

Out of the Frying Pan

By

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Cast of Characters

<u>Lt. Jefferson F. Sparks:</u>	Stiff military man who learns to trust other people.
<u>Sgt. Ezra Kohn:</u>	Dependable right-hand man who can get flustered easily.
<u>Pvt. "Birdy" Vogel:</u>	Young man who tends to try too hard and get in trouble for it.
<u>Pvt. Judah Cooper:</u>	Southerner who fights for the North.
<u>Pvt. Frank Evans:</u>	Woman in disguise; real name Deborah Sile. Some knowledge of explosives.
<u>Ps. Mercedes Finch:</u>	Latina nurse in the employ of the Pinkerton Detective Agency.
<u>Felicity:</u>	Former slave woman in the employ of the Pinkerton Detective Agency.
<u>Ashley Fancher:</u>	Southerner with no patience for a kind-hearted sister-in-law.
<u>Celia May Fancher:</u>	Southerner with a big heart; volunteers in the prison.
<u>Elizabeth Van Lew:</u>	Leader of a Union spy ring in Richmond. Real-life person.
<u>Mrs. Weatheridge:</u>	Southerner with connections throughout the Richmond business scene.
<u>Smith:</u>	Mrs. Weatheridge's butler.
<u>Pvt. Patrick:</u>	Confederate private with a little too much faith in himself.

(MORE)

Cast of Characters (cont'd)

<u>Pvt. Noah:</u>	Confederate private with no time for nonsense.
<u>Barnaby:</u>	Southerner who's just a little too eager to help General Hooks.
<u>Rider:</u>	Scout sent north with a message for General Hooks.
<u>Lt. General T. M. Hooks:</u>	Confederate General set with guarding the Potomac.

SUNDAY

Scene 1

Galatians 4:7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

ENTER Birdy LEFT
(Affecting a Southern Accent)

BIRDY
Hi-- no. Hi, I'm Birdy. Y'all know where the-- no.
Y'all. Y'all.

ENTER Ezra LEFT

EZRA
Atten-shun!

BIRDY
Yes, sarge!

EZRA
No! No salutes. You fell for it again. And pull your
shoulders forward. Get one hand in your pocket and try
to look like you love the taste of cornbread.

BIRDY
How's that look?

EZRA
Better, but still awful. I wonder what he'll think.
(offstage)
Lieutenant Sparks!

ENTER Sparks and Judah RIGHT

SPARKS
Well, Private, how are you coming along?

BIRDY
Exceptional, sir!

Ezra slaps his hand down.
(cont'd)

Other than that. Still a habit. But everything else is
perfect.

JUDAH
Then you been practicin' that accent I taught you?

BIRDY

Shore I has--and ya'll better believe I ain't y'all's yonder.

Ezra looks disappointed.

(accent intensifies)

Well, frittercakes, Judah. I done did the deed just like you done did teached me.

JUDAH

Well, that's just great. Great job. Hey, Lieutenant, have you called Abraham Lincoln to see if he wants to come with us? He'd blend in just as well as Birdy here. Ain't nobody goina' reckonize him.

SPARKS

Calm, Judah. We can shift his backstory. What if Birdy is from the North, too?

JUDAH

It's yer call, Lieutenant. We're just gonna get found out real fast, is all.

SPARKS

Have faith, Judah. Things will work out. Remember your Bible lessons? When the Israelites found giants in their way and twelve spies advised Moses to be cautious, do you remember what happened?

EZRA

Sir, I see Frank outside.

SPARKS

Yes, yes.

ENTER Frank LEFT

FRANK

(saluting)

Sir.

SPARKS

Frank, have you made contact with that Pinkerton Detective yet? He's supposed to be our gateway in.

FRANK

Yes, sir, but --

SPARKS

Ezra, Birdy, go greet our guests. Frank, a word?

EXIT Ezra and Birdy LEFT

(cont'd)

(MORE)

SPARKS (cont'd)

Frank, you're a very young man, and very brave. Judah, don't go. I want to talk to you too. The two of you are risking the most of all of us. Going south . . . Maybe it's asking too much.

JUDAH

Lieutenant, beggin' your pardon, sir. But that ain't the way Ah see it.

SPARKS

Judah, you're from the South. You may blend in better than the rest of us, but even if we're caught, we'll be prisoners of war. You'll be a traitor.

JUDAH

Sir, you'll be out of uniform on enemy ground. You won't be no prisoner of war. You'll be a spy, and hung for it. Me? Well, they cain't prove Ah'm a spy.

SPARKS

But they can get to your family, Judah. I'm worried about your mother.

FRANK

Well, my mother's dead. Sir, you said I'm risking the most, but I don't see it. I'm an orphan; I have nothing to lose.

SPARKS

And I appreciate your eagerness to help, but you risk something more precious than family. You are young, and you have the best chance of all to see the end of this savage war.

