

JACKIE

By Elfriede Jelinek

Translated by Gitta Honegger

Collaborators: Randy Taraborrelli, Elisabeth Veit, Roland Barthes, and others.

Additional Edits made January 4, 2013

Jackie should appear in a Chanel suit, I think (you would have to have very good reasons to do it differently!). One could also take as a model that last photograph in Central Park (with Maurice Tempelman), the one on the bench, trench coat, wig (hair lost because of chemo), sunglasses, and Hermès scarf. In any case, she should work hard. I imagine all her dead loved ones, her children, well, the embryo and the two dead babies aren't that heavy, but those dead men, Jack, Bobby, Telis ("Ari"), they'll be quite a load, so, how shall I put it, she should drag those dead ones behind her like in a tug-of-war. Or like a Wolga boatman with his boat. Sorry, I can't make it easier for you. At least the blood on her suit doesn't weigh that much, and there is a chunk missing from Jack's skull. The actress should drag the bodies (which are tied to each other) behind her with great effort, which makes her speech increasingly breathless; panting for breath, she will have to stop her monologue at some point because she can't go on. According to her condition and the way she feels on a given day, this will happen sometimes sooner, sometimes later. And then the monologue is done and over. But I am sure you'll come up with something completely different.

Jackie

Well, I suggest myself like my waist, which I don't stress. I wear understated clothes. My waist would be wasted if stressed and instantly cast off, I mean cast in. Oh, no, well, I am about to make a crucial decision and I decide differently: my waist shall not be cast in anything, it should just be suggested. It's not something I would stress about myself. I stick to my shifts or whatever they are called, those little loose dresses little girls wear. I am the little girl inside the woman. I politely take off my self when I am talking to somebody, and yet I also stay, though far above. I prefer to be suspended in all those pictures of myself and dragged along, that way I don't have to do anything. On the other hand there are those furious activities in matters of home furnishing and decorating. Early American, crowned

like a rotting tooth with Louis Seize drapes, that's what they used to call good taste in those days, imagine! No, better not imagine things. Because one never knows which pot feeds the imagination in the soup kitchen of the poor. I had to come and suggest myself to the population, which put its faith in me and got nothing in return. One has to add pomp and majesty to everything except oneself, you should stay simple and that takes guts — especially for the sort of total restraint, the barely breathed trivia—a boldness that turns into complete stillness, as soon as you appear to the public as Our Lady of Miracles. It's a miracle that a picture like me can speak at all! One must turn into the footsteps people hear in front of the door, which make them instantly freeze in fear. That's power. That's not the gateway to power, as they always show it in the magazines. That's power itself, pure power that dispenses its limbs delicately like clothes, and invisible hands take hold of elbows, hands, which drop to their knees in front of themselves, so to speak. You see and don't see power. You have to present your head in beautiful movements, bundle them in a photo, tie them up and make a hostage of yourself. As the lover of yourself. That's why Jack's countless lovers didn't get to me, because they didn't get it. One has to be captured by oneself in order to be able to captivate others. One has to be still, but loudest in that stillness, so that one instills sensations in others as if injecting medication into a patient. People need those sensations, because they don't have them, but people know sensation nevertheless. Sensations are described to them constantly, in the rustle of those colorful rags, in the rush of coming by yourself, which is the safest way, unless it's already too late. Their parents can die, their children can die, their dogs can die, but when one of us dies they throw out all their opportunities to die themselves, like rocks onto a pile, and lift up their snouts and howl. The people are incapable of stepping back, they are even less capable of stepping on us. They'd rather step up to us and be like us. And whatever they are not, they want to have described to them, but it should be something they already know, otherwise they wouldn't get it. For that? Should we live for them?

It's logical somehow, that a shot put an end to all that. Well, no, it all began with that shot. Looking at us with great interest, as if they were seeing themselves in the mirror, that's what people do all the time. They look at us, but actually they see themselves. But a treasure like my self is most appreciated when absent. On the other hand, I can be seen everywhere. With the little jacket during the day. I buy them by the dozens, but they don't

