushing to the surface.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

As the one who has been given such a difficult task sure as you, when did you first feel the gravity of the responsibility that you hold?

Lincoln ponders the question William has posed. He knows all too well the exact moment in time when he realized the mission he was about to undertake.

LINCOLN

So many times I have pondered that very subject Mr. Davidson. My first realization of my role in our great struggle came on the evening of my first election to the Presidency.

Lincoln's mind goes back to that day, no hesitation. A day in time he will never forget.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. LINCOLN HOME - NIGHT

SUPER: "November 6, 1860"

The room is dark and somber. The only visible light in the room is coming from a fireplace just in view to the right. Bare log walls can barely be seen and then fall back into darkness as the fire roars alive and then lowers. A small

window on the back wall shows only darkness beyond it. There are very little furnishings to be seen. Lincoln sits in his favorite rocking chair. A small table sits to the left of him, just within reach, a lone drinking glass sits on it. The fire illuminates his silhouette as he sits there, alone, pondering what may come of today's election.

As we see Lincoln sitting quietly, staring into the fire, we see movement from behind him. A dark figure enters the view and walks around in front of him. It is Mary Lincoln, his wife. She is wearing a simple light colored dress covered by a dark colored apron, hair pulled back in a tight bun. She stands in front of her husband for just a second then kneels down and stares deeply into his eyes. She sees concern and worry in him. After a few seconds, Lincoln moves his eyes from the fire and gazes into hers.

MARY LINCOLN

My dear husband, tell me what is troubling you.

Lincoln raises his head a bit and cracks a small smile.

LINCOLN

My dearest Mary, why is it that you would want to be burdened by what is rattling around in this tired old mind?

MARY LINCOLN

Tired perhaps, but not nearly as old as you may think.

LINCOLN

Whatever life throws at me, you still have the ability to make me smile.

MARY LINCOLN

With all the world is throwing at you, I hope I will always have that gift.

Mary reaches out and lays her right hand on his left.

MARY LINCOLN

Tell me what troubles you.

The smile Mary had brought to his face slowly fades from sight.

LINCOLN

As much as I wanted the office of the President, I now live in fear of what it will bring.

MARY LINCOLN

Abraham, I would not lie and say that I envy you in your task. I fear that it will be far more difficult than you can imagine.

Lincoln takes his right hand and gently covers his wife's hand, still resting on his other.

LINCOLN

I know all too well the difficulty ahead of me. I thank you for your courteous purposeful understatement.

MARY LINCOLN

I do not mean to try and reduce what you know to be true. I only pray that it will not continue.

A look of sternness comes to Lincoln's face.

LINCOLN

I have not yet given up hope that a peaceful resolution can still be reached. Perhaps God has placed me in this position to orchestrate a resolution to our Nation's differences.

Mary looks deep into his eyes.

MARY LINCOLN

Do you really feel that strongly about this?

LINCOLN

I feel more strongly of this than anything I have felt before.

(Pause)

My guiding principals are dictated to me by the Constitution. The rights guaranteed by that document are for all men. A single person, a single state or we as an entire Nation have no right to dictate who is or is not entitled to those rights.

Lincoln takes a second to catch his breath.

LINCOLN

The debate over slavery, I feel, is just an excuse for some to push for a separation as a nation.

MARY LINCOLN

While I do believe and support you with all my heart, allow me if you would, to play devil's advocate and ask questions that others, I'm certain will.

LINCOLN

Oh course, please go on.

MARY LINCOLN

Why would you not allow the succession of the South? If others believe different from us, why not allow them to live as they wish? Is that not one of the founding principles we as a nation hold most dear?

Lincoln is a bit taken back by his wife's question. But not entirely surprised.

LINCOLN

I would not be truthful if I failed to confess that very issue has entered my mind. While freedom to live as one wishes is a fundamental right that this nation was founded on, doing so at the expense of another human being, I feel contradicts the very fabric of the Constitution.

His face grows harder as he speaks for these words come straight from his heart.

LINCOLN

This nation is a Union. It has always been and will forever be. This is my calling, to preserve what was built by our Founding Fathers.

(Pause)

Even now I do not subscribe to what many say has already happened. We are still a Union, we have not yet

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT)

become divided. We as a Nation are very much like a family, brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers. A family will quarrel. This is a natural part of growing. And we are, as a Nation, growing. With that will come disagreements, conflict and pain. But no matter the outcome of the family quarrel, who wins, who loses, when it's all over...

(Pause)

you will forever be family.

Lincoln's expression again goes to one of somberness.

LINCOLN

My greatest fear is that if we as a people cannot find it within ourselves to correct this situation and a conflict does indeed occur...

(Pause)

many lives will be lost.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - DAY

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

It was quite moving listening to the President tell his tale. Having him tell me of the first time he realized the enormous responsibility that was his to bear was a chilling experience to say the least. Watching as he traveled back in time to when this terrible War had not yet begun. Seeing his face as he talked of that time when he had hoped and prayed that a resolution could be reached without the division of the Union or loss of life.

William sat reverently, waiting for Lincoln to come back in his mind to the present and the reality of what had happened. Lincoln gathered his thoughts and once again began to speak.

LINCOLN

I so long for that time again. As I do, I wonder of things that were done and of things not done. What could I have done different or even could I have done different to minimize or possibly even prevent this terrible ordeal.

William sits back and thinks of the question just posed.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Do you think there was another course to be taken?

Lincoln raises his head in a quick motion, staring directly at William.

LINCOLN

I know of no other course I could have taken to save the Union. The question of slavery, whether it be right or wrong, moral or immoral.

Lincoln sits back again as if relaxing.

LINCOLN

I remember an article written by a Mr. Greeley. As I'm sure you know, he is an editor of the New York Tribune and he wrote an article concerning the issue of slavery, secession and the South. While he agrees with the need to abolish slavery, in the manner in which he recommends it's execution, he and I differ a great deal.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - LINCOLN'S STUDY - NIGHT

SUPER: "August 22, 1862"

Lincoln sits alone at his desk, a small lamp on the desk beside him illuminates his face and the small area just in front of him. On his face he wears his reading glasses, in his hand he holds a pen. He sits and writes.

LINCOLN (VO)

Hon. Horace Greeley:

(MORE)

LINCOLN (VO) (CONT)

Dear Sir.

I have just read your article of the 19th. addressed to myself through the New-York Tribune. If there be in it any statements, or assumptions of fact, which I may know to be erroneous, I do not, now and here, controvert them. If there be in it any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not now and here, argue against them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend, whose heart I have always supposed to be right. As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing" as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt. I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored; the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union, unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave 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. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to

(MORE)

LINCOLN (VO) (CONT)
correct errors when shown to be errors; and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views. I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men every where could be free.

Yours,

A. Lincoln.

Lincoln sits the pen down on the desk beside him and leans back in his chair. He reaches up with his right hand and takes the glasses from his face. With the first finger and thumb of his left hand he rubs his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - LINCOLN'S STUDY - DAY

Lincoln is still sitting back in his chair.

LINCOLN
I so pray that God could have shown another path for me to have taken, more options to pursue for preserving the Union. What I wrote to Mr. Greeley, I meant. I would use all powers and authorities available to me to have prevented this War. I firmly believe that the slavery of the colored race was a cancer eating away at the very soul of our nation. This belief that some men deserve freedom and liberty while others do not, goes against the very principles that this country was founded.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)
(From the journal)
Once again his face turns stern as he speaks of his burden. He is torn between his beliefs and what the consequences of implementing them had brought. I can not fathom what the weight of that must feel like.

LINCOLN

Mr. Greeley proposed we allow the South to break free and keep the Northern states slave free. How could I allow this. How could anyone allow our great Nation to disband and live as two separate entities.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

As I sit and listen, I ask myself, how I would have done if I had been in his place. Could I have had the courage to follow my beliefs, place so many men in danger, place the people of the country in the position to chose sides against each other?

LINCOLN

I would use any and all powers allotted to me by the Constitution to end or shorten this conflict as long as the end result was in keeping with that same Constitution.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Do you feel that you used the Emancipation of the colored race as a tool to reach that end?

Lincoln's head raised slightly but quickly. He seemed taken back by Williams question. He sat quietly, thinking seriously before giving his answer.

LINCOLN

I did not start that way. The reasoning in my attempt to end slavery was one of conscious. I have always held that slavery was and still is, morally wrong. I have held that our Country has been weakened by the practice of slavery. To represent that we, as white men, are superior to any other race and that that race should be subservient to us, is a crime against any plan that God has for us.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I can see that my question has sparked a fire deep within him. I do not know what it is he will say or if I will want to hear what he does.

