The Whipping Man

by Matthew Lopez

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

New York Hollywood London Toronto
SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Copyright © 2009, 2010, 2011 by Matthew Lopez

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Cover Photography © by Ann Marsden

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *THE WHIPPING MAN* is subject to a Licensing Fee. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. In its present form the play is dedicated to the reading public only.

The amateur and professional live stage performance rights to *THE WHIPPING MAN* are controlled exclusively by Samuel French, Inc., and licensing arrangements and performance licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur Licensing Fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a licensing quotation and a performance license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Licensing Fees are payable one week before the opening performance of the play toSamuel French, Inc..

Licensing Fee of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

Stock/professional licensing fees quoted upon application to Samuel French, Inc.

For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to: The Gersh Agency, 41 Madison Avenue, 33rd Floor, New York, NY 10010; Attn: Seth Glewen.

Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured in writing from Samuel French, Inc.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play: "Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

ISBN 978-0-573-69709-8 Printed in U.S.A. #29121

No one shall commit or authorize any act or omission by which the copyright of, or the right to copyright, this play may be impaired.

No one shall make any changes in this play for the purpose of production.

Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to Samuel French, Inc., for written permission before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

MUSIC USE NOTE

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original music that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for all music clearances and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play and their licensing agent, Samuel French, Inc., against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of music by licensees.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of *THE WHIPPING MAN must* give credit to the Author of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play, and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for the purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author *must* appear on a separate line on which no other name appears, immediately following the title and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent of the size of the title type.

THE WHIPPING MAN was originally produced by The Luna Stage Company (Jane Mandel, artistic director) in Montclair, New Jersey, April 29, 2006, under the direction of Linnet Taylor with the following cast and production staff:

SIMON . . . . . Frankie R. Faison
CALEB . . . . . Douglas Scott Sorenson
JOHN . . . . . Brandon O'Neil Scott

Paul Whelihan – Stage Manager
Amanda Embry – Scenic Design
Colleen Kesterson – Costume Design
Jill Nagle – Lighting Design
Margaret Pine – Sound Design

THE WHIPPING MAN was produced by the Penumbra Theatre Company (Lou Bellamy, Artistic Director) in St. Paul, Minnesota, February 19, 2009, under the direction of Lou Bellamy with the following cast and production staff:

SIMON . . . . . James Craven
CALEB . . . . . Joseph Papke
JOHN . . . . . Duane Boutté

Mary Winchell – Stage Manager
Kenneth F. Evans – Scenic Design
Kalere A. Payton – Costume Design
Kathy A. Perkins – Lighting Design
Martin Gwinup – Sound Design

THE WHIPPING MAN was produced by The Old Globe (Louis G. Spisto, Executive Producer) in San Diego, California, May 8, 2010, under the direction of Giovanna Sardelli with the following cast and production staff:

SIMON . . . . . Charlie Robinson
CALEB . . . . . Mark J. Sullivan
JOHN . . . . . Avery Glymph

Diana Moser – Stage Manager
Robert Mark Morgan – Scenic Design
Denitsa D. Bliznakova – Costume Design
Lap Chi Chu – Lighting Design
Jill BC Du Boff – Sound Design

THE WHIPPING MAN was produced by Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, artistic director) in New York, New York, February 1, 2011 under the direction of Doug Hughes with the following cast and production staff:

SIMON . . . . . André Braugher
CALEB . . . . . Jay Wilkison
JOHN . . . . . André Holland

Winnie Y. Lok – Production Stage Manager
John Lee Beatty – Scenic Design
Catherine Zuber – Costume Design
Ben Stanton – Lighting Design
Jill BC Du Boff – Sound Design

CHARACTERS

SIMON – 50s, former slave in the DeLeon home
CALEB – 20s, only child of the DeLeon family
JOHN – 20s, former slave in the DeLeon home

SETTING

The ruins of a once grand home in Richmond, Virginia.

