

DAVID'S REDHAired DEATH

c. Sherry Kramer
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CHARACTERS

JEAN Her hair is deep, rich, dark auburn red. She is thirty.

MARILYN Her hair is bright red, true, light red. She is thirty.

TWO STAGE TECHNICIANS Tall, darkhaired men. The stage technicians are play enablers—they transform the ordinary world into the redhaired world within our sight, they become McDonald's employees on demand, they ready Jean for her journey—they do whatever is needed. They belong to the play, not to themselves, they are part of the play's system of death.

The first New York production had ten Technicians—all young, tall, darkhaired men wearing dark suits, as if dressed for a funeral—they enabled the play, and gave extra signal to the base line system of death. Technician number is up to each production, but two is the optimal minimum.

SETTING

The redhaired world is created, and then lost during the play—a transforming, non-static setting, constantly evolving or de-evolving.

The Redhead's bed is the center focus of the play. But her bed is not an ordinary one—elements of the natural world encroach on the man-made aspects of everything associated with her. The bed may be outside, nestled in a woodland glen surrounded by trees even before the transformation begins. The 1985 Royal Blue Pontiac Tempest should be suggested in some way, and all set pieces should have active interaction with the characters and the two stage technicians.

All sound effects are created by the technicians, including music—a redhaired-world melody, on vibes or some other bell toned instrument is recommended, as is scoring throughout the play.

Costumers note: Redheads have been known to wear deep forest green. They don't always wear pink or red.

ACT ONE

JEAN

(To the Audience)

There was a time a person had only a hundred deaths, at best. In remote, isolated places forty or fifty had to do. When a man died, the only people who had his death were the members of his family, and those close enough to know him, day by day. And so consequently, no one ever went through life carrying the weight of more than several dozen deaths on top of them.

We have death differently now. The sheer volume of death in the global village demands it. Think how many people had Judy Garland's death, for instance. Hundreds of thousands. If not millions. In fact, she's still having them--in bars where female impersonators reign; in homes where late night movies are watched, alone; in poster shops; in the costumes of Halloween; in little girls' dreams down the yellow brick road.

I had a handful of those Judy Garland Deaths. I didn't know it at the time.

Since then I've had about a couple hundred thousand deaths, I guess. These are my deaths, in part:

My grandfather. Chips, our boxer. Obi-Wan Kenobi. JFK. My best friend in the 5th grade, hit by a train on her way to church. Ophelia. Tony Curtis in TARUS BULBA--Yul Brynner shoots him for

betraying the Cossacks to the Poles. A bullet, right through the shining Polish armor, straight into Tony's wavy black haired heart--and mine. My grandmother. Princess Di. Sydney What's-His-Name in the TALE OF TWO CITIES. All my uncles. One of my aunts. My old friend Victor, and then his friend, Scott. My college boyfriend Jim. The six million who died. Three thousand on a day that started like any other, a perfect clear September morning. And David.

There are so, so many people in the world. All having deaths, over and over. We are not far away, I'm afraid, from a moment of critical mass, of geometric progression, when we are all carrying so many deaths that the system must collapse, like a black hole, must just consume itself in its own weight.

I feel the irreversible heaviness, the unnatural slowness already. Our deaths pile up on top of us. And one day their weight makes taking a step toward a person we love like carrying a brontosaurus on your back while dodging across eight lanes of LA traffic. With your teeth sunk into the dinosaur's tail to keep it from slipping. Once it falls you will never, ever be able to lift it up again. You will never be able to shoulder the weight of your deaths. And move toward someone you love.

When my brother David died he had--oh, at least a couple thousand deaths. And he's still having them, in all the people who loved him, and who he loved. A remembered joke he told--a pair of shoulders shaped like his, seen for an instant in crowd--the most ordinary detail of the most ordinary day--reminds us of him...and David dies again. In those he loved.

This is the story of one of David's deaths. This is the death of David's that was had by two redheads. This is David's Redhaired Death.

There have been times I've let it slip back into brownette, it's true--

(She runs her hand through her hair.)

--and in certain light, only my hairdresser can tell for sure. But I will always think of it as red, even after it is gray. Of course, even after it is gray, it will still be red--at least for awhile. Now the Redhead--

(Lights up on Marilyn. She lies on a bed, on white sheets, asleep. Jean moves toward the bed.)

--the other redhead--is a more honest redhead. Her hair is naturally the color mine is on purpose. She takes it several steps redder--brighter, but notice--

(She lightly touches the Redhead's hair.)

--no brassy highlights--no give away tones--she takes it to a shade found only on young Irish girls who live in the green hills where the deaths are still numbered in hundreds. Not hundreds of thousands.

This is the redhaired death of David's, one of many, not complete, not ever finished. Someday it will fade, like my hair, to a shade, a shadow, one lost in a crowd of shadows, like a mousy blond lost in the streets below. This is the redhaired death, the death of David's that was had by the two redheads, Marilyn and Jean--in this room, on this bed, in these arms.

David's Redhaired Death.

(Two stage technicians appear as the light changes to a kind of moonlight. The Technicians are tall, dark haired men.

Jean leaves the bed area.

One technician begins the transformation of the bed area into the magical redhaired world--perhaps he hangs shell and shrimp colored mythic lingerie from a flying buttress or a tree branch, perhaps he spreads a luscious magenta colored duvet over the sleeping Redhead's body--or perhaps the colors are green, deep forest green--and red arrives later in the transformation.

The other technician scoops up a bit of dust from the ground, and blows it into Jean's hair. He takes a large McDonald's coke and holds it up so Jean can take a sip from it--the lid is loose, some spills down her blouse. He hands her a road map, a pair of sunglasses, a credit card.

