

Watergate Amendment

A NOVEL

BY

John Fitzgerald

Dedicated To:

Pammy Sue!

My Children

Erin, Sean and Kiernan

My Grand Children

&

To Mary

Who held the light.

PROLOGUE

President Nixon sat staring fixedly into the camera. He knew what he was about to say, but could not comprehend how it all came about. The technician finished a whispered countdown, "Four, three, two, one," and pointed his finger at the camera. "Good evening, my fellow Americans. I am addressing you from the Oval Office. On thirty-seven other occasions, I've spoken to you from this office, where so many decisions have been made that shaped the history of this nation. Tonight, I wish to discuss another situation that will have an effect on our nation, and me as president. I shall resign from the office of the presidency effective noon tomorrow..."

He mustered all the strength and discipline he could as he labored on through the prepared phrases, remembering not to display clenched fists or his forced smiles. His real thoughts were on how this all happened. On his last election, he carried forty-nine out of fifty states. How could everyone turn against him? How could he be brought to such a humiliating end of his public life?

He'd never find out.

Preface

It was a warm summer day as Father Mulrooney drove through the rolling farmlands of upstate New York. The fields were a lush green, as it had been a wet spring and warm summer. The black and white Guernsey cows looked content, grazing in the open pastures, some under shaded trees. This time of the year he enjoyed being a priest; summers afforded him a lot of free time. He could play golf when he wanted and fish the many streams and lakes in his parish. He had a long list of invitations from his parishioners to use cottages or boats. He enjoyed this casual, leisurely lifestyle. However, he did take on the responsibility of visiting the Farview Hospital for the Criminally Insane, the local state mental hospital. It was an interesting, but temporary assignment, just for three summer months. He took over this summer post as Hospital Chaplain for Father Horan, who was off studying in Rome.

This was the third visit Father Mulrooney was to make to Farview. After entering the large facility, he had to go through a security check just like any other visitor. It was not so much a concern with smuggling in contraband, but rather innocent items that could be used as weapons or help in fabricating tools. Father noticed that he was always checked when he went into the hospital, but never checked when he left.

After completing his security check he remarked to the guard, "You gentlemen always check me on the way in, but not on the way out. I guess you're more concerned with things appearing

than disappearing."

"Well, Father," said the smiling guard, "it's that most visitors don't understand that what they bring in could cause problems. As an example: a gift of a regular belt to you is fine. But to certain patients it could be a means of suicide, or they could strangle someone with it. Even some types of magazines can cause certain patients problems." He then smiled at the priest and added, "So we just make sure we understand what is going in for everyone's safety, and the patients well-being, Father."

"I understand, Officer Labinski," Father Mulrooney said. "One of the patients gave me a present. It was a Kleenex box holder made out of playing cards. It was quite an interesting piece of artwork."

"Oh, you must have gotten that from Jude Thaddeus," said the guard. "He's an interesting one. Been here longer than me, and that's been many years now. He just sits by himself and plays chess all day. I heard him babble one time about some big chess game in the 1800s in Berlin. Anderssen versus Dufresne, I think. He kept saying it was the greatest grand masters match of all time."

The guard paused, thinking for a few moments. "He must have done something horrible; don't know what it was. His file is locked away deep in the vaults. They have to keep him on heavy medication."

Father Mulrooney said, "I didn't have the box checked when I left; I just took it for granted that it was okay."

"That's fine, Father. You might say it's like food," the guard said in an exaggerated Irish brogue. "We're more concerned about what's going in than we are about what's coming out." Both men laughed.

Father Mulrooney made the rounds of the hospital. In the

early afternoon he celebrated Mass in the small chapel. Some patients and a few staff members attended the service. Afterward, Father Mulrooney noticed one patient who remained at the rear of the chapel, and recognized that it was Jude Thaddeus. He was holding another tissue box.

Father Mulrooney smiled at him while walking slowly up the aisle to greet his summer parishioner. "Hello Jude. How are you today?"

Jude sat in the pew, slumped over, clutching his prized tissue box. He lifted his head; his eyes clear and hopeful. "Father, can you hear my confession?"

"Yes, Jude. if you like I'm free now, ," Father Mulrooney said.

"I don't want to go into the confessional. I think it's bugged," Jude said, pointing at the two small closet-sized rooms used for confession. "I want to sit in the middle pew, in the center of the chapel."

"That's fine Jude," Father said in a kind voice, as he waved his hand in the direction of the center of the chapel. The two men walked slowly and sat down, both facing the altar.

"Bless me Father for I have sinned." Jude spoke in a low but determined voice. "Now this is an official confession. Upon your sacred vow to the Catholic Church and God, you can't disclose to anyone what I am about to tell you."

"In confession, it's between you, me, and God alone. What is said here remains here. Jude, I took a vow of obedience to the sacraments. I'm obligated with my life and soul to keep that vow," Father Mulrooney said with compassion and authority, but he was thinking, *perhaps he will confess his terrible crime.*

"Father," Jude cleared his throat. "I have little time between medications, and they're probably looking for me now, so I must be quick." He then handed the box to Father Mulrooney.

"I made you another tissue box. It looks like the first one. I had to make the first one to make sure it got out undetected. This one has the first ten sheets clean and on the remaining tissues I've painstakingly written a manuscript. Do with it what you can. It's my story, and that's why I'm here."

The rear door of the chapel suddenly opened, and standing there in white uniforms were two large male nurses. "Jude, we've been looking for you," said one of the men. The nurses walked quickly down the aisle.

"I'm hearing confession," Father Mulrooney said flatly.

Jude stood up, looking directly at the priest and said softly, "I'm finished telling my sins, Father. If they ask I only talked about chess." He then walked like a robot toward the two nurses. "In Berlin 1852, Anderssen put on the greatest exhibition of precise devastation. He crushed chess's Grand Master Dufresne with a record of subtle moves."

The large male nurses latched onto his arms and started escorting Jude down the hall. He was still talking loudly. "Anderssen would crush Spassky, Smyslov, or Larsen. And I could crush Anderssen."

As Father Mulrooney witnessed this sorrowful event, he was saddened that such a brilliant young man had lost his mind because of his obsession with the game of chess. Later that day Father Mulrooney left the hospital. He walked out holding the tissue box Jude had given him and no one took notice. He carried it back to the rectory, hurried up to his bedroom, and in the privacy of the room, he lifted off the top tissues. He was surprised to see the neatly printed words written quite legibly on delicate tissue. *It must have taken Jude years to complete this work.* That very evening, he started to transcribe the tissue writings to type. This book is a result of that work. This is Jude's story.

Chapter 1

Pocantico Hills was a beautiful estate in the lush green Hudson Valley of New York. The grounds were groomed to perfection on this warm spring day. The trees were filled with leaves, and flowers were everywhere. Jude seemed in a trance as he looked out the limousine window as they slowly drove up the mile long driveway. This would be the day Jude had planned and dreamed about. He was being courted by one of the richest, most powerful men in the world, Governor Nelson Rockefeller. Jude was confident he would make the right impression. His college professor from Harvard, Henry Kissinger, was sponsoring him for this rare introduction.