Act 1
Scene 1: Late night, April 13, 1865
Scene 2: Morning, April 14, 1865
Scene 3: Evening, April 14, 1865

Act 2
Scene 1: A letter home
Scene 2: Evening, April 15, 1865

A NOTE ON THE AMPUTATION

I recognize that every production is going to have its own needs insofar as the amputation scene is concerned. Some spaces will require Caleb to be slightly elevated for sightlines (at Manhattan Theatre Club, it was performed on a chaise) and others will be able to do it directly on the floor (at the Old Globe, the audience was looking down on the proceedings and so we could keep it as unadorned as possible). Some versions will be graphic (Doug Hughes gave us an image of a saw hacking through bone with blood pouring out of the wound) others will be more reserved (Giovanna Sardelli made the build-up frightening and then pulled the lights down right as the sawing began). The script is written assuming you can do it on the floor with Caleb's leg resting on a broken chair. The lines in the text support this. At the risk of encouraging wholesale rewriting of my play, I do encourage you to find your own way of making the amputation as frightening and as immediate as possible. If you need to stray from the text ever so slightly to facilitate that, then so be it. All I ask is that you honor my overall intentions of making this scene truly frightening, which is different from making it downright ghastly (although that's okay, too). On the floor or on a chaise, bloody or dry, it has to be an event and it has to be unnerving. Beyond that, it also has to be your own.

Matthew Lopez, 2011

For my parents, who never doubted.

ACT I

Scene One

(Richmond, Virginia. Thursday, April 13, 1865. Around ten o'clock at night.)

(The lights rise on what was once the front entrance of a grand town home, now in ruins. Craters dot the hardwood floors. The wallpaper is stained with soot and parts of it are burned away. Most of the windows are broken. The railing of the grand staircase leans perilously down to the floor, as if it would collapse with the slightest touch. The steps themselves are broken and jagged. The damage to the house suggests recent destruction rather than years of neglect. This was someone's home not too long ago. But it is now a haunted house.)

(A violent thunderstorm rages outside. At the crack of a thunderbolt, the front door swings open. A **YOUNG MAN (CALEB)** *in a tattered Confederate Captain's uniform leans against the doorway. He is bearded, thin and dirty. He hops on one leg toward the center of the room. He then slowly extends his other leg and tries to put weight on it. He lets out a cry of pain and collapses onto the floor in a dead faint.)*

(A few moments pass. Slowly, an **OLDER MAN (SIMON)** *enters from the kitchen. He is middle-aged, black. He carries a rifle with a lantern dangling from the end. It is too dark to see anything. The* **OLDER MAN** *cautiously approaches.)*

(Lightning and thunder. The room fills with light for a brief moment. **OLDER MAN** *sees* **YOUNG MAN** *on the floor.)*

OLDER MAN. Hey you.

Hey you, there.

*(***OLDER MAN** *approaches the* **YOUNGER MAN***, inspecting him from a cautious distance. He then nudges the* **YOUNGER MAN** *with his foot.)*

OLDER MAN. Wake up, soldier. Wake up.

*(***YOUNGER MAN** *jerks violently back to life. He turns and sees the figure [but not the face] of* **OLDER MAN** *before him.)*

OLDER MAN. Easy. Easy.

YOUNGER MAN. Get that rifle out of my face, old man.

OLDER MAN. Seeing as I'm the one holding it, I think I'll make the rules.

YOUNGER MAN. Where am I?

OLDER MAN. That don't matter 'cause you ain't staying.

YOUNGER MAN. Whose home is this?

OLDER MAN. You best be on your way. They ain't nothing left to steal here, if that's what you're thinkin'. If it's dying you're looking to do, you best do that elsewhere. Now get up / and –

YOUNGER MAN. Simon? Simon, is that you?

(The **OLDER MAN** *brings his lantern down to the* **YOUNGER MAN***'s face and takes a good long look at it.)*

SIMON. Caleb?

CALEB. *(all tension leaving his body, a wave of relief)* Yes. Yes. Oh, God. Am I home? Is this, am I, am I home?

SIMON. You are.

CALEB. Oh God, oh God.

*(***SIMON** *rests his hand on* **CALEB***'s head.* **CALEB** *flinches at the touch but doesn't fight it.)*

SIMON. *Baruch atah adonai elohenu melech haolam mechaye hametim.*

CALEB. Where is everyone? Where's my mother? Where's Sarah?

SIMON. Sarah is with your pa. And my Lizbeth. Your pa took them with him when he left with President Davis. My girls are safe with your pa.

CALEB. And my mother?

SIMON. She went over to Williamsburg to be with your grandma. She's safe, too.

CALEB. When will they be back?

SIMON. No one knows. Just like everyone else from this town. Most folks are gone. They'll be back when it's safe.

CALEB. What about...?

