



IF MEN WERE ANGELS

By

Lawrence DuKore

WHY I LIKE IT: Features Drama Editor JOHN SULLIVAN writes...

I actually like pretty much everything about If Men Were Angels. The play is built of an entirely credible series of situations spun off of U.S. social / political / cultural history. The dialogue is crisp and on-point; the structure propels the play's action and generates a sense of inevitability while never shutting down the possibility that an ethical choice might trump cold ambition. And the conflicts in If Men Were Angels stem organically from its personal themes and historical context.

Reading this play, my focus was immediately drawn to Demetrios Minotis, a high-energy, magnetic man of the theatre – but also a careerist of fungible convictions. The small ensemble he directs and acts with is one of many in 1930's New York City that developed plays presenting a radical vision of social justice – in fact, a revolutionary transformation of society from a capitalist to a socialist model. After all, the brave new world of capitalism was in shambles and the Soviet Union offered a real alternative. The grip of The Great Depression was universal and hunger and deprivation haunted the entire globe. Demi steers a small group of committed artists but his ambitions for more prominence in that world, and later Hollywood, seem limitless. His character's arcs toward a personal coronation on the west coast but that progress involves a series of disguises and betrayals, some of which prove ultimately toxic for his former colleagues at the "Proletarian Theatre". Because we're blessed by foreknowledge of the real history, the specters of Senator Joe McCarthy, Roy Cohn, the House Un-American Activities Committee and blacklisting lurk in all the shadows of this play.

And the fate (or is it the destiny) of Demi Minotis parallels that of some real movers & shakers from Depression era theatre. Clifford Odets (of the Group Theatre and later as a Hollywood director / screenwriter) comes quickly to mind but there were many others. For a reference, the 1952 western High Noon was essentially a parable on blacklisting written smack in the middle of the McCarthy era. A dark comedy from 1976, The Front (starring Woody Allen, Zero Mostel, Herschel Bernardi, et al) is very literal and pulls no punches about the inherent injustice in blacklisting. That film (basically Hollywood's moral revenge) was empowered to tell the truth because so much time has passed. But the history encoded in If Men Were Angels begins at the source when actors on American stages became awakened and sang out for justice and a reckoning. Its structure is tightly wound, its action really gripping, it's a look backward into deep-roots but also topical and crucial to our own moment, and ... it's production ready. No matter what styles of theatre you might prefer, or what you may instinctively gravitate toward in terms of content, I highly recommend reading If Men Were Angels. The history is chilling and the parallels with where we are right now, even more so. And Demi's story is a "could be" mirror into all of our needs and desires.

Five Stars

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Characters

Demetrios (Demi) Minotis theatre director; 39 years old; then 24 - years old

Elizabeth (Liz) Scott Minotis Demetrios' wife, 39 years old; then 24 years old

Artie Simmons actor; 55 years old; then 40 - years old

Frances Adamson actress; 20 years old; then 35 - years old

Ben Myerson Communist Party official, 40 -years old

James Strickland Congressman; 40 - years old

Act One:

Scene 1: February, 1953; the stage of an off-Broadway theatre;
Scene 2: the winter of 1934; the stage of the same theatre;
Scene 3: backstage at the same theatre;
Scene 4: American Communist Party headquarters in New York;
Scene 5: the spring of 1936, the stage of an off-Broadway theatre;
Scene 6: the alley outside the theatre;
Scene 7: the living room of the Minotis apartment;
Scene 8: December of 1952, the stage of a Broadway theatre.

Act Two

Scene 1. The waiting area outside Congressman Strickland's office; January, 1952
Scene 2. The office of Congressman James Strickland
Scene 3. The waiting area outside Strickland's office
Scene 4. The office of Congressman James Strickland
Scene 5 The waiting area outside Strickland's office
Scene 6. The street outside Strickland's office
Scene 7 The bare stage of a Broadway theatre; December, 1952

“What is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary ... (but) you must first enable the government to control the governed and in the next place oblige it to control itself.”

-- James Madison (THE FEDERALIST PAPERS, #51)

1.

Act One

Scene 1. A bare stage of an off-off Broadway theatre. The time is a cold December evening December, 1952. A spotlight falls on a lectern. Enter Demetrios Minotis, 39 years old, a successful, celebrated theatre and film director. He is wearing a blue suit, white shirt and tie. He looks around the stage, then out to the audience.

DEMETRIOS (*to the audience*)

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. It's good to be back here. This theatre has a lot of wonderful memories for me and I'm sure it has a lot of wonderful memories for you.

(His wife, Elizabeth, 39 years old, enters quietly behind me.)

ELIZABETH

Practicing your “mea culpa” speech?

DEMETRIOS

It’s not a mea culpa speech. I’ve got nothing to be “culpa” about.

ELIZABETH

Oh? Really?

DEMETRIOS

Really! And what are you doing here?

ELIZABETH

I read your piece in the NY Times and in Variety. Do you also have an ad in the Hollywood Reporter?

DEMETRIOS

It’s not an advertisement. It’s an explanation: setting the facts straight.

ELIZABETH

It’s an apologia. It’s your version – your biased version - of history.

DEMETRIOS

Elizabeth, I’m trying to rehearse.

(He turns away from her and looks out to the audience.)

ELIZABETH

You always did prepare for any contingency, any emergency. You were always ahead of the game.

2

DEMETRIOS

Darling, I *was* the game. And I’m still the game. And ... I always *win* the game. Now if you’d like to take a seat out front ... you’ll have the house all to yourself.

(Enter Artie Simmons, a 55 years old actor, enters from the wings.)

ARTIE

Not *all* to herself.

DEMETRIOS

Hey, it’s like Old Home Week. What do you say, Artie?

ARTIE

Go fuck yourself.

DEMETRIOS

Artie, come on ... I got you a Broadway show. And I got Franny a Broadway show.

ARTIE

Too bad Franny couldn't be here to thank you. But she's dead.

DEMETRIOS

I know; I know ... and I'm sorry.

ARTIE

Yeah, you've got a lot to be sorry for. Shame on you! Shame on you for naming names, you spineless, gutless sonofabitch!

ELIZABETH

We'll be sitting out front: first row center.

(Elizabeth and Artie exit.)

DEMETRIOS *(shouting)*

Okay if I continue? Well? Answer me! Do you mind if I continue? Not as if I care. *(Looking out to the audience)* I can't see all your faces but I don't think there are too many of my old friends out there. I suspect that there are a lot of – well, if not enemies, then people who are pissed off at me. I suspect there are people out there who consider me a traitor; a snitch, a rat fink.

ARTIE

Your suspicions are correct.

3

DEMETRIOS

Why? Because I named names? Right! I named fellow actors and fellow writers who were in fact fellow travelers. Yeah! They were members of the Communist Party.

ARTIE *(from the audience)*

Like you, buddy boy; like you.

DEMETRIOS

Right! Like me! Sixteen years ago, a lifetime ago, I was a member of a Communist cell. Why did I join the party? Why did my wife join? Why did my best friends join? Well, for those of you too young to remember or for those of you who don't *want* to remember, there was a major catastrophe called The Great Depression! More than half of working class Americans was out of work. Farmers were losing their farms in the Dust Bowl. I saw my father lose his job, lose his savings, saw him join the millions and millions of Americans who were living below the poverty line. I saw my father become a broken man, because of the failure of the American capitalist system.

ARTIE

And you, my old friend, are part of that system!

ELIZABETH

Artie; shut up and let the man speak.

DEMETRIOS

Thank you, my dear. (*gathering himself*) Negroes were being lynched in the south. Hitler and the Nazis had taken over Germany and were getting ready to take over Europe -- and the world! The Communists were serenading us with visions of a utopia, a free society, a safe society, a productive and equitable society. What did I know? I was fresh out of college and into a whole string of labor theatres and proletarian productions, two years into my dream. I believed that the American Communist Party had all the answers to all my angry questions. The year was 1934.

(*Demetrios exits.*)

(*Light change, revealing the small, bare stage of the off-off Broadway theatre.*)

Scene 2. The time is the winter of 1934. Enter Artie Simmons, 40 years old. He wears an old jacket and an older hat as he addresses the audience as an actor performing in LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE MASSES.

ARTIE

Comrades! I'm not much of a speaker – so I'm not going to speak. But there's a buddy of mine who's itching to come out here and give you a piece of his mind.

4

ARTIE (*contd*)

I want you to listen to him – because he's got the answers. So stop your yapping and pay attention to one of our own. He drives a hack just like the rest of us and he's breaking his back seven days a week, 14 hours a day, just to make a few bucks. Fellow workers: give a hand to Herbie Weiss.

(*Enter Demetrios, the actor, 24 years old, wearing a turtle neck sweater, an old leather jacket and a worn cloth cap.*)

DEMETRIOS

Hey, Maxie, for a guy who doesn't like to talk, you sure do a lot of it. Okay, folks, I just got a few words for you: We done our talking with the bosses. They don't listen and hey don't want to listen. The only thing they listen to is the sound of cash going into their pockets. That's the nickels and dimes that we sweat for, the nickels and dimes that they take from us. So now we're going to make them listen. They sucked our blood, sucked us dry. What do we have left? And what do we have to lose?

ARTIE

Tell it like it is!

DEMETRIOS

Yeah, I want a strike. But I don't just want a strike I want a revolution! I want to change this friggin' society so everybody works. I'm not talking about cushy jobs. I'm talking about bread and milk for our wives and kids. They're making an old lady out of my wife. They're starving my kids. I will make a revolution if I have to do it with my bare hands. I'll do it with you. I'll do it without you. But I'll do it. And I mean – right now.

DEMETRIOS (*walking away*)

I'm going to the garage – and I'm taking over. You want to follow me? You want to join me? Come on, guys, let's go. Right now! Do you hear me? Revolution! Revolution! Revolution!

(Demetrios/marches off, followed by Artie as the sound of applause, wild cheering, whistling and shouting fills the now-empty stage.)

(Light change)

Scene 3. The lights come up on a tiny dressing room backstage; immediately following the performance. Artie and Demetrios are joined by Elizabeth and Frances Adamson, a young actress and member of the theatre company.

ELIZABETH

That was a great speech, honey. I couldn't tell if you were making up those words or if they were Artie's words.

5

DEMETRIOS

They were *my* words.

ARTIE

Next time: stick to the script - stick to the words in *my* script.

FRANCES

Who gives a damn? They were everybody's words. Demi, the audience was with you all the way. They knew what you were talking about.

DEMETRIOS

You know something? I *felt* like a taxi cab driver who'd been beaten down. .

FRANCES

You felt like a cab driver because I had you doing those sense memory exercises. I had you working on what it's like to have an aching back....

DEMETRIOS

My back was really killing me. My ass was really killing me. That's gotta be a tough way to make a buck; driving a cab. So thanks for the acting lesson.

ARTIE

That was Frances' idea. Hey Franny; you ought to be a teacher.

FRANCES

I had a boyfriend who drove a cab.

ARTIE

You had a lot of boyfriends!

FRANCES

And you had a lot of girlfriends. So what?

ARTIE

So I believe in free love.

FRANCES

Your definition of "free love" is not paying for a girl's dinner. You're a cheapskate.

ELIZABETH

Come on, kids; don't fight. I want to celebrate.

(She takes a bottle of wine out of a paper bag and distributes coffee cups to everyone.)

6

FRANCES *(to Elizabeth)*

Thanks, Liz. You know, I taught your husband how to be a working stiff.

DEMETRIOS

Franny baby, I *am* a working stiff.

FRANNY

From Harvard?

DEMETRIOS

From waiting on tables at Harvard.

ELIZABETH

Demi, I'm so proud of what you did out there tonight. But ...

DEMETRIOS

Uh-oh. Elizabeth is about to give me the "but" speech.

ARTIE

The wife giveth –and the wife taketh away.

FRANCES

Shut up and drink your wine. Nobody's taking away nothing!

ELIZABETH

Will you two stop bickering? You sound like an old married couple.

ARTIE

And we're not even married.

FRANCES

And we're not getting married.

ARTIE

I know what's bugging you. I know *who's* bugging you.

FRANCES

Shut up, Artie.

DEMETRIOS

Yeah, Artie; shut your mouth up.

ELIZABETH (*suspiciously*)

What's going on here?

7

DEMETRIOS

Actors! They're like babies.

ELIZABETH

And you're the biggest baby of them all. Demi, you're a fine actor but that's not your future!

DEMETRIOS

I brought down the house tonight.

