

**Lightning In A Bottle**

An American Tragedy

**by C J Nolan**

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## **Characters**

**Young Jean** – 18 years old

**Jean** – between 20 and 40 years old

### **Various Off-Stage Male Voices:**

Including Ed Sullivan, Romain Gary, Otto Preminger, Ed Seberg, the FBI and newspaper reporters

## **Setting**

The set is minimal and allows for the use of slides and other multimedia effects. Upstage center is a queen-size bed, which will be Young Jean's focal point. Possibly with a small nightstand on either side. There is a make-up mirror, table and chair down right with a rack of clothes and a partition upstage. Down left is a love seat.

*As house lights come down, we hear “Brahms’ Lullaby” being played from a music box. As the music ends, the house and stage are black. Then --*

**YOUNG JEAN**

I’m burning!!

*(Lights up on Young Jean downstage center, wrapped in a blanket. She sits bolt upright on the floor.)* Oh! Oh, God! What...? Where...? Oh. A dream. That Dream again. *(She gets up and walks aimlessly to the bed.)* I thought it had gone. It should have gone by now. I dream...I dream I’m running. Running through the back yards of my neighborhood. And someone is chasing me. Trying to kill me. And I’m running through the yards...under clotheslines, over bushes and...screaming. But there is no sound. And the ground is on fire and ...he’s right behind me. I can’t see but I think it’s a “he”. *(Pause)* I’ve had this dream for some time now. I don’t know why. *(The phone rings, startling her. She answers.)* Hello? My...my what? Oh, thank you. Yes, thank you. I’m already awake but... thank you. *(Hangs up the phone, laughing)* Oh my gosh! That was my “wake-up” call! I had totally forgotten where I am! *(Stretching)* The voice on the phone said *(in a stuffy British accent)* “Miss Seberg, this is the front desk and this is your 5:30 wake-up call. Breakfast will be served presently.” Ha! I’m used to Momma yelling up the stairs - “Jeanie! Get out of that bed this instant!” *(Looking around)* That’s right. I’m in London! I’m in a hotel! I get room service! And am about to begin filming a major Hollywood motion picture!! Wow... *(Crosses down right to an imaginary window)* Just look . It’s so bright! A new city. A new country. A whole new life on the verge. Everything, everything ... ! Even this room! The curtains! The rug! The telephone! This is the largest bed I have ever slept in! Today is the beginning of every dream I ever had. *(Big Ben tolls in the distance. She looks at her clock.)* Ooops, I forgot. I have to get dressed. Excuse me. *(She crosses to the clothing rack for an outfit. Giggles as she goes behind the partition to change.)* I have *another* press conference this morning. Mr. Preminger wants to parade me in front of the British press. I feel like a trained seal! You know, I bet I’ve spent more time in front of newspaper men and photographers in the past two months than Eisenhower himself! I’ve

**YOUNG JEAN(CONT.)**

decided that reporters are like a bunch of barnyard, cackling hens - with flash bulbs. But I guess they are what Papa would call a “necessary evil”. I just hope it works out because it seems like the whole world is watching.

*(JEAN, age twenty, enters from up left, crossing to the loveseat.)*

**JEAN**

Describe Jean Seberg? Well...she has short hair. It has become a symbol for her. Lately she’s been letting it grow out which delights her to no end because she hates going to hairdressers. In her later years, I have a feeling she’ll gain quite a bit of weight if she’s not careful.

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Coming out to face reporters)* You have a lovely city here - at least from the pictures I’ve seen and from the window and the limousine over here. Um... where does the Queen live?

**JEAN**

I have noticed that on some days she can look like a child, while on others she looks like an old lady. Stress lines - around the mouth - from setting her jaw against the world.

**YOUNG JEAN**

My favorite actors are James Dean and Marlon Brando. I once read that Mr. Brando felt the press wouldn’t leave him be so I wrote him a letter saying if he needed a place to hide, he could stay at my house.

**JEAN**

Let’s see. She is nervous, maybe a bit too anxious . . .

**YOUNG JEAN**

I was thirteen.

**JEAN**

. . . appears remote and aloof to some.

**YOUNG JEAN**

No, he never wrote back.

**JEAN**

But it is really just ... protection. Often great needs or troubles go unspoken. Hmm, and that just shows my Lutheran upbringing. "Suffer in silence," you know. Give it up to God.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Oh, yes, I've grown to love my short haircut. Now I can slip down low in the bathtub! After Saint Joan, I guess I'd like to do something in Technicolor. Thank you. Bye now.

*(YOUNG JEAN waves as she backs offstage. Lights come up full on JEAN)*

**JEAN**

You must admit, what started out as a fairy princess story had a very miserable end! Joan was universally despised. As was I. You'd think I had killed someone! I don't blame them, really. It was the longest movie I ever saw! I was taking acting lessons in front of the largest audience in the world. That's not the best way to go about it. And then to be sent around like a sacrificial lamb to all those cities, one premiere after another, for a month. I wouldn't attend the premiere in my hometown. Mr. Preminger tried again with his next film - to prove he hadn't made a mistake with me. But no one liked that movie either. At least at the advanced age of twenty I'm getting thick skinned toward what people say about me. But it would be nice if someone could say I was improving - if just for my parents' sake. I'm still under contract to Otto, though I can't see myself working with him again. Honestly, I appreciate that if it wasn't for Otto, I would still be "Little Miss Dowdy Mouse" from Iowa. He made me a celebrity - if not an actress. But still ... To be blunt, Otto Preminger is the world's most charming dinner guest and the most sadistic director! It has been the strangest... relationship. Louella Parsons once asked me if I planned to marry Otto! Can you believe it? Of course not, I told her. I'm old enough to be his mother. I mean, he threw worse tantrums than a two-year-old. *(Pause)* During filming? I stood on the balcony of the Carlton Hotel and seriously considered throwing myself off. Part of me refused to give Otto the satisfaction. I was just his gimmick. He used me like a kleenex and threw me away. *(The lights begin to change)* He did bring me to here, though. I guess I went to France the way some people go into analysis. I have very strong feelings for

France... (JEAN *exits.*)

*(Church bells begin to chime and a voice is heard praying in Latin. Over that voice cuts in the voice of Mr. Seberg .)*

**MR. SEBERG**

The whole town's going nutty. You know old Pete Simon? He comes into the pharmacy and can't finish two sentences before he's boo-hooing all over the place. "Oh, Ed, she can do so much good!" and starts again with the water works. But she's a good little girl, my Jeannie. She'll have some fun. Then she'll come back home and do what's right.

*( Lights up full on YOUNG JEAN as she sits on the bed.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Reading a book)* She was thirteen when she first heard the Voices. It says she used to hear her Voices in the bells. That must have been beautiful. To be so young, so simple in her life - and to be called by God! It frightened her at first. I mean, how did God notice her? Her! There were three Popes at the time! And with all the holy men and kings and bishops and clergy around at the time, He chose a young girl. How frightening to be the one? And to prove it to people. Every day - answer their questions, endure their stares. And prop up *their* faith as the wars go on. It was a miracle for sure. *(Pause)* A world like that needs miracles. Actually, miracles are needed everywhere! It also says here Joan was constantly bringing home stray animals. *(Laughs as she closes the book.)* Now that sounds like me. I was always bringing home strays. Sometimes I would find a dead bird or a field mouse on the side of the road and I would bring the poor thing home and give it a proper Christian burial in our backyard. I can almost see Momma shaking her head in the kitchen window. But someone had to care. I care. *(Pause)* In Marshalltown - Iowa, where I'm from? - everyone forgets how it feels to be young. How it feels to be alive! So, I took it as my job to remind everyone. To lead by example. Believe in your dreams. When I was little, my dream was to be a toreador. I would practice in the backyard with a towel from the clothesline. Toro, Toro! Then a brain surgeon, because Papa was a pharmacist. I knew you could grow up to be whatever you wanted if you worked hard and cared about people. Simple, right? But to

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

teach that, you have to be a little noisy and a bit headstrong. And if it wasn't for girls like me, who would the old folks have to shake their fingers at? *(Pause)* You have to maintain faith. Like Joan. Faith in the world of possibilities. And you have to make it happen. I mean, I love my hometown. Really. But I never felt comfortable there, you know? And they've never been comfortable with me! My friend Dawn Quinn and I liked to read together. Oh, books like "Forever Amber" and lots of poetry. *Women's* poetry! And that was considered too thought-provoking, mischievous ... and probably even deviant to the locals. *(Giggles)* So we would sneak behind the Old Soldiers home and read together on the banks of the river. That used to be an old Indian burial ground. We still have a reservation just outside of town. So Dawn and I would spend afternoons reading poetry and staring at the sky and dreaming that the Indian spirits were all around us. Our voices called to them and they answered. Whispering in our ears. Telling their own stories as we all gathered beneath the trees - hidden and worlds away! My favorite writer was Edna St. Vincent Millay - "I drank at every vine/ The last was like the first/ I came upon no wine/ As wonderful as thirst ---"

**JEAN**

*(Entering from up left)* "I gnawed at every root/ I ate of every plant/ I came upon no fruit/ As wonderful as want --"

**YOUNG JEAN**

"Feed the grape and bean/ To the vintner and the monger --"

**JEAN**

"I will lie down lean/ With my thirst and my hunger."

