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Abraham, Honestly

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ABRAHAM, HONESTLY

"With his own two hands, Abe Lincoln built the log cabin he was born in."
—from a college student's American history paper

THEORY I: OUT-OF-BODY ABE

The ghostly glob of fetal Abraham sneaks out of his mother's womb at night with architecture on his budding mind-speck. In the first two months, the Lincoln bean can barely hold a toothpick, let alone a log, so he darts around his neighbor's place, plotting floor plans and examining crannies. By month two his heart's really in it. By the end of the first trimester he's using his tail to slick down the mud mortar of his neighbor's house. *Mudd*, he thinks, and feels his very first shiver. By month five he's chopping thick stripes of wood by the light of his prenatal halo. By month six he's strapping logs to his back and floating them across miles of undivided Kentucky airspace. By month seven he's all over the roof like a Christmas specter. By month eight his newly-lit neurons are sparkling up the lawn as he flaps back and forth from womb to hearth, nesting like there's no country but home, no place like tomorrow.

THEORY 2: BORN AGAIN ABE

When you make a house of your heart, no assembly is required, but some laying of the hands may be.

THEORY 3: AUTHORIAL ABE

Like many Abrahams before him, Lincoln enjoys limited omniscience whenever he writes speeches, treaties, bills, or commandments, and this affects his mind in mellifluous ways. He often imagines, for example, what it must have been like for his Pa to construct their homestead. How many times had Abraham built that same boxy house in his mind, amputating trees and sanding them to naked plainness, putting, perhaps, more care into the project than his own father? This fantasy of building kicks in like a nervous tick whenever Lincoln loses things, and for every log he stacks in his imaginary abode, a windy sigh rushes through the grassy blades of his beard. Since the war started, he's been adding new rooms that were never there in his youth, and the walls are getting higher, so high that the cabin is now a log tower which he must climb and climb.