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ARTHUR & JOE

by

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CHARACTERS

Arthur Miller mid-40s
Joe DiMaggio mid-40s
Waiter.....mid -60s
Woman with Red Hair..... late -30s

SETTING and TIME

A restaurant in Brooklyn, New York, late October 1962
And again January 1970, same restaurant.

**SCENE ONE
(EVENING)**

(DIMAGGIO IS SEATED, THEN RISES. HE SEES MILLER COMING TO THE TABLE FROM THE RESTROOM HALLWAY. THEY HAVE HAD A FEW MINUTES OF CONVERSATION, UNDOUBTEDLY. MILLER GOES TO THE TABLE)

ARTHUR

I could apologize.

JOE

Apologies never come on time. Like FTD flowers.

ARTHUR

I do want to apologize. Please. I should have been there. Even my parents wanted to be there for her.

(SILENCE)

Fuck it, Joe. Give me a break.

(PAUSE)

I like your necktie. Is it silk?

JOE

Yes.

ARTHUR

Either I have glaucoma or it's a very dark restaurant.

JOE

Yes. I like the atmosphere. Tranquil. Folks don't bother you here.

ARTHUR

I can see the mural of Venice opposite the bar. I like dark oil murals.

JOE

The cuisine is Northern Italian. *Milano, Venezia, Firenze . . .*

ARTHUR

I wouldn't know the difference. Red sauce throws me all the time. Interesting relief. Heavy brush strokes. The gondolas look larger than life, militant, Germanic . . . are you in town long?

JOE

I flew in for a few days. I like visiting the city as much as avoiding it. I prefer San Francisco. Were you in Connecticut?

ARTHUR

No. I was in town. I stay overnight a lot.

JOE

I didn't think you would show up.

ARTHUR

Why is that?

JOE

Gut reaction. I didn't phone you. Lee did.

ARTHUR

I respect Lee.

JOE

So do I.

ARTHUR

Lawford phoned me too. If you had phoned, it wouldn't have changed anything. I owe you this.

JOE

It's not my style to pick up a phone, Arthur. I was about to go back to the hotel. You are a few minutes late. Lee reached me just as I was leaving to go catch a flight.

ARTHUR

I thought I knew Strasberg but . . .

JOE

Don't tell me.

ARTHUR

I don't mind. Let's be candid.

JOE

You dislike Lee?

ARTHUR

He kept his distance. And I was always a little cool to him, but that's not it. He's changed a lot.

JOE

Because of her death?

ARTHUR

Can't you tell?

JOE

Maybe I can't. Marilyn thought he was a genius.

ARTHUR

For controlling her?

JOE

Isn't that what acting teachers do?

ARTHUR

The Method is like an endless wine cork screw.

JOE

You're not a fan of popping the cork.

ARTHUR

He had designs on her. Look, he cared about her talent and he protected her from some sharks. I can respect him, Joe.

JOE

Lee said you were thinking about suicide.

ARTHUR

That's fucking crazy. Lee said that?

JOE

He convinced me. You sat inside your garage with the car running until a neighbor came.

ARTHUR

He said that? Total bullshit. Is that why you came tonight?

JOE

Yeah.

ARTHUR

And Peter Lawford told me you were about to kill yourself. You were stocking up on sleeping pills.

JOE

Not me. That's a crock.

ARTHUR

Leave it to Strasberg and Lawford to be jerking our chain.

JOE

Misguided caring.

ARTHUR

Why the hell are we meeting?

JOE

A quick drink – it's on me.

ARTHUR

No. Let's call it a night and go our separate ways.

JOE

Fine.

ARTHUR

It wasn't just Lawford. Sinatra told me you were drinking heavily and needed a damn lifeline before you jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge.

JOE

I can't hurt my son, Arthur. He needs me.

ARTHUR

Yeah, we live for others.

JOE

Who do you live for?

ARTHUR

My new wife.

JOE

Sure.

ARTHUR

Strasberg has exalted himself above the fray like a Jewish Zadie lifted by a flock of angels.

JOE

A Jewish Zadie?

ARTHUR

Grandpa in a fuzzy terry robe. One night in the city Strasberg told me he lost his wallet. At the Hotel Pierre. Some people are like that. They lose their house keys or can't find

their damn car. He had on a tux and said his wallet ruined the jacket fold. So I spotted him fifty bucks.

JOE

Well, I got him to speak at the funeral. He was dignified.

ARTHUR

New York theatre loves him. I'm sure she told Strasberg where a bad marriage was heading. You get this treatment?

JOE

People don't sport with me.

ARTHUR

I'm built the same way. But that's no insurance.

JOE

(AWKWARD SILENCE)

You're taller than I thought.

ARTHUR

Pin stripe suits accentuate the vertical.

(THROWAWAY JOKE)

I'm 5'4" in my stocking feet.

JOE

Are you going to sit?

ARTHUR

Yeah. Why not?

JOE

My favorite spot. The worst table's under the chandelier because that thing just isn't bolted in right. She'll take your overcoat. The cute hat check girl with a perfect gap between her front teeth.

ARTHUR

Should I ask her to whistle?

(REMOVES COAT)

What the hell, I'll keep the coat.

JOE

This place is a hidden urban gem. Right by the canal. Lamp lights on the water make it look greener than a bullfrog.

ARTHUR

You can smell the canal in summer.

JOE

Hell, how can you miss it! The Gowanus Canal – the ninth wonder of the earth.

ARTHUR

A few corpses can be found if you dredge the canal. I read the papers.

JOE

Monte's ain't Venice, *pizan*.

ARTHUR

(LAUGHING)

Certainly not. And we've both been to Venice.

(PAUSE)

Traffic's miserable. You can hear the fire engines roar for a hot September night.

JOE

Well, Brooklyn is Brooklyn, Arthur. Can't stay quiet and can't sit still.

ARTHUR

It's not the Bronx. Brooklyn's brazen. The Bronx is blunt.

JOE

Dodgers flew. Giants dodged.. Yankees are forever. Are you a fan?

ARTHUR

Yeah. Great World Series. Record length.

JOE

Seven games over thirteen days. Incredible. Giants played very well at New York.

ARTHUR

Very close indeed. Know the difference between a dentist and a Yankee fan? One yanks for the roots.

JOE

The other roots for the Yanks. Hey, that's rich.

ARTHUR

So let's not talk baseball.

JOE

Yeah. Sure.

(PAUSE)

Monte's is an old favorite in this part of town. State Superior Court judges and half of all

the Italian attorneys are in love with this place.

ARTHUR

And the Mob?

JOE

What about the Mob? I'm not part of the Mob.

ARTHUR

I know a good Italian lawyer, Joe.

JOE

I bet you do.

ARTHUR

He wears expensive double breasted suits and packs heat. You don't need a guy if you're dressed for Court, right?

JOE

Sharp clothes can fix a guy with bad posture.

ARTHUR

God wants us to wear nice clothing. Everyone knows that. Even atheists.

JOE

You like Italian cuisine?

ARTHUR

Who doesn't?

JOE

Atheists.

(PAUSE)

My mother was a wonderful cook.

ARTHUR

My mother burns jello.

JOE

My mother relied on rosemary and thyme.

ARTHUR

Mine used dill in everything. Even on my head. That's why I'm balding.

JOE

How is your mother?

ARTHUR

Fine. She doted on Marilyn.

JOE

As did mine.

ARTHUR

I know your mother had slipped into a coma about a decade ago. How are things?

JOE

Not well. Church helps. Are you drinking?

ARTHUR

Sure. If you are.

JOE

A glass of wine, you know. Lambrusco. What would you like?

ARTHUR

Wine is just fine. Nothing like a beautiful Sagrantino grape.

JOE

Travaglina Gattinara . . . very special.

ARTHUR

You pick a bottle. My mind's tired tonight. Please. May I call you Joe?

JOE

You already have.

ARTHUR

No one calls me Art.

JOE

Monte's waiters are all old men who live with their mothers.

ARTHUR

Call that innovation.

JOE

You can call it a lot of things. Jobs are scarce in New York.

ARTHUR

It's an economics question. Where does your son live?

JOE

He's a Marine.

ARTHUR

You don't like political conversation.

JOE

No. Politics brings out the worst in a person.

ARTHUR

Invariably you argue about the Church, the Military, freedom of speech . . .

JOE

I'll defend the Church.

ARTHUR

And I'll defend freedom of speech. Who the hell will defend the Military? Do I seem sullen?

JOE

Yes.

ARTHUR

It's an art of mine. As I smile.

JOE

It's a lousy way to smile. If that's how you smile.

ARTHUR

You sound like Yogi Berra.

JOE

I'll take that as a compliment.

ARTHUR

I heard you were about to remarry her last summer.

JOE

Who said that?

ARTHUR

Skip it.

JOE

Was it her doctor?

ARTHUR

Yeah. And she told you yes?

JOE

Don't go there.

ARTHUR

Damn it, I'm not a journalist.

JOE

I know.

ARTHUR

You don't have to give an answer. Did you like Eisenhower?

