

EXHUMING LINCOLN

Written by

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BLACK SCREEN.

A slow roll of archival text and voices, screams, one after the other.

"The President has been shot!" - Washington Star, April 14, 1865
"Booth Escapes Southward After Shooting Lincoln!" - The New York Herald
"Sic Semper Tyrannis." "Lincoln's body to be returned by funeral train."

ARCHIVAL PHOTOS fade in:

- Ford's Theatre - John Wilkes Booth's wanted poster - The crowded streets during Lincoln's funeral procession - The actual casket on display in Philadelphia or Chicago

SUPERIMPOSE -
DATES AND
LOCATIONS:

April 15, 1865 - Death of Abraham Lincoln

April 21, 1865 - Funeral Train begins journey

May 4, 1865 - Burial in Springfield, Illinois

MORE FRAGMENTED
VISUALS:

- Crude sketches of Lincoln's corpse - A headline: "Body May Have Been Moved in Secret!" - A page torn from a ledger: "Guard assigned: T. Reese"

The images fade slowly, one by one...

Then:

FADE IN:

EXT. OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - NIGHT - SEPTEMBER 26, 1901

A cold wind rustles through the towering oaks. The cemetery is empty, save for a single lamplight flickering against the crypt's entrance.

SUPERIMPOSE: SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS - 1901

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - UNDERGROUND CHAMBER - NIGHT

A dozen men in dust-covered coats stand in a semicircle, lamps trembling in their hands. The screech of metal-on-metal echoes as they pry open a coffin lid.

Their breath fogs in the stale, dead air.

EDWARD S. JOHNSON (50s, caretaker, deep lines of exhaustion) wipes the sweat from his brow. His hands tremble.

WORKER #1

You sure we should be doin' this?

EDWARD S. JOHNSON

He's been moved too many times...
We just confirm it's him... and put
him down for good.

The coffin lid shifts—a sharp, unnatural creak.

And then—silence.

The men lean forward. Their lanterns cast shadows that seem to move on their own.

Inside the coffin lies ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Thirty-six years dead—yet still there.

His face is eerily preserved—high cheekbones, his famous beard, the sunken shape of his nose. Untouched by time.

WORKER #2

He looks... the same.

WORKER #3

He ain't supposed to look the same.

A crash from above. The men freeze.

The lamps flicker. Shadows ripple along the stone walls.

WORKER #1

(whispering)

We should not have done this.

Edward swallows hard, gripping his lantern tighter.

EDWARD S. JOHNSON

Let's just... finish this.

WORKER #3

What if he's... not done?

They all glance at the body.

Suddenly, a drop of water—or sweat—trickles down Lincoln's temple. The men step back, startled.

EDWARD S. JOHNSON
No one's here to talk. We're here
to bury.

He nods, almost to himself.

The wind howls through unseen cracks. The room grows colder.

Lincoln's face—his eyes seem to watch them.

FADE TO BLACK.

FLASHBACK - EXT. FORD'S THEATRE - NIGHT - APRIL 14, 1865

SUPERIMPOSE: WASHINGTON D.C. - 1865

Gunfire. A woman's scream.

A man crashes onto the stage—JOHN WILKES BOOTH, wild-eyed,
one leg twisted from a botched landing.

BOOTH
Sic semper tyrannis!

The crowd erupts in chaos as Booth flees—his silhouette
disappearing into the dark streets of Washington.

FADE TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

The slow, ominous movement of a black-draped train steaming
forward into the night... carrying the body of Abraham Lincoln.

FADE OUT.

EXT. FUNERAL TRAIN - MOVING - NIGHT

The iron wheels clank against the tracks as the black train
pushes forward into the fog. Gas lanterns flicker inside the
cars, casting eerie shadows on polished mahogany walls.

SUPERIMPOSE: APRIL 21, 1865 - LINCOLN'S FUNERAL TRAIN

INT. FUNERAL TRAIN - PRESIDENTIAL CAR - NIGHT

Inside, Lincoln's casket rests on a raised platform, draped in black velvet. Candles flicker, reflecting off brass fixtures. A solemn DR. CHARLES BROWN (40s, exhausted, his suit stained with embalming fluids) stares at the casket.

DR. BROWN
(to himself)
This is... unnatural.
A gentle knock at the
door. GENERAL DAVID
HUNTER (50s, rugged,
weary) steps inside.

GEN. HUNTER
How is he holding up?

Dr. Brown exhales, rubbing his face.

DR. BROWN
The embalming held, but...
He should look worse. He should
smell worse.

Hunter steps closer, staring at Lincoln's face. The President's features remain eerily intact, his skin stretched tight, almost waxen.

GEN. HUNTER
People will talk.

DR. BROWN
They already are.

GEN. HUNTER
You think they're right?

DR. BROWN
I think... I don't know what
embalming can do anymore.
Not after this.

GEN. HUNTER
That's not science. That's
something else.

Dr. Brown looks back to the casket— His own reflection in the polished lid looks... off. Eyes misaligned. He blinks, and it's normal again.

DR. BROWN
(intensely)
Lock the car when I leave. No
visitors. Not even clergy.

Hunter turns, peering out the window. In the distance,
torches flicker--thousands waiting at the next station.

GEN. HUNTER
We'll be in Baltimore soon.

Dr. Brown nods, but his hand lingers over the casket. His
fingers tremble as he gently presses against Lincoln's cheek.

For the briefest moment--

Lincoln's skin feels warm.

Brown yanks his hand away, breath hitching.

A distant whistle screams into the night. The train barrels
forward.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. BALTIMORE STATION - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: APRIL 21, 1865 - BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Thousands gather in eerie silence. Torches and gaslights
flicker, illuminating black crepe draped across buildings.
Union soldiers form a perimeter, keeping the mourners in
line.

The train hisses to a stop. The casket is carefully lifted by
an Honor Guard and carried through the crowd toward the
Exchange Building.

Among the mourners, a woman faints. Others weep openly. Some
stare, as if in a trance.

INT. EXCHANGE BUILDING - ROTUNDA - NIGHT

The casket is placed on an ornate catafalque beneath a
massive chandelier. Dr. Brown stands nearby, watching the
steady stream of mourners filing past.

A YOUNG SOLDIER (18, rigid posture, hands clenched into
fists) steps forward. He stares at Lincoln's face for an
unusually long time.

YOUNG SOLDIER
(whispering)
He looks like he could
wake up.
Dr. Brown tightens his
jaw.

DR. BROWN
Move along, soldier.

The soldier hesitates, then nods and steps away. Another mourner—a frail OLD WOMAN—lingers at the coffin.

OLD WOMAN
(muttering)
His eyes... they follow
me.
Brown stiffens. He
watches as she shuffles
away, clutching her
rosary.
A murmur ripples through
the guards standing
watch. One of them,
SERGEANT COLLIER (30s,
skeptical but unnerved),
leans toward Brown.

Dr. Brown flinches.

For a split second, Lincoln's eyelids twitch.

The chandelier above groans on its chain.

Everyone looks up—then away quickly, as if pretending they didn't see it.

SGT. COLLIER
Doc... is it just me, or does he
look more... lifelike now?

Dr. Brown doesn't answer. He stares at Lincoln's face, his own expression tightening. He swallows hard.

DR. BROWN
(quietly, to himself)
I saw him speak once. When I was a
boy. Never thought I'd be the last
to see him... like this.

DR. BROWN (CONT'D)
Lock the doors when visitation
ends.

Collier nods, but he's uneasy.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - NIGHT - NOVEMBER 7, 1876

Thick fog curls through the moonlit trees. Shadows move low and fast—two men, coats pulled tight, carry shovels and sacks of tools.

SUPERIMPOSE: SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS - 1876

INT. TOMB - OUTER CHAMBER - NIGHT

The heavy door creaks open. LEWIS SWEENEY (30s, wiry, jittery) and JAMES KENALL (40s, ex-con, hard eyes) step inside, lanterns held high.

The chamber is colder than outside.

KENALL
(whispers)
This is it. Quick and clean.

They move to the inner tomb wall—its bricks recently patched. Sweeney unloads a crowbar.

SWEENEY
You sure he's in there? Thought
they moved him...

KENALL
He's in there. Secret Service
confirmed it. This wall's hollow.

Sweeney taps the bricks—a hollow thunk confirms it. He nods, starts prying.

INT. TOMB - INNER CHAMBER - LATER

The false wall now lies in rubble. Behind it, Lincoln's wooden sarcophagus sits in eerie stillness, wrapped in rusted iron bands.

SWEENEY
God... he's really here.

Kenall steps forward, eyes gleaming with greedy disbelief.

KENALL

We're about to own the most famous
corpse in history.

He begins cutting the bands.

Suddenly—

A soft, low thud.

Both men freeze.

SWEENEY

You hear that?

Another thud. This one... wet. Like something shifted inside
the coffin.

KENALL

It's rats. Or settling wood.

Sweeney's hand trembles as he lifts the lid slightly. The
hinges groan.

The lamplight flickers violently.

SWEENEY

(silent beat)

No... no, man—he's looking at me.

Kenall shoves him aside.

KENALL

It's a corpse, you idiot.

He yanks the lid the rest of the way open.

INSIDE: LINCOLN'S FACE — intact, waxy, the beard slightly
curled. But the eyes—they glisten. Almost wet. Remnants of an
American flag lays on his suit.

Kenall's smirk vanishes.

KENALL (CONT'D)

What the hell...?

Suddenly—

A loud CRASH from outside the tomb. Then shouting—bootsteps.

AGENT TYRONE WALKER (30s, Black, pistol drawn) bursts in with
two officers.

WALKER

Drop the tools! Hands up!

Sweeney bolts—smashes past a lantern, sending it clattering to the floor. The flame rolls close to the coffin.

KENALL

No! Not near him!

Walker grabs Kenall just as he tries to shield the body.

Flames flare—but stop short of the casket, snuffing out unnaturally.

Walker lowers his weapon. But his hand shakes.

He steps closer. One of the officers lights a new lantern. Its flame dims—struggles against the air near the coffin.

WALKER

(quietly, to himself)

This is why we were told never to
open it.

Silence.

Everyone stands frozen. The lanterns are dead.

Only the moonlight now... illuminating Lincoln's unchanged face.

SWEENEY (O.S.), screaming from outside.

SWEENEY (O.S.)

He was breathing! I swear to God—he
was breathing!

INT. SPRINGFIELD POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

A cracked porcelain lamp casts hard shadows. JAMES KENALL sits cuffed, sweat pooling under his arms.

Across from him, AGENT TYRONE WALKER (composed, piercing eyes) flips through a dossier. Nearby, SHERIFF MARCUS BANE (50s, local lawman) leans against the wall.

AGENT WALKER

You were going to sell the body of
the President. You realize what
that would've done to this country?

KENALL
He didn't belong there. He don't
belong anywhere. That body's...
wrong.

SHERIFF BANE
(scoffing)
You're trying to claim demonic
possession as your defense?

Kenall leans forward, eyes bloodshot.

KENALL
That corpse looked at me.

A long beat.