come cheaper. I cast myself as a cast — plaster, but not plastered, and not my waist. My waist isn't cast in plaster, and my hair isn't plastered. It's lacquered. I also have a wig, although I always denied it. Joan, that boozier, gave me away; she was cast out, that also was stressed. And how! Yet she is the only one who produced responsible heirs. Ethel: almost only irresponsible heirs. Myself: so-so. They balance each other out. Only one is left anyway, and she at least is the preserver of order. She lives to preserve me and her father; she won't have to save us, we are saved; not because we had so much to do in life, but because we were. At least she doesn't recite other people's stories. Joan was the most beautiful of us all, but also the least of all. But that Teddy really was an ass. When we still existed as human beings, they called us personalities, but Teddy wasn't even that. Not bad. Drowning in the act — really now! Well, at least the little secretary, not he. He must have come up pretty fast while the car was sinking; it seemed to have sunk instantly. As if the car were a whale, which had to move quickly from land into the sea because fishermen with flashing cameras were after him. That poor little blond fish stayed behind, below, Mary Jo. Yes, unfortunately Teddy was our last chance. Then it was over with the careers in the family. I became a statue, as ordered, with a bleeding man falling on it and no one forgetting his face during those last minutes. People can also cast themselves — to use that term again — by getting cast out and out of sight. Like Joan. My husband also disappeared and remained as the permanent scar of a wound, lit forever by a sanctuary lamp, the eternal flame, so they won't forget us; I am lying there too, with the dead children. John-John, unfortunately, didn't get in, because he didn't serve. The soldiers' cemetery: Only for those who served! He is ashes now, in the ocean, and the boats of the America's Cup are racing through him, that's nice too, isn't it? I wouldn't call it pleasant in the ER, things never turned out well for us there. The public responds absolutely the same way to both the disappearing and the reemerging. The public isn't neutral; it is the deciding factor, the ruler that measures us, the rulers, who fall into our own image, falling over it occasionally, because we overstepped ourselves and that's a sight people can't shake off. Somehow I can't get myself to expose the public, which has a right to every detail, to the sight of the smashed head with the brain oozing into my lap. The doctors understand that; the Secret Service men do too. They have to understand everything, even though we don't get it. Oh, Jack, oh, Jack, I love you, I sob. What else should I say? I can't very well pretend we had

planned to meet in the hospital. We hold each other and gently pat each other's backs, while we cry softly, because so many of us died and now us, too; well, I am dead in any case. It's all right, we tell ourselves, it's all right, let it come out, let it all come out, every last bit of it. I just got over my crying spell, Ethel's is starting just now, Joan appears, tearless, but then she starts to cry as well; no, she doesn't; yes, now her tears finally arrive, if somewhat late, though no one was waiting, no, I see, they were awaited nonetheless. Ready for the river. Get those tears into the ocean of tears! And out of sight. With that look on your face you won't get anywhere, you better take this one! I've tried it already some other place, but it wasn't right for there. That one's like a shoe that takes you silently up the stairs, where you slip and fall down again screaming loudly. Oh, had we just put it on in time, that cute, nonslip soft-shoe routine, that always stops the show. And then filter everything that's coming through a black veil, you'll find the taste incomparable. I held up well, until Ethel came, then I got my self-portrait from my portrait gallery and I stood there, a woman in black up to the straps that tied me to the coffin. In front of me the two small children with their well-bred faces, the little red shoes, the powder blue coats, didn't I doll them up adorably, they'll be remembered for centuries, you'll see. No, unfortunately you won't see. But you can watch it on film five thousand times and you still won't have enough of it and you still won't have seen anything. I did that well, didn't I? All my doing, convincing people of this enchanting death in red and powder blue, of this death in the shape of two small children, cute, like a slender patch of heaven, something like that, this death that's in store for them as well, but it won't be as awesome, I am afraid. They open their mouths to grasp it. The horse without a rider, the empty boots turned upside down in the stirrups. And Jack hated horses! He was allergic to their gorgeous hair. Well, not I. Riding, tennis, skiing, water skiing, that's the way I embrace myself. As soon as I turned my back to him, Jack immediately came on to one woman or another, but that was the cortisone. Turns you on, without having to let go of Mommy's hand. Every day the ladies' man advances, without having taken any lessons, but he is a sloppy learner. He doesn't have to work hard. It comes to him. No woman can escape his personality. He jumps into every woman, but he won't jump into an argument with me. I finally cleared up that thing with Marilyn, he told me he was finished with her before her death, therefore he couldn't be held responsible for it. He said, she had big problems long before they met. I finally came to the conclusion that they

