

PART FOUR



**CHASING THE
ASSASSINS**



SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 1865

Maryland Countryside

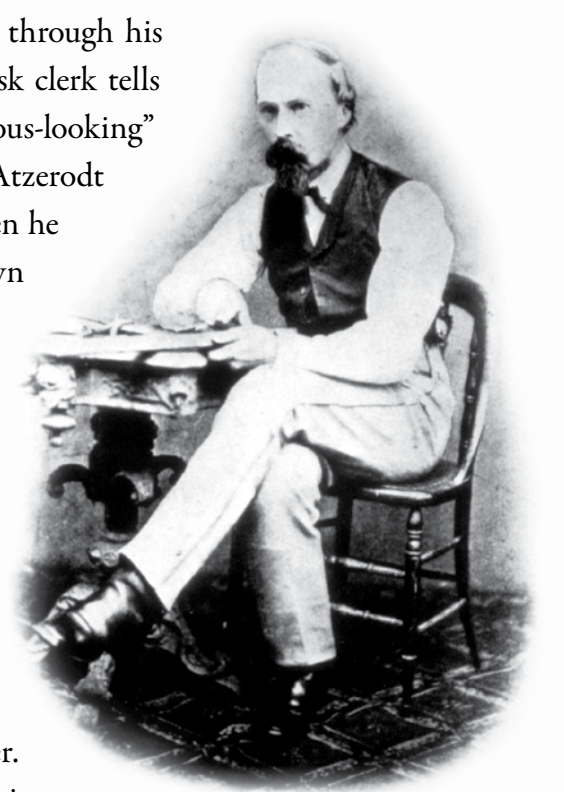
Early Morning

JOHN WILKES BOOTH and David Herold have escaped into the Maryland countryside. They meet up at their rendezvous spot of Soper's Hill in the dead of night. There is no sign of Atzerodt or Powell, so Booth and Herold push on with their flight toward Virginia. However, Booth's leg injury is so severe, and their horses are so tired, that they have been forced to find a place to rest. They are now hiding in the house of the physician and Confederate sympathizer Dr. Samuel Mudd, whose farm is about twenty-five miles south of Washington.

In Washington, investigators stumble upon Atzerodt's trail first. After failing to carry out the assassination of Vice President Johnson, he spent the night wandering around Washington, getting thoroughly drunk in a number of bars and making sure to dispose of the knife that was supposed to be the murder weapon. Atzerodt is all too aware that returning to his room at Kirkwood House would be a stupid idea. So just before three A.M., he checks into the

Pennsylvania House Hotel, where he is assigned a double room. His roommate is a police lieutenant named W. R. Keim. The two men know each other from Atzerodt's previous stays at the Pennsylvania House. They lie on their backs in the darkness and have a short conversation before falling asleep. Keim is stunned by the slaying of Lincoln. As drunk as he is, Atzerodt does an artful job of pretending sadness, saying that the whole Lincoln assassination is a terrible tragedy.

Meanwhile, detectives are combing through his belongings at Kirkwood House. A desk clerk tells them he remembers seeing a "villainous-looking" individual registered in room 126. Atzerodt took the only room key with him when he fled, so detectives have to break down the door to investigate. Quickly canvassing the room, they come up with the first solid leads about Lincoln's murder. In the breast pocket of a dark coat hanging on a wall peg, they discover a ledger book from a bank in Montreal. The name written inside the cover is that of John Wilkes Booth, whom many eyewitnesses have identified as Lincoln's killer. The book confirms the connection between Atzerodt and Booth.



Dr. Samuel Mudd.

Searching through the bed, the detectives find a loaded revolver under the pillow and a knife underneath the covers. In fact, room 126 is a treasure trove of evidence: a map of Southern states, pistol rounds, a handkerchief embroidered with the name of Booth's mother, and much more.

Investigators now have two suspects: Booth and Atzerodt. Warrants are issued for their arrests.

At the same time, a tip leads investigators to raid Mary Surratt's boardinghouse on H Street. Nothing is found, but Surratt's behavior is suspicious enough that detectives decide to keep an eye on her and the house. A similar tip leads police to room 228 at the National Hotel—Booth's room—which is quickly ripped apart. Booth also has left behind clues—among them a business card bearing the name J. Harrison Surratt and a letter from Samuel Arnold, who had been part of the kidnapping plot, that implicates Michael O'Laughlen. It is obvious that John Wilkes Booth did not act alone.