ELIZABETH

I've sat in on rehearsals when you were directing the Theatre of the Revolution. I watched you when you were directing this play, making script changes and working with the actors. You don't need Franny's sense memory lessons. You don't need her coaching. Your future is directing. You make all those Broadway directors look like hacks – which is what they are.

DEMETRIOS

I'm not interested in Broadway.

ELIZABETH

Not now ... but you will be. You need a bigger audience.

DEMETRIOS

Liz honey, I like where I am. I like what I'm doing.

ELIZABETH

I know you better than you know yourself.

DEMETRIOS

It's all fun: directing ...acting

FRANCES

You should be a leading man.

DEMETRIOS

With a mug like this? This is not the face of a leading man. Hey, I know my limitations. I'm a character actor; a one note character actor. And I'm fine with small roles.

ARTIE

And you know what they say. There are no roles; only small salaries.

8

ELIZABETH

Demi, your future is uptown – and you know it. You're ambitious. You're meant for bigger things – and I'm not just talking about the theatre.

ARTIE

She's right. Harvard graduates deserve something better. Harvard graduates demand something better. Look at President Roosevelt. With a voice like that, he should be a radio actor.

DEMETRIOS

Do I detect a note of sarcasm in your voice?

ARTIE

Absolutely, Mister President; absolutely!

ELIZABETH (*to Demi*)

Point is, I know you want to direct Broadway shows and Hollywood movies.

DEMETRIOS

When did I ever tell you ...?

ELIZABETH

I know. (*softly*) I know you.

DEMETRIOS

Elizabeth, what's going on here? It's like you're talking around things. Broadway! Hollywood! That's not me and you know it. What are you *not* saying?

ELIZABETH

You see? That's why I love you. You won't let anyone beat around the bush and fancy talk you.

DEMETRIOS

So ... talk to me.

ELIZABETH

Your energies, your intelligence – all your talents – can make a great contribution to the Party. You have a passion, a special talent as a director and as a teacher. You could help the Party in its fight – in our fight – for social justice, for a better society. You can educate the masses. You can teach them how the American Communist Party is the salvation of America.

(Demetrios turns away from Elizabeth and paces back and forth.)

9

FRANCES

Demi, say something!

DEMETRIOS

For the first time in my life ... I'm speechless.

ELIZABETH

Demi, tomorrow, you go see Benjamin Myerson. You know who he is? *(Demetrios shakes his head.)* When you meet him, you'll know him. He's always hanging around the theatre but he's always in the background. Never talks; just listens... and watches ... and takes in everything and everybody. Here's his card. *(Demetrios takes the card and looks at it.)* Come on, honey. Let's go home.

ARTIE *(to Demetrios)*

Go get 'em, tiger.

DEMETRIOS *(looking at the business card)*

Yeah, sure! See you tomorrow.

FRANCES *(to Demetrios)*

And we have a rehearsal at 4 o'clock. Don't forget!

DEMETRIOS

I never forget anything.

ELIZABETH

Let's go home. We have to talk.

DEMETRIOS

And celebrate!

ELIZABETH

We'll celebrate after you see Ben Myerson.

DEMETRIOS

I don't know ...

ELIZABETH

Don't worry. *I* know!

(Demtrios and Elizabeth exit.)

ARTIE

And I'll bet she knows about you and Demi. I don't want you being a home wrecker.

10

FRANCES

I thought you believed in free love?

ARTIE

Demetrios is special. Elizabeth is also special.

FRANCES

So I'm not special?

ARTIE

Let's go back to your place. I'll show you how special you are.

FRANCES

How come we never go back to your place?

ARTIE

You like the Lower East Side? You like communal living? You like four people sharing a bedroom? It's okay in theory. It's okay if you're Lenin or Karl Marx.

FRANCES

What are you talking about? They were part of the bourgeoisie. They came from nice middle class families.

ARTIE

And where I live is like a scene out of THE LOWER DEPTHS. Am I right or am I right?

FRANCES

Say no more. My place!

(Artie and Frances exit.)

(Light change)

Scene 4. The following day. The lights come up in a small office on the 6th floor of the American Communist Party headquarters in New York City, overlooking Union Square. A high-ranking officer of the party, Ben Myerson, is sitting at his desk, feet propped up, reading the Sporting News and listening to Duke Ellington and his orchestra on the radio. Ben lights a cigar, blows a few smoke rings, rises and dances to the music. At that precise moment, Demetrios opens the door and sticks his head in.

DEMETRIOS

Am I disturbing you?

11

BEN

Not at all! Come on in.

(Demetrios enters. Ben immediately turns off the radio.)

BEN (contd)

I love the Duke. What do you think of Duke Ellington? Don't be shy. Speak up! Isn't his orchestra the best in the world?

DEMETRIOS

I'm not much on dance music.

BEN

Well, you have to get uptown to The Cotton Club.

DEMETRIOS

You go to the Cotton Club?

BEN

You got a problem with that?

DEMETRIOS

My wife and I went there/... once. We looked around. The customers were all white. Not one Negro at the tables --- except for the entertainment. /My wife and I walked out. We didn't go for their "whites only" policy. I'll tell you straight out: for a money-making club in Harlem, they should open it up for the local residents.

BEN

The local residents don't have the money to go.

DEMETRIOS

You should boycott the club.

BEN

You want to dictate policy for the Party?

DEMETRIOS

Maybe I should. Maybe I will.

BEN

Little pishers don't dictate policy.

DEMETRIOS

Who does: you?

12

BEN

The higher-ups!

DEMETRIOS

/So why am I talking to you?

BEN

How the hell should I know? If you want to talk to one of the higher-ups: go to Moscow.

DEMETRIOS

You take your orders from a foreign government?

BEN

They're foreign now but the day's going to come, my friend, when they won't be foreign.

DEMETRIOS

Yeah, and comes the revolution, we'll all be eating peaches and cream. Listen, Mister Myerson, I'm in the middle of rehearsals. I have to get back.

BEN

What's your hurry? Are you shocked that we take our orders from Moscow?

DEMETRIOS

I'm disappointed. And I'm on a lunch break. Have a nice day.

(Demetrios starts to leave.)

BEN

Are you saying you don't have time for Ben Myerson? Are you saying I have to hurry up and give my spiel?

DEMETRIOS

I'm saying I'm rehearsing a new play.

BEN

So what's your priority, the Party or the ... show?

DEMETRIOS

It's not a "show". It's a play – a very good play; a very important play.

BEN

You don't think I don't know about your very important play?

13

DEMETRIOS

I don't know what you know or what you don't know.

BEN

Well, I know that the guy who wrote your play is a member of the Party.

DEMETRIOS

He didn't write the play by himself. He wrote it with me.

BEN

You want a medal? What about the actors who contributed to the script? Wouldn't you say it was a collective effort?

DEMETRIOS

I didn't come here to talk about theatre.

BEN

Why not? You're a member of The Proletarian Theatre Company. That's not exactly the effete, right wing Theatre Guild, is it? You co-authored a play where a Bulgarian Communist is the hero. You acted in a play about organizing a strike. You weren't half bad.

DEMETRIOS

You were there last night?

BEN

Last night. The night before. The night before that.

DEMETRIOS

And I wasn't half bad?

BEN

Artie Simmons thought you were okay. Frances Squire thought you were okay. Your wife thought you were okay – but what does she know? She's got to be prejudiced.

DEMETRIOS

Maybe the audience was also prejudiced?

BEN

So you made a speech before the already converted. Big deal! Make that same speech at the Princeton Club and see how far you get.

DEMETRIOS

Thanks for the advice. Now if you'll excuse me ...

14

BEN

You're not excused.

DEMETRIOS

I came here because, last night, my wife urged me to make a date to see you today. My wife's a persuasive lady. She said I should get involved in the Communist Party. I told her I voted for Roosevelt and I would be perfectly happy to vote the Democratic Party line for the rest of my life.

BEN

Then go back on the stage and don't waste any more of my time. I'm sure they're going to love you uptown on Broadway. Good day, Mister Minotis.

DEMETRIOS (*leaving*)

Let me tell you: I don't have any illusion about my acting ability - but last night I was pretty terrific. When I walked out of the theatre, the audience was still there. They applauded me again. My wife and I flew all the way home and we were still so excited, we couldn't sleep. Today, I picked up a copy of the New Masses. They called me

BEN

A "Proletarian Thunderbolt!" Don't let it go to your head. You may be a "proletarian thunderbolt" in your rinky-dink theatre but in the real world – you're just a drizzle.

DEMETRIOS

And what are you - a Soviet spy?

BEN

I'm a proud American ... with a world view.

DEMETRIOS

Good for you! Goodbye!

BEN

No hard feelings. Go back where you belong and concentrate on your next production. You're directing an important play about capitalist oppression.

DEMETRIOS

Your spies did a good job on me.

BEN

The American Communist Party doesn't have spies. We have comrades. So! You're still here? You're still hanging around? Do we talk about theatre or do we talk about social injustice?

15

DEMETRIOS

I think maybe I want to serve but I want to think about it. Right now, I don't want to keep my actors waiting.

BEN

Your actors are all members of our cell. Are you surprised? You shouldn't be. Mister Minotis – all the actors in your company are devoted members of the Communist Party. I know that you've been sniffing around, asking questions, which is why you called me – (*meaningfully*) which is why *you* called *me*.

DEMETRIOS

So?

BEN

What do you mean, "so"? Are you waiting for Ben Myerson to invite you to become a member of the Party? It doesn't work that way. I'm waiting for you to show some eagerness, some enthusiasm; some readiness to commit yourself to the only cause worth anything in this country.

DEMETRIOS

It's a good cause but I wouldn't say it's the only cause.

BEN

Oh, wouldn't you? What's more important? Who's more important?

DEMETRIOS

The Democratic Party! The New Deal!

BEN

Well ... nobody could ever accuse theatre people of being too naïve. What's the New Deal doing for American Negroes? Who's protecting young Negroes from being lynched? And what's Roosevelt doing about the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party?

DEMETRIOS

And what's Josef Stalin doing about it? He just signed a peace treaty, a non-aggression pact, with Germany.

BEN

What papers do you read: The Wall Street Journal; The New York Times? You want answers? We've got the answers. And you know it, don't you?

DEMETRIOS

That's why I'm here. I'd be interested in taking in one of your meetings.

16

BEN

You don't "take in" a meeting. It isn't like going to a Saturday matinee.

DEMETRIOS

Okay, okay. I know you're doing a lot of worthwhile things. I'd like to attend a meeting...time permitting.

BEN

Time permitting? If you want to join the Party, you *make* time. Let me ask you something, Mister Minotis. Is that what you like to be called? Mr. Minotis? Demetrios? What?

DEMETRIOS

My friends call me Demi.

BEN

I'm not your friend. Maybe someday we'll be comrades. Look, I know you're interested in the Party. I know you care about the plight of the Negroes in this country. I know you care about social conditions in this country. I know you have a utopian vision for the theatre ...

DEMETRIOS

Not just for the theatre; for society. I see the same breadlines that you see.

BEN

What are you doing about it?

DEMETRIOS

I'm totally committed to the Proletarian Theatre Company. I'm teaching - I'm directing - I'm working with different youth groups and labor groups. I co-authored a play about the taxi strike. I also acted in that play.

BEN

When you yelled at the audience to strike, you were persuasive. You should go to Hollywood.

DEMETRIOS

I'm not interested in Hollywood.

BEN

Really? You don't want Demetrios Minotis to be a household name – like Clark Gable? Don't you want to grab some of that gold? This is a golden age for Hollywood.

17

DEMETRIOS

It's a golden age for the studios and a handful of stars. But what about the writers? They don't even have a union. What about the technicians? Where's *their* union? They work like slaves. I know. I have friends out there. They tried to organize a strike. The studios came in with their goons and busted their heads. That's your golden age.

(Ben circles Demetrios, like a detective scrutinizing a suspect.)

BEN

I like what you have to say. You sound like the actor I saw on that stage last night, shouting at the audience to strike. You should consider a career as a speaker.

DEMETRIOS

I speak through my productions. I'm rehearsing a very important play about a Bulgarian communist who was executed by the Nazis. The Nazis accused him of setting fire to the Reichstag ...

BEN

I know the story.

DEMETRIOS

And I should be getting back. I don't like to keep my actors waiting.

BEN

So who's going to see your "very important play?"

DEMETRIOS

People who care!

BEN

Wrong! People who are already committed!

