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It was either the ribs I'd had for dinner or the Civil War special on TV that I watched, but that night I had a dream I met Abe Lincoln. He was sittin on a bench in a park in the capital, and he was wearin' that stovepipe hat. I asked him if he'd seen the Lincoln Memorial yet. He said he hadn't, he'd just got into town and was restin his feet. I tried to figure out what to talk about, so I told him when I was a kid with my parents, we'd visited his tomb in Springfield, Illinois and asked him if he remembered the big metal statue of his head out front. He just nodded, and it wasn't until later in the dream I realized he'd probably never seen the statue of his head because he'd been dead then. Anyway, I went on not realizing that, and told him I thought it was funny that all the visitors who'd passed by had rubbed the nose, until it was shiny gold, and the rest of the statue was dark brown. Odd things like that impress a kid. There was a awkward silence so I told him they named a car after him.

But he wasn't interested in cars. Said he had a blank spot between 1865 and whatever date it was now. I never paid much attention in history class, so I told him I might be a little rusty, but I might could fill him in a bit, and he said that was OK, to give it a try. So I told him there was World War I, and World War II and we won those. And then there was Korea where there was an armistice and Vietnam that we kind of lost because Saigon is now called Ho Chi Minh City. I told him I lost some good friends there, and he said he certainly understood that.

I told him he was pretty famous, that he was carved into Mount Rushmore in South Dakota along with Washington and Jefferson. I had a picture in my shirt pocket of me and my wife standin in front of Mt. Rushmore when we was there on the Harley for Sturgis. Why I had that particular picture in my shirt I don't know, but in the dream it all seemed OK. I showed it to him and he recognized me right away. I told him I wanted to get the Harley into the picture, but the guard said no, I couldn't ride it up the steps.

Abe asked who the fourth guy was -- the one with glasses up on Mt. Rushmore -- and I couldn't remember. He said no problem, he probably wouldn't know him anyway.

I was about to put the picture back into my shirt pocket, but he asked to see it again. He looked at my wife standing there in her leathers and says he wondered whatever happened to his Mary Todd. I told him my daughter could find out on the Internet. I'm telling him how good she is at finding things on the Internet, like one time I mentioned I had a date for the school dance the night JFK was killed, and my daughter looked up my date's name on the Internet and found out she owns a bar in New Jersey.

"Who's JFK?" Abe asked, and then I had to get into all that stuff about the assassination. I think they were in a Lincoln convertible, but I didn't tell him that, didn't want him to feel bad. Then I remembered that JFK said we should put a man on the moon, and we did. Abe said he'd heard about the man in the moon, but thought it was just to amuse children. No, I tell him, we shot a rocket up to the moon and one of our astronauts walked on the moon. He must have thought I was joking, cause he smiled and said "Was it made of green cheese like they say?" Well, we had a laugh about that.

It was getting dark so Abe and I went into a bar, sat back in a booth and had us a drink. He tells me a story about after the Revolutionary War, some guy goes over to England, and the English are still mad at us for winning, so this American guy goes into the outhouse and there's a picture of George Washington in the outhouse. So he finishes his business -- I'm not telling it very good, but this here's the gist of it anyways -- and comes out and the English are standin around kind of grinning, waitin to see his reaction.

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One of the English guys asks the American what he thought of a picture of Washington in the outhouse, and the American says he enjoyed it, thought it was very appropriate. Well, this confuses the English who was expecting the American to be upset. So they ask him what he means. "Well, there's nothing like a picture of General Washington," says the American, "to scare the crap out of an Englishman."

The waiter comes around and asks us what we'd like, and I'm feeling flush so I ask Abe if he'd care for a scotch and he says he would. Now I realize later that this is a dream and nobody pays any attention to Abe Lincoln sitting there in the bar, his stovepipe hat on the table, drinking a scotch with me. But a black guy in a suit keeps looking over at us and pretty soon he gets up and comes over. He introduces himself, says he's an attorney with a firm in town. He looks at Abe, and says "If I'm not mistaken you studied the law as well, sir." And Abe says he did, asks the guy to sit down. Well, now I'm going to have to buy for this guy too, and I start to worry. Even in my dreams I sometime have insufficient funds.

Well for a lawyer, this black guy seems kind of uncertain of himself, seems like maybe he's sizing up Abe. Maybe he's having his own dream and somehow we all end up here in a bar in Washington. Pretty soon, though, they're discussing the Emancipation Proclamation and I'm trying to follow but got nothing to say. Luckily my card goes through OK, so I can relax, at least until the next round.

Pretty soon the lawyer says he has a train to catch, gets up, shakes hands with Abe and thanks him for everything.

The sun is setting and Abe and I get up to stretch our legs. Somehow we end up at the Lincoln Memorial, and Abe stands there looking up at himself and says the sculptor must have thought a lot of Abe Lincoln. Well, I thought that too, but didn't say anything. He seems kind of surprised that the Gettysburg Address is up there on the wall, said he was kind of disappointed in it, it bein so short and all.

Then he asks me the question I been worried about. He asked me what happened to him in 1865. I told him what I could remember about him being at a movie at Ford's theatre. "Our American Cousin" he said snapping his fingers. He asks me to go on, so I tell him some guy comes up behind him and shoots him in the head and gets away, but they catch him and hang him. He's quiet for a moment, then jokes "I wonder how the play ended."

Since he was joking, I went along, told him nowadays you can watch movies in your own house, beer in the fridge, dog in your lap, laid back in the lounge chair, plate of ribs on the side table, big flat screen, the whole deal.

I told him the North won the war, but he seemed to know that already. I told him we had a president was a Georgia peanut farmer, another was from Arkansas, and a bunch from Texas and they all did OK. And, I said, our last president is a black man. He seemed very interested in that.

"And what did you think of him?" he asked. Well, I told him I voted for the other guy because I got run out of the woods by the liberals protecting the spotted owl from loggers like me. He just nodded, so I told him now we got a reality show guy as president, and he said reality would be a good idea in Washington, but I said it wasn't that kind of reality, and then we got into taxes, health care and the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and so on. I was kind of careful because I liked him and I couldn't remember if he was a Republican or a Democrat. But he seemed to take it all in stride, even the troubles.

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“Someone once said that a monarchy is like a merchantman that sails well before the wind," he said, "but one hole will sink her, whilst a democracy is like a raft. It will not sink, but your feet are always wet.” Well, I smiled and nodded like I knew what he was talking about. He finished off his drink, thanked me, said he also had a train to catch, so we shook hands and he went off down the sidewalk.

Next morning my daughter was still up and messing around on the computer, so I asked her to look up Abe’s Mary Todd to see what happened to her in case I run across Abe again in a dream. Turns out Mary Todd never got over Abe’s murder and ended up in an institution. If I did run into Abe again, that would be a tough one to tell him.

But a funny thing – as it turns out, the guy with glasses up on Mt. Rushmore was Teddy Roosevelt, and Teddy as a little boy sees Abe’s funeral procession. That might cheer Abe up some, kind of like a relay race, where one guy ends his race and hands off the stick to the guy who’s just getting started, and they’re both on the same team.

Well, my daughter went off to bed, and I sat down with my morning coffee to watch the news. Things seemed a little brighter, somehow, that we’d make it through the troubles like the country always does.