She gets into her car.)

The road came up to meet me in Pennsylvania, then Ohio. I was on my way to the Redhead's in a royal blue 1985 Pontiac Tempest--a high seas cruiser of the highway, a boat of a car. But--as the sailors say--the water is your friend. It's the land you have to watch out for.

(The Tempest makes hideous engine trouble sounds.)

I ran aground outside Chicago.

(The Tempest makes "grinding to a halt" noises. Jean gets out, goes around to inspect the engine.)

I pulled into a Texaco station, and trusted my car to the man who wears the star.

(One of the technicians pops the hood, and looks inside. He shakes his head, sadly.)

It was the transmission. Now the transmission turns out to be a closed black box, not unlike Pandora's. Once you open it up, you're stuck--there's no shutting the lid and going on. The sensible traveler, faced with transmission trouble, takes the roadside mechanic's advice and turns around and heads for home.

(Jean slaps the hood of the car shut, and climbs back in.)

I ignored the mechanic's warning. What did a roadside mechanic know? I was on my way to the Redhead's. The mythical, magical Redhead's. And no power on earth could have gotten me to turn around and head for home.

(One of the technicians holds a phone, some distance away from the stage. It rings, with a far off sound.)

MARILYN

At a midtown Holiday Inn Hotel, a desk clerk is calling the fire department. This is the first of the calls that will trap us with David's death. There is a fire on the fourteenth floor.

JEAN

(She puts the car in gear, continues driving. The Tempest makes unobtrusive, but odd engine noises.)

The Tempest raced strangely though the fading hills. I bought a few moments of daylight, chasing the sun west. Astronauts in space see the sun rise and set seven times a day. This is my version of FIDDLER ON THE ROOF, in space:

(She starts off slow, then sings VERY FAST.)

Sunrise, sunset. Sunrise, sunset. Sunrise sunset. SunriseSunset. Sunrisesunset Sunrisesunsetsunrisesunset.

(Pause)

Anyway, the best the Tempest could do, from a dead stop. was sunrise, sunset...period. I knew that. It didn't stop me, though. I was on my way to the Redhead's, the mythical, magical Redhead's--and when I got there, it would be wonderful.

I remembered the first time.

(Jean takes a step in Marilyn's direction. Marilyn gets out of bed and walks toward her. They stop several feet from each other.)

MARILYN

Hi. You must be Jean.

JEAN

You're Marilyn.

Hello. MARILYN

I've heard a lot about you. JEAN

From Bob? MARILYN

From Bob. JEAN

Me too. MARILYN

Funny, you look different from the way I imagined you. JEAN

You too. You're a redhead. MARILYN

So are you. JEAN

You don't meet that many redheads. MARILYN

No, you don't. JEAN

Real redheads, I mean. Most redheads you meet come out of a bottle. Lady Clairol. MARILYN

L'Oreal. JEAN
(Pause)

(Lying) MARILYN
I'm a real redhead.

JEAN

(Lying)
So am I.

MARILYN/JEAN

You can always tell.

MARILYN

One redhead to another can always tell.

JEAN

(To the Audience)

It was love at first sight. It was lots of giggling, lots of phone calls, lots of hidden picture looks across crowded rooms. We looked so special to each other. We looked so right. We each had a redhaired heart to look inside of, and see it as if it were our own hearts beating. No one could look at us the way we looked at each other.

People used to fear the redheaded woman--she had, they claimed, the power to witch a man, enchant him. As it turned out, the Redhead and I had tested out our powers on men for years. For all our lives. Now it was time to try it on an equal.

(To Marilyn)

Nice to finally meet you.

MARILYN

Nice to meet you.

(They cross the few feet between them, extend their hands and shake. Jean realizes she has a French fry in her hand.)

JEAN

Oh...I'll bet you're wondering what I'm doing with this French fry...

MARILYN

It is late when you arrive.

JEAN

No--

MARILYN

You are tired--

JEAN

Not yet--

MARILYN
You come to bed--

JEAN
(To the Audience)
A fall from a great height changes everything.

JEAN	MARILYN
Take a penny, for instance.	Jean--
If you drop one on the floor	(She sighs.)
you probably don't--	Bob warned me about you.
	(Louder, insistent)
	BOB WARNED ME ABOUT
	YOU.

(Jean stuffs the French fry back in her pocket, returns to Marilyn.)

JEAN
Bob warned me about *you*.

MARILYN
He did?

JEAN
Bob's a slime.

MARILYN
Yes, he told me all about you.

JEAN
He told me about *you*.

MARILYN
Bob's a slime. I'll bet none of the things he told either of us about the other are true.

JEAN
He said be careful of Marilyn. She's a redhead.

MARILYN
He said be careful of Jean. The first time I met her, she wore a see-through blouse.

JEAN
It wasn't *really* see through.

MARILYN

Mine was.
(Pause)

JEAN

Look--it's none of my business, but Bob told me that you and he were--

MARILYN

I'm not surprised. He says that about everyone.

JEAN

Everyone?

MARILYN

Yes. The story he told about you and him and a baby grand was sublime.

JEAN

The slime. Even if he were the last man on earth, I wouldn't touch him.

MARILYN

Yes. I'd let the human race die out before I'd touch that slime.

JEAN

You know, Bob has no shame.

MARILYN

None at all. One time I had to sit there and listen to him tell the story of my conquest of a Nobel Prize winner. He had this whole story, this fantasy, and he had the nerve to tell it to someone while I was sitting right there in front of him.

JEAN

So--what happened when you denied it?

MARILYN

The more you deny it, the more the other person thinks it's true.

JEAN

Was it?