LINCOLN

As the War continued, I have looked for all possible ways of expediting the end.

(Pause)

I guess, in a very real way, I have tried to use the issue to our advantage.

(Pause)

It was not a purposeful attempt but as I had said earlier, I had the obligation to use any and all powers allotted to me to bring a swift end to this conflict.

Lincoln places his hands in his lap and begins to wring his hands together.

LINCOLN

Sadly, many have only seen it as a ploy to bring this War to a swift end. When in reality, it is one of the most important steps our Country has ever made, the freeing of all men. To have all people, no matter their color or place of origin, to be equal, to have the same rights as everyone else.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

This had been his calling. It was clear he had not wanted it but God had placed him there, to be the Savior of our great Nation, to mend what had been broken and cast aside.

Both men sit in silence. Neither speaking for several moments. Lincoln begins to squirm as the silence lengthens. Suddenly he can hold it in no longer.

LINCOLN

As much as I started out believing that the worst possible outcome of

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT)

the outbreak of war was the division of the Union, that tragedy pales in comparison to what has become the ultimate cost of this war.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I am puzzled by this remark. I am forced to ask myself, as much as Lincoln believed that the Union must survive, what could possibly be an even greater burden on his already heavy heart?

Lincoln slowly reaches forward towards the table separating the two men. As he does, his hand reaches out and opens a small drawer on the front. As he slowly and deliberately opens it, William looks hard and long at the drawer, wondering what could be there. As the drawer opens fully, William can see a brown binder inside. Lincoln reaches inside and pulls out the binder, places it gently on the table and then slides the drawer closed.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON VO

(From the journal)

The binder sits there, he stares at it. Seconds seemed to pass as hours. This is something of great importance to him. He reaches forward to touch it again and his hands begin to shake. He ran his hand over the cover as if stroking a child's hair, softly and lovingly.

LINCOLN

As I have said, the responsibility for reuniting the country has been one that carried more weight that I could have ever imagined.

(Pause)

But that duty pales in comparison to the responsibility that this binder represents.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

There is no writing on the outside of the binder. I have no idea what could be inside that is causing him so much pain. He reaches across and

(MORE)

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO) (CONT)
 slowly opens it up. As he lays the cover over, I see what appears to be an entire page of names. Listed from the top of the page to the bottom. Each line containing only one name, not sharing the space with any other.

LINCOLN
 As this dreadful war began, I left instructions with the War Department to keep me apprised on the list of casualties. As they received these reports from the field, they forward them to me.
 (Long pause)
 I then in turn, write each name down in this journal.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)
 (From the journal)
 At that very moment, I feel as if all the air has been taken from the room. The tension in the room is that of which I have never known prior nor do I feel I will ever feel again. How could any one man carry around that kind of burden?

LINCOLN
 After all the politics are finished, all the issues of slavery, land boundaries and every other possible ending, good or bad, win or lose,

Lincoln taps his hand on the journal

LINCOLN
 THIS is the cost of what we have done.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)
 (From the journal)
 It is all I can do to just sit there. Taking in this incredible and frightening moment. How would I, if in his position, shoulder the burden of so many lost souls.

LINCOLN

As I learn of them, I will add the names of our losses in the Confederate Army. As with this one, I will add them in no particular order or distinction. This is not a list of North or South...but of Americans.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I do not know what to say. What can I say? Me, a simple farmer and writer? What can I say to him to ease any of the pain that he is feeling? I did all I felt that I could in that moment, I sat there, waiting for him to speak, not wanting to intrude into the place where he was.

William sits motionless with his pen in hand, frozen in time. Lincoln's hand still lies on the list of names as his eyes stare down at them. After what seemed an eternity, Lincoln raises his eyes and speaks.

LINCOLN

This list is a reminder of what we have lost. If it were all that I had, I am not sure I could continue on at times. Luckily I have something to help me through those days.

Lincoln takes the list and places it back into it's binder. He then places it on the table just to the left of Willie's photograph. He then reaches into the drawer again.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

Lincoln reaches into the drawer and pulls out a second binder. It is smaller than the first and darker in color. He places it on his lap and opens the flap.

LINCOLN

When the reality of that list of names hits me, these letters show me that even though many have given all they have for us, others have given more than they ever thought they could.

Lincoln lifts each page one by one and places them down gently over the previous one.

LINCOLN

They are written by mothers, fathers, wife's, brothers and sisters. Each represents a loved one lost in this conflict. The ultimate sacrifice for the good of the Union.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

A quiet and simple look of determination came over the Presidents face as he tells me of the letters. He held them in his hand as if they were a precious gift. A gift that has given his burden a purpose and on some small level, justification.

LINCOLN

Without exception, every one of these letters has given praise to what we are attempting to accomplish. Although their losses are unimaginable, their pride in their loved ones for the willingness to place such a gift on the altar of freedom is inspirational.

Lincoln lays his hand on the letters

LINCOLN

These are what helps to keep this conflict in perspective.

Lincoln holds one letter in his hand, the others are face down on his leg.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

As he sat there, he looked at the letter in his hand with an intense stare. There is something different about this one.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Mr. President, what is it?

One can see that Lincoln is reading the letter as he holds it. Moments into it, his hands begin to shake. He closes his eyes tightly as a tear slowly rolls down his left cheek.

LINCOLN

I have read this particular letter so many times, I know longer need to look at it. It has been ingrained in my mind for all time.

(Looks up at William)

Would you like me to read it to you?

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

I would be honored sir.

Lincoln pulls a small white handkerchief from his inside vest pocket and wipes the tear from his cheek.

LINCOLN

This was written by a Mrs. Patsy Hartford of Allentown Pennsylvania.

Lincoln clears his throat as he begins to read from the letter. His handkerchief still clutched in his hand.

LINCOLN

(From the letter)

My dear President Lincoln, I have received the letter from your office concerning the passing of my dear son Edgar at Springfield. I felt it necessary to write to you and convey my thoughts. My son was a gracious and kind man.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOME OF PATSY HARTFORD - KITCHEN - DAY

Mrs. Hartford sits at her kitchen table. We only see her from the back as we slowly move in and see over her right shoulder. She is dressed in a long summer dress, blue in color. She sits writing the letter that is being read. A picture of her son Edgar sits on the table just to the right of her.

We now hear her voice as the one reading the letter.

MRS. HARTFORD (VO)

He was a father, husband and loyal member of our local church. All

(MORE)

MRS. HARTFORD (VO) (CONT)

that he was, he felt as though he needed to set aside and stand up for what he felt was right. He joined in on the struggle to reunite this great nation. He did not feel this was a mission of glory but one of humble calling to a cause greater than any one man. As a mother I will miss my son more than I could ever convey in words or on paper. However the honor of knowing that he gave all that he could to better the good of all men will carry me through when the pain of his absence is felt. I would like you to know this sir for I feel that you have a far larger burden to bear than even I do at this time. I feel the loss of one son, you must shoulder the burden of all sons that are lost. I pray that our Heavenly Father gives you the strength that you need to return us, our country, back together. I will remember you in my prayers always.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Robert Hartford

Mrs. Hartford sits the pen down and lifts a cup of tea sitting by Edgar's picture. We slowly move in on the picture.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - LINCOLN'S STUDY - DAY

Lincoln bows his head as he finishes the letter. He closes his eyes tightly again fighting back the tears. It is to no avail, again we see the tear as it rolls down the cheek of the President. He raises his handkerchief still clasp in his hand and blots it from his face.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I am completely speechless. I want to say something but everything that enters into mind feels small and unworthy of such a somber and

(MORE)

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO) (CONT)
 profound moment. I merely wait in
 silence as he deals with his pain.

Lincoln gathers himself, lifts his head toward William.

LINCOLN
 (Softly)
 Please forgive me Mr. Davidson. I
 do hope I have not made you feel
 any discomfort.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON
 Please sir, think nothing of it. I
 can only imagine what emotions come
 to life when you read that letter.
 (Pause)
 If I may say sir, you handled it
 with far more dignity than I could
 have.

Lincoln sits, still staring at the letter he has just
 finished.

LINCOLN
 Dignity
 (Pause)
 That is the one thing that I have
 tried so very hard to give to honor
 these men who have died. I have
 visited many of the battlefields
 and hospitals during this war.
 Dignity is a virtue that is very
 difficult to hold onto in those
 places.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)
 (From the journal)
 Lincoln sits, again deep in
 thought, staring off, going to
 these places he spoke of in his
 mind. The things that he had seen
 when he visited the battlefields,
 I'm sure made the reality of
 everything even more real.

