A stocky young man, one of only twenty black students in the Ball State audience, stood up in the balcony and said, "Mr. Kennedy, I agree with the programs and proposals you are making. But in order for them to work, you're placing a great deal of faith in white America. My question: Is this faith justified?"

"Yes," Kennedy said, in a loud and confident voice. "I'm also placing faith in black America." He pointed out that there were extremists on both sides and insisted that only a small minority of whites opposed treating blacks equally, that "the vast majority of [the] American people want to do the decent and right thing here within our country."

As he was responding to these questions, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stepped onto the second-story balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis and was shot by an assassin firing a high-powered rifle from the bathroom of a nearby flophouse. Three of King's associates rushed onto the balcony and pointed toward the flophouse. As Justice Department official James Laue knelt down and pressed a towel against the wound in King's right cheek, trying to stanch the bleeding, he thought, "Kennedy... Kennedy... Kennedy," the Kennedy in question being John F. Kennedy.

As Robert Kennedy was preparing to board his plane at the Muncie airport, a teenage boy asked if he had heard about Dr. King.

"Was he shot?" Kennedy asked quickly, proving that the danger of an assassination was never far from his mind.

"He's in critical condition."

Marshall Hanley, the Muncie attorney who had introduced Kennedy at Ball State, heard the news on a police radio and gave Kennedy more details as he was boarding the plane.

Kennedy stared at the ground and asked, "Is he dead?"

"Wounded," Hanley said.

After takeoff, Kennedy moved seats so he could sit next to John Lindsay of Newsweek. Lindsay had also been sitting alongside him when they landed in Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1966 and learned that Ethel Kennedy's brother, George Skakel, had been killed in a plane crash. Kennedy told Lindsay he was upset at having just told the black student at Ball State to have faith in white Americans, "then I walk out and find that some white man has shot their spiritual leader."

(An early NBC radio news bulletin from Memphis, presumably relayed to Kennedy by Hanley, reported that people were searching for a white man who had fled the scene.) He knew what Mrs. King and her children were going through, he said, confirming Lindsay's suspicion that King's assassination was forcing Bobby to relive his brother's.

While Kennedy's plane was en route to Indianapolis, physicians at St. Joseph's Hospital in Memphis pronounced King dead. Jim Tolan was awaiting Kennedy's arrival at Weir-Cook Airport in Indianapolis when Pierre Salinger called on his mobile phone with the news. Tolan telephoned John Nolan in Washington, who reported that Burke Marshall and Joe Dolan were recommending that Kennedy issue a statement at the airport and cancel his appearances. Disturbances were already breaking out in Memphis, and they feared someone might shoot him in revenge.

Tolan called Walter Sheridan, who was at the rally site at Seventeenth Street and Broadway with two black Kennedy staffers, John Lewis and Earl Graves Jr. Lewis and Graves had just circulated through the crowd and believed that most people were unaware of the assassination. Lewis argued that Kennedy had to attend, saying, "You can't have a crowd like this come, and something like this happen, and send them home without anything at all. Kennedy has to speak, for his own sake and for the sake of these people."

Richard Harwood boarded Kennedy's plane after it landed and gave him the news. Kennedy's face went blank and he jerked his head backward, as if the bullet had struck him, too. Then he covered his face with his hands and murmured, "Oh God, when is this violence going to stop."

Chicago Sun-Times reporter Dave Murray, who witnessed this, said later, "It was unbearable to watch him [and] to know that he was thinking about his brother."

Tolan boarded the plane to find Kennedy "shook, really shook," more disturbed than he had ever seen him.

Kennedy asked Tolan about his schedule.

"You have two stops. One is to open your headquarters, and the
April 5, 1968

A PRAYER FOR OUR COUNTRY

VOTED

THE LAST CAMPAIGN
crowd who knew about the assassination and the whites who did not, and some heard shouts of "What are you doing here, Whitey?" and "Get out of here you white son-of-a-bitch!" A black woman grabbed a white pastor by the arm and cried, "Dr. King is dead and a white man did it, why does he [Kennedy] have to come here?"

The rally's organizers became increasingly nervous that Kennedy would be attacked. They decided against announcing King's death over a loudspeaker, instructed the band to keep playing, and told some men to climb trees and watch the surrounding buildings for snipers. A contingent of black plainclothes police officers had also infiltrated the crowd, and two police marksmen were stationed on the roof of the nearby Broadway Christian Center.

