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Tragedy of Errors

The negotiated peace reached between the Kennedys and Look magazine has been described in some places as Jackie's "Total Victory." We find it hard to identify any winners in this sad struggle. In retrospect the astonishing thing is that anyone believed there could be.

Look has agreed to delete certain passages that Mrs. Kennedy and her associates found objectionable. But in the process the substance of the expurgated material has now been widely reported — and received more attention than it would have if there had been no large collision. Moreover, a German magazine which purchased republication rights from Look has announced that it feels free to publish the unedited version; will the litigation now be shifted to German soil? Where will it end?

This has been a tragedy of errors, perhaps inevitable when any book is conceived under the terms of the original Manchester-Kennedy accord. Manchester's integrity has been impugned; the Ken-

nedys have been portrayed as attempting to revise history, or suppress it. Friends have turned on each other.

Failures of communication have contributed to the shambles; too many intermediaries were involved. But the basic issue stemmed from a mutually dubious arrangement in which a writer abdicated ultimate control of his own findings. "Authorized" biographies are notoriously suspect and usually dull; "authorized" history is even less palatable. The disaster was compounded when Jacqueline and Robert Kennedy initially delegated to others the responsibility for reading the book—and their minds.

Out of respect for John F. Kennedy's memory, we can only voice the hope that the Look agreement will pave the way for total settlement of the controversy, a full ceasefire and an avoidance of further recrimination and scapegoat hunting. There can be no happy ending to this story.