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JFK's Last Hundred Days: The Transformation of a Man and the Emergence of a Great President

Thurston Clarke

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A *Kirkus* Best Book of 2013

A revelatory, minute-by-minute account of JFK's last hundred days that asks what might have been

Fifty years after his death, President John F. Kennedy's legend endures. Noted author and historian Thurston Clarke argues that the heart of that legend is what might have been. As we approach the anniversary of Kennedy's assassination, JFK's Last Hundred Days reexamines the last months of the president's life to show a man in the midst of great change, finally on the cusp of making good on his extraordinary promise.

Kennedy's last hundred days began just after the death of two-day-old Patrick Kennedy, and during this time, the president made strides in the Cold War, civil rights, Vietnam, and his personal life. While Jackie was recuperating, the premature infant and his father were flown to Boston for Patrick's treatment. Kennedy was holding his son's hand when Patrick died on August 9, 1963. The loss of his son convinced Kennedy to work harder as a husband and father, and there is ample evidence that he suspended his notorious philandering during these last months of his life.

Also in these months Kennedy finally came to view civil rights as a moral as well as a political issue, and after the March on Washington, he appreciated the power of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., for the first time.

Though he is often depicted as a devout cold warrior, Kennedy pushed through his proudest legislative achievement in this period, the Limited Test Ban Treaty. This success, combined with his warming relations with Nikita Khrushchev in the wake of the Cuban missile crisis, led to a détente that British foreign secretary Sir Alec Douglas- Home hailed as the "beginning of the end of the Cold War."

Throughout his presidency, Kennedy challenged demands from his advisers and the Pentagon to escalate America's involvement in Vietnam. Kennedy began a reappraisal in the last hundred days that would have led to the withdrawal of all sixteen thousand U.S. military
advisers by 1965.

JFK's Last Hundred Days is a gripping account that weaves together Kennedy's public and private lives, explains why the grief following his assassination has endured so long, and solves the most tantalizing Kennedy mystery of all—not who killed him but who he was when he was killed, and where he would have led us.

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