

**AMERISTOCRACY**

by

Paul Moxham

FADE IN:

INT. PRIVATE LIBRARY - 1865 - DAY

Stately and imposing. Walls lined with hardbound texts. Leather-appointed seats. Men of great power and influence congregating.

SUPER: SOMEWHERE IN AMERICA - 1865

One such man -- THE LEADER -- commands all attention as he struts back and forth in his sharp suit, his thumbs hooked into his vest.

LEADER

Gentlemen, we all agree our nation has been led astray. This usurper has turned our guns against our own and threatens to transform an inferior class of citizenry into full-fledged Americans. The bloodline of the Ameristocracy has for a century reigned over this great nation, but with his actions, this man threatens to steal our divine right to lead.

"Hurumphs" and "Um-hmms" from the assembled men.

LEADER

So by the power of our sacred order, I hereby enter a motion that we eliminate this man.

A glance around the room. No one answers aloud. Instead, each man puts a single hand upon their knee, tapping identical gold rings as their response.

Rings with a symbol that looks like it's part flag, part crown emblazoned upon them.

The decision is unanimous.

LEADER

Good. I have taken the liberty of enlisting a man of uncompromised vitriol to do our bidding....Mr. John Wilkes Booth.

He motions to the rear of the room and the assembled men shift in their seat to see JOHN WILKES BOOTH, standing hat-in-hand, eyes lowered in reverence to the men before him.

INT. FORD THEATRE - PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

Booth barricades a doorway behind him. He casts his eyes upon the entry to the Presidential box. Unguarded.

Leaning back against the wall, sweat beads along his hairline and his breath quickens. A trembling hand unbuttons his jacket and reaches inside.

Eyes closed, Booth listens to faint sounds of the play in progress - an actor waiting for his cue.

INT. FORD THEATRE - BALCONY - NIGHT

PRESIDENT LINCOLN, wife MARY TODD LINCOLN, and guests HENRY RATHBONE and CLARA HARRIS chuckle in good humor as they watch a performance of "Our American Cousin."

ACTOR (O.S.)

Don't know the manners of good society, eh? Well, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old gal; you sockdologizing old man-trap!

The crowd erupts in laughter.

Booth rushes into the balcony, eyes wide as he produces a pistol. He fires a shot through Lincoln's head!

Lincoln slumps in his rocking chair and Rathbone bounds over to stop Booth, the commotion quickly evolving into panic and screaming that fill the theatre, the sound blending into--

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - PRESENT DAY - DAY

--RIIIIIINNNNGGGG!!! The blare of an alarm. Strobe lights flicker.

AN ANGRY SHOPKEEPER

stands in the doorway, clutching a handgun --

SHOPKEEPER

Thief!

He turns, seeing a

D.C. POLICE CRUISER

rounding the corner, red-and-blue lights flashing, SIREN WHOOPING.

The Shopkeeper hides his handgun behind his back and hooks a finger down the street.

SHOPKEEPER  
He went that way.

The cruiser continues on.

EXT. ALLEYWAY

Covered in head-to-toe in black - jeans, hoodie, even sneakers - the THIEF scrambles down an alley. He crashes into a row of trash cans, barely able to keep on his feet.

He doesn't even look back as the police cruiser rolls up behind him.

INT. POLICE CRUISER

Behind the wheel, OFFICER MAGGIE TEMPLETON, 30, sweet but strong.

In the passenger seat, the handsome but high-strung JACK MITCHELL, 37.

Before the cruiser even comes to a stop, Jack throws open the door and jumps out to give chase.

MAGGIE  
Mitchell, wait!

But Jack's long gone.

EXT. ALLEYWAY

Jack chases the Thief, barreling through the same set of trash cans as he goes. Like the thief, Jack almost loses his footing but he manages to stay up.

When he looks up again, the Thief is throwing something back at Jack. Jack braces as a shoe hits him in the face!

When he realizes what it is, it just seems to make him madder. Now he really jumps into action.