The reporter in William begins to emerge as he listens.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON
 I did not know of the visits of
 which you speak. I am sure that
 seeing the realities of war has to
 be overwhelming.

Lincoln's head still faces down as his eyes come up and lock with Williams.

LINCOLN

I was not prepared for what I was to find there. A few of my generals tried to prepare me for what I would see. The violence, the carnage, No words could ever describe or prepare one to see what War looks like.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

As if someone had grabbed him from behind, he stops speaking and begins to shake his head as if something even more disturbing than what he was describing had come to mind.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

What is it Mr. President?

Lincoln gathers all his strength and turns away from William as he musters the courage to say what he cannot possibly ignore.

LINCOLN

I was warned to expect the visual carnage.

(Takes a deep breath)

No one told me of the smell of War.

Lincoln begins to go back in his mind to what his words are describing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SHARPSBURG MARYLAND - ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD - DAY

SUPER: "OCTOBER 1862"

Lincoln's carriage enters from the right of the field. It is lead and followed by mounted Cavalry officers. As the carriage comes closer, Lincoln's head protrudes from the left window. He looks off onto the distant field. We hear his voice as he describes his approach.

LINCOLN

My first remembrance of this was on my visit to Sharpsburg after the

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT)

Battle of Antietam. As I approached the battlefield in my carriage, the smell began to consume the air even as far as one mile away. Even though it had been some time since the fighting had ended, somehow I could still smell the faint hint of gunpowder in the air.

(Pause)

Then it hit me, like a weight that wounded me to my very soul. The dead. The smell of death. I do not know if that has ever left me since that day. Many nights since, I have awakened to that smell in the air.

The carriage pulls up to a waiting group of men all adorned in Union Army Officers attire. One of the Cavalry officers dismounts his horse and opens the carriage door. Lincoln slowly exits the carriage and steps onto the field. He is met by Major General George B. McClellan. The two men shake hands and begin to speak.

MCCLELLAN

Mr. President, it's an honor to receive you sir.

LINCOLN

Thank you General.

McClellan seems visibly shaken by Lincoln's presence.

MCCLELLAN

Perhaps you would care to rest and freshen up a bit after your trip?

LINCOLN

Not at all General, I would like to survey the area before anything else.

LINCOLN (VO)

It was no secret that I was disappointed with General McClellan and his unwillingness to pursue the Union Army after their defeat at Antietam, but he was not my first order of business.

Lincoln turns to the group of officers and informs them of his plans.

LINCOLN

Id like to be taken to see our
wounded General.

MCCLELLAN

Very well sir. We have a hospital
set up in a barn. If you will
follow me sir.

McClellan motions for Lincoln to follow him as the group
begins to walk across the field towards a barn off in the
distance.

CUT TO:

INT. SMITH'S BARN - FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

The group of Officers enter the barn followed by Lincoln. As
soon as the group disperses from in front of him, Lincoln,
for the first time, sees with his own eyes the reality of
War. Rows of wounded, crying out in pain. The ground so
saturated with blood it pools where it cannot drain. Men
missing arms, legs, bandages covering them from every
possible location. Lincoln was not prepared and is visibly
shaken.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - LINCOLN'S STUDY - DAY

Lincoln's head hangs low and somber. William can tell this
was a turning point for the President. Seeing it is quite a
difference from hearing about it.

LINCOLN

Everything I thought of what I
might see was gone at that point. I
felt my heart being ripped from my
chest. Men, young boys, lying
wounded, many mortally. The cries
and screams were more than I could
bear. I wanted to break down and
cry right there but somehow
something inside me told me I could
not.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SMITH'S BARN - FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

As the president stood there, looking across the vast sea of wounded, many of the men saw him. Suddenly, right then, right there, time seemed to stand still, an eerie silence fell over the crowd. The screams and crying seemed to stop. Those that could, stood up. Those that could not simply looked his way. Then in one moment of absolute majesty, all saluted their Commander In Chief. Lincoln stood proudly. Looking at the men who had given so much for the cause of freedom. He choked back the tears of sadness for the sight he had found. Those tears then replaced with the tears of pride to be in the presence of such gallantry. He stood before them and proudly returned their salute.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - LINCOLN'S STUDY - DAY

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I can say nothing. I sit in awe of what is being told to me. How men who had given so much of themselves could put their pain and suffering aside, if only for a moment, to honor their President. It seems that somehow they knew what he needed at that exact moment. For one moment in time, the pain of War was replaced by a pride in their country and their President.

(Pause)

It took him a few seconds to gather himself before he could speak again.

LINCOLN

I cannot tell you the solemn pride I felt to have been the leader of such men. If I had not felt this way before, it was then that I knew that this War was necessary and the Union would be victorious.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I see the pain and pride on his face. The pain from seeing the dead and injured, the pride from those same brave men standing, sitting or nothing more than acknowledging

(MORE)

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO) (CONT)
 their President who was standing
 before them. Paying homage to the
 man they believed in so much that
 they were willing to pledge their
 lives to the pursuit of the cause.

Lincoln gathers himself, remembering these images has shaken
 him visibly.

LINCOLN
 These sights, sounds and smells of
 war are more than I could have
 imagined. As terrible as these were
 to me, my thoughts go to the men
 who have seen it first hand. Lived
 it, saw it. Stood shoulder to
 shoulder with fathers, sons,
 friends and neighbors. And stood by
 and watched as those same men fell
 and died right beside them.

Lincoln leans over and rests his elbows on his knees, his
 hands clasp as he begins to wring them together, harder and
 faster. He then reaches over and places his left hand on the
 binder he read from before.

LINCOLN
 In addition to the letters written
 to me from family members, some
 have sent me letters written by
 their loved ones from the battle
 field. Many of these are horrific
 and graphic as they describe what
 they have seen and lived through.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)
 (From the journal)
 Lincoln lifts the stack of letters
 from the folder, riffles through
 them as if looking for one in
 particular. As he searches through
 them, one at a time, he stops
 suddenly and then pulls out two
 sheets of paper. He places the
 remainder of the letters gently on
 the table. His hands shake visibly
 as he holds these letters.

LINCOLN
 These two,
 (Pause)

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT)

These two letters keep me up at nights Mr. Davidson. For reasons both horrible and glorious.

Lincoln looks at William.

LINCOLN

If I may?

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Please sir, I would be honored.

LINCOLN

The first is from Mary Thomas of Massachusetts. She writes this to me just after receiving this other from her husband.

Lincoln pulls his glasses from his vest pocket, places them on his face and begins to read.

LINCOLN

Mr. President. I write this letter to you and hope you can find the time to give it your attention. I received a letter from my husband Patrick today as to his experiences at the battle of Gettysburg. I have included it with this letter as to allow you see what it is that our brave men are going through in this great war. I will not go on as I feel my husbands words will convey all that needs to be told. He is a brave and proud man, one of few words but of great conviction. He and our son Howard volunteered to assist in our great conflict nearly two years ago. I trust his words will tell his tale and show you what it is that the brave men we have sent out to defend our nation are made of. Yours respectfully
Mrs. Patrick Thomas

Lincoln places the second letter over top of the first and begins to read.

LINCOLN

My dearest Mary. I apologize for the delay in writing you as I have been much to occupied over the past few days.

As Lincoln reads, we move in on the letter he holds in his hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD - DAY

SUPER: "JULY 1863"

It is a rainy dreary day. We see men dressed in Union uniforms huddled under tarps, tents and make-shop shelters. We move in on one tree off in the distance back, far from the other men. Sitting under the tree is Patrick Thomas. He is dressed in a tattered and torn Union uniform. Mud covers him up to his knees. A dirty uniform hat tries desperately to keep the pouring rain from his face, but to no avail. The coat he wears is also stained with red mud. A closer inspection shows that the coat also carries the deep stains of blood. As we move in on him, his hands covered and stained with dirt and blood, are tucked under a low tree branch holding a pencil and paper. He struggles to write the letter to his wife.

PATRICK THOMAS (VO)

(From the letter)

I am at Gettysburg PA and my unit and I have been engaged is what I can only describe as the worst engagements since my arrival. Before I go any further I must tell you of a terrible tragedy. Our dear son Howard has been wounded. He is alive and being treated as of this moment. It appears he will lose his right leg due to a severe wound. Do not fret for he is in good spirits and tells me to send you his love. As soon as I hear of his possible return home I will let you know. My dear I must tell you of what we have just been through. The past week has been one the likes of which I have never heard of or seen. The fighting we have seen I can say without thought, is the worst I or anyone in my unit could imagine. The battles have taken place on three different days and each day seemed to be worse than the day before. The Rebels' spirit and tenacity was something none of us were prepared to face.

