

Dreams Gone to Seed
L.K. Samuels

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

THOMAS:	In his late forties, he is tall, lean and has an autocratic flair. He has a streak of silver in his hair. He wears a tricorn hat, white long-sleeve shirt, worn brown coat, red vest (waistcoat), corduroy breeches, and long white stockings.
BENJAMIN:	Sixtyish, he is short of stature and pudgy, endowed with a jolly demeanor and a taste for liquor. He wears his gray hair long and dons a tricorn hat. His attire comprises of a loose linen shirt, knee-breeches, a waistcoat and a skirted coat, thigh-high stockings, and buckled shoes. His wire-frame glasses are bifocals. He walks with a cane.
SALLY:	A young, beautiful, African American woman in a long, gauzy dress and leather sandals. She is rash, hot tempered, and stubborn. She is in her young thirties.
PATRICK:	A young actor, mid-twenties, always in colonial costume. He is a peppy computer hacker with a penchant for mischief.
ERHARD:	Curator of the American Historical and Cultural Center. In his forties, he has a slight German accent and a well-cultivated mean streak. He wears a dark pinstripe suit and designer sunglasses.
OFFICER CLANCY:	A grouchy and unscrupulous Philadelphia police officer in his late fifties.
COLONEL TRAVIS:	An honest and beloved leader of the First Lexington Marching Regiment. Sheriff of Middlesex County, he dresses in a colonial military uniform; its coat is dark blue coat with gold trim and collar. He also wears a white shirt and vest, white pants, knee-high black boots, golden epaulets on each shoulder, and black tricorn hat. A sword hangs from his belt.
JIMMY:	Colonel Travis's 15-year-old son. His body is bruised and his spirit broken. He wears blue jeans and a torn t-shirt.
GEORGE:	Actor who plays George Washington. He towers over most, confident, assertive and sociable. He is always garbed in colonial costume.
ALEXANDER:	An actor in his mid-forties who plays Alexander Hamilton. He wears a sour face and the finest colonial attire. He always carries a cane, which has a hidden blade.
POLICEWOMAN:	Overweight policewoman with an attitude. She is in her late forties.
LINDA:	Overbearing and bossy; she is divorced from Thomas. She is in her young thirties
JACK:	First surveillance agent, in his late twenties
WILLIAM:	Second surveillance agent, in his late twenties.

OTHER CHARACTERS

Prisoner 1:	Wearing street clothes
Prisoner 2:	Wearing street clothes
Soldiers:	In riot gear and army fatigues, bulletproof vests, and helmets; carrying machine guns
Members of First Lexington	

Marching Regiment:	Wearing colonial military uniforms like Colonel Travis, but their coats have red trim, and they do not wear epaulets. They carry flintlock rifles.
Waitress:	Dressed as a tavern wench of the 1770s. Has a British accent and generous cleavage.
Police and Federal Agents:	Police uniforms; FBI and ATF jackets
Constitution Boys:	Followers of Alexander Hamilton dressed in civilian colonial costumes.
Fife Player:	Dressed in Revolutionary war costume. He carries a fife.
Drummer Boy	Dressed in Revolutionary war costume. He holds a rope-tension snare drum.

SETTING

The action takes place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the following locations:

- Police station, including the front entry, a back office, and a cell block
- The American Historical and Cultural Center, which houses a gift and book shop and a theater for staging historical reenactments
- The Guy Fawkes Tavern
- The street outside the Guy Fawkes Tavern
- Thomas's apartment
- The street outside the police station
- Sally's apartment

TIME

Sometime in the future, between the evening of July 2 and the morning of July 5.

ACT I
Scene 1

(THOMAS and BENJAMIN, in handcuffs, are escorted by OFFICER CLANCY down a corridor toward a jail cell. The cell is full of prisoners, most wearing white T-shirts and sporting tattoos. These prisoners frown at the new arrivals. A POLICEWOMAN unlocks the cell door, swings it open, and waves the prisoners inside. THOMAS and BENJAMIN stop before the door and stare at each other nervously.)

THOMAS

(Raising his handcuffed hands)

Could you be so kind?

OFFICER CLANCY

Why?

THOMAS

For the sake of humanity.

OFFICER CLANCY

(Laughing)

Humanity? Boy, did you come to the wrong planet.

(THOMAS rattles his handcuffs.)

OFFICER CLANCY

Fine!

(OFFICER CLANCY unlocks THOMAS's and BENJAMIN's handcuffs. She takes away BENJAMIN'S ornate cane.)

Anybody dressed like you should be put in solitary.

BENJAMIN

(Points his finger at OFFICER CLANCY)

See here, we're not common criminals.

OFFICER CLANCY

I suppose you're special ones?

BENJAMIN

(To THOMAS)

You never listen to me.

THOMAS

I could not allow such injustices to continue, Ben.

BENJAMIN

Every action commands a counter-reaction, Tom. You could have been discreet.

OFFICER CLANCY

Stop yapping and get inside!

(As he walks inside, BENJAMIN is quickly surrounded by a crowd. He smiles with a childlike simplicity.)

BENJAMIN

Good afternoon, gentlemen.

OFFICER CLANCY

I don't have all frickin' day. Now shoo!

BENJAMIN

Tom, don't look so gloomy. It's rather . . . picturesque in here.

THOMAS

Purgatory would portray a better image.

BENJAMIN

Don't get your wig all in a frizzy. Someone will dispatch a rescue party. Maybe George?

THOMAS

(Huffing as he walks into the cell)

Don't expect Erhard to ride to our deliverance.

(OFFICER CLANCY slams the cell door shut.)

PRISONER

(Fingering THOMAS's fine red vest and staring at his knotted silk stockings)

Fancy threads. Who you s'posed to be?

THOMAS

(Brushing off his shirt)

Sir, 'tis better you not know my identity. My enemies seek to have me put before the hangman's noose. Mine is not an enviable position for the fainthearted.

BENJAMIN

Tom, he's no Tory.

THOMAS

(To the PRISONER)

So you're just an upstanding citizen down on your luck?

PRISONER

You can say that again.

THOMAS

(He pats PRISONER on the shoulder)

I am sure you'll soon be back to doing what you do best.

PRISONER

Next time I rob a bank, I'm going to make sure the gas tank is full.

BENJAMIN

Intelligence is often seen as not repeating one's failures. As I am fond of saying: "A learned blockhead is a greater blockhead than an ignorant one."

PRISONER

Are you calling me a failure?

THOMAS

(Interrupting)

My compatriot merely wishes to enlighten you about your pernicious habits. He intended no harm.

PRISONER 2

(To THOMAS)

Man, you look like that dude on the nickel.

THOMAS

(Surprised)

Seal your lips and give no words but mum. Who told you that? Was it Alexander?

PRISONER 2

(Stepping back, confused)

No!

BENJAMIN

(To THOMAS)

Leave the poor man alone, Tom. *You* stepped into the limelight causing trouble. You must keep a lower profile. You can't continue——

THOMAS

I could not allow blackguards to assault Sally in plain daylight! The strong must protect the weak. You wish I had stood aside?

BENJAMIN

No, but jail disagrees with my gout. And——

(BENJAMIN holds his hand over his nose.)

some of these people require a prolonged bath. Anyway, I must underscore an inescapable fallacy. We can't right every wrong. Believe me, the math does not add up to a winning hand. The world is ruled by the errant strong.

THOMAS

(Shaking his head)

The less fortunate depend upon us, Ben. We ignore compassion and justice at our own risk.

BENJAMIN

But——

(JIMMY, a prisoner, moans, and THOMAS walks toward him. JIMMY is a teenage boy sitting on the floor. His head is bruised and bloodied.)

THOMAS

May I be of some service?

JIMMY

No! Go away.

THOMAS

But you appear in distress.

JIMMY

Dad is probably worried sick about me. Why hasn't he come?

