AMERICAN HOMICIDE: NARRATIVE AS DISINFORMATION

by Ian David

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Arts

School of Literature, Art and Media
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Sydney University
2017
AMERICAN HOMICIDE: NARRATIVE AS DISINFORMATION

Declaration

Abstract

Acknowledgements

“American Homicide” Screenplay

Dissertation:

1 JFK 1
2 The Narratives 2
3 Wall of Mirrors 7
4 Damage Control 8
5 Hidden Motives of the American Anti-hero 9
6 The Patsy 11
7 Cold War Child 12
8 A Little Mass of Stars 16
9 The Minds of Others 17
10 Affective Logic 18
11 The Screenplay 20
12 The Double Agent 24

Bibliography

References
DECLARATION
I, Ian David, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work, except as acknowledged in the text.
I hereby declare that the work contained within this dissertation has not been submitted to any other university or institution as a part of whole requirement for any other degree.
ABSTRACT
The critical function of narrative is to reveal character; a process of describing motivation. Without motive we can observe, but not judge, a character’s actions. In 1963, President John Kennedy had many enemies with powerful motives to see him removed, one way or the other, from the administration of the United States. When Kennedy was assassinated, Lee Oswald, the man declared by the Warren Commission to be the assassin, was deemed to have no discernible motive for the crime.
Constructing a narrative from the best available evidence offers an instrument revealing Lee Oswald had a motive for actions that did not include the assassination of John Kennedy. Moreover, those who were motivated to assassinate the president constructed a false narrative to imply Oswald's guilt and in so doing implied their own.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to the Australian taxpayer for providing a Research Scholarship to undertake this work, and the University of Sydney for offering me the means to complete that work in a nurturing environment.

I am grateful to Sue Woolfe for starting me on this journey; Liam Semler, Judith Beveridge, Peter Kirkpatrick, Rebecca Johnke and Peter Marks for their invaluable support and guidance along the way; Barbara Kearns, who kept me on the path and my Supervisor, David Kelly, for his generosity, patience and wisdom.
The very word "secrecy" is repugnant in a free and open society; and we are as a people inherently and historically opposed to secret societies, to secret oaths and to secret proceedings. We decided long ago that the dangers of excessive and unwarranted concealment of pertinent facts far outweighed the dangers which are cited to justify it.

President John F. Kennedy
Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City
April 27, 1961
INT  214 WEST NEELY ST, DALLAS  DAY  240463

A baby’s cry echoes through an untidy, rundown apartment. From the kitchen, LEE Oswald (23) carries his baby daughter, JUNE, to his pregnant wife MARINA (21) sitting on the toilet, puffing on a cigarette.

MARINA
(in Russian)
You fucking guy, you can’t even carry a baby!

Lee’s a serious young man, weedy with narrow shoulders and thinning hair. He looks older, but he’s just a boy.

LEE
(in Russian)
If things work out I’ll come and get you.

MARINA
(in Russian)
If you say so... yeah, sure.

She’s hurt his feelings.

LEE
(in Russian)
You want this to work out, don’t you!

MARINA
(in Russian)
You idiot.

Marina kicks the toilet door shut and the front doorbell rings.

LEE
(to door, in Russian)
I’m going to make it work. New Orleans is where all my family come from. I’ve got contacts there.

Lee hurries back down the cluttered hall to open the front door to RUTH Paine (30), a slender, austere figure in blouse and long skirt.

LEE
Marina’s not ready.

EXT  214 WEST NEELY ST, DALLAS  DAY  240463

In the driveway, Ruth opens the back of her station wagon for Lee to pack a baby’s bassinet, bags and suitcases. He’s eager to get away.

RUTH
Where will you stay?

LEE
An aunt.
RUTH
And she knows you’re coming?

LEE
She took care of me when I was small. They live in Lakeview, that part of town.

RUTH
I don’t know New Orleans very well. She’s a nice person?

LEE
Last I heard.

With June on her hip, Marina carries out a bundle of blankets for Lee, but he takes the baby.

LEE
Hello, Junie... hi, Junie. (nuzzles his face into her chest)

MARINA
(in Russian)
Don’t, Alik.

LEE
(in Russian)
She likes it... she loves her Papa.

Marina dumps the blankets in the station wagon. She has a coarseness about her, despite her sweet, waifish face. Ruth pats her and climbs behind the wheel. Lee hands the baby back and throws his two duffel bags onto the backseat of the station wagon.

RUTH
(to Marina)
I’ll be back in half an hour.

EXT   DALLAS BUS DEPOT   DAY  240463

Lee stows his duffel bags in the luggage bay of a Greyhound bus and climbs aboard.

INT   GREYHOUND COACH   DAY   250463

Lee wakes, his head against the window, to the dawn lights of New Orleans and the strains of Chubby Checker’s ‘Let’s Twist Again’.

TITLES:  AMERICAN HOMICIDE
Lee eats at the kitchen table while his Aunt LILLIAN (63), a small, portly southern belle, cooks pancakes. Lee can see into the living room where his Uncle Charles ‘DUTZ’ Murret (62) wolfs a pancake, watching Cassius Clay on television, sparring in a London gym.

LEE
Betcha a dollar he whips that English fighter.

DUTZ
I got better ways to lose a dollar.

LEE
Betcha he does it in three rounds.

DUTZ
I'll hold you to that, son.

Aunt Lillian slides another pancake onto Lee’s plate.

LEE
Soon as I find a job, I'm sending for Marina and Junie. They love this kinda food.

Frypan in hand, Lillian looks in on Dutz, he’s very pleased with Clay’s gliding low-glove shuffle.

LILLIAN
(to Dutz)
You done?

DUTZ
Don’t he look good! Louisiana, done itself proud with that boy.

With a fearsome punch, Cassius Clay knocks a speed ball clear off its wall mount and Dutz leaps out of his chair, almost breaking the braces holding the pants over his paunch.

DUTZ
Whoa!

Amused at Dutz’s endorsement of the champion, Lee mops up his syrup.

LILLIAN
What are you doing tomorrow?

LEE
Gonna find my daddy.
Lee stalks a line of head stones until he stops at an overgrown grave to read the weathered stone... ‘Robert E. Lee Oswald, Died August 19th, 1939’

Lee checks the entrance to 544 Camp St, then sets to climbing the creaking stairs into the dark to find...

... DELPHINE Roberts (56), typist and office guardian. One look at Lee and she goes back to her letter.

LEE
Is Mr. Banister here?

DELPHINE
Your name?

LEE
Lee Oswald.

DELPHINE
You know Mancusos’s?

BANISTER
Where are you staying?

LEE
With my uncle Dutz.

BANISTER
Dutz Murret, Dave knows Dutz.

Across the table, David FERRIE (45) is a sight even for poor eyes... due to his alopecia praecox, he’s stationed a red, ratty drugstore toupee over his scalp and drawn a pair of arching eyebrows on his forehead with black liner.

BANISTER
Dave’s good for a laugh, but if I want a drinking buddy...
FERRIE
And if I wanted to pickle my liver, I’d take it out and put it in a jar.

BANISTER
You drink, Lee?

LEE
Don’t drink, sir, and I don’t smoke.

BANISTER
Well, I supposed somebody has to.

FERRIE
For Pete’s sake, Guy, leave him alone.

BANISTER
(to Oswald)
You’ve been highly recommended. Dave’s been helping me with the desegregation campaign, but I’ve got some thing else for you.

LEE
Yes, sir.

BANISTER
We don’t want this garbage program run by nigger-lovers in D.C.

LEE
I’m not comfortable with that term, sir.

BANISTER
It’s my way of talking. If you’re uncomfortable, well, it don’t bother me.

LEE
I’m a supporter of better race relations.

BANISTER
Made a study of it, have you?

LEE
I read books and try to keep learning as much as I can.

BANISTER
Well, they say a self-educated man has a fool for a teacher. But, I suppose we should be talking about your job.

LEE
That’s why I’m here.
BANISTER
You like the smell of coffee? Oh, shit, what am I saying, who doesn’t?

FERRIE
It’s unAmerican not to like coffee.

BANISTER
That’s right. (to Lee) William B. Reily Coffee Company, just down the street... go and ask for Alfred, a man called Alfred Claude, tell him I sent you.

LEE
I came here to do the work I was trained for.

BANISTER
Jesus, I was told you had some experience in these matters. You’ll need some cash. We’re setting you up, so everything looks kosher.

INT MURRET HOUSE DAY 050563
Phone cradled against his neck, Lee runs a thick pencil over an entry in the directory, sliding a finger down the list to find ‘Hazel Oswald’.

He dials.

LEE
(into phone)
My name is Lee Oswald, m’am... I’m the son of Robert E. Lee Oswald... yes, Marguerite’s my mother.

INT HAZEL OSWALD’S HOUSE DAY 050563
In a dark, poky living room, Lee holds a large, framed photograph of his father, Robert Oswald...

HAZEL
Worked in insurance.

... as Aunt Hazel (73), a dry stick in a knitted housecoat, riffles through a shoebox of photos

HAZEL
Such a shame.

LEE
What was he like?
HAZEL
Kind and honest. People said that about him. I never knew him real well, but I always felt in my heart there was a reason God made me keep that very fine photograph.

Hazel holds up a flattering portrait of her late husband.

HAZEL
Now, here's one of your Uncle William... my, they were good-lookin' fellas... don't you think?

Lee doesn't bother to look up.

HAZEL
You can take that. You gotta have your papa's picture to put on the wall.

LEE
So, you didn’t know him?

HAZEL
Well, as I say, he was in insurance, travellin' all the time. He died before the war... I remember the funeral.

LEE
Yes, m'am.

HAZEL
Your momma was carrying you, standing at the grave.

LEE
He died before I was born.

HAZEL
That’s what I say, she was carrying you in her belly, it's an expression. How old are you, son?

LEE
What about other members of the family?

HAZEL
Far as I know, they're all dead.

EXT NEW ORLEANS DAY 050563
Nightfall approaches as a solitary figure makes his way down the street... it's Lee, his father’s photo tucked under his arm. At the corner, he shoves the photo, frame and all, into a trashcan and keeps walking.
On a gantry, in overalls and clutching an oil can, Lee peers into a large copper vat of churning coffee beans. By his side, a workmate, John BRANYON (25) and the supervisor, Emmett BARBEE (45), enjoy the rich aroma.

BARBEE
You’re looking at the finest coffee in the state of Louisiana.

BRANYON
It’ll taste like mud...

LEE
Smells OK.

BRANYON
... once it’s been ground.

As he’s thinking that one over, Branyon slaps Lee’s back, knocking the wind out of him.

BRANYON
Ain’t you got a funny bone!

BARBEE
Lee, you see the nipple in the centre spindle?

LEE
A nipple?

BARBEE
Push the oil gun in there and give it one pump, just one, don’t want any oil spoilin’ those beans.

As Lee reaches to push his oil can nozzle onto the nipple, Barbee and Branyon agree with a look, they’ve got a live one here.

INT  4905 MAGAZINE ST., NEW ORLEANS  NIGHT  090563

Pushing open the front door, Lee drops his duffel bags in the hall of a dusty apartment. Throwing his keys on the kitchen bench, he takes a look around at the threadbare furnishings. It’s a dump.

INT  BANISTER’S OFFICE  DAY  100563

Guy Banister puffs on a cigar... Ferrie ruffles through a scrapbook... and LEE studies a photograph on the wall of Banister shaking hands with two Klansmen.

BANISTER
(to Lee)

Delphine put that up.
LEE
You’re in the Klan?

BANISTER
Hell, no, I was invited to their barbecue.

Ferrie hands Lee the scrapbook and stabs a finger at a newspaper cutting, showing Castro and some young Cuban men (FPCC Members).

FERRIE
See that? Castro pays ‘em. That’s why they’ve got their office in New York. They send the money to the Cuban United Nations office.

BANISTER
There’s an opening here to get something done, Lee.

LEE
Yes, sir.

BANISTER
You know what we’re trying to do?

LEE
Well, I got some idea.

BANISTER
You got no idea. What do you know about Fair Play For Cuba?

LEE
They support the Castro regime.

BANISTER
They’re fuckin’ commies! Now, listen. You’re gonna start up a Fair Play For Cuba Committee here. I don’t care how you do it. Everyone thinks you’re a commie, so you’re gonna start up a little operation.

FERRIE
You’re gonna flush ‘em out.

BANISTER
Yeah, you write to them, tell them you wanna join. You know how to do that?

LEE
Of course, I do.

BANISTER
You join and then you tell ‘em you’re gonna set up an office and find some members.
Lee hauls a bassinet and a suitcase from Ruth’s station wagon and struggles up the steps...

... to find Ruth, Marina and baby June looking disconsolate in the shabby kitchen - Marina screws up her nose, she doesn’t like the apartment.

Lee drops the bassinet and suitcase and heads outside for more stuff.

Lee and Marina attempt carnal knowledge without making a sound. It’s painful. In the flurry of moving hands, gasps, groans, Lee tries to mount Marina, but she forces his face down between her legs. Lee gets the idea at last, and recoils.

Marina indicates she wants Lee to get back down there.
MARINA
(sotto voce in Russian)
You stupid!

Lee clings to Marina.

LEE
(sotto voce in Russian)
I want to feel loved.

MARINA
(sotto voce in Russian)
You’re too fast, Alik, always too fast.

LEE
(sotto voce in Russian)
I can’t help it.

MARINA
(sotto voce in Russian)
Does that make me feel better... no, no... I want you to last longer, like a real man should.

LEE
(sotto voce in Russian)
Let me try to do that, let papa do it, I can do it.

MARINA
(sotto voce in Russian)
No, go down there, first... do it for me, Alik.

Lee does as he’s told.

MARINA
(sotto voce in Russian)
Oh, Alik... the sheets are wet!

LEE
(sotto voce in Russian)
I’m sorry, my love... I’m so sorry.

In a surge of pleasure, Marina grits her teeth, her gaze fixed on the dark ceiling.

INT LIVING ROOM - 4905 MAGAZINE ST. (NEW ORLEANS) NIGHT 110563

Wide awake, Ruth lies on the sofa in her nightdress, staring at the ceiling. Her feet, in white socks, are elevated, resting on the armrest. She’s heard every whisper, every cry.
Under a hoist, Adrian ALBA (43) drains the oil out of a shiny black Chrysler sedan when Lee enters the workshop, hands thrust into his pockets to amble down.

ALBA
Hey, Lee.

LEE
Hi.

ALBA
A little slow, next door?

Lee studies the underside of the Chrysler.

LEE
FBI car?

ALBA
They shoulda stuck with Buicks.

Lee strolls over to the customer waiting area to take a seat and thumb through a pile of gun magazines.

LEE
I’m thinking to apply for a job at NASA.

ALBA
Oh, yeah.

LEE
I was a radar operator in the Marines… (they need people like me)

Lee looks up, disappointed to see Barbee has entered the workshop and has spotted him.

ALBA
Oh, yeah.

Barbee circles around to stand over Lee.

BARBEE
Sometime soon, you oughta get off your scrawny chicken ass and oil something, Lee.

LEE
Yeah, sure… I’m on my break.

Lee selects another magazine… Barbee strolls over to inspect the underside of the Chrysler.
FBI car.

BARBEE
You spend more time reading magazines in here than doing your work.

LEE
It’s just bad luck, you keep turning up when I take a break. Anyway, what’s the problem, everything’s oiled up and working?

BARBEE
If you don’t want to be around here long, that’s OK, but Mr. Monaghan, he’s already talking about you being anywhere else you want real soon.

LEE
I hear John Branyon talking about getting a job at NASA. How do you know I’m not working on something big?

BARBEE
I don’t care if you wanna join the space program. Just make it look like you’ve got a job here. It don’t make us look good with freeloaders sitting around, reading magazines and getting paid for it.

EXT 544 CAMP STREET (NEW ORLEANS) DAY 290563

Ferrie and Lee make their way down to Banister’s office.

FERRIE
I can appreciate you feel bad. I sense it.

LEE
I don’t feel bad. I’m frustrated. I want to push this thing down the road a bit.

FERRIE
Now, no one’s blaming you, Lee.

LEE
That’s great, no one’s blaming me!

FERRIE
Just be patient. We’ve got things, we’ve got something else in mind. I’ve just got to find the right people to deal with the details.

LEE
What details?
FERRIE
Some of the Cubans, they’re feeling the same as you, like they want something to happen. See, the thing with Castro is he’s moving people into Miami all the time.

LEE
Agents?

FERRIE
Yeah, so we have to be very careful... I don’t want to say too much... but, we’re thinking about training guerrillas, send ‘em back into Cuba. There might be something in it for you... something you could help out with.

INT  BANISTER’S OFFICE  NIGHT  300563
Lee’s bemused, watching Banister caress his gun as though he’s pulled it out of his pants. He aims out the window, through the blinds.

LEE
I wrote again to the Fair Play For Cuba national director in New York. He doesn’t want me doing anything. I told him I was looking for an office, but told me not to do that. He says please avoid (reads) “unnecessary incidents which frighten away prospective supporters.”

BANISTER
I feel that gentleman is going to be a little disappointed.

LEE
He wouldn’t send me anymore handbills, so I ordered a thousand from Jones Printing Company...

Lee refers to the pile of handbills on Banister’s desk.

LEE
... that should do it and I’m getting some membership cards as well.

BANISTER
You want me to pay for these?

LEE
If you would.

BANISTER
Ask Delphine. Get cash.

LEE
They’re OK?
BANISTER
Yeah, OK. You red-raggin’ bastard!

LEE
I seem to be getting that reputation, yes, sir.

BANISTER
I do business with god-fearing, loyal Americans, Lee. Now folks might not see you that way and you might have to offer people a big bouquet of lies, but as long as I know you’re a patriot, you’ll just do fine.

LEE
Yes, sir.

INT BUS DAY 090663

Lee shares a seat with Marina, travelling on a bus on a soft, cold dusk in New Orleans.

MARINA
(in Russian)
The air’s so heavy.

LEE
(in Russian)
It’s the salt. This time of year, the wind gets trapped in the Gulf of Mexico. Picks up salt. Makes it heavy.

MARINA
(in Russian)
I don’t like it.

LEE
(in Russian)
It’s good for you, give it a chance.

She can’t see he’s a family man with unfulfilled ambition.

MARINA
(in Russian)
Where do you go after work, Alik?

LEE
(in Russian)
Don’t worry about that... I just see friends... I’m looking for a better job.

INT HARVEY HOUSE DAY 100663

In sunny monochrome, President Kennedy addresses an outdoor crowd at the American University.
KENNEDY
So, let us not be blind to our differences--but let us also
direct attention to our common interests and to the
means by which those differences can be resolved. And
if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can
help make the world safe for diversity.

In his comfortable Washington bungalow, William King HARVEY (48), 250 pounds of
cunning encased in an Hawaiian shirt, slacks and loafers, reclines on a narrow sofa, his keen
gaze fixed on the television.

SUPER: William Harvey - Chief of the CIA Rome Station

KENNEDY (VO)
For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is
that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the
same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we
are all mortal.

HARVEY
Yes, you are, you son-of-a-bitch.

Switching off the set, Harvey finds his wife, Clara (48), “C.G.” out on the patio, browsing
Vogue. She’s stout in every way, but sharp as glass - unassailably loyal, where Bill’s concerned
her blinds are always down.

HARVEY
The man is perfidious.

C.G.
Don’t punish yourself.

HARVEY
He’s selling us out.

Harvey doesn’t know what to do with himself. He can’t sit. He studies the garden, the sky...
we all breathe the same air.

HARVEY
He’s doing it. He’s talking about cosying up to Castro.
Normalising relations with that murderous bastard... all
our work means nothing.

C.G.
Don’t upset yourself, Bill. You’ll burst an artery.

HARVEY
He’s ruining this country. What am I supposed to do?

C.G.
Mix a martini... it’s lunch time.
Lee’s having trouble reading at the kitchen table with Marina standing over him, holding a screaming Junie.

LEE
(in Russian)

Get out of here!

MARINA
(in Russian)

Give me the money.

Marina slaps Lee across the head and steps back, waiting for him to retaliate.

LEE
(in Russian)

Sign this, first.

Lee pushes an FPCC membership card across the table and offers Marina a pen.

LEE
(in Russian)

Not your real name. A. J. Hidell.

Marina studies the card.

MARINA
(in Russian)

(reads) Fair Play for Cuba.

LEE
(in Russian)

A... J... H... I... just sign it!

MARINA
(in Russian)

Why?

LEE
(in Russian)

Below ‘president!’ A. J. Hidell... A... J... H... I... D... E... L...

EXT DULLES AIRPORT  DAY  200663

Gangster about town, Johnny ROSELLI (58) struts out of the airport with a crocodile skin bag, golf hat, cashmere skivvy and a Montecristo No. 2 clenched between his teeth. A black Cadillac glides alongside to swallow Johnny up before he attracts attention.

SUPER: Johnny Roselli - Hoodlum and CIA asset
INT BILL HARVEY’S CADILLAC DAY 200663

Climbing into the passenger seat, Roselli jabs the cigar in his face and greets Bill Harvey, behind the wheel, and C.G., perched on the back seat.

ROSELLI
Great timing… you see that...

Roselli settles back and fixes on a car parked by the entrance, dark windows and a figure with a camera.

HARVEY
Bureau bums.

ROSELLI
Takin’ pictures.

C.G.
It’s so good to see you, Johnny.

INT RESTAURANT NIGHT 200663

Harvey, C.G. and Roselli share a table in the corner.

ROSELLI
You see those guys?

HARVEY
FBI fuckers, doing their job.

C.G.
You’re a celebrity, John.

ROSELLI
That little commie bastard, Bobby, he’s got a tail on me.

C.G.
The Kennedy’s are scum.

ROSELLI
They never give up. I’d like to do to him what his brother did to Marilyn after she sang Happy Birthday.

Roselli and Harvey laugh hard at that one.

ROSELLI
I love LA, but every time I go there, I’m thinkin’ a couple of government goons are gonna jump me, throw me on a plane to Sicily! Jesus Christ, I been here since I was six years old!
C.G.
There’s nobody loves this country more than you do.

ROSELLI
Ain’t that the truth?

HARVEY
We’re gonna take him out, Johnny.

Roselli nearly chokes on his Campari.

ROSELLI
Bobby?

HARVEY
His brother.

EXT HARVEY HOUSE NIGHT 200663

Half-hidden in the shadows, Bill and Roselli share a bottle of bourbon on the patio.

ROSELLI
If it’s a crossfire, we can’t miss... and every bit of confusion helps.

BILL
I want the Corsicans on the kill team... at the front.

ROSELLI
Who’s putting this all together... you’re doin’ it?

BILL
Dulles is backing it.

ROSELLI
With Langley?

BILL
Well, I could tell you, but you don’t have to know.

ROSELLI
They know nothin’?

BILL
Mostly the fellas in Miami. We gotta keep everyone apart. Each team gets its job and they work it out.

ROSELLI
If it’s a crossfire, I gotta know where everybody is.
BILL
Two shooters at the back and two at the front... you’re in charge of the location details.

ROSELLI
One fires, the other’s a backup. Always have insurance.

BILL
We’re gonna need help with the cops and local knowledge.

ROSELLI
Well, I can find some help in any city you name.

Bill’s excited by this talk of killing.

BILL
I don’t want to keep any thing from you. There’s gonna be some people doing this, others doing that, no one needs to know everything... it’s safer that way.

ROSELLI
We gotta take our country back.

C.G.
(from the dark)
They’re scum.

Bill and Roselli enjoy the sight of C.G. with a tray of fried chicken wings.

BILL
You’re not supposed to be listening to this.

C.G.
I’ve got security clearance.

ROSELLI
Where are you gonna do it?

BILL
We don’t know just yet. It’ll be a motorcade.

ROSELLI
That’s our Havana plan!

BILL
We’re gonna put it to good use. The country can’t last another four years.

ROSELLI
High point onto a motorcade.
C.G.
Somewhere in the south. He’s behind in the polls down there.

INT BANISTER’S OFFICE (NEW ORLEANS) DAY 060763

Banister holds up a ‘HANDS OFF CUBA!’ handbill with ‘544 Camp St. New Orleans’ printed on the bottom.

BANISTER
You stamped my cocksuckin’ address on those fuckin’ handbills!

Banister screws the handbill up and sends it over his desk at Lee’s face.

BANISTER
You stupid fuck!

LEE
Well, I don’t agree with that.

BANISTER
Who’s asking! I don’t truly know how you’re still walkin’ the streets without your mama holdin’ your hand!

LEE
I wanted to build the membership.

BANISTER
Fuck the membership, we don’t care about that!

LEE
How are people gonna know how to join?

BANISTER
Who gives a shit! You’re all the members they need. Get out and make yourself known, get a name for yourself. We don’t want any commies comin’ ‘round here!

INT CRESCENT CITY GARAGE DAY 190763

In the customer waiting area, Oswald looks up from his book to find Emmett Barbee, standing over him.

BARBEE
What’re you reading, Lee?

Lee shows him the cover... ‘Five Spy Novels’ by Howard Hawcroft
BARBEE
I’ve been lookin’ all over for you.

LEE
It’s my break, Emmett. You know I come here.

BARBEE
Mr. Claude has asked me to thank you for your employment. I’ll have your pay sent on.

Lee packs up to follow Barbee to the office and Alba ambles over.

LEE
I’m leaving... well, that suits me, I’ve found my pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

ALBA
You’re working at NASA?

LEE
Well, not exactly.

EXT LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN DAY 240763

Lee and David Ferrie lean against a truck, watching twenty young Cuban DRE (Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil) GUERILLAS in army fatigues practice firing their rifles, running through a swampy field.

FERRIE
The problem is the equipment. We can’t give ‘em American issue stuff. It’s not legal. So, these guys are training with old rifles, but we’ll get them M-16s... only the best for our friends from the sugar republic.

LEE
M-16s?

FERRIE
Steal ‘em from the Army.

A car pulls up and a Cuban exile, Carlos BRINGUIER (28), alights.

FERRIE
Carlos!

Bringuier strolls over, his Latin looks and swagger belie a sullen, edgy disposition.

FERRIE
It’s good to see you, my friend.

Bringuier’s more interested in the Cuban Guerillaa running around out in the swamp.
FERRIE
(to Bringuier)
You been busy?

BRINGUIER
Yeah, I got a sale on.

FERRIE
Lee’s gonna drop in for a visit, he’s looking for a shirt, aren’t you, Lee?

Lee tries to match Bringuier’s cool.

BRINGUIER
Make it after lunch. Not so many customers.

Without a word, Bringuier turns on his heel and heads off to watch the Guerillas.

FERRIE
(to Lee) He hates Fidel so bad.

INT 4905 MAGAZINE ST. (NEW ORLEANS) NIGHT 260763

Lee’s in boxer shorts, showing off his legs to Marina while they watch television, the CBS News, President Kennedy steps from Airforce One with Jacqueline at his side.

MARINA
(in Russian)
Look at him... President Kennedy... so young, no hat, out in the sun... he’s so handsome.

LEE
(in Russian)
Don’t get your hopes up.

Lee drapes a leg over Marina so that it rests against her swelling belly.

LEE
(in Russian)
My cousin, Eugene, he’s asked me to talk to his class tomorrow about life in the Soviet Union.

MARINA
(in Russian)
Don’t forget to tell them some of the good things.

Marina pushes Lee’s leg away.

LEE
(in Russian)
You don’t like my leg?
MARINA
(in Russian)
I love your leg, but I’m going to bed.

LEE
(in Russian)
You’re always tired, always leaving me, I want to be together.

MARINA
(in Russian)
You’re never here... or you’re reading books!

Marina heads for the bedroom.

LEE
(in Russian)
Tomorrow, I’ll tell them how beautiful Russian women are... but I got an ugly one!

Lee gets up to turn the television off and breaks into the title song from ‘High Noon.’

LEE
(sings)
Do not forsake me, oh my darlin’
You made that promise as a bride
Do not forsake me, oh my darlin’
Although you’re grievin’, don’t think of leavin’
Now that I need you by my side

Lee follows Marina to the bedroom, to finish the song from the doorway, forcing her to slip her arms around his neck, kiss him once.

MARINA
(in Russian)
Please, papa, get another job before the baby comes.

INT DUTZ’S LIMO  DAY 270763

Lee, Marina and June take up the backseat in Dutz’s Studebaker. It’s got plenty of room, the red and white vinyl seats are squeaky clean, the roof’s up and Dutz is driving with his hat on. At his side, Lillian got her hat on, too.

DUTZ
Eugene is different. He’s a pacifist, he’s got a real sense of concern... he worries about the bomb.

Lee studies the tobacco fields, waving at him under a bright sky.

DUTZ
Have you seen your mother since you got back?
When I got back a year ago.

She was worried about you. She called once when your letters kept coming back.

I told her not to write.

You didn't want news from home?

The KGB read all my mail.

In a classroom, under the gaze of twenty five NOVITIATES, Lee reads from his handwritten notes. Dutz sits at the back of the class, with his son EUGENE (21).