MARILYN

Yes. A completely different Nobel Prize winner, but Bob is occasionally a lucky son of a bitch.

JEAN

So--what was it like?

MARILYN

Well, if you've heard Bob's version--

JEAN

No, tell me the real one. I've always wondered what it would be like with a Nobel Prize winner.

MARILYN

So did I. In many ways, Bob's version was far superior to mine. In Bob's version, the old man performs like a boy of seventeen, has a heart attack, and dies.

JEAN

And in yours?

MARILYN

The old man remains an old man. It takes a hell of a long time to win the Nobel Prize. I put on my clothes, he calls me a cab, I go home.

JEAN

And the heart attack--

MARILYN

Three days later.

JEAN

Had nothing to do with you.

MARILYN

Well...three days is a long time, but a girl can dream, can't she? I mean, he was a very old man. I mean, come on, haven't you ever...you know, wanted to believe you could kill a man by the way you looked? Construction workers, come on, you know. You're trying to get across the street, they're throwing their lunch buckets down in front of you, their tongues are hanging out, and they all claim to know exactly what you like to do at night. You can't tell me you don't want to turn toward the one who who's yelling "Hey there, Red, I could die for you,

baby"--open your coat wide, and give him the good long look that buries him?

(Marilyn opens her robe, seductively, toward Jean. Jean takes a step in her direction, then hurries back to the Tempest.)

JEAN

(To the Audience)

It is almost dark. I am beginning to wish I'd taken the mechanic's advice. But no one ever takes sound advice. In the story of Rapunzel, we focus on the Prince who makes it, on the one in a hundred who carries Rapunzel down her golden rope of hair. We forget all about the other ninety-nine guys who didn't make it. All the poor slobs who should have heeded the witch's warning, but didn't, who saw no reason why they shouldn't be the one to wrap their legs around Rapunzel's heavy plait of shining hair. And so I had faith that I would make it to the Redhead's. And that when I got there it would be wonderful.

This was our second meeting. On the way over to see her, I'd stopped at the 7-11, to get some smokes. There are no accidents, and the Redhead and I smoked the same brand.

(A technician gives her two packs of Camel Filters.)

Ever notice there's a naked man in the camel on the front of the pack? (She tosses one of the packs to Marilyn. Along with it, at least one French fry goes sailing through the air. Jean realizes she is still holding a French fry as well.)

Oh--I'll bet you're wondering what I'm doing with this French fry.

MARILYN

It is late when you arrive.

JEAN

No, please, not yet--

MARILYN

You are tired.

JEAN

(To the Audience)

A fall from a great height changes everything.

MARILYN

What do you think you're doing, Jean!

JEAN

Take a penny, for instance. If you drop one on the floor, you probably don't even bother picking it up anymore. If you drop a penny from the top of the Empires State Building, however, that penny transforms itself into the weight of--

MARILYN
This is not the way it happens, Jean.
It is late when you arrive. you are tired, you come to bed.
The phone rings.
THE PHONE RINGS

(The phone rings, far away. A technician carries the phone closer to the stage. Jean continues, falteringly.)

--transforms itself into the weight of a thousand or more pounds on its way to the...
(Jean can't continue.)

At the fire department, the central dispatcher is calling for back up, for extension ladders, for special upper story crews. And in the Holiday Inn the alarms are ringing on every floor, in the hallways, in the bar, the coffee shop, the lobby. Guests are scurrying from their rooms, half packed suitcases under their arms.

MARILYN

They are flooding into the elevators. They are rushing headlong down the stairs. They are pouring onto the street and staring up at the flames.

(The technician moves the phone closer, it rings insistently.)
An ambulance is called. The door to the burning room is jammed, or barricaded, and inside someone has started to scream.

JEAN

Ever notice there's a naked man in the camel on the front of the pack?

MARILYN

Jean, let's get it over with.

JEAN

Here's his leg, right where the camel's leg is--I can't believe Bob didn't show you too.

MARILYN

This just makes it harder. Let's get it behind us, move on--

JEAN
Here's his arm--he's holding it like this--
(She demonstrates, using her arm.)

MARILYN
Come to bed, Jean, let's get it over with--

JEAN
And here is his--
(She indicates a large penis.)

MARILYN
Jean I can't--

JEAN
You can't say you don't see it, Marilyn. It's the size of a small nuclear submarine.

MARILYN
I can't. Do this. I--

JEAN
Oh. I didn't realize it was so late--you must have other plans for dinner, I'll leave.
(She turns, and starts to go.)

MARILYN
NO!

JEAN
(Pause)
No, what?

MARILYN
Jean. Please. Don't do this.

JEAN
(Prompting Marilyn)
No, I don't have other plans....

MARILYN
(Resigned)
No, I don't have other plans.

JEAN
 (Still prompting)
 Do you want to go out...

MARILYN
 Do you want to go out?

JEAN
 And get...

MARILYN
 And get...
 (Jean waits. Marilyn gives in.)
 ...something to eat?

JEAN
 (Thinks about it for an instant. Lightly.)
 No.

MARILYN
 (Monotone, still an unwilling participant)
 You're sure? Because if you're on a diet or something, I know this
 great salad place, all kinds of-

JEAN
 (Seductively)
 Oh, I never bother with diets, not really. If I gain a pound or two, I
 just instinctively stop eating for a couple days. Don't you?

MARILYN
 (Can't help laughing. She is drawn in again.)
 No. What planet are you from?

JEAN
 (They are both laughing now.)
 It's just I ate already. At McDonald's. It's silly. Crazy. I have this thing
 about McDonald's.
 (To the Audience)
 The Redhead never even saw it coming. A McDonald's story was not
 exactly the usual redhead attack. Here we were, both orchestrating the
 subtle ways we would prove who was the stronger redhead, the better
 redhead, the deadlier redhead.