THOMAS

I am sure he will arrive.

JIMMY

(Stares up at THOMAS)

I shouldn't be in here. Why are they doing this to me?

THOMAS

I understand the feeling.

(From offstage SALLY can be heard calling.)

SALLY

Are you numbskulls in here?

THOMAS

(Rushes to the cell door)

Sally!

(The cell door creaks open. Enter SALLY with OFFICER CLANCY.)

SALLY

Tom, Ben. You both can come out.

(Sally rushes up to THOMAS and pulls on his arm. THOMAS remains motionless.)

Did you hear me? You have been released!

THOMAS

Do not hurry me. I delight in your sweet voice. Few can compare to your bright disposition.

SALLY

Get your butt into gear. The gates of Hell won't stay open forever.

THOMAS

(THOMAS AND BENJAMIN Follow SALLY out of the cell)

I am most grateful for your kind assistance.

SALLY

Show it some other time.

THOMAS

Sally, I was stopping a robbery. I was performing my civil duty!

SALLY

They were from the tax franchise board! They were tax collectors, not thieves!

THOMAS

Is there a difference?

BENJAMIN

I always thought God had invented tar and feathers for the enjoyment of tax collectors.

SALLY

I didn't need to be rescued. And by the way, your little act of chivalry cost me \$2,000. Don't forget to pay the Wicked Witch of the East, or she will melt you in the blink of an eye.

BENJAMIN

(To THOMAS)

Even a good alchemist can't do that.

THOMAS

I always pay my debts, especially those to beautiful damsels who seek to overturn injustice and challenge the powerful.

SALLY

Whatever!

THOMAS

(Searching his empty pockets)

I will have the funds . . . later. I would rather go to bed supperless than rise in debt.

SALLY

You two have got to get a life! I'll see you tonight.

(Exit SALLY.)

BENJAMIN

She's too beautiful to be involved with witchcraft. Now, how about a drink? The alehouse is three blocks away.

THOMAS

I hate to see her so distraught.

(Enter two SOLDIERS shouldering submachine guns. Their bulletproof vests are weighed down with communications equipment and weapons.)

BENJAMIN

Sally's an alley cat. Stray too close and you'll get her claws.

THOMAS

She is not a low woman.

BENJAMIN

You know . . . I prefer old women. They are more experienced with grace, charm, and knowledge. As for the ravages of age, in the dark all cats look gray.

(Another company of soldiers enters and nearly bumps into THOMAS.)

THOMAS

Have you noticed all of the foot soldiers patrolling the streets? The British appear to be increasing their troop movements.

BENJAMIN

Can you forget the British for one moment? An alehouse is waiting for us. I believe it has a two-for-one special!

THOMAS

They are up to something. Somebody should warn George.

BENJAMIN

George won't listen.

THOMAS

He'll have to, or we will lose the war.

(Exeunt.)

Scene 2

(Independence Hall is represented by a few rows of old chairs and a desk. A poster advertises the show under the billing of “RevoMania: History with Attitude.” At the edge of the stage is an area for book vendors. SALLY is at her booth, waiting for customers. THOMAS stands next to BENJAMIN, GEORGE, and the other signers of the Declaration of Independence.)

THOMAS

It is the right of the people; no, it is the duty of the people, to overthrow such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. Only then may we procure the blessings of liberty.

(THOMAS removes his tricorn and bows. The other delegates to the Second Continental Congress stand up and applaud THOMAS’s final words. They all turn and face the audience, bowing again, and then they break character and begin milling about the stage, chatting or heading out. BENJAMIN walks briskly toward the book-vendor area; GEORGE and THOMAS follow, slowly.)

GEORGE

Another splendid show, Tom. But you got the date wrong. George Washington read the Declaration to my men on July ninth, not July sixth.

(Enter ERHARD, who interrupts them.)

ERHARD

(To GEORGE)

He did it again! He cannot go on doing anything he likes! You want to literally bring down the house? Do something! You’re the director.

(ERHARD huffs and exits, refusing to make eye contact with THOMAS as he passes by.)

GEORGE

(Frowning, to THOMAS)

He’s right.

THOMAS

He acts like he’s in charge!

GEORGE

He is!

THOMAS

George, I do not take my orders from a fussy, overbearing curator who tampers with history.

GEORGE

(Looking over his shoulder and lowering his voice)

How many times do I have to tell you? Stick to the script!

THOMAS

I wrote it. I know what it says.

GEORGE

Damn it, Tom! It’s not our show anymore. Stop spitting seeds into the wind. We must do what they tell us. No more ad-libbing about overthrowing the government!

THOMAS

Didn’t I say the British government?

GEORGE
 You said *the* government.

THOMAS
 The audience understood my meaning.

GEORGE
 Perhaps all too well. (Scanning the room nervously)
 And then you had the audacity to use the *s*-word! My God! Do you want Homeland Security down on us? No more talk about . . . secession!

THOMAS
 But the *British* call our little altercation “the American War of Secession!”

GEORGE
 You’ve been expressly forbidden to say that word. It’s . . . seditious.

THOMAS
 It’s supposed to be! Maybe you have forgotten, but we are at war! We’re seceding from the British Empire! If that makes us traitors to the Crown and hostile rebels, so be it. We have a right of revolution.

GEORGE
 Will you stop role-playing for one minute? You know the Cultural Affairs Department has rules about how we interpret the revolution. If we don’t follow those guidelines, *we’ll* be the ones overthrown. Do you want that?

THOMAS
 George, the people must be trusted to do the right thing. We *cannot* allow our principles to be compromised.

GEORGE
 This has little to do with trust. We must follow the rules.

THOMAS
 The Continental Army may be run by discipline, but society must be run by consent.

GEORGE
 There is nothing I can do.

THOMAS
 But our situation deteriorates daily!

GEORGE
 We’ve already run out of time—the marchers are here.

(Enter the FIRST LEXINGTON MARCHING REGIMENT. They perform “Yankee Doodle.” Drum and fife lead. When the song is finished, they exit.)

THOMAS
 Don’t they chill the flesh to the bone?

(GEORGE leads THOMAS over toward the book and gift vendors and SALLY’s book tables where BENJAMIN is trying to read a book.)

BENJAMIN
 This is unreadable! Do they have to black out every other page?

SALLY
 Don’t blame me. Not my rules.
 (To THOMAS)

Well?

(THOMAS reaches into his vest and pulls out a thick envelope. He hands it to SALLY.)

THOMAS
I have not forgotten my obligations.

SALLY
Give it to George. He paid your fine.

THOMAS
(Handing the envelope to GEORGE)
Thanks for your benevolence.

(GEORGE opens the envelope and pulls out several \$100 bills.)

GEORGE
I can't use this.

THOMAS
It is legal tender!

GEORGE
Barely! I'll have to fill out reams of paperwork. Don't you have a debit transfer card?

(GEORGE rifles through the cash then examines some bills closely.)

Some of these notes are ancient.

BENJAMIN
(Watching GEORGE examine the bills)
I'll take them. I could look at myself all day.

GEORGE
Pride that dines on vanity sups on contempt.

BENJAMIN
(Sourly)
Well, look who can spit back my own words without drooling.

GEORGE
(Smiling)
My talents are few, but the ones I have really count.
(To THOMAS)
Don't ever give me cash again. They're going to phase out all currency notes any time. Cash will be worthless.

BENJAMIN
I'm still glad to take you spurious greenbacks nonetheless.

GEORGE
Why don't you go out and play with lightning?

THOMAS
Why are they always debauching our currency? Don't they know it also debases society?

GEORGE
Sally might know. Little Miss Rebel here has an aversion to paying taxes. She got caught selling another unauthorized book. You know, under the table. Now she's really on Erhard's shit list.

SALLY
I paid the tax.

THOMAS
Was it an old book?

