

Timeless  
(Lincoln's Timeless Love)  
an original screenplay by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. WASHINGTON, DC - SPRING DAY 2012

CASSIE, a pretty girl of 19, sits in the back of a cab, deep in contemplation. She fidgets with a locket around her neck as she heads through modern day Washington, D.C. The monuments and majestic buildings of the Capitol roll by.

EXT./INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - CONTINUOUS

At the top of endless steps, she hesitates to take in the building's intimidating grandeur.

Inside, a procession of tourists snakes through a long entrance line. Cassie hands her ID to a guard.

GUARD #1

Researcher?

Cassie nods.

The guard snorts skeptically, but indicates a private doorway beyond the queue.

She enters a vacuous and foreboding maze of corridors. Tensely, she lays her possessions in the security conveyor and passes through the security arch before facing a final sentinel behind a counter.

CASSIE

Can you tell me how to get to the  
Rare Books section?

GUARD #2

(without looking up)  
Elevator to the second floor.

As Cassie heads away, he barks

GUARD #2 (CONT'D)

Belongings stay here.

Cassie turns and surrenders her bag. He waits.

GUARD #2 (CONT'D)

Everything.

CASSIE

I was hoping to get some pictures.

He glares. Flustered, Cassie hands over her notebook and camera, takes the offered receipt and bolts for the elevator.

Ornately carved wooden doors in an otherwise barren hallway beckon on the second floor. A sign reads: "Rare Book and Special Collections Reading Room". She turns the knob.

INT. RARE BOOK AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS READING ROOM -  
CONTINUOUS

Cassie stands in an imposing room that hails from another era: old-fashioned bookshelves frame the chamber; long reading tables and antique chairs sit at the center, and a large bronze chandelier with an eagle atop complete the antiquated appearance.

She approaches the LIBRARIAN, an older, stern looking woman with piercing eyes behind a pair of glasses perched on her nose.

CASSIE

Hi. I'm a research student at GU.  
I requested an old book from your  
collection.

LIBRARIAN

Have you filled out the necessary  
paper work?

CASSIE

Yes. It's all here.

The Librarian reads over the proffered documents when something catches her eye. She looks up, disbelievingly, at Cassie.

LIBRARIAN

The Kirkham Grammar book?

CASSIE

Yes.

The Librarian studies Cassie carefully. Cassie looks away, finding renewed interest in her locket.

LIBRARIAN

Have a seat.

Cassie moves to a table and fidgets with a pencil to pass the interminable time. Inadvertently, it flicks across the tabletop and the noise echoes in the unnerving silence. Another Librarian looks up disapprovingly. Cassie swallows hard.

A gentleman admires a painting in the far corner of the room and Cassie approaches.

He ponders a beautiful portrait of a handsome, blue-grey eyed, young Abraham Lincoln standing in a large room; he appears to deliver a speech to a small gathering.

GENTLEMAN  
(whispering)

Cassie nods and moves forward to read a small plaque: "A. Lincoln, 1834. Debating Society, New Salem, IL. Artist Unknown."

CASSIE  
I wonder at the artist.

GENTLEMAN  
A very talented young woman.

When Cassie raises an eyebrow, he continues

GENTLEMAN (CONT'D)  
I'm sure.

The first Librarian reappears; she carries a plastic book holder and a small box. Ceremoniously, she places the holder upon a table and removes a small, well-worn book from the box. Reverently, she deposits it onto the holder.

Cassie returns to the table, immediately drawn to the tiny artifact.

CASSIE  
Can I touch it?

LIBRARIAN  
(Disparagingly)  
You may. However, as one of our most valued American treasures, we expect you will handle it with the utmost care and respect.

Gingerly, Cassie opens the cracked leather cover and turns a few pages. After a few minutes, she turns back to the first page. She notices a hand written note taped to the inside cover. Awe-struck, she quietly reads aloud,

CASSIE  
"... Please to pay the bearer thirty dollars and this shall be your receipt for the same ... A. Lincoln. March 8, 1832."

She is then diverted by pretty, feminine writing on the top of the opposing page. She reads on,

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
 "Ann M. Rutledge."

Then further down,

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
 "Love like a glorious vision re-  
 arises."

As she reads, Cassie's fingertips lightly skim the writing. On contact, her fingers begin to tingle. She tries to rub the feeling away.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
 (to herself)  
 That's odd.

The Librarian clears her throat and Cassie suddenly remembers her.

LIBRARIAN  
 Are you through with our book?

Cassie begins to close the book, but pauses to examine Ann's signature on the page once more. She touches it. Again, the same prickle occurs. Cassie looks to the Librarian.

CASSIE  
 Who was Ann Rutledge?

LIBRARIAN  
 A legend.

Cassie holds her gaze steady. This time, it is the stern older woman who looks away.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)  
 It was rumored that, as a young man of twenty-one, Lincoln fell in love with a girl named Ann while living in New Salem. A young woman who supposedly changed his life.

Then, facing Cassie,

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)  
 Of course, there is no evidence to support the myth.

CASSIE  
 But, Ann's name is in this book and so is his. And the quote from a love sonnet ...

Abruptly, the Librarian snatches the book from Cassie.

LIBRARIAN

It means absolutely nothing!

Cassie startles at the sudden outburst and the Librarian quickly regains her mono-tonal composure.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)

Books were difficult to come by in those days; passed from person to person. It is more likely that it came into her possession some time after.

She turns on her heels, book in hand, and leaves Cassie to wonder after her.

EXT./INT. GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY CAFE - LATER

Eyes on the pavement, arms tightly crossed, Cassie ambles past the founder's statue perched majestically on the manicured lawn. Its stone signage reads: "Georgetown University, est. 1789."

Old Healey Hall, with its Romanesque architecture and timeworn clock tower, looms in the distance. Its clock chimes the dinner hour as Cassie enters the University Café.

She goes straight for the food line, grabs soup and a drink. She bobs and weaves in search of her favorite treat.

WOMAN

Saved the last one just for you.

An old black woman behind the food display shakes her head and chuckles.

Smiling her thanks, Cassie triumphantly places the coveted chocolate pudding on her tray. Just then, she is spied by her roommate, SARAH, a vivacious, antithesis of Cassie, who sits nearby.

SARAH

Cassie! Over here!

Cassie turns toward Sarah's voice only to collide with TRISTEN, a young man dressed for baseball. Despite their mutual attempts to keep her tray upright, its contents spill. Clumsily, Cassie lunges for the pudding, managing to catch it before it hits the ground.

Her face registers relief then turns scarlet with the realization that she now commands an audience. A snicker disrupts her victory and breaks the ensuing silence.

Mortified, she turns her attention to Tristen, who wipes the remnants of her dinner from his clothes.

CASSIE

Oh! I'm so sorry! Let me...

Cassie's futile attempts to assist him in cleaning up worsen the situation. Tristen is forced to back away.

TRISTEN

It's OK. Really, it's OK.

Awkward silence follows, then

TRISTEN (CONT'D)

So, how are you?

CASSIE

Good, good. Thanks.

Another painful silence stretches on. Finally,

TRISTEN

Hey, are you coming to the game tonight?

CASSIE

(Awkwardly)

Nah. I've got work to catch up on. But hey, I'm sure you'll do great!

TRISTEN

Yeah. Though, I guess I should work on my catching skills.

Tristen chortles; Cassie doesn't laugh. More uncomfortable silence, then

TRISTEN (CONT'D)

(Nervously)

Listen, Formal is coming up and I was wondering if maybe you wanted to go ... together.

CASSIE

Oh. Tristen. I'm really not much for dancing and I'd be a terrible date anyway. But, thanks for thinking of me.

TRISTEN

Sure. Sure. Well, if you change your mind...

CASSIE

Right, thanks.

A dejected Tristen limps toward his teammate's table and the inevitable ribbing that awaits. Cassie, eyes downcast again, pays for her pudding and makes her way to her roommate.

SARAH

Hey, are you O.K.?

CASSIE

Yeah, but I just had the strangest experience.

SARAH

Being asked out is not strange. Saying no as often as you do definitely is, though.

CASSIE

No. That's not what I meant. Earlier, I -

SARAH

- Are you ever going to say yes?

CASSIE

What do you mean?

SARAH

Cassie, we've been friends forever. Guys drool over you and you don't even care. You never go out and you never want to meet anyone. It's a perfectly good waste of your beauty if you ask me.

Cassie looks back uneasily at the table filled with jocks. Her eyes betray a fleeting, profound yearning before she veils her desire, her countenance resolute as she faces Sarah.

CASSIE

Look, you know my dad works really hard to keep me here. With mom gone, I just want him to be happy; to be proud of me.

SARAH

Cassie, he is proud of you. And, your mom would be too, but it's time for you to move on, to stop hiding behind your history books.

Cassie glances at the time on her phone.

CASSIE

I've got to go see Professor Owens.

She jerks up, severing any further discussion.

SARAH

Are you going to eat that?

Cassie's demeanor softens. She hands Sarah her most prized indulgence.

CASSIE

You're a good friend.

Sighing, Sarah opens the pudding and savors a mouthful. She watches Cassie's retreat and calls out wistfully,

SARAH

I'm your only friend.

EXT./INT. GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, HISTORY DEPT. - CONTINUOUS

At the entrance of Old North, Cassie admires the plaque affixed to the doorway.

It records the names of all the Presidents who have entered the hallowed, white-stoned edifice. George Washington's name is at the top, Lincoln's a little further down.

Reaching the second-floor office, she taps on the professor's door.

CASSIE

Professor?

PROFESSOR OWENS places papers into a briefcase at his desk. A handsome man of dark features, not yet thirty, he smiles at her arrival, though his smile doesn't quite reach his eyes.

His small, cramped office brims with dusty books and civil war memorabilia. On a table nearby sits an old ivory chess set.

PROFESSOR

Cassie! Come on in. Sit down.

Cassie starts toward a chair, but stops to analyze the game. Intent on a move, she picks up one of the tiny figurines. It, too, tingles at her touch. Alarmed, she quickly replaces the piece and shakes out her hand.

The Professor discretely watches.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

So, how are you progressing with your paper on Lincoln, the self-made man?

CASSIE

I was at the Library of Congress today looking up his grammar book like you suggested.

The Professor's movements suddenly still.

PROFESSOR

The Kirkham's Grammar book.

He holds his breath before asking,

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

Did you have an opportunity to examine it?

CASSIE

Yes. I held it.

Cassie looks down at her hands. The Professor studies her carefully, seeming to understand something. When he finds his voice again, it sounds far off, nostalgic.

PROFESSOR

It's a great treasure. Lincoln first studied with it in New Salem, Illinois, the place scholars say became his "alma mater" in more ways than one.

CASSIE

What was so special about New Salem?

PROFESSOR

It was there that Lincoln began his remarkable transformation from backwoodsman to gifted statesman.

He takes a deep breath and gives Cassie a furtive glance.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

However, it's also the place where, through a tragic and painful experience, he almost broke.

CASSIE

Did it involve Ann Rutledge?

The distant chime from the bell tower punctures the heavy silence. The Professor finally nods.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Professor, there are literally thousands of books written about Lincoln. Why haven't we ever heard of Ann?

PROFESSOR

The legend of Ann was buried a long time ago.

CASSIE

Why?

He walks around the desk to stand before her, somber.

PROFESSOR

Lincoln came very close to losing himself after their affair, and, if he had, it would have altered the course of history. That's not a story his allies ever want told. We all have secrets. We all have a piece of history to protect.

CASSIE

What happened between them?

The Professor gazes pensively at Cassie, but does not answer her question.

PROFESSOR

Cassie, take your time with this story. Let it compel you and you'll get all the answers you need.

EXT./INT. GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, HISTORY DEPT. - CONTINUOUS

Still reflecting on their conversation and oblivious to her surroundings, Cassie exits the Professor's office. Reaching the elevator, she finds it out of order. A STUDENT walks past, shakes his head and mutters.

STUDENT

What do you expect from a decrepit old building?

Resigned, she heads to the central staircase.

As she grasps the rail with her still tingling hand, she is inexplicably drawn to two figures who speak on the landing above.

She stops mid-step and her eyes lock with those of a familiar looking, dark haired YOUNG MAN with soulful blue-grey eyes.

They stand transfixed until the older man beside him begins the conversation anew.

OLDER MAN  
So, how long will you be staying  
with us, young man?

The magical moment dispelled, Cassie grudgingly prepares to descend, but stops, frozen. The staircase below is gone. They now stand in the large room from the painting.

Everything has changed.

INT. NEW SALEM, ILLINOIS - SPRING DAY 1832.

Bewildered, yet intrigued, Cassie returns her attention to the YOUNG MAN. He is now dressed simply in the well-worn clothes of another era. Though not classically handsome, there is something alluring and charming about him.

YOUNG MAN  
My apologies?

OLDER MAN  
I was inquiring as to how long will  
you be staying with us in New Salem.

YOUNG MAN  
Can't say for sure. I'm hoping to  
study law while clerking at the store.  
I'd be much obliged if we could work  
out weekly terms.

OLDER MAN  
And your family?

YOUNG MAN  
Don't have much left; lost a brother  
in infancy, my sister a year ago.  
My mother when I was nine.

Cassie's hand goes instinctively to the her locket.

OLDER MAN  
Well, we'll work something out.

YOUNG MAN  
Thank you, Mr. Rutledge.

A kindly man, MR. RUTLEDGE continues, but the young man's attention is diverted yet again. This time, however, it is the beautiful, self-possessed young woman who stands beside Cassie who captures his interest.

Cassie turns to view the interloper and is stunned to come face to face with a mirror image of herself.

Before Cassie can move or utter a word, ANOTHER YOUNG MAN, finely dressed, appears. He glances in the direction of the men, then places a possessive arm around the young woman and a chaste kiss upon her cheek.

YOUNG WOMAN

John, you mustn't.