I would like to thank my cousin, Eugene, for inviting me along today. I understand you are all training for the priesthood. I am sure you are aware that the Soviet Union, being communist, does not mention religion in its constitution.

Lee's disappointed there isn't a bigger reaction.

The Russians are just like us, we're all human beings despite everything else... but we can say what we want to because of our system. It's got most of the things we call modern civilisation, but people, the people in the street, in the schools and department stores... are good people.

Lee puts away his notes.

But, I saw a world I hope you... not one last one of you... will have to live in... it is a police state, after all.

Why did you go, Mr. Oswald?

Well, I thought I just explained that.

I wasn't sure.
LEE
It was my interest in the communist system. I'm not saying ours is perfect. I'd like to see the stock exchange wound up. The capitalist system is very hard on many people... and I'll say this for the Soviet Union, you don't see the kind of racism we have here.

To bring proceedings to an end, Dutz gets to his feet to initiate some tepid applause.

INT CASA ROCA STORE DAY 050863

Lee enters a clothing store. Hearing voices, he works his way down aisles of racks until he finds Carlos Bringuier, leaning on the counter, deep in conversation with two young CUBAN MEN.

CUBAN MAN #1
(in Spanish)
He now uses Batista's mansion to house his mother's family. My sister wrote to me, she saw for herself.

CUBAN MAN #2
(in Spanish)
He is very good at talking about the national family of Cuba. It's his own!

BRINGUIER
(in Spanish)
She must be careful.

CUBAN MAN #2
(in Spanish)
There are spies everywhere.

CUBAN MAN #1
(in Spanish)
I don't think she cares if they know what she thinks. They can put her in gaol. She hates working for all the friends of the regime.

Lee steps up to the counter.

LEE
You don't support Castro?

BRINGUIER
I wouldn't say that.

The CUBAN MEN laugh.

LEE
You folks aren't communists, I know that for sure.
BRINGUIER
You speak Spanish?

LEE
I’m told you folks are fighting against the so-called revolution and I want to tell you I support your cause.

Bringuier laughs with his friends - Lee’s not sure if he’s being mocked, but it sure looks like it.

LEE
Well, I’d like to help out. Can I make a donation?

BRINGUIER
So, you haven’t come for a shirt?

Lee’s bravado is punctured.

LEE
I’d like to make a contribution.

Hands deep in his pocket, Lee’s shrinking... then Bringuier relents and slaps him on the back.

BRINGUIER
If you want to give money, talk to the head office in Miami.

LEE
I was a Marine and I know a bit about guerrilla tactics and military training and I would be more than happy to come and show your recruits my knowledge.

BRINGUIER
Why would you do that?

LEE
To defeat Castro... anything I can do.

BRINGUIER
Anything?

LEE
My Marine handbook is full of necessary information. I’d be happy to drop it in, just in case you have any doubts about what I’m talking about.

BRINGUIER
Well, if you think so.

Lee makes too much of a show of shaking hands all ‘round, then heads outside.
Posters of Che Guevara and Castro line the walls. Dave Ferrie’s thinking aloud as Lee works on a pile of handbills, carefully printing the office address on each one with a small rubber stamp.

FERRIE
When you go back tomorrow with the manual, tell Carlos the set up. In a couple of days you’re going down to the corner of Bain and Lafayette Street and you’ll give ‘em out. Make a show. I’ll send someone ‘round to tip off Carlos.

Lee pins a handbill to the wall, it says “HANDS OFF CUBA!”

FERRIE
What time will you get there?

LEE
About one.

FERRIE
Carlos will call the cops before he sets off.

LEE
I’ll take plenty of handbills, just in case he’s late.

Lee follows Ferrie downstairs to Banister’s office.

LEE
How do you know it’s going to work?

FERRIE
I thought it through, you just have to think of everything.

LEE
Every detail?

FERRIE
Every goddamn detail. Every plan has a weakness, in this business you have to track it down.

LEE
Until you find it.

FERRIE
Like picking through dogshit for a diamond, Lee. You just gotta trust it’s there.

LEE
Good advice, Dave.
FERRIE
And after every job, wash your fingers.

Ferrie enters Banister's office... before the door's closed, Lee can see Banister having his neck massaged by Delphine.

EXT NEW ORLEANS STREET  DAY  090863

In shirt, tie and ironed slacks, Lee offers PASSERS-BY a handbill and a curt thanks... standing on the corner of Bain and Lafayette Streets, he's doing a steady trade.

Across the street, a police cruiser pulls up just as Bringuier appears, racing up the street with his friends, two young Cuban Men.

Two POLICE OFFICERS alight from the cruiser and Lee takes the opportunity to keep giving out handbills before Bringuier arrives and lunges out to grab a fistful of handbills.

LEE
Hello, Carlos.

Bringuier throws the handbills into the air and stamps them into the pavement.

BRINGUIER
(in Spanish)
What is this shit!

Lee sets about patiently picking up his handbills and Bringuier appeals to the crowd.

BRINGUIER
This man, this lying dog, a friend of Fidel Castro, told me he wants to help in our fight for our homeland and here he is, laughing at us! This filth, Hands off Cuba!

Trying to put on a show, Bringuier closes in on Lee, rolling up his sleeves.

BRINGUIER
He lies, this communist, look at him, this lying, filthy friend of Castro... he is a lying communist snake!

The two Cuban Men push their way in, tearing up the handbills.

LEE
Come on, Carlos... come on, hit me, Carlos...

The two POLICE OFFICERS cross the road.

Bringuier pushes Lee, grabs his shirt, pulling off some buttons. Lee drops his arms, enjoying the performance.

LEE
OK, Carlos... you want to hit me, hit me.
When Lee and Bringuier enter into their arranged scuffle, the Police Officers move in to arrest Lee, Bringuier and the two Cuban Men. Satisfied, the crowd disperses.

INT NEW ORLEANS JAIL CELL  DAY 100863

In his cell, Lee hands his FPCC membership card to FBI Special Agent John QUIGLEY (38), perched on a bench, taking notes.

LEE
Here's my membership card.

QUIGLEY
You're the only member?

LEE
Yes, sir.

QUIGLEY
Why did you call the FBI?

LEE
Well, I'm trying to flush some people out, people sympathetic to communism and I thought you should know about it.

QUIGLEY
Who have you flushed out?

LEE
I've only just started with the handbills, but I've been conducting some correspondence with Mr. V. T. Lee, he's the national director of Fair Play For Cuba.

QUIGLEY
I know who he is.

LEE
I told him I've set up an office and printed material and he's not been very helpful.

QUIGLEY
Does he suspect something?

LEE
Well, I guess so, but that won't stop me.

INT STATE-ITEM NEWSPAPER OFFICE  DAY 100863

The RECEPTIONIST behind the counter of the StateItem Newspaper office keeps her head down as Lee addresses the CITY EDITOR
LEE
I've just come from the New Orleans District Court where I pleaded guilty to disturbing the peace and was fined the princely sum of ten dollars.

CITY EDITOR
This is a complaint story?

LEE
I'm complaining about your lack of coverage. I'm here to ask you to give some attention to my Fair Play For Cuba campaign.

CITY EDITOR
Fair Play For Cuba?

LEE
Yes, sir, I'm the secretary of the local chapter.

CITY EDITOR
I'm not interested, Mr. Oswald.

LEE
But, this is news.

CITY EDITOR
My coffee's getting cold.

The City Editor makes his way back to his desk.

INT BANISTER’S OFFICE   DAY   130863

Lee’s on the desk phone, as Banister removes his hat, his coat and shoulder holster and drops his Smith & Wesson thirty eight in a drawer.

LEE
(on phone)
Mr. Nebel, sir... sorry, Long John, yes sir, I'm a big fan of your radio show...... now, I'm running a campaign down here in New Orleans for the Fair Play For Cuba Committee... yes, that's right, and I'd like to offer you the chance of interviewing me on your show... I'd be happy to pay my way to New York... hello?

Lee replaces the receiver.

LEE
He said I've got hang-ups and here's another one.

Banister pushes Lee off the corner of his desk and squeezes into his chair.
OK, now we gotta do this whole thing again. I know somebody at WDSU, Bill Stuckey. He’s a good friend of good causes. Now, in a day or two, I want you to head down to the waiting room of the Louisiana Employment Office, find a couple of young fellas to help hand out those handbills. Offer ‘em a coupla bucks. For a few minutes work, there should be a stampede.

A Camera CREW from local television station, WDSU, films Lee and two YOUNG MEN handing out FPCC handbills.

Lee opens the door to Bill STUCKEY (27), a milk and cookie boy with a Jimmy Olsen personality.

STUCKEY
Are you Lee Oswald?

LEE
Yes, sir, I am.

In the kitchen, Marina can hear the door close. She feeds June when Lee enters.

LEE
(in Russian)
I’m going to be on the radio with Bill Stuckey.

Marina laughs.

LEE
(in Russian)
What’s funny?

MARINA
(in Russian)
In the Soviet Union it would make you a government stooge.

LEE
(in Russian)
This is important and you’re too stupid to know it.

Lee grabs his jacket and slams the door on the way out, making June cry.

MARINA
(to June in Russian)
Don’t cry, don’t cry, it’s only papa.
In a Radio WDSU sound booth, the ANNOUNCER waits for the red ON AIR light and catches Bill SLATTER’s eye through the glass

ANNOUNCER
It's time now for Conversation Carte Blanche. Here is Bill Slatter.

In the studio, program presenter, Slatter, forty and cocky, leans into the microphone.

SLATTER
Good evening, for the next few minutes Bill Stuckey and I are going to be talking to three gentlemen, the subject mainly revolving around Cuba. Our guests tonight are Lee Harvey Oswald, Secretary of the New Orleans Chapter of The Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a New York headquartered organisation which is generally recognised as the principal voice of the Castro government in this country. Our second guest is Ed Butler who is the Executive Vice-President of the Information Council of the Americas (INCA) which is headquartered in New Orleans and specialises in distributing anti-communist educational materials throughout Latin America, and our third guest is Carlos Bringuier, Cuban refugee and New Orleans Delegate of the Revolutionary Student Directorate one of the more active of the anti-Castro refugee organisations. Bill, if at this time you will briefly background the situation as you know it, Bill

Bill Stuckey and Bringuier are waiting to pounce. In his heavy woollen jacket, Lee isn’t ready.

STUCKEY
First, for those who don’t know too much about the Fair Play for Cuba Committee this is an organisation that specialises primarily in distributing literature, based in New York... attempts have been made to organise a chapter here in New Orleans. The only member of the group who has revealed himself publicly so far is 23 year old Lee Harvey Oswald who is secretary of the local chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. He first came to public notice a few days ago when he was arrested and convicted for disturbing the peace... We, er, Mr. Butler brought some newspaper clippings to my attention and I also found some too, through an independent source, Washington Newspaper clippings to the effect that Mr. Oswald had attempted to renounce his American citizenship in 1959 and become a Soviet citizen. There was another clipping dated 1962 saying that Mr. Oswald had returned from the Soviet Union with his wife and child after having lived there three years. Mr. Oswald are these correct?
LEE
That is correct. Correct, yeah.

STUCKEY
You did live in Russia for three years?

LEE
That is correct and I think that those, the fact that I did live for a time in the Soviet Union gives me excellent qualifications to repudiate charges that Cuba and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee is communist controlled.

SLATTER
Mr. Bringuier perhaps you would like to dispute that point.

BRINGUIER
I'd like to know exactly the name of the organisation that you represent here in the city, because I have some confusion, is it Fair Play for Cuba Committee or Fair Play for Russia Committee?

LEE
Well that is a very provocative request and I don't think requires an answer.

SLATTER
How many people do you have in your committee here in New Orleans?

LEE
I cannot reveal that as Secretary of the Fair Play for Cuba committee.

BUTLER
Is it a secret society?

LEE
No, Mr. Butler, it is not. However, it is standard operating procedure for a political organisation consisting of a political minority, to safeguard the names and the number of its members.

BUTLER
Oh. I see. Well would you say then that the Fair Play for Cuba Committee is not a communist front organisation?

LEE
We have been investigated from several points of view. That is, points of view of taxes, allegiance, subversion, and so forth. The findings have been as I say, absolutely zero.
BUTLER
Well I have the Senate Hearings before me and I think what I have in front of me refutes precisely every statement that you have just made. For instance, who is the Honorary Chairman of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee?

LEE
The honorary Chairman of this Committee, - the name of that person I certainly don't know.

BUTLER
Well, let me tell you, in case you don't know about your own organisation.

LEE
No. I know about it.

BUTLER
His name is Waldo Frank and I'm quoting from the "New Masses" Sept. 1932. The title of his articles, 'How I Came to Communism - A Symposium' by Waldo Frank - 'Where I stand and How I got There'. Now let me ask you a second question. Who is the Secretary for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee? The national secretary?

LEE
Well we have a National Director who is Mr. V. T. Lee, who was recently returned from Cuba...

SLATTER
Mr. Oswald, if I may break in now a moment I believe it was mentioned that you at one time asked to renounce your American citizenship and become a Soviet citizen, is that correct?

LEE
Well I don't think that has particular import to this discussion. We are discussing Cuban-American relations.

SLATTER
You apparently, by your own past actions, have shown that you have an affinity for Russia and perhaps communism, although I don't know that you admit that you either are a communist or have been, could you straighten out that part? Are you or have you ever been a communist?

LEE
Well I answered that prior to this program, on another radio program.
STUCKEY

Are you a Marxist?

LEE

Yes, I am a Marxist.

BUTLER

What's the difference?

LEE

The difference is primarily the difference between a country like Guinea, Ghana, Yugoslavia, China or Russia. Very, very great differences. Differences which we appreciate by giving aid, let's say to Yugoslavia in the sum of a hundred million or so dollars a year.

BUTLER

That's extraneous, what's the difference?

LEE

The difference is as I have said, a very great difference. Many parties, many countries are based on Marxism. Many countries such as Great Britain display very socialistic aspects or characteristics. I might point to the socialised medicine in Britain.

BUTLER

I was speaking of...

SLATTER

Gentlemen I'll have to interrupt, Well be back in a moment to continue this kind of lively discussion after this message.

In his heavy woollen jacket, Lee's taking the strain under a jingle for foaming denture tablets.

NT SOUTH TEXAS OFFICE BUILDING LOBBY DAY 080963

Sunday morning and not a soul around. Under soaring glass, in the cavernous forecourt, David Atlee PHILLIPS (41) studies Lee's nervousness. The two men sit in the lobby of a large office building in downtown Dallas. Phillips is a Texan with a hard lacquer of New York cynicism. He's ruggedly handsome, urbane and painfully cautious.

SUPER:  David Phillips - CIA Chief of Cuban Operations, Mexico City Station

PHILLIPS

Your Russian wife, she's settled?

LEE

She likes it here.
PHILLIPS
Why wouldn’t she? You haven’t encouraged her to learn English.

LEE
No. She worries there’s not enough money. We’ve got a baby and she’s pregnant again.

PHILLIPS
What you’re doing is important.

Lee agrees with that.

PHILLIPS
Their New York office is in damage control, to your credit. You’re a patriot.

LEE
Yes, sir.

PHILLIPS
We need to set things up, to deal with Fair Play For Cuba outside the U.S., put a stake in its heart. How do you feel about going to Mexico City?

LEE
Mexico? (his voice breaks) I’m just a little... I get nerves... I want this to work out.

PHILLIPS
I understand.

LEE
When do you want me to go?

PHILLIPS
As soon as you’re able. I’ve arranged for some Cuban exiles to help you. They’ll make contact.

LEE
Back in New Orleans?

PHILLIPS
They will take you to Mexico City and you will get a visa from the Cuban Consulate. Show them some proof of what you’ve done, tell them you’d like to go to the Soviet Union via Cuba.

LEE
I’m not sure I understand.
PHILLIPS
With your background, they’ll give you a visa straight away.

LEE
Yes, but why the visa?

PHILLIPS
So you can go in undercover.

LEE
To Cuba?

PHILLIPS
Let’s take things one at a time. First, you get the visa.

LEE
If I’m going away, I have to tell my wife.

PHILLIPS
You’re going to Mexico, that’s all. We’ll meet once you’re back to discuss the next stage.

LEE
Can I contact you?

PHILLIPS
You can’t... it’s not the way we do it... I contact you.

Phillips takes a small, tightly folded piece of paper from his pocket and offers it to Lee.

PHILLIPS
If you’re ever in grave trouble, call (taps paper) this man. Commit his name to memory. He lives in Raleigh, North Carolina. You’ll find his number in the directory. He knows about you, should you ever call him, he will answer any time.

Lee unfolds the paper.

LEE
(reads) John D. Hurt.

PHILLIPS
As a last resort.

Phillips takes back the slip of paper.

PHILLIPS
Call collect, the operator will put you through. If he asks for the name of your case officer, tell him it’s Bishop.
Antonio VECIANA (34), a big, shaggy Cuban with a zapata moustache, approaches across the forecourt. On seeing Phillips and Lee, Veciana tries to make out as though he’s got somewhere else to go. Phillips acknowledges him and indicates that he approach.

PHILLIPS
I can’t stress enough, for your own security, do not discuss this with anyone.

At last, Lee’s found the end of the rainbow.

PHILLIPS
Good luck in Mexico.

Dismissed, Lee moves away... when he looks back, Phillips and Veciana are heading for the café across the forecourt.

INT CAR NIGHT 080963
Ferrie drives through the night with Lee wide awake at his side.

FERRIE
How did it go?

LEE
OK... it was OK... I appreciate you driving me, Dave.

INT 4905 MAGAZINE ST. (NEW ORLEANS) DAY 090963
In the kitchen, Lee scrambles eggs for Marina, slumped at the table, 8 months pregnant and sallow. She’s over New Orleans.

MARINA
(in Russian)
I don’t want eggs.

LEE
(in Russian)
What else have we got?

Marina’s hopeless glance at the pre-war refrigerator says it all.

MARINA
(in Russian)
We never go out.

LEE
(in Russian)
You’re gonna have a baby!
MARINA
(in Russian)

Does that stop me sitting at a table with a cloth on it?

Lee spoons scrambled eggs onto a plate.

LEE
(in Russian)

I have to go to Mexico City.

MARINA
(in Russian)

Are you coming back?

EXT  4905 MAGAZINE ST. (NEW ORLEANS)  240963

Ruth’s station wagon, parked in the street with its doors open, is crammed with Marina and Lee’s belongings.

Carrying the bassinet, Lee follows a very pregnant Marina out of the apartment and down the steps.

Ruth appears from the apartment, with June.

Lee reaches for Marina, but she’s already edging into the front passenger seat, cradling her swollen belly.

Ruth hands June to Marina and moves around the car to get behind the wheel.

Marina slams the door and Lee bends down.

LEE
(in Russian)

I’ll call when I get back to Dallas, Sweetness.

If Marina has heard, she doesn’t respond.

Ruth pulls away from the curb.

INT  FPCC OFFICE (NEWMAN BLD)  240963

Lee drops a duffel bag on the floor and proffers some library books to Ferrie.

LEE

They’ve gotta go back to the Napoleon Library, Dave.

Ferrie shuffles through the titles.

FERRIE

More James Bond?
Lee pulls an ancient Mannlicher-Carcano rifle half way out of his duffel bag.

LEE
The Cubans might want this for practice.

Lee pushes the rifle back into the duffel bag and fishes around for a Smith & Wesson .38 snub-nosed revolver. He pockets the revolver.

EXT 4905 MAGAZINE ST. (NEW ORLEANS) 250963 50
First light, Lee stumbles down the steps with two small suitcases.

EXT HOUSTON BUS DEPOT DAY 260963 51
Dawn. Lee alights from a Greyhound, with a suitcase. He crosses the road, to a red car, parked at the kerb. A skinny, long-faced Cuban, ANGELO (26), gets out and opens the boot for Lee’s luggage.

Lee climbs into the backseat to greet the driver, a thick-set Cuban with swept-back black hair, LEOPOLDO (40).

LEOPOLDO
You eaten?

Lee shakes his head, ‘no’.

LEOPOLDO
We’ll get something when we get out of town.

EXT TEXAS DAY 260963 52
The red car carrying Lee, Leopoldo and Angelo, tears past a road sign... HIGHWAY 45 - DALLAS 200 miles

INT SILVIA ODIO’S APARTMENT NIGHT 260963 53
In the bathroom, a beautiful Cuban woman, SILVIA Odio (26), dressed in a slip, with a towel around her hair, applies makeup when the doorbell rings and her vivacious teenage sister, ANNIE Odio (17), hurries to answer it.

SILVIA (VO)
(in Spanish)
I’m about to go, Annie!

ANNIE
OK!

Annie opens up to Leopoldo, Angelo and Lee, all a little worse for wear, waiting on the landing.
LEOPOLDO
(in Spanish)
Does Sarita Odio live here?

ANNIE
(in Spanish)
No, she doesn’t.

LEOPOLDO
(in Spanish)
She’s the one who’s married?

ANNIE
(in Spanish)
What do you want?

LEOPOLDO
(in Spanish)
We belong to Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil.

ANNIE
(in Spanish)
Wait.

Annie attaches the security chain as Silvia comes out of the bathroom, tying up a robe.

ANNIE
Some men at the door. They say they’re with JURE.

Silvia peeks through the gap in the chained door.

SILVIA
Yes?

LEOPOLDO
We’ve driven from New Orleans to see you.

SILVIA
Do I know you?

Silvia is drawn to Lee’s timid confusion, attentive, yet clearly a dumb witness. He smiles back at Silvia, her lovely features framed above the chain she refuses to free from its catch.

LEOPOLDO
We know your father. My name is Leopoldo, and I know him, of course, through our work with the Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil.
SILVIA  
(in Spanish)  
You know my father?

LEOPOLDO  
(in Spanish)  
Yes, of course, Amador is our good friend... (to Angelo and Lee)... isn’t he... and our brave leader, Manolo Ray. (indicates the other Cuban) This is Angelo... and (indicates Lee) our gringo friend, Leon Oswald.

SILVIA  
(in Spanish)  
When did you see my father?

Leopoldo takes a sheaf of papers from his coat pocket.

LEOPOLDO  
(in Spanish)  
At Isla de Pinos, we were imprisoned together by Castro. I’ve written some letters to business people asking for financial support to get rid of Castro. My English isn’t good. I wanted some help translating them.

SILVIA  
(in Spanish)  
I can’t... I will have to think about it.

INT CAR NIGHT 260963

Lee wakes in the back. Leopoldo and Angel drive through the night to Mexico City, with the radio playing loud mariachi music.

LEOPOLDO  
We’ll be at the border in an hour.

Lee leans his head against the window and closes his eyes.

INT HOTEL DE COMERCIAL DAY 270963

Worse for wear, Lee signs the register, O. H. Lee... and trudges up to the room with his bag.

INT CUBAN CONSULATE DAY (11:00) 270963

Clutching his passport and a bundle of documents, Lee steps forward to take a seat at Silvia DURAN’s (26) desk. He has time to appreciate Duran’s sensual maturity crossed with impish charm and. It does not lessen his unease.
DURAN
Are you a Mexican citizen?

LEE
American. I wish to apply for a visa. I intend to travel to the Soviet Union, with a stopover in Cuba.

Lee pushes his passport across the desk. Duran lets it lie, untouched.

DURAN
When do you intend travelling to Cuba and the U.S.S.R?

LEE
I’d like these visas without delay.

DURAN
Your reason for travelling?

LEE
I have friends in the Soviet Union and I’m a supporter of the great revolution undertaken by the Cuban people.

Duran takes up Lee’s passport and idly thumbs through it.

DURAN
Your application... you need passport portraits.

Lee gets to his feet gathering up his documents with some irritation.

DURAN
Across the street and down four blocks.

INT HAVANA DRUGSTORE DAY (12:00) 270963

Back against the wall, Lee glares into the lens and the Mexican DRUGGIST takes the shot.

INT CUBAN CONSULATE DAY (13:00) 270963

At Duran’s desk, Lee lays out four mugshots and pushes his passport across. Duran finishes typing an application form and duplicate, staples a photograph on the top of each form and offers them to Lee to sign.

DURAN
What supporting documents do you have?

LEE
I hope this is not going to take too long... here’s my Russian Labor card, Communist Party of America card and my membership for the Fair Play For Cuba Committee.
Lee lays out his American Communist Party membership card, Russian labor card and a ‘Fair Play For Cuba’ membership card.

LEE
I’m secretary of Fair Play For Cuba.

DURAN
You’re aware that membership of the Communist party is illegal in Mexico?

LEE
No.

DURAN
Normally, the Communist Party chapter would arrange your visa details before you arrive. They would’ve arranged your trip to Cuba.

LEE
I didn’t have the time to ask them.

DURAN
You have to obtain a Russian visa before you can be granted a Cuban visa.

Duran writes her name and phone name on a piece of paper.

DURAN
You’ll have to apply to the Russian Embassy first.

LEE
Is this because I’m an American!

DURAN
I’m sorry, everyone has to do this.

INT RUSSIAN CONSULATE  DAY (17:00)  270963

In a long, sterile corridor, Lee clutches his documents and tries to make himself comfortable on a wooden bench. It’s been a long afternoon.

INT CUBAN CONSULATE  DAY (13:00)  270963

The phone rings on Duran’s desk, she answers.

GUARD VO)
(on phone in Spanish)
An American who does not speak Spanish is at the gate asking about a visa.
DURAN (into phone in Spanish)

Escort him here.

Lee is shown in to take a seat and push his documents across to Duran.

DURAN
You’ve been granted a Russian visa?

LEE
Yes, m’am.

DURAN
Have you got it with you?

Lee’s lost for words.

DURAN
Where is it?

LEE
They’re sending it over.

DURAN
They don’t do that. Where is it?

LEE
They didn’t give me any documents.

Duran dials the Russian Consulate.

DURAN (into phone in Spanish)
I have an American citizen with me. He tells me you granted a visa to for him to enter the Soviet Union... (listening)... I see.

Duran replaces the receiver.

DURAN
They say you were told that the reply to your application will take approximately four months.

LEE
They can’t do that!

DURAN
It’s the same for everybody.

LEE
Why are they targeting me! Because I am an American citizen! I demand a visa! It doesn’t take all that time!
Duran pushes Lee’s documents across the desk to him.

LEE
I was told it can be granted immediately. I am a person who has been in gaol because of my support for the Cuban Revolution!

DURAN
I’m sure they’ve taken all that into consideration.

LEE
I can’t wait that long, my Mexican visa expires in three days!

Lee watches Duran walk over to the office of Consul Eusebio AZCUE (43), knock and speak to the Consul from the doorway.

Duran returns with Consul Azcue, a small, neat man with keen, furtive features.

AZCUE
Mr. Oswald, I am very sorry your application process has caused you a little anguish.

LEE
I shouldn't be humiliated this way, I have fought for the principles of the Cuban Revolution! I have paid for those principles and now I get treated like this!

AZCUE
Intransit visas take four months, if they’re granted.

LEE
I insist on you granting my visa, I won’t leave until I get it!

Azcue draws himself up to his full, but modest, height.

AZCUE
I’m told you claim you’re a friend of the Cuban Revolution, but you are not, a friend would understand that Cuba has to be extremely careful with the people it allows into the country.

LEE
You’re making a mistake, you’re an moron and an idiot!

Azcue motions for a SECURITY GUARD to approach and escort Lee to the door.

AZCUE
You’re another rude, stupid American. Get out.

The Security Guard helps Lee through the front door.
AZCUE
You’re a disgrace, Signor Oswald!

INT DFS OPERATION ROOM (MEXICO CITY) DAY 280963 (11:51)

In a Mexico Secret Police room lined with electronic equipment, two MEN (“Lee” and “Russian”) and a WOMAN (“Silvia”), each with a script, sit around a table and two phones. Behind them, David Phillips watches a middle-aged technician, Richard CAIN, thread magnetic tape onto a reel-to-reel recorder. The “Russian” waits for “Silvia” to pick up a receiver and dial a number... the “Russian” picks up a receiver and CAIN press ‘play’, indicating for them to begin.

“SILVIA”
(into phone)
There is an American here who says he has been to the Russian Consulate.

“RUSSIAN”
(into phone)
Wait a minute.

“SILVIA”
(to “Lee”)
He said, wait... do you speak Russian?

“LEE”
Yes.

“SILVIA”
Why don’t you speak to him then?

“LEE”
I don’t know... (in terrible Russian into the phone) I was in your embassy and spoke to your Consul.

“RUSSIAN”
(into phone)
What do you want?

“LEE”
(in terrible Russian into the phone) I was just now at your embassy and they took my address.

“RUSSIAN”
(into phone)
I know that.

“LEE”
(in terrible Russian into the phone) I did not know it then. I went to the Cuban Embassy to ask for my address, because they have it.
“RUSSIAN”
( into phone)
Why don’t you come by and leave it then, we’re not far.

“LEE”
( in terrible Russian into the phone)
Well, I’ll be there right away.

Behind them, the tape recorder spools turn... through a dusty window, Phillips, can see the Cuban Consulate compound, baking in the heat-haze, below.