really couldn't blame him for what happened. His father always pays. He pays me too, after all. If I have to marry and stay married, then his father should pay. Mine couldn't do that, paying. I had to marry, there was no other way to disperse my charms, they always needed a permanent address. Not like Sylvia Plath, who was allowed to accept the internship at a woman's magazine and as a consequence was almost poisoned by the crabmeat and mayonnaise, which was offered to the girls, well, that could have saved her a lot of troubles. No one would have offered me that sort of stuff. No one would have dared. You see, I don't need a fellowship for dying. I know how it goes. I already knew. I know how it goes. No matter what. Someone like Plath never becomes an icon, except for stupid women, who think they have gotten a brain of their own. Ridiculous! Where should it come from?!? Where would they use it, except for petty affairs? I wasn't allowed to accept my internship at Vogue. Mother was against it. You have to marry rich, she said. Quite right. Don't lose an entire year. You can use that year for something better. And how long does one have to wait during visiting hours on Judgment Day, when there's no one there to support your arm, because one has to wait forever on the gangway for God to finally arrive and shake hands with you? Even de Gaulle and Khrushchev didn't take that long! Keep in mind that you could — knock on wood — be wooed by any number of men. Time for a poem — absolutely — but make sure your dress works like a poem! That's right! You must adapt! Only when you have gotten everyone's attention have you truly adapted. Lean against flesh, even if it's rotted, as long as it is richly garnished, so that the flesh disappears underneath. No one could have done a better job educating a woman in power than Mother did with me. She doesn't get me, but she's right. She was like that herself. I grasp myself, but there is only air and deep pain, like water that turns into a highway when you water-ski, hard as a road that's ahead of you, but you can still drown in it. That never happens in a sea of tears. There you can always get out. Why should the president learn anything, the women are coming all by themselves. Those men. The first men to become sex symbols through sports. The sisters too. No, that's not true. It's true only today, now that female athletes have to undress. They started it. Those Rah-Rah girls. Always shouting, fighting, kicking, screaming, cheering and then the fire, made of nothing but hot air and winds, fanning, blowing, tumbling on top of each other, women soccer teams, women players, biting, stomping, scratching. They always did that well, those women; their sinews zipping like bows and

arrows all over the place, in all directions, women pushing each other around like cars on a bursting road during rush hour. As if they would be thrown into the air at any moment, if they didn't hold on tight to the earth. Or is it true after all that all of us female figures, stringy as we were, without any meat on our bones, became display windows for our generation and all those coming after? I most of all. Look at us and order something similar right away, because you'll never get the same! We looked as if we would never be subject to decay, there didn't seem to be an ounce of flesh anywhere. We were somehow meatless, healthy, yes, and yet it was our flesh that was always hit the hardest. If it really had been flesh. Instead fate always caught us in a taut safety net and tossed us back up high, no matter what happened. Yes, fate took note of us and then wrote us up in a book, all the way to the end of our best pages. Since then it only copied from us, fate, to the umptth degree. Can't come up with anything new, fate that is. A sprawling novel, extracted from life, but no, we were life itself. They extract from us! But not just a little! No one was ashamed. No woman can keep her figure, only with us it lasts forever. We make the most of our pounds, but there are only a few. We have no bodies. Please, fate, go ahead, help yourself! Just a moment, I have to cast myself into the new shape that is prescribed to me by my clothes, and I advised Mr. Cassini to make the clothes according to my measurements, but in such a way that they never touch my body. Nothing and no one must touch me, if I don't want it. Only fate didn't respect my wish. There, now I have to cover my chewed-down fingernails with the usual long or elbow-length gloves, and now I am done. White is my favorite color; I share it with death, the great whitener. That popular universal cleanser. Nothing gets that clean, unless he gets a hold of it. He always shrugs his shoulders and that's not a sign of regret. With all my expensive clothes, heaps and heaps of fabric, consisting of clean lines, from where the passing shots are played, all well placed, but I scored only once, no, twice, with all those rags, sometimes flat, sometimes billowing voluminously, I want to pretend I have no body. Although I presented it athletic, taut, muscular, in that new variation you could get everywhere during the sixties, even if only a few could afford it, anyway, I did present it, as contentless content, in countless magazines. On television. In the movies. And whatnot. So I was cast. And I cast a spell. Nothing had to be spelled out, as I indicated before. Spelling it all out doesn't necessarily heighten the effect, it can also be heightened by withdrawal. Always discreet, that's important, always reflecting one's charms, let them

