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Sunday, November 24th WHD

This was the day that the President lay in State at the Capitol. It was the day I will never forget -- nor will the other people of America.

In contrast to the day before, it was a bright, clear day, of sparkling sun. We began by going to St. Marks to church, with Luci and Congressman Thornberry. There was a line in Bill Baxter's sermon -- something about how every man who had fostered, or had permitted to be fostered around him, an atmosphere of hate, had his hand on the gun barrel that day.

After church, we went to the White House and waited in the Green Room for the family. After they came, Mrs. Shriver turned to me and said, "I hear Oswald has been killed." That was the first news I had about Oswald.

We were told by protocol officials that we would ride with Mrs. Kennedy and the Attorney General. Suddenly Mrs. Kennedy came walking in, leading John-John with one hand and Carolyn^{me} with the other, in two darling blue coats. And then I realized that there would be six of us in the car and I wondered if we shouldn't change and get in another one. But it turned out that we all got into the same limousine -- Mrs. Kennedy and Lyndon in the back seat, the Attorney General and I in the jump seats, Carolyn next to her mother, and John-John in an absolutely peripatetic mood, jumping from the

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back seat to his uncle's lap, to the front seat and back again.

As soon as we emerged from the gates of the White House, I became aware of that sea of faces, stretching away on every side -- silent, watching faces. I wanted to cry for them and with them, but it was impossible to permit the catharsis of tears. I don't know quite why, except that perhaps one reason is that the continuity of strength demands it. Another reason was the dignity of Mrs. Kennedy and the members of the family themselves demanded it.

In front of us there was a handsome black, riderless horse, carrying reversed boots. I recognized it at once as the symbol of the fallen leader, but I didn't really know much about it. I asked Lynda Bird later and she said it went long back into history, in fact back to Genghis Khan, when the horse was sacrificed at the grave. A few centuries ago they abolished that part of the custom.

In front of this horse there was a caisson, drawn by six white horses, and the caisson itself draped with the flag. Soldiers were marching, and the whole time there was the sound of muffled drums in the background. Flags flew at half mast. But most of all was the feeling of a sea of faces all around us and that curious sense of silence, broken only by an occasional sob. I kept on comparing it in my mind

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with the time FDR died, but that was so different because then everybody could be as emotional as they felt like. The feeling continued in me that I was stalking step by step through a Greek tragedy. I remembered a definition of it back in college some time, that a Greek tragedy is a noble protagonist being overtaken by an inevitable doom, but then there is a third ingredient but I can't remember it, and some time I must look it up.

The only note of levity came from John-John, who jumped from the back to his uncle's lap, to the front, until finally the Attorney General said, "John-John, be good, you be good, and we'll give you a flag afterwards. You can march with Dave Powers."

We were a pretty silent group as we rode along, each wrapped in his own thoughts. The only time the Attorney General said anything was when we passed a big building on the left, and he looked over and said (I think as much to himself, perhaps to the children), "That was where it all began. That was where he ran for the Presidency." It was a grave, white, sorrowful face, and there was a flinching of the jaw at that moment that almost made -- well, it made your soul flinch for him. After that interminable drive, we got to the Capitol, we

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entered the Rotunda, and in the center, right underneath the dome, was the flag-draped coffin with the honor guard around it. One of them, I noticed, had on the green beret. There were eulogies by Chief Justice Warren, by Speaker McCormack, and by Mike Mansfield (I shall never forget Mike Mansfield's speech -- he, that most precise of men, repeated over and over the phrase, "and she took a ring from her finger and placed it on ^{his} ~~her~~ hand," and I thought if he said it one more time I would scream if nobody else did).

Lyndon advanced and laid a wreath at the foot of the casket, and then Mrs. Kennedy went over and knelt. It is strange how you remember little things, but I remember how carefully she knelt and kissed the casket and Carolyn by her side simply put her little hand on the flag -- sort of underneath the flag. John-John had disappeared. I think maybe he was -- well, it was high time that he started his marching. And then we left in separate cars.

To me, one of the saddest things in the whole tragedy was that Mrs. Kennedy achieved, on this desperate day [something that she had never quite achieved in the years she'd been in the White House -- that] is a state of love, a state of rapport between her and the people of this country. I mean the sort of people who write their Congressman on ^{tablet paper with a} ~~tamper with paper and pencil.~~

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Her behavior from the moment of the shot until I said goodbye to her the other day is, to me, one of the most memorable things of all. Maybe it's a combination of great breeding, great discipline, great character. I only know it's great.

Her behavior is one of the things that keep on coming back to me. Another is the contrast with the death of FDR, because this time there's something much worse about it -- there is that sense of shame over the violence and hatred that has gripped our land. [Shame for America! Shame for Texas!] But also a determination to help wipe it out!

When we got home about 2:40, after that emotionally exhausting experience, I began to think suddenly of Lynda Bird, and I decided, ridiculous as it was for her to come up and go right back in just a day or two, I was going to call and ask her to catch a plane and come up here for the President's funeral, because Lynda Bird somehow in spite of the difference in their ages (hers and the President's) and the difference in their positions, simply felt herself as his friend.

I remember one time in the back seat of the car on our way somewhere in a big hurry, she told him that she had to write a school paper on Profiles in Courage, and she wanted him to help her compose it.

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2 If there was something of a gulf between me and him, there never was anything of a gulf between Lynda Bird and him, and so I wanted her to be here. I called her and she said she could pack in 10 or 15 minutes. She did and she arrived about 10:30 that night.

Some time in the middle of the afternoon there began a business session, which, in a way, is a combination of highly hilarious things. Isn't it odd to think that you have to set about planning how you're going to make a living when you've just been elected, or rather when you've become President of the United States? But that's the way it was. We obviously had to separate ourselves from KTBC and say goodbye to a 22-year livelihood-and-love for a 13-month hitch, for the good and sufficient reason that Lyndon is now in the position of appointing the Members of the Federal Communication Commission, who have the power to license and regulate radio and TV stations.

Abe and Carol Fortas were present; Waddy and Don Thomas had been hastily summoned from Texas; also A. W. Walter was there with his files and his head bulging with information that nobody else had. Leonard Marks was there to advise. Part of the time Lyndon was in and out. I think the Busbys and the Valentis were there occasionally, or rather, just Jack.

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The subject was -- how to put the stock of KTBC in trust. How to simply, quickly and severely cut off our ties with KTBC until such time as Lyndon emerged from a Federal office.

It took hours, there were many ramifications, many proposals. I think it was finally set up on clear-cut lines. We also talked of disposing of The Elms as quickly as possible.

Finally, late in the day, we had our business wrapped up, or on the way to being wrapped up, in a state that we can face the future in a completely new way.

In the evening there arrived for dinner Lyndon, bringing Mary Lasker and Florence Mahoney. Congressman and Mrs. Jack Brooks, Homer Thornberry, and the Bill Whites came; the Abe Fortases stayed; we all sat around and really enjoyed each other. I love to listen to Abe talk and, of course, from Mary there is much I can learn about art. I intend to enlist her help in every way I can.

With a few days, or maybe a couple of weeks, remaining before we say goodbye to The Elms, I am well aware -- gratefully aware, nostalgically aware -- of how well it has served us, this lovely house, these bright fires, these good meals, this good talk. #