Dr. Kissinger had his own thoughts as he stared out the window without speaking. He had made many visits to this estate, but this trip was somewhat different. He was introducing a real maverick to Governor Rockefeller. Jude Thaddeus was a genius all right, but he was raised in an orphanage. Jude had no family or background to feel comfortable with. His appearance was quite common, although his jet-black wavy hair blended well with his dark almond eyes. He had a Roman look with chiseled features. He stood almost six feet tall, not muscular, but trim. The girls were attracted to him like moths to a light. However, he had kept his distance from any long-lasting relationships. Dr. Kissinger liked him, respected his intellect, and the fact that he was quite mature for his age. He was a loner and a planner.

Kissinger reflected on his own background: escaping from Nazi Germany in 1938, coming to America without money, and how the Rockefeller Foundation helped support him. Henry worked in the army's counter-intelligence service during World War II. That's when he worked very closely with Nelson Rockefeller. Both were members of the OSS, which later became the CIA. Those were good times, and Nelson had helped Henry to get a scholarship to

Harvard. Kissinger studied the world of politics and power. He and Nelson would work very closely, so they could make this world a better place if they had control.

When their limousine reached the main house, a doorman was waiting to escort both Jude and Dr. Kissinger. The three walked quietly down the impressive hallway. The walls were adorned with an original and expensive art collection. The white and black marble floors glistened, reflecting the abundant flowers on the various tables. Before Jude realized it, he was entering the Governor's study.

Governor Rockefeller rose from behind the enormous desk, showing his guests the famous "toothy smile." Extending a hand to Kissinger, he said, "So nice to see you again, Henry."

Kissinger said something pleasant in return; his marked German accent was an odd contrast with Rockefeller's raspy, nasally New York voice. Kissinger continued, "Governor, I would like you to meet the young gentleman we discussed, Jude Thaddeus." Kissinger put an arm around Jude's shoulders. "Jude, it gives me great pleasure to introduce you to a very good friend of mine, Governor Nelson Rockefeller."

Jude jerked his eyes away from a series of pictures showing Rockefeller greeting notable world leaders, politicians, and celebrities, and gripped the Governor's extended hand. Managing a stiff smile, nervous but confident, he said, "It's a great pleasure to meet you, sir. I have studied you and what you have accomplished. It's a remarkable record."

The Governor's smile became broader, showing most of his large, square teeth. "I've heard a great deal about you. I'm pleased to meet you too, Jude."

Jude reflected for a moment basking in the warmth of his host's greeting. Rockefeller managed to sound as if he were interested in his meeting with Jude. Or was it because Dr.

Kissinger had arranged the meeting? Rockefeller didn't have any idea, yet, of just how interesting this meeting would be.

While Jude was trying to decide whether or not to sit without being invited, Governor Rockefeller went over to the elaborate, cupboard-topped bar against the sidewall. His back to them, he asked, "Would you like a glass of Sherry, grown and fermented right here on Pocono Hills? I can assure you this is the finest white Sherry outside of Spain."

Mildly lecturing, professor to student, Kissinger told Jude, "This is perhaps one of the finest Sherry's in the world. The Governor takes great pride in his vintage wines."

Jude said, "I'd appreciate the chance to taste vintage Sherry." He wished they'd get these preliminaries over with so he could tell Rockefeller the opportunity he was prepared to offer him for the right price - ten million dollars.

Jude sat down when Kissinger did, in the big leather chairs facing the large ornate desk. Rockefeller handed his guests their glasses and took his place in the even bigger, throne-like chair behind the desk.

After ceremonially tasting the wine, the Governor looked directly at Jude and he remarked, "The secrets of making great wine are in the selection of the grapes and the timing of the harvest. Doctor Kissinger has told me you're one of the brightest students he's met at Harvard and you possess some unique talents."

"He has a very unique ability to see things others miss and he has the highest intellectual mind of any student I have encountered," said Kissinger.

"Yes," Jude agreed calmly, and looked the Governor directly in the eyes. "Thank you Dr. Kissinger, I believe you're correct."

As if a little annoyed by Jude's objective assessment, the

Governor said, "If you're so intelligent, why don't your Harvard grades reflect it?"

Kissinger put in, "I didn't say he was the best student I have encountered - only the most intelligent."

Jude said nothing, watching Rockefeller, who was again attending to his Sherry. After a minute, Jude said, "I have the brains and ability to get higher grades than anyone who ever attended Harvard. But why should I? I'd be conspicuous, and that's not what I want. I prefer to be noticed only when I want to be. I don't have any interest in being famous - at Harvard or anyplace else. I want to be wealthy. A straight four-point-0 won't get me that. There's an old saying, 'A student's work for B students that manage companies that are owned by C students.' Being inconspicuous and making things happen is the best way... for those of us, not already in the political or business arena," Jude added, pointedly looking around at the expensive knickknacks decorating the Governor's study.

"Only money and power can buy invisibility," remarked the Governor dryly. "Unless you're broke and stay broke. Then it's easy to be invisible. However, I trust you seek money and power. Just how are you going to achieve such a lofty goal? And please be brief."

"From you, Governor Rockefeller," said Jude bluntly and firmly. The Governor smiled, but was not amused. He had just acknowledged the end of the preliminaries. Jude went on, "I can attain my goal by helping you to attain your life-long goal... the goal you have been seeking all of your adult life. The goal you have been planning for, working for, and campaigning for. You see I understand your main drive in life is to be president of the United States, and my plan is to make you the president of the United States."

"The presidency?" The Governor laughed out loud and shook

his head, though still not amused. He turned and looked at Dr. Kissinger and then turned his stare to Jude. He continued his criticisms. "I didn't invite you up here to discuss political matters or my ambitions. I don't care how smart you think you are, or that others think about you. You're just a kid, a senior in college, even if it is Harvard." The Governor rose from his desk and started walking towards the large bookshelves on the far wall. He stared at the books and the many pictures as if thinking as he walked slowly. Now with more emotion in his voice, he said, "I am the governor of the most powerful state in the Union. I have more money than my children and their heirs will be able to spend. I have more business and political power than anyone you know or know about. I can make or break millionaires with the stroke of a pen. I have enough political power to make a call to the White House...it doesn't matter who is there...and they will listen to me."

Jude sat motionless as did Dr. Kissinger. Rockefeller took a sip of his Sherry and said, "You may be a bright kid...Doctor Kissinger thinks so. And I was willing to meet with you to see if you're the kind of person that could fit into our organization. I pay top dollar for key people. In fact, I think enough of Henry's opinion that I was willing to double the best offer you had. You will make more money working for me than you would with any other job you will ever have. I know we can find a spot for you, and you will have a bright future with us." He paused for a moment, and then in a low voice, said, "Now, let's not start off with you trying to sell me the Brooklyn Bridge. Hell, I almost own it now. I am not interested in chasing distant clouds at my age."

"It's not the Brooklyn Bridge or clouds, sir," Jude responded steadily. "It's the presidency, and it's not chasing, it's achieving."

