

New York Times, deftly seduces the reader into his relentlessly fretful, sweaty-palmed life with self-deprecating humor and a robust knowledge of malaise's history. The story of how Smith lost his virginity, one major catalyst for his anxiety, is uncomfortably honest, and falls into such a gray category of what defines consensual sex that even Dan Savage would think twice before doling out

advice. Smith also describes the oft-ignored physical effects of anxiety — for him, it's the feeling of an icicle piercing his chest, sweaty palms, gnawing his fingertips to a pulp — with such acuity that it paints a better picture than most mental health professionals ever could.

Unfortunately, the book loses its momentum by the halfway point. OK, we get it, an anxious life can be an inexhaustible cycle of torture and relief, but at some point we want to know, Mr. Smith, what are you going to do about it? There is plenty of anecdotal exploration of anxiety, but fairly few examples of how he manages it and leads a healthy and productive life — which he clearly does.

For those who live or know someone who lives with anxiety, this is a great crash course about the disorder's daily struggles, but for those looking for a meatier discussion of one the world's oldest ailments and its treatment, keep looking. — *Alex Notman*

The Passage of Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson

By Robert Caro. Alfred A. Knopf, 2012. \$35.

If it's possible that Barack Obama has not read all 712 pages of Robert Caro's fourth volume on Lyndon Johnson,

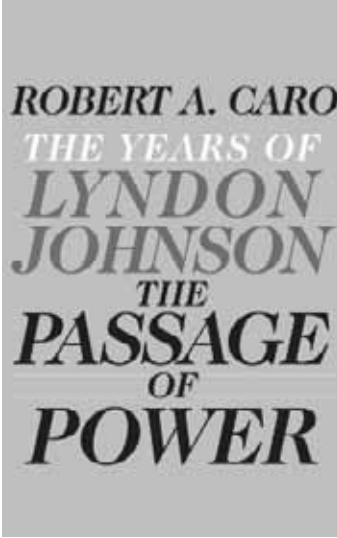
we humbly suggest that he do so over the holidays.

Not that this president should or could emulate Johnson in every way, but he does need to employ plain old arm-twisting and amassing of political debt with some of the relentless brilliance that LBJ showed. This, the fourth in Caro's amazing series, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*, covers only 1958 to 1964, but those years are a textbook in the use of political power.

The most fascinating example came after Kennedy's assassination when Johnson flew back to D.C. from Dallas, instantly working at his fierce pace cementing power he had lost in his miserable vice-presidential years. Caro describes in great detail how LBJ eventually passed legislation probably stronger than anything Kennedy and his Ivy Leaguers could have done. How ironic that the hick from Texas, so scorned especially by Robert Kennedy, achieved so much in his presidency derived out of the death of John F. Kennedy.

Johnson's use of power was not always pretty, to understate it, and sometimes agonizingly timed. Caro tells how he waited too long before entering the presidential primary against young Jack, and most tragically, how he could not muster the personal and political will to extricate the U.S. from Vietnam. Johnson's Vietnam years will be the subject of Caro's fifth book in the series, a volume we're eager to read.

If you love history, politics, biography and want to share his joy of piecing together puzzles of freshly discovered detail, Robert Caro's latest treasure is for you. — *Anita Johnson*



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(Reviewed this issue)

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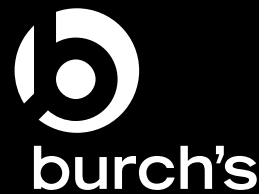
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