

# SUNSET BOULEVARD



**RADIO  
SCRIPT**

Drama - Sunset Boulevard  
Radio Script

**CAST:**

**JOE GILLIS**  
**MAX VON MAYERLING**  
**ARTIE GREEN (20 lines)**  
**CAPTAIN (5 lines)**

**NORMA DESMOND**  
**BETTY SCHAEFER**  
**YOUNG GUARD (3 lines)**  
**REPO MAN (7 lines)**

**NARRATOR**  
**SHELDRAKE**  
**OLD GUARD (4 lines)**  
**LIEUTENANT (4 lines)**

**AFX 01: HOUSE LIGHTS OUT, STAGE LIGHTS UP FULL**

**BIZ: CAST ENTERS AND TAKES THEIR SEATS**

**DIRECTOR:** Greetings, ladies and gentlemen to this our final production of the 2017-2018 season . . .

Sunset Boulevard, a busy thoroughfare in the heart of Hollywood, California, is far more typical of the motion picture capital than even Hollywood and Vine streets. Here you will find the site of the first motion picture studio, the swank offices of the actors' agents and the night spots. And very far out, almost to the Pacific Ocean, the homes of the screen stars themselves. And this is where tonight's play takes place, in the home of the famous, but forgotten glamorous actress of the silent days, Norma Desmond.

The 1950 movie starred Gloria Swanson, herself one of the most acclaimed women of silent or talking pictures. Her co-star was William Holden, another famous and popular actor of the day. Both Swanson and Holden were nominated for academy awards as lead actors, along with nine other members of the cast and production staff. *Sunset Boulevard* is listed as # 54 of the top 100 all-time movie favorites. Our script was adapted from both the movie and the Lux Radio Theater airing on September 17, 1951. Now, here is our presentation of *Sunset Boulevard*.

**ACT 1****SCENE 1**

**AFX 01B: STAGE LIGHTS SLOWLY DOWN**

**SFX 01: MAJESTIC INTRODUCTION ... THEN DOWN AND OUT**

**AFX 01C: STAGE LIGHTS SLOWLY UP**

**NARRATOR:** Yes, Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood California. It's about five-o'clock in the morning. That's the homicide squad, complete with detectives and newspapermen. A murder has been reported at one of those great big houses, in the ten thousand block. You'll read about it in the late editions, I'm sure. You'll get it over your radios, and see it on television. Because an old-time female movie star is involved -- one of the biggest. But before you hear it all distorted and blown out of proportions; before those Hollywood columnists get their hands on it, maybe you'd like to hear the facts, the truth.

**NARRATOR:** You see, the body of a young man was found floating in the pool of her mansion with two shots in his back and one in his stomach. Nobody important, really. Just a movie writer with a couple of "B" pictures to his credit. The poor dope, he always wanted a swimming pool. Well, in the end Joe Gillis got himself a pool -- only the price turned out to be a little high.

Let's go back about six months and find the day when it all started. He had a couple of stories out that wouldn't sell, and an apartment right above Hollywood and Ivar that wasn't paid for. Come to think of it, a lot of things weren't paid for – his car, his laundry, Dave the delicatessen man . . . He was trying to pound out a western this time, but it was like pulling teeth. He was in a slump.

**SFX 02A:** **SOUND OF A DOOR BUZZER.**

**JOE:** (SHOUTING TO THE DOOR) Yeah?

**SFX 02B:** **SOUND OF A DOOR BUZZER, AGAIN, THEN DOOR OPENS**

**MAN:** Joseph C. Gillis?

**JOE:** That's right.

**MAN:** I've come for the car.

**JOE:** What car?

**MAN:** 1946 Plymouth convertible. California license 97 N 567. Where are the keys?

**JOE:** Why should I give you the keys.

**MAN:** Because the company's played ball with you long enough. Because you're three payments behind. And because we've got a court order. Come on – the keys. Or do you want us to jack it up and haul it away?

**JOE:** Relax, pal. The car isn't here.

**MAN:** Is that so?

**JOE:** I lent it to a friend of mine. He took it up to Palm Springs.

**MAN:** Had to get away for his health, I suppose.

**JOE:** You don't believe me? Look in the garage.

**MAN:** Sure, I believe you, only now I want you to believe me. That car better be back here by noon tomorrow or there's going to be fireworks.

**JOE:** You say the cutest things.

**NARRATOR:** Well, Joe needed about two hundred and ninety dollars and he needed it real quick, or he'd lose his car. It wasn't in Palm Springs and it wasn't in the garage. He was way ahead of the finance company. Joe knew they'd be coming around and wasn't taking any chances, so he kept it a couple of blocks away in a parking lot behind Rudy's Shoeshine Parlor. Rudy never asked any questions. He'd just look at your heels and know the score.

Joe had an original story kicking around Paramount. His agent told him it was dead as a doornail, but he knew a big shot over there who always liked him, and the time had come to take a little advantage of it. His name was Sheldrake. He was a smart producer, with a set of ulcers to prove it. (FADE OUT)

**SHELDRAKE:** (FADE IN) All right, Gillis. You got five minutes. What's your story about?

**JOE:** Well, it - it's about a baseball player, Mr. Sheldrake, a rookie shortstop that's batting 347.

**SHELDRAKE:** Oh?

**JOE:** The poor kid was once mixed up in a holdup.

**SHELDRAKE:** Hmm.

**JOE:** But he's trying to go straight – except there's a bunch of gamblers who won't let him.

**SHELLDRAKE:** So they tell the kid to throw the World Series, or else, huh?

**JOE:** More or less. Only for the ending, I've got a gimmick that's real good. I, uh-- I submitted an outline a while back. I imagine your story department's got a report on it.

**SHELDRAKE:** You got a title?

**JOE:** "Bases Loaded." They're pretty hot about it over at Twentieth, but I think Zanuck's all wet. Can you imagine Ty Power as a shortstop? (HE LAUGHS, NERVOUSLY)

But you've got exactly the man for it right here on this lot -- Alan Ladd. Be a great change of pace for him. There's another thing: it's pretty simple to shoot. Lot of outdoor stuff. Bet you could make the whole thing for under a million. And there's a great little part for Bill Demerest. One of the trainers, an oldtime player who got beamed and goes out of his head sometimes.

**SFX 03:** **KNOCK ON DOOR, THEN DOOR OPENS**

**SHELDRAKE:** Come in, come in.

**BETTY:** Hello, Mr. Sheldrake.

**SHELDRAKE:** Hello.

**BETTY:** On that "Bases Loaded," I have a two-page synopsis. You may want to look at it.

**SHELDRAKE:** Ah, thank you.

**BETTY:** Personally, though, I wouldn't bother.

**SHELDRAKE:** Oh? What's wrong with it?

**BETTY:** It's from hunger.

**SHELDRAKE:** (CLEARS THROAT) I'm sure you'll be very glad to meet Mr. Gillis. He wrote it. This is Miss Schaefer, from the reading department.

**BETTY:** (EMBARRASSED CHUCKLE) And right now I wish I could crawl in a hole and pull it in after me.

**JOE:** (DRY) If I could be of any help, Miss Schaefer--

**BETTY:** I'm sorry, Mr. Gillis, I - I just didn't think it was any good. I found it flat and trite.

**JOE:** Exactly what kind of material do you recommend? James Joyce? Dostoyevsky?

**BETTY:** I just think that pictures should say a little something.

**JOE:** Oh, one of those message kids. Just a story wouldn't do. You'd probably have turned down *Gone With The Wind*.

**SHELDRAKE:** No, that was me. I said, "Who wants to see a Civil War picture?"

**BETTY:** Perhaps the reason I hated "Bases Loaded" is that I knew your name. I'd always heard that you had some talent.

**JOE:** **That was last year. This year I'm trying to make a living.**

**SHELDRAKE:** That'll be all, Miss Schaefer, thank you very much.

**BETTY:** Goodbye, Mr. Gillis.

**JOE:** Goodbye. Next time I'll write *The Naked and the Dead*.

**SFX 04:** **DOOR CLOSING AS BETTY EXITS**

**SHELLDRAKE:** Well, it seems like Zanuck's got himself a baseball picture.

**JOE:** Look, I - I don't want you to think I thought this was gonna win any Academy Award, but-- I'm up a creek, Mr. Sheldrake; I need a job.

**SHELDRAKE:** I haven't got a thing.

**JOE:** Any kind of assignment. Additional dialogue. Rewrite.

**SHELDRAKE:** There's nothing. Not even if you were a relative. Honest.

**JOE:** Mr. Sheldrake--? (EXHALES) Well, could you - could you let me have three hundred bucks as a personal loan? It's for my car. They're after my car.

**SHELDRAKE:** Could I? Gillis, last year somebody talked me into buying a ranch in the valley. So I borrowed the money from the bank to pay for the ranch. This year I had to mortgage the ranch so I could keep up my life insurance so I could borrow on my insurance so I could pay the bank. ... (DRONING ON) Then there's a little matter called income tax. Now, in case you don't . . .

**AFX 02:** **BLACKOUT**

## SCENE 2

**SFX 05:** **CAR STARTING, RUNNING, IDLING ... IN BG**

**AFX 03:** **STAGE LIGHTS UP FULL**

**NARRATOR:** Well, that was that. Joe drove out of the parking lot. No place in particular to go, just driving and trying to think things out. The time had come for him to wrap up the whole Hollywood deal and somehow get back to Ohio. He stopped for a traffic light. Behind him, in the mirror, he saw a very familiar dark-green Dodge business coupe -- the guy from the friendly finance company.