"Now, Jude..." Kissinger broke in anxiously in a high-pitched voice. He then fell silent at a slight gesture from Rockefeller.

"All right kid, I'm listening," Rockefeller said with a serious look on his face.

"I'm not interested in being invisible because I'm part of your organization, or any other organization where everybody stays anonymous for a salary. I intend to make my fortune by manipulating people and events. I'll only be paid if I deliver." Jude paused for a moment and then continued, "I will deliver. I am good at chess." Annoyed at having slipped into false modesty, Jude corrected himself. "Hell I'm better than good, I'm excellent at chess! I've taught some international masters, and I've beaten them all at one time or another. It was me who trained and coached and laid the game plan of Bobby Fisher to beat the Russian."

Rockefeller nodded, still willing to listen a little longer. "You remained under the radar screen, you might say," he suggested

"Precisely chess, like life, involves maneuvering players and their interactions and circumstances. Chess is a game of knowing when and where to move and how to make your opponent move for your advantage. A chess player learns how to be patient, how to bide time, how to see an opponent's strengths and weaknesses, and how to take advantage of both. He learns how to set up promising situations and how to take advantage of other's mistakes. If I'd wanted my picture in chess magazines for a month, the major papers for a day, I would have taken the title from that fat Russian and walked away with a couple hundred thousand dollars. I believe that's cheap notoriety. Instead, I decided to take charge and ensure that for the first time in history, a young American would be the World Chess

Champion. My price for this service was that if a verified representative came to ask about it, Bobby Fisher would admit that his win was due to my influence. He will also admit that I've beaten him in unofficial matches in the last two years. Governor, you are welcome to send a representative to verify this information."

Rockefeller's playing-along look had faded. His face was now perfectly blank...no expression at all. After a few minutes thought, he remarked, "It's a little hard to see where you'd fit in. If you have a campaign plan for an election, forget it. So far I have spent thirty million dollars and have gotten one electoral vote for it. I'm not going to spend anymore, so forget about getting rich on my campaign treasury. I guess it's just the Brooklyn Bridge, after all. I already have a few fast talking people that have many ideas and plans. I don't need any more. And certainly not one with delusions of second-hand grandeur."

Dr. Kissinger set his glass down carefully on a low table between the chairs. It made a little click. "Governor, I wasn't forewarned about Jude's proposition. But, it occurs to me that I've seen him play chess. He plays with uncanny determination and I don't recall ever seeing him lose."

" Rockefeller and Kissinger traded a long, expressionless look. Then Rockefeller turned, looking directly at Jude with piercing eyes, holding his glass in one hand like a pointer. "Just for the sake of discussion, then, what game or strategy do you have in mind, Jude?" he asked in a smooth, questioning manner.

Jude's lips turned up slightly forming a devilish smile, with eyes of confident determination he asked, in a soft voice, "Have you ever heard of a chess player by the name of Frank Marshall?"

Both Rockefeller and Kissinger again glanced into each other's eyes seeking some indication for response. Both men mumbled no, they hadn't.

Jude waited till there was silence, and then began to speak as if he were lecturing the two adults in the room. Jude continued speaking in an informative pleasant voice saying, "Frank Marshall was a brilliant chess tactician and a champion player and was the U.S. Chess Champion from 1909 till 1936. He became famous for his unique strategy he termed 'The Swindle'. The swindle strategy is not even taught today, because it is so difficult to pull off. But Marshall was proud of this ploy he developed, even wrote a book on the subject. Marshall's Chess Swindles. Bear in mind gentlemen, in the game of chess a swindle is a ruse by which one player tricks his opponent into not realizing the real strategy. Utilizing this tactic, one employs a hidden agenda with the freedom to implement undetected movements cloaked by obvious but plain faulted moves. Utilizing this psychological method he can create confusion and other subtleties as means of controlling the board. He can direct the opponent into pitfalls and other areas for his own benefit which will result in victory. In this game plan our player appears to be in a total loss position, or in this case with no chance of success, then in faint incomprehensible moves, he eliminates his unaware opponent. The end result of this victory is achieving our goal with the Governor becoming President Rockefeller."

Rockefeller and Kissinger traded a long, expressionless look. Then Rockefeller turned, looking directly at Jude with finely tuned eyes, holding his glass in one hand like a indicator. "Just for the sake of discussion, then, what game or strategy do you have in mind, Jude?" he asked in a smooth, questioning manner.

"I'd like to have another meeting with you in two weeks, Governor." Jude spoke as a clever salesperson closing in on a deal, only to make sure the customer was worthy of the product. "At that time, I'll have prepared for your consideration a complete game plan that will put you in the White House...as president."

The Governor smiled, looking back toward Kissinger. "I appreciate your bringing this young man so I could meet him, Henry. But you know my schedule's going to be busy for quite a while. I believe the best way to handle this would be for Jude to meet with Jack Chandler. Jack's knowledgeable about our plans and our resources. He can put Jude in the picture."

Kissinger's grunt was noncommittal. Jude wasn't sure if he was being given an opportunity to prove himself or shoved off on some subordinate. He felt uncertain until the Governor spoke again quickly.

"Jack will report to me, and if your plan makes sense to him, he'll have the authority to approve the plan and make all the arrangements. He is a key member of my inner circle. He has access to power and influence like no one you have ever met." The Governor paused for a moment longer, then said, "As to your fee, Jude...if Jack approves and we can accomplish the goal, you will be paid your ten million dollars."

"I appreciate that, sir," said Jude, thinking that at least Rockefeller hadn't choked when Jude stated the price tag, and that he was being taken seriously. He was to get a hearing - a real hearing. All he had to hope for now was that this Chandler didn't turn out to be the deal-killer type. Jude was aware that many powerful people would have on their staff those appointed to keep them out of trouble. Their job was to hear proposals and then politely and effectively say no thanks.

As if reading his mind, Rockefeller added, "Jack's a

capable man with my complete trust. Top of his class in law school - Yale." Rockefeller again showed his toothy smile. "He's in *Who's Who*, if you want to look him up - he is not the anonymous type, that's not his style. But he is effective."

"Your confidence in him is all I need, sir," Jude said quickly. "I look forward to meeting Mr. Chandler. Perhaps Doctor Kissinger can contact him and let him know how to reach me."

The Governor smiled and walked over to both men, offering his hand first to Kissinger and then to Jude. "I'm afraid I have another meeting now. But this certainly has been interesting. I appreciate your bringing him up here, Henry." He then turned, looking directly into Jude's eyes, saying, "Jude, we'll be in touch. I hope you have a comfortable trip back. Goodnight and thank you again for coming."

As they left the office, a tall man in a gray pinstriped suit, an aide or secretary perhaps, approached them. He fell into step with them as they moved down the corridor and remarked, "Your car is waiting." Then he handed each of them an envelope. "This is from the Governor, for your time. I trust you'll have a pleasant journey home, Mr. Thaddeus. Always nice to see you again, Doctor Kissinger."