SALLY
A first edition of Lysander Spooner's 1867 treatise *No Treason*. Very subversive. I had to black out half of its pages. That was the real crime.

GEORGE

That was a huge risk you took. You're just a book vendor!

SALLY

I'm a book *collector*. My specialty is tomes on firearms and gunsmithing, but such material is no longer considered . . . appropriate. Anyway, a girl has to survive somehow.

THOMAS

Did Erhard threaten you?

SALLY

He said I could work off my violation, but the bastard changed his mind and sicced two tax officials on me. That was when you two came along. Your swordplay didn't help matters.

THOMAS

I was holding off the malefactors so you could escape!

SALLY

Escape where? This is my business. If I lose my license, I lose everything.

THOMAS

If I still had my sword, I would subdue that depraved Hessian.

(As the men talk, Sally is called away by a customer who wants to purchase a book.)

BENJAMIN

Where *is* your sword?

THOMAS

They refused to return it to me. They said I was in no position to claim it.

GEORGE

(Chuckling)

You mean they think you're dead?

THOMAS

For the life of me, I cannot fathom how they can embrace such a parochial notion.

GEORGE

(Clearing his throat)

Luckily, nobody was harmed; otherwise you would be touring Homeland Security's reorientation facilities.

(Exit GEORGE.)

(Enter PATRICK.)

PATRICK

They're changing my script.

THOMAS

Again?

PATRICK

Now they want my character to say "Give me security! Anything but Death!"

THOMAS

They are altering history!

PATRICK

Really? Wikipedia says that Patrick Henry did indeed say that at St. John's Church in 1775.

THOMAS

No! That is ludicrous! He said "Give me liberty, or give me death!"

PATRICK

Well, I'm not so sure.

THOMAS

Listen, my good fellow, I understand that you are wizard with those computing machines. I would be in your debt if you would change it back.

PATRICK

Meh? I mean, who going to believe all of that goofy liberty or death mumbo jumbo. I'm not going to die so people can have the liberty to buy different brands of toilet paper.

(Sighing)

Anyway, that stupid wig they want me to wear makes me look like a cadaver.

(Enter LINDA.)

LINDA

(To PATRICK with cold stare)

Aren't you *supposed* to be dying for something?

PATRICK

Patrick was a hothead, not a deadhead.

LINDA

Too bad! You play your best part dead.

PATRICK

I never died!

LINDA

What a pity.

(Exit PATRICK.)

THOMAS

(To LINDA)

What is it this time?

LINDA

I have a bone to pick with you!

THOMAS

I am preoccupied with matters of state.

LINDA

You pompous dandy! I don't care if your lineage *does* go back to the original Jefferson. You're not who you think you are.

THOMAS

I can be whomever I want to be.

LINDA

How about being a father, for once?

THOMAS

I thought we had resolved this!

LINDA

You're supposed to provide *continuous* support, but you're making loans to people who can't pay them back. There'll be nothing left for me and the children.

THOMAS

There are many others in much greater need.

LINDA

Greater need than us?

THOMAS

What would you wish me to say?

LINDA

Stop loaning money, especially to actors and those marching fools! Otherwise, I *will* take you back to court.

(Exit LINDA.)

BENJAMIN

(To THOMAS)

Divorce is why they dub dogs bitches.

THOMAS

Feuds instigated by women are unavoidable and unwinnable. Sometimes I think they resemble General Washington's battlefield maneuvers: full of retreats and humiliation. I wish, at some point in my life, I would not feel like the innocent child getting the losing end of the stick.

BENJAMIN

I have a decadent thought. Let's drown your sorrow at the alehouse. Strong drink can melt away you memory faster than a wrathful witch.

(Exeunt.)

Scene 3

(Inside the Guy Fawkes Tavern, an old-fashioned English pub. BENJAMIN grows increasingly tipsy over the course of the scene. THOMAS stares at his mug absently.)

BENJAMIN

Drink up Tom. The Sam Adams Pale Ale is exquisite.

THOMAS

I find little comfort in hiding behind a fermented broth.

BENJAMIN

We all have family quagmires. My bastard son still refuses to talk to me.

THOMAS

Do you think I'm too generous?

BENJAMIN

With what?

THOMAS

Money.

BENJAMIN

Generosity is the harvest bounty of virtue. Old Ben never patented his inventions, no sir. Anyone could forge a stove, a lightning rod, or bifocals. I could have increased my fortune. But long ago I dedicated my life to serving others and the community. Moneymaking is important, and yet I found it far more enjoyable to dispense my wealth to the needy. It's like giving candy to children.

THOMAS

But you are penniless!

BENJAMIN

I gave too much away.

THOMAS

Is this my destiny? My assets are not inexhaustible.

BENJAMIN

(Slamming down his mug)

You're the best compatriot anybody could ask for! You took me in before I rotted away in that wretched institution. You believed in me when none dared call me mate. Take my word: money never gave me happiness. Why do we require wealth when we're amongst kind-hearted companions?

THOMAS

To pay for a warm bed?

BENJAMIN

A warm heart will take care of any affliction except that stalking alley cat. Sally is a sly predator.

THOMAS

I worry for her well-being. Fear has crept into her voice. I believe she is in danger.

BENJAMIN

From?

THOMAS

Erhard is a prig. Never trust a German prima donna, especially one who acts as if a broom handle were wedged up his rectum.

BENJAMIN

He *is* a douchebag.

But . . . Tom, he's more than a fusspot overseer. Erhard is a high mucky muck with Cultural Affairs. Patrick suspects he was hired to spy on us.

(Enter WAITRESS, who sets down another beer for BENJAMIN.)

THOMAS

Spies and informers choke the land like thistles.

WAITRESS

That's for bloody sure. They are always outside, watching our patrons come and go. Why don't they just lock us all up and throw away the key? If they did that, they could save on surveillance cameras, spy drones, and spooks.

(To THOMAS)

You're that Thomas Jefferson bloke from the cultural play, right? Great stuff. Do you write your own lines?

THOMAS

Madam, you are correct. I wrote them once, but these days it seems I am continuously revising the script. High-minded words and ideals are no longer in vogue.

WAITRESS

Too bad. Seems like we can't do anything anymore. It's like they outlawed fun.

THOMAS

You know what the problem is? Leaders are no longer subservient to the people. Forget consent of the governed. We have lost our sovereignty to career bureaucrats, two-bit tyrants, and pedantic officials! I predicted this. The course of history shows that, as government grows, liberty shrinks.

WAITRESS

Well, they're sure taxing the shit out of me. I get poorer. They get richer. They think they can squeeze blood from a turnip. Why can't they just leave us alone?

THOMAS

That is why we revolted. The people were being robbed, cheated, and abused by their own government—eating out the people's substance. Someday, we will also remedy *this* atrocious predicament.

WAITRESS

That's the spirit. I loved your speech. Very inspirational. You should take your show on the road. You know, fire a few shots heard around the world.

(Exit WAITRESS.)

BENJAMIN

The only shots I'll be firing are blanks. I had one of those little operations.

THOMAS

Ben, I think you have reached your limit.

BENJAMIN

Let's invade France and storm the Bastille! Overthrow Louis before he can shove more cake down his pie hole. Blow the place apart! You, me, and that wicked pistol of yours!

(BENJAMIN gives a hearty laugh and gulps the remaining ale.)

THOMAS

The French did that already.

BENJAMIN

Bloody copycats.

THOMAS

We should go before we give the spies too much to gossip about.

BENJAMIN

Those spooks're probably at home riding Saint George cheek-to-cheek with their lovely mattresses.

THOMAS

You mean mistresses.

BENJAMIN

That, too, lucky bastards.

(Exeunt.)

Scene 4

(On the street outside the Guy Fawkes Tavern. JACK and WILLIAM are listening with surveillance equipment.)