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Pause)* Hello.

**JEAN**

*(Quickly crosses to the dressing table to put on her make-up)* I have to finish dressing. The French opening of my Peter Sellers movie is tonight. I don't really know why I'm going,

**JEAN(cont.)**

my part is so small ... Well, because my contract with Columbia requires me to attend. Can you imagine? Otto calls me one day and says "Jean, I have sold you." How touching. *(Pause)* I probably should feel lucky to still be in pictures at all. Anyway, Francois - my husband - he likes parties and I love to dress up. *(JEAN looks at the girl who has been staring at her the entire time.)* Have you seen my wedding pictures?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Um... no... I - I haven't.

**JEAN**

Here, let me show you! *(She pulls a photo album out from under the bed, sits and opens the book.)* I love these pictures. Most of them were featured in LIFE magazine, you know?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Really? Wow. Oh, look at that gown! You look so beautiful. And that's called a "marriage cup," right?

**JEAN**

Yes, Francois' best man brought it over from Paris.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Is that Francois? Is he really French?

**JEAN**

Yes! He's a young lawyer and filmmaker in Paris.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Wow. He looks like Tony Perkins! *(Embarrassed)* He ... He's very handsome.

**JEAN**

Mmmm and passionate and impulsive. We met on the Riviera. After filming my last movie...

**YOUNG JEAN**

Wait. You're an actress, too?

**JEAN**

So they say ... Anyway, I didn't know anyone in France and... I didn't feel like I could go home... I felt so alone and miserable. I think I spent most of my time on the beach, crying. That's how he found me.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Your White Knight.

**JEAN**

I guess he was. It wasn't always easy. Whether we lived in Paris or New York, some days we had money and some days we collected bottles for deposit. But ours is a wild and passionate love affair. As it should be, I think. Last summer, we had this car - a convertible - cherry red and shiny chrome. Columbia had lent it to me to promote one of those films, so Francois decides we should drive to Florida. Key Largo to be exact because of the Bogart film. He's crazy about movies! Anyway, we finally hit Florida at about eighty miles an hour, laughing and singing. He had his shirt off and I was in my bathing suit. It was a gorgeous and brilliant day! All of a sudden, a police car starts chasing us, lights and sirens, the whole bit. We pull over and Francois, the epitome of the French male ego, starts arguing with this very Southern policeman - in French! I was sure we'd be arrested. So I got out of the car, said "You've yelled enough!" and threw a hundred dollar bill in the nice policeman's direction. And we were off.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Oh, I am so jealous! It sounds just like a movie! Come on. Tell me about the wedding. Every detail!

**JEAN**

The wedding was wonderful, really. I mean, from the moment we got off the plane, it was a real mob scene. So many people and reporters and photographers! We were under a microscope on the biggest day of our lives! I had to get... some pills... for him! I mean, Francois was so tense! He started crying, uncontrollably, at the rehearsal. And... well, no one understood him - it's such a small town! You know, his hair was too long and the

**JEAN(cont.)**

football team threatened to beat him up when he walked out of the dressing room at the store without his pants on... then he locked the keys in the car at the church... and, then, on our way to our outdoor reception? It poured rain.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Oh, no! I'm sorry.

**JEAN**

But - but it was still very magical for me. Very Cinderella. I remember sitting in the limousine on our way to the reception, in my gown and my bouquet in my lap, thinking - I wish I could throw this bouquet to every young girl who has ever put on a slicker and hat and walked in the rain just because it was raining. I wish all their daydreams could come true like mine. *(Just then the phone rings.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

What time is it? *(As she reaches for the phone from the bed, JEAN collects her things and starts to leave)* Hello? Oh! Oh, thank you. Yes. Yes, I'll be ready. *(Hangs up)* My wake up call. I have to...

**JEAN**

You don't want to keep Mr. Preminger waiting.

**YOUNG JEAN**

He wouldn't allow that! There will be a car downstairs in thirty minutes.

**JEAN**

*(As she leaves)* Get used to it. Otto is fond of gilded prisons. *(Exits)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

Wait. What do you mean? *(She's gone)* Bye. *(YOUNG JEAN crosses to behind the dressing screen. She changes into the classic "Joan of Arc" costume during the next speech. This is worn for the rest of the play.)* We had our first reading of the script yesterday and... I think I did all right. But I was petrified! My gosh! First, the room was full of photographers and reporters - as usual. They seem to swarm out of the woodwork

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

whenever I walk into a room. *(Pause)* I should talk to Mr. Preminger about that. Anyway, there I am sitting at a table with John Gielgud and Richard Widmark and some of the greatest British stage actors alive. There is only one other woman in the cast. Everyone was so much older and experienced and... bigger than me! But the whole room was focused on *me* and what *I* was going to say. *(Pause)* It was exciting! I liked it. I mean, there was an air of anticipation over every word I said. All that attention... *(Laughs)* But I think I sounded like an idiot. Even my tongue wouldn't stop shaking. *(She comes out from behind the screen.)* At one point I felt like I had snuck into one of my father's church meetings... *(She tugs on her broadsword and holds it in front of her.)* The script is strange to me. Here we are doing a film about the youngest general in history and there are no scenes of Joan with the soldiers. She seems to spend most of her time talking to the sky, not leading men into battle.

**JEAN**

*(Enters from left, possibly wearing something in the exotic French style - like St. Laurent - of the early Sixties.)* Well, how would you do it?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Do what?

**JEAN**

Lead an army!

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Nervously)* I... I have no idea.

**JEAN**

Of course you do. Think about it. Why, here they are! *(Indicates the audience)* Look at them. Here are roughly seven, eight hundred of France's finest. Ugly, sweating, swearing, hungry, nasty soldiers! Go on. Inspire them. Move them.

**YOUNG JEAN**

But...

**JEAN**

Joan did.

**YOUNG JEAN**

I know Joan did!

**JEAN**

Well, *you're* supposed to be Joan. (*Sounds of a crowd of men come up in the background.*)

You don't have the words written for you, but you should know her heart. Rally the men!

Instill them with Faith. Go on - they're waiting.

**YOUNG JEAN**

(*She pauses, staring at the audience. Then she looks at her sword, feels it's weight in her hand and begins:*) So you are the soldiers of France...

**JEAN**

(*As she backs away, just out of the scene*) Good.

**YOUNG JEAN**

(*As Joan*) I am told you have no more stomach for fighting. That you do not fear dying, but you are terrified of losing. I am told the only courage a French soldier can muster is with a whore after a good meal and too much wine. Well, I don't put much stock in such stories. You - my fine, stout-hearted comrades - you do not lack courage. You do not lack will. You may just be a little weak of Faith. Did not my Lord Beaudricourt provide me with that horse and six of his best men? And horses are expensive! Have I not traveled from my home of Domremy, through enemy lands, without losing one of our company? How many can make such a claim? I have even convinced Charles the Dauphin that I will crown him King of France if he allowed me to lead his army. And he, whom you have marked a coward, stood up to his royal blood and accepted my challenge. Magic? No, my friends. Faith. They believe because I believe... in God. He whose heart breaks to see the injustice done to our people and our country! A country given to the French by God! And He called me to be his soldier and rid the land of the Goddamns! So. Here I am, dressed in boys' clothing, that we soldiers may speak as comrades making sense. No war was ever won

### **YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

without first raising arms. Let us raise our arms with all the strength Heaven can bestow, to loose France from her shackles and set her free again! (*Cheers from the crowd are heard as YOUNG JEAN exits, sword held high as the sound fades out. Then we hear a voice speaking with a French accent.*)

### **ROMAIN GARY**

Like most Americans, Jean is both idealistic and unrealistic. I call it the American naivete. But she loses her naivete rapidly under my influence. Jean is reading Pushkin, Sartre, Dostoyevsky - all in French, of course. (*Chuckles*) You see, she *is* intelligent. Just immature. (*Lights up on the loveseat.*)

### **JEAN**

France has been utterly intoxicating for me! I have three films playing on the Champs Elysses! All because of Breathless. Suddenly, I'm a French icon. Actually, my hair is the icon. These young girls, running into salons all over Paris ordering "la coupe Seberg!" The French critics have always defended my work - even Saint Joan. Godard, Truffaut, Charbol - all these wonderful, spirited young men of Paris. I am eternally grateful for their enthusiasm and friendship. They were a great morale saver. Yet here I am - this awkward American with bad teen-age skin, a flat, stilted French accent and extremely short hair. What could I possibly symbolize? I mean, maybe my character in Breathless has a basic melancholy. A sense of loss, of uncertainty. All young girls feel that. Of course, now that I'm a French actress, the critics at home have finally given me a break. Pauline Kael described my character in the film as "the most terrifyingly simple muse-goddess-bitch in modern movies!" Really! (*Laughs*) I hope my father doesn't read that! It is already difficult to explain my French films to the folks back home. They're confused and I thoroughly understand. In Five Day Lover, I play a wife and mother who spends her afternoons with a gigolo. (*Laughs*) So how can they help but feel I have lost my way? But I follow my instincts as an actor and just keep working. Of course, it would be nice if I could land a decent part in an American film. I haven't had much luck in the States... in films or in