INT SILVIA ODIO’S APARTMENT NIGHT 280963

With her four CHILDREN playing in a bedroom, Silvia gives up packing clothes in a cardboard box to answer the phone.

LEOPOLDO (VO)
(in Spanish)
It’s Leopoldo, Silvia... we came to see you the other night.

SILVIA
(in Spanish)
Yes.

LEOPOLDO (VO)
(in Spanish)
Thank you for talking with us. We’ve found someone to help.

Two Children run from the bedroom and Silvia indicates for them to keep quiet.

LEOPOLDO (VO)
(in Spanish)
What did you think of Leon?

SILVIA
(in Spanish)
I didn’t think anything.

INT HOTEL ROOM CONTINUOUS

In a shabby room, Leopoldo reclines on an unmade bed, talking on the phone to Silvia.

LEOPOLDO
(in Spanish into phone)
Leon’s loco, he’s an ex-Marine. He’s kinda nuts.

SILVIA (VO)
(in Spanish on phone)
Is he?
LEOPOLDO
(in Spanish into phone)
He thinks we don’t have any guts. President Kennedy should’ve been assassinated after the Bay of Pigs. He thinks we should’ve done it, but if he had a chance he’d do it himself.

SILVIA (VO)
(in Spanish on phone)
I’m sorry, I can’t help translate your letters.

Leopoldo replaces the receiver, his work done.

EXT PALACIO DE BELLAS ARTES (MEXICO CITY) 280963

Dwarfed by the towering pink-veined marble columns, Phillips seems transfixed by El hombre en el cruce de caminos. It’s early, there’s no one to obstruct his clear view of Diego Rivera’s mural. Across the polished wooden floor, Lee approaches, diminished by his travel-worn clothes and sense of failure.

PHILLIPS
(refers to the mural) What do you think?

LEE
It’s big... a big painting.

PHILLIPS
Fresco... El hombre en el cruce de caminos.

PHILLIPS
It’s deeply calming, don’t you think?
LEE (indicates the figure of Lenin) Well, I know who he is.

Phillips leads Lee away.

PHILLIPS
How did you get on?

LEE
I showed them everything.

PHILLIPS
Who did you meet?

LEE
A woman called Duran, but it was Consul Azcue, he wouldn’t listen to me. I got a little worked up.

PHILLIPS
A clear breach of regulations. Consul Azcue’s a fool. They’re moving him to Havana.

LEE
The Soviet Embassy told me it would take a few months before I get an answer.

PHILLIPS
While you’re waiting, I want you to stay in Dallas. There’s a job. The Cubans are running guns over the border.

Lee soaks this up, willing himself to remain calm.

PHILLIPS
You met Homer Echevarria?

LEE
He was at Lake Pontchartrain.

PHILLIPS
He’s operating out of a house in Dallas. It’s our show, we’re paying for it. Keep an eye on those guys. They know about you. They know you’re coming.

LEE
Yes, sir. Is this a Fair Play for Cuba thing?

PHILLIPS
That’s right. We’ll get you a job. If you notice anything that needs attention, call Ferrie, but don’t leave Dallas. This is important work. I’ll make contact when we need to talk.
Phillips descends the marble stairs. Lee looks around, there’s no one to notice he’s arrived.

INT    CAR    MEXICO CITY    DAY    300963

In the back seat of a CIA staff car, Phillips opens his briefcase, under the hawkish eye of his assistant, Anne GOODPASTURE (38), as they weave through dusty streets on the outskirts of Mexico City.

PHILLIPS
Send the transcript to Langley through the system.

Phillips takes out a large envelope and writes on the front.

GOODPASTURE
You don’t want to take it?

PHILLIPS
I want you to send it today under this name.

Goodpasture takes the envelope from Phillips.

GOODPASTURE
(reads) Byron McKenzie.

PHILLIPS
I’m feeling romantic. I’ll be away a couple of days. Call me if anything happens on Oswald. He should be on his way by now.

INT    CLOAK-AND-SWAGGER (WASHINGTON D.C.)    DAY    011063

James Jesus ANGLETON (46), a small, carefully wrapped scrap of a man in a dark suit, horn-rimmed glasses, and a face delicately poised between curiosity and melancholy...

SUPER: James Angleton · Chief of CIA Counterintelligence

... sits at a centre table with Phillips in a swank eatery full of well-dressed BUREAUCRATS.

PHILLIPS
I thought you’d prefer the corner.

ANGLETON
Looks too suspicious.

Phillips doesn’t check the corner and Angleton grins into his Manhattan. Their mains arrive and they carefully take up their cutlery.

ANGLETON
All good in Mexico?
PHILLIPS
I think so. He went and did as he was told.

ANGLETON
Human beings are a tangle of knots, some are easier to unpick than others. I’ve been following him, salting his file, for four years. He doesn’t even know I exist.

PHILLIPS
How could he?

ANGLETON
It’s a delicious idea. When we picked him up in the Marines, he was keen, learned Russian, took to it like a dog to water... ee cummings... I published him, you know? I don’t think our man ever read poetry. He never was a serious ‘viatorem.’ Too naïve. Something missing, can’t read people. He pretends he knows. He’s an actor. I always had him waiting in the wings. He’s the solution, but the problem is one that belongs with us.

PHILLIPS
The problem?

ANGLETON
If we commit a crime, who’s gonna come after us? You set him up with Kostikov?

PHILLIPS
I had a couple of DFS agents impersonate him in a phone call and then dropped it into the system. It’s locked in there, without comment. I sent the transcript before I got on the plane. It’ll arrive tomorrow.

ANGLETON
You’ll have to monitor your assistant. She’ll trigger CI/SIG, they’ll think you’ve been penetrated, and we don’t want to go on a molehunt just yet. (laughs)

PHILLIPS
So how do we stop it over-heating?

ANGLETON
Human nature being what it is, they shut it down or enjoy a nuclear exchange. Send out the message, there’s no reason to jump to conclusions, think of the consequences.

PHILLIPS
Let’s hope so.

Angleton pushes his plate away, more interested in his Manhattan.
ANGLETON
I was out at The Farm yesterday. The Old Man sends his regards.

PHILLIPS
He approves?

ANGLETON
I said that.

Phillips can see that Angleton’s got his eye on the newcomers who have just occupied the table in the corner. He knows them.

PHILLIPS
Was it his idea?

ANGLETON
Mutual. The truly terrible thing, said Jean Renoir, is that everyone has their reasons. The Old Man calls Lancer a soft commie, but for me, it’s what he’s doing with Ben-Gurion. He won’t let them get on with their nuclear program. How else can they stop another Holocaust?

PHILLIPS
That’s your reason?

ANGLETON
Israel must have its own bomb. It’s the only way to stop another Holocaust.

PHILLIPS
You’re not concerned, he’s talking to Khrushchev, he’s about to set up a meeting with Castro?

ANGLETON
There’s no going back, David.

To Phillips, it sounds like a threat.

INT PAYPHONE (DALLAS) NIGHT 031063

In a dark street across from a bus depot, Lee pushes coins into a payphone and dials.

LEE
(into phone in Russian)
Marina... it’s Alik... I’ve missed you... are you good... how’s Junie? Yes, Dallas... I want to come and see you... yes, today, I just got back... I can tell you all about it... the girls love me in Mexico... no, no, listen I just got... is Ruth there... can she pick me up... is she home... hello?
In a dingy hall, Lee’s on the phone to Marina.

LEE
(in Russian into phone)
... I didn’t get it... they didn’t like my references...

Lee turns to see MRS BLEDSOE, his desiccated, suspicious landlady, watching him from the end of the hall.

LEE
(in Russian into phone)
... I'll keep looking tomorrow... I've gotta go... kiss Junie for me...

Lee hangs up.

MRS. BLEDSOE
Now, that's a foreign language you’re speaking, I can hear that.

LEE
Polish.

Mrs. Bledsoe’s not convinced, before she can object, Lee steps across the hall into his small, drab room. He sits on the threadbare bed and waits. There’s a knock, the door opens.

MRS. BLEDSOE
My brother-in-law was Polish.

With a tired shrug, Lee loses... Mrs. Bledsoe closes the door.

INT PAINE HOUSE  NIGHT  091063

Ruth enters the kitchen with a sack of groceries to find Marina, pregnant, reading a magazine at the table while in the living room, Lee lounges on the sofa with Junie, watching television.

RUTH
(in Russian to Marina)
Is he staying for supper?

LEE
What’s cooking?

RUTH
(in Russian)
Beggars can’t be choosers, Lee!

Marina waddles into the living room. Lee makes room for her on the sofa. She eases herself down, he offers her his foot to rub and she pushes it away.
Under whispering palms, at a surf-side bar, William Harvey and David Phillips drink with David MORALES (38), a beefy, big-drinking Mexican-American CIA operative and psychopath and Howard ‘Eduardo’ HUNT (45) a pointy-nosed CIA operative with a penchant for naff suits, Bob Hope and bourbon.

PHILLIPS
It’s set. We’ve got a building in Dealey Plaza, belongs to a friend of the firm.

Morales searches the white caps running into the beach - he’s always looking for bodies, rolling over in the waves.

HUNT
We just slip in and slip out.

HARVEY
Will you? It never works that way. It’s just business, keep calm, no attracting attention. The only way this will work is through controlled confusion.

PHILLIPS
Oswald’s in Dallas. The Cuban boys are keeping him busy.

MORALES
What do we do with him?

HARVEY
Ruby, the local guy, he’s tied in with the cops. One of them is going out to find Oswald in a cruiser - it’ll be self defence.

HARVEY
Every move’s got to look like it doesn’t belong to a pattern, like it’s going in every direction but the obvious.

HUNT
More fucking mumbo jumbo - let’s just get on and do it.

HARVEY
This is bigger than you, Howard. We don’t just ‘do it’.

HUNT
I can see it working, Bill, that’s all I’m saying.

PHILLIPS
The day before, the two teams’ll mark out their positions.

HARVEY
We’ve got the Frenchman to take the kill shot.
MORALES
This is fucking serious.

Morales snorts with incredulity and throws back his drink.

MORALES
We’re gonna do it.

HARVEY
(to Morales)
There’s gonna be a lot of mopping up for you, Dave. This will be long term, full employment. Someone has to manage what comes after.

MORALES
We’re taking our country back, Bill.

PHILLIPS
We won’t be seeing each other again.

Phillips gets up and walks off into the night.

INT Linnie Mae Randle’s House  DAY  141063

In a cheerfully cluttered kitchen, Ruth and Marina sits around the table over coffee, with Linnie Mae Randle (30), a small, nosey woman, and her equable female NEIGHBOUR.

RUTH
Mae, Marina’s husband, Lee, he’s a decent young man, just come back to Dallas and he’s looking for a job.

MAE
Well, I’m sure there’s work out there.

RUTH
Of course, it would have to be something close by, Lee’s not able to drive and he doesn’t have a vehicle.

MAE
What sort of work does he do?

RUTH
(in Russian)
Lee can do most anything, can’t he, Marina?

MARINA
(in Russian)
No, not really.
RUTH
(to Mae)
She said Lee can pretty well turn his hand to anything. Now, I’m just wondering if there’s anything at the book depository? I know Buell’s just got work there.

MAE
Well, there could be.

RUTH
Perhaps Buell could help Lee out, if he knew anything.

MAE
I think he’d say you should phone the manager.

RUTH
(into phone)
Mr. Roy Truly? My name’s Ruth Paine and I live in Irving. Sir, I’ve got a young man and his wife boarding with me and they’re in desperate need of some good luck. The young man’s wife is expecting a child in a few weeks and he needs a job. One of your employees, Mr Buell Frazier recommended I give you a call since he knows that young father-to-be... Lee Oswald, sir.

Lee sits across the desk from the manager, MR. TRULY, (56) a bespectacled, craggy-faced man with a Texas drawl and an eye for detail.

MR. TRULY
We like punctuality.

LEE
As a matter of fact, sir, I’m partial to that myself.

MR. TRULY
Just as long as you’re here on time.

LEE
Yes, sir.

MR. TRULY
I hear you’re going to be a father.
LEE
Well, sir, I’m already a father, a little girl, the most beautiful girl in Texas, she’s coming up for two years old and she’s a handful, I can tell you, and I’m looking forward to the next one, arriving in a few short weeks, we’re hoping for a boy, but I would be just as happy and proud with another little girl, that’s for sure.

MR. TRULY
Relax, son, you’re hired. Start tomorrow.

INT PAINE HOUSE DAY 151063
In the hall, Ruth’s on the phone.

RUTH
(into phone)
Why, I’m very sorry, but Lee’s already taken another job.

Ruth replaces the receiver and heads out to the backyard...

EXT PAINE HOUSE CONTINUOUS
... where Marina, heavily pregnant, hangs out washing.

RUTH
(in Russian)
A man from the Texas Employment Service, said he had a job for Lee out at the airport. They’re prepared to offer more, but I told him Lee’s already started at the Book Depository.

MARINA
(in Russian)
Maybe Lee might like more money.

RUTH
(in Russian)
The Book Depository’s closer and Mae Randle’s brother has a car.

Lee appears at the backdoor. Marina resumes her work as he strolls over.

RUTH
Lee, I’ve got a neighbour, Buell Frazier, he works at the book depository and he’s a very sweet young man. Might be, he can take you to work if you ask him.

Lee’s not sure if he’s got much to say in the matter. Ruth heads back inside and Marina fishes a pair of Lee’s work pants from the laundry basket.
MARINA
(in Russian)
*How long will you have this job?* *A week, maybe a month, then you’ll go somewhere else.*

Lee takes up the basket of pegs and offers a couple to Marina and...

LEE
(in Russian)
*I know what I do is difficult for you.*

... she disappears into the shrouds of washing.

MARINA
(in Russian)
*It’s not difficult. I’m comfortable here.*

LEE
(in Russian)
*One day I’ll settle down, when the job’s done.*

MARINA
(in Russian)
*Well, good for you.*

INT TEXAS SCHOOL BOOK DEPOSITORY DAY 161063

Sunlight floods through large windows, across the warehouse’s timber floor. Lee loads boxes onto a trolley, a clipboard under his arm. Buell FRAZIER (18) climbs up the stairs.

BUELL
*How’s it going, Lee?*

Buell’s a lanky southerner with slow eyes, a gentle disposition and a struggling moustache.

LEE
*Getting the hang of it, Buell.*

BUELL
*Mrs Paine says you might like a lift back to her house on the weekend.*

LEE
*I’d appreciate that. I can see my wife and daughter.*

BUELL
*Yes, that’s what she told me.*

Hands in his pockets, Buell approaches a window, to look down into Dealey Plaza.
BUELL
You get a good view from up here... if there was anything to look at.

INT BUELL'S CAR DAY 181063

Lee rides home from work with Buell to the Paine home. The radio plays Top Forty... Dion’s “The Wanderer”.

FRAZIER
You like The Twist?

LEE
I don’t get time for parties.

FRAZIER
My sister was showing me, it’s a new dance. We was doing it in the kitchen the other day with the radio up real loud.

Lee studies the Dallas skyline. He’s not interested in The Twist.

FRAZIER
My sister tells me you've got a baby.

LEE
Junie, and one on the way... Junie’s so smart, she already wants to go to school... she loves her papa.

FRAZIER
I’m sure she does.

LEE
I wish I could see her every day. One day, soon, I will.

INT LIVING ROOM - PAINE HOUSE NIGHT 181063

Marina leads Lee, with a blindfold, into a dark living room... the lights go up, revealing Junie, Ruth and her estranged husband, MICHAEL (31), a casually groomed company man with sober tastes and short, back and sides.

RUTH, MICHAEL, MARINA
Surprise!

Removing his blindfold, Lee is startled, then delighted.

RUTH, MICHAEL, MARINA
Happy birthday, Lee!

LEE
You scared me!
RUTH
Wasn’t that the best surprise, Lee?

LEE
Yes, I wasn’t expecting anything... yes, it is... it was.

Marina waddles into the kitchen, heavily pregnant and Ruth offers a bottle to Michael.

RUTH
Michael, open the wine.

Ruth follows Marina into the kitchen, leaving Michael to pull the cork.

MICHAEL
How’s the new job?

LEE
It’s OK.

MICHAEL
What’ve you been reading?

LEE
Nothing much... a history of The Berlin Wall.

RUTH
(singing) Happy birthday to you... (Michael joins in) happy birthday to you...

Ruth enters with a cake, covered in flaming candles... Marina follows, singing in Russian.

RUTH
(singing) Happy birthday, dear Lee... happy birthday to you!

With the cake on the table, Lee is intent on counting candles... there’s twenty.

RUTH
Blow them out!

After several attempts, Lee manages to extinguish the candles.

MICHAEL
How old are you, Lee?

Lee can’t hold back tears.

LEE
Twenty four... there’s only twenty candles.

RUTH
My birthday present, Lee, is to give you some driving lessons.
MICHAEL
Good idea, you’ve got to have a car in Dallas.

INT LIVING ROOM - PAINE HOUSE NIGHT 181063

Lying on the sofa, with the television on, Lee massages Marina’s swollen ankles.

LEE
(in Russian)
I don’t have to have a car. I can keep using the bus. We’ll buy a washing machine.

MARINA
(in Russian)
Until the baby comes... I’ll stay here a while... we’ll save some money... Ruth thinks it would be a good idea.

Lee makes a show of kissing Marina’s foot.

LEE
(in Russian)
Can’t we find a place? We should live together.

MARINA
(in Russian)
Ruth wants me to stay.

INT KITCHEN - PAINE HOUSE NIGHT 201063

Lee dances around the kitchen with Junie, making her laugh. Ruth’s about to serve up and Marina gingerly eases her swollen belly into place at the table.

Lee ‘aeroplanes’ Junie around the kitchen.

LEE
Look, mama, she’s flying!

Junie’s got the giggles and Lee makes a buzzing bee sound to go with the action.

LEE
She loves that!

Ruth drops a bowl of over-cooked, greasy vegetables in front of Marina.

RUTH
Chinese isn’t my best dish.

MARINA
(to Ruth in Russian)
My waters have broken.
Marina gags at the ‘Chinese’ and Lee helps her up as the first big contraction hits.

RUTH
You can’t wait!

MARINA
No!

INT   BEDROOM - PAINE HOUSE   NIGHT   201063

On the bed, Lee lies next to Junie, tickling her feet.

LEE
You’re just like your mama.

Lying in the half light on the crumped sheets, he senses he is alone, far from Marina. Without warning, he breaks down, his body wracked with sobs, with Junie laughing next to him.

INT   PAINE HOUSE   DAY   211063

At the window, Lee can see Buell’s car pull up out the front. He makes his way back to the kitchen to collect his lunch as Ruth appears from her bedroom, doing up her dressing gown.

RUTH
Lee, I didn’t want to wake you.

LEE
Junie’s asleep.

RUTH
Lee?

At the front door, Lee turns back.

LEE
She’s had it?

RUTH
Last night.

Ruth watches Lee hurry down the path to Buell.
Lee sits at the bedside, cradling his baby daughter, Audrey Marina RACHEL Oswald.

**LEE** (in Russian)
*We will get back together, now.*

**MARINA** (in Russian)
*Is she all right?*

**LEE** (in Russian)
*She’s beautiful. Ruth said I shouldn’t stay at the hospital.*

Lee finds no sympathy in Marina’s silence.

**LEE** (in Russian)
*I’ll find us a place to live.*

**MARINA** (in Russian)
*This isn’t the way you told me it was going to be.*

**LEE** (in Russian)
*Did I?*

**MARINA** (in Russian)
*You do what you want. Whatever it is. It’s not how I want to live.*

**LEE** (in Russian)
*I’ll find a place.*

**MARINA** (in Russian)
*You’re always lying.*

**LEE** (in Russian)
*To protect you.*

**MARINA** (in Russian)
*You want to live always in the shadows, that’s where you feel comfortable. I just want a normal life... an American life.*
Lee lies, curled on a single bed in a small, neat rented room. He gets up to answer a knock at the door. The landlady, Earlene ROBERTS (61), is waiting for him in the hall with his change.

ROBERTS
You look well pleased with yourself, Mr. Lee.

LEE
Do I?

ROBERTS
(offering change) Three nickels and a quarter.

Roberts notices a thick book lying open on the bed.

ROBERTS
Mr. Wilkes was a reader.

Lee doesn’t bother to step aside so she can carry out more surveillance.

EARLENE
He died in that bed. It’s a new mattress.

EXT  SUPERMART PARKING LOT  DAY  271063
Ruth’s Chevrolet Rambler station wagon squeals and lurches around a deserted parking lot.

INT  RUTH’S STATION WAGON  DAY  271063
Lee’s fighting the wheel and Ruth’s hanging on against the lurching and bucking.

RUTH
Try to let out the clutch gently.

Lee stalls the Rambler.

RUTH
There’s no need to keep pressing the brake, Lee.

LEE
I don’t want to hit anything!

RUTH
That’s good, Lee. Some things come more naturally to some folks I guess.
INT PAINE HOUSE NIGHT 281063

While Marina sleeps, Lee slips money into a plastic wallet in the top drawer of the dresser, then comes over to kiss her goodbye.

LEE

Are you awake?

Marina shakes her head, ‘no’. Dejected, Lee heads for the door as Buell’s car horn sounds.

EXT PAINE HOUSE DAY 051163

FBI Agent Jim HOSTY (38) isn’t a keen student of the human condition. He’s built like a boxer gone to seed, preferring to block with the badge and lead with his jaw... Ruth Paine swings open the door.

HOSTY

Morning, M’am, I’m Agent John Hosty with the (flashes badge) Federal Bureau... got some questions, you mind?

RUTH

Well, good morning.

HOSTY

Lee Oswald, is he known to you?

RUTH

I know of him.

HOSTY

I’m trying to locate him.

RUTH

I’m led to believe he was staying at the YMCA.

HOSTY

So, he’s not here?

RUTH

I can’t tell you where he is. He’s not predictable. In fact, to be honest, he’s a very illogical person.

HOSTY

How so?

RUTH

How so? Well, he describes himself as a Trotskyite communist, and they’re known for being unstable.

HOSTY

I see.
It doesn’t upset me. I’m amused by his declarations. He’s harmless.

So, he’s not here?

He comes most weekends.

Cuban dance music... Lee pads down the hall of a dark, unkempt house to a kitchen full of high-spirited young CUBAN EXILES, members of the DRE (Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil), the Cuban Student Directorate.

RODRIGUEZ
Leon! (in Spanish) Where have you been!

A dark, lanky exile, in fatigues, RODRIGUEZ (28), pushes his way through the crowd to wrap his arms around Lee in an uncomfortable gesture of brotherhood mixed with vapours of cheap wine.

It’s been hard to get away.

Lee’s released and Rodriguez leads him to a room at the back of the house... Rodriguez lights a panatella, enjoying Lee’s unease in the gloom.

When can we get the rifles at Fort Hood?

I haven’t heard anything.

We need them in one month.

Some local people, I’m waiting to hear from one of them.

The nightclub owner, Jack?

He’s the one arranging to get them into Cuba.

You heard Castro might send a team to kill Kennedy?
LEE
Why would Castro do that?

RODRIGUEZ
Why! He’s crazier than you.

LEE
I’m not crazy!

RODRIGUEZ
No, no, it’s a joke... don’t you get anything, man?

INT FBI OFFICE - DALLAS DAY 121163

The RECEPTIONIST (25) looks up to see Lee push his way through the FBI’s glass doors and approach. He edgy, as though he’s made a mistake.

LEE
I’d like to see Agent Hosty.

RECEPTIONIST
He’s not in.

LEE
Where is he?

RECEPTIONIST
Working... or having lunch... why should you care?

Lee thrusts an envelope at her.

LEE
Get this to him.

INT ROOMING HOUSE NIGHT 181163

Lee’s on the phone in the hall.

LEE
(into phone in Russian)
I’m sorry... when did you call... I know I promised... I can’t use my real name... I can’t... you know why, Marina... I’m doing very important work...

The landlady, Earlene Roberts appears in the hall... Lee coughs loudly and switches to English.

LEE
No, I’m sure there’s been a mistake... perhaps you asked for the wrong person.
Bathed in a pool of blue fluoro, Lee cuts a lonely figure, reading a magazine as his washing tumbles in the dryer.

Lee and Marina sit on the front lawn, watching Junie running around on the grass, pulling a wooden horse on a string.

LEE
(in Russian)
I want to buy you a washing machine.

MARINA
(in Russian)
No, do your important work.

Ruth Paine pulls into the driveway in her station wagon.

LEE
(in Russian)
What about the girls, we have to live together and make them happy.

MARINA
(in Russian)
It’s all right, you can visit us.

On the sofa, Lee’s tired of the journey, the loneliness of his secret life. He reaches out for Marina, dozing in front of the television, but she pulls away.

LEE
(in Russian)
I want to know how you feel about living with me. I can go back to school. I don’t know much about working for a company. I don’t even know if you feel anything for me... if it’s like love. I don’t need much.

Lee’s desperate, he sees his life with Marina slipping away.

LEE
(in Russian)
Let’s live together, we can start again.

MARINA
(in Russian)
I’m happy here, Alik.
LEE
(in Russian)
We have a family, Marina.

MARINA
(in Russian)
You think so... you live in your fantasy, there’s no room for us, it’s your secret world.

LEE
(in Russian)
You know what I’m doing?

Marina allows Lee to stroke her.

LEE
(in Russian)
I’m helping my country, Marina.

MARINA
(in Russian)
No, you play like a little boy. Just games, little boys’ games, Alik.

LEE
(in Russian)
One day, everyone will know me. I’m working for my country. You can’t see it, that’s all.

MARINA
(in Russian)
My uncle worked for the secret police. You don’t think I know about these things! I don’t want to know what you’re doing, because I know what you’re doing!

LEE
(in Russian)
I’ll give it up... we’ll buy a car and a washing machine and live in a house together.

MARINA
(in Russian)
I’m happy here, Alik!

INT BATHROOM - PAINE HOUSE NIGHT 211163 (23:30)

Eyes closed, Marina soak in the tub.

RUTH (VO)
Marina?
Startled by a gentle knock, Marina reaches for a towel... Ruth holds the door ajar.

RUTH  
(in Russian)  
*Lee's been calling you. I'm going to bed.*

MARINA  
(in Russian)  
*Goodnight.*

INT  MARINA'S BEDROOM - PAINE HOUSE  DAY  221163 (07:10)  
Marina nudges Lee awake, then rolls over to go back to sleep. Lee's late. He jumps up and pulls on his clothes, ready for work. Removing a plastic wallet from the top drawer, he stuffs a few crumpled bills from his back pocket into the wallet and closes the dresser. As an after thought, he removes his wedding ring and flips it in a white china teacup on the dresser.

INT  BUELL'S CAR  DAY  221163  
Buell drives his car into Dallas. He looks to the backseat.

BUELL  
*What's you got?*

LEE  
*Curtain rods... I told you about 'em... curtain rods for my room.*

INT  1ST FLOOR - TEXAS SCHOOL BOOK DEPOSITORY  DAY  221163  09:45  
On the First Floor, Lee joins a young African-American, Junior JARMAN, looking out the window at the CROWD in the street.

LEE  
*What's going on?*

JARMAN  
*Why, the president's going to drive by today.*

LEE  
*I see.*

INT  6TH FLOOR - TEXAS SCHOOL BOOK DEPOSITORY  DAY  221163 (11:45)  
On a trolley, Lee has stacked several boxes. He checks the details on each box against the list on his clipboard.

Across the floor, two men, a middle-aged African-American, Bonnie Ray WILLIAMS and a small, raw-boned white guy, Billie LOVELADY, make for the freight elevators.
WILLIAMS

Lunchtime, Lee.

LEE

Coming.

Lee drops his clipboard on the trolley and follows his workmates as their elevator heads down to the 1st Floor lunch room. The other elevator is already on a lower floor.

LEE
calls

Guys! How about an elevator?

Williams and Lovelady can be heard getting out of their elevator.

LEE

(shouts)

Send one of the elevators back up!

Lee can hear an elevator rising up to him and he stands back.

ARCHIVAL: EXT DEALEY PLAZA DAY 221163 (12:30)

President Kennedy's motorcade turns into Elm Street, directly under the Book Depository.

INT DOMINO ROOM/2ND FLOOR - TSBD 221163 (12:31)

Lee sits alone in a booth, in the deserted lunch room, reading a newspaper... in the distance he can hear a faint, sharp, crack... he turns a page of his newspaper... and another two cracks, almost together... silence... then a flock of wailing sirens.

Lee throws his lunch scraps in a garbage bin and heads up the stairs to the 2nd Floor lunchroom for a drink.

With the sound of fading sirens, Lee can hear raised voices outside, urgent voices... he enters the lunch room and makes for the Coke machine.

As the dimes drop in the slot and Lee bends down to collect his drink, a woman cries out in the street below.

Dallas Police Officer Marrion BAKER and the manager, Roy Truly, race up the stairs from the street to the lunch room. They emerge from the stairs and Officer Baker checks the small glass window in the door to the lunchroom.

Lee turns away just as Officer Baker’s face appears in the door window... behind him, the door’s thrown open and Officer Baker enters with a pistol... followed by Roy Truly.

