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Manhunt

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Published by Portrait

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Chapter One

"I Had This Strange Dream Again Last Night"



JOHN WILKES BOOTH AWOKE GOOD FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 14, 1865, hungover and depressed. The Confederacy was dead. His cause was lost and his dreams of glory over. He did not know that this day, after enduring more than a week of bad news and bitter disappointments, he would enjoy a stunning reversal of fortune. No, all he knew this morning when he crawled out of bed in room 228 at the National Hotel, one of Washington's finest and naturally his favorite, was that he could not stand another day of Union victory celebrations.

Booth assumed that April 14 would unfold as the latest in a blur of eleven bad days that began on April 3 when Richmond, the Confederacy's citadel, fell to the Union. The very next day the tyrant, Abraham Lincoln, visited his captive prize and had the audacity to sit behind the desk occupied by the first and last president of the Confederate States of America, Jefferson Davis. Then, on April 9, at Appomattox Court House, Robert E. Lee and his glorious Army of Northern Virginia surrendered. Two days later Lincoln made a speech proposing to give blacks the right to vote, and last night, April 13, all of Washington celebrated with a grand illumination of the city. And today, in Charleston harbor, the Union planned to stage a gala celebration to mark the retaking of Fort Sumter, where the war began four years ago. These past eleven days had been the worst of Booth's young life.

He was the son of the legendary actor and tragedian Junius Brutus Booth, and brother to Edwin Booth, one of the finest actors of his generation. Twenty-six years old, impossibly vain, preening, emotionally flamboyant, possessed of raw talent and splendid élan, and a star member of this celebrated theatrical family—the Barrymores of their day—John Wilkes Booth was willing to throw away fame, wealth, and promise for his cause. Handsome and charismatic, he was instantly recognizable to thousands of fans in both the North and the South. His physical beauty astonished all who beheld it. A fellow actor once described him: "Picture to yourself Adonis, with high forehead, sweeping black hair, a figure of perfect youthful proportions and the most wonderful black eyes in the world. Such was John Wilkes Booth. At all times his eyes were his striking features but when his emotions were aroused they were like living jewels." Booth's passions included fine clothing, delectable women, and the romance of lost causes.

Booth's day began in the dining room of the National, where he was seen eating breakfast with Miss Carrie Bean. Nothing unusual about that—Booth, a voluptuous connoisseur of young women, never had trouble finding female company. Around noon he walked over to Ford's Theatre on Tenth Street between E and F, a block above Pennsylvania Avenue, to pick up his mail. Accepting correspondence on behalf of itinerant actors was a customary privilege Ford's offered to friends of the house. Earlier that morning Henry Clay Ford, one of the three brothers who ran the theatre, ate breakfast and then walked to the big marble post office at Seventh and F and picked up the mail. There was a letter for Booth.

That morning another letter arrived at the theatre. There had been no time to mail it, so its sender, Mary Lincoln, used the president's messenger to bypass the post office and hand-deliver it. The Fords did not even have to read the note to know the good news it contained. The mere arrival of the White House messenger told them that the president was coming tonight! It was a coup against their chief rival, Grover's Theatre, which was offering a more exciting entertainment: *Aladdin! Or*

His Wonderful Lamp. Master Tad Lincoln and chaperone would represent the family there. The letter, once opened, announced even greater news. Yes, the president and Mrs. Lincoln would attend this evening's performance of Tom Taylor's popular if tired comedy *Our American Cousin.* But the big news was that General Ulysses S. Grant was coming with them. The Lincolns' timing delighted the Fords. Good Friday was traditionally a slow night, and news that not only the president—after four years a familiar sight to Washingtonians—but also General Grant, a rare visitor to town and fresh from his victory at Appomattox, would attend, was sure to spur ticket sales. This would please Laura Keene, who was making her one thousandth performance in the play; tonight's show was a customary "benefit," awarding her a rich share of the proceeds. The Lincolns had given the Fords the courtesy of notification early enough in the day for the brothers to promote their appearance and to decorate and join together the two boxes—seven and eight—that, by removal of a simple partition, formed the president's box.

