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THE MAKING OF AN ASSASSIN

We never talked of John Wilkes Booth at our house. One reason, I realize now, was the fear abroad in the towns and on the farms of the Oil Region that he might have had accomplices in the motley excited crowds which had so suddenly invaded this Northwest corner of Pennsylvania on the discovery that petroleum in quantities could be found by drilling into the earth.

Booth had joined the invasion early in 1864 and had become a familiar figure particularly in our county seat - Franklin, Venango County. Was it possible that there was anyone who had known what he was up to? The government sent its agents to see but they called only one witness, soon dropped the inquiry. What we did not know then was that the government obsessed by the idea that Jefferson Davis and his colleagues were the real conspirators, Booth and his aides tools, wanted only evidence that would carry out their theory.

There was a sigh of relief in the Oil Regions when it was realized that the government was satisfied that Booth's movements and activities there were of little

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consequence. If the government was satisfied it would be just as well for us to keep our mouths shut. And so I grew up thinking that Boothswas a name not to be mentioned. Even thirty years after the assassination when I undertook to write a life of the man he had killed I refused to include the story of his plot, his death, the trial.

This deep-seated reluctance was broken by the accidental discovery that there was one spot in the United States outside of the man's boyhood home in Maryland - and one only - so far as I could make out-where John Wilkes Booth's name was spoken with kindness, mingled with pity. It was this town of Franklin where in 1864 he had come and gone freely, mingling so familiarly with people, particularly with the best people.

~~Today~~ In Franklin today ~~Booth is a historic figure.~~ There are men and women still living who remember him. There are scores of those of middle life who have grown up on legends of him. They show you the house in which he lived, the room he occupied, the site of the oil well in which he had an interest. They bring out momentoes of him, autographed photographs, smart canes, a mirrow with its wide old-fashioned mahogany frame he bought for his room. They tell you of his fastidiousness, particularly in the matter of towels. The town over-run with strangers was

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hard pushed even to find enough common towels. Booth insisted on his own and plenty of them, and it is still remembered. They tell how going to and from the house in which he lived he often passed a little shop in the window of which the woman had the habit of placing her child. He always stopped to play with the little one, and if the child was not there went in to ask if he were sick. There are a few recollections, not so pleasant, angry outbursts when it was suspected that he had been drinking too much, but nothing of politics. Few remember any expression, even a mild expression of his opinion on the government, of war, of Lincoln. They remember him as a likeable, fascinating creature, so much more agreeable to have around than most of the multitude that this mad search for wealth had thrust upon them.

How could a man who had made such an impression on a town, an impression that has endured for seventy five years in spite of his crime and their horror over it, how could such a man have become an assassin? A political assassin is not born, he is the product of the confusions and struggles and warring of his times. But there must be something to work on - an inheritance, a background, an experience of life. What was John Wilkes Booth's inheritance? What was his boyhood, his education, his early contacts with life? How

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could it be that this friendly man Franklin remembered could rock the world by a deed which he alone planned and executed?

The records are not many but in them are clues. There was his father, Junius Brutus Booth, a wild genius if there ever was one. He had come to live in America in 1821, his name as an actor and rival of Edmund Kean preceding him. He soon became the greatest figure on the American stage. But there was no taming of him. In America as in England he indulged in wild eccentricities, both on and off the stage.

When not on tour Junius Brutus lived on a farm outside of Baltimore. Here all but one or two of his ten children were born. The ninth of these was John Wilkes. Johnnie, they called him, born in May of 1838. The fourteen years which Johnnie lived before his father's death in 1852 were memorable for the wild excitements, the strange doings, the poignant happiness that Junius Brutus Booth brought into the household whenever he returned from a tour.

When in the mood he filled the place with loud rehearsals of the tragic and melodramatic parts in which he starred. The boy heard the ringing words of the greatest dramas of the English stage there on the Maryland farm. He learned of costumes, make-up, stage business. He saw his father fencing, riding, dancing and when the excitement

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passed he saw him gay and gentle, absorbed in the trees, the fields, the building, the workers of the place. And sometimes he saw him laid low by drink.

What did it do to him? He had his opinion and confided it once to his sister Asia.

"You know, Asia," he said, "I think that much of the evil as well as the good that is in us came from those furious plays of father."

He went away to school - St. Timothy, one of Maryland's best. A schoolmate tells how the boys talked much of their future, their ambitions. Johnnie told them he was to be great and famous. "How are you going to do it?" they asked.