He jumped the light and stepped on the gas

**SFX 06:** **CAR SCRATCHES OFF, RUNS FAST**

. He was on Sunset Boulevard now, heading toward the beach . . . Suddenly a tire blew out

**SFX 07:** **TIRE BLOWS, CAR DOOR OPENS, SHUTS, FOOTSTEPS**

**NARRATOR:** There wasn't time to think twice. He turned off the road into a private driveway, then ducked behind some fancy shrubbery and waited. (BEAT) He was safe.

**NARRATOR:** He had landed himself in the driveway of some big mansion that looked run-down and deserted. At the end of the drive was a lovely sight indeed; a great big empty garage, just standing there going to waste . . . If ever there was a place to stash away a limping car with a hot license number . . .

There was another occupant in that garage; an enormous foreign-built automobile, the kind that burns up ten gallons to a mile. It had a 1932 license plate. Joe figured that's when the owners must have moved out. He also figured it was a cinch he couldn't go back to his apartment, so the thing to do was take a bus for his buddy Artie Green's apartment and stay there till he promoted that three hundred dollars.

Some people say that when you first see the spot where you're going to die it rings a bell inside you. Joe didn't hear any bell. It was just big and still, one of those white elephants crazy movie people built in the crazy twenties.

**NORMA:** (INTERRUPTS, IMPERIOUS) You there! Why have you kept me waiting so long?

**JOE:** (FLUSTERED) Oh, I, uh-- I beg your pardon, but I'm, uh, uh--

**MAX:** (ALSO IMPERIOUS) In here! Come in.

**JOE:** I - (CHUCKLES IN EMBARRASSMENT) - just left my car in the driveway. I had a blow-out. I thought maybe I --

**MAX:** Go inside.

**NORMA:** (MOVING OFF) Have him come up, Max.

**JOE:** Look, maybe I'd better take my car --

**MAX:** (STERN, TO GILLIS) Wipe your feet! Go on. You're not properly dressed for the occasion.

**JOE:** What occasion?

**MAX:** Go up the stairs.

**JOE:** Now, suppose you listen to me for just a minute--

**MAX:** Madame is waiting.

**JOE:** (PUZZLED) For me? (SHRUGS, UNCARING) Okay.

**MAX:** If you need any help, call me. (FADE OUT)

**NARRATOR:** So Joe went up the staircase. It led to a huge bedroom. On a table covered with a Spanish shawl, was a monkey. A dead monkey, he guessed. He just stood there, staring. (FADE OUT)

**NORMA:** (FADE IN) You should have been here hours ago. I put him there because he always liked to be near the fire. Well, I've made up my mind that he be buried in the garden. Uh, any city laws against that?

**JOE:** Uh, I wouldn't know.

**NORMA:** I don't care anyway. I want the coffin to be white. I want it specially lined with satin. White, or maybe deep pink.

**JOE:** Lady, I don't know what you're talking about.

**NORMA:** Maybe red, bright flaming red. Gay. Let's make it gay. (BEAT) Now, I warn you. Don't quote me a fancy price just because I'm rich.

**JOE:** Look, you've got the wrong man, lady. I - I had some trouble with my car. I thought this place was empty--

**NORMA:** (OFFENDED) It is not. Get out.

**JOE:** I'm sorry, and I'm sorry you lost your friend., and I don't think red is the right color.

**NORMA:** Get out!

**JOE:** Wait a minute, haven't I seen you before? I know your face.

**NORMA:** Shall I call my servant?

**JOE:** **You're Norma Desmond. You used to be in silent pictures. You used to be big.**

**NORMA:** **I am big. It's the pictures that got small . . .**

**JOE:** (DRY) Yeah, I - I knew there was something wrong with them.

**NORMA:** They're dead. They're finished. There was a time when they had the eyes of the whole wide world. But that wasn't good enough for them! Ho ho, no They had to have the ears of the world, too. So they opened their big mouths, and out came talk, talk, talk . . .

**JOE:** Yeah, well, that's where the popcorn business comes in. You buy yourself a bag and plug up your ears.

**NORMA:** Look at them in the front offices -- the master minds! They took the idols and smashed them. The Fairbankses, the Chaplins, the Gilberts, the Valentinos. And who have you got now? A lot of pale little frogs croaking pish-posh!



**JOE:** (AMUSED) Well, don't blame me. I'm not a producer, just a writer.

**NORMA:** **You are, are you? (WITH CONTEMPT) Writing words, words. More words! Well, you've made a rope of words and strangled this business! With a microphone right there to catch the last gurgles, and Technicolor to photograph the red, swollen tongue!**

**JOE:** Ssh! You'll wake up the monkey.

**NORMA:** Get out! (CALLS) Max!

**JOE:** Okay, okay, I'm going.

**NORMA:** Just a minute, you. A writer, you said.

**JOE:** (BEAT) Why?

**NORMA:** Are you or aren't you?

**JOE:** Oh, sure, sure. At least that's what it says on my Equity card.

**NORMA:** And you have written pictures, haven't you?

**JOE:** Sure. The last picture I sold was about Okies in the Dust Bowl. But you'd never know, because when it reached the screen, the whole thing played on a torpedo boat somewhere in the South Pacific . . .

**NORMA:** I want to ask you something. Come in here. (BEAT) How long is a movie script these days? I mean how many pages?

**JOE:** Depends upon what it is -- a Donald Duck or a Joan of Arc.

**NORMA:** This is to be a very important picture. I happened to have written the script myself. Took me years. It's the story of Salomé. I - I think I'll have DeMille direct it.

**JOE:** Uh huh.

**NORMA:** We've made a lot of pictures together.

**JOE:** And you'll play Salomé?

**NORMA:** Who else?

**JOE:** Only asking. I, uh-- **I didn't know you were planning a comeback.**

**NORMA:** **I hate that word. It's a return! A return to the millions of people who have never forgiven me for deserting the screen.**

**JOE:** Fair enough.

- NORMA:** (WITH GREAT RELISH) Salomé – the woman who was all woman! What a part! The Princess in love with John the Baptist, dancing the dance of the seven veils. He rejects her, so she demands his head to be chopped off. He's hers at last. His head is on a golden tray. She kisses his cold, dead lips.
- JOE:** (DRY) **They'll love it in Peoria . . .**
- NORMA:** **They'll love it every place!** Read it! Read my manuscript. Read the scene just before she has him killed!
- JOE:** Now, look. Never let another writer read your material, Miss Desmond. He may steal it.
- NORMA:** I'm not afraid. (CALLS) Max! Max! (TO GILLIS) Sit down. Is there enough light?
- JOE:** I've got twenty-twenty vision.
- MAX:** Yes, Madame?
- NORMA:** The young man is staying for a while. Get some champagne. (FADE OUT) (TO GILLIS) I said sit down.

### SCENE 3

**SFX 09:** **MUSIC IN, THEN BEHIND JOE --**

**NARRATOR:** She had a voice like a ring-master's whip. Somehow Joe found himself sitting there reading that mad scrawl of hers. Some letters big and arrogant, others as small as fly-specks. He wondered what a handwriting expert would make of it. Max wheeled in some champagne and some caviar.

Later, Joe found out that Max was the only other person in that grim Sunset castle of hers, and he found out a few other things about him. As for her, she sat there coiled up like a watch spring. Joe could sense her eyes on him behind those dark glasses, defying him not to like what he read. Or maybe begging him, in her own proud way, to like it. It meant so much to her.

It was a cozy set-up: that bundle of raw nerves, and Max, and the dead monkey. Later on, just for comic relief, the real guy arrived with a little coffin. It was all done with great dignity. He must have been a very important chimp, Joe thought, the great grandson of King Kong, maybe . . . (BEAT) It got to be evening. Joe was feeling a little sick at his stomach. It wasn't just that sweet champagne. It was wading through that guck of hers, that mad hodge-podge of melodramatic plots. By then, however, he had started making up a little plot of his own. **(FADE OUT)**

**NORMA:** (IMPATIENT) Well? Well, you're not going to stop reading?

**JOE:** This is, uhh . . . fascinating.

**NORMA:** Of course it is.

**JOE:** Maybe it's a little long and maybe there are some repetitions . . . But after all, you're not a professional writer.