By the time Booth arrived at Ford's, the president's messenger had come and gone. Sometime between noon and 12:30 P.M. as he sat outside on the top step in front of the main entrance to Ford's reading his letter, Booth heard the galvanizing news. In just eight hours the subject of all of his brooding, hating, and plotting would stand on the very stone steps where he now sat. This was the catalyst Booth needed to prompt him to action. Here. Of all places, Lincoln was coming here. Booth knew the layout of Ford's intimately: the exact spot on Tenth Street where Lincoln would step out of his carriage; the place the president sat every time he came to the theatre; the route through the theatre that Lincoln would walk and the staircase he would ascend to the box; the dark, subterranean passageway beneath the stage; the narrow hallway behind the stage that led to the back door that opened to Baptist Alley; and how the president's box hung directly above the stage. Booth had played here before, most recently in a March 18 performance as Pescara in *The Apostate.*

And Booth, although he had never acted in it, also knew *Our*

American Cousin—its duration, its scenes, its players, and, most important, as it would turn out, the number of actors onstage at any given moment during the performance. It was perfect. He would not have to hunt Lincoln. The president was coming to him. But was there enough time to make all the arrangements? The checklist was substantial: horses; weapons; supplies; alerting his fellow conspirators; casing the theatre; so many other things. He had only eight hours. But it was possible. If luck was on his side, there was just enough time. Whoever told Booth about the president's theatre party had unknowingly activated in his mind an imaginary clock that, even as he sat on the front step of Ford's, chuckling aloud as he read his letter, began ticking down, minute by minute. He would have a busy afternoon.

At the Executive Mansion, Abraham Lincoln ate breakfast with his family and planned his day. The president's eldest son, Robert, a junior officer on General Grant's staff, was home from the war. Robert had been at Appomattox, and his father was eager to hear details of Lee's surrender. Lincoln had scheduled a meeting with Grant at 9:00 A.M. at the White House. He wanted to talk more with Robert, so he postponed the meeting and sent a messenger over to the Willard Hotel with a handwritten note for his special guest: "General Grant, Please call at 11. A.M. to-day instead of 9. as agreed last evening. Yours truly, A. Lincoln." The president decided that Grant should join the cabinet meeting set for that later hour.

At the cabinet meeting Lincoln was jubilant—everyone in attendance, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, and the secretaries of the Treasury, the Interior, and the Post Office and the attorney general—noticed Lincoln's good mood. Welles, a faithful diarist, preserved an account of the gathering. Lincoln expected more good news from other battle fronts.

"The President remarked that it would, he had no doubt, come soon, and come favorable, for he had last night the usual dream which

he had preceding nearly every great and important event of the War. Generally the news has been favorable which succeeded this dream, and the dream itself was always the same. I inquired what this remarkable dream could be. He said it related to your (my) element, the water; that he seemed to be in some singular, indescribable vessel, and that was moving with great rapidity towards an indefinite shore. That he had this dream preceding Sumter, Bull Run, Antietam, Gettysburg, Stone River, Vicksburg, Wilmington, etc."

General Grant interrupted Lincoln and joked that Stone River was no victory, and that "a few such fights would have ruined us."

"I had," the president continued, "this strange dream again last night, and we shall, judging from the past, have great news very soon. I think it must be from Sherman. My thoughts are in that direction, as are most of yours."

Lincoln had always believed in, and sometimes feared, the power of dreams. On June 9, 1863, while he was visiting Philadelphia, he sent an urgent telegram to Mary Lincoln at the White House, warning of danger to their youngest son: "Think you better put 'Tad's' pistol away. I had an ugly dream about him." And in April 1848, when he was a congressman in Washington, he wrote to Mary about their oldest son, Robert: "I did not get rid of the impression of that foolish dream about dear Bobby till I got your letter."

After the meeting adjourned, the president followed his usual routine: receiving a variety of friends, supplicants, and favor seekers; reading his mail; and catching up on correspondence and paperwork. He was eager to wind up business by 3:00 P.M. for an appointment he had with his wife, Mary. There was something he wanted to tell her.

