



Photo of Jonathan Atkinson and Joe Mallon by Carolina Dulcey. Background photo by Gary Erskine.

The Characters and Synopsis of *One Destiny*

Ford's Theatre: Sensory-Friendly Performance

Harry Hawk



Photo of Joe Mallon by Carolina Dulcey.

Harry Hawk is an actor who worked at Ford's Theatre. He was the only actor onstage at the moment that President Abraham Lincoln was shot.

Harry Ford



Photo of Jonathan Atkinson by Carolina Dulcey.

Harry Ford is the manager of Ford's Theatre. He was working at the theatre on the day President Lincoln was shot.

Synopsis



Photo of Jonathan Atkinson and Joe Mallon by Carolina Dulcey.

One Destiny tells us the story of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination. The play starts a few weeks after President Lincoln died. Ford's Theatre is closed because it is being investigated as a crime scene. The police have allowed the actors and other people who worked at Ford's Theatre to come back to collect their things.

Harry Ford finds Harry Hawk on stage when he comes to the theatre. Ford has just been released from prison.

Ford wonders if there had been a way to stop the assassination from happening. Hawk suggests the only way for them to find out is to replay the day moment-by-moment.

Synopsis

Hawk pretends to be a theatre employee named Tom Raybold. Ford instructs Mr. Raybold (Hawk in costume) to have the Ford's Theatre VIP box decorated because President Lincoln and General Grant will attend the performance of *Our American Cousin*. The war has just ended, and everyone in Washington is ready to relax and enjoy themselves.

Ford pretends to be another theatre employee, Ned Spangler. Raybold asks Ned Spangler (Ford in costume), to prepare the VIP box. Spangler doesn't like President Lincoln and wants the Confederacy to win the war. But he does his job at the theatre and prepares the VIP box anyway.

Ford then pretends to be a man named John Matthews, another actor at Ford's Theatre. Hawk and Matthews (Ford in costume) practice for the performance. They see John Wilkes Booth enter the theatre when he comes to pick up his mail. Hawk then pretends to be a man named Mr. Buckingham. Mr. Buckingham (Hawk in costume) lets Ford know that General Grant will not attend the theatre that night after all.

President Lincoln arrives at the theatre so late that the play starts without him. When Lincoln and his party arrive, the play stops and everyone in the theatre claps for the president. A little after 10 p.m., while the play continues, Matthews sees Booth walking through the audience near the VIP box. As Hawk delivers the funniest line of the play *Our American Cousin*, Booth shoots President Lincoln.

Synopsis

Hawk pretends to be Dr. Charles Taft, one of the doctors who treated the president. Dr. Taft (Hawk in costume), describes the president's injury and how Lincoln was carried out of the theatre to the Petersen Boarding House across the street.

At the same time, Matthews describes the fear and chaos backstage. Matthews remembers that earlier that day, Booth gave him a letter to hold. Matthews finds the letter in his pocket and reads it aloud. In the letter, Booth talks about his plan to assassinate the president. Matthews is scared that people might think he helped Booth because he has Booth's letter. Matthews throws the letter away. Dr. Taft tells us that President Lincoln died on April 15, 1865 at 7:22 a.m.

Hawk and Ford stop pretending to be other people. They realize there was nothing they could have done to stop John Wilkes Booth from killing President Lincoln. But John Wilkes Booth failed, because Lincoln lives on forever in our memory.

The Civil War



Photo of Jonathan Atkinson and Joe Mallon by Carolina Dulcey.

The Civil War was about whether or not slavery should be allowed in the United States. Slavery is when people are forced to work without being paid. Enslaved people weren't considered citizens and therefore were not allowed to vote. A group of states in the South seceded (broke away) from the United States, trying to create their own country called the Confederate States of America, also called the Confederacy. In the Confederacy, slavery was allowed. The United States, also called the Union, fought to keep the whole country together and to make slavery illegal. The Civil War lasted for four years from 1861 to 1865 before the United States finally won. Many people were killed or wounded. Washington, D.C. was on the frontlines of the war, with Confederate Virginia just across the river.

GOING TO SEE *ONE DESTINY* – CREDITS

All stage photos are from the 2023 Ford's Theatre production of *One Destiny*.

The pre-visit materials were developed by: Ford's Theatre Access Committee

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