

**THE
SPRINGFIELD
BOYS**

Written by

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CAST

Abraham Lincoln
Billy Herndon
Joshua Speed
Mary Lincoln
Anna Herndon
Fanny Speed
Lucy Speed
Ensemble
Demonstrators
Counter Demonstrators
Elizabeth Edwards
Ninian Edwards
Phineas Gurley
Pastor
Chief Justice
Stanton
South Carolina Speaker

PROLOGUE

MUSIC. Joshua Speed and William "Billy" Herndon face the audience.

SPEED
Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to an evening with the Springfield Boys.

BILLY
I am William Herndon. Just call me Billy.

SPEED
And I am Joshua Speed. Just call me Speed.

BILLY
We are the Springfield Boys. Two of them. The third was named Abraham Lincoln. Yes, that one.

SPEED
He called me his closest friend. We even shared a bed for four years. Mr. Lincoln disclosed his whole heart to me.

BILLY
I was his law partner of 16 years. I could read his secrets. He was the greatest man who ever lived. I have written one of two eyewitness biographies about Mr. Lincoln. The other one is not very good.

SPEED
You will see and hear two accounts of what Mr. Lincoln was like.

BILLY
But we both love Mr. Lincoln.

SPEED
And we are the Springfield Boys!

SCENE 1 SPRINGFIELD ILLINOIS BELL'S GENERAL STORE
1837

Joshua Speed, 23, is stocking
merchandise. Abraham
Lincoln, 28, walks in.

SPEED
Good afternoon Sir. How can I help you?

LINCOLN
I'm new in town. Abraham Lincoln here.

SPEED
The lawyer?

LINCOLN
Word gets around fast.

SPEED
There's a sign posted down the street reading Stuart
and Lincoln.

LINCOLN
Are you Mr. Speed?

SPEED
Joshua or Speed here.

LINCOLN
Abe here.

SPEED
Is there something you need, Mr. Lincoln?

LINCOLN
A bed.

SPEED
Also mattress, pillows, linens and blankets, I
presume?

LINCOLN
Hard to sleep without them.

SPEED

Bedding is to your left.

LINCOLN

Thanks.

SPEED

Long or regular?

LINCOLN

I'm a big man. Say king. M-M-M. Now wait, I have limited cash after renting a horse. What's the difference in price?

SPEED

Long is fifty percent higher than the regular.

LINCOLN

I'll take the regular.

SPEED

The pillows will be a dollar each.

LINCOLN

Reasonable.

SPEED

And do you like these sheets?

LINCOLN

I'm not particular.

SPEED

Then \$3.

LINCOLN

Fine.

SPEED

And the mattress?

LINCOLN

OK.

SPEED

That will be \$12 and the springs \$4.

LINCOLN

That's \$20, and I only have \$17 in my pocket. I have ridden into town on a borrowed horse, with no earthly goods but a pair of saddle-bags, two or three books, and some clothing.

SPEED

I presume you have a room?

LINCOLN

You presume too much.

SPEED

You're actually looking for a boarding house. This is a general store.

LINCOLN

Do you rent rooms?

SPEED

It's under consideration. My clerk Billy sometimes sleeps in that room that is my bedroom too.

LINCOLN

How about a third person?

SPEED

We already have two beds in the room.

LINCOLN

Sorry.

SPEED

Can you share a bed?

LINCOLN

I like the idea of sharing a bed. But I'm a big man, 6 foot 4 inches tall.

SPEED

But only 1 ft. wide.

LINCOLN

A little bit more.

SPEED

Are you picky about who you sleep with?

LINCOLN

If he doesn't snore or smell too badly.

SPEED

I found the perfect man for you.

LINCOLN

Who?

SPEED

You're looking at him.

LINCOLN

What!

SPEED

You're looking at him.

LINCOLN

You, Mr. Speed?

SPEED

How much money did you say you had in your pocket.

LINCOLN

Exactly \$17.

SPEED

Then that will be your monthly rent.

LINCOLN

Reasonable indeed.

SPEED

It's cheaper if you live in one of the nearby farms.

LINCOLN

I need to live in Springfield. You see I'm a lawyer
and setting up practice here.

That is why I only have \$17 in my pocket. I had to pay two months rent for the office.

SPEED

You may wish to sleep in your office, and you won't need to buy any bedding and sleep on the floor.

LINCOLN

That's a little too rugged even for me. A man has got to have a good bed to sleep in.

SPEED

I agree, but I thought this might be a short term alternative.

LINCOLN

Thank you anyhow.

SPEED

Then, we will share the bed. Just wait a minute. I have another idea.

LINCOLN

Yes.

SPEED

Pay me at the end of the month. You have to eat in the meantime.

LINCOLN

I wasn't planning on it.

SPEED

No, No. You MUST eat Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN

Life is hard. It is probably cheap enough; but I want to say that cheap as it is I have not money to pay for the next two months. But if you will credit me until Christmas, and my experiment here as a lawyer is a success, I will pay you then. If I fail in that I will probably never be able to pay you at all.

SPEED

We have a deal!

LINCOLN

Do you mind sleeping with an older man?

SPEED

I can handle it.

LINCOLN

How old are you, 23?

SPEED

Right, and you are 28?

LINCOLN

How did you know?

SPEED

I know all about you Mr. Lincoln! Boat builder, sailor, carpenter, hog-sticker, saw miller, blacksmith river-pilot, logger, farmer and...

LINCOLN

And I failed at all of them and more.

SPEED

In 1831 Election clerk at New Salem. Captain and private in Black Hawk War. Store clerk and merchant, New Salem. Studies for the law.

LINCOLN

You missed Deputy surveyor, at three dollars a day, Sangamon County.

SPEED

And elected to State legislature as a Whig.

LINCOLN

Even that. Postmaster, New Salem appointed by President Jackson in 1835.

SPEED

I am one your many admirers.

LINCOLN

Why?

SPEED

Twice a member of the Illinois Legislature.

LINCOLN

Yep!

SPEED

And I remember how you demolished one of your opponents.

LINCOLN

And I know you Mr. Speed.

SPEED

Oh?

LINCOLN

Everyone knows the Speeds of Kentucky. Farmington?

SPEED

We've been Kentuckians for a long time.

LINCOLN

Mighty fine people. You and I are going to get along well. I badly need a friend.

SPEED

I go to sleep at 10, Abe.

LINCOLN

Me too, Speed. I'm having dinner with my law partner tonight. See you at ten.

SCENE 2 10 PM THAT NIGHT

Lincoln and Speed are in bed.
The lanterns are out.

SPEED

Good night, Abe.

LINCOLN

Good night Joshua.

SPEED

I have to thank you for a lot.

LINCOLN

For what?

SPEED

The Springfield Times says; Upon the return of the General Assembly, ignoring Vandalia's efforts, Congressman Lincoln succeeded in having Springfield named as the third Illinois Capital. On February 25, 1837. Without you Springfield would not be the capitol.

LINCOLN

Ha! You can lower my rent if you want to.

SPEED

No thanks. How was dinner?

LINCOLN

Good potatoes. Business as usual. Logan and wife.

SPEED

Something I forgot to tell you.

LINCOLN

Well.

SPEED

You might move out.

LINCOLN

Beggars can't be choosers.

SPEED

I believe in slavery.

LINCOLN

I knew that. More than half the country --the white country--agrees with you.

But you don't. SPEED

No. LINCOLN

Do you want your money back? SPEED

Since I haven't given you any payment yet, I can not demand it back? LINCOLN

I'll give you a refund anyhow. SPEED

I don't accept refunds from people I haven't paid. LINCOLN

Good night, Mr. Lincoln. SPEED

Good night, Mr. Speed. LINCOLN

A brief pause.

Mr. Lincoln? SPEED

Yes? LINCOLN

Are you planning to marry? SPEED

Someday. LINCOLN

Me too. SPEED

I like women talk. LINCOLN

So do I.

SPEED

I'm getting to like you more by the minute.

LINCOLN

Abe?

SPEED

Yeah?

LINCOLN

Have you ever been in love?

SPEED

I asked someone to marry me last year.

LINCOLN

Mary Owens?