At the theatre, Henry Clay Ford wrote out an advertisement to place in the evening papers, which would start coming off the press at around 2:00 P.M. He delivered the notice to the *Evening Star* personally and sent another via messenger to at least two of the other

papers. That afternoon an advertisement appeared in the *Evening Star:* "LIEUT. GENERAL GRANT, PRESIDENT and Mrs. Lincoln have secured the State Box at Ford's Theatre TO NIGHT, to witness Miss Laura Keene's American Cousin." Around 1:00 P.M., Ford walked next door and delivered notice in person to his neighbor James P. Ferguson at his restaurant at 452 Tenth Street, one door north of the theatre.

"Your favorite, General Grant, is going to be in the theatre tonight; and if you want to see him," Ford cautioned, "you had better to go get a seat."

Ferguson took advantage of the tip: "I went and secured a seat directly opposite the President's box, in the front of the dress circle." Ferguson booked seats 58 and 59 at the front corner of the house near stage right. The restaurateur didn't want the best view of the play, but the best view of Lincoln and Grant.

James Ford walked to the Treasury Department a few blocks away to borrow several flags to decorate the president's box. Returning to the theatre, his arms wrapped around a bundle of brightly colored cotton and silk bunting, he bumped into Booth, who had just left Ford's, at the corner of Tenth and Pennsylvania, where they exchanged pleasantries. Booth saw the red, white, and blue flags, confirmation of the president's visit tonight.

A few blocks away, on D Street near Seventh, at J. H. Polkinhorn and Son, Printers, pressmen began setting the type for the playbill that would advertise tonight's performance. Once newsboys hit the streets with the afternoon and evening papers, the ad for *Our American Cousin* caught the eye of many Washingtonians eager to see General Grant.

Dr. Charles A. Leale, a twenty-three-year-old U.S. Army surgeon on duty at the wounded commissioned officers' ward at the Armory Square Hospital in Washington, heard that President Lincoln and General Grant would be attending the play. He decided to attend. Three days prior, on the night of April 11, Leale, while taking a walk on Pennsylvania Avenue, encountered crowds of people walking toward the White House. He followed them there and arrived just as Lincoln commenced

his remarks. Leale was moved: "I could distinctly hear every word he uttered, and I was profoundly impressed with his divine appearance as he stood in the rays of light which penetrated the windows." The news that Lincoln was coming to Ford's Theatre gave the surgeon "an intense desire again to behold his face and study the characteristics of the 'Savior of his Country.'"

Lincoln's box at Ford's was festooned with flags and a framed engraving of George Washington. The box office manager prepared for a run on tickets when he went on duty at 6:30 P.M.

Later, witnesses remembered seeing Booth at several places in the city that day, but none of his movements created suspicion. Why should they? Nothing Booth did seemed out of the ordinary that afternoon. He talked to people in the street. He arranged to pick up his rented horse. Between 2:00 and 4:00 P.M., Booth rode up to Ferguson's restaurant, stopping just below the front door. Ferguson stepped outside onto his front porch and found his friend sitting on a small, bay mare. James L. Maddox, property man at Ford's, stood beside the horse, one hand on its mane, talking to Booth. "See what a nice horse I have got!" boasted the actor. Ferguson stepped forward for a closer look. "Now, watch," said Booth, "he can run just like a cat!" At that, Ferguson observed, Booth "struck his spurs into the horse, and off he went down the street."

At about 4:00 P.M., Booth returned to the National Hotel, walked to the front desk, and spoke to clerks George W. Bunker and Henry Merrick. Three days later a *New York Tribune* reporter described the encounter:

> [He] made his appearance at the counter...and with a nervous air called for a sheet of paper and an envelope. He was about to write when the thought seemed to strike him that someone around him might overlook his letter, and, approaching the door of the office, he requested admittance. On reaching the inside of the office, he immediately commenced his letter. He had written but a few words when he

> said earnestly, "Merrick, is the year 1864 or '65?" "You are surely joking, John," replied Mr. Merrick, "you certainly know what year it is." "Sincerely, I am not," he rejoined, and on being told, resumed writing. It was then that Mr. Merrick noticed something troubled and agitated in Booth's appearance, which was entirely at variance with his usual quiet deportment. Sealing the letter, he placed it in his pocket and left the hotel.

