

THERESA

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A One Act play

By JOE STRAW

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THERESA/ELEANOR, Theresa is 18, A student at the University of Colorado in Boulder Colorado and Eleanor is 26, wife, bookkeeper.

JOE, 31, Husband to Eleanor and a non-reliable reporter of the truth.

NEIGHBOR, GUARD, FOREMAN, all unseen

(The following is a fictional account of human interactions based on a tragic event on November 9, 1948.)

SCENE 1

*Essentially, most of the action takes place in a one bedroom cottage. All scenic areas are realized through the imagination of the actor except a 1940's Delco Radio, a bucket, newspapers, two chairs, a phone, a .45 caliber handgun, and a small table.*

THERESA

(A young blond woman 18 enters, almost floating in, and not taking note of her surroundings, she wears a blueish grey gaberdine coat spotted with blood, a pinkish orange knit cardigan collarless sweater, button white cotton blouse, brown loafers and white corrugated bobby socks, and dressed in 40's regalia.)

Hello. My name is Theresa...I'm a little tenuous about telling you my story on this day November 9th, 1948. Nobody really likes an ugly truth. My words will not be poetic and I hope you'll forgive me for what I am about to say. To start I am 18 years old, originally from Greeley Colorado. Ninth of eleven children and a very proud daughter of an onion farmer. Funny, whenever I say that, I can smell the onions on my hands, my hair, my skin, in my coat, and on my shoes. (Playfully, she walks sideways across mounds of imaginary dirt and onion stems.) From sun up to sun down I managed the fields and the migrant workers. I developed some pretty serious muscles lifting and cutting. Not only was I brawny but brainy too.

My marks in high school were pretty incredible. Hard field work translated into graduating with honors. The happiest day of my life was leaving for college. On scholarship, the University of Colorado was only an hour away. Everyone came to usher me off even my dog. My mom didn't want to let me go. My dad got teary eyed 'cuz he remembered holding my big toe in the nursery making a promise to protect me. I miss them and I miss home. (pause) My big dream was to be an aeronautical engineer. But, here I'm finding out that my mathematical skills were less than adequate. I almost failed chemistry and I never failed at anything in high school or on the farm. I asked for help.

THERESA WALKS  
UPSTAGE AND  
TURNS TO THE  
AUDIENCE. THE  
BACK OF HER COAT  
IS COVERED WITH  
DRIED BLOOD.

THERESA

In this sleepy town of Boulder, the Newman house at the university provided a place to study. But, finding a ride home at the end of a long night of studying was always hard. Tonight especially, everyone I asked had things to do, dates, students always have other plans. (pause) On this particular night no one was going my way. Father F just stared at me when I asked and he went off some place. (she crosses herself) To the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. (Re-Living the event Theresa takes a step outside and shivers.) It's cold outside but a mile and a half is manageable. I did it on the farm all the time. (She takes a step back in) But, ten o'clock is too late to be walking home alone. I fear the dark. Listen to your fears. Stop, stop, stop being so scared. (She bundles herself, wraps a scarf around her neck and shivers as she steps out into the cold) (pause - Theresa is now in another state of mind. She stares straight ahead.) Well, that decision led to an unfortunate set of circumstances - which, eventually found me in the trunk of someone's car. And in there, with my privates burning, and battered, I tried to shake off the disorientation from strangulation and rape. I was in a state of semi-consciousness. My mind focused to overcome my fear of the dark, working out a plan to recover as best I could, and to find a way out.

That is until he picked up my semi-lifeless body and threw me over a railing of a bridge next to a small stream.

(Theresa takes in a big gulp of air and exhales out a powerful force. She places her right arm above her head and her left near her face.)

I had the wind knocked out of me. I crawled away from the stream toward the bank looking up to see the shadow of a man. He threw down my remaining clothes and that was the last thing I remembered in the freezing cold before...it started snowing...

THE SOUND OF  
BATHWATER STARTS

The blanket of snow would protect me. It was late fall in 1948, specifically Tuesday night, November 9th, just outside of Boulder, Colorado. 1948 Boulder Colorado, 1948 Boulder Colorado. I was found in this position and that is my truth.

BLACKOUT.

ELEANOR'S COTTAGE

SOMEONE IS  
FIGITING HARD  
TRYING TO OPEN  
THE KITCHEN DOOR

ELEANOR

(26, running a bath, runs to the door expecting her husband but stops short.)

Joe? Is that you?

MORE STRUGGLES  
AT THE KITCHEN  
DOOR, JOE 31

ENTERS CARRYING  
A BAG OF  
GROCERIES.

ELEANOR  
(seeing he is in trouble )  
Joe? What happened? What's all this blood!?!?