AGENT WALKER
Forget the defense. You're going
away for a long time.

Walker snaps the dossier closed.

INT. OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - LINCOLN'S TOMB - LATE NIGHT

Inside the now-exposed tomb, several SECRET SERVICE AGENTS,
undertakers, and local officials confer in hushed tones. One
of them is ROBERT TODD LINCOLN (30s, solemn, sharply
dressed), pale with tension.

AGENT WALKER
He's vulnerable here. If word of
this gets out—

ROBERT LINCOLN
(quietly)
It won't.

He walks slowly toward the casket, still open.

ROBERT LINCOLN (CONT'D)
Seal him. No fanfare. No papers. No
crowds. We bury him where no man
can find him.

Robert stops at the edge of the platform. Looks down at his
father's face.

His jaw tightens—but his voice is soft.

ROBERT LINCOLN (CONT'D)
He wanted peace. He got pilgrimage.
This isn't legacy. It's
disturbance.

UNDERTAKER
Sir... where would that be?

Robert looks around the tomb.

ROBERT LINCOLN
Here. Beneath the floor.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - EARLY MORNING

By lantern light, workers dig a shallow pit directly beneath the tomb's central floor. Dust coats everything.

The coffin is gently lowered.

QUICK CUTS: - Cement poured - Bricks sealed over - Dust swept clean

Above, a false slab is placed. Seamless. As though he was never moved.

AGENT WALKER (V.O.)
(softly, from a later
report)
"November 8th, 1876. In agreement
with Mr. Lincoln's family, the body
was hidden from public record.
Official burial remains unchanged."

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - NIGHT - 1887

A fresh coat of paint. The tomb now boasts a taller iron gate, marble markers--official restoration, meant to deter vandals.

SUPERIMPOSE: SPRINGFIELD - 1887

INT. TOMB KEEPER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

A small room in the cemetery caretaker's house. THOMAS REESE (late 40s, widower, ex-Union private) scratches into a leather-bound journal by candlelight.

THOMAS (V.O.)
May 12. Third night on the grounds.
No issues... yet. Wind's rougher
out here than I remember from the
war.

He closes the journal. The candle sputters. He lies down.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - NIGHT

A dim lantern flickers in the far corner. The camera moves
down... past the false floor.

A faint creaking sound.

Then stillness.

INT. TOMBSTONE KEEPER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT (LATER)

Reese bolts upright in bed.

DISTANT THUDS. Repeating. Low. Rhythmic.

He rises, pulls on boots, grabs a lantern and revolver.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Fog rolls in. The tomb stands silhouetted against a cloud-
streaked moon. Reese approaches.

INT. TOMB - NIGHT

Inside: nothing. Perfect stillness. Reese scans the walls.
His breath fogs.

The flame dims.

Suddenly-

A BRICK falls loose from the far wall. Not near the new
facade—from the opposite wall.

Reese steps forward, examining it.

A hole. Something glinting within.

He reaches in.

His hand closes on an old brass token—military style.
Engraved: "For Services Rendered - April 1865"

FLASH MEMORY - WARFIELD (1865)

The same token - pinned to a dying soldier's coat. Blood pouring. Reese, younger, screams for a medic.

BACK TO PRESENT

The blood on his palm now mirrors that old scene - exact same angle, same drip pattern.

REESE
(quietly)
No. Not you. Not again.

He yanks it out.

Blood on his palm.

Behind him—a deep breath.

Reese turns.

No one's there.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. TOMBSTONE KEEPER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT - LATER

THOMAS REESE sits at his desk, the brass token glinting under candlelight. Blood still stains the edge.

He sketches the token's design into his journal, beside a crude diagram of the tomb's layout.

THOMAS (V.O.)
May 14. Found something behind the
inner wall. Nothing should be
there. No record. No reason.

He flips back through earlier pages—some torn, others smudged—as if rewriting past nights. Then:

A soft tap tap tap.

He freezes.

INT. TOMB - NIGHT

Lantern in hand, Thomas enters. The air is thick. Still.

He stops near the false burial spot.

The tapping continues. It's coming from beneath the stone floor.

His hand hovers over the seam in the bricks. The tapping stops.

Suddenly—

A loud metallic clang from the opposite wall.

Thomas spins. The lantern flickers.

From the shadows, a shape shifts—

A TALL FIGURE in black... standing at the entrance.
Motionless.

Thomas raises the lantern.

The figure is gone.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Thomas sits in a back pew, gripping his rosary. A PRIEST (70s) finishes his sermon.

PRIEST

—And so we pray not only for the
living, but for the disturbed...
those who were not laid to rest,
whose spirits echo where peace was
denied.

Thomas bows his head. Behind his eyelids: Lincoln's face,
cold but unblinking. Watching.

INT. TOMBSTONE KEEPER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Montage of restless nights:

Thomas jerks awake.

FLASH - A dream: Lincoln stands at the foot of his bed, lips
moving silently.

Reese grabs for his revolver—but can't lift it.

His hands are bound. Candlelight flickers—then darkness.

BACK TO NIGHT - Reese stumbles out of bed, gasping.

Wipes sweat from his neck

Glances at the door to the tomb, always ajar

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - NIGHT (LATER)

Thomas brings a Bible and places it on the floor above Lincoln's hidden grave.

THOMAS
You're not forgotten. But you need
to let go.

He lights candles. Prays aloud.

Suddenly—a single bootstep behind him.

He turns—

Nothing.

But the Bible is gone.

INT. TOMBSTONE KEEPER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT (LATER)

Thomas scribbles in his journal.

THOMAS (V.O.)
May 20. The token burns cold in my
palm now. I buried it outside the
grounds. Still, the noises
continue. Still, I see him—tall
hat, black coat... like he never
left Ford's Theatre.

He stops writing.

His candle goes out.

And from the tomb, outside the window, a faint glow rises.

He stands. Grabs his revolver.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Thomas moves across the dew-covered grass. The moon is high.
The tomb glows faintly—from within.

He pushes open the door.

INT. TOMB - NIGHT

Dozens of candles now burn around the chamber. Arranged in perfect symmetry—like a funeral vigil.

In the center:

The Bible, now open... turned to the Book of Lamentations.

Written in fresh red ink, beneath the passage:

"Arise, cry out in the night... pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord..."

Below it—a childlike drawing of Lincoln's face.

Thomas backs away, breath trembling.

THOMAS

No... no...

He turns to run—

Standing at the exit—

His fingers twitch. He lowers the revolver.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Are you asking for help... or
giving warning?

The candles behind him flare once—then die.

Reese turns—

LINCOLN.

Unmoving. His face pale and solemn. Eyes full of burden.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Thomas stares at the figure in the doorway—tall, motionless, silhouetted in flickering candlelight.

The stovepipe hat. The long coat. The shape of Lincoln... exactly as he's remembered.

THOMAS

(muttering to himself)

You're not real. You're memory.
Guilt. Nothing more.

He raises his revolver with a trembling hand.

The figure doesn't move.

Thomas fires.

The flash from the muzzle illuminates the empty doorway.

No figure. No body. Just the sound of the bullet ricocheting off stone.

He staggers back, breathing hard.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You're dead. You're supposed to be dead.

He drops the revolver. It clatters across the stone floor.

The sound of the bullet still echoes.

Reese doesn't move. Doesn't breathe.

Then—from beneath the floorboards— A soft scrape. Like wood against stone. Measured. Intentional.

REESE

(muttering)

You're not memory. You're waiting.

INT. TOMBSTONE KEEPER'S QUARTERS - LATER THAT NIGHT

Thomas sits at his desk, pale and soaked in sweat. He tries to write in his journal.

CLOSE ON THE PAGE - The ink bleeds. The letters no longer form words—just shaky lines, illegible and frantic.

He tears the page out. Opens the drawer.

Inside: the brass token he buried earlier. It's back.

Thomas lets out a low, broken laugh. Then slams the drawer shut.

INT. TOWN HALL - SPRINGFIELD - DAY

ROBERT TODD LINCOLN, now older, sits at a polished table across from AGENT WALKER, gray-haired but sharp.

A young aide brings them a letter. Walker reads.

AGENT WALKER
Caretaker's gone. Took nothing.
Left his quarters locked.

Robert nods grimly.

AGENT WALKER (CONT'D)
Local clergy found his journal.
Scribbles, mostly. Nonsense near
the end.

ROBERT LINCOLN
Is the tomb secure?

AGENT WALKER
It is. But I suggest this be the
last change. Next time, there won't
be anyone left to watch him.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - NIGHT (SOME DAYS LATER)

The tomb is sealed again. Quiet. No candles, no wind.

Just silence.

A low creak. A faint shuffle of movement from beneath the
stone floor.

Then stillness.

EXT. CEMETERY GROUNDS - NIGHT

The camera pulls slowly away from the tomb, the night
stretching out around it—cold, quiet, eternal.

FADE TO:

SUPERIMPOSE: Springfield, Illinois - September 1901

EXT. OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - DAY

A carriage arrives, kicking up dust along the cemetery lane.

ROBERT TODD LINCOLN steps out in black, older now, shoulders
heavy with years.

Awaiting him at the tomb entrance: EDWARD S. JOHNSON, the
caretaker from the opening scene.

They exchange a silent nod.

EXT. OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - TOMB ENTRANCE - DAY (1901)

ROBERT TODD LINCOLN and EDWARD S. JOHNSON stand before the iron gate. The lock clanks open. Edward pushes the gate aside.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - MOMENTS LATER

Dim light filters in. Dust motes hang in the still air. The silence is sacred.

Edward lights a lantern from the wall. He nods toward the floor.

EDWARD

He's still below. Just as we left him in '76.

ROBERT LINCOLN

No press. No politicians. Just us.

EDWARD

You think it's necessary?

ROBERT LINCOLN

It's beyond necessary. We either put this legend to rest... or it festers another hundred years.

He walks to the center of the floor—the false slab. Edward kneels, brushes away fine grit.

EDWARD

I'll bring in the crew after dark.
Fewer questions.

Robert nods, but lingers, hand resting on the slab.

ROBERT LINCOLN

Last time I saw him, his face
hadn't changed in over a decade.

Edward doesn't respond.

ROBERT LINCOLN (CONT'D)

I remember something my father
said. "Die when I may, I want it
said of me that I always plucked a
thistle and planted a flower where
I thought a flower would grow."

He looks around at the tomb. Cold. Hollow. Choked with shadows.

ROBERT LINCOLN (CONT'D)
There are no flowers in this place.

Edward turns to speak—but doesn't.

Robert's fingers brush the slab again.

ROBERT LINCOLN (CONT'D)
I buried a father. I uncovered a
riddle.
You ever bury someone who refuses
to leave?

INT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY - RECORDS ROOM - DAY

Dusty volumes line the walls. AGENT TYRONE WALKER (60s now, still trim) stands beside a young ARCHIVIST (20s, eager), flipping through Thomas Reese's journal—the Watchman from 1887.

ARCHIVIST
That's the original. Never
published. Too much... folklore.

Walker skims the last entry.