But I could tell that I didn't stand a chance against the Redhead with

the usual redhead array--sultry looks, unspoken promises, that sort of thing. I had seen that right away.

So I circled around back and got the drop on her. With the McDonald's story.

(To Marilyn)

I have this--thing--about McDonald's.

MARILYN

Tell me.

JEAN

(As if embarrassed)

Oh, no, you don't want to know.

MARILYN

But I do.

JEAN

Not really.

MARILYN

Cross my redhaired heart and hope to--

JEAN

Redhaired heart?

MARILYN

Yes. Don't you think of it like that?

JEAN

(To the Audience)

This is the moment in the chronology of the redheads when the redhaired heart is officially carried out into the open like a 4-H Club's Nativity scene in a Christmas parade.

(To Marilyn)

Yes.

MARILYN

I really want to hear about this thing you have about McDonald's. Cross my redhaired heart and hope to die.

JEAN

(As if reluctantly)

Okay. If that's what you want.

(She sits down next to Marilyn on the bed.)

I was at McDonald's, ordering a quarter pounder with cheese--

(Marilyn kisses Jean's wrist.)

--a large coke--

(Marilyn kisses the inside of Jean's elbow.)

--and a large fry--

(Marilyn kisses Jean's neck.)

And in a midtown Holiday Inn Hotel, my brother David...

(She stops, lost, confused. She pulls away from Marilyn, leaps off the bed.)

NO!... I was at McDonald's, ordering a quarter pounder with cheese, a large Coke, and a large fry, because ever since I was thirteen years old, and my parents told me I had to have a goal in life, I've had this plan.

I wanted to order the exact same thing--a quarter pounder with cheese, a large coke, a large fry--in Louisiana, in Mississippi, in Hawaii. In every state, in the map I got from McDonald's marking every Golden Arch marked town. I wanted to say the same eleven words, pay with a five dollar bill, receive the exact same change. Eat identical food, identically, ritualistically--three French fries, one bite of burger, one sip of coke. I knew in advance that the decor would inevitably vary--Townhouse McDonald's, with their fake exposed brick. Country Cottage McDonald's, with rough hewn plastic stones littering the floor. And in Missouri, they say, there is the Taj Mahal of McDonald's--costing over a million dollars to build, with three different theme eating areas featuring one hundred thousand dollars worth of rare antiques, all bolted down. And in the Dutch decorated room is a portrait of Ronald McDonald after the school of Van Eyk. And in another, the French room, he's painted in a Renoir-like shimmer of light. And in the third, he's the all male Western Ronald, sitting high in the saddle on a brave, earth tone range. His ten gallon hat pushed jauntily back, on his mop of bright red hair.

(To the Audience)

Of course, things rarely work out the way they're planned. Here I was expecting a nice, easy fight--while I was charming the Redhead with the story of my life plan for McDonald's--which is a true story, but an insane one, its insanity being the secret of its charm--I'd be bringing up my heavy artillery on the side. Bring the Redhead under my spell, and waste her.

Instead, the Redhead decided to get the drop on me.

If there was any hope of our avoiding a very intense, very messy, very

up and down, up and down kind of unnatural redhair affair, after what was only the tip of the iceberg of the McDonald's' story, it was gone as soon as the Redhead made the first move. To her cigarettes.

(Marilyn opens her pack of Camel Filters.)

It was a standard in the redhaired arsenal. I reached for mine.

(She does.)

The lighting up, while gazing into the eyes.

(They light up, gaze into each other's eyes, etc. They are like gunslingers, facing each other down.)

The long inhale...the longer exhale. The gauzy smoke caressing the face. The cigarette that makes the victim think she's looking across at the mysteries of Greta Garbo--who wasn't a redhead, but should have been.

(They continue to smoke and seduce.)

I matched the Redhead's movements. She matched mine. She was good.

She was complete. She thought she had the drop on me.

And then it happened.

MARILYN/JEAN

(Both start speaking seductively, on the exhale)

A LITTLE CLOSER TO HEAVEN...WITH A CIGARETTE IN MY HAND...

(They look at each other, incredulously.)

A little closer to heaven with a cigarette in my hand?

Oh--

(They begin laughing.)

I don't believe it--

MARILYN

The exact same line--

MARILYN

(Very slow)

I don't

believe it!

(Normal speed)

Yes, I guess Bob told you it was *my* favorite line.

JEAN

(Very fast)

I don't believe it!

(Normal speed)

It's one of my favorite

lines!

Oh, God.

But I
don't remember
using it on Bob--he must
have seen me use it on
someone else.

What?

The slime.

JEAN

Well who else could have told you?

MARILYN

Told me what?

JEAN

That line, told you to use my favorite line.

MARILYN

That's my favorite line.

JEAN

I don't believe it--

MARILYN

I don't believe it!

JEAN

(To the Audience)

We couldn't fucking believe it. We quickly checked to see if we were
the same person.

(To Marilyn, as the technicians make the final changes
that transform the bed area into the mythical, magical
redhaired world.)

I've got a younger brother, an older brother.

MARILYN

I've got a younger brother, an older brother.

JEAN

I've got a grandmother I call Nano.

MARILYN

I've got a grandmother I call Nana.