**NORMA:** I wrote that with my heart.

**JOE:** Sure you did. That's what makes it great. All it needs is maybe a little more dialogue.

**NORMA:** What for? **I can say anything I want with my eyes.**

**JOE:** Well, it certainly could use a little editing.

**NORMA:** I will not have it butchered!

**JOE:** Oh, of course not. Just a touch here and there. You can find somebody.

**NORMA:** Who? I'd have to have somebody I could trust. Uh, when were you born? I mean, what sign of the zodiac?

**JOE:** I don't know.

**NORMA:** What month? What date?

**JOE:** Oh, December. December twenty-first.

**NORMA:** Sagittarius. I like Sagittarians. You can trust them.

**JOE:** Thank you.

**NORMA:** (COMES TO A DECISION) I -- I want you to do this work.

**JOE:** Me? (CHUCKLES) Oh, no, I'm busy. I -- I've got a job.

**NORMA:** I don't care.

**JOE:** And I'm pretty expensive. I get five hundred a week.

**NORMA:** I wouldn't worry about money. I'll make it worth your while.

**JOE:** Well, maybe I'd better take it home and look it over there.

**NORMA:** You'll read it here and you'll read it tonight. I won't let it out of my house.

**JOE:** Well, it's getting kind of late.

**NORMA:** Are you married, Mister--?

**JOE:** Uh, the name is Gillis . . . and I'm single.

**NORMA:** Where do you live?

**JOE:** Hollywood. Alto Nido Apartments.

**NORMA:** There's something wrong with your car, you said.

**JOE:** There sure is.

**NORMA:** (CALLING OFF) Max? (TO JOE) You're staying here?

**JOE:** I am?

**NORMA:** Yes you are. There's a room over the garage. Max will take you there. (CALLS) Max! Max! Come here! (FADE OUT)

#### SCENE 4

**SFX 10:** **MUSIC IN, THEN BEHIND JOE --**

**NARRATOR:** She sure could say a lot of things with those pale eyes of hers. They'd been her trade mark. They'd made her the Number One Vamp of another era. There was a rather florid description in an old fan magazine which said: "Her eyes are like two moonlit waterholes, where strange animals come to drink"

Joe took the rest of the script and Max led him to the room over the garage. He felt kind of pleased with the way he had handled the situation. Sure, he'd work on her script. Meanwhile, his car would be safe and the money prospects looked very good indeed. **(FADE OUT)**

**MAX:** I made your bed this afternoon.

**JOE:** Thanks. (ON SECOND THOUGHT) How did you know I was going to stay, this afternoon?

**MAX:** (NO ANSWER) This garage room has not been used for a long time.

**JOE:** Well, it'll never make House Beautiful, but it's okay for one night. (BEAT)

**MAX:** (POINTING) There is the bathroom. I put in soap and a toothbrush.

**JOE:** Thanks. Say, she's quite a character, isn't she? Miss Desmond?

**MAX:** She was the greatest of them all. You wouldn't know. You are too young. In one week, she received seventeen thousand fan letters. Men would bribe her manicurist to get clippings from her fingernails. There was a Maharajah who came all the way from Hyderabad, India to get one of her stockings. Later, he strangled himself with it.

**JOE:** Yeah. I sure turned into an interesting driveway.

**MAX:** You did, sir. Good night, Mr. Gillis.

**SFX 11:** **MUSIC, IN AND BEHIND JOE--**

**NARRATOR:** Joe pegged him as slightly cuckoo, too. A stroke, maybe. Actually, the whole place seemed to have been stricken with a kind of creeping paralysis -- out of beat with the rest of the world, crumbling apart in slow motion. When he woke up the next morning, all of Joe's belongings were there. Suitcases, books, even his typewriter. He threw on some clothes and ran over to the house. **(FADE OUT)**

**JOE:** Hey, you -- Max -- whatever your name is -- what are my things doing here?

**MAX:** I brought them here. I brought them myself.

**JOE:** (UPSET) Is that so?!

**MAX:** Why are you so upset? Is there anything missing?

**JOE:** Well, who said you could? Who asked you to?

**NORMA:** I did. It seemed like a good idea, if we are to work together.

**JOE:** Well, there's nothing in the deal about my staying here.

**NORMA:** You'll like it here. Besides, you can't work in an apartment where you owe three months' rent.

**JOE:** I'll take care of that.

**NORMA:** It's all taken care of. It's all paid for.

**JOE:** I'm used to paying my own bills.

**NORMA:** You proud boy, why didn't you tell me you were having difficulties?

**JOE:** Okay, we'll deduct it from my salary.

**NORMA:** Now, now, don't let's be small about such matters. We won't keep books. Max, unpack Mr. Gillis' things.

**MAX:** It has been done, Madame.

**JOE:** Well, pack 'em up again! I didn't say I was staying!

**NORMA:** Then suppose you make up your mind. Do you want this job or not?

**NARRATOR:** Sure, he wanted the job. He wanted the dough. But it wasn't so simple getting some coherence into those wild hallucinations Miss Desmond called a script. And what made it even tougher was that she was around all the time -- hovering over him, afraid he'd do some injury to that precious brainchild of hers. (FADE OUT)

-- LATER --

**SFX 12:** SOUND OF TYPEWRITER CLACKING

**NORMA:** (FADE IN) What are those papers on the floor?

**JOE:** Oh, just a scene I threw out.

**NORMA:** What scene?

**JOE:** Well, the one where you go to the slave market. It's better to cut directly to John the Baptist.

**NORMA:** Cut away from me?

**JOE:** Well, honestly, it's a little old hat. They don't want to see you in every scene.

**NORMA:** Don't they? Then why do they write me fan letters every day? Why do they beg me for my photographs? Why? Because they want to see me -- me! -- Norma Desmond!

**JOE:** (RESIGNED) Okay, okay.

**NORMA:** Put those pages back there, where they belong. (FADE OUT)

## SCENE 5

**SFX 13A:** MUSIC, IN AND BEHIND JOE --

**NARRATOR:** So he put them back. He figured she was like a sleepwalker -- she might fall and break her neck. That was it. She was still sleepwalking along the giddy heights of a lost career -- plain crazy when it came to that one subject -- her celluloid self, the great Norma Desmond.

**SFX 13B:** MUSIC OUT, SOUND OF TYPEWRITER, AGAIN

**NARRATOR:** It wasn't all work, of course. Sometimes there'd be little bridge games at the house. Friends of hers, actors. Dim figures you might still remember from silent pictures. Joe thought of them as her waxworks -- fragile and old. They'd come and they'd go, quietly like ghosts. They never spoke to me. I don't believe they even asked her who I was.

On other nights, Max would operate a motion picture machine. They'd see a movie, right in her living room. She'd sit very close to him and she'd smell of tuberoses, not one of his favorite perfumes, not by a long shot. They were silent movies, of course. I guess I don't have to tell you who the star was. They were always her pictures. That's all she wanted to see. (FADE OUT)

**NORMA:** (FADE IN) Still wonderful, isn't it? And no dialogue. **We didn't need dialogue. We had faces!** There just aren't any faces like that any more. Maybe one – Garbo. Oh, those idiot producers. Those imbeciles! Haven't they got any eyes?! Have they forgotten what a star looks like? ! I'll show them! I'll be up there again! So help me! (FADE OUT)

**SFX 13C:           EXCITING TRANSITION**

**NARRATOR:** Norma Desmond! Sometimes Joe felt like he couldn't breathe in that room, it was so thick with Norma Desmonds. Staring at him, crowding him, stampeding him – Norma Desmonds, more Norma Desmonds, and still more Norma Desmonds.

**SFX 13D:           SOUND OF TYPEWRITER CLACKING**

**MAX:** Mr. Gillis, some men are here. They asked for you.

**JOE:** I'm not here.

**MAX:** That's what I told them

**JOE:** Good.

**MAX:** They found your car in the garage. They are going to tow it away.

**JOE:** (NARRATES) Norma was in the main room playing bridge with some of her old cronies.

(TO NORMA) Norma, I must speak with you.

**NORMA:** Not now, my dear. I'm playing three no trump. Oh, and will you get us the ashtray?

**JOE:** (STAGE WHISPER) They've come for my car.

**NORMA:** Please. Now I've forgotten how many spades are out.

JOE: (STAGE WHISPER) I need some money right now.

NORMA: Can't you wait until I'm playing dummy?

JOE: (STAGE WHISPER) No!

NORMA: (ANGRILY) Please!

**SFX 14: SOUND OF A CAR BEING WINCHED AWAY**

NORMA: Now, what is it? Where's the fire?

JOE: I've lost my car.

NORMA: Oh . . . and I thought it was a matter of life and death.

JOE: Well, it is to me. That's why I took this job!

NORMA: Now you're being silly. We don't need two cars. We have a car. And not one of those cheap new things made of chromium and spit. An Isotta-Fraschini. Have you ever heard of an Isotta-Fraschini? All handmade. Cost me twenty-eight thousand dollars.

And that's a dreadful shirt you're wearing, Joe.

JOE: Yeah? What's wrong with it?

NORMA: Nothing, if you work in a filling station. And I'm getting rather bored with that same sport jacket, and the same baggy pants. Max?

MAX: Yes, Madame?

NORMA: Take us to a good men's shop in town. The very best. Take us there now!

JOE: But I don't need any clothes, and I certainly don't want you buying them for me.

NORMA: Why begrudge me a little fun? I just want you to look nice. And, um . . . must you chew gum?

**LFX 04: SLOW BLACKOUT**

## SCENE 6

**LFX 05: STAGE LIGHTS UP FULL**

**SFX 15A: CURIOUS TRANSITION**



**NARRATOR:** It was the last week in December, the rains came. They came right though the old roof of Joe's room over the garage. So she had Max move him into the main house. He didn't much like the idea but it was better than sleeping in a raincoat and galoshes.