**JEAN(cont.)**

marriage. I am newly divorced from Francois. My fault, I guess. Those French men - they think you have to break in an American woman like a horse! You comb it, run it, train it, beat it... To him, life is all fun! You go from one party to the next, whether here in Paris or Hollywood. I was exhausted. I'm the one who had to work every day. I'm the one who had to worry about my career... about my life... Well, I was married and still alone. I couldn't get to know his friends and I had none of my own. So, that's over and done. *(Pause)* Actually, I did make one new friend. A great friend. His name is Romain Gary. He's the French Ambassador and we met at a party in Los Angeles. He just started talking to me. About philosophy and politics and romance - I was thoroughly swept off my feet! Even though he's nearly twenty years older than me, it hardly mattered. He's taught me so much already, about myself and the world. He's an award winning novelist in France... and... so is his wife. *(Pause. Confidentially to audience -)* You know, in Paris, even if couples get along well with each other, they prefer to cheat as much as possible! Americans divorce. I think it's much more honest that way. Besides, I think *this* "muse-goddess-bitch" would like to have a baby. *(Lights down as she exits. YOUNG JEAN enters, stumbling, and flings herself on the bed.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

I. Am. Exhausted. *(Pause)* Have you ever seen those trained animal acts in the circus? I have great empathy with them. We live a similar life... though I think they eat better. *(Sitting up)* It's not the work. As a devout Lutheran, our strength is in our burdens! Ha! No, I think it's the attention. All this because of a contest! Like it was a prize from Battlecreek, Michigan. Send four box tops and play Joan of Arc in a major motion picture! You know, I figured it was all some gimmick - Preminger's world wide search for a fresh new face. All this publicity, thousands of girls audition and then he hires the real actress he wanted all along. Unbeknownst to me, however, some friends from Marshalltown thought I should be that actress. So, when I came home from the Priscilla Beach Playhouse, where I was doing summer stock, there was a letter waiting. I had won an audition with Mr.

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

Preminger himself! I flipped! But I had to beg Papa to let me go. He wanted me to go to college, find a nice boy, settle down and start a family, like my sister Mary Ann. And I will! I want to but... This is my dream. How could he ask me to throw that away? Finally, we compromised. I could go to Chicago for the audition if I applied to Iowa State and pledged to my sister's sorority. *(Pause)* There were hundreds of girls at the audition, girls from all the big cities and even Europe! I knew they had much more experience. But! Joan was a *country* girl, like *me*! I kept her very simple. And I didn't wear a cross! You see, she was poor and a cross would have been a luxury. Every other girl in the place was wearing a cross. I never saw such an assortment in my life! When I went in for my audition, Mr. Preminger said, "How come you're not wearing a cross?" "My family is too poor", I told him. He laughed out loud. But I was in. Two weeks later, there was a second audition and two weeks after that - the screen test. A week later, I'm on the Ed Sullivan Show! In front of sixty million people! October 21, 1956. Gosh! When life starts happening to you, it can take off pretty fast. Zoom!

**JEAN**

*(JEAN enters from left. Her hair is longer - "Lilith" style. She is three months pregnant and a little unsteady, trying to hide the fact.)* Sometimes too fast, don't you think?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Are you all right?

**JEAN**

*(Defensively)* Yes! Just a bit tired. Why?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Nothing. Nothing. You look... tired.

**JEAN**

I'm just feeling a bit... nauseous, that's all. *(Sits on the love seat and drapes a blanket over herself.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

That must be it. *(Pause)* You... you seem so familiar to me.

**JEAN**

I think we're quite alike. For instance, I think we both could use someone to talk to.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Oh, I would love someone to talk to!

**JEAN**

Come. Sit with me. You're probably homesick. God knows I get homesick all the time.

**YOUNG JEAN**

It would be nice to be home for awhile.

**JEAN**

It always rejuvenates me - the home cooking, the fresh air, the country side. Seeing the family. Momma never seems to age, have you noticed?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Mmm-hmm. *(She is now nestled in JEAN's arms as the older woman strokes her hair.)*

**JEAN**

I always see her the way I remember her most- in the kitchen.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Oh, Momma is a wonderful cook. I know what you mean, though. I think she has either been slicing apples or stirring a roux for most of her life.

**JEAN**

As if you're more aware of the color of her apron than her face.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Yes - but Papa's face I can never forget. That look can wither me. I'm always trying to get him to smile.

**JEAN**

I know.

**YOUNG JEAN**

I guess it's because he works so hard at the pharmacy.

**JEAN**

"Seberg's - the suburban store with the downtown service!"

**YOUNG JEAN**

You never know what he feels unless he's angry! Sometimes I think he hates me.

**JEAN**

He demands so much...

**YOUNG JEAN**

He never judges my sister or brothers like that. They seem to make him happy at will!

**JEAN**

It's all right. Don't take it so hard.

**YOUNG JEAN**

I'm a good girl, aren't I? I try...

**JEAN**

Shhh. It's all right.

**YOUNG JEAN**

He has no idea how much I need him! I keep reaching out, looking for a word or some expression... and nothing. Ever.

**JEAN**

Why don't you get some sleep? You must be tired. Go on. Tomorrow's a big day.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Yes. Well. Goodnight. *(She gets into bed and falls asleep.)*

**JEAN**

*(As the lights focus in on her)* If I had to remember all the things that have happened to me in the last seven years, I'd flip! But I have proven one truth - not all the publicity in the world will make you a star if you are not also an actress. I've learned my craft over the past few films. But, at the age of twenty-five, I think I'm a better actress for one reason - living.

**JEAN(cont.)**

Romain Gary has been my constant champion and tutor. (*Laughs*) And he is a very strict taskmaster when it comes to my European education. I feel transformed lately - neither fish nor fowl as they say. Albert Einstein once said that, compared to an American, Europeans are more pessimistic, more self-conscious and less kind-hearted. So who knows? Maybe I can bridge that gap and foster a new type of European. (*Pause*) Romain will be getting divorced this year. And I think we will marry, though we haven't discussed it yet. My parents are very... anxious about our relationship, so I want to do what's right. For their sake. I'm not a home-wrecker by any means. Still - everyone should open their minds a little. God, you can't just run around, pinning people down like butterflies with a perception of morality. The world just doesn't work that way! (*Pause*) But traditions are very strong at home and I respect that. (*Pause*) I am very happy to be playing an American in America finally. It's surprising, actually. Everything is so big over here - the crew, the sets. The costs! My foreign films were all done on the cheap - and most of them you will never see here, I'm afraid. One recently was filmed in Africa with a young Italian director and I doubt it would pass the censors. In one scene I actually dance with an African man. The film itself is a mess - part documentary, part 1930's Hollywood. On one hand there are interviews with Mobutu and Kasavubu and fascinating bits of the culture. But then there are shots of me in my nightie, combing my hair and taking sleeping pills. (*Laughs dismissively*) But I am very proud of my work in Lilith. I play a troubled young girl placed in a sanitarium by her parents. The movie stars myself, Kim Hunter, Peter Fonda and Warren Beatty... who was enough to drive us all over the edge! It makes me so mad, even now. All my scenes were with Warren. When everyone else was ready to roll, he wanted more time. One more run through, a different camera angle, a new shirt - God knows what! He seemed to have no respect for the director, who was very ill - dying, we found out later. Thank God for Peter Fonda, though. On the last day of shooting, he and some of the crew grabbed young Mr. Beatty and tossed him into a nearby pond! (*Laughs*) Apart from all that, it was an interesting role for me - Lilith. Her language is her body. The gift she wants to give

**JEAN(cont.)**

everyone is her sexual-self. She exudes a kind of rapture that ensnares people. Ensnares herself. I learned a great deal. Before we started, the cast went to visit a real sanitarium. I was heartbroken. Those men and women were all so young, my age and some younger! It is like they never had a chance, you know? Something just overwhelmed them. In some of them you could see a brilliance that just made you ache. Here were these sensitive, thoughtful and intelligent people - and suddenly they'd just go... out of focus. I met a woman there named Rita... sometimes. Sylvia other times. Besides the doubling, she fancied herself God as well and complained endlessly about the work that caused her. This woman could do nothing but knit and, as she was God, she knitted . . . hearts, kidneys, lungs, ovaries... . I learned being alive is a powerful thing, something you have to face open and unguarded. Some people open too wide and it burns them... *(Pause)* I have a great respect for the mentally ill. *(The phone in the room begins to ring.)* Excuse me. *(She carefully exits left. The phone continues to ring until YOUNG JEAN jumps from the bed and runs to center stage.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(As Joan)* My Lord! Forgive my boldness but of late my patience is bound to my youth and both are fleeting! We have not marched in six months. Here we stand before Orleans. It is ours for the taking, my Voices tell me so. Yet, instead of a rallying cry to arms, all we hear is the contemptuous yawn of yet another council! I mean no offense to the Archbishop and his cabinet. They are my elders and masters and I respect them as such. But who is wiser than God? Does not the lion's share of my obedience belong to Him? My Dauphin! Let me be your consul. You trusted me before and a mighty army was gathered under your name and shining victories were won for France. But that army falters with waiting. Our time to strike fades quickly. It is not to "hold out" against the English I have come, but to raise the siege! Ah, the time is so short! My Voices have said I shall only last a year and then the time is lost.... Use me. Let me say to your troops - "To the breach and fear nothing!" Come, my Dauphin, Our Father in Heaven stands with you now. But He won't just hand you

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

France and your kingdom. You must fight! That is why I am here. I am His soldier!