Nana? JEAN

Nano... MARILYN

Well, adjusting for regional dialect differences-- JEAN

Yes, it's exactly the same. MARILYN

I love my family. JEAN

I love mine too. MARILYN

I loved my family, very much, but growing up I knew I was different. JEAN

I loved my family, very much, but I didn't fit in. MARILYN

Everyday of my life I had to wear this scarlet letter that said: DO NOT PASS GO. JEAN/MARILYN

DO NOT FIT IN. MARILYN

It started fading--but it was-- JEAN

--too late by then. JEAN/MARILYN

It started fading too late to fit in. MARILYN

Spooky, huh? JEAN
(Pause. They both pull back a bit, overwhelmed.)

MARILYN

Coincidence. Coincidence, that's all it is, it's just--

JEAN

I have been waiting all my life to recognize someone the way I recognize myself.

MARILYN

The way I recognize you.

JEAN

The way I recognize you.

MARILYN

Here's what I've done while I've been waiting. Here's what I've been doing while I've been hunting you: I love Sam Shepard's plays. I wear Ralph Lauren perfume. I eat Chinese food. I prefer blue ink over black, black clothing over blue. There are the facts of how I've hunted you.

JEAN

Me too. And we both smoke camel filters.

MARILYN

Which will be very convenient, when one or the other of us runs out.

JEAN

I'm really trying to quit.

MARILYN

Who isn't? I'll bet every pack of Camel Filters that's sold is bought by a Camel Filter smoker who wants to quit.

(They smoke.)

JEAN

Once I fell in love with a man I thought I recognized.

MARILYN

I must have met that man a hundred times.

JEAN

But the more familiar he looks over dinner, the better the chances are he'll be almost unrecognizable by midnight.

A total stranger by three a.m. MARILYN

A bad memory by morning. JEAN

You think you recognize him every time, but it turns out he doesn't want anything interesting-- MARILYN

Or remarkable-- MARILYN

--or enduring from you. JEAN

It turns out, that if most men were women, other men would call them-- MARILYN

Whores. JEAN/MARILYN

You'd think a redhead would be immune. JEAN

But even a redhead can't help going back for more. MARILYN

(A sigh of longing)
Men. JEAN

All those men. MARILYN

So what if they're whores--the things you can find out from them! JEAN

Amazing, isn't it? MARILYN

JEAN

And for a redhead, so goddamn easy.

MARILYN

Like taking candy from a baby.

JEAN

All those men.

MARILYN

You know, it's funny, but I don't think any of them were ever redheads.

JEAN

I wonder why.

MARILYN

I never consciously ruled out redheads.

JEAN

Just aren't that many of them around.

MARILYN

Maybe only redhaired girls grow up to be redheads. I remember my father telling my brothers, when we were little: You can take out all the flashy blondes you want, do what you want with them in the back seat of the car. But when you marry--marry mousy brown.

JEAN

Your father really said that?

MARILYN

But what do you do with the redheads, I wanted to ask him. He never said, but he knew. Redhaired girls are supposed to fade into brown! That's where all the little redhaired boys are, Jean. Every one of them's faded into marrying brown.

JEAN

But not us.

MARILYN

Not us.

JEAN

Not yet.

MARILYN

The two of us together--

JEAN

The redhaired badge of courage--

MARILYN

We'd be strong enough together.

JEAN

We'd buy all the Fuchsia Plum they had. To hell with "only your hairdresser knows for sure."

MARILYN

To hell with 'em all! Let 'em know, the minute we walk into a room. Our hair dyed the exact same shade.

JEAN

Double your redhead pleasure.

MARILYN

Double your redhaired fun.

JEAN

And be twins.

MARILYN/JEAN

(They lock arms.)

PRESENTING--FOR ONE LIFE ONLY--THE SWEET AND FUNNY REDHAired TWINS!!!!

(They do a little vaudeville bit, kicking and swaying.)

They dye their hair alike

They smoke alike

They love alike

They joke alike

You could lose your miiiiiiiiind--

(The phone rings.)

Marilyn pulls away from Jean, leaving her in the middle of the big kick.)

JEAN

When redheads—are two of a kind! When redheads are--

MARILYN
That was just a game.

JEAN
It was a real game.
(The phone continues to ring.)

MARILYN
Maybe to you.

JEAN
It was real.

MARILYN
Not anymore.

JEAN
It was a real game and we loved to play it. No matter how many times
the phone rings, we loved to play that game.

MARILYN
(The phone continues to ring, as the technician brings it
almost to the edge of the stage.)
The calls are getting closer, tacking Jean down. They are getting a bead
on her from the imprint on the MasterCard David used when he
checked in to the hotel. A computer somewhere in Atlanta is printing
out a phone number and an address.
(Marilyn moves toward the bed area.)
It is late when you arrive.

JEAN
It wasn't a game--

MARILYN
You are tired--

JEAN
You wanted this. You wanted a sister to stand up for you when your
brothers teased you.

MARILYN
You come to bed--

JEAN

(Jean grabs Marilyn, whispers in her ear.)
You loved your family, your family loved you, but right there at the beginning, it was always there--the raven blackhaired family wheeling along the baby carriage filled with red hair.

MARILYN

(Insistently)
It is late when you arrive.

JEAN

"You can't be our little sister, our little sister has black hair."

MARILYN

(Still trying)
You are tired, you come to bed.

JEAN

"Somebody stole our real little sister and gave us a flame head. A carrot top."

MARILYN

(Can't help joining in.)
"A marmalade brain."

JEAN

"Scarlet O'Head--"

MARILYN

"We're gonna trade you in an' get our real sister back."

JEAN

My brother Jim said there was just one chance.

MARILYN

To be like them.

JEAN

To finally fit in.

MARILYN

If I cut it all off, all the way down, when it grew back in, it'd grow in black.

JEAN

I asked my brother David, but he just laughed. Even if I pulled it out by the roots, he said, it still wouldn't grow in black.