(MORE)

PATRICK THOMAS (VO) (CONT)
 They fought with the heart of lions
 and did not back down until ordered
 to do so. I actually saw the Rebel
 commander, General Lee, on the
 morning of the last day of battle.
 I saw him across the field, sitting
 atop his horse.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD - DAY

The images Patrick is writing his wife about is now in his mind and being played in front of us. We see the Confederate Army spread out across the field. Just behind them, on a small knoll, is General Robert E. Lee, sitting atop his trusty horse Traveller. He wears his Confederate gray in all its glory. Proudly he stands amongst his men. He says nothing as he sits, staring across the vast sea of troops ready to do battle. His men walk by him, staring up reverently, as each walk by they salute their Commander. Lee returns their salute with pride.

PATRICK THOMAS (VO)
 (From the letter)
 I stood across the field and saw
 him there. He was a man of noble
 posture. Even though I was far away
 I could see how his men looked at
 him. He was a man they greatly
 admired and respected. These men
 fought for him when it was very
 clear to anyone there, that all was
 lost. That type of loyalty is not
 easily won.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Patrick continues his letter.

PATRICK THOMAS (VO)
 (From the letter)
 The dead have been piled as high
 as twenty feet in multiple places.
 The wounded have taken up what I
 could estimate as more than two
 acres spread out. The screams of
 the wounded and dying are nearly
 (MORE)

PATRICK THOMAS (VO) (CONT)
 more than I can bear. The dead are so numerous we cannot bury them fast enough. The body does terrible things when left out in the elements, things I will not describe further. Even though our casualties were high, we were victorious. Howard even speaks of how proud he is to have been a part of such a victory. He fought by my side with bravery and honor until he fell. I have never been so proud as I am of him. I hope you will pray for us as we continue to move forward. I so long for the day that I will return home to you. But know this my dear, this is not a fruitless quest. Every man here, living, wounded or dead, knows we fight for a greater good. Without exception, every man fights for his country and for what it stands for. We do this willingly and without hesitation. With all my heart I love you.
 Patrick

Patrick pauses as he finishes the letter and looks across the vast landscape he sits before.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - LINCOLN'S STUDY - DAY

Lincoln, still holding the letter, holds his head high and a bit of a smile escapes his lips.

LINCOLN

As terrible as the events he describes are, knowing he and his fellow soldiers hold what they are doing as just and necessary makes the carnage they face easier to stomach.

William stops from his writing to take in what he has seen and heard.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

As I hear these words from this brave soldier, I could not help but
 (MORE)

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO) (CONT)
wonder how one could see such things and still speak with such assurance that the cause you fought for was just. I asked myself, if I were there, would I feel the same? Could I hold to belief in the greater good in the presence of such carnage?

After what seemed an eternity, William spoke.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON
I have heard from men that fought at Gettysburg. The stories they have told are horrid and beyond imagination.

Lincoln looks up at William.

LINCOLN
Yes Mr. Davidson, their stories are beyond comprehension. This is just one of many that I have received that describe what these brave men have endured.

William takes the opportunity to change the subject.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON
I have heard that you held General Lee in high regards at one time.

LINCOLN
High regards indeed. As War was imminent, General Winfield Scott came to me and requested that Lee be made Commander of all Union troops. Having heard of his bravery and war record, I did not hesitate to agree. This appointment was two fold. His excellent record as a military leader and due to the fact that he was from Virginia, a southern state. General Winfield and I felt that if we could have him lead our army, there would be less of a chance of that state declaring secession. Sadly he refused the position and joined the Confederate cause. I never had the pleasure of meeting the man personally but General Scott told me of the meeting he had with Lee.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GENERAL SCOTTS' OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: "APRIL 16, 1861"

General Scott sits at his desk, dressed in his Union Army uniform. He is busy writing when his aid walks in.

AID

General, Colonel Lee is here sir.

GENERAL SCOTT

Thank you send him right in.

The aide holds the door open and Lee walks into the room. He is dressed in his Army uniform. He stands in the center of the room and salutes Scott.

GENERAL SCOTT

Its a pleasure to see you Colonel.

ROBERT E. LEE

The pleasure is mine sir.

Scott offers his hand to Lee. Lee returns the handshake.

GENERAL SCOTT

Have a seat Robert, we need to talk.

Lee walks around and sits in a chair just in front of Scotts' desk. Scott walks around his desk and sits in his chair.

GENERAL SCOTT

Robert I'm sure you are aware of all that is going on. Tensions are high and right now,

(Pause)

nobody really knows what is going to happen.

ROBERT E. LEE

Yes sir. I have found myself torn as well. Our nation is on the brink of what could be a defining moment. I only pray that good judgment prevails and tragedy is avoided.

Scott sits back in his chair and looks hard at Lee.

GENERAL SCOTT

I have spoken many times to
President Lincoln on this matter.
We are searching for a man to lead
our Army if indeed the worst does
happen.

Lee's head bows a bit as he knows what is coming next.

ROBERT E. LEE

And what names have you come up
with General?

GENERAL SCOTT

My recommendation to the President
was one name only.

(Pause)

Yours Robert.

Lee is visibly shaken by this. He shifts from side to side
in his seat. After a long period of silence, he speaks.

ROBERT E. LEE

General, you have honored me with
this appointment. Any words I could
say would not do justice to the
admiration and respect I have for
you. I do so wonder what will
become of my beloved home state of
Virginia if indeed War does come.

Scott leans over and places both of his arms on his desk.

GENERAL SCOTT

Robert I know this will be
difficult for you if it does come
to that. In my recommendation to
the President, I did consider your
reservations should this occur.
Even with that in mind, I still
believe that you are the best, most
qualified man under my command to
lead our Army.

Lee starts to shake his head, he begins to speak but Scott
interrupts him.

GENERAL SCOTT

Robert please, I do not want an
answer right now. Take some time to
consider everything this means.
This is a decision that will
challenge your loyalty to this

(MORE)

GENERAL SCOTT (CONT)
 Nation and your loyalty to
 Virginia. It is not one to be taken
 lightly and not one I really want
 you make quickly.

We move in on Lee as he stares off into the distance. He does nothing, says nothing, barely any acknowledgment of what has just been offered to him.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - LINCOLN'S STUDY - DAY

LINCOLN

Two days later, Lee tendered his resignation. He wrote to General Scott, expressing his admiration and regret for the decision he had to make. I do, on some level, understand why he made his decision. If I were in his place, I may have done the same. Being placed in the position of fighting against men of ones home state. A terrible decision to say the least.

(Pause)

In the days that followed, I heard of his appointment of Commander of the Army in Northern Virginia. I knew in my heart that we would find a formidable opponent when our Army would meet him on the battlefield.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I can see that this was one of the events he spoke of earlier, things that might have been done different, possibly changing what did or could have happened. He sits there, still holding the letters he had read to me, I thought again of the last one, the memory of Gettysburg.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

I have read newspaper reports of your journey to the battlefield at Gettysburg. A speech you delivered there?

Lincoln sits the letters down on the stack sitting on the table.

LINCOLN

Yes I did. I was asked to come and say a few words at the dedication of a National Cemetery being constructed at the sight. I was honored to have a small part in the proceedings.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

A small role you say? Many have described your speech as one of the greatest they have ever heard.

Lincoln smiles at Williams description.

LINCOLN

Many have commented on that speech, some with kindness, others with scoff and ridicule.

(Pause)

All I can say is that I spoke what it was in my heart. Those brave men that fought and died on that field deserved more that this simple man could convey. I did what I could to honor their sacrifice.

We move in on Lincoln's face as he thinks of that day and the preparations he made in anticipation of his speech.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRESIDENTIAL TRAIN - DAY

SUPER: "NOVEMBER 16, 1863"

Lincoln sits on a bench in his train car. the train is en-route to Gettysburg from Washington DC. He sits with pen in his hand and a stack of paper sitting loose on the desk attached to the seat in front of him. He is staring off, out the window, deep in thought when his valet, William Johnson, carrying a glass of water, walks up from behind him.

WILLIAM JOHNSON

Would you like a glass of water Mr. President?

LINCOLN
(Startled)
Yes, yes I would .

WILLIAM JOHNSON
Are you OK sir?

Lincoln still staring out the window, hears his question.

LINCOLN
I suppose as well as one can be in
this situation.

WILLIAM JOHNSON
What situation is that sir?

Lincoln points down at the empty paper.

LINCOLN
Tell me what I should write to say.
It would be in vain any words I
could possibly write down on this
paper that could do any justice to
the deeds that have been done on
this battlefield.