JACK  
Freeze!

Jack lurches forward, jumps up, grabs the bottom rung of a fire escape ladder. His momentum propels him forward as he swings off the ladder and onto a dumpster --

Jack takes two quick steps across the black plastic lids, then launches himself in the air, flying high, arms spread -- crashes down atop the Thief, the two of them sprawling across the pavement --

The Thief tries to run but Jack overpowers him, pulling him to his feet and spinning him around.

But Jack's jaw drops when he sees

THE THIEF'S FACE

Wide-eyed, frightened. Still got baby fat on his cheeks. The Thief is 12 years old - 13 at the most.

The Thief glances down at the stolen goods in his hands. Jack follows his gaze...

A Snickers bar.

Jack can't believe it. His grip on the Thief's elbow slips and --

The Thief takes off running again!

Jack looks up, shaking off the surprise of the moment just in time to see the Thief crash into Maggie, who has driven around to the other side of the alley.

The Thief squirms but Maggie quickly spins him around and reaches for her cuffs.

MAGGIE

Okay, okay. Just settle down there. You have the right to remain silent...

Jack walks up, still a little dazed by what has transpired.

Maggie's slaps the cuffs on the Thief. Jack reaches forward and grabs her by the wrist, stopping her.

Maggie glances down at Jack's hand on her wrist and even smiles a second before asking:

MAGGIE

What?

Jack unlocks the cuffs.

JACK

Go on, get out of here.

The Thief shuffles away.

JACK  
Hey, kid!

The frightened child stops at the corner.

JACK  
Stay away from Snickers. Mars Corporation spends millions bribing politicians to keep quiet about illegal workers and unsafe products. You want an honest, American candy bar, stick with Hershey.

The confused Thief scurries around the corner.

Maggie gives Jack a look mixed with curiosity and respect.

She heads for the car door.

MAGGIE  
You coming?

JACK  
Where're we going?

MAGGIE  
If we're not making busts, we may as well take some target practice.

INT. IRISH PUB - AFTERNOON

Guinness on tap, rock 'n roll on the jukebox. And Jack and Maggie shooting darts in the back.

Swoosh... A dart flies through the air and hits double-20. Maggie pumps her fist in victory.

MAGGIE  
That's another finsky you owe me.

JACK  
Put it on my tab.

Maggie gives Jack a playful punch to the arm. He shoots her a look, she returns a smile. A little too flirtatious for partners but hey, the beer's flowing, and these two are clearly close.

MAGGIE  
Okay, you want your money back?  
We'll go double-or-nothing.

JACK  
You're on, Templeton.

Jack walks up to the dartboard, collects the darts. Walks back and hands Maggie's darts to her. He stops to sip his beer but Maggie knocks her hip into his, nudging him to the line.

MAGGIE  
You go first.

Jack puts his beer down, steps up to the line. Lines up his shot--

MAGGIE  
Don't choke!

--and lets it fly. It misses wide, hits the corkboard.

Jack spins on Maggie and shoots her a glare.

JACK  
Oh, so that's how you're gonna win?  
Shouting in my ear?

MAGGIE  
If you can't stand the pressure,  
big boy, maybe you shouldn't be  
playing.

Jack shakes off Maggie's playful grin and turns back to the board. This time he fires off a dart that hits pretty darn close to the bull's-eye.

JACK  
Huh? How's that now?

MAGGIE  
Not bad for a mama's boy.

JACK  
Okay, make your jokes while you  
can. That's temporary.

Maggie walks around behind Jack, moving a little too close.

MAGGIE  
Relax, Mitchell. I was just  
breaking your balls a little. Now  
you gonna throw your third dart or  
what?

Jack rears back and fires. Another good shot.

MAGGIE

Nice.

She smacks Jack on the back as he walks toward the board to collect his darts. When he turns back around, Maggie's already aiming for the board.

She lets the dart fly...

Jack ducks just in time...