(SILENCE. A LOVELY, RED HAired WOMAN ENTERS AND SITS AT A TABLE AT OTHER END OF THE STAGE. THE MEN DON'T SEE HER)

When he left office, Ike was strong to warn us about the Military-Industrial Complex.

JOE

I'm not wild about Ike or JFK.

ARTHUR

I thought you had your favorites. Ike's not a true Republican, but he was an American hero like you. He spoke openly to the American people at the end and he spoke with ease. Like you.

JOE

I'm not a talker.

ARTHUR

You don't hold back, Joe.

JOE

What do you expect from a retired ball player?

ARTHUR

An autographed baseball?

JOE

Maybe we should stop this right now.

ARTHUR

I'm sorry. Let's order some food.

(AWKWARD SILENCE)

Like you I hate the press.

.

JOE

You fight the press more.

ARTHUR

Do I?

JOE

Take the compliment.

ARTHUR

Words are words. But what are the words? Words without thoughts.

JOE

Thoughts without words.

ARTHUR

Setting them to a tale. The art of a story teller. Everyone's got one.

JOE

A story.

ARTHUR

A moral narrative.

JOE

And that's as good as a signature.

ARTHUR

And that's that.

JOE

I get everything from a person's face.

ARTHUR

Sometimes.

JOE

Even your face.

ARTHUR

My face.

JOE

You have an open expression.

ARTHUR

Think so?

JOE

I trust my eye more than my ear. For years.

ARTHUR

Maybe that's baseball smarts?

JOE

Nothing to do with baseball.

ARTHUR

Life is baseball. We think we're a team. We bat alone.

JOE

It's just the reverse. We think we're alone.

(JOE NOTICES THE RED HAired WOMAN)

ARTHUR

What the hell.

JOE

What the hell.

ARTHUR

We're a bunch of walking clichés.

JOE

Yeah. Who's staring from that table?

ARTHUR

No one's staring over.

JOE

That woman in the full mink.

ARTHUR

It's an awful color . . .

JOE

. . . for her complexion.

JOE

She looks drunk.

ARTHUR

(ARTHUR TURNS AND SEES HER)
Yes, but she's a knock out.

JOE
Is she crying?

ARTHUR
She doesn't look happy.

JOE
Not a bad looking gal. Blonde in a bottle?

ARTHUR
So hard to tell.

JOE
Redhead.

ARTHUR
Can't see well in this lighting.

JOE
Is she really with that guy? He's a thug. Why do that to herself?

ARTHUR
People are people.

JOE
I used to drink a lot on the road with the boys. Didn't agree with me even if the team spirit took over the bar. Spent too much time with Sinatra too.

ARTHUR
Hell, he's a wild card.

JOE
The thing is, people don't know how much they change when they drink. It's kind of a national curse. In Italy the culture is a different and there are safeguards. Family gets involved. In Italy folks don't drink and drive. What are you looking at?

ARTHUR
She's a redhead. Gorgeous. And I don't think he's the boyfriend. In fact, she's there to help him with a real humdinger of a problem.

JOE
You see all that?

ARTHUR

More or less.

JOE

Clairvoyant?

ARTHUR

Hardly.

(SILENCE)

I know you don't like me.

JOE

I respect you, Arthur.

(THE RED HAired WOMAN TAKES OFF HER MINK STOLE AND DOES APPEAR A LITTLE DRUNK OR DRUGGED. SHE KICKS OFF HER SHOES)

ARTHUR

Level with me. You never liked me.

JOE

Why would I meet with you?

ARTHUR

Because Sinatra spreads gossip and you were stirred up.

JOE

He never said anything. I never said anything.

ARTHUR

I heard you did.

JOE

From the press?

ARTHUR

The press never played up the rivalry.

JOE

From our hotshot friends?

ARTHUR

No.

JOE

From Peter Lawford? Stuff what you hear, Arthur. What you hear is a bunch of lies.

ARTHUR

Lies hurt.

JOE

I know. And no one's a saint. Not me.

ARTHUR

Maybe Dom's a saint?

JOE

My brother's not a saint. No way. A better fielder? Maybe.

(PAUSE)

Look. You and I are far from saints and we are worlds apart.

ARTHUR

We are worlds apart.

JOE

What have I for you, really? I don't have your education.

ARTHUR

We can help each other. A bereavement group for two.

JOE

Oh flip off.

ARTHUR

Joe. Listen. Mourning takes a very long time. I can't relate to my close friends right now. And other thoughts dominate. Selfishness. Indecency. Cruelty.

JOE

Coming from whom?

ARTHUR

Take a guess.

JOE

From an Italian singer. Is that Sinatra talking inside your head?

ARTHUR

Screw Sinatra.

JOE

Go ahead and say it to his face, Arthur. You'll feel better.

ARTHUR

Think so? Frank was washed up years ago. Got his nose in other people's affairs. Got his nose nearly broken.

JOE

Yeah, he meddles. Nothing new.

ARTHUR

He's too close to Sam Giancana and the mob. I'm not inventing any of this. Look at me, Joe. He may have used you.

JOE

That's evident.

ARTHUR

His male friends have benefits. His code of behavior fails the cleanliness test.

JOE

One first meets his good side and yet he can't help but unleash the little demon.

ARTHUR

Listen to his songs and his phrasing and his candid injury . . . you sense a purer person.

JOE

That's an Italian for you.

ARTHUR

I've got his damn records. Yes, he's in my home. His best album was "*Only the Lonely*" because he took a hard look at himself in the mirror. The Ava Gardner years – well – you know what I mean.

JOE

I like Ava Gardner. Her movies were good.

ARTHUR

Yeah.

JOE

Both Sinatra and I were attracted to actresses.

(THE RED HAired WOMAN LEAVES HER TABLE AND TAKES A FEW STEPS TOWARD JOE AND ARTHUR. THE MEN DON'T NOTICE HER)

ARTHUR

Those days were sweet.

JOE

They were. When I left baseball I thought it would be for good.

ARTHUR

Yeah.

JOE

But Yankees brought me back as a hitting coach and I returned to the organization. The team has changed but the feeling is steady. Traditional enough. A little society all to itself.

ARTHUR

In the theatre there's nothing quite like the Yankees. Maybe in the '30s with Harold Clurman and the Group Theatre. Maybe Odets felt what you have with the Yanks.

JOE

For better or for worse, we have our own little society, Arthur. You and me.

ARTHUR

What's the tie about? Is it the coincidences or is it the rumors?

JOE

Does it matter? The rumors are awful.

ARTHUR

It's like we're related by blood.

JOE

We're reflections in her moonlit pool.

ARTHUR

I'm not your brother. I'm not your brother-in-law.

JOE

And who gives a crap, really?

ARTHUR

Not me.

(THE WOMAN UNZIPS HER DRESS AND LETS IT FALL TO THE FLOOR)

JOE

Think about the good in the worst situation. Think about anything right because people tried to be decent despite the Hollywood insanity. Think about the doctors who couldn't break through to her no matter how much they were paid. Think about her first husband.

ARTHUR

(CHECKS WATCH NERVOUSLY)

But we are related to the core of her.

JOE

I was saying the first guy has nothing to compare to what we share, Arthur. Nothing more complicated than . . .

ARTHUR

I know what you were saying, her first husband was a low life. No distinction and he bossed her around. Screw it, I can't say anything generous tonight. It takes years to give into this properly. If you push it, you get nothing but a great fraudulent kiss from a painted whore.

(THE WOMAN WALKS OFF THE STAGE LEAVING HER DRESS, SHOES,
AND MINK STOLE. THE DINING ROOM LIGHTS CHANGE TONE)

JOE

Well, Arthur . . .

ARTHUR

Joe?

JOE

Shall we order?

JOE

Sure.

ARTHUR

Are there menus?

JOE

Some days they give out menus.

ARTHUR

On Jewish holidays?

JOE

I'll ask. Is it a Jewish holiday?

ARTHUR

Yeah, Yom Kippur. Ask for the special.

JOE

OK.

(A WAITER ARRIVES, WRITES DOWN A FEW THINGS AND LEAVES)

ARTHUR

You don't like anything about show business.

JOE

Show biz is Yankee Stadium, Arthur. We suit up and it's show time.

ARTHUR

Open air theatre.

JOE

Yankee Stadium will last forever. It's a palace.

ARTHUR

A national treasure.

JOE

A hall of fame for all.

ARTHUR

Athletes have short careers just like many show biz folks.

JOE

The clock is way too fast. Where did that woman go?

ARTHUR

What woman, Joe?

(PAUSE)

Celebrities are freaks of nature, you learn that in short order.

JOE

(STILL ADJUSTING TO THE WOMAN'S DISAPPEARANCE)

Celebrities give up something you never get back.

ARTHUR

In America, we don't have royalty but we have celebrity. Always a mixed blessing.

(PAUSE)

You're giving me the once over. Joe.

JOE

Hardly. Let's break bread.

ARTHUR

I have an appetite tonight.

JOE
Oysters?

ARTHUR
Is Sinatra coming?

JOE
No.

ARTHUR
Is that a promise?

JOE
Do you need me to make that promise?

ARTHUR
You can't think when this guy's within earshot.

