THE DEPLORABLE

a history play
by seamus miller

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THE COMPANY

Actor 1: BIPOC, portrays male characters, plays SGT. AQUILINO GONELL and STONEWALL JACKSON.
Actor 2: Portrays male characters, plays THOMAS PAINE, SGT. MICHAEL FANONE, and RIOTER.
Actor 3: Portrays male characters, plays JOHN BROWN, TECH CEO, and RIOT GEAR OFFICER.
Actor 4: Black, portrays male characters, plays BEN FRANKLIN, OFFICER HARRY DUNN, and JOHN LEWIS.
Actor 5: Portrays female and male characters, plays NATHANIEL BURROWS, MAGA WOMAN, WIDOW, and JOHN WILKES BOOTH.
Actor 6: Portrays female and male characters, plays SINGER, COLLINS, and WALT WHITMAN.
Actor 7: This actor plays ABRAHAM LINCOLN and only appears on the last page of the play. It is fine–and in fact preferable–if this actor bears no resemblance whatsoever to Abraham Lincoln. They wear street clothes and enter from the audience. It can be a different individual every night, provided that they have rehearsed with the production team and memorized the Gettysburg Address (e.g. this role could be played on Friday night by the Lighting Designer, on Saturday by one of the understudies, on Sunday by the Director, and so on).

NOTES ON THE TEXT

1. Before reading–or alongside reading–this piece, I strongly recommend watching the full video of the officers' testimony, which is available publicly online (Watch Here).
2. This piece includes descriptions and presentations of extreme political and racial violence. I believe, in concordance with Officer Fanone's testimony, that it is vitally important for Americans to engage with these materials, however difficult they may be. This show is designed for an adult audience.
3. This piece blends fictional inventions with actual remarks from the historical record. The officers' testimonies are abridged in some cases but are otherwise presented word-for-word (the same is true for the Collins CNN interview, and various quotations of historical figures). Any resemblances to other living persons are purely coincidental.
4. The two songs in the play, "John Brown's Body" (Listen Here), and "Get Off The Tracks" (Listen Here) are both in the public domain.

THE DEPLORABLE

Darkness.

VOICE (ACTOR 3): “These are the times that try men's souls.”
VOICE (ACTOR 4): “He that would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression.”
VOICE (ACTOR 5): "The cause of America is, in a great measure, the cause of all mankind."

A tiny beat.

VOICE (ACTOR 1): Part one.

Lights reveal THOMAS PAINE. He speaks to the audience.

PAINE: Only six people came to my funeral.

FRANKLIN: You were lucky to get six.

PAINE: Shut up, Ben Franklin.

FRANKLIN *(To the audience*): Benjamin Franklin, pleasure’s all mine. *(To PAINE)* I warned you, Thomas. Not to publish–

PAINE: Don’t start with me.

FRANKLIN: “He that spits against the wind–

PAINE & FRANKLIN: “--spits in his own face.”

FRANKLIN (*Delighted*): You remember!

PAINE: I remember! I invented their goddamn democracy–and I told them the truth!

FRANKLIN (*Drily*): Well they didn't like it. *(Reading a letter)* "I would advise you, therefore, not to attempt unchaining the tiger, but to burn this piece before it is seen by any other person; whereby you will save yourself a great deal of mortification by the enemies it may raise against you, and perhaps a good deal of regret and repentance. If men are so wicked with religion, what would they be if without it? Simply yours, B. Franklin."

(Beat.)

PAINE: Is he here?

FRANKLIN: Here?

PAINE: Here!

FRANKLIN: Who?

PAINE: The dead boy!

FRANKLIN: Oh, yes! I mean, no, he's not, but yes, I know e*xactly* who you mean. Our delayed arrival.

PAINE: Well go get him.

FRANKLIN: If you're in such a bloody hurry, *you* go get him, you godless bastard.

PAINE: Ben. He's waited long enough.

FRANKLIN: Fine, I'll fetch him. Why don't you give them a taste.

PAINE: Of my godlessness?

FRANKLIN (*Going*): Mhm!

PAINE (*Suddenly and strangely orating to the audience. Over the course of his remarks, he becomes more and more animated and isolated*): "Our traders in men–an unnatural commodity!--must know the wickedness of that slave trade. Certainly one may, with as much reason and decency, plead for murder, robbery, lewdness, and barbarity as for this practice. Christians are taught to account all men their neighbors, and love their neighbors as themselves, and do to all men as they would be done by, to do good to all men; and manstealing is ranked with enormous crimes. Is the barbarous enslaving our inoffensive neighbors, and treating them like wild beasts subdued by force, reconcilable with all these divine precepts? Is this doing to them as we would desire they should do to us? If they could carry off and enslave some thousands of us, would we think it just? One would almost wish they could for once; it might convince more than reason or the Bible."

FRANKLIN reenters with a soldier from the American Revolution, NATHANIEL BURROWS.

FRANKLIN: Allow me to present, um…

NATHANIEL: Nathaniel Burrows. Third Regiment, Continental Army. It's an honor to meet you, sir.

PAINE: *(Offering his hand)* Thomas Paine.

NATHANIEL: I know who you are, sir–I had *Common Sense* in my breast pocket when I, when–it was–right when–

NATHANIEL is oddly unable to express himself.

FRANKLIN: He got shot in the neck. He's not supposed to talk about it.

NATHANIEL: They said I could meet you, Mr. Paine. They said I crossed over with your words upon my heart. And that, perhaps, I could hear you speak.

FRANKLIN: What is this, the fucking Make a Wish Foundation?

PAINE: Shut up, Ben Franklin.

FRANKLIN (to NATHANIEL): Benjamin Franklin, pleasure's all mine.

NATHANIEL: I'm very confused… I'm sorry, I should go.

PAINE: No, no, stay. (*To Franklin*) Leave us.

FRANKLIN: As you wish. (*Singing, as he goes, to the tune of "Edelweiss"*) Booze and whores, booze and whores, off to find some booze and whores…

PAINE: What's the matter?

NATHANIEL is avoiding the audience's gaze.

NATHANIEL: I'm sorry, it's them, sir, I–I don't like them, or, I don't know what to make of them. I wish they would stop looking at me.

PAINE (*Gesturing at the Audience*): Who, them?

NATHANIEL: Yes, sir.

PAINE smiles..

NATHANIEL: I was told that they would ask lots of questions about being dead, what it's like, but that I mustn't indulge in such talk, and, if pressed, I must only give a *hypothetical account* of the experience.

PAINE: Who gave you this advice?

NATHANIEL: Someone from their time. Someone more recently–

PAINE: Recently arrived.

NATHANIEL: Yes, sir.

PAINE: And did this person offer a "hypothetical account" that might adequately speak to our guests?

NATHANIEL: They did, but I'm afraid I don't understand it.

PAINE: Well, go on, out with it.

NATHANIEL: They said, "You can die for the right to vote–but your descendants will just give it away, like it's nothing, like they're giving up their turn at karaoke. And the only thing you can do here is to witness the departure of that freedom, like sand slipping through the fingers of apathy and entitlement. So hard to gain, but so easy to lose."

PAINE: I see.

NATHANIEL: And, again, I don't really know what that means. Especially karaoke.

PAINE: It is... not inaccurate.

NATHANIEL: I fought really hard. For freedom. I promise. I really tried.

PAINE is caught off guard by NATHANIEL's vulnerable sincerity. Maybe he awkwardly hugs NATHANIEL.

PAINE: Oh, um, I know–I know you did.

NATHANIEL: And I can't imagine... just letting it go.

PAINE: It's okay.

NATHNANIEL: Did we get it?

PAINE: What?

NATHANIEL: Did we win?

PAINE: Oh–oh my god, did they not–did nobody? Yes. Yes, we–you won.