DEMETRIOS

You have to start somewhere. I'm not looking to start a revolution.

(Demetrios starts for the door.)

BEN

Why not? Wasn't that what your character was shouting last night?

DEMETRIOS

That was my character; not me. I'm not a militant. Maybe I'm a little headstrong, maybe I'll shout at my actors. But that's not my style. And that's not my goal. I don't want to overthrow the government.

18

BEN

Who's talking about overthrowing the government?

DEMETRIOS

I'm a loyal American. I love my country.

BEN

Who doesn't?

DEMETRIOS

Fine. Come see my new play. It's about working people who try to put the screws to the Bulgarian government to release that Communist from prison. It's based on ...

BEN

I know what it's based on.

DEMETRIOS

I have to go now. It was nice meeting you.

(Again, Demetrios starts to exit.)

BEN

It's never nice to meet Ben Myerson. Listen, Demi, come to the next general meeting. And see my secretary on your way out. She'll give you the details for the meeting. If she's not out there, she'll be down the hall at the mimeograph machine.

DEMETRIOS

Oh, yeah, I saw her on the way in. I was impressed that you hired a Negro.

BEN

That's what the Party is all about: freedom – and equality. If you're willing to fight for freedom and equality, if you're willing to bring down the ruling class, then welcome aboard. On the other hand, maybe you want to be part of the ruling class?

DEMETRIOS

Don't *you* want to be part of the ruling class?

BEN

I want to bring about change.

DEMETRIOS

Change? I guess so.

19

BEN

Your wife described you as an angry young man, a rebellious, romantic young man.

DEMETRIOS

What were you doing, talking to my wife? Were you pumping her for information?

BEN

Absolutely!

DEMETRIOS

So you found out everything about me?

BEN

Hardly. And I didn't have to pump Elizabeth. She did the pumping. She's eager for you to get involved

DEMETRIOS

All she said to me was that I should come and see you. That was *all* she said to me.

BEN

That's why she's a good party member.

DEMETRIOS

Why - because she's a better Communist than a wife?

BEN

The two are not mutually exclusive. I know she's a good Communist and I'm sure she's a good wife.

DEMETRIOS

You should be working in Washington at the State Department. That's a nice diplomatic answer.

BEN

Never mind my nice diplomatic answer. And frankly I'm not so sure that you're a good husband or a good companion for Elizabeth.

DEMETRIOS

That's none of your goddamn business.

BEN

If you're going to join the Party, *everything* about you is my goddamn business. (*pause*)
Look, Demi - have a seat.

20

DEMETRIOS

That's okay; I'll stand

BEN

Go ahead and stand. I'm sitting. (*He does so*)

DEMETRIOS

Well, if you're sitting, I'm sitting. (*He sits down.*)

BEN

Sure I can't get you anything?

DEMETRIOS

I'm fine. Listen, I've only got a few minutes ...

BEN

You've got a great little lady.

DEMETRIOS

Thank you.

BEN

How did you and Elizabeth meet?

DEMETRIOS

Why do you ask?

BEN

I have great admiration for her. And since you're the husband – and since you're interested enough in our organization to come here, I want to get to know you.

DEMETRIOS

I think you *do* know me.

BEN.

Not really. And it's not like you're applying for a job as a filing clerk. So ... how did you and Elizabeth meet?

DEMETRIOS

We were students at Harvard. I was a scholarship student, which meant I had to wait on tables just to get by. Liz was at Radcliffe. Liz did *not* have to wait on tables.

BEN

More power to *you*!

21

DEMETRIOS

Yeah, more power to me. I had to take a lot of crap from those members of the privileged class. Anyway, we were both attracted to the drama club/ I think she always saw theatre as an outlet for her political agenda.

BEN

How did you see it? Why did you join that drama club?

DEMETRIOS

I wanted to get laid.

BEN

And there was this pretty little rich girl!

DEMETRIOS

I didn't know she was a blue blood – so when I started to mouth off against those snotty Harvard kids ...

BEN

You were one of those Harvard kids.

DEMETRIOS

They didn't have to wait on tables. They didn't have to clean up their mess. And when they were off to Europe, soaking up culture on their summer vacations, I was soaking up sweat, hauling rugs all over the city for my uncle's business.. Even with a scholarship, I needed money.

BEN

Is this your self-pitying speech? Do you want us to feel sorry for you? Everybody works. Everybody needs money.

DEMETRIOS

Not everybody, not those snotty kids from Harvard. Elizabeth understood how I hated to wait on them. And then I found out that she was from the Scott family that had the coal mines in West Virginia. I went crazy. I asked how she could tolerate her family when they were exploiting coal miners. She said she agreed with me. But I thought she was placating me. Later, I found out I was wrong. She really loved me and respected me. Me – a kid from a poor Greek family!

BEN

Do you love her?

DEMETRIOS

Of course I love her. I wouldn't have married her if I didn't love her.

22

BEN

Even though her family exploited the miners? Even though they stripped the mountains?

DEMETRIOS

Liz was different. Liz was better.

BEN

And still is. *(pause)* Demetrios, if you want to join the Party, we'd like to have you. You'll be a member of the cell. That means the Proletarian Theatre Company will have a 100% membership in the Party.

DEMETRIOS

What would I have to do?

BEN

Whatever we tell you!

DEMETRIOS

Well, that's pretty blunt.

BEN

Down there – in your theatre – you're the director. Up here, I'm the director and you're just one of the performers.

DEMETRIOS

Who writes the script?

BEN

The Central Committee.

DEMETRIOS

Scripts by committee don't work.

BEN

What about the show I saw last night? I know for a fact that all the actors contributed to the script. That's what made it so good.

DEMETRIOS (*irate*)

I'm what made it so good. For sure I let the actors do some improvisation. *Some* improvisation! For sure I gave them some freedom. *Some* freedom! But I was the director. I had the final say

BEN

You were the manipulator; the commissar.

23

DEMETRIOS

That's what the theatre is all about.

BEN

This isn't the theatre. This is real life.

DEMETRIOS

To me, the theatre is real life.

BEN

A beautiful sentiment; beautifully expressed, as only a talent actor could deliver that line.

DEMETRIOS

I'm not a talented actor; only an actor – and a limited one at that. I have no interest in a career as an actor; it's just a means to an end.

BEN

And, as we all know, the end justifies the means. So ... what do you envisage as your end?

DEMETRIOS

Directing plays – but not just any plays – plays that can change our society – plays that will contribute to a better society.

BEN

Okay, Demetrios Minotis: welcome to the American Communist Party.

DEMETRIOS

Does that mean I'm a member?

BEN

Like I said, see the lady at the mimeograph machine. Rosetta will give you some papers to fill out. She'll also give you a card, which will have your name typed on one side and your signature on the other side – and which I hope you'll be proud to carry with you at all times.

DEMETRIOS

Sure!

BEN

She'll also give you some information as to the dues and the meeting schedule. And we'll put you on the mailing list.

24

DEMETRIOS

Great! Now I really have to run.

BEN

Run, young man, run! And we'll see you at the next meeting.

(Demetrios exits. Ben puts the radio back on and picks up his newspaper.)

(Blackout)

Scene 5. Two years later, the summer of 1936. The lights come up on the stage of a tiny off-Broadway theatre, The Proletarian Theatre Company. Artie Simmons is rehearsing a scene with Frances Squire. Since there is no air conditioning, the actors are suffering through an August heat wave. Frances is fanning herself furiously to no avail.

ARTIE

Miss Adamson, you want to drop the fan? You're not doing MADAM BUTTERFLY.

FRANCES

You want to open some doors? Maybe we can get a breeze off the gutter?

ARTIE

We'll get a lot of traffic noise off the gutter. Let's just rehearse.

FRANCES

I miss the old theatre.

ARTIE

What's to miss? It was always freezing cold.

FRANCES

That's what I miss; the freezing cold.

ARTIE

Let's rehearse. It'll take your mind off the weather.

(They take a moment to prepare for the scene, which takes place in a cold apartment.)

FRANCES *(acting)*

“Sunny Italy? Says who? It’s freezing. Can’t we get some heat in this place?”

ARTIE *(acting)*

“And it’s snowing in Rome. Snowing in Rome! Just be happy we’re not living during the reign of Julius Caesar. Everybody wore short skirts.”

25

FRANCES *(acting)*

“Just the men! They were called togas.”

ARTIE *(acting)*

“At least the women wore long dresses. Women were smarter; even back then.”

FRANCES *(acting)*

“Then was then! Now is now. Put in a heating system.”

ARTIE *(acting)*

“You got through two winters without complaining. Can you hold out a little bit longer? I got a distinguished publisher for my book. When I get my advance, I’ll get you a mink coat.”

FRANCES *(acting)*

“People are out of work. People are starving -- and all you can talk about is a fur coat.”

(Demetrios enters, running onto the stage.)

DEMETRIOS

Sorry I’m late.

ARTIE

In two years, you’ve never been late.

FRANCES

That’s because he sleeps in the theatre.

DEMETRIOS

The trains weren’t running.

ARTIE

So maybe we should move to Italy and join the Fascists? *(Imitating the Italian dictator)* Benito Mussolini keeps saying, “I make the trains run on time.”

DEMETRIOS

That's a lousy imitation. (*Opening his script*) Now let's get to work.

ARTIE

Demi, if you and Elizabeth lived with us, you could walk to the theatre.

FRANCES

He doesn't like communal living – do you, Mister Director?

26

DEMETRIOS

Can we start the scene? From the top?

ARTIE

We already started the scene – from the top.

DEMETRIOS

Then we'll just have to start it over again – from the top. And Franny: get rid of that fan. Artie, where's the new stage manager? He can open the street doors.

ARTIE

You can open the street doors.

DEMETRIOS

What about *you*?

ARTIE

What about *you*?

DEMETRIOS (*evenly*)

What *about* me?

ARTIE

You know, two years of success has gone to your head.

DEMETRIOS

You call this "success"? Come on; let's go to work.

ARTIE (*acting*)

"You got through two winters without complaining."

DEMETRIOS

Who's complaining?

ARTIE

No, it's in the script. It's called "acting".

DEMETRIOS

Right! Sorry!

ARTIE (*acting, to Frances*)

“You got through two winters without complaining. Can you hold out a little bit longer? I got a distinguished publisher for my book “

27

(*From the wings, Ben Myerson walks onto the stage.*)

BEN

Instead of “distinguished”, he should say, “an American publisher. You know: a typical blood-sucking capitalist sonofabitch.”

ARTIE

I like that.

FRANCES

Me, too!

BEN

How about it, Demi?

DEMETRIOS

Are you all out of your fucking minds?

BEN

Language; language. There’s a young girl present.

DEMETRIOS

There’s a director present. Ben, do everyone a favor and go back to overthrowing the government.

BEN

I don’t like your tone.

DEMETRIOS

I don’t like *yours*. Stop playing director. And stop making believe you’re a playwright.

ARTIE

Ben made some valuable contributions to the script.

DEMETRIOS

Like what?

BEN

When you get to the third act, you'll find out. It's brilliant. The protagonist has closing speech that ...

DEMETRIOS

Fuck the protagonist. And, Artie, why wasn't I given a copy of the changes?

28

BEN

I'll answer that! Listen, young man, you better learn how to talk to your superiors.

DEMETRIOS

"Superiors"? I didn't know there were superiors. I thought czars and czarinas went out with the revolution. I thought the proletarian revolution was all about equality? Or is it that some party members are more equal than others?

BEN

You're way out of line.

DEMETRIOS

Obviously I'm way out of the Party line.

FRANCES

Demi, don't talk that way. The Party isn't just interested in you; it's interested in all of us. It's all about the common good. You should know that by now.

DEMETRIOS

And all of you should know that, in my theatre, I'm the czar.

BEN

This isn't your theatre. It's the people's theatre. May I remind you that the name of the company is the Proletarian Theatre Company?

DEMETRIOS

And we're all proles: aren't we? Right? Okay, brothers and sister, let's get on with the rehearsal. Okay? Artie, your line is, "I have a *distinguished* publisher for my book."

ARTIE

Is that okay, Ben?

DEMETRIOS

It's not up to Ben. It's up to me.

BEN

Wrong! It's not up to you. It's not even up to me. It's up to the people that I take orders from.

DEMETRIOS

Moscow?

BEN

Detroit.

29

DEMETRIOS

Detroit is the center of the revolution?

BEN

It's the center of the automobile industry.

FRANCES

Demi, you see? We all take orders.