JOE
I know. And he usually means well.

ARTHUR
Sinatra has real issues. He wants to be the king of entertainment but then he hangs out with heavies.

JOE
That's rumor.

ARTHUR
I don't care. He gets by on crooner's luck. Doesn't matter if he's a good Italian or not. Doesn't matter if he can sell a new album. And doesn't matter when he turns in a good movie performance.

JOE
Speaking of royalty, you know, with access to the Kennedys, Frank's got it.

ARTHUR
So what? Doesn't mean a thing. You and Frank were close ten years ago.

JOE
Never that close.

ARTHUR
Okay, what happened in November '54? With the raid on Florence Koltz's home?

JOE

Never happened.

ARTHUR

Oh, come on. You and Frank were having dinner at the Villa Capri in Hollywood . . .

JOE

(INTERRUPTING)

Not true.

ARTHUR

. . . when you got a tip from a very dumb gumshoe who said Marilyn was in bed with another gal.

JOE

Horseshit, Arthur.

ARTHUR

It was in the papers, Joe. I also heard that the Frank beat up the detective who gave you the tip. Sinatra evaded police charges as he usually does. This was stranger than fiction.

JOE

Frank slapped around the detective, but we didn't break in.

ARTHUR

See? I'm not blowing smoke.

JOE

The press just wanted to ridicule the last weeks of my marriage. Just as they made hay out of her visits to the White House.

ARTHUR

And Peter Lawford's a velvet pimp.

JOE

He carries himself like he's got the key to the palace. Rat Pack has a wretched stench.

ARTHUR

I abhor Vegas culture. Marilyn thought he's homosexual.

JOE

She said that?

ARTHUR

More than once. Light in the loafers. Or to put it in an elevated sentence, Lawford's sincere sanctimonious charm covered by cheap London elegance.

JOE

I kept him and his wife Patricia from attending the funeral.

ARTHUR

I know.

JOE

I had to keep the event from turning into a circus far from the White House and Hollywood. I kept Frank away too.

(PAUSE. GETTING UPSET INSIDE, BUT COVERS IT)

Yeah, Americans love the Kennedy mystique, Arthur. Craving it like caviar. The nation's optimism rides on a President in black tie – our new matinee idol.

ARTHUR

As handsome as Gregory Peck . . .

JOE

. . . with the cutest kids on the White House lawn.

ARTHUR

Rocking chair in the Oval Office.

JOE

First Lady rivals Audrey Hepburn.

ARTHUR

Next to JFK, Ike looks like gramps on meds.

JOE

Well, hair helps.

ARTHUR

Harvard helps.

JOE

Money helps.

ARTHUR

Joe Kennedy built it up on bootleg. You'd think the country would call a pirate by his real name.

JOE

Money can be sanitized. No art to that. Happens like a car wash. Look, I met the President. But the rumors are nauseating.

ARTHUR

You've been to the White House.

JOE

Sure. Haven't you?

ARTHUR

And you despise Kennedy?

JOE

Despise is a strong word.

ARTHUR

I'm critical.

JOE

Kennedy didn't bother you in Congress.

ARTHUR

True. And charm can only go so far. He's careful not to cut off Martin Luther King, but what's he doing for the Negro population? I know he sounds good on TV and the cameras love him.

JOE

The country needs honest leadership.

ARTHUR

I see a lot of vanity from the Kennedy clan. Bobby's out of his league in the cabinet. The Kennedys are insular. They have been catered to all their natural lives.

JOE

Luck of the Irish.

ARTHUR

Yeah.

(DRINKING LIBERALLY)

We both know that Marilyn was not treated well by the Kennedys, Joe.

JOE

What's your point?

ARTHUR

The charades involving her and the Kennedys.

JOE

Look . . . you can't believe what you hear.

ARTHUR

I know what to believe.

JOE

Then it's a form of self-torture.

ARTHUR

Screw it.

JOE

I'm guilty of the same. The blame game.

ARTHUR

Marilyn saw John Kennedy many times in confined spaces.

JOE

And Elia Kazan too. There's a list, Arthur. Many guys were on the list.

ARTHUR

I don't care about the damn lists. It was Kennedy and his minions. How it got that far I have no idea. How she was able to sing to him on his birthday, sing to him next to that cake, intimate to everyone at that party what was really between them with the First Lady in the room. I don't know how the hell that can happen in our society, Joe. Really. How big is the big wink?

JOE

It can be pretty damn big.

ARTHUR

Undignified. Uncalled for. Looking more like a night at the Playboy Mansion with Hugh Hefner. The journalists took notice, you can bet the ranch on that. What about Bobby Kennedy? He was with her that final day. What the hell was he doing visiting her apartment? What was her doctor doing with these horrible prescriptions? You know what I'm talking about. No cop was honest with this case.

JOE

What can you do?

ARTHUR

I wish we could just turn back the clock.

JOE

And prevent her from going to the White House? Stop her from going to celebrity parties? She was the goddess. We were accessories to a goddess.

ARTHUR

Who then has propriety to her soul?

JOE

You or me?

ARTHUR

I mean that in earnest.

JOE

I think you do, Arthur, mean it.

ARTHUR

Look Joe. We could tell the public. Stand together. The Kennedys are responsible for her death.

JOE

We would be crucified for taking on Kennedy, Arthur. There is no hard evidence.

ARTHUR

We could press for the police to reopen the investigation and get a second coroner's report.

JOE

No. It would be a colossal indignity to her memory.

(THE WAITER RETURNS WITH SALADS FOR THE MEN.
CONVERSATION STOPS UNTIL THE WAITER LEAVES)

ARTHUR

We know too much and we can do absolutely nothing for the rest of our lives.

JOE

Just eat your salad, Arthur.

ARTHUR

We were heroes for a few minutes and now utterly useless.

JOE

Heroes burn quickly.

ARTHUR

Can't let it go, Joe.

JOE

Her first husband did. He may be the luckiest of all.

ARTHUR

That hick of a husband was as abusive as her mother.

JOE

Look, you thought New York would help in ways Hollywood would never. But keeping her east was just as bad.

ARTHUR

Maybe the President's brother just couldn't find the way to disentangle – as smoothly as the Commander In Chief. And Goddamn it - I don't understand how two Irish American brothers share a person intimately. It's an insane way to keep a sense of brotherhood in tow.

JOE

Men behave like boys when it comes down to sex, Arthur. Drop this Kennedy vendetta.

ARTHUR

You're right. I'm losing my mind over this.

(QUIET FALLS AND THE ROOM'S LIGHTS RETURN TO THE TONE WHEN THE RED HAired WOMAN WAS IN THE DINING ROOM)

JOE

That woman's back, Arthur. Look over your shoulder.

ARTHUR

(NOT PICKING UP ON JOE'S MEANING)

Did Marilyn cast such a powerful spell? Like Circe's magic at Odysseus's expense.

JOE

(THINKS HE SEES THE RED HAired WOMAN RETURN FOR HER THINGS)

Not Marilyn, Arthur. That girl over there.

ARTHUR

(DISCONNECTED TO JOE'S THREAD)

You know, Congressman Francis Walter from Pennsylvania told my lawyer that if he could take a photo with Marilyn, the congressional committee would drop the hearing on me. I was being played all the way. And there were risks if I gave them the finger, Joe.

(ARTHUR SENSES HE HAS OFFENDED JOE AND THERE IS SILENCE.

ARTHUR PROCEEDS IN A MORE QUIET STRIDE ALL THE WHILE FIGHTING WITH HIS INNER ANGER)

My politics just pissed off the lot of them. Of course I said absolutely not! We're not posing for Francis Walter's fucking Polaroid. We're not going to take a close-up with Marilyn hanging on Walter's arm. So I didn't give him the finger, but he got nothing from us. What is this Mickey Mouse ethics?

JOE
 (MANAGING TO RETURN TO THE TABLE CONVERSATION)
 From Mickey Mouse to Mickey Mantle.

ARTHUR
 Yeah.

JOE
 The country is star struck. The favors are disgusting and the explanations for the indignities are revolting. Like you, I despise the adulation which still demeans her memory. There will never be another Marilyn in the world.

ARTHUR
 There will never be.

JOE
 And there will be no appropriate commemoration because the world sees this as her self-hatred and her suicide. The rumors come from the strangest circles.

ARTHUR
 From J. Edgar Hoover to Hedda Hopper.

JOE
 Does it matter? The point is that half of America reviled her and the other half worshipped her. I wish the whole experience was more dignified. Our nation should honor her as an artist and not a sex kitten. Dying so young needn't be a curse on the living. I can imagine the sorrow of so many young women who emulated her look.

ARTHUR
 Women trying to capture her way of pleasing, yes, that's her legacy. Maybe it's more certain of a girl in the south, from Georgia or South Carolina. A girl in Hollywood may act submissive but that's not the south. That's just whorish behavior.

JOE
 It's Billy Wilder directing her on that subway grating with the wind machine blowing up her skirt. That's whorish from a famous director.

ARTHUR
 I know. Ironic that the rumors from either side of society confirm the very same thing

JOE
 Confirming she was a blinding light to us.