WILLIAM JOHNSON
It would not be my place to tell
you what to speak sir.

Lincoln looks up at William with sadness and humility.

LINCOLN
My friend, you probably have more
insight as to what should be told
here than anyone.

WILLIAM JOHNSON
Me sir? What ever do you mean?

LINCOLN
These brave men have fought and
died for the hope that this great
Nation will be whole again, for the
hope that we as a people, all
people, coloreds, whites, will be
able to live as one.

William sits down in the seat across the isle from Lincoln.

WILLIAM JOHNSON
Do you think these men really
fought for colored folks?

LINCOLN

I think they fought for the belief that all men deserve the same rights as they have, to make a life for themselves and their family as they see fit.

(Pause)

So yes I believe they fought for you.

Lincoln sits his pen back in its ink well and turns towards William.

LINCOLN

I believe these men hoped for a day when our Nation will once again be a Union, living up to the beliefs handed down by our founding fathers. Their steadfast resolve that only as one Nation, together in one common belief that all men regardless of color, deserve the same rights and privileges as all others. Their sacrifice on this battlefield was given to ensure their belief in the swift conclusion to this War and the reconstruction of our Nation.

William stands and turns towards the back of the train car.

WILLIAM JOHNSON

Sounds to me like you don't need my help at all Mr. President.

Lincoln sits stunned and enlightened as William walks away. He picks up the pen from its ink well and begins to write. We move in on the piece of paper as he writes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GETTYSBURG - SPEECH PODIUM - DAY

SUPER: "NOVEMBER 19, 1863"

Lincoln stands on the podium. The crowd is gathered before him, the stage is littered with people sitting behind him. He is the final speaker of the days dedication.

LINCOLN

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT)

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 this 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. 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.

As Lincoln completes his speech, the crowd breaks into a roar of applause. Lincoln looks over the vast crowd, his head held high, his heart filled with pride for the honor being shown by the crowd to these brave men.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - LINCOLN'S STUDY - DAY

Lincoln sits in reverence as he thinks of that day in Gettysburg.

LINCOLN

I hope in some small way I was able to honor the memory of those brave men that laid down their lives on that field. I was extremely honored to be included in the dedication of the field.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I saw him sit up right, as if forcing himself to recover from the memory he had just shared. I see the heaviness that weighs upon him from what he was feeling when he thought of that day.

LINCOLN

Just days before arriving in Gettysburg, I had visited the studio of photographer Alexander Gardner. I was to sit for a portrait. During the time I spent there, I was able to view many photographs of the battlefield just after the three day siege.

Lincoln's eyes dropped to the floor, his face went somber.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I could see his face go pale as if he had seen a ghost, it was almost as if I could see the physical pain seeping from every pore of his body.

LINCOLN

I have no words to describe the carnage that these photographs portrayed. Men lying in trenches, piled up on top of one another, open wounds with all types of cavities opened up.

(Pause)

Knowing that men were dying is one thing unto itself, but seeing them as they fell, right there where

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT)

they fell, wondering what their last thought might have been. I cannot imagine what it was like to be there and to have experienced such horror.

Then all in an instant, the tension and silence was broken by the sounds of a child's laughter coming from outside.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

Upon hearing the laughter, Lincoln turns his head toward the double doors he had entered earlier. Slowly he stands and walks over to the door, pulls back the curtain just a bit and looks outside. The bright light of the outside world covers his face. I watch as he stares out through the glass pane of the door. As he did, a smile starts to emerge from his face.

LINCOLN

Mr. Davidson, Id like to show you something.

Lincoln turned and looked toward William as if asking him to join him at the door. William sat his writing material down on the seat beside him, stood up, walked toward and then stood beside Lincoln.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

As I stood next to him. Lincoln pulls the curtain open further, moves to the left a bit so I can see out. I see Mrs. Lincoln and their young son Tad playing in the garden just a few feet from the office door. Tad is running around chasing butterflies as Mrs. Lincoln watches and laughs along with him. Tad catches one, holds it within his tiny hands for a few seconds then lets it go. He then breaks out into an almost uncontrollable laughter, dance and jump around as he watched it fly away. Then as quickly as he can, he chases it back down and catches it again with his hands. Over and over he did

(MORE)

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO) (CONT)

this. His laughter growing with every catch and release.

Lincoln stared longingly at his wife and son as they enjoyed this quiet and playful moment.

LINCOLN

I envy him so much. That childhood innocence. Nothing in the world matters at this moment except that butterfly. Yesterday is no longer a memory, tomorrow is not a thought or concern. This moment is the only thing in the world to him. I so wish that as we grow older we could afford moments like this again.

(Pause)

Just a few moments to chase the butterflies.

Lincoln turns and walks from the door and back to the couch where he was sitting before. William remained at the door, looking at the child and his mother. Lincoln sat back down on the couch, he began wringing his hands together, back and forth.

LINCOLN

Can you remember when that innocent time in your life ended for you Mr. Davidson?

William stood there, still looking at the pair, pondering the question he has been asked.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

It has been such a long time ago, I have no memory of such a carefree time.

(Pause)

Life, the world as we know it, or the world we have come to know it, seems to take over. We forget how to stop and enjoy what we have right in front of us right there at that moment.

(Pause)

I too share your envy Mr. President.

William lets loose of the curtain and turns from the door, still standing there, he looks at Lincoln.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Is it wrong for us to long for such
a simpler time?

Lincoln stops wringing his hands.

LINCOLN

I think we need to live each day as
it comes at us. Responsibility and
obligation come hand in hand with
age.

Lincoln points in the direction of his wife and son.

LINCOLN

Although it would be refreshing at
times to stop and chase the
butterflies.

William walks back and sits down in the chair he left
before. He picks up his writing material and begins to
write.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

Hearing the President speak of
simpler and innocent times made me
wonder if he had any time, in the
past few years, where he could
retreat from the enormous burden
that he had been forced to bear?

Lincoln looked up at William as he sat back down.

LINCOLN

I hope that one day my son will
understand what it is that has
happened during this great
conflict. I pray that all the
children of this War will one day
understand.

Once again the look of despair returns to Lincoln's face.

LINCOLN

So many children are now without
fathers. They will be tasked with
the job of rebuilding a country
that was torn apart so violently
right in front of their eyes. The
images of the dead and wounded will
haunt them for many years if not
forever.

(Pause)

While I would not wish it on anyone, especially a child, my hope for them is that they will remember what it looked like so that it may never happen again.

William writes as Lincoln pours out his fears.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

As I listen, I continue to write. As I do, my thoughts go to my own son, William Jr. Although he is only 2 years old and will have no memory of this terrible conflict, what will he do in the years to come? What part will he have in the rebuilding of our Nation. I am thankful that, due to his young age, he will not remember the horrible images of this War. In the coming years I hope that I can answer the questions that he will have. My only prayer is that what I may tell him, will give ease to the burden, if only in some small way as to the enormous task ahead of him and every child of this War.

William looks up at Lincoln and speaks to him, not as writer or reporter, but as a father.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON

Do you ever wonder of your sons and their future from this point?

Lincoln's face grimaces as he hears Williams question.

LINCOLN

I have pondered that very subject more than I could ever convey Mr. Davidson.

(Pause)

I have wondered just what type of legacy I have left for my sons. I am now an old man. It will soon be time for me to step from the public eye and pass the torch to younger more capable men. I fear my sons will be looked upon and asked to follow the path that I have taken.

Lincoln shakes his head as he speaks.

LINCOLN

This is not what I would have chosen as their birthright. They will be men of their own right and should be entitled to their own opinion and views on this and all other items. I fear what I have done may limit them in their future pursuits. Tad is still very young so hopefully, he will be able to outgrow his fathers ideologies and not be punished for them. Robert I fear is doomed to be caught up in what I have begun. He and I have had conversations on this very subject.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EXECUTIVE MANSION GARDENS - NIGHT

It is just as dusk is arriving at the Gardens of the Executive Mansion. We see four small lanterns perched on metal poles surrounding four corners of a small stone patio. The light from the lanterns is cast lightly upon the surrounding trees and bushes. Sitting on the stone patio, in his favorite rocking chair, is Abraham Lincoln. He is dressed in a dark wool coat as the air holds just the slightest hint of a chill. Lincoln sits quietly, looking down at a small book sitting on his lap. The light from the lanterns illuminate his profile. To each side of Lincoln we see two small benches, each has a small end table beside of it. Lincoln sits, deep in thought and deep into his reading. From the right side, a shadow of a person slowly covers Lincoln, as it does, Lincoln slowly lifts his head and looks in that direction. He smiles as he recognizes who it is. It is his oldest son Robert Lincoln. Robert is a handsome man, nearly 21 years old. He is dressed in a dark wool suit tonight for a meeting with his father. Robert walks over and stands in front of Lincoln just off to his right.