INSERT - JOURNAL PAGE

Ragged ink. Slanted handwriting. The final legible line:

"He is not at rest. None of us are."

Walker closes the journal.

WALKER
He said it in '76. And now again in
'87. All of them seeing the same
thing.

ARCHIVIST
You think there's truth in it?

Walker hesitates. Looks through the high, dusty window.

WALKER
It's not my job to think. Just to
make sure the truth stays buried.

EXT. CEMETERY GATEHOUSE - NIGHT

The sun dips. Workers arrive in a covered wagon—shovels, pulleys, tools wrapped in canvas.

Edward meets them, gives quiet instructions.

From a distance, a YOUNG BOY watches. Maybe ten. Holding a notebook. Sketching.

His mother yells from afar.

MOTHER (O.S.)
Tommy! Leave the dead alone!

The boy runs off.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - NIGHT

Four WORKERS prepare the site. Lanterns line the walls. The floor slab is half-lifted, exposing the cavity beneath.

One worker coughs.

WORKER #1
You smell that?

WORKER #2
Just old earth.

They finish removing the slab. Inside:

LINCOLN'S COFFIN, iron bands rusted, the wood blackened with age—but intact.

Edward stares at it.

EDWARD
God help us... it's time.

The workers glance between each other.

WORKER #3
Why's it warm down there?

They all pause. Listen.

The air from the tomb cavity is strangely still—but warmer than above.

He turns to the others.

EDWARD

Put it on the pulley. Slowly. Don't
jostle him.

The men nod and begin lowering ropes.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - ROBERT LINCOLN'S TEMPORARY LODGING -
NIGHT

Robert sits alone. His suitcase is open. On the bed lies a
folded letter--the last letter his father wrote him, yellowed
and cracked with time.

He opens it.

LINCOLN (V.O.)

"I leave it to my son to carry
forth whatever good my name may
still inspire. To be forgotten is
the fate of all men. But to be
remembered wrongly... is a
tragedy."

Robert folds the letter back. Stares at the blank wall ahead.

A faint knock at the door.

EDWARD (O.S.)

We're ready, sir.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - NIGHT - 1901

The air is thick with dust and candle smoke. The men have
assembled again--six in total, including EDWARD, ROBERT
LINCOLN, and AGENT WALKER.

LINCOLN'S COFFIN now rests above the floor on a wooden
support platform, roped and braced.

Lanterns flicker across the chamber walls. Shadows stretch
unnaturally.

Each flame seems to bend slightly toward the coffin--like
gravity, but wrong.

One lantern suddenly dims to nearly nothing, then steadies
again.

The men don't speak. The air feels... heavier now.

EDWARD
Mr. Lincoln... whenever you're
ready.

Robert steps forward.

A long silence.

He nods to a worker.

The man inserts a crowbar beneath the rusted seam.

A SCREECH OF METAL ON METAL pierces the chamber.

The lid shifts. Dust billows into the air.

WORKER #1
(quietly)
Lord have mercy...

They lift the lid.

And there he is.

INSERT - INSIDE THE COFFIN

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Unchanged.

Beard still curled. Skin pale, waxen. High cheekbones intact.
Eyes closed.

As though he had just lain down yesterday.

WORKER #2
(stepping back)
Jesus...

EDWARD
Thirty-six years...

WALKER
Thirty-six, five months, and twelve
days.

A long beat.

One of the men begins to tremble. Another starts breathing
heavier.

WORKER #3

I heard the stories. But I didn't believe...

WORKER #1

Is he embalmed... or preserved?

They all turn to Robert.

ROBERT LINCOLN

The embalmer is dead. The undertaker is dead. The last watchman disappeared.

He looks down at his father.

ROBERT LINCOLN (CONT'D)

And yet, you remain.

A pause.

Then—a low sound. Barely audible. A rasp.

All heads snap to the coffin.

WORKER #2

Tell me that was the wind.

A single droplet of condensation trails from Lincoln's brow.

One worker drops his lantern. It shatters.

ROBERT LINCOLN

Seal it. Now.

EDWARD

Should we photograph—?

ROBERT LINCOLN

No. No more records. No more legends.

He turns away. But then stops.

He looks back.

Lincoln's eyes—

Open.

Just a crack. But enough.

Wide enough to reflect the lantern light.

WALKER

Sir-

Robert steps forward. Stares down. Frozen.

And then-

CLOSE-UP - LINCOLN'S FACE

Still. Silent. Eyes closed once more.

As if they'd never moved at all.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - LATER

The coffin is sealed again. Reinforced.

Cement poured. Iron cage laid. Final slab placed.

All under candlelight and silence.

The men finish their work.

Robert watches them go. One by one, they exit.

He remains.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - MOMENTS LATER

Robert stands alone.

ROBERT LINCOLN

(quietly, to the sealed
floor)

I've done what you asked. I've
protected your memory.

He pauses.

ROBERT LINCOLN (CONT'D)

But I don't think you're at rest.

The lantern flickers.

He turns and leaves.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Robert steps into the carriage waiting near the path. Edward closes the door behind him.

EDWARD
Safe travels, sir.

The carriage pulls away down the foggy lane.

The iron gate to the tomb swings slowly closed.

It locks with a loud CLANG.

INT. FEDERAL ARCHIVES - PRIVATE OFFICE - WASHINGTON D.C. -
NIGHT

A small lamp glows on the desk of AGENT TYRONE WALKER. He's older now, methodical, and deeply aware of how history turns on silence.

He types slowly on an old Remington typewriter. The page reads:

"SUBJECT: Observation and Condition of Presidential Remains -
Sept. 26, 1901 - Classified"

He pauses.

Then types:

"Deceased appears physically unchanged since last documented visual verification (1876). Subject's condition inconsistent with expected post-mortem decay after 36 years. Recommend continued restriction of access to all personnel not pre-cleared via internal memorandum 38-X."

He stops. Looks at the blank space beneath his signature line.

Instead of typing further, he removes the sheet. Rips it in half.

He opens a file drawer marked: "Baker-Holt Files -
Suppressed."

Inside—Thomas Reese's original journal.

He places the shredded report inside and closes the drawer.

A soft knock.

AIDE (O.S.)
Sir? Mr. Lincoln's arrived.

INT. INTERIOR PARLOR - FEDERAL BUILDING - NIGHT

ROBERT TODD LINCOLN enters, hat in hand. WALKER stands to greet him.

WALKER
Mr. Lincoln.

ROBERT
We said this would be the last
time. I meant it.

WALKER
I believe you. But there's
movement. Quiet... but real.

He pulls out a slim folder. Slides it across the desk.

WALKER (CONT'D)
A reporter filed a Freedom of
Information request... on the 1876
attempted robbery.

ROBERT
That was sealed.

WALKER
Apparently not tightly enough.

ROBERT
Who's the reporter?

WALKER
We don't know. But we have someone
local-young, smart-starting to
connect pieces.

Robert exhales. Opens the file.

INSERT - PHOTOS: A photocopy of a journal page... a map of
Oak Ridge... and an aged black-and-white photograph of the
Watchman, Thomas Reese.

ROBERT
You buried him. Why does he keep
coming back?

WALKER
Some truths... don't stay dead.

Walker's eyes flick toward the sealed file cabinet.

WALKER (CONT'D)

(slowly)

The girl's name is Nellie Jacobs.
State Journal. Too smart for her
own safety.

ROBERT

Then we keep her away from the
tomb.

WALKER

She's already closer than you
think.

INT. SPRINGFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY - ARCHIVES ROOM - NIGHT

The young ARCHIVIST we met earlier now works alone. Papers,
boxes, and brittle volumes cover the desk.

He places Reese's original journal next to a box of cemetery
blueprints.

ARCHIVIST (TO HIMSELF)

Section 3A... plot elevation
changes...

He flips through Reese's sketches. His fingers stop at a
crude map showing a second burial layer beneath the tomb.

He overlays it on the blueprint.

They don't match.

He pulls out a ruler, tracing lines.

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

No... no, this can't be right.

He digs into a box labeled "UNFILED MATERIALS - 1890-1905."

Inside: a sealed envelope, yellowed and stamped CONFIDENTIAL
- U.S. INTERIOR.

He slowly opens it.

Inside—a photo of the casket being lowered beneath the tomb
floor, taken secretly.

On the back, in fading pencil:

"Not the first burial. Possibly not the last."

He stares at it, heart pounding.

Then—

A sound.

Floorboards creak.

He turns.

Empty hallway.

He slowly tucks the envelope into his satchel. Dims the lamp.

Locks the room behind him.

EXT. SPRINGFIELD - STREETS NEAR THE STATE JOURNAL OFFICE -
DAY

Early fall wind scatters leaves across the pavement. A young woman in a long brown coat strides toward a brick building, notepad tucked beneath her arm.

SUPER: October 1, 1901

This is NELLIE JACOBS (28) — sharp-eyed, assertive, and relentless. A reporter for The Illinois State Journal with a reputation for asking the wrong questions in the right rooms.

She steps into the building.

INT. NEWSROOM - STATE JOURNAL - MOMENTS LATER

A small bullpen—typewriters clacking, editors shouting, cigarette smoke drifting. Nellie drops her satchel onto a desk.

EDITOR (60S, BALDING)
Nellie, I didn't green light
anything from you on Oak Ridge.
That's history, not news.

NELLIE
You want a scandal? Try this: a
missing body, a sealed tomb,
and federal silence. That's not
history. That's a cover-up.

NELLIE (CONT'D)
You said history only matters when
it makes someone squirm. Consider
this squirm-worthy.

She drops a photo onto his desk—an old grainy image of armed guards outside Lincoln's tomb from 1876.

EDITOR

Where'd you get this?

NELLIE

Public records. Took some digging. You know the weirdest part? Nobody ever signed a death certificate for that caretaker who vanished in '87. And the Reese journal? Pages missing. No explanation.

EDITOR

(cautioning)

You think the Lincoln family wants you stirring that up?

NELLIE

I don't care what the Lincoln family wants. I care what's true.

EDITOR

You're playing with fire.

NELLIE

So was Prometheus.

She picks up the photo and heads for the door.

EXT. OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Nellie walks the perimeter road, notebook in hand. The tomb looms in the distance, gated and silent.

She watches as a cemetery groundskeeper locks the gate for the evening.

NELLIE

Excuse me—sir?

GROUNDKEEPER

Tours ended hours ago.

NELLIE

I'm not here for a tour. I'm here to ask what happened the night they sealed the tomb again. A week ago.

The man stiffens.

GROUNDSKEEPER

I don't know what you're talking
about.

He walks away quickly.

Nellie flips her notebook to a new page.

CLOSE ON HER WRITING

"Employee evasive. Sealed tomb. No official statement from city or family."

She looks back at the tomb.

The wind picks up.

A single leaf lands at her feet—burnt around the edges.

INT. ROBERT LINCOLN'S PRIVATE STUDY - WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

Gaslamps flicker. Robert sits alone, reading a wire dispatch.
His face tightens.

INSERT - DISPATCH TEXT

"LOCAL REPORTER INVESTIGATING 1876 ROBBERY AND 1901 RESEALING. JOURNALIST NAME: JACOBS, NELLIE."