At the reproach, he steps away, but his actions do not escape the men who descend toward them. Mr. Rutledge, keenly aware of the Boarder's interest has an admonishment of his own.

MR. RUTLEDGE

(To Boarder)

Watch your step, young man. She is as smart as she is beautiful, and you won't be the first to lose your heart.

(Then resignedly)

But as you can see, you may have come too late for the warning.

Annoyed, the young man quickly assesses his adversary before stepping forward for introductions.

MR. RUTLEDGE (CONT'D)

Mr. Lincoln. I'd like you to meet my daughter, Miss Ann Rutledge, and her fiancé, Mr. John McNeil.

Cassie let's out an audible gasp. It goes unnoticed.

LINCOLN struggles to regain his composure from the unfortunate news.

LINCOLN

Miss Rutledge, Mr. McNeil, how do you do?

JOHN MCNEIL, having noticed LINCOLN'S consternation at the glad tidings, masks his own displeasure as he takes Lincoln's proffered hand.

MCNEIL

How do you do, Mr. Lincoln?

Lincoln turns to Ann. They study one another briefly before she lowers her eyes, remaining as mute and unmoving as Cassie.

In an attempt to lessen the stilted moment, Mr. Rutledge interjects.

MR. RUTLEDGE

Mr. Lincoln will be lodging with us while he clerks at Offut's and studies law.

Ann looks up at Lincoln with renewed interest, and her response grates on McNeil.

MCNEIL

Law in the backwoods, Mr. Lincoln? Looking to become a self-made man like our illustrious President Jackson?

LINCOLN

(Sharply)

No. I'm a Henry Clay man, Mr. McNeil. And, I'd consider myself fortunate to possess even a modicum of his political abilities.

MCNEIL

Ah! A Whig and an aspiring politician! Tell us then, how are you at speech-making, Mr. Lincoln?

LINCOLN

I guess we'll find out soon enough. I'm running for a seat in the Illinois General Assembly come November.

At this, McNeil endeavors further one-upmanship:

MCNEIL

Well, as luck would have it, Mr. Lincoln, I'm considered one of the best writers in these parts. I'd be happy to take a look at your speech. After all, wasn't it your man Clay who said speech-making was Caesar's greatest power?

Exasperated, Ann finally finds her voice.

ANN

Yes, and look at how well that turned out for him.

McNeil blanches, Ann smirks and Lincoln endeavors to suppress a smile. Collecting himself,

MCNEIL

Well, I should be on my way.  
(Extending his hand)  
Mr. Lincoln. Mr. Rutledge. Ann.

He hastily departs and a chagrined father chooses to do the same.

MR. RUTLEDGE

Mr. Lincoln, let me show you to your room.

Wide grin still apparent, Lincoln extends his hand to Ann in farewell.

LINCOLN

It was a distinct pleasure to make your acquaintance.

ANN

The pleasure was mine, Mr. Lincoln.

As their palms meet, they experience an immediate and intense connection. Unnerved by the sensation, Ann withdraws from his grasp.

As men depart, Cassie notices they pass a dark figure. He sits silently in a corner of the Tavern having observed the entire exchange.

Cassie whirls back toward Ann. Instead, she finds herself alone on the second floor landing of the History building.

She leans against the staircase railing and sighs. She closes her eyes and rubs her tingling hand.

INT. CASSIE'S DORM - NEXT DAY

Eyes closed, Cassie takes a deep whiff of the freshly baked muffin passing under her nose.

CASSIE

Chocolate Chip, Mocha Fudge.

SARAH

Breakfast of champions!

Cassie opens her eyes and grabs the pastry from Sarah, who, accompanied by her friend ABBY, a shallow brook kind of girl, pounces on Cassie's bed.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You missed breakfast again, sleepy head. And, since you also missed all the fun last night, why are you the only one still in bed?

Cassie takes a bite of chocolate heaven.

CASSIE

Ummmmmm. I was having the most vivid, incredible dream. There was this girl who looked just like me, and the cutest guy I have ever seen.

Sitting up, she retrieves her locket from its post near her mother's photograph on the bedstand. She slips it on and grabs her laptop while Sarah changes her clothes.

SARAH

Hey, we're going to the gym, want to come? You're gonna need it after that two thousand calorie breakfast.

CASSIE

Thanks, but I've got to finish something.

SARAH

Still working on that paper?

CASSIE

Yeah. I need to get it done. Especially now that I'm starting to dream about it.

ABBY

I thought you said you were dreaming about cute guys. I'd like to write a paper on cute guys!

CASSIE

Not cute guys, one cute guy. It's about Lincoln.

ABBY

His name is Lincoln?

SARAH

Abby! The paper's about President Lincoln.

ABBY

Oh! Ugh! Cassie, we really need to talk about your taste in men.

Sarah rolls her eyes.

Cassie half-listens as Abby prattles on. She searches "Ann Rutledge" on her lap top, but no worthwhile matches come up.

ABBY (CONT'D)

You know, I had a class trip to Ford's Theater last semester. God, it was awful.

Ignoring her, Cassie tries again using the search term, "New Salem, Illinois". This time, she finds a website dedicated to the old village.

ABBY (CONT'D)

They had his bloody clothes and the gun, oh, and a picture of the stuff that was in his pockets the night he was assassinated.

Cassie opens the web page and is surprised to learn that the Village of New Salem still exists. She reads the contents of the page in earnest, whispering to herself.

CASSIE

It's been restored.

SARAH

What's restored?

Cassie clicks on a "Founders and Pioneers" link and scrolls through sketches of its early residents.

One drawing in particular stuns her. It is of a young woman whose features are strikingly similar to her own; a woman who looks eerily identical to the the young woman in Cassie's dream.

CASSIE

Wait. How is that possible?

Cassie clicks on the caption: "Ann Rutledge, 1832."

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Oh, my God...

At Cassie's exclamation, Abby takes a peek at her screen and notices the resemblance.

ABBY

Hey! Why is there a picture of you on that website? And, why are you dressed like that?

Frightened, Cassie abruptly closes her laptop.

Now changed, Sarah approaches.

SARAH

What website?

Again, Cassie ignores her question.

CASSIE  
Abby, you're from Illinois.

ABBY  
Yeah? So?

CASSIE  
If I wanted to travel to the central part of the state, what's the quickest way?

ABBY  
Well, St. Louis is an hour away. Why?

CASSIE  
I think there's something I've got to do there.

SARAH  
What are you talking about?

Cassie shakes her head.

CASSIE  
I don't know. I can't explain it. But, I think I've got to go there and check something out.

Sarah and Abby look at her questioningly.

SARAH  
And when exactly were you planning on doing this?

CASSIE  
We have a long weekend coming up.

The friends look at one another, brows raised.

ABBY  
Wow. A long, cold weekend in Illinois. Awesome.

SARAH  
Cassie, what about your dad? He's expecting you home.

Cassie doesn't answer.

As Sarah and Abby depart, Cassie opens her laptop again, picks up her phone and dials.

CASSIE  
 Hey, Dad. I was just wondering ...

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. LOUIS / ILLINOIS TRAVEL SCENES - TWO DAYS LATER

Cassie asks for directions at the rental counter of the airport. She picks out her car, puts the key in the ignition and the motor roars to life.

Finally behind the wheel, she leaves the lot and her old world behind.

During her journey, she recollects her previous telephone conversation.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
 Hey, Dad. I was just wondering ...

DAD (V.O.)  
 (Interrupting)  
 Cassie! Honey, how are you? How's school? When do you head home?

CASSIE (V.O.)  
 I'm good. Everything's good. Listen, Dad, I'm not coming home.

Silence, and then,

DAD (V.O.)  
 I don't understand. It's been a really long time, Cass.

Cassie nervously plays with the locket around her neck.

CASSIE  
 I know.

DAD  
 I thought we'd take a trip nearby. Maybe do a theme park.  
 (His voice softens)  
 Remember how much you and your mother loved roller coasters?

The scenery gets darker, grayer, as she makes her way.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
 Please, Dad; that was a long time ago.

DAD (V.O.)  
I'm sorry. I don't mean to upset  
you.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
No. It's fine. Really. It's just  
... well, I'm traveling to Illinois  
for a couple of days.

As Cassie gets closer to New Salem, the surroundings become denser and more rural. She passes antiquated clapboard houses and wooden barns, and then an old rickety bridge.

DAD (V.O.)  
Illinois?

CASSIE (V.O.)  
Yeah. I need to find something.

As she crosses the bridge, an elderly man, bent by the side of the road, straightens to watch her progress. He is dressed in old-era clothing, but Cassie does not see him.

DAD (V.O.)  
(Unconvincingly)  
Sure. I understand. Research. Do  
you need anything? Do you want me to  
come out there with you?

CASSIE (V.O.)  
No. It's O.K.  
(Pause)  
Dad?

DAD (V.O.)  
Yeah?

CASSIE (V.O.)  
Maybe you should take that trip.  
You know, with friends. Maybe, it's  
time you did something fun; live a  
little.

Silence.

DAD (V.O.)  
I'll think about it. In the mean-  
time, just keep in touch so I know  
you're safe.

Cassie sighs and anxiously rubs her locket again.

CASSIE (V.O.)  
I've got to go now.

DAD (V.O.)

O.K.

Cassie lets out a deep, loud, long breath.

A wooden sign indicates the direction of New Salem to the left. She turns off the main and onto an unpaved road.

EXT. NEW SALEM, ILLINOIS - CONTINUOUS

An old black man, weary and tattered, crouches unseen near an outcrop of bushes. He watches warily as Cassie's car approaches the entrance of the sleepy village.

She parks near an Information Center and takes in her surroundings. The main thoroughfare, a narrow dirt lane lined with a dozen quaint houses and shops, stretches abandoned before her.

Despite the solitude, Cassie visibly relaxes.

INT. INFORMATION CENTER, NEW SALEM - CONTINUOUS

Cassie enters the small wooden edifice, barren save for photographs and paintings on the walls. At a small desk in the corner sits a young GUIDE of 20, eager to share knowledge.

GUIDE

Hello! Welcome to New Salem.

CASSIE

Thanks.

Cassie approaches the young man who jumps up to greet her.

GUIDE

Can I interest you in a guided tour?

CASSIE

Actually, I'm doing some research on Lincoln and I was hoping to talk with someone about his time here.

GUIDE

Sure. The best way to do that would be to take a guided tour.

Cassie scans the room for a Tour Guide.

CASSIE

(Doubtfully)

OK. Great. Who gives the tours?

GUIDE

I do.

Cassie casts him a friendly, yet dubious look. He takes the skepticism in stride.

GUIDE (CONT'D)

Look, I'm a history major at Wash U.  
I intern here on breaks. Believe  
me, there's more to experience here  
than you can imagine.

(Then playfully)

Besides, I know all kinds of stuff  
you might find interesting.

Cassie laughs.

CASSIE

Right, but...

She stops mid-sentence, as she catches sight of a painting on the wall behind him.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

What is that a painting of?

The Guide studies Cassie intently. He answers without turning.

GUIDE

Ann.

CASSIE

Yes.

Cassie looks at the Guide, and then slowly makes her way to the artwork, clearly disturbed.

A young woman, her resemblance to Cassie unmistakable, lies on a bed, very ill. Her beloved, his back to the artist, lovingly swabs her forehead with a handkerchief.

Cassie's face transforms with awareness. Her voice shakes, barely audible, as she asks the question she fears she knows the answer to.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

But, what is it a painting of?

GUIDE

Her death.

Cassie grips the desk chair tightly for support. She turns to the Guide.

CASSIE

When?

GUIDE  
1835. She was 22.

CASSIE  
He was with her.

The Guide nods.

GUIDE  
You know, he almost doesn't recover.  
Gently, but decidedly, he adds

GUIDE (CONT'D)  
That's why you're here. Isn't it?  
Cassie stares at him, somehow frightened by his words.

CASSIE  
I think I'll take a walk. Alone.  
She heads for the door and he calls out.

GUIDE  
You'll need a map.  
She doesn't respond as she steps outside.

EXT. GRAVEYARD, NEW SALEM, ILLINOIS - CONTINUOUS

Cassie wanders the deserted village. Dazed and reeling from the news of Ann's early demise, she sees nothing.

Unaware of just how her feet have brought her there, she stands before a churchyard cemetery. She shudders.

FLASHBACK - INT. CASSIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

A tearful, nine-year old Cassie sits on her bed, clutching a stuffed bear. Her father, still wearing scrubs, sits with her and explains,

FATHER  
Honey, Mommy's gone. I tried so hard, but nothing could be done.

CASSIE  
(whispering)  
I can try, Daddy.

FATHER  
No, Honey, you can't fix this. She's not coming back. Do you understand?

Little Cassie rubs her locket and nods.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. GRAVEYARD, NEW SALEM, ILLINOIS - CONTINUOUS

Cassie stands at the entryway and peers in uncertainly. After a moment she straightens, decided, and walks through the gate.

The graves of town folk long departed greet her, Mr. and Mrs. Bale and Fannie Bale, Billy and Estee Green.

She lingers at a stone marking the resting place of "Mentor Graham".

A larger headstone nearby glistens in the sunlight. It beckons, and she stops before it to read the inscription:

"I am Ann Rutledge Who sleeps beneath these weeds, Beloved of Abraham Lincoln, Wedded to him, not through union, But through separation, Bloom forever, O Republic, From the dust of my bosom!"

Cassie's eyes fill with tears. Slowly, yet determinedly, she reaches out and touches the engraved words, "I am Ann Rutledge".

She closes her eyes and takes a deep, steady breath. When she opens her eyes, once again, everything is different.

EXT. NEW SALEM, ILLINOIS - SUMMER DAY 1832

The village bustles with vibrant activity as old-timers go about their day.

Cassie turns back in the direction of the small Information Center. It is gone.

She takes a few tentative steps out of the graveyard and calls out to a passerby,

CASSIE

Excuse me, I...