JACK

I think I've got a live one. Two men are plotting to overthrow the government.

WILLIAM

Any talk about bombs or explosives?

JACK

One said something about blowing things apart. I bet they are tied to the secret terrorist cell. Sound like they're also engaged in hate speech.

WILLIAM

We'll keep a watch on them. You can never be too careful.

(Exit JACK and WILLIAM as THOMAS and BENJAMIN enter, leaving the tavern. THOMAS strolls, and BENJAMIN, drunk, stumbles. ALEXANDER and five other men, dressed in colonial garb and white wigs, also enter, walking the opposite them. Despite their youth, all carry walking canes.)

THOMAS

Here come the Constitution Boys. Mr. Hamilton riles my senses. He is the quintessential Federalist.

BENJAMIN

Be gentle. They're our brethren.

THOMAS

Not in my book. Most of them require adult supervision.

ALEXANDER

(Doffing his hat and bowing slightly)

Good evening.

THOMAS

(Mimicking the gesture)

Fine evening, Mr. Secretary. Still planning more empire building?

ALEXANDER

Mr. President. Still tilting at windmills?

THOMAS

Only when I can take the wind from the sails of windbags.

ALEXANDER

Very clever. But you still don't get it, you anachronistic relic. Don Quixote didn't exist, and neither do you. What can you possibly achieve by attacking imaginary enemies?

THOMAS

The enemies of liberty are *not* imaginary. They are immortal!

BENJAMIN

Bravo, Tom! If only I had a decent quill to jot that one down.

ALEXANDER

Tom, your squire has become your lap dog.

BENJAMIN

I prefer a Saint Bernard.

ALEXANDER

(To BENJAMIN)

You've been hitting the sauce again! Weren't you the paragon of temperance? Your autobiographer needs to clean his eyeglasses.

My spectacles are just fine.
BENJAMIN

THOMAS
And you, Mr. Secretary, are not a paragon of virtue. You would have had us reattached to the Monarchy. Holding us down by ball and chain!

ALEXANDER
(Snickering)
My character was an aristocratic prima donna. Everyone knows it. Alexander demanded that the president serve for life and all the governors be appointed. King George would've been amused. But we are all actors here. Find a better target for your tongue.

THOMAS
An American Machiavelli could say no less.

ALEXANDER
Good grief.
THOMAS
(Pointing at ALEXANDER's cane)

Why the cane?
ALEXANDER

Oh, this old thing?
(ALEXANDER pulls the cane apart, revealing a shiny dagger.)

The streets have become . . . dangerous. I used to pack heat before I retired. Completely permitted and registered, even though that's no longer an option.

THOMAS
The British have always feared an armed citizenry.
ALEXANDER

They're not the only ones, Tom.
(Doffing his hat, ALEXANDER leads his cohort past THOMAS and BENJAMIN, who continue walking in the opposite direction. Exeunt.)

Scene 5

(THOMAS's modest apartment. THOMAS and BENJAMIN enter through the front door.)

BENJAMIN

(Throwing himself onto a couch)

You've got to stop antagonizing Alexander. He's one of us.

THOMAS

Those Federalists are not honorable men.

BENJAMIN

What about me? I was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention.

THOMAS

You were duped as much as I was in France.

BENJAMIN

Duped is a strong word, Tom.

THOMAS

(Boiling water for tea)

What would you have me call it? The constitutional meetings were held in secret. They boarded up windows and posted guards. They were plotters and schemers—recreant lawyers, aristocrats, nagging busybodies. They flaunted their case to the public as if it were handcrafted by the people.

BENJAMIN

We had good intentions.

THOMAS

That path runs from hell to tyranny, and the pavement is so black that few can see what is coming.

BENJAMIN

I know, Tom. It's the dilemma of who watches the watchers. I always said that the nation can only end in despotism—just as others before it.

THOMAS

(THOMAS hands a cup of tea to BENJAMIN)

But you still partook of it!

BENJAMIN

We took a few precautions. We had to keep our meetings secret so foreign enemies couldn't know what we were doing.

THOMAS

You wanted to keep *domestic* enemies in the dark!

BENJAMIN

I wanted to keep the delegates from killing each other. You should have seen Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Mason go at it.

THOMAS

I was in France.

BENJAMIN

(BENJAMIN pours gin from a flask into his tea.)

Quite right. We—I mean—they sent you there to keep you from ruining the convention. And you would have.

THOMAS

What disturbed me most were Madison's letters. I was told the executive would be weak and decentralized. But lo and behold, the Constitution was loaded with "implied powers" for the executive! King George couldn't have asked for more. The Constitution Boys stabbed the revolution in the back.

BENJAMIN

But the Republic worked!

THOMAS

Au contraire! From the very start the Federalists taxed and bullied citizens. Revolts littered the land! And then the Constitution Boys performed their *fait accompli* when they ratified the Alien and Sedition Acts.

BENJAMIN

(Sheepishly)

I wasn't alive . . . I mean I wasn't paying much attention at that time.

(BENJAMIN and THOMAS stare at each other for a long time.)

THOMAS

You can be excused for that.

BENJAMIN

John's mistakes weren't that abhorrent.

THOMAS

He had newspaper editors and a member of Congress—anyone who dared bad-mouth his administration—arrested and jailed. They even arrested your grandson.

BENJAMIN

(Yawning)

John wouldn't have done that!

THOMAS

(Sipping his tea)

Power is a fearful taskmaster. Do you know that I was singled out in his little ploy? The Sedition Act protected the presidency and all of Congress from the slings and arrows of outrageous criticism except one office—the vice presidency.

Mr. Adams proclaimed that the law was vital to protect America. Instead, it protected political hides. I was the only game in town for character assassins. It proves that people, not the government, should run society.

(Noticing BENJAMIN is asleep)

Ben?

(THOMAS attempts to move BENJAMIN to his bed, but cannot. BENJAMIN's flask falls to the floor. THOMAS picks it up, unscrews the cap and sniffs. He shakes his head.)

Gin.

(THOMAS locates a blanket and covers BENJAMIN's body.)

Sleep well, Ben.

(THOMAS moves to turn out the lights. As he is about to switch off the last light, there is a knock at the door. THOMAS looks through the peephole and opens it. SALLY enters.)

A little late for visiting hours.

SALLY

I came to ask a favor. I don't know where else to turn.

THOMAS

Erhard?

Dreams Gone to Seed

SALLY

(Sitting down)

He is blackmailing me. If I refuse to do what he says, he will revoke my vender license. And now, I . . . I think . . . I'm pregnant.

THOMAS

I shall challenge the rogue to a duel!

SALLY

I don't need honor. I need security. Of course, if we *did* hogtie Erhard with ropes, stuff his rotting corpse into a burlap bag, and toss him into the river. . . .

THOMAS

It's good to see that you don't hold a grudge. Unfortunately, I am no good with knot tying, lynching, or putrefaction.

SALLY

(Pleading)

I came over to ask you if you know of someone who might hire me? Under the table? I'll work for very little. If you need something done, I could even work for you.

THOMAS

I lost my plantation years ago to debt collectors. I have no need of laborers.

SALLY

I . . . also came over to apologize. I wasn't really upset with you earlier. I was mad at myself for getting into this mess. If Erhard revokes my license, I will be unemployed. Do you know how long it takes to get reassigned? I enjoy the books. I don't want to be a cocktail waitress. I fear for my future; if there is one.

THOMAS

I understand.

SALLY

How could you? You're rich.

THOMAS

You are mistaken. I have squandered most of my inheritance. Most of my current assets reside in a single artifact, which I swore never to sell.

(THOMAS turns, opens a drawer, pulls out a box, unlocks it, and pulls out a flintlock pistol. He hands it to SALLY.)