ROBERT LINCOLN

Good evening father.

LINCOLN

Robert, it is so good to see you, I had nearly forgot that you were coming by this evening.

Robert turns and sits on the bench on Lincoln's right.

ROBERT LINCOLN

I was looking for mother inside but
could not find her.

Lincoln turns his head a quarter turn and flashes a small
grin.

LINCOLN

I'm afraid I may have made your
mother quite angry with me today. I
was dealing with meetings all day
and completely forgot that I made a
promise to have lunch with her.

ROBERT LINCOLN

Mother knows the demands you have
on you. I'm sure all will be well.

LINCOLN

As you are not married, you cannot
know the anger ones spouse can hold
against you when you break a
promise.

ROBERT LINCOLN

This is true father, I have seen a
small bit of that anger directed
towards me growing up.

Lincoln turns and looks toward the house.

LINCOLN

Still I can not blame her. I have
put so many things ahead of her
these past few years. The least I
could do is keep a lunch date.

ROBERT LINCOLN

Could it be you are missing the
simpler life back in Illinois?

LINCOLN

There have been many a time I have
wondered what our lives would have
been like had I have stayed
practicing law back in Springfield.

Lincoln takes a pause when he speaks of these things and
looks towards Robert.

LINCOLN

Your mother is not the only one I
have put things ahead of is she?

Robert pauses a moment as he looks just past his father into the darkness of the night. It is as if he is looking into the past to a time that his father has just described.

ROBERT LINCOLN

There are a great many things I will forever wonder about father. The biggest thought would be of our relationship.

(Pause)

Being that you were on the road traveling the judicial circuit, I feel we never had the time to form many of the bonds you have with Tad.

Lincoln looks over at Robert as he pulls down on his reading glasses.

LINCOLN

There are a great many things that if God would now give me the opportunity, I would do different. My travels keeping me away during your formidable years would be one of them.

(Pause)

Perhaps I did not know what it was to be a father then, not knowing how to show love and affection.

(Pause)

Sadly, I only began to realize this after Eddie passed away. I think I then tried more with Willie in an attempt to make up for that. In turn I may have made you feel that you were not as important.

(Pause)

For that my son I am truly sorry. Never did I want you to feel as I cared for you any less.

Robert leans over and places both his elbows on his knees. Leaning over he looks into his fathers eyes.

ROBERT LINCOLN

Father I hold nothing against you. You did what you believed to be right. Difficult decisions had to be made and I truly believe you made the correct ones.

Lincoln looks over at his son as he hears these words.

LINCOLN

So you hold no grudge against me?

Robert struggles to tell his father what is truly inside him.

ROBERT LINCOLN

For a number of years I did feel I was less important in your eyes than my brothers. As I have grown, I now see that was not the case.

LINCOLN

I pray, my son, that you know all I have ever wanted was the best for you and have always felt nothing but love for you in my heart. You have become the man I always wanted you to be, independent and level headed.

(Pause)

Luckily you are taking after your mother.

Robert smiles as he shares the small joke from his father.

ROBERT LINCOLN

I think that my character traits I get from both you and mother, both good and bad.

(Pause)

Honestly,

(Pause)

I would have it no other way.

LINCOLN

I am afraid anything you would take from me my son, will cause you more heartache than anything. Many would say that I am difficult to get along with, especially if you ask your mother.

ROBERT LINCOLN

Father we all have traits we would change about ourselves, be more patient, understanding and the like. Having watched you for these many years and the difficulties you have faced and burdens you are forced to shoulder, if I grow into half the man that you have become,

(Pause)
 I will consider my life and my
 accomplishments well worth the
 effort.

Lincoln smiles as he hears the words of admiration from his
 oldest son.

LINCOLN
 I thank you so very much for your
 kind words. I only fear that being
 my son has doomed you to a life of
 criticism and scrutiny.

ROBERT LINCOLN
 Why would that be?

LINCOLN
 I want nothing more than for you to
 be your own man, following your own
 path, the one God has in store for
 you. Not the path left over from
 your father.

ROBERT LINCOLN
 God leads men in the direction he
 would have them to go. If my path
 starts as a result of one that you
 have started, I will do all that I
 can to honor that lead.

(Pause)
 In the end, I feel as if I will
 find my own path and God will guide
 me as he sees fit.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - LINCOLN'S STUDY - DAY

Lincoln smiles as he recalls that day with Robert.

LINCOLN
 I know I have not been as open
 about my affection with Robert as I
 have with my younger children. I
 have always loved him and been
 proud of him and the man he has
 become.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)
 (From the journal)
 It is all too easy to see the love
 he has for Robert. I also see the
 (MORE)

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO) (CONT)
regret. Regret for times that he
could not go back to and times he
could not make up for.

William sits and writes as Lincoln speaks. He pauses for a moment as he thinks of a question he wanted to ask.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)
(From the journal)
There was a question I had for him.
It was one I had pondered for some
time. Now that I am here, sitting
before him, I dare not let this
opportunity pass by.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON
Mr. President I have wondered
something for some time.

Lincoln looks up and smiles as if happy to hear this.

LINCOLN
You may ask me anything Mr.
Davidson.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON
I have heard that many of your
cabinet has criticized you for
taking a liberal approach with the
South and it's leaders now that the
War is at a conclusion. They feel
that punishments should be passed
down, up to and including hanging
for treason. You have refused to
impose such sanctions. Why is that?

Lincoln's face now shows a look of anger. His jaw tightens and clinches.

LINCOLN
Yes Mr. Davidson you are right.
There are many that feel as if I
have been to soft or to lenient.
One such example, one that holds a
special memory for me is from when
I visited Richmond just two days
after it was relinquished by the
Confederates.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. RICHMOND VIRGINIA- STREET - DAY

SUPER: "APRIL 1865"

We see Lincoln walking down the street. He is accompanied by his young son Tad. Lincoln is dressed in his usual attire a black suit, Tad wears a matching suit, smaller of course and a black cap covers his small head. Four Union soldiers armed with muskets walk on all four sides of the President as the group walks through the street. Also in the group is Admiral David Dixon Porter, Captain Penrose and bodyguard William Crook. As they walk, people stop and look at them. They are in awe that standing before them is President Lincoln. Many of the crowd are slaves that due to the Union occupation, are now free. They look at Lincoln with admiration and thanks. The group walk until they reach the steps of the Confederate White House. There they are met by General Godfrey Weitzel, General Thomas Devin and General George Shepley. Lincoln looks up at the building, he does not smile, he shows no happiness that the Union has beaten the Confederates from their capital. He only shows determination for what he has been and what he is doing.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFEDERATE WHITE HOUSE- JEFFERSON DAVIS' OFFICE - DAY

The room is in complete disarray. Papers are thrown about, chairs are turned from their appointed desks, some are lying on the floor on their backs. The bookshelves surrounding most of the room are half empty as if they had been stripped hurriedly of their contents. Lincoln slowly walks into the doorway of Davis' office and stops just short of entering the room. He sticks his head in and looks around the room slowly and deliberately. He then walks completely into the room and walks the entire perimeter, stopping behind Davis' desk. He reaches out, grabs the back of the chair and pulls it out. He walks around in front of the chair and slowly sits down. A look of peace comes over him.

LINCOLN

Could someone get me a glass of
water?

Upon his request, Admiral Porter turns to one of the Union officers who nods and leaves the room. Lincoln looks around, taking in the moment and knowing what has happened here just hours before. The soldier returns and hands Lincoln the glass of water.

LINCOLN

I am glad I lived to see this day.
 (Takes a drink from the glass)
 It's the beginning of the end.

Lincoln sits the glass of water down on the desk. General Weitzel turns and asks.

GENERAL WEITZEL

Mr. President. How would you have us treat the defeated Rebels.

Lincoln looks up at Weitzel with a look of absolute steadfastness.

LINCOLN

Let them up easy.

Lincoln sits back in the chair. He places his arms over the arms of the chair, he grips them tightly with his hands.

LINCOLN

We are to become a country again,
 (Pause)
 and Richmond is where we will start

CUT TO:

EXT. CONFEDERATE WHITE HOUSE- DAY

As the men exit the building, Lincoln turns to Admiral Porter.

LINCOLN

Admiral, do you know the location of General George Pickett's home?

PORTER

Yes sir I do. It is a short walk away.

Lincoln looks in the direction that Porter has described.

LINCOLN

Id like to visit it.

