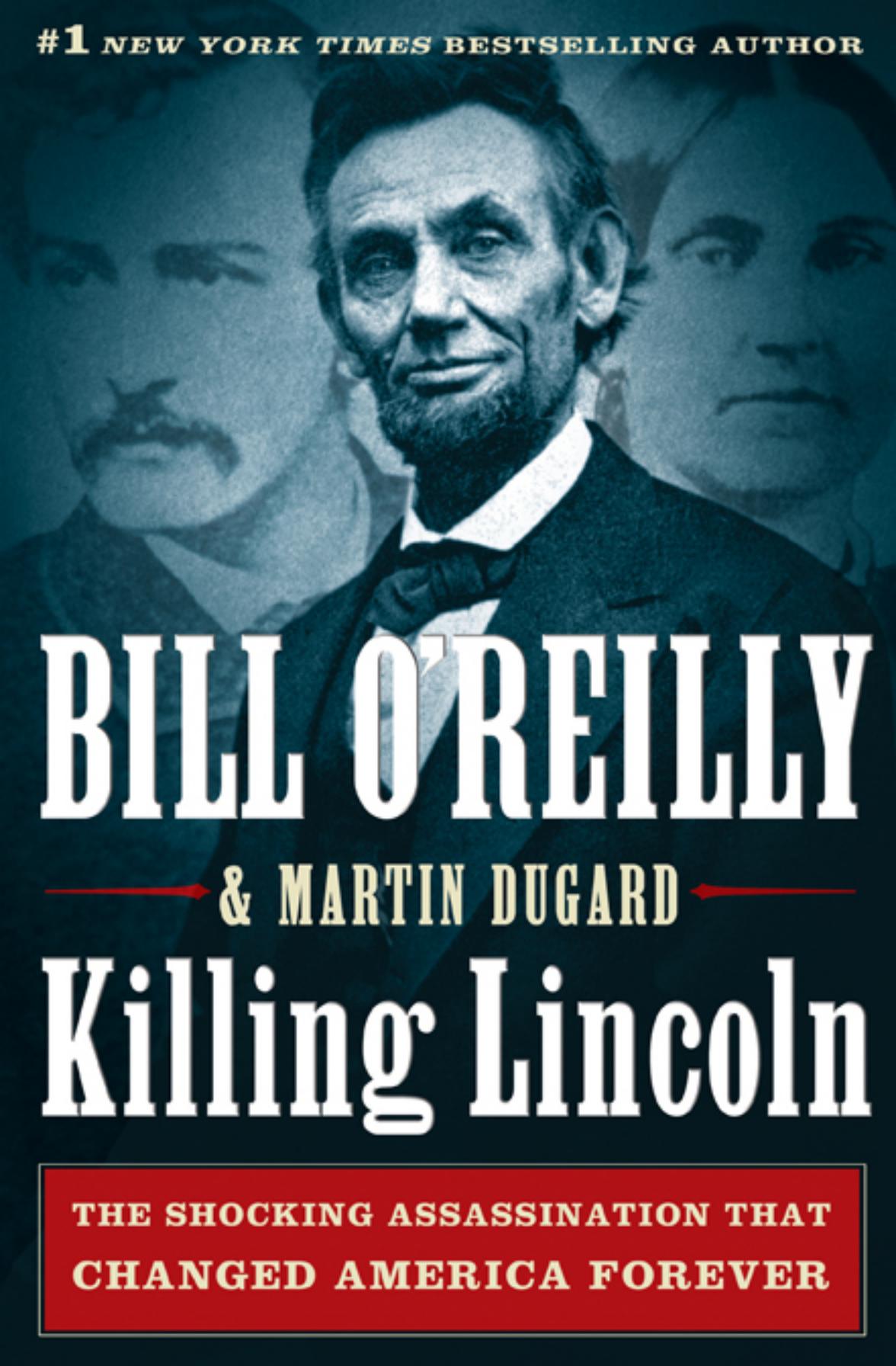


**#1** NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR



**BILL O'REILLY**

— **& MARTIN DUGARD** —

**Killing Lincoln**

**THE SHOCKING ASSASSINATION THAT  
CHANGED AMERICA FOREVER**



## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

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FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
3:30 P.M.

“Crook,” Abraham Lincoln says to his bodyguard, “I believe there are men who want to take my life. And I have no doubt that they will do it.”

The two men are walking down Pennsylvania Avenue, on their way back to the War Department for their second meeting of the day. Lincoln wants a short session with Stanton to discuss the fate of a Confederate ringleader who very recently made the mistake of crossing the border from Canada back into the United States. Stanton is in favor of arresting the man, while Lincoln prefers to let him slip away to England on the morning steamer. As soon as Lincoln makes his point, he aims to hurry back to the White House for the carriage ride he promised Mary.