SPEED

Gossip gets around fast.

LINCOLN

Well, are you broken hearted?

SPEED

She found someone else.

LINCOLN

Oh, how sad.

SPEED

Not really.

LINCOLN

Why?

SPEED

She looks like a little bit of a hog now.

LINCOLN

SPEED

And has two missing front teeth. She comes in every week and buys two blueberry pies.

LINCOLN

A nice girl.

SPEED

Do you like vulgar jokes?

LINCOLN

You bet!

SPEED

I'll bet you were raised a Baptist.

LINCOLN

I was.

SPEED

They don't tell vulgar jokes.

LINCOLN

Not at church. You ought to hear the men the rest of the time.

SPEED

Do you like unvulgar jokes?

LINCOLN

Not as much as vulgar ones.

We hear loud banging.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

What is that?

SPEED

OH MY GOD! Billy's drunk again.

LINCOLN

Billy?

SPEED

My store clerk.

We hear more banging.

Billy

LET ME IN!

Speed goes to window.

SPEED (CONT'D)

Billy, stop the noise. You have a key!

BILLY

But it can't open the door.

SPEED

You're drunk. Go home.

BILLY

That's why I can't go home.

SPEED

Well just turn the knob. It's unlocked.

BILLY

Coming. But I have to throw up first out here.

SPEED

Oh, oh Billy. That means more than a half gallon of Bourbon.

BILLY

It was moonshine tonight.

LINCOLN

Tell me about this guy.

SPEED

He's Will Herndon's son. A well-to-do farmer who sent the brightest and oldest of his eight kids to Illinois College hoping he would become a well educated, well behaved man of faith. Instead Billy came home an abolitionist, drunk and free thinker. His father and the College both agreed he should not return. Everyone feels sorry for Mr. Herndon, Sr.

LINCOLN

So why did you hire Billy?

SPEED

He's the best and brightest. Has eyes in the back of his head. I pay him \$700 a year. Not bad for an eighteen year old. And he earns it.

LINCOLN

That's more than I earn at 28.

Billy enters.

BILLY

I have to sleep here tonight so that I can open the store at six. OK?

SPEED

OK.

BILLY

Who's this guy?

SPEED

Mr. Abraham Lincoln.

Billy looks close

BILLY

It sure is! MR. ABRAHAM LINCOLN. I know you.

LINCOLN

Pleased to meet you, Billy. How do you know me?

BILLY

Two terms a member of the State legislature and new attorney in town. Law firm of Lincoln and Logan. And one of our most prominent Whig politicians

LINCOLN

Thank you.

BILLY

I can even quote your speeches. How can anyone forget how you demolished your opponent Forquer. I do a great imitation of you.

SPEED

Really, Billy not now!

LINCOLN

Please.

BILLY

(imitating)

Mr. Forquere, you allude to my being a young man: but YOU forget that I am older in years than I am in the tricks and trades of politician. _

LINCOLN

You remembered every word.

SPEED

And the imitation is perfect!

BILLY

Even when I'm drunk. You ought to HEAR me sober! Mr. Lincoln!

SCENE 3 THE NEXT NIGHT

Speed is reading in bed. A copy of the Bible, Shakespeare's Complete Plays, and the Constitution lay on a table. Lincoln walks in.

LINCOLN

Still up?

SPEED

I took the liberty of opening the three books you left here today.

LINCOLN

I knew you were a smart man.

SPEED

I should respect your privacy.

LINCOLN

Curious is what you mean. Keep reading!

SPEED

Shakespeare, the Bible, and the U.S. Constitution.

LINCOLN

Three best works ever written.

SPEED

The Bible too?

LINCOLN

Have you ever heard any of my speeches.

SPEED

I hear a lot of biblical references for political purposes, I presume.

LINCOLN

Am I that much of a hypocrite? The Bible is the greatest book ever written

SPEED

Are you religious?

LINCOLN

Yes. Just don't call me any names.

SPEED

Any names?

LINCOLN

Like Baptist, Methodist, Jew, Episcopalian, Catholic Mormon or Congregationalist.

SPEED

Why not?

LINCOLN

Too many dogmas.

SPEED

You don't like dogmas?

LINCOLN

I do. As long as I write them. And I haven't written any yet. Because dogmas are created rules of thought created by men that you never heard of and don't care to hear about.

SPEED

I thought you might read it for the Elizabethan English.

LINCOLN

Shakespeare writes much better Iambic pentameter. Are you religious?

SPEED

When I visit my mother.

LINCOLN

Feel free to read any of the three books at any time.

SPEED

And the Constitution?

LINCOLN

A mighty fine document. Needs a little revisiting.

SPEED

We have to learn to disagree. And Shakespeare?

LINCOLN

I love the theatre. Go very chance I get. Greatest playwright ever. That Shakespeare guy. Gave me a love for the theatre.

SPEED

Good night Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN

Good night Mr. Speed.

Good night. SPEED

A moment passes.

Abe? SPEED (CONT'D)

Yes? LINCOLN

Are your parents still alive? SPEED

My mother is dead. My stepmother is a fine woman. LINCOLN

And your father? SPEED

It's time to go to sleep. LINCOLN

OK. SPEED

And your parents? LINCOLN

I love them. I was blessed with a large loving family. I have 15 brothers and sisters. SPEED

Truly blessed you are. Are you a romantic man? LINCOLN

Yes I am, but have not found the right woman. And you? SPEED

Same. I am not experienced in romance. I can talk politics but not romance. LINCOLN

SPEED

This town has attracted all the beautiful women of Kentucky. Surely you will find one of them. Springfield is an exciting town. Thanks to you.

LINCOLN

Why me?

SPEED

You moved the capital from Vandalia to here. And look at us now. We are the Paris of the West. And a thriving metropolis. Twenty dry-goods stores, six grocers, four druggists, two clothing stores, one bookstore. Two newspapers, and even more.

LINCOLN

Mighty proud.

SPEED

Discussions, books, literature, Shakespeare and Burns . It's all here.

LINCOLN

Good night,

SPEED

Good night.

LINCOLN

And shut up for the rest of the night.

SPEED

You do the same.

SCENE 4 TWO NIGHTS LATER PARLOUR AT SPRINGFIELD MANSION

We hear dance music, and Billy, dressed very well, steps forward. He sees Joshua Speed.

SPEED

Billy, you're quite a dancer.

BILLY
I learned in college. Who is that good looking girl?

SPEED
Which one?

BILLY
That one.

SPEED
Mary Todd?

BILLY
She's a Todd?

SPEED
Yep. One of THEM.

BILLY
I must ask her to dance.

SPEED
Don't be surprised if she turns you down. She's the prize. The line of potential suitors is at least a mile. Stephen Douglas is at the front of it

BILLY
I understand her sisters have had you in mind.

SPEED
There have been some insinuations to that affect. Only one problem.

BILLY
Yeah?

SPEED
Mary ain't interested.

BILLY
She's coming our way.

SPEED
Miss Mary Todd?

MARY

Joshua Speed!

SPEED

C'est moi! Miss Mary, I would like to introduce a third Kentuckian to you. This is William Herndon, known as Billy.

BILLY

Pleased to meet you May I have this dance?

MARY

Yes, but I promised this dance To Mr. Douglas.

BILLY

He can wait.

He pulls her onto the floor
and they begin dancing.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You dance so well, Miss Todd.

MARY

Thank you.

BILLY

You dance in fact, like a serpent.

MARY

What!

BILLY

You dance like a serpent.

MARY

I beg your pardon!

BILLY

I mean...

MARY

Mr. Herndon, comparison to a serpent is rather severe irony, especially from a newcomer!

She walks away. Joshua Speed
walks up

BILLY

That woman!

SPEED

What happened?

BILLY

She's crazy?

SPEED

She has lines of men after her.

BILLY

I will not be one not one of them.

He exits. Mary returns.

SPEED

How did you enjoy your dance with Mr. Herndon?

MARY

It was fine. I owe an extra dance to Mr. Douglas
now. Question for you?

SPEED

Yes, Mary.

MARY

Who is that tall lanky man in the distance?