JOE  
Don't look at me.

ELEANOR  
Stop, don't move! I just mopped the floors. (She grabs a large dirty towel and a trash bucket.) Where's your coat?

ELEANOR TAKES  
OFF HIS SHIRT  
AND PLACES IT IN  
THE BUCKET. JOE  
TAKES A GUN OUT  
FROM HIS BACK  
WAIST, HIDES IT  
FROM ELEANOR,  
AND PLACES IT IN  
THE GROCERY BAG.

JOE  
Na...

ELEANOR  
It's freezing outside. And, oh boy, you're not steady on your feet. Drinking again. You smell like onions and manure. What have you gotten yourself into? Here, steady yourself on this. Let's get you out of these clothes. Blond hair and your knees are riddled with pebbles. How did this happen?

She pulls his t-shirt off and he screams.

JOE  
(in a daze)  
Watch the head! I got into a fight at the tavern. I think I might have killed a man and maybe the woman too. I'm a mess.

ELEANOR

This another one of your stories. Really? Who was it?

JOE

I don't know. I just met them.

ELEANOR

You killed two people you just met?

JOE

I can't believe what I got myself into.

ELEANOR

(thinking hard)

Okay, okay, okay, we'll get this all figured out. Maybe it's just the drunk talking. I'm running a bath, you get in and we'll get you patched up and well..are you okay?

(Joe, completely naked, nods, is unsteady on his feet as he walks to the bathroom with a grocery bag with toilette paper.)

JOE

(looking at bloodied clothes)

I fell down and hit my head pretty bad. Ya better burn all that shit in the incinerator, boots too.

BLACKOUT.

WEDNESDAY THE NEXT DAY

ELEANOR CLEANS  
THE DOORWAY OF  
THE BLOOD. SHE  
PUTS ON HER COAT  
AND PEEKS OUT  
THE DOOR.

JOE ENTERS FROM  
THE BEDROOM OUT  
OF SORTS.

ELEANOR

(seeing Joe)

Hoo, you slept most of the day. Tied one on. A really good one. Can I remind you, this is not the weekend Joe. Anyway, I called in sick today. Wednesday is a slow day for me bookkeeping. So, can we talk about last night?

JOE

(still shaken by the events  
last night)

I drank way too much whiskey and beer. My head feels like somebody took a wrench to it. Any coffee in that percolator? And how about a couple of eggs?

ELEANOR

Sure. (Grabbing a cup.) We've talked about this before and you know this is not right, Joe.

JOE

(taking a sip, he winces)

What?

ELEANOR

You staying out late at night, drinking, and God knows what.

JOE

That's what men do. They smoke, they drink, and they talk.

ELEANOR

You can talk to me. I'll listen.

JOE

(waving her away)

Ah. Humph.

ELEANOR

Sure, sure but one day, and I'm not predicting anything, you might not come back. The car will be bloodied and all that's left will be pieces of you and twisted metal. Life ain't about being drunk all the time.

JOE

(taking a sip)

I know. But, just, stop.



ELEANOR

Joe?

JOE

I got a little job today. Is that red paint under the sink?

ELEANOR

Still. Why?

JOE

I'm going to repaint the trunk of my car.

ELEANOR

Why?

JOE

Because it needs it.

ELEANOR

It's thirty degrees out there. If you're going out, at least put on a couple of old sweaters...

JOE

That's all I got is old sweaters.

ELEANOR

...or you'll get pneumonia. Maybe your coat is in the car.

JOE

Fat chance of that.

ELEANOR

What?

JOE

After that..if I'm still not feeling okay I'm going back to bed. Forget breakfast.

(Joe takes a can of paint and a brush from under the sink and walks out the kitchen door.)

ELEANOR

You seem out of sorts.

JOE

Maybe.

ELEANOR

What's on your mind?

JOE

My head is on my mind. Nothing.

NEXT SCENE

(Later that evening Eleanor is listening to "Confess" by Patti Page dancing a little as she cleans the last remaining bit of blood along the doorway.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Eighteen year old Colorado University Co-Ed Theresa Foster, from Greeley Colorado, has been missing since Tuesday night after leaving the Newman House to walk home. If anyone has seen or heard from her please contact either the University or the Police department immediately.

(Joe, coming from the bedroom, still shaken from the events of the prior night, turns off the radio.)

JOE

Keep the radio off. It hurts my head. Will you do that for me?

ELEANOR

Sure.

JOE

I really need you to keep things quiet.

ELEANOR

(startled)

You're acting kind of strange...Are you mixed up... Joe? Tell me.

JOE

No, nothing. This? I fell down and bumped my head coming across the ditch and that's it. Why? What did I say?