SIMON. Ain't seen him in some time. Probably on a drunk somewhere.

CALEB. Or gone.

SIMON. I'd bet money on a bottle before I'd bet on him leaving.

CALEB. I'm thirsty, Simon. Get me some water.

(pause)

Simon?

(another pause)

SIMON. Sure. Sure, I'll do that.

*(***SIMON** *exits to the kitchen.)*

*(***CALEB** *looks around the room.)*

CALEB. What in hell happened here?

(off, to **SIMON***)*

What the hell happened here, Simon?

(no answer)

(He tries to stand. It's not easy for him. He finally gets himself upright on one leg. He cautiously extends the other and tries to put weight on it. He collapses in a heap, crying out in pain.)

*(***SIMON** *re-enters with a mason jar filled with water, handing it to* **CALEB**.*)*

SIMON. That you doin' all that yellin'?

CALEB. Yeah.

SIMON. You wounded?

CALEB. It's just a graze. I'll be fine.

SIMON. Can you stand up?

CALEB. Yes, I can stand.

SIMON. Can you walk?

CALEB. Walking's a different matter.

SIMON. When'd this happen?

CALEB. Week? Maybe more? We, ah, we were leaving Petersburg and–

SIMON. Them Federal doctors didn't tend to it?

CALEB. What Federal doctors?

SIMON. When you surrendered.

CALEB. Oh. No, they, ah, they were more concerned with their own, I guess.

SIMON. We'd best take a look at it.

CALEB. It's not that bad.

SIMON. Week-old wounds have a habit of killing people. Might have to take you up to the soldier's hospital.

CALEB. NO! No, I'm not going there. I'm not going anywhere. I just got here. I'm not leaving.

*(***SIMON** *begins lighting a few candles and lamps around the room. Not too many. They throw off a weak light.)*

What happened to this house, Simon?

SIMON. Same thing that happened to all the other houses.

CALEB. What about the furniture?

SIMON. Stolen.

CALEB. By who?

SIMON. People.

Fire happened to this house, too. Upstairs, it...well, I don't go upstairs no more.

CALEB. Why not?

SIMON. Big holes in the roof. Rain's coming in. Artillery shells took out a lot of the roof.

CALEB. The Yanks did that?

SIMON. No, you boys did that. I hear tell that someone told someone else to light all the warehouses on fire so the Yanks couldn't get at any of what was in there. Cotton, tobacco, all up in a blaze. Then, the fire spread to where they stored the munitions and– BOOM! –right into your mama's sewing room. Whole town looks like this.

CALEB. I saw as I rode up.

SIMON. Hell happened to this town. Looks like hell done happened to you, too.

CALEB. What've you been doing this whole time?

SIMON. Last few months I was living up at Chimborazo with your ma and the women from the temple. Nursing, bandaging, whatever needed doing. Then when the Federals came, your ma left for Williamsburg–

CALEB. And told you to come here and wait for everybody.

SIMON. She asked me.

(Pause.)

Best let me take a look.

*(***SIMON** *pulls out a pocketknife and cuts* **CALEB***'s pant leg open at the knee to reveal a rotting bullet wound.)*

God in heaven. This ain't no graze. This is a bullet hole. You was shot a week ago and you ain't had it cleaned?

CALEB. It was chaos.

SIMON. We need to clean this. Your pa has some whiskey left.

CALEB. Some? He has cases.

SIMON. *Had* cases.

*(***SIMON** *moves to a section of the torn-up floorboards and begins reaching under.)*

CALEB. Where'd all the whiskey go?

SIMON. Same place it always goes when there's trouble.

(He mimes chugging at a bottle. Then he finds a whiskey bottle.)

Here she is.

*(***SIMON** *moves back to* **CALEB** *and opens the bottle.)*

This is gonna hurt, now.

CALEB. I'm sure I've felt worse.

*(***SIMON** *pours the whiskey on the wound.* **CALEB** *lets out a yell, then winces through the pain.)*

Goddammit, Simon, that hurts!

SIMON. You don't say.

*(***SIMON** *returns to tending the wound.)*

CALEB. What's there to eat?

SIMON. Not much. Been living off a sack of corn meal and some vegetables from the garden. It's yours if you want it.

CALEB. Where are the chickens?

SIMON. Ain't no chickens. You gotta understand: things've been bad for a while. People, they...there ain't no food.