appear in the mirror only. The inventor of the strapless evening gown as public servant. My pre-linguistic stage, which you could call the clothes-stage, that is to say form precedes speech, but is present, nonetheless, ready to testify at the trial by the masses, but pundits keep interrupting. They talked about my clothes even more than about myself, and that's saying something! My clothes were my signature. My clothes were more individual than my language, you know, even though they were only lines, which are the basic form, with all that decoration just stuck on, simple, essential. Circle, square, ball, cube. The fitted shape receded from me, because I just let things flow around my waist like the waves around Venus, born from foam. But I was the foam on the dreams of others, strangers. Countless strangers. How strange. How could I have achieved even more? By becoming the dreams themselves? For God's sake. Being inside everybody. How horrible. Here it's always only me, at the windblown shore. The summer crowd is gone, so there's only me. "I love the autumn, and yet I cannot say all the thoughts and things that make one feel this way. I love walking on the angry shore, to watch the angry sea; where summer people were before, but now there's only me." "I love the autumn, and yet I cannot say all the thoughts and things that make one feel this way. I love walking on the angry shore, to watch the angry sea; where summer people were before, but now there's only me." An expression crosses my face, it's running away, it's trying, but it is caught and captured instantly by all the cameras. That's where I am never only me. Never again. It escapes, my dear expression, before I can take care of details, and now it's everywhere, turned into an idiot. No, it never was idiotic, that's not true. I won't be moving much longer the way I used to. I am moving to Greece. I have news for you, Bobby was told. The president has been shot. What? Bobby said. Oh, I... is it serious? Yes, that's what he said, Bobby, but only once, it wasn't necessary to say something like that again. The next time it was already his turn. I think it is serious, he was told. Never again would I be able to accomplish such a thing. Who could top something like that? Sleeping between two oceans — who could do that? I couldn't even get to the piece of skull on the trunk when I crawled on top of it. The next day I couldn't remember doing that. It was not an escape. I can only remember that I saw some of the inside of his skull. It was flesh-colored, kind of soft, you know. Just like clothes, they look hard in a picture, not like a fabric, but in reality they are very soft, if allowed to wrap all around. If let be. I won't let it be; otherwise, I would become human, like a night that's over. Unrepeatable. Not to

mention death, which can't ever be repeated. I still remember what I was thinking — that Jack looks like he has a light headache. He had such a confused expression on his face, and he raised his hand, it must have been the left. I remember screaming, the way only my sisters-in-law screamed on the beach. I slipped from the seat and I had his face in my lap, I remember that clearly. Later, you know, there were pictures of me crawling to the rear of the car. But I don't remember that at all. I carefully breathe devotion into Jack's skull, but actually and clinically, he is already dead. One can't know more than what is shown. That's also the way it is with clothes: One can't know more than what is shown. Clothes are absolutely dead, though they look alive on me. Or am I only alive through my clothes? No matter. At any rate, it's a special quality. I am not sure whether my own or the clothes'. But in the photos they are dead again. One can sense what's moving them. That it is a woman moving them. That's why I was so interested in fashion. It is what it is. And it lets a person disappear in it. There's blood and bits of brain on my suit, but the pink suit will be remembered, because it's a suit that holds my spirit, which keeps learning incessantly, until it can become an editor. In a publishing firm. The shots, remember, came from a textbook depository. Books present the states of things, and the state is always muddled and gets more muddled all the time. Whatever one believes in has to be dropped again right away. Otherwise others start to believe in it too. A dress, on the other hand, must be described, otherwise it doesn't exist. A dress comes into being through description, the emphasis is mine. You also must read the footnotes. This footnote says that the spots in the suit are blood and bits of brain. All else around it are accessories, but it is the suit that counts. We know about the blood and the brain. I am the dress over it; no, the dress is more than myself, it is bigger, it never merges with my shape, it bravely holds its own against me, and it will stay forever in people's memory. What's left of me is my white face, the black mass of hair, like an unshakable mountain, who could shake a mountain? Eyes far apart, no sunglasses ever fit right, because the eyes always try to tear them apart in the middle, like a black panther his prey. A person always looks calm compared to her clothes with the wind blowing through them howling and crying for itself. My clothes surround me like stunned, crying children, they distract from me, but without me they would have been nothing. No, that's not right. They don't need me. They are an awesome sight. But so is every mountain. All those lovers. They never gave me the information I wanted, therefore I made it my

game: to give myself value and that value consisted of solid hair and a soft waist. That Marilyn parodied me in Vogue in that black plaster wig with the outward flip on the bottom. And all those pearl necklaces! That crazy woman. She didn't understand a thing. I am carved out of the space, darkness, created by light. She was the light. That's what she didn't understand. There's nothing more vulnerable than light. One sweep of the hand and it's gone. But darkness remains; night, after all, follows every day. Not bad, how Marilyn did it, that dark wig didn't really look good on her, but the intention was clear, though no one paid attention. It didn't matter. It didn't pay off. Everyone was watching. But it didn't count. I count. No one could ever count as much as I. And Jack would not have wanted to follow her into that dark building with its eternal light. That would have cost him too much. But I say to that pitiful, undone doll, that chalk face: Thinness empowers! I am not thin, but I can look it because I dress smartly. I am at my best, when I show myself, because I am not just light. I am not that fleeting. And if I want to flee, they won't let me. I am my clothes, and my clothes are me; therefore they are more than light. They are what can't be more. They are not what can't be anymore. I mean, how shall I say: There is no flesh underneath. They are what they are, but they are not mortal, because there is no flesh. I do not decompose. I let myself feel completely at home in my body, because it is surrounded by clothes, which make me secure. No, that's not it, either. Oh well, the far-apart eyes and the sensual mouth will be remembered for a long time, but also the clothes. My eyes, my mouth are accessories. My contours are very complicated, but there are all those symbols for them, which are my clothes and I use them all, to inscribe myself in shorthand in the collective unconscious, in people's scrapbooks, there's something in it for everyone. A shorthand, which basically is a variant, without identity or shape. Nothing is secure, that's why I appear to be so secure. A basically insecure woman such as I, who appears secure in the system that's our world. They expect us public figures to be tough, and we have plenty of opportunities to toughen up. Showing the legs! No one before me dared to do that. No waist. Legs instead, all skin and bones! Even on Inauguration Day, when I nearly froze to death in my little woolen coat. But I set myself apart from all the matrons in their long minks. You don't understand how one can put oneself through such a thing? Listen now: It wouldn't work if anything were missing, because then everything would be missing. I mean, something can be missed so distinctly that its existence is no longer a given, even