Jude waited to open the envelope until they were safely on the private plane. While Kissinger was in the restroom, Jude quietly tore the envelope open. His eyes grew large, for this was the first time he had ever seen a thousand dollar bill. His envelope contained three of them. He folded them carefully but kept them in his hand, thinking. When Dr. Kissinger returned, Jude said, "The envelopes must have gotten mixed up. Mine had three thousand dollars in it." He opened his hand to expose the cash, looking for a response from Henry.

Kissinger smiled and shook his head. "No mistake. The

Governor is a very generous man. He compensates me far more than a couple of thousand dollars, for time spent on his behalf. If money is what you want, he has it, and will pay handsomely for what he wants. I will say he watches his money. He doesn't give money to bums on street corners and he doesn't remain rich by wasting time or money." Dr. Kissinger then paused for a minute looking out the small window, and then slowly spoke in a formal direct voice. "Jude, I was a little embarrassed in front of the Governor, and disappointed in you for not telling me of your intention of laying out this plan of yours. I think now is a good time to explain it to me."

"If the Governor is interested, I'm sure he'll tell you all about it," said Jude in a light cheery voice. "If he isn't, well, the plan is designed for him alone. Without him there is no plan, and no use discussing it."

"All right Jude, keep it to yourself for the time being," Dr. Kissinger said, as if thinking of it himself. He then turned to the side to prepare for a comfortable nap.

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Two weeks later Jude was on a plane to New York City. He was picked up at JFK Airport in a long limousine. Jude was surprised that the driver had recognized him as soon as he cleared his baggage. He was driven without any preamble to a tall nondescript office building in midtown Manhattan. Jude was escorted through a busy first floor reception area, then up a private elevator. On the forty-seventh floor, the elevator doors opened to a large office space. There was a receptionist sitting behind a large dark wooden desk. She was beautiful,

well dressed and well groomed. With a bright smile, and eyebrows raised, she said, "Good morning, sir. Will you follow me please?" She walked like a model, every movement smooth. They walked down a narrow hallway to a large conference room. She entered first, directing Jude to the large conference table. "Is there anything I can get for you? Coffee, juice, or any other drink you may wish?"

Jude said, "No thank you," and as he spoke he noticed a man sitting at the far end of the table. He was dressed like a Wall Street lawyer; thousand-dollar suit, razor cut hair, in good shape, with a leathery tan face.

The stranger rose to introduce himself. "Good morning. I'm John Chandler. It's nice to meet you, Jude."

Jude spoke warmly. "Good morning, Mr. Chandler. I didn't notice your name on the directory. Are you one of the junior partners?" He said this knowing it would put Mr. Chandler off-guard.

"You are quite observant, Jude." He now paused gathering his thoughts and emotions.

"No, I am not a junior partner, nor am I listed with this firm. This is just one of the many offices I might be found in on any given day."

Chandler picked up his attaché case and set it upon the table. He opened it slowly and took out a yellow legal pad, placing it on the table. He began right away. "The Governor said you had a novel proposition and asked me to look into it for him. I understand you have a plan that is quite interesting to him."

Jude pointed at the attaché case. "Are you recording this conversation?"

Chandler responded quickly, "Why do you ask?"

"I hope it is being recorded because I want no inaccuracies

in what I am about to tell you."

"You can rest assured there will be no inaccuracies. I made a career on not making mistakes."

"Well, then let's begin," Jude said. "In a nutshell, I have a plan to make Governor Rockefeller president of the United States."

"Oh please, don't tell me you have a scheme to get the Governor elected president," Chandler said almost in despair.

"I didn't say I would get the Governor elected president, I said I have a plan to make him president," Jude said.

"Is there a difference?" Chandler asked quickly.

"Yes, a big difference," Jude said flatly. "One is possible. The other is not."

"As everybody says, it's a great country. Anybody can grow up and be elected president, theoretically of course. As you're surely aware, the Governor has poured millions into past campaigns without even managing to get the party's nomination. He's accepted that the time is not right and the opposition's too strong for him to pour more money, effort, and time into another doomed attempt. Quite frankly he's not up to it. So then, Jude, what is your plan to make him president, a revolution?"

Fleetinglly, Jude wondered if the man would even blink if Jude said yes to a revolution. He held his temper, but did say, "A revolution is too impractical; too difficult to control. Who can predict the outcome?" Jude said with a sigh.

"Well, Jude, I am pleased your plan doesn't include a revolution, but what is it all about?" Chandler's tone was serious.

"It will take an amendment to the Constitution. That, in turn, will require a lot of money, a lot of maneuvering, financing of various campaigns, perhaps many favors called in.

It will require a great deal of control and influence in the oil industry. I know, it sounds rather convoluted, but the goal can be accomplished. For Governor Rockefeller to be president, he must be appointed to the office."

Chandler made a notation on his pad. "Well, that's a new approach, at least. An amendment to the Constitution, hmmm, precisely what sort of amendment were you considering?"

"An amendment that would change the Constitution and enable an un-elected person to be appointed president." Jude spoke as though he had thought of every detail in depth.

"I gathered that," said Chandler, equally as patient. "But we live in a democracy, Jude. I think you would have a better chance with a revolution."

Jude felt his anger rising, but kept his voice cold. "Since the assassination of President Kennedy, do you realize who is next in line, if anything happens to L.B.J.?"

Chandler thought a moment. "The Speaker of the House, McCormack."

"You're correct, Mr. Chandler." Jude continued speaking in a matter-of-fact attitude. "Speaker of the House of Representatives. There is no vice president, and there will not be one until the next election. Mr. McCormick is the oldest member of the House. A Republican with a bad heart is one heartbeat away from being president. Just the thought of having a Republican fill his shoes is enough for L.B.J. to stay alive and have legislation enacted so he could appoint his own vice president. The amendment would be the vehicle Governor Rockefeller would need to become vice president...by appointment."

"And then president?" Chandler asked.

"In due time, that's the goal," Jude said quietly.

"There are those who claim that Kennedy's death

was...arranged."

"I wouldn't know," said Jude firmly. "I suppose it's possible. Many things are possible given sufficient desire and means and planning."

"An amendment," said Chandler, and made another notation. "Yes, that is a novel approach. What level of financing are you estimating?"

This was the moment Jude was waiting for. Chandler was convinced enough to inquire about the money. If he was comfortable with the plan, the money part should be easy.

"First, twenty million dollars. Seed money. To be disbursed by an intermediary of the Governor's choosing, for his protection and control, and for my security. This money will be needed to influence elections and people. Second, all the political influence the Governor can muster to push the approval of the amendment. Third, authority to speak in the Governor's name to his people involved in the oil industry here and abroad, to direct and coordinate their actions. This may seem unrelated, but it is not."

"This sounds like a major campaign," remarked Chandler, as though he were thinking of the military, not the political kind. "The Governor is no longer a young man. Time is also a consideration."

"It won't happen overnight," Jude admitted. "My current estimate is five years, maximum. I'll adjust the estimate as we proceed. The Governor will know, from time to time, where we stand."