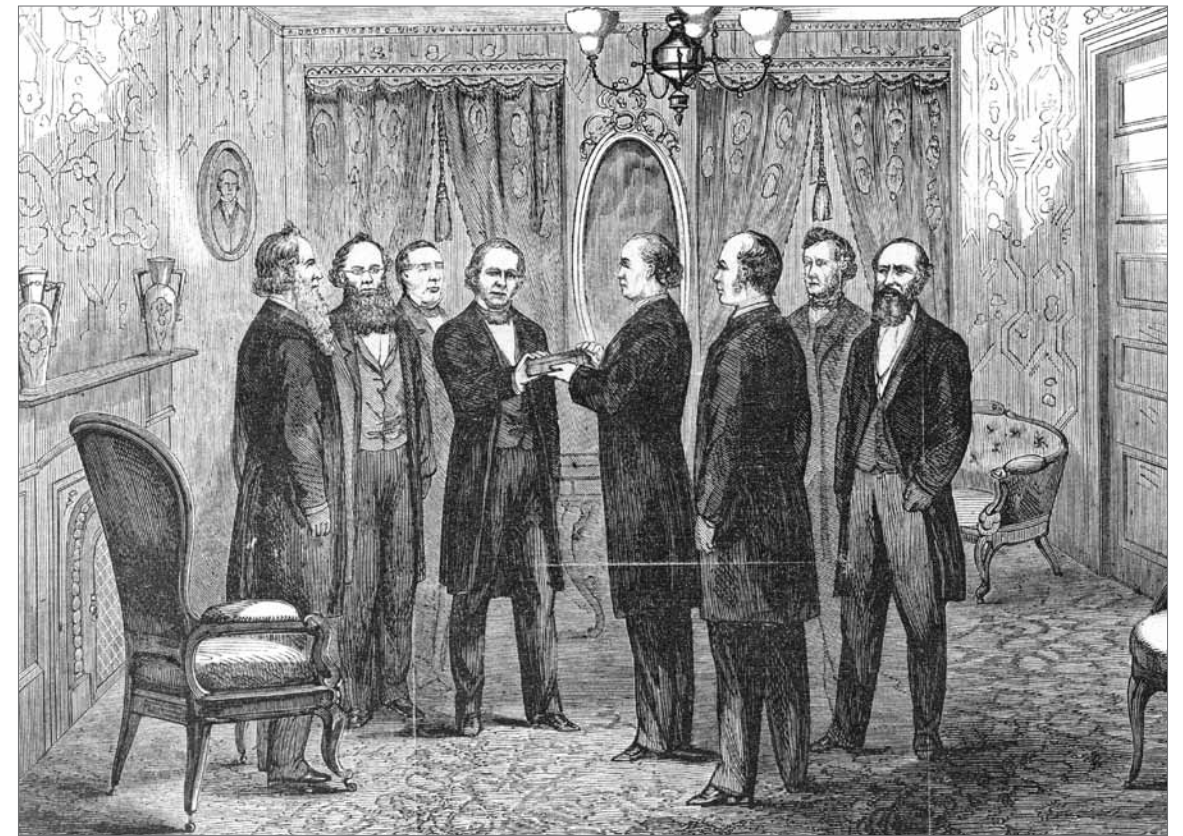
A few blocks away, detectives question Secretary of State Seward's household staff and add two more nameless individuals to the list: the man who attacked Seward and his accomplice, who was seen waiting outside. This brings the number of conspirators to six: Booth, Atzerodt, O'Laughlen, Arnold, and Seward's two unknown attackers.

Meanwhile, Washington is in a state of shock. Flags are flown at half-mast. Vice President Andrew Johnson is sworn in as the seventeenth president of the United States.

Throughout the nation, as the news spreads, Abraham Lincoln's

worst fears are being realized. Outraged Northerners mourn his loss and openly pledge revenge, while Southerners rejoice in the death of the man who wouldn't give them the freedom to form their own nation. The Civil War seems on the verge of erupting once again.