NATHANIEL: We won?

PAINE: Yes.

NATHANIEL starts crying. PAINE is like, very not equipped for this.

NATHANIEL: I'm sorry. I was so scared to ask.

NATHANIEL collects himself a little.

NATHANIEL: I was hoping, if it's not too much–that you could read some of this–every soldier in the regiment has it memorized, almost, and the ones who can't read, well, they listen to... They listened to me read it. I thought, perhaps, you could–

NATHANIEL produces a bloody pamphlet of "Common Sense." PAINE does not want to touch it.

PAINE: Do you know why Mr. Franklin is so upset with me?

NATHANIEL: No, sir.

PAINE: *The Age of Reason?*

NATHANIEL: Reason is... very old, sir.

PAINE: No–No–it's a pamphlet, I wrote it–

NATHANIEL: That... might have been after my time, sir.

PAINE: Ah, of course. Sit. Please sit.

They sit together, facing the audience.

PAINE: "My own mind is my own church." After the war. After everything... I had one more thing to say. It ruined me, but I said it. That God was not to be found in preachers and prophets, but in nature, in reason, in human goodness. I raged against false prophets and golden idols. I could find more of God in a bluebird than the Pope.

NATHANIEL: So you... you don't believe in...?

PAINE: Jesus. I believe he was a man. A good man. You, perhaps, believe he was the son of God.

NATHANIEL nods vigorously.

PAINE: Ah. Let us, then, suppose you are right. That this man, son of God, spends thirty-three years worth of sermons expressing a radical but very simple idea.

PAINE stands back up on a box (or something).

PAINE (*proclaiming, as Jesus Christ*): "You have to care about poor people. You have to care about poor people! Not a little bit, not later–a whole lot, right now–YOU HAVE. TO CARE. ABOUT POOR PEOPLE."

To which the Romans said, "Thanks for the suggestions, really great stuff, we are absolutely gonna murder you."

And they did. And while they did, Jesus said unto his disciples, "I will give thee hundreds–nay, thousands!--of years to work on this *one thing* which I have imparted to you, and then, *I am coming back to check on your progress*."

Bearing this in mind, his followers set out upon this important work, saying, "We must strive to complete this task that Jesus has set before us. What was it again? Oh yes–to ferret out the homosexuals! Furthermore, we shall establish kings and popes to rule over other men, and, in all things, we shall throw the poor into the fires of famine, prison, ignorance, and neglect."

What would your Jesus say upon his return?

"Good job?"

NATHANIEL: Probably not.

PAINE: Probably not.

NATHANIEL: Is that why you only had six people at your fun–

PAINE (*Yelling towards offstage*): FRANKLIN YOU BASTARD! Must you insist on distributing my indignities to the masses?! (*He stops. To*

NATHANIEL) Apologies. My manners are often the victim of my convictions.

NATHANIEL holds out the pamphlet again. PAINE just looks at it.

PAINE: "A thirst for absolute power is the natural disease of monarchy." (*A beat, then suddenly*) You read it.

NATHANIEL: Sir?

PAINE: The other soldiers, you said they listen to you. You read it.

NATHANIEL is skeptical.

PAINE: Go on! Up you go!

NATHANIEL stands on the box. At first, he is nervous and primarily reading the document. By the end, he is off-book, completely transformed–a force of nature. As his convictions grow, a small crowd assembles around him, eventually including a moderately drunk BEN FRANKLIN.

NATHANIEL: Where there are no distinctions there can be no superiority, perfect equality affords no temptation. Men who look upon themselves born to reign, and others to obey, soon grow insolent. Selected from the rest of mankind, their minds are early poisoned by importance; and the world they act in differs so materially from the world at large, that they have but little opportunity of knowing its true interests, and when they succeed to the government are frequently the most ignorant and unfit of any throughout the dominions.

It is the good fortune of many to live distant from the scene of present sorrow; the evil is not sufficiently brought to their doors to make them feel the precariousness with which all American property is possessed. But let our imaginations transport us a few moments to Boston; that seat of wretchedness will teach us wisdom, and instruct us

for ever to renounce a power in whom we can have no trust. The inhabitants of that unfortunate city who but a few months ago were in ease and affluence, have now no other alternative than to stay and starve, or turn out to beg.

If you say you can still pass the violations over, then I ask, hath your house been burnt? Hath your property been destroyed before your face? Are your wife and children destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on? Have you lost a parent or a child by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If you have not, then are you not a judge of those who have. But if you have, and can still shake hands with the murderers, then are you unworthy the name of husband, father, friend or lover, and whatever may be your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward, and the spirit of a sycophant!

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe! Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart! O! RECEIVE THE FUGITIVE! AND PREPARE IN TIME AN ASYLUM FOR MANKIND!

The crowd exclaims forcefully! They erupt into a percussive rendition of "Get Off The Tracks." (While these lyrics feel somewhat dated and awkward on the page, using heavy percussion and a very fast tempo makes it effective). The crowd holds protest signs from many different eras of American history. A suggested assortment might be: "VOTES FOR WOMEN" + "I CAN'T BREATHE" + "JIM CROW MUST GO" + "MY SON WAS KILLED IN VIETNAM – WHAT FOR?"

SINGER
Ho! the Car Emancipation,
Rides majestic thro' our nation,
Bearing on its Train, the story,
Liberty, A Nation's Glory.
COMPANY

Roll it along! Roll it along! Roll it along!
Thro's the Nation! Freedom's Car, Emancipation,
Roll it along! Roll it along!
Roll it along, thro' the Nation,
Freedom's Car. Emancipation!
Sound the alarm! Hear the thunder!
Ere too late, you see your blunder.

SINGER

Politicians gazed, astounded,
When at first our Bell resounded;
Freight trains are coming, tell these Foxes,
With our Votes and Ballot Boxes!

COMPANY

Jump for your lives! Politicians,
From your dangerous false positions.
Roll it along, Roll it along, Roll it along,
thro's the Nation Freedom's Car, Emancipation,
Roll it along! Roll it along!
Roll it along, thro' the Nation,
Freedom's Car–Emancipation!

Sound. They suddenly disappear. A massive and almost instantaneous shift. U.S. Capitol Police Sergeant AQUILINO GONELL sits at a desk. He has prepared remarks, but he does not really need to read them. He speaks with a Dominican accent. He cries through much of the testimony but you can barely see it. He only stops once.

GONELL: Chairman Thompson and Members of the Select Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. It is with honor, and a heavy heart, that I come before you to tell you my story, from painful, first-hand experience, of what happened that terrible day at the Capitol. I am providing this testimony solely in my personal capacity, and not as a representative of the U.S. Capitol Police.

It is imperative that the events of January 6 are fully investigated, that Congress and the American people know the truth of what actually occurred, and that all those responsible are held accountable, particularly to ensure this horrific and shameful event in our history never repeats itself. I applaud you for pursuing this objective.

Even though there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary, including hours and hours of video and photographic coverage, there is a continuous and shocking attempt to ignore or try to destroy the truth of what truly happened that day, and to whitewash the facts into something other than what they unmistakably reveal: An attack on our democracy by violent domestic extremists, and a stain on our history and our moral standing here at home and abroad.

As a child in the Dominican Republic, I looked up to the United States as a land of opportunity and a place to better myself. From the moment I landed at JFK airport in 1992, I have strived to pursue that goal. Thankfully, I have achieved that goal on many levels: I was the first in my family to graduate college, join the U.S. Army, and become a police officer.