"The Governor would require that in any case," Chandler said abstractly, making another notation on his pad. "The figure of ten million was mentioned, I understand. Is that included in the twenty--?"

"No. That ten million is my payment upon completion, and it

is separate."

"Honoring Murphy's Law, what if things don't go as you plan?" Chandler asked.

Jude had thought through all the contingencies. "If the Governor becomes vice president, and dies before becoming president, my payment is five million. If, through my actions, he has the opportunity of becoming president and should decline, either because of health, or for any other reason, my payment would be seven million."

"That's not exactly what I meant. What if you fail in your plan?"

Jude spoke with cool determination. "If the office of president is not made available to the Governor, through my actions, within seven years, I will be his servant in any capacity he chooses for the rest of my life."

Chandler smiled, slowly, like an absent-minded shark. He put his legal pad away and shut the case, snapping each latch with his thumb.

"Well?" demanded Jude sharply.

"Someone may be getting in touch with you soon," said Chandler. "It may even be me if the Governor is interested. If you'd like, stay in the city for a few days. See the sights before going back."

"I have final exams," Jude blurted.

"Oh, I don't think you need concern yourself about that," Chandler responded blandly, rising. "It's your future that's most important, and that's what I am looking at."

"There's a suite I sometimes use at the Plaza Hilton. I won't be needing it this trip." He slid a key along the table's polished surface. "I think you'll find everything you'll need. Or call room service. There will be some cash under the pillow for your expenses. Enjoy yourself."

"Thank you," Jude said. "I will."

Jude smiled to himself. Chandler and the Governor just moved the first pawn. They were now committed.

Chapter 2

Jude's New York office came complete with the lavish furnishings a major executive would require. There was a large foyer, complete with reception desk and expensive furniture, to impress visitors. Sylvia was the receptionist, attractive and friendly, but not inquisitive. She spent most of her time learning Spanish with a micro-recorder and tiny headphones lost in her elaborate hairdo. Her dream was to travel to Spain and drink red wine in the famous cellar *Tapas Bars* of Madrid. She wanted to attend Mass in the Cathedral of La Giralda, in Seville, and to pray at the same altar of "Our Lady of Antiqua," as Columbus did before he sailed off to the New World. She concentrated on that and other dreams to fill her days.

Valerie was Jude's personal secretary with her own well-furnished office. She was a true professional with little small talk and no office whispers. The conference room was slightly smaller than a bowling alley, with a large polished table to match the expensive leather chairs. Jude's private office had all the perks of power and money. There was a private bathroom, complete with shower, and private elevator to a private entrance. He required state-of-the-art communication systems,

with six separate phone lines, three video recorders and monitors. Jude had his own secure phone with scrambling capabilities. The office complex was impressive but not gaudy. Everything was in good taste, which meant expensive taste - just as a successful Wall Street brokerage maker should be.

On paper, Jude managed a large hedge fund that was restricted to certified investors. This would limit his visibility but not diminish his appearance of power. All could be arranged with private untraceable money.

The intercom buzzed. Jude touched the toggle and Valerie, his secretary, announced the visitor. "Miss Gala Dufante to see you, sir." Jude smiled. The chessboard was set; he was ready to proceed. He also smiled because he knew the visitor very well and she was destined to be a key player in his strategic game.

She walked into the room like a model, her head held high, holding her purse in her arms like a baby. She was beautiful to look at, early twenties, light brown hair with a touch of blond sprinkled in for interest. Her hair was elaborately groomed, falling in waves. The clothes fit her like they were designed for her body. She wore a beige wool suit that was hemmed just right to display her long, long legs...every inch gorgeous.

As Jude stood, she came right around the desk and embraced him, just closely enough, then stood back holding his hands, looking him in the eyes as if he were a long lost friend.

"Gala," he said, clearing his throat. "How nice to see you again. You look better than I remember. And that's saying something."

She was the highest priced call girl he'd ever heard of, let alone met. She looked like what she was: a Vassar graduate who'd made it good.

"Jude," she said warmly, "this is a splendid place. I

always had confidence in you, but I had no idea you were in the city. I was surprised to hear from you after all this time. Glad, of course, but surprised. What's the occasion?"

He invited her to sit, and pushed the ashtray nearer when she took out a cigarette from a case that was probably platinum. She paused a moment, then snapped a lighter and smiled brightly at him, showing several thousand dollars' worth of effective dental work. Jude sat on the corner of the desk and said, "I'm not going to beat around the bush." Her mouth twitched slightly, as though he'd said something amusing, and then she was giving him her full attention again. He went on, "I know you're a smart, beautiful girl. Remember in our younger days at school, both of us orphans on scholarships, we both wanted to make a lot of money after we graduated. It seems you have started already."

"You're not far behind me," Gala replied, looking appreciatively at the first-class reproduction of a Picasso behind the desk and the genuine hand-loomed Persian carpet covering nearly all the floor. "I live well," she added with a self-deprecating smile. "Perhaps someday I'll tire of variety and become the mistress of a prominent podiatrist. And someday he'll get divorced, and I'll be left with all his money. Mrs. Podiatrist's widow. Someday."

"How would you like to make two thousand dollars a week for an indefinite time, beginning today," Jude asked in a mildly excited voice.

She breathed a little smoke and tapped her cigarette on the ashtray. "I don't murder people, dear, and I don't do sex starved perverts."

Jude said hastily, "Nothing like that. Just form an intimate relationship with a powerful, attractive man for an extended period of time. You will make yourself useful in every

way possible, so he won't even think of doing without you. His company will pay you handsomely, and I will pay you a healthy salary. In addition, you will receive a bonus of a million dollars when the assignment is completed."

"I believe," said Gala, "I'm a little tired of variety already. Is he a podiatrist? And I can see that you're up and coming in your profession, whatever it may be. If the money is real let me know who and when."

Jude slapped an envelope onto the desk. "Here's your first month's pay. Go to the bank on the first floor and see if it's real." Jude smiled and added, "Explain to the teller that you have twenty or thirty of these checks and ask if they're worth anything. I'll give you eight minutes to cash your check and be back in my office ready to go."

She picked up the envelope. "Make it fifteen, I don't like to be rushed doing something I enjoy." As she swept out the door, Jude chuckled to himself. "She's the piece, 'the queen.'"

She was back eleven minutes later, Jude was sure, for he had timed her. She came brushing through the door without waiting to be announced and resumed her seat, pushing a wisp of her hair off one shoulder. "I'm impressed and ready for duty sir," she said in a jetty manner. "Who is this wonderful man I'm to seduce?"

"Well Gala, your assignment will begin this way. You will go over to the Pepsi Cola Company headquarters at Rockefeller Center and ask for Jack Wilkinson. He'll handle your job status."

She surveyed both perfectly manicured hands. "I don't see myself capping bottles, somehow. Why not just introduce me to the gentleman and let me handle it from there. Is Mr. Wilkinson my pigeon?"

"God no! He couldn't afford it, even if his heart would

stand it. No, you're going to have an affair with a former Vice President of the United States. He's not going to pick up some broad in a bar, or on a plane..."