**SFX 15B:** PLEASANT MUSIC IN. THEN BEHIND JOE --

**MAX:** You should be quite comfortable here, Mr. Gillis.

**JOE:** Uh huh. Whose room was this?

**MAX:** It was the room of the husband. Or the husbands, I should say. Madame has been married three times.

**JOE:** Oh. Hey, what's the matter with the door? There isn't any lock.

**MAX:** There are no locks anywhere in this house, sir.

**JOE:** How come?

**MAX:** Madame has had some moments of melancholy. There have been some attempts at suicide.

**JOE:** Oh. I guess it would be hard to take, being sent to the showers - - even if you've got platinum plumbing.

**MAX:** We have to be very careful. No sleeping pills, no razor blades. We turned off the gas in Madame's bedroom.

**JOE:** Why? Her career? She got enough out of it. She's not forgotten. She still gets those fan letters.

**MAX:** Those letters? I would not look too closely at the postmarks.

**JOE:** (BEAT, REALIZES) You send them. Is that it, Max?

**MAX:** I'd better press your evening clothes, sir. Mr. Gillis has not forgotten Madame's New Year's Eve party. (FADE OUT)

**NARRATOR:** No. No, Joe hadn't forgotten the party. He dreaded it, but he was curious as to who would be there. He heard voices; Max, ushering in the orchestra. A little later on, they started to play.

**SFX 16:** MUSIC, ORCHESTRA PLAYS ... DOWN IN BG

**NARRATOR:** He went downstairs. This was the night he was to find out how she felt about him. He'd been an idiot not to have sensed it coming. That sad, embarrassing, revelation. She was dancing alone, a tango. And then she saw him and came over to the foot of the stairs. If there had been any hope of ducking that New Year's Eve party he simply wouldn't have been there. As it was, however, he had put on that dinner jacket from the best shop in town and went downstairs. (FADE OUT)

**NORMA:** Joe, you look absolutely divine. Turn around.

**JOE:** Oh, please.

**NORMA:** Come on! (BEAT) Perfect. Wonderful shoulders. And I love that line.

**JOE:** Oh, it's all padding. Don't let it fool you. You know, to me dressing up was just putting on my dark blue suit.

**NORMA:** (LAUGHS) Cute. Let's have some drinks.

**JOE:** Shouldn't we wait for the others?

**NORMA:** Careful, it's slippery. I just had the floor waxed.

**SFX 17** CHAMPAGNE CORK POP, PAUSE, TANGO

**NORMA:** Here's to us. (BEAT) This floor used to be wood, but I had it changed. Valentino said there's nothing like tile for a tango. You tango, don't you?

**JOE:** Not on the same floor with Valentino!

**NORMA:** Just follow me. (BEAT) Don't bend back like that.

**JOE:** It's those feathers. They tickle.

**NORMA:** Rudy never complained.

**JOE:** (BEAT) Norma, it's - it's late. What time they supposed to get here?

**NORMA:** Who?

**JOE:** The other guests.

**NORMA:** There are no other guests. This is for you and me, Joe.

**JOE:** Oh?

**NORMA:** Hold me tighter.

**JOE:** Okay.

**NORMA:** You think this is all very funny.

**JOE:** (CHUCKLES) A little.

**NORMA:** Is it funny that I'm in love with you?

**JOE:** What's that?

**NORMA:** I'm in love with you. Don't you know that? I've been in live with you all along?

**SFX 18: ORCHESTRA OUT, PAUSE, NEW MELODY IN BG**

**NARRATOR:** And so they danced -- Norma Desmond and Joe Gillis -- in a room big enough for a softball game, to the music of her favorite orchestra.

**NORMA:** (DRUNKENLY) What a wonderful year it's going to be, Joe. What fun we'll have. I'll fill my pool for you. Or I'll open my house in Malibu, and you can have the whole ocean. And when our picture's finished, I'll buy you a boat and we'll sail to Honolulu.

**JOE:** Stop it. You aren't going to buy me anything. You've bought me enough.

**NORMA:** Shut up. I'm rich, Joe. I'm richer than all this new Hollywood trash. I've got a million dollars.

**JOE:** Keep it.

**NORMA:** I own three blocks downtown. I've got oil in Bakersfield -- pumping, pumping, pumping. What's it for, but to buy us anything we want?

**JOE:** Cut out that "us" business.

**NORMA:** What's the matter with you?

**JOE:** What right do you have to take me for granted?

**NORMA:** What right? Do you want me to tell you?

**JOE:** Has it ever occurred to you that I may have a life of my own? That there may be some girl that I'm crazy about?

**NORMA:** Who? Some car hop? Some dress extra from Central Casting?

**JOE:** Why not? What I'm trying to say is that I'm all wrong for you. You want a Valentino, somebody with polo ponies, a big shot --

**NORMA:** (UPSET) What you're trying to say is, you don't want me to love you, is that it? Well, say it. Say it! Say it!

**SFX 19:** NORMA SLAPS JOE IN THE FACE

**NARRATOR:** (BEAT) Norma left the room and rushed upstairs -- and the orchestra kept playing.

Well, that was it! Joe had enough. He grabbed his coat and left.

**SFX 20:** ORCHESTRA FADES OUT, DOOR CLOSSES

**LFX 06:** BLACKOUT

## SCENE 7

**LFX 07A:** STAGE LIGHTS UP FULL

**NARRATOR:** Joe thought about a friend of his, Artie Green, an assistant director. There was bound to be a New Year's shindig going on in his apartment. He walked down to the Boulevard and hitched a ride into town. (FADE OUT)

**SFX 21:** BUZZER, DOOR OPENS, PARTY SOUNDS, THEN IN BG

**ARTIE:** (IN A PARTY MOOD AND LOUDER THAN THE PARTY SOUNDS) Well, what do you know?! Joe Gillis!

**JOE:** Hi, Artie.

**ARTIE:** Where ya been? I dropped by your place a couple of weeks ago and the landlady said--

**JOE:** Well, I - I moved out -- to a deep freeze.

**ARTIE:** (AMUSED) Oh. (TO THE PARTIERS) Fans, you all know Joe Gillis, the well-known train robber, opium smuggler and Lindbergh kidnapping suspect.

**BIZ:** Various forms of "Hi, Joe", "Hey, guy", "Hellooo Joey", . etc.

**JOE:** Hi, everybody!

**ARTIE:** Give me your coat.

**JOE:** Ah, just let it ride for a while.

**ARTIE:** You're going to stay, aren't you?

**JOE:** Well, that was the general idea.

**ARTIE:** Well, OK, give me your . . . Whoaaa, what is this, mink? Judas H. Priest, who did you borrow this from, Adolphe Menjou?

**JOE:** Close, close, but no cigar.

**ARTIE:** Say, you're not really smuggling opium these days are you?

**JOE:** Where's the bar?

**ARTIE:** Right this way, Mr. Warbucks.

**BIZ:** Various forms of "Woooo", "Where'd ya get the monkey suit?", "Hubba, Hubba", etc.

**JOE:** Nice party!

**ARTIE:** It's all on CBS. Just signed up to play the lead in a new *Suspense* radio serial called "The Belcher", it's a take-off on "The Whistler". I know many a strange dish, so I belch at night while I'm solving crime.

**JOE:** (LAUGHING OUT LOUD) Now that's funny! Ha! I needed a good laugh.

**ARTIE:** Is this Johnnie Walker OK? I'm saving the champagne until midnight.

**JOE:** Just pour.

**SFX 22:** LIQUID POURING, PARTY SOUNDS CONTINUE IN BG

**ARTIE:** OK, you're turn. What's up with you?

**JOE:** Look, I'll give you a full report later. Meantime, could I, uh, stick around here for a while?

**ARTIE:** Oh, this'll go on all night.

**JOE:** No, I mean, uh, could you put me up for a week or so?

**ARTIE:** It just so happens we have a vacancy on the couch.

**JOE:** I'll take it.

**ARTIE:** I'll have the bell-hop take care of your luggage. Just register with the Desk Clerk, here . . .

**BETTY:** (APPROACHES) Hello, Mr. Gillis.

**JOE:** Oh, hello.

**ARTIE:** You two know each other?

**BETTY:** Betty Schaefer, remember? Sheldrake's office.

**JOE:** Oh, yes. "Bases Loaded"

**ARTIE:** Wait a minute. This is the woman I love. What's going on? Who was loaded?

**JOE:** Don't worry. She's just a fan for my literary output. Hey, Artie, where's the phone?

**ARTIE:** Over there, by the hat-check station. Let me get you a fresh drink, Betty, my love. (LEAVES)

**BETTY:** I've been hoping I'd run into you, Mr. Gillis.

**JOE:** What for? To recover that knife you stuck in my back?

**BETTY:** Well, I - I did feel a little guilty. So I got out some of your old stories.

**JOE:** Why, you sweet kid.

**BETTY:** There's one called . . . window . . . something with a window.

**JOE:** *Blind Windows*. How did you like it?

**BETTY:** I didn't.

**JOE:** Thank you.

**BETTY:** Except for about six pages. You've got a flashback there . . . the flashback in the courtroom, when she tells about being a school teacher . . . I've got a few ideas. Come on, let's - let's go into the kitchen.