On July 23, 1999, the day before my 21st birthday, I raised my hand to give back to the country that gave me an opportunity to be anything I wanted. At the time, I had already started basic training with the Army Reserve. In fact, I have raised my hand several times in ceremonies to pledge my commitment to “Defend and Protect the Constitution of the United States”: when I joined the Army Reserves, when I was promoted to Sergeant while in the Army, during my naturalization ceremony, when I reenlisted in the Army, when I joined the United States Capitol Police, and lastly when I was promoted to sergeant in the U.S. Capitol Police 3 years ago. I have always taken my Oath seriously.

On January 6, 2021, I fulfilled my oath once more: this time, to defend the United States Capitol and Members of Congress carrying out their Constitutional duties to certify the results of the November 2020 presidential election.

To be honest, I did not recognize my fellow citizens who stormed the Capitol on January 6, or the United States they claimed to represent. When I was 25, and then a sergeant in the Army, I had deployed to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom. From time-to-time, I volunteered to travel on IED-infested roads to conduct supply missions for U.S. and allied military forces and local Iraqi populations. But on January 6, for the first time, I was more afraid working at the Capitol than during my entire Army deployment to Iraq. In Iraq, we expected armed violence, because we were in a war zone. But nothing in my experience in the Army, or as a law enforcement officer, prepared me for what we confronted on January 6.

The verbal assaults and disrespect we endured from the rioters were bad enough. I was falsely accused of betraying my oath and of choosing my "paycheck" over my loyalty to the U.S. Constitution – even as I defended the very democratic process that protected everyone in that hostile crowd. While I was on the Lower West Terrace at the Capitol, working with my fellow officers to prevent a breach and restore order, the rioters called me a "traitor," a "disgrace," and shouted that I (an Army veteran and police officer) should be "executed". Some of the rioters had the audacity to tell me that it was "nothing personal," that they would "go through" us to achieve their goals as they were breaking metal barriers to use as weapons against us. Others used more menacing language: "If you shoot us, we all have weapons, and we will shoot back", or "we will get our guns". "We outnumber you, join us," they said. I also heard specific threats on the lives of Speaker Nancy Pelosi and then-Vice President Mike Pence.

The physical violence we experienced was horrific and devastating. My fellow officers and I were punched, pushed, kicked, shoved, sprayed with chemical irritants, and even blinded with eye-damaging lasers by a violent mob who apparently saw us law enforcement officers, dedicated to, ironically, protecting *them* as U.S. citizens, as an impediment in their attempted insurrection. The mob brought weapons to try to accomplish their insurrectionist objectives, and they used them against us. These weapons included hammers, rebars, knives, batons and police shields

taken by force, as well as bear spray and pepper spray. Some rioters wore tactical gear, including bulletproof vests and gas masks. The rioters also forcibly took our batons and shields and used them against us. I was particularly shocked at seeing the insurrectionists violently attack us with the very American flag they claimed they sought to protect. Based on the coordinated tactics we observed and verbal commands we heard, it appeared that many of the attackers had law enforcement or military experience.

The rioters were vicious and relentless. We found ourselves in a violent battle in a desperate attempt to prevent a breach of the Capitol by the entrance near the Inauguration Stage. Metropolitan DC Police officers were being pulled into the crowd–we have one of them right here, next to me–as we tried to push all the rioters back from breaching the Capitol. In my attempt to assist two MPD officers, I grabbed one officer by the back of the collar and pulled him back to our police line. When I tried to help the second officer, I fell on top of some police shields on the ground that were slippery because of the pepper and bear spray. Rioters started to pull me by my leg, by my shield, and by my gear straps on my left shoulder. My survival instincts kicked in and I started kicking and punching as I tried in vain to get the MPD officers' attention behind and above me. But they could not help me because they were also being attacked. I finally was able to hit a rioter who was grabbing me with my baton and able to stand. I then continued to fend off new attackers as they kept rotating after attacking us.

What we were subjected to that day was like something from a medieval battlefield. We fought hand-to-hand and inch-by-inch to prevent an invasion of the Capitol by a violent mob intent on subverting our democratic process. My fellow officers and I were committed to not letting any rioters breach the Capitol. It was a prolonged and desperate struggle. The rioters who were attempting to breach the capitol were shouting, "Trump sent us! Pick the right side! We want Trump." I vividly heard another officer screaming in agony and pain just an arms-length from me. He's here today to testify.

I, too, was being crushed by the rioters. I could feel myself losing oxygen and recall thinking to myself "this is how I'm going to die, trampled defending this entrance." Many of the officers fighting alongside me were calling for shields, because their shields had been stripped from them by the rioters. I was one of the few officers left with a shield, so I spent the majority of the time at the front of the line .

I later found out that my wife and relatives here in the U.S and abroad were frantically calling and texting me from 2:00 pm onwards because they were watching the turmoil live on television. But it was not until around 4:26 pm, after giving CPR to one of the rioters who breached the Capitol in an effort to save her life, that I finally had a chance to let my own family know that I was alive.

After order finally had been restored at the Capitol and after many exhausting hours, I arrived home at nearly 4:00 am on January 7. I had to push away my wife from hugging me–

I'm sorry.

GONELL wipes a tear from one of his eyes.

Hugging me, because of all the chemicals that covered my body. I couldn't sleep because the chemicals reactivated after I took a shower, and my skin was still burning. I finally fell asleep two hours later, completely physically and mentally exhausted. Yet by 8:00 am that day I was already on my way back to the Capitol, and I continued to work for 15 consecutive days until after the Inauguration. I made sure to work despite my injuries because I wanted to continue doing my job and help secure the Capitol complex. Six months later, I am still trying to recover from my injuries.

Many of my fellow Capitol Police officers, as well as MPD officers, suffered terrible physical injuries from the violence inflicted on us on January 6. I sustained injuries to both of my hands, my left shoulder, my left calf, and my right foot. I have already undergone fusion surgery on my foot, and I was just told that I need surgery on my left shoulder. I

have been on medical and administrative leave for much of the past six months, and I expect to need further rehabilitation for possibly more than a year.

Despite being outnumbered, we did our job. Every Member of the House of Representatives, Senator, and staff member made it home safely. Sadly, as a result of that day, we lost officers - some really good officers. But we held the line to protect our democratic process, and because the alternative would have been a disaster. We are not asking for medals or even recognition. We simply want accountability and justice.

For most people, January 6 happened for a few hours. But for those of us who were in the thick of it, it has not ended. That day continues to be a constant trauma for us literally every day, whether because of our physical or emotional injuries, or both. I could have lost my life that day, not once, but many times. But as soon as I recover from my injuries I will continue forward and proudly serve my country and the U.S. Capitol Police. As an immigrant to the United States, I am especially proud to have defended the U.S. Constitution and our democracy on January 6. I hope that everyone in a position of authority in our country has the courage and conviction to do their part by investigating what happened on that terrible day, and why.

As America and the world watched in horror what was happening to us at the Capitol, we did not receive the timely reinforcements and support we needed. In contrast, during the Black Lives Matter protest last year, U.S. Capitol Police had all the support we needed and more. Why the different response? There are some who expressed outrage when someone simply kneeled for social justice during the national anthem. Where are those same people expressing outrage to condemn the violent attack on law enforcement officers, the U.S. Capitol, and our American democracy?

I’m still waiting for them.

Enter MAGA WOMAN. She lies down on the desk and speaks to the audience. Throughout her monologue, GONELL does CPR on her. She does not acknowledge this.

MAGA WOMAN: First they thought that I was trampled to death, but then it turned out to be an amphetamine overdose. And, to be honest, everything that went down at the Capitol… I don't know. It made a lot more sense if you were on meth.

Anyway, I just need to get my paper signed. I don't mean to bum you out but like, when you die, there is a fuckton of paperwork. And like, re-education bullshit, like we're in fucking *China* or something. And my RIGHTS to my OPINIONS are like, NOTHING here. So yeah, I need one of you to sign this thing. Oh, I'm supposed to read it.