"I've seen," began Gala dubiously.

"Never mind what you've seen. The target is the target."

"The target is the target," Gala repeated dutifully. "I'm sure this will be interesting. I'm sure he will be delightful."

"Delightful enough to have been elected, anyhow," Jude said matter-of-factly.

"Who could ask for more?" Gala said with a smirk.

"You're to be his secretary, become his friend and, as soon as you can tactfully manage it, his lover. Your responsibility is to befriend and bed him."

"What about Mrs. Vice President?" Gala inquired.

"You were chosen, Gala, for your many talents, one of which is your ability to have an affair with him and become the wife's best friend also." Jude spoke as if he had trained Gala for this task.

"Well, I guess I shall have two dear friends in the near future." Gala paused. "We'll be the best of friends. I do have contacts throughout New York and Washington; I'll make sure they are on the 'A' list, in both towns. I can even help her choose the right clothes."

"Pick her clothes later. Handle it any way you want, so long as you're there when I need you." She raised her brows and showed the slightest twitch of a smile, and this time Jude knew she was laughing at him. "Not for that," he disclaimed. "But there will be times when I want you to influence him to do something, go somewhere, say something. And I need to know what's happening...regular reports. I'll see that you always have a direct line to me. We're embarking on a project that will take years. I trust you're willing to spend that much time

to make that much money."

"I learned a long time ago, you gain nothing without sacrifice." She added, "Neither of us is eighteen anymore, dear Jude. Old executives are all handsome. But old hookers are just old hookers. I always had a feeling that someday I'd be dealing with you for money. Too bad it couldn't be for love." She gazed at him wide-eyed, until he had to laugh. She was, he thought with satisfaction, very, very good. While he sat thinking, she spoke up. "I don't know the scam, but I have confidence in... shall I say, in your eye for opportunities? I always have. So, I'll go to the Pepsi Cola Company and apply for the job of executive secretary to - what did you say his name was?"

Jude smiled and spoke quietly, "Richard Milhouse Nixon."

The following day, Gala sat in the office of Frank Wilkinson, a thoroughly uninteresting middle-aged man with a bad cold. Gala kept her gloves on while shaking hands. He didn't seem to notice. She made it her business to notice things like that. Eventually, after the usual pleasantries, he said, "This is a very important position. I hope you can handle it. Looking over your resume and background, I believe we are lucky to find someone of your caliber." He then sat for a moment, not wanting to give away anymore of his enthusiasm. Then he said, "It seems you're just what the doctor ordered."

Gala only smiled, sure that whatever references Jude had supplied would be impeccable and impressive. She hadn't bothered to study them too closely. If she'd been required to supply verification, Jude would have briefed her. The meeting went as well as could be expected. Mr. Wilkinson was putting on a front that he was considering all the information before making up his mind.

"Please understand that the man you'll be working for is

not only one of our top executives, but a former vice president of the United States. He's in charge of the company's public relations, and we are an international company. So Mr. Nixon's position requires a great deal of travel and work. I assume you're prepared to handle this?"

"I believe so," said Gala firmly. "I'm seldom unprepared."

"Fine, fine," burred Wilkinson and sneezed into a big handkerchief. Then he escorted her to the office of Richard Nixon.

Nixon was a man with a permanent five o'clock shadow, a longish sloping nose, crisp dark hair, and a gloomy, scowling expression that instantly became a cordial smile when he saw Gala.

Gala reached out her hand and smiled. "Good morning Mr. Vice President. It's nice to meet you."

Her formal demeanor and pleasant smile startled Nixon. *This girl has class*, he thought to himself. Then he said, "How nice to meet you. I'm sorry, ah, your name is Gala?" he said as if he had never heard it before. Gala was pleased; he was flustered.

Nixon then expressed in an apologetic manner, "I must apologize for my cluttered desk. I'm in the process of arranging a trip to France."

"I'll be glad to help you with tasks like that, Mr. Nixon. I am familiar with travel arrangements on the Continent. I was a great admirer of yours while you were vice president. I particularly enjoyed the way you handled foreign affairs, and I will never forget how you outwitted Nikita Khrushchev at the World's Fair confrontation. Not many vice presidents took the opportunity for such decisive action. They generally get lost in the president's shadow, so to speak."

Nixon looked pleased. "I appreciate the compliment very

much. After my defeat in California, compliments are a rarity. I must say after reviewing your credentials, I was greatly impressed: Top of your class at Vassar; correspondent for Ladies' World, covering the U.N.; a freelance newswoman with international experience. I must say you may not find this position as prestigious as what you're leaving."

"There was excitement, true - but really, the work was difficult, demanding, lonely, and thankless. Men often seemed to feel hostile and threatened by a professional woman, and women were jealous of any success. I had my fill of trying to make it to the top of the heap. For what? I'd rather have stable work with a large company like this; regular paychecks, familiar faces to say good morning to everyday. I want to work hard, enjoy my job, and have friends again."

Nixon took her arm and urged her to sit down. The frown was gone, and he looked and felt comfortable. There was a loud sneeze by Mr. Wilkinson, who immediately excused himself and left the office, leaving Nixon and Gala alone. Nixon settled behind his desk, saying, "It's similar to the political life that I left behind, Miss Defante. I had a few friends, and there's a lot of envy, resentment, by some people, and at the end...only criticism. We may have a lot in common. I believe we can work well together."

"I'm looking forward to it Mr. Nixon," Gala said sincerely.

Returning to his office, Wilkinson placed a call. When the ringing stopped, he said, "This is Wilkinson. Your client made a nice impression and has the job."

The young voice at the other end said, "Very good. Your cashier's check will arrive at your home before five today." The phone clicked, and then went silent.

Wilkinson scrubbed at his nose and wondered if he'd ever find out what that'd been about.

Nixon was saying, "I trust Mr. Wilkinson has already told you the terms of employment, benefits, and so on? The base salary is twenty-five thousand per year plus a bonus if you and I are successful at increasing the product's territory and worldwide sales of Pepsi Cola. I hope you realize travel will be extensive, and there will be times when you and I will travel alone." He paused, uncomfortably, apparently waiting for a reaction. Gala just gazed at him as though she couldn't think of anything worth commenting on. Eventually Nixon blurted, "Miss Dufante - Gala...my wife Pat and I are happily married. I don't cheat on her. I apologize for being blunt, but I want matters understood before any, ah, any misunderstandings could arise. I'd initially felt the job as my assistant could, and perhaps should, be handled by a man. But you have a godfather somewhere, and you were highly, highly recommended..."

Gala waited for a few seconds then spoke in a serious voice. "Mr. Nixon, I understand the rigors of achieving certain goals and lifestyles. I can assure you I am mature enough to handle our relationship in a professional manner. And, yes, I have some godfathers. While at Vassar, I spent many vacations and holidays with classmates whose families were the rich, famous, and powerful. I am still friends with them. I think some still watch out for me."

Nixon met her eyes, produced something like a smile, and seemed a fraction less tense.