(sigh)

When we all marched out for that first battle, I was just a kid, myself. I thought the weather was fine. Two long lines of boys all standing and looking at each other in the heat until the shout came down and we fired a volley. A man standing next to me was weeping; couldn't fire. He'd spotted his cousin in the opposite line. At the end of it, the trench was full of men full of holes. Believe me when I say this civil war is the worst that the devil ever designed.

FRANK

That's why we've got to go end it, sir. If the devil designed it, then God can break it.

SPARKS

Well said.

Listen, to the two of you: one final chance to turn back.

JUDAH

Ah'm gonna pretend you didn't say that.

ENTER Birdy LEFT

FRANK

Yeah, sir. No offense to you, but . . . that was pretty foolish.

ENTER Ezra and Birdy LEFT

EZRA

I won't do it, Lieutenant. I just won't.

SPARKS

Hullo, Ezra. Well, where's the detective?

BIRDY

That's just it, Lieutenant!

ENTER Felicity LEFT, as Sparks gestures widely.

SPARKS

Our detective needs a messenger?

FELICITY

Hello, my name is Felicity. You must be Lieutenant J. F. Sparks.

SPARKS

Good evening, welcome. And where is the agent from the Pinkerton Detective Agency?

FELICITY

Hm. Mm-mn.

SPARKS

Oh.

EZRA

I wont. Do it.

BIRDY

They sent a lady detective!

JUDAH

They pulled a good one on you, Lieutenant.

Judah and Birdy start to laugh.

SPARKS

Quiet down, now. Let's have some respect. Ma'am, you seem to know who I am, but I am caught at a

(MORE)

SPARKS (cont'd)

disadvantage. I was told to expect an agent so skilled as to be near-invisible, and able to get us into and out of the South without notice.

FELICITY

That's me.

SPARKS

You know, it makes a certain amount of sense.

JUDAH

You can't be serious, sir, I mean . . . look at her!

FELICITY

If you get caught in a Rebel's dressing room, you'd be caught, whereas I would be invisible. Consider that maybe Pinkerton knows what he's doing.

SPARKS

I would have never guessed that a colored woman would be a detective, though. I think I can use you.

FELICITY

You men could help my partner with the bags from the coach. She's outside, paying the driver. And before you get any ideas, Ms. Finch *is* a woman, yes.

BIRDY

Two lady detectives!

SPARKS

Gentlemen? Please go help unload the coach.

EXIT Frank, Birdy, Judah, and Ezra LEFT

(cont'd)

Ms. Felicity, I would appreciate it if you not undercut my authority as you just did. These men are under my command, not yours.

FELICITY

I'm free to act as I please.

SPARKS

It's Lieutenant, not Mister, while we're north of the Potomac. And you are in my command while you work for this mission.

FELICITY

I'm not enlisted in your army, Mr. Sparks.

If this partnership is going to work, we've got to be that: partners. I've got to have my autonomy. I get to call my own shots.

SPARKS

(pause)
So, then. What shall I call you?

FELICITY

My name'll do.

SPARKS

Ms. Felicity.

ENTER Ezra LEFT

EZRA

Sir? The joke's on us. They've got papers and everything.

SPARKS

Well, it isn't how we pictured it, but get everyone together and we'll run over the plan.

EZRA

Sir.

EXIT Ezra LEFT

SPARKS

Miss Felicity?

FELICITY

Lieutenant Sparks.

EXIT All LEFT

Scene 2

ENTER Felicity, Mercedes, Birdy, and Frank LEFT

FRANK

So. This is Virginia?

BIRDY

That was a lot easier than I thought it would be.

MERCEDES

We took a ferry; did you expect it to be difficult?

FRANK

We just crossed a border into an enemy state.

FELICITY

Most people in Maryland don't feel that way, Frank. Trust me: we've been in the South for a while. Mercedes? My bag, please.

The women pull out hats and shawls and change.

BIRDY

Well, I have never been so relieved that Lieutenant--Mister Sparks was wrong.

FELICITY

I expected him to be wrong.

BIRDY

Excuse me, ma'am? I don't think that's your call.

FRANK

She has a point, Birdy. I don't want to point fingers, but the officers didn't know about the ferry.

BIRDY

The rest of the plan is very good, though.

MERCEDES

No, it's really not. Think about it: what if we can't find an identical horse in time for the hollow horseshoe? And honestly, a lot of the plan hinges on people believing that beet juice is blood. I may be just a nurse, but I think I could tell the difference.

FELICITY

And what if Mr. Sparks is taken to a different hospital than Mr. Ezra? What if they find the papers tied to his leg?

FRANK

What if someone loads a bullet into the gun?

BIRDY

Stop! Just . . . give me a second to think. What in blue blazes are you two doing with those clothes?

FELICITY

We're getting ready for our own plan, Mr. Birdy. I'm in the South now. I have to dress as a slave. Mr. Sparks may not like who I am, but there's a reason the detective agency sent me and nobody else.