He crumples the telegram.

Gazes out the window.

EXT. OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - NIGHT

The tomb stands quiet.

But in the distance a lantern bobbing.

A silhouette moves across the trees. Watching.

Then vanishes into the dark.

INT. SPRINGFIELD LIBRARY - SPECIAL COLLECTIONS - NEXT MORNING

The EUGENE MATHERS, 20-something, ARCHIVIST sits at a table strewn with cemetery maps, Reese's journal, and a folded photo from the Interior file.

He's muttering to himself.

EUGENE

That elevation shift doesn't make
sense... unless...

He overlays the 1876 tomb diagram with a newer blueprint.

His brow furrows.

A SHADOW falls across the table.

NELLIE (O.S.)

You're not a city official. Which
makes it interesting that you're
spending so much time studying
Lincoln's tomb.
So are you just checking tomb
blueprints for fun.

What are you really looking for?

EUGENE

(beat)

I had an uncle. He was one of the
1901 laborers.

He came back... wrong. Wrote numbers on the walls. Stopped
eating.

Died in the asylum. I'm not letting that happen again.

Eugene looks up--startled.

EUGENE (CONT'D)

Who--?

NELLIE

Nellie Jacobs. Illinois State
Journal. I filed three requests
last year to see those blueprints.
I was denied.

EUGENE

I work for the Historical Society.
I'm--I'm just researching the site's
modifications for a legacy
preservation paper.

NELLIE

And I'm a tightrope walker from
Peoria.

She pulls out the same old photo of the armed tomb.

NELLIE (CONT'D)
You've seen this?

EUGENE
Yes. It's real.

A long beat.

NELLIE
Do you know what they buried down
there in '76?

Eugene hesitates.

EUGENE
Not for sure. But I think... I
think it's not the first time they
buried him.

He pushes the journal across the table.

Nellie scans a page—Reese's final entry:

"They built the slab over him. Again. But it doesn't hold.
Not really."

NELLIE
You ever think about what would
happen if this got out?

EUGENE
Sometimes.

NELLIE
I think about it every day.

INT. ROBERT LINCOLN'S RESIDENCE - D.C. - NIGHT

A storm rolls outside the windows.

Robert sits at his writing desk. His father's last letter
lies open beside a fresh sheet of paper.

He begins to write.

INSERT - HANDWRITING

"To whom it may concern... If these words are read, it means
I failed to protect my father's final legacy..."

He hesitates.

Outside, thunder rolls. The house groans.

He crosses out the sentence and writes instead:

"If these words are read... it means something woke up."

He stops. Looks up at the portrait on the wall.

Abraham Lincoln.

Candlelight flickers across the glass. For a moment, Robert's own reflection lines up with his father's.

INT. TRAIN STATION - SPRINGFIELD - LATER THAT NIGHT

Eugene paces the platform. Nellie waits nearby, her satchel over her shoulder.

EUGENE

I don't know about this.

NELLIE

You don't have to know. You just have to show up.

EUGENE

You think they'll arrest us?

NELLIE

If they do, we'll make page one.

EUGENE

You're not scared?

NELLIE

Of ghosts? No.
Of the living? Every damn day.

She boards the train.

Eugene looks down at a leather case in his hands—Reese's original journal.

He boards.

INT. FEDERAL INTERIOR OFFICE - NIGHT

AGENT WALKER receives a telegram.

INSERT - TELEGRAM

"Springfield journalist, Jacobs, en route to Washington with primary source materials. ETA: Friday."

Walker exhales.

Then turns to a filing cabinet.

Pulls open a drawer marked: "1876 INCIDENT - TIER 1 CLEARANCE ONLY."

From inside, he removes a sealed envelope, stamped:

"REMAINS - ALTERNATE SITE RECORDS"

He stares at it.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - DAY

EUGENE and NELLIE sit in a small booth near the rear. Trees whip past the windows.

Eugene clutches Reese's journal tightly in his lap.

NELLIE

You're thinking of backing out.

EUGENE

I'm thinking... this isn't how I imagined becoming a footnote in history.

NELLIE

No one ever is.

Beat.

EUGENE

What if we're wrong? What if it really is just old stories and misfiled diagrams?

Nellie opens her notebook. Inside, clippings: the robbery in '76, the Watchman's disappearance, the anonymous memo from 1890.

NELLIE

You ever notice how stories vanish right before they turn into truth?

She taps a photo—Thomas Reese's missing poster.

NELLIE (CONT'D)
They buried him, too.

EUGENE
And what if he didn't stay buried?

NELLIE
Then I'll dig until we find the
truth.
Or until the dirt buries us both.

INT. LINCOLN RESIDENCE - ROBERT'S PRIVATE STUDY - NIGHT

Rain taps softly at the windows.

ROBERT LINCOLN sits at his desk, reading an old letter—not from his father, but from Mary Todd Lincoln, dated 1866.

"He would not have wanted to be martyred. He only ever wanted to go home."

Robert folds it.

Lights his pipe.

He does not notice the candle beside him flickering without wind.

INT. FEDERAL INTERIOR OFFICE - WAR ROOM - NIGHT

AGENT WALKER stands over a map of Springfield, pins marking the original tomb, the 1876 false wall, and the secret 1901 chamber.

An aide enters with a new dispatch.

AIDE
They've arrived.

Walker nods.

WALKER
Keep them under observation. I want to know who they speak to—and where they go.

AIDE
And if they try to go back to the tomb?

Walker folds the map.

WALKER

Then we remind them some graves are
better left closed.

EXT. UNION STATION - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

The train hisses to a stop beneath a cloudy sky.

NELLIE and EUGENE step off into the crowd, unaware of the
federal agents watching from across the concourse.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - SMALL ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Nellie tacks clippings and maps onto the wall.

Eugene stands at the window, watching the street below.

EUGENE

We're being followed.

NELLIE

Good. Means they're nervous.

She picks up a letter she's been drafting:

"To The New York Times: Enclosed you'll find a series of
documents relating to the death, exhumation, and possible
suppression of the condition of Abraham Lincoln's body..."

Eugene turns from the window.

EUGENE

You're going to publish?

NELLIE

Not yet. But I want them to know I
can.

She seals the envelope.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - SMALL ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Nellie sets the sealed envelope aside. Eugene hovers behind
her, visibly shaken.

EUGENE

You don't understand what this
could do.

NELLIE

To who? Him? He's dead.

EUGENE

Not just him. Robert. The country.
If we tell people Lincoln's body
never decomposed—if we make that
public—it changes everything.

She sits.

NELLIE

Or maybe it just changes what
people believe about him. Maybe
it's time they stopped worshiping a
myth and started reckoning with the
man.

A pause.

EUGENE

You sound like you want to break
something.

NELLIE

Maybe I do.

A gust of wind howls down the chimney.

The envelope on the desk shifts—slides an inch by itself.

They both stare.

No words. Just unease.

INT. ROBERT LINCOLN'S STUDY - NIGHT

Robert walks the length of his study, restless. He stops by
the fireplace.

On the mantle sits a framed photograph of his father—not as
president, but younger, cleaner-shaven, holding Robert as a
child.

Robert stares.

Then removes the back of the frame. Inside is a small, folded
letter.

He unfolds it carefully.

INSERT - LETTER EXCERPT

"If history must remember me, let it remember also my burden.
The sorrow of surviving what others die to build."

He closes his eyes.

LINCOLN (V.O.)
"... let it be said I always tried to
plant a flower..."

Robert folds the page. Looks into the fire.

Then softly:

ROBERT
The sorrow of surviving what others
die to build.

INT. FEDERAL ARCHIVES - BASEMENT STACKS - LATE NIGHT

Eugene, alone again, sorts through old files under dim
lighting.

He finds a document labeled:

"CIRCUIT RIDER FILES - CONFIDENTIAL 1877-1890"

Inside: correspondence between Interior officials and the
Springfield Watchmen—all referencing unlisted tomb visits,
sealed entries, and unapproved nighttime access.

A red-stamped page:

"DO NOT REOPEN WITHOUT TIER 1 AUTHORIZATION - STATUS: ACTIVE"

EUGENE
(to himself)
They knew. All of them.

He copies the file by hand. Just as he finishes—

A rustle behind him.

He turns.

No one there.

But a file drawer is now slightly open—even though he closed
it.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - SAME NIGHT

Nellie sits awake. The envelope still lies on the desk—now with a postage stamp affixed.

She stares at it.

Then reaches into her coat and pulls out the photograph of Lincoln's face from 1901—what little detail is visible shows a man unchanged by time.

She sets it beside Reese's journal.

Two truths.

Both heavier than myth.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - SMALL ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUED)

NELLIE tucks the sealed envelope beneath a floorboard. EUGENE sits on the edge of the bed, silent.

NELLIE

You don't have to stay in this.

EUGENE

I've read too much to leave now.

A soft knock at the door.

They freeze.

NELLIE (O.S.)

Who is it?

No answer.

She opens the door—nothing but the hallway.

She looks down.

An unmarked envelope lies on the floor.

INT. ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nellie opens it. Inside: a photograph, freshly printed.

INSERT - PHOTO

Eugene and Nellie on the train platform. Taken from a distance.

NELLIE
They're watching us.

Eugene takes the envelope. Something else falls out.

A single sheet of paper. Typed.

"You are not the first to try. The last man disappeared in 1887."

NELLIE (CONT'D)
They think this is over a story.

EUGENE
What if it's over something still
breathing?

Nellie doesn't answer. She fingers the photo— Lincoln's tomb faintly visible in the distance.

EUGENE (CONT'D)
(slowly)
We're being watched... like the
tomb watches back.

They look at each other.

INT. ROBERT LINCOLN'S PRIVATE STUDY - DAY

ROBERT stares at the now-crumpled letters from his father and mother.

His butler appears.

BUTLER
Sir... there's someone here to see
you. He says it's urgent.

ROBERT
Who?

BUTLER
Says his name is Asa Bledsoe.
Claims he worked with the Bureau
during the war.

Robert's face tightens.

INT. SITTING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

ASA BLEDSOE (70s) sits straight-backed, military posture, thick gray mustache. A former intelligence man-sharp and haunted.

ASA
Mr. Lincoln. I'm sorry to come
unannounced.

ROBERT
You were with my father?

ASA
More like around him. I worked
under Stanton. My job was to
protect certain truths.

He pulls out a leather pouch. Removes a bundle of brittle documents and photographs.

ASA (CONT'D)
You're being hunted, sir. Not for
what you know... but for what they
think you'll say.

ROBERT
"They"?

ASA
The ones who've kept this secret
longer than you've carried it.

Robert opens one of the photos. A nighttime burial. Torchlight. Lincoln's casket midair.

Another photo: a man resembling Reese, staring directly into the camera-eyes hollow.

ASA (CONT'D)
This story doesn't belong to you
anymore. It belongs to whoever
survives it.

INT. FEDERAL OFFICE - WALKER'S DESK - NIGHT

WALKER looks out a rain-slicked window. His desk is empty-except for a sealed packet addressed to "R. Lincoln."