All the men turn and follow Porter as he leads the way.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOME OF GENERAL GEORGE PICKETT - DAY

It is a small home, whitewash siding, a small picket fence surrounds the front yard. A long front porch covers the full length of the front. The men congregate in the front just off the porch. Lincoln leaves the group and walks up onto the porch and to the front door. He knocks.

After a few seconds, a young woman comes to the door and stands just behind the closed screen door. It is Sally Pickett, wife of General George Pickett. She is carrying a small child in her arms.

LINCOLN
is this the home of George Pickett?

SALLY PICKETT
Yes it is. I am his wife and this
is his baby.

LINCOLN
I am Abraham Lincoln.

Sally's eyes open wide as she hears him introduce himself.

SALLY PICKETT
The President.

Lincoln smiles as he can see she is quite surprised.

LINCOLN
No, Abraham Lincoln
(Pause)
George's old friend.

Sally opens the screen door and walks out and onto the porch, standing just feet away from him. As she stands there, not knowing what to say, her baby starts to smile and coo at Lincoln. The child reaches out with both hands to Lincoln. Sally looks at the child and then at Lincoln. Lincoln reaches and picks up the child, holding it close to his chest. As he stood there, holding the child, a look of delight and absolute tenderness covered his face. The child then leaned in and places a wet kiss on the cheek of Lincoln. Lincoln closes his eyes and the child kissed him, smiled as if he had not smiled in years. He then handed the child back to his mother. Lincoln takes his index finger and shakes it playfully in the child's face.

LINCOLN
Tell your father, the rascal, I
forgive him for the sake of that
kiss and your bright eyes.

Lincoln tips his hat to his friends wife, turns and walks off the porch. He joins the group of men waiting in the front yard. All stand saying nothing. Lincoln is looking at Porter and Weitzel when he hears something just off into the distance. From just down the street the sound of a church bell is ringing. As the bell stops, the sound of the gospel hymn, "Amazing Grace" can be heard. Lincoln turns and looks in the direction of the singing. He sees a small church many yards off in the distance. It is beaten up and damaged from battle and from fire. There are twenty to thirty people walking into the church, two, three and sometimes four at a time. Upon seeing this, Lincoln turns and looks at Porter. Porter sees this and speaks.

PORTER

It is a funeral, Mr. President. One of the local Rebels is to be laid to rest today.

Without a moment of warning, Lincoln walks from the group and towards the church. As he makes it to the church steps, those who are standing there, walking up the steps, stop cold at the sight of the President. Lincoln stops for a second at the bottom of the stairs, looks up as if looking into the open double doors, then proceeds up the stairs and into the building.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Lincoln stands just inside the double doors of the church. The congregation is singing "Amazing Grace". We see the group of officers that were accompanying Lincoln enter and stand behind him. Lincoln stands there, looking around. In a small room off to the left, open to the sanctuary he sees a woman sitting in a chair just in front of and to the left of a casket that is draped with an Rebel flag. The woman is dressed in a black dress, face covered with a black veil. She is in her mid to late forties. She is crying and holding a handkerchief that she is using to wipe the tears from her eyes. The crowd has noticed that the President has entered and all singing has stopped. Only the organist still plays the song, the room is deathly silent except for the music. From behind Lincoln, Porter leans forward and whispers into the Presidents ear.

PORTER

It was her son, Mr. President.

Lincoln makes no acknowledgment of Porter's words. He walks slowly towards the small room. Standing in front of the

woman is a line of people, ten to twenty, waiting to pay their respects. Lincoln stands behind them, staring ahead, staring at the casket. The line of people stop and turn to see him standing there. All at once, they all separate, some to the left and some to the right. A open path is made from the President to the grieving mother sitting in front of her departed child. Lincoln ever so slowly, cautiously even, moves forward, his feet shuffle as if they do not want to move but must. A look of incredible pain covers his face, worse and worse with every step closer to his destination. Lincoln stands in front of the woman, still sitting in the chair. Her crying stops as she lifts her head and sees who it is that stands before her. The two look deep into each others eyes for what feels like an eternity. Suddenly a tear rolls down the right cheek of Lincolns' face. No sound can be heard but the organist still playing the hymn. Lincoln slowly and reverently places his right knee down on the ground in front of the woman, then slowly lowers his left knee. Now on both knees, he kneels in front of the woman, stares deep into her eyes and bows his head. She stares at the top of the Presidents head, no emotion for several seconds, then hears the sound of weeping coming from Lincoln. His head is visibly moving up and down as he weeps nearly uncontrollably. The woman reaches out and places her right hand on the top of Lincolns' head, she then leans her head forward, places it beside his in a mothering comforting way. The two cry together as the entire crowd looks on.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - LINCOLN'S STUDY - DAY

Lincoln sits in the darkened room as he thinks of that horrible event.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

Once again I see the pain so evident on his face. I dare not speak for I can think of nothing to say to ease his pain.

LINCOLN

I have no words to describe what it was I was feeling at that moment. I was so overcome with grief, more than I could ever convey.

Lincolns' hands still gripped the arms of the chair as they did before this story began.

LINCOLN

This young man was not a Southerner, a Northerner but an American. Every son, father or brother lost, is an American. We should make no distinction between any of them. We will again as we were once, a Union and we start this now.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I held my breath as his face goes cold and serious once more. His conviction was steadfast and true.

LINCOLN

I made my wishes clear and true. I wanted no revenge on the South, no avenging for their secession from the Union. The longer these feelings and hatreds lingered, the longer it would be until our Nation was whole again.

(Pause)

I have always found that mercy bears richer fruit than strict justice.

As he speaks, Lincoln stands up and begins to walk around the room.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

He walks, back and forth between the chair he had been sitting in and the table in front of me. His hands clasp together behind his back. Every time he turns and walks in the other direction, he looks at me, as if making sure I understand what it is he is trying to say.

LINCOLN

Just yesterday I gave an address from the balcony here. As I prepared to speak, I could feel the mood of the crowd as one of jubilation and celebration. Everyone had heard of the fall of Richmond and Petersburg. The atmosphere was one of victory, victory over our enemy.

(Pause)

Sadly for everyone present, I did not feel those defeated were our enemy, and I feel my speech was a disappointment to many who heard it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EXECUTIVE MANSION GROUNDS - NIGHT

SUPER: "April 11, 1865"

There is a large crowd gathered on the lawn of the Executive Mansion. Just ahead, in the background is the Mansion. The crowd is facing the building and looking up at the balcony. Lincoln reads from his prepared notes, as he finishes each page he drops them down onto the floor. Tad, his young son, sits on the floor at his fathers feet and grabs the pages as they fall. Lincoln is a little over half way into his speech at this point.

LINCOLN

We all agree that the seceded States, so called, are out of their proper relation with the Union; and that the sole object of the government, civil and military, in regard to those States is to again get them into that proper practical relation. I believe it is not only possible, but in fact, easier to do this, without deciding, or even considering, whether these States have ever been out of the Union, than with it. Finding themselves safely at home, it would be utterly immaterial whether they had ever been abroad. Let us all join in doing the acts necessary to restoring the proper practical relations between these States and the Union; and each forever after, innocently indulge his own opinion whether, in doing the acts, he brought the States from without, into the Union, or only gave them proper assistance, they never having been out of it.

The crowd that was at one time jubilant and cheering, now is more silent and reserved. We move around the crowd, from person to person, seeing the expressions on their faces.

LINCOLN (VO)

As I delivered the address, I could feel that the crowd had expected an uplifting speech declaring victory. Hearing me speak of forgiveness and bringing our Southern brothers and sisters back into our hearts with no recourse was more than I believe was expected. As I ended the speech I stayed and watched the crowd start to disperse. Many stood still and talked amongst themselves. I could only imagine what was being said.

The crowd slowly broke apart, two, three and more at a time. As we see this we see one man standing with his back to us, still staring up at the balcony. Over the next bit, all the people that remained have left but the man still stands motionless, staring up at the President. After the last person is gone, the man slowly turns and faces us. He is wearing an all black suit, a white shirt and a thin black tie. He wears a black bowler hat. His lips tighten under his dark black mustache. It is John Wilkes Booth.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION - LINCOLN'S STUDY - DAY

Lincoln sits, staring off into the distance.

LINCOLN

I feel that as this great conflict is coming to an end, we can finally begin on the road to reconstruction. Our Nation shall again be a Union. I do not know that it will ever be as it was, the "Old Union". Perhaps it is just as well. We will begin again as a "New Union". We will be stronger than before, more mindful of what we have and what we have lost. These brave men who have given all to the cause of freedom will enlighten the path for our future and our children's future. I pray that God will allow me the honor to see how it is we will proceed from this point. I hope that History will not hold any man accountable for what some may say was foolish or

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT)

wasteful. None of this is wasteful. Our Nation is worth the price we have been paid. My only prayer is that no one ever takes for granted what has been paid for with such a heavy price.