BIRDY

Well, whatever you want. Just remember that you're not in charge. You should leave the planning to Lieutenant--Mr. Sparks, that is--in this campaign, and you'll find that everything goes a lot smoother.

ENTER Sparks, Ezra, and Judah RIGHT

They're dripping wet; their raft didn't work.

MERCEDES

Hello, gentlemen. I trust you had a lovely trip.

SPARKS

Yes, of course. Nothing wrong; everything according to plan. I trust the ferryman didn't identify you as Northern spies?

FELICITY

Who, Mr. Dillon? No. He's a Northern sympathizer. I'm surprised you didn't know that. Listen to me, Mr. Sparks. You may not think much of it, but my plan is going perfectly, whereas yours seems . . .

FRANK

Convoluted?

MERCEDES

Complicated?

JUDAH

Wet?

FELICITY

Anyway, your plan isn't working, and I think it's time to use mine.

SPARKS

You undercut my authority. Take it back.

FELICITY

No. Everybody can see your plan didn't work.

SPARKS

Take it back; that's an order.

FELICITY

What? No. You don't get to order me around. Your raft failed, and your plan to get General Hooks' papers will fail, too.

SPARKS

That's it! Get out. Felicity, Mercedes, and whatever garbage you brought with you! Get out of my sight. I won't take orders from a woman.

FELICITY

Fine.

Felicity walks to the far side of stage LEFT.

(cont'd)

If anybody wants to come with me, I have a better plan.

SPARKS

And if anybody goes with her, their plan will fail.

Sparks walks to the far side of stage RIGHT.

FELICITY

I could use every one of you. For the North.

Mercedes, Birdy, Frank, and Judah walk stage LEFT.

SPARKS

Really? Oh, and you, too? Come on, Judah. Think about what you're doing.

JUDAH

She may be a lady, but at least her boots aren't full of water.

SPARKS

Ok, Ezra. Come on.

Everyone on the other side talks over each other.

ALL

Come on, Ezra.
Get over here.
We have a plan.
Let's go.
Ezra, think about it.
Your boots are full of water.

EZRA

You know, Mr. Lieutenant Sparks, I've thought about it? And I want to do what's best for the North.

SPARKS

You're going to follow a woman?

EZRA

It's something we haven't done before, and I don't know how it will work out. But so far, she's been right and we've been wrong. I'd like to try it her way.

SPARKS

Don't do this, son. Get back over here!

EXIT all but Sparks LEFT

SPARKS

Fine! Abandon your posts! You'll all be court-martialed if you aren't captured, anyway.

Alright! I'll do it myself. Joshua and Caleb faced opposition in the Bible; I suppose I'm the same. I have

(MORE)

SPARKS (cont'd)
to find an identical horse, steal a Confederate uniform, and infiltrate the rebel camp. That can't be so hard. For now, though, get dry. And think.

ENTER Barnaby RIGHT

Sparks has got his shirt off before Barnaby speaks.

BARNABY
Excuse me. Whay're ya wet?

SPARKS
(pause)
I was fishing. And I fell into the river. Hello, I'm J.F. Sparks. I'm not normally so wet, but it's nice to meet you regardless.

BARNABY
What didja catch?

SPARKS
(long pause)
Crappie.

BARNABY
That ain't make no sense. There's no crappie in the Potomac. And if ya lied about fish, maybe ye'll sound like a liar to Gen'ral Hooks, too.

SPARKS
You know General Hooks? You wouldn't happen to know what his horse looks like, do you?

BARNABY
Comeon, Yank. Let's go met 'im.

SPARKS
Well, I didn't want to do this, but you leave me no choice.

Sparks scoops up his shirt and tries to run/fight. Maybe his suspenders catch him up, or Barnaby just wraps the shirt around his head. Either way, it ends badly for Sparks.

BARNABY
Alright. Let's try this again.

EXIT Barnaby and Sparks RIGHT

Scene 3

ENTER Barnaby and Sparks RIGHT

BARNABY

Don't touch anything, ya hateful Yank. The Gen'ral is a great man, and you? Yer just a money-grubbin', good fer nothin', manure -- Sorry, Sir.

ENTER TMHooks LEFT

TMHOOKS

What have I told you about language? Now, then. I'm Lieutenant General T. M. Hooks. Let's get straight to it, shall we? You are a Northern spy. Can you deny it?

SPARKS

Yes. I'm just a fisherman from Maryland and my boat caught on a rock in the river and I capsized. I washed up on the South shore. I'm not a spy.

BARNABY

Comeon, Gen'ral. You cain't actually believe him.

TMHOOKS

You've brought in fourteen "spies" this month. If even one of them were actually spying on us, I might believe you. But for now, I'm going to find a boy from Maryland to corroborate his story. Girl? Please come collect this man's things. He's our guest for today.