He runs his fingers along the edges.

He doesn't mail it.

EXT. WASHINGTON STREETS - DAY

NELLIE and EUGENE walk quickly, satchel clutched close.

Across the street, a man in a bowler hat lights a cigarette—and watches.

They enter the Library of Congress.

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - RESEARCH ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

They meet a female researcher in her 60s—MARGARET DONOVAN, head of Special Acquisitions.

She eyes Reese's journal and the envelope Nellie holds.

MARGARET

You found this in Springfield?

NELLIE

It matches your suppressed material
from the Interior files, doesn't
it?

Margaret opens a drawer. Removes a battered binder:
"Confidential Accessions - Lincoln Collection."

Inside—multiple matching notations to Reese, to the
Springfield tomb, to a person only listed as 'Subject 45-L.'

MARGARET (QUIETLY)

They didn't want the world to
remember what didn't decay.

A long silence.

EUGENE

But they remembered it anyway.

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - BASEMENT STACKS - LATER

Margaret Donovan leads Nellie and Eugene through the
underbelly of the archives.

Fluorescent bulbs buzz above. Pipes hum overhead.

MARGARET

We don't file these publicly. Too
dangerous. Not for the story. For
the precedent.

She unlocks a metal cage door.

Inside: unmarked boxes, faded ledgers, and a sealed crate marked "EVIDENCE HOLD - 1877."

MARGARET (CONT'D)

This crate was recovered in 1902 from a private residence. Belonged to one of the Springfield grave workers. He vanished before it could be returned.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

We never proved this came from Springfield. But everyone who handled it... had dreams.

NELLIE

Of him?

MARGARET

Of the ground cracking open.

She hands Nellie a pair of gloves.

Nellie opens the crate.

Inside:

A rusted lantern

A charred Bible

An iron nameplate: "A. Lincoln"

And a scrap of unburned paper tucked into the book's spine

INSERT - PAPER TEXT

"His face watches me in dreams. Even now. Even sealed."

Eugene steps back.

EUGENE

We're in too deep.

NELLIE

Or maybe just deep enough.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

A man watches from across the street.

He pulls out a notepad.

INSERT - NOTES PAGE

"Jacobs - LOC visit confirmed. Subject has Reese journal + unauthorized documents."

He tears the page, slips it into an envelope addressed to "INTERIOR OPS - CLASSIFIED."

INT. LINCOLN'S STUDY - NIGHT

Robert pours a drink. A light knock.

He opens the door.

AGENT WALKER stands there, raincoat dripping.

WALKER
We've got a problem.

ROBERT
Only one?

Robert doesn't speak.

Walker steps in, dripping onto the carpet.

He sets a satchel down on the table. Opens it.

Inside—a newspaper draft from the New York Times.

WALKER
It's not printed. Yet. But it's
real. And it came from D.C. They're
not chasing the truth.
They're chasing the legend.
And legends bleed when you cut too
deep.

Robert scans the headline:

"Was Lincoln's Body Hidden Twice? New Evidence Surfaces from
Springfield Sources"

ROBERT
Jacobs.

WALKER
And a historical society junior
researcher. Both slippery. Both
stupid.

Robert folds the paper. Taps it on the table.

ROBERT
I buried the man. I buried him with
dignity.

WALKER
The truth doesn't stay buried.

Beat.

WALKER (CONT'D)
If you want this silenced, it'll
take more than words.

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - RESEARCH ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Nellie returns with coffee. Eugene isn't at the table.

She glances at his notes. Reese's journal is missing.

She runs to the desk clerk.

NELLIE
The man I was with—Eugene Mathers.
Where is he?

CLERK
He left about fifteen minutes ago.

Nellie sprints outside—

EXT. LIBRARY STEPS - CONTINUOUS

She scans the street—no sign of him.

But on the ground—his satchel.

She picks it up.

Inside: torn pages. A single note.

"Don't follow. They said they'd come after you too."

Not disappear into it.

She grips the satchel tighter. Her breath fogs like a prayer.

She clutches the satchel to her chest, breath ragged.

Then looks up across the street.

The man in the bowler hat stares back at her.

Then turns and walks away.

NELLIE
(softly)
You said you wanted to make
history.

EXT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - MOMENTS LATER

NELLIE clutches Eugene's satchel. Breath fogs the morning air.

She opens the flap—his notebook is gone.

Inside, only one item remains: a torn page from Reese's journal.

INSERT - JOURNAL EXCERPT

"I've sealed him again, but I hear him still. Not words—just weight."

Nellie stands there, shaken. Alone.

She looks down the street—no sign of Eugene.

But a slow realization crosses her face.

She turns and heads toward the train depot.

INT. PRIVATE CARRIAGE - EN ROUTE TO SPRINGFIELD - NIGHT

ROBERT LINCOLN sits by himself, staring out the window as shadowed countryside rolls past.

Across from him: WALKER, flipping through a folder marked:

"ARCHIVAL THREATS - JACOBS, NELLIE"

WALKER
You don't have to be there.

ROBERT
Yes, I do.

Walker studies him.

WALKER
You think she'll come back?

ROBERT
They always do.

INT. OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - CARETAKER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A lantern flickers in the window.

Inside, a new caretaker boils water for tea. He hears the front gate clink open.

Looks out.

Nothing.

Just wind.

He shuts the curtain.

EXT. OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - SAME NIGHT

NELLIE walks the perimeter alone, bundled tight against the chill.

She reaches the iron gate. Finds it unlocked.

Pushes it open slowly.

Walks toward the tomb.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - NIGHT

The walls breathe silence. Candle sconces long cold.

Nellie kneels before the false slab.

From her coat she removes a single page—a photocopy from Reese's journal—and a pressed flower.

She sets them both on the stone.

A whisper in the dark—wind, or memory:

LINCOLN (V.O.)
"Let it be said I always plucked a
thistle, and planted a flower..."

She stands. Exits without a word.

INT. SPRINGFIELD HOTEL - LOBBY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Robert checks in. Walker lingers nearby, watchful.

CLERK

Mr. Lincoln... welcome back.

Robert signs the registry.

CLERK (CONT'D)

You're the only guest tonight. Most folks don't come this time of year.

Robert nods.

ROBERT

Sometimes that's the point.

He signs under a false name.

The clerk glances at it. Doesn't ask.

Robert walks away, leaving a smear of ink across the ledger.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Robert sits on the bed, alone.

He pulls out a sealed envelope addressed: "To be opened only if the truth surfaces."

He places it on the nightstand.

Next to it: his father's final letter.

The wind howls outside.

INT. TRAIN STATION TELEGRAPH OFFICE - WASHINGTON - DAY

NELLIE JACOBS sits at a small desk, scribbling a message.

INSERT -
TELEGRAM DRAFT:

"To Editor, New York World.

Private meeting request. Have firsthand material on Lincoln's 1901 tomb resealing and missing government files. This is no hoax."

She folds it. Hands it to the operator.

OPERATOR
Sender's name?

She hesitates.

NELLIE
No name. Just tell him—he'll know
from the handwriting.

INT. LINCOLN FAMILY RESIDENCE - SPRINGFIELD - STUDY - DAY

ROBERT LINCOLN sits across from AGENT WALKER, who lays out a federal injunction draft.

WALKER
This halts all press activity
related to the tomb, Reese's
journal, and any unverified
materials linked to the '76 or '01
events.

ROBERT
On what grounds?

WALKER
Preservation of national myth. The
public doesn't need doubts about
its greatest president.

Robert studies the document. Silent.

WALKER (CONT'D)
You sign this... we shut it all
down. Permanently.

ROBERT
You assume that's what I want.

WALKER
You buried him twice. I'm trying to
protect that silence.

Robert doesn't respond immediately. Finally...

ROBERT
(low)
You think this silence is
protection?

WALKER
It's better than panic. Better than
myth becoming contagion.

ROBERT
It's already infected us.

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - HISTORICAL RESEARCH ROOM - NIGHT

MARGARET DONOVAN, senior researcher, works late. She opens a worn file:

"SPRINGFIELD INCIDENT - 1876: AGENT PATRICK TYRRELL REPORT"

INSERT - REPORT PAGE (MARGARET READS ALOUD)

"Suspects Mullen and Hughes apprehended in tomb. Kenally fled. Undercover agent Lewis Swigert maintained credibility throughout. No injuries reported. Subject's remains never disturbed."

She reads on. Her hand pauses.

MARGARET (V.O.)
"Evidence suggests additional
unauthorized access to tomb in
months following arrest - source
unknown."

She pulls the page. Folds it into an envelope.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - NELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nellie paces. The room is dark.

A knock.

She opens the door. Margaret enters, coat dusted with rain.

MARGARET
They're going to bury it again.
Legally this time.

She hands Nellie the envelope.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
But this is federal. Tyrrell's full
report. Never entered into court
record.

NELLIE
Can I quote it?

MARGARET
I didn't see anything.

Nellie stares at the envelope, her pulse racing.

INT. SPRINGFIELD NEWSROOM - EARLY MORNING

An editor reads Nellie's submission - a column titled:

"A Tomb Too Well Sealed"

He looks up.

EDITOR
This gets printed... you'll never
work in government media again.

NELLIE
Then I'll write history instead of
reporting it.

EDITOR
(quietly)
You know what this costs, right?

NELLIE
If history doesn't hurt, you're not
reading the right part.

He nods. Sets it for type.

INT. LINCOLN FAMILY RESIDENCE - STUDY - LATER THAT DAY

Robert sits at his desk. A letter from The New York World
lies open.

He pulls out a blank sheet.

Begins to write - slow, deliberate.

INSERT -
ROBERT'S
HANDWRITING:

"Let it be remembered not how he died, but how this nation
could not decide what to do with his memory."

He stops. Folds the paper. Seals it in an envelope.

LABEL: To be opened in 50 years.

He places it in a locked box.

INT. LINCOLN FAMILY RESIDENCE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS

WALKER watches Robert closely.

WALKER

You don't need to decide now. But
once that story runs--there's no
sealing it again.

Robert rises. Walks to the window.

Outside, the oak trees sway. He sees a young boy pass by on a bicycle, tossing a folded newspaper onto a doorstep.

ROBERT

Have you ever wondered if silence
is cowardice?

WALKER

I've wondered what silence
protects.

A long beat.

ROBERT

My father... believed in truth. But
he also believed in timing.

He walks to his desk. Opens a drawer. Pulls out a sealed envelope.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I wrote this months ago. If
anything ever surfaced.

He hands it to Walker.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You decide what to do with it. But
if Nellie publishes... let this go
with it.

WALKER

You're trusting the press?

ROBERT

No. I'm trusting history.

INT. PRINTING PRESS - NIGHT

Rotary presses spin. Sheets fly. Ink stains hands.

A bold headline scrolls across the feed:

"A TOMB TOO WELL SEALED"

Exclusive - New Details Emerge on 1901 Resealing of Lincoln's Remains

An editor signs off. Workers load stacks onto delivery carts.

