

Any Road That Leads to the White House

(A tragicomic play in many acts)

TMO - Feb 68
by Robert F. Kennedy

Copyright, 1966: Jacqueline Kennedy,
Robert F. Kennedy

Producer: Robert F. Kennedy

Directors: Simon Rifkind, Esq., Richard
Goodwin, Esq.

Stage Managers: Too many to list.

Dialogue Editors: Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.,
Richard Goodwin, Edwin Guthman,
John Siegenthaler, Pamela Turnure
Timmins, others.

Copy boy: William Manchester

The Cast:

Ghost John F. Kennedy
Eminence grise Lyndon B. Johnson
Queen Mother Jacqueline Kennedy
Crown Prince Robert F. Kennedy
Villain William Manchester
Innocents None

Time of plot: November 22, 1963—January
20, 1969 (January 20, 1973?)

Settings:

First Scene Dallas, Texas
Second Scene Air Force One
Third Scene White House
Fourth Scene Secret catacombs
Fifth Scene Court House
Final Scene ... Back in the White House

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More than anything else, the Kennedy-Manchester feud is an insult to the American public even if there are but few to discern it as such. For behind it is a cynical play for power which determines the roles of the actors. It even determines the ways in which the memory of an assassinated husband and brother is invoked.

Apparent is the fact that Robert Kennedy, after a long period of ever more publicly challenging President Johnson, has suddenly begun to shower him with praise. Manchester's *The Death of a President*, painstakingly edited by and for the Kennedys, suddenly became unacceptable to them. The Presidential widow's personal sentiments are the ostensible reason, even though much of the editing was done to satisfy her on this score.

The real reason appears to be Robert Kennedy's need to fulfil a secret truce agreement with Lyndon Johnson. Since the uncomplimentary reflections on Johnson will eventually be published in any case, and indeed much about them is already known, the immediate aim in all the fuss raised by the Kennedys appears to be not so much to censor parts of Manchester's book as to



Return from Dallas

—UPI Photo

nedy came to his defense with unconvincing zeal:

All of us feel we have a responsibility to those who are less well off. President Johnson needs no defense from me. The poverty program originated under him. He has immense responsibilities, great problems over defense costs and the budget. Also a very serious struggle in Southeast Asia.

I understand the difficulties you face. But the President is a man of great compassion.

For Robert Kennedy to say such things about Lyndon Johnson is almost as good as evidence that the two have reconciled their political ambitions and pledged to bait each other no longer. Johnson's *quid pro quo* was soon to follow when, instead of standing by his presumed subordinate, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, he remained aloof from Hoover's exchange of incriminations with the Senator. This involved unusual restraint, especially because Senator Kennedy, in disclaiming responsibility for the FBI's eavesdropping when he served as Attorney General, is evidently not telling the truth. He is passing the buck—the President, or a spokesman, could easily catch him in the act—to appear qualified presidential timber untarnished by disregard for law. Certainly, in a previous stage of their relations, Johnson would not let him get away with this one. He would be diligent in painting Bobby's well deserved portrait as an Eavesdropping Tom.

Behind the sudden Kennedy fury against a hired literary hack is an ugly intricate story, in which all heroes are moral lepers. There is a family willing to negotiate away the truth about the death of its most distinguished member. There is a President desperately trying to close mouths opening to talk against him. There is a writer that hires himself out and bestows to others full veto powers over his knowledge, ideas, impressions, and conclusions. There is the full ugly gamut of American politics.

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disassociate themselves from them. Now that Lyndon Johnson is presumably no longer the chief obstacle in Bobby's way to the White House, the Kennedy ammunition is being withdrawn from the battlefields.

When President Johnson was criticized by a poverty program worker, at a Washington meeting on December 12, 1966, Senator Ken-