*(Pause)* His soldier. *(Pause)* A soldier... *(She looks down at her sword)* Oh, what am I talking about? I'm a poor excuse for a soldier. Big deal - so I know how to hold a sword and ride a horse. Nine hours yesterday on a horse named "Monster". I have bruises in places you can't even imagine! But I don't know what I'm doing! What makes Joan a soldier? She is still a young girl, but she's fearless. Confident. Strong. I need to find that... thing! What allows her to wear armor and fly into the midst of battle? What makes her risk death? Risk everything? What does it mean to just believe?

**JEAN**

*(Entering, from a distance)* You have to be in a war.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Thank you, Einstein. We haven't had many wars in Iowa.

**JEAN**

You'll be fighting one very soon. Before you know it.

**YOUNG JEAN**

I wish you would leave me alone just now.

**JEAN**

Be wary of them.

**YOUNG JEAN**

What do you want?!

**JEAN**

Be prepared to fight! Protect yourself and don't take your eyes off them.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Who... who am I supposed to be afraid of? Tell me. Who? Where?

**JEAN**

The war starts... now! *(Calling out)* BOYS!

*(Flashbulbs burst all around YOUNG JEAN. They continue to go off intermittently)*

*throughout the scene. There is the murmur of a crowd in the background as the Reporters questions fly at her from different sides of the stage. JEAN watches from the shadows.)*

**REPORTERS**

Miss Seberg? Are you nervous?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Yes. A bit. We start filming today. Our first scene is where Joan . . .

**REPORTERS**

How was your Christmas, Miss Seberg?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Oh, wonderful. We traipsed all over France! From Mass at Domremy to the Cathedral at Rheims then...

**REPORTERS**

What did you think of France?

**YOUNG JEAN**

It was lovely. All the farms and rolling hills reminded me of . . .

**REPORTERS**

What do ya hear from Iowa, Miss Seberg?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Oh... well, um , not a great deal. I...

**REPORTERS**

A lot of people say you're not experienced enough for this part. Care to comment?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Well, I *am* young. But I trust Mr. Preminger knows what he wants and . . .

**REPORTERS**

Is it true you and Mr. Preminger are romantically involved?

**YOUNG JEAN**

What?!

**REPORTERS**

Smile, Miss Seberg.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Why do you say that?

**REPORTERS**

Come on. You're the reason he separated from his wife, right?

**YOUNG JEAN**

That is not true! How dare anyone suggest . .

**REPORTERS**

Smile, Miss Seberg.

**YOUNG JEAN**

But, that . . .

**REPORTERS**

Miss Seberg?

**YOUNG JEAN**

No! I . . .

**REPORTERS**

Smile, Miss Seberg.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Why . . . ?

**REPORTERS**

Smile, Miss Seberg.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Please . . . !

**REPORTERS**

Miss Seberg! (*Big Flash*)

**YOUNG JEAN**

WHAT?! (*Total silence as she looks out at the audience. Quietly, shaken:)* Excuse me . . I

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

have to go now. *(She exits left as lights fade down.)*

**ED SULLIVAN**

*(From off stage)* Right now, we have a real treat in store for you. As you may know, the celebrated director, Otto Preminger, has scoured the globe for the past year in search of a young actress to play the role of Joan of Arc in his next feature film. The search is over and Mr. Preminger has found his new star in a young lady from the great state of Iowa. Here to perform her audition for the role is the young girl who caught lightning in a bottle - Miss Jean Seberg!

*(There is applause which fades out as YOUNG JEAN, as Joan, walks onstage, holding her bandaged shoulder. She kneels and crosses herself.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Joan)* O Holy St. Catherine, Holy St. Margaret - hear the voice of your penitent daughter. My weakness on the field of battle today showed you slight service. For a moment, when I fell, I knew fear. Tears flowed from my pain like a child! My men saw their general mewling like a babe! I beg your forgiveness. Oh, how wonderful to be a man! They make such fine soldiers. To have the strength in your arm to swing your sword with authority and justice! To charge headlong into the battle and know your limbs will match your heart! Well, no British arrow could drive deep enough to keep me from Orleans!! I saw to that. But there is more to come. And I must do better. Oh Catherine - patron of all young maidens. Oh Margaret - who stood firm against the Romans and who the fires could not consume. Speak to me. Show me the path to courage! Give me the words of comfort and strength...

*(As the lights change from the "Joan" special, YOUNG JEAN does hear a sound. It is - jazz! The strains of Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" fill the stage. The young girl slowly gets into the music, relaxing, beginning to dance to the beat and rhythms. From upstage left JEAN enters the scene slowly - snapping her fingers. The two dance together like two young girls would. They should touch and laugh. It is an intimate, special moment between*

*them - very carefree. Slowly, YOUNG JEAN exits upstage right and JEAN comes downstage.)*

**JEAN**

America? America hasn't changed. It's just become more decadent. Whenever you can sell peanut butter and jelly in the same jar - that's decadence! But the country still springs from its roots - tradition, patriotism. Puritanism. All those pillars I was raised on. *(Pause)* It's different in Europe. I'm afraid I've become a bit of a gypsy. Anyone who tempts me with a new place I've never seen before... well, I just shut my eyes and say I'll come. That's been my career. I'm sure my son, Diego, would rather I not travel so much. He's so young. I must seem like some fairy princess to him rather than his mother. But there will be time. We spend important moments together, we really do... *(Pause)* I miss Christmas at home. Diego gets so excited about "Pere Noel's" arrival. It just never fails that I'm in tears on Christmas Eve in our little apartment in Paris. Just remembering what it used to be like... And Romain - ha! - he's a regular Scrooge about these things. Not very romantic. And never frivolous! God, it is hard to keep up with myself. You know? For so long I felt quite exasperated by reporters questions about Iowa - like I was being driven into the ground by a stalk of corn! But now, out here in the open country... This is where we'll film most of "Paint Your Wagon", just over the horizon. At night, the sun sets right in the well between those hills there - see? Times like these, this country's roots just sing through me! But the other roots. The stronger roots America was founded on. Can't you feel them? Sparks of idealism! Waves of revolution! The shaking of old shackles! I hear young voices - here and in Paris and in London - and they fill me with wonder again. Why just last week, I sat in our director's beach house and talked with Bobby Kennedy. He was the guest of honor, making his way through California. We talked for hours about the problems facing this country what with the Watt's riots and the Vietnam War - especially after Tet - and the youth movements and Hollywood's role. If any. And I was giddy by the time I left. He will make a great President. *(Pause)* I met his brother, too. At the White House. Romain and I were invited to dinner and they were quite lovely. I - I swiped a menu... *(Pause)* He was a

**JEAN(cont.)**

great loss for us. *(Pause)* Resilience. That's a word people use to describe me. Which I guess means I wasn't consumed by the fire - yet. This picture will prove my resilience. And I think America will prove its resilience, too. *(JEAN exits)*

**TV REPORTER**

*(As the lights fade, we hear a commotion. A noisy, panicked crowd.)* Oh my God! The Senator has been shot. The Senator has been shot! He's still got the gun. He's waving the gun - Get the gun! Grab the gun!! Break his arm if you have to! Just... oh my god... *(Lights come down as she goes off and YOUNG JEAN enters with a small tape recorder and plants herself in the middle of the bed.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Speaking into a microphone)* Testing, testing. Hello? *(Singing)* A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P is for Princess! *(Giggling, she stops the tape, rewinds and listens for a moment. Then she stops, rewinds and begins again.)* Hi, Dawn! This is your best friend Jean calling from Jolly Olde England! Thank you so much for your letter. It made all the flowers in my room bloom again. It was a true miracle! I meant to write, but last week was so... difficult and... Well then I remembered that your father had a tape recorder so I asked Otto and -Voila! Last week Otto gave me a phonograph and new records by Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra. You know, Dawn, I mean sometimes he acts so nice to me. But other times he can be such a shit! Oh! I'm sorry! *(Laughs)* But it's true! Oh, dear. I've spent too much time around men lately. *(Coquettishly)* Pretty soon I'll acquire a taste for liquor, too! *(Pause)* Things are going well, though. I'm happy. Tired, but happy. The cast and crew have been very nice and are helping me as best they can. *(Pause)* Dawn, sometimes... out here... sometimes I feel like the only thing I have to hold on to is Joan. I keep thinking about that parade in Marshalltown. All those people seemed so happy for me. Cheering and holding up banners. Giving me flowers... I didn't believe them, Dawn. I know those people. They're my neighbors, church members, teachers, classmates. I know where they work. I baby-sat for their kids. God, I even know who comes into the store