SPEED

Mr. Abraham Lincoln. Another native Kentuckian.

MARY

He seems a bit odd.

SPEED

Yep.

MARY

Interesting man indeed.

SPEED

Just a back woods lawyer.

MARY

And a little bit more.

SCENE 5 AUGUST 1841 FARMINGTON THE SPEED
ESTATE

Lincoln is seated in a beautifully furnished bedroom gazing out the window. We hear a knock at the door. Lincoln does not answer. The knocking continues and then stops. A brief pause.

LINCOLN

Come in.

Speed enters.

SPEED

Good afternoon, Mr. L.

LINCOLN

Hello.

SPEED

Would you like to chat again, or shall I leave you alone?

LINCOLN

(Speaking slowly) I'm half inclined to accept your second offer. But I'm willing to listen to some more. You've half convinced me to resume the engagement. My heart tells me one thing, my head tells me another.

SPEED

Shall we dwell on your head issues? If you are ready. You seem much happier today than the first day you arrived.

LINCOLN

How long has it been?

SPEED

Ten days.

LINCOLN

I must get back. The legislature awaits me.

SPEED

You are in no condition to leave.

LINCOLN

Why not!

SPEED

The blue dogs have not left.

LINCOLN

I keep no secrets from you. You know my whole heart, oh Friend.

SPEED

The blue dog is one animal you can never escape from.

LINCOLN

Shall we talk some more.

SPEED

Can I mention her name again?

LINCOLN

Go ahead.

SPEED

We've tried everything else. Let us try this approach. Questions and answers. Answer each of the questions on a one to ten. Ten being the highest.

LINCOLN

OK

SPEED

How much do you think Mary Todd loves you? A guesstimate.

Ten. LINCOLN

SPEED
How much do you love her?

LINCOLN
Why do you think I'm here?

SPEED
A Ten then?

LINCOLN
I guess so.

SPEED
How would you grade her on fidelity?

LINCOLN
Ten.

SPEED
Attractiveness??

LINCOLN
Ten.

SPEED
The smarts?

LINCOLN
Ten.

SPEED
How well does she understand you and your career --
trajectory to ..

LINCOLN
Ten.

SPEED
Her disposition?

LINCOLN
Two.

SPEED
Her disposition 90 percent of the time?

LINCOLN
10

SPEED
Her want of children?

LINCOLN
Twelve.

SPEED
Her devotion to you?

LINCOLN
Ten.

SPEED
Her ability as a household manager?

LINCOLN
Nine.

SPEED
Her current frame of mind.

LINCOLN
Meaning?

SPEED
How miserable is she. Ten is the worst.

LINCOLN
I have no way of knowing.

SPEED
Abraham Lincoln!

LINCOLN
Ten.

SPEED
And there is our answer.

LINCOLN

I suppose.

SPEED

Which means that your heart tells you that you love her, and your head says something else.

LINCOLN

We're to listen to our heads when that happens.

SPEED

Not in this case. I think you have only one answer.
ACCEPT HER AS SHE IS!

LINCOLN

AND THAT IS A STEEP PRICE TO PAY!

SPEED

The alternative is worse. A backwoods lawyer with bouts of depression would not be the greatest bargain to some women. Mary Todd is willing to accept the prize. NOW MEET HER HALFWAY!

LINCOLN

No!

SPEED

YES!

LINCOLN

NO!

SPEED

Then you will die. The blue dogs will devour you.

LINCOLN

You are stubborn.

SPEED

With my closest friend ever. Yes. Now visit Mary...and kick out those Dogs.

LINCOLN

All right. All right!

SPEED

I already see a bright look on your face.

LINCOLN

OK OK. I will leave for Springfield in the morning.

SPEED

YIPPEE.

LINCOLN

Thanks for all the hospitality. This is a beautiful bedroom. The view is so pleasing.

SPEED

It's an addition to the house. And you know who drew the plans for this addition?

LINCOLN

Who?

SPEED

My Uncle Thomas.

LINCOLN

I would like to meet him.

SPEED

He's dead. Died fifteen years ago. His name is Thomas Jefferson.

LINCOLN

Thomas Jefferson is your uncle?

SPEED

Sort of. My grandfather was his guardian. I never considered him anything other than Uncle Tom. Do I still detect a lifting of the Blue Dog?

LINCOLN

It's gone.

SPEED

GONE! GONE! GONE! You will pay a heavy price and she will pay a heavy price. But the alternative for each of you will be a much heavier price indeed.

LINCOLN

I suppose. The die is cast.

SPEED

Praise be the Lord. Joseph will bring you to the station.

LINCOLN

I hate to leave these gentle surroundings. There is only one Farmington.

SPEED

My mother wants to adopt you. Even at 33.

LINCOLN

There is only Lucy Speed. Never a kinder or gentler woman. And yes she should would make a good replacement for Nancy Hanks. Albeit twenty two years later.

A knock at the door.

LUCY

May I come in?

SPEED

Yes, Mrs. Speed.

Lucy Speed enters. She is beautifully dressed and brings in a leather bound Bible.

LUCY

Mr. Lincoln. Am I disturbing you?

LINCOLN

Never, ever. Mrs. Speed. I thank you for your generosity and ten days of the best food, accommodations and the rest.

LUCY

And you seem so relaxed. Actually happy.

LINCOLN

Thanks to your son.

LUCY

Can you excuse us, Joshua?

He exits.

LINCOLN

I had no idea that I was sharing a bed with Thomas Jefferson's nephew.

LUCY

By adoption only.

LINCOLN

Nevertheless..

LUCY

Something you might find even more interesting. Did he ever tell that I was George Washington's first cousin?

LINCOLN

No he did not.

LUCY

Not very important. But I have something for you. I want you to have it as a token of the love which Joshua and the entire Speed family have for you.

LINCOLN

This is the most beautiful Bible I have ever seen. Black leather bound Oxford edition.

LUCY

For you and your children and grandchildren.

LINCOLN

Thank you, Mrs. Speed! And I can honestly say I slept in a room designed by Thomas Jefferson.

LUCY

And there is something we Speeds can always say.

LINCOLN

Yes?

LUCY

Abraham Lincoln once slept here.

SCENE 6 1842 WEDDINGS

Speed and Lincoln write letters. Each speaks from the podium while writing letters.

SPEED

Thank you again! Fanny and I are getting married on February 15. Thanks to you. And thank you for engaging her Uncle into a long drawn out political conversation so that I would find the space and time to propose. And she said YES!

LINCOLN

I will miss you always Mr. Speed.

SPEED

Oh Mr. Lincoln. You know I will not move to Springfield. Fanny wants to remain close to my Family and to hers. — And Our wedding day is set. I am now a full fledged farmer on Pond Settlement. A thousand acres. —

LINCOLN

I have no sympathy for your career. I shall be lonesome without you. I have no farm and do not into to ever be a farmer. I need to collect on my notes.

SPEED

We marry tomorrow!

We hear Wagner's Wedding March.

PASTOR

Do you Joshua Fry Speed taking this woman to be your wedded wife?

SPEED

I do.

PASTOR

And do you Fanny Hennings take this man to be your wedded husband?

FANNY

I do.

PASTOR

I pronounce you man and wife.

ENSEMBLE

FANNY! JOSHUA! FANNY!

JOSHUA

And at this reception I make a special toast to my closest friend Abraham Lincoln who very much made this day possible. And to Mary Todd.

ENSEMBLE

Lincoln! Lincoln! Lincoln

LINCOLN

I hear the celebration even in Springfield

Romantic music.

SPEED

You guided me. Mr. Lincoln. Where it not for you I would never have married Fanny

LINCOLN

I can even taste the wedding cake from here. And give my love to your mother. I read her Bible every day.

SPEED

Proceed to marry Miss Todd at all possible speed!

More Romantic Music

LINCOLN
Shall we set a date.

MARY
Please proceed Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN
November?

MARY
November 4 it is.

LINCOLN
I must order the rings. Do you want any inscription.

MARY
One that we will carry us into eternity.

LINCOLN
Love is eternal?

MARY
Oh Mr. Lincoln!

LINCOLN
You like it?