**ARTIE:** (RETURNING, TO BETTY) Here's your drink. I said he could have my couch. I didn't say he could have my girl.

**BETTY:** Oh, this is just shop talk, silly.

**SFX 23: PARTY SOUNDS DOWN**

**JOE:** Now if I got you correctly, there was a short stretch of my fiction that you found worthy of notice?

**BETTY:** The flashback in the courtroom, when she tells about being a school teacher.

**JOE:** That wasn't exactly fiction. That's something that happened to my cousin Katie. She taught school in Dayton.

**BETTY:** Maybe that's why it's good. If you forgot all the rest and made those six pages into something . . .

**JOE:** Into what, a lampshade?

**BETTY:** Into something true, something moving.

**JOE:** Who wants true? Who wants moving?

**BETTY:** Drop that attitude. There are good pictures being made, and this can be one of them.

**JOE:** Want me to start right now? Maybe there's some paper around.

**BETTY:** I'm serious. Like I said, I've got a few ideas.

**NARRATOR:** Joe didn't pay much attention to what Betty was trying to tell him. Too much noise, too many people having a good time. But suddenly, he knew that he was feeling good again, and that she was part of that feeling.

**JOE:** Wait for me. I'll be right back. I have to make a phone call.

**SFX 24:** PARTY SOUNDS DOWN, PHONE BEING DIALED

**JOE:** Hello, is that you, Max?

**MAX:** (FILTER) I'm sorry, Mr. Gillis, but I cannot talk to you now.

**JOE:** Yes, you can. Now look, Max. I want you to get out my old suitcase and pack all of my old--

**MAX:** (FILTER) I have no time to do anything now. The doctor is here.

**JOE:** Doctor? What's going on?

**MAX:** (FILTER) Madame got - the razor from your room. And she cut her wrists.

**SFX 25:** PHONE DISCONNECTS, JIGGLES CRADLE

**JOE:** Max--? Max? Hello, Max?!

**PHONE HANGUP ... SOUNDS BECOME MYSTERY**

**ARTIE:** Hey! Hey, Joe! Where you goin'? (NO ANSWER, TO BETTY) What did you do to him, honey? Scare him or something?

**BETTY:** (MYSTIFIED) Who was he talking to, Artie? Why would he leave like that?

**ARTIE:** I don't know. How do you like that guy? (FADE OUT)

**AFX 07B:** BLACKOUT

## SCENE 8

**LFX 08A:** STAGE LIGHTS UP FULL**SFX 27:** MUSICAL TRANSITION, THEN FOOTSTEPS UP THE STAIRS

**MAX:** Thank you for coming back, Mr. Gillis.

**JOE:** How is she?

**MAX:** The doctor says she will be all right. Be careful, Mr. Gillis. Be careful what you say to her.

**JOE:** (BEAT) Norma?

**NORMA:** Go away. Don't look at me. Go away and let me alone.

**JOE:** What kind of a silly thing was that to do?

**NORMA:** To fall in love with you? That was the idiotic thing.

**JOE:** That sure will make attractive headlines: "Great Star Kills Herself for Unknown Writer."

**NORMA:** Great stars have great pride. Go away. Go back to that girl of yours. (SOBS, IN BG)

**JOE:** Look, I - I was making that up because I thought the whole thing was a mistake. I didn't want to hurt you. You've been good to me, Norma. You're the only person in this stinking town who has been good to me.

**NORMA:** Then why don't you just say thank you and get out? Go!

**JOE:** Not until you promise to act like a sensible human being.

**NORMA:** (SOBS, TEARFUL) I'll do it again, I'll do it again, I'll do it again! (WEEPS, IN BG)

**JOE:** Norma. (BEAT, FOR A HUG) Happy New Year, Norma.

**NORMA:** (STOPS WEEPING; LOVINGLY) Oh, Joe. Joe. Happy New Year, darling.

**SFX 29:** MUSIC SWELLS TO END OF FIRST ACT**LFX 08B:** BLACKOUT**BIZ:** CAST EXITS

END OF ACT 1



## ACT 2

LFX 09: STAGE LIGHTS UP FULL

BIZ: CAST ENTERS AND TAKES THEIR SEATS

## SCENE 9

**NARRATOR:** By the following day, if it hadn't been for her bandaged wrists, no one would have dreamed that here was a woman who'd tried to kill herself.

Come April she had fixed up the pool for Joe. They had finished that script of hers, such as it was . . . **but**, he wasn't a writer any more. He was drifting through a blurry, Novocain existence, feeling no pain . . . pampered and spoiled and watched over as if he was some kind of a sickly Persian prince.

**NORMA:** Lunch is ready, darling.

**JOE:** O.K.

**MAX:** I went to Santa Monica and got some of the small lobsters . . .

**NORMA:** Mr. Gillis hates lobsters.

**MAX:** There is some ham and eggs for Mr. Gillis.

**NORMA:** Very Good. Now this afternoon I want you to take this script over to Paramount. Deliver it to Mr. DeMille in person.

**MAX:** Very good, Madame.

**JOE:** You're really gonna send it to DeMille?

**NORMA:** Well, this is the day. This is the day, Joe. Look. Here's the chart - from my astrologer. She's read DeMille's horoscope. She's read mine.

**JOE:** Did she read the script?

**NORMA:** DeMille is Leo; I'm Scorpio. Mars has been transitting Jupiter for weeks. Today is the day of greatest conjunction.

**JOE:** Norma, scripts don't sell on astrologers' charts.

**NORMA:** But, darling, I'm not just selling the script. I'm selling me. Norma Desmond in *Salome*. How does it sound?

**JOE:** Sounds fine.

**NORMA:** DeMille will jump at it.

**JOE:** Norma, dear, don't get your hopes up too high . . . I'm sure DeMille would like to make a picture with you.

**NORMA:** DeMille always said I was his greatest star. The question is: would I like to make a picture with him?

**JOE:** (GENTLY) When did he say it, Norma?

**NORMA:** Well, all right, it was quite a few years ago. But the point is, I - I never looked better in my life. Do you know why? Because I've never been as happy in my life. (CALLS) Now hurry, Max, hurry!

**SFX 30:** **MUSIC, BRIEF TRANSITION, PHONE RINGS (2) . . .**

**MAX:** Hello . . . It's for you, Madame. The telephone. Paramount is calling.

**NORMA:** (TRIUMPHANT) Now do you believe me, Joe? Paramount is calling. I told you DeMille would jump at my story.

**MAX:** It's not Mr. DeMille in person, Madame. Someone by the name of Gordon Cole. He says it is very important.

**NORMA:** (UPSET) Certainly it's important. The very idea of having some assistant call me! Say that I'm busy, and hang up!

**MAX:** Very good, Madame.

**NORMA:** How do you like that? We made twelve pictures together. His greatest successes!

**JOE:** Maybe he is busy. Maybe he's shooting.

**NORMA:** (LAUGHS) I know that trick! He's trying to belittle me. He's trying to get my price down. I've waited twenty years for this call. Now DeMille can wait until I'm good and ready. (FADE OUT)

**AFX 10:** **BLACKOUT**

## SCENE 10

**AFX 11:** **STAGE LIGHTS UP SLOWLY**

**NARRATOR:** About three days later, Norma was good and ready. Incredible as it may seem, there had been another of those urgent calls from Paramount. So she put on a half a pound of makeup, fixed it up with a veil, and set forth to see DeMille in person. (FADE OUT)

**SFX 31:** **FADE IN CAR RUNNING, THEN SLOWS TO IDLE**

**NORMA:** Joe, are you sure you don't want to see Mr. DeMille with me, dear?

**JOE:** No. I'll wait outside. It's your script, Norma; it's your show. Good luck.

**NORMA:** Thank you, darling. Uh, Max, what are we waiting for?

**MAX:** The gate, Madame.

**SFX 32: CAR HORN HONKS A FEW TIMES**

**Y GUARD:** Hold that noise, will ya, please?!

**MAX:** To see Mr. DeMille. Open the gate.

**Y GUARD:** Mr. DeMille is shooting. Have you got an appointment?

**MAX:** No appointment necessary. I am bringing Norma Desmond.

**Y GUARD:** Norma who?

**MAX:** Norma Desmond.

**NORMA:** (TO OLD GUARD) Jonesy! It is you, Jonesy!

**OLD GUARD:** (SURPRISED) Why -- why, Miss Desmond! Oh, how have you been, Miss Desmond?

**NORMA:** Just tell that officer to open the gate.

**OLD GUARD:** Sure, Miss Desmond. (TO YOUNG GUARD) Okay, Mac, open it up.

**GUARD:** They can't drive on the lot without a pass.

**OLD GUARD:** Miss Desmond can. Open it up.

**SFX 33: GATE OPENS BEHIND--**

**NORMA:** Where's Mr. DeMille shooting, Jonesy?

**OLD GUARD:** Stage Eighteen, Miss Desmond.

**NORMA:** Thank you, Jonesy. And teach your young friend some manners. Tell him without me he wouldn't have any job, because without me there wouldn't be any Paramount Studio. (TO MAX) Max? Stage Eighteen!

**SFX 34: SCENE FADES OUT**

**NARRATOR:** It wasn't possible, Joe thought. How could a man of DeMille's intelligence see even a glimmer of hope in a script as bad as the one she'd sent him? But he came out of the sound stage and put his arms around her, and then led her onto his set. (FADE OUT)

**SFX 35: FADE IN BUSY BACKLOT BACKGROUND ... MOVIE STUDIO WORKERS MURMUR, ET CETERA**

**MAX:** You saw them, Mr. Gillis? The extras, the electricians; they fall all over each other just to get a look at her. You see that row of offices? That used to be Madame's dressing room, the whole row.

**JOE:** That didn't leave much for Wallace Reid. Oh. Oh, that sign over there, Max -- "Readers' Department" -- reminds me, I - I want to look up somebody. I'll be back in a few minutes.

