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# THE JERUSALEM ASSASSIN

THE  
FOUR  
ASSASSINS



*Only four times in U.S. history has an assassin successfully targeted the president. Many have tried. And who knows when the vigilance of the U.S. Secret Service will be put to the test again.*

The Syrian took a sip of the chilled water and pressed the cool glass against his right temple. A thousand thoughts were coursing through his brain, overheating him like a computer trying to perform too many simultaneous calculations. He began to consider how to kill an American president.

Al-Qassab knew many American presidents had been targeted over the years.

As he pondered all that he had learned, he was again surprised that among so many attempts, only four assassins had actually been successful.

John Wilkes Booth had famously shot Abraham Lincoln on the fourteenth of April, 1865. The location: Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., just a few blocks from the White House. Booth's weapon of choice: a .44 caliber pistol known as a derringer.

A far different plot was the most recent American assassin—Lee Harvey Oswald had taken down John F. Kennedy in Dealey Plaza, Dallas, Texas, on the twenty-second of November, 1963. When al-Qassab had pored over various history websites, he was intrigued to learn that even all these years later,

there were many Americans who believed Oswald had not acted alone, that he'd had help, and that's why a man named Jack Ruby had shot Oswald down while in police custody, to keep the man from exposing a broader conspiracy. The Syrian had no idea if any of that was true. He could certainly imagine others—possibly many others—were involved in the plot, particularly when he considered how difficult it was to reach such a carefully guarded target as an American head of state. Regardless, Oswald was certainly involved, and his weapon of choice had apparently been an Italian-made Carcano M91/38 bolt-action rifle.

That said, the two assassinations in between Lincoln and Kennedy were names that had been new to al-Qassab—both the killers and the presidents they targeted.

One was a man by the name of Charles J. Guiteau. He had shot President Andrew Garfield on the second of July, 1881. He did so at the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad Station in Washington, D.C., with a British Bulldog revolver firing .442 Webley bullets.

The other was a man named Leon Czolgosz. He had taken out President William McKinley on the sixth of September, 1901. Like Oswald, Czolgosz chose to strike while McKinley was out of Washington, away from the protective bubble of the White House. In this case, the city was Buffalo, New York. The occasion was the Pan-American Exposition. The location was a theater known as the Temple of Music, where McKinley was greeting the public following a major speech he'd delivered just the day before.

There were certain patterns al-Qassab could identify among these assassinations. For starters, he observed that each of the successful assassins had been a man. At one level, that made sense to the Syrian, and certainly the history of jihad suggested it was far easier to recruit men than women to kill for Allah. Then again, he mused, three of the four successful killers lived during an era when only a man was likely to be in the company of, and truly get close to, an American leader. Of course, that was not necessarily the case any longer, and he found himself wondering, *Might a woman raise fewer suspicions and thus potentially be able to get closer to her target than a man in the modern age?*

What al-Qassab also found interesting was that all four successful assassins had used guns. Not poison. Not knives. Not bombs. Guns. Only guns. Three had used handguns—small, easily concealed pistols, in fact. Only one had used a sniper rifle. There was an unassailable logic to this, but again these assassins were products of their times. The first three were able to get astonishingly close to their targets without being stopped. Yet that was no longer the case. The McKinley assassination had, in fact, moved Congress to commission the Secret Service precisely to make sure no one could ever again get so close to an American president with a handgun. That's why Oswald had used a rifle. He knew he couldn't get close to Kennedy, but he didn't need to be close. The window on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository apparently sufficed.

Yet al-Qassab knew it was precisely the Kennedy assassination that had moved the U.S. Secret Service to dramatically tighten up their security protocols. No longer would an American president ever be driven in an uncovered limousine, except perhaps on Inauguration Day, and even then, extraordinary measures would be taken to make it near impossible for a sniper to take such a shot as Oswald had that fateful November afternoon.

These four shooters now consumed his waking moments, the only men in history who had killed an American commander in chief. Were there any similarities or common patterns, anything he could glean from their lives or tactics that would help him become the fifth?

Three of the men—Booth, Czolgosz, and Oswald—each had a deep ideological contempt for the United States and its leaders, favoring the Confederacy or anarchy or socialism. All of their pursuits were misguided, but al-Qassab could certainly sympathize with their hatred for America, its policies, and all the wickedness it propagated in the world.

Guiteau, by contrast, considered his mission a personal vendetta. When the Garfield administration repeatedly rebuffed his ambitions to become a diplomat, Guiteau became enraged, plotted his revenge, and concluded that God had commanded him to kill the president. Guiteau was disillusioned and not a follower of Allah, whereas al-Qassab knew what it meant to have just such a holy mandate.

Curiously, all four assassins had been American citizens, born and raised in the U.S. And none had killed his target in a foreign country. If Kairos were to hit President Andrew Clarke, history suggested they should do it on American soil with an embedded agent. Yet al-Qassab knew there was a reason no American leader had been successfully assassinated in five decades. Attempts had been made, to be sure. Many of them. And he would carefully study each and every one of them. But the simple truth was the United States Secret Service was the best in the world at doing their jobs, and they were getting better all the time. What the higher-ups in Libya were asking seemed downright impossible. Yet al-Qassab refused to be discouraged. He would find a way. For as he turned and looked out at the sun now rising over London, he took solace in one of his most deeply held and cherished beliefs: nothing was impossible for Allah.

We hope you enjoyed your bonus chapter of *The Jerusalem Assassin*.

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