ELEANOR

Well, you had some crazy story last night about killing a man and maybe killing a woman. And now there's this college co-ed missing.

JOE

(laughing)

And somehow you're connecting me to that? A lot of people go missing. I had too many beers at the Nifty Nix last night. And one thing's for sure, I walloped my head pretty good.

ELEANOR

When did the whiskey come in?

JOE

What?

ELEANOR

Last night you said you had beer and whiskey.

JOE

Ah.

ELEANOR

They still haven't found her body. Her mother said in the papers she thinks that she's dead. They found her ring up on Lee Hill Road. Her mom said they'd have to kill her before she would give up that ring. I have to pray, please pray for her Joe. Pray. Pray.

JOE

Yeah, I'll pray.

BLACKOUT.

THURSDAY THE NEXT DAY

Eleanor is sitting at the kitchen table with a ledger doing personal finances.

JOE GOES OUTSIDE  
AND COMES BACK  
WITH A NEWSPAPER

ELEANOR

Where did you get that paper?

JOE

It was in our yard, slightly over the line. So, it's mine now.

ELEANOR

Petty crime is still a crime. Just because we can't afford... The people around these parts get a little particular having their stuff stolen.

JOE SCANS THE  
PAPER HURRIEDLY.

JOE

(ignoring her looking at the paper)

I'll put it back out after I'm finished. I read a lot, keep up with politics and current events. (Staring at Eleanor) They got an article about that local girl missing.

ELEANOR

I hope they find her okay so we can all breathe easier. Can we go over Tuesday night?

JOE

There's nothing to go over.

ELEANOR

You come home without your parka on Tuesday.

I imagine that she, a stranger, wouldn't be of any concern to you. Why are you so curious?

JOE

No reason. I'm curious just like the next man.

ELEANOR

(moves toward the newspapers)

Mama said I was never a good judge of character. I hope that changes. What does she look like?

JOE

I don't know. They ain't got no pictures.

ELEANOR

You said...

JOE

Get this, I never said nothin'.

JOE PRESSES HIS  
HEAD WITH HIS  
PALMS. HE IS IN  
PAIN.

Um, this really hurts.

ELEANOR

(pulling the wrap off)

You're still bleeding. Let me find something cleaner to wrap your head.

JOE

It's like I'm in a fog. I'm having trouble thinking and remembering. I'm staying home today. You should do the same.

ELEANOR

I don't have no reason to stay home.

JOE

Call and tell my boss I'm sick. You call and tell your's 'n too, and that you're taking care of me.

ELEANOR

We don't get paid if we don't work.

JOE

The kind of money they pay us...

ELEANOR

A little is more than nothing.

JOE

It's best for us to keep a low profile for a few days, maybe a week. You a part of this as much as me.

ELEANOR

A part? A part of what? How did I suddenly become a part? Whatever happened with you, I had nothing to do...

JOE

Whatever happened or whatever I think didn't happened you're a part of it. We're a team now, we're married, we're in this together. Or, what's that other word, accessory?

ELEANOR

(shocked)

Joe, now you're scaring me.

JOE

Just do what I say. Can I get you to do that? (pause) Come over here and look out the window with me. The snow covers everything so white, so smooth, and so clean. That's us, that's what I promised you a new beginning. Time will help us and time will cure. Time heals. Call.

(Eleanor stares at him and then walks to the phone to call their bosses.)

FRIDAY THE NEXT DAY

JOE GRABS A  
PAPER FROM  
OUTSIDE, AND  
READS WITH

URGENCY. HE  
SEARCHES FOR  
MORE INFORMATION  
OF THE KILLING.  
HE SIPS COFFEE  
FROM AN OLD ARMY  
MUG FOLLOWED BY  
SCRATCHING AND  
MARKING  
NEWSPAPERS.

ELEANOR ENTERS

ELEANOR

What are you doing?

JOE

Nothing.

ELEANOR

You can't return them with all those markings.

JOE

I never said I was. The Denver Post and The Boulder Daily  
Camera is on top of that murder.

ELEANOR

Murder?

JOE

Uh, missing girl. 'Says here that they've questioned a couple  
of suspects...someone with a stolen car out of Denver.

ELEANOR

Joe, our neighbor's are not liking us.

JOE

You fear what you want to fear. Seems to me we have to be  
vigilant. It says here that two people were involved in the  
kidnapping. Two? Yes. How else could it be?

ELEANOR

Since Tuesday night you've been acting very...Can I turn on  
the radio?

JOE

(grabs his head)

No, leave that noise box off. I have a hard time concentrating with that thing on. Says here they arrested some suspicious salesman.

