

The Silence Breaks

In "The Silence Breaks, The Demon of Unrest," the narrative unfolds on February 11 and 12, marking the start of Lincoln's journey on the Great Western Railroad through various towns in Illinois toward his inauguration. As he traverses towns like Illiopolis, Niantic, and Danville, Lincoln takes time to stand on the rear platform, allowing the public to see him. His presence stirs significant curiosity and excitement as citizens gather in crowds anxious to catch a glimpse of the man whose election has unsettled the nation.

During brief stops, Lincoln speaks to the crowd, delivering a noteworthy message about the national importance of his travels, quoting a poet to convey hope: "Behind the cloud the sun is still shining." After reaching the Illinois-Indiana state line, Lincoln faces the unpleasant surprise of receiving terrible yet overpriced food during his midday break.

Continuing his journey, Lincoln's train stops in Thorntown, Indiana, where he entertains the crowd with a humorous story about a man and his slow horse that illustrates getting sidetracked. His wit resonates well with the audience, and he keeps the mood light, bidding them farewell while noting that he must reach Washington on time.

Lincoln's day culminates in Indianapolis at the Bates Hotel, where he delivers a careful speech before an immense crowd. He engages directly with the pressing political tensions, questioning terms like "coercion" and "invasion" while asserting the government's rights to reclaim federal properties. Despite initial reticence, Lincoln boldly addresses the audience, addressing the roles of states and the federal government in maintaining unity.

After the speech, a surge of curious onlookers seeks to meet him, pressing against his space. Meanwhile, Lincoln anxiously awaits his son Robert, who guards a satchel containing copies of his inaugural address. When Robert returns, slightly inebriated, he reveals he left the satchel with the hotel clerk. In a humorous rush, Lincoln descends to retrieve it, sifting through baggage until he finds his own. The chapter exemplifies Lincoln's human side amidst the monumental pressures of his impending presidency, blending humor with the gravity of historical context. Now, as he embarks on his journey, he reflects on his birthday, surrounded by family and festively adorned train cars celebrating his presidency.