

Sample Scenes from Booth - Episode 1 "A Bad Hand"
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Winner of the 2020 True Story Screenplay Competition

INT. THEATRE STAGE - THE BOSTON MUSEUM - NIGHT

Booth's face in close shot, seemingly still. Suddenly, he jerks awake, dragging himself towards the prone, well-lit, form of a lovely young woman lying on a stone slab.

BOOTH (ROMEO)

"...O, here

Will I set up my everlasting rest,

And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars

From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last!

Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips, O you

The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss

A dateless bargain to engrossing death!"

Stylish figures in the audience lean forward in their richly padded seats. In the front row, a particularly attractive young lady brushes a tear from her eye.

BOOTH (ROMEO) (CONT'D)

"Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavoury guide!

Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on

The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark!"

A not-so-attractive young lady in a house-right seat sobs wildly. A nearby man rolls his eyes and offers her a monogrammed handkerchief.

BOOTH (ROMEO) (CONT'D)

"Here's to my love!"

Booth lifts the glass vial of poison aloft, catching the stage lights with a practiced flash. GASPS from the crowd. He brings it to his lips with a growl, gulping it quickly, gagging as he finishes the last of it.

BOOTH (ROMEO) (CONT'D)

"O true apothecary, Thy drugs are quick.
Thus with a kiss I die!"

Booth kisses his Juliet, actress KATE REIGNOLDS, 28,
passionately.

The not-so-attractive young lady in the crowd swoons. The
nearby man retrieves his handkerchief and checks his pocket
watch.

Meanwhile, Booth falls, twitching violently, milking the death
scene for every drop. He writhes, contorts, and finally lies
still. The crowd erupts with APPLAUSE.

FRIAR LAWRENCE, fat and puffing, enters from offstage.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

"Saint Francis be my speed!"

TO OFF-STAGE LEFT

Two stagehands lean upon ropes and scenery, watching the
action idly.

STAGEHAND #1

Hell of an actor, that John Wilkes.

STAGEHAND #2

He rushed the poisoning. It was better in the
run through.

BACK TO STAGE

KATE (JULIET)

"O, happy dagger,
This is thy sheath. There rust, and let me
die!"

Juliet flops down dead beside our Romeo. The crowd ERUPTS
again.

The onstage action continues dimly.

BOOTH

(whispering)

Not bad, Kate. I rather like your style.

KATE

Not bad yourself, John. Although, if my memory serves, you did rush to drink that poison tonight, did you not?

BOOTH

Truth be told, I like lying next to you, Kate. Forgive me if I hastened towards my goal.

Kate smiles.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

Do you have plans after the performance?

KATE

No plans, John Wilkes Booth. Just intentions.

Lights down. End of the show. Curtain call. The supporting actors sweep forward and bow. As Romeo and Juliet enter for their bows, the crowd LEAPS to a STANDING OVATION.

Juliet makes eyes at him knowingly. Booth returns her flirtatious gaze, then looks out, spying another attractive face in the crowd. Then another. He smiles wolfishly.

INT. BOOTH'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Two bodies COLLIDE sensuously against a wall. We pull back to see Kate pressed into Booth, kissing him hungrily. Both tremble, fumbling with buttons. They can't get their clothes off fast enough.

Clothing falling away, Booth pushes off the wall and tosses Kate into bed, regarding her momentarily with a satisfied eye.

KATE

"O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?"

Booth smiles, then crawls towards her.

BOOTH

"What satisfaction canst thou have to-night?"

Kate pulls him on top of her.

INT. BOOTH'S HOTEL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

BOOTH'S EYES blink slowly open, and he rolls over to discover he is alone in bed. Next to him he finds a folded NOTE, which he shakes open to read -

KATE (V.O.)

My drunk husband rises late, but he does still rise. I mustn't be found missing. - Kate

Booth lowers the note. He tosses it aside and lies back in bed with a stretch.

BOOTH

Here's to drunk husbands.

EXT. B&O RAILROAD TRAIN PLATFORM - WASHINGTON D.C. - AFTERNOON

A light snow falls from the sky. Hustle and bustle as passengers enter and exit the train depot. Brakes HISS as a train slides into the station, sounding its horn.

INT. TRAIN PASSENGER CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Booth sits reading a newspaper as the train comes to a complete stop. The CONDUCTOR makes his final passenger check.

CONDUCTOR

Washington D.C.! Washington D.C.!

At the conductor's approach, Booth reaches into his pocket and pulls out a few bills. A brass CONFEDERATE CIPHER DISK pops out too. He glances down at it. Shines it with his thumb, then quickly pockets it again.

The conductor passes Booth's seat. Booth reaches out his hand to stop him.

BOOTH

(speaking softly)

If you would, please ensure my luggage gets to the National Hotel.

Booth passes the money to the attendant.

CONDUCTOR

Of course, Mr. Booth.

The conductor folds the bills discreetly into his jacket and heads on down the aisle.

Booth stands up, gathering his coat and newspaper.

EXT. B&O RAILROAD TRAIN PLATFORM - MOMENTS LATER

Booth steps off the train and takes a breath of fresh air. A TRAVELING MAN and a few other passersby recognize Booth, the actor. Most smile and wave. An excited whisper or two.

TRAVELING MAN

Welcome back to Washington, Mr. Booth!

Booth lifts a hand politely.

TRAVELING MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

When is your next performance?

BOOTH

You sir, will be the first to know!