though a remnant remains. No, that's wrong; there's no room left for existence to play with, so existence itself becomes that space. But only we, the chosen ones, can play in it. The others stand at the fence and try to squeeze through. It doesn't work.

There are no clothes without seams. Well, there you go. No seams — no clothes. Things that go together don't just simply grow together. Who would know better than I? And that's how I proceed with myself. I am the seams, but the fabric between them is missing — oops, now I turned the whole thing around. So: My existence has meaning only when I change stresses. Soon they talk more about my white duchesse gown to benefit the election; about my Vichy checkered shirt plus shorts at the beach to benefit the children; about my pink Chanel suit to accommodate death; and about my red wool suit at the announcement of the landslide election results. No matter. Suddenly I stand there all alone and I start to cry. I keep thinking about those seams I am not. The public fills in what's in between. Everybody sees something else. Seams are there or they aren't; they can be tacked and tackled to the ground, they can be stressed like a waist, not mine, someone else's, mine is stressed out, I have to distract from it. Too many births, more than half in vain. All nonsense. Miscarried or infant's death. I won't ever get over the death of tiny Arabella and baby Patrick. So I give you their father too, children do need their father, plus a piece of miscarriage, nameless, which was the last thing I needed. One was enough. So was the second and the third. I just walked behind them. There was nothing better in store for me. Death can have them all, as far as I am concerned, he finally got me too, death, that shoddy old slip, which he slips off, all by himself, death, that old slippery Dick, oh, well. Jack was attractive beyond words, to men and to women. The drugs didn't hurt in that regard. I took them too, after all. For decades. With a doctor just for the prescriptions. Very good. Those sweet, slim drugs still speak the loudest, but clothes have the advantage that one can see them and they should be seen. Drugs stand behind us all the way, it is so unfair that they can't be seen, that they are outlawed, those poor things, which add such magic to our lives! That's so mean. One can be up and upset all day long and no one notices. One can be up and unjust all day and all night, and no one notices. Strange. Drugs are mankind's dreams, but only a few are able to really experience them. That's good. Our doctor was the best. He always kept his mouth shut, that wonderful man, whom we kept busy as much as possible with all those fabulous slim things

we popped into our mouths. We became like them, fab, slim, and fast. Those things made us tough, terrific, and tenacious. Many thanks though much delayed, but better than never, to our doctor, next door, with the next dose.

Men always talk, they don't like to let others talk, except if it is something unpleasant, then they hire a speaker or they simply let a drug speak inside and through them and guide them ever so miraculously. Tears aren't real, laughter isn't real, energy isn't really a drink; what's real are drugs, especially speed — fantastic, how fast even the laziest can move! Makes you pop right out of yourself. You should try them! You will roll out of yourself like a solitary, miraculous, crystal clear, sparkling tear that's wrested itself from you, but without any effort. However, with us women, whatever we do, it's always also something else that speaks through us, and that is death. There we are, trying to get some goodies from the supermarket shelf, and what addresses us shamelessly? Death. Death in vegetables, death in fish, death in fruit. And it's our fault. It's our fault that things were planted, because we wanted to feed our children and husbands and now it's our fault that the plants turn against us. An example, if I may, for the turnabout: Since 1940 my husband suffered from urethritis — inflammation of the urinary tract as a consequence of gonorrhea. His Addison's disease prevented a cure, his immune system was weakened. An autopsy also revealed a chlamydia infection. It is transmitted exclusively by sexual contact — well now, from whom to whom? You can be sure I didn't bargain for that illness, but I got it anyway. It was Ari who gave me my real pearls; that was much later though; the first thing I got was the disease. My stillbirths and miscarriages were probably a result of my getting infected. Because chlamydia can prevent the amniotic sac from maturing before the fetus has really developed and trigger premature births and miscarriages. No one keeps his shape, as I said earlier; others have said it too. I also told it to my clothes and they listen to me: they totally merge with the shape and they stay, as if nailed in. Because that's all there is. There is no more. With the forced smile in my eyes I glow between my dead children as the eternal light, beaming in the house, but mourning to the outside. The press is there. Ashes, ashes, we all fall down. One they didn't even show me, the other one I didn't even get to see. Yes, Jack infected me and refused to give me the necessary information as to why and whom I have to thank for it. Since I had him to thank for everything. He kisses like a sort of Casanova, no matter whom, the way he generally treats his clientele, the public. Well, Jack