"I understand that Donald Trump has presented zero credible evidence of fraud in the 2020 election."

So, like, yes, fine, yes, I understand, and like, *maybe,* I guess maybe knowing that would have made a difference and I would have, like… Not been there, doing all that.

(Suddenly looking at Gonell) Could you stop touching me??

GONELL does not hear her, but stands as if to say, "We have to stop compressions, she's gone," and walks away, his head in his hands.

MAGA WOMAN: So, anyway, I'm sorry and shit. Can you sign this? I need a witness.

She gets up and gets an audience member to sign it. If individuals refuse, she says things like "Okay well fuck you too."

MAGA WOMAN: Thanks. *(She starts to go, then stops)* Okay, but like why would he say that? Like if it wasn't true, about the election, like, why would he say that? Cause there's things that he can't tell us, like deep, deep state secret shit, and like, if he says it was stolen–I'm just

saying, we don't *know.* Maybe it was stolen, because why else, like… Why would he say that?

> *Enter BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. Maybe he is drunk, maybe he is having a PTSD episode or a psychotic break, but either way, he is rather upset.*

BEN FRANKLIN: BECAUSE HE'S LYING TO YOU! HE'S FUCKING LYING TO YOU! FUCK! JESUS FUCKING–WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH–HE'S A FUCKING LIAR! HE'S THE MOST WELL-DOCUMENTED LIAR IN HUMAN FUCKING HISTORY GODDAMN MOTHERFUCKITY-FUCK-FUCK!! HE HAS THIRTY-FOUR FELONY CONVICTIONS! READ A FUCKING BOOK! GET OFF INTERNET! PUT IDEA! INSIDE BRAIN! AHHH!!!

> *He slams a book into his face three times and then throws it at her.*

BEN FRANKLIN: FUCK!

> *THOMAS PAINE runs onstage and struggles to contain BEN. They overlap with each other.*

PAINE: Whoa-whoa-whoa-whoa! Ben. Ben! Listen to me! /

BEN FRANKLIN: DO NOT TELL ME TO BE NICE! I'M DONE BEING NICE ABOUT THIS. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?! /

PAINE: Ben! You are having an episode! I need you to breathe. Breathe with me! Deep relaxing breaths!

BEN FRANKLIN: I HATE RELAXING BREATHS! WHY THE FUCK DO WE PUT UP WITH THIS NONSENSE? /

PAINE: Inhale two and three and four and exhale two and three and four–/

BEN FRANKLIN: HOW COME ONLY THEY GET TO HAVE A RIOT?! I WANNA RIOT. WHERE'S MY RIOT, TOM?! WHERE'S MY RIOT?!

BEN starts to calm down. He and TOM are forehead to forehead.

PAINE: I've gotchu, I've gotchu. You're okay, brother. You're okay.

BEN FRANKLIN: Where's my riot...

PAINE: If you want to say something to her, you can say it *calmly*.

BEN FRANKLIN: Calmly.

He collects himself and looks at the MAGA WOMAN, who is staring at him.

BEN FRANKLIN: *(calmly)* Are you stupid, or selfish, or both?

This hangs in the air for a moment.

MAGA WOMAN: Fuck you, Ben Franklin.

She leaves.

PAINE: You okay?

BEN FRANKLIN: I hate that question. Just do the John Brown thing.

He exits. PAINE looks at the audience.

PAINE: Part two.

In the darkness, hauntingly under-tempo:

SINGER:
He captured Harper's Ferry with his nineteen men so true
He frightened old Virginia till she trembled through and through
They hung him for a traitor, they themselves the traitor crew,
His soul is marching on...

Lights arrive on JOHN BROWN. He speaks to the audience from on top of a box, with a noose around his neck. He is a fearsome man–alarmingly unafraid of his present circumstances.

BROWN: I have a few words to say. In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted — the design on my part to free the slaves.

Last winter, I went into Missouri and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moved them through the country, and finally left them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again, on a larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite slaves to rebellion or to make insurrection.

I have another objection; and that is, it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner which I admit–and which I admit has been fairly proved— had I so interfered in behalf of the *rich*, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends — either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class— and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right. And every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be the bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me further, to "remember them that are in bonds as if bound with them." I endeavored to act upon that instruction. I believe that to have interfered as I have done — as I have always freely admitted I have done — in behalf of his despised poor, was not wrong, but right.

Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments — I submit! SO LET IT BE DONE!

There is the sound of a body dropping, a neck snapping. BROWN slowly removes the noose.

BROWN: There were some strange persons at my hanging.

Three men face the audience. From left to right, they are STONEWALL JACKSON, WALT WHITMAN, and JOHN WILKES BOOTH.

STONEWALL: Stonewall Jackson.

WHITMAN: Walt Whitman.

BOOTH: John Wilkes Booth.

STONEWALL (*to BOOTH*): No one knows who the fuck you are yet.

BROWN (to the audience): I did not invite them, but they were all there. December 2nd, 1859. Stonewall, Whitman, Booth.

STONEWALL (*to BOOTH*): No one knows who the fuck you are yet.

WHITMAN (*to STONEWALL, about BOOTH*): He's an actor.

STONEWALL: Shut up, Walt Whitman.

BROWN fades away.

WHITMAN (*to BOOTH*): I saw you in *Julius Caesar*.
"Let me have men about me that are fat;
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous."

STONEWALL: I done told you shut the fuck up Walt Whitman!

WHITMAN (*to BOOTH, about STONEWALL*): He's not much of a reader.

BOOTH (*Under his breath*): He's not much of a thinker.

STONEWALL: What was that?

BOOTH: Nothing.

STONEWALL: Good. *(He spits.)* Y'all aint seen my left arm, now have you?

The other two notice that STONEWALL does not have a left arm. They both awkwardly indicate that no, they have not seen it. STONEWALL, using his right hand, produces a small notebook.

STONEWALL: "Peace be with you, gentlemen." I keep a list of nice things to say in polite society, since I never learnt. So, "Peace be with you" it is. If you have nothing nice to say… *(he gestures to finish the expression).* NOW THEY GON'HANG THIS SON'BITCH OR WHAT?

STONEWALL moves off to hurry the proceedings along.

WHITMAN: What did he mean, "yet?"

BOOTH: What?

WHITMAN: "No one knows who you are–*yet*."

(*No response.*)

BROWN (*Offstage, perhaps behind the audience*): I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood. I had vainly flattered myself that without very much bloodshed, it might be done.

The hanging sounds are repeated. The neck snaps. WHITMAN winces. BOOTH is expressionless. They watch BROWN die. The uncomfortable sounds of applause. Then:

WHITMAN: "Men at some time are masters of their fates:
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."

(*No response.*)

WHITMAN: Goodbye, Mr. Booth.

(*No response. He starts to go.*)

BOOTH: Mr. Whitman–

(*WHITMAN stops and turns. BOOTH cracks an unsettling half-smile).*

BOOTH: Beware the Ides of March.

(Beat.)

WHITMAN: Actually. I have a message for you. I had thought not to deliver it. The contents are, well, probably madness, and…

BOOTH: And?

WHITMAN: I don't like conflict.

WHITMAN unfolds the letter he has produced and reads:

WHITMAN: "My Esteemed Mr. Whitman,
On the evening of October 6th, two-thousand-and-five–"

They both take a moment with the date–2005.

WHITMAN (Cont.): "On the grounds of Greenmount Cemetery, in the Free State of Maryland, I consumed eighty ounces of malt liquor and, upon the stroke of midnight, pissed it all out on John Wilkes' grave. I do not presume that this event has any historical significance; it is rather of a personal nature. If you encounter Mr. Booth, please deliver to him thus: while I am no great respecter of the laws of men, I have come to believe that the laws of Nature are fearsome, perfect, and immovable, and should he continue in his present course, I tremble to think how he shall be called to a terrible account.
P.S. Please enact the following as a demonstration."

