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**Bill Slocum**

## Jackie's Run-In With the Ghost

Nothing looks worse in soulless chill, black print than honest emotion and certain truths.

John F. Kennedy's widow is making that sad discovery. I could have told her. I went through her experience from the other side, no less than six times.

I have no opinion now about whether she is right or wrong in trying to block the publication of William Manchester's book. My nationality and my occupation make me mighty uneasy when any form of censorship seems involved.

I became something of an expert of the chill effect of being a ghost author of six books. In every one of them, with varying degrees of rancor, people were wounded or terrified when they saw in print what they had said in relaxed talk.

The matter of truth was never, but never the issue. Truth does not seem to be the issue in the Kennedy-Manchester row, either.

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IT'S AS SIMPLE as this. A man or a woman — I've dealt with both — sits down with somebody in whom he or she has a certain amount of confidence and tells a story.

It is a story easily told and the hatred or the love or even the humor of it is savored by the teller as he or she talks. Then the story is put into type. The teller is appalled.

As a reasonably skillful ghost I can be assumed to have caught the story accurately (none of my clients denied this). But I was merely a reporter, a stenographer, if you will. I was not a mind reader beyond a routine knowledge of human nature.

The teller, in the telling, is taken upon his or her emotions. The same emotions that were felt when the incident occurred return, in toto. The same hatreds, loves, fears.

But these emotions are not fully present when the teller reads what he or she has told. Now questions come into the teller's mind.

A man says, "My God, I sound like a roughneck here." I wrote a book for one of the greatest roughnecks of all time and he ruined it because he wanted to sound like Sir Laurence Olivier rather than Jack Dempsey.

Time not only heals. It terrifies.

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I NEVER FELT I owed any subject anything but an honest count. As a ghost I was an admitted friend of the subject and would tell the story as sympathetically as I could — I ruled out lying and I ruled out reading like a fool.

The entire matter boils down to: Was Manchester handed a literary plum because he was accepted as a sympathetic friend of the family? Or because he was an esteemed writer?

It is quite likely that both conditions existed. The first in the mind of Mrs. Kennedy. The second in the mind of Manchester. They were merely being polite to each other until it hurt.