



The Avenger Takes His Place: Andrew Johnson and the 45 Days That Changed the Nation

Howard Means

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From the moment of Lincoln's death on April 15, 1865, until Andrew Johnson, his replacement, formally announced postwar plans on May 29, the fate of the country hung in the balance. War had left the Republic strained almost beyond endurance. Johnson's ascendancy to the presidency seemed the killing stroke even to the victorious North. A former slave owner from the border state of Tennessee, Johnson had been drunk at his inauguration as vice president; he was hated equally by the South and the North. Some Northerners were even convinced he had been part of the conspiracy behind Lincoln's assassination. Later, he escaped impeachment by a single vote.

As Howard Means reveals in this revisionist, powerfully persuasive, and absorbingly dramatic account of Johnson's first six weeks in office, the new president faced almost insurmountable odds. Yet, as Means shows, Johnson not only met but overcame them, preserving the Union for which so many had sacrificed their lives.

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