Lee turns back, Coke in hand, breathing easy.

With his gun drawn, Officer Baker advances.
OFFICER BAKER  
(to Truly)

This boy work here?

TRULY

Yes, sir, he does.

OFFICER BAKER  
(to Oswald)

Come here.

Dutifully, Lee approaches and Officer Baker sticks the pistol’s muzzle into Lee’s gut.

OFFICER BAKER  
(to Truly)

You know this man?

TRULY

Yes, sir... he works for me.

Officer Baker bustles away to the stairs, with Truly in pursuit, leaving Lee to open his Coke.

INT  OFFICE - TSBD  DAY 221163 (12:33)  102

Coke in hand, LEE ambles into the office, where the SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR has her head buried in her hands. She looks up into Lee’s quizzical gaze.

SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR  
(helpless)

The President.

Putting down his Coke, Lee collects his jacket and hurries down to the front entrance...

EXT  GROUND FLOOR - TSBD  CONTINUOUS  103

... as two REPORTERS appear, frantic... one of them Pierce ALLMAN, runs into Lee on the steps of the building.

ALLMAN

Hey, I need a phone, quick!

Lee turns back.

LEE

Up here.

Allman follows Lee...
INT  GROUND FLOOR - TSBD  CONTINUOUS

... up the front steps, through the glass doors to the lunch room with a payphone.

Allman fishes for coins.

    ALLMAN
    Did you see it... oh, shit...

Lee leaves him to it.

EXT  ELM ST, DEALEY PLAZA - DALLAS  DAY  221163

Darting through the dazed and troubled CROWD, Lee hurries down to the curb. To his left, a light green Chevrolet Rambler approaches along Elm St, driven by Rodriguez, dark and baleful, in a sport coat... he pulls up by the curb.

Lee leaps into the Rambler, and Rodriguez edges back into the traffic.

    RODRIGUEZ
    Where’s your gun?

    LEE
    I didn’t bring it.

    RODRIGUEZ
    Shit!

Rodriguez scans the traffic, crawling along Elm Street passed BYSTANDERS, their stricken faces searching for something, anything that’ll make sense of what they’ve seen.

    RODRIGUEZ
    This ain’t gonna work.

Rodriguez checks with Lee... he can see a slow panic setting in.

    RODRIGUEZ
    All right, get out. Go, get your gun. Go to the Texas Theater. Wait there.

INT  BUS - DALLAS  DAY  221163 (12:44)

Lee leaps aboard a bus to be confronted by a wall of confused, shocked PASSENGERS. He takes a seat and realises he’s made a mistake.

As the bus crawls along in the congested traffic, Lee approaches the BUS DRIVER.

    LEE
    (to Bus Driver)
    I’m getting off, sir, can I have a transfer?
The Bus Driver tears a transfer from the ticket dispenser.

EXT GREYHOUND BUS STATION - DALLAS DAY 221163 (12:45) 107

Lee runs up to a taxi and opens the front passenger door to speak to the taxi driver, William WHALEY.

    LEE
    Sir, can you take me... (to North Beckley?)

An ELDERLY WOMAN opens the back door and Lee steps back.

    LEE
    It's alright, Ma’am, you take it.

Realising her mistake, the Elderly Woman closes the door.

    ELDERLY WOMAN
    No, I'm sorry, it's yours.

    WHALEY
    There'll be one right along, Ma’am.

Lee jumps in and the cab pulls away.

INT ROOMING HOUSE DAY 221163 (12:57) 108

Earlene Roberts drags her attention from the television as Lee reaches the front fly-wire door, snatches it open and hares down the hall.

    EARLENE
    You're in a hurry, Mr. Lee.

Lee's gone, the fly-wire door slams and Earlene looks back to Walter Cronkite...

    CRONKITE
    We have just received confirmation... (glances at studio clock)

Earlene's attention is drawn to a Dallas Police cruiser pulling up at the verge... it looks like a driver and a passenger... the horn sounds... tit-tit.

    CRONKITE
    ... from Parkland Hospital in Dallas... President Kennedy has been declared to have died.

INT LEE'S ROOM CONTINUOUS 109

In his room, Lee pulls on a fresh shirt and jacket, packs his Smith & Wesson .38 revolver in his pocket... he can a horn sound outside... tit-tit.
Earlene keeps a close eye on the police patrol car, slowly driving away.

Lee emerges to hurry up to the street... Earlene can see Lee loitering at the bus stop, then abruptly turning right, he heads away.

Clean-cut shoe salesman, Johnny BREWER (28), looks up from his counter at the sound of wailing police sirens, just as Lee enters the shop entrance to take refuge. As Lee stands in the doorway, Brewer can see that he looks agitated, his back to the window display of boots, sandals and moccasins.

There’s something about the way Lee has his hands thrust into his jacket that draws Brewer’s attention and...

... as soon as two police cars pass, Lee steps away and hurries up the street to the Texas Theater, where the main feature, War Is Hell, is about to start.

Brewer hurries to the front of his store, just in time to see Lee disappear into the 900 seat theater...

... finding the balcony area empty, Lee steps back outside to buy popcorn from Butch BURROUGHGS’ stand in the foyer.

Returning to the main level, Lee takes a seat next to a middle-aged MAN and waits for a sign. When none is forthcoming, he moves to the back of the theater and sits next to another MAN.

In the entrance, Brewer taps on the ticket booth glass and the ticket seller, JULIA Postal (30), looks up from her magazine.

BREWER
I just saw some freeloader go into your theater. The police are after some fella and it could be him.

POSTAL
I didn’t see anybody.

BREWER
Well, some young fella just shot a policeman, it could be him. He sure did look suspicious, that’s all I’m sayin’. I checked the back doors and I’m sure he’s still in there.
Julia reaches for her phone.

INT  TEXAS THEATER  DAY  221163 (13:50)

With *War Is Hell* blasting off the screen, Lee gives up on getting a sign from the middle-aged MAN and moves to the back of the theater to sit by a PREGNANT WOMAN, who promptly rises from her seat and leaves the theater... as Lee looks around for another possible contact, the lights go up in the auditorium.

As *War Is Hell* rages on, a handful of DALLAS POLICE OFFICERS walk on stage to peer out over the meagre AUDIENCE.

Behind a curtain, to the side of the stage, Brewer points out Lee to Officer Nick MCDONALD.

With the movie still playing, Lee can see Officer McDonald step out behind the curtain with his gun drawn and stroll up the aisle toward him.

McDonald stops beside Lee.

McDONALD

Get up nice and slow, now... put your hands up.

Lee gets to his feet and as he begins to lift his arms, McDonald reaches for the revolver in Lee’s waistband. Lee punches the police officer in the head and lashes out, struggling with him for possession of the revolver... the sound of the revolver’s hammer misfiring can be heard as a dozen POLICE OFFICERS rush in, throwing punches at Lee, knocking him to the ground.

LEE

Well, it’s all over now!

Lee is dragged to his feet and punched in the face by Detective Paul BENTLEY (42).

LEE

I am not resisting arrest!

With Lee bleeding from a cut over his eye, Dallas Police Officer, Captain WESTBROOK (43) pushes his way through as Lee is handcuffed by Dallas Police Officer Ray HAWKINS (31).

WESTBROOK

OK, boys, let’s go!

LEE

I don't know why you're treating me like this. I don't see why you handcuffed me.

WESTBROOK

Get him out of here and don’t let anybody see him!  (to McDonald) We have our man on both counts.

Brushing down his dress suit, smoothing his Brylcreemed hair, Bentley grabs Lee’s left arm on the way outside...
LEE
I want a lawyer... I am not resisting arrest... I fought back there... I know I wasn’t supposed to be carrying a gun.

Bentley stops to light his cigar, then...

EXT TEXAS THEATER CONTINUOUS

... Lee’s frogmarched outside, surrounded by Dallas Police and FBI Agents.

LEE
I didn't kill anybody. I haven't shot anybody. I protest this police brutality!

On the footpath, an angry mob of ONLOOKERS closes in.

ONLOOKERS
Cop killer! Cop killer! Cop killer!

LEE
What is this all about?

INT DALLAS POLICE SQUAD CAR DAY

Dallas Police Officer, Bob CARROLL’s (30) driving. At his side, Detective Sgt. Gerald HILL (34) has broken open Lee’s revolver to find six shells in the gun’s cylinder. In the back, Lee is sandwiched between Detective Bentley and Officer C. T. WALKER (31).

HILL
Now, Paul why don’t you see if this boy has any identification on him?

Bentley removes a wallet from Lee’s left hip pocket.

LEE
I don’t know why you are treating me like this. The only thing I have done was carry a pistol in a movie. I know my rights.

BENTLEY
Yes, sir, you have done a lot more. You have killed a policeman.

LEE
A police officer has been killed? Well, you can only fry for that. Well, they say it just takes a second to die.

HILL
Maybe you will get a chance to find out.
LEE
Well, I understand it only takes a minute. All I did was carry a gun.

Bentley ruffles through Lee's wallet and finds an identity card.

BENTLEY
Are you A. J. Hidell?

LEE
Hidell is not my real name... I have been in the Marine Corps, I have a dishonourable discharge, I went to Russia.

BENTLEY
Russia?

LEE
I had some trouble with police in New Orleans for passing out pro-Castro literature.

BENTLEY
Well, that's not gonna make you friends, but you're in a lot more trouble than that.

LEE
Why are you treating me this way? I am not being handled right.

BENTLEY
Why did you kill the police officer?

Lee settles back for the ride... what's the point?

HILL
I been told you're a communist, is that right?

INT  DALLAS POLICE HQ  DAY (14:00)

Hill, Bentley and Walker bustle Lee, handcuffed and battered, into Dallas Police Headquarters through a crush of gawking, hostile REPORTERS, CAMERAMEN and ONLOOKERS.

HILL
Lee, you might want to hide your face if you want to.

LEE
Why should I hide my face? I haven't done anything to be ashamed of.
INT  HOMICIDE & ROBBERY BUREAU (DALLAS CITY HALL)  DAY (14:25)

Head of Homicide & Robbery, Captain Will FRITZ (68), is a short barrel of a man, miserable with words and mean with fools. He works his way down the corridor to his office, where Westbrook is waiting for him with a wallet.

WESTBROOK
Will, I picked this up at the Tippitt murder scene and thought you should have at. It belongs to Oswald.

Fritz looks at the wallet in Westbrook’s hand.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Now, do you know of any man who needs two wallets?

Fritz pulls a wallet out of his pocket.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
This was taken off Oswald in the car on the way in.

Westbrook pockets the second wallet with nonchalant speed.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Get rid of it.

Fritz enters the Homicide & Robbery office to find FBI agents, James Hosty and James W. BOOKHOUT, waiting for him with T.J. NULLY and David B. GRANT (Secret Service) Robert I. NASH (United States Marshal) and Billy L. SENKEL and Fay M. TURNER (Dallas Police Department).

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Now, Lee, we’ve got here Mr. Hosty and Bookhout from the FBI.

LEE
(to Hosty)
You have been at my home two or three times talking to my wife. I don’t appreciate your coming out there when I was not there.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Tell us why you went to Mexico City?

LEE
I was never in Mexico City. I have been in Tijuana. Please take the handcuffs from behind me, behind my back.

Fritz agrees to Officer Senkel removing Lee’s cuffs.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Where do you usually work in the Book Depository?
LEE
My usual place of work is on the first floor. However, I frequently use the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh floors to get books. I was on all floors this morning.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Why did you leave your place of employment so quickly?

LEE
Because of all the confusion, I figured there would be no work performed this afternoon so I decided to go home.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
You were arrested in the Texas Theater.

LEE
I changed my clothing and went to a movie.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
You were carrying a gun.

LEE
I carried a pistol with me to the movie because I felt like it, for no other reason.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
You know why you’re here.

LEE
I fought the Dallas Police who arrested me in the movie theater where I received a cut and a bump.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
What about the bullets in your pocket?

LEE
I didn’t shoot anybody... the bullets, I just had them in there.

EXT PAINE HOUSE DAY (15:00)

Marina’s taking in the washing in the back garden. She can see Ruth approaching. She looks pale. Marina removes Lee’s work clothes from the line and Ruth joins in.

RUTH
(in Russian)
President Kennedy’s dead.

Marina can hear the words, but they don’t register.
RUTH

The news reports say the shots came from the School Book Depository on Elm Street.

INT LIVING ROOM (PAINE HOUSE) DAY 221163 (15:54)

Marina watches the NBC News on TV... there’s a knock at the door and Ruth gets up to answer.

BILL RYAN (VO)
Lee Oswald appears to be the prime suspect in the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Ruth returns as MARGUERITE Oswald (55), puffing with the exertion of a little extra padding and a heavy suitcase, tumbles into the house. Her fly-away glasses, bulbous nose and sturdy girth, spell trouble.

RUTH (in Russian)
It’s your mother-in-law.

Marina is relieved when Ruth switches the television off, things can’t get much worse. Marguerite strips off her coat, ready for action.

MARGUERITE
I came as soon as I could! It just ain’t true, my boy wouldn’t do anything like what they’re saying... Marina, how are you, Honey?

Marina bursts into tears.

MARGUERITE
Well, I’m tickled pink to see you, too.

INT BATHROOM (PAINE HOUSE) DAY (14:25–16:04)

Marina sits on the toilet, smoking a cigarette... she’s startled by a fierce knock on the door.

MARGUERITE (VO)
Marina!

Marina wipes at the tears coursing down her face.

MARGUERITE (VO)
Marina, are you in there, Honey!

Marina flicks the cigarette into the toilet bowl and flushes.

MARGUERITE (VO)
It’s no time to be on your lonesome!
Marina unlocks the door, turns on the cold water and splashes her face... behind her the door opens... Marguerite fills the doorway.

MARGUERITE
It's a difficult time, child, but we got to stick together.

Marina keeps splashing and sobbing.

MARGUERITE
You know Lee works for the government, don't you?

INT  LINE-UP HALL (DALLAS CITY HALL)  DAY (16:45)  123

Dallas housewife, Helen MARKHAM (42), is a little addled, peering through a window at the line-up of four young MEN, including Oswald, with a torn t-shirt, his face bruised.  Dallas Police Detective Jim LEAVELLE (43) hovers in his Stetson, waiting for a decision.

Under the hard lights, Oswald addresses the window and his fellow suspects.

LEE
It isn't right to put me in line with these teenagers.  You know what you are doing, and you are trying to railroad me... I want my lawyer... You are doing me an injustice by putting me out there dressed different than these other men... I am out there, the only one with a bruise on his head... I don't believe the lineup is fair, and I desire to put on a jacket similar to those worn by some of the other individuals in the lineup.  All of you have a shirt on, and I have a T-shirt on.  I want a shirt or something, this T-shirt is unfair!

MARKHAM
(to Leavelle)
Yeah, he's the one, he shot Officer Tippit.

INT  HOMICIDE & ROBBERY BUREAU  DAY (16:45-18:30)  124

Captain Fritz leads the interview with Oswald, as FBI agents, James Hosty, James W. Bookhout, T.J. Nully, David B. Grant (Secret Service) Robert I. Nash (United States Marshal) and Billy L. Senkel and Fay M. Turner (Dallas Police Department), look on.  Despite the crowded stage, Oswald’s performance is impressive for its admirable poise.

LEE
When I left the Texas School Book Depository, I went to my room, where I changed my trousers, got a pistol, and went to a picture show.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
What was the pistol for?
LEE
You know how boys do when they have a gun, they carry it.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Where’d you go to school, son?

LEE
I went to school in New York and in Fort Worth, Texas. After getting into the Marines, I finished my high school education... I support the Castro revolution.

BOOKHOUT
Why did you give a false name to your landlady?

LEE
My landlady didn't understand my name correctly, so it was her idea to call me O. H. Lee. Listen, I want to talk with Mr. Abt, a New York attorney.

HOSTY
The package you carried to work this morning... what was in the package... Buell Frazier said you told him it was curtains rods.

LEE
The only package I brought to work was my lunch.

HOSTY
What about the membership card found in your wallet.

LEE
I am a member of the Fair Play For Cuba Committee

HOSTY
This is for the Communist Party of America.

LEE
I never had a card to the Communist party.

HOSTY
But, you’re a communist.

LEE
I am a Marxist, but not a Leninist-Marxist.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
You mind telling me about the purchases of the weapons in your possession?
LEE
I bought a pistol in Fort Worth several months ago. I refuse to tell you where the pistol was purchased.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
When you bought those guns... (ordered them by mail)

LEE
I never ordered any guns. I am not a malcontent.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
What did you have against the President, Lee?

LEE
Nothing irritated me about the President.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Do you believe in a deity?

LEE
I don't care to discuss that.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
And, why not?

Lee shrugs, it's not a conversation he cares to have.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
The rifle you hid... (up on the sixth floor)

LEE
How can I afford a rifle on the Book Depository salary of $1.25 an hour?

CAPTAIN FRITZ
It's not your rifle?

Lee sits back, folds his arm, so insolent Fritz would love to slap his face.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
What did you have against President Kennedy?

LEE
John Kennedy had a nice family.

There's a tap on the glass, it's Deputy Sheriff, Roger CRAIG (25). Captain Fritz lets him in. Craig enters and crouches down to get a good look at Lee.

CRAIG
(indicates Oswald)
I saw this man get into a light green Rambler, a few minutes after the assassination.
CAPTAIN FRITZ
You seen him before?

CRAIG
After the shooting, he came running down from the book depository... get into a Rambler, yes, sir.

LEE
That’s Mrs Paine’s car.

CURRY
It’s her car?

LEE
Yeah, Ruth Paine, my wife lives with her. Don’t try to tie her into this. I told you people I did... (nothing wrong)

Lee slumps onto the desk, then looks up to Captain Fritz.

LEE
Now, everyone will know who I am, I need an attorney!

CAPTAIN FRITZ
You haven’t been charged.

LEE
I have not been given the opportunity to have counsel.

FBI AGENT HOSTY
(to Oswald)
You’ve had trouble with the law.

LEE
As I said, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee has definitely been investigated, that is very true... the results of that investigation were zero. The Fair Play for Cuba Committee is not now on the attorney general’s subversive list.

FBI AGENT HOSTY
How do you know that?

LEE
Check it... (it’s correct)

FBI AGENT HOSTY
I don’t have to check it.

INT  LINE-UP HALL (DALLAS CITY HALL)  DAY (18:30)

Handcuffed, Lee is dragged to a line-up for witnesses, Cecil J. McWATTERS, Sam GUINYARD and Ted CALLAWAY.
LEE
I didn’t shoot anyone!

A mob of REPORTERS rush Lee.

LEE
I want to get in touch with a lawyer... I want to talk to Mr. Abt, in New York City.

REPORTER
Have you been charged?

LEE
I never killed anybody.

INT  ARRAIGNMENT COURT (DALLAS CITY HALL)  NIGHT (19:35)  126
Judge J. P. JOHNSON scribbles a note: State of Texas v. Lee Harvey Oswald - for murder with malice of Officer J. D. Tippit of the Dallas Police Dept.

LEE
I insist upon my constitutional rights... the way you are treating me, I might as well be in Russia... I was not granted my request to put on a jacket similar to those worn by other individuals in some previous lineups.

JUDGE JOHNSON
You have been arraigned for the wilful murder of Dallas Police Officer J.D. Tippit. You will be remanded to the Sheriff, Dallas County, Texas, forthwith.

LEE
I don’t know what you’re talking about.

JUDGE JOHNSON
You will be given the opportunity to contact the lawyer of your choice.

LEE
I’ve pleaded for legal assistance for the past eight hours!

Lee is dragged away.

INT  LINE-UP HALL (DALLAS CITY HALL)  NIGHT (19:50)  127
Lee, in soiled white t-shirt and slacks, rages in a line-up of three suspects for witness, J.D. DAVIS.

LEE
I have been dressed differently than the other three!
Lee steps out of the line-up to be restrained by two Dallas Police OFFICERS.

LEE
Don’t you know the difference? I still have on the same clothes I was arrested in. The other two were prisoners, already in jail.

The two Officers bundle him out, past the crush of Reporters.

LEE
(yells)
I am only a patsy!

INT HOMICIDE & ROBBERY BUREAU NIGHT (19:55-20:55)
Captain Fritz scribbles notes as Lee rambles, wrung out, resting on the desk, his chin on folded arms.

LEE
I think I have talked long enough. I don’t have anything else to say... what started out to be a short interrogation turned out to be rather lengthy... I don't care to talk anymore... I am waiting for someone to come forward to give me legal assistance. It wasn’t actually true as to how I got home. I took a bus, but due to a traffic jam, I left the bus and got a taxicab, by which means I actually arrived at my residence.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Now, Lee, we got a few office chores to do.

INT HOMICIDE & ROBBERY BUREAU NIGHT (20:55-23:00)
Captain Fritz stands by while three Dallas Police OFFICERS take Lee’s fingerprints and conduct a paraffin test to check for gunpowder residues.

LEE
I will not sign the fingerprint card until I talk to my attorney.

Lee’s name is on the card anyway. An Officer spreads hot paraffin on the sides of Lee’s face and over his hands.

LEE
What are you trying to prove with this... I fired a gun? You’re wasting your time. I don't know anything about what you are accusing me.
Lee’s at last realised his situation... Police Officer John ADAMCIK and FBI Agent M. CLEMENTS fill out several forms.

LEE
I was in Russia two years and liked it in Russia... I am 5 ft. 9 in., weigh 140 lb., have brown hair, blue-gray eyes, and have no tattoos or permanent scars.

Several Police Officers enter, lift Lee to his feet and drag him from the office into the crowded corridor where...

EXT HOMICIDE & ROBBERY BUREAU CONTINUOUS 231163

Graphic: November 23rd

... Lee’s paraded like a show dog, the Police Officers pushing their way through the large press contingent of Reporters and Cameramen.

Nightclub owner, Jack RUBY (56) emerges from a side door, pats the gun in his pocket and hurries to join the passing throng, making for the line-up hall. Ruby's a burly, flashy man with the usual weaknesses. He's a gangster from Central Casting, neither brave nor bright, the perfect co-conspirator for those who expect total loyalty.

INT DALLAS POLICE HQ CONTINUOUS (00:05)

Along the corridor, in the crush of Reporters and Cameramen, Lee shuffles, suffering the popping flashes of cameras and the heat of attention... straining against his handcuffs, he looks for a friendly face...

INT BASEMENT LINE-UP HALL (DALLAS POLICE HQ) CONTINUOUS

... Lee is hauled into the line-up hall, to face a clamorous audience of Reporters and Cameramen.

Jack Ruby stands on a table at the back of the press corps, pretending to be a reporter.

CHIEF Jesse CURRY (50) and District Attorney, Henry WADE (49), push their way into the room and the press corps gathers around.

CHIEF CURRY
We wanted to give you a chance to see Mr. Oswald... give you an idea as to how he’s being treated.

REPORTER
(to Lee)
How’d you get the black eye?
LEE

A cop hit me.

At the back, Ruby cranes forward, fondling the gun in his pocket.

REPORTER

You were arraigned early today?

LEE

Well, I was questioned by Judge Johnson. However, I protested at that time that I was not allowed legal representation during that very short and sweet hearing. I really don’t know what the situation is about. Nobody has told me anything except that I am accused of murdering a policeman. I know nothing more than that, and I do request someone to come forward to give me legal assistance.

REPORTER

Did you kill the President?

Lee ponders for just a second; this is why he’s here. He wants no credit.

LEE

No. I have not been charged with that. In fact, nobody has said that to me, yet. The first thing I heard about it was when the newspaper reporters in the hall asked me that question... I did not do it... I did not do it... I did not shoot anyone.

WADE

Oswald is a member of the Free Cuba Committee.

RUBY

(calls)

Henry, that’s the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

INT  PAINE HOUSE  NIGHT  (00:23)  134

Two SECRET SERVICE AGENTS escort Marina, Marguerite, June and Rachel from the house. In the kitchenm Ruth pushes past a detective to follow Marina.

RUTH

Marina?

Marina turns to speak, but the agents shove her out the door to several waiting cars.

INT  JAIL CELLS (DALLAS CITY HALL)  NIGHT  (00:35)  135

Pursued by a mob of Reporters and Cameramen, Lee is released by a JAILER and led down a corridor by two burly Homicide Detectives in Stetsons.
TV REPORTER
What were you doing in the book depository?

LEE
Well, I work in that building.

TV REPORTER
Were you there at the time?

LEE
Naturally, if I work in that building, yes sir.

TV REPORTER
Did you kill the president?

POLICE OFFICER
Back up, men!

LEE
No, they’re taking me in because of the fact that I lived in the Soviet Union... I’m just a patsy!

The POLICE OFFICER drags LEE toward a door.

LEE
This is the third set of fingerprints, photographs being taken.

INT  COURTROOM (DALLAS CITY HALL)  NIGHT (01:35)

JUDGE JOHNSON, freshly pulled from his bed, studies Lee standing in front of him, bruised and bedraggled in handcuffs.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY
Your Honour, we wish to proceed.

JUDGE JOHNSON
Proceed.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY
The State of Texas charges Lee Harvey Oswald for the Murder with Malice of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, President of the United States.

JUDGE JOHNSON
(to Lee)
You understand the charges, Mr. Oswald?

LEE
Well, sir, I guess this is the trial... (for murder)
JUDGE JOHNSON
You are being arraigned, Mr. Oswald.

LEE
I want to contact my lawyer, Mr. Abt, in New York City. I would like to have this gentleman. He is with the American Civil Liberties Union.

JUDGE JOHNSON
You'll have to take that up with those arranging your incarceration.

INT  MOTEL ROOM  DAY
Marguerite has pigeonholed a bemused Secret Service Agent in the tiny kitchen.

MARGUERITE
Now, I knew it wasn't right. I didn't think he wanted to go to Russia, but the Navy said he did, they said it was his decision. I had to go to Washington and get them to tell me where he was.

In the living room, Marina is getting the third degree from two FBI AGENTS and a White Russian TRANSLATOR.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT
We'd advise you not to contact Mrs Ruth Paine again. She's associated with the CIA.

George is dumbfounded, but more so when it's clear Marina comprehends.

MARINA
OK.

INT  JAIL CELLS (DALLAS CITY HALL)  NIGHT (10:20)
Lee lies on his bunk in a cell. A tin tray on the floor holds his uneaten breakfast, cold scrambled eggs.

Two Homicide DETECTIVES arrive with the Jailer and Lee is taken from his cell and frogmarched down to batwing doors. He braces himself as they push through into a wall of Reporters and Cameramen.

INT  HOMICIDE & ROBBERY BUREAU  DAY (10:30-13:10)
Lee is sullen, handcuffed and empty. Postal Inspector H.D. Holmes, FBI Agents, James Bookhout and Hosty, and Captain Fritz are visiting old questions - or they're tired of going through the motions. As are the four Dallas Police Detectives, guarding the door.
CAPTAIN FRITZ
Where did you go after you left the lunchroom?

LEE
I told you that.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Tell me again.

LEE
You took notes, just read them for yourself if you want to refresh your memory.

LEE
I would like to have an attorney represent me. I would like to contact Mr. Abt in New York.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
You can have any lawyer you like. The phone is there for you in gaol and you can call anyone you want to.

LEE
I don’t have the money to call New York.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Call collect.

LEE
If I can’t get Mr. Abt to represent me, then I would hope the Civil Liberties Union will come up with an attorney.

Captain Fritz flips his pencil across his bare desk. He’s given up writing notes.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Your wife says it’s your rifle.

LEE
I never owned a rifle.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Do you have someone who can verify that?

LEE
Robert Oswald, my brother, lives in Fort Worth. We used to go shooting when we were kids. I was not good at it. Ask him.

HOSTY
Lee, tell us about the charges in New Orleans.

LEE
I’m not interested in talking to you.
CAPTAIN FRITZ
You seem to have a problem with Special Agent Hosty.

LEE
I am familiar with all types of questioning and have no intention of making any statements. In the past three weeks the FBI has talked to my wife. They were abusive and impolite. They frightened my wife, and I consider their activities obnoxious. I refuse to take a polygraph. It has always been my practice not to agree to take a polygraph. The FBI has overstepped their bounds in using various tactics in interviewing me. I don't own a rifle. I didn't tell Buell Wesley Frazier anything about bringing back some curtain rods.

Deputy Sheriff BOONE sticks his head around the door.

BOONE
Mr. Oswald's brother's waitin' downstairs.

INT VISITORS' ROOM (DALLAS CITY HALL) DAY (12:00)

ROBERT Oswald (29) enters a long grey room, divided in the middle by a dusty glass wall. Plywood screens form eight cubicles, facing the glass. Behind Robert, a NEWS CAMERAMAN persists in filming until Lee enters at the other end of the room. Despite the crashing of steel doors, the wall denies all sound. Lee chooses a cubicle and approaches to observe his brother through the filthy glass. Robert, taller and stronger, looks drawn. He’s slow to react to Lee’s prompt to pick up his handset.

LEE
(calm)
This is taped.

ROBERT
Well, it may be or may not be.