BEN

Go ahead, Artie.

ARTIE (*acting*)

"I have a distinguished publisher for my book."

DEMETRIOS

Hold on a second. I have some script changes.

(*He gives the new changes to Artie and Frances.*)

BEN

I want to see those changes.

DEMETRIOS

You'll hear them ... in a minute. Go ahead, Artie. Take it from ...

ARTIE

I know where to take it from. (*Trying to prepare*) "I have a distinguished publisher for my book."

FRANCES (*acting the new pages*)

"*Our* book!"

ARTIE (*acting*)

"Scusi! We have important museums for my show ... "

FRANCES (*acting*)

Our show . . .

ARTIE (*acting*)

“*Our* show, of course. And the opening of *our* show will coincide with the publication of *our* book. So I would like to celebrate with . . .

30

(*He mimes uncorking a champagne bottle and pours.*)

BEN

People are starving. People are on breadlines. And you’re celebrating with champagne?

ARTIE

That not my idea; that’s Demi’s idea.

DEMETRIOS

Artie, we agreed on the theme, on the situation, on the characters – and now we’re having a rewrite by committee? Uh-uh! No! And, Ben, I have to ask you to leave.

BEN

This is not how we do things around here.

DEMETRIOS

If you have to go back to Detroit, maybe you can get a job on the assembly line.

FRANCES (*to Ben*)

Demetrios has only been a member of the cell for two years.

(*Demetrios and Ben are glaring at each other. Then Demetrios turns to Frances.*)

DEMETRIOS

Frances – don’t make any excuses for me. And Ben, believe me, my heart is here. I want this play to be done the way Artie and Frances want it to be done, the way we agreed it should be done.

BEN

“We?” Who’s “we”? Listen, my friend, reach into your back pocket, take out your wallet and take a look at the card you signed. You’re a member of the American Communist Party. That means you take your orders from the Party.

DEMETRIOS

Does the party know how to write a play? Does the party know how to direct a play? Does the party know how to produce a play?

ARTIE

Demi – the Party is the producer.

DEMETRIOS

The Party is in the real estate business. They own the theatre ... period.

31

BEN

The party pays your salaries ... exclamation mark! Listen, my well-meaning friend, we're not in the business of putting hard-earned money into plays just to entertain an audience. You know about agit-prop theatre? Well, this is it. We want to agitate. We want to propagandize. We want to get our message across any way we can and *every* way we can.

DEMETRIOS

You've got the Daily Worker for messages. You have your mimeograph machine to roll out the leaflets.

BEN

And this little stage, this little theatre, is the best tool we have. For a few nickels and dimes, people can come in here and escape from the lousy world outside. We give them hope. You – you, Demetrios Minotis, you give them hope for a better world, a new world. Now go ahead and rehearse.

FRANCES

So how does this play give them hope? The ending is depressing. The man and the woman go their separate ways.

ARTIE

But they learn from each other. They take from each other. That's why it's called "Reflected Glory."

FRANCES

And I don't like the title. It's too intellectual.

DEMETRIOS

Stop! Stop! We're not having a seminar on playwriting. We're not having a discussion on what the play is about or what the title should be. Jesus Christ, I feel like I'm back at Harvard. And let me tell you: I don't like feeling like I'm back at Harvard. Frances, you're an actress. Act!

FRANCES

I'm more than just an actress. I've also got a mind. I know what's good and what's ... not so good. I've got a friend who spent last summer in Connecticut with the Group Theatre. They had long discussions about the plays. And it wasn't just the directors who did the talking. Even the actors had opinions.

DEMETRIOS

God! Save us from actors who have opinions. And, Miss Adamson, even though you're not getting rich on your salary ...

32

FRANCES

What salary?

DEMETRIOS

The salary you'll get when the show opens. Anyway, can we get on with the rehearsal?

FRANCES

How come we don't get paid for rehearsals?

DEMETRIOS

Go talk to your union. Or better yet, tell Ben Myerson to go talk to Actors Equity.

BEN

I already talked to those dummies at Actors Equity. It's a crummy union, totally without balls. Even the Broadway actors don't get paid for rehearsals.

FRANCES

But why don't *you* pay us for rehearsals?

BEN

I'll take it up with the committee.

DEMETRIOS

Yeah, scratch a fat-assed communist and you get a fat-assed capitalist. We're supposed to be the great defender of the working class. Actors are part of the working class.

BEN

You know something? I'm getting fed up with you.

ARTIE

Ben, the guy's trying to direct a play. And I gotta tell you, I'm loyal to the party but I'm also loyal to the theatre. Let us rehearse.

DEMETRIOS

Okay, kids, let's pick it up from where we left off – wherever the hell that was. Oh, yeah, Artie, you were opening a bottle of Asti Spumante. Then you kiss the young lady.

(Artie kisses Frances.)

FRANCES

Artie, you've got bad breath. Take some chewing gum. Here!

(Artie takes the gum and sticks it in his mouth, chewing and acting at the same time. He is trying for an Italian accent.)

33

ARTIE (*acting*)

"I'm too old for you. You're gonna give me a heart attack."

FRANCES (*acting*)

"Yeah; but what a great way to go!"

ARTIE (*acting*)

"You have done 18 months of hard work! Molto grazie!"

FRANCES (*acting*)

"I don't want you to be grateful. I want you to love me."

ARTIE (*acting*)

"I like you."

FRANCES (*acting*)

"But you don't love me."

ARTIE (*acting*)

"With you and me, it was never about love. It was always about ... the glory."

FRANCES (*acting*)

"I don't want it to be over. I don't want *us* to be over."

ARTIE (*acting*)

"Go back to America!"

FRANCES (*acting*)

"Let's make love."

ARTIE (*acting*)

Go home.

FRANCES (*acting*)

"This is my home. I want to stay here with you."

ARTIE (*acting*)

"Tomorrow, my daughters are coming. The Three Fates! I will have enough guilt to spread around like an Alfredo sauce. Thank God I do not go to confession. I would have to be in the box all day."

FRANCES (*acting*)

“Does Maria know?”

34

DEMETRIOS (*softly directing*)

Artie, for now, never mind about the Italian accent. Think about what you’re saying. But “think” through the words.

(*The actors nod, understandingly*)

ARTIE (*acting*)

“She’s a woman. She knows.”

FRANCES (*acting*)

“So it’s time for me to go home. Right?”

ARTIE (*acting*)

“Have some more sparkling wine.”

DEMETRIOS (*softly directing*)

Good! You’re in the moment. Now really concentrate on pouring the wine.

ARTIE (*acting*)

“It is time for you to resume your own life.

FRANCES (*acting*)

“You know I love you.

ARTIE (*acting*)

“I’m an old man.”

FRANCES (*acting*)

“For these last 18 months, you’ve not been an old man. You’ve been ... you’ve been.... “

ARTIE (*acting*)

“Look at me. Damn it, look at me! I *am* an old man.”

FRANCES (*acting*)

“They will love you in America.”

BEN

The Soviet Union! They will love you in the Soviet Union!

FRANCES

I think it should be, “They will love you in Moscow.”

ARTIE

Frances, we're not doing THE THREE SISTERS.

35

DEMETRIOS

And I'm not doing this play. My fault, entirely! Somehow, along the way, it's turned into ... Artie, what's that Yiddish expression for a certain kind of herring?

ARTIE

Schmaltz!

DEMETRIOS

I've written a piece of schmaltz herring ... and it smells. Sorry folks. Artie, Frances, Ben: goodbye and good luck! It's been tense

ARTIE

Demi, go outside and have a smoke.

DEMETRIOS

You know I don't smoke. Goodbye.

ARTIE

You can't say goodbye. We're brothers. Ever since you came into the cell ...

DEMETRIOS

Lately, it's been feeling like a cellblock, not a cell.

ARTIE

Take the day off. Talk to Elizabeth! Better yet, listen to her.

DEMETRIOS

Why should I talk to my wife? And what's she got to tell me?

BEN

She understands the difference between the theatre and the rest of the world. The Party isn't interested in the crap you get uptown: mindless musicals and sappy comedies. Demerios, we want to change the world any way we can and every way we can. Isn't that what you want to do? Isn't that why you joined the party?

DEMETRIOS

Yes.

BEN

You want to be a hotshot director. Go uptown. Go to Hollywood. But if you want to save the world, if you want the workers of the world to unite and get their fair share, if you want to get rid of the filthy capitalists, the only hope is the American Communist Party. So which road do you take?

36

DEMETRIOS

I'm taking the subway!

(Demetrios exits.)

FRANCES *(running off-stage)*

I'll be right back!

(Light change)

Scene 6. Outside the theatre. Demetrios is pacing back and forth, undecided as to whether to return to rehearsals or go home. Frances comes running out. They go into a doorway where they embrace and kiss.

FRANCES

I don't want you to leave.

(She tries to kiss him again but he pushes her away.)

DEMETRIOS

Careful. There are Commie spies all over the place. One of them is going to report back to my wife.

FRANCES

Doesn't she believe in free love?

DEMETRIOS

I'm the only free lover in the family. *(pause)* What's the matter?

FRANCES

I never heard you use the word, "family," before.

DEMETRIOS

I guess I'm just an old fashioned member of the bourgeoisie after all.

FRANCES

With a mistress!

DEMETRIOS

It comes with the territory.

What does that mean?

FRANCES

I'm a director. You're an actress.

DEMETRIOS

So you fuck all your actresses?

FRANCES

Not all of them.

DEMETRIOS

Is this your way of saying, "So long, it's *been* good to know you?"

FRANCES

I don't know what it means except that I just talked my way out of a job.

DEMETRIOS

You'll get another one.

FRANCES

You know that for a fact?

DEMETRIOS

I know you. If you don't hook up with the Group Theatre, you'll get something with the Theatre Guild. And you'll forget all your friends.

FRANCES

We'll stay in touch.

DEMETRIOS

Bullshit.

FRANCES

Seriously ...

DEMETRIOS

Seriously, will I see you later?

FRANCES

You're rehearsing.

DEMETRIOS

FRANCES

Come over later. Artie and the others are going to a meeting.

38

DEMETRIOS

What about you? Aren't you going to yet another meeting?

FRANCES

You're the only meeting I want. *(waiting)* Well?

DEMETRIOS

If I can!

FRANCES

What's the matter?

DEMETRIOS

You know what the matter is.. You were inside.

FRANCES

You should come back inside.

DEMETRIOS

Only if Commissar "Budinsky" can keep his Commie butt out of here ...but he can't. And neither can the other party bigwigs.

FRANCES

You really hate those people, don't you? Don't you? *(Demi walks away)* Why'd you ever join in the first place?

DEMETRIOS

Elizabeth kept urging, kept insisting ...

FRANCES

Blame it on your wife.

DEMETRIOS

No, no, no. Their programs appealed to me. They made sense ... until I joined ... until I got to know them. .

FRANCES

But you know us! Or maybe you don't know us? And maybe we don't know you.

DEMETRIOS

Frances, I just talked my way out of a job. So please don't do a post mortem. As of right now, I'm out of the Party ... and unemployed. And my wife is not going to be thrilled with my big mouth.

39

FRANCES

Your wife? You never referred to her as "your wife" before.

DEMETRIOS

Well, that's who she is – and she's going to be plenty pissed off at me.

FRANCES

And what about me?

DEMETRIOS

Of course I want to stay in touch with you.

FRANCES

Stay in touch? All of a sudden, Mister Show Business wants to stay in touch?

DEMETRIOS

I'm sorry – but damn it I'm all screwed up. I understand Ben Myerson's agenda. I pretty much agree with it but I don't like his totalitarian methods. . Anyway, he belongs on a soap box over there on Union Square, not in my theatre.

FRANCES

It's not *your* theatre.

DEMETRIOS

When I'm directing, it's my theatre. Well, it *was* my theatre

(Demetrios kisses her quickly and starts to leave.)

FRANCES

It was never your theatre.

DEMETRIOS

You think it was yours?

FRANCES

It belongs to all of us. And that's okay with me. I'm doing something important.

DEMETRIOS

You can do better.

FRANCES

I'm already *doing* better.

40

DEMETRIOS

You're a good actress.

FRANCES

And I'm good in bed. Right?

DEMETRIOS

Yeah. Right.

(Demetrios walks away.)

FRANCES

So now you have to go home and get the party line from ... your wife. .

DEMETRIOS

Liz is a smart lady.

FRANCES

And you're a smart guy.