On his way out of the National, Booth asked George Bunker if he was planning on seeing *Our American Cousin* at Ford's, and urged Bunker to attend: "There is going to be some splendid acting tonight."

Around 4:00 P.M., the actor John Matthews, who would be playing the part of Mr. Coyle in tonight's performance, met Booth on horseback on Pennsylvania Avenue, at the triangular enclosure between Thirteenth and Fourteenth streets, not far from the Willard Hotel. "We met," recalled Matthews, "shook hands, and passed the compliments of the day." A column of Confederate prisoners of war had just marched past, stirring up a dust cloud in their wake.

"John, have you seen the prisoners?" Matthews asked. "Have you seen Lee's officers, just brought in?"

"Yes, Johnny, I have." Booth raised one hand to his forehead in disbelief and then exclaimed, "Great God, I have no longer a country!"

Matthews, observing Booth's "paleness, nervousness, and agitation," asked, "John, how nervous you are, what is the matter?"

"Oh no, it is nothing. Johnny, I have a little favor to ask of you, will you grant it?"

"Why certainly," Matthews replied. "What is it?"

"Perhaps I may have to leave town tonight, and I have a letter here which I desire to be published in the *National Intelligencer;* please attend to it for me, unless I see you before ten o'clock tomorrow; in that case I will see to it myself." Matthews accepted the sealed envelope and slipped it into a coat pocket.

As Booth and Matthews talked, Matthews spotted General Grant riding past them in an open carriage with his baggage. He appeared to be leaving town.

"There goes Grant. I thought he was to be coming to the theatre this evening with the President."

"Where?" Booth exclaimed.

Matthews recalled: "I pointed to the carriage; he looked toward it, grasped my hand tightly, and galloped down the avenue after the carriage."

When Booth caught up to the Grants and rode past their carriage, Julia Grant thought of something that had happened earlier in the day. She was at lunch at the Willard Hotel with General Rawlins—one of Grant's top aides—Mrs. Rawlins, and the Rawlins' daughter, when four men entered the dining room and occupied a nearby table. One of the men would not stop staring at her, and Julia and Mrs. Rawlins both found the whole group "peculiar." Now, a few hours later, Booth reminded her of the unpleasant incident when he caught up to their carriage. "As General Grant and I rode to the depot, this same dark, pale man rode past us at a sweeping gallop on a dark horse.... He rode twenty yards ahead of us, wheeled and returned, and as he passed us both going and returning, he thrust his face quite near the General's and glared in a disagreeable manner." She was sure that it was the same man from Willard's.

The sight of the Grants must have disappointed Booth. Their carriage, loaded with baggage, was heading toward the train station. They were leaving town. They must have canceled their engagement at Ford's Theatre. If General Grant was not attending *Our American Cousin* tonight, did that mean the Lincolns had canceled, too? Curtain call, approximately 8:30 P.M., was in less than five hours, and John Wilkes Booth did not know whether the Lincolns still planned to attend the play or who might be in the box with them.

Booth rode over to the Kirkwood House, where he accomplished his strangest errand of the day. The Kirkwood was the residence of the

new vice president, Andrew Johnson, former military governor of Tennessee. Johnson did not own a house in Washington, and the job did not include official quarters, so he lodged at a hotel. Johnson's room was unguarded, and, if Booth had wanted to, he could have walked upstairs and knocked on the door. But he did not want to see the vice president. He just wanted to leave him a note. Booth approached the front desk and requested a small, blank calling card. He wrote a brief note and handed it to the desk clerk, who placed it in Johnson's mail slot. The mysterious message, which soon became the object of intense speculation, read: "Don't wish to disturb you. Are you at home? J. Wilkes Booth."