Believing that catching Lincoln's killer will end the unrest,

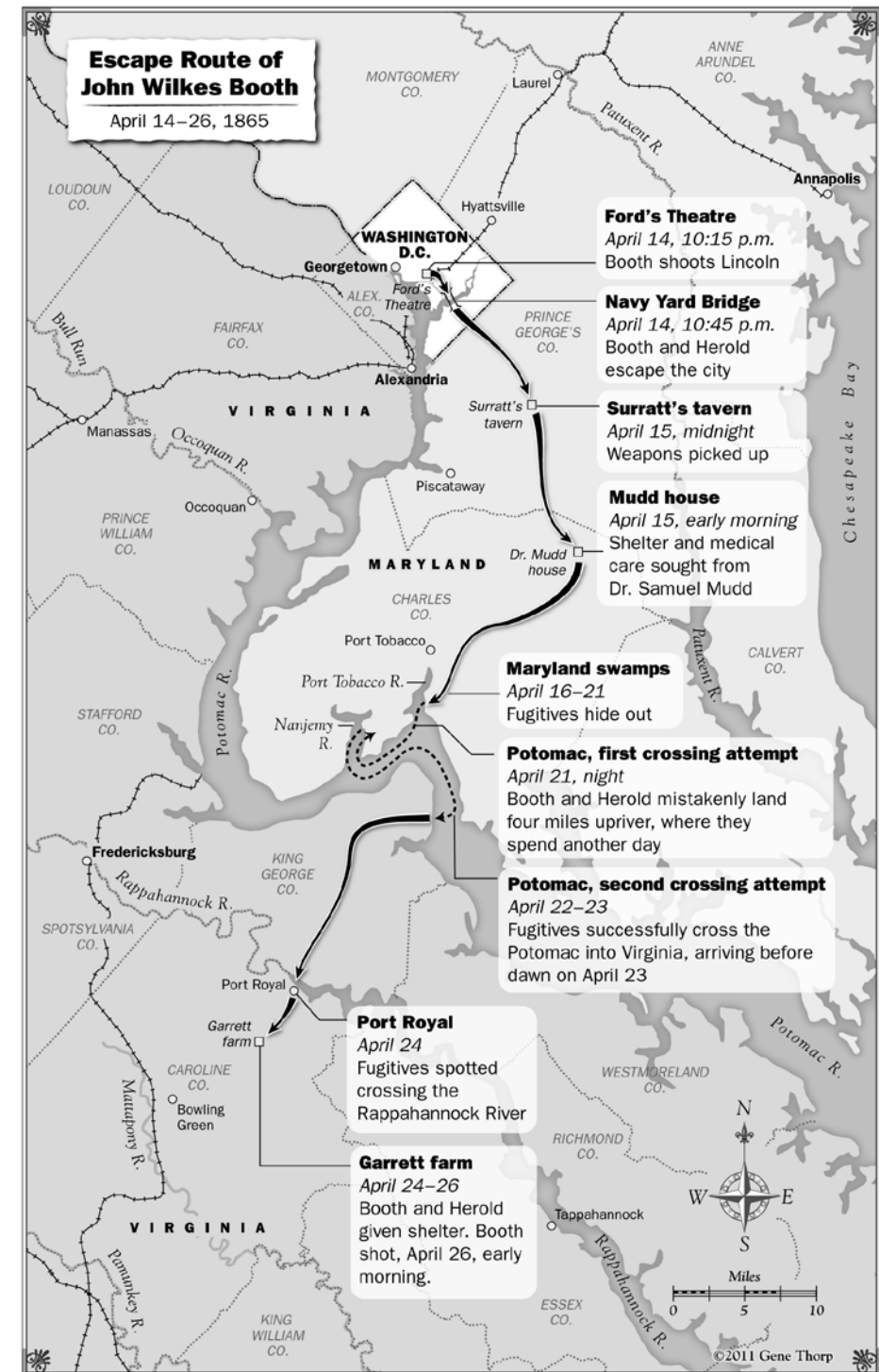


An illustration showing Andrew Johnson taking the oath of office for the presidency of the United States.

Secretary of War Stanton spends Saturday expanding the search, making the hunt for Lincoln's killers the biggest in American history. Soldiers, cavalry, and law enforcement officers throughout the Northern states are ordered to devote all their energies to finding John Wilkes Booth and his band of killers. Stanton sends a telegram to New York City, recalling Lafayette C. Baker, his former spymaster and chief of security, to help him in this effort.

As all this is going on, George Atzerodt wakes up at dawn on Saturday morning. He leaves the Pennsylvania House and walks across the city to nearby Georgetown, where he makes the unusual gesture of calling on Lucinda Metz, an old girlfriend. He tells her he is going away for a while, as if she might somehow want to come along. And then as mysteriously as he appears, Atzerodt leaves and pawns his revolver for ten dollars at a nearby store.

Fate is smiling upon George Atzerodt. Nobody stops him as he leaves Washington. Soon he is in Maryland and, incredibly, it appears that he will escape the manhunt.





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Noon

JOHN WILKES BOOTH IS MISERABLE. Flat on his back on a bed in the country home of Samuel Mudd, Booth screams in pain as the thirty-one-year-old doctor cuts off his boot and gently presses his fingers into the grossly swollen ankle.

After the assassination, Booth and David Herold rode hard all night, stopping only at a small tavern owned by Mary Surratt to pick up some rifles she'd hidden for them. Herold boasted that they'd killed the president. He also bought a bottle of whiskey so Booth could enjoy a nip or two to dull the pain. Then they rode ten more hard miles on tree-lined country roads. Every mile was more painful for Booth than the last.

Still, they're close. Very close. Mudd's estate is just north of Bryantown, Maryland, two-thirds of the way to the Potomac River.

Booth's pants and jacket are spattered with mud. His handsome face is unshaven and unhealthy looking. But more than anything else, John Wilkes Booth is helpless. He is completely dependent

upon David Herold to lead their escape into the South. At a time when he needs all his intelligence and energy to complete the second half of the perfect assassination, he is in too much pain to think straight.

Dr. Mudd says he's going to splint the leg. Booth lies back and lets him, even though he knows he will no longer be able to slip his



Dr. Samuel Mudd's medical kit.



left foot into a stirrup. Now Booth must ride one-legged—if he can ride at all.

Mudd finishes splinting the leg, then leaves Booth alone in an upstairs room to rest.

Booth rolls over, closes his eyes, and falls into a deep sleep, sure that he is being hunted but unaware that more than a thousand men on horseback are within a few miles of his location—and that Lafayette Baker is now on the case.

John Wilkes Booth's boot that Dr. Samuel Mudd cut open.