George and Abraham

George scratched his head and sighed as he looked down at the disappointment below. Violence and oppression ravaged the land of the free and home of the brave, injustice plagued those who needed it most and the divide between parties widened farther than the Grand Canyon. Was his country beyond repair? Were him and his fellow revolutionaries’ dreams of a country free of tyranny too radical and unachievable? He didn’t believe so at first, but 200 years of hindsight altered his perspective. Perhaps they were missing the proper leader! Given the opportunity, he’d accept a third term as president without a second of thought. What he wouldn’t give to have another opportunity to walk amongst his people again. To sit on the porch of Mt. Vernon with his wife while reading *the History and Adventures of the Renowned Don Quixote*, converse with his inebriated and idealistic colleagues about the further progression of their country, walk amongst his fellow citizens down the dimly lit and dirty streets of New York City, and watch the sun set beyond the hills as it lit the sky in a beautiful orange and yellow haze that blended with the autumn trees. But he was destined to remain here.

George turned and surveyed the 39 empty chairs resting on risers, each row higher than the last, forming a large semi-circle. Each chair resembled the other, with elegant leather and a small wooden side table reserved for pipes, canes, hats and other miscellaneous items. In a room meant for a congregation, he stood alone. He rubbed the tiredness from his eyes and moseyed toward his chair in the front center of the room. He ran his fingers through the remaining wisps of his powdered white hair and leaned on his knees.

“Rest in peace,” he scoffed. “An inaccurate description of the afterlife.”

Worry and anxiety followed him like a dark rain cloud wherever he went. George peered behind him, looking at the large clock hanging above the room’s exit. 7:30 a.m. He groaned and slumped into his chair.

 “You know, even ghosts need their rest,” a tall man said closing the door behind him. The man walked between the risers, his black shoes tightly gripping the new blue carpet. The man combed his black beard three times as he walked toward his best friend.

George looked over his shoulder and smiled. “Good morning Abraham! How did you sleep?”

“Considering how I used to sleep hunched over when alive, fantastic!” Abraham exclaimed. “Something you seem to lack.”

He walked over and sat in the neighboring leather chair. He removed his black top hat, revealing his thin black hair, and placed it on the small table. “I do apologize for my lateness. I believed I had misplaced my hat, but upon further examination, Harding was examining *himself* in the mirror with it again.”

George chuckled, brushing black specks from his newly pressed tan pants. “I found him reciting Reagan’s ‘Tear Down this Wall!’ speech a couple weeks back. Seems he likes intimidating past presidents, again.”

“Well, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery!”

George smiled and looked out the window. “I suppose. Is everyone beginning to stir?”

“A few,” Abraham said, adjusting his long black suit. “The Roosevelts are re-watching John Wayne’s westerns, Taft is taking yet *another* bubble bath, L.B. Johnson is playing fetch with his dogs in his underwear, and I believe Grant, Eisenhower and Taylor are finishing their millionth game of Risk in the library.”

“Still haven’t determined which of them is the best general yet?”

“I believe Eisenhower still has the most wins followed by Grant and then Taylor. I’m sure their invitation for you to join hasn’t yet expired.”

“I have no time for strategy games; I’m too busy up here.”

“That’s what I tell Kennedy when he says we should finally determine which of us wrote the best speech.” Abraham arched his back and looked at the empty chairs behind him. “It seems with each passing year, the occupants in this room dwindles. Kennedy and Jefferson frequent this room often, but I can’t recall how many others visit as often as you.”

George chuckled. “Honest Abe. I’ve always preferred Humble Abraham. You and I both know, you’re in here just as much as I.”

“That may be, but I can’t stand to sit in these chairs once the sun sets. I much prefer the ten-foot bed in my room! But you need your rest George. The bags under your eyes worsen by the day.”

George lowered his head and rubbed his eyes again. “I know. I can’t seem to quiet my mind. I’ve been going over what more I could’ve done. What more I could’ve given my country, if I had more time. I could’ve done more Abraham.”

Abraham leaned over and clasped George’s shoulder with his hand. “Don’t fall into that abyss George. We were given valuable time and dwelling on what we didn’t do, and what we should’ve done, will only drive you mad. Nixon is still recovering from his fall into that abyss. He, like many of us, made mistakes we wish we could take back. But all we can do is hope those who precent us, learn from our mistakes and strive to do better.”