ENTER Felicity LEFT
Sparks looks at her, agog.

BARNABY

Guest? Aww.

TMHOOKS

Stay here and guard him. He's not exactly a guest, either.

EXIT TMHooks RIGHT

BARNABY

Now yer talkin'. Well, well, spy. That Maryland boy'll gonna tell us everything we need to know, and then we're gonna catch you in a lie. Maybe they'll give me the honor of shooting you first.

Felicity creeps up behind Barnaby and begins gesticulating to Sparks, trying to communicate. Barnaby thinks he's talking to him.

SPARKS

(to Felicity)
And why should I trust you?

BARNABY

I ain't got no reason to lie to ya.

SPARKS

You would prefer I was dead!

BARNABY

Well, if you gotta put it that way, yes. I thought I made it clear.

SPARKS

You abandoned me at the riverside, took my men, and betrayed the United States.

BARNABY

What? Yank, I think yer about two corn cakes shy of a hoedown. You stay away from me.

He takes a step back and Felicity hits him on the head with a piece of wood/fake bottle.

SPARKS

I don't trust you, woman.

FELICITY

Sssh! Quick, read these while I take care of this one.

She pulls a sheaf of papers out and shoves them at Sparks, then pulls the body by the foot across the stage.

SPARKS

Good heavens! And this one, too! Maybe I misjudged you. Why, some of these are Confederate battle plans. This--woah, this is a map of their deployment along the Potomac! With this, we could change the war!

FELICITY

Good. Pick one, Mister Sparks.

SPARKS

One? We're taking them all!

Felicity drops the Reb and shakes Sparks.

FELICITY

One.

SPARKS

Ouch, Felicity. That hurt.

FELICITY

We all talked and decided to take one document. That's it. I can't read, so I need you to pick which one it is.

SPARKS

You all decided, did you? Well, Joshua and Caleb were outnumbered, too, and God was --

FELICITY

Stop. This is not Joshua and Caleb. Stop bringing that up. This is Peter's sheet. Now pick one and stop whining. We've got to run.

SPARKS

(pause)

Fine, this one has what we need. Let's go.

FELICITY

Not that way, Mr. Sparks! Go out the back!

SPARKS

That's what I meant.

EXIT Sparks LEFT

FELICITY

Lord, give me time to clean up after this man.

Felicity grabs the papers and finishes dragging Barnaby off.

EXIT Felicity LEFT

Scene 4

ENTER Sparks and Felicity LEFT

SPARKS

Have you gotten us lost, now?

Felicity whistles the first bars of Dixie. If she can't whistle, someone off-stage whistles it.

ENTER Birdy, Ezra, Frank, Judah, and Mercedes RIGHT

SPARKS

Well!

EZRA

Good to see you in one piece, sir.

FELICITY

Do you still have that document?

SPARKS

Right here.

EZRA

We did it! We pulled it off.

MERCEDES

(to Felicity)

You did it.

BIRDY

I have to admit, this plan went much better than expected. Us boys used that hollow tree you suggested. They walked right past us and never guessed a thing.

FELICITY

And thank you for the distraction. Nobody noticed me walk right in. I couldn't have done it without you.

JUDAH

Ah'm not much for gushing, but this was a beautiful plan.

FELICITY

Alright, everyone. Let's go to Richmond.

Felicity leads the cast RIGHT, but Sparks stands his ground at LEFT.

SPARKS

No! To Washington!

FELICITY

No, Mr. Sparks. We can't.

SPARKS

This is the last straw, Ms. Felicity. You may be a big shot back in Chicago, but I'm the Lieutenant. I'm Joshua. I'm Caleb. The Israelites ignored what their spies had to say and wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Well, you'll be lucky to get only forty years in jail for this insubordination! Who's with me?

No one moves from CENTER.

FELICITY

I already told you, this is Peter's sheet. God let down a sheet full of unclean animals--snakes and leopards and snails--and told Peter to eat. The message wasn't about food, it was about the Roman that Peter hated just because he was different. This is *your* sheet, Mr. Sparks, and I'm a black woman. Are you going to hate me just because I'm different?

*EXIT Felicity, Birdy, Frank, Judah, and Mercedes
RIGHT*

SPARKS

Ezrah, you understand, don't you? We have to go back to Washington. We can't follow the advice of that . . . traitor.

EZRA

They'll be looking for us, mostly because you got captured. Now, you can take those papers and try to make it. Maybe you will, who knows? Or we can all go south, cause some havoc, and take the plans north when we get the chance.

EXIT Ezra RIGHT

Sparks stands for a very long time. He pulls the document out of his jacket pocket and unfolds it.

SPARKS

Peter's sheet, huh?
(yelled)
Alright, wait up--

*ENTER Birdy, Ezra, Frank, Felicity, Judah and Mercedes
RIGHT*

FELICITY

Yes Mr. Sparks? What are your marching orders?