"You have read about the Seven Wonders of the World", he answered. "Well, we'll take the Statue of Rhodes for example. Suppose that statue was now standing and I should by some means over-throw it? My name would descend to posterity and never be forgotten, for it would be in all the histories of the times, and be read thousands of years after we were dead!"

"I wish," he said again, "there was an arch or statue at the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea across the Straits of Gibraltor, with one side resting on the Rock of

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Gibraltor and the other on an equally prominent rock on the coast of Africa. I would leave everything and never rest until I had devised some means to throw it over into the sea. Then look out for history, English, French, Spanish and all Europe, Asia and Africa would resound in the name of John Booth. I tell you it would be the greatest feat ever executed by one man."

"But suppose you went down it it?" they said.

"I should die with the satisfaction of knowing I had done something never before accomplished by any other man, and something no other man would probably ever do."

It seems to have been a foregone conclusion with him and with his family that he was to be an actor. But Junius Booth left his family poor so Johnnie's atage training must be picked up. He was persistant, sandwiching in the learning of parts as he helped Asia wash the dishes or she helped him on the farm. He taught himself to fence, to ride, to run, to wrestle, to leap from high places.

The home in the country was only some twenty five miles from Baltimore where there was a theatre in which the Booths had always been at home. The boy got a job at $6.00 a week. He learned all the ways of the stage, became known to the managers, the members of the stock company, the stage hands. There was even one among the latter that the elder Booth had used in building Tudor Hall, as the

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country home was called. His name was Edward Spangler. We are to hear of him later.

One day Johnnie came home to tell with glee that he was launched. He had made his first appearance on the stage - one night only - but in big capitals. Mother and sister and friends listened with pride as he gloated over his success, told of what he hoped to do with himself in the future.

Two years more and he was in Richmond, Virginia, in stock, doing well, so his mother wrote, although his letters showed him irritated when he had to take a bad part, but he was getting on, not destined to be as great an actor as his brother Edwin, he told his sister confidentially, nor did he mean to go into Edwin's territory. The South would be his field. The more he saw of it the more he liked it. These were his kind of people, this was the kind of life for a gentleman.

Soon Asia and his Mother were worrying. They sensed a rival to the stage dividing his interest - politics. It had shown itself early. When he was nothing but a boy he had joined our first great popular Anti-alien society, the Know Nothings, then flourishing in Maryland. The Know Nothings of Maryland were no mild propagandists. They believed in direct action, led in rioting. Johnnie was out later and later at night.

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The family's distress was aggravated by their detestation of the principles of the Know Nothings. There was no anti-alien, anti-religious sentiment among the Booths. They were shocked, too, at the aristocratic notions developing in John. There was his unwillingness that white laborers sit at the table with his mother and sister, as good Americanism of that day demanded. It was all contrary to the Booth tradition dating back to his grandfather, an English Barrister, who kept a picture of George Washington in his drawing room and insisted that every one who came in bow to his reverence.

He was still in Richmond when in October 1859 John Brown attempted to seize the arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, arouse the negroes to revolt. Among those who joined in the hunt for Brown and after the capture was enrolled in his guard was John Wilkes Booth. He was among those who saw Brown hanged in December, but his family sang, "John Brown's Body Goes Marching On."

Through '60 and '61 Booth played in Southern cities, just where and when we do not know. He and Asia and his mother in those days saved play bills, clippings, letters, tracing the course of his career, how he felt about it, what the public felt about it, what the newspapers said of him, what friends said, where he went, how long he stayed in this or that town, what he played - good

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parts, bad parts, all the gossip of a rising boy dear to a family.

On the night of April 15th, 1865, Asia in her home in Philadelphia was to see all this precious material of her adored brother taken away by the government.

If we had all of that family collection it would be easy to trace what he was doing and thinking, not only professionally but politically, for in the year of '60 and '61 he saw in the South the rising tide of rebellion, the coming of the War. Deeply as he was stirred, more and more convinced as he was of the Southern point of view he did not join the Army. What would he be there? Nothing but a private - no colossus to pull down there.

But Booth soon saw that there was no place within the Confederacy for a young and able bodied actor save on the stage of war, and at the ~~close~~ of 1861 he returned to the North.

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The few play bills preserved in scattered collections of the country, notably the dramatic collection of the library of Harvard College show a two week's engagement in January 1862 in St. Louis, Missouri; a week in March at the Broadway Theatre in New York; two weeks in Boston in May; two weeks at Grover's Theatre in Washington in April of 1863.