EXT. WASHINGTON STREETS - DAWN

Bundles of papers hit doorsteps.

People begin to stir.

One man opens the headline. His eyes widen.

INT. NEWSROOM - NEW YORK WORLD - MORNING

Phones ring. Reporters shout.

EDITOR (YELLING)
Who the hell is Nellie Jacobs and
where the hell did she get a
federal report from 1876?!

Someone hands him a second page.

He reads it. Slows.

INSERT - OP-ED BY ROBERT LINCOLN (reprint):

"Let it be remembered not how he died, but how this nation
could not decide what to do with his memory..."

INT. FEDERAL INTERIOR OFFICE - WALKER'S DESK - LATER

Walker reads both articles in silence.

He hesitates.

Then adds, beneath it:

"But also remember what we buried to make a hero."

Closes the file.

Picks up a new document.

LABEL: RECOMMENDATION: RELOCATE REMAINS - CLASSIFIED VAULT,
WASHINGTON D.C.

He doesn't sign it.

He sets the pen down.

The ink bottle tips slightly- A single drop falls onto the
corner of the unsigned order. Spreads like a bloodstain.

WALKER
(muttering)
Some graves won't take orders.

EXT. CHICAGO BACK ALLEY - NIGHT - OCTOBER 1876

A thin veil of smoke rolls from chimneys. Crates piled high.
A flickering gaslamp barely lights the alley.

In the shadow of a crumbling tenement, BIG JIM KENNALLY (40s,
burly, smug) lights a cigar.

JACK HUGHES (30s, jumpy, eyes darting) and TERRENCE MULLEN
(late 20s, gaunt, nervous) approach, shivering from the
chill.

KENNALLY
(shaking out match)
You boys bring the wagon route?

Hughes nods, unrolling a smudged map of Springfield with
lines tracing roads, alleys, and a rough sketch of Oak Ridge
Cemetery.

HUGHES
That's the delivery path for the
funeral wagons. We hide off Third
Street. After midnight, no patrols.

KENNALLY
(grinning)
Perfect. We get in, get the box,
and by dawn it's halfway to St.
Louis.

MULLEN
(tense)
It's not just any box. It's him.

KENNALLY
He's a sack of bones, same as any
other. Just more valuable.

He puffs the cigar. The glow briefly lights his scarred face.

KENNALLY (CONT'D)

This ain't about desecration. It's business. Dead presidents don't pay taxes.

HUGHES

And if we get caught?

KENNALLY

(smirks)

Illinois law don't cover corpse theft. At worst, we get burglary. Hell, we might be out by Christmas.

Mullen eyes the custom-fitted crate behind them—reinforced with padded lining and straps.

MULLEN

You really think the Secret Service will just let this go?

KENNALLY

They don't even guard the tomb. And that undertaker's so old he can't tell a shovel from a cane.

HUGHES

You got someone on the inside?

KENNALLY

(grins wider)

Better. Got a guy who knows when they ain't watching.

INT. DIVE BAR - CHICAGO - LATER THAT NIGHT

A haze of pipe smoke. Ragtime music clicks on an out-of-tune piano.

Kennally slides into a back booth opposite a shadowy man—LEWIS SWIGERT (30s, clean-cut but playing it rough).

(Secretly an undercover Secret Service agent.)

SWIGERT

You're really going through with it?

KENNALLY

You bet your commission I am.
Already got buyers who'd pay to
parade the corpse through New
Orleans.

SWIGERT

(disgusted)
That's grotesque.

KENNALLY

It's America. We sell baseball
cards and bullets. Why not a
martyr?

Swigert forces a smirk.

SWIGERT

Just make sure you let me know when
you move.

KENNALLY

You'll get your cut.
(beat)
You ever think maybe he didn't die
like they said?

SWIGERT

What's that supposed to mean?

KENNALLY

Nothing. Just... stories. About
what that undertaker saw.

Swigert leans forward, intrigued but cautious.

SWIGERT

What did he see?

KENNALLY

Didn't say. But he never worked
again. Took to the bottle. Said the
dead man blinked.

Swigert stiffens. Kennally laughs, throws back a shot.

EXT. SPRINGFIELD - CEMETERY EDGE - TWO NIGHTS BEFORE ROBBERY

The crew arrives in advance, cloaked in darkness. They stash
the crate in the woods, map out escape routes, and mark the
tomb's back gate latch with a chalk X.

MULLEN
(quietly)
It's colder here.

HUGHES
What, the ground?

MULLEN
No. The air. Like something's
watching.

A low moan ripples through the trees. Not the wind.

KENNALLY
(scoffing)
That's history whispering, boys.

But even he doesn't sound sure.

Kennally ignores them, focused.

KENNALLY (CONT'D)
Two nights. We come back, haul him
out, and get paid. The Union can
keep their medals. We're getting
something better—immortality.

He slaps the crate. The sound echoes far too loudly.

EXT. OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - NIGHT - NOVEMBER 7, 1876

A dense fog blankets the graveyard. Lanterns glow dimly
through the trees.

SUPER: SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS - 1876

Three men in dark coats approach Lincoln's tomb. One carries
a crowbar. Another checks a pocket watch.

BIG JIM KENNALLY (40s) - Irish, imposing, leader of a Chicago
counterfeiting ring

JACK HUGHES (30s) - nervous, impulsive

TERRENCE MULLEN (late 20s) - smaller, more cautious

They reach the tomb's iron gate, already unlocked from an
earlier visit.

KENNALLY
Clock's ticking. Get that door
open.

Hughes fumbles with his tools. Mullen keeps watch over his shoulder.

MULLEN

I still say this is mad. Grave robbing's one thing. This is a president.

KENNALLY

He's a corpse. Same as any other. And corpses don't testify.

HUGHES

(grunting)

This ain't no ordinary lock...

He jams the crowbar in. Stone creaks. Metal strains. Finally — a SNAP.

The door edges open with a slow groan.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - OUTER CHAMBER - NIGHT

Darkness. Dust. The inner chamber is still.

Their lanterns cast jumpy shadows on the stone walls.

MULLEN

(whispers)

Smells like... mold and copper.

They step inside. The weight of history thick in the air.

KENNALLY

(eyeing the sarcophagus)

There he is. Right where they swore he wouldn't be.

They approach the sarcophagus — reinforced with rusted iron bands.

A plaque reads: ABRAHAM LINCOLN - 1809-1865

KENNALLY (CONT'D)

Quick now. Just the coffin. We leave the rest.

MULLEN

(quietly)

Feels like it's looking back at us.

He means the plaque. Or maybe the dark beyond it.

HUGHES
I don't want to touch him.

KENNALLY
We're not here to touch. We're here
to steal.

They begin prying at the clamps.

HUGHES
(grunting)
These bands are welded. This'll
take time...

MULLEN
And what? We just carry him out? In
that thing?

KENNALLY
(sharply)
We drag it if we have to. I've got
a fence in St. Louis who'll pay
five grand just to look at him.

They strain at the bindings. Sweat glistens despite the cold
air.

MULLEN
You hear that?

The others freeze.

KENNALLY
Just the wind. Keep working.

INT. OUTER TOMB HALL - SAME TIME

Two men wait in the shadows - undercover Secret Service
agents:

LEWIS SWIGERT (early 30s) - posing as a gang member

AGENT PATRICK TYRRELL (40s) - mustached, sharp-eyed
Springfield operative

Swigert quietly chambers a round in his revolver.

SWIGERT
No one else here.

Tyrrell nods. They advance, quietly.

INT. INNER TOMB CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

MULLEN
I swear I heard something.

HUGHES
Let's get out of here. Forget the
whole job!

KENNALLY
No one leaves without the prize.

Suddenly—FLASHLIGHT BEAMS CUT THROUGH THE DARK.

TYRRELL (O.S.)
Federal agents! Drop the tools!

SWIGERT (O.S.)
Hands in the air! Now!

Lanterns shatter. Chaos.

HUGHES bolts — crashes into a sarcophagus pillar.

MULLEN surrenders instantly, hands shaking.

KENNALLY
(grabbing a tool)
Back off! I'll smash his face in!

He grabs Mullen, holding the crowbar to his neck.

TYRRELL
Don't be a fool, Kennally.

KENNALLY
You want him alive? You back out
that door.

Swigert shifts position — gun trained.

SWIGERT
You're not walking out with a
president or a hostage.

A low rattle from the coffin behind them.

Everyone hears it.

TYRRELL
(whispers)
What the hell was that?

Even Kennally flinches.

A long tense moment—

Then Swigert lunges forward—grabs Mullen, knocks Kennally's arm aside.

The crowbar CLANGS across the floor.

Tyrrell cuffs Kennally.

TYRRELL (CONT'D)
You're under arrest for attempted
burglary of federal property.

HUGHES (O.S.)
(struggling, from outer
hall)
I didn't touch the body! I swear!

EXT. CEMETERY GATE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Kennally and Mullen sit cuffed in the back of a wagon.

Hughes is loaded into another, moaning.

TYRRELL
(to Swigert)
You did good, Lewis. That's one
president they won't counterfeit.

INT. SPRINGFIELD COURTHOUSE - DAY (WEEKS LATER)

A bored JUDGE reads from the bench.

JUDGE
Illinois statutes don't cover
corpse theft. Burglary it is.

One year in Joliet Prison.

The courtroom is silent. Too silent.

A creak in the gallery— Someone shifting in the shadows.
Watching.

The judge doesn't notice.

Kennally does.

Kennally laughs under his breath.

KENNALLY
We try to steal Lincoln and get
twelve months?

Mullen just lowers his head.

INT. FEDERAL INTERIOR FILE ROOM - 1877

Tyrrell stands alone, filing his final report.

The cover reads:

"Attempted Theft of Lincoln's Body - Closed"

Status: Remains Secure. Investigation Sealed.

He closes the drawer.

Locks it.

FADE TO:

RETURN TO ORIGINAL TIMELINE - 1901

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counterfeiting ring

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TERRENCE MULLEN (late 20s) - smaller, more cautious

KENNALLY
Clock's ticking. Get that door
open.

Hughes moves toward the tomb door, jams the crowbar in. Stone
creaks.

MULLEN

I still say this is mad. Grave robbing's one thing. This is a president.

KENNALLY

He's a corpse. Same as any other. And corpses don't testify.

The lock pops with a snap.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - NIGHT

Darkness. Dust. The inner chamber is silent.

The men move inside, lanterns flickering.

INSERT - WOODEN SARCOPHAGUS

Reinforced with rusted iron bands. A simple plaque:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN - 1809-1865

KENNALLY

Quick now. Just the coffin. We leave the rest.

They begin working the iron clamps loose.

INT. OUTER TOMB HALL - SAME TIME

Two men stand silent in the shadows - undercover Secret Service agents.

LEWIS SWIGERT (early 30s) - posing as a gang member

AGENT PATRICK TYRRELL (40s) - mustached, eyes sharp, Springfield's lead operative

He grips a pistol. Nods.

INT. INNER TOMB CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

MULLEN

You hear something?

KENNALLY

Just the wind.

VOICE (O.S.)
Federal agents! Drop the tools!