SPARKS

(resigned laugh)
Richmond.

FELICITY

Perfect! Let's develop a plan for what each of us can do when we get there. I was thinking we find a supply route and blow it up. Sounds good to you?

SPARKS

After you, ma'am.

EXIT All RIGHT

MONDAYScene 1

Romans 12:19-20 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."

Bible story of Joseph

Mercedes, the other Pinkerton detective is captured and thrown in a cellar, where she tries to lie her way out of trouble. After it doesn't work at all, she decides to tell the truth, that she is a spy, and let God take care of the rest. She accidentally solves her problems by telling the truth, because Celia May, the woman she confides in, is a Union sympathizer.

TUESDAYScene 1

Proverbs 27:6 Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.

Bible story of Sampson

Birdy, one of the Union soldiers, is tasked with gathering some vital information. He tries to blend in with the Southerners and quickly digs himself a hole. He squirrels out of three lies before finally admitting, under pressure, the truth. It turns out he hasn't been talking to Delilah, and she's not going to turn him in. It's Elizabeth Van Lew, who is there because she met Mercedes yesterday. They get the information and get out.

WEDNESDAYScene 1

Isaiah 41:10 "Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

Bible stories of Peter in prison and Paul singing in prison

Frank (Deborah) and Ezra, two Union soldiers, dress as women to slide past the rebels and blow up a railroad bridge. Ezra is so bad at faking being a woman that the two are captured. While they're in prison, Frank, who is actually a woman, is about to have the explosives she's carrying discovered, when Celia May swoops in yet again to save the day. Ezra is still in prison, though. No miraculous escape for him.

THURSDAYScene 1

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Bible story of Jesus in Gethsemane and Judas' betrayal

Lieutenant Sparks and Judah are left to clean up the mess the others have created, and they run North to intercept a messenger going to warn Confederate General Hooker of the spies' presence in Richmond. No sooner have they captured him, though, than they find out that there are two messengers, and the other has surely made it through already. Then, they hear the Rebels coming through the woods! Will there be a deliverance this time? No. Judah, a Southerner working for the Union, turns coat and betrays Sparks. He says he has a plan, though?

FRIDAYScene 1

Matthew 5:43-48 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor[a] and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

This play is predicated on flashbacks. The use of colored lighting can differentiate between flashback and present narrative. If no colored lighting is available, I'm writing the scenes with verbal introductions to guide the audience to an awareness of flashback.

ENTER Felicity, Deborah LEFT

ENTER Mercedes, Birdy RIGHT

Felicity is carrying Sparks' note.

FELICITY

Did anybody see any sign?

All shake their heads.

He said--Back by morning. They have to be back. Here, Mercedes. Read it again, Mercedes.

MERCEDES

(taking the note)

Gone to intercept messenger to Hooks. Back by morning. Rely on God. Sparks.

BIRDY

Unless something happened to them.

FRANK

Don't be such a pessimist, Birdy. They have to be okay.

BIRDY

But what about the traitor!?

ENTER Judah LEFT

FELICITY
Judah!

All surround him.

MERCEDES
Where's Sparks?

JUDAH
Captured.

BIRDY
How?

JUDAH
Well, Sparks had just finished prayin', and the Rebels were closin' in.

LIGHTS RED

ENTER Sparks LEFT

JUDAH
As of right now, I disappear. I'm blandin' in with the Southern troops and skippin' town. It's just too bad about the others.

SPARKS
Oh, don't worry about them.

JUDAH
Wait, what?

SPARKS
I left a note in the hideout.

JUDAH
There's a traitor, Jefferson. You left a note for the traitor to track us by. Are you stupid, or just tryin' to die?

SPARKS
No, I . . . it was the right thing to do.

JUDAH
Are you willin' to die for your friends?

SPARKS
Yes.

JUDAH
(pausing for a long time)

(MORE)

JUDAH (cont'd)

You really mean that, don't you? Well, I'm not going to die just because some handbill has my name on it. I have a plan.

SPARKS

Well, let's hear it.

JUDAH

Shh!

SPARKS

What?

EXIT Sparks LEFT

LIGHTS WHITE

FELICITY

What handbill?

JUDAH

(drawing the paper from his pocket)

This handbill has all our names on it. If we stick around, we'll be captured. We haveta run. We haveta get North.

FELICITY

Should we?

FRANK

No! Sparks would never leave us, would he?

JUDAH

You cannot! We have to go.

BIRDY

Go where? One of us is a traitor; we'll be taking our betrayer with us.

Everyone takes a step back, staring at each other closely.

FRANK

Yeah! I don't trust any of you.

MERCEDES

Well, it isn't me.

BIRDY

Nor me!

FELICITY

What if there is no traitor? Now, hear me out. We all made some pretty big mistakes on this mission. What if one of us slipped and revealed the plot to the Rebels?

JUDAH

How do you figure?