Then there is, I believe, a stage direction? Which I am to… act out.

WHITMAN lowers himself to the ground and assumes the role of BOOTH–after Lincoln's assassination, with a broken leg, in the tobacco barn, immediately before his death. The whole scene transforms from a bizarre performance by WHITMAN into a horrifying and prophetic vision of BOOTH's death. Lights change. We hear sounds of the barn catching fire.

VOICE (offstage): He's in there! I can see him!

VOICE (offstage): Traitor!

VOICE (offstage): Come on out now! We got you surrounded.

VOICE (offstage): He'll die of the smoke before we get him outta there.

VOICE (offstage): Come on out, Booth! This is your last chance!

WHITMAN as BOOTH: Oh god, oh god…

WHITMAN as BOOTH, in agonizing pain, tries to pull himself up, produces a pistol, and tries to aim it towards one of the surrounding troops. A gunshot. WHITMAN as BOOTH falls to the ground, having been shot in the neck. He drops the gun, grips his neck, then looks at his hands. Sounds fade.

WHITMAN as BOOTH: Useless. Useless.

WHITMAN as BOOTH "dies." Lights change back to normal. BOOTH is expressionless. WHITMAN stands up. He reads the final sentence of the letter.

WHITMAN: "Yours in all things, Séamus."

(Beat. BOOTH is expressionless.)

WHITMAN: What do you make of that?

BOOTH: You can't trust the Irish, Mr. Whitman.

WHITMAN puts the note back in his pocket.

WHITMAN (*as a farewell*): Mr. Booth.

They vanish–a massive and almost instantaneous shift. MPD OFFICER MICHAEL FANONE sits at a desk. He gives the impression of someone that you absolutely do not want to fuck with. He only loses his temper once–but it seems that a lot of effort and preparation has gone into this level of restraint.

FANONE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of this Committee, for inviting me to provide my eyewitness testimony of the violent assault on our Nation's Capitol on January 6, 2021.

My name is Michael Fanone, and while I have been a sworn officer with the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, D.C. for almost two decades, my law enforcement career actually began here in this building as a United States Capitol police officer, shortly after 9/11. In part because of the 2001 attacks on our country by terrorists, I felt called to serve. As a Capitol Police Officer, I was proud to protect this institution and the dedicated Members of Congress and their staff who work hard each day to uphold our American democracy.

I remain proud of the work of the Capitol Police and MPD officers who literally commit their lives to protecting the safety of each of you, and all of us in this room, in our Nation's Capital.

In this line of work, it probably won't shock you to know I've dealt with some dicey situations. I thought I had seen it all, many times over. Yet what I witnessed and experienced on January 6, 2021 was unlike anything I had ever seen, experienced, or could have imagined in my country. On that day, I participated in the defense of the United States

Capitol from an armed mob, an *armed* mob, of thousands determined to get inside. Because I was among a vastly outnumbered group of law enforcement officers protecting the Capitol and the people inside it, I was grabbed, beaten, tased, all while being called a traitor to my country. I was at risk of being stripped of, and killed with, my own firearm as I heard chants of, "Kill him with his own gun!" I can still hear those words in my head now..

I was just one of hundreds of local police who lined up to protect Congress even though I had not been assigned to do that. Some have asked why we ran to help when we didn't have to. I did that because I simply could not ignore what was happening. Like many other officers, I could not ignore the numerous calls–*numerous* calls–for help coming from the Capitol Complex. I'm a plainclothes officer assigned to the First District Crime Suppression Team. But for the first time in nearly a decade, I put on my uniform.

When my partner and I arrived at the Capitol around three that afternoon, it was unlike any scene I had ever witnessed. We immediately began to search for an area where we could be of most assistance. We first made our way through a door on the south side of the Capitol, then to the crypt and finally down to the Lower West Terrace Tunnel.

The fighting in the tunnel was nothing short of brutal. Here I observed approximately thirty police officers standing shoulder-to-shoulder, maybe four or five abreast, using the weight of their own bodies to hold back the onslaught of violent attackers. Many of these officers were injured, bleeding and fatigued. But they continued to hold the line.

As I don't have to tell the Members in this room, the Tunnel is a narrow and long hallway. It is not the sort of space where anyone would want to be pulled into hand-to-hand combat with an angry mob, although the narrowness of the hallway provided what was probably the only chance of holding back that crowd from entering your personal offices and the House and Senate Chambers.

In an attempt to assist injured officers, I asked them if they needed a break. There were no volunteers. Selflessly, they only identified *other* colleagues who may be in need of assistance.

The fighting dragged on, and I eventually joined the tactical line at the Tunnel's entrance. I can remember looking around and being shocked by the sheer number of people fighting us. At some point during the fighting, I was dragged from the line of officers into the crowd. I heard someone scream, "I got one!" as I was swarmed by a violent mob. They ripped off my badge. They grabbed my radio. They seized the ammunition that was secured to my body. They began to beat me, with their fists and with what felt like hard metal objects. At one point I came face to face with an attacker who repeatedly lunged for me and attempted to remove my firearm. I heard chanting from some in the crowd, "Get his gun" and "Kill him with his own gun." I was aware enough to recognize I was at risk of being stripped of, and killed with, my own firearm. I was electrocuted–again and again and again–with a Taser. I'm sure I was screaming, but I don't think I could even hear my own voice.

My body camera captured the violence of the crowd directed toward me during those very frightening moments. It's an important part of the record for this Committee's investigation and for the country's understanding of how I was assaulted and nearly killed as the mob attacked the Capitol that day, and I hope that everyone will be able to watch it. The portions of the video I've seen remain extremely painful for me to watch. But it is essential that everyone understands what really happened that tragic day.

During those moments, I remember thinking that there was a very good chance that I would be torn apart or be shot to death with my own weapon. I thought of my four daughters who might lose their Dad. I remain grateful that no Member of Congress had to go through the violent assault that I experienced that day.

During the assault, I thought about using my firearm on my attackers. But I knew that if I did that, I would quickly be overwhelmed. And that,

in their minds, it would provide them with the justification for killing me. So instead, I decided to appeal to any humanity they might have. I said as loud as I could manage, “I’ve got kids.” Thankfully, some in the crowd stepped in and assisted me.

Those few individuals protected me from the crowd and inched me toward the Capitol until my fellow officers could rescue me. I was carried back inside the Capitol Building. What happened afterwards is much less vivid to me. I had been beaten unconscious and remained so for more than four minutes. I know that my partner helped evacuate me from the building and drove me to MedStar Washington Hospital Center despite suffering significant injuries himself. At the hospital, doctors told me that I suffered a heart attack, and I was later diagnosed with a concussion, a traumatic brain injury, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

As my physical injuries gradually subsided and the adrenaline that had stayed with me for weeks waned, I have been left with the psychological trauma and the emotional anxiety of having survived such a horrifying event. And my children continue to deal with the trauma of nearly losing their Dad that day.

What makes that struggle harder and more painful is to know so many of my fellow citizens, including so many of the people I put my life at risk to defend, are downplaying or outright denying what happened. I feel like I went to Hell and back to protect the people in this room. But too many are now telling me that Hell doesn’t even exist—or that Hell actually wasn’t all that bad. The indifference shown to my colleagues is DISGRACEFUL.

> *FANONE slams his hand down on the table–hard. A tense moment. The SINGER is a cappella and hauntingly out of time.*

SINGER: John Brown 's body lies a-mold'ring in the grave
John Brown's body lies a-mold'ring in the grave
John Brown's body lies a-mold'ring in the grave
His soul goes marching on.