The villager continues on his way without hearing her.

A couple argues nearby. She tries again.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

I'm very sorry, but I don't know...

They carry on with their bickering.

A sign above the doorway of a wooden structure nearby stops her: "Rutledge Tavern". Quickly, she makes her way to its door.

INT. RUTLEDGE TAVERN, NEW SALEM - CONTINUOUS

Cassie hesitates with astonishment. The man of her dreams waits inside.

The handsome young man from school, her Lincoln, works busily at a table, head bent over his papers in the now familiar room.

She approaches him and sees the Kirkham Grammar book at his side. He takes a pocket watch out of his trousers, and then looks up and through Cassie.

LINCOLN

John?

John McNeil walks past Cassie, places an edited draft of Lincoln's speech before him on the table and stands over his shoulder.

MCNEIL

Take a look. This should do it, Abe.

Cassie inches closer just as a young woman comes in from another room. Cassie recognizes Ann.

The men rise at her approach. John kisses her forehead; Lincoln briefly looks away, uncomfortable with the display.

Ann's smile warms at the sight of Lincoln and his reciprocating expression confirms his own feelings.

LINCOLN

Good morning, Miss Rutledge. How I've missed our morning sparring! You know too well that breakfast just isn't the same without a hearty treatise on the merits of abolition to wash it down.

Ann laughs, takes a pot from the side board and begins to pour him coffee.

ANN

Mentor Graham commenced our studies earlier last week, Mr. Lincoln. But, don't despair. Given the recent uprisings in the South, I can easily promise you double portions of our rhetoric in the weeks to come.

John, unsettled by the topic and their familiarity, softly, but condescendingly, reproaches Ann.

MCNEIL

Ann, you know it isn't right for young women to be vocal on political matters, especially in the company of men.

Lincoln notes the censure.

LINCOLN

On the contrary, John. I find the views of an enlightened woman most appealing.

Ann beams, while John, irritated by the retort, responds

MCNEIL

We should get back to your speech, Abe. The election is two months away.

LINCOLN

Perhaps Miss Rutledge would like to hear it.

MCNEIL

I don't think -

ANN

- I've read it.

Both men stare at her, wide-eyed.

ANN (CONT'D)

(Defensively)

You left it on the table after breakfast, the week before last.

Lincoln chuckles.

LINCOLN

Then won't you share your opinion of it with us?

Ann replaces the urn before turning to face him directly.

ANN

It articulates your political positions quite well, Mr. Lincoln. However, I do find the speech lacking in one area.

McNeil bristles with indignation, while Lincoln appears humored.

LINCOLN  
Really? And which area might that  
be, Miss Rutledge?

Ann smooths her skirt and hesitates briefly before answering.

ANN  
It doesn't give the voter a true  
understanding of your character, Mr.  
Lincoln. Men vote for the man as  
much as the issue.

Lincoln now looks at Ann intently.

LINCOLN  
(softly)  
And what do you feel should be said  
of me, Miss Rutledge?

She glances at John, but then focuses again squarely on Lincoln.

ANN  
Would you not say that we are better  
defined by our struggles and sorrows  
than by our successes?

LINCOLN  
I would.

ANN  
Then share these with your  
constituency, Mr. Lincoln, so that  
they may better understand the  
humanity of the man they will  
ultimately choose.

Lincoln, visibly impacted by her words, cannot take his eyes from hers.

MCNEIL  
We should get back to our endeavor  
in earnest, Abe.

Ann takes the cue.

ANN  
Good day, gentlemen.

As she walks away, McNeil utters under his breath.

MCNEIL

That is precisely why women do not vote.

Lincoln and Cassie look at him incredulously.

Cassie turns and follows Ann, curious to see what will happen next.

EXT. NEW SALEM, ILLINOIS - AUTUMN DAY 1833

In search of Ann, Cassie finds herself once again surrounded by villagers unaware of her presence. Unsure of her next step, she turns at the sound of laughter.

A young lady of twenty scoops up her straw hat blown by a cool wind. Cassie buttons her light sweater and hugs her shoulders.

ESTEE

You must tell me!

Ann laughs again and takes Estee's arm as they stroll.

ESTEE (CONT'D)

Oh do tell! What is in your hand?  
Have you received a passionate letter  
from your one true love?

ANN

Hardly, Estee. John's been gone for  
more than a year and his letters  
grow less ardent and more infrequent.  
Now, he talks of staying away another  
six months.

As they amble by, Cassie notes Estee's strong resemblance to her roommate, Sarah. Amazed, she follows them toward Offut's Grocery and Dry Goods.

A group of boisterous men stands outside the small store, Lincoln with them.

ESTEE

(Quietly)

Ann, have you considered that he  
might not come back?

ANN

Of course I have, but what can I do?

While the young women remain absorbed in their conversation, a smitten Lincoln attentively watches their arrival.

All the while his friend, BILLY, who bears a similarity to the Guide, brags of Lincoln's physical agility and skill. His attention elsewhere, Lincoln pays no heed.

BILLY

I've seen him split rails at twice  
the speed of most men and I've watched  
him lift 1000 pounds of shot. I  
tell you there's no man stronger in  
Illinois!

Among the gathered is JACK ARMSTRONG, a burly local wrestling champion. His friends carefully gauge his reaction to the boasting.

Oblivious, Ann and Estee continue,

ESTEE

Ann Marie Rutledge! You are the  
most independent minded woman I have  
ever met! Write him back and break  
it off!

ANN

Estee! You know I cannot. He's gone  
to care for his family while his  
father is ill. How would it look?  
It's a matter of honor.

Estee finally notices the men.

ESTEE

And, whose honor do you think is  
being compromised in this situation?

Ann follows her gaze. She becomes defensive.

ANN

Marrying John would afford my family  
a measure of relief. Father could  
take things easier. My brothers  
could finally get a real education.

ESTEE

Schooling is your dream, Ann, not  
theirs. Please, don't settle!

In his continued inattention, Lincoln inadvertently agrees to a wrestling match with Armstrong to take place on the spot. The men busily make their wagers.

Smirking, Billy comes to deliver the news.

BILLY

Two out of three pins wins the match.

LINCOLN

What?

BILLY

You're up against Armstrong.

LINCOLN

What?!

Flabbergasted, Lincoln sizes up his opponent. Aware that he must go through with the match or appear cowardly, he scowls at Billy and reluctantly marches toward the eager contender.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

You're a mighty good friend, Billy.

Armstrong gives Lincoln an appreciative nod and a gloating smile, clearly anticipating a quick victory.

The fighters shake hands, remove their jackets, roll up their sleeves and circle each other cautiously. Armstrong is physically more overpowering, but Lincoln, though lanky, is more physically adept and just as strong.

They circle, and the women, including Cassie, come to a standstill to watch.

Presently, Cassie overhears a man who has just joined the gathering.

MAN #1 (REPORTER)

Well if it isn't Mentor Graham!  
Why, I haven't seen you since  
Savannah!

She recognizes him as the shadowy figure of her dream.

The man he speaks with bristles, but masks his unease with his own response.

MAN #2 (MENTOR)

Must be slow at the paper, Jones, if  
they've got you covering a wrestling  
match between a state champ and a  
hapless local.

Cassie is surprised to see that the man speaking with the reporter is a slightly younger version of her professor.

Armstrong wins the first match, pinning Lincoln easily. The men begin to hoot and holler; the women look on anxiously.

REPORTER

Hope you didn't wager much on that  
one, Mentor.

MENTOR

Don't underestimate him, Jones.

After a few minutes, Lincoln pins Armstrong just as effortlessly and wins the second match.

Ann tries to hide her pleasure, but her relief and delight are evident to all.

Mentor gives the reporter a smug look.

REPORTER

Well, well, maybe he'll be luckier in this match than he was in the political arena.

MENTOR

Don't fret it, Jones. He's been studying with me for a year now. He'll win a seat on the state Assembly next time around.

REPORTER

(Menacingly)

Now, we wouldn't want that, would we, Mentor? After all, I hear tell he's an abolitionist.

At this remark, Mentor pales.

Shouting brings their attention back to the match.

Armstrong, frustrated and tired, attempts an illegal move. Angered, Lincoln counters with a chokehold and Armstrong's friends, riled by the maneuver, rush in to give aid.

Billy jumps into the fray and ineptly attempts to protect Lincoln.

Finally, Lincoln releases Armstrong, backs up against a wall and growls at the men, fists up.

LINCOLN

Come on! I'll take you all, one at a time. Who'd like to go next?

The men back away.

ARMSTRONG

Leave him be!

Armstrong picks his jacket from the ground, saunters toward Lincoln.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

We'll call it a draw.

(Extending a hand)

You'll get no more trouble from us.

Match over, the crowd disbands except for a few. Mentor and the reporter remain involved in a tense discussion.

Billy picks up Lincoln's jacket and hands it to him. As they head toward the store, Lincoln steals a backward glance at Ann and is rewarded with the sight of her beaming countenance.

Billy notices too, and smirking, teases him.

BILLY

Finally got her attention. Knew it would.

LINCOLN

Like I said, Billy, you're a mighty good friend.

Mentor Graham steals a glimpse of Ann and his expression betrays his displeasure at this turn of events.

INT. OFFUT'S GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

Lincoln holds the door open of the quaint shop. Estee enters first, exchanging flirtations with Billy.

Ann attempts an air of nonchalance as she passes, but suddenly she sees a trickle of blood running down Lincoln's forehead.

ANN

My God! You're hurt!

LINCOLN

It's nothing.

ANN

You're bleeding!

Lincoln touches his temple, sees blood on his hand and sways.

Instinctively, Ann takes an embroidered handkerchief from her pocket and wipes his forehead.

At her touch, Lincoln takes a sharp inhale of breath. He reaches up and places his own hand upon hers.

Neither seems able to move their hand away until Ann realizes others watch and withdraws, leaving his hand alone to stem the bleeding.

She tries again at indifference.

ANN (CONT'D)

Really, Mr. Lincoln. Is it not more commendable to be admired for one's intellectual prowess?

He grins.

LINCOLN

Something tells me that in that arena, you'd have the better of me, Miss Rutledge.

ANN

Well, if women had the opportunity of an education, they certainly wouldn't squander it fighting.

LINCOLN

Then let them get an education.

ANN

Ha! Spoken like a man.

Lincoln removes the handkerchief, but retains it.

LINCOLN

A self-made man, Miss Rutledge.

He picks up the Grammar book from the store counter nearby and hands it to her.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Perhaps you'll have better luck with this than I did.

Curios, Ann takes the volume from his hands.

ANN

What is it?

LINCOLN

It's a book from Mentor Graham. Said it had the power to change history.

He watches her eagerly leaf through the pages.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Don't know about that, but what I do know is that the resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing. Man or woman, makes no difference.

At this, Ann closes the book and gives him her undivided attention.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Ann, you can have what you want, if  
you want it badly enough.

Surprised by his intimate use of her first name and the underlying message of his remarks, Ann remains stockstill.

She and Lincoln gaze at one another again, as Estee comes up and whispers quietly to Ann.

ESTEE

It would be best to be on our way,  
Ann.

Ann acquiesces.

They walk past the reporter and Mentor, whose unfathomable expression rests on Ann, and then the book in her hand.

Cassie looks toward Lincoln.

He watches the women's departure attentively. Then he peers down at the embroidered and initialed handkerchief in his hand. Silently, he places it in his pocket.

Unsettled by his behavior, Cassie steps outside.

She catches Ann and Estee entering a small house across the lane and gives pursuit.

INT. HOME OF MRS. BALE, NEW SALEM - SPRING DAY 1834

Ann and Estee sit across from two young women. Wearing light, cotton frocks, they giggle and talk over one another as they sew a large, colorful quilt.

An older woman, MRS. BALE, opens the window to air out the room. There is a knock at the door and she runs to answer. Lincoln stands on the stoop.

LINCOLN

Good afternoon, Mrs. Bale. Mr. Offut  
asked that I deliver these to you  
with all possible haste.

At the sound of Lincoln's voice, the young ladies become even more animated.

Mrs. Bale takes the small packages from Lincoln, hardly containing her own excitement at his arrival.

MRS. BALE  
 Young Abe, come in! Fannie, Fannie!  
 Oh, look who's come! It's Mr. Lincoln!

Ann and Estee exchange quick, covert glances; FANNIE, all braids and knots, suffers a fit of nervous, high-pitched giggles.

Lincoln enters the sitting room and greets the young women, his eyes resting momentarily on Ann.

LINCOLN  
 Ladies.

FANNIE  
 Mr. Lincoln, come see my quilt!  
 It's almost finished!

MRS. BALE  
 It will make a very special addition  
 to her wedding trousseau, don't you  
 think, Abe?

Lincoln admires the workmanship of the quilt and smiles down gently at Fannie.

LINCOLN  
 It's quite lovely, Miss Bale.

A torrent of batting eyelashes replace Fannie's giggles.

ESTEE  
 (Annoyed)  
 Thanks in no small measure to Ann's  
 proficiency with a needle.

Fannie looks stung by the comment, and so Ann quickly adds

ANN  
 We've all done our part, Estee.

Lincoln turns his attention to Ann and grins.

LINCOLN  
 Creative and humble.

At this unwelcome praise for Ann, Fannie sticks her finger with her sewing needle.

FANNIE  
 Ouch!

LINCOLN  
 Are you alright, Miss Bale?

FANNIE

Oh! I think I've pierced my finger  
through!

Mrs. Bale and the women become alarmed at this news, while Lincoln calmly takes a seat near Fannie and reaches for her hand to examine the puncture.

LINCOLN

Here, let me.

Gently, he helps Fannie remove the needle from her finger.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

There now. Better?

Enthralled, Fannie is consumed with adoration.

FANNIE

Oh, thank you, yes! You are so very  
gallant, sir.