MARILYN

I had all this lovely, long golden red hair. Everybody was always telling my mother it would be a tragedy to cut it. It would be a crime to wear it short.

JEAN

I wasn't strong enough, but my brother Jim said he would help me do it. We went into my bedroom, and Jim locked the door. He had me hold onto the doorknob, and then he took a big handful of my hair.

He started pulling. It hurt. It burned. I screamed but he wouldn't stop. David pounded on the door, he yelled for Jim to stop. Jim had me by the hair, he was dragging me across the room, my hair started ripping out. I grabbed a hanger from the closet and swung it at Jim as hard as I could. It was an accident, really.

(They are giggling together.)

It caught him through the lip. I had him on the hook of the hanger like a big blackhaired fish.

(Jean stops laughing.)

And then the door gave way. David rushed in, my father right behind him, he took one look at Jim's lip, and came at me with his belt. But David wouldn't let him touch me.

I cried all night and David held me. He said "I'm going to hold you until it's all right." And in the morning, when he let go of me, it was.

And when it grew back in--

MARILYN

It didn't grow in black.

JEAN

No. It didn't grow in black. But it never looked the same.

(They are touching each other's hair, stroking it softly.)

But if I'd had a redhaired sister--

MARILYN

(Whispering)

A redhaired sister...I always wanted a redhaired sister...

JEAN

(Whispering)

All my own.

(They continue to touch and caress, but they don't kiss. They continue until the phone rings.)

MARILYN

(Dreamy)

Do you believe in miracles, Jean?

JEAN

I believe in McDonald's.

MARILYN

You've got a point. McDonald's is not exactly likely. Given all the possibilities for life on earth, McDonald's is not what you'd expect.

Do you think, on the scale of things, that what is happening to us is more probable than McDonald's, or less?

JEAN

(To the Audience, as they embrace, over the Redhead's shoulder.)

The Redhead couldn't believe what was happening to her. Neither could I. We were hypnotized, but wide awake at the same time. No matter what I said, it was right. No matter what the Redhead did, it was perfect. This was love--infinite, redhead, and pure. There were no odd angles, no extra digits, this was it. This was the enchanted redhead world where no matter what story I told, it was always the McDonald's story, and the McDonald's story was anything I goddamn wanted it to be.

I held the Redhead close. It was...confusing...I wanted to hold her, to do nothing but hold her, to not stop holding her, but when we touched, her skin was dry, and rough, like sandpaper, she scraped against my skin. It was confusing...but it was also wonderful. It was part of the redhead world, wasn't it?

(To Marilyn)

Marilyn, I--

MARILYN

Yes?

JEAN
Marilyn, I want to--

MARILYN
Yes?

JEAN
Marilyn, I--

MARILYN
Say it, Jean.

JEAN
(About to kiss Marilyn)
Marilyn, I--
(The phone rings, as the technician brings it to the edge of the stage.)

Jean breaks away from Marilyn, returns to the Tempest.)

To the Audience)
I am a hundred miles away from the Redhead's, on the outskirts of Madison when it happens.

MARILYN
The fire has grown, engulfing the hotel room, billowing out from it like a giant red flare. The ladder has been extended, a fireman smashes the flames back with a stream of water and leans in through the shattered window. He extends his hand. The man in the room looks at him, confused, pushes him aside, and goes out the window. He reaches the ground in less time than it takes to say, less time than it takes to tell.

(The phone rings again as the technician moves it on to the stage.)

JEAN
A call makes its way to my mother and father within an hour. They are listed as credit references on my brother's MasterCard.

(A technician hands Jean a gift-wrapped package as she steps out of the Tempest.)

MARILYN
You know what I want?
(Marilyn lights up a cigarette, offers one to Jean.)

JEAN

This was our third time together. Things were happening fast, even for redheads. And redheads like things fast. It's not how long you make it--it's how you make it long.

(She takes the cigarette.)

MARILYN

I want a cigarette that shuts off at exactly the right instant. I want a Camel Filter that knows.

(Jean surprises Marilyn with the gift. Marilyn opens it, and takes out a sexy negligee. Marilyn puts it on.)

JEAN

I do too. All the things you're thinking, I'm thinking too. I am thinking how you smell, I am thinking that I also wear Ralph Lauren's perfume. I am thinking I like Sam Shepard, Chinese Food, prefer blue ink to black, black clothing over blue. I am thinking about what touching you will do. I am thinking we are in trouble, or in Paradise.

(To the Audience)

Who had time to choose?

(To Marilyn, as she comes out to model the negligee.)

I love you.

MARILYN

I love you.

(They touch each other's hair, then stop.)

Well. What do you think we should do about this?

JEAN

We could call up Bob. He's spreading some very interesting rumors about us.

MARILYN

We could call up Bob, ask him what he's been saying about us, and then do it.

MARILYN/JEAN

He's such a slime.

JEAN

It'd almost be worth it just to do it, just so we could call him up and thank him for introducing us. Rub it in that we're doing it with each other and not with him.

MARILYN

Yes. It's the kind of thing that could kill a slime like Bob.

JEAN

This is getting confusing, Marilyn.

MARILYN

I know.

JEAN

Really, really confusing.

MARILYN

I know.

JEAN

I'm not used to things like this being confusing.

MARILYN

No, not for a redhead.

JEAN

Never for a redhead.

MARILYN

It wasn't even all that confusing when I was with that woman before.

JEAN

It didn't sound confusing.

MARILYN

It wasn't. It was really fun. Good, clean school girl fun.

JEAN

I remember when everything was good clean school girl fun.

MARILYN

Yes.

JEAN

Where I went to school, it was just thought of as part of the liberal arts degree. Since then, I really haven't thought about it at all.