didn't need any stitches, he was seamless, that's clear, I should think. Rather, he was a package, an empty one, frequently opened, nothing in it, a package that only arrives, after he emptied his full loads of secrecies about and over so many women. Nothing was left. Everything was left, but not for me. We don't exist at all. Yet: We are the rulers of the public, who give us our houses and much more: the world around us, really, which we left behind, headed for eternity. We are made for eternity, but we don't know why. And though we walked through the valley of the shadow of death, we are still made for eternity. And though we were wooed in the shadow of death, we were still made for eternity. The light is wrong. You see that light that comes from that woman, Marilyn, that light is wrong, and that is why that poor woman, who deep down did not interest us at all, that is exactly why that poor woman died. We all die, but that woman died with good reason. Because we were not interested. We were more interested in our dead children, whom we didn't even know, than in that woman. And why? I don't know either! I look at her picture like a piece of furniture in my room. And I forbid Jack any interaction with her, out of pity, no misunderstanding now, please, she never was a rival, she wasn't even a rival, she was nothing and nobody, though everyone of course also knew her. Jack won't go down with her, and she won't go down on him, no matter, she doesn't count and that is because she never learned to count. I could have taught her a few things, but she never asked me. Thrift in splurging, that's it. Saving oneself by pretending to give oneself freely, well, I never pretended even that — generosity, I mean. I was sewn by hand, stitch by stitch; I didn't fall apart as quickly as others, though I had plenty of reason for it. The entire right side of the head was gone! All the way down to the right ear! The cerebellum was dangling from the back of his head on a single strand of tissue — that's how one could describe my new dress, which I will be wearing only once, like all my other dresses. Maybe a dress with a loose button. I tried to hold his skull together like the whole family. There was no more. Nothing. All dead, all dead, that's my world now, death. Others have their culture, which I have too, more at any rate than those stupid sisters-in-law, those centers of their circle of friends, everyone has that, but any time we feel any culture rising in us, we are fighting it, because we want to stay our unadulterated selves. And that's what we show the amazed crowds. That we are exclusively ourselves and that we don't need anything or anybody else, we, no, only me, only me, with my teased bouffant, pillbox at the back of the head, my narrow

sheath dresses, tight jackets with big buttons and plain coats. I even told Marilyn, she should save herself for herself, she should watch out for herself, as we, the rich, and those pretending to be, always did, and will always do. I for one wasn't always rich, I was even poor, really poor, but from a rich family, no, we still didn't have to save; we, the rich, even if we are poor, we'll always be there, because we always saved up ourselves. That's why there are so few of us. We hoard ourselves, until there is a vast emptiness around us, the emptiness of death, that is fog moving up and down, that is an afternoon frittered away at the private beach... blow, winds, and crack your cheeks. That's the whole secret. Nothing more to it. Forget piling dollar upon dollar, save yourself. Save yourself. Save yourself. You too, dear Marilyn, but unfortunately you existed in only two versions, as light and as shadow. You would have needed that emptiness, not light and shadow, darkness and lightness. So that everyone would back off you, instead of running to you in the movies. Ridiculous. How can one save anything of oneself, if everyone wants everything of oneself? How could we be saved? It is relatively simple to skimp with light, but if you want to see, you'll need it after all. It's the light that makes all the difference. You, Marilyn, are nothing but light, the greatest uncertainty, sheer nothingness, worse than the table in my room with the fresh flowers on it. Worse than the hat on my head, which barely stayed on my hair, it teetered right on top, while my husband toppled over. At least you went before him. Everything is quite material, Marilyn. But you are not. I say she is not matter, your Marilyn, she does not matter. She is decay, for she is flesh. And even though this flesh consists of light — decay she must. She was already decomposed when her blond shock of hair was still sizzling out of the coffin like the foam from a fire extinguisher. My hat was pinned down, but Marilyn, she always forgot, of course, to pin herself down. Her hair just kept flowing out of the coffin, it wouldn't go in, the biggest humiliation. She could no longer lift her arm. That would never have happened to my hair. My hair was one smooth, cold, black, absolutely lightless surface. Black, as we know, catches the light and doesn't let it out of its cage again. She wasn't used to that, poor woman; then again, she was used to it, always fighting, as she had to, against her always willing flesh, so that it could transform itself completely into light. That was wrong. Something was always left, of course. Crumbs for the mob. The howling dogs right next to her. That shock of hair. Can't get it out of my mind. Sticking out of the coffin like the twirling pom-pom of some tacky cheerleader. She came