CALEB. Market's still open?

SIMON. It's open, so to speak. Those that are left to sell. But what money you gonna buy with? People only taking Federal. Only the rich are eating.

CALEB. Aren't we rich?

SIMON. That's for your father to say. All I know is when he left, he didn't leave nothing behind to live off of. I come home, everyone's gone. The larder's empty. Chickens dead. Carrots, collards and corn meal, that's what we got.

CALEB. I'll eat anything.

SIMON. Well, that being the case, you say you rode here?

CALEB. I had a horse.

SIMON. Had?

CALEB. He's dead. Out front.

SIMON. Just as well. Can't feed a horse, anyway.

Could eat one, though.

That horse have any meat on him?

CALEB. Not much. He spent a week dying.

SIMON. Well, whatever's left, he ain't got no more need for it and God knows we could use a meal.

CALEB. Yes.

SIMON. I've got rags in the kitchen. I need to clean this wound.

*(***SIMON** *exits to the kitchen.)*

*(***CALEB** *reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a packet of letters, tied together with string. The sight of them moves him greatly.)*

(A **FIGURE (JOHN)** *is seen moving around on the front porch, looking through the windows.)*

CALEB. Who's there? Who is that?

(The **FIGURE** *moves away.)*

Simon! Simon, get in here!

*(***SIMON** *re-enters.)*

SIMON. What? What is it?

CALEB. Something was moving out there, looking in the windows.

*(***SIMON** *grabs the rifle and moves to the front door. He opens the door and looks about. No one is there. He comes back into the house.)*

SIMON. No one there.

CALEB. There was someone looking through the window.

SIMON. Well, if they take a look again, it'll be down the barrel of this gun.

*(***SIMON** *continues to look out the window for a moment then turns to face* **CALEB**.*)*

You ain't gonna like what I'm about to say.

CALEB. Don't tell me we're out of whiskey, too.

SIMON. Your leg, it…you got the gangrene pretty bad.

CALEB. How bad?

SIMON. Well, it ain't gone above the knee, which is good, but…that leg gonna haveta come off.

(pause)

CALEB. No.

SIMON. Caleb.

CALEB. No.

SIMON. I spent three months looking at sick legs–

CALEB. I said no!

SIMON. Caleb.

CALEB. I've been in plenty of hospital tents the last four years. I saw what it was like when they took off those limbs, I –

SIMON. You ever see what happens when they don't? We don't cut you leg off at the knee, the gangrene gonna keep crawling right on up, hurting every inch as it goes. It gonna pass through your privates. They gonna fall off like ripe apples on a tree. They gonna be a big hole where your Tommy Johnson used to be. It gonna eat away at your liver, your stomach, your kidneys. It gonna crawl right up to your heart and turn it black. Blacker than my fist. Your blood gonna be so filled with poison, every part of you is gonna hurt. You gonna be in more pain than you ever thought you could stand. You gonna lose your mind with the pain. And then... and only then...will you die. The pain you gonna feel having this leg come off today gonna feel like a tickle compared to the pain you gonna feel when you die of poisoned blood on Sunday. You understand me?

CALEB. If I do this, I'm gonna be better?

SIMON. You gonna have a chance of being better. I wouldn't be saying this if I didn't believe it. Do you trust me?

*(***CALEB** *signals his acquiescence by lying back down.)*

SIMON. Good. Now, I need to clean this wound and then find some help in the morning to take you up to Chimborazo.

CALEB. No! No hospital. Do it here.

SIMON. I can't –

CALEB. If you think this is something I need, then you're gonna do it.

SIMON. I can't –

CALEB. Yes, you can. You've done it before, haven't you?

SIMON. Not by myself. I could kill you.

CALEB. So could they. I'd rather die here than at that hopspital.

SIMON. I can't do it.

CALEB. You will. You got tools?

SIMON. Well, I–

CALEB. How much whiskey we have left?

SIMON. Not enough to keep the wound clean and get you as drunk as you're gonna need to be.

CALEB. How drunk?

SIMON. Dead drunk. Even that ain't gonna be enough.

CALEB. We'll make do with what we've got. Go look for more whiskey. Find what you can. Check the cellar.

SIMON. Caleb?

CALEB. What?

SIMON. All these things you're telling me to do, by rights now you need to be asking me to do.

CALEB. Are you asking me to chop my leg off or are you telling me?