**LFX 12: LIGHTS #1 & #3 OUT, #2 REMAINS ON IN CENTER**  
**SFX 36: BACKLOT OUT. . . OFFICE IN**

### SCENE 11

**BETTY:** Well, for heaven's sake! Come on in. Have a chair. You left the party so abruptly and I've been trying to get a hold of you since. I've got the most wonderful news for you.

**JOE:** What's the wonderful news?

**BETTY:** Sheldrake likes that angle about the teacher.

**JOE:** What teacher?

**BETTY:** The one in *Blind Windows*. I got him all hopped up about it.

**JOE:** You did?

**BETTY:** He thinks it could be made into something.

**JOE:** Into what, a lampshade?

**BETTY:** You and your lampshade. Into something for Olivia DeHavilland. He's got a commitment with DeHavilland. On the level. Sheldrake really went for it.

**JOE:** O,K, Where's the cash?

**BETTY:** Where's the story? I bluffed it out with a few notions of my own, but they were really just a springboard. It needs work.

**JOE:** I was afraid of that.

**BETTY:** I've got twenty pages of notes. I've got a pretty good character for the man.

**JOE:** Sorry, Miss Schaefer, but I've given up writing on spec.

**BETTY:** This is half sold!

**JOE:** As a matter of fact I've given up writing all together. (beat) I've got to run along. Thanks anyway for the interest in my career.

**BETTY:** It's not your career – it's mine. I wanted to get in on this deal. I don't want to be a reader all my life. I want to write.

**JOE:** Sorry if I crossed you up.

**BETTY:** You sure did.

**JOE:** Look, Miss Schaefer, if you think there's anything in *Blind Windows*, go ahead, take it. It's all yours.

**BETTY:** Why should you do that?

**JOE:** Well, it's no good to me. Help yourself. I mean it.

**BETTY:** That doesn't make sense. Besides, I'm - I'm just not good enough to do it by myself.

**JOE:** Well, what about all those ideas you had?

**BETTY:** See if they make any sense. To begin with, I think you should throw out all that psychological stuff – exploring a killer's sick mind.

**JOE:** Psychopaths sell like hotcakes.

**BETTY:** This story is about teachers – their threadbare lives, their struggles. Here are people doing the most important job in the world, and they have to worry about getting enough money to resole their shoes. To me it can be as exciting as any chase, any gunplay.

**JOE:** Check.

**BETTY:** Now I see her teaching day classes while he teaches night school. The first time they meet . . .

**JOE:** Look, if you don't mind, I haven't got time to listen to the whole plot . . .

**BETTY:** I'll make it short.

**JOE:** Sorry. It's your baby now.

**BETTY:** I'm not good enough to write it alone. We'll have to do it together.

**JOE:** I'm all tied up. I can't.

**BETTY:** Well, maybe we could work evenings, or -- or even six o'clock in the morning.

**JOE:** (IRONIC) Artie would just love that.

**BETTY:** Well, for the next month, Artie won't mind at all. He's out of town. Incidentally, we're engaged.

**JOE:** Oh? Huh. Well, good for you. You - you couldn't find a nicer guy.

**BETTY:** That's what I think. Anyway, he's on location in Arizona, so I'm free every evening and every weekend.

**JOE:** Look, Betty, it can't be done. Now -- now, stop being chicken-hearted and write that story. And don't make it too dreary. Get a few laughs in it.

How about this for a situation: the two live in the same boarding house. They're so poor they have to share the same room, the same bed. They sleep in shifts, of course – because she teaches daytimes and he teaches at night, see?

**BETTY:** Are you kidding? Because I think it's good.

**JOE:** So do I.

**BETTY:** Come on back. Let me show you where it fits in.

**JOE:** (MOVING OFF) So long, Betty. Good luck.

**BETTY:** (NOT SERIOUS) Oh, honest to goodness. I -- I hate you.

**SFX 37:** TYPEWRITER SEGUE

## SCENE 12

**LFX 13:** LIGHTS #1 & #3 BACK UP FULL

**NARRATOR:** Betty Schaefer was so like all writers when they first hit Hollywood – itching with ambition, panting to get their names up there. Screenplay by: Original Story by: **Audiences don't know somebody sits down and writes a picture, Joe thought. They think the actors make it up as they go along.**

As he walked back to the car, Joe saw someone talking to Max. He was just leaving. Then Max turned to him and looked at him helplessly.

**JOE:** (TO MAX) What's the matter?

**MAX:** That man. One of DeMille's assistants.

**JOE:** Well?

**MAX:** The reason for all those telephone calls to Madame. It was not DeMille. It was the Property Department who called.

**JOE:** Property Department?

**MAX:** The car. They saw the car when I brought the script here. They want to rent the car, the Isotta-Fraschini . . . For a Bing Crosby picture. ...

**JOE:** And DeMille's going to tell her, then?

**MAX:** He will know what to tell her. He remembers her. He will not break her heart.

**JOE:** Take it easy. She's coming.

**MAX:** You see? Look at her. Look at her. She's - radiant.

**JOE:** (CHEERFUL, TO NORMA) Well, how'd it go?

**NORMA:** Oh, it couldn't have gone better! It's practically set. Of course, he has to finish this picture first. It's a - a circus picture. But I'm next. I'm sure I'm next. (SOBS; SUDDENLY QUIET) He said, nothing would please him more than -- than to work with me again.

**JOE:** (MOVED BY HER EMOTION) Norma--?

**NORMA:** Oh, it's nothing, I - I just didn't realize what it would be like to come back to the old studio. (EXHALES, REGAINS HER COMPOSURE) Well, what are you waiting for, Max?

**MAX:** (MOVED) Forgive me, Madame. Your arm, Madame.

**AFX 14:** SLOW BLACKOUT

### SCENE 13

**AFX 15:** ALL STAGE LIGHTS UP SLOWLY TO FULL

**SFX 38:** EMOTIONAL TRANSITION

**NARRATOR:** After that, an army of beauty experts invaded the house. Norma went through a merciless series of treatments, like an athlete training for the Olympic Games. She went to bed every night at nine. She was absolutely determined to be ready. Ready for those cameras that would never turn.

**NORMA:** (NERVOUS, TENTATIVE) Joe darling, are you - are you there?

**JOE:** (EXHALES WEARILY) Yes, Norma.

**NORMA:** Don't turn around. Keep your eyes on the book. I, er -- I just came down to say good night. I -- I don't want you to see me; I'm -- I'm not very attractive at the moment.

**JOE:** All right, good night.

**NORMA:** You know, I - I've lost a pound and a half since Tuesday.

**JOE:** Good.

**NORMA:** I was a little worried about the line of my throat. This woman has done wonders with it.

**JOE:** Good.

**NORMA:** Uh, you going to read all night?

**JOE:** Oh, for a while.

**NORMA:** (QUIETLY) You went out last night, didn't you, Joe?

**JOE:** Why do you say that?

**NORMA:** I had a nightmare and I screamed for you. You weren't here. Where were you?

**JOE:** I, uh-- I went for a walk.

**NORMA:** No. You didn't. You took the car.

**JOE:** All right, I drove to the beach. Norma, you don't want me to feel I'm locked up in this house?

**NORMA:** (QUICKLY, VERY VULNERABLE) It's all right; it -- it's just that I don't want to be left alone. Not while I'm under this terrible strain. My nerves are being torn apart. All I ask is for you to be a little patient and a little kind.

**JOE:** Norma, I haven't done anything that --

**NORMA:** (INTERRUPTS, LOVINGLY POSSESSIVE) Of course you haven't. I wouldn't let you. Good night, my darling.

**AFX 16:** SLOW BLACKOUT

#### SCENE 14

**AFX 17:** LIGHT #4 UP

**SFX 39A:** MUSIC, IN AND BEHIND GILLIS – SOUNDS OF NIGHT, CRICKETS, ETC.



**NARRATOR:** Yes, she was right. Joe was playing hooky every night. That story of his that Betty Schaefer had dug up kept going through his head like a locomotive. He had phoned her, and they'd started working on it -- just the two of them -- in her office. Nights, when the studio was deserted, up in her little cubby-hole of an office. And sometimes, when they got stuck, they'd walk around the lot. Just wandering down alleys between the sound stages, or through the sets the stagehands were getting ready for the next day's shooting. It was on one of those walks that Betty first told Joe about her nose.

**SFX 39B:** **MUSIC, TURNS WISTFUL, CONTINUES IN BG**

**BETTY:** Look at this street. All cardboard, all hollow, all phony. All done with mirrors. (beat) I like it better than any street in the world. Maybe because I used to play here when I was kid.

**JOE:** What were you – a child actress?

**BETTY:** I wish. I was born just two blocks from this studio. Right on Lemon Grove Avenue. Father was Head Electrician here till he died. Mother still works in Wardrobe.

**JOE:** Second generation, huh?

**BETTY:** Third. Grandma did stunt work for Pearl White.

**JOE:** Wow! *The Perils of Pauline*.

**BETTY:** So, naturally, my family expected me to become a great star. Anyway, the studio made a test. But, uh, they didn't like my nose. It slanted a little.

**JOE:** Ah, they're crazy.

**BETTY:** Oh, no, they're not. So I went to a doctor and had it fixed. Then they gave me another test. This time they were crazy about my nose, but they didn't like my acting.

