

Our Man Hoppe

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**A Simple
Explanation**

OSWALD AND Tippit and Ruby. How it brings it all back. How it evokes once again the confusing emotions of those first terrible days—the loss, the aloneness and the wordless fears.

From Friday to Sunday we sat in front of our television sets, watching the barbaric pageantry of his funeral—the muffled drums, the riderless horse. We sat and we watched. Some of us wept. But mostly we watched in silence. It was a time of unsaid things, a time of deep unease.

We grieved. It was not, I think, that we loved him when he was alive. Some of us liked him, some admired him. But the right wing hated him. The left wing scorned him. He was reviled by segregationists, mistrusted by businessmen, feared by anti-Catholics. But, oh, how we loved him when he was dead. How fervently we told each other how much we had loved him. How fervently we absolved ourselves, during those strange days, of any guilt.

So we sat and we watched. And we waited. What we wanted most desperately, I think, was a simple, orderly answer to explain our loss. For, like bewildered children, we didn't understand. We wanted a clear, concise answer, one that would make life seem simple and orderly again. We wanted the security this would bring. We wanted it so.

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THE RIGHT WING, which had hated him, had the simple, orderly answer. It was all a vast conspiracy, involving Khrushchev, Castro and high government officials. Oswald had been secretly trained for months in Russia at a school for assassins. He had pulled the trigger on orders from Moscow and Havana. It was

clear and concise, simple and orderly. No one in the right wing was to blame. The guilt was heaped on the Communists, on whom most of the disasters in life are to be blamed.

The left wing, which had scorned him, had the simple, orderly answer. It was all a vast conspiracy, involving right wing Dallas fanatics, the Secret Service, the FBI and the CIA. Oswald hadn't done it at all. He was merely the scapegoat. Ruby had killed him to shut him up. It would all become clear and concise, simple and orderly, if the fascist masterminds could be exposed. The guilt was theirs and theirs alone.

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CO WE WAITED. And now, ten months later, the Warren Commission has at last issued its exhaustive official report. And nowhere in it is the simple, orderly answer we sought.

There is Oswald, frustrated, embittered, unwanted. There is Ruby, the unloved avenger. There is Officer Tippit, killed for no good reason. There are the misstatements by police, retouched photographs, mistakes by security officials, unexplained minor characters. It is a compendium of errors and accidents and petty egos.

Those who believe that disasters are caused by vast conspiracies will never accept the report. They will go on, I'm sure, poking holes and demanding a simple, orderly answer.

But the rest of us, I think, must accept it. We must accept not only the report, but what it implies: that usually there are no simple, orderly answers; that life is vastly complex, often irrational and sometimes seemingly senseless. I think we must accept the deep insecurity this viewpoint brings. And build from there.