MARILYN

I thought it would be sweet, and funny. And easy. It's always been easy before, right?

JEAN

Always. Even when it looked like love.

MARILYN/JEAN

It always looked like love.

JEAN

But this is hard.

MARILYN

And it is love.

JEAN

And it's confusing.

MARILYN

(She sighs.)

Maybe we should have done it before...before we got to be twins.

JEAN

I wonder why we didn't think of it then.

MARILYN

Just think, it'd be out of the way, we could get on with being the redheads.

JEAN

But we'll still be the redheads after, won't we?

MARILYN

Of course.

JEAN

I mean, even after it's--over?

MARILYN

Jean--who says it's ever going to be over?

JEAN

Oh.

(Beat. They pull away from each other by a fraction of an inch.

To the Audience)

We had reached a critical impasse in the redhaired affair.

MARILYN

(Sighing)

Do you know what life is like, Jean?

JEAN

I know what McDonald's is like.

MARILYN

This can't go on, Jean.

JEAN

I know.

MARILYN

We have to move on--

JEAN

I know.

MARILYN

Next time.

JEAN

All right.

MARILYN

Cross your redhaired heart?

JEAN

Cross my redhaired heart. I promise. Next time.

(Jean returns to the Tempest, as Marilyn lies down in bed, and sleeps.)

To the Audience)

I was almost at the Redhead's. Just another thirty or forty miles. I had not taken the mechanics advice and I had made it. Not only that, but I was making it in record redhaired to redhaired time.

(The technician moves the phone to the Redhead's bedside table. The phone rings, at the Redhead's.)

The Redhead is a heavy sleeper, the Redhead is a deep, unreachable dream. My mother lets it ring and ring and ring.

(The ringing stops.)

An hour later, she'll have to make the call again. But for the moment, for an hour, David's death has been delayed.

And I am racing toward it. Eighty-five, ninety miles an hour. How did the crippled Tempest manage such speeds? Like a horse in the Black Stallion series, whose leg has been shattered in the crush of flying hooves at the starting gate, and runs to the finish line on heart alone.

(The Tempest makes valiant transmission dying noises.)

I had worn the transmission down to the bone, the way the princess in the fairy tale wore out three pairs of stone shoes and broke three stone walking sticks on her way to her true love. She also sucked three stone loaves down to pebbles. I went to...McDonald's.

(The technicians perform the duties of McDonald's employees at a drive-thru. They load a McDonald's bag for Jean, and hand it to her.)

I ordered a quarter pounder with cheese, a large coke, and a large fry. I was ten miles from the Redhead's, but I needed that last sacred pit stop. When your transmission is shot, and reverse is gone, the drive-through is a blessing for the traveler who can not turn back.

(The Tempest races on for an instant, then sputters to a halt, and dies. Jean leaves the Tempest.)

She opens the bag, takes out a French fry, and places it on the ground behind her. She leaves a trail of French fries, as she arrives at the Redhead's.)

I arrived at the Redhead's.

This was it. We had it all mapped out. We had a double redhead plan. Cross our redhaired hearts. We had agreed.

(She bends down, and kisses Marilyn lightly on the forehead.

Marilyn wakes, reaches out to Jean, Jean reaches to embrace her. They both realize Jean has a French fry in her hand.)

Oh--I'll bet you're wondering what I'm doing with this French fry.

MARILYN

As a matter of fact, I am.

JEAN

(To the Audience)

A fall from a great height changes everything.

MARILYN

Stop it Jean--there's no where else to go, Jean--JEAN!

JEAN

Take a penny for instance. If you drop one on the floor, you probably don't even bother picking it up anymore.

MARILYN

You are tired, you come to bed.

JEAN

If you drop a penny from the top of the Empire State Building, however--

MARILYN

You do not tell this story. It is too late. You come to bed. The phone rings.

JEAN

(To Marilyn, triumphant)

But the phone rings *after* I come to bed. It is late when I arrive, I come to bed, and the phone rings *after* I come to bed, right?

MARILYN

Right, but--

JEAN

No buts. Here we go.

A fall from a great height changes everything. If you drop a penny from the top of the Empire State building, that penny transforms itself into the weight of a thousand or more pounds on its way to the ground. On a good day, not too much wind, the penny will be embedded a good foot into the concrete, straight down. If you drop a woman from the top of the Empire State Building, however--

MARILYN

No.

JEAN

No what?

MARILYN

It's not your story.

JEAN

Maybe I didn't start it well enough. All right. I'll start it again. A FALL FROM A GREAT HEIGHT CHANGES--

MARILYN

It's not your story! So it doesn't matter how you start it or if you finish it. The phone rings. Come to bed.

JEAN

I was at McDonald's--

MARILYN

You do not tell a McDonald's story! It is late, you are tired, you come to bed. The phone rings.

JEAN

If the phone hadn't rung, I might have told it.

MARILYN

You didn't.

JEAN

I meant to. I meant to tell you the most magnificent McDonald's story of them all. And maybe it would have taken forever to tell. Maybe, with the laughing, and the holding, and the smoking, I could have made the McDonald's story last until the end of time. Told it until there was only you and me and the McDonald's story. The story of each of the billions sold. You and me in each other's arms.

I ask you--one redhead to another--can it be done?

MARILYN

No.

JEAN

I think you're lying. I think that in a world, a parallel redhead world where the McDonald's story is always being told, the phone doesn't ring. Maybe there are no phones. Maybe Alexander Graham Bell was dropped on his head as an infant or something, I don't know. But in that world, as long as the McDonald's story is being told, David is still alive.

MARILYN

It is late when you arrive.