Had Kennedy known that some in the crowd were armed, he would have been even more determined to address the rally. After Dallas, he had embraced risk. He copied Emerson's "always do what you are afraid to do" into his daybook, and dove into piranha-infested waters in Brazil, faced a rhinoceros at twenty feet in Africa, and rafted through treacherous rapids. Like JFK, he considered moral courage more difficult to demonstrate than physical courage. In 1966, he had told students in South Africa that moral courage was "a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence," and extolled it as "the one essential, vital quality of those who seek to change a world which yields most painfully to change," saying, "Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance." Now, in Indianapolis, he could demonstrate both kinds of courage: the physical courage to address a predominantly black audience two hours after a white man had murdered the most beloved black leader in U.S. history, and the moral courage to announce his death and deliver a speech offering comfort and hope.

Death while dining in the Marriott Hotel with the television personality Jack Paar, who was scheduled to interview Kennedy later that evening. They discussed whether Kennedy should attend the rally, and Martin later asked a police inspector who was sitting in a squad car in the hotel driveway what he thought. "I sure hope he goes," the policeman said, "If he doesn't, there'll be hell to pay. He's the only one who can do it." Walinsky had jotted down some ideas for a speech, and persuaded the inspector to drive him to the rally. They stopped on the way at Kennedy campaign headquarters and picked up Joan Braden, an Honorary Kennedy from California who had assisted in organizing the event.

Braden and Walinsky arrived moments before Kennedy. As Walinsky headed for the platform, Braden climbed onto the hood of a car parked at the edge of the crowd. Those surrounding her knew about the assassination and spoke in low voices. She looked up and saw people leaning from tenement windows, watching silently as Kennedy's car arrived. Kennedy motioned for her to join him on the platform. "No, there's no room up there. Just go," she shouted. As he climbed onto the flatbed truck, those surrounding it cheered and waved his signs.

Mankiewicz gave Kennedy a sheet of paper containing ideas for his speech. Kennedy put it in his pocket without looking at it. When Walinsky approached the dais with his notes, Kennedy waved him off. After asking the dignitaries on the platform not to introduce him, he stood alone at the microphone, looking drawn and shaken.

The night was cool, in the upper thirties, and a light rain fell. A single spotlight swept the leaden sky, and two floodlights mounted on poles waved in a gusty wind, leaving most of the crowd in the shadows. It was so dark that Life photographer Bill Eppridge, who disliked using a strobe light, was unable to shoot.

As Kennedy began speaking, a man jumped onto the hood of the car where Braden was standing and grabbed her hand. She looked down to see that the hand gripping her own was black. "Fear was palpable. . . . It hung in the air, a warning of an event about to happen," she said later. "The man who had his hand over mine knew it and I knew it and Bobby knew it as he spoke."
On June 11, 1962, when JFK had suddenly decided to deliver a redemptory, almost seven minutes' cold essay they addressed him to the occasion. Instead, he spoke ex-temporaneously for almost seven minutes. The speech is considered one of the most important speeches in American history. JFK had been criticized for his speeches, but this one was different. He spoke from the heart, and the audience was moved to tears.

The speech was widely praised as moving, but there were those in the audience who were less impressed. Some felt that JFK was not prepared to give such a speech, and that the speech was too long.

JFK's speech was considered a turning point in his presidency, and it helped to solidify his position as a leader. He went on to deliver many more speeches, but none that were as memorable as this one.

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A Prayer for Our County

In search of a spiritual and conscious, and compassionate life, I found myself feeling a profound sense of guilt and inadequacy in my own life. I realized then that this guilt and inadequacy were due to the lack of compassion and understanding for the problems of other human beings who are, in many cases, the victims of our own actions. I am deeply ashamed of the way I have treated others, and I feel a deep sense of responsibility for the suffering of those who are less fortunate than myself.

A Prayer for Our County

In this prayer, I ask for forgiveness for my own sins and for the sins of others. I pray for understanding and compassion, that we may learn to see the world through the eyes of others and to understand the pain and suffering that they experience. I ask for the courage to act in ways that will bring healing and hope to those who are in need.

A Prayer for Our County

I pray for the strength to overcome my own fears and weaknesses and to be bold in my actions. I pray for the wisdom to know when to speak and when to be silent, and to speak the truth with love and compassion. I ask for the grace to be a witness to the goodness and beauty of life, and to share that witness with others.

A Prayer for Our County

I pray for the peace of mind and heart, that I may find comfort in the presence of others and in the knowledge that we are all connected. I pray for the ability to forgive and to be forgiven, and to find joy in the simple things of life. I pray for the strength to be a good and loving person, and to make the world a better place for all those who come after me.
He was looking at the stage. …

In Washington, D.C., it was a different story. While the Kennedy campaign continued to dominate the headlines, many in the media were focusing on the Chicago Convention and the issues that had emerged from the primaries. The pressure on the candidates was immense, and the stakes were high.

As the campaign moved forward, the two candidates were forced to confront the stark realities of the political landscape. The Kennedys were determined to win, and they would not be deterred by any obstacle. And so, as the campaign reached its climax, the nation held its breath, waiting to see who would emerge as the new leader of the free world.

The last campaign...