SIMON. I'm telling you.

CALEB. Then I'm telling you to go get the fuckin' whiskey. If you're giving orders, I'm giving orders. That sound fair to you?

SIMON. Fair enough for now.

*(***SIMON** *exits.)*

(The **FIGURE** *appears again at the window.)*

CALEB. Who's there? Who is that?

(The **FIGURE** *moves to the door.)*

Who are you?

(The front door slowly opens. We see the **FIGURE** *standing in the shadows. He wears a burlap hood over his face with two eye holes cut out, putting him in likeness of an executioner. He exudes menace.)*

FIGURE. Captain Caleb DeLeon?

CALEB. Who is that?

FIGURE. Are you Captain Caleb DeLeon?

CALEB. Who are you?

FIGURE. I am the man asking if you are Captain Caleb DeLeon.

CALEB. What do you want?

FIGURE. I have a message for you.

CALEB. From who?

(No answer.)

What is the message?

(A moment, then the **MAN** *rips the hood off to reveal the face of* **JOHN**, *a young black man close to Caleb's age.)*

JOHN. Nigger John has come home!

*(***JOHN** *laughs with glee and dances around, delighted with himself. It's a "boo! I gotchya" moment that* **JOHN** *performs with devilish relish.* **CALEB** *jumps at this then, knowing he is safe, relaxes.)*

(About **JOHN***'s appearance: he is feral. His clothes are dirty and tattered. His feet are bare. His hair is grown out and a week's worth of beard sits on his face. He also has a cloth bandage wrapped around one hand.)*

CALEB. Goddamnit, John, you scared me half to death.

JOHN. You look at least to be three-quarters there.

This your dead horse here?

CALEB. It is.

JOHN. I don't know which of the two of you looks worse.

*(**JOHN** looks behind him as if checking to see that the coast is clear, then he steps inside and closes the door.)*

CALEB. Was that you creepin' around just then?

JOHN. I saw a soldier crawling up to the house and thought he might be up to no good.

CALEB. I thought you were a looter.

JOHN. I was havin' the same thoughts about you.

CALEB. Good to know the house is well-protected.

JOHN. Not that there's all that much left to protect.

(He moves into the room, looking around.)

Just you and Simon, then?

CALEB. That's right.

JOHN. No one else?

CALEB. You.

*(**JOHN** looks **CALEB** over.)*

JOHN. You wounded?

CALEB. Just a scratch.

Where've you been? Simon says you've been missing.

JOHN. I didn't miss a thing.

CALEB. You've been here in Richmond?

JOHN. I have.

CALEB. What's the news? Have you heard anything?

JOHN. I've heard everything. What do you want to know? War's over. You lost. We won.

Whiskey?

CALEB. What?

JOHN. You want some whiskey?

(He produces a bottle of whiskey from his pocket.)

CALEB. Where in hell did you get that?

JOHN. A neighbor.

CALEB. You stole it.

JOHN. I did not steal anything. "Stealing" is when someone has gone to great lengths to protect something. That

JOHN. *(cont.)* was not the case with this, although there was a case *of* this. The house was half burned and the doors were wide open. No, this whiskey was liberated and is now being occupied by me.

(He takes a drink then holds it out to **CALEB***.)*

JOHN. Want some?

*(***CALEB** *stares at the bottle for a moment then reluctantly gestures for it.* **JOHN** *hands it to him and* **CALEB** *begins drinking. They pass the bottle.)*

You were at Petersburg, weren't you?

CALEB. I was.

JOHN. Was it as bad as they say?

CALEB. What did they say?

JOHN. I wouldn't have wanted to be there.

CALEB. No, you wouldn't've.

JOHN. So I guess you surrendered with Lee at Appomattox.

CALEB. I did.

JOHN. That must've stung.

(silence a moment)

What do I call you now?

CALEB. Call me?

JOHN. "Master" doesn't quite fit no more.

CALEB. You never called me that.

JOHN. "Sir?" Do I address you as "sir," now?

CALEB. You never called me that, either. I think "Caleb" will be just fine.

JOHN. Will he?

*(***SIMON** *enters, carrying a toolbox and a bottle of whiskey.)*

SIMON. Well, look who's home.

JOHN. Simon.

SIMON. Where you been, boy?

JOHN. Here, there. Mostly there. This place sure got picked over.

SIMON. You have anything to do with it?