FANONE: My law enforcement career prepared me to cope with some aspects of this experience. But nothing—truly nothing—has prepared me to address those elected Members of our government who continue to deny the events of that day. Those very same members whose lives, offices, staff members I was fighting so desperately to defend.

SINGER: They hung him for a traitor, they themselves the traitor crew. His truth is marching on!

FANONE: I am hopeful that with your commitment, we as a country will confront the truth of what happened on January 6 and do what is necessary to make sure this institution of our democracy never again falls into the hands of a violent and angry mob.

> Sound. Total blackout. In darkness, we hear the horrifying sounds of *FANONE's body camera footage*. *Sounds of an enormous crowd and FANONE screaming in pain. Several cast members sing over this.*

COMPANY
Glory, Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory, Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory, Glory! Hallelujah!

> *On the recording, we hear FANONE scream, "I've got kids." All sound cuts out. Perhaps some light has arrived on the SINGER.*

SINGER: His truth is marching on.

> *The SINGER starts to exit, then looks back.*

SINGER: Part three.

Lights come up on the actor playing STONEWALL, but the actor's body (possibly including their head) is obscured by a black sheet (or similar). Only the left arm protrudes and speaks directly to the audience. Ideally, this should be equal parts moving, disturbing, and ridiculous.

STONEWALL JACKSON'S SEVERED LEFT ARM: I was shot by my own men. See they mistook me for a spy in the dark. Doc sawed me off; then eight days later, my body died and was buried, separately, one-hundred-and-ten miles away. When General Lee got the news, he said, "Stonewall has lost his left arm, but I have lost my right."

I got my own eulogy. I got my own headstone. There's fifteen other bodies in this grave, but only I have a marker. But I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself.

Here's the short version of my life. I was born; then my father died; then my sister died; then my mother gave me to my grandmother; then both of them died; then my brother died; then I killed a crowd of unarmed civilians in Mexico–and swore I'd never follow a bad order again. Then I got married; then our baby died; then my wife died. The night after the funeral, there was a pouring rainstorm, but no Stonewall to be seen. They found me in the storm, face down on my wife's grave, screaming and clawing at the earth.

Then I founded a Sunday school! I taught hundreds of free and enslaved Negroes to read – which was expressly against the laws of Virginia – so they could read the Bible and follow the laws of God. Several white folks expressed objections to these classes, so I threatened to kill them, and they all went away. Then I led an army on behalf of the Confederacy, fighting for white supremacy in the South. But mostly I just worried about the Sunday school. This has been referred to as a "contradiction of character." And it is for this, my brothers and sisters, that I wish to make amends.

I should say that I have not spoken to my body in some time. The distance between us is more than just a physical separation; I have, in truth, seceded from myself. My body could not be reached for comment.

There is a distinction to be made between providing context and making an excuse. I have no excuse. I preached that God invented slavery. I am sorry. I was wrong. Turns out, I had followed another bad order. I have had one-hundred-and-sixty-one years in the dirt to think about this–and to work on my manners–and I offer the following only as context:

I thought that God was Death, and Death was God. And while that explained much of what I saw in life, it never unbroke my heart.

Offstage we hear a scream for help. A RIOT GEAR OFFICER stumbles out from the darkness. He rips a gas mask off his face, which is covered in blood. He vomits. He takes a water bottle off of the desk and pours it over his face, trying to get CS gas out of his mouth and eyes. A RIOTER, dressed in a similar manner to what the officers have described, appears suddenly and hits the RIOT GEAR OFFICER in the head from behind with a metal object, knocking him unconscious. He hits him again. The RIOTER looks at the audience.

RIOTER: We're doing this for you.

He hits the RIOT GEAR OFFICER a final time–then exits. The SINGER sings a capella and slowly, hauntingly out of time.

SINGER:
Roll it along… Roll it along…

The RIOT GEAR OFFICER reanimates, stands up, and speaks to the audience.

OFFICER: January 7th, 2021: Officer Brian Sicknick succumbed to his injuries, having suffered multiple strokes as a result of blunt force trauma and assault with a chemical irritant. His assailant was sentenced to seven years in prison for assaulting a police officer–and received a Presidential Pardon on January 20th, 2025.

SINGER:

His truth is marching...

OFFICER:
January 9th, 2021: Officer Howard Liebengood.
Self-inflicted gunshot to the head.
January 15th, 2021: Officer Jeffrey Smith.
Self-inflicted gunshot to the head.
July 10th, 2021: Officer Kyle DeFreytag.
Self-inflicted gunshot to the head.
July 29th, 2021: Officer Gunther Hashida.
Self-inflicted gunshot to the head.

The Department of Justice determined that Officers Liebengood and Smith died in the line of duty. This decision was reached after body cam footage showed officer Smith being repeatedly hit in the head with a piece of metal scaffolding. Officers reported speaking to Smith on the scene–

Officer GONELL runs on and grabs the OFFICER.

GONELL: Jeff! JEFF!

OFFICER: –and found him confused–

GONELL: Put your helmet back on! PUT YOUR HELMET BACK ON! JEFF!

OFFICER: –with two black eyes–

GONELL: JEFF!

OFFICER: –unable to answer basic–

GONELL: JEFF CAN YOU HEAR ME?! HEY! HEY! WHAT'S MY NAME?

OFFICER: –unable to–unable to–unable...

GONELL: *(Calling offstage)* Hey! We need help over here!

OFFICER: Yes sir… I was just…

GONELL lets go of the OFFICER.

OFFICER: I don't know where I am.

GONELL fades as the WIDOW appears.

WIDOW *(from the shadows)*: The man that left on January 6 was not the man that came home in the early hours of January 7. He was a different person. His personality changed. His demeanor changed.

The OFFICER takes out his service weapon and stares at it.

WIDOW: He was there, but the man that I knew was not in the same body. My husband was not there.

The OFFICER makes a sudden movement with the weapon towards his own head. Almost instantly, there is a giant sound, and he vanishes.

WIDOW: My dad was in the Tea Party. I don't tell people that anymore–but to be honest, we laughed about it at the time. Like, "There goes Dad, dressing up like a Founding Father and yelling about Obama again. In public. Totally normal thing to do."

But now–wow, sorry, okay, *right now*–I'm realizing that it's particularly hard to talk about. Because I'm glad he wasn't there on January 6th. I'm glad that he died before all this. I loved him, I did… but I know he would have been there. In a fucking John Hancock outfit or something.

And if he had played a role in… in the events that… if he had been part of what happened to my husband.

Well. That would have made a hard thing even harder.

At my Dad's memorial, I made a little joke about how I hoped that he was up in heaven, having a beer with Thomas Jefferson. In festive matching breeches. The All-American Afterlife. A little humor goes a long way when everyone's depressed.

Thomas Jefferson is probably in hell. Now that I think about it.

I know that people need something to care about. And that's good–I mean, yes, obviously, that can be really good. To have a driving purpose.

But when someone is very angry–and very alone–they are also very vulnerable. Even if they would never admit it. They are vulnerable to lies and manipulation. And when they latch onto the wrong thing, when they find *a false and driving purpose*...

That can get really scary, really quick.

When Obama won–the second time–my father looked me in the eye and said, "It's a great victory for Al Qaeda."

What I'm trying to say is, the lie started long before January 6th. It was there in 2012. It was there when U.S. Marshals walked Ruby Bridges into school. Maybe it leaked out when that first chest of tea landed in Boston Harbor. But I think it's older than that.

I don't know the people who are doing the lying. There's a degree (or twelve) of separation there. But I am surrounded by the daughters and the husbands and the communities that are on the receiving end of this big American lie.

They are my people.

They are my family.

And I'm sick of burying them.