The dart whizzes past his head and lands squarely on 19. Jack rises back up, eyes bulging in disbelief. But Maggie steps forward and whispers in Jack's ear.

MAGGIE

Too close for comfort?

Maggie backs up to line up her next shot and Jack scrambles out of the way. He shuffles to the nearby table and picks up his beer.

But as he lifts the bottle to his lips, his eyes are drawn to the television mounted in the corner.

TELEVISION SCREEN

File footage of two powerful and well-dressed men walking across the White House Rose Garden.

One is CHIEF OF STAFF PETER PHELPS, 50s, wearing his salt-and-pepper temples like a badge of honor and a \$5000 suit as though he was born in it.

The other is VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT JAMES HAWKINS, late-40s, strong and powerful, moving with an easy gait and waving to the camera.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

White House Chief of Staff Peter Phelps has been asked to stay on in that prestigious position, a choice many credit to the influence of Vice President-elect Hawkins, a longtime friend of the powerful Washington insider.

Footage of PRESIDENT-ELECT BEN LOMBARD, 60s, as he rallies outside a factory with picketing union workers.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

Pundits suggest the choice clashes with the reform message of Lombard, whose surprise victory in the fall  
(MORE)

NEWSCASTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 came with promises to take on the Washington establishment and powerful business interests. Many see the continuation of Phelps's service as Lombard's bipartisan attempt to ease the transition as the incoming President hopes to pass his famous "Renewed Society" program, a series of reforms likely to shake up all areas of domestic policy, ranging from healthcare to energy.

Footage of the rotund, balding SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, ANDREW BAXTER, 50, as he speaks on the floor of Congress.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)  
 The program's staunchest opponent, Speaker of the House Andrew Baxter, carries only a slim majority in his house and may have trouble halting the President's growing momentum. The coming Inauguration promises to provide a great deal of drama on Capitol Hill.

AT THE TABLE

Jack shakes his head.

JACK  
 Big things happening in the world.  
 Huge.

Maggie lets a dart fly.

MAGGIE  
 Oh, here we go...

JACK  
 False flag attacks and unjustified wars. Big Pharma and Oil companies running the show for God knows how long. Now we just have to wait and see if this new hero is gonna be just like the others. Government, of, by and for whom? Sure as hell not the people!

Maggie looks over at the BARTENDER, who rolls her eyes at Jack's rant.

JACK

The whole country is getting robbed blind and we're not doing a damn thing about it. Just busting kids with candy bars.

MAGGIE

What? Not the kind of "protect and serve" you had in mind?

JACK

It's enough to drive a cop nuts. Might explain my father.

Maggie perks up, and her interest draws her to the table.

JACK

You must have heard stories. But you never asked.

MAGGIE

Figured it wasn't my place. Maybe you'd talk when you wanted to.

Jack shrugs.

JACK

Not much to tell, really. A few years back, he just left. No explanation, no promise to return. Just packed up and moved out to this house in Virginia. And he won't return calls or answer letters. I just don't get it.

MAGGIE

Always looking to resolve people's hidden natures, huh?

JACK

When you don't understand the people closest to you, it makes it hard to trust anybody, you know?

MAGGIE

Do you trust me?

Jack looks up. He fights off a small smile, then downs the rest of his beer and stands.

JACK

Not when you got a dart in your hand.

INT. JACK'S COMPUTER ROOM - EVENING

Jack huddles behind a computer, reading a blog entitled:  
"THE TRUTH REVEALED."

All around him in the room are newspaper clippings and  
bumpers stickers held to walls and corkboards by thumbtacks.

His conspiracy theories are laid out concisely by phrases  
like: "9/11 WAS AN INSIDE JOB" and "JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE  
PARANOID DOESN'T MEAN THEY AREN'T OUT TO GET YOU!"

NANCY (O.S.)  
I'm leaving.

Jack glances over his shoulder, sees his mother NANCY, 60s,  
standing in the doorway, putting on earrings and looking  
rather stunning in an evening gown. He shifts uncomfortably.