Ann, Estee and Cassie seethe; Lincoln appears mildly amused, and a new chorus of unbecoming giggles is set off by the Bale women.

MRS BALE

Oh, mark my words, Abe! You'll make  
a fine husband!

Looking at Ann, Lincoln remarks teasingly

LINCOLN

Well, Mrs. Bale, I suppose I should  
settle down. But with so many pretty  
young ladies in New Salem, how is a  
man to choose?

Fannie and her mother both sober as Lincoln's eyes again rest on Ann. Nettled, Mrs. Bale replies,

MRS. BALE

We certainly do have our share of  
beauties, Abe. But you will want to  
hurry as so many of them are so  
quickly spoken for.

Ann becomes visibly upset by the intended dig and abruptly rises to leave, obliging Lincoln to do the same.

ANN

I should be getting home.

Estee begins to stand as well.

ESTEE

I'll come with you.

LINCOLN

No need, Miss Wood, I'm headed to the Tavern. I am happy to escort Miss Rutledge.

Fannie and her mother watch unhappily as Ann and Lincoln depart together.

Estee takes her seat and picks up her needle again.

ESTEE

You'll want to watch where you stick that in the future.

Fannie glares.

EXT. THE WOODS, NEW SALEM - CONTINUOUS

Ann trudges hurriedly ahead of Lincoln, still smarting from the antagonizing remark. Cassie trails them both.

Lincoln catches up to Ann.

LINCOLN

Careful. At this pace, you'll trip on a fallen branch and break your neck.

ANN

You needn't concern yourself, Mr. Lincoln. I don't need rescuing.

Lincoln grabs her by the arm and stops her.

LINCOLN

Don't you?

Ann yanks her arm from his grasp and continues to walk away.

ANN

What do you care? You have better things to do with your time. After all, you have a bride to choose, from a bevy of New Salem beauties, remember?

Again, he catches up and stops her, his mood suddenly serious.

LINCOLN

Does it matter to you who I choose?

Ann refuses to meet his eyes or answer his query.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

He's been gone for almost two years,  
Ann!

He grasps her by the shoulders this time, forcing her to look up at him.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Two years, I've waited for the slightest encouragement, a gesture, perhaps one word from you that would tell me I do not wait in vain.

(Then more desperately)

Call it off, Ann!

ANN

I can't!

LINCOLN

Then tell me you love him and I'll leave you alone!

Again, silence. Then,

ANN

Yes.

LINCOLN

(Incredulously)

Yes? You love him?

ANN

(softly)

Yes, it matters to me who you choose.

Relieved and exhilarated by her confession, Lincoln takes her in his arms and kisses her, gently at first, then more passionately as she responds.

Cassie watches spellbound.

Their kiss complete, Lincoln holds Ann and gives his own confession.

LINCOLN

Forgive my selfishness, Ann. He's a man of means and I've nothing to recommend me but a handful of dreams. But, I swear I cannot bear the thought of living without you.

Cassie's hand goes to her throat. Panic etches her face.

FLASHBACK - EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A frightened nine-year old Cassie stands grave side, someone holds her shoulders. Tears obscure her sight. She plays with her locket as her mother's casket descends into the cold, hollow ground.

At a distance, Cassie's father watches the slow descent, alone, wretched and immobile.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. THE WOODS, NEW SALEM - CONTINUOUS

Cassie hand still clutches her throat. Tears now streaking her face.

She hears herself cry out.

CASSIE

No! No! This can't happen!

Ann tears from Lincoln's embrace and looks toward Cassie.

ANN

I'm sorry. I cannot do this.

Shocked, Cassie takes a step back, and then turns on her heels and flees.

Frantically rushing out of the woods, she does not recognize that her surroundings have changed until she glimpses her car parked before the Information Center.

Relieved, she opens the door.

INT. INFORMATION CENTER, NEW SALEM - SAME DAY 2012

Cassie collides with Billy and becomes agitated. He grabs her in an effort to calm her and she finally recognizes him as the Guide.

GUIDE

Whoa! Whoa! Hey. Are you OK?

She composes herself enough to nod.

GUIDE (CONT'D)

Here sit down. Do you want some water?

Cassie nods again and collapses into the desk chair.

GUIDE (CONT'D)

You're as white as a...

CASSIE  
 Ghost? Yeah, a lot of that going  
 around today.

GUIDE  
 Not surprised.

He hands her a water and she drinks gratefully. From her  
 vantage, Cassie examines the painting behind the desk.

CASSIE  
 I don't get it.

The Guide follows her gaze.

GUIDE  
 Get what?

CASSIE  
 The point.

GUIDE  
 What do you mean?

Despite the question, he reads her knowingly.

CASSIE  
 The point! What is the point of  
 loving?

He shrugs.

GUIDE  
 I don't know. They say, "It's better  
 to love and lose than to not love at  
 all."

CASSIE  
 Please! Only people who have never  
 lost someone would say that. Trust  
 me. In the end, love doesn't change  
 anything.

GUIDE  
 (Gently)  
 It changes everything.

Cassie stands and places the now empty cup on the desk.

CASSIE  
 You're right.  
 (Beat)  
 You do know all kinds of stuff I might  
 find interesting.

She heads to the door and the Guide takes a brochure from the desk.

GUIDE  
Here. You'll need this.

CASSIE  
Thanks, but -

GUIDE  
- Take it.

Reluctantly, Cassie accepts. She steps out.

CASSIE  
O.K., but I'm pretty sure my work is done here.

Without a look back, she walks to her car.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS, NEW SALEM - NEXT DAY 2012

Cassie hums along to the car radio as she heads down the small, dusty road and then turns onto the two lane highway. A minute later, a tire blows and she is forced to pull over.

She gets out, cell in hand, but finds no reception. Frustrated and uneasy, she looks around. Nearby, she spots a modest home where she decides to seek aid.

She knocks on the door.

INT. HOME OF FLORENCE AND HARRY - CONTINUOUS 2012

FLORENCE, 50, black and ethereal, answers.

CASSIE  
I'm sorry to bother you. But, I was just heading out when my tire blew. May I borrow your phone, please?

FLORENCE  
Sounds like you need help. Come on in, Sugar.  
(Then)  
Harry!

A vaguely familiar black man (HARRY) in a suit appears behind her.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)  
Harry, this young lady needs our assistance. Will you see to her car?

HARRY

We'll be late to church, Flo.

CASSIE

Oh no! It's OK. If I can just use the phone, I'll call the rental company and they'll send someone out right away.

FLORENCE

Don't you worry, Honey, we'll have you back on your way in no time.

Florence takes the car keys from Cassie and hands them to Harry who steps outside without another word.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

I'm Florence by the way. Come in and we'll have a cup of tea.

Florence leads Cassie to a small kitchen and begins to prepare tea. Meanwhile, Cassie explores the den shelves laden with knickknacks and family pictures of Florence, Harry and a boy of about ten.

After a moment, the teapot whistles and Cassie heads to the kitchen counter where Florence pours steaming water into mugs.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

So you've been to New Salem?

Cassie nods.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Not many folk know it.

Cassie plays with the tea bag in her mug.

CASSIE

Not only do I know about it. I have dreams about it.

FLORENCE

Not surprised.

Startled, Cassie looks up.

Florence smiles and puts a plate of chocolate cookies out.

CASSIE

Do you know the story?

FLORENCE

Of Lincoln and Ann? Of course, Sugar, their love story is legendary in these parts.

Cassie takes a sip of tea and reaches for a sweet.

CASSIE

It's more of a tragedy, if you ask me. It's far better for them not to have loved at all.

Florence expression fills with compassion.

FLORENCE

(Gently)

Some might think so. But, if he hadn't had the chance to love her, he would never have become the man we would ultimately need.

Cassie stops mid-bite, suddenly defensive.

CASSIE

She died. Nothing undoes that kind of pain.

FLORENCE

True. But, realizing the timeless nature of love is what saves him in the end. It's what saves us all, lets us move on, if you will.

Cassie chews silently. She picks up her mug and looks toward the photographs.

CASSIE

Your little boy is adorable.

FLORENCE

Thank you.

CASSIE

How old is he?

FLORENCE

(Pause)

He was nine. We lost him a year ago, March.

Cassie's mug hits the counter with a hard thud.

CASSIE

I'm so sorry!

Florence pats her hand in consolation.

FLORENCE  
We are too, child. But, death is  
not our enemy.

Florence slowly wipes the splattered tea from the counter.  
Cassie watches her sweeping motions, silent and mesmerized.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)  
Just the same. He was gone too soon.  
So much left unsaid and undone.  
But, that's alright. It'll keep.

Cassie looks up at Florence, questioningly.

CASSIE  
Keep?

Florence and Cassie face one another.

FLORENCE  
Till next time.

Harry appears from nowhere, startling Cassie, and hands her  
the keys.

HARRY  
Car's fine. You're set to go.

CASSIE  
Thank you. Thank you both.

Cassie heads to the door.

FLORENCE  
Safe travels, Ann.

Cassie freezes, and then turns.

CASSIE  
I'm Cassie.

Florence smiles.

FLORENCE  
Of course you are.

EXT. HOME OF FLORENCE AND HARRY - CONTINUOUS

Cassie grips the wheel and turns the key in the ignition.  
She glances toward the modest house one last time. It's  
gone.

Shocked, she steps from the car and checks her tire. It shows no sign of distress.

She catches sight of a marker in the field where the house stood just moments ago and goes closer to investigate.

"Site of the home of Anti-Slavery Party leader Florence Holmes and one stop on the famous Underground Railroad"

Breathing heavily, Cassie rushes to her car and puts it in drive.

EXT./INT. DINER, OUTSKIRTS OF ST. LOUIS - CONTINUOUS 2012

Cassie spots a 50's era diner on the side of the road and her grumbling stomach suggests a detour.

Crowded with patrons, it takes her a minute before she locates an empty stool at the counter. A television nearby blares the morning news.

WAITRESS

Coffee?

CASSIE

Yes, please. Do you have pancakes?

WAITRESS

All kinds.

CASSIE

Chocolate chip?

The waitress gives Cassie an odd scowl and a shake of her head before turning to the kitchen with a shout,

WAITRESS

A stack of black on white!

The diner becomes momentarily quiet except for the boom from the television:

(V.O.)

In the Southern United States violence continues to flare in the Georgia provinces of ...

MAN AT COUNTER

Barbaric.

CASSIE

Excuse me?

MAN AT COUNTER

Those barbarians have no idea how to handle their colored problem.

Cassie finally notices the images on the television. An angry black mob appears to burn overturned vehicles in a slum area. Stunned by the uncouth language of her neighbor, Cassie seeks a ready pretense for escape.

CASSIE

(to waitress)

Where's the restroom, please?

The waitress takes a hanging key attached to a wooden plank and hands it to Cassie.

WAITRESS

Out back.

Cassie laughs at an image on the board.

CASSIE

Henry Clay?

MAN AT COUNTER

We're very partial to our 16th President here in Missouri.

Bewildered by the remark, Cassie goes in search of the facilities without another word to the delusional man.

Outside, she stops cold at the sign above the bathroom: "White Women Only".

She pulls out her phone and quickly punches in a number.

OPERATOR

History Department. How may I help you?

CASSIE

Professor Owens, please.

OPERATOR

Excuse me?

CASSIE

I know it's Sunday, but I was wondering if Professor Owens might be in his office.

OPERATOR

I'm sorry. We have no Professor Owens here.

Cassie lets the phone drop from her ear.

EXT. NEW SALEM - CONTINUOUS 2012

Cassie desperately rattles the knob and pounds at the door of the Information Center. No one answers. She squints through the small window, but sees no one.

OLD MAN  
Closed on Sunday.

She turns in the direction of the voice. The old man from the bridge walks up from the churchyard path, his clothes modern now.

CASSIE  
Excuse me?

OLD MAN  
No one left on Sundays, but old folks paying respects. Looking for something?

Cassie looks toward the graveyard.

CASSIE  
More like someone. I think I may have somehow made a terrible mistake.

The old man follows her gaze and rubs his whiskers.

OLD MAN  
Maybe so, but you won't find what you need here today.

Alarmed, Cassie runs toward the churchyard and quickly finds Ann's grave.

Taking a deep breath, she places her hands on the inscription and closes her eyes. Nothing happens. She tries again. Nothing.

She sits on the ground, disheartened.

EXT. AIRPORT, WASHINGTON, DC - LATER

Cassie dashes through the airport terminal and nearly stumbles when she catches sight of the sign: "Welcome to Washington, DC. Capital of the Northern United States."

She calls Sarah and gets her voicemail. She hangs up.

Quickly, she hails a cab.

CASSIE  
Georgetown University. Hurry, please!

Street banners announcing historical venues and exhibits throughout the city lie in juxtaposition to the modernity of Washington, DC.

Distracted, she reaches into her bag to retrieve her phone again, but instead pulls out the Guide's Brochure.

She glances at it and one picture stands out, the painting of the deathbed scene. She takes notice of a small detail she hadn't seen before.

She opens the brochure fully and examines the pictures throughout.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
(Excitedly)  
Driver, I've changed my mind. Please take me to the Library of Congress.

DRIVER  
It's in the opposite direction, Miss.

CASSIE  
(Taking her laptop from her bag)  
I know, but I've got to get back and I know how.

The taxi halts before the now familiar Library of Congress. Cassie scribbles something on a sheet of paper, pays the fare and, determinedly, rushes the steps.

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - CONTINUOUS 2012

This time, Cassie maneuvers the corridors and check points of the fortress with confidence.

Once again, the elevator doors open on the second floor and, this time, she strides purposefully to the Rare Book and Special Collections Reading Room.

INT. RARE BOOK AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS READING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The same Librarian glares as Cassie enters.

LIBRARIAN  
Back for the Kirkham's Grammar book?

CASSIE  
No. I'm here for something else.