DEMETRIOS

I'm not smart; I'm shrewd. But I'm no deep thinker. And there are too many times when I let my dick do my thinking for me.

FRANCES

Is that who I was sleeping with: a dick head?

DEMETRIOS

Could have been worse!

FRANCES

For sure it could have been worse. Come by later.

DEMETRIOS

I'll try. Now go back inside.

FRANCES

I didn't mean what I said – calling you a dickhead.

(Frances exits. Demetrios watches her as she goes back inside the theatre.)

DEMETRIOS

Good actress! Good in bed!

41

(Light change)

(Music cue: a recording of Paul Robeson's DEEP RIVER)

Scene 7. The time is later that evening. The lights come up in the Minotis' Upper West Side apartment where Elizabeth is reading a manuscript, sipping a cocktail and listening to the Robeson recording. Demetrios enters. He kisses Elizabeth and sits down heavily on the couch. Then he sings along with the Robeson recording.

ELIZABETH

Are you trying to compete with Paul Robeson?

DEMETRIOS

I'm a better football player.

ELIZABETH

Somehow I don't remember seeing you running for touchdowns at Soldiers Field.

DEMETRIOS

I was too fast for the naked eye. I was so fast ...

ELIZABETH

(The routine)

How fast were you?

DEMETRIOS

Glad you asked! I was so fast ... I was a blur.

ELIZABETH

You're still a blur.

(Demetrios gets up from the couch and takes a sip of Elizabeth's cocktail.)

DEMETRIOS

Maybe I'm too fast for my own good.

ELIZABETH

I know.

DEMETRIOS

What do you know?

ELIZABETH
Ben Myerson called me.

DEMETRIOS
Do you want to hear my side of the story?

ELIZABETH
I did. *(pause)* Artie called me.

DEMETRIOS
I'm not going back.

ELIZABETH
Not even to Frances?

DEMETRIOS
What?

ELIZABETH
You smell of cheap perfume.

DEMETRIOS
I work closely with my actors. You know that.

ELIZABETH
Don't insult me.

DEMETRIOS
I'd never insult you. I have too much respect for you.

ELIZABETH
I could do with a little *less* respect and a little more love.

(Demetrios tries to embrace her but she moves away.)

DEMETRIOS
How about a *lot* more love?

ELIZABETH
I know you've been screwing the ingénue.

DEMETRIOS
I haven't been screwing anybody. On the contrary, I've just been screwed.

ELIZABETH

Don't do this to me. I can smell Frances all over you.

43

DEMETRIOS

I merely huddled in the doorway with a sympathetic actress – whose sexual offerings I rejected.

ELIZABETH

That must have been a first.

DEMETRIOS

I was anxious to come home to my beloved Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

I hate it when you use multi-syllabic words, like “beloved” and “sexual offerings.”

DEMETRIOS

What can I tell you? I had an Ivy League education.

ELIZABETH

Didn't you learn anything these last two years?

DEMETRIOS

Yeah. The Party's not for me. I'm quitting

ELIZABETH

You just joined.

DEMETRIOS

I didn't just join. It's been two years.

ELIZABETH

Did you join for my sake?

DEMETRIOS

Of course not!

ELIZABETH

You got a lot of work. You made a lot of connections. You have a good reputation. So you can thank Ben Myerson and the Party for that.

DEMETRIOS

I thank *you* for that.

ELIZABETH

Stop trying to butter me up. Damn you, don't you have any sense of loyalty?

44

DEMETRIOS

What do you want me to do: take a loyalty oath?

ELIZABETH

I was afraid this would happen.

DEMETRIOS

Then why didn't you say something?

ELIZABETH

I knew you had to come to this decision by yourself.

DEMETRIOS

Do you approve?

ELIZABETH

I'm not your mother.

DEMETRIOS

Do you approve?

ELIZABETH

Do you need my approval?

DEMETRIOS

You have such a grim look on your face. You should be proud of the fact that I lean on you for matters political and artistic.

ELIZABETH

And on matters sexual? On matters moral?

DEMETRIOS

I wasn't perfect at Harvard. I'm not perfect now.

ELIZABETH

You were more perfect at Harvard. You were needy then.

DEMETRIOS

I'm still needy.

ELIZABETH

What you need:- what you want – what you always wanted - is a big Broadway show.

DEMETRIOS

No, a big Broadway *hit*. But it's got to be well written. It's got to have something to say. It's got to be *about* something.

ELIZABETH

You want it both ways, don't you?

DEMETRIOS

Wouldn't *you* like to write a big Broadway hit show?

ELIZABETH

I write plays; not big Broadway hit shows. The things I write about are not the things that tired businessmen and their tired wives want to see. And you know something? I don't give a damn about that kind of writing.

DEMETRIOS

I know what you *do* give a damn about. That's why I love you.

ELIZABETH

You love me and you fuck the ingénues. I wish it was the other way around.

DEMETRIOS

If it was the other way around, how long do you think our marriage would last?

ELIZABETH

Let's find out.

DEMETRIOS

Liz, we're going to stay married to each other because we care deeply about the same things.

ELIZABETH

Do we? Do we care about the same things? You *talk* about caring. I really thought you cared deeply about something other than ... the theatre.

DEMETRIOS

Maybe if you cared more for the theatre, you'd write better plays. I'm sorry. I didn't mean that.

ELIZABETH

Yes, you did.

DEMETRIOS

You're a better writer than I'll ever be.

ELIZABETH

But that's not saying much, is it? Is it? Is it?

DEMETRIOS

Listen, I didn't mean what I said before – about your writing. You're a damn good writer.

ELIZABETH

How reassuring of you to say so.

DEMETRIOS

Damn it, I care about you.

ELIZABETH

What about world peace - justice for the Negro – full employment - free education - free medical care? Do you want me to go on? You know the shopping list.

DEMETRIOS

I want the same things you want.

ELIZABETH

Do you? I wonder.

DEMETRIOS

You're scaring me with this kind of talk.

ELIZABETH

Caring is easy to talk about. Doing something about it is a different matter. When you joined the Party, I was so proud of you.

DEMETRIOS

I want you always to be proud of me.

ELIZABETH

But with you, it's only about career, however you get there, whomever you step on.

(Demetrios walks away from Elizabeth.)

ELIZABETH *(contd)*

Where are you going?

DEMETRIOS

I'm hearing words coming out of your mouth that I've never heard before.

ELIZABETH

Am I wrong?

DEMETRIOS

No, my dear, you're never wrong.

ELIZABETH

You never walked on a picket line. You never marched in a May Day parade.

DEMETRIOS

Right! Right! I confess: I never fought for the common man. But do you think the only way to fight for what you believe is through the Communist Party? Ben Myerson and all those arrogant Party bigwigs are just like the boys I waited on at Harvard. They all thought they owned the world.

ELIZABETH

You're confusing style and substance.

DEMETRIOS

Where was substance in the Yard, the famous Harvard Yard? When I was a freshman, I had to serve those smart ass bastards. I had to wait on them and listen to their nonsense. . (*Imitating them*) "Daddy came over on the Mayflower." "Daddy owns half the Commonwealth of Massachusetts." (*He takes another sip*) Well, *my* daddy owned nothing but a mule in the old country.

ELIZABETH

My daddy owned a lot of mules. And he landed in Virginia before the Mayflower. So what does that make me ... in your angry eyes?

DEMETRIOS

My wife!

ELIZABETH

Can't you stop being theatrical for one second?

DEMETRIOS

I fell in love with you. I married you.

ELIZABETH (*rising*)

That's a line out of a Hollywood movie.

DEMETRIOS

I like Hollywood movies.

ELIZABETH

Maybe that's your problem.

DEMETRIOS

So what happens now? Does *my* problem become *our* problem?

ELIZABETH

I think we should go downtown and have a meeting with Ben.

DEMERIOS

Are you crazy? Why not go to the Soviet Union and have a meeting with Josef Stalin? At least we'd get good seats for the Moscow Art Theatre. Yeah! Mission to Moscow! Save a marriage!

ELIZABETH

My aunt took me over there for my high school graduation present. It was the defining moment of my life.

DEMETRIOS

Now you tell me? I thought that *I* was the defining moment of your life?

ELIZABETH

Darling husband, you're a never-ending moment – like a roller coaster ride.

DEMETRIOS

Do you want to get off?

ELIZABETH

No – but sometimes it's white knuckles all the way.

DEMETRIOS

But I don't compare to your Soviet experience.

ELIZABETH

The Moscow Art Theatre! Meeting Stanislavsky! That was my paradise, my utopia. Two weeks that changed my life.

DEMETRIOS

Was that like “Ten Days that Shook the World??

ELIZABETH

It shook *my* world.

DEMETRIOS

So you said. So you said. But what were you allowed to see – besides the obligatory cultural events?

ELIZABETH

In Stalingrad, I saw women working alongside men. I saw women working as doctors and scientists. I saw happy children. I saw happy workers.

DEMETRIOS

You saw all that in two weeks?

ELIZABETH

Yes – and the Communist Party will turn the United States into a utopia/

DEMETRIOS

My money's on FDR and the Democrats – and the New Deal - to do that.

ELIZABETH

You're politically naïve. The Party

DEMETRIOS

The Party only knows how to come up with pie in the sky slogans. They *talk* the good fight. They speak to all the idealists who want to believe. I'm with you on that. At least I wanted to be with you on that.

ELIZABETH

That was the man I fell in love with.

DEMETRIOS

But anyone can make a speech. Even *I* can make a speech.

ELIZABETH

So why did you join?

DEMETRIOS

I bought the party line! I just didn't know they'd tie it around my neck.

ELIZABETH

So you actually quit?

DEMETRIOS

Yep. I walked out of rehearsals.

ELIZABETH

Are you going to walk out on me?

DEMETRIOS

Never!

(They embrace and kiss.)

ELIZABETH

It's a lousy play anyway.

DEMETRIOS

I told you that up front. But hey I needed the work.

ELIZABETH

Maybe you can get a job as a short order cook?

DEMETRIOS

I make a mean spinach pie. My folks would be proud of me.

ELIZABETH

Demetrios Minotis ... you're an amazing man.

DEMETRIOS

I know.

ELIZABETH

Demi – please –go see Ben Myerson and tell him you reconsidered. Tell him you want to direct a play – but it has to be a good play – something that speaks to the people.

DEMETRIOS

The Party doesn't speak to the people. They use the people. You think they care about the unemployed?

ELIZABETH

Of course they do.

DEMETRIOS

Of course they don't. They don't have solutions. They only criticize.

ELIZABETH

Look, darling, we don't have to fight about political theory. You're a man of the theatre, a gifted man of the theatre. The Party is giving you a theatre ...

DEMETRIOS

With a price tag!

ELIZABETH

Fine! Then you starve alone - because I'm not leaving the Party.

DEMETRIOS

I respect your values.

ELIZABETH

Don't talk down to me.

DEMETRIOS

I'm going for a walk.

ELIZABETH

Union Square?

DEMETRIOS

I don't know. It's a long walk downtown.

ELIZABETH

It'll be a longer walk uptown if you don't see Ben.

DEMETRIOS

Is that a command? *(pause)* Is that a threat?

ELIZABETH

See Ben. I'll call him first.

DEMETRIOS

No.

ELIZABETH

Are you going to see Frances?

DEMETRIOS

No.

ELIZABETH

Do you think you still have friends downtown?

DEMETRIOS

Why not? We still have the same goals. (*Again, he starts to leave.*)

ELIZABETH

Don't you have any regrets?

DEMETRIOS

About what?

ELIZABETH

Fighting the good fight!

DEMETRIOS

Liz – that hasn't changed.

ELIZABETH

Then go back to the theatre. You've never walked out on a production before. The least you can do is stay with it until Opening Night. You do want to get the good reviews, don't you?

DEMETRIOS

You're one smart cookie.

ELIZABETH

That's why you married me.

DEMETRIOS

That's not why I married you.

ELIZABETH

Why don't you remind me?

DEMETRIOS

It's too hot. Wait till the sun goes down.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, sure! I'll count the hours.

DEMERIOS

Do that, please! (*He kisses Elizabeth*) Honey, I want to get back to the theatre. Seriously! You were right about that. Seriously! I don't want Ben Myerson imposing his Marxist / Leninist doctrine on every page.

ELIZABETH

How are you going to stop him? Are you going to sweet talk him the way you're sweet talking me?

DEMETRIOS

I love you. I don't love Ben Myerson.

ELIZABETH

I repeat: how are you going to stop him?