SALLY

(Inspecting the weapon)

Long, heavy barrel, a spur on the trigger guard, saw handle—this must be a dueling pistol from the late 1700s. Looks like a Wogdon.

THOMAS

This is my last artifact worth anything. I cannot sell it, but I fear I will soon be penniless.

SALLY

What would you know about fear? You're a man.

THOMAS

Fear knows no bounds. When I was governor of Virginia, British dragoons invaded Charlottesville. They were sent to capture me and put me before the gallows. I ran rabbit-scared back to Monticello. I practically hid under my bed. Later, I was almost prosecuted by the Virginia House of Delegates for negligence of duty. Believe me: I have lost a few rounds with terror.

SALLY

I'm sorry. I just feel that I have no control over my life.

THOMAS

(Taking SALLY's hand)

People have always yearned to be free. Everybody wants to control their own destiny.

SALLY

Maybe it's better to die than to be at another's mercy. If only I had a steady paycheck.

THOMAS

There are more important matters than having a pocketful of shillings. If we cannot control our own money, then what do we control? This war is not about how many coins a bully can snatch at the schoolyard. We are trying to dethrone the bully. We *must* be our own masters!

SALLY

I wish I could believe that.

THOMAS

Stand up to Erhard. Control your fate.

SALLY

Before or after I kill the son-of-a-bitch?

THOMAS

Preferably before.

SALLY

(Hugging THOMAS)

I appreciate your advice.

THOMAS

(Pushing SALLY away)

I am always here to help.

SALLY

I'd really like to work for you.

THOMAS

I have a wife.

SALLY

But she's gone.

THOMAS

I did not ask to be abandoned.

SALLY

So we're both unwanted. We could want each other. Join the same lonely hearts club.

THOMAS

An empty heart cannot be wound up and turned on like a mechanical toy.

SALLY

It's an empty world.

THOMAS

That may be true. But . . . I have dedicated my life to defending others.

SALLY

Why not share yourself with a close friend?

THOMAS

Some debts are too great to bear. Besides, I cannot share what I do not own.

SALLY

I suppose we're all in prisons of our own making.

(SALLY kisses THOMAS on the cheek. Lights fade.)

ACT II**Scene 1**

(The morning of July 3rd, in THOMAS's apartment. As THOMAS enjoys a cup of tea, BENJAMIN rises from the couch and walks into the kitchen, where he begins searching for something.)

BENJAMIN

Where'd you put my flask?

THOMAS

Away. This is not a gin house.

BENJAMIN

I need it. Gin goes splendidly with Wheaties and . . . and . . . it provides a rousing pick-me-upper. Better than milk. It's really good with . . . ah . . . a fruity cereal . . . now what was that called?

(There is a rapid knock on the door. THOMAS answers it. OFFICER CLANCY pushes THOMAS aside and enters with three other police officers, including the POLICEWOMAN.)

THOMAS

May I help you, gentlemen?

OFFICER CLANCY

Someone reported a disturbance last night.

THOMAS

What kind of disturbance? Do you have a search warrant?

OFFICER CLANCY

Who are you, Rip Van Winkle? We haven't needed warrants for years.

(To his officers)

Go to it!

(Police officers begin to rifle through THOMAS's apartment, tearing out stuffing from couch cushions and dumping drawers on the floor. Throughout the ensuing exchange between OFFICER CLANCY and THOMAS, officers continue to enter and exit through the apartment's interior doors.)

THOMAS

Then I must welcome you as honored guests.

OFFICER CLANCY

(Reading from a tablet computer)

Let's see . . . you were recently arrested for assaulting two officers. This also says you were cited for wielding a weapon.

BENJAMIN

'Od's bodkins, it was a plastic sword. You couldn't slice mashed potatoes with that blade.

THOMAS

Does assaulting an officer with an impotent blade make me a dangerous criminal?

OFFICER CLANCY

Did you know the 9/11 terrorists were only armed with box cutters and plastic knives?

THOMAS

I thought you were investigating a disturbance from last night.

OFFICER CLANCY

We are, because we're the good guys who put the bad guys out of business.

BENJAMIN

(Aside)

I didn't know they could tell the difference.

(Enter POLICEWOMAN from one of the bedroom doors. She presents the cloth holster holding THOMAS's flintlock pistol to OFFICER CLANCY.)

POLICEWOMAN

(Stares at THOMAS)

My, my. Look what we found. And it's not made of plastic.

THOMAS

I—

POLICEWOMAN

This is gonna be good. Come on, what do you say fancy pants?

THOMAS

It is not dangerous. It is broken.

OFFICER CLANCY

We'll have to give it to the evidence custodian. For your sake, it had better be a registered antique gun.

(Exeunt OFFICER CLANCY, POLICEWOMAN, and other police personnel.)

BENJAMIN

Wasn't that Aaron Burr's dueling pistol? The one he used to shoot Mr. Hamilton?

THOMAS

Unfortunately, yes.

BENJAMIN

I get this queer notion that the constables knew it was here.

THOMAS

Impossible! I never told a soul.

BENJAMIN

You told me.

THOMAS

My mistake. But I was under the impression that you had sold your soul to gin.

BENJAMIN

By Jove I cannot believe it. You actually admitted to making a mistake. This is a *precedent!* We need to celebrate. Give me back my flask.

THOMAS

Bosh. Error is to be pitied and pardoned.

BENJAMIN

Not at all, Tom, errors and critics are our friends; they show us our faults.

THOMAS

Then I shall criticize you hourly.

BENJAMIN

That's the spirit! Now, let's go have chitchat with Colonel Travis. He might help you get your pistol back.

(Exeunt.)

Scene 2

(At the reenactment, THOMAS and BENJAMIN are in the crowded book and gift vendor area where they meet COLONEL TRAVIS.)

COLONEL TRAVIS

(Shaking THOMAS's hand)

Mr. President! I'm glad to see you again.

(Several other FIRST LEXINGTON MARCHING REGIMENT soldiers crowd around to see THOMAS.)

DRUMMER BOY

(To THOMAS)

Mr. Jefferson, we still can't get the soldiers out of our house. We're paying the mortgage. The army is getting it for free. We'd be out in the street if it weren't for your generosity. We appreciate the stipend.

FIFE PLAYER

(Handing THOMAS a small gift-wrapped box)

Mr. President, I would like to thank you for all you've done, too. My mother wanted me to give you this. She wouldn't have survived without your assistance. She would have died long before the doctors ever got to her. The wait for that procedure is now over two years!

THOMAS

(THOMAS opens box and pulls out a silver medallion. He reads the writing on it aloud.)

The Sons of Liberty Award: The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

THOMAS

Thank you!

(To COLONEL TRAVIS)

Colonel, the constables confiscated my pistol this morning.

COLONEL TRAVIS

The one that killed Mr. Hamilton?

THOMAS

I told you, too?

COLONEL TRAVIS

And half of my Continentals.

THOMAS

Well, I thought you might help me retrieve it. You are a well-respected lawman.

COLONEL TRAVIS

I'm not sure what I can do. I'm just the sheriff of Middlesex County. And besides . . . the Feds—I mean some unidentified agency—they arrested my son.

THOMAS

I can see your hands are occupied.

COLONEL TRAVIS

I wish habeas corpus was still enforced. I can't get any goddamn information. Nobody will tell me what crime he committed. An officer hinted that my son was involved with a terrorist sleeper cell. Come on! He's just a 15-year-old kid.

(Enter ERHARD)

ERHARD

(To THOMAS)

My office, now!

(Exeunt.)

Scene 3

(ERHARD's large office. It has expensive furniture, carpet, and paintings on the wall. Enter THOMAS and ERHARD.)

THOMAS

(Examining the furniture)

You must have an unlimited expense account.

ERHARD

I have just been informed that you were arrested for carrying an unregistered firearm. You have gone too far this time. We can't have terrorists involved in the show!