With some concern, Robert leans forward to study Lee’s bruised face.

ROBERT
What have they been doing to you, were they roughing you up?

LEE
I got this at the theater. They haven’t bothered me since. They’re treating me all right.

ROBERT
I see Mother has been making a fuss.

LEE
What did you think of the baby?
ROBERT
Yeah, thanks a lot for telling me about the baby. I didn’t even know you had one.

LEE
Well, it was a girl, and I wanted a boy, but you know how that goes.

ROBERT
Marina seems like a very nice person.

LEE
Yes.

ROBERT
She’s lovely.

Lee is distracted, he’s looking at a stranger.

ROBERT
Lee, what in Sam Hill is going on?

LEE
I don’t know.

ROBERT
You don’t know? Look, they’ve got your pistol, they’ve got your rifle, they’ve got you charged with shooting the President and a police officer. And you tell me you don’t know. Now, I want to know just what’s going on.

LEE
I just don’t know what they are talking about... don’t believe all this so-called evidence.

Robert slips into a search of his brother’s quiet obstinacy, his sense of loss without anxiety.

LEE
(with certainty)
Brother, you won’t find anything there.

Robert steps back.

ROBERT
Lee, what about Marina, what do you think she’s going to do now, with those two kids?

LEE
My friends will take care of them.

ROBERT
Do you mean the Paines?
Lee
Yes.

Robert
I don’t think they’re any friends of yours.

Lee
Yes, they are.

Robert
Well, they’re sure not friends of mine.

Lee
Junie needs a new pair of shoes.

Robert
Don’t worry about that, I’ll take care of that.

Robert senses that Lee is withdrawing again.

Robert
What about this attorney you tried to contact in New York, who is he?

Lee
Well, he’s just an attorney I want to handle my case.

Robert
I’ll get you an attorney down here.

Lee
No, you stay out of it.

Robert
Stay out of it? It looks like I’ve been dragged into it.

Lee
I’m not going to have anybody from down here. I want this one.

Robert
Well, all right.

Robert is disappointed to see a uniformed Police Officer enter and tap Lee on the shoulder.

Police Officer
That’s all the time you can have.

The Police Officer steps away and Lee seems unconcerned.
ROBERT
I'll see you in a day or two.

LEE
Now, you've got your job and everything, don't be running back and forth all the time and getting yourself in trouble with your boss.

ROBERT
Don’t worry about that, I'll be back.

LEE
All right, I'll see you.

Lee leaves Robert holding the phone.

INT  HOMICIDE & ROBBERY BUREAU  DAY (10:30-13:10)  
Washed out, Lee arrives, escorted by four Dallas Police Detectives, and indicates for his handcuffs to be removed. Postal Inspector H.D. Holmes, FBI Agents, James Bookhout and Hosty finish their coffee. Captain Fritz gets up to close the door, ushering the four Dallas Police Detectives outside.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
(to Lee)
What is your relationship with Mrs. Paine?

LEE
My wife lives with Mrs. Ruth Paine. She was learning Russian. My wife needed help with the young baby, so it made a nice arrangement for both of them. I don't know Mrs. Paine very well, but Mr. Paine and his wife were separated a great deal of the time.

HOSTY
Tell us about your belongings left at Mrs. Paine’s home.

LEE
The garage at the Paines' house has some seabags that have a lot of my personal belongings. I left them after coming back from New Orleans in September.

FRITZ
You kept the rifle with those belongings?

LEE
I don't own a rifle at all. I did have a small rifle some years in the past. You can't buy a rifle in Russia, you can only buy shotguns. I had a shotgun in Russia and hunted some while there.
HOLMES
You took the rifle out of the garage?

LEE
I didn't bring the rifle from New Orleans.

FRITZ
You were seen taking it to work by Buell Frazier.

LEE
He is mistaken. I did carry a package to the Texas School Book Depository. I carried my lunch, a sandwich and fruit, which I made at Paine's house.

HOSTY
Who is Alik J. Hidell?

LEE
The name Alik Hidell was picked up while working in New Orleans in the Fair Play for Cuba organization.

HOSTY
This is a communist organisation?

LEE
No, sir, I speak Russian, correspond with people in Russia, and receive newspapers from Russia... I am not a member of the Communist party. It's true, I belong to the Civil Liberties Union.

BOOKHOUT
Is that why you killed the president, because of your communist beliefs?

LEE
I had nothing personal against John Kennedy.

INT VISITORS' ROOM (DALLAS CITY HALL) DAY (13:10 -13:30)
Lee’s approaches the glass where Marina, scared and pale, studies his face for hope, or at least some answers. At her side Lee’s mother, Marguerite, has hold of a handset, ready to speak. Lee picks up his handset and indicates for Marina to pick up the other one on the wall.

MARGUERITE
Is there anything you need, Lee, what can we do?

LEE
No, there is nothing you can do. Everything is fine. I know my rights, and I will have an attorney. I already requested to get in touch with Attorney Abt, I think is his name. Don't worry about a thing.
MARINA
(in Russian)
You are hurt, have they hit you?

LEE
(in Russian)
Oh, no, they have not been beating me. They’re treating me fine.

MARGUERITE
What about these lies they’re saying about you?

LEE
You're not to worry about that. (to Marina in Russian) Did you bring June and Rachel?

MARINA
(in Russian)
They wouldn't let me bring them in to see you.

MARGUERITE
I suppose they've got this place bugged. Can we talk normal in here?

LEE
Of course we can speak about absolutely anything at all.

MARGUERITE
What they’re saying, you killed our president, what is happening?

Marina, shivering with fear, begins to sob.

LEE
It's a mistake. I'm not guilty. (in Russian) There are people who will help me. There is a lawyer in New York on whom I am counting for help. Don't cry. There is nothing to cry about. Try not to think about it.

MARINA
(in Russian)
What will happen to us?

LEE
(in Russian)
Everything is going to be all right. If they ask you anything, you have a right not to answer. You have a right to refuse. Do you understand? You are not to worry. You have friends. They'll help you. If it comes to that, you can ask the Red Cross for help. You mustn't worry about me. Kiss Junie and Rachel for me. I love you.
Marina breaks down, sobbing into the handset.

LEE
(in Russian)
Be sure to buy shoes for June.

INT JAILER’S OFFICE (DALLAS CITY HALL)  DAY (15:45)

Lee waits for the phone, while a Police Officer dials.

POLICE OFFICER
(into phone)
Mrs Paine, Mrs Ruth Paine? Hold the line, please.

The Police Officer hands the receiver to Lee.

LEE
(into phone)
This is Lee. Would you please call John Abt in New York for me after 6:00 P.M. The number for his office is 414472, and his residence is 16, West 73rd. Thank you for your concern.

INT HOMICIDE & ROBBERY BUREAU  DAY (18:00–18:30)

Sitting back from the desk, Lee slides a photograph, a monochrome blow-up, out of his field of view. Postal Inspector H.D. Holmes, FBI Agents, James Bookhout and Hosty pass the photo around of Lee standing in a backyard holding a rifle and some newspaper with a revolver on his hip. Captain Fritz scribbles some notes, he’s never seen a suspect so calm.

LEE
In time I will be able to show you that this is not my picture, but I don’t want to answer any more questions. I will not discuss this photograph without advice of an attorney.

HOLMES
Can you confirm where you got the rifle?

LEE
There was another rifle in the building. I saw it. Warren Caster had two rifles, a 30.06 Mauser and a .22 for his son.

Lee takes the photograph back.
LEE
That picture is not mine, but the face is mine. The picture has been made by superimposing my face. The other part of the picture is not me at all, and I have never seen this picture before. I understand photography real well, and that, in time, I will be able to show you that is not my picture and that it has been made by someone else.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
You're not suggesting that photograph was fixed.

LEE
It was entirely possible that the Police Department has superimposed this part of the photograph over the body of someone else.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Lee, you know that's horse shit.

LEE
The Dallas Police were the culprits. The small picture was reduced from the larger one, made by some persons unknown to me. Since I have been photographed at City Hall, with people taking my picture while being transferred from the office to the jail door, someone has been able to get a picture of my face, and with that, they have made this picture.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Well, that's just plain crazy... now, we know you kept the rifle at Mrs. Paine's house.

LEE
I never kept a rifle at Mrs. Paine's garage at Irving, Texas. I have no receipts for purchase of any gun, and I have never ordered any guns. I do not own a rifle, never possessed a rifle.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
What about this card found in your wallet, is Hidell your alias?

LEE
I will not say who wrote A. J. Hidell on my Selective Service card. I will not tell you the purpose of carrying the card or the use I made of it.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Do you want to tell us who these people are, the people in your book?
LEE
The address book in my possession has the names of Russian immigrants in Dallas, Texas, whom I have visited.

INT JAILER’S OFFICE (DALLAS CITY HALL) NIGHT (21:30) 145
Lee’s waiting for the phone. A Police Officer is dialling.

POLICE OFFICER
(into phone)
Mrs Paine, Mrs Ruth Paine? Hold the line, please.

LEE
(into phone)
Marina, please, would you try to locate her?

Lee clutches the phone with two hands, no one’s getting it off him.

LEE
(into phone)
She’s moved?

INT HOMICIDE & ROBBERY BUREAU NIGHT (22:00) 146
Captain Fritz closes a file and hands it back to Detective Leavelle, resigned under his pale wide-brimmed Stetson.

DETECTIVE LEAVELLE
The paraffin test came back from the FBI, it’s negative for his face. He ain’t shot no rifle. He’s got a little residue on his hands, but he could get that having a piss.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
It’s not addin’ up, is it?

DETECTIVE LEAVELLE
Rifle sight, couldn’t hit the sky if you was aiming at it. No prints on the gun. Someone’s been running ‘round using his name while he’s been working at the book depository. His landlady says he’s a nice, quiet... (fella)

Captain Fritz can see Lee approaching, escorted by two Homicide Detectives and the usual troop of Reporters.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Yeah, yeah... we ain’t got a case... not yet, anyway.

Lee’s led in the office by two Homicide Detectives as an AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN (35), in handcuffs, is led past the window on his way to the cells.
LEE
Life’s better for the coloured people in Russia than it is here.

DETECTIVE LEAVELLE
Well, maybe that’s because they haven’t got many black folks... (laughs) they can have ours, we got plenty to spare.

INT JAILER’S OFFICE (DALLAS CITY HALL) NIGHT (22:30)
Lee takes the receiver from a Police Officer.

LEE
(into phone)
M’am, I’d like to make a collect call to a Mr. John D. Hurt in Raleigh, North Carolina... 919

INT SWITCHBOARD ROOM (DALLAS CITY HALL) NIGHT (22:30)
Louise SWINNEY (36) checks the directory and writes Lee’s number on a pad... 82115

SWINNEY
(into phone)
This will be a collect call?

Swinney glances up as two Office of Naval Intelligence AGENTS enter, moving through to an adjoining room to don telephonist headphones.

SWINNEY
(into phone)
That’s Mr. John Hurt, nine, one, nine, eight, two, one, one, five.

Swinney looks over and one of the Agents shakes his head ‘no’.

SWINNEY
(into phone)
Please wait, while I put through your call.

Swinney checks with the Agents again one of them offers the slightest ‘no’.

SWINNEY
Trying your number, the party in North Carolina.

Swinney reaches up and pulls the jack out.
Lee hangs on the phone.

SWINNEY (VO)
I'm sorry, sir, your call failed to go through.

Cold gravity pulls on Lee’s insides, his hands and face. He hangs up.

Graphic: November 24th

Lee turns in his bunk. The shadows hold his face in misery. He can hear Dallas, the traffic, the whispering of closing deals. He knows.

Dallas Postal Inspector, Harry D. Holmes, searches the corridor, haunted by Homicide Detectives in Stetsons, until he finds Captain Fritz, trying to shake off a clutch of Television Reporters.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
You fellas should be down in the basement. In fact, if I had my way... (you’d be there permanently)

TELEVISION REPORTER
Don’t say it, Captain.

Captain Fritz and Holmes meet at the door to the Homicide and Robbery office.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
(to Holmes)
We’re getting ready to have a last interrogation of Oswald before we transfer him to the county jail. Would you like to join us?

HOLMES
I would.

Captain Fritz and Holmes find seats... Lee is doubled over beside a desk.

Leaning back on their chairs, Local Agent in Charge Forrest V. SORRELS and Inspector Thomas J. KELLEY of the Secret Service, seem irritated with the presence of the four Homicide Detectives, guarding Lee like hunting dogs at a river bank.
CAPTAIN FRITZ
Gentlemen, morning to you all, you know why we’re here. Just so you know, there won’t be any record kept of this little meetin’. Just can’t seem to find a tape recorder in the building. So, we can all speak freely. I trust that’s agreeable.

Holmes removes a notebook and pen from his jacket.

HOLMES
I’d like to write, if that’s OK?

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Now, Lee, is there anything you’d like to say?

Lee senses a warmer atmosphere, and tenses up.

HOLMES
I’d like to know how Mr. Oswald found the post office service when he paid for his box?

LEE
I found the service very helpful, thank you, sir.

All faces turn at the banging on the door... out in the corridor, Chief Curry tries the door, it’s locked. A Police Officer lets him in... Chief Curry leads Captain Fritz out into the corridor for a few furtive words, sotto voce.

CHIEF CURRY
We won’t take too long in here... we’ll be ready real soon to take him down.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Let me know when it’s good to go.

Captain Fritz re-enters his office.

LEE
If you ask me about the shooting of Tippit, I don't know what you are talking about. The only thing I am here for is because I popped a policeman in the nose in the theater on Jefferson Avenue, which I readily admit I did, because I was protecting myself.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
Where did you get the money to go to Mexico?

LEE
It didn't cost much to go to Mexico. It cost me some $26, a small, ridiculous amount to eat, and another ridiculous small amount to stay all night.
CAPTAIN FRITZ

In Mexico?

LEE

I went to the Cuban Consulate in Mexico City to try to get permission to go to Cuba by way of Russia. Then, I tried to go to the Soviet Embassy. They told me to come back in 'thirty days.'

CAPTAIN

You still haven’t explained why you needed such a long paper bag to take to work.

LEE

I don’t recall the shape, it may have been a small sack, or a large sack; you don’t always find one that just fits your sandwiches. The sack was in the car, beside me, on my lap, as it always is... so it didn't get it crushed. It was not on the back seat. Mr. Frazier must have been mistaken or else thinking about the other time when he picked me up.

CAPTAIN FRITZ

We found some communist literature in your belongings at Mrs. Paine’s house.

LEE

It's true, I subscribe to two publications from Russia, one being a hometown paper published in Minsk, where I met and married my wife.

CAPTAIN FRITZ

Son, we might not get another chance to talk.

LEE

It’s a pleasure I won’t miss.

CAPTAIN FRITZ

Where you brought up with any religion?

LEE

What religion am I? I have no faith, I suppose you mean, in the Bible. I have read the Bible. It is fair reading, but not very interesting. As a matter of fact, I am a student of philosophy and I don't consider the Bible as even a reasonable or intelligent philosophy.

Lee relishes the Detectives’ collective groan.

LEE

I have been a student of Marxism since the age of fourteen.
CAPTAIN FRITZ
I thought it might be a comfort in the days to come.

LEE
I don’t need comfort. The American people will soon forget the President was shot, but I didn’t shoot him.

CAPTAIN FRITZ
So, you had no reason... (to do it?)

LEE
Since the President was killed, someone else would take his place, perhaps Vice-President Johnson. His views about Cuba would probably be largely the same as those of President Kennedy. It might not be proper to answer further questions, because what I say might be construed in a different light than what I actually meant it to be. When the head of any government dies, or is killed, there is always a second in command who would take over. I did not kill President Kennedy or Officer Tippit. If you want me to own up to hitting or pleading guilty to hitting a cop in the mouth when I was arrested, yeah, I plead guilty to that. But I do deny shooting both the President and Tippit.

Detective Leavelle sticks his head around the door.

DETECTIVE LEAVELLE
We’re ready to roll.

LEE
I would like to have a shirt from clothing that was brought to the office to wear over the T-shirt I am wearing. I prefer wearing a black Ivy League-type shirt, which might be a little warmer. I don’t want a hat. I will just take one of those sweaters, the black one.

Lee gets to his feet, pulls on his black sweater, and holds out his wrists for Detective Leavelle to snap on the handcuffs and they step out of the office.

Secret Service Agent Kelley approaches Lee.

KELLEY
I’ll just have a word with you, Mr. Oswald, if you don’t mind.

Kelley and Lee gets into a huddle.

KELLEY
Mr. Oswald, my name is Thomas Kelley. I’m with the Secret Service. I’m authorised to ask if you would be prepared to talk with me once you’ve secured legal counsel.
LEE
They won’t let me talk to a lawyer.

KELLEY
They will, it’s your right. Since you’ve denied any responsibility for the assassination of the president...

Lee’s unease at catching the eye of one of the Detectives, has Kelley drawing him away.

KELLEY
... we’re responsible for the safety of the President. You know that, sir... and the police here in Dallas have charged you with killin’ him, but we’re all very aware you have denied it... and denied it several times.

LEE
I didn’t shoot anybody!

KELLEY
So, we are very anxious to talk with you further to make absolutely sure and certain that the right story, that is the truth, is coming out as it should in relation to the murder of the President. Am I clear, sir?

LEE
You are - and I would be glad to discuss your offer with my attorney and after that we could talk or you could talk with the attorney, if he thought it was the wise thing to do... at the moment my situation is... at the present time I have nothing I can say to you... but I will be glad to once I have some representation.

KELLEY
Thank you, sir.

Kelley steps aside - Detective Leavelle and two Police Officers lead Lee out of the office.

INT  CORRIDOR (DALLAS CITY HALL)  CONTINUOUS
Detective Leavelle and two Police Officers escort Lee to the lift.

INT  LIFT  CONTINUOUS
In his black sweater, handcuffed to Leavelle, Lee rides the lift... the doors open to reveal a crush of anxious, hyped-up humanity, a wall of faces, microphones and camera lights, and...

INT  DALLAS POLICE HQ BASEMENT CARPARK  CONTINUOUS
... Lee steps out, handcuffed in front, and flanked by Detective Billy COMBEST (32), he’s escorted along the empty corridor with faces silently staring out from offices.
Stepping through the doorway, Lee confronts the waiting crowd, filling the basement. Flashes pop, film runs through cameras and the air is electric.

**DETECTIVE LEAVELLE**
If someone decides to shoot you, I hope they’re as good a shot as you are.

**LEE**
Don’t be so dramatic... no one’s gonna shoot anybody.

Lee’s led into the underground carpark, into a wall of Reporters, Cops and Spectators... a van backs into view and a horn sounds... and Lee’s led on.

**REPORTER**
(to Lee)
Have you anything to say in your defence!

The crowd parts, making way for Lee, Detectives Leavelle and Combest... in less than six steps, a stocky gangster in a fedora, Jack Ruby, pushes his way to the front in his dark suit. In his hand, a .38 revolver... Ruby lunges forward... at the last moment, Lee can see him and at the moment of recognition, Ruby pumps a bullet into Lee’s guts.

**RUBY**
You killed my president, you rat!

Lee takes the crashing slug and cries out with the sad shock of a man whose life is about to...

**TELEVISION JOURNALIST**
He’s been shot! Oswald’s been shot!

The ceiling, dark with strangers’ faces and hard lights, presses down on Lee, lying on his back with a cop whispering in his ear...

**DETECTIVE**
Is there anything you want to tell us?

Lee would like to say, ‘no, sir’... what can he say, what does he know?

Ruby is wrestled to the ground. Job done, he thrashes around on the floor, fighting Detectives, while several shocked Reporters look on... while cameras keep filming.

Police Officers carry Lee into a nearby office and lay him on the floor. Detective Billy Combest gets down on his hands, bringing his face to Lee’s ear.

**COMBEST**
Lee... Lee, do you want to... would you like to make any confession... was anyone working with you?

Lee shakes his head, ‘no’.

**COMBEST**
Lee... any statement in connection with the killing of President Kennedy?
Lee shakes his head again, ‘no’... a Police Officer applies CPR and Lee’s lifted onto a gurney to be carried from the office to an ambulance.

INT  MORGUE - NEW ORLEANS  NIGHT  241163

Lee’s corpse lies, naked, on a steel gurney. An FBI AGENT enters with a Mannlicher-Carcano rifle. He removes the handgrip under the barrel, presses Oswald’s dead hand to the barrel, fixes the wooden handgrip onto the barrel and leaves.

EXT  CEMETERY  DAY  251163

Marina, Marguerite and Robert observe the hearse pull up. Over, by the few trees, a gallery of Reporters and Cameramen look on, recording the assassin’s burial for the evening news.

The UNDERTAKER and his ASSISTANT drag the casket out into the sunlight. They have no intention of carrying it to the grave.

Marguerite heads over to the Newsmen.

MARGUERITE
Come, help put my son in his grave.

Without enthusiasm, a handful of Reporters saunter over, pick up the casket and head for the grave.

MARGUERITE
Be gentle, he’s a patriot.

At the graveside, the Reporters drop the casket.

PREACHER
Gather ‘round boys... in the spirit of forgiveness.

Ignoring the invitation, the Reporters head away.

FADE TO BLACK

INT  LEE HOME - NEW ORLEANS  DAY  011253

Curled up the sofa, Lee (now 14) can just hear his mother, Marguerite (now 41) entertaining a SALESMAN in the kitchen.

Opening titles of the television series ‘I Led 3 Lives, Episode S02E39.’

Over a mournful trumpet...
ANNOUNCER
(stentorian)
This is the story, the fantastically true story of Herbert A. Philbrick, who for nine frightening years did lead three lives... average citizen, high level member of the communist party and counter-spy for the Federal Bureau of Investigation...

Marguerite and the Salesman make their way to the front door.

MARGUERITE
We’re going out, Honey.

The front door closes, Lee doesn’t notice.

ANNOUNCER
... for obvious reasons the names, dates and places have been changed, but the story is based on fact. The communist party does not believe in Christmas, except as it can turn it to its own advantage. This is the story of an attempt by the communists to cash in on the spirit of the Christmas season.

The End
A second term in the White House was John F. Kennedy’s to lose, particularly if Senator Barry Goldwater, should succeed in gaining the Republican nomination. Goldwater, with his unpredictable personality and Cold War conservatism, was no match for Kennedy’s youth and ‘progressive’ agenda. All that changed at 12:30pm, November 22nd, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Until then, his growing stature as a statesman, his hold on the mood of the time, suggested a presidency of elysian promise. In JFK and The Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters, James Douglass describes a president at the absolute height of his powers as he prepared to face the voters once more. His approval rating in 1963 had steadily climbed through sixty percent after the Cuban Missile Crisis in October, 1962. He was unassailable as an orator, inspiring and clear-minded. He was celebrated as a break from the ‘old guard’, someone who promised a future beyond the austerity of the 1950s, the Cold War and the grim intransigence of ideological battles with communism. He was intent on scaling back American military involvement in south-east Asia. Well-acquainted with the history of French colonialism in Vietnam and its protracted withdrawal, he was determined not to repeat that entanglement. He was intent on introducing legislation to outlaw racism and desegregate federal institutions, a promise he’d made to Martin Luther King. However, the issue which particularly preoccupied him during 1963 was nuclear disarmament.

The Cuban Missile Crisis induced a thorough reappraisal in Kennedy’s worldview. When elected he possessed an aggressive anti-communist foreign policy, intent on countering incursions into developing countries in the region. He backed the CIA’s not-so-clandestine war on Castro until the Bay of Pigs debacle terminally soured his view of the CIA. Convinced that the intelligence community had lied, betraying his trust, he famously expressed his displeasure by declaring that he wished to smash the CIA into “a thousand pieces and scatter it to the wind.”

The Missile Crisis not only had a profound effect on Kennedy, it similarly affected his counterpart in the Soviet Union, Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Both men felt that the Cold War could eventually annihilate their respective nations and take the rest of the world with it. Kennedy insisted on installing a ‘hotline’ to Khrushchev’s desk. The two men began writing personal letters to each other. They discovered they shared a warm, self-deprecatory sense of humour. They confessed of their inner terror as the hours and minutes ticked by during the crisis in October, ‘62. Kennedy’s change of heart was noted by the Joint Chiefs and his CIA advisors in Washington. A thaw in the Cold War did not fill them with glee. Kennedy was appalled at the constant clamouring by all but one of the Joint Chiefs for a first strike using nuclear weapons. He felt estranged from the war room denizens at the Pentagon and the State Department bureaucrats he regarded as ‘Washington blue-bloods.’ He admitted in his private messages to Khrushchev he was deeply worried about his military and intelligence advisors. Khrushchev was sympathetic. He feared similar factions in his own government. Each acknowledged their frailty and their humanity and each was touched by it. This sentiment was expressed with powerful eloquence in a speech Kennedy gave to students at the American University on June 10th, 1963. It was a declaration of peace, addressed to the world, stunning in its evocation of the commonality of mankind - “We all breathe the same air.” To the Cold War warriors at Langley and the Pentagon, those who had been fighting communists for decades, this must have seemed like an insult - a raw rebuke to their careers.

However, it was Kennedy’s decision to open up a dialogue with Fidel Castro in the second half of 1963 that stripped away the last vestiges of goodwill of those who could not appreciate the
vision of the new president. They may have had personal issues with his style, his youth, but it was his lack of any need of them that cut deep; men like Allen Dulles and William Harvey of the CIA. Kennedy had forced Dulles out of the Directorship of the CIA after the Bay of Pigs catastrophe and his brother, Robert, had banished Harvey to Rome after his reckless and foolhardy incursions into Cuba at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis. To exacerbate matters, Kennedy made it clear he simply didn’t trust the advice of most of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and appointed General Maxwell Taylor as his trusted advisor. Peter Dale Scott described Kennedy’s situation as dire in 1963, trying to stand up to men who were committed to “... a prolongation of a system committed to the Cold War.” (2)

President Kennedy had been tested during his three years in the White House, securing the confidence of an overwhelming majority of his countrymen and women. His decisiveness and optimism was reflected in the polls, however, it’s possible to argue his popularity was as dangerous to him as his commitment to change. His increasingly liberal agenda attracted wealthy, powerful enemies; perhaps another four years of Camelot would change America in ways that would not be to their liking or advantage. With so much at stake, it seems unlikely that Kennedy’s removal from office was arbitrary or accidental, yet the official version is that the president was shot by a young American, Lee Oswald, as an impulsive act. Gerald Posner, author of Case Closed (1992), once referred to Oswald as “a 24-year-old sociopath armed with a cheap rifle.” (3) This description, succinct and final, assumes so much. Is the evidence so clear about Oswald’s state of mind? Why him over all the other possible culprits? Despite the layers of innuendo, no one actually saw Oswald with a rifle on the day of the assassination. Moreover, there is absolutely no proof of him firing one.

After reading the Warren Commission Report’s rejection of all other suspects, (4) I researched the main narratives hatched in the aftermath of the assassination. Favouring evidence that was corroborated by contemporary, reliable witnesses, I found David Lifton’s explanation of ‘best evidence’ to be useful: “to determine a fact from conflicting data, you must arrange the date according to a hierarchy of reliability.” (5) Despite much weighing and sifting, reliability was hard to find.

2

The Narratives

The murder of President Kennedy has drawn many dedicated researchers to pick over the ‘facts.’ After I joined the queue, I shared the experience of many, almost all of the narratives offered up to explain the Kennedy assassination had difficulty sustaining coherency, no matter how many dormant seeds of information they contained. At times, it seemed like the narratives formed an endless, aimless labyrinth, tiring and frustrating every attempt to maintain integrity. It transpired that my interest soon turned to trying to adduce the motives of those involved, not just the historical figures, but those constructing the narratives. With so many competing narratives to chose from it was clear that the truth behind the Kennedy assassination lay far beyond any simple application of logic.

International Conspiracy - Cuba/USSR

The morning after the assassination, the Cuban Student Directorate, or Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (DRE), paid for stories in a Miami newspaper, affirming Oswald as the shooter, but casting Fidel Castro as the chief architect behind the assassination. Stressing Castro’s communist alliance with the USSR, the DRE revealed Lee Oswald as a communist agitator working for the Fair Play For Cuba Committee, an organisation funded directly by Castro. The DRE was a CIA sponsored organisation, run under auspices of the CIA Miami station, JM/WAVE, by agent, George Joannides. It was made up of disaffected middle-class students, driven from Cuba and prepared to take up arms to crush Castro and the revolution. The DRE also connected Oswald to Castro’s declaration on September 7th, 1963, vowing to
take revenge on Kennedy if he continued with assassination attempts on Castro. Castro’s promise to punish continued assassination attempts was the result of a CIA provocation, using a Cuban intelligence agent, Rolando Cubela, (6) in a calculated gamble to extract just such an outburst from the Cuban leader.