JOHN. I wish I had.

SIMON. I come home thinking you'd be here and you just up and disappeared.

JOHN. Well, now I just up and re-appeared.

SIMON. What'd you do to your hand?

JOHN. It's nothing.

SIMON. Let me take a look at it.

JOHN. I said it's nothing. What's wrong with Caleb?

*(***SIMON** *pulls* **JOHN** *out of earshot from* **CALEB**.*)*

SIMON. He's got a bullet in his leg.

JOHN. He said it wasn't bad.

SIMON. He ain't a doctor.

JOHN. Neither are you.

SIMON. Closest thing he got to one. His leg's gonna haveta come off.

JOHN. Does he know that?

SIMON. He ain't got no choice. I've been trying to get him to go to the hospital but he won't budge.

JOHN. So…what, then?

SIMON. Well, I told him I'd do it here but it's too much for one man, especially in the dark. I figured if I started laying out all my tools it might scare him into going to the hospital. If that don't work, I just figured to get him drunk. He's half starved as it is. It won't take much for him to pass out. Then we take him to the hospital, whether he wants to go or not.

JOHN. We? Oh, no no no no no.

SIMON. I need your help, John.

JOHN. Take him up to Chimborazo?

SIMON. It needs doing.

JOHN. Let me ask you something. How is this our problem anymore?

SIMON. Our problem? That boy is dying. Layin' in his mama's house and dying. That's a problem.

JOHN. So let's leave. Let's get out of here. When they find out, we'll be long gone.

SIMON. And what would happen to Caleb? You see anybody else around here? I need your help, John.

JOHN. Could we do it here? *If* I helped…could you…could we do it?

SIMON. Could do, but…it ain't an easy thing. He's going to be kicking and screaming. You think you're strong enough to hold him down?

JOHN. Have been since we were kids.

SIMON. It could be done, then.

JOHN. So how do we do this? Just chop it with an axe or something?

SIMON. An axe? You crazy, boy?

JOHN. Well, I don't know! I've never taken off someone's leg before.

SIMON. We use a saw. Saw at his leg right above the knee. Here, see?

(He points to a spot on **JOHN***'s leg. He continues to explain using* **JOHN***'s leg as an example.)*

SIMON. We gotta cut through the skin, through the muscle, right down to the bone.

JOHN. And then?

SIMON. Then? Clear through the bone. As fast as we can. He's gonna be wiggling and struggling. The more he struggles, the harder it's gonna be for me to cut.

*(***JOHN** *grabs the whiskey from* **SIMON** *and takes a huge gulp.)*

SIMON. Through the bone, onto the other side of the leg. The muscle, the skin. 'Til it comes right off.

JOHN. That's it, then?

SIMON. That's just the beginning. He's got an artery there in his leg. Got to tie that off or else he gonna bleed to death. As it is, he gonna be bleeding all over hisself and us, too.

JOHN. You know how to tie it off?

SIMON. Done it hundreds of times. Then we take the skin from his leg and we cut it, we pull it back. Like pulling the husk off of corn, see? And we cut away at the muscle on the leg 'til the bone's sticking out. We wrap the skin around the bone. We fold them, one over the other and sew it up. That makes the stump, see?

JOHN. He's awake during all this?

SIMON. Without ether? All depends on his strength. Some men pass out at the sight of the saw. Others watch the whole thing.

JOHN. And what about the person holding him down? When does he usually pass out?

SIMON. I need you strong, John.

JOHN. I can do this.

SIMON. It ain't gonna be pretty. We gonna be up all night.

JOHN. So, then...let's get started.

You want a drink first?

SIMON. No.

JOHN. Suit yourself.

*(***JOHN** *goes to take a swig and* **SIMON** *grabs the bottle out of his hands on his way over to* **CALEB**.*)*

SIMON. All right, Caleb. We're gonna do things your way. We won't take you to the hospital but we got to do this now. Keep drinking.

CALEB. Goddamnit, Simon, I'm already drunk.

SIMON. Get drunker. Go on. Big ol' gulps.

CALEB. Simon, I–

SIMON. You shoulda had the wound cleaned days ago. You shoulda had that leg off by now.

CALEB. Simon, I changed my mind.

SIMON. You want to go to the hospital?

CALEB. No.

SIMON. Then you ain't got no mind to change. You best start drinking that whiskey. Your bottle is for your belly. My bottle is for your leg. If I finish my bottle before you finish yours, you gonna be in a world a hurt.