MARY
As much as I love you. My name will henceforth be
Mrs. Lincoln.

LINCOLN
Not Mary Todd Lincoln?

MARY
You heard me.

We hear footsteps

NINIAN EDWARDS
Abraham Lincoln. Good day

LINCOLN

I want to share with you that you and I will be brothers in law shortly.

NINIAN

What!

LINCOLN

November 4 is the date. You will be invited of course.

NINIAN

It would be an insult not to have this in my home!

LINCOLN

We were planning to have it at the Episcopal Church.

NINIAN

Never. My wife won't stand for it. It will be at our home.

LINCOLN

But..

NINIAN

The decision is made.

We hear more wedding music.

LINCOLN

So now we are getting married at the home of Ninian and Mary Edwards.

MARY

Whatever.

LINCOLN

This will be happiest day of my life!

MARY

And mine too. I am making up the wedding list. Shall I invite your Father?

LINCOLN

Do you want me to call off the marriage again.

MARY

As you wish, Mr Lincoln

LINCOLN

And Mary we will live above the Globe Tavern. With probably less space than your bedroom in the Edwards mansion.

MARY

I'm perfectly happy living above the Globe Tavern. Anywhere is fine with me so long as Abraham Lincoln is beside me.

LINCOLN

I love you Mary.

MARY

I love you Abraham.

We hear more wedding music.

ELIZABETH

Sister Mary, to think, you tried to sneak off and get married.

MARY

Elizabeth! We did not want to disturb you.

ELIZABETH

Disturb us! You are my sister.

MARY

We are getting married on Friday. Only three days away. A simple church wedding will do.

ELIZABETH

How insulting! The Edwards Mansion is the only place fit for my sister's wedding.

MARY

Even though she's marrying a backwoods lawyer as you say.

ELIZABETH

You have made your decision. Now I must bake a cake on Friday morning.

MARY

That will be a disaster.

ELIZABETH

Why?

MARY

Kentucky Rule number one! Never bake a cake on Friday. It always turns out badly

ELIZABETH

The fault will be yours. You gave so little notice. We have no choice. And with so little time I will have to bake a Ginger Cake.

MARY

A ginger cake is fine for a backwoods lawyer.

ELIZABETH

Now Sister. I must rush off now. I can not cancel the sewing party I am having on Thursday night. And then the wedding on Friday.

MARY

I will help you with the sewing party.

ELIZABETH

And I saw the guest list. You forgot to include Thomas Lincoln and his wife.

MARY

I was only obeying my husband to be's wishes.

ELIZABETH

Well then we are ready to go.

More wedding bells

PASTOR

Do you Mary Todd take Abraham Lincoln to be your wedded husband?

MARY

I do.

PASTOR

And do you Abraham Lincoln take this woman to be our lawful wedded wife?

LINCOLN

I do.

PASTOR

I pronounce you man and wife.

We hear applause.

PASTOR (CONT'D)

Love is eternal

MARY

Love is eternal.

LINCOLN

Love is eternal.

We hear applause.

MARY

It's lovely.

LINCOLN

Just a room above the Globe tavern.

MARY

It's larger than I expected.

LINCOLN

Nineteen by fourteen. One square foot wider than your bedroom at the Edwards mansion.

MARY

I think it's charming. And my home for years to come. And we will make do.

LINCOLN

Not bad for \$100 Meals in the common dining room for \$4 a week. Sarah Beck -widow of James Beck- is our landlord

MARY

Lovely woman. It is our home

LINCOLN

I love you. Molly.

MARY

I love you, Mr. Lincoln.

SCENE 7 1844 -1855 - LETTERS PODIUM

Lincoln and Speed sit at two different desks

LINCOLN

Mary is very well and continues her old sentiment of friendship to you.

SPEED

Fanny sends the same,

LINCOLN

In January Rev. Charles Dresser and I signed s a contract for purchase of property now known as "Lincoln's Home." Price is \$1,200 and a lot in the business section of Springfield. We moved in on May In addition I am a Presidential Elector campaigning for Henry Clay. B

SPEED

And now about your religion. I hear you are no longer a Christian

LINCOLN

That I am not a member of any Christian Church is true; but I have never denied the truth of the Scriptures; and I have never spoken with intentional disrespect of religion in general, or of any denomination of Christians in particular. ...

Lincoln is seated Billy enters.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Billy!

BILLY

I am now a lawyer! I PASSED THE BAR!

LINCOLN

Our partnership begins.

BILLY

Hallelujah!

LINCOLN

Mr. Speed: We have another boy, born the 10th of March. He is very much such a child as Bob was at his age, rather of a longer order.

SPEED

Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln.

LINCOLN

Since I began this letter, a messenger came to tell me Bob was lost; but by the time I reached the house his mother had found him and had him whipped, and by now, very likely, he is run away again.

SPEED

Oh well. You and Mary govern with love.

LINCOLN

Mary has read your letter, and wishes to be remembered to Mrs. Speed and you, in which I most sincerely join her.
As ever yours, Abraham Lincoln.

SPEED

Now I owe you a letter. Glad all is well.

LINCOLN

February 13, 1847: You know my desire to befriend you is everlasting -- that I will never cease, while I know how to do any thing.

SPEED

A belated Happy Birthday, Mr. Lincoln

SPEED

We miss you but our roots are here. My family and hers.

LINCOLN

Mr. Speed. Our second child is born and is named Edward Baker.

SPEED

Will you name the next one, Joshua?

LINCOLN

Next time.

ENSEMBLE

Lincoln for Congress ! Lincoln for Congress.

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

Cartwright! Cartwright! Reverend Cartwright.

ENSEMBLE

End slavery!

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

We want peace.

BILLY

Abraham Lincoln, with an unprecedented majority of 1,511 votes over your Democratic opponent Rev. Peter Cartwright, you are the only Whig among seven congressmen elected from Illinois.

LINCOLN

Thank you Billy I could not have won without you.

BILLY

No one has greater allegiance to you than Billy.

LINCOLN

I will never forget.

SPEED

I close this letter. I am so proud of you Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN

Dec. 6. I taken my seat in the Thirtieth Congress, the only one which he was a member.

ENSEMBLE

Lincoln! Lincoln! Lincoln!

SPEED

Mr. Lincoln!

LINCOLN

Joshua. Love Washington. Mary the children and I are off for a small vacation.

BILLY

I am running the office to perfection, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN

I don't doubt that for a minute.

BILLY

Yes.

LINCOLN

Billy. I continue the fight to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. Without much success. I hope the rumors about your abolishing Slavery in the District of Columbia are not true.

BILLY

Right On Abraham Lincoln. You will be President.

LINCOLN

Billy: Four pieces of news. Two good and one bad. I have been admitted to practice before U.S. Court. Second I applied for a patent on a new and improved manner of combining adjustable buoyant chambers with steam boats or other vessels. The patent was granted on May 22.

But I am bitterly disappointed at not being named Commissioner of General Land Office, a position for which I had worked for weeks. Fourth the President wanted me to become secretary of Oregon Territory. I said no.

BILLY

Good. As your chief political advisor. I say right on. If you will not be the fifteenth President of the United States you will be the sixteenth.

LINCOLN

Dear Mr. Speed. We are distraught. Edward Baker lincoln has died. After an illness of fifty-two days.

SPEED

Deepest Condolences. You and Mary and Robert are in our Prayers.

LINCOLN

Dec. 21. Our third son, William Wallace, is born. Mary is doing well. Nothing will replace the loss of Eddie. —

SPEED

I am so glad you will be building a memorial to your father. —And now you continue to trump, and are blessed with a wife, family, and esteem. And I have heard no mention of any black dog.

LINCOLN

Apr. 4. Our fourth son, Thomas (Tad), is born. We are all excited.

SCENE 8 1855 -60 SPRINGFIELD

Billy stands before a large
crowd

DEMONSTATORS

BILLY FOR MAYOR! BILLIE FOR MAYOR.

BOO! BOO! BOO! COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

BILLY! BILLY! DEMONSTRATORS

BILLY, THE DRUNK! COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

WE WANT BILLY! DEMONSTRATORS

BILLY
Gentlemen! I will win this election. I have lived
in Springfield. Now for over twenty years.