Cassie hands her the scribbled note. She looks down and then at Cassie, saying nothing. Cassie slams her Researcher's ID onto the desk. They stare each other down, one hesitant, the other resolute.

LIBRARIAN

It will be a moment.

CASSIE

Please hurry.

The Librarian glowers, but moves quickly away.

Cassie paces near a reading table. The male Librarian at his desk gives her a cool, assessing glance, and Cassie returns it.

The Librarian returns with another small box and places it before her. This time, Cassie waits for her departure.

Alone, she sits down, and reaches inside. She assembles the contents on the table: two pairs of antique eyeglasses, a lens polisher, a pocketknife, and an odd triangular object.

Next, she removes an old leather wallet. A newspaper clipping from the Sangamo Journal dated 1835 peeks out from inside. Carefully, she pulls at the edge of the dated clipping and quietly reads the first few lines of a poem:

CASSIE (CONT'D)

"Yes! I've resolved the deed to do,  
And this the place to do it: This  
heart I'll rush a dagger through  
Though I in hell should rue it!"

It sticks in the wallet. Afraid to tear it, she tucks it back in. She looks into the box again, in search of the object she knows it contains.

There, lying at the bottom, she discovers Ann's daintily embroidered handkerchief.

Cassie grasps it and closes her eyes.

EXT. NEW SALEM - DAY, JUNE 1835

Cassie watches New Salemites gather for a summer cook out near the banks of the Sangamon river.

Men sit around open fires roasting wild boar and turkeys on iron spits. Women chatter as they set long tables with corn, bread, jams, fruits and pies. Children play noisily nearby.

Cassie hears a woman's soft, happy voice.

ANN

Is there anything he cannot do?

Estee smiles at her friend as they sit on a blanket enjoying a race. Lincoln, Billy and other men maneuver flatboats down the river in groups of two. Given Lincoln's physical agility, he and Billy lead the pack by a fair distance.

As they glide by, Billy, oaring at the front of the boat, spies Estee on the bank and clownishly takes a bow. He loses his grip on the oar and, in an attempt to grasp it, suddenly finds himself flailing in the water.

ESTEE

Billy!

A crowd gathers round the bank laughing and pointing, while Estee runs to the edge to help him out.

Lincoln, left alone, steers ahead. Despite attempts to overtake his lead, he centers himself on the boat, and single-handedly finishes the race victoriously.

Ann turns to Cassie.

ANN

(Laughingly)

I guess not!

CASSIE

You can see me?

ANN

Not everything he will need to do  
will be accomplished if done alone.

Her remarks are cut short by the cheering crowd as the villagers swarm the victor. Before they can speak again, Ann joins the throng, leaving Cassie to ponder her words.

MONTAGE - NEW SALEMITES ENJOY THE FESTIVITIES

-- Men and their children participate in a tied-leg foot race.

-- Men sit at a table gobbling pies as part of a contest.

-- Children dunk their faces in a barrel of water, hands tied behind their backs in search of apples. Grown ups watch on in amusement.

-- Men pitch horse-shoes while children retrieve them from the ground after each toss.

-- Billy and Estee steal away, holding hands.

END OF MONTAGE.

EXT. NEW SALEM - LATER

Evening darkness begins its descent and a small group huddles, satiated, by the light of a campfire. Cassie sits with them. They laugh softly as Lincoln finishes a funny anecdote, then

YOUNG MAN

Abe, now tell us your favorite poem.

LINCOLN

That's easy enough, William Knox's  
"Mortality."

YOUNG MAN

Recite it for us, will you?

Lincoln is thoughtful for a moment and then recites the poem, in its entirety, as the fire crackles in front of him.

LINCOLN

"Oh, why should the spirit of mortal  
be proud? Like a swift-flying meteor,  
a fast-fleeting cloud, A flash of  
lightning, a break of wave, He passeth  
from life To his rest in the grave.  
The leaves of the oak and the willow  
shall fade, Be scattered around and  
together be laid; And the young and  
the old, and the low and the high,  
Shall moulder to dust and together  
shall lie. The maid on whose cheek,  
on whose brow, in whose eye Shone  
beauty and pleasure, her triumphs  
are by; And the memory of those who  
loved her and praised, Are alike  
from the minds of the living erased."

Everyone listens pensively as the fire dies out. Then slowly they drift away until only Ann and Lincoln remain.

ANN

That was a beautiful poem, Abe.  
But, very sad.

LINCOLN

Yes, I'm afraid so, but it is also  
my very favorite.

ANN

So the truth comes out, Mr. Lincoln.  
(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

Melancholy is your closest friend,  
and poetry your first true love.

LINCOLN

You are right on one count. The Blue  
Devil is my most devoted companion  
but as for poetry... Actually, poetry  
is my second love.

ANN

(Teasingly)

What of your first love then? Let  
me guess. Is it the law or perhaps  
politics?

Lincoln puts an arm about Ann's shoulder and looks lovingly  
into her face.

LINCOLN

My first love is bound by honor to  
another.

Ann looks down at this remark and he continues softly

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Have you no word from him, Ann?

ANN

No. I do not even know if he has  
received my letter asking for release.

LINCOLN

How much more must we wait, then?

(Sighing)

Ann, please, I long to share the  
news of our own engagement. I want  
the world to know that you belong to  
me.

Ann looks into Lincoln's beseeching eyes and strokes his  
cheek.

She takes his hand and leads him to a blanket near the cooling  
embers of the fire. She casts a glance in Cassie's direction.

ANN

"They that love beyond the world can  
never be separated by it."

Lincoln lays Ann down gently on the blanket.

Smiling with satisfaction, Cassie turns her back on the  
lovers.

As she rounds, she glimpses rustling branches on the other side of the canopy of trees. Moving closer, she finds she is not alone in her observation of the lovers.

Mentor Graham stands just beyond, spying on the young couple.

He staggers away, but not before Cassie glimpses anger and pain etched on his face. Her own clouds with suspicion.

She makes to follow him, but someone calls out.

INT. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - CONTINUOUS 2012

Cassie turns.

LIBRARIAN

Your time is up.

With these words, Cassie is brought back to the present.

The Librarian now holds the handkerchief and hurriedly places it and the other contents back inside the box.

CASSIE

Please, wait.

Desperate, Cassie tries to stop her.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Please! I'm not finished!

Unperturbed, the Librarian quickly closes the box.

LIBRARIAN

There's nothing else to be done.  
We're closing.

As she walks away, Cassie shouts

CASSIE

She loved him and he loved her.  
(she gentles her voice)  
I'm sorry.

The Librarian hesitates, but does not look back, and then continues on her way.

EXT./INT. GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, HISTORY DEPT. -  
NIGHT 2012

Darkness descends as Cassie's footsteps approach Old North. This time, she does not linger to view its historical plaque, but resolutely pushes through the double doors.

Upstairs, she stops before Professor Owens' office and knocks. No answer. She hears approaching voices and quickly turns the knob. Inexplicably, it opens.

Cassie steps inside Professor Owens' office, quietly closing the door behind her. In the moonlight, mementos of history await.

She walks purposefully toward the object she has come for; the chess set rests on the table, positioned exactly as she last saw it.

She lifts a white ivory pawn from its square. At her touch, she feels nothing. After a moment, she places the tiny figure on the board, confused and disappointed.

Reluctantly, she walks to the door. Through the window, the clock tower declares the lateness of the hour.

Cassie stops. She heads back toward the chessmen, curious. She reaches for a small, black knight.

EXT. NEW SALEM - JULY 1835

Cassie stands beside Mentor Graham, at a large gathering of mostly men, the shiny knight still visible in her hand.

A handmade banner overhead proclaims, "Illinois General Assembly - Election Debates of 1835".

CASSIE

1835.

Cassie's exclamation is drowned out by the rowdy, jovial crowd, who despite the oppressive heat of the day, talks animatedly. Laughter punctuates their lively banter and drink is passed among the men.

MENTOR

He appears ill at ease.

Unaware of Cassie's presence, Ann fans herself and cranes for a glimpse of Lincoln.

ANN

He'll be fine.

Billy and Estee take cover under the shade of a tree nearby. Off to the side, Reporter Jones, as smug as he is obtuse, appraises the man at the center of the crowd.

Standing on a tree stump, Lincoln towers above the gathering. His hands are thrust uncertainly in the pockets of his pants. He speaks nervously, but loudly over the buzz, and vies for their attention.

LINCOLN

Fellow citizens, I presume many of you know who I am. I have been solicited by friends to become a candidate for the Legislature once more.

Someone shouts.

MAN

Sounds like you need new friends, Abe!

Everyone laughs uproariously, and Lincoln tries again.

LINCOLN

Gentlemen, please listen. I promise you my politics are short and sweet, like an old woman's dance. I implore you to consider casting your vote for me...

Again, someone shouts out.

MAN #2

You're a Whig running in a democratic state, Abe! I reckon, just like that old woman's, your dance card will remain empty!

The crowd laughs harder and continues with their noisy chatter as Lincoln retorts.

LINCOLN

We Whigs stand for the modernization of our country's infrastructure and the economic protection of our goods. What prejudice can a hard working man have toward this?

Reporter Jones chooses this precise moment to interrupt.

REPORTER

Speaking of prejudices, Mr. Lincoln, incendiary words and actions by abolitionists in the North have not gone unnoticed by the Southern states.

The clamor around him begins to dim and he continues.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

As a matter of fact, you have not gone unnoticed. Our southern brethren paint you as an abolitionist, sir.

(MORE)

REPORTER (CONT'D)

They say that you oppose their ways.  
Any truth to that, Mr. Lincoln?

At this, Lincoln flusters. Mentor and Ann shift uncomfortably beside Cassie.

The group falls silent, waiting for a response.

LINCOLN

No sir, not an ounce. I can say with a clear conscious that I have no prejudice against the Southern people. Why, I count many as my friends. And, I am no meddling abolitionist either.

Mentor and Ann exchange alarmed glances.

Lincoln removes his hands from his pockets and straightens.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

What I am, sir, is a Constitutionalist, and as I recall it, slavery below the 36th parallel is sanctioned by our laws.

Many of the men assembled whisper and nod vigorously in agreement.

Mentor and Ann exchange another set of wary glances. Ann holds her breath. She pleads with her eyes, willing Lincoln to continue, and he does.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

But as a white man, living in the freest nation in the world, I can no longer remain silent in the face of what I have always viewed as our hypocrisy and complicity in a monstrous injustice.

The gathering now begins to murmur loudly, some begin to walk away. He hushes the crowd.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Hear me out! Hear me out!

The crowd quiets. After a moment, he continues slowly and solemnly. He abandons rhetoric for heartfelt expression for the very first time.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

I stand before you today, a man of humble origins. Like you, I have struggled with almost insurmountable challenges, profound losses and terrible hardships. And like you, the freedoms granted to me by this great Republic have given me the strength to form my character and the hope to improve my standing, even in the face of overwhelming odds.

The men begin to listen earnestly now. Those who had begun to step away now turn around.

He continues, his voice stronger, his figure more erect.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

But, it is not so for the Negro of our land. He, who through no fault of his own, is shackled and chained and whipped. Unrewarded for his toil, his family torn asunder, he is not only denied the very same freedoms we enjoy, but is hunted down like a beast when he runs toward them.

Lincoln then looks directly at Reporter Jones before finishing.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

I am not an abolitionist, sir. What I am is anti-slavery. And what I wish to be is a lawmaker, in order that I may defend to the very last, any measure that will lawfully stop slavery's spread and lead to its ultimate extinction.

The crowd is silent.

Mentor and Ann look at each other triumphantly. Along with Billy and Estee, they begin to cheer, while Jones inconspicuously melts away.

Slowly, the gathering begins to applaud and Lincoln steps down to shake hands enthusiastically.

Ann smiles as she watches him move through the group, her face radiates with love and admiration.

Mentor steals covert glances at Ann, his features mirroring her own. Cassie observes him closely. The scene dissolves.

INT. MENTOR GRAHAM'S SCHOOLROOM, NEW SALEM - MID AUGUST DAY  
1835

Cassie stands in a small schoolroom with Mentor Graham. Agitated, he paces before a small desk at the front of the sparsely furnished room. Ann walks in and he stops in his tracks, surprised.

MENTOR

Ann? I wasn't expecting you.

ANN

I'm sorry. Am I disturbing you?

Mentor studies her features. His face softens with affection.

MENTOR

No, no... never.

ANN

(Smiling)

I wanted you to be the first to know.

He nods and looks down, expecting words that will wound him deeply.

ANN (CONT'D)

I've applied to the Jacksonville  
Academy for Women.

Mentor head snaps up. He is speechless at the news. Ann misinterprets his silence.

ANN (CONT'D)

I know I have much left to learn  
before I'm ready, Mentor, but I can  
manage it with your help.

MENTOR

Ann, you've been my protégé since  
the age of 14. If there is anyone I  
am certain will succeed in all that  
she aspires to, it is you.

(Pause)

Tell me, though, what has brought  
this on?

Ann looks at Mentor coyly, a small smile forming at the corners of her mouth.

ANN

No one is to know, but I trust no  
other more than you, Mentor.

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

(Then blurting out in excitement)

Now that he has finally won a seat on the Assembly, Abe and I are to be married! And he wants me to study!

The dreaded words finally out, Mentor manages to hide his pain and sound congratulatory.

MENTOR

I'm happy for you, for both of you. Truly, I am.

ANN

Oh Mentor, all I have ever wished for has finally come true! And, to celebrate, I've brought you something.

Mentor unwraps a small box and discovers a beautiful ivory chess set. He places the set on his desk and takes her hands.

MENTOR

Ann, it's too much. I cannot accept.

Radiant, Ann leans forward and kisses Mentor on the cheek. He startles, moved by her sweet gesture.

ANN

Your friendship has meant more to me than I can ever express. I hope you will accept the gift as a token of my eternal affection.

