

196

Death of a Nobody

Jack Ruby was like a character out of nineteenth-century Russian fiction. Gogol or Dostoevski would have found comprehensible this strange, unhappy, obsessed man. In the denouement of a historical tragedy, he suddenly stepped into the glare of the television lights and fatally wounded the suspected assassin.

Nothing in his prior life seemed to have prepared him for any significant role. He had lived a rather mean and shadowy existence in the back streets of Chicago and Dallas. He was an unsuccessful promoter, a small-time nightclub operator, a vaguely disreputable figure known to the police. He was a nobody. But charged up by the emotional atmosphere of those November days, Ruby acted upon his lurking impulse to violence.

Was he momentarily a madman or a conspirator? Almost everything that is known of him suggests that he was temporarily insane when he killed Lee Harvey Oswald. Through his last conscious moments Ruby insisted that he acted alone. Those who believe otherwise most likely would not have learned additional information even if he had lived to stand trial a second time. The stress of his involvement apparently clouded his mind.

Now he is gone. And men are left to ponder once again the mysterious interplay of chance and design, of the senses and the rational, called history.