Lee Harvey Oswald
As the evidence arrived on FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover’s desk, it all pointed one way - to Lee Oswald. His recent history as an agent provocateur operating in New Orleans and Mexico City, married with information from his FBI file showing he’d ‘defected’ to the Soviet Union, identified him as the prime suspect. The weapon said to have killed the president had been bought through a mail order house under the name Alex Hidell, an Oswald alias. There were photographs of Oswald in a backyard with the murder weapon and several copies of communist newspapers. The connection was clear. There were letters to various embassies and leftwing groups, avowing to his commitment to communism. With evidence from his friends, Ruth and Michael Paine, and his wife, Marina, a picture emerged of Oswald as a loner, a disaffected misfit, burning with radical ideas, plotting in secret to avenge himself and the victims of American capitalism.

By the end of the day, Hoover understood two things. The CIA had lied to him about a recent supposed meeting between Oswald and a KGB agent in Mexico City, and up until a few weeks ago his FBI had been enjoying highly-sensitive contact with Oswald. Both needed to be kept from the public. The morning after Kennedy’s death, Hoover phoned President Lyndon Johnson:

JOHNSON: Have you established any more about the [Oswald] visit to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico in September?
HOOVER: No, that’s one angle that’s very confusing for this reason. We have up here the tape and the photograph of the man who was at the Soviet Embassy, using Oswald’s name. That picture and the tape do not correspond to this man’s voice, nor to his appearance. In other words, it appears that there is a second person who was at the Soviet Embassy. (7)

Johnson had already been briefed by his CIA Director John McCone; someone had been impersonating Kennedy’s alleged assassin in a foreign embassy. If Johnson was worried by this, he didn’t show it. He was far more concerned by rumours being put about by the Dallas Police of an international communist conspiracy behind the president’s murder. He feared the Congress, Pentagon and rightwing media would react by urging a military response. Hoover could see the danger in connecting Oswald to Castro, turning the assassination into an international incident, provoking an outbreak of war. Johnson informed Hoover a squadron of fighter planes had to be called back on their way to Cuba.

The chips were on the table, Hoover had to show his cards. He suspected the CIA had to be sending him a message. On one of the taped phone calls the Oswald imposter could be heard asking to meet an embassy official called Valeriy Kostikov, attached to Department 13 of the KGB’s First Chief Directorate, specialising in “executive action” – sabotage and assassination. Hoover knew of David Atlee Phillips, the CIA’s Chief of Operations, operating out of the Western Hemisphere office in Mexico City. He guessed that Phillips and other agents were trying to implicate Oswald, make him look like an assassin motivated by leftist fervour and hatred for America’s treatment of Cuba. By connecting Oswald to Cuba, they would sheet the blame home to Castro and the Cuban intelligence service, the Dirección General de Inteligencia (DGI).
Hoover seized his opportunity. With Johnson desperate to smother suggestions of an international conspiracy behind the assassination, the obvious response was to find a simple, direct solution that would satisfy the president, the media and the public. He realised if he was to protect the FBI, he would have to protect the CIA. Perhaps that was always the intention.

When Johnson and Hoover spoke again, it was agreed the FBI would restore the sense of security by digging up enough evidence to convict Oswald. As a lone gunman, he who would absorb all the nation’s hatred, fear and confusion; in this way the federal investigator would quickly bring the nightmare to an end. Hoover’s assistant, William Sullivan, came up with the lone nut scenario and Hoover had no trouble convincing Johnson. The CIA, realising the matter was racing away from them in a most agreeable way, sat back to watch. Hoover could save his beloved FBI and his own credibility.

The Warren Commission Report was a product of Hoover’s power and influence. From the outset, he insisted that the FBI take sole responsibility for the investigation into the assassination. In no time at all, the Warren commissioners learned the tune, so too the Secret Service, the Dallas Police, the Justice Department, military intelligence and the media, and the entire country was subject to a narrative taken from the same hymn sheet. Included on the list of Warren Commissioners was the immediate ex-Director of the CIA, Allen Dulles. Kennedy had fired him over the debacle of the Bay of Pigs. Dulles was well pleased with the report’s findings.

Oswald’s reputation as a troubled misfit, a loner speaks volumes as to his suitability as a patsy. So much of his life could be hidden or reinterpreted or inverted. As we drown in a swamp of contradictions, we reach for something simple that looks like it’ll float. Hoover understood that. His investigation was more concerned with searching for any reason that Oswald could not be involved. When Oswald was silenced almost two days after the assassination, Hoover’s burden of proof got a lot lighter.

LBJ/Dallas Police/Texas Oilmen
In the years after the assassination, Jack Ruby became a frantic figure. Convicted of Oswald’s murder, he began to open up, pleading for clemency. He suggested in one interview that, like Oswald, he was a patsy himself, used by powerful figures in the American government. He singled out Lyndon Johnson as the instigator, backed by a consortium of wealthy oilmen and the Dallas Police. Forty years later, the same narrative emerged with a deathbed confession from CIA operative, E. Howard Hunt. His version also included a group of Texas oilmen and members of the Dallas Police. One of the oilmen, Colonel David Byrd, owned the Texas School Book Depository and took considerable pride in what allegedly happened there. Byrd is said to have removed the sniper’s window in the book depository and had it installed in his home.

CIA
After several years of increasing doubt and disquiet over the Warren Report’s finding that Oswald was solely responsible for the Kennedy assassination, an investigation was undertaken by New Orleans District Attorney, Jim Garrison, in 1967. (8) Garrison’s pursuit of witnesses turned up evidence that implicated a gallery of borderline players with CIA connections, such as Clay (Bertrand) Shaw, David Ferrie and Guy Banister. Garrison managed to lay charges on Shaw and show how a New Orleans nest of spies operated within a stone’s throw of the CIA installation in Miami. Garrison was certain that Cuban exiles were involved in the assassination and the intention was to induce the United States into invading Cuba. Garrison’s investigation was besieged by infiltrators, leaking sensitive information from within his organisation well before his allegations could be tested in court. Around the same time, a crucial witness, David Ferrie, committed suicide before his evidence could be taken in an affidavit, and various witnesses were persuaded not to assist the District Attorney’s investigation.
while suspect friends appeared from the mist of intelligence. One of them, Bill Boxley, turned out to be a retired CIA operative, William Wood, whose job it was to infiltrate the Garrison team and pass information back to Langley. Throughout, Garrison was under attack from journalists such as Hugh Aynsworth and Robert Kennedy’s favourite boundary rider, Walter Sheridan. Garrison was constantly misrepresented by the NBC Network and Fox. Documents released more than a decade later revealed a concerted operation by the CIA to compromise Garrison’s case in the late 1960s. The CIA had pulled out all stops to destroy his investigation. In the end they succeeded. Although he failed spectacularly to secure a conviction against Shaw, Garrison was unrepentant. He remains the only law officer to succeed in getting a suspect in the assassination to trial.

It should also be noted that at the time that the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) was gathering its evidence in the late 1970s, several books appeared supporting the view that Oswald was the sole culprit, particularly Priscilla Johnson McMillan’s biography, *Marina and Lee* (1977). In the years since the book’s publication, CIA documents revealed that McMillan had been a CIA asset since the late 1950s, working as a writer and journalist. She interviewed Oswald when he first arrived in the Soviet Union and befriended his wife, Marina, immediately after assassination. Since the biography’s publication, Marina Porter (Oswald) has disavowed the book.

In a 2015 Politico Magazine report, (9) newly declassified documents came to light showing that CIA Director John McConie had lied and hidden evidence from the Warren Commission, the body set up by Lyndon Johnson to investigate JFK’s assassination in 1963. According to the CIA’s once-secret report, released in 2013, written by the CIA’s top in-house historian, David Robarge, the CIA admitted McConie and other senior CIA officials withheld ‘incendiary’ information from the Warren Commission thereby perverting the course of justice. McConie admitted that the Agency withheld from the Warren Commission the CIA-Mafia plots to kill Castro. Had the Warren Commission known of the plots, it would have followed a different path in its investigation. The Warren Report, in its conclusions, produced no adverse findings against the FBI, Dallas Police and particularly, the CIA. Apparently, it had very little to go on.

**CIA/Mossad**

After the Cuban Missile Crisis of October, 1962, John Kennedy was so keen to limit the spread of nuclear armaments he vehemently insisted to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion the United States would simply not allow the development of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, and that included Israel. The CIA Head of Counter Intelligence, James Jesus Angleton, had a deep connection with Israel that stretched back to Mossad’s creation after the Second World War. Angleton had even involved Mossad in CIA operations. A theory, developed by Michael Collins Piper, in *Final Judgment*, contends that Angleton directed a CIA and Mossad operation to stop Kennedy’s efforts to thwart Israel’s nuclear program; an operation that ended with Kennedy’s assassination.

**Organised Crime**

In the 1970s, despite Jim Garrison’s humiliation in the Shaw trial, his claims would not fade away. In the wake of Watergate, hard questions were being asked about America’s intelligence community, questions that reached back to the Kennedy assassination. Late in 1974, investigative reporter Seymour Hersh revealed in the New York Times (10) that the CIA was not only destabilising foreign governments and engaging in assassination programs, but was also conducting illegal intelligence operations against thousands of American citizens.

On January 27, 1975, the United States Senate established an eleven member investigating body chaired by Idaho senator Frank Church, similar in construction and methodology to the Watergate Committee. The select committee was given twelve months (later extended to sixteen) and hired 150 staff to complete its work. The Church Committee was set up just
before Abraham Zapruder’s famous 8mm film of the assassination had its first television showing on March 6th, 1975, on Good Night America, presented by Robert Groden and Dick Gregory. This, the Kennedy assassination’s most important piece of primary evidence, had been purchased by the Time-Life corporation within hours of the assassination. Clare Boothe Luce, the wife of Henry Luce, the owner of Time-Life, was a wealthy conservative, financing raids on Cuban ports. She was also a close friend of CIA operatives McCord and Harvey, and rightwing adventurer William Pawley. For over a decade, Time-Life locked the Zapruder film away from public access for reasons that have never been adequately explained.

The Zapruder film renewed America’s focus on the Kennedy assassination, and Congress established the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1977 to re-examine the murders of the John Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. The man first given the job of running the HSCA, Philadelphia District Attorney Richard Sprague, declared his commitment to using every effort to fulfil the brief, to investigate the assassination, particularly that of John Kennedy. When he declared that he would be expecting to have the files of the CIA made available, a chill fell over proceedings. In the months that followed, the CIA worked behind the scenes to have Richard Sprague removed. (11) His replacement, Robert Blakey, an academic and leading legal advisor, had spent much of his career tracking the Mafia. He had no interest in looking elsewhere. Gaeton Fonzi, in his book The Last Investigation (1993), revealed that he and other senior investigators, frustrated by the lack of interest in pursuing other suspects than the Mafia, came to the conclusion that the CIA was being protected. Their worst fears were realised when it was revealed in 1992 that George Joannides, the officer installed as liaison assisting the HSCA with CIA document clearance, was in fact a senior operative in the CIA Miami office during the Kennedy assassination and had direct knowledge of many of the events and major players, including Oswald. This deception ensured the CIA kept its secrets. Not a word of his history, working in Miami with Cuban exiles on operations that included Oswald, was ever uttered by Joannides during his tenure or after.

Robert Blakey, the Chief Counsel of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, later changed his view that the CIA was cooperative and candid with the investigation when he learned of George Joannides and the CIA’s deception. Joannides had to have known about Oswald’s involvement in the months leading up to the assassination with the anti-Castro exiles. In a 2003 addendum to a 1993 interview with the PBS program, Frontline, Blakey stated that Joannides should have been a witness, interviewed by the HSCA, rather than serving as a gatekeeper to the CIA’s evidence and files regarding the assassination.

In the same 2003 addendum, Robert Blakey, clarified his feelings on the CIA and Lee Oswald: “I no longer believe that we were able to conduct an appropriate investigation of the [Central Intelligence] Agency and its relationship to Oswald.” Significantly, Blakey accepted that the CIA set up a process that could only have been designed to frustrate the ability of the Committee in 1976-79 to obtain any information that might adversely affect the Agency. He summed up: “Many have told me that the culture of the Agency is one of prevarication and dissimulation and that you cannot trust it or its people. Period. End of story. I am now in that camp.” (12)

**The Secret Service**

The body responsible for the president’s protection, was severally criticised by Abraham Bolden, the first Afro-American to work for the Secret Service. In his book, The Echo From Dealey Plaza, Bolden accused Secret Service agents of racism, unprofessionalism and a deep loathing of Kennedy. He derided them for not providing sufficient protection to Kennedy in Dallas, and freezing with fear when the shooting started, causing the motorcade to come to a dead stop at precisely the place in Dealey Plaza giving an assassin extra time to take aim.

Riding on the back of Oliver Stone’s film, JFK, released in the early 1990s, a man called Howard Donahue expounded his theory in Bonar Menninger’s book Mortal Error that a Secret
Service agent, George Hickey, accidentally shot the president from the Secret Service vehicle following the president’s Lincoln limousine in the motorcade. This theory recently received considerable attention, but is probably the most implausible explanation, since it does not explain how no one in the crowd saw the weapon discharge or heard it and none of Hickey’s colleagues in the Secret Service gave it any credence. Donahue, it appears, was also involved with intelligence.

3  
Wall of Mirrors

The findings of the two governmental enquires into the Kennedy assassination, the Warren Commission Report (1964) and the House Select Committee on Assassinations (1979), with the conclusions of major works related to the assassination, strongly suggests that much of the doubt which has dogged the Kennedy assassination for more than fifty years is due not to a lack of evidence or its integrity, but the confusion generated by the contradictory narratives after they’ve arisen to ‘explain’ the assassination. It also suggests the possibility of an organising principle at work behind the narratives.

Peter Dale Scott, in *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK* (1993), describes the first or ‘Phase I’ narrative as one which sheets the blame home for the assassination to an international communist conspiracy. The day after the assassination, it was decided by Hoover and President Johnson that this was a dangerous course. With support from Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach, it was agreed to adopt a ‘Phase II’ narrative, blaming the assassination on a lone gunman, Lee Oswald. Three days after the assassination, Katzenbach wrote to Presidential Assistant Bill Moyers, stating the ‘official’ position:

“It is important that all of the facts surrounding President Kennedy's assassination be made public in a way which will satisfy people in the United States and abroad that all the facts have been told and that a statement to this effect be made now.
1. The public must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin; that he did not have confederates who are still at large; and that the evidence was such that he would have been convicted at trial.
2. Speculation about Oswald's motivation ought to be cut off, and we should have some basis for rebutting thought that this was a Communist conspiracy or (as the Iron Curtain press is saying) a right-wing conspiracy to blame it on the Communists.” (13)

Four days later, on November 29, 1963, Johnson informed Hoover he’d decided it was necessary to set up an presidential commission of enquiry, overseen by Chief Justice Earl Warren. The sole investigative agency, supporting the commission would be the FBI. Hoover’s fears evaporated. It’s clear that the decisions made about investigating the assassination were made only after Hoover had convinced himself and others of Oswald’s suitability as an assassin. While intelligence personnel were undoubtedly involved in the Phase I international conspiracy narrative, they made no contribution to the Phase II ‘lone gunman’ narrative. Their silence might suggest the Phase II narrative suited them.

Almost a year later, the Warren Report declared Oswald to be the president’s assassin. Again, the CIA accepted that finding without comment. There followed an hiatus of several years during which time the public digested the report and began to question its conclusions. In 1967, Sylvia Meagher’s groundbreaking *Accessories After The Fact: The Warren Commission, The Authorities & The Report* painstakingly worked through the Warren Report’s findings, and its
many volumes of hearing transcripts and exhibits, casting grave doubt on its methodology and severely limited investigation. Meagher’s penetrating analysis opened up cracks in the public’s confidence concerning Oswald’s guilt. In the same year, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison began investigating the part played by the CIA in the assassination. He was supported by Mark Lane, a lawyer who had represented Oswald’s interests during the Warren Commission and deeply committed to Oswald’s innocence. With the spotlight directed away from Oswald, Garrison opened up the possibility that individuals close to government were involved in the Kennedy assassination, particularly individuals connected to intelligence agencies. Soon after his investigation received nationwide media interest, Garrison began to experience interference in his investigation from sources close to the CIA. (14)

In 1977, with the House Select Committee on Assassinations beginning its investigations, its Chief Counsel Richard Sprague declared he would use whatever means necessary to get to the bottom of the case, even if that meant demanding total access to the CIA’s employees and subpoenaing their records. By year’s end Sprague had gone, blaming the CIA for his removal. His replacement, Robert Blakey, directed the HSCA’s investigation away from the intelligence community and to the Mafia. He would later regret that action, claiming that the CIA deceived him as to its knowledge of Oswald’s activities.

Disinformation is a common tool of government, particularly in intelligence and military circles. In those hands, construction of false narratives takes a special talent. The persuasive element of the narrative, that part which offers up its meaning, can only be dismantled with impeccable evidence. False narratives are most successful when the populace is constantly fed conflicting information, in the end perhaps that confusion is about buying time. It is entirely possible that some narratives simply never dissolve in time and are deemed fundamental to the culture of a nation, even though they are entirely false.

4

Damage Control

As we’ve seen, at no time during the United States government’s initial investigation of the assassination was truth a paramount consideration. Appearances took priority. It hadn’t always been so. A diversity of views in the media and a robust Bill of Rights ensured America’s democracy could handle the truth eventually. This changed, mostly due to the perceived threat of communist expansion, in the years immediately following the Second World War. While America’s industrial and cultural influence spread through Europe’s ravaged cities, the relief at war’s end did not evolve into an American Belle Époque across the greater United States. What brought about this residing inclination to manage the facts, to play with the message? The prospect of Mutually Assured Destruction, mingled with ideological tensions evident before the war, produced an invisible pervasive fear. The Cold War had a way of seeping into sleep, dividing cells to form a resident paranoia. By the end of the 1950s, an insidious presence had permeated the West. Democracy now relied on the constant, invasive gathering of intelligence to keep ahead of the threat of communist world domination and the arms race. Secrecy now took precedence over transparency. National security and counterintelligence were fundamental for survival in the new world. By the end of Dwight Eisenhower’s presidency, he not only knew this, but he warned the nation in his farewell speech:

“we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can
This remarkable admission by Eisenhower, a man deeply connected to America’s military traditions, was largely ignored. Americans didn’t seem to know what was meant by ‘acquisition of unwarranted influence.’ Kennedy, however, soon grasped what Eisenhower was on about. The military-industrial complex was code for those who considered themselves the foundation of the nation’s security and economic power, it included the intelligence community. Although not mentioned in the American Constitution, the various intelligence agencies were enmeshed with industry and defence and now assumed a role that Eisenhower, and soon Kennedy, would fear. They would safeguard their interests in the name of national security. What Eisenhower seemed to be suggesting was that these clandestine forces would yield to no one, including the president.

Eisenhower’s telling line, that an “alert and knowledgeable citizenry” should commit itself to reconciling the differences between the sword and the word in order “that security and liberty may prosper together,” is of course a tacit admission that power does not belong to those with “peaceful methods and goals.”

5

Hidden Motives of the American Anti-hero

I’ve previously alluded to Kennedy’s political wildfires; the battle to end segregation enraging the south; Pentagon hawks denouncing his Vietnam policy as rank cowardice; Cuban exiles fanning their humiliation over the Bay of Pigs; Hoover’s fear the Kennedys would sack him; LBJ’s conviction Kennedy wanted another running mate; Castro’s rage at the CIA’s constant attempts to kill him; the hatred of Texas oilmen for new taxes on their profits. Each possessed a powerful motive to get rid of Kennedy. (16)

Kennedy also had formidable political creditors to service. His father, Joseph Kennedy’s organised crime connections reached back to the bootlegging operations that made his fortune. Those connections helped inflict defeat on Richard Nixon in November, 1961. The Kennedy elder had paid for favours from Chicago mobsters to activate unionised labour to get Democrat voters to the booths. In the end, John Kennedy won by the slimmest of margins and Nixon was denied. The mafia, however, would not be. Bosses, such as Carlos Marcello, Santo Trafficante and Sam Giancana became deeply aggrieved at Robert Kennedy’s anti-organised crime crusade, particularly since they were threatened with gaol or deportation.

Gerald McKnight, in Breach Of Trust (2013), his book on Kennedy’s loss to history, makes a powerful case that the gallery of Kennedy’s formidable enemies could not kick the habit of the Cold War. It framed and defined American power and prestige in the post war period, it could not be dismantled, particularly by a ‘vacillating, inexperienced’ Commander In Chief. This view was best summed up when CIA Cuba operations executive officer, Sam Halpern, told Washington Post reporter, Jefferson Morley, “The deceptiveness of Kennedy’s policy virtually justified extra-constitutional correction.” (17) Certainly, Kennedy’s decision to appoint his younger brother, Robert, as Attorney General, severely weakened his ability to garner trust and support from the premier domestic investigative agency, the FBI. Desperate to keep his job as director, J. Edgar Hoover kept the Kennedy brothers under constant surveillance. He wanted something on them as security, and it wasn’t hard to get. Despite his failings, flaws and numerous enemies, Kennedy was a formidable political force, with considerable wealth and powerful allies. In every way, Oswald was his antithesis.
American narratives in film and literature, particularly originating after the Depression, developed the essential qualities of the anti-hero. Concentrating on the loner with nothing to lose and nothing to gain but recognition of the moral right of his identity, the anti-hero's narrative sets out to show that one person can change the world. Even if it's their world.

Hollywood offered this unlikely champion in films such as 'Casablanca', 'My Darling Clementine', 'Shane' and 'High Noon', when the anti-hero stepped from the shadows of life, confronted with impossible odds, his heart beating strong with the unstoppable force of his convictions. He was usually a man, a small man, of limited intellect and education, who believed in something. His weapon, an ancient rifle from a fading war. Without practice or support, he would take his one and only chance and perform a miracle. Only in America could this feat be truly understood. However, it was possible because it had been born of hundreds of films set in the Wild West or the streets of Chicago or the battlefields of France. The loner with everything against him could reset the world and make it a better place. The anti-hero was to a great degree about revealing one's integrity despite the odds. Perhaps Americans were more likely to believe one man, particularly a socially challenged loner, could call up such tragedy by performing an act considered to be far beyond the talents of a mere mortal; a character composed of elements of the ‘dark triad’ of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. (18)

In the news coverage and media comment throughout America in the 1960s, Oswald brought to mind various tropes of Post War Hollywood. The anti-hero, the thin-lipped guy who does bad things but has a heart of gold. The Kennedy assassination played to these tropes, riding parallel to facts that didn’t marry up, didn’t make sense, but simply should be the truth. One of the tropes, a staple of Hollywood anti-hero narratives is the loner who disdainfully rejects authority so he can ‘do it my way.’ He can’t help it, it’s the way he’s been cast. While it would be deeply offensive to publicly lionise Oswald, there are documented cases of him being regarded with quiet celebration by those who regarded Kennedy as an ‘enemy of the people.’ The generosity shown to Oswald's widow, Marina, in the aftermath of the assassination cannot be completely explained away as sympathy for a young migrant.

The supreme irony to many Americans was that Oswald, regarded as a communist-sympathising loser in the Warren Report, who never associated with other leftists, was alleged to have killed the man most sympathetic to the cause of détente and disarmament. A few days after the assassination, Jackie Kennedy remarked to a friend, “Jack, killed by some puny communist.” Would it have been any better if the president was killed by someone more notable or important? Those who condemned Oswald (beginning with the Warren Report) claimed some supreme power to understand his mind. This sentiment, so bitterly expressed by William Manchester in a letter to the New York Times, suggests the victim can be magnified or diminished by the quality of the assailant:

“But if you put the murdered President of the United States on one side of a scale and that wretched waif Oswald on the other side, it doesn't balance. You want to add something weightier to Oswald. It would invest the President's death with meaning, endowing him with martyrdom. He would have died for something. A conspiracy would, of course, do the job nicely. Unfortunately, there is no evidence whatever that there was one.” (19)

I would contend that President Kennedy was not diminished by Oswald’s casting as the assassin, nor was he elevated by it. We know Kennedy exhibited considerable courage, travelling through Dallas in an open car. We also know that he did die for something. He didn’t need a conspiracy to invest his death with meaning. What can also be said is that casting Oswald as an anti-hero, a ‘wretched waif’, a ‘sociopath armed with a cheap rifle’,
invested his presence in Dealey Plaza with meaning for those who could find no other reason for him to be there.

6

The Patsy

The Warren Commission Report, delivered almost a year after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, was unequivocal: On November 22nd, 1963, the president of the United States was mortally wounded by a young ex-Marine, Lee Harvey Oswald, firing a cheap Italian rifle from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository, in Dealey Plaza, Dallas. The report emphatically declared there was no evidence:

“that (Oswald) had accomplices or that he was involved in any conspiracy directed to the assassination of the President. There remains the question of what impelled Oswald to conceive and to carry out the assassination of the President of the United States. The Commission has considered many possible motives for the assassination, including those which might flow from Oswald’s commitment to Marxism or communism, the existence of some personal grievance, a desire to effect changes in the structure of society or simply to go down in history as a well publicized assassin. None of these possibilities satisfactorily explains Oswald’s act if it is judged by the standards of reasonable men.” (20)

In other words, the Warren Report could ascribe no motive to Oswald’s ‘cruel and shocking act.’ Thus, the brutal execution of an American president, in a public place in broad daylight, was rendered inexplicable.

Announced by President Johnson exactly a week after the tragedy in Dallas, the President’s Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy (Warren Commission), was created as a response to the disturbing possibility that there was international involvement in the assassination. Johnson used this scenario to overcome Earl Warren’s intense aversion to heading up the commission: “If the public became aroused against Castro and Khrushchev, there might be war.” (21) When Johnson suggested a nuclear conflagration would cost America “forty million lives” Earl Warren, on the verge of tears, accepted the brief.

From its first day his commission was more interested in burying fear and doubt along with the slain president. Almost ten months after the assassination, the Warren Commission delivered its 888-page Report that found Lee Harvey Oswald murdered the United States president in a public display of angst, and that he in turn was despatched by a grieving nightclub owner, Jack Ruby, a man who looked for all the world like a gangster stepping out of a 1940s Cagney movie to actually utter, “You killed my president, you rat.” (22) So, here we have the classic film noir performance. The only thing missing is the word ‘dirty.’ Ruby, playing the part of a Chicago gangster perhaps because he came from Chicago and was a gangster, delivering a line that would explain everything to someone conversant with Hollywood’s underworld of dark alleys, cheap booze and hard-boiled dialogue. That it happened to be the first murder captured live on television wasn’t entirely an accident. There was more than a hint of ‘set-up.’ America had shown the world the future.

The Warren Report was followed up several months later with the publication of 26 volumes of Hearings and Exhibits which would hopefully support the findings. Available to every American for US$76 from the U.S. Government Printing Office it was an imposing collection which served to impress the purchaser with its physical dimensions and carefully constructed
pages of semi-legalese. Taken together, the Warren Commission’s report and evidence were widely hailed as an exhaustive study produced by honourable and credible men, and was generally accepted by the American public. As discussed earlier, this acceptance soon turned into widespread disbelief in the Commission’s conclusions.

The problem was that the Warren Report stood as the definitive statement of the “lone nut” theory of the assassination of President Kennedy. At no time, in its writing, did it ever seriously countenance any other possibility. That Lee Oswald was Kennedy’s assassin was intended to be conveyed with such certainty as to reassure America that the horror it had witnessed could be explained and contained.

While the conclusions of the Warren Report were meant to be clear and final, the impression given in the mass of evidence accompanying the report, collected by the Warren Commission by way of investigation and hearings, gave a disturbingly different picture. For those looking for certainty, however, reading each volume of the evidence stirred the unappetising scraps of proof into a muddied soup of confusion and contradiction. Within a few short years it would become a toxic broth of national anxiety. The verdict was flawed, and useless, for assuaging anxiety about America’s vital institutions for the many who were trying to emerge from the intellectual and cultural paucity of the Cold War.

Coming at the dawn of live, televised news, the assassination proved to be traumatic as much for its ubiquitous sanguineous images as the end of a young and promising world leader. For America, the president’s murder created long term social, cultural and political effects, arising from the Warren Commission’s spectacular failure to address the nation’s despair.

Of the numerous narratives offered to the world to explain the Kennedy assassination, the narrative of the lone gunman, taking the opportunity to express his outrage on the world through a murder, has endured. It has always been the simplest explanation, no matter what the evidence, or lack thereof. Yet, a majority of Americans have for many years found themselves unable to embrace it completely. Is it because without a motive, the narrative just doesn’t work; despite the abundance of memes, in the end the lack of character motivation fails to lend the story integrity?

7

Cold War Child

There were two Oswalds. The one described in the Warren Commission Report (1964) is of an angry, disturbed 24 year old of limited intelligence. An ex-Marine, he knows his way around weapons and spouts communist dogma, although he describes himself as a Marxist. He is typically referred to as a ‘loner’, an oddball, who is socially inadequate and prone to domestic violence. The Oswald I discovered in the records is in fact a man of above average intelligence who spoke fluent Russian, was employed as a radar operator in the Marine Corps and had limited social skills. As a marksman he was regarded as a poor shot.