from nothing, that blond woman, who isn't blond at all; every week an old Russian woman rubbed peroxide into the roots of her hair, no wonder it wanted to escape, when it thought it could still do it, to escape just once!, no wonder, that she actually consists of nothing, Marilyn, she is nothing, and there is nothing she can do, even if she herself has been left: With her overly voluptuous body, sewn into the glitter dress, it could only whisper, that dress, because it didn't get any air. "Happy Birthday, Mr. President . . ." Give me a break! She's out! Out for good! Out of this world, up, up and away, though curvy and earthbound, hips fleshy, bust and shoulders just about to lose their shape, just about to burst through the seams, can't hold her back, can't hold herself in, can't hold on to the promise of her shape. In short, a person who desperately needs clothes, more so than I, who AM the clothes!, must take off, inevitably, in a hurry. Marilyn. Her hair won't get out alive, I can see that already. The violent draft that's stirred up whenever one aims for a higher social status blew her up and away, forever. Marilyn. So here we are experiencing the first natural birth, I mean the birth of what's natural, of nature itself, and then it's all over so quickly. One can look at nature for hours, but when it's ruined, let it go! Nothing to be done. In my case you will see instead the birth of artifice, which Nature hides so skillfully, that nature itself disappears and with it Life — as if those two had ever been natural! You see, the effect is the same, whether it's the birth of Art or Nature. They both rot once we get close to them, making a mess of them. Always keep your distance! Both nature and art rise from their seats with astonishing speed and since we got them out of balance, there, on their VIP seesaw, one up, one down and then the other way around, on this seesaw it's always you who hits the ground rather roughly. You don't belong to the celebrities, be honest. Belonging could enrich your life, but it's better you stick to your own thoughts. At least they can't be seen, but they do need you, they can't do without you. We can — we, the VIPs. If nature goes, life goes, as I said before, because they are one, if not always in agreement; the breasts, for example, would finally have to decide now whether or not they agree with the hips that come with them. And then the face and the legs should also match; that's asking a bit much, but we, the rich, can ask that of ourselves. We can ask anything of ourselves, because we already have it. Yes, the artificial must not hide its artificiality, it can be the way it is. But when nature gets into the act, although she always acts, though not very artistically, poor Marilyn, then it's getting serious. When the play begins it's getting deadly

serious. In the university of life one can achieve various degrees of independence, but the material, the flesh that's underneath locks itself out and desperately looks for the key, that's how it was with Marilyn. I never shut myself in, and I never shut myself off from the victory of artificiality. That poor woman, she didn't just lose the key, she threw it out the window to make sure she'd never return to herself. She never really was quite there. I decided myself what and who and where I wanted to be. So it goes. The flesh succumbs and it succumbs especially fast when it comes from the suburbs. The flesh comes streaming out of the suburbs, it's coming towards us even when we make a trip to the beach, but it's running right past us, it's running right past us, it's running right past us the whole stream runs to the newsstand to buy pictures of us, even though we are standing right in front of them, in the flesh, but no, we never mingle with the crowd. Well, the flesh doesn't always get by unharmed, but most of the time it does. Who would be interested in it, other than other flesh? Most of the time it misses us, and unfortunately it will have to recognize its limits if it doesn't fit any longer into last year's slacks. My boundary consists of duchesse and wool, and that's where it's going to stay. Marilyn's boundary was her flesh. Poor thing. Light flees us, it goes up and away. She was the light — fleeting, something that's already gone while it's still there. It still gets invested with feelings, but only as a joke. That's what they don't understand, those women. The owner of the free world tells them quickly before he leaves: I am ready to really hurt you, if you don't stop. His little brother also tells them that, only a little later of course, he only comes second. They let him have the second turn. But Marilyn can't hear that anymore, because she was in such a hurry to hurt herself much faster. That nasty light presents itself to us in all its fakeness, dots on the screen, for eternity, which is more fleeting than anything else, because it has no beginning and no end, more fleeting even than the light that projects people onto the screen, and lets them starve to death, no wonder that that kind of thing is catchy and my husband wanted to imitate it, his hands outstretched, but if we want to take anything from him, he disappears. You see, that's how Marilyn was, too. One wants to get a hold of her; there is nothing. Only her hair resisted, I can't get it out of my head, I can't get it out of my head, I can't get it out of my head, I can't get it out of my head, I can't get it out of my head. Yes, the effect is the same with me. They can't get a hold of me either, I am not flesh, I am its foil, I am the dress! My silhouette never changes. I am unchangeable. And the less one is able to hold on to, the