BILLY
Billy! Billy! Billy. DEMONSTRATORS

Music

RAH! RAH! RAH! DEMONSTRATORS (CONT'D)

LINCOLN
Congratulations, Mayor elect Herndon.

ENSEMBLE
Yes, Billy. Yes Billy! Mayor Billy

BILLY
I am pleased to be your mayor!

ENSEMBLE
WHAT'S IN STORE!

BILLY
Here is what I will begin with the first day

ENSEMBLE
Yes

BILLY
I will be mayor for only one year, my thirty sixth
year.

ENSEMBLE

Yeah!

BILLY

We will have at least once council meeting every week. But a minimum of 75 meetings.

ENSEMBLE

Rah! Rah! Rah!

BILLY

Even more standing committees

ENSEMBLE

Yes , Mayor Billy!.

BILLY

No horses stitched in front of the State House!

ENSEMBLE

Yippee! Yippee! Yippee!

BILLY

Streets will graded and planked

ENSEMBLE

Yea!

BILLY

We will have our first gas lights on the streets.

ENSEMBLE

RAH! RAH! RAH!

BILLY

We will rent a new city hall.

ENSEMBLE

RAH! RAH! RAH!

BILLY

For only \$250

ENSEMBLE

RAH! RAH! RAH!

BILLY

We will improve our roads

ENSEMBLE

RAH! RAH! RAH!

BILLY

With our own hands!

ENSEMBLE

RAH! RAH! RAH!

BILLY

All men over 21 must to help build roads or pay a tax.

ENSEMBLE

RAH! RAH! RAH!

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

BOO!

BILLY

And the police force will be expanded to make the mayor and city council members ex officio policeman

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

BOO!

ENSEMBLE

RAH! RAH! RAH!

BILLY

We will build another school.

ENSEMBLE

RAH! RAH! RAH!

BILLY

And now my greatest legislation.

YES?
 ENSEMBLE
 Springfield, Illinois will now be a liquor free town!
 BILLY
 PROHIBITION!
 ENSEMBLE
 Yes!
 BILLY
 M-M-M
 ENSEMBLE
 BILLY
 Women and children can now walk through our streets,
 highways and alleys at all hours night or day with
 scarce a fear of insult or harm. The peace happiness
 and morals of this community will increase. The
 greatest good lasting results will follow.
 DEMONSTRATORS
 YES! YES! YES!
 COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS
 WE WANT OUR BOOZE!
 DEMONSTRATORS
 SAFE CITY! SAFE CITY!
 COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS
 NO! NO!
 BILLY
 Just stop drinking as I have.
 COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS
 HA! HA! HA!
 BILLY
 The people demand it and so will it be. We will pass
 an ordinance OUTLAWING ALL LIQUOR SALES.

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

NO!

BILLY

And closings and heavy fines will be imposed on those disobeying the law!

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

BOO!

BILLY

So be it.!

LINCOLN

Billy!

BILLY

What do you think, Partner?

LINCOLN

Sounds ambitious!

BILLY

Aren't you proud of me!

LINCOLN

Yep.

BILLY

Great.

LINCOLN

Just one thing. You drink like a fish. And you are imposing prohibition.

BILLY

Says who that I drink like a fish?

LINCOLN

Well, just last week....

BILLY

That was last week. This is this week. I have had my last drink as of 6 days ago. And will never drink again.

LINCOLN

Well, I'll be...

BILLY

Yes. It's true. Aren't you proud?

LINCOLN

Well you know I don't drink, and I don't smoke, and I don't cuss.

BILLY

Yes, I do.

LINCOLN

But I don't object when others drink and smoke and cuss. But that does not mean prohibition is a good thing. You may not be able to handle booze, Billy. That does not mean that the next man can't.

BILLY

My mind is made up. I am the mayor. And we will have a booze feet free city.

Drinking Music.

LINCOLN

Billy!

BILLY

Yes

LINCOLN

I understand you closed down four grocery stores for selling booze.

BILLY

And they also need to pay a \$100 fine to reopen.

LINCOLN

Some of these store owners are mighty mad. Joe Andrews and David Cohen came to see me.

BILLY

Tough! The law is the law!

Music

ENSEMBLE

DOWN WITH BILLY!

BILLY

TOUGH!

DEMONSTATORS

IMPEACHMENT

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

IMPEACHMENT!

BILLY

I STAND BY MY GUNS

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

OUT OF OFFICE

ENSEMBLE

OUT OF OFFICE.

Music.

ENSEMBLE

Mr. Herndon is defeated. The new mayor is Jack
Walden. RAH! RAH!

BILLY

I go gladly.

LINCOLN

And you're drunk again , Billy.

BILLY

Just this once.

Music. Lincoln, Speed, and
Billy stand on three podiums

LINCOLN

You know I dislike slavery; and you fully admit the abstract wrong of it. So far there is no cause of difference. Certainly I am not.

SPEED

Slavery can be an abomination. But it is our way of life.

LINCOLN

I leave that matter entirely to yourself. I also acknowledge your rights and my obligations, under the constitution, in regard to your slaves. I confess I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down, and caught, and carried back to their stripes, and unrewarded toils; but I bite my lip and keep quiet.

SPEED

I agree with you.

LINCOLN

I do oppose the extension of slavery, because my judgment and feelings so prompt me; and I am under no obligation to the contrary. If for this you and I must differ, differ we must. —

SPEED

Agreed. On to the presidency.

BILLY

O to the presidency.

'LINCOLN

FEBRUARY 8, 1855

Joshua: today, I lost my bid for Senate when Illinois legislature elected Lyman Trumbull.

Another loss.

BILLY

This should fall off your back like water off a camels. On to the Presidency!!

LINCOLN

JUNE 19, 1856

Dear Joshua

My career is moving. I am even being considered for vice president at the first Republican National Convention

BILLY

Just a first step. Mr. Lincoln!

LINCOLN

JUNE 26, 1857

Dear Joshua

The Dred Scott Decision has me upset. The Dred Scott decision is immoral!

MUSIC

BILLY

SLAVERY MUST BE ABOLISHED!

LINCOLN

Yes, Billy

BILLY

Mr. Lincoln: You have been Chosen as U.S. Senate candidate by Illinois Republican Convention .

SPEED

Right on with your campaign against Stephen Douglas .

MARY

Senator Lincoln. It sounds good.

SPEED

IF I win. Wasn't he one of your suitors.

MARY

He never got very far.

ENSEMBLE

SENATOR DOUGLAS! DOUGLAS! DOUGLAS!

DEMONSTATORS

SENATOR LINCOLN! LINCOLN! LINCOLN!

BILLY

We won the popular vote. He won the election. On to the Presidency.

LINCOLN

Off we go! I will be speaking in Ohio, Indiana, and Wisconsin, northeastern Kansas, New York City and New England.

BILLY

You will receive the support of Illinois Republican Convention for president. AMEN!

LINCOLN

MAY 18, 1860 I ACCEPT the Republican Nomination for President of the United States

DEMONSTATORS

LINCOLN FOR PRESIDENT! LINCOLN FOR PRESIDENT!

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

DOUGLAS! DOUGLAS! DOUGLAS!

BILLY

You are the Sixteenth President of the United States.

MARY

To Washington we go, Mr. President

ENSEMBLE

LINCOLN! LINCOLN! LINCOLN!

MARY

To Washington we go.

SPEED

Mr. Lincoln! Though we disagree on slavery, I WILL
MAKE SURE KENTUCKY STAYS IN THE UNION!

LINCOLN

JOSHUA! I NEED GOD THE MOST. BUT I NEED KENTUCKY
TOO.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

SCENE 1 1860 CHICAGO HOTEL

Billy and Lincoln sit across
from one another

BILLY

MR. PRESIDENT!

LINCOLN

Billy, your loyalty has paid off.

BILLY

The road has been a hard one.

LINCOLN

Do you want any office?

BILLY

Only if you insist.

LINCOLN

I can find an office for you, but I am hoping you
will do something else.

BILLY

What is that?