Mentor looks down at their joined hands, unable and unwilling to release her. She looks into his face wonderingly, then

MENTOR

(Softly, sadly)

Ann...

There is a knock at the open doorway, and Mentor lets his hands drop quickly from hers.

REPORTER

Have I interrupted something?

Ann flushes.

MENTOR

(Stiffly)

Mr. Everett Jones may I present Miss Ann Rutledge. Miss Rutledge this is Mr. Jones, a reporter for the Menard Gazette.

REPORTER  
Miss Rutledge.

Ann looks at them inquiringly, but moves toward the door.

ANN  
I'll stop by tomorrow afternoon.  
Perhaps, we can begin then?

MENTOR  
Of course.

The men watch her departure, one intrigued, the other despondent.

REPORTER  
She's a mighty pretty one you're  
taking liberties with, Mentor.

Mentor reddens, his hands at his sides, clenching and unclenching.

MENTOR  
It's not what it appears, Jones. I  
was simply congratulating the lady  
on her engagement to Mr. Lincoln.

REPORTER  
It that so?

The reporter begins to walk to the door, and then turns back.

REPORTER (CONT'D)  
(Snickering)  
Tell me, does she know about you?

Mentor glowers at the reporter, whose own countenance betrays the self-satisfaction of having hit the intended target.

FADE IN:

INT. OFFUT'S GENERAL STORE, NEW SALEM - LATE AUGUST DAY 1835

Cassie observes Mentor and the Reporter engrossed in a quiet, but heated exchange.

REPORTER  
Now he and his Whig's are talking of  
abolishing the slave trade in the  
District of Columbia; the most  
prosperous slave market in the  
country!

MENTOR  
They'll never get it passed.

REPORTER

Your information does me no good,  
Mentor! Now, listen up. He has to  
be stopped! Do you understand me?

Mentor looks around angrily, hoping their conversation has not attracted unwanted attention, and then whispers under his breath.

MENTOR

Perfectly.

As Ann walks in, they cease their discourse and nod in greeting.

Ann returns the acknowledgment, again curious about the pair, but continues toward MR. OFFUT standing at the main counter.

While lovely as always, she appears pale and fragile today.

ANN

Good afternoon, Mr. Offut. I've  
come for some paper and the mail.

Mr. Offut reaches behind the counter, selects several sheets and, together with the Tavern's correspondence, places them before Ann.

OFFUT

Afternoon, Ann. Writing letters  
again, then?

ANN

I won't need postage, Mr. Offut. Is  
Mr. Lincoln not in?

OFFUT

He's still at the house-raising for  
Billy and Estee. I'm surprised you're  
not with them.

ANN

I haven't been feeling quite myself  
lately. But with Mr. Lincoln there,  
they'll have the house built before  
they have the chance to miss me.

Mr. Offut speaks again, but Ann does not hear him. She stares at the familiar handwriting on the envelope atop the stack.

Regaining a semblance of control, she snatches it up, quickly tears it open and reads the first few lines.

What little color remained begins to drain from her face. She speaks quietly, to no one in particular.

ANN (CONT'D)

It's been three years... He... He didn't get my letter. Oh God, he's headed back!

OFFUT

What's that?

Mentor observes Ann's distress and hurries to her side, the reporter at his heels.

MENTOR

What is it, Ann?

Ann looks up from the letter, panic written on her face.

ANN

He didn't get my letter! He's bringing furniture, and his family, and wants to marry without delay...

Mentor immediately realizes Ann's predicament. Unfortunately, so does the reporter.

REPORTER

Well, well, well. The pretty Miss has been stringing along two suitors. Positively scandalous! Wouldn't do at all to have that news out, now would it?

Mentor turns and grabs the Reporter by the cuffs of his jacket, a hairs' breath from beating him.

Ann turns ashen at his threatening remark. She places one hand on her forehead, closes her eyes and grips the counter to no avail.

Mentor turns in time to helplessly witness as she crumples to the floor.

The letter released from her limp hand floats mid-air, finally dropping to the floor to rest near her motionless form.

INT. NEW SALEM, ANN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cassie and Mentor stand in the corner of Ann's room. Ann lies in bed, her family gathered round as DOCTOR HENRY examines her.

Abe hurries to her side, grief and worry mar his features.

Dr. Henry speaks quietly to Mr. Rutledge and the family. Cassie, Mentor and Abe listen in.

DR. HENRY

Looks like Typhoid. No way to know if the fever will break. Try and wake her to get some broth and nanny tea down. Keep her cool, if necessary, with wet blankets, and send for me if anything changes.

Mr. Rutledge walks him to the bedroom door and he adds

DR. HENRY (CONT'D)

We should know better in a week. And, James, let the lodgers go, and move your family to the farm.

SISTER

I'll stay with her, Father. I'm the strongest.

Mr. Rutledge sadly nods.

LINCOLN

I'll stay with her as well.

Lincoln and the sister set to their tender ministrations as the doctor and family leave.

Stonily, Mentor follows and the door of Ann's bedroom closes. He leans against the wall beside it. Moonlight streams through a small window casting shadows across the hall. Slowly, his body sinks to the floor and he begins his vigil.

MONTAGE ONE

The rays from the early morning sun frame the bedraggled, weary face of Mentor Graham. Slowly, he opens his eyes to greet the new day.

Ann's sister comes up the stairs with a bowl and towels to cool her down. As the door opens, Mentor and Cassie peek inside.

They watch Lincoln speaking lovingly to the unresponsive Ann, and swabbing her forehead with the embroidered handkerchief.

MONTAGE TWO

Another evening transpires. Mentor sits with his eyes closed. He hears the door open, but it takes him a moment to muster the energy to open his eyes again.

When he does, he finds Lincoln seated beside him on the floor. They sit silently for a few moments, then

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

How can someone so filled with life  
now lie so still?

MENTOR

Has she taken no sustenance, Abe?

Lincoln shakes his head. Mentor becomes agitated.

MENTOR (CONT'D)

This is my fault! I told...

Lincoln stills him with a gesture and gives him a hard stare,  
then

LINCOLN

Rest easy, Mentor. We've nothing to  
fear. She will prevail. She has  
grand plans for us, you know. I am  
to become a brilliant lawyer and  
noble statesman; she, a writer of  
great influence.

(Then, smiling weakly)

With your assistance, of course.

Mentor looks into Lincoln's eyes.

MENTOR

I could not bear it to be otherwise.

MONTAGE THREE

The sounds of birds announcing another day assault his ears.  
Mentor slowly opens his eyes just as the door of Ann's room  
opens for the final time.

Her sister, face in her hands, weeping, rushes out towards  
the stairs.

Mentor shakily rises and pushes the door further ajar.  
Together with Cassie he witnesses Lincoln rocking Ann's  
lifeless body in his arms.

EXT. GRAVE SITE, NEW SALEM - AUGUST DAY 1835

Cassie stands in the familiar graveyard alongside Mentor  
Graham witnessing Ann's funeral from afar. The sun makes  
its descent.

A preacher is positioned before the freshly dug grave.

Lincoln is at one side, paralyzed and overcome. Profound  
wretchedness emanates from every corner of his being. He is  
surrounded on either side by a sorrowful Billy and Estee,  
and Ann's grieving family and friends.

Ann's stricken father approaches Lincoln and hands him the Kirkham's Grammar book.

MR. RUTLEDGE

She would have wanted you to have it; said it was a great gift.

Lincoln looks down at the book and takes it silently.

The Reverend approaches.

REVEREND

Will you say a few words, Abe?

Lincoln steps forward precariously. The faces around him register the dubious belief that he can utter sufficient words.

He attempts to speak. No sound is heard. Everyone looks away painfully. He tries again.

LINCOLN

"Let me not to the marriage...

He concentrates on the Kirkham's Grammar book, seeking strength. It takes a moment, then, he begins yet again.

This time, he recites Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 in its entirety, his voice cracking with emotion.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments. Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds, Or bends with the remover to remove: O no! It is an ever-fixed mark That looks on tempests and is never shaken; It is the star to every wandering bark, Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Billy and Estee look at one another. Cassie and Mentor look down.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks Within his bending sickle's compass come:

(Pause)

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, But bears it out even to the edge of doom. If this be error and upon me proved, I never writ, nor no man ever loved."

He becomes silent again, unmoving. Billy steps toward him, places his arm around his shoulder.

BILLY

It's time to go.

Lincoln says nothing as Billy eases him away from Ann's grave. Estee joins them and they begin to walk away, toward Mentor and Cassie.

As they reach them, Lincoln suddenly stops. Cassie searches his face, but he does not see her. His eyes are fixed on Mentor's. They stare at one another a long time, each sharply aware of the other's overwhelming anguish.

The mourners disperse.

Cassie and Mentor remain, neither able to contain their sorrow any longer.

Clouds drift swiftly by in the gray and overcast sky and Cassie sits at Ann's grave, hugging her knees to her chin. Mentor stands alone.

Time begins to move quickly, sunsets and sunrises elapse around them, and still they linger motionless in this place.

Gradually, Cassie rises up. She and Mentor make their way listlessly from Ann's grave.

EXT. NEW SALEM - SEPTEMBER DAY 1835

As Cassie and Mentor reach the village proper, a light rain begins to fall. They stop briefly to watch John McNeil in the distance.

McNeil stands unmoving in the yard of his small house, his face lifted skyward, stained and wet. New furniture sits in his yard, propped against the house, gathering raindrops.

Billy scurries by in the drizzle, accompanied by Dr. Henry.

BILLY

We took him in when we saw him in a bad way; didn't want him staying alone in the storeroom anymore. And now Estee says he's stopped eating; hasn't touched anything in days!

DR. HENRY

How long has he been this way?

BILLY

More than two weeks. He paces the house day and night in a daze. Doc, we've taken to hiding the guns, we're so afraid.

Mentor and Cassie follow as they make their way to a small house.

INT. ESTEE AND BILLY GREEN'S HOME, NEW SALEM - CONTINUOUS  
1835

The rain becomes torrential just as Cassie reaches the porch. She notices that Mentor remains standing in the rain, unwilling to enter.

Suddenly, Cassie turns toward the house again when she hears a man's loud, anguished wail from inside. She stops at the open entranceway, stunned to see that the terrifying sound has emanated from Lincoln.

He stands at a side window of the tiny house looking out toward the churchyard. He is disheveled and unkempt; his face haggard; his eyes bloodshot. He is frenzied.

LINCOLN

I cannot bear it!

BILLY

Abe? The doctor has come. He can help you.

LINCOLN

I don't need a doctor! I need her!

Billy and Estee watch helplessly while the doctor gently leads a bewildered Lincoln from the window to a chair beside a table. He hands him a vial from his medicine bag and quietly coaxes him to drink its contents.

DR. HENRY

Abe, please, take this. It will settle your nerves.

Resigned, Lincoln drinks the concoction, but begins to cry softly.

LINCOLN

I can never reconcile to have her lying in the ground all alone, the rains and storms falling upon her grave. My heart lays buried with her. Please, I beg you, just let me be with her.

At these final words, Cassie sobs. Suddenly,

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Ann?

Stunned, Cassie looks into the bewildered, desperate eyes of Lincoln.

Then sleepy from the sedative, his eyelids become heavy. He begins to lay his head on his forearms resting on the table.

MENTOR

He'll think you a dream.

Cassie whirls to face Mentor and discovers herself face to face with Professor Owens.

INT. GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, PROFESSOR OWENS' OFFICE  
CONTINUOUS 2012

Unfazed by her presence, he turns on the lights and glimpses the tiny figure in her hand.

Cassie looks at him, dumbfounded, still shell-shocked, then

CASSIE

He'll be O.K.?

The Professor says nothing.

She shakes her head and paces, hysterical.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

He goes on! He recovers!

She shouts

CASSIE (CONT'D)

For God's sake, he becomes the  
President of the United States!

PROFESSOR

Not without help.

The finality of his words immobilize her.

CASSIE

There's Billy and Estee and ...

The Professor approaches her, but she takes a step away.

PROFESSOR

You must act or history changes.

Cassie shakes her head once more, frightened and confused.

CASSIE

What are you saying?! How is this happening?! Why is it happening to me?!

PROFESSOR

You have a gift.

CASSIE

That's crazy! I can't undo death!

PROFESSOR

No.

CASSIE

Then what do you want? I can't fix this! I can't fix anything!

PROFESSOR

(Softly)

It can't be done alone.

At this, Cassie begins to pace anew. She stops and views him suspiciously.

CASSIE

Who are you? Who is Mentor Graham?

Professor Owens hesitates before quietly answering.

PROFESSOR

The proverbial footnote in history.

CASSIE

And, I'm just a History student going mad! Answer me!

Professor Owens moves his chair back and takes a seat. He speaks matter-of-factly, but his inability to meet her eyes, belies his tone.

PROFESSOR

Mentor Graham was the son of a Plantation owner. He became a writer and then left his post unexpectedly. Nothing else was ever heard of him until the news of his death at Gettysburg.

CASSIE

There's more to him.

PROFESSOR

There's more to each of us.

(MORE)

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

However, if you want to know more, there's an exhibit on the great battles of the Civil War at the Museum at Ford's Theater. You'll find the answers there.

Cassie doesn't know what to make of his bizarre statement.

CASSIE

Did he hurt her?

PROFESSOR

I don't know.

Again, she looks down at the chessman.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

Leave it. We're of no use to you anymore. You have almost all that you need.

She walks to the chess set and places the black knight back onto its square. Suddenly furious, she knocks the pieces to the floor.

CASSIE

I hope he was more of hero in death than he was in life.

She storms out, leaving the Professor tired and pensive at his desk.

INT. CASSIE'S DORM ROOM - DAY 2012

Cassie sits at her desk, kneading her temples, her laptop open. She stares at the photograph from the Library of Congress website that illuminates the early morning darkness. The contents of Lincoln's pockets, the ones she held in her hands, stare back at her.