more clearly I am here, but I have no light. I sent it away. In the barrage of flashbulbs, without any privacy, I am completely private by being completely public and one doesn't diminish the other. I can be framed in black, I can be all in black and pull a veil over my face, I can be freshly fallen snow next to Pablo Casals or Isaac Stern, I can shake my head and open my eyes wide, my favorite pose; I can softly breathe my words or warble like a first grader asking the first question in her life, where did they put Abraham Lincoln's bed, because I want to put it right here, I had planned that for a long time, but despite all that: They won't take anything from me. My husband can die, my brother-in-law can die, twenty thousand, hundred thousand other people can die — in the jungle? Yes, why not in the jungle, wherever, why should I care, who cares, at any rate, they are not taking anything from me, because I locked up everything in my clothes, myself included. I am and I am not. I am also a sort of vampire. I am dead, but I won't die. People's wishes, yes, including those regarding me, surge around me, I am the ship on those waves, but everything is locked in and sown up. Pure wool. Pure will! A higher degree of material independence, no, not yet, that comes later. Simply wanting to be, that is only wanting to be and then wanting to be kept as well, that's not possible. Got to tell Marilyn. She only wants to be kept, she's waiting for it. She is waiting for a nice master. That doesn't work. One can't just want to lose oneself in order to be picked up and kept by someone else. That only leads to constant telephone calls, whimpering fear, shaking limbs, telephone calls, telephone calls, telephone calls, sleeping pills, telephone calls, telephone calls and all kinds of forbidden substances. Well, Jack and I did that too for years, decades, but it didn't do us any harm. Took a lot, gave back little. That's how we do it. Luckily Dr. Jacobson remained silent during the trial. I implored him, our jolly host, not to say anything about his menu, except to us, his regular customers. Not like that Dr. Death, who makes sure everyone is talking about him. But even death has to market himself, who would otherwise accept him voluntarily? Poor Marilyn is all I can say, she wanted to get herself to embrace life one more time and with my Jack, of all people. And for this she left her place of work without permission, ran off the shoot when there was nothing left to shoot, just to cut! She must have been crazy. Got fired, that's the way it goes. Discipline is everything; well, we all have that in our family. I am, how shall I say — solid. I am my own piece of furniture. I survive differently, because I am flesh and blood, but at the same time I am not. I am made of this and that dress, this coat, that casual look,

mostly slacks. I am clothing. Yes. Light is needed so that one can see me in my clothes and appreciate the details. Not so Marilyn. Light doesn't need any details inside its circle. O holy halo! Hail, Mary. No blessed virgin here to help. She doesn't help women. She's after men. Like everyone else. I am too. I, however, am after myself, I get on top of myself, to make myself look taller, even though I am not all that short, I get on top of my own flesh and like a hungry vulture I tear pieces of flesh out of myself for the crowd to see that I am also made of flesh. And they really believe it! No, they don't believe it. Even so: That was a good act, wasn't it? There is something that doesn't go away and I don't know what it is. Somehow it irritates me like a splinter under the skin, under my striped beach sweater. But once again, it doesn't do any good. It really hurts to express an emotion for everyone to see it. Believe me. Hello? Anybody home? I am telling you, Ethel says, concluding from my presence and behavior, which does not include an invitation to her, which irritates her quite a bit, so Ethel says for me to hear, well, I am here and then to Joan: Do you have any clue about the pressure that girl is under — Now that she just lost another baby? I am telling you, that girl is on medication. That's what she said, sweet-talking me, comforting me, but I don't even notice, things like that and whatnot, whatever she kept saying about me. But that's always the others: They are not what hell is. They are no matter. So what the hell. Of course I've had it, no question. Nothing to improve, nothing to make worse. We are all under pressure, no question, but I am not to be crushed! They can press and squeeze and whatnot, but nothing will come out, not even water. I stay by myself. I'll tell you my secret: Never rush a crush. I'd rather rush to myself, to comfort myself, but no one is there. There's not even the hair, like Marilyn's. That fell out all by itself quite a while ago, because of the cancer. Isn't that funny? There isn't even any hair to fall out. If I were a body, I'd wonder. I wave my hand in front of my face: Hello, anybody home? But I only look at myself. Why shouldn't I look at myself? That's what everyone else does. No. No one home. Not even my hair. Heavens, will you look at that! Not even my hair is home. Completely uninhabitable! Once again I am in the middle of renovating. I already picked the drapes. They are so great, no one will ask about my hair. Yes, that's how we do it. No question.

End of play.