His repertoire whows a wide range of distinguished plays. He was the Duke of Gloucester in Richard III - he

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was Romeo - he was Charles DeMoor in the Robbers - Hamlet - Pescara in The Apostate - Claude Melnotte in the Lady of Lions. He played in The Taming of the Shrew and in Macbeth. The critics were friendly. "Wilkes Booth reminds us of his father in many respects, though he does not imitate him," said the Boston Transcript. "There are strong indications of genius in his acting and he is perhaps the most promising young actor on the American state - - - he has youth, beauty, and impassioned earnestness."

Such was his growing reputation that when he played his two week's engagement in Washington in April of '63 the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, came to see him in one of his lesser parts - The Marble Heart. John Hay who records the party in his diary comments, "Rather tame than otherwise."

He was making a good deal of money by this time - $700.00 an engagement, $20,000 a year - and naturally looking for investments.

Among his acquaintances in the theatre in Boston had been a man by the name of John A. Simonds - Jo Simonds. Soon after the breaking out of the oil excitement in 1859 Simonds had dropped whatever rather intangible connections he had with the theatre and gone into the oil

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game, turning his hand to whatever came up. He was making his headquarters in Franklin, Pennsylvania, and to Franklin Simonds persuaded John Wilkes Booth to come to look over the field. It was not long before he had yielded to the lure and with Simonds and two other theatrical men of the day - Thomas Y. Mears and John A. Ellsler - had formed what they called The Dramatic Oil Company. Mr. John F. Budke, a leading lawyer of Franklin, who has made a thorough investigation of the activities of this company, collecting certified copies of all existing documents, has been good enough to let me use his findings. Mr. Budke has found no record of The Dramatic Oil Company as a corporate entity. In his judgment no such corporation ever existed.

"It was the custom during the oil excitement," he says, "for a company, in a sense that the word company suggests a group of men, to adopt a name for their enterprises."

This seems to have been what happaned now. Booth and his friends, Simonds, Mears and Ellsler had decided to try their luck as oil producers, chose a name celebrating their profession, bought three acres of land across the river from the town of Franklin and proceeded to drill a well. Booth's investment in this enterprise according to Simonds was $6,000.00.

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The new interest brought Booth to Franklin more and more frequently. He liked the town. Franklin, indeed, was a fine old place. Not even the inundation of men rushing to make fortunes had destroyed its charm. True, there were not enough beds to go around, true, you had to take pot luck for food. But in the general excitement and in the consciousness that Franklin was growing rich - a high grade oil having been discovered in its neighborhood - there was a general gaiety about the hustle. Booth liked the town and soon was very much at home on its streets and in many of its best homes.† Not that he gave up his profession - the records are few and uncertain but it is known that early in this year he played two weeks in New Orleans and in May filled an engagement of two weeks

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in Boston.

But In this going about the country he was doing more than playing great roles. He was more and more engrossed with the political situation, more and more embittered by the knowledge that the iron ring with which the North had from the first of the War attempted to encircle the South was strengthening and closing.

The Mississippi was open. He had floated down it early this very year when he went to play in New Orleans. Vicksburg had fallen; Lee had been driven back from Pennsylvania; the blockade was becoming more and more effective.

But if the North was winning on the Southern battlefield was it not losing at home? It must have seemed so to Booth as he went over the country. Here was no such unity of purpose and of action as in the South.

The South had no doubt of its object, the North was divided. As Lincoln put it there were those that were for the Union, with or without slavery; there were those that were for it with, but not without; those that were for it without, but not with.

The situation was complicated by intense partisanship, democrats supporting the war but doing their best to weaken Lincoln's conduct of the war, republicans bitterly attacking the able democrats Lincoln in his attempt to rally the whole country had put into positions of power,

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intrigue in the Cabinet, strife and division in the churches - supposed citadels of peace.

Highly organized secret societies bored within seeking to hamstring the administration, relieve the South. There were the Knights of the Golden Circle, popularly known as Copperheads, an order to which Booth, himself, is believed to have belonged, the Knights having taken the place in Maryland of the old Know Nothing party. There was the Order of American Knights - the O A K S, as they were known, flourishing particularly in the Middle West, numbering many thousands of men, handling plenty of money, planning a Northwestern Confederacy to join the Southern Confederacy in overthrowing the North. The Oaks specialized in raising and hindering enlistments, fighting the draft, encouraging riots, and particularly in stirring up discontent among Northern soldiers in the field, persuading them to desert, helping them to escape if they were arrested.