FLASHLIGHT BEAMS CUT THROUGH THE DARK.

Hughes panics – runs for the exit. A struggle erupts.
Kennally tries to flee, but Tyrrell and Swigert grab him.

TYRRELL
You're under arrest for attempted
burglary of federal property.

HUGHES (O.S.)
(being tackled)
I didn't touch the body! I swear!

EXT. CEMETERY GATE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Kennally and Mullen sit cuffed in the back of a wagon.

Hughes is loaded into another.

TYRRELL
(to Swigert)
You did good, Lewis. That's one
president they won't counterfeit.

INT. SPRINGFIELD COURTHOUSE - DAY (WEEKS LATER)

A bored JUDGE reads from the bench.

JUDGE
Illinois statutes don't cover
corpse theft. Burglary it is. One
year in Joliet Prison.

Kennally laughs under his breath.

KENNALLY
We try to steal Lincoln and get
twelve months?

Mullen shrinks in his seat.

INT. FEDERAL INTERIOR FILE ROOM - 1877

Tyrrell files away a final report. The cover reads:

"Attempted Theft of Lincoln's Body - Closed"

Status: Remains Secure. Investigation Sealed.

He closes the drawer.

Locks it.

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - HISTORICAL RESEARCH ROOM - NIGHT
(1901)

MARGARET DONOVAN finishes reading the suppressed Tyrrell report.

She closes the file.

Eyes narrowed.

MARGARET (V.O.)
They never moved the body. But
something moved that night.

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - HISTORICAL RESEARCH ROOM - NIGHT
(1901)

MARGARET DONOVAN closes the Tyrrell report. Her eyes linger on the words "Remains Secure. Investigation Sealed."

She exhales, slips the file back into its archival jacket.

Her hand trembles slightly.

She closes her eyes.

MARGARET
(whispering)
Why now? Why again?

From the hall, a clock ticks louder than it should.

She opens a desk drawer. Inside - a locked wooden box marked CONFIDENTIAL - LINCOLN TOMB FILES.

She adds a single line to the log sheet inside:

"November 7 - Accessed file 38-T, Tyrrell Report. Materials match subject testimony (Jacobs)."

She signs her name.

Then locks the box.

INT. NELLIE'S BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

NELLIE JACOBS sits at her desk. Eugene's satchel lies untouched nearby.

She stares at the torn page from Reese's journal - the one left behind after he vanished.

INSERT - JOURNAL
EXCERPT:

"I've sealed him again, but I hear him still. Not words—just weight."

She closes the journal. Picks up a blank notepad.

Begins writing.

INT. FEDERAL INTERIOR OFFICE - NIGHT

AGENT WALKER walks through the dim corridor, passing glass offices where clerks burn the midnight oil.

He enters his private office.

His coat is soaked. Not just from rain.

Walker moves slower now. Worn.

He locks the door behind him.

Double-checks it.

Then draws the blinds.

On the desk: a sealed envelope from Robert Lincoln.

He sits. Stares at it. Doesn't open it.

Instead, he types a short memo.

INSERT - MEMO
TEXT:

"Recommendation: Defer immediate relocation of remains. Public awareness risk now active. Monitoring press channels."

He stops typing. Tears the sheet in half.

Walker leans back, staring at a framed Civil War photo on the wall - young Abraham Lincoln with generals at Antietam.

Walker mutters:

WALKER
You still command more than half
the country. Dead or not.

EXT. SPRINGFIELD - OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - NIGHT

The wind howls through the bare trees.

A black carriage passes along the outer lane - its windows
curtained.

Inside: ROBERT LINCOLN, silhouetted, his face unreadable.

He passes the tomb.

The carriage doesn't stop.

But his eyes never leave it.

INT. SPRINGFIELD HOTEL - ROBERT'S SUITE - NIGHT

The suite is dark, except for a single gas lamp.

Robert opens a small tin box. Inside:

His father's last letter

The 1901 resealing telegram

Nellie's name scrawled in pencil

He pulls out a page he's been drafting. The writing is neat,
thoughtful.

INSERT -
ROBERT'S DRAFT
LETTER:

"History is not for us to bury. It is for us to live through
and carry - with all its rot and all its glory."

He folds the letter, places it in an envelope.

Labels it: "To be published only upon my death."

He slides it under the hotel room safe.

INT. TRAIN STATION - NELLIE - DAY

Nellie exits the telegram office. Her pace is quick, urgent.

She crosses the street.

Something makes her stop. She turns—

That same bowler-hatted man from before stands watching her from a newsstand.

They lock eyes.

He tips his hat...

And walks away, disappearing into the crowd.

INT. STATE JOURNAL NEWSROOM - DAY

The editor slams down the phone.

EDITOR

(to assistant)

They're printing it in New York.
She scooped the Times. You believe
that?

The assistant shrugs.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

I told her it was too hot. I told
her she was walking into a war...

He picks up the paper with Nellie's headline.

INSERT - FRONT
PAGE HEADLINE:

"A Tomb Too Well Sealed" - Exclusive by Nellie Jacobs

He stares at it.

Then breaks into a grin.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

Damn good writing, though.

The printing press runs hot. Sparks fly from the gears.

Outside, boys on bikes toss the paper to doorsteps like
firebombs.

This isn't just news.

It's a breach in the myth.

INT. FEDERAL INTERIOR OFFICE - PRESS MONITORING ROOM - DAY

Stacks of newspapers from across the country. Headlines blaring:

"Lincoln's Tomb Secrets Revealed" - Chicago Tribune

"Abe Unburied - Nation Demands Truth" - Boston Herald

"The Immortal President?" - San Francisco Examiner

Clerks race to catalog them. One agent rushes into WALKER'S office.

AGENT

It's gone national. Wire services
picked it up an hour ago.

WALKER

(stern)

Pull every copy you can. Suppress
the reprints. Flood the wires with
denials.

AGENT

Won't be enough.

Walker sighs, pinches the bridge of his nose.

INT. SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY - ARCHIVES ROOM - DAY

NELLIE pores through Reese's original journal. Her fingers stop on a torn page edge - the one Eugene had.

She closes the book. Stares out the window.

A crowd is gathering outside the gates of Oak Ridge Cemetery.

Dozens of locals. Journalists. Even schoolchildren.

The tomb, once a silent relic, now a lightning rod.

INT. SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY - BASEMENT STACKS - NIGHT

Nellie flips through a crumbling copy of the Springfield Ledger, 1887 edition. Dust floats in the air. Nearby, Eugene types quietly.

She stops at a headline.

INSERT -
NEWSPAPER
HEADLINE:

"Watchman's Disappearance Still Unsolved - No Body, No Grave"

EUGENE

They said he vanished. You ever wonder why there wasn't even a funeral?

NELLIE

Because the wrong people write history. The rest gets filed under "folklore."

She snaps a photo of the page. The bulb flash briefly illuminates a dusty shelf labeled:

"RESTRICTED - REESE CORRESPONDENCE / PERSONAL EFFECTS"

EXT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - THAT AFTERNOON

Barricades line the gates. Police officers stand guard. A reporter shouts questions.

REPORTER

Is it true the body was moved? Why was the public never told?

OFFICER

No comment.

2ND REPORTER

Is Abraham Lincoln still in that tomb?

Camera shutters click. The nation watches.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - WEST WING - NIGHT

A closed-door meeting. Advisors whisper. A copy of The New York World lies open on the table.

SENIOR ADVISOR

If we don't respond, conspiracy theories will fill the vacuum.

CABINET MEMBER

Do we acknowledge it? Or call it a
hoax?

STAFFER

We've contacted the Lincoln estate.
Robert Lincoln hasn't issued a
statement.

A heavy silence.

Then:

CHIEF OF STAFF

We can't bury Lincoln again.

A beat.

SENIOR ADVISOR

If he's not buried... then what are
we protecting?

No one answers.

INT. ROBERT LINCOLN'S HOTEL ROOM - SPRINGFIELD - NIGHT

Robert sits in the dim glow of his desk lamp.

A telegram lies open beside him:

"Request for public statement. White House asking for
clarification."

He doesn't respond.

Instead, he walks to the window. Looks down at the street.

People holding candles. A spontaneous vigil outside the
cemetery walls.

Robert's reflection merges with his father's portrait in the
window glass.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - NELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nellie holds a clean, empty page.

She begins typing on her portable typewriter.

NELLIE (V.O.)

"They say history is written by the
victors.

(MORE)

NELLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But what about the witnesses? What of those who bury the truth, only to dig it up again when the nation forgets?"

She pauses. Types:

NELLIE (V.O.)

"I do not know what lies beneath that stone. But I know we were meant to ask.
But silence isn't peace."

And some stones were meant to break.

INT. FEDERAL INTERIOR OFFICE - WALKER'S OFFICE - SAME NIGHT

Walker opens Robert's sealed letter - the one marked "If truth surfaces."

He reads silently.

INSERT -
HANDWRITTEN
TEXT:

"Let the people decide if myth makes a better foundation than truth. I trust them more than I trust silence."

Walker lights a match.

Pauses.

Then snuffs it out.

He files the letter in a drawer marked: "RELEASE UPON FINAL REQUEST."

EXT. OAK RIDGE CEMETERY - NIGHT

The crowd outside grows.

Candles flicker.

Nellie arrives. Stands quietly among them.

No notes. No questions.

Just silence.

The camera rises slowly-

Past the crowd...

Past the tomb...

Up into the starlit sky.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - FINAL IMAGE

Below the false slab...

A crack in the cement.

Barely visible. But growing.

A soft sound in the darkness.

A heartbeat?

Or just the wind?

In the crowd below A CHILD turns to his mother.

CHILD

Mama... is he coming out?

The mother doesn't answer.

FADE TO BLACK.

BLACK SCREEN.

A slow roll of archival text and voices, screams, one after the other.

INT. SPRINGFIELD - OLD CHICAGO BAR - NIGHT (1876)

Dim light. Cigarette smoke curls in the air. BIG JIM KENNALLY, JACK HUGHES, and TERRENCE MULLEN sit in a back booth.

KENNALLY

We go in smooth. We got the schematics, the bribe's in place, and that caretaker's a coward. We're not just robbing a grave—we're robbing history.

HUGHES

What if someone talks?

KENNALLY

Then we bury more than a president.

MULLEN

(low, uneasy)

Some things ain't meant to be
disturbed, Jim.

KENNALLY

You want to get paid or preach?

They clink whiskey glasses. In the background, a shadowy figure watches—a possible informant.

INT. CEMETERY OFFICE - SPRINGFIELD - NIGHT (JUST BEFORE ROBBERY)

A nervous YOUNG CARETAKER counts money as he hands over a copy of the tomb's key.

CARETAKER

I never saw you. You were never
here.

KENNALLY

Good boy.

INT. LINCOLN'S TOMB - 1901 - DEEP NIGHT

Six men stand around the coffin. Lanterns flicker.

WORKER #4

(reading from a worn
prayer book)

...and deliver us from evil.

WORKER #2

(low, scared)

He's still warm... God help me, I
felt heat.