FELICITY

They were going to check with someone from Maryland because Sparks was captured. I remember the Rebel saying so--

The flashbacks take place on the front end of the stage, and as naturally as possible, everyone else stands back.

LIGHTS RED

ENTER Barnaby LEFT

BARNABY

Now yer talkin'. Well, well, spy. That Maryland boy'll gonna tell us everything we need to know, and then we're gonna catch you in a lie. Maybe they'll give me the honor of shooting you first.

EXIT Rebel LEFT

LIGHTS WHITE

FELICITY

I'm sure that if they asked someone from Massachusetts, they could have found out about us. Don't tell me you're all perfect. You've made mistakes.

MERCEDES

That's true, actually. I admitted to the Fanchers that I was a spy.

LIGHTS RED

ENTER Celia May and Ashley LEFT

CELIA MAY

Well, if you still think she's a spy, we just take her to Elizabeth Van Lew. She'll know what to do.

ASHLEY

That's the best idea you've had all day, Celia May.

CELIA MAY

Well, I mean, it's pretty good. But there as that bit about heapin' burnin' coals. I thought that was genius.

ASHLEY

I'll go fetch the cart and we can dump this spy scum at the Van Lew's.

EXIT Celia May and Ashley LEFT

LIGHTS WHITE

MERCEDES

Ashley could have told anyone about me.

FELICITY

Exactly! It's possible there's no traitor, after all.

BIRDY

I guess, if we're admitting mistakes, I'd better step up.

LIGHTS RED

ENTER Elizabeth RIGHT

LIZA

I guess that it did. I'm just glad you'll never have to see her again. I'm surprised she didn't get suspicious. We don't want to leave her any clues.

BIRDY

Wait! My hat!

Birdy turns around to run back; Liza holds him.

LIZA

Stop!

BIRDY

You don't understand!

LIZA

I do, though! We barely got out of there. Just leave the hat.

BIRDY

But, clues!

LIZA

I don't care, and you shouldn't either. The way you were acting, you're lucky to make it out. Come on, let's go.

EXIT Elizabeth RIGHT

LIGHTS WHITE

FELICITY

Your hat!? There's so many ways they could put this together.

JUDAH

Thank you! Can we please go North? There's no traitor.

FRANK

Then . . . how did they know to check for Ezra and I at the bridge? That's oddly specific information if there's no traitor.

Everyone falls quiet for a moment.

Judah, how did you say you got away from the Rebels, again?

JUDAH

Really? We don't have time for this. I already told you.

LIGHTS RED

ENTER Sparks LEFT

JUDAH

Are you willin' to die for your friends?

SPARKS

Yes.

JUDAH

(pausing for a long time)

You really mean that, don't you? Well, I'm not going to die just because some handbill has my name on it. I have a plan.

SPARKS

Well, let's hear it.

JUDAH

Shh!

SPARKS

What?

EXIT Sparks, running LEFT

LIGHTS WHITE

JUDAH

And I ran the other way. I was able to blend in to the Rebels. They assumed I was from Kentucky or Tennessee. As soon as I could, I broke from them and ran here to warn you all. So we could go North. North!

FRANK

You expect us to believe you were surrounded and got away?

FELICITY

You know, you weren't wearing a Rebel uniform. Are we supposed to believe they didn't suspect you at all?

MERCEDES

And you said yourself that there must be a traitor.

Everyone starts to clump together LEFT

FRANK

Are we supposed to believe this handbill just happened out of thin air?

BIRDY

We never should have trusted you to join the North. You've got family in the South, you Rebel. And now you've come back to round us up and turn us in! Well, we're not going anywhere with you.

All begin to shout simultaneously.

FRANK

You betrayed us all! You sold Sparks to the devil, you scum!

MERCEDES

You can't change who you are, and you're a traitor to the core!

FELICITY

Did you do it just because of me? Is that what this is about?

BIRDY

All Southerners are the same! You liar!

JUDAH

Back up! I said back up!

Judah pulls his pistol out and points it at the group.

I hate when Sparks is right. I thought my plan would work, but I guess we're doing it this way.

BIRDY

(spitting)

All Southerners are the same. Underneath the skin,
you're just a devil.

*Judah takes a step back, and the group lean
forward, as if to jump him, despite the gun.
There's only a heartbeat of a pause.*

ENTER Celia May LEFT

CELIA MAY

Sparks is in Libby Prison!

Just as everyone turns, Judah runs.

*EXIT Judah RIGHT (he will need to cross for his
next entrance)*

*The group is split; Birdy and Deborah want to
chase, but Mercedes and Felicity grab the others
and grab the others.*

MERCEDES

Tell us what you know, Celia May.

CELIA MAY

They're going to execute him and Ezra for being spies.
We don't have long. I think I may be able to get you
in, but we have to go.

BIRDY

But Judah!

