

Change of Heart

In "Change of Heart," the events unfold on March 28, shortly before Lincoln's first state dinner. General Winfield Scott's memo deeply disturbs Lincoln as it presents a grim assessment of Fort Sumter's situation. Scott emphasizes that Anderson's position at Sumter is more untenable due to Beauregard's artillery installations, predicting that a full-scale invasion to relieve the fort would require ten months to organize, during which time Union forces would likely suffer defeat. He advises that evacuation of Fort Sumter should happen sooner rather than later as a gesture promoting peace.

However, Scott escalates his recommendation, asserting that merely abandoning Sumter wouldn't suffice to maintain allegiance from the upper South and border states. He insists that both Sumter and Fort Pickens must be evacuated to restore confidence among slaveholding states, further alarming Lincoln. The president is taken aback by Scott's political reasoning and the suggestion that such drastic actions were even on the table, leaving him in distress as he prepares for the upcoming dinner.

During the state dinner, attended by notable guests, including Mary Lincoln, the ambiance is lively yet Lincoln remains preoccupied by the contents of Scott's memo. Guests, including William Russell, observe Lincoln's storytelling as a means of managing tense situations. Russell hopes to uncover Lincoln's strategies regarding the secession crisis but leaves the event none the wiser.

Following the dinner, Lincoln privately convenes his cabinet to discuss Scott's message. The silence is palpable, reflecting the gravity of the situation until Postmaster Blair breaks it, criticizing Scott's shift from military to political concerns. Lincoln calls for a formal cabinet meeting the following day to revisit the resupply mission to Fort Sumter.

At the next meeting, the cabinet's members, equipped with new information on the pro-Union sentiment in South Carolina, mostly overturn their previous stance, now favoring resupply. Urged by Blair to act swiftly to prevent further conflict, Lincoln ultimately authorizes two expeditions to resupply both Fort Sumter and Fort Pickens. However, the decision holds the potential for disaster, as both missions rely on the same warship, the side-wheel steam frigate, Powhatan, creating a significant logistical conflict for his administration facing possible turmoil within the Union.