ELEANOR

Can you see how this looks?

JOE

I've told you my story. You can worry till the cows come home. Look, it's still snowing outside. They say 6 inches today. (to himself) 'Buys me some time.

ELEANOR

What?

JOE

Nothing.

ELEANOR

Boulder's a small town. I'm thinking you know that girl. Have you ever met or seen her?

NO ANSWER

ELEANOR

Were you with her?

JOE

Who?

ELEANOR

That girl. (pause) Joe?

JOE

Yeah?

ELEANOR

She's a little younger than me. About my size. (pause) Did you hurt her?

NO ANSWER

ELEANOR

Did you hurt her Joe? Joe? Joe, say you didn't hurt her.



JOE

I don't even know her. The paper here says they got a blond guy from California, they got him in for questioning, found blood in his car. He's probably the one. You know me, El. I wouldn't kill a fly. I wouldn't hurt anyone.

ELEANOR

(relieved)

Let me take a look at that bandage. You lost a patch of hair and this thing doesn't look so good. It smells bad and I think it might be infected.

JOE

Stop coddling me. You're a bookkeeper, not a doctor.

ELEANOR

All I'm saying is maybe you need medical attention. (going to fetch) Maybe a little more dab of Mercurochrome.

JOE

Don't put anymore of that shit on me. It stains. No, I'm not going anywhere. This thing will heal on its own.

ELEANOR

Joe, I'm scared of this whole thing. Something has happened to you. You got that thing on your head, falling down? Losing all that blood? I didn't see any blood outside where you said you fell. I think you need a doctor, and we're supposed to stay here and not do anything?

JOE

Do you think I would hurt anyone?

ELEANOR

Well, (pause) I'm thinking real hard.

JOE

Do you think I would hurt you?

ELEANOR

Be honest with me. If I could get one bit of truth from you, I'd be the happiest woman in the world.

JOE

I never lied to you or anyone else.

ELEANOR

The little things I'm finding out more about you everyday turns my stomach. Things that I don't like.

For instance?

ELEANOR

Well, before the eyes of God, we're married?

JOE

Yes we are. And I promised to take care of you for the rest of your life. You remember the ceremony in Huntington Park, California?

ELEANOR

You didn't tell me you were already married.

JOE

I have an answer for that.

ELEANOR

So, I'm left here living in sin before the eyes of God and I don't like it.

JOE

The ink wasn't dry on my divorce. I didn't know that. That's all. I thought it was but it wasn't. But, I'm divorced now.

ELEANOR

And we're still not married. 'Wouldn't have found that out if I didn't apply for your military allotments when you were in the service and I couldn't get it because you were still married to that other woman.

JOE

Yeah, I know. But, we didn't need allotments? I said I'll take care of you, and I will.

ELEANOR

And now we are here. Moved here from California to be next to my family, me a bookkeeper and you in a whole lot of trouble that seems to follow you wherever we go. And I swear, trusting your word is an all day job.

JOE

Yes, you can trust me.

ELEANOR

Now the serious talk. You went out to get supplies, and you were gone for hours. What were you doing?

JOE

My head's startin' to hurt. Can we do this another time?

ELEANOR

Tell me what happened.

LOUD POUNDING ON  
THE DOOR. JOE  
AND ELEANOR MOVE  
TO THE FAR END  
OF THE COTTAGE.

JOE  
INSTINCTIVELY  
THRUSTS HIS HAND  
OVER ELEANOR'S  
MOUTH.

ELEANOR

Go get it, Joe.

JOE OPENS THE  
DOOR.

NEIGHBOR

(not seen)

What do you think you're doing?

JOE

I don't know what you're talking about.

NEIGHBOR

You better stop stealing my newspapers.

JOE

(calmly)

You're barking up the wrong tree, mister. Better check with Silas. That guy steals everything.

NEIGHBOR

Oh, okay.

JOE CLOSSES THE  
DOOR. PUSHES IN  
ON HIS HEAD AND  
GRABS A CHAIR TO  
SIT.

ELEANOR

Let me call the doctor.

JOE

I said no. No, means no.

ELEANOR

Sit down. (Pause) All this running around is not doing you any good. Better let me get the door the next time. You just try...I have to ask you a question. Have you ever been arrested?

JOE

Younger days, just doing kid's stuff.

ELEANOR

What?

JOE

Kid's stuff.

ELEANOR

I know this is late in the game to be asking you this but, have you ever spent time in jail, or, prison?

JOE

If I told you the truth, would you stop asking me? Would you think less of me?

ELEANOR

Yes, no.

JOE

Well which is it? Yes? Or No?

ELEANOR

Yes to the first question and no to the second.