JACK  
Shouldn't you wear your wedding  
ring? I mean, you're still  
married, right?

NANCY  
That would make for a pretty  
awkward first date.

Jack gives her a judgemental look and she shoots him a glare.

NANCY  
What? You want me to sit around  
the house like an old maid? When  
your father left --

Jack stands abruptly to retort. Nancy glances at her watch.  
She doesn't have time to fight a fight they've clearly had  
before.

NANCY  
I've got to go. Just tell me I  
look good, okay?

Jack sighs, calms down.

JACK  
You look great, Mom.

Nancy starts to turn away, then stops, turns back to her son.

NANCY  
Oh Jack...

She digs into her purse and pulls out a scuffed envelope.

NANCY

This came from Charles.

She tosses the envelope to Jack. It sails through the air and lands at his feet.

The return address reads: UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE.

Jack looks at the seal, a slight snarl appearing on his lips.

JACK

(begrudgingly)  
Secret Service.

NANCY

Go on, open it.

Jack reluctantly opens the envelope and pulls out its contents: an official invitation to the Presidential Inaugural Ball.

JACK

(under his breath)  
Sure, rub it in...

When Jack looks up, his mother is already disappearing down the hallway.

NANCY (O.S.)

Don't forget to thank him.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Celebratory lights sparkle against the falling snow, making this majestic building look even more amazing than usual.

PHELPS (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, the President-Elect of the United States... Benjamin Lombard!

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

Black tie affair. Dignitaries in tuxes, trophy wives in sequined dresses. Everyone applauding politely as they watch Chief of Staff Peter Phelps introducing--

President-Elect Lombard, dashing and commanding in his perfectly-tailored tuxedo, makes his way through the room, shaking hands vigorously.

## ACROSS THE ROOM

Jack stands alone in the corner, watching the President-elect and Chief of Staff from afar as he sips a light beer.

CHARLES (O.S.)

What are you, a tea-totaler?

Jack spins around, grinning as he sees old friend CHARLES LONG, 36, clean shaven and dressed impeccably in a black suit and purple tie. They embrace.

JACK

Gotta keep my wits about me in this den of wolves.

CHARLES

Same old Jack.

JACK

Thanks for the invite, Charles. This is... Amazing. I still can't believe you got this gig.

CHARLES

Yeah, the six years of background checks paid off. C'mon, let me show you around.

## EXT. WHITE HOUSE - BALCONY - MOMENTS LATER

Jack and Charles look out across the fable White House Rose Garden.

CHARLES

This is bad-ass, right? Totally bad-ass.

JACK

Well... better than being a DC beat cop, I'll tell you that much.

CHARLES

What? You're sore I moved, stuck you partnering with some newbie?

A tiny hint of smile registers on Jack's face. He covers quickly but not before Charles notices.

CHARLES

What?

JACK  
What what?

CHARLES  
What was that?

JACK  
Nothing.

CHARLES  
It's a girl! Your new partner is a girl and you--

JACK  
No I don't!

Jack tries desperately to change the subject.

JACK  
Hey, I'm proud of you, Charles. I really am. You've come a long way from DC Metro. Not exactly busting kids for stealing candy bars.

CHARLES  
You don't like humping it on the streets, take the detective's exam again. Get yourself a cheap suit and a notepad, do some real good.

JACK  
That isn't gonna happen.

CHARLES  
Don't give up. Your dad--

JACK  
Don't.

CHARLES  
--had to take the exam three times to pass it but he did. And you know what? He was the best detective on the force.

JACK  
Was being the operative word. If he was so great, if being a cop was so great, why did he walk away? Legendary detective Spencer Mitchell up and quits just like that.

CHARLES

What's with this mope-around attitude? I mean, you always thought you were the boss, even when I was the senior officer. Figured you'd be the one in the suit and I'd be the one wearing out my shoe leather.

JACK

It didn't work out that way. Nothing works out the way it's supposed to.

