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## The Golden Ticket

by Richard Rewell

I manoeuvred my sabre allowing me to sit down with some decorum, while Clara my wife glided effortlessly towards her seat. I clattered downwards as Clara eased gently upon the velvet, her crinoline evening dress whispering. I fidgeted in my blue uniform. It was uncomfortable. I was a major in the northern Union Army and we had just prevailed against the southern rebels after a four year long civil war that had nearly destroyed our nation. Clara and I were attending the opening night of 'Our American Friend' at Ford's theatre.

I looked at the uniformed men around me bedecked with medals. My uniform was void of such recognitions. I am not surprised. I had, for the duration of the civil war been sitting at a desk in the War department. I had seen no action. Nor any of the horrors of war. I felt guilty sitting there in the theatre. Especially as it was Clara who had won the golden ticket three weeks earlier. I felt I did not deserve to be there. I had lost two friends in the war, one at Shiloh and one at Gettysburg.

And what did I do in our civil war? I checked invoices, made out purchase requests and heroically devised a ledger that showed my superiors how much we had spent on railway expansion. I got a promotion for that!

The gas lamps around the theatre's wall were, one by one snuffed out as Clara and I settled in our balcony seat and where I for a second or two I enjoyed the smell of cigar smoke and the cocktail of feminine perfumes. The orchestra below us exploded into the national anthem, we hauled ourselves to our feet and cheered the President as he entered the box directly opposite ours. There he was, Abe Lincoln. Someone who was worth sweating over invoices and ledgers for.

The play was rather dreary until my waning concentration was interrupted by a movement in the President's box.

"Jesus." I cried.

"Darling. What is it" screamed my wife.

Bang! Bang!

"The President" I shouted and leapt onto the balcony wall just as a figure opposite sprung from the Presidents balcony shouting "Long live the South. Death to the Union and Lincoln."

As I landed upon the stage, I recognised the figure. I shouted above the growing pandemonium "It's John Wilkes-Booth." Wilkes-Booth saw me and dived behind some scenery. I gave chase only to lose him in the alley ways behind the theatre.

For the rest of the night Clara and I were questioned by police and journalists alike at the theatre and at home. We retired to our bed just after three. We were both in sombre mood, our dear President was dead.

On my way to the War department the next day I spotted the headlines on the Washington Post.

"Brave War department officer identifies and pursues assassin. Another hero of the victorious Union. Promote him now!"

Well I wanted action. I wanted to see the horrors of war. But not like this and so I ripped up that God damn golden ticket.