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

every Friday for their hemorrhoid medicine! *(Pause)* I'm sorry, but Marshalltown was happy for itself. Not me. Dawn, remember when I was a kid - I don't know, fourteen? - and I joined the NAACP? Papa said everyone would think I was a Communist or something. And they did! You could see the change. But I only joined because they beat that poor black boy from the basketball team - because he asked a white girl to dance! Everyone was just so... pigheaded! I tried to write a book about a Negro boy and a white girl. But I couldn't. I didn't know anything about it. *(Pause)* But those looks. No matter whether I was in the Pep Club or elected Vice President of our class or Lieutenant Governor at Girls State... Those looks never changed. And now all the magazines and newspapers calling me "America's Cinderella". It just makes me wonder how long I have before I turn back into a pumpkin. All I have is Joan. Did you know she never used her sword in battle? Never took a life, never even drew blood! Because she trusted God to deliver her. If I can do right by Joan, then the rest should take care of itself. *(Yawns)* It's getting late. Goodnight, my dear friend. Take care of yourself. Love, Jean. *(She turns off the tape player and crawls under the bed sheets. As the lights dim, the audience hears:)*

**F.B.I.**

Memorandum. June, 1969. Director, F.B.I. Subject - Jean Seberg. Racial Matters, Black Nationalist Groups. In view of information concerning captioned individual, it is desired that you immediately institute a discreet investigation in accordance with existing Bureau instructions. Alert the INS. Considering her prominence in the entertainment field, all luggage searches should be conducted in a manner to preclude any embarrassment to the Bureau.

*(Lights back up as JEAN enters briskly and crosses to the dressing table and begins to apply makeup. This movement, and the lights, wake YOUNG JEAN.)*

**JEAN**

*(Troubled, but trying to remain in control)* My divorce from Romain should be finalized next month. He thought I was having an affair with Clint Eastwood. *(Pause)* Actually,

**JEAN(cont.)**

so did I. It's always a shock to me when people aren't sincere. Hm! Silly me. You know, Romain actually came to the set and challenged him to a duel? Of all people, challenging Clint Eastwood to a duel?!(*She takes two pills out of her purse and tosses them back with her drink. In the mirror, she notices YOUNG JEAN.*) What are you staring at?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Nothing.

**JEAN**

I have been getting these funny looks from people lately. Averted glances as you turn toward them - stop it! There is nothing wrong with me. My stay in L.A. has been a bit... rough. My hands shake sometimes. Look, people are dying around me! My baby brother was killed in a car accident. Bobby Kennedy, Dr. King, Malcolm X - all dead! Killed by cowards. Even my marriage... dead.

**YOUNG JEAN**

I'm sorry.

**JEAN**

(*Increasingly hyper*) Yeah, well, my career seems to be dying as well. Just look at Airport! God! I've had it with Hollywood, let me tell you. The things I've let them do to me! I get cast as Miss Submissive. No will, no way of coping without a man - or *two* in the case of that stupid musical! Always the oversexed wife, always my clothes falling off... It's disgusting! Where does that leave me? A semi-washed up, thirty year old, two-time divorcee... If it hadn't been for Hakim, I'd have killed myself.

**YOUNG JEAN**

No! Don't talk like that. If they treat you so badly, why not just quit?

**JEAN**

And do what? (*Laughs*) "My great ambition is to become immortal!... and then die."

**YOUNG JEAN**

Look. I'm sorry. I've been working so hard and all I get is tired. I - I feel like I'm being

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

left to dangle out here so I don't need any . . .!

**JEAN**

Listen! The most stimulating thing about my American movies is the money. What else matters in the business, right? Money is all that matters. So I'll use my money to fight theirs. You see? Hakim and the Panthers can have my dirty Hollywood money and use it for a just cause. In return, maybe I can regain my self esteem. (*She stands.*) Are you ready?

**YOUNG JEAN**

For what?

**JEAN**

To start our crusade. It's time to rattle swords. To change history.

**YOUNG JEAN**

You're scaring me.

**JEAN**

(*Touching the young girl's cheek*) Don't be afraid. Just watch how it is done. ( JEAN *gathers herself, walks to center stage and faces the audience.*) Good evening. Welcome to my home. Does everyone have a drink? First let me remind you that there are newsletters and pamphlets on the table in the foyer. The collection box is there as well. I am here to introduce to you Hakim Jamal, a man of vision and a leader for his people. A man who was redeemed from the poverty and drugs and despair of his early life in America by the teachings of the late Malcolm X. Not only was Malcolm X his mentor and his own cousin, but Malcolm was also his dearest friend. Hakim will talk to you about the Montessori School in Los Angeles which he established in Malcolm's name to carry on his great work by raising his people's children. Together we ask for your support. (*Pause*) I am honored tonight to see so many luminaries of our humble craft. Most of you are in the business of entertainment, which is the business of fantasies. But Hollywood can be a very isolated community, so much so that we can go for years without truly being touched by the outside world. I think it is time to open up - to be touched. This country is at war. Not just with

**JEAN(cont.)**

other nations, but with itself. It happens daily in your own back yard. A thirty minute drive from here puts you in Watts. But in every city, on every college campus, blacks and whites, students and the poor gather together to be heard. They need and ask for so little. They ask for the killing in Vietnam to end. They ask for help as drugs invade their lives. The blacks ask for respect and equal opportunities. Simple rights guaranteed to all Americans. Rights you and I don't even think about. Don't even use. And the response to these pleas? Governor Reagan has increased the police force, called out the National Guard, initiated espionage against all black and student rights groups and approved state sponsored terrorism against them! Now every major city is on fire. California is engulfed by the flames of hatred! The fact is all our country's ills are connected. The Vietnam War, the subversion of our youth through drugs and the treatment of blacks in our society. They are all one thing. Racism. *(Pause)* Everybody talks about generation gaps, communication gaps, believability gaps. There is only one gap and that is a compassion gap. My goal is to try to bridge that gap. You know, Hakim doesn't put much hope in his chances for survival. There are shadows that fall on all sides of us. I hope with all my heart he is wrong. But I can tell you, if anything were to happen to Hakim or his wife or his children, then I would understand the anger of the black man and I may participate in violence myself. *(She turns and walks back to the table.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

What are you trying to do to me? Who *are* all those people you were talking about? What is happening? *(Immediately, the phone begins to ring.)*

**JEAN**

You'll see. It's your turn now. *(She turns and exits.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Going after the woman)* NO! Talk to me! Why are you showing me this? Don't walk away from me! *(The ringing of the phone gets louder and louder until it merges with the sound of cathedral bells. The girl picks up the broadsword from behind the bed and*

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

*walks center as the lights change. The bells fade away. She is Joan after the coronation.)* I love the bells, don't you? They remind me of my home. The sun on the fields. The children playing. A pot on the fire and my dog warming himself nearby. The bells also remind me of what has come to pass. We have come so far, my King! The English fear us. I have brought you to Rheims. I have seen you crowned King of France, true to my promise. Should not Paris be next? Come! Now, together! *(No response)* Come - a soldier is made for fighting and naught else. *(No response)* Remember the bridge at Orleans? We were alive at that bridge! We can take Paris. Now is the time to strike! *(No response)* Do not turn away. Have you no heart? Why is everyone satisfied? Charlie is satisfied to be named "King". The Archbishop and his companions are indeed satisfied to remain perfumed and well-fed. Well, France is not satisfied and God is not satisfied! Where is your faith? How - how many signs must I show you before you believe God is with me - with us? *(Losing Joan)* Why won't you trust me? I can help you. I can lead you. Please don't...

**JEAN**

*(Entering and crossing right to the girl)* Cut, cut, CUT! God, I have always hated the way you play this scene! You moon-eyed, sniveling wretch. Joan would never cry! You're pleading with them. Them?! They've just written you off! Where is your spark? Your outrage? You are God's *soldier!* Not His cheerleader.

**YOUNG JEAN**

But...but...

**JEAN**

You expect me to believe you fought at Orleans?! Give me that! *(JEAN takes the sword from the girl.)* I'm Joan. *(She comes forward and aggressively addresses the audience.)* Oh your silence deafens me. God save us from the frailty of the male ego. I've seen your eyes. I know your hatred of me. To have a kingdom restored to you not only by a woman - but a girl! You, you commanders, have been forced to follow the Maid these seven months as she did what you could not. Now, you want to play the leaders again. Yet you've learned

**JEAN(cont.)**

nothing! Remember, Dunois, when you closed the gates to keep me from Orleans, the people followed *me*! We overcame your guards and began the march without you. The people have faith. And I will lead them to Paris! And should the Church disown me and my King disown me - so be it. I do not fear being alone. God is alone. France is alone! And I shall keep their good company and leave you to play with your skirts!*(She breaks and turns back to the girl.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

That's not fair! You didn't give me a chance.