THOMAS

I was *not* arrested.

ERHARD

We have a zero-tolerance policy towards guns. I have to let you go.

THOMAS

The flintlock is a personal keepsake. It was unloaded and has papers. The police found it locked away. In fact, they broke into a locked container.

ERHARD

I'm bound to follow the law.

THOMAS

Rubbish! You do what you are told. That's not the law. Under a monarchy, the King's law is whatever the king says it is. The law is often but the tyrant's will. You have turned royalist red.

ERHARD

I am glad to see you go. You've been a thorn in my side since I was appointed to this position. Now I can finally fix the script.

THOMAS

You are a traitor to your countrymen! You menace life and liberty!

ERHARD

Let me tell you a little about life. Most people are ants. They gather food. I and people like me take that food away. We leave enough breadcrumbs so the ants can gather more. Anybody interfering with this circle of life could . . . get hurt.

THOMAS

You can't replace me.

ERHARD

I'll find another Thomas Jefferson in a New York second. Maybe I can get that idiot Patrick to play your part.

THOMAS

My family started this reenactment!

ERHARD

We took it over years ago. You've been overthrown, Mr. Jefferson. Tonight's your last performance. Now, get out!

Scene 4

(At SALLY's booth in the crowded vendor area, where SALLY and BENJAMIN are conversing. Enter THOMAS.)

SALLY

(To THOMAS)

You look terrible.

THOMAS

I've been relieved of my position. The forces of infamy have crossed the Rubicon.

SALLY

Are you sure? They've been threatening to fire you for years.

THOMAS

Erhard knows about my pistol.

SALLY

Aaron Burr's pistol!

(BENJAMIN folds his arms and beams with amusement.)

THOMAS

(To BENJAMIN)

Fine! So I told everyone and the town crier.

SALLY

What?

BENJAMIN

Tom is getting his comeuppance. Three may keep a secret if two are dead.

SALLY

Whatever the case, that gun is priceless. You've got to get it back! Did they give you an evidence receipt?

THOMAS

Is that some proof that the artifact was impounded?

SALLY

They didn't give you an evidence receipt?

THOMAS

From the sound of your voice, I gather that I have played the buffoon.

SALLY

To put it mildly. We've got to go!

(SALLY throws a sheet over her book table and locks her cash register. Exeunt.)

Scene 5

(At the police station, where the POLICEWOMAN sits at the front desk. Enter THOMAS, BENJAMIN, and SALLY.)

BENJAMIN

I'm not so sure about this. Aren't we entering the belly of the beast?

SALLY

Afraid it will digest you?

BENJAMIN

Maybe. Although many have said I'm a hard pill to swallow.

SALLY

Let's see if we can give the beast a little indigestion.

THOMAS

(To the POLICEWOMAN)

I am Thomas Jefferson, of 1826 York Avenue. I would like to retrieve a flintlock pistol that Officer Clancy seized. Or, at least, receive an evidence receipt for it.

POLICEWOMAN

(Staring down at THOMAS)

Not you again.

THOMAS

Can you just check on my property?

(The POLICEWOMAN checks her computer.)

POLICEWOMAN

I don't see anything in the evidence record.

(The POLICEWOMAN picks up the phone.)

Clancy, I need you up front.

THOMAS

Clancy never explained what he was searching for.

POLICEWOMAN

Nobody needs probable cause if you are listed on a terrorist list.

THOMAS

True patriots do not target innocent civilians!

POLICEWOMAN

Who do they target?

(Enter OFFICER CLANCY.)

OFFICER CLANCY

Yes?

POLICEWOMAN

This man wants to retrieve impounded property from the evidence locker. Or get a receipt. Have you finished your investigation?

OFFICER CLANCY

What property? What investigation? I've never seen this guy before.

THOMAS

Sir, how could you have forgotten already?

POLICEWOMAN
 Let me see your national ID card.

THOMAS
 As I have already stated, I'm Thomas Jefferson.

POLICEWOMAN
 (Pointing to BENJAMIN)
 And I assume you're Benjamin Franklin.

BENJAMIN
 In the flesh! Some call me the cracker-barrel philosopher, but you may call me Dr. Fatsides.

SALLY
 They're actors in the Cultural Affairs Reenactment for the 4th of July celebrations.

OFFICER CLANCY
 (To the POLICEWOMAN)
 Ask them if they are the real McCoy.

POLICEWOMAN
 What?

OFFICER CLANCY
 You know, ask them who they think they are.

POLICEWOMAN
 (To THOMAS)
 Are you saying you're the real Thomas Jefferson?

THOMAS
 (Tugging on his lapels)
 There is no other. And please, address me as Mr. President.

SALLY
 Oy vey.

POLICEWOMAN
 Okay, you fruit loops, time to leave.

BENJAMIN
 (To THOMAS)
 That's it! The other cereal that blends splendidly with gin: Fruit Loops!

SALLY
 (To THOMAS)
 They're lying! You know Officer Clancy himself conducted that raid early this morning!

THOMAS
 Our government has indeed become wolves over sheep. We must come back tonight with reinforcements. If we must, we will break into their armory to retrieve my property. I believe some of the fellows in the First Lexington Marching Regiment may assist us. Maybe Colonel Travis would reconsider helping us. He has valuable expertise.

SALLY
 It would risk his career!

THOMAS
 He is worried about his son. Careers are fleeting; family is permanent.

(Exeunt.)

Scene 6

(An upstairs room of the police station. JACK listens with headphones. WILLIAM stands nearby.)

JACK

Subjects Tom and Ben are planning a break-in to steal firearms.

WILLIAM

When?

JACK

Not sure, but it sounds like they plan to take over an armory. I think we've got an active terrorist cell ready to act out its evil.

WILLIAM

Any militias involved?

JACK

They said something about the First Lexington Marching Regiment.

WILLIAM

It's time to deploy the Special Response Units. That will put a cork into their extremist rants.

Scene 7

(At the reenactment. THOMAS, BENJAMIN and SALLY are in the book and gift vendor area. COLONEL TRAVIS then enters.)

THOMAS

Colonel, can we talk in secret?

(THOMAS, BENJAMIN, and SALLY draw COLONEL TRAVIS aside.)

THOMAS

Here is our predicament. We must penetrate a secure police station and retrieve my stolen property.

COLONEL TRAVIS

Are you crazy? I can't help you break into a police station! The evidence locker will be tamper proof. We would need a crate of C-4 explosives to get inside.

SALLY

If a dirty cop wanted to hide something valuable, he wouldn't store it in the evidence locker. He would conceal it somewhere in the station. Besides, your son is also incarcerated inside!

COLONEL TRAVIS

I can't just waltz inside, cold-cock the desk cop, and release him. I would be throwing away my career. But . . . if we had a person on the inside, maybe . . .

SALLY

I used to work at that police station. I know the layout, the procedures.

COLONEL TRAVIS

And my son?

SALLY

I know where they would be holding him.

THOMAS

You were once a law-enforcement officer?

SALLY

I was a secretary.

COLONEL TRAVIS

I can probably get you past the desk officer. But that's all I can do.

THOMAS

That might be enough. We will also need someone to breach their information system.

BENJAMIN

Recruit Patrick. He is a wizard with computing things.

SALLY

He's crazier than any of us.

THOMAS

I believe *you* can convince him to join us.

(Enter GEORGE.)

GEORGE

(Shouting)

Places everybody! Two minutes to curtain!

SALLY

Are you going to go on?

THOMAS

Tonight may mark my last stint in the limelight. I hope my final performance will generate enough heat to inflame a few hearts.

(THOMAS walks to the front of the stage and addresses the audience.)

THOMAS

We live in times that try men's souls. The enemy is not at our doorstep, not in our homes, but at our throats. We can no longer say what we want, go where we please, or live our life as we see fit. We face a foreign army of intolerant, parasitic men determined to control who we are and what we might become. Despotism has a death grip on our very being.