*(***CALEB** *hesitates then begins quickly drinking.)*

SIMON. John, get the chair. *(to* **CALEB***)* Keep drinking.

CALEB. Simon, I think I'm going to be sick.

SIMON. You gonna be a lot sicker if we don't get this leg off. Drink.

*(***JOHN** *hands* **SIMON** *the chair and* **SIMON** *sets it on its side.* **CALEB** *continues drinking.)*

CALEB. Simon–

SIMON. Keep drinking.
I'm gonna grab your leg, now.

*(***SIMON** *grabs* **CALEB** *by his leg and* **JOHN** *takes him by the shoulders. They move him over to the chair and rest his leg on it.* **SIMON** *rips* **CALEB***'s pant leg open to above the knee.* **CALEB***'s leg is rotting.)*

SIMON. Tourniquet.

*(***SIMON** *points to a tourniquet in the tool box.* **JOHN** *grabs it and hands it to* **SIMON***, who ties it around Caleb's thigh. As this is happening…)*

CALEB. Simon, I don't want you to do this.

SIMON. Got no choice, Caleb.

CALEB. I don't want you to.

SIMON. You gonna die if we don't.

CALEB. I'll take my chances.

SIMON. You'll be dead by Sunday.

CALEB. I can't, I can't do this.

SIMON. You ain't gotta do nothing. I'm gonna do all the work.

CALEB. Simon, don't do this.

*(***SIMON** *takes the bottle and pours the whiskey over the wound.* **CALEB** *screams and tries to get away.* **SIMON** *stops him.)*

SIMON. John! You gotta hold him down, now. Hold him down.

*(***JOHN** *pins* **CALEB** *to the floor.)*

CALEB. Let go of me, goddammit!

*(***SIMON** *repositions* **CALEB***'s leg on the chair.* **CALEB** *struggles against* **JOHN**.*)*

CALEB. I said let go!

SIMON. Hold him down, John.

JOHN. He's not going anywhere.

*(***CALEB** *continues to struggle but is too drunk and weak to get* **JOHN** *off of him.)*

*(***SIMON** *takes a saw from the tool box.* **CALEB** *sees it and starts to scramble away.)*

CALEB. No!

*(***JOHN** *struggles to keep* **CALEB** *pinned.* **SIMON** *steps on the foot of* **CALEB***'s good leg, bearing down with all his weight to keep him from kicking. He then repositions* **CALEB***'s bad leg onto the chair. Throughout this:)*

CALEB. Simon, no. No, please, Simon. Don't do this.

SIMON. Got no choice, Caleb.

CALEB. Simon, please, please don't do this.

SIMON. It needs doing, Caleb.

CALEB. PLEASEDON'TDOTHISPLEASEDON'TDOTHIS PLEASEDON'TDOTHISPLEASEDON'TDOTHIS...

*(***SIMON** *breaks off a spindle from the chair and hands it to* **JOHN**.*)*

SIMON. For his mouth. To bite down on.

*(***JOHN** *takes the spindle and tries to put it into* **CALEB***'s mouth.* **CALEB** *spits it out.)*

CALEB. DON'TDOTHISDON'TDOTHISDON'TDOTHIS!

DON'T YOU FUCKING DO THIS!

DON'T YOU FUCKING DO THIS!

DON'TYOUFUCKINGDOTHIS!

*(***JOHN** *grabs the spindle again and forcefully puts it into* **CALEB***'s mouth, holding it in place.)*

*(***CALEB** *screams and struggles, his words muffled by the spindle.)*

(And then, **SIMON** *pulls the saw back, making the first cut into Caleb's leg. The lights immediately fade on them and slowly rise on the rest of the house. It is our first full look at the ruin.* **CALEB** *screams. It is as if his screams were pushing the light upward. His screams echo throughout the empty house as the lights finally fade completely.)*

End of Scene One

Scene Two

(The next morning. Friday, April 14, 1865.)

(The rain continues.)

*(***CALEB** *is sleeping on a mattress on the floor. His leg is gone and he is covered in quilts and blankets. A few sacks filled with pilfered goods lay around the room. Stacks of books are scattered around, as well.)*

*(***SIMON** *kneels on the floor with a bucket and a scrub brush, cleaning the bloodstains. A cup of what we take to be coffee sits steaming by his side.)*

*(***JOHN** *enters from upstairs, carrying a sack. He is dressed in better clothes than in Scene One. He trudges down and sits on the foot of the stairs, watching* **SIMON** *scrubbing. After a moment…)*

JOHN. That coffee?