William Crook is fond of the president and deeply unsettled by the comments.

“Why do you think so, Mr. President?”

Crook steps forward as they come upon a group of angry drunks. He puts his body between theirs and Lincoln’s, thus clearing the way for the president’s safe passage. Crook’s actions, while brave, are unnecessary—if the drunks realize that the president of the United States is sharing the same sidewalk, they give no notice.

Lincoln waits until Crook is beside him again, then continues his train of thought. "Other men have been assassinated," Lincoln says.

"I hope you are mistaken, Mr. President."

"I have perfect confidence in those around me. In every one of you men. I know that no one could do it and escape alive," Lincoln says. The two men walk in silence before he finishes his thought: "But if it is to be done, it is impossible to prevent it."

At the War Department, Lincoln once again invites Stanton and telegraph chief Major Thomas Eckert, the man who can break fireplace pokers over his arms, to attend *Our American Cousin* that night. Both men turn him down once again. Lincoln is upset by their rejection, but he doesn't show it outwardly. The only indication comes on the walk back to the White House, when he admits to Crook, "I do not want to go." Lincoln says it like a man facing a death sentence.



Inside the White House, Lincoln is pulled into an unscheduled last-minute meeting that will delay his carriage ride. Lincoln hides his exasperation and dutifully meets with New Hampshire congressman Edward H. Rollins. But as soon as Rollins leaves, yet another petitioner begs a few minutes of Lincoln's time. A weary Lincoln, all too aware that Mary will be most upset if he keeps her waiting much longer, gives former military aide Colonel William Coggeshall the benefit of a few moments.

Finally, Lincoln marches down the stairs and heads for the carriage. He notices a one-armed soldier standing off to one side of the hallway and overhears the young man tell another, "I would almost give my other hand if I could shake that of Lincoln."

Lincoln can't resist. "You shall do that and it shall cost you nothing, boy," he exclaims, smiling broadly as he walks over and grasps the young man's hand. He asks his name, that of his regiment, and in which battle he lost the arm.

Only then does Lincoln say his farewells and step outside. He finds Mary waiting at the carriage. She's in a tentative mood—they've spent so little time alone in the past few months that being together, just the two of them, feels strange. She wonders if Lincoln might be more comfortable if they brought some friends along for the open-air ride.

"I prefer to ride by ourselves today," he insists. Lincoln helps her into the barouche and then is helped up from the gravel driveway to take his seat beside her. The four-wheeled horse-drawn carriage features two facing double seats for passengers and a retractable roof. The driver sits in a box seat up front. Lincoln opts to keep the roof open, then covers their laps with a blanket, even though the temperature is a warm sixty-eight degrees.

The war has been hard on their marriage. Mary is delighted beyond words to see that Lincoln is in a lighthearted mood. She gazes into her husband's eyes and recognizes the man who once courted her.

"Dear Husband," she laughs, "you startle me by your great cheerfulness. I have not seen you so happy since before Willie's death."

"And well I may feel so, Mary. I consider this day, the war has come to a close." The president pauses. "We must both be more cheerful in the future—between the war and the loss of our darling Willie we have been very miserable."

Coachman Francis Burns guides the elegant pair of black horses down G Street. The pace is a quick trot. Behind them ride two cavalry escorts, just for safety. The citizens of Washington are startled to see the Lincolns out on the town. They hear loud laughter from Mary as the barouche passes by and see a grin spread across the president's face. When a group calls out to him as the carriage turns onto New Jersey Avenue, he doffs his trademark stovepipe hat in greeting.



Throughout the war, Lincoln has stayed in the moment, never allowing himself to dream of the future. But now he pours his heart out to Mary, talking about a proposed family trip to Palestine, for he is most curious about the Holy Land. And after he leaves office he wants the family to return to their roots in Illinois, where he will once again hang out his shingle as a country lawyer. The "Lincoln & Herndon" sign has never been taken down, at Lincoln's specific request to his partner.

"Mary," Lincoln says, "we have had a hard time of it since we came to Washington, but the war is over, and with God's blessing we may hope for four years of peace and happiness, and then we will go back to Illinois and pass the rest of our lives in quiet. We have laid by some money, and during this term we will try to save up more."

The carriage makes its way to the Navy Yard, where Lincoln steps on board USS *Montauk*. His intent is just a cursory peek at the storied ironclad, with its massive round turret constituting the deck's superstructure. But soon its crew mobs Lincoln, and he is forced to politely excuse himself so that he can return to Mary. Unbeknownst to Lincoln, the *Montauk* will soon serve another purpose.

Lincoln offers a final salute to the many admirers as coachman Burns turns the carriage back toward the White House. It's getting late, and the Lincolns have to be at the theater.

John Wilkes Booth is expecting them.

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