

# Chapter 7

I submit to you that if a man hasn't discovered something he will die for, he isn't fit to live.  
—*Martin Luther King*

There was an immeasurable distance between the quick and the dead: they did not seem  
To belong to the same species; and it was strange to think that but a little while before  
they had spoken and moved and eaten and laughed.  
—*W. Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage*

**Friday Evening, November 22, 1963**  
**Dallas, Texas**

It was 6:05 p.m. when the emergency military flight dropped through a dramatic canyon of cotton and gravel thunderheads to land at Love Field in Dallas, Texas. The front and rear fuselage doors were lifting before the jet came fully to a stop. Robert Kennedy, grim faced, his tie askew, his sleeves rolled above the elbows, stood at the rear exit of the Dash 80. The stewards secured the opening doors, and the ground crews positioned the wheeled ramps against the fuselage. The Dash 80 was a commercial passenger jet reconditioned to transport government personnel and top brass around the United States and overseas. It was now packed with Secret Service agents, FBI special agents, a large U.S. marshal contingent, four medical specialists from Bethesda Naval Hospital, numerous aides—and the attorney general of the United States.

A medium height thickly-built man with curly dark hair wearing a heat-rumpled suit coat waited uneasily at the base of the portable stair ramp as the passengers began filing out the plane door. He held his sunglasses in a gnarled hand. The attorney general was first off. “Mr. Kennedy, sir, I’m Secret Service Agent Jiggs Dansant. I have a detail of agents here to provide you with protection while you are in Dallas. We—”

“I will not be in need of your services,” interrupted Robert, stone-faced as he continued walking.

“Sir, I must request that you allow us to provide protection.” The agent backpedaled, keeping up with the hurried pace of Robert Kennedy as he continued walking. Jiggs had a flat puggish face that could, at kinder moments, be called roguishly masculine. Just now it held a scowling, pained expression. He was unsure of his position in making demands of the attorney general, the brother to the president, especially at such an emotional moment. But he was also accustomed to the expression of authority and was adamant. “Sir, I have been strictly ordered not to let you out of our protective custody. Please, sir. We are as of yet unaware of the extent of the conditions present here in Dallas and—”

“Mr...?” asked Robert.

“Dansant, sir.”

“Mr. Dansant, the Service fucked up today!” Robert blistered as he halted in the middle of the tarmac, boring into the agent in front of him. He had spent bitter hours contemplating the nature of the shooting of his brother and was well aware of the Secret Service’s failure to provide protection. But he was also aware of how difficult his brother had made their assignment. Jack had thwarted them at every turn and resented their intrusion into his free-wheeling life style. A constant war of wills determined how much freedom the president could wrest from their ubiquitous presence. Robert had not been afforded protection in the past even though encouraged to request it, and he was loath at the moment to shift his position. But in watching the agent in front of him nearly pleading, he was tipped to adjust his stance. The man was just asking to be allowed to assist in protecting the president’s brother, at least for the moment. There was surely an avalanche of guilt in the tight-knit brotherhood of his professional companions, and there was so much unknown as to the extent of the assassination plot and the potential that this was just the opening salvo of a much broader conspiracy. Also, the agent’s transport was immediately available.

“You can drive me directly to Parkland Medical Center,” Robert said looking directly at Jiggs, “but you will stay the hell out of my way!”

“Yes, sir,” responded Jiggs, shaken but relieved, taking Robert’s statement as assent. “We have a car ready for you.” He directed Robert to the open backdoor of an idling black Buick. Bags were quickly thrown into the open trunk as Robert instead opened the front passenger door and got in. Jiggs stuttered for a moment, but not about to test his luck, he quickly jumped into the driver’s seat as two agents and an aide piled into the back. There followed a car with agents and another aide that pulled out just behind them.

It was only a ten-minute, two-mile ride to Parkland Medical Center. Police at every intersection directed traffic and secured roads providing direct access between Love Field and Parkland. Caught unaware by the initial shooting, the Secret Service was not about to falter at this point. They engaged the Dallas Police and the Texas State Patrol, to cordon off large sections of the thoroughfares around the medical center and redirect nonessential traffic, which was increasing at an alarming rate, to alternate side roads. It was obvious that traffic was a mess, but Cedar Springs Road, Inwood Road and Harry Hines Boulevard, all restricted to vehicles coming and going from Parkland Medical to Love Field, were nearly devoid of traffic. It made for a short ride.

“What do you know about his condition?” asked Robert immediately after Jiggs had pulled out of the terminal and onto Cedar Springs Road.

“Sir, we just heard on the radio that he’s out of surgery, but they are skimpy on detail. We don’t know his condition,” said Jiggs. “The doctors have been working on him for hours. They wheeled him right into the emergency room, and then, in five minutes, over to Operating Room One. He was still there when I left to come here to

meet you. He was shot at least once, maybe twice. Middle upper back shot. He lost a lot of blood. The whole back of that limo was drenched. With Colton Mays jumping on the president as the limo sped up, and all the blood from Governor Connally, it was a real mess.”

“I listen to the radio too, Mr. Dansant. What else?” said Robert Kennedy harshly.

“They’ve been circumspect. At first they seemed to think, as least this is what I heard, that the president’s wounds were not too severe and they could patch him up. But after they were in for a while, one of the nurses came out for some extra blood and whispered that he wasn’t responding well. It should have been easier, but something was going wrong. That’s all I heard. They’ve been quiet since. Had the president’s doctor in there the whole time and then a bunch of specialists. I was told that some specialists were being flown in from DC.”

“They’re following us. They were on the plane,” added Robert.

Robert could guess what was wrong. Jack, unknown to but a few, was taking a wide array of drugs, some probably that Robert didn’t even know about. And even with Dr. Burkley’s intimate knowledge of JFK’s pharmacology, it would no doubt confound the doctors treating him. Robert thought he was quite familiar with JFK’s medical condition, but had been shocked recently to discover the multitude of drugs his brother was ingesting and injecting into his ravaged body. His ailments were manifold and his self-medication was a matching cornucopia of treatments.