“Strive to do better? They seek only to better themselves by acting solely upon their self-interests. And when some seek to better the lives of Americans, they argue and stall. There is no compromise. No compassion. Only division and hatred.”

Abraham stood and grabbed his top hat, rubbing the brim between his fingertips. He walked to the window and gazed upon the American people below. He watched as businesspeople braved the blizzard blitzing the streets of New York, artists lay the finishing touches to their newest masterpiece in Seattle, college students viciously re-reading their notes to prepare for an upcoming test at Howard and surfers desperately swimming toward the next big wave in Hawaii. He smiled and straightened his suit jacket.

“I don’t often say this George, but I believe you’re wrong.”

George joined Abraham at the window. “How so?”

“What do you see down there?” he asked, motioning toward the United States.

George watched as parents impatiently readied their children for school, people wait in mile-long lines to receive their daily caffeine fix, chefs grumble to themselves as they prepare food for that night’s dinner service and fisherman curse at the high heavens as they wrangle in their catch of the day. “Americans going about their day,” George answered. “It’s another typical day.”

“It may seem that way, but there is an invisible force at work.”

“And what is that?”

“Progress. There is a thick veil nearly concealing it, but down there, I see the youth of today learning how to better the future. I see progress in communication. The connection the world shares through the internet can now be accessed by almost everyone around the world. Progress through innovation. Life is made easier with every new piece of technology and it’s helped those who are unable to help themselves both at home and abroad. Our United States are battling a raging storm, desperately trying to remain afloat, but the night is always darkest before the dawn, my friend. I believe we will see a new revolution unfold, where people will put aside their differences, ignore the cultural and racial bias that have plagued our past, and look toward building a better America, thus creating a better world and a brighter future.”

George smiled. “You never could take off those rose-colored glasses. How do you see this future materializing?”

Abraham motioned toward the window. “She has been absent for some time, but I believe she will soon rise from the ashes and fill the hearts of young people.”

George looked out the window puzzled. “Who?”

“The same entity that flowed through Lewis and Clark as they paved a way through the west. In the heart of Harriet Tubman as she brought freedom to slaves. In the soul of Susan B. Anthony as she fought for women’s suffrage. In the heart of Martin Luther King Jr. who fought for Civil Rights. In the courage of Amelia Earhart as she crossed the Atlantic. And in the patriots who rebelled against a tyrannical king.” Abraham looked at George. “She is same entity that stood by you as you crossed the Delaware.”

George smirked and nodded. “American Spirit.”

Abraham nodded. “There are many things I wish I could’ve done during my time, but such is the cruelty of hindsight. We can only hope that those who succeed us, learn from our mistakes and strive to do better. Americans have always asked themselves throughout their existence, how can we do better? Sometimes it’s breaking barriers, while other times, it means admitting to past mistakes. Each propels us forward and reveals the possibility for a brighter future ahead.” Abraham grasped George’s shoulder. “Things may seem dark now, but soon the skies will clear, the seas will calm, and progress will move forward. ‘When you’re living on your knees, you rise up,’ and I believe the United States will soon rise up.”

George chuckled. “Did you just quote *Hamilton*?”

Abraham shrugged. “When Jefferson and Madison listen to it non-stop, and blast it from their room, it’s hard to not get a couple lyrics stuck in your head! I just hope the next play he writes is about me!”

George snickered. “America, will be alright?”

Abraham nodded. “She’ll be alright.”

George nodded, satisfied. He yawned and quickly covered his mouth. “Is taking a nap before 8 a.m. deemed too early?”

Abraham laughed. “For men of our age, absolutely not. If I were almost 300 years old, I’d nap as much and as often as I could!”

George smiled brightly. “She’ll be alright,” he whispered.

Abraham secured his top hat to his head and wrapped his arm around George’s shoulder. “Before your long needed slumber, what do you say we get some breakfast while Harrison regales with his unfounded ambitions for his presidency?”

George nodded. “Now that, will lift my spirits!”

The Founding Father and the Great Emancipator walked out of the room side by side, each taking one last look over their shoulder at the small blue and green world slowing rotating. Abraham slowly exhaled and exited the room. George straightened his blue and tan coat and addressed what was once only a mere 13 colonies.

“The alternate domination of one factor over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism,” he said. “The disorders and miseries, which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of Public Liberty. I pray, we the People, can overcome such a tragedy.”