ROBERT LINCOLN stares. Then looks up—

ROBERT LINCOLN

Seal it with chains. No more risks.

EXT. SPRINGFIELD - REESE FAMILY FARMHOUSE - DAY

NELLIE speaks with an elderly WOMAN, Reese's granddaughter.

GRANDDAUGHTER

He was never right after the tomb.
Said the dreams wouldn't stop. Said
Abe Lincoln watched him... even in
daylight.

She hands Nellie a torn journal page.

INSERT - PAGE

"He walked once more. The floor could not hold him."

INT. SPRINGFIELD CHURCH - BACK OFFICE - LATER

A PRIEST hands Nellie an old record.

PRIEST

We gave Reese last rites. But no
funeral. No body.

INT. ROBERT LINCOLN'S PRIVATE STUDY - NIGHT

Robert, alone. He speaks aloud to Lincoln's portrait.

ROBERT

I don't know what you've become...
but I know it's not rest. Not
peace.

He tears up a letter. Begins again.

INT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY - LATER

EUGENE uncovers a separate tomb design labeled "ALT PLAN -
NEVER USED."

EUGENE

(to himself)
They built over it twice...

He flips the page—

EUGENE (CONT'D)
Someone buried him deeper on
purpose.

He stares at the page. Shakes his head.

EUGENE (CONT'D)
Not just to hide a body.

To hide what he became.

INSERT - SKETCH

A second, lower vault. Dated 1865.

EXT. SPRINGFIELD STREETS - EARLY EVENING

Nellie and Eugene walk briskly through empty downtown streets.

NELLIE What if Lincoln wanted to be buried twice? Not to be honored. But to be hidden.

EUGENE
You're starting to sound like
Reese.

NELLIE
Maybe Reese wasn't crazy. Maybe he
was chosen.

They reach a locked iron gate marked "St. Mary's Chapel -
Deconsecrated."

EUGENE
This was the original parish on the
1865 burial map.

NELLIE
Then we start here.

INT. VIGIL SCENE - NIGHT

Candlelight vigil. Locals place flowers and small items at the tomb gates.

OLD MAN
My father worked here. He said
Lincoln never aged. Said he'd never
really died.

EXT. MODERN-DAY CAMPUS - HISTORY CLASS - DAY

A professor holds up Reese's journal.

PROFESSOR
Some say it's folklore. Others
believe it's truth buried in
concrete.

He clicks a slide: Lincoln's tomb. Students whisper.

INT. DEEP FEDERAL STORAGE - D.C. - NIGHT

A lone guard walks past a vault labeled:

"SUBJECT 45-L - CONTINGENCY ONLY"

A soft thud comes from within.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - WAR OFFICE - NIGHT (BACK IN 1901)

A dimly lit room. Files stacked high. ROBERT LINCOLN speaks
with a stern-faced GENERAL FLETCHER.

GENERAL FLETCHER
You're saying your father's corpse
might... not be dead?

ROBERT LINCOLN
I'm saying I saw his eyes open.

The general lights a cigar. Silent.

GENERAL FLETCHER
This is above your name. This is
above mine. If what you're saying
is true—

ROBERT LINCOLN
Then we've already lost control of
the story.

Fletcher reaches into a safe and removes a steel box labeled:

"EMERGENCY: 45-L / DO NOT DISCLOSE"

He hands Robert a single envelope from inside.

GENERAL FLETCHER
Then you'd better read this. He
wrote it before Appomattox.

EXT. SPRINGFIELD CEMETERY - RETURN TO 1901 TIMELINE - NIGHT

NELLIE walks alone with a lantern. She pauses beside the sealed tomb, placing a fresh pressed flower on the slab. She closes her notebook.

A final whisper rides the wind—Lincoln's words:

LINCOLN (V.O.)
Let it be said... I always planted
a flower.

But the tomb accepts no flowers.

Only silence. And time.

And something else — waiting.

FADE OUT.

INT. SPRINGFIELD HOTEL - ROBERT'S SUITE - NIGHT

Robert sits at a table, ink-stained fingers trembling. He writes what may be his final letter.

ROBERT (V.O.)
"If this ever finds the light, I
ask only this: that he be
remembered not for how he died, or
how he was buried... but for the
silence that followed."

He seals it, labels it: "TO BE OPENED - ONLY IF THE TOMB
OPENS."

INT. WASHINGTON D.C. - FEDERAL HISTORIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

A YOUNG INTERN flips through a dusty archive log. Finds a folder labeled: "ALTERNATE BURIAL SITES - UNVERIFIED."

INSIDE: a hand-drawn map... leading to a crypt outside Springfield.

The intern's eyes go wide. He makes a call.

YOUNG INTERN
Yeah, I think I found something.

INT. CANDLELIT ROOM - UNKNOWN LOCATION - NIGHT

A secretive figure reads aloud from Reese's journal. Dozens listen in silence. On the wall—a large photo of the tomb.

SECRETIVE FIGURE
If what the journal says is true...
he never left.

VOICES IN CROWD

Then he waits.

They bow their heads in eerie unison.

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - NIGHT - MARGARET'S OFFICE

MARGARET DONOVAN opens a letter addressed to her in perfect handwriting.

INSERT - LETTER (V.O.)
"Dear Margaret, I trust you've
found the pieces. But be warned —
this is not a story. This is a
wound."

She frowns, turns to a drawer, and pulls out a wax-sealed envelope marked: CLASSIFIED - 1871.

Inside: A drawing of Lincoln's original burial mask. Under it, written in faded ink:

"Eyes open. June 22, 1870."

Margaret leans back, trembling.

INT. OLD NEWSROOM - NIGHT

NELLIE types furiously, headlines piling beside her. Clippings, redacted documents, and Reese's sketches create a mosaic of suppressed history.

She circles a phrase again and again:

Each time the pen touches the page, it bleeds a little deeper.

She underlines it one last time.

Not as fact. But as warning.

"HE IS STILL WITH US."

She opens a new page.

NELLIE (V.O.)
There are truths so heavy, they
warp the graves they sleep in.

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - PHOTO ROOM - NIGHT

A dim red-lit room. Archival film strips hang to dry.

MARGARET DONOVAN moves carefully along a row of negatives.

She pulls one strip from the drying rack—frozen frames of Lincoln's open coffin in 1901.

She hesitates—then feeds the strip into a burner.

The flame crackles.

MARGARET
(to herself)
Some truths... history doesn't
deserve.

She watches the negatives burn. Her reflection flickers in the glass.

INT. FEDERAL INTERIOR - ROBERT LINCOLN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Rain taps the tall windows. ROBERT sits alone, reading Nellie's article from the Springfield Journal.

A fire crackles. His face is worn, torn between pride and dread.

He opens a desk drawer and pulls out a stack of letters tied with red twine. Each envelope is labeled PRIVATE - DO NOT OPEN.

He unties them one by one – letters from his mother, President Grant, and one marked in another's hand: Walt Whitman.

He opens Whitman's.

INSERT – WHITMAN'S NOTE: "Some things stay buried not from fear, but mercy."

Robert stares at it. Then tosses it into the fire.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SPRINGFIELD – MORNING

Newspapers arrive on porches. One headline stands out:

"Tomb Truths Suppressed for 30 Years?"

A woman picks up the paper, then pauses...

Behind her, the sun casts a long shadow from the direction of Oak Ridge Cemetery.

Something looms.

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS – PHOTO ROOM – NIGHT

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EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL – NIGHT (1901)

NELLIE stands alone at the base of the towering statue, her coat tight against the cold.

She stares up at the face of Lincoln, lit only by gaslight.
Her voice is barely above a whisper.

NELLIE
What are you really?

She removes Reese's torn journal page from her satchel. Looks
down at it. Then back at the statue.

Wind whips through the trees. Something hollow whistles.

She doesn't flinch.

NELLIE (CONT'D)
I'm coming back. With or without
them.

She places the journal page at the statue's base.

The wind picks it up— It doesn't scatter.

It sticks to the bronze foot.

Like it belongs there.

INT. SPRINGFIELD - FEDERAL MEETING ROOM - NIGHT (JUST BEFORE
D.C. RETURN)

A long table. Maps. Candles. Two unidentified FEDERAL MEN
converse in whispers.

FEDERAL MAN 1
If the body was truly never
moved...

FEDERAL MAN 2
Then the seal's holding something
that doesn't belong in this world.

They glance at a file stamped TIER 1 - EYES ONLY.

FEDERAL MAN 1
If she publishes, we lose the veil.
Then comes panic.

FEDERAL MAN 2
Then we act. Full protocol.

They extinguish the lamp. The room fades to black.

INT. FEDERAL INTERIOR OFFICE - STRATEGY ROOM - NIGHT

AGENT WALKER meets with a SPECIAL ADVISOR in a sealed room.

SPECIAL ADVISOR

We buried a man. But we created a relic.

WALKER

He's not a relic. He's a fault line in American memory.

They both stare at a wall covered in news clippings.

SPECIAL ADVISOR

Then maybe it's time we stop burying him—and start weaponizing him.

Walker doesn't answer. He opens a drawer marked:

"PROJECT: L-VOLT"

Walker flips open the drawer.

Inside: Blueprints. Redacted memos. A vial of embalming fluid.

And at the bottom—

A sketch labeled: "Reanimation Protocol - Subject 45-L"

INT. PRINTING PRESS - TYPESET ROOM - NIGHT

A TYPESETTER assembles the morning edition of Nellie's exposé.

He notices something strange in the copy:

"The floor could not hold him."

He frowns. That line wasn't in the original.

A sudden gust of cold air.

He turns—

A figure in stovepipe hat stands briefly behind the glass.

The type falls from his trembling hands.

On the linotype plate: The phrase reappears.

Not set by his hand.

"The floor could not hold him."

EXT. SPRINGFIELD CEMETERY - 1922 - NIGHT

Two TEENAGE BOYS dare each other to peek inside the mausoleum through the iron gate.

BOY #1
My granddad said he never rotted.

BOY #2
That's why they chained him down.

Suddenly—

The gate RATTLES violently.

They scream and run into the night.

A faint WHISPER follows them...

LINCOLN (V.O.)
I... remain.

EXT. SPRINGFIELD CEMETERY - RETURN TO 1901 TIMELINE - NIGHT

NELLIE walks alone with a lantern. She pauses beside the sealed tomb, placing a fresh pressed flower on the slab. She closes her notebook.

A final whisper rides the wind—Lincoln's words:

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Let it be said... I always planted
a flower.

FADE OUT.

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SECRETIVE FIGURE
If what the journal says is true...
he never left.

VOICES IN CROWD

Then he waits.

One of the attendees removes a hood.

It's a federal official.

Walker's aide.

He bows with the others.

They bow their heads in eerie unison.

INT. OLD NEWSROOM - NIGHT

NELLIE types furiously, headlines piling beside her. Clippings, redacted documents, and Reese's sketches create a mosaic of suppressed history.

She circles a phrase again and again:

"HE IS STILL WITH US."

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warp the graves they sleep in.

FADE OUT.

THE END.