A sense of calm seems to come over Lincoln as these last words come. As if a weight has been lifted from him. William sees this, finishes what he is writing, and closes his journal.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I want nothing more but to stay and continue our meeting but I can see that he had told all he needed or wanted to. I have been honored beyond words that he had chosen to share with me these memories, these horrors that had haunted him these past years. To such a simple man as myself, being here, alone in this room, listening to him pour out his soul, spelling out all that he has shouldered was more than I could have possibly hoped for. As I put away my journal. I stand before him. Lincoln slowly and carefully stands and faces me. With a trembling hand, he reaches out to me, which I humbly excepted. I feel the strength in his hand as he grasps mine. Strength that has seen him through tragedy and heartache, triumph and victory.

William picks up his journal and writing instruments. He turns and begins to walk towards the door of the office.

The voice reading the journal transitions from William to Professor Davidson.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON/PROFESSOR DAVIDSON (VO)

(From the journal)

I turned from him and walked toward the door. As I approached it, I heard the lock as it turned. The door opened and standing there was the Chief Secretary. He stood there, holding the door open as I walked through. As I passed into

(MORE)

WILLIAM DAVIDSON/PROFESSOR DAVIDSON (VO) (CONT)
the hallway, I paused, turned and looked back into the office. Lincoln was sitting back in the chair. He stared down at the table in front of him and at the photos of his children. He leaned forward and picked up the drawing of Willie. He stared at it a moment then pulled it close to his chest. I shall never forget the last moment I saw him. He clutched the drawing of Willie so tightly that his hands turned pale white. He stared at the table, lost, somewhere else, as the door closed in front of me.

CUT TO:

INT. PROFESSOR DAVIDSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Professor Davidson continues to read from the journal.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON

(From the journal)

The chief Secretary led me out of the Mansion and out into the courtyard. Waiting for me there was my horse and buggy. As I turned my horse and began the long journey back to my beloved Harrisburg, I felt an uneasiness I could not explain. As I made the two day journey home, I contemplated the events of that day, all that he had shared, his sadness, his moments of pride, all that he carried and the small portion he shared with a small town reporter and farmer from Virginia. I arrived home late in the evening on April 16. As I entered town, I saw women crying and men standing in groups shaking their fists in anger. It was then that I learned of the Presidents death. Learning of this left a sadness in me that I know will never leave. I was blessed to have been one of the last to speak with him, to hear his words and to put it down on paper. Upon hearing of

(MORE)

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON (CONT)
 his death, I struggled to fill in more of our conversations that day in this journal. Knowing all too well the great honor I had been given and not wanting to forget a single detail.

As he reads, Professor Davidson adjusts his glasses. He peers over them and sees Mrs. Tuttle, sitting on the edge of her seat, listening just as attentive as when he began.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON
 (From the journal)
 I do not know what I will do with this treasure I now hold in my hand. Perhaps I will share it with all who will hear it. Perhaps I will hold it until the time comes that we, as a people, as a Nation, need to hear his words, his hopes and fears that drove him during the many hours and days of what has become our Nations darkest time. I do not know, perhaps God will guide me as to the correct course.

As Professor Davidson finishes reading the journal, he places each page one on top of the other and then places it face down on his desk. Both he and Mrs. Tuttle sit in silence, neither knowing what to say. Finally Professor Davidson speaks.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON
 I never knew. How could I have know how my Grandfather felt.
 (Pause)
 I should have known. I should have talked to him. I should not have allowed my own childish stubbornness to come between us. We could have shared so much more.
 (Pause)
 Now, it is to late.

MRS. TUTTLE
 Perhaps not Professor.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON
 What do you mean? My Grandfather is gone. Only after his death do I learn of why he felt so strongly of the very reason we drifted apart. I
 (MORE)

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON (CONT)
cant go back in time and tell him I
now understand.

MRS. TUTTLE
Even though you and your
Grandfather never mended the rift
between you, he wanted you to know
why he felt the way that he did.
This was his way of explaining it
to you. I think it was a very
fitting way as well.

Professor Davidson sits and thinks of the explanation Mary
has just given. As he does, a smile crosses his face.

He finally gets it.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON
You know something Mary, I think
your right.

Professor Davidson places his hand on the journal still
sitting on his desk.

PROFESSOR DAVIDSON
And what of this? What do you think
he would want me to do with this?

MRS. TUTTLE
Your Grandfather kept this journal
safe for so many years, and for a
purpose. It has fulfilled that
purpose now.
(Pause)
I think you know it now has a new
purpose.

Professor Davidson smiles at Mary as he does know what
should be done.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE - DAY

We are in the National Museum of American History. We slowly
move from room to room, fading in from exhibit to exhibit
until we reach a room showing many items from President
Lincoln and his contributions to the Nation. We move in and
see a wedge he used to split wood. We fade in on the top
hat that was worn the evening he was shot, we fade in and
out on several other items specific to Lincoln. Then we move

in ever so slowly to the back corner of the room, a glass enclosed case. There is an easel sitting in the middle of the case and on it is the journal of William Davidson, opened as if one is reading the words written so long ago. Sitting on the floor of the case, just below the journal, is a small plaque. Written on it is the words, "This journal belonged to William Nathaniel Davidson of Harrisburg Virginia, farmer and writer. Donated by Professor William N. Davidson, University of Illinois".

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH RICHMOND - DAY

SUPER: "RICHMOND VIRGINIA, June, 1865"

We see a small little church on the bank of a river. There is no one outside, only buggies and horses tied up around the front of the church. We hear a hymn playing in the background. Slowly we move in on the open doors of the sanctuary.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH - DAY

There is a church sermon rapping up. The congregation is divided with a aisle in the center of the room. On either side, sit the people, all dressed in their best Sunday clothes. In the very back right of the sanctuary is a small section, separated from the rest, this section is reserved for the colored members of the church. They to are dressed in their best cloths, although not nearly as nice as the white members.

The sermon has just been completed and the preacher is standing at the pulpit, Bible on hand, in the center of the room, facing the crowd. The organist is playing a hymn and everyone else is sitting patiently, waiting for the preacher to call on those who wish to take communion. From the very last row, all the way to the right of the building, sitting were no one had seen him, a lone black man stands up, turns and walks behind the last row of pews and to the center of the room. He then stands there for a second, looking straight ahead towards the preacher, who has, by this time seen him standing there. He then begins to walk, down the center aisle directly towards the preacher. As he walks, every person, black and white, turns and looks at the man. All are aghast and in complete shock. The organist, upon seeing the events, stops playing. Whispers can be heard as he walks closer and closer to the front of the church. As he

makes his way to the front, he passes the first row of pews and steps up to the communion rail, just feet away from the preacher. When he makes it there, he pauses, looks up at the preacher and kneels down. A loud gasp can be heard from the crowd as he does this, then silence. All sit motionless, not knowing what to do. After what seemed an eternity, from the center of the left side of the crowd, a man stands up and slowly makes his way past the seated people to his right. One by one the people move their legs so the man can make it past them. He soon makes it to the center aisle and turns towards the front, where the preacher stands and the black man is knelt. He is a white man, dressed in a tan suit three quarter length. He wears black riding boots up to his knees. His hair is a gray with a full gray beard. Tucked under his left arm is a gray wide brimmed hat with a tattered braided gold band rapped around it. He pauses briefly as he faces ahead. Slowly he begins to walk. As he makes his way forward, as he passes each person, their eyes widen in disbelief. We follow him from behind as he walks, never seeing his face, until he reaches the communion bench. Slowly we move around to the front of the man and up to his face.

It is Robert E. Lee.

Lee kneels down on the bench beside the black man. Silence still fills the room. Lee never looks to the black man, only sits as if waiting for the preacher to begin their communion. After a few seconds without this beginning, Lee raises his head looks at the preacher. He never speaks, never raises an eye or even tilts his head. The preacher looks into Lee's eyes for just a second. He then opens his Bible to the marked page and begins to read. As both men kneel there, side by side, taking their communion together, the rest of the congregation begin to join them at the front, one at a time, then two, a family of four, until all the church members have formed a line behind them, following the example of these two brave men.

We move away, leaving them in the distance. We move back and out the doors of the church. We continue moving backwards as the church building itself becomes smaller, fading off into the distance.

FADE OUT:

THE END

(MORE)