DEMETRIOS

I don't know – but nobody ever accused me of running away from a fight.

ELIZABETH

Ah -- but what are you fighting *for*?

(Demetrios exits without answering her question.)

ELIZABETH (*contd*)

Or should I say, *who* are you fighting for?

(Blackout)

End Act One

Act Two

*Scene 1. The time is 9 AM on a cold January morning in 1952 in Washington, D. C. The place is a waiting area outside a small hearing room adjacent to the Chambers of the House of Representatives. **Artie Simmons** and **Frances Adamson** are sitting on a bench, waiting, having been subpoenaed by HUAC, the House Un-American Activities Committee. They are huddled together with their backs to the street door. They do not see **Demetrios** and **Elizabeth** enter. It has been raining and Demetrios and Elizabeth are shaking out their umbrellas.*

ELIZABETH

Do you think the rain is symbolic?

DEMETRIOS

Only if you believe that Joe McCarthy is some kind of wrathful god.

ELIZABETH

He's wrathful but he's not a god. Maybe he's an avenging angel.

DEMETRIOS

He's no angel. And neither is the Chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee. .
(pause) And neither am I.

ELIZABETH

One more time: you don't have to testify. You can take the Fifth Amendment.

DEMETRIOS

There's no necessity for me to take the Fifth. I'm not about to incriminate myself. I was assured by this Congressman, James Strickland, that it's going to be a closed door session. No spectators, except for you.

ELIZABETH

Is that what I am: a spectator?

DEMETRIOS

Be happy you're not a witness. Come on, Liz. There won't be any lawyers or reporters; just you and me and this one Congressman. So far, he's been very friendly.

ELIZABETH

Sure, 'cause he want a friendly witness.

DEMETRIOS

We've been all through this. I'm not naming names.

55

(Artie turns around and sees Demetrios and Elizabeth.)

ARTIE (*shouting*)

Hey, Demi! Liz! Over here!

DEMETRIOS

Keep your voice down.

(Demetrios and Elizabeth approach Artie and Frances.)

ARTIE

I have no intention of keeping my voice down. What do you think this is: St. Patrick's Cathedral?

FRANCES

(to Demi and Elizabeth)

Welcome to the "Inquisition".

DEMETRIOS

That's not funny.

(Artie kisses Elizabeth, then hugs Demetrios..)

ELIZABETH

What time is your appointment?

ARTIE

Some jerk came out and said, "We're running late." No apologies; no nothing. It's worse than auditioning for a show. When you get rejected for one show, at least you can try again for another show. With these bastards, there's no "again." One strike and you're out ... forever.

FRANCES

Yeah, it's like auditioning for your life. What about you guys?

ELIZABETH

Not me; just my famous husband.

FRANCES

So where's the sign that says, "Abandon hope, ye who enter here?"

ELIZABETH

I think we're just supposed to wait here. *(to Demetrios)* Want to sit down?

56

DEMETRIOS

No. Too nervous!

FRANCES

You? Nervous?

DEMETRIOS

I'm not the "Proletarian Thunderbolt" any more.

ARTIE (*to Elizabeth*)

So how was the Soviet Union?

ELIZABETH

They're still recovering from the war. They lost millions of soldiers and civilians, more than any of our Allies, much more than us. But their spirits are great. You should get over there.

ARTIE

Unfortunately, the State Department took away my passport.

DEMETRIOS

Sorry to hear that – but you're not missing anything.

ELIZABETH

Don't listen to him.

DEMETRIOS

My wife's beloved "workers' paradise" is all in her mind. Liz, you're still living in the 1930s.

ELIZABETH

Yes, and I'm proud of it. Now go ahead and tell your story. I'm sure that Frances and Artie want to hear all about your Soviet experience.

DEMETRIOS

We had a guide. In Moscow, you can't go anywhere without a guide. So much for freedom of movement! I asked our guide – our government guide, "Where are the slave camps? What they call. the "gulags." He said, with a perfectly straight face, "There are no slave camps. There are no gulags."

FRANCES

Shame on you, Demi! That's capitalist propaganda.

57

DEMETRIOS

Like the concentration camps were Jewish propaganda? Anyway, Liz and I were strolling around Red Square – with our guide, of course – and suddenly a black car – all their cars are black – a black car pulls up to the sidewalk. Two goons jump out, grab some poor sucker and start beating him up! Lots of people are on the street and they just keep on walking. Nobody stops to look. Nobody stops to help. Nobody says anything. The little guy is lying there in a pool of blood. The

goons jump back in the car. And everyone just keeps walking around this guy, like he's some piece of dog shit. Such is life in the workers' paradise.

ELIZABETH

One isolated example!

DEMETRIOS

I hope today is one isolated example.

ELIZABETH

How can you say that? Before there was a House Un-American Activities Committee or a Senate Internal Securities Committee, there were Justice Department goons going after socialists and anarchists.

DEMETRIOS

With good reason! The anarchists were throwing bombs and assassinating presidents.

ARTIE

So what are you going to tell them when you go inside?

DEMETRIOS

The truth!

ARTIE

Whose truth?

DEMETRIOS

There's only one truth. But to answer the question you're not asking, "No, I'm not going to name names."

FRANCES

Your bosses in Hollywood won't like that.

DEMETRIOS

My bosses in ...? I don't have any Hollywood bosses.

58

ARTIE

Come on, Demi. Every studio is after you to make another movie. All you've got to do is be a friendly witness.

(Demi reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out some pages.)

DEMETRIOS

I know my rights. I've got them right here: the first ten amendments, the Bill of Rights. That's the truth, Artie!

ARTIE

It may as well be written in Aramaic – because those fascist bastards won't understand one goddamn word.

(As if on cue, the office door opens and James Strickland comes out, extending his hand to Demetrios. Strickland is an affable, good-looking Mid-Western type)

STRICKLAND

Mr. Minotis! Jim Strickland here. Come on inside.

DEMETRIOS

Can I bring Mrs. Minotis with me? Your aide said it would be all right.

STRICKLAND

Absolutely.

(Strickland ushers Elizabeth and Demetrios inside.)

ARTIE

How about us? We've been waiting out here for over an hour.

STRICKLAND

We'll get to you just as soon as we're through with Mr. Minotis.

ARTIE

You know who I am, don't you?

STRICKLAND

Of course! We have files on every Communist cell in this country. You're Artie Simmons and that's Frances Adamson.

ARTIE

No! I'm *Mister* Arthur Simmons and this is *Miss* Frances Adamson.

59

(Light change)

Scene 2. The lights come up in the tiny office of James Strickland.

STRICKLAND

Mrs. Minotis, please, have a seat. Try that one over there; it's the only comfortable one in the room.

(Elizabeth sits down.)

DEMETRIOS

Frankly, I was expecting a large hearing room with you and your colleagues on a raised platform, looking down on us.

STRICKLAND

Ah, yes, that's the director at work. That's why you're so good at what you do. You have an eye for the theatrical.

DEMETRIOS

I have an eye, an ear and a *nose* for the theatrical. And I smell a lynching coming on.

STRICKLAND

They'll be no lynching here, not if you cooperate.

DEMETRIOS

I'd be happy to cooperate.

STRICKLAND

Good! So – did you have a pleasant train ride?

DEMETRIOS

“Pleasant?” Not particularly.

STRICKLAND

Know just what you mean. I take that train every Friday. I like to spend the weekends with my family.

DEMETRIOS

Me, too!

STRICKLAND

Okay, let's get down to business - and, believe me, I want to make this as painless as possible. First of all, we're not interested in you, *per se*.

60

DEMETRIOS

Then what am I doing here?

STRICKLAND

I'll get to that in a minute. Now then, as you can see, there's no stenographer taking down your words or my words. And, rest assured, our little conversation will not get out to the ladies and gentlemen of the press.

DEMETRIOS

Not even to Walter Winchell?

STRICKLAND

What is said in this room stays in this room. (*pause*) Mister Minotis, what we would like to know, for openers, is: (*pause*) is John Garfield a Communist? And was he a member of your cell at the Proletarian Theatre Company?

DEMETRIOS

Well, Senator ...

STRICKLAND

Congressman, but thanks for the promotion.

DEMETRIOS

First of all, I hardly knew him. I'd see him occasionally at benefits or theatre openings but I was really just a fan, like everybody else.

STRICKLAND

I wouldn't say, "like *everybody* else."

DEMETRIOS

No, you wouldn't – but I would. It's my testimony.

STRICKLAND

Touché! Continue.

DEMETRIOS

Secondly, he was never a member of my... of the Proletarian Theatre Company.

STRICKLAND

You started to say, "of my theatre company."

DEMETRIOS

I was the artistic director. The actors were my friends. I felt like it was my second home.

61.

DEMETRIOS (*contd*)

Listen, I know what you want to hear. So let me tell you flat out: Yes, I was a member of the Communist Party for two years, from 1934 to 1936. And then I quit – for good! Never went back. No regrets! In fact, I was enormously relieved. Okay?

STRICKLAND

Glad to hear that.

DEMETRIOS

So is that all? Can we go? I know you've got people waiting outside.

STRICKLAND

Mr. Minotis: you can relax. This isn't a witch-hunt. I'm not asking you to "name names", contrary to what the New York Post or other members of the liberal press are suggesting. The Committee is not looking to ruin lives and careers. The subpoena that was sent to you – that was just an invitation to come down here. Nothing more, nothing less! An invitation!

DEMETRIOS

I'd rather be invited to a wedding.

ELIZABETH

My husband likes weddings.

STRICKLAND (*ignoring Elizabeth*)

What about Arthur Simmons?

DEMETRIOS

A good man of the theatre! As we say in French, "un homme du theatre." But I know what you're getting at. Listen, I'm here to cooperate. I'll tell you everything you want to know about myself. I'll tell you more than you want to know. But I'm not ratting on one of my oldest and best friends.

STRICKLAND

Even if he's a spy for the Soviet Union?

DEMETRIOS

You know that for a fact?

STRICKLAND

I know that for a fact.

DEMETRIOS

You'll furnish me with proof?

62

STRICKLAND

That's confidential information – but I'll have my secretary furnish you with whatever documents can be declassified. (*smiling*) The "inquisition" is over.

DEMETRIOS

That's it?

STRICKLAND

That's it until after lunch. I recommend Marcel's, if you like French food – and I know you do. But wherever you go, bring me the receipt. And get me the receipt for your transportation.

DEMETRIOS

Thank you.

STRICKLAND

We'll see you back here at two o'clock. Oh, and you might want a little reading material while you're sipping a glass of red wine. The 1950 Bordeaux was a particularly good year.

ELIZABETH

Any year had to be better than this year.

STRICKLAND

And here are some pamphlets, compliments of the Government Printing Office. They're the testimonies of some of our cooperative witnesses. They're among the top Hollywood directors and Hollywood writers. You may not know John Garfield but I'm sure you know these guys. They're all loyal Americans in addition to being outstanding movie directors and writers. Nice meeting you, Elizabeth!

(Demetrios is half out the door when Elizabeth turns around.)

ELIZABETH

I never told you my first name.

STRICKLAND *(all smiles)*

I have a very efficient staff. Oh, and why don't you leave by the back door? I'm sure you don't want to discuss this meeting with your old friends.

(Elizabeth and Demetrios exit by the back door.)

STRICKLAND *(calling out)*

Beverly! Beverly! Did you get everything? *(He sticks his head into the next room.)* Did you get it all down? Very good!

63

(Light change)

Scene 3. The waiting area outside Strickland's office; moments later. Artie and Frances are pacing back and forth.

FRANCES

Sounds pretty quiet in there.

ARTIE

Sure. Demi's spilling his guts out...in a whisper!

FRANCES

I hear somebody typing. That's all.

ARTIE

May as well relax. May as well move to England. I hear they've got some American producers over there hiring blacklisted actors and writers ... at bargain basement prices.

FRANCES

Would you go?

ARTIE

For sure! What about you?

FRANCES

I don't want to leave. Besides, what do these clowns want us for? We're no big names.

ARTIE

We *know* names. These committees want the publicity. Worse case scenario is: we don't make any more movies.

FRANCES

Any *more* movies? I only made one movie - in Mexico. But I'm finally getting radio jobs. Now that's going down the tubes.

ARTIE

Don't start feeling sorry for yourself.

FRANCES

We're not spies.

ARTIE

Doesn't matter.

64

FRANCES

And the Communist Party is legal.

ARTIE

Doesn't matter.