No. JEAN

You come to bed. MARILYN

JEAN
(To the Audience, desperately, she returns to the Tempest.)
I was at McDonald's, you see, and I'd had all this car trouble. Radiator, water pump, thermostat, it was coming every fifty miles or so--

MARILYN
(She's had enough.)
Jesus Fucking Christ--who the hell do you think you are, Jean!

JEAN
--but nothing my credit card and I couldn't handle. Then the transmission started acting up outside Chicago.

MARILYN
You've got French fries all over my room--

JEAN
I should have turned around and headed home--

MARILYN
--you change the subject every thirty seconds or so--

JEAN
--any sane person would have. I would have, but nooooooooooooo--

MARILYN
And this fucking negligee--

JEAN
I was on my way to the Redhead's. The mythical, magical Redhead's. I'll be safe if I can just make it to the Redhead's.

MARILYN
--don't let me get started on this fucking negligee, I'm warning you--

JEAN

You never loved me.

MARILYN

OH FUCK OFF.

(Pause)

I did love you.

(Pause. Gently)

Once I fell in love with a redhead.

(She reaches out her hand to Jean.)

Once I looked at her. And when she looked at me, we were both the double redheads, the most powerful woman in the world. The Redhead seen by the redhead seeing the Redhead. If we had wanted, we could have been the redhaired death of the world.

JEAN

(Crying)

Then why didn't it work, why?

MARILYN

It is late when you arrive. You are laying a trail of French fries up to my bed.

(She can't help a little smile.)

I did love you. You know I loved you.

(Marilyn gets back into bed, as Jean takes another French fry out of the bag, slowly puts it down. She arrives at the Redhead's, as before, and wakes her, as before.)

JEAN

Oh. I bet you're wondering what I'm doing with this French fry?

MARILYN

Well, as a matter of fact I am.

JEAN

Isn't it obvious?

MARILYN

No.

JEAN

I'm leaving a trail so I can find my way back to the Tempest.

MARILYN

Something's happened to the Tempest--

JEAN

Yes.

(She is laying down more French fries around the bed.)

It's tragic.

(She plops down on the bed.)

It's the transmission

MARILYN

I'm sorry. What is the transmission, really?

JEAN

I have no idea. Except it's gone.

MARILYN

Where did you have to leave the car?

JEAN

Two blocks. Two blocks, and I would have made it. It could be worse. If it had happened out on the highway, I would never have had enough French fries.

MARILYN

Oh, Jean, I'm sorry.

JEAN

Well, anyway, I'm here.

(Pause)

MARILYN

Jean—you've been crying.

JEAN

It was a very difficult parting.

(Pause)

I'll tell you all about it in the morning.

(Pause)

So. Anyway. I got here.

(Pause)

MARILYN

Yes.

JEAN

I've missed you.

MARILYN

I've missed you.

(They start to really kiss, but quickly shift to fast pecks on the cheek. Nervously, stalling:)

So. You made good time, though?

JEAN

Yes. All things considered.

(They attempt to kiss and embrace again, but back off shyly again.)

MARILYN

You...hungry?

JEAN

Well, I stopped at--

MARILYN

Oh, right--

JEAN/MARILYN

McDonald's.

(Pause. They try to kiss again.)

JEAN

But if *you're* hungry--

MARILYN

No, not really, I--

(She leaps out of bed.)

THIS IS MAKING ME CRAZY!

JEAN

The sweet and funny twins lose their minds. Over nothing, really.

MARILYN

We agreed--

JEAN

I know. No more dancing around it.

MARILYN

No more talking it to death.

JEAN

No more talk. Action!

MARILYN

We agreed. I am not seducing you. You are not seducing me. We are both in this together.

MARILYN/JEAN

We both get to be the redhead.

MARILYN

I am not going to wait for you to kiss me. You are not going to wait for me to kiss you.

JEAN

All right.

MARILYN

Okay.

(They both wait. They cannot keep a straight face after a moment or two.)

JEAN

What are you waiting for Marilyn?????

MARILYN

What are you waiting for, Jean?????????

JEAN

Marilyn?

MARILYN

Jean?

JEAN

I'm not the one waiting.

MARILYN

Well it's certainly not me.

JEAN

I think you're waiting...

MARILYN

Not me...

(They are playing cat and mouse on the bed.)

JEAN

You were too--

MARILYN

No, you were the one waiting--

JEAN

I saw you waiting...I definitely saw you waiting...

(To the Audience)

We didn't know it, of course, but we were waiting. For the phone to ring.

MARILYN

You are really asking for it.

(She starts tickling Jean. Jean tickles back.)

JEAN

Who me?

MARILYN

Yes, you!

(She tickles Jean more aggressively.)

Come here--

(She grabs Jean, they kiss for an instant on the lips, Jean pulls back.)

JEAN

You promise we'll still be the redheads?

MARILYN

I promise.

JEAN

No matter what?

MARILYN

We'll be the redheads forever. No matter what.

(They come together, a long true kiss. The phone rings, they explode into laughter.)

Oh, no.

(They are laughing too hard to continue the kiss. They flop on their backs, giggling.)

Should I answer it, or let it ring? Maybe it'll stop.

JEAN

Maybe, if we just ignore it--

MARILYN

Go back to where we were--

JEAN

Now, where were we--

(They try to embrace and kiss again, but the phone keeps ringing, and they're laughing too hard.)

You might as well get it. Maybe it's Bob, with sex tips for girls.

MARILYN

(Marilyn crawls toward the phone.)

How CAN you bring up Bob at a time like this!

(Answering the phone)

Hello?

JEAN

(Sudden light change--spotlight on Jean.)

And so David's Redhaired Death begins like this.

(BLACKOUT)