JOE

I'm sorry. What was the first question? Never-mind. I spent some time in prison.

ELEANOR

Prison is hardly kid's stuff.

JOE

All right! I got caught up in some insurance fraud thing that happened in Murray Kentucky - was the other guy's fault - he roped me into it and said we wouldn't get caught. But, they caught me, not him, and I got sent to prison.

ELEANOR

And in isolation you learned what?

JOE

Bottom line is I didn't do anything to her. You know me better than that. Now, I've got to lie down. My head's still killing me.

BLACKOUT.

SOME TIME LATER

(Eleanor walks from the backroom. She moves to the windows to look at anything suspicious. Seeing nothing, she grabs a chair from the kitchen table and sets it near the radio. She peaks in on Joe, closes the door and turns on the radio.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Mutilated body...

ELEANOR

Mutilated?

## RADIO ANNOUNCER

found by a hunter. The nude and battered body of Theresa Catherine Foster, an 18-year old Colorado university coed missing since Tuesday night was found shortly before noon Thursday twelve miles south of Boulder near Marshall Colorado.

## ELEANOR

(looking toward the bedroom)

Oh no! That's near here.

(Eleanor quickly turns down the radio and runs to the dishes to start putting them away.)

## ANNOUNCER

An isolated culvert yields key clues in the murder of University of Colorado co-ed. A blood stained parka was found stuffed in the culvert.

## ELEANOR

(stares at the front door)

His coat. Bad. Bad. Bad. Bad. What am I...?

(As a nervous tick Eleanor places her fingers in her ears - she turns off the radio, moves toward the kitchen, picks a newspaper out of the trash, and sees the headlines in The Denver Post - reading)

A reward of \$10,000 for information leading to the slayer of Theresa Foster, 18-year-old coed, was offered Saturday by the University of Colorado regents.

JOE ENTERS.

## JOE

I said looking at those things could be hazardous to your health.

## ELEANOR

I know, I know but I can't help but be... we're stuck Joe. I want you to confess, tell them everything you know, whatever you know.

JOE

I don't know anything.

ELEANOR

You told me the night that it happened. Something happened. You just can't take that back.

JOE

I was drunk. I didn't know what I was saying. You don't have anything to worry about. Whatever comes, if something comes, let me deal with it.

ELEANOR

Joe, they found the butt of the gun up on Lee Hill Road. From the gun that probably killed that woman. It was a .45 caliber like the handgun my brother Robert loaned you.

JOE

So?

ELEANOR

Where's the gun?

JOE

It's still here, somewhere.

ELEANOR

Go get it.

JOE

You want me to go, into the next room, to get a weapon?

ELEANOR

I'm not playing. Get it.

JOE

You don't want to do this.

ELEANOR

I said get it.

MORE POUNDING ON  
THE DOOR.

JOE

Don't answer it.

(He motions for them both to keep still.)

OUTSIDE VOICE

I know you're in there. (More pounding) Come out!!! (pause)  
Stop stealing my papers. This is your last warning.

(The person goes away and Joe relieved slumps into a chair.)

ELEANOR

Go get it Joe.

JOE

Alright, I'll get it. And when I show you, will you be kind to me?

ELEANOR

All you have to do, right now, is go in the other room and bring the gun back to me.

JOE EXITS AND  
THEN RE-ENTERS  
WITH HIS PALMS  
OPEN AND THE GUN  
FLAT AGAINST HIS  
PALMS.

JOE

See.

ELEANOR REACHES  
FOR THE GUN AND  
THEY STRUGGLE.

ELEANOR

Give me the gun!

JOE

Stop, this thing is bound to go off.

ELEANOR

There's no clip in the gun.

JOE

There might be a round in the firing chamber!



ELEANOR

Let go Joe! Let go!

(She twists it out of his hands,  
turns the gun over, and sees the  
other side of the butt missing.)

ELEANOR

(dropping the gun)

It's you! It's you! It's you! Get that out of my house!

Joe grabs the gun.

JOE

Turn your back to me! Now!

ELEANOR

Joe, don't do this!

JOE RUNS INTO  
THE OTHER ROOM,  
BRINGS OUT A  
CLIP AND SLAMS  
IT INTO THE  
CHAMBER. THEN  
JOE REACHES FOR  
SOME DISCARDED  
NEWSPAPERS AND  
PLACES IT ON THE  
FLOOR BEHIND  
ELEANOR. HE  
MOMENTARILY  
POINTS THE GUN  
IN HER DIRECTION  
BEFORE HE PLACES  
THE GUN ON THE  
PAPER AND WRAPS  
IT UP. WITH  
EVERY LITTLE  
FOLD ELEANOR  
FEARS FOR HER  
LIFE.