FRANCES

I'm scared.

ARTIE

So move to Russia.

FRANCES

I'm an American.

ARTIE

Tell it to the guys behind the door.

FRANCES

I voted for Henry Wallace. Does that count? I voted for Norman Thomas. Does that count?

ARTIE

Doesn't count. He's a socialist.

FRANCES

You think they know the difference down here?

ARTIE

They don't care.

FRANCES

How come?

ARTIE

We're at war.

(A frightened, tearful Frances falls into Artie's arms and he tries to comfort her.)

(Light change)

Scene 4. Five hours later. The office of James Strickland. Demetrios and Elizabeth are sitting as before (she on a small couch; he in a straight back chair) as Strickland enters.

65

STRICKLAND

Well, I hope you both had a pleasant lunch.

ELIZABETH

Who could eat?

STRICKLAND

Did you try the Bordeaux Red?

ELIZABETH

We thought it might be more expedient to have the white.

DEMETRIOS
I had the Dover sole.

STRICKLAND
Very good!

DEMETRIOS
Then I got sick.

STRICKLAND
I'm sorry.

DEMETRIOS
Not to worry. The white wine came up with the fish.

STRICKLAND
That won't go into the record. *(He takes out a fountain pen and begins writing on a legal size pad.)*
Okay, may I please have your name?

DEMETRIOS
You know my name.

STRICKLAND
For the record!

DEMETRIOS
Is this being recorded?

STRICKLAND
You're looking at the recording secretary.

66

DEMETRIOS
Demetrios Minotis.

STRICKLAND
Place of birth?

DEMETRIOS
Astoria.

STRICKLAND
Astoria? Where's that?

DEMETRIOS

It's in the borough of Queens – which is part of the City of New York. It has a small, but growing, Greek population.

STRICKLAND

And are you an American citizen?

DEMETRIOS

Do you want to see my passport? Do you want to see my birth certificate? I brought all the documents.

STRICKLAND

Just answer the question.

DEMETRIOS

Yes, I'm an American – and proud of it!

STRICKLAND

Education?

DEMETRIOS

I got a scholarship to Harvard.

STRICKLAND

Really? I also went there. Where did you stay?

DEMETRIOS

I was off campus for most of the time but in my freshman year, my address was J-31, Wigglesworth.

STRICKLAND

No kidding? Me, too! Not J-31 but I was also at Wigglesworth as a freshman.

67

ELIZABETH

Did you wear the Crimson colors or would that have been too incriminating?

STRICKLAND

Mrs. Minotis, another outburst and I will have to ask you to leave. Now then, Mister Minotis, how did you support yourself? Besides the scholarship, I mean.

DEMETRIOS

I waited on tables. For three and a half years, I waited on tables.

STRICKLAND

You probably waited on my two nephews.

DEMETRIOS

Probably!

STRICKLAND

So ... you went from the Yard right into the Proletarian Theatre Company. How did you hear about them?

DEMETRIOS

I hung out with all the radicals I could find.

STRICKLAND

Were you part of that group that planted a bomb on the 50-yard line at Soldiers Field?

DEMETRIOS

No, I believe that group was from M. I. T.

STRICKLAND

Right! So ... who told you about the Proletarian Theatre Company?

DEMETRIOS

Everyone!

STRICKLAND

Who?

DEMETRIOS

Everyone!

STRICKLAND

Could you be more specific?

68

DEMETRIOS

No. No, sir! No.

STRICKLAND

You mean, you *won't* be more specific.

DEMETRIOS

Right.

STRICKLAND

Was the Proletarian Theatre Company a front for the Communist Party?

DEMETRIOS

It wasn't a front for anyone. However, we presented plays that had a definite, left-leaning philosophy.

STRICKLAND

And who wrote those plays?

DEMETRIOS

We all did. Well, not all of us. I did; other members of the company did. Looking back on those productions, it was amazing that a collective effort came up with so many good productions. I went into that company, totally supporting their artistic methods. I left the company two years later, vowing that I'd never work that way again. And I didn't.

STRICKLAND

Let's stay with that company and the people who ran it: the producers. Were they fronts for the Communist Party?

DEMETRIOS

No, sir! Not to my knowledge.

STRICKLAND

Really? You were a member of the cell and you didn't know?

DEMETRIOS

It was a large theatre company and like all theatre companies, there was a certain vagabond quality to it. People kept coming in and going out.

STRICKLAND

And during that time, you were a member of the Communist Party, weren't you?

DEMETRIOS

Yes. Yes, sir.

69

STRICKLAND

Who were the members of your cell?

DEMETRIOS

I was a member of the cell for two years. I was a Party member for two years.

STRICKLAND

You're repeating yourself.

DEMETRIOS

Yes. Yes, sir.

STRICKLAND

And the others? Who were the other members?

DEMETRIOS

I respectfully decline to answer that question.

STRICKLAND

Who recruited you?

DEMETRIOS

I respectfully decline to answer that question.

STRICKLAND

Mr. Minotis, do you understand the risk you are taking? If you continue to answer in this vein before the full committee, you can be held in contempt of Congress.

DEMETRIOS

Yes, sir. I know that ... sir.

STRICKLAND

Mr. Minotis, you do understand, don't you, that it is my duty – in fact it is the duty of this committee – to find out all there is to find out about the Communist Party and what they're up to and to ask people like you what you know. I hope you will reconsider your refusal to cooperate.

DEMETRIOS

I am cooperating. I'm not asking for immunity for myself. I'm telling you everything – about myself, about my involvement with the cell and with the Party.

STRICKLAND

You do know we're at war with the Communists.

70

DEMETRIOS

It's a cold war.

STRICKLAND

The Soviet Union has spies in this country. You do know that, don't you?

DEMETRIOS

And those spies should be punished. Yes, sir.

STRICKLAND

This investigation goes way beyond Demetrios Minotis. I'm urging you to give us the names of the other Party members.

DEMETRIOS

I can't do that – sir.

STRICKLAND

Mr. Minotis, we're not trying to harm innocent people. This isn't a witch-hunt.

DEMETRIOS

Understood! But any name I give you would condemn an innocent man ... or woman. I'm not judging anybody – but that's a heavy responsibility.

STRICKLAND

Mr. Minotis, you have a heavy responsibility to your country. Now listen carefully: you have a great career on Broadway and you're on your way to a great career in Hollywood. We're talking about movies as a propaganda machine. We know there are directors, writers and actors who came out of your old theatre company, who are active Communists. Those are the people we're looking for. You can be of enormous help even if you only give us one name. One name, Mr. Minotis!

DEMETRIOS

I suspect you already have all the names, don't you, Mister Strickland? Don't you?

STRICKLAND

We ask the questions; you supply the answers.

DEMETRIOS

I won't inform on anyone. I'll help you in any way I can but I won't name old friends.

STRICKLAND

I understand. *(pause)* Well, that's that. You and Mrs. Minotis can see Beverly and she'll arrange for your expenses.

71

DEMETRIOS *(rising)*

So we can go now?

STRICKLAND

One more thing! I'm not speaking for myself but I am speaking for the other members of the committee. Some of them are all for not bothering you any further.

DEMETRIOS

Fine!

STRICKLAND

But one or two of them are afraid that if they – how shall I say – pass you by, they'd be open to criticism. Some of our constituents, might wonder, why did we go so easy on this guy?

DEMETRIOS

I told you everything about my involvement with the Party.

STRICKLAND

But it wasn't under oath. And you weren't questioned by the full committee.

DEMETRIOS

In other words, you're calling me back.

STRICKLAND

Not right away – but soon - very soon. (*extending his hand*) Nice to have met you, Demetrios.
Nice to have met you, Mrs. Minotis.

(*Strickland abruptly exits.*)

ELIZABETH

I'm very proud of you.

DEMETRIOS

I need a drink.

ELIZABETH

I love you.

DEMETRIOS

I still need a drink.

72

ELIZABETH

Let's see Beverly and get that good old government money.

DEMETRIOS

It's our money. We pay taxes.

ELIZABETH

And we voted these people into office.

DEMETRIOS

Do you think this will ever end?

ELIZABETH

No.

DEMETRIOS

They want me on the coast next week for a pre-production meeting. Somehow I don't think I'm going to make it.

ELIZABETH

Let's go home.

(She holds him and kisses him – as the lights fade.)

Scene 5. The waiting room outside Strickland's office. As Elizabeth and Demetrios exit, they see Artie and Frances. Elizabeth rushes over to embrace Artie and Frances as Demetrios stands back, watching them.

ARTIE

We just got through. Those bastards really put us through the ringer.

FRANCES

Just about every member of the cell was here. Where were you?

ELIZABETH

He had a private session with Strickland.

ARTIE

King of the Witch Hunters! He makes McCarthy look like a flaming liberal.

ELIZABETH

He treated Demi very nicely. I didn't buy his act for a minute.

73

DEMETRIOS

I'll be coming back soon. What about you guys?

ARTIE

I feel like I just went 15 rounds with Joe Louis.

FRANCES

We all took the Fifth Amendment. We're dead!

DEMETRIOS

Hang in there!

ARTIE

Hang in where? We're hung! We're finished.

DEMETRIOS

I'm doing a movie this year. I'll find work for you guys.

ARTIE

A studio movie? Forget it!

DEMETRIOS

Not all studios are the same.

ARTIE

All studios are the same and you know it. They'll never hire us.

DEMETRIOS

I'm wiped out. I'll see you guys back in New York.

(Demetrios starts to leave. Elizabeth stays behind for a moment.)

ELIZABETH

You would have been proud of him. He didn't name names.

ARTIE

He doesn't have to. They already know the names.

ELIZABETH

But he didn't squeal. He stood up for all of us. He protected all of us.

(Elizabeth hugs and kisses Artie and Frances.)

74

ELIZABETH *(contd)*

I was very proud of him.

DEMETRIOS *(calling out)*

Come on, honey; let's go. I'm beat. *(to Artie and Frances)* We'll get together in New York.

(Elizabeth follows Demetrios out the front door.)

FRANCES

He'll talk. When they bring him back here, when he sits in that hard chair and looks up at those grim faced bastards hiding behind their long tables, looking down on him from their platform, when he sees his shining career on the line, he'll talk.

ARTIE

What's that? Woman's intuition? The ex-girlfriend slighted?

FRANCES

Did you notice – we’re not riding back to New York together?

ARTIE

He’s got a lot on his mind: a Hollywood movie, a Broadway show.

FRANCES

That’s why he’s not getting on a train with two black listed actors.

ARTIE

You’re reading too much into it. Listen, kid, we just got our asses kicked big time. We can talk about it on the train.

FRANCES

What’s to talk about? I don’t know about you but I’m moving to England. I hear there’s work for anyone who’s talented, regardless of nationality or political persuasion. And maybe I can find a nice English gentleman to marry. I’d like to have a family before it’s too late.

ARTIE

Listen, we still have our theatre.

FRANCES

Aren’t you tired of being poor and struggling?

ARTIE

That’s all I’ve ever known.

75

FRANCES

Well, you better learn a trade – because things are only going to get worse.

ARTIE

Come on, kid, I’ll buy you a drink.

(Artie takes Frances in his arms.)

FRANCES

What’s with this “kid”? I’m too old to be anybody’s kid.

ARTIE

You’ll always be *my* kid.

(Artie continues to hold Frances as the lights fade.)

(Blackout)

Scene 6. Moments later, outside the government building. It is still raining as Elizabeth opens her umbrella.

ELIZABETH

Open your umbrella. *(beat)* Are you coming or are you just going to stand there?

DEMETRIOS

I'm going back inside.

ELIZABETH

What's the matter? Scared of a little rain?

DEMETRIOS

I can't do it.

ELIZABETH

What can't you do?

DEMETRIOS

I've got a chance, maybe my only chance. to establish myself as a film director. And my producer is waiting for me, begging me to cooperate with Strickland and the Committee.

ELIZABETH *(closing her umbrella)*

Be patient. In two years, they'll be another election. Most of those guys will be voted out of office.

76

DEMETRIOS

And what of they're *not* voted out of office? Another two years for Strickland. Another four years for that bastard in the White House. Another six years for his cronies in the Senate.

ELIZABETH

And you'll be doing another Broadway show; most likely another *hit* Broadway show.

DEMETRIOS

I somehow don't think that a German play like MOTHER COURAGE is going to be a hit on Broadway. Maybe off Broadway but nowhere else except maybe Munich.

ELIZABETH

So what are you saying?