The success of all these undercover efforts to paralyize the North depended the plotters realized on breaking down the people's faith in Lincoln, spreading and intensifying contempt and hate for him. They had much to work on contributed by the very supporters of the Northern cause. Lincoln's conduct of the war was under the continual fire of Congress, the press, the unhappy masses trying to support the army and to keep the country behind the lines fed and clothed.

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Lincoln's handling of slavery was held to be arbitrary and unconstitutional, so were his military commissions, arrests, imprisonments, drafts, his suspension of the right of habeas corpus. These were the charges they used to stamp him as an ambitious and brutal tyrant, aiming to fix himself perpetually on the country, establish a dynasty. He was to be King Lincoln.

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When in the Spring of 1864 Booth came to Franklin, Pennsylvania he was not long in finding there were many in the town who shared this widespread contempt and distrust of the President. The attitude of a large portion of the population was best expressed by its leading newspaper - The Venango Spectator - which had carried since the summer of 1862 at the head of its editorial page in black-faced type the following announcement:-

OUR PLATFORM

"Mr. Lincoln is not the United States Government. The Government is ours, and we owe allegiance to it; Mr. Lincoln is not ours, and we do not owe allegiance to him. Mr. Lincoln's term of office is short and fleeting; the Government we hope, will last forever."

At this time - the summer of 1864 - hostile feeling in both North and South had been intensified by the refusal of ~~Grant backed by~~ the administration to exchange prisoners. The Southern armies were worn out out, dwindling, To release the thousands of Confederates in Northern prisons would give them new power of resistance.

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That must be prevented. The war must not be prolonged. But the decision was costing the Northern men in Southern power atrocious suffering. The whole North cried out against the sacrifice.

Here was the situation for which Booth had been watching. Here was his first chance for the dramatic act of which he had dreamed, his first chance to pull down a colossus. If he, John Wilkes Booth, should kidnap Abraham Lincoln and carry him to Richmond, the Confederate authorities could demand for his release the exchange of their imprisoned soldiers. His name would be forever written into history.

There seems to have been no doubt from the inception of the idea that he regarded it as both practical and spectacular.

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Did he have friends in the Oil Regions to whom he confided his ideas? I think it doubtful. That there were active Southern agents in the motley crowd of oil operators is probably true. Espionage went on everywhere. A picturesque so-called Confederate spy living in Petroleum Center in 1864 was said to be a friend of Booth. This was ~~the notorious~~ French Kate - the notorious mistress of a famous gambler of the period - Ben Hogan. Booth knew French Kate, it is said, possibly knew she was an agent of the Confederacy, but that he ever confided to her or to any one in the country his idea that he could render the South aid which might turn the tide of battle by kidnapping the President there is not the shadow of evidence. All that is sure, ~~however~~, is that in August he left Franklin for Baltimore where meeting two former schoolmates, Samuel Arnold and Michael O'Laughlin, just back from two year's service in the Confederate Army, he told them what he had decided to undertake and the youths after much debate agreed to go with him. That there was money in it for them, big money according to Booth, seems to have been no mean factor in winning them over.

He had taken his first step, begun to assemble his helpers but he had a long road to travel before he could carry out the act with hope of success.

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He began his preparation by divesting himself of his interest in the Dramatic Oil Company. The documents in this transaction are all to be found in the Court House in Franklin. They show that on the 29th of September Booth's one third interest was passed over to Jo Simonds as a trustee. The records do not prove that he was in Franklin at this time, but I should say the probability is that he was. Too strong an impression has come down of his presence there, not only in the Summer but in the Fall of '64, to believe that he never was back after he left in August.

It is certain that October found him in Canada. Had he gone there to lay his plan before Jacob Thompson, the head of the Confederate service in Canada? For many months now Thompson had headed an active group of plotters intent on furthering by every possible means the revolt of the North against Lincoln. Thompson's spies were scattered everywhere through the states. He furthered with money and counsel the active schemes of the various organized Copperhead groups. It was with his money and under his direction that boats were burned on the Mississippi, attempts made to burn cities, prisoners run South. At this moment the efforts were directed largely to seizing Northern prisons, releasing the Confederate soldiers and helping them fight their way to the South.