FELICITY

Who's more important to you: Judah, or Sparks and Ezra?

EXIT All LEFT

LIGHTS DOWN

Scene 2

LIGHTS UP

Sparks and Ezra are awaiting their fate.

EZRA

You know, Jefferson, I never thought they'd catch you,
of all people.

SPARKS

Oh, I had to come check on you, Ezra. I'm glad you're okay.

EZRA

I'd rather be alone here, honestly. Anybody but you, actually, Lieutenant.

SPARKS

And I'd rather be here than anyone in the group.

EZRA

Is that how Judah got away, sir?

SPARKS

Actually, that's quite the story--

ENTER Felicity, Mercedes, Birdy, and Deborah LEFT

They rush over and help/hug the prisoners.

BIRDY

Lieutenant! Sarge!

FELICITY

It's time to go! Celia won't buy us much time.

SPARKS

No! I thought Judah would be able to stop you all from doing this!

FRANK

Judah is a traitor, sir. Come on, let's go!"

ENTER Patrick and Noah LEFT

PATRICK

Go where?

NOAH

Woah, step back there! Ha!

EZRA

(pause)

Or what?

NOAH

Ah said step back!

EZRA

Exactly; step back or what? You don't have a gun. Just a stick.

The group begins to inch forward, when in walks Judah with his pistol leveled.

ENTER Judah LEFT

JUDAH

Sorry Sparks. Things don't always go accordin' to plan. You two! I'll cover these here prisoners. Go get General Hooks.

PATRICK

O' course.

EXIT Patrick LEFT

JUDAH

Both of ya'll! Quick!

NOAH

I don't take orders from you. I'm gonna make sure this here prisoner don't get away. Back up, all ya'll!

Noah approaches Sparks and menaces the others with his cudgel. He grabs Sparks roughly, standing to stage rear of Sparks.

SPARKS

Judah?

JUDAH

Not now, Sir.

SPARKS

NOW!

A lot happens in this moment. The group surges forward to smash into Judah and bear him to the ground. Judah shoots his pistol, releasing a gout of flame and smoke. Sparks spins toward stage rear, dragging Noah to the ground under him. The group spend a fragile moment to turn around and look at Sparks lying on the ground with Noah under him. The tableau is utterly still; I picture the back of the group standing, the few closer to Sparks crouching or on hands and knees, so they form a rough triangle sloping towards Sparks' prone form. The silence is broken by a scream.

EZRA

Everyone run!

EXIT Felicity, Mercedes, Birdy, Deborah, Ezra LEFT

Judah roughly picks himself up from where he was trampled on the ground and recovers his pistol. Noah shoves Sparks off with difficulty, revealing a shirt soaked with blood.

ENTER Hooks and Patrick LEFT
Hooks surveys the scene.

PATRICK

There were fifteen, no, twenty of 'em, sir!

TMHOOKS

I'm sure.

(pausing)

Is that the Lieutenant? And you shot him, I assume?
I'll have that pistol, son.

NOAH

What do you want us to do? Run after the others?

TMHOOKS

They won't get far. We've cut the head off the snake.
Pity he's dead, though. We could have used him, gotten
him to talk.

(To Patrick; gesturing)

Help him carry that body out back. He's the
gravedigger's problem now. And do hurry back to help me
out with this traitor.

EXIT Patrick and Noah, dragging Sparks LEFT

JUDAH

I'm no traitor, sir. What I did, I did for the
Confederacy, God bless it.

TMHOOKS

You shot a valuable spy, boy. You're not leaving this
prison for the rest of your very short life.

LIGHTS DOWN

EXIT all LEFT.

Scene 3

LIGHTS UP; DIM

ENTER Felicity, Mercedes, Birdy, Deborah, Ezra
LEFT

They're all out of breath. Deborah (stage LEFT)
collapses to her knees, crying. Mercedes attempts
to comfort her. Birdy almost walks off (stage

RIGHT) before he notices the group has stopped. He's clearly only just suppressing a boiling rage. Ezra and Felicity are now the defacto leaders of the group, and stand together (CENTER).

EZRA

Can we stop here?

FELICITY

It's not like we can run any more just yet.

They look back and forth from the agitated Birdy to the weeping Deborah.

BIRDY

We left too soon. We should have taken the time to wipe out that waste of life for shooting the Lieutenant. You're all just fools. And stop crying, already, Frank!

Deborah stands up and runs at Birdy. They meet in front of Ezra and Felicity.

FRANK

My name's Deborah, Birdy. Not Deborah; Deborah!

BIRDY

(defensive)

I'm just saying, we could go back and get him.

FRANK

Are you such a big hero? You're going to walk into a prison and fetch a corpse?

The two are essentially yelling over each other.

BIRDY

Don't say that!

FRANK

What--that Sparks is dead?

BIRDY

I know that! You think I don't know that?

Birdy loses his cool and starts to cry. They lean on each other; Deborah is punching Birdy with the palm of her balled-up fist.