ARTHUR
 A living paradox.

JOE

Tough as nails and then more vulnerable than a robin's egg.

ARTHUR

She was more honest to men than to women, but that hurt her in the end.

JOE

She saw all men as boys.

ARTHUR

In her deeper recesses, she was the elder.

JOE

She told about being held down at parties by aggressive men, and through the grace of God she escaped.

ARTHUR

You know this as a fact, Joe. She had no common sense.

JOE

But she had something more sacred.

ARTHUR

That goes without saying.

JOE

I'm left darting around without a head on my shoulders. Maybe this is the kind of thinking from having a career in professional sports. When I played at the stadium, there was a small patch of grass that made me feel lighter than a feather. It was as if there was no gravity and all the fielders knew about it and we never talked about it.

ARTHUR

I get it.

JOE

We were inches away from being looped with the flyer saucer people.

ARTHUR

Yeah. Sure. Flying saucers are next.

JOE

We were father figures to her

ARTHUR

At what cost?

JOE

It is what it is. And what good would it be to know?

ARTHUR

Bring her back. Memory is everything.

JOE

Memory is punishment, Arthur.

ARTHUR

Sin is punishment, my friend.

JOE

Mine as great as yours.

ARTHUR

Let's not make a contest out of this. It makes us look pitiful.

JOE

Every Italian will tell you something just as awful when a marriage fails and a scandal hits.

ARTHUR

What does the community see beyond the social façade?

JOE

More falseness?

ARTHUR

The human community, the intimate community, is not the reporters and the television cameras.

JOE

She never had the support of a family. That's why Strasberg and his wife exerted a big pull on her.

ARTHUR

She was trying so hard to enhance her acting and took the traditional route within acting studios. She knew there was another actor inside her. Of course she was prone to the acting guru. She trusted others more than herself as she dug into it. Even during the shooting for *The Misfits*, and in spite of her booze and pills, Marilyn was getting to a new identity. When she stepped out of her fog she was smart as a whip. I respected her for doing the work however wrong Strasberg was in her training. He probably had a stranglehold on her and that was that. She knew instinctively that her acute depression was the key to her growth as an artist. And she had to choose between the sins of her celebrity and her insidious pain. Sometimes she thought the critical choice was between

having a baby and never having one. Sometimes she thought the choice was a perfect career and a perfect marriage.

(SILENCE)

The problems of suffering are greatly misunderstood. It's not a mistake or a sign of weakness. No. The greatest epiphanies come out of our human suffering. Instead of burying it under the rug, we need to embrace our struggle and learn from the hurting. Heaven help us. You know what I mean.

(PAUSE)

You kept Hollywood from the funeral.

JOE

I had to.

ARTHUR

I couldn't go.

JOE

I understand. You didn't want to go.

ARTHUR

I am not Hollywood.

JOE

Where does Hollywood stop and Broadway start?

(AT THIS POINT IN THE SCENE, THE MEN SEEM TO DISASSOCIATE FROM EACH OTHER AND ALLOW AN 'ASIDE' DESPITE HAVING COMPANY AT THE TABLE)

ARTHUR

One night in New York, she told me about her Aunt Ana and a macabre memory. When Marilyn was a teenager her Aunt Ana, the best relation in her life and an ersatz guardian to her, died suddenly. This was crushing to Marilyn and she went to the cemetery and found the gravediggers. She asked if she could climb down the ladder into the open grave. They let her go in. And she lay on the ground to view the sky. She said the ground was frightfully cold under her back.

JOE

February 10, I secured release for her from Payne Whitney Psychiatric Clinic. I took responsibility. It was our second honeymoon although no one knew that. Not even Marilyn. Honest to go God. You know she accompanied me to Florida where I was one of the batting coaches during spring training.

ARTHUR

Yes.

JOE

Yes.

ARTHUR

Words fail.

JOE

I'm a quiet man.

* * * * *

JOE'S MONOLOGUE #1

JOE

She was clothed in a emerald green gown with a matching scarf because it gave her serenity. Her casket was bronze with soft colored satin. "Whitey" did her make-up. In her hand was a posy of pink teacup roses which I gave her from the night before. She wore a wig because of the autopsy. The pallbearers were dignified and part of her inner circle. Clarence Pierce, Allen Abbott, Sidney Guilaroff, Leonard Krisminsky, and Ronald Hast. My son Joe walked behind her hearse. He wore his Marine uniform. Carl Sandburg could not give the eulogy because he was sick so Strasberg was given the honors. Marilyn's mother was in an institution for the funeral. Of course she failed to remember who Norma Jean was in life and how Marilyn never destroyed her first identity. She had some comprehension that her daughter was one of the greatest legends in Hollywood. Marilyn's half sister Berneice authorized me to handle every detail of the funeral. Bernice lived with Marilyn's mother for various periods. Marilyn's mother outlived two of her three children.

In April 1998, a year before I would die, Arthur wrote *Mr. Peters' Connections* – a play produced in New York. The critics hated the work. It was not a popular script. The story involves a pilot who worked for Pan Am in the airline's glory days and who claimed to have slept with 18 dancing Rockettes from Radio City Musical Hall. That's right, 18. The unlikeable pilot married one dancer who is transparently standing in for Marilyn. Arthur had put Marilyn on stage before and ineptly so – *After the Fall*. And the critics assailed him for that error in spades. But with *Mr. Peters' Connections*, he based the insulting pilot's character on me, insinuating that I had physically abused my wife all the while claiming great love for her. It was enough to take Miller into Shubert's Alley for the fucking beating of his life.

I knew about Marilyn changing her will right after marrying Miller. Marilyn told me about this after the fact. She was quite aware that he was not rolling in money due to his

alimony and child support. 7/8 of her estate in that draft was bequeathed to Mr. Arthur Miller. He also had her think about co-joining her production company with his poor earning literary properties. The merger of Fort Knox with a lemonade stand.

Arthur never showed up in 1962. Not for the August funeral and not for our arranged dinner in Brooklyn one month later. Arthur never phoned me. No letters transpired between us. I was left waiting and no one knew otherwise.

* * * * *

JANUARY 1970
(SAME TABLE, ARTHUR'S WEARING
A DIFFERENT SUIT JACKET AND TIE)

ARTHUR

I haven't set foot inside this establishment in nearly a decade.

JOE

It's something to shout about.

ARTHUR

Happy New Year. A new decade and a new wristwatch.
 (HE FLASHES A ROLEX)

JOE

Yes. To you too. 1970 is starting out with a bang.

ARTHUR

Oh, those Miracle Mets!

JOE

After an eight year franchise, they took the ride all the way to the top.

ARTHUR

The '60s are not over by a long stretch, even if the Beatles did break up.

JOE

Is that bad news?

ARTHUR

Depends on your generational inclination. The parade's passed us by. Woodstock generation can't stay out of the news. Abbie Hoffman's still in the public eye, working on

a very scholarly tome entitled, *Steal This Book*.

JOE

Pitcher Jim Bouton's galley's *Ball Four* is making waves.

ARTHUR

Shock waves. Not a bad book.

JOE

Every team has blacklisted him.

ARTHUR

Dirt's rising to the surface. Mantle got tarred in five pages.

JOE

Well, I'm old school. My playing was always clean.

ARTHUR

Old school it is. I ordered for you. Clams and linguini.

JOE

And you chose the veal with baked ziti?

ARTHUR

I asked them to turn down the music. Vic Damone and not his signature song.

JOE

What title?

ARTHUR

"*To Make a Big Man Cry*"

JOE

I don't know it.

ARTHUR

It was a big hit last year.

JOE

Oh, well good for Vic.

(AWKWARD SILENCE)

I like the younger music scene. Yeah, the Beatles were a great group. I was at a seafood restaurant with some friends in mid-town about a year or so ago and I recognized a pop singer – you know – Paul Simon.

ARTHUR

Yeah, of course. Simon and Garfunkel.

JOE

So from across the room, I went over to his table.

ARTHUR

Really?

JOE

I gave him a quiet look and he was determined to break the ice. You know, he's a short guy with these brooding brown eyes and round little belly.

ARTHUR

Yeah.

JOE

I said, "I'm Joe DiMaggio." It was silence. Simon coughed, cleared his throat, said he heard a rumor that I was upset with the song about Mrs. Robinson and he thought I was about to launch a lawsuit. I didn't know what to say. Just nodded and smiled. He told me to please pull up a chair and I did. He was very nervous and spilled a glass of water by his elbow. We talked about baseball and he said he's a lifelong Yankee fan and a big fan of Mickey Mantle. He said he idolized me. I believed him. I knew about the song and it was part of the movie, *The Graduate*, with Dustin Hoffman. I knew the lyrics referenced me.

ARTHUR

Joltin' Joe.

JOE

Joltin' Joe. So I said to Paul Simon, "What I don't understand is why you ask where I've gone. I just did a Mr. Coffee commercial, I'm the pitchman for the Bowery Savings Bank and I haven't gone anywhere, don't you know?"

ARTHUR

That's funny.

JOE

Yeah?

ARTHUR

You know, Mike Nichols loves Simon and Garfunkel. Nichols directed the movie.