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We do not know that Booth ever saw Thompson, that he ever laid his plan before him, but we do know that he went to Canada and on October 27th took $300.00 in gold from a Canadian bank leaving there a deposit of some $500.00. He came back at once to New York where on the 29th he transferred to his brother Junius two ninths of his one third interest in the Dramatic Oil Company. And then he went on to Maryland to vote for McClellan.

McClellan was defeated - Lincoln was elected. The bitterness of the defeat, the now desperate plight of the South, the conviction that the election meant just what he had said - a permanent succession - made Booth eager to go on with his plan.

He saw it by this time as a one-act play, a play of two scenes - Capture - Escape. The first gave him less worry than the second. He knew his Washington,

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knew the freedom with which Lincoln came and went. He had two stages in mind for the seizure - the theatre when the President would be watching the play. He knew his audience, knew that for the business he planned it would be only interested in seeking to connect what had happened with the drama it was watching. He would be off and on his way before it had awakened to the truth, realized that he was a hero braving death for his cause.

A less dramatic possibility which he always regarded as a makeshift was a surer - to capture the President as he went about half guarded to and from the Soldiers' Home on the hill above the city.

More difficult for him was knowing exactly what to do with the President once he got him, how he was to run him out of Washington, by what route reach the Potomac. How get him across the Potomac into Virginia into the presence of Jefferson Davis?

That Booth realized the enormity of his undertaking, that successful or not it would divide him from his family, his friends, the North, perhaps cost his life, we know from a document which he prepared at this time and placed for safe keeping in his brother-in-law's hands, John S. Clark, the comedian - Asia's husband. This document was not to be opened until as Booth foresaw a search would be made of his

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papers and belongings in the homes of both sister and brother. It was addressed "To Whom it May Concern." And it laid down his reasons for what he was up to. There is much that is melodramatic, much that is incoherent in the document, but from it one can select a clear statement of his creed.

"I have ever held the South were right. The very nomination of Abraham Lincoln, four years ago, spoke plainly war, war, upon southern rights and institutions. His election proved it. - - - - - - -

"The country was formed for the white, not for the black man. And looking upon African slavery from the same standpoint held by the noble framers of our constitution, I, for one, have ever considered it one of the greatest blessings (both for themselves and us) that God ever bestowed upon a favored nation. Witness heretofore our wealth and power; witness their elevation and enlightenment above their race elsewhere. [illegible]

"But Lincoln's policy is only preparing a way for their total annihilation. [illegible]

"The South can make no choice. It is either extermination or slavery for themselves (worse than death) to draw from. - - - -

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"I have also studied hard to discover upon what grounds the right of a state to secede has been denied, when our very name United States, and the declaration of independence both provide for secession. - - - - - - -

"My love, (as things stand today), is for the South alone. Nor do I deem it a dishonor in attempting to make for her a prisoner of this man to whom she owes so much of misery. - - - - - - -

"A confederate doing duty upon his own responsibility."

Soon after the election Booth set out to familiarize himself with Southeastern Maryland through which the escape must be made, his errand the buying of horses, the trading in land. He studied roads, by-ways, swamps, hide-outs; he studied the people, learned their sympathies. They were over-whelming Confederate, he found. There were those who were out-spoken, vindicative, wanting action; those who were neutral, cautious, unwilling to involve themselves in any way that might get them in bad with the government under which they were living and under which they were beginning to suspect they must continue to live.

It is pretty certain that ~~by~~ before the end of the year he had the map of the territory over which he expected to carry his victim well in mind.

But he must have a larger supporting cast. So far he had but the two drafted in August. His immediate

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need was somebody who knew this territory with which he was trying to acquaint himself, knew its routes and its people.

He was lucky in finding a young man of twenty one - John A. Suratt - whose business for some two years had been to run errands for the Confederate Government, carrying messages, bringing back information he had picked up. Suratt was probably as successful a young spy as the Confederates had developed. He had great contempt for the Northern spies. Had he not carried messages in his boots for months and they had not discovered them? It took time to convince Suratt but finally Booth did it and throughout the months of preparation he was the most useful and intelligent of Booth's aides. His great value was clear-headedness, conscious of danger points and quickness to avoid them, something in which Booth, himself, was weak.