JOE

Now. Come with me. We're going take a little ride in the Buick.

JOE GRABS A VERY  
STARTLED ELEANOR  
AND FORCES HER  
TOWARD THE DOOR.

ELEANOR

Wait a minute! I need my coat!

BOTH EXITS

BLACKOUT.

A SHORT TIME LATER

JOE ENTERS  
AGITATED AND  
TURNS ON THE  
RADIO. ELEANOR  
FOLLOWS A SHORT  
TIME LATER. SHE  
TURNS DOWN THE  
RADIO.

ELEANOR

My mama said one lie gives birth to many. The young woman was just a girl, just like me. There is something wrong when we can't walk home anywhere or anytime without being accosted, molested, or raped at night. Do you realize what you've done?

JOE

I haven't done anything.

ELEANOR

Her mother, her father heartbroken. Her brothers and sisters probably haven't stopped crying and here I am with you. You've terrorized their family, an entire generation. She's eight years younger than me. And you did this. You did it! Please, please, please tell me the truth with all the sincerity you can muster.

JOE

I'm going to say this once.

(She waits.. Joe turns the radio up and sets the chair across from Eleanor and starts in on his side of the story. Eleanor opens her mouth wide, she gets up and tries to run to the bedroom before Joe catches her and sits her down in the chair.)

BLACKOUT.

THE NEXT DAY

Joe sits in the kitchen having a cup of coffee. Eleanor, dressed nicely starts out the kitchen door.

JOE

You're all spruced up, nails, lips, hair. Where are you going?

ELEANOR

Church, I've got a lot of praying to do. And then I've got to see a doctor. An hour or two. When I get back we'll have more to talk about.

JOE

Are you okay?

ELEANOR

I'm fine.

JOE

What's wrong?

ELEANOR

Nothing. I need things checked.

JOE

What?

ELEANOR

Things, women things.

JOE

(goes to her and kisses her)

Oh. Okay. Now? Sunday?

ELEANOR

Yes.

JOE

Remember what we talked about.

ELEANOR

(winces)

Yes.

LIGHTS ONLY ON  
ELEANOR

(Eleanor addresses the audience as though they were the police. She is now in a police station.)

ELEANOR

Hi. Could I talk to someone? About the murder of the young woman, Miss Foster. Thank you I'll wait. Hello. I've been listening to the radio and reading newspaper accounts and there's been a lot of misinformation leading you folks in the wrong direction. Wait. Please don't dismiss me. I believe I know who you are looking for. It's my husband. I am Eleanor Walker. My husband is Joe Walker. We live in El Dorado Springs. I cannot in good conscience be silent now. To be silent would be complicit. Is that a word? Good. On November 9th my husband came home late. What time? Around midnight. He was covered in blood. Most of the blood was coming from his head. He has a severe head wound. He was drunk. He said he killed a man and maybe a woman. I think he is the man you want.

The gun you're looking for was thrown away in Coal Creek Canyon. I fear for my own life and I'm feeling lightheaded and I need to sit down. I think I'm fainting...

BLACKOUT.

LIGHT UP ON JOE  
WHO IS OUTSIDE  
CLEANING THE  
TRUNK OF HIS CAR

JOE  
(concerned by approaching  
men)

How do? What can I do for you gentlemen? Neighbors complaining about missing newspapers? I'm sorry. Who are you? Oh. The bump on my head? I got that coming across the lawn the other night and tripped in the ditch. Yeah, it was a bad one. No, I haven't been to a doctor. I didn't see the need. It wasn't that bad. Huh? Just cleaning my car. Yes, I know it's too cold but I figured it was time now that my wife is out on an errand. Car was looking pretty bad. Me being a metal-worker I thought it needed a good hosing out after I have painted it. Is there a law against this? (Laughing) No, no, no, I didn't think there was. Arrested? No. I've never been arrested in my life. Where was I Tuesday night? (long pause) Here, with my wife, most of the time. Went out and got some groceries, came back slipped and fell on the lawn. Bumped my head. Where's the gun? What gun? Why don't you ask the man I sold it to. His name? I don't remember. Turn around? Why?

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP ON  
ELEANOR IN A  
HOSPITAL BED

ELEANOR  
Reporters want to see me? Have them wait for a few minutes and then send them in.

(Eleanor reaches for her purse, looks in her compact and decides she is unfit for presentation. She applies foundation, eyebrows, mascara, and lipstick. She places her purse on her lap.)