JOE

Right.

ARTHUR

How does the song go again? "Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio, a nation turns its eyes

to you?"

(HUMS A FEW BARS AFTER THE FIRST LYRIC'S OVER)

JOE

He said that he didn't mean the lines literally, that he thought of me as an American hero and that America was in short supply of heroes. We shook hands and said good night.

ARTHUR

What's that you say, Mrs. Robinson?
'Joltin Joe' has left and gone away
Hey hey hey . .

JOE

Hey hey hey . .

ARTHUR

Hell, you can't dance to it.

JOE

No, you can't dance to it.

ARTHUR

Bertolt Brecht wrote in his play *Galileo* a great line between Galileo and his pupil – his pupil saying "Pity a country without heroes." And Galileo responds, "Pity a country that needs heroes."

JOE

Yes, Galileo was Italian.

ARTHUR

My point exactly.

JOE

So I found myself wondering about Paul Simon. He was uncomfortable and he didn't look me in the face. And he's a Mantle fan, obviously.

ARTHUR

Look Joe. It was a good movie. *The Graduate* touched a new crowd.

JOE

Breaking from an older crowd.

ARTHUR

Breaking from one's father and failed industry.

JOE

And Dustin Hoffman sleeps with Ann Bancroft. Who played his girlfriend's mother.

ARTHUR

Well, Ann Bancroft was very sexy in that movie.

JOE

I would agree.

ARTHUR

You would take her to bed.

JOE

No.

ARTHUR

Bancroft gave boys permission.

JOE

So there is a generational leap.

ARTHUR

Or a divide.

(PAUSE)

I don't believe the song insults you, Joe. I think it praises you. It honors your quiet.

JOE

There's no virtue anymore in being quiet.

ARTHUR

We all get blamed.

JOE

Getting blamed in the stadium, I had stuff for that.

ARTHUR

You were never booed.

JOE

It's part of baseball.

ARTHUR

It's part of Hollywood.

JOE

And you know how I feel about Hollywood.

ARTHUR

Public is fickle.

JOE

Ain't it great.

ARTHUR

We have thin skin. It can drive me nuts.

JOE

Is that why you stay in Connecticut?

ARTHUR

Except for England, no place offers sanctuary.

JOE

Retirement, Arthur, is a proposition that changes by the hour.

ARTHUR

I haven't retired.

JOE

I know.

ARTHUR

Theatre critics have just gotten more vicious. Fuck the New York Times.

JOE

We both have been tested.

ARTHUR

The country is being tested.. Vietnam seems endless. Does Nixon have a plan? There is no leadership. See, the '60s are not over.

JOE

I meant to say that I'm not as political as you.

(PAUSE)

I'm a ball player. I know society. I believe in family. Were you a communist?

ARTHUR

No. You think Italians and Jews are so different?

JOE

Not at all.

ARTHUR

Which do you like more? Jews or Jewish communists?

(JOE LAUGHS)

My critics think my best plays were years ago. Isn't that swell?

(PAUSE)

Do you ever read comic books?

JOE

When I was a kid, yeah.

ARTHUR

Did you like Batman or Superman?

JOE

I don't know. Maybe I liked the Flash.

(PAUSE)

I get a kick out of Superman.

ARTHUR

Red boots and red skivvies?

JOE

Well, there's a cape that kind of covers things. I had Lefty Gomez buy me the comic books and he sneaked me a whole of Superman stories. Gomez would kid me all the time. "He puts on his uniform and suddenly Superman is unbeatable!"

ARTHUR

To Gomez, you were Superman.

JOE

Maybe for one magic year. 1941.

ARTHUR

56 consecutive game. Killer hitting streak. July 16th.

JOE

My manager Joe McCarthy had a big hand in this. He let me swing away even with one out, a man on base and Charlie Keller on deck.

ARTHUR

Can't be anything like that feeling for another guy, Joe.

JOE

Yeah, Italian Superman from Sicily.

ARTHUR

There's a moment at plate when you take on such Godlike importance.

JOE

Writers get none of that?

ARTHUR

Apples and oranges.

JOE

No, no. You get acclaim. The audience rises to their feet when the curtain falls.

ARTHUR

Marilyn preferred the electricity of the sport. I know she did.

JOE

She never said that.

ARTHUR

It's so true.

JOE

I couldn't read her mind half the time.

ARTHUR

I'm not saying I had an angle on her inside thoughts.

JOE

I think you are saying.

ARTHUR

I mean to say that she went in and out of focus. You know what I'm saying. She indicated like an actress in a poorly directed play. When a good director helps her, she shines. Marilyn enters the room with the wrong clothes on and she looks for a robe. She checks the couch and the coat rack. She shudders pretending she's cold and then her mouth purses larger than life. It's a look that makes everything stop in an instant. America knew that look on screen, but it was overwhelming in person.

JOE

Arthur.

ARTHUR

What?

JOE

How often do you say that she was badly directed?

ARTHUR

I don't know. Not that much.

JOE

Sounds like a message.

ARTHUR

What the hell does that mean?

JOE

You're making a message to a lot of people.

ARTHUR

I don't give a damn if I am.

JOE

Yeah. I get it. You were able to move on. I've read about Inge Moath and you. Happy for you and for your sense of companionship.

ARTHUR

Are you just saying that?

JOE

I'm sincere.

ARTHUR

We married in '62.

JOE

I know.

ARTHUR

Look. I don't tell many people this. We had a child a few years ago with a birth disorder. So difficult on us. Downs Syndrome.

JOE

Very hard. I'm sorry.

ARTHUR

This makes the mind work in darker corridors.. About the nature of how we have to live when cruelty comes to the door. Do you strike up a dialogue with God and all the attending priests and clergy? And what if you're an atheist? What silence must a family endure? What nonsense the doctors tell us in handling this. They are so damn callous. What to do with the tears? Inge is besides herself with grief.

JOE

This is your third marriage.

ARTHUR

Don't want to talk about Inge.

JOE

Alright.

ARTHUR

Each woman is so different. Before marriage. During marriage.

JOE

Did she sing to you?

ARTHUR

Marilyn?

JOE

She did. I know.

ARTHUR

Yes. Standard ballads. She studied with Ella Fitzgerald.

JOE

Ella was good to her.

ARTHUR

They became friends. She brought Ella to clubs that didn't book Negroes.

JOE

You know the 1954 session she did with Schaefer?

ARTHUR

Yeah. RCA Victor arranged it with nobody special but backup musicians.

JOE

And there was a B-side. "*She Acts Like a Woman Should*". Really a beautiful number.

ARTHUR

I know it, Joe. I know it. She had talent and phrasing. I think it was the Jerome Kern-Dorothy Fields tune that got under her movie star radar.

JOE

She stood so gracefully by a piano and all her troubles vanished.

(THE RED HEADED WOMAN FROM THE FIRST SCENE ENTERS THE RESTAURANT AND TAKES OUT A CIGARETTE. ONLY JOE SEES HER

ARTHUR SIGNALS TO THE WAITER FOR ANOTHER GLASS OF WINE.
THE WAITER ACKNOWLEDGES THE REQUEST AND COMES OVER
WITH THE OPEN BOTTLE TO POUR)

ARTHUR

A baby grand piano was her best accessory. I heard again from Peter Lawford.

JOE

Is that right?

ARTHUR

He touched on Teddy's troubles. Oh God, Chappaquiddick is another Kennedy classic. How ugly an incident. Defines negligence in our time.

JOE

Unbearably tragic.

ARTHUR

Definitely a wrongful death suit. The fall from up high. Teddy boy.

JOE

The last surviving son.

ARTHUR

Can't keep his trousers on and can't keep his head above water. All the lawyers and all the king's men cannot put Humpty Dumpty back together again. The difference between Teddy and his brothers is that Teddy managed to get caught for the crap he pulls. Bobby's assassination doesn't mitigate it and nor does JFK's. Is the act of assassination the penalty for pervasive sexual transgression and public deception? Not subscribing to conspiracy theories, Joe. I don't believe in superstition and I am a free thinking person of logic. But it shocks me to witness what befell the two Kennedy brothers by assassin bullets. Like the Heavens above striking down on the sins of two brothers in destroying Marilyn. It defies the imagination. Bobby was at Marilyn's cottage that night, Joe. And Lawford was the last to phone her before she passed away. Who bears the blame in 1962 and who in 1969? In the most wicked way imaginable the political murders were poetic justice. I'm glad Ted Kennedy's career is finished and, mercifully, an assassin is not needed.

JOE

(RETURNING HIS ATTENTION BACK TO ARTHUR)

What are you saying?

ARTHUR

It's evident that the Kennedy curse was the final blow to Marilyn.

JOE

Because she spent time with both Bobby and the President? Because of all the phone calls logged into the White House switchboard?

ARTHUR

Because she made the rumors with both Kennedys believable?

JOE

Hearsay.

ARTHUR

She had fantasies of replacing Jackie Kennedy. This was known by many.

JOE

That's total crazy talk.