"Hmmm. Well connected. Of course. If I tend to be suspicious of public opinion, it's because I've had some sore lessons in that area. It's appearances I'm chiefly concerned about."

"Of course," Gala said quickly. "Perhaps I could meet Mrs. Nixon so we could get her feeling about your new assistant. I'm sure she will have some suggestions on how appearances can best

be managed."

"That's a wonderful idea. We'll have lunch together." He was positively beaming. "Pat's a wonderful woman, and a good judge of character. I'm sure you'll get along famously."

"I'm looking forward to meeting her," Gala declared. "As I said, I've been wishing I could greet familiar faces everyday. Hers would surely be one of them."

"That's great. That's the way I like things - up front," Nixon said as he rubbed his hands. "I've always felt that the people you work with have to know their job, and the family. They also have to be loyal and know where they stand at all times."

"Exactly my feeling, Mr. Nixon."

Nixon suddenly looked at his watch. "Oh my God, its lunchtime already. Let's go. The cafeteria food is awful, but fortunately we have the executive dining room...much better...nicer atmosphere."

As they walked toward the elevator, Nixon said, "I'm leaving for Paris on Friday. Pat, my wife, will be joining me also. We'll be gone for about two weeks. Will that be any problem, since you'll be coming too? The short notice, I mean?"

Gala considered for a moment. "No. But I wonder... have you been to Paris since you left office?"

Nixon tilted his head, puzzled. "No, come to think of it, I haven't. Why do you ask?"

"Where are you planning to stay?" Gala asked.

"They booked us into the Paris Hilton. I've stayed there before and was treated royally."

"But then you were the vice president of the United States. Now they'll treat you like a typical traveling businessman. Believe me...I know. May I suggest the Continental? It is in the heart of Paris. It is a first-class hotel. It has the same

style as the Ritz, but not the phony trappings. The food is great, and they have the right class of guests. It's the place in Paris to be seen, respectfully."

Nixon stood thoughtfully before the elevator. "Well, I'll surely look into whether we can change our arrangements on such short notice..."

"Please," Gala said. "I can handle the short notice change, if you like. I can make the arrangements to ensure that you and Mrs. Nixon have a comfortable visit."

"Do you speak French?" Nixon asked with a delightful look on his face.

"Oui, monsieur," Gala said. "And they all speak English, though most Parisians refuse to acknowledge English, for they believe it dilutes their culture." She looked at her watch, and then said, "Let me see what I can do about the arrangements. I will join you and Mrs. Nixon in a little while."

"Leave the arrangements until later. I would like you to meet Mrs. Nixon," he said.

"It'll only take a couple of quick calls and then I will join you in a few moments," she said, taking control. She turned and started back down the hall.

Nixon called after her, "Can you find your way?"
"If I can't, I'm sure I can find someone who'll direct me."

"I'm sure you can," agreed Nixon, and entered the elevator with a wave.

Gala didn't bother with overseas operators. She called Jude direct at the number he'd given her. When he answered she said, "This is Gala Dufante calling on behalf of Mr. Richard Nixon of Pepsi Cola. There's been an error in his travel arrangements to Paris next week. He's been booked into the Paris Hilton. I am changing the schedule to more appropriate lodgings for Mr. and Mrs. Nixon. They would like to stay at the Paris Inter-

Continental Hotel." She paused for a moment, and then said, "It may be difficult to get rooms there, but I trust you can handle it."

There was silence for a few seconds while Jude thought and just breathed into the phone. "I'm sure it can be arranged. Will you be accompanying Mr. Nixon?"

"It will be a party of three: Mr. Nixon and Mrs. Nixon, and myself. We'll need flight arrangements, travel to and from the airports, with a suitable car and driver during the Nixon's stay, and any other simple perks you may come up with. When the details are complete, I can be reached here to finalize everything at my new office, Pepsi Cola, Rockefeller Center."

"I have the number," Jude said. "I'll call to confirm within an hour."

"Make it two," Gala responded, and then remembered to add please. "I'm lunching with the Nixon's and won't be free until then."

In a joyful pleased voice, Jude said, "Two it will be, Gala. Very, very good."

Gala sighed and then reflected that Jude was precisely where he ought to be...where he wanted to be... behind the scenes. Jude was demonstrating so far that he had a lot of money, and he was skilled at using it. They were just getting the thing into operation, after all. So far this was turning into an interesting career change. Gala had no idea where it was leading to, but she was not paid to think. When the music played, she danced.

At the airport, Mr. and Mrs. Nixon seemed surprised to be received by an airline official who directed the handling of the baggage and escorted them all to a private lounge. The room was private. It was not an airline clubroom, but a private VIP lounge. It was small and nicely furnished, with a well-stocked and attended bar, a table of hors d'oeuvres, fruit basket, TV set, and a desk with phone. Gala surveyed the room critically, turning as the Nixon's entered the room.

Mrs. Nixon spoke first with a large smile. "Miss Dufante, do we owe this special treatment to a result of your efforts?"

Gala, knowing she was being appreciated, said, "Well, this is part of my job. If I can help make this trip more pleasant, I will enjoy my job even more. I have a lot of connections, and I like to use them," Gala said. "I believe my responsibility is to see that Mr. Nixon is free to concentrate on business with as few annoyances as possible." Gala then picked up a plate of fresh cut fruit offering it to both Nixon's.

"Richard," Mrs. Nixon said to her husband, "you've found a treasure. Does she have a sister for me?" She then looked at the fresh strawberries covered with chocolate. "Well...just one before the trip."

Nixon grinned. He had a look of happiness. "Shall we have a little champagne to start our trip?" he asked in a loud voice.

There was adequate service at Orly Airport, and the Continental was even better than Gala had expected...thanks, she conjectured, to Jude's connections, whoever they might be. But she decided that the mysterious connections had passed this first test with good marks...and so had she.

During the day, she concentrated on learning the routines and protocols of business meetings, learning what was required and making sure it was provided beforehand, and ready at need. Then, when things seemed to be running smoothly, there was time

to help Pat Nixon enjoy herself touring, shopping, and entertaining. Everything was harmonious. Gala did nothing but work and offer undemanding, friendly company. She had the ability to be there when needed and to exit graciously and inconspicuously at the proper time. Soon the three were on a first-name basis. Gala was careful not to be too friendly, remaining pleasant at all times but never overly familiar, solidifying an amicable but thoroughly professional relationship. The meetings proceeded uneventfully, except for the occasional interruptions of press coverage. Nixon's public relations activities on behalf of Pepsi Cola had increased interest to the news media. He was being spotlighted in the news more and more as a pleasant goodwill ambassador. A role he visibly enjoyed.

Chapter 3

At 11:30 in the morning, President Lyndon Johnson was sitting on a couch in the Oval Office leafing through newspapers to see how he and his policies were being talked and written about. He had a clipping service that collected items from the domestic and foreign press, but his habit of looking himself, begun during his many years in Congress, was too hard to break. He was of the opinion that the more people that read your name in the papers, the better off you'd be at election time. He often said, "It makes people back home think, if they see your name, you're hard at work spending their damn money."