A heart-breaking feature of the life he was now carrying on was the effect upon his family, his sister in Philadelphia, his mother at Edwin Booth's in New York. Asia has told how he would frequently come to the house at night and would throw himself on a couch downstairs, not even taking off his long muddy riding boots. Haggard, exhausted he would sleep for hours, though not infrequently on these sudden visits strange men arrived evidently sure of finding him.

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It was all mysterious, terrifying. What was he doing? It was clear he was carrying on some wild and secret business. Asia wormed out of him that he was smuggling quinine to the Confederates then in dire need of it, and she heard exultant stories of his success in running the blockade.

Frequently he went to New York to visit with his Mother living with Edwin and she like the sister became more and more alarmed by his strange hints, ~~his~~ erratic performances, indifference to his profession. Indeed, in all these months he appeared but twice on the stage, in New York on November 26th at what was known as the Booth Benefit for the Shakespeare Statue Fund, the three brothers appearing in Julius Caesar - Edwin as Brutus - Junius Brutus as Cassius - John Wilkes as Mark Anthony. Bryan 103 The second was on March 18th in Washington when he played Pescara in The Apostate at a benefit for his friend John McCullough.

As December came towards its end Booth felt confident that he was ready for action. The route of escape would be kept open by Suratt who was to take charge of this part of the business. He had rented a stable in the rear of Ford's Theatre, put in it two horses, hired a stage hand - his old Baltimore and Tudor Hall acquaintance, Edward Spangler, to take care of them. In case the act was played at Ford's

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as he seems always to have hoped Spangler could see to it that the rear door was open, that is in case he found no more likely aid. As it turned out it was Spangler on whom he had to depend. The fellow's loyalty to Johnnie was to bring him death.

Early in January he filled out his cast, a young man by the name of Harold, not good for much - a German - Atzerott, who knew the river and had ferried Confederates back and forth at night from his home in Port Tobacco, useful for this important bit of business in the plan. A little later Booth picked up in Baltimore another actor - John Payne. Nobody in the group was so willing to carry on to the bitter end, no matter what it was, as was to be proved.

It was not until January 18th than an apportunity came to put on his act. The morning of that day he learned Lincoln with certain members of his Cabinet was to occupy a box in Ford's Theatre. They were coming to hear Edwin Forrester in Jack Quade.

At once he went into action bringing his associates to the theatre to acqauint them with the house, with the boxes, the condition of the doors, the exits, the stage, assign them their parts:- Who was to put out the lights, what they would do with their prisoners when they got them.

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While this rehearsal went on, Suratt spent the day making sure of the road to Port Tobacco, sure that there were boats to carry twelve or fifteen men across the river. All was ready but the curtain did not rise - Lincoln failed to come to the play.

A natural alarm seized the conspirators. Were they suspected? Had word of the kidnapping plot reached the government? Had the President been persuaded not to expose himself? They must lie low for a time. Booth, himself, stayed on in Washington a few days, then went to his family in New York and Philadelphia. Asia found him more morose than ever, more and more bitter against Lincoln on whom by this time he had centered all

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his venom. Everything about him proved his unfitness, he told Asia, his appearance, his pedegree, his low jokes, his vulgar similes, his frivolity. He was a man springing from the ashes of old John Brown, a false President and he sang with jeers a current refrain, "In 1865 when Lincoln shall be King."

Although his whole mind was set on carrying out his plan of kidnapping he took time for love making. Indeed, through all this fateful winter a thread of romance runs. He was courting Bessie Hale, the charming daughter of Senator Hale of New Hampshire. Asia tells how on St. Valentine's Day of 1865 he spent the night writing a Valentine - a strange contrast to the nights when she saw him arriving booted and disheveled to throw himself exhausted on a downstairs couch.

By the first of March he was back in Washington and on the fourth sat on the platform not far from the President during the inauguration exercises, probably the guest of Bessie Hale, maybe her escort.

If anything was needed to harden Booth's determination the inaugural would have done it. What he heard was that Lincoln believed ~~that~~ the war might be the Almighty's way of punishing the world for toleration of slavery. He writhed under Lincoln's solemn declaration that if God willed all the wealth piled up by the bondsmen's two

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hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil should be sunk and every drop of blood drawn with the lash should be paid by another drawn with a sword, still must it be said, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

This was asking him to deny his deepest conviction, the conviction that slavery was one of 'the greatest blessings that God ever bestowed upon a favored Nation.' He had no ears for Lincoln's noble plea for malice towards none, charity for all. The man must be pulled down.