**JEAN**

*(Raging, backing her down to the floor.)* You only get ONE chance!! If you take it, you can never go home again. And if you blow it - you cease to exist! *(Slowly, she points the sword at the girl.)* Take this from me.

**YOUNG JEAN**

No.

**JEAN**

Take this from me!!

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Scrambling to her feet, trying to cross the stage)* No! Stay away!

**JEAN**

TAKE IT! *(She pursues the girl until she has her pinned to the bed. JEAN presses the blade to the girls throat.)* I hate you. What you are! *You've* done this to me. Now we will never be the same again. *(She throws the sword to the ground and exits. Blackout.)*

**F.B.I**

*(From offstage)* Memorandum. Jean Seberg, also known as Racial Matters. The information furnished herein concerns an individual who is believed to be covered by the agreement between the F.B.I. and the Secret Service concerning Presidential protection. The individual possesses a potentially dangerous background and has been under active investigation as member of group or organization inimical to the United States of

America. Very truly yours, J. Edgar Hoover.

*(Lights come up on YOUNG JEAN. She moves aimlessly around the room.)*

### YOUNG JEAN

My head is spinning. I can't sleep because it's too early, but I'm too tired to read and I can't go out anyway and I can't sit still! During the day - well, it's great. All my days have been planned for me. Every last moment filled and photographed and documented... then I'm thrust back in here. I'm alternating between such heights of happiness and depression, I think I'll die. One night I'm having dinner with Lawrence Olivier and the next I'm gnawing on cold chicken in my room. Alone in my cell. Harry Belafonte told me that everyone who is an artist works alone. Well, then - here I am. These walls are ganging up on me. All I see is Otto. I can't even speak to anyone on the set! No, no! That would disrupt Otto's plans for me. No input without the Preminger seal of approval. *(Pause)* I don't know them, anyway. I'm not even allowed to have lunch with the cast or the crew. I get sent to my trailer at every break! And then! *Then* he has the nerve to say that *I'm* ruining his picture! Screaming at every time I open my mouth. Yesterday he called me a "stupid cow". On set. In front of everyone! I don't think I can take one more day of taunts and insults from the "great" Otto Preminger. Someday, I swear I'll . . .! *(She flops onto the bed)* Oooooohh! God! What have I done? This was supposed to be my dream come true! Look at me. I've been crying too much. My hands shake sometimes. It's all out of control! *(Pause)* How did my life get so big? When I look back - just to last summer - everything was so much... simpler. During summer stock, my only worry...*(laughs)* my *only* worry was that the girl playing my younger sister was *much* better endowed than I. I felt... well, you know ... it would look wrong... on stage, I mean. You know, with her being my *younger* sister... *(Giggles)* So, for opening night, I went down to the local pharmacy and bought myself a pair of falsies! Well, when I bounced onstage that night, the rest of the kids nearly died laughing. Suddenly, there I was - jutting out bigger than Mae West! *(Laughs)* It didn't really matter. My co-star played Cary Grant to my Grace Kelly all summer. I was really in love with him. *(Pause)* But you know, I've written him four letters since and haven't received

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

one. *(Pause)* I fall in love too often. I tend toward artists and poets. They're so full of passion. And... I like to flirt with boys. A bit. It's fun. Maybe more fun than... you know. I went "all the way" once. Almost two years ago. At the Drive-In. When it was over I thought,"So?" It wasn't special at all. But afterwards I was terrified! God, I could be pregnant! So, my grandma went with me to take the "rabbit test". When it came back negative, I promised God I would never have sex again... or at least for a while. A promise I have kept. Here. Alone. In a strange country, a thousand miles from home. *(She slips under the sheets and goes to sleep as the lights change.)*

**F.B.I.**

*(From offstage)* Memorandum. May, 1970. Jean Seberg, internationally known white movie actress, is reportedly a sex pervert. Subject has been a financial supporter of the Black Panther Party and should be neutralized. Los Angeles plan to publicize Seberg's pregnancy as with a black agitator will cause her embarrassment and serve to cheapen her public image. The Bureau suggests waiting approximately two months so pregnancy is obvious to everyone. Disseminate this information to the honorable John Ehrlichman and Attorney General Mitchell.

*(JEAN enters in a bathrobe. She is seven months pregnant. She is very agitated. She takes the telephone and sits down in front of the bed, lights a cigarette, and dials.)*

**JEAN**

*(Very nervous)* Hello. This is Arisa.... What? Hello?... *(Laughs)* Hey there! What's going on? Did you get my letter?... It should have been there today or tomorrow... I wanted you to know where you can reach me, ok? 'Cause, well... It's all there in my letter. About my health, which has been bad and some... No, it's okay. I just have to shine it on, you know. But I'll be moving around. I'm in Majorca now, but I might go to this clinic in Geneva because of the baby and all... Yeah, so I just wanted someone to know where I am in case Huey needs to contact me when he's in Europe... How is Huey?... Yeah... Yeah! Dig it! Oh plus, ah, I can send, um, some cash soon. Soon... I think. You know, though my situation is

a bit shaky. . . I've really been on edge lately with this whole pregnancy gig. Did I tell you... ? Right! Right, when I was filming in Mexico... well, I was lonely. And there were these student protests going on against the government and I met one of the young leaders . . . and, well... Anyway, my former old man agreed to be father to the child, publicly, which is funny because our divorce was finalized last month. So, we'll have to remarry, but... What's happening in LA? ... Uh huh. Who's writing the book?... JAMAL!? Oh, um, what - what's in it? Do you know? Oh, wow. Does he name names? ... "Caucasian liberals causing dissent... !?" He's so full of shit!... Wha - Wow. That is cold. Well, he had better watch his ass, you know, because - 'cause - I mean - I gave him everything! I kept him and the school and his family afloat the entire time! It was... it... god... You know, I think he doesn't know where he's at and maybe the fact that I, you know, tuned him out completely flipped him back into his whole racist bag... I don't - Listen. Can - can someone discreetly get me a copy so I can... This is so outta sight 'cause what I really need right now is moral support and instead I'm being hit over the head with a hammer! My old man has a book coming out, too. It's about the black movement and LA and... no, no it's very sympathetic. I'll send it to you but it is quite frank and bitter about my involvement and... No, see, it's a bad situation here. Last week I... took too many sleeping pills... I don't know, I don't know!... Huh? Oh, better, but - See, now, if I can just get through this month, then the baby will be over seven months and chances are good but I've been through this all , you know, totally alone and, and I'm afraid and... Yes... yes, I know. Look, um, I'll send you that check today. Okay?... Yeah, you too. Power sister. Bye. (*Hangs up phone and sits on the end of the bed, rocking herself.*) Oh, baby , baby , baby... We're all we have now. I'm sorry I tried to hurt us before. I want you to live so badly, but I get so confused. The world is not so kind. (*Pause*) How's about I read to you, hmmm? (*She gets up and crosses to the loveseat. She flips through a magazine.*) Newsweek. Where's the "people" section? Ah, let's see... Mrs. Kopechne absolves Ted Kennedy of blame - good. Janis Joplin buys a new tombstone for Bessie Smith. Senator Strom Thurmond insists, "I ran no red light and was given no ticket." And - What? "Can a small-town girl from Iowa find happiness in Paris?"

**JEAN(cont.)**

It seems so, despite the ups and downs of her marriage. 'It is wonderful', smiled Jean Seberg, 31, from a hospital bed in Majorca where she is recuperating from complications in her pregnancy. She and French author Romain Gary are reportedly about to remarry even though the baby she expects in October is by a black activist . . ." *(Pause)* That's not true... Damn it... That's Not TRUE! *(Screaming)* LIARS!!! Evil! Vicious! How dare you?! Cowards!! Leave me ALONE! How do YOU know whose seed I carry? Have, have you been watching? Huh? Is that it? Has J. Edgar Hoover been peeking up my dress? Huh? Is that what he wants? Does everyone want to peek up my dress?! WELL FUCK YOU!! *(At this point she is nearly spinning around the room, tearing the magazine to shreds as she rants. YOUNG JEAN begins to wake.)* ROMAIN! We'll sue them. Sue the bastards! They won't get away with this! Oh, yes. Oh, yes!! We'll - We'll . . .Uh! *(Suddenly, she feels a pain in her abdomen. She stops - listens - fearful of what might be happening. Then - again - the pain. She is doubled over by it. She is going into labor.)*

Oh no. Oh God. Not now baby, not now. It's too soon, too soon - UH!  
*(The pain again and she crumbles to the floor. The phone begins to ring.)* Baby please don't don't don't... Oh God! No baby no! AH! *(YOUNG JEAN runs to help her as the ringing, by degrees gets louder and louder.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

Help! Please! Somebody help!

