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MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, June 5, 1968

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It had been a short night. The phone jarred me awake from a deep sleep. It was Lyndon saying briefly, tersely, "Will you come in here?" I resentfully did not see how it could be morning. I was too tired. And sure enough, I saw with amazement that the hands of the clock said 4:20.

He was propped up against the pillows in his room, looking as though he had never been to sleep, and all of the TV sets were on. A.W. was sitting in the chair by him. They were listening intently, and I realized at once something was happening. I am not sure whether I heard it first from the TV set or from Lyndon. Senator Kennedy had been shot. All three faces of the TV sets were going, but it was total confusion. He had been at his headquarters with Ethel celebrating the victory in the California primaries. And every few minutes the voting would come on. It was something like 44 or 45 percent for Kennedy and 41 or 42 for McCarthy.

The whole thing had taken place under the eye of the television camera, and we saw over and over film of the shooting itself and heard the light crack of the gun. We saw him lying on the floor, and a pool of blood under his head, and heard that he had gone to one hospital and briefly treated and dispatched to another -- the Good Samaritan.

Lyndon asked me to get some coffee. I went to the kitchen not knowing where coffee or a coffee pot was and searched until I found some instant Sanka and put the kettle on and got out tea and cream and sugar, and presently took a tray back. Lyndon looked at me and smiled slightly. He said, "Well, you had better start learning how to cook all over again."

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There was an air of unreality about the whole thing -- a nightmare quality. It couldn't be. You dreamed it. It had happened before.

And then every few minutes, there would come on the screen a smiling face of Senator Kennedy tasting the wine of victory, making little jokes with Ethel by his side. And then we would go through the whole thing over again.

Lyndon was using the telephone almost at the first moment I went in it seemed. He was calling someone about putting a guard -- Secret Service -- on all the candidates. And he was listing them off: Kennedy and McCarthy and Humphrey and Nixon and Rockefeller and Stassen, and what about Gregory<sup>1</sup>. That seemed to be a question. If there weren't enough Secret Service they could borrow from the FBI or from the Marines. But get them -- assign them.

At 5:30, he was calling Ramsey Clark.

Very early in the morning -- I don't know just when, I think it was around 7:00 -- Senator Mansfield came in. I got him some coffee. A.W. left. Senator Mansfield had a staring look in his eyes. He said, "What is happening to our Country?" Quality of being a sleep walker in a dream persisted. Lyndon was functioning. He was talking to Mansfield about how they could get the legislation moving on a Gun Law, and about how to protect the candidates; how to carry these things through the maze of legislative action. And about how and whether we could get any further action on a crime Bill.

He called Senator Dirksen and Senator Aiken about an agricultural problem.

The three faces of the television kept repeating the hideous story that the Senator was going in for brain surgery. It had been determined that the bullet

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had lodged somewhere behind the ear. It all melts into a montage, and I do <sup>NOT</sup> remember times exactly.

Jim Jones came in. And DeVier Pierson. They handed Lyndon memo sheets of long pieces of paper from the ticker. Occasionally he passed them on to me, and was giving them instructions and everybody was using the telephone.

At one point I went back in my room and tried to sleep a little more. But it was hopeless, and after about an hour I returned to Lyndon's room. And all the time the three-faced television set went on. The Senator was in surgery. It would be 45 minutes. Doctors were interviewed, and men in the streets.

Somewhere early in the morning A. W. had said, "They had better start watching that Resurrection City come daylight."

Finally I began to relate this whole hideous unreality to my own day. It was clear that nothing was the same, and that <sup>we</sup> were in a sort of a state of suspicion waiting for the hand of fate.

Liz~~er~~ came in -- the whole story written on her face, and said, "You had better cancel, don't you think, that 3:30 appointment?" Yes, as soon as people were in their offices. Then we would take a look at tomorrow's award ceremony and beautification meeting a little later. Almost certainly we would be cancelling those too.

Around 9:00, I called Ashton and asked her to cancel the appointment with Mrs. Rogers and the artists this morning.

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And so there stretched in front of me a long empty day. I was tired. Everybody was tired from the news.

Liz and I tried to put together a wire for Mrs. Rose Kennedy and one for Ethel.

Lyndon had been able to do one thing to help. He made a plane available to carry some members of the family -- three of the children I think -- and I believe later there was one for a Kennedy family Doctor.