**JOE:** (DEADPAN) That's the saddest thing I ever heard.

**BETTY:** (CHUCKLES) Oh, not at all. It - it really taught me a little sense. So I got a job in the mail room, then Stenographic, and now I'm a reader.

**JOE:** (LIGHTLY) Three cheers for Betty Schaefer! I will now kiss her nose.

**BETTY:** (AMUSED) If you please.

**JOE:** (BEAT, FOR KISS) Ummm. May I say that you smell real special?

**BETTY:** Must be my new shampoo.

**JOE:** No. No, that's not shampoo. It's more like freshly laundered linen handkerchiefs. Like a brand new automobile. How old are you anyway?

**BETTY:** Twenty-two.

**JOE:** That's it. You smell of being twenty-two. And may I suggest that if we're ever to finish our story you stay at least two feet away from me at all times. And the first time you see me come any closer, I want you to take off a show and clunk me over the head with it. Now let's walk back to your office.

**SFX 40:** MUSIC, SWELLS ROMANTICALLY ... THEN OUT

### SCENE 15

**SFX 41:** CAR ARRIVING, OUTDOOR NIGHT SOUNDS

**NARRATOR:** It was long past midnight when Joe got back to the house. Max was waiting for him on the patio.

**MAX:** Mr. Gillis? You must be very careful as you cross the patio. Madame may be watching.

**JOE:** How about my going up the kitchen stairs and undressing in the dark. Will that do it?

**MAX:** (BEAT) Mr. Gillis, I'm not inquiring where you go every night --

**JOE:** (SNAPPISH) Well, why don't you? I'm writing a script and I'm gonna finish it.

**MAX:** It is just that I am greatly worried -- about Madame.

**JOE:** You're not helping her any, feeding her lies and more lies. What happens when she finds out there isn't going to be any picture?

**MAX:** She will never find out. That's my job. It's been my job for a long time. You must understand I discovered her when she was eighteen. I made Norma Desmond a star, and I cannot let her be destroyed.

**JOE:** (SKEPTICAL) You made her a star?

**MAX:** I directed all her early pictures. There were three young directors who showed promise in those days: D.W. Griffith, C.B. DeMille and Max Von Mayerling.

**JOE:** (WITH DISGUST) And she's turned you into a servant.

**MAX:** It was I who asked to come back, humiliating as that may seem. I could have gone on with my career, only I found everything unendurable after she divorced me. **You see, I was her first husband.**

**SFX 42A:** **MUSICAL TRANSITION**

**LFX 18:** **BLACKOUT**

## SCENE 16

**LFX 19:** **LIGHT #2 UP FULL**

**SFX 42B:** **MUSICAL TRANSITION**

**NARRATOR:** The following night, as usual, Joe was in Betty's office. Betty was strangely quiet. It wasn't like her. Something had happened. (FADE)

**JOE:** Hey, what's the matter . . . Betty, wake up! Yoo! Hoo! . . . Why are you staring at me like that?

**BETTY:** Was I? I'm sorry.

**JOE:** What's wrong with you tonight? What is it, Betty?

**BETTY:** Something came up. I don't want to talk about it.

**JOE:** Why not?

**BETTY:** I just don't.

**JOE:** Oh . . . Is it about me? What have you heard?

**BETTY:** It's nothing. I got a telegram from Artie.

**JOE:** From Artie? What's wrong?

**BETTY:** He wants me to come on to Arizona, Joe. (TEARFUL) He said it only costs two dollars to get married there. (WEEPS QUIETLY, IN BG)

**JOE:** Well, why don't ya? We can put the script on hold. (BEAT) Well, stop crying, will you? You're - you're getting married. That's what you wanted.

**BETTY:** I don't want it now.

**JOE:** Why not? Don't you love Artie?

**BETTY:** Of course I love him; I always will. (BEAT) I'm not in love with him any more, that's all.

**JOE:** What happened?

**SFX 43:** **MUSIC, SNEAKS IN**

**BETTY:** You did. (BEAT, LOVINGLY) Oh, Joe. Joe.

**AFX 20:** BLACKOUT (KISS)

**SFX 44:** LOVE SONG UP THEN OUT

### SCENE 17

**AFX 21:** ALL STAGE LIGHTS UP FULL

**NARRATOR:** Well, there it was, right in the palm of his hand – the future of Betty Schaefer, engaged to Artie Green, the nicest guy that ever lived. She was ready to give him up for Joe. She'd been somewhat of a fool not to sense there was something phony in his set-up. And he loved her and he'd been a heel not to have told her. But you just can't say those things to somebody you're crazy about. Maybe Joe would never have to. Maybe he could get away with it; get away from Norma. Maybe he could wipe the whole nasty mess right out of his life.

(BEAT) As soon as Joe got back to that peculiar prison of his, he went to Norma's room. Her door was ajar but she hadn't heard nor seen him. Somehow she had gotten a hold of one of the new pages Betty and Joe had worked on. She read it aloud to herself.

**NORMA:** (ALoud TO HERSELF) "UNTITLED LOVE STORY by Joseph C. Gillis and Betty Schaefer".

**NARRATOR:** (NARRATES) Norma tossed it aside and went for the telephone book. She rummaged through several pages and then went to the telephone.

**SFX 46:** SOUND OF TELEPHONE DIALING

**NORMA:** Is this Gladstone 0858? . . .

Can I speak to Miss Betty Schaefer? She must be home by now . . .

Forgive me for calling you so late, Miss Schaefer, but I really feel it's my duty. It's about Mr. Gillis . . .

Never mind who I am. You do know Mr. Gillis? . . .

Exactly how much do you know about him? Do you know where he lives? Do you know how he lives? Do you know what he lives on? . . .

Miss Schaefer, I'm trying to spare you a great deal of misery. Of course you're too young to even suspect there are men of his sort . . .

No Miss Schaefer, he does not live with relatives, nor with friends, in the usual sense of the word. Very well, then. Ask him. Ask him.

**JOE:** (RUSHING IN) Give me that phone!

**NORMA:** No, Joe! No!

**JOE:** Give it to me! (BEAT, INTO PHONE) That's right, Betty, ask me. Or better yet, why don't you come out and see for yourself? The address is Ten Thousand Eighty-Six Sunset Boulevard.

**SFX 47:** RECEIVER DOWN

**NORMA:** (PLEADS DESPERATELY) Don't hate me, Joe. Don't hate me. I found a script in your room. Your name was on it -- your name and hers. I called her up because I need you. I need you as I never needed you before. Oh, look at me. Look at my hands, look at my face, look under my eyes. How can I go back to my work if I'm wasting away under this torment? You don't know what I've been through these last weeks! (SOBS)

**SFX 48A:** MUSIC, SNEAKS IN . . .

**NORMA:** (INCREASINGLY TEARFUL) I bought myself a revolver. I did, I did. I stood in front of that mirror, but I couldn't make myself do it. Don't just stand there hating me! Shout at me, strike me! But don't hate me. Oh, don't, Joe. What are you going to do? What are you going to do? What are you going to do?

**LFX 22:** SLOW BLACKOUT

**SFX 48B:** MUSIC, SNEAKS OUT . . .

### SCENE 18

**LFX 23:** LIGHT #4 UP

**NARRATOR:** What was he going to do? Over and over she kept repeating those words -- sobbing, hysterical. Joe left the room and went out of doors. He kept walking around the grounds until he saw some headlights and a car turning into the driveway. Betty had come. (FADE OUT)

**SFX 49:** CAR ARRIVAL, DOOR SHUTS, FOOTSTEPS, CRICKETS

**BETTY:** Joe, what is it? What's wrong? I didn't know what to do, so I jumped in the car.

**JOE:** Come on in. Come on in the house, Betty.

**BETTY:** I don't know why I'm scared, Joe. Is it something awful?

**SFX 50:** DOOR CLOSSES, CRICKETS STOP

**LFX 24:** LIGHT #4 OUT, LIGHTS #1, 2 & 3 UP FULL

**JOE:** Take a look around, Betty. Ever been in one of these old Hollywood palazzos? They built them like this when they were making eighteen thousand a week, and no taxes.

**BETTY:** You live here, Joe?

**JOE:** You bet.

**BETTY:** Whose house is it?

**JOE:** Whose? Well -- Well, there are a hundred photographs of her in that one room. If you don't remember the face, you must have heard the name. Norma Desmond?

**BETTY:** That was Norma Desmond on the phone?

**JOE:** Want something to drink? There's always champagne on ice, and plenty of caviar

**BETTY:** Why did she call me?

**JOE:** Jealous. Did you ever see so much junk? She had the ceiling brought all the way over from Portugal. And look at this . . .

**BETTY:** Joe -- What about Norma Desmond?

**JOE:** That's what I'm trying to tell you. This is an enormous place. Eight master bedrooms. A sunken tub in every bathroom. There's a bowling alley in the cellar. It's lonely here. So she got herself a companion. Very simple set-up: an older woman who's well-to-do, a younger man who's not doing too well . . . Can you figure it out yourself?

**BETTY:** No.

**JOE:** All right, I'll give you a few more clues.

**BETTY:** No! No, I haven't heard any of this. She never called me and I've never been in this house. Now get your things together and let's get out of here.

**JOE:** All my things? My eighteen suits, my custom-made shoes, the six dozen shirts, the cufflinks and the platinum key-chains and cigarette cases?