DEMETRIOS

You met my producer – Billy Myers. He's from my old neighborhood. Another Brownsville Jew who made good in Hollywood. Billy told me – begged me – to cooperate. He said all I have to do

is name the names that Strickland already has. It's not like I'd be naming new names. I'd be naming old names.

ELIZABETH

Not so! You'd be naming one new name. Yours!

DEMETRIOS

Nobody will ever know.

ELIZABETH

I'll know. *(She opens her umbrella and walks away as DEMETRIOS watches her leave.)*

(Blackout)

Scene 6. The time is a bitter cold September morning, 1952. The place is the bare stage of a Broadway theatre - with one work light, a folding table and a couple of folding chairs. The lights come up on Artie Simmons and Frances Adamson. They are decently dressed, like any actors waiting to be interviewed for an audition.

FRANCES

I didn't think that old guy would let us in, the way he looked at me.

ARTIE

Those guys at the door, they look at everybody that way. And you know something? Their name is always "Pop."

77

FRANCES

You've been here before?

ARTIE

Never!

(Frances looks out to the orchestra and the balconies.)

FRANCES

I wonder if I can project to the second balcony.

ARTIE

Why not?

FRANCES

I've only worked little theatres. You know that.

ARTIE

Don't worry about it. You'll be fine. Just concentrate on the reading.

FRANCES (*still looking out to the balconies*)
Look at this place. It's big

ARTIE
I've seen bigger.

FRANCES
Like where?

ARTIE
Madison Square Garden.

FRANCES
They don't put on plays at Madison Square Garden.

ARTIE
Political rallies.

FRANCES
Which ones? Like the American Nazi Party?

ARTIE
As a matter of fact, yes. I tried to get up on stage to go after Father Coughlin. But those brown shirt bastards got to me first.

78

FRANCES
What did you expect them to do: roll out the red carpet for you?

ARTIE
Red carpet! Very funny! I did it for the publicity. And it worked. Front page in the Daily News *and* the Daily Worker.

FRANCES
So did you ever audition for a Broadway show before?

ARTIE
Sure!

FRANCES
And ...?

ARTIE
And nothing!

FRANCES

This is my first.

ARTIE

I can tell.

FRANCES

I wonder what Demi looks like?

ARTIE

Successful! That's what he looks like.

FRANCES

I've seen his picture in the papers and the magazines but I still wonder

ARTIE

Stop wondering. He'll look like he did in Washington – only better dressed.

FRANCES

But he's not going to act the same. He's not going to *be* the same.

ARTIE

Check out the way he smells.

79

FRANCES

What are you talking about? I gotta go sniff him ... like I'm some kind of cocker spaniel?

ARTIE

Guys who make it big; they always put on too much after-shave lotion. It's like they take a bath in cologne. Comes from insecurity!

FRANCES

Well, at least he hasn't forgotten his friends.

ARTIE

I hate to bust your bubble but this isn't about friendship. This is about payback. Maybe a little bit of guilt thrown in- like oregano. Come on! He's a hotshot Broadway director and we're still working for bubkas – if we're lucky.

FRANCES

He was under no obligation to call us. So if you're feeling pissed off about it, then you can go ... piss off!

(Enter Demetrios, wearing a blue blazer and a blue overcoat, draped over his shoulders. He is also wearing a handsome gray fedora.)

DEMETRIOS

Who's pissing off?

ARTIE

Demi, baby, how the hell are you? Hey, you're looking good. Sharp as a tack!

(Demetrios holds out his arms and embraces Artie. Then he goes to Frances, embracing and kissing her.)

DEMETRIOS

You look more beautiful than ever.

FRANCES

So do you.

DEMETRIOS

Let me put you guys at your ease right away. You don't audition for me. Hell, it's not like I don't know your work. So ... here are the scripts. You guys got the part. You got the job. You'll be making your Broadway debut in six weeks.

FRANCES

No kidding?

80

DEMETRIOS

No kidding.

(Artie is looking at the title page of the script)

ARTIE *(reading)*

"Mother Courage" by Bertolt Brecht. I didn't know Broadway did plays by Communists.

DEMETRIOS

Uptown, he's known as a pacifist.

ARTIE

How convenient.

DEMETRIOS

He wrote me a great letter. *(Demetrios pulls a folded letter out of his jacket pocket.)* "Dear Mr. Minotis"—blah, blah, blah, blah. okay, here it is: "I want my play to show that in wartime, the big

profits are not made by little people, that war, ... is a continuation of business by other means.”
How about that?

ARTIE

You think the critics will know this isn't a comedy?

DEMETRIOS

It takes place in 1624!

ARTIE

That was a good year. I remember it well.

DEMETRIOS

It's set during the Thirty Years War – in Sweden. That makes it exotic.

FRANCES

Am I playing Mother Courage?

DEMETRIOS

You're too young for Mother Courage. You play her daughter, Katrin. She gets raped.

FRANCES

I like it already.

ARTIE

So who do I play: Father Courage?

81

DEMETRIOS

There is no Father Courage. But there are a couple of roles you can do – and if I can double up on the casting, you can play the Chaplain and the Cook. He has some good scenes with Mother Courage. So there you have it. Rehearsals begin right after Labor Day.

ARTIE

Symbolism!

DEMETRIOS

And it's a political play!

ARTIE

So come on, tell us: how does it feel to be a big deal Broadway director?

FRANCES

Artie ... come on ...

DEMETRIOS

No, no – it's a fair question. Artie ... it feels great! I love having scripts sent to me. I love getting phone calls from Hollywood, from the brothers Warner. I know it's all bullshit but I love it. Correction: it's all bullshit *and* I love it.

ARTIE

And this producer of yours is really letting you do a play by a German Communist?

DEMETRIOS

It's got blood and gore and rape ... and it's also got a mother and her kids trying to survive. So it's also a family play. Something for everyone!

FRANCES

And it's okay about us?

DEMETRIOS

I want you. I want Artie.

ARTIE

We still believe in the cause.

FRANCES

We're still committed to the revolution.

82

DEMETRIOS

I don't believe in *the* revolution but I believe in *a* revolution. Like Thomas Jefferson said, it's healthy, it's necessary to have a revolution every couple of years. Come on, fellows! You're two good actors. You're two good friends. Go home and learn your lines. The producer is sending out contracts this week. Sign on the dotted line, where indicated, and return the goddamn contracts to the producer – and not to Ben Myerson. Okay?

FRANCES (*kissing Demetrios*)

Okay – and thanks!

ARTIE (*to Demetrios*)

I know this is payback – but thanks anyway.

(The two men hug each other. Then Artie exits. From the shadows, Elizabeth walks out onto the stage.)

ELIZABETH

And didn't one of Mother Courage's kids go over to the other side?

DEMETRIOS

It was wartime. Whatever it took to survive ...whatever it *takes* to survive.

ELIZABETH

Yeah ... *whatever* it takes.

(Blackout)

Scene 7. Same as in Act One, scene 1. February, 1953; the stage of an off-Broadway theatre.

DEMETRIOS

Some of you out there – maybe all of you – condemn me for naming names. Well, the names belonged to the Party members I never liked in the first place - and that doesn't include you, Artie. And you know it doesn't include you, Elizabeth. Mostly I hated what the Party stood for. After two years I was fed up with ... the Party! The leadership of the Party just saw me as a tool. I could be "Their Man on Broadway; Their Man in Hollywood." I could communicate the same lies about the Soviet Union and about communism that they printed in the Daily Worker and in Pravda. You know what Pravda means? That's Russian for "truth". Well, there's no truth in Pravda and there's no truth in the Daily Worker. Communists are totalitarian. When I announced that I was leaving the Party, Ben Myerson tore up my card and said, "You don't need this. You're on our preferred list. If the FBI raids our office, they'll be no record of you anywhere." I thanked him and walked out the door. I can tear up my own card.

83

ARTIE (*from the audience*)

You're on the side of the people who are trying to destroy civil liberties. I've got a right to speak my mind – and I'm speaking it.

DEMETRIOS

You're not speaking it. If you're still a card-carrying member, you're operating from secrecy.

ARTIE

Just like you, baby. Just like you and all those witch-hunters.

DEMETRIOS

If I were operating from secrecy, I wouldn't be here today. I'm on this stage because I'm a proud liberal and a proud American. I'm not taking orders from the Kremlin. I'm not taking orders from Washington.

ARTIE

You're taking orders from the Hollywood studios.

DEMETRIOS

I'm making the kinds of movies that all Americans will be proud of. There was a time – there was a time, Artie – when we shared the same dream. We thought that Russia embodied that dream. Well, friend, we were wrong. I was wrong. I'm only sorry that I've lost some dear friends along the way.

ARTIE

Yeah, you lost some dear friends along the way. Remember Frances Adamson? She was a dear friend. Frances went over to England. When she found out that you gave the committee my name and her name among others ...she killed herself.

DEMETRIOS

The Committee already had your names.

ARTIE

That's not the point! But you're so blinded by your own ambition ... come on, Liz; let's get out of here. ..

.

DEMETRIOS

I'm sorry about Frances. I'm truly sorry.

ARTIE

Yeah, she took an overdose of pills and killed herself. How about that, Demetrios Minotis? How about that, defender of democracy? How about that?

84

(Artie walks out of the theatre. Demetrios is stunned.)

DEMETRIOS

I didn't know about Frances.

ELIZABETH

I always knew about Frances.

DEMETRIOS

I mean, I didn't know that she killed herself.

ELIZABETH

She didn't; *you* killed her. *(Elizabeth walks away.)*

DEMETRIOS

Where are you going?

ELIZABETH

I don't know. But it won't be with you.

DEMETRIOS

Liz – I never said I was an angel.

ELIZABETH

You were never an angel. I just didn't realize – when we got married – when I knew you were going to be a success – I didn't know I'd made a deal with the devil. If it's any consolation, you're not a Communist. You never were.

DEMETRIOS

I'm glad you understand. Thank you.

ELIZABETH

No, my dear! You're not a Communist. *(pause)* You're an opportunist.

(She exits)

DEMETRIOS

It's ambition. That's all it is. That's all it ever was. Ambition!

(He stands there, looking after her, as the lights fade.)

(Blackout)

End of Play

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *What inspired the submission of my play, IF MEN WERE ANGELS, were the many tyrants in our country, from Hamilton Fish, a congressman in the late 1930s and early 1940s who was an out and out fascist and an admirer of Hitler and the Nazis, trying to keep our country out of what became World War Two. Then there was Joe McCarthy who used the fears of The Cold War and the fiction of a Communist threat to lie about alleged Communists like President Dwight Eisenhower, political figures in our government and actors who had left the Communist Party.*

My stylistic and literary influences were not playwrights. They were journalists, editors and columnists who spoke out every day in newspapers, magazines and on radio about the lies perpetrated by the many people who were against our Constitution and our democratic form of government.

I wrote what I read. I wrote what I heard. I tried to be a reporter; not a politician or an editor. I must confess that I did have one religious influence: I was a longtime member of The Quakers; the Society of Friends.

Tirades were not welcomed at our Sunday prayer meetings. In my play, however, I did speak out THROUGH my characters. They argued with each other. Men are not angels. I hope that my play showed both sides of the political fight. I hope that my play did not take sides. I hope that my audiences and my readers will see both sides and all sides.

AUTHOR BIO: As a very young screenwriter, Lawrence DuKore began his writing career with the Richard Pryor film, GREASED LIGHTNING, which was produced by Hanna Weinstein for Warner Bros. His television play, A MISTAKEN CHARITY was produced by Lindsay Law for PBS/American Playhouse and was nominated for a Writers Guild of America award for best dramatic writing. He is a member of both the HB (Herbert Berghof/Uta Hagen) Playwrights Foundation and the Actors Studio Playwrights/Directors Workshop. Most recently, his play, STAINED GLASS, premiered off-Broadway at the award-winning Metropolitan Playhouse. And his Latino comedy, SUNSHINE, just had a successful 3 week run off off Broadway at Teatro LATEA.

· Writings;PLAYS

· Virgin Territory, Actors Studio, New York City.

· The Emperor of My Baby's Heart, New York City, 1984.

· Writings;SCREENPLAYS

- Greased Lightning, Warner Brothers, 1977.
- Writings;TELEPLAYS; EPISODIC
- "A Mistaken Charity," American Playhouse, PBS, 1987.
- Writings;SERIES
- One Life to Live, ABC, 1979.
- Search for Tomorrow, NBC, 1984.

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