ARTHUR

Norma Jean had fantasies of transforming herself from the sexiest movie star in the world back into an ordinary woman. She had fantasies that her ectopic pregnancy would have magically succeeded and a gift of maternity would finally be hers. And we both know that she didn't give herself a barbiturate enema before dying.

JOE

Putting the tragedy on the Kennedys is never going to make the day honest.

ARTHUR

What will ever purge the crime, Joe? Think deeply. Our guilt won't resurrect her. Nor will it sanitize us. Blaming each other in the media won't do a damn thing either.

JOE

My son had phoned her that last day.

ARTHUR

And?

JOE

He said she sounded just fine. Not a hint of suicide or anything despondent. I'm thankful he made contact. My son stayed in touch with her for years and she was wonderful to him.

ARTHUR

Jealousy was never a real concern

JOE

What the hell does that mean?

ARTHUR

Stability is closer to the truth.

JOE

Between the two of us, my life is more stable. I never got into trouble with Congress or the FBI.

ARTHUR

That's nothing to boast about. At least I never broke into someone's home. Look. You resent Sinatra for picking up with Marilyn when his timing was appalling. You were still with her. You probably could have killed him for shooting off at the mouth about her. Sometimes Sinatra gave the impression that he was head of a harem and the chief procurer. Look, Joe. Our closest friends have failed their basic code of ethics. I resent Kazan for doing the same to me just as I was starting out with Marilyn. He slept with her many times and bragged about it when he knew I was in love with her. It's as though our so called friends love to screw us to heighten their triumphs. Maybe she was seeing only through her drug induced, hazy judgment and maybe her self-destructiveness was her true friend. Clearly you were destined to have a second chance with her, even if I had the longer marriage. It clearly wasn't in my destiny. She was driving me insane since I could do nothing to save her. You had the ability to fly in and pick her up from whatever trap she fell into. You were Superman. I was Clark Kent. I'm a flatfooted intellectual with too much time on my hands. You proposed marriage twice. You were the man of action in her life. I have to praise you for that. Believe me. By comparison I was immobile and paralyzed by shame. My shame. Not hers. I can own that much. No one can ever understand your situation and my situation, but we're the closest to being the same person looking into a mirror. We were father figures, Joe. That is both a blessing and a curse.

JOE

What do you want from me?

ARTHUR

Forgiveness for intruding.

JOE

I can't forgive you. You may have poisoned the waters preventing me to return. You may have made it harder for me to have her back fully. You may have put the thought in her mind that she was bullied by her previous husbands. All this comes to the surface, Arthur, and jealousy alone cannot make this understandable. No, I cannot forgive you.

ARTHUR

I don't expect you to. Nor can I forgive you for physically hurting her even if it were just one night. Nothing remained a secret for long with her. She spoke freely.

(JOE STANDS UP ABRUPTLY)

Where are you going?

(JOE LEAVES THE TABLE)

JOE

I got to get some fresh air. I'll be back.

ARTHUR

You're ditching me.

JOE

You'd like that.

ARTHUR

It would piss me off.

JOE

Do you know you already pissed me off.

ARTHUR

I'm sorry.

JOE

Your damn cowboy movie with John Huston destroyed her spirit. You do know that. You all tortured her to her wits end.

(JOE EXITS. THE WAITER COMES TO THE TABLE)

WAITER

I could bring out another bottle? Is there something wrong?

ARTHUR

A triangle is the shape of human pain. And it never breaks.

* * * * *

ARTHUR'S MONOLOGUE

Shooting *The Misfits* with Marilyn was the worst ordeal of my life. We made the film in Nevada and the heat was hellish. The movie was the only time Marilyn and I worked together.

(PAUSE)

Gable suffered a heart attack two days after filming ended and died about a week later. Marilyn and Montgomery attended the premiere in New York in February 1961 while she was on a pass from the psychiatric ward. She later said that she hated the film and even more to the point hated her film presence. *The Misfits* was the last completed film for both

Marilyn and Gable, her childhood screen idol. The story came about from my own experience in Nevada to complete a residency rule in my divorce from my first wife. I had met a group of cowboys who rounded up wild horses for dog food. Well, there was a time the horses were trained to be children's ponies. The idea struck me hard about the emptiness of modern life. Intellectuals are often the major misfits of American culture. But at the time of filming, I don't know if Marilyn or I were the greater misfit to the world. Clearly we were misfits to each other. And certainly the picture failed to deliver on her expectation of a major role change into legitimate acting. I was Gable. I was the aged authority with the inflexible moral code. I had to cut loose the roped horse by the end of the story. Doing so told Marilyn that her code was stronger than my code. This was a big concession on my part and when you watch the damn movie you can see Gable doing it so beautifully. He does the shift and he admits he is now obsolete. More than a has-been. He's written out of America. A fucking ghost on the open desert. Marilyn knew that as an intellectual in America, I was about as necessary as yesterday's rodeo star.

(PAUSE)

John Huston hit at me often to build up the movie story. The script was disjointed. I didn't give a shit. Admittedly, very little happens. And as my anger toward Marilyn grew during the film, I injected text to label her character Roslyn as thoroughly crazy. During the shoot, we moved from our shared suite to individual rooms. By midsummer everyone on set knew our marriage was dead. Marilyn thought the countless film takes in the killer heat was a way to punish her and maybe she was half right. Adding to the insanity, Huston's gambling debts almost destroyed the movie. And poor Gable doing killer stunts like being dragged hundreds of feet by a truck rope 35 miles an hour.

(PAUSE)

Marilyn was missing for several days during a key stretch. The film producers were dumping more than her share of failings. Whom to blame? Her psychiatrist Ralph Greenson had too much power over her. And he had strange psychological theories. More than one doctor was mailing her medication weekly and even Greenson's daughter was making drug deliveries to our home. Marilyn was going through weight gain too. And yes, she had consulted Greenson before marrying me and before divorcing me. Half the time she was a lost child and the other half she was a corporation with a power hungry board of advisors.

(PAUSE)

In the script Marilyn's Roslyn is asked by Clark Gable if she has any children. Roslyn goes on about why she doesn't and it may have been cruel on my part to make this a belabored piece of dialogue. Was I trying to hurt Marilyn needlessly? Why did I write into the script the line about Cliff's scarred face from rodeo days – knowing he had real scars recently?

(PAUSE)

Marrying Marilyn was never a mistake. I was the mistake. I can be colder than Antarctica. If only this were our first marriage - for each of us - and if we avoided many of our friends, there would have been a real chance for happiness.

(PAUSE)

DiMaggio and I met once years ago and he agreed to get together for dinner. In fact Lee Strasberg arranged a date which we both said yes to. But he never showed up that night in 1970.

* * * * *

(JOE RETURNS TO THE TABLE)

JOE

I'm still here, Arthur. I never left the restaurant. I know you don't mean me any harm. And you must sense the same about me.

ARTHUR

I do.

JOE

You look very uncomfortable.

ARTHUR

I'm expecting a phone call later at home. 10pm.

JOE

Who's calling?

(PAUSE)

Another glass of wine?

(ARTHUR STANDS, TAKES A FEW STEPS FROM THE TABLE)

JOE

A few minutes before Marilyn and I took our vows at City Hall in San Francisco, she phoned a publicist at Fox. She lied about her age when we signed the registry in the Municipal Judge chambers. She stated she was twenty-five, making me appear fourteen years older. She gave her real name Norma Jean Mortensen Dougherty. She wore a restrained dark suit with an ermine collar. Marilyn looked wonderfully serious. I had some relations and friends present but Marilyn had no one witness the event. We were entrapped by a mob of fans, reporters, and photographers. We lost our moment alone and our intimacy – becoming human mannequins posing and kissing for the cameras. Reporters kept asking us how many kids we planned to have. We both thought we were going to have children. In a few hours we drove south to Paso Robles and left that town on January 15 to a remote Palm Springs location. We were not followed and that was a small miracle. We ultimately were on route for Tokyo.

ARTHUR

And that's when a reporter commented on her broken thumb?

JOE

(IGNORING THE QUESTION)

When got to Japan we were surrounded by countless well wishers and fans. And they were there for her. I was an appendage. I was less than nothing. And I felt worse for the feeling that simply choked my pride. She went ahead to greet American troops overseas. I was there in the wings. She sang over and over again, "*Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend*". I knew our marriage was now a commodity for others first and something less than second for us. I was the Prince of Our Nation's Pastime. She was the Princess of America's Awakening Lust.

ARTHUR

Did you ever hit her, Joe?

JOE

When we got back to California there was the annual Photoplay awards and Marilyn was being honored for *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. I didn't go with her but, of course, Sidney Skolsky was her hanger-on. People talked about my absence, that much I know. It didn't feel right to be thrown right back into the showbiz maelstrom. Overnight, her hair went platinum. Reporters calling her Jean Harlow's ghost.

ARTHUR

She told me she spoke to Skolsky right after the ceremony.

JOE

Spoke about what?

ARTHUR

About her fate with love and subsequent marriages.

JOE

She said that?

ARTHUR

I swear to you she did.

JOE

Are you saying right after our honeymoon she told Skolsky she was going to marry you?

ARTHUR

I'm addressing her innate instability.