He visited a boardinghouse at 541 H Street, a few blocks from Ford's Theatre, to pay what looked like an innocent social call on the proprietor, Mary E. Surratt, a forty-two-year-old Maryland widow and the mother of his friend John Harrison Surratt Jr., a Confederate courier. Over the last several months, Booth had become a frequent caller at Mrs. Surratt's town house. Her son John wasn't home—he was out of the city on rebel business—and would not be back tonight. Mary told Booth that she was riding out that afternoon to her country tavern in Surrattsville, Maryland, several miles south of Washington, and Booth asked if she would mind delivering a small package wrapped in newspaper to her destination. Conveniently, Booth had the package with him.

There was one more thing. Booth informed Mary that he would be riding out of Washington this evening. Sometime that night, he said, he would stop at her tavern to pick up not only this package, but also the guns, ammunition, and other supplies that her son John had secreted there for him. Booth asked Mary to tell the tavern keeper John Lloyd—a heavy-drinking former Washington policeman to whom she had rented her country place—to get everything ready for the actor's visit this evening. She agreed, and soon she and one of her boarders, Lewis Weichmann, an old school chum of John Surratt's, drove down to Surrattsville by carriage.

Booth returned to Ford's Theatre around 5:00 or 6:00 P.M., where Edman "Ned" Spangler, a scene shifter and stagehand—"stage carpenter," he called himself—saw the actor come up behind the theatre through Baptist Alley, named for the church that once occupied the site. Spangler had known Booth and his family for about a dozen years and had done odd jobs for them, most recently helping the actor outfit a small, private stable in the alley behind Ford's, about fifty yards from the back door. Spangler had seen Booth use a variety of horses: tonight he rode what Ned described as "a little bay mare." Booth and Spangler walked to the stable, where the actor removed the saddle and the yellow-trimmed saddlecloth. He didn't like the look of the cloth, he told Ned, and said he might use his shawl instead. Booth asked Ned not to remove the mare's bridle. "She is a bad little bitch," Booth said, and she should remain bridled. Booth locked the stable door, took the key, and went for a drink.

At some point, most likely by late afternoon or early evening, Booth must have secluded himself, probably in room 228 at the National, and made his final preparations. There were two elements, practical and psychological. First, the weapons. Booth chose as his primary weapon a .44-caliber, single-shot, muzzle-loading percussion cap pistol manufactured by Henry Deringer of Philadelphia. It was a small, short barreled, pocket-size handgun designed for stealth and concealment, not combat, and favored by gamblers and other unsavory types. Unlike military pistols such as the .44-caliber Colt or Remington Army revolvers, or the lighter weight .36-caliber Colt Navy revolver, all of which could fire up to six rounds before reloading, the Deringer could be fired just once. Reloading was a laborious process that called for two hands and twenty to forty seconds. Booth knew that his first shot would be his last. If he missed, he wouldn't have time to reload. Because the Deringer fired a round ball and not a rifled conical bullet, it was most effective at short range. Its big .44-caliber ball, weighing in at nearly an ounce, was a solid, deadly round.

If Booth missed, or failed to inflict a fatal wound with the pistol, he

would turn to his secondary, backup weapon, a "Rio Grande Camp Knife," a handsome and extremely sharp type of Bowie knife. Booth left behind no explanation for why he chose the Deringer over a revolver. Pistols misfire occasionally. Either the copper percussion cap might fail to spark, or the black powder in the barrel might be spoiled from dampness and fail to ignite. Three decades earlier, on January 30, 1835, Richard Lawrence, a crazed, unemployed British house painter who fancied himself of royal blood, failed to assassinate Andrew Jackson on the East Front of the U.S. Capitol when not one, but both, of his single-shot, black powder, percussion cap pistols misfired. And even if Booth's pistol worked, how certain was he that he could kill Lincoln with one shot? Plenty of veteran combat soldiers who had survived multiple gunshot wounds were getting drunk in the saloons of Washington that night. Booth couldn't have chosen the Deringer because he could not obtain a revolver. He had already purchased at least four, and if he did not have any in his hotel room within easy reach, he could have gone out and bought another one. In the war capital of the Union, thousands of guns, including small, lightweight pocket-sized revolvers, were for sale in the shops of Washington.