Sound. In different spaces, KAITLIN COLLINS and TECH CEO speak to the audience. They do not acknowledge each other. COLLINS' text is taken from CNN's 2023 town hall with Candidate Trump.

COLLINS: Mr. President, do you have any regrets about your actions on January 6?

TECH CEO: Mr. President, thank you for the invitation to the oval office today. Thank you for your leadership, your strength of character–

COLLINS: The Mayor of DC is not in charge of the National Guard. You're in charge of the National Guard.

TECH CEO: And on behalf of my company, thank you for Making America Great Again.

COLLINS: Your acting defense secretary—

TECH CEO: No president in American history has ever been as strong–

COLLINS: Acting defense secretary, Chris Miller, at the time, he says you never gave a formal order to deploy the National Guard.

TECH CEO: As bold–

COLLINS: He testified–

TECH CEO: Or as beautiful as you.

COLLINS: He says you never gave that order.

TECH CEO: We say it all the time in the office–"President Trump has saved the tech industry!"

COLLINS: He has testified that, Mr. President.

TECH CEO: "And he's one hell of a golfer!"

Offstage laughter and applause.

COLLINS: When they were breaking into the Capitol, smashing windows, injuring police officers, why did it take you three hours to tell them to go home?

TECH CEO: We're proud to announce that, starting today, we will be investing four-hundred *billion* dollars in *American manufacturing*!

More applause.

COLLINS: Mr. President, I looked at the same timeline that you did. Once it was clear–

TECH CEO: And while we can't disclose what, if anything, will be manufactured here–

COLLINS: When it was clear to you that they were not being peaceful – you saw them rushing the Capitol, breaking windows. They were hitting officers with flagpoles, Tasing them, beating them up–

TECH CEO: We promise to deliver on this big and beautiful and very strong American dream.

COLLINS: When it was clear they weren't being peaceful–

TECH CEO: So even though I went to Harvard, and even though I am lying, and even though I have never lied, not ever, not once–

COLLINS: Why did you wait three hours to tell them to leave the Capitol?

TECH CEO: Mr. President, this is my message to you:

COLLINS: So, why didn't you tell them to go home sooner?

TECH CEO: I have come to sell my dignity.

COLLINS: Pelosi is not in charge of Capitol security.

TECH CEO: I have come to sell my civic responsibility.

COLLINS: But that video that you referenced there, it wasn't posted until 4:17 p.m.

TECH CEO: I have come to sell my soul.

COLLINS: They breached the Capitol at 2:00 p.m., Mr. President.

TECH CEO: And I have brought you a gift!

> *A gift is brought on stage on a giant golden platter (with a golden bell covering the gift).*

COLLINS: Because, in that time, over 140 officers were injured.

TECH CEO: As a symbol of my love and adoration–

COLLINS: One person who was at the Capitol that day, as you know, was your vice president, Mike Pence, who says that you endangered his life.

TECH CEO: Of my undying loyalty–

COLLINS: Mr. President, do you feel that you owe him an apology?

TECH CEO: Because the truth is–

COLLINS: That's not what happened. You're referring to the Electoral Count Act.

TECH CEO: I would kill for you, Mr. President!

COLLINS: Legal experts, including Republican legal experts, say that he does not have that authority, Mr. President.

TECH CEO: I would let you kill people–

COLLINS: They have not admitted that, Mr. President.

TECH CEO: Or I would kill them myself.

COLLINS: I should note that your campaign paid for a recount that happened in Wisconsin and actually had more votes for President Biden by the end of it.

TECH CEO: That's how much I love you, Mr. President.

COLLINS: Mr. President, there weren't any fraudulent votes in Wisconsin.

TECH CEO: And now, the moment we've all been waiting for!

COLLINS: Will you pardon the January 6th rioters who were convicted of federal offenses?

TECH CEO: On behalf of my company–but really, of all our companies. Of Apple, and Google, and Amazon, and Meta–

COLLINS: Will you pardon the January 6th rioters who were convicted of federal offenses?

TECH CEO: Please accept this gift. Drum roll, please!

Laughter and drumroll.

COLLINS: Will you pardon the January 6th rioters who were convicted of federal offenses?

The TECH CEO lifts the golden cover to reveal a bloody human heart with a knife sticking out of it. Huge applause. Perhaps dollar bills fall from the sky. The TECH CEO joyfully cuts off a bloody slice of the heart and holds it out to the audience.

TECH CEO: Here, Mr. President. This is my heart, which I have cut out for you. Please do me this honor… and take the first bite.

As he holds out the offering, MAGA WOMAN comes out of nowhere, grabs it out of his hand, pops it into her mouth, and swallows. She begins laughing hysterically.

MAGA WOMAN: Ha! SWIPED!

TECH CEO begins to object.

MAGA WOMAN: You're getting canceled!

She gestures and TECH CEO disappears.

COLLINS: What the–

MAGA WOMAN: And *you're* getting canceled!

She gestures and COLLINS disappears.

MAGA WOMAN: Hi it's me again. We tested this play with an audience and they complained that my character was one-dimensional, so I'm back to show off all my dimensions. Ha! My *dimensions*. That sounds like I'm gonna twerk or something. Ha!

But I'm not going to twerk. In fact, I'm going to talk about pain. And not Thomas Paine. Although I just met him, and he's very interesting, and also kind of an asshole. But I mean pain like hurt. I'm gonna talk about hurt.

I got hurt a lot.

Have you ever noticed that “How are you?” is kind of a bullshit question? It sure gets bullshit answers. Like nobody’s ready for the real answer to *how I really am*. If you ask me, “How are you?” and I respond like, “Domestic violence,” then there’s this whole, conversational… problem. I guess my pain was always a problem. For other people. Also for me. But either way, a problem that needed burying.

So I don’t really ask, “How are you?” anymore. I just ask this:

“What hurts?”

Because when you ask, “What hurts?” people know that you’re down for a real fucking conversation. People know that you know what you’re talking about. They know that *you know* about pain. And that pain becomes a kind of connection.

And that’s when we start to get some real answers.

Shakespeare once said, “It’s hard to hate up close.” Actually, James Comey said that. Which is disappointing. Because I wanted to quote someone fancy. Oh! Okay. Wait. I have one:

“Happy people don’t kill their husbands.”

Abraham Lincoln. I’m kidding. *Legally Blonde*.

I was not a happy person. My blood ran straight fear. So here’s something you can quote me on:

Happy people don’t storm the Capitol. They just don’t.

I never got this when I was alive, but I understand it now. Whenever anyone does something shitty–like really shitty–one thing is for sure:

They are either very sick or very afraid.

If there are other explanations… I ain’t seen them yet.

Sound. She vanishes. Officer HARRY DUNN sits at the desk. He has written remarks but does not really need to use them. He is disarmingly open and gentle in his demeanor. Please note that–out of respect for his testimony and experience–this role must be played by a Black actor.

HARRY DUNN: Chairman Thompson and Members of the Select Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to give my account regarding the events of January 6, 2021, from my first-hand experience as a Capitol Police officer directly involved in those events, and still hurting from what happened that day. I am providing this testimony solely in my personal capacity, and not as a representative of the U.S. Capitol Police.

I reported for duty at the Capitol, as usual, early on the morning of January 6. We understood that the vote to certify President Biden's election would be taking place that day, and that protests might occur outside the Capitol, but we expected any demonstrations to be peaceful expressions of First Amendment freedoms, just like the scores of demonstrations we had observed for many years.

As the morning progressed, the crowd of protestors began to swell on the east side of the Capitol, many displaying "Trump" flags. The crowd was chanting slogans like "Stop the Steal!" and "We want Trump!" But the demonstration was still being conducted in a peaceful manner.