I'm ready. (She pulls the sheet up to her neck and looks downtrodden) I'll wait until everyone is settled. Looks like, everyone. My name is Eleanor Fleming Walker. My husband is Joe Walker. I just can't understand what happened. First of all we're not really married. We live together. Our marriage was annulled. When? I don't remember when that was. I was suspicious of Joe when he came home on Tuesday night covered in blood. He was the most fantastic sight that has ever met my eyes. He was dripping in blood. There was so much blood that the sight and odor made me ill and nauseated. And through subsequent news on the radio and the newspaper I thought he was involved in the murder of that woman, Theresa. I know that he had killed that girl. From then on there was never a normal conversation between us. I don't know entirely what happened. He was always so nice to me.

BLACKOUT.

JOE IS IN THE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

(Joe is hooked up to a lie detector.)

JOE

Got me hooked up. Does this lie detector work? Hmmm. How do I think this is going to end? In the gas chamber as my end is concerned if the officers have all the things they say they have. I have a fever and not feeling that good. But, I'm here, ready to answer all of your questions. Name. Joe Walker. Age? 31. Nifty Nix and had a couple of beers. One answer at a time. Yes, I saw them. They were hitchhiking. They asked for a ride. Sorry. We stopped at the railroad station. She had to make a call home. Me and the blond guy, well the blond guy broke out a pint of whiskey. I drank most of it. We drove off to Lee Hill Road. There, he pulls a gun and they attacked me. I pulled out my own.

He got the better of me and I was knocked unconscious and when I come to I found her in the trunk of my car. No. I didn't rape the Foster girl.

BLACKOUT.

A table sit center stage. Joe, the prisoner sits on one side.

GUARD

(not seen - voice over)

Ten minutes.

Eleanor comes into the room. Joe stares at her. They remain quiet for ten minutes. Without words a consortium of accusations fly across the table at each other.

BLACKOUT.

ANOTHER DAY

GUARD

Ten minutes.

Eleanor walks into the room again. This time Joe is a little more composed.

JOE

Are you talking to me now?

ELEANOR

I'm here.

JOE

Things have been pretty tough. I can't convince anyone that I'm innocent. Mama said she was going to send me some money so that I can look into investigating the man who did this.

ELEANOR

Joe.

JOE

She said if she can send it, she'll send it to you. If she doesn't send it..

ELEANOR

I'll take care of it. I tried getting you a lawyer but nobody wanted the case, sorry.

JOE

I've got a good lawyer now.

ELEANOR

Really? Good.

JOE

The press is saying lots of things, and making up stories, well, at first I didn't know what I was saying. I was sick and I guess I said some things when I wasn't right in the head.

ELEANOR

You mean the fever made you say things that weren't true?

JOE

Well yes, no, or maybe.

ELEANOR

Well, what is it? Yes, no, or maybe? Never mind. I'm in the papers for all the wrong reasons. They make me out to be some damsel in distress.

JOE

Which we know is so far from the truth. Will you never not love me again?

ELEANOR

Um hmm. Your life has been a series of lies and I don't see myself being a part of it.

JOE

But, I need your help.

ELEANOR

Go on.



JOE

First, I need you to write a check to your brother Robert for \$40.00. That's for the gun. And, post date it to November 7th 1948.

ELEANOR

I'm not doing that.

JOE

Understand this, I didn't kill her. I will repeat that until I die.

ELEANOR

Okay.

JOE

And the things I told you...

ELEANOR

Yes?

JOE

Well, those things I told you were in confidence.

ELEANOR

Joe. There's a ninety nine percent chance that you killed that young woman.

JOE

Don't make yourself out to be a saint. Everyone else says I'm lying. I'm all over the papers of people saying I did this or that and none of it is true. I need you.

ELEANOR

Joe, that waitress at the Nifty Nix says she saw you with Theresa Tuesday night. She said you had two beers and the blond you were with had coffee.

JOE

And you believe her? Over me?

ELEANOR

She said you asked her out on a couple of occasions. I am your annulled wife. Your partner! I'm sitting home alone and you're out trying to make some other woman?

JOE

That never happened. None of it. Everyone is lying. The papers are lying. The people in the papers are lying. Even the lie detector guy is lying. They go to the press just to get coverage and publicity. You heard of the Black Dahlia murder in Los Angeles? They asked me if I knew anything about that.

ELEANOR

We were living in Los Angeles at the time.

JOE

Everything is circumstantial now. (pause) This is not how I wanted this to go. I need..

ELEANOR

What?

JOE

Will you marry me?

ELEANOR

You've got to be kidding me.

JOE

I need someone to be on my side.

ELEANOR

Until this happened I would never not be on your side. But, you got your lawyers for that now.

JOE

But I need more. I need to know there is one person who will stick with me through thick and thin. You are the breath that I need, the touch, and the one emotional support I am craving for right now.

