



# Landslide: LBJ and Ronald Reagan at the Dawn of a New America

*Jonathan Darman*

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*In politics, the man who takes the highest spot after a landslide is not standing on solid ground.*

In this riveting work of narrative nonfiction, Jonathan Darman tells the story of two giants of American politics, Lyndon Johnson and Ronald Reagan, and shows how, from 1963 to 1966, these two men—the same age, and driven by the same heroic ambitions—changed American politics forever.

The liberal and the conservative. The deal-making arm twister and the cool communicator. The Texas rancher and the Hollywood star. Opposites in politics and style, Johnson and Reagan shared a defining impulse: to set forth a grand story of America, a story in which he could be the hero. In the tumultuous days after the Kennedy assassination, Johnson and Reagan each, in turn, seized the chance to offer the country a new vision for the future. Bringing to life their vivid personalities and the anxious mood of America in a radically transformative time, Darman shows how, in promising the impossible, Johnson and Reagan jointly dismantled the long American tradition of consensus politics and ushered in a new era of fracture. History comes to life in Darman's vivid, fly-on-the wall storytelling.

Even as Johnson publicly revels in his triumphs, we see him grow obsessed with dark forces he believes are out to destroy him, while his wife, Lady Bird, urges her husband to put aside his paranoia and see the world as it really is. And as the war in Vietnam threatens to overtake his presidency, we witness Johnson desperately struggling to compensate with ever more extravagant promises for his Great Society.

On the other side of the country, Ronald Reagan, a fading actor years removed from his Hollywood glory, gradually turns toward a new career in California politics. We watch him delivering speeches to crowds who are desperate for a new leader. And we see him wielding his well-honed instinct for timing, waiting for Johnson's majestic promises to prove empty before he steps back into the spotlight, on his long journey toward the presidency.

From Johnson's election in 1964, the greatest popular-vote landslide in American history, to the pivotal 1966 midterms, when Reagan burst forth onto the national stage, *Landslide* brings alive a country transformed—by riots, protests, the rise of television, the shattering of consensus—and the two towering personalities whose choices in those moments would reverberate through the country for decades to come.

## **Praise for *Landslide***

“Richly detailed . . . *Landslide* is a vivid retelling of a tumultuous three years in American history, and Mr. Darman captures in full the personalities and motives of two of the twentieth century's most consequential politicians.”—*The New York Times*

“Novel and even surprising . . . *Landslide* deftly reminds readers that Johnson and Reagan both trafficked in grandiose oratory and promoted utopian visions at odds with the social complexity of modern America.”—*The Washington Post*

“Riveting . . . Darman portrays [Johnson and Reagan] as polar opposites of political attraction. . . . Animated by the artful insight that they were men of disappointment headed toward an appointment with history . . . A tale about myths and a nation that believed them, about a world of a half century ago now gone forever.”—*The Boston Globe*

“Alert to the subtleties of politics and political history, Darman, a former correspondent for *Newsweek*, nimbly explores delusion and self-delusion at the highest levels.”—*The New York Times Book Review*

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