LINCOLN

Keep the office of Lincoln and Herndon open for the
next four-perhaps eight years.

BILLY

Why?

LINCOLN

Why he asks!

BILLY

You are the President of the United States.

LINCOLN

When my stay in Washington is over, I intend to presume my law career.

BILLY

But as President of the United States you have a
.....

LINCOLN

I have only one law partner --his name is Herndon. Billy ---there is only one Billy!

BILLY

I will keep the fires burning then. There is one thing you can do for me now.

LINCOLN

I will do whatever I can.

BILLY

You can help me find another wife.

LINCOLN

What!

BILLY

I am very lonely since my wife died, and my daughters need a mother.

LINCOLN

I am not a good matchmaker.

BILLY

You don't need to be . I have already found a new love.

LINCOLN

Really!

BILLY

Anna Chatterton. But she does not love me.

LINCOLN

So sorry.

BILLY

But her brother needs job. And if we get him a job, she can not turn me down.

LINCOLN

Wonderfully funny! I will see if I can help. Charles Chatterton. Of course! He's actually quite competent! Commissioner of Indian Affairs! That's it!

BILLY

He would be superb.

LINCOLN

Anything else?

BILLY

I need to borrow twenty dollars from you.

LINCOLN

Here. And do I hear wedding bells?

Billy pulls out a wedding ring. We hear a wedding march.

BILLY

Do you like it?

LINCOLN

I pronounce you man and wife.

SCENE 2 1860-1865

THE WHITE HOUSE COLLAGE

We hear The Battle Hymn of the Republic during this entire scene.

DEMONSTATORS

NO WAR!

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

END SLAVERY!

SOUTH CAROLINA SPEAKER

We declare our secession from the Union. This
December 20, 1860.

ENSEMBLE

LINCOLN! LINCOLN ! LINCOLN!

LINCOLN

The United States is an association of States. As a
contract, can it be peaceably unmade, by less than
all the parties who made it?

ENSEMBLE

LINCOLN! LINCOLN ! LINCOLN!

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

DOWN WITH LINCOLN!

LINCOLN

There needs to be no bloodshed or violence; and there
shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national
authority.

ENSEMBLE

LINCOLN! LINCOLN ! LINCOLN!

COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS

DOWN WITH LINCOLN!

LINCOLN

Must Congress protect slavery in the territories. The
Constitution does not expressly say. Plainly, the
central idea of secession, is the essence of anarchy.

ENSEMBLE

LINCOLN! LINCOLN ! LINCOLN!

LINCOLN

In conclusion, We must not be enemies. Though passion
may have strained it must not break our bonds of
affection.

The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Applause.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

I direct the suspension of writ of habeas corpus throughout America.

SPEED

You must do whatever you must to preserve the Union.

MARY

Oh, help us God.

LINCOLN

William Wallace (Willie) Lincoln is dead. He is the second son we have lost.

MARY

The dead do not die. Willie is still alive

LINCOLN

Yes, Mother.

REVEREND GURLEY

He left his whole savings to the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church.

LINCOLN

Five dollars.

MARY

Willie! Willie!

LINCOLN

That for every soldier of the United States killed in violation of the laws of war, a rebel soldier shall be executed; and for every one enslaved by the enemy or sold into slavery, a rebel soldier shall be placed at hard labor on public works.

GENERAL GRANT

We shall win this war.

LINCOLN

I proclaim the first national observance of Thanksgiving, to be held Nov. 26.

REVEREND GURLEY

Blessed be the Lord.

ENSEMBLE

LINCOLN! LINCOLN! Lincoln

LINCOLN

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

BILLY

The world will call this the finest speech ever written.

LINCOLN

To Joshua Speed:
The national Union Party convention, meeting in Baltimore, nominated me for President and Andrew Johnson of Tennessee for Vice - President.

CHIEF JUSTICE

Congratulations on our second term of office

LINCOLN

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds;

to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan-- to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

SPEED

General Grant delivers Savannah to you as a Christmas present. .

ENSEMBLE

The War is over! Peace at last. Peace at last.

LINCOLN

And now Mary we go to Fords. Theatre. Our American Cousin.

MARY

Off we go.

We hear a single shot.

STANTON

Now he belongs to the ages...

We hear Amazing Grace.

SCENE 3 1868 SPRINGFIELD

Speed, Billy, Anna, Lucy, and John Hay stand before a statue of Abraham Lincoln We hear the star spangled banner Followed by heavy applause. John Hay stands at the podium.

HAY

We honor Abraham lincoln with this memorial. But this memorial is only possible because of the support from the people of Kentucky. We especially honor that the Speed Family which is largely responsible for this memorial. The role which the Speed family and indeed the whole state of Kentucky played in saving the Union can never be denied.

Because Kentucky stayed in the union, So Maryland and Missouri remained in the Union. Without the border states we would never have preserved the Union. Mr. Lincoln was born in Kentucky, and as one who worked more closely with him in the last four years of his life, he felt and spoke and thought like a man from Kentucky.

Applause

HAY (CONT'D)

And of course Mr. Lincoln never failed to point out that his Attorney General James Speed was not only a Kentuckian but the brother of his very closest friend, Joshua Speed. And he never failed to express his gratitude to Joshua Speed. And Mrs. Lucy Speed, how many times did I see the President viewing the Oxford bible you gave him 31 years ago.

Applause

SPEED

With that the ceremony is over. And will you now help yourself to the refreshments.

ENSEMBLE

Yep.

Speed approaches John Hay,
Lucy Speed and Fanny, Anna
and Billy Herndon and Anna

HAY

Why Mr. Herndon. How is your biography coming?

BILLY

I am leaving no stone unturned.

HAY

So I understand.

BILLY

I have read the ten volumes which you and Mr. Nicolai wrote.

HAY

And?

BILLY

Good work. A wee bit too complementary. But the critics were too harsh on you.

HAY

Well Mr. Nicloai and I like you had a birds-eye view of the President for 4 years, while you were with him for sixteen years.

BILLY

Of course, yours were the crucial years. And that is the period during which he will be judged. But both of us have written about the greatest human who ever lived.

LUCY

Let us not get carried away, Mr. Herndon!

SPEED

Did I read in the papers that you presented some of Mr. Lincoln's' very personal matters

BILLY

You must mean the evacuations!

LUCY

Evacuations!

HAY

I blush.

BILLY

You have only seen the beginning.

LUCY

The beginning!

HAY

Indeed! Did the President authorize you to write his biography?

BILLY

He did not. Which is why the biography I am writing is impartial, fair, and reveals all for historians, biographers and above all the American people

LUCY

Mr. Lincoln was not only your law partner but a friend.

BILLY

He is my hero. The processes of writing the biography of a hero are to make him fully known to the reading world. . All the facts of the hero should be told-the whole of his life-thoughts, the determination and deeds. It is the religious duty of the biographer to reveal all.

LUCY

Well with that Mr. Speed I think we should all enjoy the refreshments. .

BILLY

Shall we partake, Anna.

Anna and Billy exit.

HAY

I hope you don't intend to change Mr. Herndon's mind.

LUCY

His mind seems made up.

HAY

Also He's already blabbed all through his public letters and lectures.

LUCY

But a retraction might be in order.

HAY

Have you ever tried to put manure back into a horse?

LUCY

Good point, Mr. Hay.

HAY

Even Hellcat referred to him as an uncouth drunk.
She minced no words.

LUCY

You mean Mary?

HAY

Yes.

LUCY

How would Shakespeare have described him?

HAY

An uncouth drunkard.

SCENE 4 1871 OFFICE OF LINCOLN AND HERNDON

Billy is at his desk,
drinking.

BILLY

Anna, I fear for my life.

ANNA

Have courage, my husband!

BILLY

If he attacks me, call the police immediately.

ANNA

I will be standing behind the door, listening to all
that is said. He wouldn't dare attack you. Trust me
my love.

BILLY

He is stark raving angry.

ANNA

You are a brave man but I won't take any chances.
He's 28 and you are 53.

BILLY

~~I remember playing with him when he came to the office.~~

ANNA

~~Indeed?~~

BILLY

He's at the door! Rush!