About 10:20 I went upstairs and had a cup of coffee with our four house guests -- the Bill <sup>Noel</sup>~~Knowles~~ and the John Ben Shepherds. And we deliberately put aside for a few minutes the tragedy that gripped everybody and talked about the little park in Texas, the exhibits, ~~the~~ Lawrence Rockefeller's help.

And then I went back to my desk and signed enumerable letters and a lot of the idiot work, as I call it. That is, autographing pictures. And Marilyn shakes her sweet little head at me and says, "But it makes people happy."

Luci called and was crying. She had not been asleep at all. I had left word with the kitchen that I wanted to know when Lynda awakened. I went into her room and her first thought was of Ethel and the baby she was going to have and of all the other children. She said, "Mother, is there anything we can do for them?" And I told her about her Daddy sending the plane.

The 45 minutes had lengthened into hours. I believe in all it was 4 hours. The day melted into a montage -- work at the desk, a few hushed telephone calls. Everybody with stricken faces. The air of unreality, this can't be happening. And underneath this deep racking sob -- my Country, my Country,

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remembering Martin Luther King just two months ago today, and President Kennedy. And then a hideous story in the paper about two Marines being shot in a Georgetown cafe by some Negroes -- some of the poor marchers.

Lyndon had gone to his office for an 11:00 meeting, and did not come back for lunch. I think he must have had it in the Rose Garden in the middle of the afternoon. And very late in the afternoon, he came over for what hopefully would have been a nap but just turned out to be telephone calls, and back to his office at 6:00.

About 6:30, I took a little break and went out on the Truman balcony with Lynda, and we talked of the day and of her future and of finding a nurse and Chuck's letters. And we felt idly self-conscious that we were so clearly visible from the roof of the Washington Hotel -- the dining terrace. Not that I myself ever feel any fear at all. It is absolutely foreign yet for me, or even really for Lyndon. But maybe neither of the Kennedys felt it either.

A little past 7:00 I went over to the bowling lanes and had two quick games. Very poor scores. And then back upstairs to record and wait for Lyndon's speech.

I had told the kitchen that dinner might be dreadfully late and that he might have staff with him.

Chief Dunn came about 9:00 and gave me a massage.

And then at 10:07, Lyndon came on. What a day it had been for him. He must have had at most 2 hours of sleep last night. He did look tired, but strong, commanding, and somehow reassuring. All day long I had heard this

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cacophony over and over -- the reactions of people questioned. What is our Country coming to? What is happening to us? Are we a sick society?

In fact at one point when I had listened to Arthur Schlesinger giving a graduation speech somewhere, I had felt like spitting on him. And so I welcomed it when Lyndon said, ~~XXXXXX~~ after a condemnation of this assassination attempt on Senator Kennedy and of the spirit of violence that made such things possible that 200 million people did not shoot Senator Kennedy. We have to cling to the belief that the fabric of the American people is still good, that it's not the fault of every last one of the 200 million of us, that there is enough virtue and courage and discipline and hard work in Americans to solve our problems.

It was not a long speech, but I was proud of it.

And a few minutes later Brooke Astor called me, very moved, and praised it with words like it made her proud to be an American and she was glad ~~xxxx~~ he was our leader.

And then June White called to tell me and him that she had liked it very much.

I had been running the intelligence between Lyndon's office and the kitchen -- a sort of an educated guess as to when he ~~walk~~ would be over for dinner. Finally about 10:30 I gave up and had my dinner on a tray in the room. Lynda came in and talked. We looked at an interminable long TV program -- an hour I think -- a summary of this dreadful day.

And then it was a little past 1:00 when we heard the three rings, and he came in with Joe Califano and Harry McPherson, Larry Temple and Jim Jones

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and George Christian. And they all sat down and woofed a good dinner while Lynda and I sat with them in our robes. Even so, dinner was interrupted with constant telephone calls. The conversation was about how to get through the Gun Bill, the chances for any crime legislation, and then a report from the Secret Service that Senator Kennedy was sinking and it would be a matter of hours -- perhaps five.

It was about 2:00 when all of the staff left and we said goodnight at the elevator. And at the end of an almost 24-hour day for Lyndon -- 22 for me -- we finally went to bed.