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Sommario/riassunto

Lincoln Prize winner William C. Harris turns to the last months of Abraham Lincoln's life in an attempt to penetrate this central figure of the Civil War, and arguably America's greatest president. Beginning with the presidential campaign of 1864 and ending with his shocking assassination, Lincoln's ability to master the daunting affairs of state during the final nine months of his life proved critical to his apotheosis as savior and saint of the nation. In the fall of 1864, an exhausted president pursued the seemingly intractable end of the Civil War. After four years at the helm, Lincoln was struggling to save his presidency in an election that he almost lost because of military stalemate and his commitment to restore the Union without slavery. Lincoln's victory in the election not only ensured the success of his agenda but led to his transformation from a cautious, often hesitant president into a distinguished statesman. He moved quickly to defuse destructive partisan divisions and to secure the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment. And he skillfully advanced peace terms that did not

involve the unconditional surrender of Confederate armies. Throughout this period of great trials, he managed to resist political pressure from Democrats and radical Republicans and from those seeking patronage and profit. By expanding the context of Lincoln's last months beyond the battlefield, Harris shows how the events of 1864-65 tested the president's life and leadership and how he ultimately emerged victorious, and became Father Abraham to a nation. Table of Contents: Illustrations Introduction 1. Re-election 2. Careworn and Haggard 3. The Burden of Patronage 4. The Search for Peace 5. The Humble Instrument of God 6. Beyond the Battlefield 7. At the Front 8.

Martyrdom Abbreviations Notes Acknowledgments Index Reviews of this book: Harris provides detail that has been paraphrased or neglected by other biographers. In even-tempered, observant prose, [he] ably organizes his facts into a presentation that even veteran Lincoln readers will appreciate as fresh.--Gilbert Taylor, *Booklist* This is a first-rate monograph for which Harris has done diligent spadework. This Lincoln isn't the sentimentalized or melancholy saint or savior, but a proficient, inventive, even cheerful administrator, dealing with diplomatic detail (chiefly with the British over Canada), naval technology and patronage squabbles in such key states as New York. Harris also provides a fresh retelling of the story of Lincoln's murder and martyrdom.--Edwin M. Yoder Jr., *Washington Post Book World* Lincoln Prize winner William C. Harris turns to the last months of Abraham Lincoln's life in an attempt to penetrate this central figure of the Civil War, and arguably America's greatest president. Beginning with the presidential campaign of 1864 and ending with his shocking assassination, Lincoln's ability to master the daunting affairs of state during the final nine months of his life proved critical to his apotheosis as savior and saint of the nation. In the fall of 1864, an exhausted president pursued the seemingly intractable end of the Civil War. After four years at the helm, Lincoln was struggling to save his presidency in an election that he almost lost because of military stalemate and his commitment to restore the Union without slavery. Lincoln's victory in the election not only ensured the success of his agenda but led to his transformation from a cautious, often hesitant president into a distinguished statesman. He moved quickly to defuse destructive partisan divisions and to secure the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment. And he skillfully advanced peace terms that did not involve the unconditional surrender of Confederate armies. Throughout this period of great trials, he managed to resist political pressure from Democrats and radical Republicans and from those seeking patronage and profit. By expanding the context of Lincoln's last months beyond the battlefield, Harris shows how the events of 1864-65 tested the president's life and leadership and how he ultimately emerged victorious, and became Father Abraham to a nation. Though the reader knows exactly what will happen to Abraham Lincoln on Good Friday, 1865, William C. Harris brings nail-biting tension, along with heartbreakingly pathos and insightful historical analysis, to the story of Lincoln's final days. This is masterful story-telling and gripping history.

--Harold Holzer, Co-chairman, US Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Just as his prize-winning book on Lincoln and Reconstruction revised our understanding of that subject, here William C. Harris finds much that is fresh, insightful, and important to say about the last months of Lincoln's life. Students of Lincoln and the Civil War will want this book on their shelves.--Michael Holt, author of *Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* There are few neglected subjects in the field of Lincolniana, but Professor Harris has found one--the last five months of Abraham Lincoln's life. He offers readers a thoroughly researched and fair-

minded historical evaluation of the beginning of Lincoln's second presidential term, restoring a sense of indeterminacy to a surprisingly revealing period that has too often been sacrificed to the dramas of Appomattox and assassination.--Mark E. Neely, Jr., author of *The Last Best Hope of Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America*
Lincoln's Last Months shows in clear and fascinating detail how the embattled Civil War president was able, in the final six months of his life, to contend with a seemingly overwhelming array of military and political problems.--Douglas L. Wilson, Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College
Harris's important and revealing study shows that during these last months the President exhibited his greatest mastery, both as a political leader and a military strategist. This fine book is admirable for the depth of its research and for the judiciousness of its interpretations. It is one of the half-dozen books on Lincoln published in the last decade that must be read by every student of the American Civil War.--David Herbert Donald, Charles Warren Professor of American History Emeritus, Harvard University