Hopeless, she goes to the window and looks out. She glimpses the tall branches of the Whitebark Pine swaying beside her sill and remembers.

FLASHBACK - INT. CASSIE'S HOME - DAY

Eight-year old Cassie squeals with delight and runs to the family Christmas tree. Festooned with dainty decorations and sparkling lights, it shelters colorfully wrapped boxes on the red felt below.

CASSIE

Mommy! Daddy! Which one? Which one first?

Cassie's mother laughs, delighting in her daughter's abandon, and she joins her at the tree. Her father looks on happily at the scene.

MOTHER

Hmmm. How about this one?

Mother picks up a small, slender gift and hands it to Cassie, who proceeds to rip at the paper gleefully.

She opens the box and her eyes widen as she finds a curious locket adorning a golden necklace. Her mother secures it round her neck.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

There! Beautiful!

Cassie looks down at the symbol engraved on the locket: A circle with a line at its base.

CASSIE

What is it? What does it mean?

MOTHER

It's a shen; it's an ancient Egyptian symbol for eternity and protection.

Cassie scrunches her small face in puzzlement. Her mother smiles and taps the tip of Cassie's little nose.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It means that those who love you will always watch over you.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. CASSIE'S DORM ROOM - DAY 2012

Cassie is brought back by the mournful toll of the campus clock, solemnly chiming six a.m.

She wipes at her tears and reaches for her locket lying on the bedstand. Lovingly, she rubs the medallion and traces her fingers along its chain.

She studies the photograph on her screen. Suddenly, she heads back to the desk and enlarges the image, focused on one object in particular. Jumping up, she puts on her necklace, grabs a sweater and hurries out the door.

INT. RARE BOOK AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS READING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 2012

The Librarian straightens the chairs lining the tables when the door opens.

She blinks in the hopes that the image standing before her will go away, but Cassie refuses to budge. She turns away, but Cassie follows.

LIBRARIAN  
Back so soon?

CASSIE  
Please. I need your help.

The Librarian walks away again. Again, Cassie in pursues.

LIBRARIAN  
Have you filled out the necessary  
paperwork?

CASSIE  
Please. He needs your help.

The Librarian stops and faces Cassie.

LIBRARIAN  
What do you want?

CASSIE  
I need to find something.

The Librarian looks at her guardedly, but says nothing.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
The night he... died. In his pockets,  
he carried a wallet, glasses, a pocket  
knife and her handkerchief.

LIBRARIAN  
You have already examined these  
objects.

CASSIE  
Yes, I know. But, in the box there  
was also a gold, triangular shaped  
object made of quartz. I saw it.

Again, the Librarian remains silent.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
Is it a watch fob?

After a moment,

LIBRARIAN  
Yes.

CASSIE

So, it would have had to have been attached to some sort of chain.

LIBRARIAN

Yes.

CASSIE

And, to a pocket watch.

LIBRARIAN

I don't see the point of all of this.

CASSIE

There was no chain and no watch in the box with the other artifacts from that night.

The Librarian picks up some papers left on a table and flees to the sanctuary of her desk. Cassie dogs her.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Was he wearing the pocket watch?

Annoyed, the Librarian stops straightening the papers at her desk and snaps,

LIBRARIAN

He always wore it!

Cassie steps back in astonishment.

CASSIE

(quietly)

It was a gift. From her.

LIBRARIAN

Yes.

CASSIE

Where is it now?

The Librarian busies herself with the papers.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

You know where it is.

Silence.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Please! I've got to go back again and it's the only way to get through to him!

The Librarian's facade finally cracks. She yells.

LIBRARIAN

Why?! In the end, it doesn't change anything!

The male Librarian looks up from his desk, dismayed by her unprofessional outburst. Cassie moves near.

CASSIE

It changes everything.

EXT. FORD'S THEATER - CONTINUOUS 2012

Cassie stands outside of the historic Ford's Theater. She looks up with trepidation, the scene reminiscent of her first visit to the Library of Congress.

She takes a deep breath, not sure she is ready to face death again. Apprehensive, yet determined, she heads inside.

INT. FORD'S THEATER - CONTINUOUS 2012

Heading toward the ticket booth, Cassie passes a Tour Guide leading a group of Asian tourists into the interior theater.

CASSIE

One, please.

TICKET SELLER

Two-fifty.

Cassie hands over the money and receives a stub.

TICKET SELLER (CONT'D)

Your ticket is valid for a visit to our Museum and exhibits downstairs, the theater located through those double doors and the Petersen house across the street.

CASSIE

The Petersen house?

TICKET SELLER

Yes. It's where President Lincoln was taken when wounded, and where he died.

Cassie grimaces, and then heads downstairs to the Museum. Finding it crammed with noisy children on a school trip, she hastens away from the din and toward the Civil War display.

Large photographs depict the glories and travesties of Union and Confederate soldiers. Cassie's attention is captured by picture of weary Union soldiers looking toward Georgetown University from across the Potomac river.

Among them stands Mentor Graham. The caption reads: "38th Illinois Infantry, Union army".

CHILD

Over here! Come see!

The school children clamor towards Cassie and she makes a quick escape.

She continues to the cases filled with artifacts from the fateful evening at the theater: John Wilkes Booth's diary, his sawed off boot and the gun he used to kill President Lincoln are on display. She looks ill.

Finally, she finds a glass case showcasing President Lincoln's belongings: his clothing, a pillow with blood stains, and the photograph of the contents of his pockets that night.

In the corner of the case, two spots stand glaringly vacant. Cassie inspects the entire case, but the objects are missing.

Frantically, she rushes to the stairs. A security guard, his back to her, angrily shoos children from the banister where they play. She dashes past them, but suddenly stops and turns.

CASSIE

I thought I'd find you here.

The guard looks up and Cassie comes face to face with Reporter Jones.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Where is it?

REPORTER

What do you want?

CASSIE

We all have a piece of history to protect.

INT. FORD'S THEATER, INTERIOR - CONTINUOUS 2012

The theater sits eerily silent. The magnitude of what transpired echoes around her.

Cassie makes her way to the front and sits reverently for a moment. She reaches in her bag and pulls at a chain. Lincoln's pocket watch glistens in her hand.

Suddenly, the now familiar prickly sensation grips the back of her neck.

She knows he is here now; he sits in the balcony above and to the side. She turns her head and looks up to meet his soulful blue-grey eyes. The scene dissolves.

INT. BILLY AND ESTEE HOME, NEW SALEM - SEPTEMBER DAY 1835

Lincoln writes at a table inside a small bedroom, gaunt and spiritless. The first line of his words visible over his shoulder: "Yes! I've resolved the deed to do,"

As Cassie approaches, a knock at the door holds her back. Lincoln swiftly folds the sheet in two and seals it.

Estee enters carrying a rucksack.

ESTEE

I'm glad you've finally decided to get out of doors, Abe. But, you'll want to take a coat. The weather's turning.

LINCOLN

I'll be fine, Estee.

Estee ignores him, removes a coat from a nearby hook and holds it out.

Lincoln obediently dons the jacket and hands her the sealed letter addressed to the Sangamo Journal.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Would you kindly take this letter to the Postmaster in my absence?

Estee takes it warily.

ESTEE

You'll be back by supper won't you?

LINCOLN

No need to worry, Estee.

ESTEE

I've packed some bread, and fruit and honey in case you get hungry beforehand.

Estee rummages through a set of bookshelves and chooses a several volumes, among them the Kirkham's Grammar book. She places them in the bag.

Lincoln covertly retrieves a small satchel from under his mattress and stuffs it in his coat's front pocket.

Estee turns back toward Lincoln.

ESTEE (CONT'D)

There, I've added a few books. You haven't studied in so long. It might be nice to stop somewhere and read for a time.

Lincoln takes the bag from Estee and gently places a kiss upon her cheek.

LINCOLN

I can never repay you and Billy for your kindness and devotion, Estee. I hope you'll always know how very grateful I am for it, and how sorry I am for the trouble I've caused.

Estee's lip trembles and she hugs him for a long while.

ESTEE

Abe, you do know that we all love you, don't you?

Lincoln leaves without answer. Cassie follows. Outside, she glances back.

Estee is poised at the window, a letter in her right hand, her left obscured, as Lincoln disappears into the woods.

INT. THE WOODS, NEW SALEM - CONTINUOUS 1835

Lincoln lumbers through the dense forest near the banks of the Sangamon River. Except for the sounds of nature, it is silent today. An eagle soaring above screams out.

He walks purposefully toward the remnants of a long forgotten campsite. When he finds it, he drops the rucksack, takes off his coat and sits on the hard ground.

After a while, he lies down and looks up at the open sky, remembering the last time he was here.

FLASHBACK - EXT. NEW SALEM COOK OUT - DAY

Lincoln experiences the joy of winning the flatboat race. His friends pat his back and cheer.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

He tells his funny stories and anecdotes and his friends' laughing faces dance in the firelight.

Ann leads Lincoln to the blanket. They lie together.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. THE WOODS, NEW SALEM - CONTINUOUS 1835

Alone, Lincoln begins to quietly recite the last lines of "Mortality".

LINCOLN

"The maid on whose cheek, on whose  
brow, in whose eye Shone beauty and  
pleasure, her triumphs are by; And  
the memory of those who loved her  
and praised, Are alike from the minds  
of the living erased."

He turns his head and spies his coat. Purposefully, he extends one arm and probes. What he seeks is not there.

He sits up and riffles through the coat in earnest. Still, he cannot find the satchel that promises his deliverance.

Frustrated, he lurches toward the bag lying nearby. He searches inside, now frantic. He feels nothing but the books within.

Angry and tearful, he turns the bag upside down and dumps the contents. Among the items he finds the Grammar book.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Damn you! Let me go!

Enraged, he glares at the treasure and forcefully hurls it. It slams into the side of an ancient walnut tree and falls open at its base.

He sits on his haunches, chest heaving, eyes on the earth below, and then slowly lifts his head toward the book again.

The scene dissolves.

He now he stands at a window, aged.

EXT./INT. SPRINGFIELD HOME OF LINCOLN - JUNE DAY 1860

The neighborhood lies littered with streamers and balloons. A poster with Lincoln's likeness hangs on a picket fence declaring him the winner of the Republican nomination for President. Its caption reads: "Our nation cannot endure permanently half-free and half-slave."

Lincoln looks out from a first-floor window, older and thinner now. Deep creases above his weary, sunken eyes and a cropped salt-and-pepper beard add countless age to his fifty-one years.

A crowd gathers in front of the house, and among them, Lincoln spots his old friend, Mentor Graham.

He looks older now and speaks with a reporter Lincoln remembers well.

He watches thoughtfully as Mentor finishes the terse conversation and approaches his front steps. A housekeeper ushers Mentor in and Lincoln turns to greet him warmly.

MENTOR

Mr. Lincoln, thank you for the kind invitation. Congratulations on the Republication nomination.

LINCOLN

Mentor. Never mind the formality. We've known each other a good long time and I will forever be Abe to you.

Mentor looks down, uncomfortable with the sentiment.

MENTOR

Thank you. But, my hope is to have the opportunity to call you Mr. President in the Fall. Our country's future has never been more precarious, Abe, and you are the man who can see us through the darkness.

There is a momentary, awkward silence. Each man assesses the other, then

LINCOLN

It's been so very long. Tell me, how are my old friends, the Greens, the Bales, the Armstrongs,  
(Pause)  
the Rutledges?

Mentor Graham stiffens slightly at the inference.

MENTOR

They are all well and in good health, and send their warmest regards to you and Mrs. Lincoln.

Again, a pause as they do not know how to continue, then

LINCOLN

There is something I wanted to return to you.

Lincoln goes to a desk, picks up the Kirkham Grammar book and looks at it devotedly. Then, he attempts to hand it to Mentor.

Mentor holds up his palms.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Go on. It was a testament to our  
friendship that you parted with it  
in the first place.

With reverence, Mentor takes the book.

MENTOR

My father taught me to write with  
this book.

Lincoln watches him carefully for a moment.

LINCOLN

Its contents are precious indeed.  
It's time they rested with you again.

They are both overcome with sentimentality, Mentor unable to  
meet Lincoln's eyes.

MENTOR

She truly loved you.

Lincoln nods, casts his own gaze downward and speaks softly.

LINCOLN

She did. And, I honestly and truly  
loved her. I still do. She was my  
world, my equal. No, my better in  
every way.

Mentor looks up and swallows hard before approaching the  
painful subject of Lincoln's despondency.

MENTOR

You ran a little wild about the  
matter... of her passing.

Lincoln looks at him searchingly, and then fixes his sights  
on a point outside the window as he utters his next words.

LINCOLN

I did, really. I ran completely off  
the track.

MENTOR

Is it true then, Abe? Did you write  
the suicide poem published anonymously  
in the Sangamo Journal in the summer  
of '35?

There is a long pause. Lincoln's eyes remain focused outside.

LINCOLN

Mentor, I will never deny her or the effects of her death on my character.

Then he turns to look directly at Mentor.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Even if it costs me the Presidential election in November.

An understanding passes between them.

Mentor nods, and securing the information he came for, begins to take his leave.

MENTOR

I wish you all the best, and my warmest good wishes to Mrs. Lincoln as well.

Lincoln shakes his hand and studies his retreat.

Mentor hesitates at the entryway and turns.

MENTOR (CONT'D)

May I ask you one other question, Abe?

LINCOLN

Ask anything of me.

MENTOR

How...

(Pause)

How did you come out of it?

Lincoln faces Mentor squarely, fully understanding the magnitude of the man's unresolved grief. He pulls his pocket watch from his vest, and caresses its face, remembering.

LINCOLN

I came out of it, old friend, because she taught me, by word and by deed, that we will never be apart.

EXT. SPRINGFIELD - CONTINUOUS 1860

The street lamps glow as Mentor finally departs Lincoln's home. The crowd is long gone, but the reporter remains, stepping from the shadows as Mentor exits the yard's gate.