From the age of 14 to 16 (1953 to 1956), Lee Oswald was a devoted fan of ‘I Led 3 Lives’, (23) the exploits of Herbert A. Philbrick, an advertising executive working undercover as an FBI informant. Dressed like a salesman in a tired suit and tie, Philbrick’s mission was to expose the activities of communists in 1950s American suburbia. People seemed able to find him without effort; communist apparatchiks, FBI agents, social agitators, concerned citizens. He was eager, if a little unsure of himself, but this didn’t seem to make much of an impression on those who relied on his talent for artless toil. For Philbrick was pure of heart. He knew which side his moral crust was buttered on, dripping and deep with unsullied patriotism. He was the
quintessential quiet hero, one day would be judgement day and he would be carried aloft by a grateful nation.

Oswald’s attraction for such a character is understandable. Philbrick was a reluctant soldier fighting for the threatened soul of his country. He would be misunderstood, but in the end he’d triumph when the truth would be broadcast to all those who foolishly misjudged him. It is the victory of the eternal victim, one who aches for vindication.

Lee Oswald’s childhood suffered from frequent relocation and emotional insecurity. His father died several weeks before he was born. His mother couldn’t find a stable relationship. Most of his childhood he spent alone. Eventually, desperate to get away from his mother, he lied in an attempt to get into the Marines. When he turned 17 he enlisted, went through training and ended up on a base in Japan. He didn’t have many friends. After 3 years, he tried to defect to Russia. He married a young Russian, returned to the United States and started a family. A few weeks after the birth of his second daughter he was gunned down in the basement of the Dallas Police Headquarters. For a man who aspired to something better in America, he certainly deserved something better.

The Warren Report’s assessment was that although Oswald’s motive was impossible to ascertain, and the forensic evidence unconvincing, the circumstantial evidence was conclusive. There can be no other reasonable explanation. Unfortunately, there is. Oswald’s simple declaration, “I’m a patsy”, deserves as much scrutiny as it did when he uttered it on the night of November 22nd, less than seven hours after the murder of his president. ‘Patsy’ has a precise meaning, “a dupe, a sucker, a scapegoat - a person who is easily taken advantage of, esp. by being cheated or blamed for something.” It originated with Billy B. Van, a vaudeville star of the early 20th Century. His character, Patsy Bolivar, got his laughs by playing the naïve victim of unscrupulous characters. Oswald’s self-description was dismissed by the Warren Commission as having no substance in fact. Yet, with every volume of evidence amassed by the commission, Oswald’s three word outburst gained credibility. He was declaring, “This is your explanation. I was there to take the blame. I’ve been made to appear guilty.” Oswald was a proud man, who considered himself to be nobody’s fool, and here he was confessing to being a dupe. For someone who’d pulled off an astonishing feat in broad daylight, he seemed strangely uninterested in taking any credit.

So many attempts to mould Oswald’s character to fit a specific profile, have left him a character very much out of focus. Someone we may never really know. Perhaps he was simply a bit player recast in the leading role, or did he invite his misfortune to walk into a scenario that was too big and too sinister to understand? Whether the lonely disaffected misfit or the wannabe revolutionary or erstaz intellectual, he did not seem comfortable in any environment. Priscilla Johnson McMillan’s description of him, repeated in various witness statements in the Warren Report, seems reliable:

"Lee had a higher than average I.Q., 118 on the Wechsler scale, and during his training he scored well, both in proficiency and conduct. But he was unpopular with his fellow Marines. He kept to himself, preferred reading to the company of others, and spend his weekends alone." (24)

Reading similar descriptions of Oswald by those who knew him over many years, I began to wonder if he possessed a condition which was undiagnosed. Without the benefit of a degree in psychiatry, I can only follow the broad strokes suggested by some general reading on Autism Spectrum Disorder. (25) From this distance he appears to have displayed the characteristics of someone with Asperger’s Syndrome, at the ‘high-functioning’ end of Autism Spectrum Disorder. Many attested to his poor social skills, his difficulty sustaining relationships, his
stolid humour and an obsessive, quasi-intellectual interest in political ideology. His views were certainly informed by a fascination with secrecy, espionage and the paraphernalia associated with being a spy. He was also clumsy, harming himself several times. Ruth Paine’s attempts to teach him to drive left her frustrated, describing him as ‘uncoordinated.’ Perhaps the behaviour that gives the best clue is his habit of confabulating. He would lie without apparent reason or conviction. His ability to ‘read’ people was so poor he came across as gormless. He was at his best with children. Perhaps he didn’t have to pretend and he could see that neither did they. He didn’t have to expend great mental effort trying to figure out what they were really thinking.

The gradual release of documents over the last quarter century, particularly since the fiftieth anniversary of Kennedy’s death, show that Oswald’s intelligence connections can be established with considerable persuasion. Within a year of his joining the U.S. Marines, Oswald was learning to speak Russian, probably at a sophisticated language training centre in Monterey, California. It is very likely he was handpicked to travel to the U.S.S.R. as a young defector with military connections. The evidence would indicate that Oswald was committed as a spy, but not a convincing one. Upon his return to the United States, he found himself in constant contact with CIA affiliates, including George de Mohrenschildt, Guy Banister, William Stuckey, David Ferrie, Carlos Bringuier, William Gaudet, and David Atlee Phillips. Although he resented being approached to work by the FBI, they managed to second him into at least two of their anti-communist operations. It’s well within the bounds of possibility that Oswald’s masquerade as a communist sympathiser enabled intelligence officers and members of the CIA-trained Cuban extremist organisation, the Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil, to manoeuvre him into his fatal encounter with Jack Ruby in the basement of the Dallas Police Headquarters.

Incredibly, Oswald’s lengthy interviews were never tape-recorded or taken down by a stenographer during the long sessions at Dallas Police Headquarters after the assassination. All of the dialogue in the interviews that took place in the Homicide and Robbery Office on the Dallas Police HQ came from rough notes taken by various of the participants. Those notes were collected by Mae Brussell.

There is little doubt Oswald was obsessed with the details of procedure during the early stages of his interrogation. He was determined to impress upon everybody that he was innocent of wrongdoing, except for carrying a firearm. He was persistent in his avowed interest in attracting the attention of a lawyer who could extricate him from the predicament he currently found himself in. If he was enjoying it, it didn’t show. He was sure a mistake has been made. He kept asking for a lawyer. As the day wore on, his desperation began to show. There is little doubt that without legal representation, he was denied natural justice.

Toward the end of his lengthy and unrecorded interrogation, Oswald seemed to realise he was hopelessly alone. His requests for legal assistance begin to sound like pleading and he changed, abruptly, a detail about his means of getting back to his boarding house after leaving the Texas School Book Depository. Whereas he agreed with Sheriff Craig that he received a lift from someone driving a Rambler, he made a point of telling Captain Fritz and others in the office that he caught a bus, then a cab, back to his room. Did he realise that he had been abandoned and that he had to reassure those involved that he would protect their identity? Whatever the truth, his pronouncements to the reporters in the corridor and later at the hasty midnight conference, which Ruby attended, sound very much like he was sending a message to someone or some people in particular. The message? Don’t worry about me, I’m solid.

Eight months before the assassination, Ruth Paine, a young mother, estranged from her husband, Michael, befriended the Oswalds. She quickly inveigled her way into their lives, inviting them to share her house in Irving, Dallas. As a witness of interest at the Warren
Commission, Paine’s verbosity, her willingness to volunteer information in clear, precise terms, revealed a woman of high intelligence and an eagerness to cast Oswald as the villain. She was instrumental in getting him the job at the Texas School Book Depository. She provided the FBI with correspondence Oswald had written on her typewriter, explaining he had carelessly left letters around for her to read and copy. She left her home open and unlocked for the FBI to search on the weekend following the assassination. She furnished considered opinions on Oswald’s views and behaviour, none of it ever favouring him. The day after the assassination, the Secret Service, with the FBI and members of Dallas’ business elite, arrived at Paine’s house to take Marina and her two children to a motel across town. They advised Marina to have nothing to do with Ruth Paine and did as she was told. Several years later, Marina admitted to New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison that Secret Service agents told her Ruth Paine had ‘something to do with the CIA’.

Others worked to convict Oswald, well after his execution. The Oswalds’ biographer, Priscilla Johnson MacMillan, now accepted as an asset of the CIA, played her part, befriending Marina, keeping her occupied while she wrote a biography, *Marina And Lee* (1977), that didn’t appear until fourteen years after the assassination and left no doubt whatsoever that Oswald did the deed. During her close association with Marina, crucial items, like bus tickets, would miraculously appear secreted in magazines; a bus ticket that ‘proved’ Oswald had gone to Mexico City in late September, 1963, to liaise with Cuban and Soviet embassy officials. To this day there is no unimpeachable evidence that Oswald ever went to Mexico City. In fact, there is evidence that he wasn’t there in the form of CIA photographs and transcripts of phone conversations that are conclusive in showing there were people impersonating him. What would be the advantage to someone, anyone, in having Lee Oswald in Mexico City in September, ‘63, attempting to obtain visa to travel to Moscow and Havana? Why is this evidence so inconsequential? Someone or some agency is instrumental in the impersonation of a man who ends up being blamed for murdering the president of the United States and it doesn’t warrant an explanation?

Only a month before, Oswald had been convicted in a New Orleans court of causing offence, giving out pro-Castro literature and getting involved in a mock fight. He then went on television and radio to declare his alleged Marxist leanings. This, for America at the height of the Cold War, was not a minor infraction. Then, he disappeared to bob up in Mexico City as a middle-aged, heavy set man who can hardly speak Russian. It is inconceivable that the FBI and/or the CIA would not want to keep tabs on him. When the photos and phone taps reveal an impersonator, wouldn’t the alarm bells have been ringing off their hooks? Apparently not.

Lee Oswald, while being escorted from Dallas Police Headquarters, was met in the basement carpark and assassinated. Live on television, surrounded by dozens of Texas police officers and media personnel, it looked very much like a defenceless man being gunned down by a gangster. The Warren Report took a sympathetic view of the assassin, Jack Ruby. He was portrayed as a nightclub owner motivated by deep feelings of sympathy for Jackie Kennedy. He must have been the only person who ran a strip joint without criminal connections in the United States. The appearance of Ruby’s thickest figure in a dark suit and Fedora, wielding a snub-nosed revolver belied something much darker in the basement. The impression given by the live footage from Dallas Police Headquarters on that Sunday morning in November, 1963, was that this was what a ‘mob hit’ looked like. Everything learned about Ruby since then has done nothing to diminish that view. Investigative journalist Seth Kantor was able to fill out Ruby’s connections in his book *Who Was Jack Ruby?*, published in 1978. It provided clear evidence that Ruby not only had mob and CIA connections but had a long career of drug and gun running with Cuban affiliates. For Lee Oswald it was a very American way to die, at the hands of a gangster.
A Little Mass Of Stars

President John Kennedy’s autopsy, carried out at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Washington on the night of his murder, was noisy and crowded. The windowless room was thick with military brass. Morbid spectators with powerful connections jostled the handful of medical personnel trying to examine the corpse. In the midst of such vulgar curiosity, as the president’s body lay under hard lights in the centre of the room, Secret Service Agent Roy Kellerman studied X-rays taken of the president’s head. Months later, Kellerman stated to the Warren Commission, “...the whole head looked like a little mass of stars, there must have been thirty, forty lights where these little pieces were so minute that they couldn’t be reached.” (27)

Kellerman’s observations were recorded without comment or enquiry. In times gone by, people would join the pinpoints of light in the firmament and draw conclusions so fanciful. Kellerman made no attempt at a fanciful explanation as to what the “little mass of stars” meant. Even in a matter of such importance as the death of a president it seemed that when the parts of a story don’t relate or it’s decided not to admit their meaning, they pass for noise and are ignored. With such dealing, the assassination of President Kennedy became a thorn in the side of public trust, ever more sharp as years passed.

Many years after the assassination, Kellerman admitted that his “little mass of stars” didn’t fit because it suggested several critical things: The assassin’s bullet came from the front; it was not a match with discarded shells, found at the scene, which were evidence of bullets encased in copper; the “little pieces” indicated instead a soft-nosed bullet, a dum-dum, designed to fragment within the body of the target. The time had long passed when his evidence would be regarded with impartiality.

Agent Kellerman knew, as he stood looking at the x-rays, something was very wrong. In all the clamour and excitement his concern was irrelevant. He was one of many witnesses that day whose observations were swept away; witnesses like Victoria Adams, Carolyn Walther, John Powell, Ruby Henderson, Gordon Arnold, Jean Hill, William Newman, Sam Holland, Lee Bowers, and many more. Although they gave a coherent picture, rarely contradicting each other, their evidence was discounted, ridiculed, or rewritten. The picture they described was different from the ‘official’ version. Since they could not be reconciled with ‘history’ they and their memories had to be cast aside. To make matters worse, the hard evidence made up of photographs, films, ballistics and autopsy reports has not gone unchallenged. The chain of identity for shell casings can’t be relied upon. Bullets apparently defy the laws of physics. Even Zapruder’s film of the assassination, regarded as primary evidence, has been called into question. Whatever happened in Dealey Plaza on November 22nd, 1963, reeks of doubt.

It is difficult to think of any other momentous event in contemporary history so riven with contradiction and dissent as the assassination of John Kennedy. Perhaps we should now accept that the assassination is beyond the grasp of our imagination or understanding. From the outset it has been politicised, with disdain and accusations of ‘un-American behaviour’ directed at the community of researchers, historians, scholars and writers who claim there were more involved in the assassination than the 24 year old from Louisiana, Lee Oswald. To aid in their demonisation, those who persist in questioning the lone gunman conclusions of the Warren Report are lumped together as “conspiracy theorists” - those ‘weak-minded fantasists’ who believe in chemtrails, fake greenhouse warming and UFOs.

To approach the tragedy of the Kennedy assassination is to glimpse a reversal of the tide of history. It is impossible to underestimate its effect on America’s collective psyche. It delivered a terrible blow to the winding down of the Cold War and with the resurgence of geopolitical
hostilities, it generated powerful emotions of loss, anger and frustration. That frustration was expressed in fierce opposition to the war in Vietnam and a deep conviction that rebooting the Cold War had ensured its nuclear paranoia and doomsday spending would be handed on to another generation. Despite the passing of more than 50 years since Kennedy’s presidency, the mindset of the Cold War, closeting its follies through pertinacious secrecy, persists, influencing international relations and our view of history. Although the signals are weaker, it also governs our understanding of the assassination, casting doubt on almost every aspect of it.

In his book *Real Answers* (1998), Gary Cornwell, who led a 1977 Congressional investigation of the assassination, observed that any attempt to investigate the Kennedy case only results in more theories and more “possible solutions;” every clue, every witness statement, leads to paralysing entanglements in alternative scenarios. It’s difficult not to agree with Cornwell, yet the questions that defy solution are as important today as they were more than fifty years ago. Why has every major investigation failed to convince many of the truth of its conclusions? Why do government agencies maintain that they didn’t know enough to stop the assassination, yet fight to keep their files from public scrutiny to prevent the public from knowing what they did know? Why did the assassination, seemingly so senseless and impulsive, advantage Kennedy’s enemies with such exquisite timing?

### The Minds of Others

The former head of the CIA, Allen Dulles, while sitting on the Warren Commission, expressed his amazement at the logistical accomplishment of the assassination. The extraordinary timing and luck required for the killer to be in the right place at the right time, avoiding detection and interference. It does seem that amazing luck was involved in the assassination, but only if impulse was motivating the assassin. The odds against the assassin were incredible. On the other hand, perhaps it didn’t need luck, perhaps the same result could be achieved if it were something akin to a well-executed military operation. If Oswald was a ‘patsy’, given the evidence to date what plausible narrative would describe his role in the assassination. What sort of scenario could’ve taken place?

Those at the heady peaks of the military and intelligence communities had made their feelings about Kennedy well known. If they harboured deep resentments after the failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs in April, 1961, their feelings could only have hardened after the Cuban Missile Crisis in October, 1962. Perhaps it was they who used their training, experience and connections, who decided to act. CIA veterans like David Morales and Bill Harvey were no strangers to plotting and assassination. They knew the workings of intelligence. They knew how to use its assets and manipulate its systems. Agents like the CIA’s David Phillips were professional liars, devoted to the underworld of projection and deception, that ‘wilderness of mirrors’ that is the atmosphere they soak up in intelligence. They all despised John Kennedy and his brother, Robert. With that as motivation, they still needed a plan.

Perhaps they discovered Lee Oswald through officers running a joint FBI/CIA operation on the Fair Play For Cuba Committee (FPCC). Oswald was the perfect patsy; he was a devoted patriot but if the public knew of him it was as a communist and Castro sympathiser. He was intelligent, but exhibited a degree of emotional immaturity. For someone with a military service background, he didn’t always take work seriously, appearing to be guileless.

In setting Oswald up, the collaborators may well have brought into the tent members of the Dallas Police, Secret Service, organised crime and the military (USN). They may have put out feelers to those they were certain were possible agents of assistance. The plot they would have
to hatch would not simply remove the president, it would have to manipulate the forces of government and media into accepting the coup and remaining if not sympathetic, then resilient to its consequences.

Those involved in intelligence have the obvious advantage of understanding the power of secrecy. Secrets evoke fear. Having chosen an assassination squad, perhaps they worked with plans they'd made in relation to other operations, like Cuba. Shooters lying in wait along a predetermined route. A decoy, a patsy, to throw to the police and take the blame. Their problem was to cover Oswald and manipulate him into acting like a man with suspect intentions and inappropriate connections. Someone could always be found to impersonate him if he needed to give a nefarious impression. With that in place, Oswald bobbed up in Dallas, hoping to reunite with his wife and find work. Almost two weeks later, he landed a temporary job as an order-filler at the Texas School Book Depository. The plotters had five weeks to survey Oswald's workplace and surrounding streets. The plan required the patsy to be in proximity to the motorcade somewhere along the route from Love Airfield to the Dallas Trade Mart. Perhaps they got lucky, or simply had the route amended to make the best use of Oswald's location.

Having bedded down the plan, their real artistry was revealed. The genius in their work was to make Oswald look guilty by presenting all the evidence in neat parcels with only one address - Oswald's. Perhaps they told Oswald to carry a particular object to work, an object big enough to fill out a paper bag and possibly suggest the shape of a weapon. The gun may have been planted days before - it was, after all, covered with paper and hidden between boxes in a place most people wouldn't ordinarily look. I would argue that Oswald's personality allowed for a degree of gullibility, but it's worth noting that he denied bringing anything but his lunch to work and the only witnesses who saw him with a paper bag both declared it could not have contained a rifle.

Perhaps several members of the assassination team entered the book depository before business hours and hid in the seventh floor. From there they could emerge as the motorcade arrived, alerted by a field radio. Perhaps they were just there to plant last second clues; the 'sniper's nest' arranged and Mannlicher-Carcano hulls carefully placed in the seconds after the president's limousine sped off for the Parkland Hospital. Perhaps, no shots were fired from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository. No witness actually saw a rifle being fired from the southeast window.

### Affective Logic

Since narrative was our first system for revealing truth, preceding science and logic, perhaps it is the course we take when all else fails. Jerome Bruner regards narrative as a means of ordering the world. Through observation we give weight to certain events and link them through action and agency. In this way we draw meaning from the river of events that flows around us. Paul Ricoeur goes further; if the essential structure of the narrative is a sequence of related events that leads to a conclusion or decision - a problem solved, a truth revealed - then narrative is about revelation in response to stress.

McCaughey and Lawson, in *Bringing Ritual To Mind*, caution against this desire to find meaning when reason is occluded by a lack of information or contradictory facts: "Human beings tend to ascribe agency far more liberally than the stimuli demand." (28) They maintain our need to find an explanation "suggests that human beings may be naturally over-prepared to detect agents where they are not." (29) This inclination, to leap to conclusions with little evidence, particularly when we feel threatened, leads us to:
“regularly overestimate the responsibility of agents for outcomes when situations do not justify it. Conspiracy theories abound. Blame is placed even when it is not required. Human beings’ preoccupation with agent causality typically results in their underestimating both the influence of variables outside of agents’ control and the role of the environment in shaping events around them.” (30)

This is a worthy reminder not to look for the ‘ghost in the machine’ when the available explanations will suffice. However, what is to be done with an array of ‘possible solutions’ that do not add up to a narrative that is cogent and satisfying - one that we can regard as reliably true? American narratologist, David Herman, regards narrative as a means of arriving at truth, whereby:

“the events represented are such that they introduce conflict (disruption or disequilibrium) into a storyworld, whether that world is presented as actual or fictional, realistic or fantastic, remembered or dreamed, etc.” (31)

Herman goes on to say:

“The representation also conveys what it is like to live through this storyworld-in-flux, highlighting the pressure of events on (in other words, the qualia of) real or imagined consciousnesses undergoing the disruptive experience at issue.” (32)

So, the narrative is a means of understanding through emotion, exploring the association of feelings with story events outside our immediate experience. Renowned English theatre director, Peter Brooks, agrees, suggesting that: “the concrete particularity of storytelling will always be more vivid than compilations of facts.” (33)

To Herman, narrative isn’t only the means by which we communicate and discover motives hidden in each other, but how we structure our thoughts and our reality. We gain an understanding of life according to the rules of cause and effect. Every action has consequences, arranging events in a particular order and investing that arrangement with emotional development imposes meaning - I am convinced that is a purpose of narrative, but not the primary purpose.

The work of Bruner and Herman helps explain why we find a cogent and satisfying narrative irresistible as a means of making judgements about others, events and our environment. Narrative is seductive because it creates a chain of ‘affective logic,’ revealing the meaning behind a character’s intentions, their motivation in responding to dramatic conflict.

Lajos Egri in *The Art of Dramatic Writing* describes a narrative as a series of transitions leading to decisions. Decision precedes action. He says, if characters are “sufficiently aroused, they will make a decision.” So, too, the audience. A series of scenes builds through dramatic steps of rising tension to a sequence that delivers a major decision. In this way, the story offers us major decisions to consider and we follow them to a resolution. However, when we encounter a competing decision it forces us to return to the transition stage to re-evaluate the first narrative. In effect, it interrupts the original narrative and we withhold judgement, unable to decide. We are rendered impotent because we cannot divine the motivation that brought about that decision.

The human hunger for answers has led some cultural historians to argue that narrative is given too much weight in contemporary society. While stories are inherently unreliable for determining discrete facts, they remain our best means of deciphering the corrupted, weak and
intermittent signals that pass from one psyche to another. While a narrative is usually given responsibility for describing actions, it’s primarily concerned with revealing character motivation; it endeavours to give us access to the minds of others. Its ability to bridge the unknown between a blind guess and a plausible working explanation for another individual’s motivation, is very old and very compelling. How else do we climb into the mind of Hamlet?

Given these sobering challenges to the use of narrative in accepting any truths about human behaviour and history, I have tried to limit my examination of its value to one specific area - by what means can we tell a true narrative from a false one? Central to narrative’s power to convince is its use of ‘affective logic’, that chain of emotional connections which leads to a satisfying dramatic resolution. That chain is broken if we lose track of the temporal/spatial reality of the storyworld, or some understanding of a character’s motivation. In other words, if we don’t know where or when the story is taking place we lose the context, and if we don’t know why an action is taking place we lose interest. In a narrative that purports to be true, the storyteller promises to ‘position’ us in the world and reveal the protagonist’s motivation.

Don DeLillo in his novel *Libra* (1988), fashioned a potent narrative from the available record, putting flesh on the bones of historical characters and moving them convincingly through the traumatic landscape of the assassination. DeLillo’s story describes Oswald’s involvement with the dregs of the New Orleans ‘after-marker’ intelligence community in the assassination and ends with him murderously shooting his mail order carbine in Dealey Plaza. DeLillo is masterful in guessing Oswald’s motive, flaws and capacity to be manipulated but cannot outrun the fact that his narrative ignores much salient evidence that makes it highly unlikely that Oswald was on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository when the president’s motorcade went by. Inevitably, DeLillo’s creative edifice succumbs to a flaw in its internal logic. The novel does not fail as literature, but as truth. Not wanting to retrace DeLillo’s steps, I resolved to find a path that would lead away from the fatal descent into Cornwell’s frustration. Files, released in stages under the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act (1992), have gradually revealed a more comprehensive picture of the assassination and those who played a part in it. After more than five decades, we still can’t be sure who took the life of John Kennedy. There is enough, however, to show that it wasn’t Oswald.

In writing a screenplay based on the best evidence of Oswald’s relation to the Kennedy assassination, my thinking is guided by a narrative principle I regard as a foundation in my work - that the primary function of narrative is to reveal the motivation of characters who act as agents of change. Failure to do so results in a false or impaired narrative, which can cause us to question the motive of the storyteller. I would hold that apart from the various narratives put forward to explain the assassination, the narrative of Lee Oswald as a lone assassin can be shown to be disinformation because the motive attached to his actions is false and cannot be supported by the evidence.

11

The Screenplay

Images, moving and still, proved to be a defining feature of John Kennedy’s presidency. He was a creation and a creature of America’s media, particularly television. It helped win him the presidency, projecting his brand of charisma while revealing his opponent’s lack of it. Photographers invited into the White House, presented his family as modern exemplars of the American Dream.

As he campaigned through the Wisconsin Primary, Kennedy outshine fellow Democrat, Hubert Humphrey, and established himself as a leader less interested in managing the future than creating it. His speeches, his engagement with the crowds and his interactions with
campaign staff, friends and family, were all captured in Primary (1960), a groundbreaking documentary using lightweight hand-held 16mm cameras in a style that has become known as Direct Cinema. Kennedy’s Inauguration speech was watched by a record television audience and he kept up the tradition of presidential ‘fireside chats’, addressing the nation regularly from the Oval Office.

Throughout, his presidency, Kennedy kept up constant contact with members of Hollywood’s inner circle. Apart from his famous dalliances with Marilyn Monroe, he enjoyed friendships with many of the Hollywood powerful, including Peter Lawford, Frank Sinatra, and Bing Crosby. He was instrumental in helping director, John Frankenheimer, make a movie adaptation of the best-selling book, “Seven Days In May,” a fictional account of a coup carried out by the military. Kennedy conveniently left for a few days holiday to allow filming to take place at the White House.

Within hours of the assassination, Abraham Zapruder’s 8mm film of the assassination was purchased by Time Inc., publisher of Life, for $150,000. For this, the most important piece of evidence from the president’s murder, to become the property of an American corporation is remarkable, if not alarming. Americans did not get to see their president gunned down until the film was shown on late night television on March 6, 1975. The reason for the lack of enthusiasm to show it earlier soon became apparent; it revealed in gruesome clarity, Kennedy being thrown back by a shot from the front. After twelve years, America finally got to see proof of a narrative that wasn’t about Oswald. The Zapruder film initiated a hurried enquiry by Senators Richard Schweiker and Gary Hart, which in turn brought on the House Select Committee on Assassinations investigation in 1976, which concluded that a conspiracy was probably responsible for Kennedy’s murder. (34)

After Kennedy’s death, images helped expose critical elements of the assassination, often contradicting the ‘evidence’ gathered by investigative agencies. Photographs supplied by the CIA Mexico City Station, showing what appears to be an Oswald impersonator entering the Cuban Consulate, proved to be essential in raising questions about the CIA’s role in monitoring Oswald. Grainy photographs of possible assassins lurking in windows in the Texas School Book Depository or boxes being placed to build an ‘assassin’s nest’ after the assassin, all add to the mystery. An image of Oswald taken in a backyard, holding a rifle and several communist newspaper, cemented his radical leanings.

Oswald’s murder in the basement of the Dallas Police Headquarters was the first ‘live’ murder caught on television. For many, including myself, it looked like a staged encounter, a piece of film noir with gangster overtones. Here, the two combatants met, both anti-heroes, in a scene that was impossible to believe. Rather than establishing Jack Ruby as an heroic figure, avenging the widow of the president and the nation in mourning, it planted a seed of suspicion that took root in the minds of those who smelled a rat, and the rat wasn’t Oswald.

The Kennedy autopsy photographs and x-rays continue to create a great deal of controversy. The images are disputed, experts claiming they are forgeries or at best, doctored to misrepresent the state of Kennedy’s wounds. The work of David Lifton (Best Evidence) and Robert Groden (The Killing of a President) throws considerable doubts on the photographs as evidence and strongly suggests the president’s corpse was dealt with in an undignified manner.

The release of Oliver Stone’s film, JFK (1991), provoked renewed interest in the assassination. Blending fact with ‘best guess’ fiction to describe a scenario that aspired to be plausible, it attracted powerful critics who mauled it relentlessly before it had even been released. Nonetheless, its box office success enabled researchers, writers and scholars to clamour for the release of documents still held by various government agencies, including the CIA, FBI and Army Intelligence. The Clinton administration created the Assassination Records Review
Board, with the power to search and arrange for the release of hundreds of thousands of classified documents related to the assassination. It seems appropriate that some of the truth got out due to Hollywood.