*(Blackout. The ringing stops and a gavel strikes three times.)*

**F.B.I.**

From the desk of J. Edgar Hoover, Federal Bureau of Investigation. This is to inform all offices that American actress Jean Seberg has been placed on Security Index Priority 3 because background is potentially dangerous and is under active investigation as member of group or organization inimical to the United States. In the case of a presidentially declared national emergency, she is to be detained to safeguard the public.

*(There are church bells in the distance. Then, we hear a murmur of voices. We are in a courtroom. A light comes up slowly on YOUNG JEAN, down right. Note: The dressing table and clothes rack should be removed during this blackout.)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(As Joan)* Yes. I have heard my Voices, yesterday and today. In the morning at vespers and later when the Ave Maria was rung. My Voices often come in the bells.

**JEAN**

*(She enters, drink in hand, during the end of the above and sits at the loveseat. She is wearing a scarf over her hair and dark glasses.)* Everyone knows that Riverside Cemetery in Marshalltown is one of the ten most beautiful in the country.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Swear? Have I not sworn enough? I will swear to speak the truth of what I know as it concerns the trial. My Voices have told me to answer boldly and God will comfort me.

**JEAN**

I am very happy I was able to bring some of the Indians from the Tama Reservation to the service. They placed some talismans in her casket, which I am sure are a comfort on her journey.

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(To one accuser)* Sir, why must the angels be naked? Think God cannot afford clothes?

*(To another)* Yes, I would know the Devil if I saw him.

**JEAN**

It was nice. But, did you notice? This time, no reporters came. And it was an open casket for the obvious reasons. Nina Hart Gary was Romain's child - no one can prove otherwise. And she was white. A white child.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Are you calling St. Catherine and St. Michael demons? Did they ever tell me falsehoods? Have I ever treated anyone unjustly? They never counseled me to hate, but said the English have their own country and France should be free.

**JEAN**

The worst is feeling that I've been exiled from my country. I love my country. I thought times were changing and peoples minds were opening up to each other. But everyone in America cultivates their hatreds - whether it's the F.B.I. or the Panthers or the congregation at the First Lutheran! The Panthers? They wanted my celebrity. They wanted my money. But not my whiteness.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Sir, I know not why my Voices do not reveal themselves to the King. Maybe they do and he does not listen. I know naught else but it be God's will.

**JEAN**

I like to have friends laughing around me. I'm what you might call a fellow traveler in leftist causes, so when people are in a jam, they sleep here or hide here. I think it's great! My neighbors pretty much hate us. Either because we're leftists or because of the motor scooters or because we let a dog out without a leash. All *they* ever do is die anyway. *(Pause)* You know, everyone keeps saying I have bad legs...

**YOUNG JEAN**

The angels told me to live rightly and they told me I must go to France. Yes, often they would say 'Leave your village and go to France'. I believed them.

**JEAN**

Hakim came to see me. Got me out of one of those clinics I was visiting... *(Laughs and shows the audience her hand.)* You see these scars? Well, we were at a cafe, arguing and drinking. And I took a cigarette, lit it and crushed it out in his hand! He screamed! Ha! Then I lit another cigarette and slowly burned each knuckle on *my* hand. I was proving a point, you see. That I could withstand the pain of love, while he could not. I think of him every time I look at these...

**YOUNG JEAN**

I wear the clothes of a man because they are the uniform of a soldier. Which is what I am. This is my country, too! All I needed to hear was God's messengers say, "France is

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

bleeding” for me to answer, “How may I serve?” As any man or woman should. To me there seem to be plenty of women for housekeeping, but none can lead an army!

**JEAN**

I had this box... pictures from Nina’s funeral. There were about, oh, nearly three hundred of them. Beautiful pictures. *(Pause)* I liked to look at them. *That’s not so strange, is it?* I am her mother... Anyway, after hours of Jamal’s arguing - telling me I never loved my baby, how could anyone love that lump of flesh *(Pause)* - he made me tear up the pictures. So my fantasy would die. All Nina’s pictures. My baby. Gone. *(Pause)* To finalize the exorcism, he insisted on a three-way - him, me and his disciple. God, how awful...

**YOUNG JEAN**

You think me a heretic because I wear a man’s clothes? If that is all give me a dress and I will go. I can sew and weave with the best of them. But if you mean to send me back to the dungeon, then I will have none of it. I will keep my clothes.

**JEAN**

You know, when you’re young, you are so full of idealism and hope and wonder. But the world is very old and sometimes it doesn’t want to be bothered. I was a sucker. I would always approach people with open arms and purse in hand. They would always take the purse.

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Beginning to breakdown a bit from the questioning)* Archbishop, if I am a prisoner of the Church, why am I not in your hands? Do you not know the danger that exists for me in an English prison? Guarded by English soldiers while I am shackled day and night? There is no love lost between they and I. No gentlemanly courtesy offered. Only my quickness and a grievous lack of sleep has kept me from certain mischief!

**JEAN**

*(Notices the girl’s struggling)* I can only live a mutilated life.

**YOUNG JEAN**

If I am not in a state of grace, may God lead me there. If I am, may He so keep me.

**JEAN**

*(Stubbing out her cigarette)* I can tell you this - the F.B.I. killed my baby. Yes sir. Newsweek and the F.B.I. Nothing short of murder.

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Emotionally drained and battered. She is near tears.)* Take heed what you do. You assume a great... responsibility! How can you use me so? What have I done that you all hate me so... ?

**JEAN**

God Dammit! And you're murdering Joan! *(She walks over to the girl carrying her drink or a newly lit cigarette. She mimics while "Otto" talks.)*

**OTTO**

*(From offstage)* Are we tired now? You're looking pale. Are the lights too bright for you?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Please . . .

**OTTO**

Can't go on? I see. So. I should send all these nice people home so that you can regain your composure and waste more of my time and my film with your spineless performance!!

**YOUNG JEAN**

Stop.

**JEAN**

*(Taking over)* Tears mean nothing, Miss Seberg! That was shit! You are not thinking the part. You are lifeless! As cold as a cucumber!

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Standing)* Go away. Everyone . . .

**JEAN**

*(Attacking)* Useless! Joan the crybaby! Joan the milksop! You wouldn't fool a child.

**JEAN(cont.)**

You've lost her, you know? (*Grabbing the girl*) You have lost Joan! Forever and ever!  
 What a mistake you were . . .

**YOUNG JEAN**

Bitch! YOU BITCH!! (*Slaps JEAN*) What the hell do you know anyway?

(*JEAN backs off and slowly exits*) We did that scene in Joan's cell maybe a thousand times. The floors were so cold. But I wasn't crying enough. *Enough?! (Pause)* You see, when I was little? My grandfather died. And my mother took us all to the wake and there he was – dressed in some old blue suit he never wore. I walked up with my mother and looked at him. His eyes were closed and he had such a stern, unpeaceful face... I never saw anyone who was dead before. And my mother said, "Kiss your grandfather goodbye." I couldn't. I touched his skin and it felt so cold, so brutally cold and alien and I tried to move away, but my mother held on to me. "Kiss your grandfather goodbye!" So I leaned over and pressed my lips to his cheek... My whole body froze. I was terrified I would be stuck there forever and buried with him! I ran home from the funeral parlor and hid in my room and cried all night. So that's what I used for the scene. Whenever I touch the cold, I remember everything. But no! He wanted more pain. He wanted more despair! (*Pause*) But that's not Joan. In her cell? She would think of other things... (*The lights change as the girl comes center stage. As Joan, she kneels in her cell.*) And does God sleep? Is God at peace with Himself? Look at me, Lord! I who am forever on my knees. I who have not heard Your Voice in months. Where are my friends? They can't risk the price of me. I am of no further use to them as either a soldier or a saint. I am expendable. Is that what I am to You? Expendable? No longer will St. Margaret and St. Catherine whisper stirring words in my ears. No - God has taken them back! They said I would be free in three months, but still I am here. They said I would not burn, but there is a pyre and a stake outside waiting for an unconfessed witch! And everyday I refuse, it grows. So much the better for You to see! I see it now. You knew it would end this way! Joan's grand and glorious death in the Name of God! Another martyr to the ranks. Only this time it will be an eighteen year old girl who

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

has seen too much of death and nothing of life! *(Standing now)* Well - only a fool walks into a fire. Forgive me. *(Running from one side of the stage to the other)* Guards! Guards! I will confess!! Tell them all. I will confess... *(She drops back to her knees. Offstage there is the sound of a man's laughter.)*

**OTTO**

*(From offstage)* Ha! What's the matter? Don't you have the *guts* to go on?!

**YOUNG JEAN**

I'LL REHEARSE UNTIL YOU DROP DEAD!! *(The laughter dies away and the lights come back to normal.)* Oh, God. I'm Cinderella.

