

Blonde

THE PLAYWRIGHT (PRE-LAP)

This play. It's become my life. For an artist, that's fatal.

INT. RESTAURANT, WEST 70TH & BROADWAY. NIGHT. 124

They are seated in a booth. He with his thinning hair, a figure of dignity, with something wounded, ravaged in his face.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

It's just that I don't think I'll ever finish it now. Some of those scenes were written a quarter of a century ago. Before, almost, you were born. Magda was my own first love, never consummated. Never even really declared! She'd be, if she's still alive, in her mid-fifties. Beautiful Magda, middle-aged!(laughs)

NORMA JEANE (hesitant)

I had some ideas about M-magda? If you're interested? Ideas? From an actress?

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Of course I'm interested. You're very kind to care.

Out of her handbag she takes a copy of 'A Poem for Magda' and places it on the tabletop between them.

NORMA JEANE

This girl Magda. She's like Natasha in 'The Three Sisters'?

The one they laugh at because her dress is the wrong color. Except with Magda, it's the way she speaks English.

THE PLAYWRIGHT (defensive)

Who told you that?

NORMA JEANE

What ?

THE PLAYWRIGHT

About 'The Three Sisters' and my play.

NORMA JEAN

Nobody.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Pearlman? That I'd been influenced?

NORMA JEANE

Oh no, I r-read the play myself. I always thought I could play Natasha?

The Playwright says nothing. His offended heart beats hard.

NORMA JEANE

I was thinking, what Chekhov does with Natasha, he surprises you because Natasha turns out so strong and devious. And cruel. But your Magda... she never changes much. She's always so good.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Yes. Magda is good. Was good. The original. It wouldn't have occurred to her to be angry.

Rebuked, The Blonde Actress can only agree.

NORMA JEANE

Oh, yes.

She understands! Magda is superior to her, a higher form than herself.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

(trying to keep the irony out of his voice)

THE PLAYWRIGHT

And what other thoughts do you have about Magda?

NORMA JEANE

I guess... I said something wrong?

About Natasha?

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Certainly not. It's helpful.

NORMA JEANE

Your play is nothing like ...that one.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

No, it isn't. I've never much been drawn to Chekhov.

She has one more thing to say. Does she dare say it?

NORMA JEANE

One thing I was thinking? Magda wouldn't know how to read? Issac could show his p-poem to her, and she's only pretending to read it?

His temple pounds...

THE PLAYWRIGHT

...Oh my God! She was illiterate.

Suddenly tears spring to his eyes. There is a well of grief, thirty years deep.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

That was it! She was illiterate. Of course!

He looks at her, so grateful, so moved. How he underestimated her. He laughs:

THE PLAYWRIGHT

I should call you Marilyn, shouldn't I? Or is that just a stage name?

NORMA JEANE

You could call me Norma. That's my true name.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

I could call you Norma, if you prefer. Or, I could call you...'My Magda'.

A dazzling smile:

NORMA JEANE

Oh, I'd like that.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

My secret Magda.

NORMA JEANE

Yes!

THE PLAYWRIGHT

But Maybe 'Marilyn' when others are around. So there wouldn't be any misunderstanding.

NORMA JEANE

When others are around, it doesn't matter what you call me. You can whistle. You can call me, 'Hey you!'

He puts his wedding-ringed hand on hers.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Hey you.

NORMA JEANE

Hey you.