Again he went back to his plotting. An almost unbelievable fact is that Booth never until now had brought together his accomplices. He had enlisted the first two seven months before, but it was not until after midnight on the 17th of March, 1865, that the men met. They must have at once realized that between them there were no bonds except Booth and the knowledge they shared a terrible secret which discovered might land them all in prison and carried out might land them all on the gallows.

They quarreled at this meeting over the stage for their act. Booth held out for the theatre. The most intelligent of his crew contended that kidnapping Lincoln in full view of a filled theatre, the stage and wings alive with actors was inviting failure, insuring their own

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destruction. They were willing to do the job but believed a first rule of conspirators is not to advertise but to keep out of the picture. Not so Booth. He wanted everybody to see him as the center of the picture.

The quarrel was settled on the morning of the 20th when Booth learned that in the afternoon Lincoln was to attend a benefit at the Soldiers' Home. He quickly called his cast together giving them a rendevous in the woods on the road to the hilltop home. Here five of them gathered, one being sent ahead to make sure that everything was clear for the escape.

Their plan was simple. They were to dash out of the woods when the carriage passed, knock the driver over, drive away with the President.

They gathered as arranged, ready for action. But when the carriage came Lincoln was not in it. His place had been taken by another - Secretary Chase they thought. They did not want Chase, he had no exchange value.

The baffled conspirators went back, angry, scared. It was a threatening omen, this second failure for the same reason-the non-appearance of the victim. Had the guardians of the President seen them hiding in the woods?

~~It was a scared and unhappy group that separated now in the interest of safety.~~

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Booth left at once not to come back to stay until the 8th of April. Most of this fortnight he spent in New York at his brother Edwin's house where his mother was - the last visit he was ever to make her. He must have given her some convincing proof that he was committed to a deed which might forever separate them for after he had gone she wrote him:-

"I am no Roman Mother, I love my dear ones before country or anything else."

Many Franklin people believe that between the days when he left Washington on the 21st of March and his return on April 8th that he was in the Oil Region. A study of his calendar for 1865* shows that it was possible for him to have made three or four visits there between the first of January and the 15th of April. That would explain Franklin's belief that he was about the town in this period. A study of this calendar shows likewise that it was impossible for him to have spent six weeks there just before the assassination as a few insist.

* The basis of this calendar is the register of the National Hotel, his Washington home, admitted as evidence in the trial of the conspirators. This registers his comings and goings.

Arrived -	Dec. 31, 1864	Left -	Jan. 10, 1865
"	Jan. 12, 1865	"	Jan. 28, 1865
"	Feb. 22, 1865	"	Feb. 28, 1865
"	Mar. 1, 1865	"	Mar. 21, 1865
"	Mar. 25, 1865	"	April 1, 1865
"	Apr. 8, 1865		

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What a different town Booth found when on the 8th of April he came back to Washington. Richmond had fallen - the end of the War was near. Already there was a loosening of tension, already the air was full of planning for readjustment, reconstruction. Only the sympathizers of the Confederacy went about with bowed heads and grim faces.

Through the fortnight that Booth had been gone Lincoln had been with Grant before Richmond. He now came back bringing news appalling to the conspirator - the surrender of Lee. Booth was forced to listen to wild exulting, to watch people weeping with joy, draping their houses with flags. He was at the peak of despair. All that he had cherished had fallen, the South, slavery. The splendid plan which was to relieve the Confederacy, stamp his name in history as a savior had no meaning now. What could he do with a kidnapped Union President with the Confederate government in flight? What could a fleeing government do with his prisoner?

Up to this time it seems clear that the idea of assassinating Lincoln had never been seriously entertained by Booth. Assassination would not restore prisoners to the Confederacy. But what now? His whole being had become so saturated with hate and contempt for Lincoln that action was necessary to ease his despair. There was no surrender in him.

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Nothing is more ironic in the whole dishevelled story than that it should have been Lincoln, himself, who clinched the matter for Booth.

Two days after Lee's surrender the still exultant crowd gathered in the evening before the White House to hear the President speak. Few of Lincoln's public speeches show better how his spirit directed and mellowed his thought. They were met, he told them, not in sorrow but in rejoicing, but that very gladness called for new efforts. Reconstruction was now their problem. Already the North was as bitterly divided over the plans of the administration as it had been over its conduct of the war. The tentative government ~~xxx~~ set up in Louisiana/ was being attacked.