Booth was a thrill seeker, and perhaps he wanted to enhance his excitement by risking the use of a single-shot pistol. Or did he believe it more heroic, honorable—even gentlemanly—to take his prey with a single bullet? Perhaps he preferred a stylish coup de grâce to blazing away at Lincoln with a six-shooter.

Given Washington's damp spring air and Booth's knowledge that he would have just one shot, he probably did not arm the pistol with a fresh copper cap and black powder charge until late in the afternoon. Better to be sure than rely on a stale load that might have been languishing in the barrel for weeks. Before wrapping the bullet with a small swatch of cloth wadding and ramming the round down the barrel, did he roll the ball between his fingertips, scrutinizing it for flaws in the casting and perhaps contemplating how this little round, dull gray one-ounce piece of metal would soon change history?

Before leaving the National, Booth slid the knife and pistol into his pockets and gathered the rest of his belongings. He planned to travel light tonight, without baggage. In addition to the weapons and his garments—a black felt slouch hat, black wool frock coat, black pants, big, knee-high black leather riding boots with spurs—he took only a velvet-cased compass, keys, a whistle, a datebook, a pencil, some money, a bank draft or bill of exchange, a small switchblade, and a few other small items including carte-de-visite photographs of five of his favorite girlfriends. His valise and big traveling trunk would have to stay behind; he would not be coming back. About 7:00 P.M., room clerk George Bunker saw Booth leave the National for the last time that day:

"He spoke to me and went off."

When Mary Surratt and Louis Weichmann arrived in Surrattsville, John Lloyd wasn't there. He had gone to pick up some foodstuffs. Mary waited for him. She could not leave without delivering Booth's message. When Lloyd returned he parked his wagon near the wood yard, climbed down, and began unloading his cargo of fish and oysters. Mary walked over to him.

"Talk about the devil, and his imps will appear," she teased her tenant.

"I was not aware that I was a devil before."

"Well, Mr. Lloyd," Mary went on once she was sure that she was out of Weichmann's earshot, "I want you to have those shooting-irons ready; there will be parties here to-night who will call for them."

She handed him the package wrapped in newspaper. The evening callers will want this too, she explained. And, she added, give them a couple bottles of whiskey. Her mission accomplished, Mary prepared to drive back to Washington. But the front spring bolts of her buggy had broken, and the spring had become detached from the axle. Lloyd tied them tightly with cord—the best he could do without proper spare parts. After Mrs. Surratt departed, Lloyd followed her instructions. He

carried the package upstairs, unwrapped it, and discovered Booth's field glasses. Then he went to the unfinished room where, several weeks ago, John Surratt had shown him how to conceal two Spencer carbines under the joists. Lloyd retrieved them and placed them in his bedchamber. He had been drinking, and he was tired. Indeed, he confessed, "I was right smart in liquer that afternoon, and after night I got more so. I went to bed between 8 and 9 o'clock, and slept very soundly until 12 o'clock."

At the Herndon House at the southwest corner of Ninth and F streets, around the corner from Ford's, at around 8:00 P.M. Booth presided over a conclave of some of the coconspirators he had assembled over the previous months to strike against President Lincoln. He must have hoped that this would be their last meeting before a great success. They had failed at least once before and then dispersed amid suspicion and fear. Tonight they needed to get ready for action in less than two hours. It was not the first time they had assembled to move against the president. Beginning in 1864, the last full year of the Civil War, the young stage star had marshaled his cash, celebrity, and connections in service of a bold plan. He hatched a harebrained scheme to kidnap President Lincoln, spirit him to Richmond, hold him as a hostage for the Confederacy, and turn the tide of the war. The origins of the plot remain murky. From the time of Lincoln's election in 1860, there arose several conspiracies to kidnap or murder him. Secessionist hotheads began posting numerous death threats to Springfield before Lincoln took office on March 4, 1861, and some even sent him jars of poisoned fruit. In the notorious Baltimore plot of 1861, local rebels schemed to assassinate the president-elect when his railroad train passed through the city en route to Washington for his inauguration. But Detective Allan Pinkerton thwarted the scheme by persuading Lincoln to pass through Baltimore incognito hours ahead of schedule. Other Lincoln haters threatened to assassinate him on the East Front of the Capitol the

moment he commenced reading his inaugural address. During the war, several Southern military officers, as well as a handful of officials in the Confederate Secret Service, considered various actions against Lincoln. At some point, John Wilkes Booth came into contact with these circles and operatives, in Canada, New York City, Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia.