The intercom on the desk buzzed. "Mr. President, Mr.

Tallsand is here for your eleven thirty appointment."

Stuffing the papers into something like a pile, Johnson said, "Send him on in, then." He mumbled under his breath, "Of all the money pushers. Well, he is at least a Texan."

William C. Tallsand was a registered lobbyist for the American Oil Company Association. His experience dealing with congressmen and White House personnel spanned decades. He dressed in a style that Johnson, a native Texan, sometimes called "Wall Street Wrangler." Everything was custom-made with enough fancy stitching to hold together two tents, and Anaconda handmade boots. But Johnson had known Tallsand a long time and mostly liked him. He greeted him in the middle of the room and, with the habitual affection of a lifelong politician, shook hands and wrapped one arm over Tallsand's shoulder as part of a ritual, steering him to a place on the couch.

Johnson said, "Billy, how in the hell are you, you old rattlesnake skinner?"

Tallsand, who'd likely never been closer to a rattlesnake than a zoo or a stockholders' meeting, took the familiar joking amiably. "Well enough, Mr. President, if the damp in the sinkhole doesn't carry me off."

"Potomac fever. It's the price we all pay. They say it goes back to an old Indian curse, when this whole area was a swamp. Sometimes I think it still is," Johnson said, as he rubbed his sore leg. "And forget that bullshit...my name's still Lyndon. When we're both retired, not so very far along now, I'll really take you hunting rattlers. There'll be no Mr. President bullshit then, so I might as well get used to it."

"Polls bad again?" rejoined Tallsand, acutely and

sympathetically.

"Oh hell, they are like the humidity in springtime - up one day, down the next," Johnson said slowly.

"Like the stock market," said Tallsand, and they shared a chuckle.

"I'm wondering, Lyndon, do you still keep that Kentucky bourbon around?" He went on to say, "That's the real reason I came over here today."

The President looked around as if to see if anyone was looking or listening, then said softly, "That doctor doesn't know I have it. He thinks it's bad for the heart. If he had this job, he'd realize there's nothing good for the heart but a little relaxation."

Retrieving the bottle from its hiding place in his bottom desk drawer, Johnson poured about two fingers into a couple glasses with the Presidential seal.

Reaching with a nod of thanks, Tallsand remarked, "This is the best bourbon in the country." Then sipping it slowly, he enjoyed the smell.

"You better think so. It's free. You're a lobbyist...you know free is always the best there is. This no-label stuff...a fellow back in the hills cooks it up for me, and somehow the Alcohol, Tax, and Firearms boys never manage to shut him down. It pays to have friends in high places."

"That's a fact," rejoined Tallsand pleasantly.

"Would I lie to a taxpayer?" After a sip, Johnson went on quietly, "I want to say how sorry I was to hear about your Mary-Sue. She was one fine lady. I know you understand that she passed right after the assassination, and at that time the office dropping in on me, it was weeks before I could trade words with my own family..."

Tallsand interrupted. "I completely understand. And it

was very kind of Lady Bird to come to the funeral. We all appreciated that."

Johnson said nothing, just sipped idly at his drink and listened. No matter how it was sliced, the subject of his own death was on his mind. But there wasn't much he could do about that. All in the good Lord's time.

"There's one other factor," Tallsand continued. "Those damn polls. As we sit here with our drinks in hand, things look pretty sour. With Vietnam raging and all the demonstrations it's rough. And you don't even have a vice president to help you. You have to wait until you get reelected before you can choose your own vice president. If anything happens to you before the election, the Republican Speaker of the House will become president. As an incumbent, he'd have a great shot at keeping the office. Hell Lyndon, you don't have a vice president to help you campaign for the next election." Tallsand paused for a moment and continued, "Mr. President, the people I represent, like things to flow smoothly, and with some kind of control. Both in oil and government."

Johnson didn't like thinking about death, but he was aware of the importance of his, and his position of leader of the Government and leader of his own political party. He also liked the idea of playing kingmaker. The next vice president would be solely of his choosing. He could demand what he wanted.

"Well, I'd just as soon not see the speaker warming that chair myself," Johnson said quietly. He knew from experience, how many ambitious politicians had the taste for the office and the power. He also knew Tallsand was not just speaking for himself. That for him to suggest something, meant it was already in the minds of some powerful people.

"It's worth talking about this vice president vacancy situation. I will talk about it with a few people and get some

ideas."

"I appreciate it Mr. President. It could make your life a little easier to have a vice president, to help with the workload." Tallsand, standing up, added, "The American people should have the right to know that the party of the President will be represented throughout his term and there would be a continuity of policies."

"Bill, I'll look into it. There must be something we can do. I don't recollect ever having anybody bring this particular point up before." Johnson paused for a moment, knowing Tallsand knew more than he was casually talking about. He also knew it was important to find out quickly from other sources and other viewpoints. "What are the drawbacks if we look into this idea?"

Tallsand answered, "If something isn't done quickly, perhaps the Republican Speaker of the House being president."

"With nobody to sit on him...keep him in line," commented Johnson, and both men laughed. "You may like it Bill, but not me."

Johnson gulped his last mouthful of bourbon. "Aha... that's a pause that refreshes." He stood up and walked toward Tallsand. "Bill, I sure do appreciate you coming over. Friendly faces are a rarity around here. Make it soon. Next time try to make it at night. Want to get back the eighty bucks you took from me in that last poker game on Air Force One."

They walked to the door slowly, shook hands, and exchanged a few parting words, then Tallsand left. Johnson wandered back to his desk, thinking that Tallsand had shunted a good lot of money his way in the last campaign, and could be expected to do the same again. Keying the intercom, he told his secretary to locate his legislative coordinator, Chuck Dawson, and get him in before lunch. He'd get Dawson checking over the idea Tallsand had brought up to see what kind of legislation would be needed

to bring it about.

Having received his presidential instructions, Dawson reported back two days later. Dawson was always uneasy in the Oval Office. He sat waiting for the President to finish his phone call. When the President finished his call Chuck opened his briefcase. He took out a large folder and handed it to the President. "This is what we came up with so far, Mr. President."

"I don't have time to read it all, Chuck. Just give me a verbal read."

"Well Mr. President," Chuck drew in his breath. "The legal staff has checked laws and precedents, such as exist at this time. We concluded that for a president to appoint a vice president, there is nothing on the books. The Constitution is clear about succession. Any change would require a Constitutional amendment. And that, as you know, will take some time."

"Then we better start now," rejoined Johnson curtly. He'd been thinking about the matter, reviewing the increasingly unfavorable polls. He made up his mind to push this idea for all it was worth. "It's just good for the country and party politics. Continuity of leadership. We'll get bipartisan support on it if we handle things right. After all, it'd work the same if a damn Republican were in, maybe a hundred years from now."

Johnson smiled and, obediently, Dawson smiled, too. Pushing the memo into a pile of unread correspondence, Johnson added, "If someone is going to be remembered for patching that hole, it's going to be me. You'll see to it. Whatever help you need just let me know."

"Yes, Mr. President, right away. We will start working on the amendment."