The words in the speech which aroused Booth to fury was Lincoln's reference to the status of freedmen in the reconstruction under way. He had wanted an apprenticeship in citizenship for them, Lincoln said, but that had been dropped. Now, he went on, there was great dissatisfaction among many that the elective franchise had not been given to

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the colored man. "I would prefer myself that it were now conferred on the very intelligent and on those who served our cause as soldiers."

The man Payne was with Booth in the crowd and he was to tell later that when his companion heard these words he ordered him to shoot Lincoln on the spot. Payne, brute that he was, had a cooler head. He realized that there would be no escape, that they might be torn into pieces by infuriated men.

But Lincoln had sealed his fate. Booth knew there was no way now for him but assassination. His opportunity came early for on the 14th of April it was announced that Lincoln was to appear that night at Ford's Theatre with General Grant just back from Appomattox and on his way North as his guest. Quickly assembling the four members of his cast still in town Booth set in action all the business of seizure and escape which for months he had been preparing and which already twice he had tried out so futilely.

But now his mind was set on more than the murder of one man. He would butcher not Lincoln alone but of those who had worked with him in over-throwing the South, freeing the slaves - Grant, Seward, Vice-President Johnson. No doubt his list would have been longer if he had had murderers enough to go around, but there were only four on hand beside himself.

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The doings of that dreadful night are too familiar to re-tell here. So far as Booth was concerned the act went true to text and direction at all but one point, the last which he would have foreseen, priding himself as he did on his agility in leaping. His spur caught in a flag draping the President's box and as he struck the stage his leg was broken. But what he had dreamed happened. The audience saw him, and a moment later realized that Lincoln had been assassinated and that he, John Wilkes Booth, had done it - and escaped.

By daylight his name was running wildly over the land - as he had dreamed that it would. It came ~~first~~ early to Franklin, Pennsylvania, ~~over the railroad wires.~~ A station agent was busy selling tickets ~~for an early train~~ when suddenly he halted his work crying out to his assistant,

"My God, do you hear what is coming over the wires? President Lincoln was shot last night in a theatre in Washington by John Wilkes Booth. Can it be possible that that is the John Wilkes Booth who was here last year we all knew so well?"

It did not take long to learn that it was the man they knew so well.

All day men gathered to discuss the meagre news coming in. There was an occassional outburst of rage, a stranger alighting from a train seemed to someone to look

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like Booth and he cried out his suspicion. It took the police to save the man. There were rare outbursts of satisfaction. "Goody, goody," cried a girl of sixteen, only to feel a strong hand over her mouth and a stern voice ordering her to shut up. But these were stray expressions. The town as a whole sorrowed. For months he had been a familiar and romantic figure in their streets, a great actor of a family of noble actors he had moved about quiet and friendly, always one of them. What had been their part in this? That they had a part was forced on them when agents of the United States Government appeared asking questions, examining the house where he had lived, but not so far as I know examining the files of The Venango Spectator, unearthing the platform which had stood for two years at the head of its editorial column, a call to contempt and hate for Lincoln.

They followed the long search for him. It seemed incredible that he could long elude his pursuers. Where would he go? Would he come to them - his friends? It is still told in Franklin how on the evening of one of these days of doubt a group of well known men gathered in an office, all friends of Booth. What should they do, they asked one another if as they thought possible he should steal back to Franklin? They were his friends. What does a man do for a friend even if that friend is the murderer of the President of your country?

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They were turning over the whole grassome matter as they then knew it when a knock was heard at the door. Booth, they whispered. What should they do? The door opened - it was not Booth.

There was little hate in Franklin, Pennsylvania, much wonder and grief. And today, seventy five years after the deed there is but one other spot in the world, I think, Tudor Hall, his Maryland home, where he is spoken of so kindly. There the best of him was known and still lives. Ask Franklin men why he did it, what made him an assassin and some will tell you positively, the man was mad. Others less dogmatic about the souls of men shake their heads and say sadly, "I don't know."

But Booth knew, at the end, as he had at the beginning, and he held to it through all the agonizing fortnight of flight up to his death, his conviction

'Why am I here in despair,' he wrote in his diary five days before the end, 'cold and starving with every man's hand against me?' 'For doing what Brutus was honored for?' 'Our cause almost being lost something decisive and great must be done.' 'Our country owed all our troubles to him and God simply made me the instrument of his punishment.'

And at the very end, even when murmuring 'useless, useless,' he whispered, 'I die for my country.'

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