Thousands of images, recorded by news gathering teams and members of the public, fix that terrible day in November, 1963, as a rich resource to feed the mind with actions, atmosphere and drama. With so much of John Kennedy’s narrative expressed visually it seemed appropriate to apply those observational influences in a screenplay concerning his tragic death. The point of view I adopted to render Oswald’s role in the assassination, is deliberately objective.

Sources
American Homicide, the screenplay written for this thesis, has been constructed from the ‘best evidence’ available, including that contained in the Warren Commission’s 26 volumes of evidence, interviews and exhibits. Despite all its faults, omissions and contradictions, the Warren Report remains at the heart of any attempt to reconstruct a narrative from the events surrounding the Kennedy murder. Although the report diligently described the early period in Oswald’s life, it grew more unreliable as it approached the assassination, due to the FBI’s bias toward the lone gunman scenario. Where evidence has come to light in the intervening years, and can be shown to materially advance the narrative, I have used it. The screenplay covers the last seven months of Oswald’s life, from April 24th to November 24th, 1963 - from Oswald leaving his wife and daughter in Dallas, to go to New Orleans, taking several short trips in Louisiana, visiting Mexico City, before returning to Dallas in early October, six weeks before his murder in the basement of the Dallas City Hall.

Scene References
Title Page Image - Lee Harvey Oswald, dragged from the Texas Theater by Patrolman C. T. Walker and, still chewing his cigar, Detective Paul Bentley, on November 22nd, 1963. On the right is Sgt. Gerald Hill. Photo: Jim MacCammon, (TIME Magazine, February 14th, 1964)
Scenes 1-15 Legend (Epstein); Marina & Lee (McMillan); Warren Report
Scene 20 Conspiracy (Summers), p.281
Scenes 16-23 Warren Commission Report, Conspiracy (Summers); A Farewell To Justice (Mellen); Oswald In New Orleans (Weisberg), Oswald and the CIA (Newman).
The Reily brothers, William and Eustis, were active in anti-Castro politics (Peter Dale Scott, Crime and Cover-Up, pp. 15, 54.) The main source of information about Oswald’s time at Reily’s was an ex-FBI man and industrial security specialist named William Monaghan. (See Peter Dale Scott, Deep Politics and the Death of JFK, pp. 94-95, 368.)
Scene 24 House Select Committee on Assassinations Report (1979)
Scene 25 Conspiracy (Summers), p.270
Scenes 26-29 House Select Committee on Assassinations Report (1979)
Scenes 30-49 Warren Commission Report; Oswald In New Orleans (Weisberg); A Farewell To Justice (Mellen)
Scene 31 Conspiracy (Summers), p.281
Scenes 32-33 Warren Commission Report; Oswald In New Orleans (Weisberg); A Farewell To Justice (Mellen)
Scene 34 Conspiracy (Summers), p.271
Scene 35 Conspiracy (Summers), p.271
Scenes 36-39 Warren Commission Report; Oswald In New Orleans (Weisberg); A Farewell To Justice (Mellen)
Scene 40 Conspiracy (Summers), p.272
Scene 41 Conspiracy (Summers), p.272
Oswald was known to have left the entire contents of his wallet, around $175, in a bowl on a dresser in Marina's bedroom at Ruth Paine’s house, when he left for work at approximately 7:30am. This isn’t necessarily unusual since it was his practice to leave money with Marina at the end of the week to defray expenses incurred by Ruth Paine in looking after Marina and June. What is unusual is that Oswald also left his wedding ring in that bowl. This is significant and is often interpreted as a gesture of finality, the act of a man about to commit an act that will have profound consequences, like a murder. However, when taking into account that Oswald’s marriage had been troubled for most of its existence, potted with argument, violence and separation, leaving his wedding ring behind might have been his way of declaring the marriage over. On four occasions the night before he had tried to reconcile with Marina, asking for the chance to live with her again, and she had denied him.

Scene 98-101 Based on Oswald’s evidence; he came to work with his lunch, worked on various floors during the morning of November 22nd and was not on the Sixth Floor when the president was shot. His evidence was corroborated by witnesses, Victoria Adams, Sandra Styles, Dorothy Garner, William Shelley, Carolyn Arnold, DPD Officer Marrion Baker and TSBD Manager Roy Truly. (35)
conducted in a remarkably casual manner. No formal recording of the interviews was taken and no stenographer was present to take down what was said. The only hard copy we have is a collection of ‘rough notes’ gathered from the various witnesses and collated in a rather ad hoc fashion by researcher, Mae Brussell.

Scene 107 JFK Assassination Last Words of Lee Harvey Oswald (Brussell), p.1
Scene 108 Conspiracy (Summers), p.84
Scenes 109-118 Warren Commission Report
Scene 119 Simpich, Bill, The JFK Case (Mary Ferrell Foundation, 2015), p.145-146
Scene 120 Marina and Lee, (McMillan)
Scene 121 Marina and Lee, (McMillan)
Scene 122 Lee, (Oswald R.), p.34
Scene 123-131 JFK Assassination Last Words of Lee Harvey Oswald (Brussell)
Scene 132 Whitewash (Weisberg), p.137
Scene 133 JFK Assassination Last Words of Lee Harvey Oswald (Brussell)
Scene 134 Evidence of Ruth Paine, Warren Commission Hearings, Volume IX, p.353
Scenes 135-136 JFK Assassination Last Words of Lee Harvey Oswald (Brussell)
Scene 137 JFK And The Unspeakable, (Douglass), p.173
Scene 138 JFK Assassination Last Words of Lee Harvey Oswald (Brussell)
Scene 139 Whitewash (Weisberg), pp.138-150
Scene 140 Lee (Oswald, R.), p.142
Scene 141 Whitewash (Weisberg), pp.138-150
Scenes 142-146 Constructed from Robert Oswald’s biography of his younger brother, Lee. (36) Conspiracy (Summers) was helpful in providing insight into the emotional state of Robert, Marina and Marguerite. (37)
Scenes 147-149 Oswald’s Raleigh Call and the Fingerprints of Intelligence, Dr. Grover B. Proctor Jr. (YouTube)
Scenes 150-154 Warren Commission Report; JFK Assassination Last Words of Lee Harvey Oswald (Brussell)
Scene 156 Conspiracy (Summers), p.107
Scene 157 Evidence of Marguerite Oswald, Warren Commission Hearings.
Scene 158 Lee (Oswald, R), p.47; Oswald, Robert, Frontline, Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald? (PBS, 1993)

12

The Double Agent

The Warren Commission could come to no conclusion as to Oswald’s motive in his alleged involvement in the assassination of President Kennedy. This was received with deep disappointment by the American public. It didn’t seem enough to simply portray Oswald as a loner, a man with possible deep-seated personality problems. Yet, the Warren Report’s admission that none of it appeared to add up was not seen as a failure, but a triumph of nuanced logic. Mad people act without reason and attack at random. The system is not to blame.

When asked by the press after his arrest, Oswald declared to the media he had nothing to do with shooting ‘anyone.’ When asked why he had been arrested he alluded to being framed, obviously implying the agency of others. For someone who had supposedly pulled off the crime of the century, Oswald seemed not to be interested in grandstanding or manifestly prosecuting a cause. In all the news footage taken in the Dallas Police Headquarters after his arrest, Oswald seemed quietly confused and frustrated, but most of all, resigned to the hysteria
around him. If he did take the life of the most powerful leader in the world, he didn’t appear to know why. Despite Oswald’s failure to deliver an assassin’s confession, the Warren Commission stood behind its narrative and managed to convince many it had delivered the only plausible explanation. To help in this persuasion Justice Earl Warren ensured a rough draft of his report was handed over to government historians to ‘finesse’ Oswald’s narrative. When delivered in reams of sober, elegant prose, perhaps the cracks didn’t show.

One of those convinced by the Warren Report was Robert Oswald. In a television interview in 1993, he claimed without any doubt his younger brother, Lee, had killed President Kennedy:

“What do you do with his rifle? What do you do with his pistol? What do you do with his general opportunity? What do you do with his actions? To me, you can’t reach but one conclusion. There’s hard physical evidence there. True, no one saw him actually pull the trigger on the president but ... his presence in the building was there.” (38)

The certainty expressed by Robert Oswald is troubling because his appeal to circumstantial evidence is so weak. His brother was in the building, but nothing Lee did that day, or any day before, aroused any suspicion that he was about to commit murder. To convict using circumstantial evidence all of the evidence must lead to one inference, and one only; a conviction fails if the theory is flawed with just one incontrovertible fact. However, Robert Oswald accepted that Lee’s presence in the building was enough. Either Robert knew something about his brother, or perhaps, like the rest of the world, he didn’t know much at all.

In the years since the Warren Commission passed judgement on Lee Oswald, precious little about him that’s new has been revealed, and nothing implicating him in the assassination. No reliable witnesses have come forward, no documents describing his murderous intentions. Nonetheless, many thousands of documents have been released which clearly indicate a cast of players behind the scenes of the assassination, like shadows in a Wayang Kulit play.

After two years heading the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Senator Richard Schweiker told a Village Voice journalist in 1975: “We do know Oswald had intelligence connections. Everywhere you look with him, there are fingerprints of intelligence.” (39)

If Lee Oswald, a friendless loser, retrieved his bargain basement rifle from Ruth Paine’s garage, took it to work and gunned down the President of the United States without apparent motive, then one must ask: Why is this tragedy, this outrage, so crowded with figures associated with intelligence? George de Mohrenschildt, Guy Banister, Clay Shaw, David Ferrie, Carlos Bringuier, William Gaudet, David Phillips, John Hurt and Jack Ruby, all had some connection with Oswald in the weeks and months before Kennedy arrived in Dallas. All of them worked in intelligence.

Why is it that Ruth Paine, who apparently took over looking after the Oswalds when the CIA ‘handlers’, the de Mohrenshildts, left for Haiti, did everything in her power to assist Oswald with his ‘work’ while collecting incriminating evidence against him? The day after the assassination, in a phone conversation bugged by the FBI, Ruth did not object when her estranged husband, Michael, declared that Oswald killed the president, before he went on to say, “We both know who is responsible.” (40)

In the end, Oswald had no doubt why he’d been hunted down and charged. When asked in a crowded corridor in Dallas Police Headquarters, he told the jostling, clamorous press, “No, they’re taking me in because I lived in the Soviet Union. I’m just a patsy!” His inference is clear, he considered himself a victim of America’s paranoid obsession with communism. Before he was murdered two days later, the communist label was dropped and he was persistently referred to
as a ‘Marxist’ or a ‘Socialist’. (41) To call him a communist implied a relationship with certain countries, which in turn suggested an international conspiracy.

Two major themes, espionage and communism, play through Lee Oswald’s life and death and they beg to be resolved. Was he a spy or was he a communist, was he both or was he neither? Forests have been sacrificed to the publication of books on each and all four possibilities. It is remarkable that after so much attention, so many investigations, and so much independent research, there is no definitive answer. Perhaps one reason is that it isn’t so much that the evidence is corrupted, it’s the frame of reference into which the evidence is placed; akin to trying to complete a jigsaw puzzle where the pieces don’t match the picture on the box.

Aristotle’s maxim, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit” is critical in considering any character. What did Oswald do again and again? In his adolescence he was a dedicated fan of the television series, “I Led Three Lives”, with the lead character, Herbert A. Philbrick, pretending to be an FBI agent working undercover as a communist spy. Oswald was a voracious reader of spy books, particularly those of Ian Fleming. In Dallas, in the last year of his life, his only social life was associating with rightwing white Russian emigres. In New Orleans, in the months before the assassination, his regular contacts were with ex-CIA or FBI operatives like Banister and Ferrie and rightwing Cuban students. What he didn’t do was associate with people from the left. Apart from calling himself a Marxist, he worked to discredit left leaning organisations. He was never a member of the communist party. He never had one card-carrying member of the left he could call a friend or associate.

It is very difficult for anyone outside the confines of the intelligence community to appreciate how employment in such a world is transacted and conducted. David C. Martin’s Wilderness of Mirrors presents a game of strategic uncertainty played with shadows and secrecy. The confessions of Vincent Marchetti and David Atlee Phillips explore the operational aspects behind American intelligence, but it is Miles Copeland, ex-CIA intelligence officer, who provides real insight into procedures involved in working in intelligence and espionage. Copeland describes various categories of operatives; those who are recruited without knowing it, those who walk in off the street, those whose proclivities grow into the role. He says most of those involved in espionage “don’t fully comprehend what they do.” (42) In the end, despite every attempt to understand their actions, most probably have no ideology, just a deep need to be a spy.

During his service with the Marines, Oswald was trained as a radar operator, work that also required a high security clearance. Along the way he also picked up skills and practices so much a part of espionage. At the time of his arrest he possessed a Minox miniature camera and a microdot printer, both essential tools of trade for a spy. Police attest to his demeanour under investigation as someone trained in interview techniques. Oswald persistently used mailbox addresses and aliases. He was even arrested in a cinema, which Copeland points out “remains an ideal place for the brush contact.” (43)

Copeland writes that of all the qualities required of an agent, “only one quality is truly important: access to the target.” (44) The evidence, gleaned from released classified documents, independent researchers and the reports of the Warren Commission and the House Select Committee on Assassinations, strongly suggests that Oswald was led to believe he was an intelligence ‘asset’ - probably recruited in the last months of his life by the CIA’s David Atlee Phillips, acting as his case officer. He thought he was working on a campaign to rid Cuba of Castro, when in fact he was creating the evidence to implicate himself in an assassination of his own president.

Lee Oswald existed on the penumbra of the world of spies, neither accepted nor rejected. A double agent in the perception of those interested in him. When he returned to the United States in the middle of 1962, he set about writing a memoir of his exploits as a failed defector
in the Soviet Union, an enterprise that was soon ‘disencouraged’ by his CIA handler, George de Mohrenschildt. His amateurish text may have been the work of an agent provocateur, but it’s hardly that of a professional operative. It’s feasible Oswald was constantly trying to prove his worth. While he may well have been taught to speak Russian and trained in ‘spy craft’ before being sent to the Soviet Union as a ‘plant,’ he was not accepted by the KGB as a serious operative. From his return from Russia to his death in Dallas, it is almost certain that Oswald did not hold down fixed employment in any intelligence organisation. There is, however, much evidence that he floated in and out of short term operations, particularly in New Orleans and later in Dallas in the weeks before the president’s murder. Apart from his intense secrecy, his association with many people connected to intelligence, and his collection of ‘spy’ methods and equipment, there is one particular event which defines him as someone working in intelligence, if only on the periphery.

On the night of Saturday, November 23rd, Oswald played his last card. In the Dallas Police Headquarters lock-up, he asked to make a phone call to a ‘John Hurt’ in North Carolina. With Oswald on the phone on another floor, two Secret Service men listened in as the switchboard operator called the number Oswald requested. With the number ringing, the operator pulled the plug and informed Oswald the “call did not go through.” Retired CIA agent, Vincent Marchetti, tells us that it’s a common ploy to convince an ‘asset’ of their status for an intelligence agency to provide a number to call in an emergency, a last resort. Oswald did just that. Unfortunately, John Hurt in North Carolina - the ‘last resort’ contact - was not seriously in a position to help. He wasn’t ever meant to be called. How did Oswald obtain this man’s number? Why was no attempt apparently made to get to the bottom of his desperate attempt to reach out to this man, who just happened to be a retired intelligence officer?

Three things persist as major obstructions on the path to claiming Oswald as the president’s assassin. Each may not seem conclusive, but together they make it practically impossible for Oswald to have shot the president. The first is Hoover’s admission to Johnson that the evidence against Oswald was ‘weak.’ No one saw Oswald with the murder weapon or saw him fire it. The fingerprint evidence was problematic. However, Hoover was particularly troubled with the FBI’s routine test to determine if Oswald had fired a weapon, particularly a rifle. A paraffin test involves taking a hot wax cast of the hands and face of the suspect, then testing the casts for deposits left by a firearm, namely powder particles. The test came back positive for Oswald’s hands, but negative for his cheek, indicating he could’ve handled a pistol that day, but he could not have fired a rifle.

The second obstruction involves a twenty two year old customer service representative, Victoria Adams, watching the president’s motorcade with friends from the Fourth Floor of the Texas School Book Depository. She heard the shots in Dealey Plaza, and before the president’s limousine disappeared into the underpass Victoria and her friend Sandra Styles made for the heavy wooden stairs in the north-western corner of the building. They heard nothing on their way down to the ground floor, and they saw no one. When interviewed, Victoria stuck to her guns, despite considerable pressure from FBI, CIA, and Secret Service agents and a senior detective from the Dallas Police. What Victoria didn’t know was that her evidence offered up grave doubts as to Oswald’s presence on the Sixth Floor. Given the timing of the assassination and Oswald’s supposed frantic escape down the noisy, wooden stairs, Victoria would’ve seen, or heard him. After months of harassment to change her story, Victoria left Texas. In his compelling work, “The Girl On The Stairs,” Barry Ernest describes how he tracked Victoria Adams down almost forty years later for her to describe again what she had and hadn’t seen. In the process, she discovered the Warren Commission had altered her statement to make it appear she and Sandra had descended the stairs many minutes after they said they had. Ernest located Sandra Butler (Styles), who confirmed she and Victoria had run for the stairs within seconds of the final shot and before the president’s Lincoln disappeared into the underpass. Ernest found Dorothy Garner, Adams’ supervisor at the TSBD. Garner revealed she had made
a statement to the FBI on the day of the assassination corroborating Adams’ evidence, she had crossed the floor to the stairs within seconds of the assassination before the appearance of Police Officer Marrion Baker and the building manager, Roy Truly. Garner’s statement had been ‘lost’ by the FBI. The critical thing to note is that everything Victoria Adams, Sandra Styles and Dorothy Garner said tallied. The Warren Commission, through their assistant counsel, David Belin, and the FBI, altered her evidence to make it worthless, then harassed her until she fled.

The third obstruction is practically impenetrable because it lies deep within the walls of American intelligence. A little under two months before the assassination, Oswald visited the Cuban Consulate in Mexico City and applied for a visa to travel to Cuba and the Soviet Union. Over the following three days, someone impersonated Oswald in several telephone calls to the Cuban and Soviet consulates. This is not in dispute. FBI Director Hoover spoke of it to President Johnson the day after the assassination. The evidence of Oswald’s impersonation in Mexico City between September 28th and October 1st, 1963, has never been adequately investigated. It remains untested and unexplained because the CIA claims all the evidence has been erased. Even if that is true, it tells us that something else was going on in Oswald’s life before the assassination, something serious and murky.

Oswald’s FBI paraffin test results, Victoria Adams’ adulterated evidence and the impersonation of Oswald in Mexico City, are only three pieces of evidence that cut deep into any judgement of Oswald’s guilt. There are many others that cast doubt on the quality of justice Oswald received, but these three are notable because if true then Oswald cannot have been a lone gunman. Crucially, they also indicate the extent to which the authorities investigating the assassination were prepared to go to channel the evidence to one conclusion, and one only.

What was Jack Ruby’s role in the assassination? As an anti-hero, he makes perfect sense. In the Warren Report, Ruby and Oswald shared the same airbrush. Each had their background bowdlerised until it was meaningless and their motives abandoned to insanity; as Buchanan describes the situation: “it was one madman who shot down another.” (45) At least Ruby came clean on the origins of the motive he took to court:

“A handwritten note by Ruby, disclosed in 1967, however, exposed Ruby’s explanation for the Oswald slaying as a fabricated legal ploy. Addressed to his attorney, Joseph Tonahill, it told of advice Ruby had received from his first lawyer, Tom Howard, in 1963: ‘Joe, you should know this. Tom Howard told me to say that I shot Oswald so that Caroline and Mrs. Kennedy wouldn’t have to come to Dallas to testify. OK?’” (46)

As tragic as any single murder is it doesn’t always change the course of history. Kennedy’s assassination, however, led America back to the Cold War and tainted a generation. We still describe the 1960s according to the radiance of the Summer of Love, but Vietnam, Malcolm X and Selma, Alabama, the Chicago riots, suggest far more the social upheaval of the times. Gerald McKnight, in Breach of Trust, writes eloquently of Kennedy’s clear intention to take America out of Indochina, he well knew the anguish of the French, bogged down and haemorrhaging, unable to extricate themselves. (47) However, after many years of doubt-infused paralysis many have stopped thinking about who did or did not kill President Kennedy. Certainly, Stephen Knot, in reviewing Breach of Trust spoke for some when he wrote:

“Our perpetual desire to reexamine the tragedy in Dallas seems rooted in a yearning for something more meaningful than the fact that a twenty-four-year-old loser who desperately sought attention for his crackpot views could alter the
Six months after the assassination, Thomas Buchanan, an American novelist and academic argued that in each assassination of American presidents since Lincoln, the first response is to blame a lone, crazed gunman, before history proves otherwise. To nail home his point, Buchanan quoted an article from *Time*, published a week after the Kennedy assassination:

> "Assassination has never been an instrument of politics in the U.S.: no plot to seize power, no palace intrigue, has ever cost an American President his life. Three assassins whose bullets killed Presidents Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley were lonely psychopaths, adrift from reason in a morbid fascination with the place history gives those who reverse its orderly progress. Each sought an hour of mad glory - and each died convinced that history would understand." (49)

John Wilkes Booth was conveniently shot while being arrested, which helped cover the trail of a conspiracy leading to the tent-flap of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy. Before his death, Booth proclaimed his 'heroic' actions in killing Lincoln to anyone who would listen. In the months that followed, several of his co-conspirators were hanged and many others were pardoned to save the restoration of the union. Sitting at the first meeting of the Warren Commission, ex-CIA Director Allen Dulles handed out material supporting the lone gunman theory and told the Commission that assassinations in Europe were carried out by conspiracies, whereas American assassins acted alone. (50) At the same meeting, John. J McCloy, declared the findings would show, "the world America is not a banana republic, where a government can be changed by conspiracy." (51) One can't help but think that Lee Oswald served his country in a manner regarded by some as necessary, but in truth was a perversion of history and justice.

Those CIA personnel frequently named as the most likely to be involved in Kennedy’s assassination all possessed motive, means and opportunity. Of the five; William Harvey, Johnny Roselli, David Atlee Phillips, David Morales and E. Howard Hunt, four confessed late in life. Harvey, the only one not to have been known to confess, made no secret of his violent loathing of both Kennedy brothers. Harvey was close to Allen Dulles, who refused to accept Kennedy removing him from wielding power and influence in Washington. Dulles simply moved his base up to "The Farm," a CIA compound in Maryland. Dulles’ appointment to the Warren Commission remains a perverse commentary on the work of that body. Dulles was most diligent in attending sittings of the commission and substantially influenced the writing of the Warren Report to exonerate the CIA from suspicion. Perhaps he was also exonerating himself.

On October 10th, 1971, as Watergate was about to flood the White House, President Nixon invited the head of the CIA, Richard Helms, to the Oval Office. Nixon wanted the CIA’s Bay of Pigs file. He was sure it contained something he could use on the Kennedys. He was concerned that Teddy Kennedy would enter the 1972 presidential race and wanted something on him. Helms calmly refused to produce the file. It is almost certain that Helms was aware that Nixon had a habit of recording all conversations in the Oval Office. Nixon became agitated, emphasising to Helms that he wouldn’t misuse the information, he could be trusted, he was ‘one of them.’ Suddenly, he seemed to realise there was no point in pursuing the matter. He dropped his voice and asked the question many wanted answered - “Who shot John?” (52) For half a minute all that can be heard is the soft hiss of tape rolling across the recording heads. It’s clear Helms is not going to answer. He knows the meaning of the question and he knows the answer. What he doesn’t say is, “It was Oswald.”
Perhaps the reason Oswald’s character is so much of an enigma isn’t due to the man’s obnubilate character, but that he was a self-created shadowy denizen of the multi-mirrored world of espionage. He was alone in playing a character more real in his mind than in an organisation of professional deceivers and sleuths. His fantasy, edging ever closer to the chasm, took him deep into a world he only imagined he understood. John Kennedy, on the other hand, did understand the world. In choosing to steer America away from a darker future, Kennedy paid with his life. Choosing a different path is always an opportunity for something better and an invitation to something worse - unless a nation’s history, embroidered with stories, untrue and unchallenged, has condemned the future already. To borrow from John Kennedy, the great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie, but the myth. (53)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Brussell, Mae, *JFK Assassination Last Words of Lee Harvey Oswald: A Full Account Of Every Word Spoken By Lee Harvey Oswald From The Time Of The JFK Assassination Until His Death* (*The People's Almanac*, David Wallechinsky & Irving Wallace, 1975 - 1981)


Davison, Jean, *Oswald’s Game* (W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 1983)


DiEugenio, James, *Destiny Betrayed: JFK, Cuba And The Garrison Case* (Sheridan Square Press, New York, 1992)


Douglass, James W., *JFK And The Unspeakable* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2008)


Klein, Edward, *The Kennedy Curse: Why Tragedy Has Haunted America’s First Family For 150 Years* (St Martin’s Press, New York, 2003)


Lewis, Ron, *Flashback: The Untold Story Of Lee Harvey Oswald* (Lewcom Productions, 1993)


Oswald, Robert, with Land, Myrick and Barbara, *Lee: A Portrait Of Lee Harvey Oswald* (Coward-McCann Inc. New York, 1967)


Rasenberger, Jim, *The Brilliant Disaster: JFK, Castro, And America’s Doomed Invasion Of Cuba’s Bay Of Pigs* (Scribner, New York, 2011)


Scott, Peter Dale, *Deep Politics And The Death Of JFK* (University Of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1993)


Simpich, Bill, *State Secret* (Mary Ferrell Foundation, 2014)

Simpich, Bill, *The JFK Case* (Mary Ferrell Foundation, 2015)


Stone, Oliver, *JFK* [film], (Warner Bros., 1991)


Weisberg, Harold, *Whitewash IV: JFK Assassination Transcript* (Harold Weisberg, Frederick, Maryland, 1974)
DISSERTATION REFERENCES


(2) Scott, Peter Dale, *Deep Politics And The Death Of JFK* (University Of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1993) p.303


(7) LBJ Library, LBJ Tapes, November 23, 1963, President Johnson, telephone conversation with FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover.


(9) Shenon, Philip, *Yes, The CIA Director Was Part of The JFK Assassination Cover-Up* (Politico Magazine, October 6, 2015)

(10) Hersh, Seymour, “Family Jewels”, (The New York Times, published December 22, 1974) This lengthy article details operations engaged in by the CIA over the years against organised crime, revealing an association with the mafia that was seen to be evidence of moral turpitude.


(20) Warren Report (WR), Ch VII, p.375


(23) Oswald, Robert, *Frontline, Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald?* (PBS, 1993); Oswald, Robert, with Land, Myrick and Barbara, *Lee: A Portrait Of Lee Harvey Oswald* (Coward-McCann
Inc. New York, 1967) p. 47


(29) Ibid. p.21

(30) Ibid. p.21


(32) Ibid.

(33) Brooks, Peter, *(Lecture Notes, 2009)* p.92

(34) The HSCA's conclusion that there was a high probability of a conspiracy, involving the Mafia, was assisted by the appearance of a Dictabelt recording of the assassination late in the proceedings. A member of the Retired Intelligence Officers Association, Mary Ferrell, was instrumental in its recovery. The Dictabelt recording was later challenged and resulted in a terminal deterioration of credibility for the HSCA's conclusions. Ferrell is famous among assassination researchers as the founder of the Mary Ferrell Foundation, a comprehensive internet archive on the Kennedy assassination. It is worth noting that Jim McBride, in his book *Into The Nightmare*, suggests that Ferrell deliberately assisted in the white-anting of the committee's conclusions. Recently, it has been confirmed that Mary Ferrell had no time for Kennedy, never voted for him and had connections to American intelligence officers that extended back to the assassination. She even donated her own car to be used in the Dallas motorcade. It was returned unscarthed.


(36) Oswald, Robert, with Land, Myrick and Barbara, *Lee: A Portrait Of Lee Harvey Oswald* (Coward-McCann Inc. New York, 1967) p.142

Robert Oswald is certain his younger brother acted alone in murdering the president, yet he is open to suggestions that Lee was manipulated by Ruth Paine and her estranged husband, Michael. Robert Oswald took an instant dislike to the Paines and counselled Marina to stay away from them. He makes no mention of a dalliance with Lee’s wife in the months after the assassination.


(38) Oswald, Robert, *Frontline, Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald* (PBS, 1993)

(39) Village Voice, December 15th, 1975


(41) Scott, Peter Dale, Oswald, Mexico, And Deep Politics: Revelations From Cia Records On The Assassination Of JFK (Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2013) pp.74-84

(43) Ibid., p.138
(44) Ibid., p.108
(45) Buchanan, Thomas G., Who Killed Kennedy? (Secker & Warburg, London 1964) p.29
(49) Buchanan, Thomas G., Who Killed Kennedy? (Secker & Warburg, London 1964) p.67
(50) Scott, Peter Dale, Deep Politics And The Death Of JFK, p296
(53) Kennedy, John F., (Commencement Address, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, June 11th, 1962) - “The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie – deliberate, contrived and dishonest – but the myth – persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Too often we hold fast to the cliches of our forebears. We subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations. We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.”