In late 1864 and early 1865 Booth organized his own little band of conspirators, loyal to him and not Richmond, to plot against the president. He recruited a gang who, after he clothed and fed them, plied them with drink, and allowed them to bask in his fame and favor, would, he hoped, follow him anywhere—even into a plot to kidnap the president of the United States. But big talk was cheap in wartime Washington and as late as January 1865, with the Confederacy in danger of imminent collapse, not one of the several overlapping conspiracies had ever attempted decisive action against Abraham Lincoln.

Booth and his gang of acolytes—Lewis Powell, David Herold, John H. Surratt Jr., Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlen, and George Atzerodt, plus others lost to history who drifted in and out of his orbit—would change that by kidnapping the president.

O'Laughlen, born in 1834, had known Booth since 1845, when their families lived across the street from each other in Baltimore. In 1861, the first year of the war, Michael enlisted in the First Maryland Infantry, but soon illness ended his military service. Restless, and looking for excitement, he signed on to the plot. Samuel Arnold, who was thirty-one, met Booth in 1848 when they were students at St. Timothy's Hall, a boys' school near Baltimore. He joined the First Maryland too in April 1861, but after the first battle of Bull Run in July 1861 he was, like O'Laughlen, discharged. Arnold's family operated a prominent Baltimore bakery at the corner of Fayette and Liberty streets. In August 1864, Booth wrote to Sam, suggesting they meet. They hadn't seen each other since 1852, thirteen years ago. Arnold visited Booth's room at Barnum's Hotel in Baltimore, where the actor offered him cigars and wine, and introduced him to O'Laughlen. Arnold joined the conspiracy. But

Booth needed to recruit more men than these two boyhood chums, who possessed scant military experience. An introduction to John Harrison Surratt Jr., a wily, twenty-year-old courier for the Confederate Secret Service who lived in Washington at his mother's boardinghouse, gave Booth the men he needed. Surratt had traveled the rebel underground's secret routes to the South, essential knowledge if they were going to transport Lincoln across Union lines. Surratt brought George Atzerodt into the plot. George, a hard-drinking, twenty-nine-year-old Prussian immigrant who worked as a carriage painter in Port Tobacco, Maryland, knew boats and the waters of Charles County. David Herold, a twenty-two-year-old pharmacist's assistant who lived with his mother near the Washington Navy Yard, joined the conspiracy. He was an avid hunter and outdoorsman who knew the country through which they would have to carry the president. Lewis Powell, twenty-one-year-old son of a Baptist minister, enlisted in May 1861 as a private in the Second Florida Infantry. An attractive, well-muscled six-footer, Powell exemplified the best that the Confederate army could muster. A loyal, obedient, and hard-fighting soldier, he saw plenty of action until he was wounded and taken prisoner at Gettysburg in July 1863. Paroled, he made his way to Baltimore and fell into the orbit of Surratt and Booth. Powell had the size and strength necessary to physically subdue Abraham Lincoln.

On March 17, 1865, Booth and his coconspirators planned to, like eighteenth-century British highwaymen, ambush Lincoln's carriage on a deserted road as he rode back to the Executive Mansion after attending a performance of the play *Still Waters Run Deep* at Campbell Military Hospital. They would seize the president at gunpoint and make him their hostage. Booth's intelligence sources proved faulty, however, and Lincoln did not attend. Instead, unbelievably, while Booth and his gang lurked on the Seventh Street road on the outskirts of the city, several miles from downtown Washington, Lincoln was giving a speech at Booth's own hotel, the National. What a chance that would have presented, the actor mourned. If only the kidnapping plot had worked.