Early that afternoon, I started receiving reports on the radio about large crowd movements around the Capitol, coming from the direction of the Ellipse to both the west and east fronts of the Capitol. Then I heard urgent radio calls for additional officers to respond to the west side, and an exclamation, in a desperate voice, that demonstrators on the west side had "breached the fence!"

Now it was obvious that there was an active threat to the Capitol. I quickly put on a steel chest plate (which weighs about 20 pounds) and, carrying my M-4 rifle, sprinted around the north side of the Capitol to the west terrace and the railing of the Inaugural stage, where I had a broad view of what was going on. I was stunned by what I saw. In what seemed like a sea of people, Capitol Police officers and Metropolitan DC Police ("MPD") officers were engaged in desperate, hand-to-hand fighting with rioters across the west lawn. Until then, I had never seen *anyone* physically assault a Capitol Police or MPD officer – let alone witness *mass assaults* being perpetrated on law enforcement officers. I

witnessed the rioters using all kinds of weapons against the officers, including flag poles, metal bike racks they had torn apart, and various kinds of projectiles. Officers were being bloodied in the fighting, many were screaming, and many were blinded and coughing from chemical irritants being sprayed in their faces. I gave decontamination aid to as many officers as I could, flushing their eyes with water to dilute the chemical irritants.

Soon thereafter, I heard an "Attention, all units!" radio dispatch that the Capitol had been breached, and that rioters were in various places inside the building. At that point, I rushed into the Capitol with another officer, going first to the basement on the Senate side where I had heard an MPD officer needed a defibrillator. After returning outside to the west terrace to assist officers, I went back into the Capitol and up the stairs to the Crypt. There, I saw rioters who had invaded the Capitol carrying a Confederate flag, a red "MAGA" flag, and a "Don't Tread on Me" flag.

I decided to stand my ground there to prevent any rioters from heading down the stairs to the lower west terrace entrance, because that was where officers were getting decontamination aid and were particularly vulnerable. At the top of the stairs, I confronted a group of the insurrectionists, warning them not to go down. One of them shouted "Keep moving, Patriots!" Another, displaying what looked like a law enforcement badge, told me "We're doing this for you!" One of the invaders approached like he was about to try and get past me and head down the stairs, and I hit him, knocking him down.

After getting relieved by other officers in the Crypt, I took off running upstairs toward the Speaker's Lobby, and helped a plain-clothes officer who was being hassled by insurrectionists. Some of them were dressed like members of a militia group, wearing tactical vests, cargo pants, and body armor. I was physically exhausted, and it was hard to breathe and see because of all the chemical spray in the air.

More and more insurrectionists were pouring into the area by the Speaker's Lobby near the Rotunda, some wearing "MAGA" hats and

shirts that said “Trump 2020.” I told them to leave the Capitol, and in response, they yelled back: “No, no, man, this is our house!” “President Trump invited us here!” “We’re here to stop the steal!” “Joe Biden is not the President!” “Nobody voted for Joe Biden!”

I am a law enforcement officer, and I keep politics out of my job. But in this circumstance, I responded: “Well, I voted for Joe Biden. Does my vote not count? Am I nobody?”

That prompted a torrent of racial epithets. One woman in a pink “MAGA” shirt yelled, “You hear that, guys, this nigger voted for Joe Biden!” Then the crowd, perhaps around twenty people, joined in, screaming “Boo! Fucking Nigger!”

No one had ever – ever -- called me a “nigger” while wearing the uniform of a Capitol Police officer. In the days following the attempted insurrection, other Black officers shared with me their own stories of racial abuse on January 6. One officer told me he had never, in his entire forty years of life, been called a “nigger” to his face, and that that streak ended on January 6. Yet another Black officer later told he had been confronted by insurrectionists inside the Capitol, who told him to “Put your gun down and we’ll show you what kind of nigger you really are!”

To be candid, the rest of that afternoon is a blur. But I know I went throughout the Capitol to assist other officers who needed aid, and to help expel more insurrectionists. In the Crypt, I encountered Sergeant Gonell–

> *He gestures to Gonell–who is in the room with him, though not visible to us.*

Who was giving assistance to an unconscious woman who had been in the crowd of rioters on the west side of the Capitol. I helped to carry her to the House Majority Leader’s office, where she was administered CPR. As the afternoon wore on, I was completely drained both physically and emotionally, and in shock and disbelief over what had happened. Once the building was cleared, I went to the Rotunda to recover with other

officers and share our experiences from that afternoon. Representative Rodney Davis was there offering support to officers, and when he and I saw each other he came over and gave me a big hug.

I sat down on a bench with a friend of mine who is also a Black Capitol Police officer, and told him about the racial slurs I had endured. I became very emotional and began yelling, “How the fuck can something like this happen?! Is this America?” I began sobbing, and officers came over to console me.

More than six months later, January 6 still isn’t over for me. I have had to avail myself of multiple counseling sessions from the Capitol Police Employee Assistance Program, and I am now receiving private counseling therapy for the persistent emotional trauma of that day.

Later on January 6, after order and security had been restored in the Capitol through the hard work and sacrifices of law enforcement, Members took to the floor of the House to speak out about what had happened that day. Among them was House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, who – along with my fellow officers -- I had protected that day, and will protect today and tomorrow. And the Minority Leader, to his great credit, said the following to the House: “The violence, destruction, and chaos we saw earlier was unacceptable, undemocratic, and un-American. It was the saddest day I’ve ever had serving in this institution.” Members of this Select Committee, the Minority Leader was absolutely right that day in how he described what took place at the Capitol. And for those of us in the Capitol Police who serve and revere this institution, and who love the Capitol building, it was the saddest day for us as well.

Lights fade on DUNN.

WIDOW *(from the shadows):* After the attack on January 6th, 147 Republican Members of Congress still voted, without evidence, to overturn the results of the 2020 election. Among them was Representative Kevin McCarthy.

GONELL reappears in the distance.

SINGER: John Brown's body lies a'moldering in the grave...

GONELL: For most people, January 6 happened for a few hours.

SINGER: John Brown's body lies a'moldering in the grave...

GONELL: But for those of us who were in the thick of it–

SINGER: John Brown's body lies a'moldering in the grave...

GONELL: It has not ended.

SINGER: His truth is marching on.

In backlight, we see THE SHADOW OF JOHN LEWIS.

THE SHADOW OF JOHN LEWIS: I was the first person to be hit. I was hit in the head by a state trooper with a nightstick. I thought I saw death. I thought I was going to die on that bridge. I thought it was my last non-violent protest. All these many years later, I don't remember how I made it back across that bridge. How I made it to the church.

I do recall being in the church, and someone asked me to say something to the audience. And I stood up and said:

"I don't understand it. I don't understand it–how President Johnson can send troops to Vietnam and cannot send troops to Selma, Alabama, to protect people whose only desire is to register to vote. I don't know if I will be able to participate in the march after today. But it is my feeling that people all over this country, but in particular the people right here in Alabama, right here in Selma, should continue to march towards Montgomery."

The shadow of THOMAS PAINE appears in the distance.

PAINE: These are the times that try men's souls.

LEWIS: We were peaceful.

PAINE: He that would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression.

LEWIS: We were persistent.

PAINE: The cause of America is, in a great measure, the cause of all mankind.

LEWIS: There were six-hundred of us on that first bridge leaving Selma. But twenty-five thousand walked into Montgomery.

(Beat.)

You can come on up now.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN stands up from somewhere in the audience and goes up onstage. It is fine–and in fact preferable–if this actor bears no resemblance whatsoever to Abraham Lincoln and is not dressed like him. BOOTH enters and, for the entirety of the speech, holds a gun to LINCOLN's head. LINCOLN does not acknowledge or respond to this in any way.

LINCOLN: Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives

that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

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

BOOTH cocks the gun.

Blackout.

End of play.