(THOMAS removes his hat and walks a few steps forward. He sighs.)

I say to ye, has our hour of deliverance come? Shall we dare to smell the sweet aroma of liberty and fail to seek its source? I do not know what surges through your hearts, but I see no other course of action. Either every citizen has inalienable rights or nobody does. I may pen elegant passages about independence, but you, the people, are the only ones who can demand it.

(THOMAS bows, then exits.)

(Enter PATRICK and SALLY in the book and gift vendor area.)

PATRICK

So you say that Tom's going to get sliced and diced by the Hessian tomorrow? And that big trouble is coming to town.

SALLY

Bigger than you know, and you can be a part of it, if you want. . . .

PATRICK

I hate it when you tease me. What do you have in mind?

(Lights go dark.)

ACT III**Scene I**

(Early morning, July 4; at the police station.
Enter COLONEL TRAVIS, who strides up to
the POLICEWOMAN at the desk.)

COLONEL TRAVIS

(Showing his badge)

I'm the sheriff of Middlesex County. I need a bit of vital information from one of your officers.

POLICEWOMAN

Kinda late.

COLONEL TRAVIS

I could get hold of him by phone. Is Officer Clancy in?

POLICEWOMAN

Almost nobody's in.

COLONEL TRAVIS

This is important. I can wait.

POLICEWOMAN

Suit yourself. All I can offer is a lumpy couch and some coffee.

COLONEL TRAVIS

That will be fine.

POLICEWOMAN

(As the POLICEWOMAN prepares a new pot of coffee, she talks to COLONEL TRAVIS. Meanwhile, THOMAS, BENJAMIN, SALLY, and PATRICK sneak into the back office. PATRICK immediately starts typing on the keyboard of a computer.)

THOMAS

Patrick—

PATRICK

When you said big trouble, you really meant it.

THOMAS

You're looking for an old flintlock pistol.

PATRICK

I found something, but it's more interesting than your pistol.

THOMAS

(Looking over PATRICK's shoulder, he gasps.)

A secret stockade in the middle of the city?

PATRICK

These prisoners look like zombies. Look at this one. They're naked and stacked in pyramids—like at Abu Ghraib!

THOMAS

Maybe you should take a look below. See what they are about.

(PATRICK nods and exits through a door.)

SALLY

(Exasperated)

I'll find the gun myself.

(SALLY begins to search through drawers. BENJAMIN assists SALLY. In the front room, COLONEL TRAVIS knocks the POLICEWOMAN unconscious, and then runs into the back office.)

THOMAS

(Seeing the unconscious POLICEWOMAN)

I see we are torching our bridges fast.

COLONEL TRAVIS

I had too. She was bragging about torturing terrorists. Some from Lexington!

(COLONEL TRAVIS shows THOMAS a keycard.)

This should unlock all the cells.

(COLONEL TRAVIS, THOMAS, and BENJAMIN open a large door to reveal PATRICK in a hallway lined with cells, each holding several thin, ragged prisoners. COLONEL TRAVIS looks through each cell.)

Jimmy!

(COLONEL TRAVIS unlocks the cell and opens the door. Enter JIMMY, thin and bloody. He can barely walk. PATRICK loops his arm around JIMMY's shoulder for support.)

JIMMY

Dad!

(COLONEL TRAVIS throws the keycard to a group of men and women huddling in a small cell and embraces his son.)

PATRICK

This is so rad!

(PATRICK begins typing something on his phone as he helps JIMMY walk.)

BENJAMIN

What are you doing?

PATRICK

I'm telling everybody on Twitter.

(He takes a few photographs with his phone.)

Man, what a badass night.

BENJAMIN

Right! And if we don't get out of here, you'll get to experience both the *bad* and the *ass* firsthand.

(They exit the cellblock into the back office to find SALLY.)

SALLY

Look what I found!

(SALLY holds up the pistol, then shoves the gun into her purse. Exeunt.)

Scene 2

(The street outside the police station. Dawn is breaking. THOMAS, BENJAMIN, SALLY, PATRICK, COLONEL TRAVIS and JIMMY are searching for a place to hide.)

THOMAS

(To COLONEL TRAVIS)

I'm sorry.

COLONEL TRAVIS

For what?

THOMAS

I roped you into this. They will not tolerate our actions.

COLONEL TRAVIS

What is life worth knowing that your child is not safe? If they come for me—let me say this as strongly as I can—let them try.

(COLONEL TRAVIS brandishes a revolver.)

From now on I'm going to let Smith and Wesson do all my talking.

THOMAS

We need a place to hide. I have an idea.

(THOMAS leads everyone to a vacant storefront. He breaks the lock and they all dart inside. As soon as they are hidden, enter SECURITY PERSONNEL, including agents from the FBI, ATF, DEA, Homeland Security, US Park Service, city policemen, Special Response Units, and county sheriffs, who sprint down the street with assault rifles and teargas guns. THOMAS, BENJAMIN, SALLY, PATRICK, COLONEL TRAVIS and JIMMY come out of hiding after they pass.)

SALLY

(To BENJAMIN)

We'll never get out alive.

BENJAMIN

I wonder if they serve ale in heaven?

THOMAS

What would General Washington do under these circumstances?

SALLY

Didn't he lose almost every engagement?

THOMAS

Retreat one day and fight another was his motto.

COLONEL TRAVIS

Whatever we do, we must do it fast.

SALLY

Who cares what we do? We're all going to end up in a landfill.

THOMAS

(To SALLY)

We must talk in private.

(THOMAS and SALLY walk upstage. As they do, workers begin draping buildings and lampposts with American flags for the Independence Day parade. As SALLY and THOMAS talk, more and more people arrive. THOMAS pauses, appearing tongue-tied.)

SALLY

What?

THOMAS

I . . . I want you to know is that everything is not hopeless. When Mr. Hamilton's dueling pistol was investigated, we found a dark secret. His weapon had been altered. It had a concealed hair-trigger, giving a distinct, unfair advantage to him.

SALLY

So he cheated. So what?

THOMAS

The only reason Mr. Hamilton lay fatally wounded was because the hair-trigger was *so* sensitive the gun fired prematurely. The bullet missed Mr. Burr. Hamilton's ploy backfired.

SALLY

Hamilton tried to rig the duel, but instead it killed him?

THOMAS

The best laid plans often go awry. The powerful are not omnipotent. They make blunders. There *is* hope. If we can outfox the fox . . . Ben once joked that whether a glass is half full or half empty depends entirely on what is inside the glass.

SALLY

Just knock over the glass and get done with it. We won't survive this!

THOMAS

I've always thought that life was God's way of testing our character, our resolve. Are we good people or do we simply bend with the shifting wind?

(PATRICK approaches.)

PATRICK

I hope I'm not interrupting, but the parade is almost here, and . . . seeing as how we're dressed . . .

THOMAS and SALLY

(In unison)

We could join in!"

THOMAS

Bravo! The parade's participants will make excellent canopy. We might slip away right under the unwary British noses.

(THOMAS motions for everyone to intermix with the Cultural Affairs Reenactment. During the parade, pairs of characters move toward the front of the stage to converse before melting back into the crowd. The first pair is THOMAS and GEORGE.)

GEORGE

Glad to see you finally made it. How come you're not leading the parade this year?

THOMAS

Let others have their turn.

GEORGE

Good call.

(As SALLY joins THOMAS, government agents and the police, including OFFICER CLANCY, inch closer to THOMAS and his group.)

SALLY

I think they see us. We've got to move.

THOMAS

(To his group)

Back this way!

(They join up with the First Lexington Marching Regiment, whose soldiers bear unloaded muskets. COLONEL TRAVIS takes command.)