Charles leans back, cocks his head, keeps eye contact with his old friend. Nothing spoken for a few seconds, then Jack settles down.

JACK

Look, I'm sorry, Charles. It's not your fault.

CHARLES

No, it's not.

JACK

I just wish things were different.

CHARLES

See? Maybe you and your dad are a lot more alike than you realize.

At the mention of his dad, Jack rolls his eyes. Charles laughs.

CHARLES

Ah, contempt. Very nice.

JACK

I don't want to talk about this anymore.

CHARLES

No? Then what do you want?

Jack motions toward a lit room in the distance. The Oval Office.

JACK

A tour, buddy.

CHARLES

You got it.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER

Jack and Charles move quickly, Charles' eyes darting toward everyone he sees.

JACK  
Come on. Just a peek.

CHARLES  
Dude, no. Oval Office? They'd can me in a heartbeat.

JACK  
Aw, and take away your black sunglasses and Illuminati ID badge?

CHARLES  
You know, I'd be insulted by that if I didn't think you were serious.

JACK  
You want to play big shot, right? That's why you invited me here? But you can't even get me through the big door.

CHARLES  
You think it's that easy to goad me into doing something I shouldn't?

JACK  
(grinning)  
Two words: Julie Stevenson.

CHARLES  
Okay, okay. Times change, Jack. You know that.

JACK  
The more they change, the more they stay the same. Come on.

Charles nods toward the open door to the Oval Office.

CHARLES  
A peek. That's all.

Jack shuffles forward, hurrying to the famed office but he is instantly cut off by AGENT ANTONIO MENDEZ, 35, trim and stern.

MENDEZ  
Can I help you?

CHARLES

It's okay, Mendez. Just giving him a peek. He was my former partner on the job.

Mendez nods brusquely, steps aside and Jack peers into the room. It's empty but it's majestic. And just like that, the peep show is over.

Mendez steps in front of Charles, blocking his view.

MENDEZ

Show's over. Agent Long, if you--

CHARLES

Thanks. We're done here.

Charles grabs Jack by the crook of his elbow and pulls him away.

CHARLES

Satisfied?

But Jack just turns to him and grins playfully.

JACK

Mm. What else you got?

INT. WHITE HOUSE - ANOTHER HALLWAY - LATER

Charles leads an excited Jack down another corridor.

CHARLES

If the bedroom's empty, you can step inside. But just for a minute and then we've got to make tracks. I may be on the inside but don't be fooled, these walls have eyes and ears. And this hallway's restricted to outside guests.

Jack looks around, sees the countless framed paintings on the walls. All of them seemingly staring at him with their painted eyes.

CHARLES

Uh-oh...

Jack spins around, sees Charles tightening up.

CHARLES

My boss.

Charles throws open a door and shoves Jack into the

BEDROOM

The door shuts quickly leaving Jack in a nearly dark room, just a thin shaft of light coming from the window. Jack whips out a tiny light fastened onto the end of his key chain and shines it around the room. A single bed, fireplace, portraits and a bookcase.

Hearing a noise from outside the room he turns off the light and hurries forward but he stumbles over his own feet and goes tumbling, reaching out desperately to catch his fall and avoid making a sound.

He catches himself on the bookcase, settles. Then... a scraping noise. Jack spins, shines the flashlight, sees--

The fireplace swiveling around, revealing a hidden passageway beyond!

JACK

Holy...

The doorknob rattles. Keys jangle on the other side. Charles's muffled voice, trying to give Jack time. Then, the scraping noise again.

Jack spins back to the fireplace, sees it closing...

The door begins to open...

Jack shuts off his flashlight, darts behind heavy curtains to hide...

A MAN walks in just as the fireplace settles back into its normal state.

Jack peers out from behind the curtains as the Man marches over to the bookcase and starts the fireplace swivel again. The tiniest sliver of light glistens off the Man's cuff link, revealing a cryptic symbol. Jack gazes intently.