JOE

And you told the press you were about to marry Marilyn before you asked her for her hand.

What does that say about you?

ARTHUR

She wasn't surprised. We talked about it for quite a while.

JOE

She was furious at your stunt.

ARTHUR

It wasn't a stunt, Joe.

JOE

Why did you make her convert to Judaism?

ARTHUR

That was her decision.

JOE

How Jewish are you, Arthur?

ARTHUR

I'm sure you're more Catholic than I am Jewish.

JOE

Doesn't make any sense.

ARTHUR

It wasn't a full throttle conversion. She did it for my parents. And she requested a rabbi to officiate. Apparently she read some chapters of Einstein's *Out of My Latter Years*. I don't know the book and I didn't assume she was reading a lot of Albert Einstein. A real conversion takes over a year of hard study. Longer if you are orthodox. You know that didn't happen. But she did work with Rabbi Goldberg over a period of time. And she didn't renounce her religion after we separated. A synagogue in New Haven lent us their support.

JOE

How fortunate.

ARTHUR

You had every right to marry her again and perhaps if her mental health had improved . . .

JOE

If the medics got to her in time . . .

ARTHUR

If she had the will to live . . .

JOE

With no monsters at her heels . . .

ARTHUR

If she feared aging . . .

JOE

She did . . .

ARTHUR

As much as she feared abandonment.

JOE

Would it be a different day?

ARTHUR

And without a child of her own . . .

JOE

Barbiturates flooding her life blood . . .

ARTHUR

I am a hollow man, Joe. I lack something. My writing may be my only therapy and when I finished *After the Fall* I had no idea the critics would be so savage with it. Tennessee Williams is allowed to personalize his plays and when I make the same effort it is a virtual crucifixion. Why do I have to be measured against Williams and his poetry? It's as patently wrong as the sports writers make absurd comparison between you and Ted Williams. Ordinary people don't know what the fuck it's about. And every public photograph is scrutinized for the hidden truth and the thinly veiled humiliations. Maggie's suicide in the play and the very platform of the story pushed audiences away. Fine. It was an experimental work and a cathartic one. The play is full of meaning and revelation. The critics called the play self-serving and tendentious. Well, fuck them. A cry for help and absolution which are furthest from my thinking. There is no absolution. The joy of falling in love with Marilyn carries with it the failure of coping with the love. So I repeat to you, I am a hollow man. I am a married man. I am a father. I am a son. I love my family. I may be considered the towering American dramatic voice of my generation and I may be thrown under a bus for being one of the vilest pricks of my generation. I was hauled before congress to answer for my political activism and for my unannounced list of so-called communist names. This is where you and I part company. We don't have anything in common. You are called upon to give speeches. You are honored for your masterful silence and restraint. When you were in Yankee Stadium, you were the quintessential superstar. You were the consummate athlete. You were the personification of masculine grace. You were flawless. And for that I cannot hide my envy.

(PAUSE)

Because running the bases after a brilliant triple against the left field wall is as close to

perfection as humanly possible. If I could field a ball in balletic grace without one muscle in excess, if I could state my art as a member of a team, if I could tip my hat at the end of the game to the fans in the bleachers.

(PAUSE)

I look at your sports photos at so many bars in town. You're praised by the public for bringing her flowers twice a week after she left the earth. You're honored for maintaining a holy silence. Had I modeled myself after you I would have buried *After the Fall* in a shallow grave. And I would paint the character Quentin in short broad strokes, punishing him for his treacle. If I am honest with myself, he deserves no fine cross hatchings. He may stand in for me in a funhouse mirror with my fucking heart on *his* sleeve and Quentin may be just another intellectual asshole crying about the impracticality of guilt.

JOE

Are you uncomfortable about all that you put on paper?

(SILENCE)

Are you ashamed?

ARTHUR

No, but it seems that people want me to think that way.

JOE

You never named names to Congress.

ARTHUR

But Kazan did. Eight names.

JOE

That doesn't reflect anything on you . . .

ARTHUR

(INTERRUPTING)

Actually it does . . .

JOE

. . . no matter how closely you worked together. You had jail time.

ARTHUR

I have a blind spot.

JOE

Everyone does.

ARTHUR

I don't pretend it doesn't exist. I pontificate. That makes it worse. I've to write in earnest and that intensifies my blind spot. I don't usually tell people this. I don't give many interviews. If I wrote novels truly and if I could write novels as well as Saul Bellow, well,

I don't think I would be afraid of any shimmering light that reflects autobiography. I'll never win a Nobel prize. You must know that Hemmingway alluded to your name frequently.

(PAUSE)

If I am thinking too much when I write and if I am withholding my gut feelings, that is Apollo and I cannot praise Dionysus. If I had a full life with Marilyn, I would have abandoned Apollo and taken on a new guiding role.

JOE

You can't deny your position in the nation's theatre.

ARTHUR

I'm part of it. So what?

JOE

You leave a legacy, Arthur.

ARTHUR

Do I? The great writers of all time fought moral issues and could not keep their anger hidden. The smaller writers made peace with themselves. The big writers found no peace. Willie Loman is carrying the bags of a playwright.

JOE

That's evident here.

ARTHUR

Evident of what?

JOE

You're weight.

ARTHUR

As compared to yours?

JOE

I spend my hours at home. When I go out I'm signing baseballs and photographs for dough. If I can make cash on TV pitching products, sure – why not? I have bills to pay. This is the state of things. Maybe we're done with real needs? Aging has some blessing if you throw away vanity.

ARTHUR

Who the hell knows?

JOE

What little we know.

ARTHUR

Kazan felt he was right in 1952. He will rue that year for the rest of his life.

JOE

And we will rue 1962 forever.

ARTHUR

Yes.

JOE

She agreed to remarry me and the day we set was August 5th.

ARTHUR

Said so verbally?

JOE

That's right.

ARTHUR

My gosh.

JOE

She was ready. I was ready.

ARTHUR

I'm sorry for you.

JOE

We kept it a secret. I don't think even her housekeeper Eunice knew.

ARTHUR

Had you a second chance, she might be alive today.

JOE

Yes.

ARTHUR

That's tragic.

JOE

I will never marry again.

ARTHUR

And that too is terrible irony, Joe.

JOE

My son helped me get through this. He's been wonderful for the entire decade. The day she died he called Marilyn telling her that he broke up with his girlfriend. She was so understanding and had full presence of mind. My son can't cope knowing the cops came so many hours after the time of death. No trace of pills in her stomach lining. Medical coroners never classify death as "*probable* suicide".

ARTHUR

You did marry her a second time, Joe. You married her like nuns marry Christ. I mean that from the heart. We aren't friends but I feel your ordeal. She was flying high on her Hollywood rocket. There was no woman like her in America. You expected privacy. She was suspicious of privacy. Her fans gave her the best sense of safety, belonging, and love. She made sex more wholesome for a frigid culture.

(THE RED HEADED WOMAN FROM THE 1962 SCENE ENTERS THE RESTAURANT. SHE GLANCES AT BOTH MEN AND SEEMS MORE FOCUSED ON JOE. SHE TURNS HER LEG TO ADJUST THE STRAP OF HIGH HEEL SHOE. SHE BENDS OVER ALL THE WHILE CONSCIOUS OF JOE'S ATTENTION. SHE WALKS OVER TO THE MEN)

WOMAN

I was expecting a friend tonight but I was stood up. Isn't that horrible?

JOE

Yes, really.

WOMAN

You look very serious. I'm sorry to bother you.

JOE

Yeah, no bother.

WOMAN

They play a lot of Vic Damone and I think it's a big mistake.

ARTHUR

What do you think they should play?

WOMAN

Sarah Vaughn.

ARTHUR

Do you want to sit down?

WOMAN

No. My heel's giving me trouble. I hate these shoes.

ARTHUR

Why not throw them away?

WOMAN

Too many memories with this pair. Honest to God. I got married with them and I got divorced with them. I had good luck mostly and that means more to me than a bunion on my middle toe. You're Joe DiMaggio.

JOE

Yes.

WOMAN

I see you a lot but I don't know why I avoid making contact. I was a child when you left baseball. I remember my dad going on and on about you and that was the way good feelings filled my home. Maybe the past was special for pure people and pure people can't walk in high heels. You must be Mr. DiMaggio's attorney.

ARTHUR

No, I'm not.

WOMAN

Oh. Well, too bad. You look like a wonderful lawyer. The lawyers I see are all short, heavy and very fast talking. Fast talkers are such amazing liars. I was married to one, you know that by now. He was mean to my children. He didn't think they were his. And maybe he was right. I had prescriptions from my doctor to ward off his attacks. A husband can say the most poisonous thing and then you might as well dig a hole in the ground. I may sound bitter but really I am a party girl. There are times in my weekend when I magic lifts my spirit and I can see the romance even in a dirty city. And New York isn't always dirty or broken or sad . . . but it is such a guilty town. That's why people are running from New York. You see them in stores and restaurants, but you know deep down they're running for their lives. Still waiting for some sort of news to paper over the problems and still waiting for some national holiday to bring everyone to their feet. I guess I'm just going on like this because how often do you meet Joe DiMaggio? Really? If the waiter had a camera, I'd beg for a photo.

