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Your Friend Forever, A. Lincoln: The Enduring Friendship of Abraham Lincoln and Joshua Speed

Charles B. Strozier

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In the spring of 1837, a “long, gawky, ugly, shapeless man” walked into Joshua Speed’s dry-goods store and asked for supplies for a bed. He couldn’t afford the price, but Speed was taken with the visitor, who “threw such charm around him” and betrayed a “perfect naturalness.” “He could act no part but his own,” Speed later wrote. “He copied no one either in manner or style.” So Speed suggested the young lawyer stay with him in a room over his store for free, initiating what would become one of the most important friendships in American history.

Speed was Abraham Lincoln’s closest confidant, offering this shy and anxious political talent invaluable support after the death of his first love, Ann Rutledge, and during his rocky courtship of Mary Ann Todd. Lincoln returned repeatedly to Speed for guidance even though the two disagreed on political matters. *Your Friend Forever, A. Lincoln* is a rich analysis of a relationship that was both a model of male friendship and a specific dynamic between two brilliant but fascinatingly flawed men who played off each other’s strengths and weaknesses to launch themselves in love and life. Their friendship resolves important questions about Lincoln’s early years and adds significant psychological depth to his later decisions as husband, war leader, and president.

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