

HUNTING BOOTH

EPISODE 1

"THE HUNT BEGINS"

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The Civil War ends in 1865 after 4 years of fighting. Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrenders to Union General Ulysses S. Grant.

To celebrate the Union's victory President Abraham Lincoln and his wife, Mary, decide to enjoy an evening together.

On Good Friday, April 14, the Lincolns attend a comedy play at Ford's Theatre in Washington D.C to laugh and relax.

10:15 p.m.

TEASER

OVER BLACK we hear two VOICES reciting lines from the comedy, *Our American Cousin*. Laughter from an AUDIENCE. We hear professional actor:

HARRY HAWK (V.O.)
"...you sockdologizing old mantrap!"

Uproarious laughter. Then a **GUN BLAST!**

CUT TO:

INT. FORD'S THEATRE, VARIOUS AREAS - NIGHT

PRESIDENTIAL BOX

OPEN ON: ABRAHAM LINCOLN shot in the head. Hunching over. Next to him, MARY LINCOLN (46, sensitive, perfectionist, socially inept) turning to see:

REVEAL: JOHN WILKES BOOTH (26, racist, intelligent, very theatrical). Etched on his face -- hatred.

CLOSE ON: Smoke seeping from the gun's barrel.

Mary screams - snapping Booth out of a trance. Next to Mary, MAJOR HENRY RATHBONE (27, pretentious, selfish) and his fiancé CLARA HARRIS (30, sweet yet gullible). Major Rathbone lunges at Booth.

The scrawny little actor with quick reflexes wiggles out of Rathbone's grips. Dropping the gun, Booth reaches into his coat and pulls a **KNIFE**. They struggle. Booth slashes Major Rathbone's arm then climbing the balcony rail - nearly slips.

BOOTH'S P.O.V.: Harry Hawk on the stage staring back.

Booth leaps 12 feet. Lands on the stage. His leg cracks. He clutches it.

AUDITORIUM SEATS

COLONEL LAFAYETTE C. BAKER -- our soon to be hero -- (35, trained spy, fearless yet humble, and head of the National Detective Police - a pre-cursor to the Secret Service).

Next to him - his wife NICOLE (33, snarky, compassionate) grabs her pregnant belly. Lafayette is protective:

LAFAYETTE

Stay down.

NICOLE

What's happening?

STAGE

Booth stammers painfully into a dominating stance. Turning to the audience with a bloody knife in hand:

BOOTH

Sic Semper Tyrannis!
Thus always to tyrants!

He escapes, shoving Harry Hawk and disappearing backstage. Harry Hawk - speechless. Doesn't chase Booth.

PRESIDENTIAL BOX

Rathbone calling for help over the railing:

MAJOR RATHBONE

Somebody stop him!
He shot the president!

AUDITORIUM SEATS

Colonel Lafayette pounces to the stage overturning wooden chairs on the theatre's floor. Nicole heaves a deep breath. Clutches her belly.

STAGE

HARRY HAWK'S P.O.V.: Lafayette charging at him.

The audience frantically pours into main aisles. Chaos!

CUT TO:

EXT. FORD'S THEATRE ALLEY - NIGHT

A quiet alley behind the theatre. John Wilkes Booth limps through a backdoor. He calls to a teen holding his horse:

BOOTH

Peanut! Peanut!

PEANUT (17, dopey) pokes his head around a saddled horse.

PEANUT
Need somethun' Mr. Booth?

BOOTH
Bring my horse! Hurry!

Just as Peanut approaches Booth, Colonel Lafayette bursts through the backdoor.

BOOTH (CONT'D)
Help me mount! I've hurt my leg.

PEANUT
What happened?

BOOTH
Never mind you. Help me!

LAFAYETTE
Young man! Stop him!

Peanut intervenes with Lafayette:

PEANUT
Soldier, why are you chasing him?
Don't you know who he is?

Lafayette grabs the saddle's billet strap. If he gets his other hand to grab hold then he can stop Booth. Suddenly -- knife slashes Lafayette's hand.

The horse bolts. Lafayette pulls a revolver from his holster and takes aim. Peanut intervenes. A scuffle ensues. Lafayette wins. Aims his gun again.

FIRES. MISSES.

Booth escapes down the alley and disappears around a corner. Lafayette chases after him by foot.

EXT. 10TH STREET/CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

Booth zooms past a horse-drawn carriage. Lafayette leaps onto the carriage and shoving the driver aside:

LAFAYETTE
I'm with the National Detective
Police. I'm commandeering this
carriage.

EXT. CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

Lafayette in the driver's seat - looks back. An OLDER COUPLE dressed for a fine evening, both poking their head out of the carriage windows. Lafayette takes the reins. Hollars. The horses take off and the Older Couple fly into their seats.

EXT. 10TH STREET - CONTINUOUS

Booth still on his horse heads towards a street party.

EXT. CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

Lafayette zoned in on Booth - now about 50 yards ahead.

EXT. 9TH STREET - CONTINUOUS

Booth reaches the street party on 9th Street. CITIZENS of various ages and ethnicities drink and dance. Union flags decorate nearby buildings. Booth is disgusted. He slides off his horse and blends into the crowd.

He swipes a DRUNK MAN'S hat. DRUNK WOMAN dances with a Union Flag draped like a cape. She spins around him. Booth charmingly holds onto the Union Flag and pushes Drunk Woman away. With the flag in hand, he wraps it around his body.

EXT. 9TH STREET - CONTINUOUS

Lafayette screeches the carriage to a halt. He stands up searching the street party. The Older Couple immediately burst from the carriage and run. The Driver shrugs.

Lafayette scans the crowd again. No sight of Booth.

EXT. STREET, ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Booth pulls off the flag, rips it. Stomps on it. Takes off the hat and fixes his hair. Then he steps into the shadows.

CUT TO:

TITLE:

Hunting Booth

END TEASER