

the most friendless. Those who come in contact with him are accepted generally as cronies, or partners, or supplicants, or men he can use—as servants. But of real friends he has few, for, above all else, he lacks the capacity for arousing warmth. Of all the things to which Kennedy was born and which Johnson lacked—wealth, background, elegance—Johnson probably envied Kennedy most his capacity for arousing love and friendship.

One has the picture of the President in the two-hour-and-eleven-minute flight (the plane slowed down so as not to overshoot the preparations of reception at Andrews Base) sitting alone with his thoroughly loving wife, Lady Bird Johnson; collecting his thoughts on the scratch paper of Air Force One as other stunned men waited on his will, then took his scribbled notes and coursed up the aisle to the signal center of the plane, which flashed them as command to a Washington waiting for the first pulse of new leadership. There emerges from all the stories the picture of a massive, lonesome figure somehow—from under grief and shock—making the machinery work and beat again, almost by instinct. One of his oldest cronies has remarked that Johnson's instinct for power is as primordial as a salmon's going upstream to spawn. This instinct, always there but now educated by experience and civilized by sadness, became a national resource in the days to come.

He arrived in Washington, his home and capital, at 6:00 P.M. By then his orders had brought to the airport the men he needed most to govern (he had originally asked for the entire Cabinet; been reminded that most of the Cabinet were en route to Japan; asked that they turn back; learned that they had already turned back and, in mid-Pacific, were approaching Hawaii and inquiring whether they should proceed to Dallas or Washington; responded that they should proceed to Washington) It was a truncated government, thus, that met him at the airport. But now, after speaking to the nation over television the minimum, slow, decorous words the bleak occasion required, he gathered three of them to him in the helicopter. And the helicopter, its belly lights flashing white, then red, took off on the seven-minute hop to the south lawn of the White House.

In the helicopter, the President sat in the big chair in the forward compartment. Facing him, from left to right, were George Ball, Undersecretary of State; Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense; Mrs. Johnson; and McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Johnson broke for a bit on the short ride, speaking very slowly and with deep emotion, but disjointedly, about what had happened that day: the red roses Mrs. Kennedy held; how she would not change her clothes for the ceremony of swearing-in in the cabin, her bravery. And then of how "we" had to go forward with what we had; how he was counting on a few people the President had got together, par-