She exits. The door opens.
Robert Lincoln enters.

ROBERT

Hello.

BILLY

Welcome back to your hometown.

ROBERT

Mr. Billy.

BILLY

Billy will do. I do not intend to call you Mr. Lincoln. I appreciate the visit from the son of the greatest man who ever lived.

ROBERT

One of them.

BILLY

So what brings you to Springfield.

ROBERT

Guess.

BILLY

Pray tell.

ROBERT

This is just a friendly visit.

BILLY

Well welcome. I presume that it is the biographical material you wish to discuss?

ROBERT

I am sure you are aware of the public outcry and concern which your speeches and lecture and now impending biography have engendered.

BILLY

I am puzzled by it. Proceed.

ROBERT

What you have been writing through the years is an insult to my father, my mother, my family and the American people.

BILLY

Whoa!

ROBERT

Where did you get the information which you have lectured on and shared with the whole world!

BILLY

From my sixteen years of sharing an office with the greatest American who ever lived.

ROBERT

You shared an office with him for 16 years. But you did not share an office from 1861 to 1865

BILLY

That is correct. And therefore I leave that for you to write.

ROBERT

I am not a biographer. And can not be because I am his son.

BILLY

You have already written a biography.

ROBERT

I have done no such thing.

BILLY

But you have. Only under the names of John Hay and John Nicolai.

ROBERT

I beg your.....,,

BILLY

They only wrote what you approved.

ROBERT

Not correct.

BILLY

That book has got to be the dullest biography written in the history of the United States And an injustice to Mr. Lincoln and his legacy.

ROBERT

Hay and Nicolai's biography was authorized by my father. Yours was not.

BILLY

Your father asked me to be his partner after his presidency was over. He also said that had it not been for me, he would never have become President. . —

ROBERT

Why did my father never ask you to be in his administration?

BILLY

He did. And I said no. And we both agreed that when he stepped down as president he would return to Springfield and sit in the same chair he left in 1860.

ROBERT

He did say something along those lines as I recall. But he did not authorize you to lie about him.

BILLY

What lies!

ROBERT

Let us begin with syphilis.

BILLY

What about it! He shared that with me several times in the office.

ROBERT

Mother never caught it if he did.

BILLY

He had it as a child.

ROBERT

I'm flabbergasted. Children do not get syphilis. It is only transmitted by sexual encounters. My father was never promiscuous. And then you said he was a bastard.

BILLY

I have several statements under oath to back that.

ROBERT

How in the hell would anyone know. My father was Thomas Lincoln's biological son and there is no doubt.

BILLY

Why did your father not invite him to his wedding!

ROBERT

Because he chose not to. Nor did he attend my grandfather's funeral. Enough said. And then my grandmother Nancy Hanks was also a bastard?

BILLY

I have sworn statements to that effect.

ROBERT

Oh brother. I thank the American people for the public outcry against these slanderous assertions.

BILLY

Please, please., Please. Mr. Robert Lincoln. No use in shouting. We both have your father's best interest at heart. -

ROBERT

Do they really have to know my fathers bowel movements!

BILLY

Yes!

ROBERT

Why! I do not know George Washington's bowel history. Nor that of any other president. —

BILLY

We differ.

ROBERT

And then Ann Rutledge. And those hurtful things to hurt my mother.

BILLY

The woman you are now trying to institutionalize?

ROBERT

Answer my question!

BILLY

I have sworn statements that say she was in love with Abraham Lincoln and he wanted to marry her...

ROBERT

Nonsense! The man to whom she was supposedly engaged says he never heard of Abraham Lincoln until he became President. And those affidavits are from 80 year olds who say they can remember the whole thing word for word.

BILLY

I still...

ROBERT

More importantly, not a single one of father's relatives knew about this nor did Uncle Joshua.

BILLY

You have not disproven me.

ROBERT

And then the bit about Abraham Lincoln being a quasi atheist!

BILLY

I never used the term quasi-atheist!

ROBERT

Free thinker is how you put it.

BILLY

Right. I shared an office with him for 16 years and he never once mentioned a belief in God.

ROBERT

Phooey! Did you ever check with the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church.

BILLY

Heavens no. They'll give the same ole song and dance about good ole religious Abe.

ROBERT

Do you have any ideas how many times Gurley visited the White House?

BILLY

At your mother's insistence!

ROBERT

No My father asked for him. And when Willie died Gurley was at the house constantly. You defined my father as a free thinker. He was not. His last wish before he died was to visit the holy Land. My mother agreed. Free thinkers' visits to the holy land are a rarity.

BILLY

Why are you making this point?

ROBERT

If, as you say my father is the greatest icon of all time his religious beliefs become quite important. My father mentioned God in his speeches over 3000 times according to one of my Harvard professors.

BILLY

For political purposes. God is a good ally to have on the trail stump.

ROBERT

My father was not a hypocrite.

BILLY

We have discussed this subject sufficiently

ROBERT

And my dead brothers are not brats!

BILLY

They most certainly were.

ROBERT

Another is that my father was a poor lawyer.

BILLY

I never said that

ROBERT

You said he was disorganized and sloppy and that you did most of the work. HA!

BILLY

I will not change anything I have said. — I am willing to give up income, status, and everything else to tell the truth.

ROBERT

Strange truths!

BILLY

I believe I am to Lincoln what Boswell was to Johnson

ROBERT

Your relationship was more like that of Judas Iscariot to Jesus of Nazareth.

BILLY

This conversation is over.

ROBERT

Now and forever. .

SCENE 5 POND SETTLEMENT SEPTEMBER 15 1881

The elegant parlor at the Speed residence. Speed is reading a bible. A huge portrait of Abraham Lincoln hangs from the wall. Fanny enters with a cup of tea, a filled glass and a bottle of Kentucky bourbon.

FANNY

Mr. Speed looks so well this morning.

SPEED

Why wouldn't I, my black eyed beauty?

FANNY

You have been through a lot, my dear.

SPEED

Another tragedy not yet sixteen years after Mr. Lincoln's death. But I have thanked God in my prayers that Robert Lincoln was spared in this assassination.

FANNY

Did that crazed office seeker have any idea that Robert Lincoln was walking in the Garden with the President.

I wish you would remain in the room with us.

FANNY

But

SPEED

Please remain. And Anna will be here with him. Why are they so late, I wonder?

FANNY

They'll be here. I'm sure he wants your approval.

SPEED

He always wants someone's approval.

FANNY

More importantly he wants Mr. Lincoln's approval.

SPEED

Mr. Lincoln is not with us any more.

FANNY

Look at that portrait. He's here.,

S

—

They embrace. Billy enters.

BILLY

How's my black-eyed beauty here.

SPEED

Welcome Mr. Billy.

BILLY

And you know what Mr. Lincoln refereed to Ms. Fanny as.

SPEED

What?

BILLY

Mr. Speed's black eyed beauty. I'm ready for a bourbon. WE HAD QUITE A RIDE!

Anna enters the room. She embraces both Speed and Fanny

ANNA

Ten years is too long a time.

FANNY

At last. At last. And you must stay at least a week.

ANNA

We can only stay tonight .

BILLY

Why are the flags at half mast?

FANNY

In honor of Mr. Garfield.

BILLY

But he has not died.

FANNY

It is our sign of respect. We have been so saddened. It brings back memories of sixteen years ago.

BILLY

It was tragic indeed. But my life is devoted to Abraham Lincoln. Settlement Pond has not changed at all.

SPEED

How's that?

BILLY

I noticed the same slaves who were working for you thirty years ago are still working for you. Did you forget to free them?

FANNY

Billy!

BILLY

Just a joke, for heaven sakes.

SPEED

Billy! They chose to remain with us.

BILLY

How decent.

SPEED

They were treated well before Emancipation and are treated well now.

Nearly all of our former slaves chose to remain with us. WE PAY THEM. We loved them then, we love them now.

ANNA

You were always decent folk, Mr. and Mrs. Speed!

FANNY

You see, Anna, so many of the abolitionists who insisted on complete freedom totally abandoned the Negroes after the war. The war extracted a heavy price and most agree that it was paid by Negroes who are now worse off than ever.