**BETTY:** Come on, Joe.

**JOE:** Come on where? Back to a one-room apartment I can't pay the rent for? Back to a story that may sell and very possibly may not?

**BETTY:** If you love me, Joe . . .

**JOE:** Look, sweetie, be practical. I've got a good thing going here. A long-term contract with no options. I like it that way. Maybe it's not very admirable. Well, you and Artie can be admirable.

**BETTY:** (BEAT, DISAPPOINTED) Joe, I can't look at you any more.

**JOE:** Nobody asked you to. How 'bout looking for the exit, then? This way.

**SFX 51:** **THEIR FOOTSTEPS TO DOOR, IN BG**

**BETTY:** (SOBS)

**JOE:** Good luck to you, Betty. You can finish that script on your way to Arizona.

**SFX 52:** **DOOR OPENS**

**JOE:** And, uh, when you and Artie get back, if the two of you ever feel like taking a swim, there's a pool out there -- Italian marble and soft, colored lights.

**SFX 53:** **DOOR CLOSSES AS BETTY EXITS**

### SCENE 19

**SFX 54A:** **JOE RUNNING UP THE STAIRS, DOOR CLOSSES, KNOCKS ON DOOR.**

**NORMA:** Thank you, darling. Thank you, Joe. (NO ANSWER) May I come in? I've stopped crying. I'm all right again. Joe, tell me you're not cross – tell me everything is just as it was . . . Joe?

**SFX 54B:** **SOUND OF NORMA OPENING DOOR**

**NORMA:** What are you doing, Joe? What are you doing? You're not leaving me?

**JOE:** (LOW, BITTER) Yes, I am, Norma.

**NORMA:** Joe! Joe, no, no. You can't leave me! You can't.

**JOE:** I said, I'm leaving.

**NORMA:** No, you're not! (CALLING) Max! Max!

**JOE:** Max is a good idea. He can help with my luggage. Thanks for letting me wear the handsome wardrobe. And thanks for the use of all the trinkets. The jewelry's all in the top drawer.

**NORMA:** It's yours, Joe. I -- I gave it to you.

**JOE:** And I'd take it in a second. Only it's a little too dressy for sitting behind the copy desk in Dayton, Ohio.

**NORMA:** What I gave you is nothing. You can have anything you want. What is it you want -- money?

**JOE:** You'd be throwing it away, Norma. I don't qualify for the job, not any more.

**NORMA:** You can't go! (CALLS) Max?! Max! (TO GILLIS) I can't face life without you! And you know I'm not afraid to die.

**JOE:** That's between you and yourself.

**NORMA:** You think I made that up about the gun, don't you? All right, see? I do have a gun. I suppose you don't think I have the courage!

**JOE:** Oh, sure, sure -- if it would make a good scene.

**NORMA:** You don't care, do you? Well, hundreds of thousands of people will care!

**JOE:** Oh, wake up, Norma! You'd be killing yourself to an empty house! The audience left twenty years ago! Now face it!

**NORMA:** That's a lie! They still want me!

**JOE:** No, they don't.

**NORMA:** What about the studio? What about DeMille?

**JOE:** He couldn't hurt you. He couldn't hurt anyone. DeMille was trying to spare your feelings. The studio only wanted to rent your car.

**NORMA:** (BEAT, LOW, STUNNED) Wanted what?

**JOE:** DeMille didn't have the heart to tell you. None of us has had the heart. (TO MAX) Come on in, Max. Go on, tell her.

**NORMA:** It's a lie. They want me. I get letters every day!

**JOE:** Do her that favor, Max. Tell her there isn't going to be any picture; there aren't any fan letters, except the ones you write.

**NORMA:** Max? That isn't true?!

**MAX:** (FIRMLY) Madame is the greatest star of them all. (BEAT, AN ASIDE) I'll take Mr. Gillis' bags to the car.

**NORMA:** (SLOW AND TRIUMPHANT) You heard him. I'm a star.

**JOE:** Norma, you're a woman of fifty; now grow up. There's nothing tragic about being fifty -- not unless you try to be twenty-five.

**NORMA:** I'm the greatest star of them all.

**JOE:** (BEAT) Goodbye, Norma.

**NORMA:** (WHISPERS) No one ever leaves a star. That's what makes one a star. You're not leaving me!



**SFX 55: MUSIC IN****LFX 25: LIGHTS #1, 2 & 3 OUT AND #4 UP IN ONE MOTION**

**NARRATOR:** Joe left her standing there. He grabbed his coat and started out. Norma kept calling him.

**NORMA:** Joe! Joe! Joe!

**GUNSHOT, GLASS SHATTERING, FOOTSTEPS**

**NARRATOR:** The front door glass shattered. Joe could hear her running after him.

**NORMA:** Joe! Joe!

**NARRATOR:** He was out of the house now. The air suddenly felt fresh again, clean. Joe started to cross the patio; Norma called to him once again.

**NORMA:** Joe!

**NARRATOR:** Joe didn't stop. He kept on going.

**FINAL SHOT, POOL SPLASH, MUSIC OUT****SCENE 20**

**NARRATOR:** Well, this is just about where we came in -- back at that pool again, the one Joe always wanted.

**SFX 57: CROWD MURMURING SOUNDS**

**NARRATOR:** Only now the place is crawling with people -- the police, detectives, reporters, photographers, the usual crowd we get in Los Angeles when they open a super market, everything but the searchlights. They must have photographed Joe a thousand times. Then they got a couple of pruning hooks from the garden and fished him out . . . ever so gently. **Funny how gentle people get with you once you're dead.**

Now the newsreel guys are roaring in. "Here's an item everybody can have some fun with!" (WITH CONTEMPT) The heartless so-and-so's. What would they do to Norma? Even if she gets away with it in court -- crime of passion, temporary insanity -- the headlines are going to kill her: "Forgotten Star a Slayer." "Aging Actress," "Yesterday's Glamour Queen."

**SFX 58: CROWD MURMUR FADES OUT**

**NARRATOR:** They're talking to Miss Desmond now up in the house, the boys from homicide. They found her upstairs sitting at her dressing table, arranging her hair. (FADE OUT)

**LFX 26: BLACKOUT**

## SCENE 21

**AFX 27:** LIGHTS #1 & #3 UP**LIEUTENANT:** (FADE IN) She just won't talk, Captain. State of shock, I guess.**CAPTAIN:** Miss Desmond, please. You don't deny having killed that man?**LIEUTENANT:** Just answer us "yes," or "no." Did you intend to kill him?**CAPTAIN:** Who is he? Where did you first meet him? Where does he come from?**LIEUTENANT:** Newsreel men are here with their cameras, Captain.**CAPTAIN:** Tell them to go fly a kite. This is no time for cameras. (TO NORMA) Miss Desmond? Is there anything at all you want to tell us?**NORMA:** Cameras? He said cameras. What is it, Max?**MAX:** The cameras have arrived, Madame.**NORMA:** They have? Tell Mr. DeMille I'll be on the set at once.**CAPTAIN:** (PUZZLED) What is this?**LIEUTENANT:** (LOW, TO CAPTAIN) Nevermind, It's one way to get her downstairs, isn't it?**CAPTAIN:** Well, okay. Have the car right outside.**MAX:** Everything will be ready, Madame.**NORMA:** Thank you, Max. You'll pardon me, gentlemen, but I - I must get ready for my scene.**SFX 59:** CROWD MURMURING SOUNDS**NARRATOR:** The cameramen were at the foot of the stairs, a dozen reporters firing questions, but Max didn't even bother to look at them. It was the cameras he was interested in.**MAX:** Quiet, everybody!**SFX 60:** MURMURING CROWD QUIETS**MAX:** Miss Desmond is coming! Lights! Turn up the lights!**AFX 28:** LIGHT #2 UP FULL

**BIZ:** PUZZLED CROWD MURMURS BRIEFLY ("Lights? What does that mean?") ... THEN OUT --

**MAX:** Are you ready, Norma?

**NORMA:** (AS IF IN A DREAM) What is the scene? Where am I?

**MAX:** This is the staircase of the palace.

**NORMA:** Oh, yes, yes.

**MAX:** Down below, they are waiting for you to dance the Dance of the Seven Veils.

**NORMA:** I'm ready.

**MAX:** All right. (CALLS) Cameras! Action!

**SFX 62:** MELANCHOLY MUSIC SEGUE INTO BG --

**NARRATOR:** So they were turning after all, those cameras. Life, which can be strangely merciful, had taken pity on Norma Desmond. The dream she had clung to so desperately had enfolded her.

She came down the stairs. They were not policemen. They were not photographers, or reporters, or just the morbidly curious. To Norma Desmond, they were her public, her fans. And she was back again, working with DeMille.

**NORMA:** I can't go on with the scene. I'm too happy. Mr. DeMille, do you mind if I say a few words? Thank you. I just want to tell you all how happy I am to be back in the studio, making a picture again. You don't know how much I've missed all of you. **And I promise you I'll never desert you again, because after 'Salomé' we'll make another picture, and another picture! You see, this is my life. It always will be. There's nothing else -- just us, and the cameras, and those wonderful people out there in the dark.**

**All right, Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up. (Moves toward Audience)**

**LFX 29:** SLOW BLACKOUT

**SFX 63:** MUSIC, UP, FOR CURTAIN, APPLAUSE

**END OF PLAY**