It's part flag, part crown, the bars of the flag stretching up to meet the stars as tips on the crown. The symbol of the Ameristocracy.

And just like that, it's gone, as the Man disappears into the hidden corridor.

Jack steps out from behind the curtain as the fireplace closes back up, the room restored to its original state.

Jack stares at the fireplace for several long seconds, then makes his move.

He just can't help himself...

He marches over to the bookcase and reaches for it.

CHARLES (O.S.)

Jack...

Jack stops short of the bookcase, turning to Charles, who has just stepped into the room.

CHARLES

We better get out of here.  
C'mon...

Charles pulls Jack out of the room but Jack can't keep his eyes off that bookcase.

INT. JACK'S COMPUTER ROOM - NIGHT

Jack, still dressed in the suit he wore to the White House, sits at his desk, scribbling on a piece of paper, trying to recreate the cryptic flag/crown symbol he saw so fleetingly.

Soon, he turns to his computer and starts searching for answers.

INT. CONSPIRACY THEORIST'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A DARK FIGURE taps away at a computer, a lot of words and thoughts going from their fingertips to the keyboard but certain words looking more important than others--

"...secret tunnel..."

"...White House..."

"...AMERISTOCRACY..."

The Dark Figure's hand moves a computer mouse, the cursor on the screen landing on the word "SEND."

CLICK.

INT. JACK'S COMPUTER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Those very same words suddenly pop up on Jack's computer screen.

Jack leans forward, his face engulfed in the glow of the computer monitor, his eyes enthralled by what he is reading.

INT. PRIVATE LIBRARY - 1963 - NIGHT

Same library. Same furniture. Same sacred texts on the shelves.

SUPER: SOMEWHERE IN AMERICA - 1963

But a different set of men. The attire is still impressive, the demeanor still stern, as a NEW LEADER speaks to his compatriots.

NEW LEADER

Gentlemen, we have long stood in the background, wielding power and control as is our divine right through blood, but just as what happened a century ago, our control is being threatened by a man fearful of military entanglements, swayed by his brother to acquiesce to the wishes of the an inferior race and class. The time has come, gentlemen, to do the deed again. I hereby enter the motion.

The men tap their rings -- the exact same rings that counted votes a hundred years before -- on their knees.

NEW LEADER

So we are decided.

EXT. TEXAS BOOK DEPOSITORY - 1963 - DAY

President Kennedy's motorcade rolls through the streets down below as a gun-wielding LEE HARVEY OSWALD appears in an upstairs window.

He squeezes the trigger... BLAM!

ON THE GRASSY KNOLL

A SECOND SHOOTER squeezes off a shot... BLAM!

IN THE STREETS

Panic ensues. Screaming. Running. Chaos... The sound blends into--

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - PRESENT DAY - MORNING

--the rumble of a car, racing down the street but hitting the brakes as it passes Jack and Maggie's squad car parked next to a sign announcing the speed limit at 35 mph.

INT. POLICE CRUISER

Maggie behind the wheel, aiming a radar gun through the window. Jack in the passenger seat, scribbling on a notepad.

MAGGIE

Here we go, here we go...

A car whizzes past. The radar gun registers... 42. Maggie looks disappointed.

MAGGIE

Seven over. Not really worth the effort.

JACK

You ever hear of the Ameristocracy?

Maggie doesn't even look at him. She just stares out the window, waiting for a good speeder to chase.

MAGGIE

That's the barbershop quartet for senators, right?

Jack's nervous scribbblings increase in intensity just as his rant does.

JACK

Not exactly. They're connected to the old families in England, think they're royalty in America. They control major, unelected positions of power, positions that don't answer to the people and give them great authority. Authority over even those that are elected.

Another car whizzes past but slows when they see the cruiser. Red brake lights hit the windshield. The radar gun drops from 41 to 39 to 35 within seconds. Maggie shrugs.

MAGGIE

I thought this whole theory was debunked. I saw this thing on 60 Minutes where--

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