Mentor throws him a glance, but continues to walk away. As the reporter follows, Mentor finally speaks.

MENTOR

Let it rest, Jones. He didn't write it.

REPORTER

Like Hell he didn't!

Mentor turns on the reporter.

MENTOR

He didn't write the Suicide Poem. And, further and for the record, there is no truth to the rumor that he dealt with the girl's death in anything less than an honorable and lucid manner. You and your backward thinking cronies cannot touch him.

He beats his retreat from the Reporter again.

REPORTER

You lying bastard!

Mentor stops, shaking with fury.

MENTOR

No one, absolutely no one in New Salem will say otherwise. He's clinched the Republican nomination and with the Democrats divided, he'll take the White House in November.

REPORTER

Damn you, Mentor! You worthless, stupid fool! I'll bury you this time! Understand?

MENTOR

Perfectly.

Mentor walks away again and Jones begins to shout.

REPORTER

Suppose you think you're headed to New Salem now. Tell me, how will these good folk greet their esteemed teacher on his return. Particularly when they read he's the bastard child of a white man and his Negro slave?

Mentor turns and faces the reporter, his face filled with loathing, but finally fearless of retribution.

MENTOR

You may have run me out of Savannah, Jones, but I'm done running. Do your damage. Because there's no punishment you will ever exact on me, worse than what I've wrought on myself.

A book firmly in his grasp, he leaves Jones to witness his disappearance into the evening dusk.

Behind the reporter, two figures listen on the darkened porch. Beside her, Lincoln slowly turns and walk inside.

EXT. ESTEE AND BILLY'S HOME, NEW SALEM - SEPTEMBER 1835

Cassie glances back to the window where Estee stands thoughtfully watching Lincoln recede into the woods.

Estee meets her eyes and smiles, a small satchel in her hand.

CASSIE

(Whispering)

Thank you.

Cassie, dressed as Ann, locket round her neck, pocket watch in her hand turns and follows Lincoln into the woods.

EXT. THE WOODS, NEW SALEM - CONTINUOUS 1835

Lincoln traverses the woods on that other fateful day, Cassie close behind. She observes him as he finds the campsite, takes off his coat, sits, then lies down to remember his summer with Ann.

She watches as he angrily searches for the satchel and witnesses his fury as he throws the Grammar book against the walnut tree.

Gently, she touches her locket, and then bends to pick up the note that peeks from the volume lying on the ground.

He looks up at the movement and she hands a stunned Lincoln her note.

LINCOLN

Ann?

CASSIE

Yes.

INT. FORD'S THEATER, WASHINGTON, DC - NIGHT, APRIL 14, 1865

The three-tiered theater stands opulent and resplendent. Cassie, still dressed as Ann, no longer sits alone; the theater brims with an audience eager to see a very funny play.

Dressed in their evening finery, the crowd watches the performance on stage, while a few peer upward, attempting to steal a glimpse of the President.

With his wife and friends, he occupies a private box lavishly draped and decorated with flags and a portrait of Washington just for this occasion.

Aware of the tragic events about to unfold, Cassie exchanges one last sorrowful gaze with the sad man sitting above, and then turns toward the stage.

The fateful last line is delivered by the sole actor on the stage:

HARRY HAWK - ACTOR

Well, I guess I know enough to turn  
you inside out, old gal -- you  
sockdologizing old man-trap.

The theater erupts with loud laughter and then a shot rings out. Cassie jumps; a woman screams; a man shouts out.

Complete silence, and then a young woman in the Presidential box screams.

MISS HARRIS

The President has been shot!

Immediately, muted chaos is heard; panicked theater-goers stand, run, trip through the aisles in their haste to escape.

Cassie remains in her chair for a time, alone with her thoughts, before making her way through the frantic crowd.

Ann's voice is heard reading the note.

ANN (V.O.)

"My Dearest Love, As we begin our  
journey together, the little Grammar  
book sits before me, overflowing  
with lessons on how to talk and write  
and conjugate verbs. Yet, its worth  
cannot be judged by its printed pages,  
but rather, measured through what it  
represents.

Seven men - four soldiers and three doctors - carry Lincoln's wounded body on a slab from the lobby of the theater to a boarding house across the street. Cassie follows.

People rush around, jostling them, others crowd about to see their beloved President. A soldier at the front of the solemn procession uses his sword to part the throng and make a passageway for the mortally wounded President.

They speedily exit the theater and are half way across the street, when they hesitate, unsure of where to take him.

SOLDIER

Can we transport him to the White House?

DOCTOR

No, the President would die on the way.

On the stoop of a house across the street, a man stands with a lighted candle. He shouts out.

MAN

Bring him in here!

The men head in the direction of the house across the street belonging to Mr. Petersen. Again, Cassie follows.

As they wind up the steps of the house, a black family stands apart from the mayhem, hearts broken. The man respectfully takes off his hat; the child holds his father's hand, uncertainly. Florence meets Cassie's eyes, and then she covers her face and weeps bitterly.

ANN (V.O.)

For it is not how we speak with our mouths that signifies, but how we communicate with our hearts that matters most. Your gift is a priceless treasure, symbolizing your unwavering belief in me and in all humankind.

INT. PETERSEN HOUSE, WASHINGTON, D.C. - CONTINUOUS 1865

Cassie enters the somber tomb where Lincoln will take his last breath, a long, narrow passageway to the right of three interconnecting rooms.

The anteroom is set as a Parlor, and in it, a soon-to-be widow, waits in a chair by the window, the mantel clock keeping time with her sobs. Her son hovers, obstructing her from view.

Cassie continues toward the second room, a small bedroom with a writing desk and a small table and chairs. Several men talk, among them sits Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, who frantically questions eyewitnesses.

Cassie's voice now finishes the note.

CASSIE (V.O.)

If life is but the compilation of human experiences, then nothing molds us with greater certitude and imbues us with greater strength than the losses we must painfully endure and the love we are fortunate to receive.

Solemnly, Cassie heads to the back bedroom where she knows Lincoln lies dying. Nonetheless, the sight of him, wounded and fragile, stuns her. She begins to cry.

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

I fear that destiny will require much from you; it is so with all men of greatness who by divine grace leave their imprints on our souls.

They have laid him diagonally in a bed far too short for his tall frame. Though the room is narrow, more than half a dozen men crowd inside it. All eyes are focused on the gravely wounded man on the bed.

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

Yet, if there is one thing of which I am unshakably assured, it is that you will do the right thing. You will see the sacrifice through, with your indomitable courage and conviction of heart.

Lincoln senses her presence and opens his eyes. Cassie nears him and places two small objects in his hand, keeping her hand in his. She speaks the final words of Ann's letter.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Go to it with strength my love, and with the sure knowledge that, 'One word frees us of all the weight and pain in life, that word is love.' Go to it my dearest love, with the knowledge that I will always be with you and you with me. For our love will endure for eternity."

LINCOLN

Thank you.

Secretary Stanton now stands with those who attend the President. Unaware of Cassie, they are unsure of what he has just uttered.

Lincoln's gaze never wavers from hers until, with a slight smile formed on his lips, he takes his final breath.

Tears streaming down her face, Cassie removes her hand from his, and mournfully walks away. The Secretary finally speaks.

STANTON

Now he belongs to the ages.

Cassie passes into the second bedroom and watches a doctor break the news to an Under Secretary who immediately dispatches a messenger.

The doctor approaches Robert Todd Lincoln in the front Parlor and whispers in his ear. He hands the young man his father's possessions. Robert heads toward his mother to break the tragic news.

Mary Todd Lincoln sits by the window, her back to the room.

Her son place an arm around her, bends to her ear and speaks horrifying words. She faces her son and wails. Her canny resemblance to the Librarian now evident.

INT. PROFESSOR OWENS OFFICE - NEXT DAY 2012

Professor Owens reads at his desk when Cassie appears at the open doorway and knocks tentatively.

CASSIE

Professor?

He looks up, relieved; she hands him her research paper.

PROFESSOR

So you've finished?

She nods.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

How was it?

CASSIE

Enlightening.

He watches her carefully.

PROFESSOR

How so?

CASSIE

I learned as much about myself as I did about him.

The professor appears to want to ask a question, but hesitates.

PROFESSOR

I'm glad. And, what was your final conclusion?

CASSIE

He wasn't self-made at all. Turns out, none of us are.

The professor waits. As Cassie walks to the door, he calls out quietly

PROFESSOR

What of Ann?

Cassie turns to face him and speaks softly.

CASSIE

Someone wise once said that it's our losses that ultimately strengthen us and that love has the power to transform us. But, you already know that.

She heads for the door again before finishing.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

She died of Typhoid Fever, Professor, not a broken heart. He did nothing wrong.

The Professor is momentarily confused.

PROFESSOR

McNeil?

CASSIE

Mentor. Her note was meant as much for him as for Lincoln.

Cassie smiles sympathetically, leaving him speechless.

Alone, he reaches down and opens a small drawer in his desk. Inside lays Ann's folded note. He picks it up and with tears in his eyes re-reads it.

EXT. GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY - CONTINUOUS 2012

Cassie walks out of the History Building, head held high, a bounce in her step, the weight of the world lifted from her shoulders. She runs into her roommate, Sarah, with a group of friends. Among them are Abbey and Tristen.

CASSIE

Hey!

Sarah hugs her.

SARAH

Hey yourself! So, how'd it go in Illinois?

Cassie smiles broadly.

CASSIE

It was an amazing journey. Oh, and I brought you back a souvenir.

She reaches into her backpack and hands the New Salem brochure to Sarah.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Here, this is for you.

Sarah opens it, puzzled by the unusual pictures that adorn the inside: a grammar book, a handkerchief, a chess board and a pocket watch.

SARAH

What is it?

CASSIE

(Mischievously)  
A Guide for your future.

As Cassie walks away, she turns momentarily toward Tristen and smiles.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

See you at the game tonight!

Sarah and the others look on, perplexed by the new Cassie.

Cassie pulls out her telephone as she continues on her way. Her father answers.

DAD (V.O.)

Hello?

CASSIE

Hey Dad!

DAD (V.O.)

Cassie! Are you OK?

CASSIE

I'm great! I was wondering: How would you feel about tackling a few roller coasters with me this summer?

The friends walk past, Sarah engrossed in the Brochure. They approach an overflowing trash receptacle, and, shrugging, she places it on the heap before heading away.

Suddenly, Sarah stops, turns around and picks it back up. She looks at it thoughtfully, and then catches up to the group, the brochure still visible in her hand.

EXT. GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY - LATER 2012

Cassie walks by the University Cafe when she spots an intriguing poster by the door: "Poetry Club Workshop All Welcome! Every Monday Evening, 6 - 8 pm."

She checks the time, smiles and enters.

INT. GEORGETOWN CAFE - CONTINUOUS 2012

The food lines closed, a small group of students congregates at two long tables at the far end and listens to the young man towering before them.

Cassie hears his familiar voice. Her smile broadens. Her heart skips a beat. She waits and listens.

YOUNG MAN

A sonnet is a kind of poem written using a strict, but fairly easy to follow set of rules. First, it has to have 14 lines divided into four sections called quatrains. Next...

A prickly sensation makes the young man rub his neck. Suddenly, he turns in Cassie's direction. He stops. Just as before, he cannot tear his blue-grey eyes from hers.

The students crane to follow his gaze; all eyes on Cassie.

Silence.

Finally,

CASSIE

Am I too late?

The students hold their breath and anticipate his response.

He is speechless.

Cassie waits.

Finally,

YOUNG MAN

No, you're perfect.

She smiles again and takes an open seat.

The young man ruffles his hair in an attempt to collect his thoughts. Nervously, he thrusts his hands inside his front pockets.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Right. Um. Sonnets. Um. 14 lines;  
4 quatrains... Written in Iambic  
Pentameter, that's ten beats. OK.  
Now, the first quatrain should give  
us an idea of the subject matter we  
want to convey. For the second, the  
theme is given an imaginative example  
...

He stops, flustered again.

He realizes that with this girl in this room this is not what he wants to say.

So, he removes his hands from his pockets, stands erect and begins again. Looking directly at Cassie, he abandons dogma for heartfelt expression for the very first time.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

"How oft a lover in his later age  
Turning the leaves of some young  
poet's book With idle finger and far  
absent look, Startled, hath seen  
glance up from the clear page A  
thought once deemed his sole self-  
heritage, But left forgotten in some  
leafy nook,"

Cassie continues the sonnet with him.

CASSIE AND YOUNG MAN

"When youth and love, locked hand in  
hand, forsook His faltering steps on  
life's long pilgrimage. Ah tears  
break forth that ever this should  
be!"

His voice quiets with astonishment and she continues alone.

CASSIE

"Love like a glorious vision rearises,  
As if the sunset rose above the sea.  
And I, how leapt my heart with mad  
surprise, When, stooping down to  
kiss thee, from thine eyes I saw my  
own lost soul look up at me."

Their sonnet finished, their eyes never leave one another.

EXT. GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY - CONTINUOUS 2012

The Young Man and Cassie walk hand in hand across campus;  
happy, laughing.

He walks her to the entrance of her dorm and they stop.

YOUNG MAN

Will I see you tomorrow?

Cassie smiles knowingly.

CASSIE

Definitely.

He hesitates a moment before he kisses her softly, gazing  
lovingly into her eyes.

Then he smiles warmly and begins to walk away.

She can't resist.

She calls after him.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

So, is poetry your first love?

The young man stops and turns to look at his true love.

YOUNG MAN

Actually, it's my second.

INT. FORD'S THEATER, MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS 2012

People wander past the illuminated display cases in the little  
museum. A little girl stands with her nose pressed to the  
glass peering down at the shiny treasures inside.

One in particular has captured her attention. It sits next  
to the antique chain and pocket watch: a golden necklace  
with a curious medallion sparkles from within.

FADE OUT.