JOE

That's Arthur Miller.

WOMAN

Oh.

JOE

The playwright.

WOMAN

Oh!

ARTHUR

Nice to meet you. And what is your name?

JOE

What's wrong?

WOMAN

I feel dizzy suddenly. I think I need to sit.
(SHE FAINTS)

END OF SCENE

SCENE THREE

(THE WOMAN IS DRINKING WATER AT THE TABLE. JOE
ATTENDS TO HER. ARTHUR IS NOT PRESENT)

JOE

How do you feel?

WOMAN

A little better. I've never fainted in my life.

JOE

You had us very worried.

WOMAN

How long did pass out?

JOE

About five minutes.

WOMAN

Oh my God!

JOE

The waiter phoned the local emergency room and an ambulance is on its way.

WOMAN

No no no. No ambulance. That's crazy. What happened to your friend?

JOE

He went to find a doctor.

WOMAN

I can't be seen like this.

JOE

You look fine. Don't worry. You should see a physician.

WOMAN

I'm afraid of doctors. They lie all the time. I have epilepsy. That was a *petit mal*. Do you understand? You look very sensitive. I can't believe I'm with you. My nephew said he met you at one of those baseball card conventions and you were signing cards and baseballs.

JOE

Yes.

WOMAN

And if I tell him that you helped me to my feet, he'd be ecstatic. Oh my God.

JOE

I think I saw you in this restaurant once before. About eight years ago.

WOMAN

I really can't remember.

JOE

It just occurred to me that I saw you sitting in that corner with a very hostile looking gentleman.

WOMAN

Either he was hostile or a gentleman.

JOE

You know what I mean, young lady.

WOMAN

No one calls me that anymore. I stopped being young right after Elvis got to be the fat man of Las Vegas. You look ticked off. I guess it's time for me to get going.

JOE

I'm just concerned for your health.

WOMAN

You're built different than your friend.

JOE

Actually he's not my friend. We don't really socialize.

WOMAN

You said his name's Arthur?

JOE

That's right.

WOMAN

He's clairvoyant.

JOE

What makes you say that?

WOMAN

Well, he knew I didn't like him.

JOE

Oh, I see . . .

WOMAN

He knew I was trouble.

JOE

Are you?

WOMAN

He's a married man. You're not.

JOE

How do you know?

WOMAN

You'll never marry again.

JOE

How do you know?

WOMAN

And your son will live as long as your hitting streak. 57.

JOE

My streak was 56 games.

WOMAN

Well, close enough. One day, you'll be cruising the streets of Martinez looking for him. He won't be able to keep a job or a real address. He'll survive you by five months. That may ease the distance you've had. You'll be selling coffee machines, you know, what every kitchen in America needs.

JOE

You're insane.

WOMAN

I wish a man would bring me flowers each week.

JOE

It's very cold in here.

WOMAN

Yeah, I feel the chill too. I feel the frost from the floor boards. It just isn't natural.

JOE

What?

WOMAN

I wonder what will happen when my lips turn blue? My fingers are bone white. Look, Joe. May I call you Joe? May I call you Mr. DiMaggio?

JOE

I don't really care.

WOMAN

Would you escort me home tonight? I don't think the medics are coming with a gurney. I'm surprised the restaurant is this dead tonight. Really. Guess it's snowing outside. Sort of scary to a gal in need of a ride. Hate the subway. Men follow me on the double G train. I had a miscarriage some months ago. If that doesn't kill a woman, nothing will. Men don't get it. Never will. Got a womb, Joe? Do you know what it's like to have an empty space inside and you ache for a baby? Know what it's like to spot in your panties when you hope you'll get to your first trimester? I didn't drink. I threw away my cigarettes. I kept this a secret. I am a clam. I am a sealed like a crypt.

JOE

(UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THIS RIFF)

I got to go. Just noticed the time.

WOMAN

Sealed tight. Airtight. And because I've embarrassed myself in front of you tonight, you

are the person entrusted with my hurt. Forget the time. I do. Can't meet men in bars, Joe, because my father used to hang out in them. I don't take strangers to bed. If I dance wildly after midnight that only means I can't remove my high heels. The lift, of my God, from these shoes can bring down the entire house. You're looking at my neck and the hairline. And I don't mind, if that's where your eyes stop. And if the frost goes away, and if the fog burns off the Gowanus Canal from the direct beam of the moon, and if your friend doesn't return, the rip inside my heart will mend. Just like that. So take my wrist and hold tight like it was a Louisville slugger and I'll go away as soon as you break your grip. No more chatter and no more nakedness and no more fortune telling.

(SILENCE. ARTHUR RE-ENTERS THE ROOM FROM THE FRONT ENTRANCE. HE WATCHES FROM AFAR, NOT WANTING TO INTRUDE. JOE DOESN'T SEE HIM AND JOE FIGHTS TO CATCH THE WOMAN'S INTENSE EYE CONTACT. A SINATRA SONG, *IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING*, COMES ON, AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.)

Look at me please. And then I'll go.

(FINALLY HE LOOKS AT HER)

Hold my wrist for one moment.

(HE DOES)

I have stolen your pain. You won't need it, Joe.

(JOE SEES ARTHUR)

You're friend is back. He'll want to know. What do you think?

JOE

Please go.

WOMAN

All right.

(SHE LEANS OVER AND KISSES JOE'S CHEEK)

My nephew will be whooping and hollering all day long. He knows you're a hero.

(SHE STANDS AND TAKES THE TABLE NAPKIN TO JOE'S CHEEK. SHE GENTLY WIPES THE LIPSTICK FROM HIS SKIN)

Goodbye Joe.

(SHE CROSSES TO THE FRONT OF THE RESTAURANT AND SMILES STRANGELY AT ARTHUR. ARTHUR TURNS TO WATCH HER EXIT AND THEN HE JOINS JOE AT THE TABLE)

ARTHUR

What the hell is she doing?

JOE

She's a sick woman.

ARTHUR

Did she fake this?

JOE
No.

ARTHUR
A doctor's coming. I had his number in my car.

JOE
She doesn't need a doctor. Not any more.

ARTHUR
What did she say to you?

JOE
Can't repeat a word.

ARTHUR
What?

JOE
She has epilepsy.

ARTHUR
She say that?

JOE
I believe her. I've known people like her. People who have convulsions.

ARTHUR
You're white as a sheet.

JOE
You start out helping them and think nothing of it. And then . . .
(HE STANDS AND LOSES HIS BALANCE)

ARTHUR
Joe . . .
(HE STEADIES JOE WITH AN OUTSTRETCHED HAND)

JOE
Damn it. The food's not agreeing with me.

ARTHUR
You didn't touch your plate.

JOE

Where's your son Daniel?

(SILENCE)

Where is he, Arthur?

ARTHUR

Why do you ask?

JOE

Because that woman knows and you should know that. She knows you have to be present and really we have been truly horrible fathers. That's what I see when I see you this close.

(PAUSE)

"I had a child and even in the dream I saw it was my life, and it was an idiot, and I ran away. But it always crept onto my lap again, clutched at my clothes."

(PAUSE)

She whispered that to me just before you came back.

ARTHUR

Goddamn you.

JOE

It's not what you think, Arthur. I just want to commiserate. Please understand.

ARTHUR

Got to go. Very bad stuff here, Joe. That woman did something horrible to you.

JOE

You think she's a witch, but . . .

ARTHUR

That's absurd. This is something that you have to protect yourself from. Nothing like a witch, but she's mentally ill and you were jostled badly. I'm really worried for you.

JOE

Don't be.

ARTHUR

I see your hands trembling.

JOE

What?

ARTHUR

Your hands Joe.

JOE

The hell with my hands. She mentioned Southbury. It's an institution. Near your home in Connecticut.

ARTHUR

(STANDS UP)

Fuck you.

JOE

Arthur.

ARTHUR

Where do you come off to say this shit in my face?

JOE

It's what she said.

ARTHUR

DiMaggio, don't ever phone me again. Do you understand? No go-betweens either. Is that clear? I have nothing to do with you. I'm sorry you're going through hard times. You don't deserve it. Take care of yourself.

(ARTHUR WALKS SLOWLY AWAY, FIRST IN A BACKWARD STEP AND THEN TURNING TO BREAK WITH JOE. JOE STANDS UP AND TAKES A LOT OF CASH OUT OF HIS WALLET. HE TRIES TO COUNT THE MONEY BUT CAN'T FOCUS. THE MONEY DROPS OUT OF HIS HANDS. HE REACHES FOR A GLASS OF WATER AND HE SPILLS THE GLASS. THE WOMAN'S PURSE REMAINS ON THE TABLE AND HE'S TEMPTED TO PICK IT UP. HE ALMOST MAKES CONTACT WITH THE PURSE, BUT THINKS BETTER TO AVOID IT. HE PUTS ON HIS DINNER JACKET WHICH IS DRAPED OVER HIS CHAIR. THE WAITER ENTERS THE SPACE AND SILENCE PREVAILS. LIGHTS GO TO BLACK)

END OF PLAY