SIMON. Water. Ain't no coffee.

JOHN. You're just drinking hot water?

SIMON. It warms me.

JOHN. Wouldn't you rather have coffee?

SIMON. *(with growing annoyance)* I'd rather have flapjacks and some eggs. Some toast, maybe, with some jam. I'd rather have some of Lizbeth's country fried chicken with the thick, white gravy she puts on it. And while we're at it, I'd rather have a soft feather bed to lay down in and have the first decent night's sleep I've had in years. And when I've had all that, then, yes, I wouldn't mind a nice cup of hot coffee.

(He goes back to scrubbing. **JOHN** *produces a small sack of coffee and tosses it over to* **SIMON**. **SIMON** *opens it and smells deeply.)*

Where'd you get this?

JOHN. Found it.

SIMON. Stole it.

JOHN. Found it, stole it. What's the difference? Course, if you have an objection, I can always…

(He reaches for the coffee but **SIMON** *moves it away from him.)*

JOHN. Guess you wouldn't be interested in these, either…

(He pulls a handful of eggs from his coat pocket.)

SIMON. You "found" those, too?

JOHN. These, I "discovered."

SIMON. You best be careful you don't discover yourself staring down the business end of a shotgun.

JOHN. All these houses are deserted.

SIMON. This one ain't.

JOHN. Most of them are. It's like they unlocked the doors of a store and said "welcome."

SIMON. Yeah, but folks will be coming back to these houses eventually. A couple of eggs ain't nobody gonna miss. But them duds you got on…

JOHN. You survive your way, I'll survive mine.

(He reaches into his sack and pulls out a bottle of whiskey.)

SIMON. Boy, it ain't barely even noon.

JOHN. I know. I do believe I am behind schedule.

*(***JOHN** *looks over at* **CALEB**.*)*

How's Prince Caleb?

SIMON. He's been runnin' a fever this morning. I'm hoping it'll break soon. He lost a lot of blood.

JOHN. I don't want to see anything like that ever again.

SIMON. You'll be a lucky man if you don't. We need to keep an eye on him next few days. You best save some of that whiskey for him once he wakes up.

JOHN. Don't worry about the whiskey. I guarantee we won't run out.

(pause)

SIMON. What you got planned for yourself, John?

JOHN. Me? I figure I'll finish this bottle, maybe start a new book. Looking forward to dinner…

SIMON. I mean with your life.

JOHN. Oh.

SIMON. Mr. DeLeon ever talk to you about money?

JOHN. Mr. DeLeon never talked to me about anything.

SIMON. Before the war ended, he told me he was gonna give us money if we was freed.

JOHN. Bullshit.

SIMON. He said.

JOHN. He never told me.

SIMON. He only told me once.

JOHN. Maybe he was drunk.

SIMON. He was sober as a glass of water.

JOHN. How much?

SIMON. Enough.

JOHN. When?

SIMON. When he gets back. Like he done with Bad Eye, remember?

JOHN. No.

SIMON. Bad Eye bought hisself free and Mr. DeLeon bought his train ticket up North. Gave him some pocket money to get started. Bad Eye went to New York City with Mr. DeLeon's help.

JOHN. That's what you're here for.

SIMON. That and I'm waiting for my Lizbeth and my Sarah to come home.

*(***JOHN** *takes a swig.)*

JOHN. How do you know he'll keep his word?

SIMON. I don't. If he doesn't, we're no worse off than we are now.

JOHN. Which isn't saying much. That's why you're so keen to help out old Caleb here?

SIMON. I'm doing it because it's the right thing to do. But if Mr. DeLeon comes home to find his son dead and we could have helped him…

JOHN. No money.

SIMON. That'd be the least of our troubles.

*(***SIMON** *stands.)*

You didn't happen to discover a frying pan, did you?

JOHN. I'll keep an eye out for one.

SIMON. You best be careful.

*(***SIMON** *starts to exit.)*

JOHN. You don't have to worry about me.

*(***SIMON** *trudges off to the kitchen.* **JOHN** *stands looking at* **CALEB**.*)*

End of Scene Two