BILLY

We must clear the air about a few things before we go to dinner. I have been much saddened by what I have heard.

SPEED

What about?

BILLY

That you do not approve of my effort to write the biography of Mr. Lincoln. I studied Lincoln critically for forty-four years and should know him well.

SPEED

You gave much up for him and you shared an office with him for sixteen years.

BILLY

I want to help all Americans- rich and humble, black and white, Jew and Christian- understand him better.

SPEED

You have but..

ANNA

Indeed, strangers knock on our door wanting to know about Abraham Lincoln and he spends hours with them. And then they stay for dinner.

SPEED

We all admire Billy's devotion.

BILLY

I remember what he said. Billy, I can trust you, if you can trust me.

SPEED

But....

BILLY

Mr. Lincoln and I never had any personal controversy or disagreement.

SPEED

We know that.

BILLY

Yet it grieved me that we only once invited to the White House once. And then we learned that Mary Lincoln was out of town.

SPEED

But that is the past now.

BILLY

The day I returned from Lincoln funeral, I made a determination to dedicate the rest of my to the taking of gathering all the material that would be necessary for the definitive biography of our friend, law partner and political leader.

SPEED

And you are to be commended for it.

BILLY

But my friendship goes beyond all friendship. I could read his secrets. That is WHY I AM HIS BIOGRAPHER.

SPEED

WHAT!

BILLY

Hay and Nicolai have written ten volumes that say nothing.

I have written one volume that says everything and will help Mr. Lincoln be enshrined in eternity.

SPEED

Did you have to include the blue pills he had to take each week!

BILLY

Can you state what else bothers you. Be specific.

SPEED

Ann Rutledge Nancy Hanks Mary Lincoln Nancy Hanks
Mother Syphilis....

BILLY

Stop! Let us go through each of them. I have gone through this many times before

SPEED

Shall we go to be a nice dinner

BILLY

You know I did not enrich myself So here I am at age 63. I am poor. I am despised. And am now an unsuccessful lawyer and farmer?

SPEED

Come now.

BILLY

I am not rich like you. Actually you are worth ten times more than Mr. Lincoln and I combined.

SPEED

What!

BILLY

Mr. Lincoln dies with a net worth of \$110,345.95. I have a negative net worth of minus ten thousand dollar. You are a millionaire. That means you are worth ten times more than the President and I combined.

SPEED

How do you know my net worth!

BILLY

Remember, Joshua Speed, I have eyes in the back of my head.

SPEED

But what is your point?

BILLY

I am not writing this biography for selfish reasons. Nor to necessarily make money. But now I am trying to get some return for all my years of effort.

SPEED

I was born to be a businessman. I am neither politician like Mr. Lincoln nor writer like you. And I appreciate what you have done to teach us about Mr. Lincoln.

BILLY

I remember what Mr. Lincoln said about biographies. "Many biographies have been written. They are all alike. They all tell of the heroic deeds of their subjects. You might as well print up these probes with blank title and fill in the names -of any subject that you please."

SPEED

You remember his exact words from at least a quarter of a century ago?

BILLY

You think I would lie? Can you appreciate what I have devoted all the last part of my life to.

SPEED

Do you really need my approval?

BILLY

Yes. And that is why I have been given this mission by providence. I started it the night I caused the clamor at the General Store 44 years ago. You remember that night?

SPEED

Vividly

BILLY

I knew this would be my mission in life I am the custodian of the legacy. I will tell the truth at all costs. And I could make a fortune with a sugar coated biography. But no way.

SPEED

And about Lamon and Weik?

BILLY

Mr. Lamon is a dishonorable man.

SPEED

Did not Mr. Lamon pay you for your papers?

BILLY

Four thousand dollars

SPEED

So you ARE doing this for the money!

BILLY

No but I needed the money then. I'll have more bourbon. How is Mary Lincoln's health?

SPEED

The poor woman is dying.

BILLY

In an asylum I presume. That is where she belongs. In fact they should have sent here there years ago.

SPEED

She is dying at the home of Mrs. Ninian Edwards --her sister. Her life has been a difficult one.

BILLY

She never forgot the serpent thing. But the hatred runs even more deep.

SPEED

We will discuss that one at another time. Some animosities begin from nowhere. This one has now been in full force for 44 years. I remember the serpent evening. .

But I must let you know what someone told me yesterday. I say this because I love you.

BILLY

Go Ahead.

SPEED

They referred to your letters as the vaporings of a silly old man. And the letters themselves as a gross and infamous slander from beginning to end to poison the minds of decent people against the dead President, his marriage and his martyrdom.

BILLY

I have a mien of steel. My only thought is to teach the world about one Abraham Lincoln. Twice a week during the hot summer I trudge six miles to Springfield, peddling grapes, corn apples from house to house.

SPEED

So?

BILLY

I am now old and impoverished to preserve my American heritage. Do you have to sell vegetables door to door Can you disparage my effort to present the real Abraham Lincoln to the American people and the world.

SPEED

But respect Mr. Lincoln's privacy.

BILLY

As President, you don't have privacy.

SPEED

What would Mr. Lincoln say to you?

BILLY

I know Billy Herndon better than anybody and I intend to stick by him. Let us make a toast to Abe. Now to you Abe

ANNA

Let us raise our glasses. To our Sixteenth President.

BILLY

(Raising his glass) You chose a slave owner for a best friend, a drunk for a partner, and a shrew for a wife. And you prevailed over all of us. Here is the most important drink of my life. In nearly sixty years. And I will devour all of it.

FANNY

Please, Billy. Stop!

ANNA

My husband. Please!!!

Billy gulps the whole drink.

SPEED

Surely you will kill yourself.

BILLY

I AM ALIVE AND WELL! Now I will tell you about this special drink. It is the last drink of my life. I will never drink again.

ANNA

Oh My Love!

He takes both the glass and the empty bottle and places them on the mantel beneath the Lincoln Portrait.

BILLY

(Facing the portrait)

Mr. Lincoln. I have two gifts for you. I have never given you these presents before, and I know that you don't believe me. But as sure as I am Billy Herndon, born 1818 I will never drink again.

SPEED

Billy!

BILLY

I give them to you now and forever, Mr. Lincoln. You will never have to say to me.

"Billy, do you know how many times I have almost fired you for being drunk." Never, never again.

FANNY

We must go to dinner.

The bell rings for dinner

ANNA

In the end we are all friends

SPEED

Mr. Lincoln would have it no other way.

BILLY

We're the Springfield boys

SPEED

Now and forever.

ALL OTHERS

The Springfield boys! Now and forever.

SCENE 6 EPILGOUE 1892

Anne Herndon is seated on her porch, dressed in black. The American flag hanging. She is drinking tea. She begins humming and then faces the audience.

ANNA

Well it's been a year now since I buried Billy, during the thirtieth year of our marriage. Life Can be cruel. But I was given a good marriage, and four children from Mr. Billy as well as six stepchildren. Poor Billy. He had a rough life. His only goal was to tell the world what the real Mr. Lincoln was like. Who was better equipped. Well when my husband died, the biography was published, but the company went bankrupt. His work was praised and lambasted .

Some thought he was a coarse, scandal loving monster, whose work poisoned the source of the Lincoln biography. To others he contributed more than factual knowledge of Lincoln during the pre presidential days.

But he paid heavily for his life effort to present the real Mr. Lincoln to the world. Last year our son Willie, like the Lincoln's Willie, died unexpectedly of pneumonia at age 25. It broke our hearts, and Billy died two days later. Mr. Billy died of a broken heart. His biography turned out a failure and he lost his son.

You remember that dinner of ten years ago. Well true to his promise my husband never drank again, God rest his soul. Joshua Speed died shortly after that dinner, and most of his estate about 900 thousand dollars to the Methodist Church, after taking care of his beloved Fanny.

—

But in spite of all, the world is still wonderful. As I sit on our porch I keep thinking about those three fellas out there in that yonder. And what are they talking about? Telling stories, joking, and talking about what boys usually talk about. Yes, despite all, they are the Springfield boys. Now and always. AND GOD BLESS AMERICA.
Music.

END OF PLAY

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