*(Suddenly JEAN, wearing a night gown, comes running up and grabs her by the wrist.)*

**JEAN**

Hey! Did you hear this? Do you know where Jean Seberg's baby is buried? No? Why - in Paris! Next to Alexandre Dumas and Guy de Maupassant! *(She laughs hysterically as the girl pulls away and runs offstage. After her:)* It was a JOKE!! *(To audience)* See, they were both mulattoes and... oh, never mind. *(The stage is empty except for the bed upstage center. The whole area is lit very bright, almost white. JEAN walks to bed.)*

*(Giggles)* The F.B.I. still looks for me. I hide! But not so much because I would miss them. They are the only ones who come to visit me. Secretly. They ask me for information. Try to make me talk. See, they've been burning me with cigarettes! Here *(shows her hand)* and here! *(Shows her stomach)* But they won't get nothin' from me! *(Pause)* I don't like this place. It's not as nice as the others. "I show my love to all of you and you despise me!!" *(Pause)* I guess Romain ran out of money. I don't think he likes me anymore. He gets so upset when I call Diego from here. But Romain always takes care of me. Did you know he wrote and directed a film just for me? That's right! "Birds In Peru" was one of the first X-rated films in the States. Very steamy! I played a frigid nymphomaniac trying to reach orgasm - with *anyone!* - on an island of dead birds. I think I spent the whole movie on my back. It was very touching. But sex ain't my problem. *(Pause)* Sometimes these hallways

**JEAN(cont.)**

are filled with dead birds. Dying birds. Tragic poets, actors, musicians and artists and love-lost actresses. These are the real people. These are my friends! They clamor and cry for love and help. Only I can hear them. Everyone turns a deaf ear or feeds them dope or kills them. Damn you. Damn You! I have seen a seventeen, eighteen year old girl who was dead with the needle still in her arm! *(Pause)* I don't do drugs. Any pills I take are prescribed to me by my doctor who needs me calm. *(Pause)* Recently? I wrote a letter. I have so little time to write between movies and... and all the projects I have and people to meet and places... I wrote this letter to Ingmar Bergman, because I think I would be wonderful for his movies. I too am a tortured Swedish Protestant. I sleep alone. I eat alone. I drink alone. I'm a natural. *(Pause. Pulls a piece of paper from her pocket)* And I had this letter published in the French papers. "A Love Letter To The Junkies - Une lettre D'Amour Pour Mes Paumes." First there was a part about Jamal. "Hakim Jamal. A.K.A. Al Donaldson. Black Muslim. Ex-addict. Ex-jailbird. The most beautiful man who ever walked the Earth in our time. He is dead, my Jamal. Eight bullets in the stomach in a rocking chair in Roxbury. His home." The De Mau Mau got him. Radical Vietnam brothers. Never did fit in. He liked white women. And *this* part was to the French police. A plea for society's outcasts. "Don't beat up my pals, who are trying painfully to escape their despair. Mind your manners, I beg of you. You know better than I where the smack is, who makes it and who profits by it. So don't break the fingers of some flaked out musician. Be keepers of the peace - OF THE PEACE!" Hmmm... *(Pause)* I wrote Dawn, too. She's a nurse now. So I told her about my pills and my doctors... and I told her... I thought I lost my faith somewhere... Oh, I wish I could knit. Like Rita/Sylvia who thought she was God? I wanted to knit some hearts. You know, Hakim thought he was God. He was wrong. There isn't one... "My candle burns at both ends/It will not last the night/But, ah, my friends and, oh, my foes/It gives a lovely light." *(Pause)* I want to go home. I want to go home. *(Lights fade slowly. JEAN exits.)*

*(Cathedral bells toll the time and we hear the gavel strike. Lights come up slowly on*

YOUNG JEAN *as she walks centers while reading from a document.*)

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(As Joan)* “ I, Joan, commonly called The Maid, a miserable sinner, recognizing the snares of error in which I was held, and being in God’s grace returned by Our Holy Mother Church, confess that I have most grievously sinned in falsely pretending to have revelations from God, His angels and His Saints; in seducing others; and in believing foolishly and lightly; in wearing dissolute and immodest dress against the decency of nature and hair cropped round like a man’s against the modesty of womanhood; in being seditious and idolatrous, adoring and calling up evil spirits. And I vow, swear and promise to you, to my Lord St. Peter, to Our Holy Father the Pope of Rome, His Vicar and His successors; to you, my Lord Bishop, the Lord Inquisitor of the Faith, my judges, that I will never return to my errors, but to always dwell in the Unity of Our Holy Mother Church.” *(Pause as she looks around)* There.

I have made my mark. May I have my chains removed now? You said I would save myself by recanting and I have done so! *(Looking from face to face)* Am I now that much more the criminal? I see. Am I now too dangerous to be freed?! The tender heart of the church will save my flesh from the fire only to imprison it for the rest of my days! Never to ride through the fields in the sun? Never to hear a child’s laughter? Never to feel the good earth and watch the skies again?! No. No, my good judges. Your “kind” sentence is most surely death to me - and a crueller death as well! *(Tears the document to shreds)* Light your fires! Today I will be in Paradise!

*(The roar of a crowd is heard, which plays continually in the background. The girl is “lead” downstage left as JEAN enters and stands at the head of the bed.)*

**JEAN**

*(Lighting a cigarette)* Then what happened to us?

**YOUNG JEAN**

Then we walked outside.

**JEAN**

Into the courtyard . . .

**YOUNG JEAN**

There are extras surrounding the platform where I . . .

**JEAN**

. . .Joan . . .

**YOUNG JEAN**

... am to be burned. I am chained to the stake . . .

**JEAN**

... once around the waist and once around the neck.

**YOUNG JEAN**

My hands and feet are loosely bound . . .

**JEAN**

... for effect.

**YOUNG JEAN**

On Otto's cue, five gas jets light underneath me . . .

**JEAN**

... to simulate fire.

**YOUNG JEAN**

He signals - Something's wrong. There's a man . . .

**JEAN**

. . .running toward me.

**YOUNG JEAN**

The gas jets aren't working!

**JEAN**

An explosion!

**YOUNG JEAN**

The flames! In front of me! My face! I'M BURNING!!

*(The crowd noises cut out abruptly. After a pause, YOUNG JEAN takes her hands from her face and walks, dazed, toward center.)*

**YOUNG JEAN(cont.)**

Someone unchained me. They beat out the fire. It... blew up the length of my body. My hands are burned. And my stomach, here. *(Shows her stomach)* The doctors say I'm fine. But I'll have the scars all my life. All. My. Life! And he kept filming! From beginning to end. And he'll use it, too! He'll have to because I'm not going up there again. You won't burn me! You will never touch me again! I'll show you. Joan's heart didn't burn and neither will mine! You can't hurt me anymore!! No more... *(Flashbulbs go off in all directions, surrounding the girl.)*

**JEAN**

Come on.

**YOUNG JEAN**

They're here.

**JEAN**

I know. Smile.

**YOUNG JEAN**

All the reporters.

**JEAN**

Smile.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Life is over there. And McCall's.

**JEAN**

Smile.

**YOUNG JEAN**

There's Newsweek and Time.

**JEAN**

Smile.

**YOUNG JEAN**

Smile. No one will ever know.

*(YOUNG JEAN has backed up to the bed and slips under the covers. JEAN cradles her and strokes her hair through the next speech.)*

**JEAN**

What else can I tell you? I've been married twice more. The first to a young American who wanted to make movies. We got married in Las Vegas. The second is Algerian and has known me for four months. Every time I thought I was getting better, things got worse. I gained weight. I lost weight. I lost friends - family. I gained nothing. We went to the movies this evening, my husband and I. I'm not in them anymore, but they do let me watch. The film had a screenplay by Romain Gary and it seems to be a huge success. For Romain, the biggest since he met me. I'm happy for him. Very, very happy. *(She picks up a blanket and her car keys from the edge of the bed and walks down center. She kneels on the floor at the edge of the stage. The sound of cars going by, one at a time, can be heard in the background. From her purse she takes a vial of pills, a small bottle of water and an envelope. She looks at the envelope.)* This is the hardest thing. *(She reads the note)*  
"Pardonne moi . . ."

**YOUNG JEAN**

*(Sitting up in bed, overlapping)* "Forgive me . . ."

**JEAN**

"Je ne peux plus vivre avec mes nerfs."

**YOUNG JEAN**

"I can no longer live with my nerves."

**JEAN**

"Comprend moi."

**YOUNG JEAN**

"Understand me."

**JEAN**

"Je sais que tu peux et tu sais que je t'aime."

**YOUNG JEAN**

“I know you can and you know that I love you.”

**JEAN**

“Soit fort.”

**YOUNG JEAN**

“Be strong.”

**JEAN**

“Ta mere qui t’aime . . .”

**YOUNG JEAN**

“Your loving Mother . . .”

*(JEAN puts the note back in the envelope and sets it in front of her. Then she opens the vial of pills. Next the water.)*

**JEAN**

*(Holding the vial in front of her) Now I will eat the bread of sorrow... (Swallows the pills)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

For bread holds no sorrow . . .

**JEAN**

*(Takes water) and drink the water of affliction... (Drinks)*

**YOUNG JEAN**

... and water holds no affliction.

**JEAN**

... for all the days of my life. *(She picks up the blanket and wraps it around her shoulders.*

*The lights start to fade. A car goes by in the distance.)*

*(Quietly) I’m burning.*

**BLACKOUT**

**The End.**