BIRDY

I'm sorry, Deborah.

EZRA

He died for me. Actually, he died for all of us.

FELICITY

You're right; it would have been nearly impossible to get out of there without . . . a distraction.

MERCEDES

He's a hero.

EZRA

But he'll die a nobody if we don't make sure to share his story.

BIRDY

Yeah?

EZRA

When we get North again, we'll make sure his family knows what he did. He'll go down in history as a hero. We'll pester Lincoln, if we have to.

FRANK

I mean, it's nice, Ezra. But what is it worth? It's too much, too sad. How can anything good come of this tragedy?

FELICITY

That's not our job to figure out. The good book says "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." Love like that isn't easy. It takes sacrifice. But it's the only thing that lasts, at the end of the day.

EZRA

You asked what good comes out of hardship. I think Felicity is right. This whole world is temporary. The only thing we get to take with us is the love of our friends and family, the love of our God.

BIRDY

So that's it?

EZRA

Maybe so.

BIRDY

Judah took him from us, and all we get is "love?" That Southern dog was nothing more than a tool of hate all along, and he stole a great man from us. All Southerners are the same, and I hate them.

(pause)

(MORE)

BIRDY (cont'd)

I'm supposed to take love from this? No. It's too big.
I hate Judah.
You all can go on. I'm going back. I can fix this.

EZRA

You can't. He's gone, Birdy. Sometimes terrible things happen. It's best to let God take care of the past, and to take what you can. Take love.

BIRDY

Go away.

EXIT Felicity, Mercedes, Ezra RIGHT

FRANK

I'm hurting, too, you know.

BIRDY

(turning around)
I know that.

FRANK

They're right, of course. About what you take away from this? Hate will eat you up forever, Birdy.

BIRDY

Is that really the end? It's an awful let-down.

ENTER Sparks LEFT

He's out of breath and covered in blood.

SPARKS

You all are a very hard group to catch.

Birdy and Deborah shout/yell, and run to grab Sparks up in an enormous hug.

BIRDY

How?

FRANK

We thought you were dead!

SPARKS

Good! It got you out of there, didn't it? I can't believe you all, coming after me like that. You could have gotten yourselves all captured or killed.

ENTER Felicity, Mercedes, Ezra RIGHT

MERCEDES

We heard--

They all run to the group and encircle Sparks.

SPARKS

Ok, slow down. I've only just been dead. Kind of.

FRANK

But what about the gun? The bullet--Judah!?

SPARKS

All part of the plan.

LIGHTS BLUE

ENTER Judah LEFT

JUDAH

Are you willin' to die for your friends?

SPARKS

Yes.

JUDAH

(pausing for a long time)

You really mean that, don't you? Well, Ah'm not going to let you die. I have a plan.

SPARKS

Well, let's hear it.

JUDAH

If you're right, the others will never trust each other. Maybe there's a traitor, and maybe not, but as long as they think so, they'll never be able to act as a group.

SPARKS

So?

JUDAH

Ah can play a Rebel soldier long enough to escape and get the others to run North. And Ah'll be the traitor, if Ah have to. Ah can bear that burden. When I know they're headed north, Ah'll come and get you out.

SPARKS

How?

Judah throws him a jar of beet juice.

JUDAH

You're no good to them dead.

SPARKS

They'll put you in jail for this. You'll be a traitor to both North and South. You won't be safe anywhere for as long as this war goes on.

JUDAH

But Ah won't've betrayed you, will I?

Judah stands, draws his pistol, and calls in a loud voice.

Ah found the spy! He's over here!

(to Sparks)

Ah'll save you just as soon as I can, sir. Just give the word.

EXIT Judah RIGHT

LIGHTS WHITE

BIRDY

You mean to say--

FRANK

Judah? He saved you, somehow?

FELICITY

He saved us all, in a way.

BIRDY

But he's a Southerner! You were wrong to trust him; he'll be hot on our trail just as soon as he can. All these Rebels are the same. They're all trash.

SPARKS

Nobody is all one thing or another, Birdy. People are more complex than the hate we have for them. It doesn't matter where you're from, what you look like, or what you believe. Humans are made in the image of God, the image of Love.

Sparks pulls the beet juice jar out and hands it to Deborah.

EXIT Sparks, Felicity, Mercedes, and Ezra RIGHT

BIRDY

Love?

FRANK

I know Judah hurt you. But I guess he was trying to save us all, if we had just let him.

BIRDY

Greater love hath no man than this?

FRANK

Than he lay down his life for his friends.

BIRDY

It's just all pretty unbelievable, I guess.

EXIT Birdy RIGHT

FRANK

Thanks, Judah. I'm sorry we forced you to save us like this. I wish I had trusted you a little more.

Deborah sets the jar down CENTER.

EXIT Deborah RIGHT

LIGHTS DOWN

END