

Mobi The Path to Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson, Volume 1 by Robert A. Caro

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By: Robert A. Caro

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The Years of Lyndon Johnson is the political biography of our time. No president no era of American politics has been so intensively and sharply examined at a time when so many prime witnesses to hitherto untold or misinterpreted facets of a life, a career, and a period of history could still be persuaded to speak. The Path to Power, Book One, reveals in extraordinary detail the genesis of the almost superhuman drive, energy, and urge to power that set LBJ apart. Chronicling the startling early emergence of Johnsons political genius, it follows him from his Texas boyhood through the years of the Depression in the Texas hill Country to the triumph of his congressional debut in New Deal Washington, to his heartbreaking defeat in his first race for the Senate, and his attainment, nonetheless, of the national power for which he hungered. We see in him, from earliest childhood, a fierce, unquenchable necessity to be first, to win, to dominate coupled with a limitless capacity for hard, unceasing labor in the service of his own ambition. Caro shows us the big, gangling, awkward young Lyndon raised in one of the countrys most desperately poor and isolated areas, his education mediocre at best, his pride stung by his fathers slide into failure and financial ruin lunging for success, moving inexorably toward that ultimate impossible goal that he sets for himself years before any friend or enemy suspects what it may be. We watch him, while still at college, instinctively (and ruthlessly) creating the beginnings of the political machine that was to serve him for three decades. We see him employing his extraordinary ability to mesmerize and manipulate powerful older men, to mesmerize (and sometimes almost enslave) useful subordinates. We see him carrying out, before his thirtieth year, his first great political inspiration tapping-and becoming the political conduit for-the money and influence of the new oil men and contractors who were to grow with him to immense power. We follow, close up, the radical fluctuations of his relationships with the formidable Mr. Sam Rayburn (who loved him like a son and whom he betrayed) and with FDR himself. And we follow the dramas of his emotional life-the intensities and complications of his relationships with his family, his contemporaries, his girls; his wooing and winning of the shy Lady Bird; his secret love affair, over many years, with the mistress of one of his most ardent and generous supporters . . . Johnson driving his people to the point of exhausted tears, equally merciless with himself . . . Johnson bullying, cajoling, lying, yet inspiring an amazing loyalty . . . Johnson maneuvering to dethrone the unassailable old Jack Garner (then Vice President of the United States) as the New Deals connection in Texas, and seize the power himself . . . Johnson raging . . . Johnson hugging . . . Johnson bringing light and, indeed, life to the worn Hill Country farmers and their old-at-thirty wives via the districts first electric lines. We see him at once unscrupulous, admirable, treacherous, devoted. And we see the country that bred him the harshness and nauseating loneliness of the rural life; the tragic panorama of the Depression; the sudden glow of hope at the dawn of the Age of Roosevelt. And always, in the foreground, on the move, LBJ. Here is Lyndon Johnson his Texas, his Washington, his America in a book that brings us as close as we have ever been to a true perception of political genius and the American political process.


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