DRUMMER BOY

(To THOMAS and COLONEL TRAVIS)

I saw the internet photo of the torture room at the police stations. We've got to do something

COLONEL TRAVIS

We will son.

DRUMMER BOY

But when?

COLONEL TRAVIS

(To the DRUMMER BOY)

Now is as good as ever.

(Shouts to his men)

Listen men! Evil is afoot! Prepare to defend Mr. Jefferson!

(COLONEL TRAVIS motions the men to follow him. With military precision, the regimental soldiers pivot toward the government agents who begin setting up a shield wall to fire tear gas grenades.)

Fix bayonets!

(The regimental soldiers attach long metal bayonets to their guns and point their weapons at the government agents.)

March!

(Enter ALEXANDER and the Constitution Boys as the next group in the parade.)

ALEXANDER

They're trying to take down the Continentals. We've must protect our troops, boys!

(ALEXANDER and the Constitution Boys pull apart their canes to reveal daggers. They rush the government agents.)

COLONEL TRAVIS

Hold the line, men! We must protect Mr. Jefferson!

(OFFICER CLANCY pulls out his revolver and points it at COLONEL TRAVIS's head.)

OFFICER CLANCY

Are you mad? Stand down and surrender!

(COLONEL TRAVELS draws his revolver.)

COLONEL TRAVIS

I know what you did to Jimmy! You have gone too far!

(Several parade spectators scramble into the street and join the Continental soldiers. Fistfights break out. Everyone is pushing and shoving. With bayonets protruding, the First Lexington Marching Regiment continues to advance toward the government agents. The agents stand behind their shields, weapons drawn. The Constitution Boys jab and parry in an attempt to join the Continentals.)

THOMAS

A storm is about to break. We cannot stay much longer!

SALLY

(Pointing to an alley)

Over there!

(THOMAS, SALLY, and BENJAMIN try to push through a crowd of angry spectators. Bursts of gunfire are heard as teargas begins to billow. People fall to the ground as bullets whiz overhead. SALLY and BENJAMIN dive for the ground.)

SALLY

(Pulling THOMAS down to the blacktop)

Get down, you fool!

THOMAS

Now I have blood on my hands!

SALLY

No you don't! Colonel Travis gave us time to escape. He made a choice. Where's Ben?

(BENJAMIN is flat on his back on the ground nearby.)

THOMAS

I will get him.

(THOMAS crawls over to BENJAMIN and shakes him. But BENJAMIN fails to move.)

Ben, Ben! Get up!

(SALLY moves closer and points to BENJAMIN's chest.)

SALLY

Blood!

THOMAS

No!

(THOMAS grabs hold of BENJAMIN and shakes him, trying to awaken him. SALLY presses her hands over BENJAMIN'S wound.)

BENJAMIN

(Gasping)

I didn't duck soon enough, I guess.

THOMAS

Don't be afraid. We will locate a physician.

SALLY

I can't stop the bleeding!

THOMAS

I am so sorry. This is all of my doing.

BENJAMIN

(Whispering)

Nonsense! You befriended me when nobody else would. You know . . . I'm . . . I'm not really Benjamin Franklin. I'm a big, fat fraud.

THOMAS

Everybody is more than what they seem. You possess his spirit, and that is all that counts.

BENJAMIN

You've been so good to me.

THOMAS

Hold on! A physician will . . .

BENJAMIN

Don't lie. You're too good for . . . that . . . when . . .

(BENJAMIN dies.)

THOMAS

Ben!

(THOMAS turns his head away.)

SALLY

It's too late for him, and it will soon be too late for us. We've got to go now!

(Exit SALLY and THOMAS. Lights and curtain.)

Scene 3

(In SALLY's apartment the morning of July 5. THOMAS is making tea in the kitchen. SALLY is peeking out the window between the blinds. SALLY moves to a table and opens her computer.)

THOMAS

Can they track us on that device?

SALLY

Not this laptop. It's unregistered. That's how I find my unauthorized books.

(THOMAS browses SALLY'S bookshelf. He holds up a book.)

THOMAS

How to Make a Gun Out of Junk. A little esoteric?

SALLY

Listen to what the papers are saying. "Terrorists Attack Holiday Parade: Five Killed on Boston Street, Many Wounded." They're making us out to be the bad guys.

THOMAS

It is far easier to spread falsehoods than the truth. Voltaire once said it is difficult to be right when the government is wrong.

SALLY

How can they lie so readily?

THOMAS

Men with noble passions always feel obligated to force others to do good. Since they have a monopoly on what is considered good, they can lie and cheat in good conscience. After all, weren't they the ones anointed by God?

SALLY

How can you be so cynical?

THOMAS

I have spent too much time in the company of angelic devils and devilish angles.

(SALLY reads more of the article.)

SALLY

This is not good. They say a large cadre of terrorists escaped. More arrests are expected. What about our people? Did *they* escape?

THOMAS

I am afraid we are unable to do anything for them. We must leave the city tonight.

(A hard knock is heard. SALLY opens the door a crack. ERHARD forces his way inside. He locks the door behind him and pulls a pistol out of his pocket.)

ERHARD

(To SALLY)

I see you have affiliated with Jefferson's merry band of rabble rousers. But I don't care about your politics. I came for the antique. Give it to me, and I will see that both of you receive a fair trial.

THOMAS

What an enticing offer—a straight trial in a crooked land!

ERHARD

(Takes off his sunglasses)

Would you rather die? I can arrange that! Who would miss a few sociopathic malcontents?

SALLY

(Screaming furiously)

You rapist bastard!

ERHARD

Maybe you'll get stricken with pregnancy. Who fucking cares! Stupid people with dopey ideals deserve what they get. Your vendor's license has been revoked. You'll never work again in your lifetime.

SALLY

Do you really want the pistol? Well, I've got it right here!

(SALLY pulls out THOMAS's pistol and points it at ERHARD.)

I hope this hurts you more than me.

ERHARD

(Laughing)

That thing is over two hundred years old. It won't fire.

SALLY

Think again!

(SALLY pulls the trigger. The gun discharges. ERHARD falls dead. She drops the gun on the floor and spits on ERHARD.)

THOMAS

You . . . you shot him!

(THOMAS kneels over ERHARD and checks his breathing, then stares up at SALLY. More knocks and shouts at the door quickly grow more and more urgent.)

That weapon was . . . broken and unrepairable.

SALLY

I fixed it.

(THOMAS stares at SALLY.)

THOMAS

You . . . have just discarded your life.

SALLY

It wasn't much of one.

(THOMAS reaches for the flintlock and examines it.)

THOMAS

Nice saw handle. Crafted by an excellent gunsmith in London. The workmanship is superb. I always wanted to fire it, to feel its . . . impact.

SALLY

What are you doing?

THOMAS

What I should have done long ago—fading away. My world is dead. Nothing remains. You madam, on the other hand, have a lifetime of youth and vigor. My dreams have all gone to seed.

(SALLY leaps at THOMAS, desperate to recover the gun. She struggles and claws at THOMAS, trying to wrestle him to the ground.)

SALLY

Give it back! I said give it to me! I won't let you! Give me the gun!

(In one burst of energy, THOMAS pushes SALLY away.)

THOMAS

It is my turn. Just like General Washington's ragtag army, I am destined to lose yet another battle.

(Police, including OFFICER CLANCY, and federal agents crash through the door. They point their weapons at THOMAS. He drops the pistol and surrenders.)

OFFICER CLANCY

Mister, you're going to end up in a landfill.

(THOMAS is handcuffed. OFFICER CLANCY slugs THOMAS in the face, knocking him to the ground. THOMAS spits out a mouthful of blood. He looks at SALLY with a somber intensity.)

THOMAS

Why should I care to live in a world that has no use for me?

(SALLY reaches out for THOMAS as the police whisk THOMAS away.)

SALLY

But I do.

(Lights fade.)

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