ELEANOR

I don't know if..

JOE

Please I don't want to hear anything other than a yes. A simple yes. I need to feel us as one. I need to know that you're there.

I want your emotional support, and the strength that I feel when I lie next to you. I'm lost without you. I need you.

ELEANOR

There's a chance that you're going to the gas chamber.

JOE

I've thought about that.

ELEANOR

And, I get it. You can't get yourself to tell me the real reason. Lying is in your nature.

JOE

Do you think I would ever confess to the truth? That I was bested by a woman. Do you think I would ever do that in my life?

ELEANOR

You're not real...

JOE

I am real. This is as real as real can get. There is no other reason. I love you. I want you. We were almost married once. Why won't you marry me again.

GUARD (OFFSTAGE)

Time's up.

ELEANOR

I have to go.

JOE

Don't.

ELEANOR

All I ever wanted was a happy life but that's not possible now. Our ten minutes are up. You've never been honest with me. Not one bit. Goodbye.

JOE

I need you to marry me because my attorney says if we're married a wife can't testify against her husband!

ELEANOR

(walking out of the door)

That must have hurt. That's the only truthful thing you've said to me today, probably in our lifetime. Thank you. (long pause) Okay, I'll marry you, but only if you make bail.

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 15TH 1949

ELEANOR

(getting herself made up)

A day after Valentines Day. Why? Why? Why? Why? Why!!!!? A ninety nine percent chance that he would not make bail and he makes bail. One thing I can do for him is put on a brave face, for me mostly. Twenty five thousand dollar bail, who would do that? No need to question. I told him I would marry him if he got out and I have to be true to my word.

JOE ENTERS AND  
HUGS ELEANOR.

ELEANOR

Hi Joe. It's been three months.

JOE

Smile for the cameras. (Dismisses them) Thank you.

ELEANOR

Let's get married.

JOE

Not yet. We've got to get our blood test, then we can do it.

ELEANOR

Then, I don't expect you'll be coming home.

JOE

(caught off guard)

No, the lawyers said not to until we are legally married.

ELEANOR

Then, enjoy your freedom.

JOE

I'll get a place in the hotel until then.

Eleanor starts to walk away.

JOE

Hold on. Let's stop and get something to eat.

JOE AND ELEANOR  
SIT DOWN TO HAVE  
LUNCH.

JOE

I'm hungry. I haven't had anything decent to eat in three months.

ELEANOR

Everyone is staring at us.

JOE

Let them stare. They lawyers gave me some spending money so whatever you want, get. It's on me.

ELEANOR

I'm not hungry.

JOE

Two beers and a cup of coffee for the lady. (Something changes in Joe like he's done this before.) You've changed your looks. New glasses?

ELEANOR

You like them?

JOE

Yes. Reminds me of that girl.

ELEANOR

That might take me a lifetime to ignore that response. Look, I'm having second thoughts about getting married.

JOE

Why?

ELEANOR

Because you're not going to beat this.

JOE

Is that so?

ELEANOR

Mostly because you're not smart enough. And, everything you say is a contradiction.

JOE

That's why I let my lawyers do the talking.

ELEANOR

Tell me you didn't do this.

JOE

I didn't. And once they find Doug, I'll be walking out.

ELEANOR

Who is Doug?

JOE

The killer.

ELEANOR

And why are you just telling me about him now?

JOE

That will come out in the trial.

ELEANOR

Nothing is ever your fault. Time and again, you keep getting caught. But now you're in something way over your head.

JOE

I was hit in the head. Some things need a little more time in the telling.

ELEANOR

You mean a little more time in the lying. Keep telling the papers what you want them to believe. It's up to them to discern the truth. Discern, is that a word?

JOE

Why are you asking me?

ELEANOR

I not doing this for you. But, ..

JOE

Are you backing out?

ELEANOR

I wish I had never met you.

JOE

You've got a big choice. What's it going to be?

ELEANOR

I've got to go to the ladies room.

ELEANOR GETS UP  
AND LEAVES THE  
TABLE TO GO TO  
THE RESTROOM.  
JOE LOOKS OVER  
TO FIND OUT  
ABOUT HIS ORDER.

ELEANOR

(dressed up and talking to  
herself in a mirror)

I'm sorry about this. You were so beautiful. I honestly don't know what happened that night. And, maybe... I never will. Finding any kind of truth was far beyond my capabilities. So, here I am, alone, with only a reflection for comfort. Only, in my imagination, I can see you. Would it be too much of an imposition? (pause) I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry will never... Mama lessoned me about the truth. She warned me about the big mistake I was making. And here I am about to do... I've got to do this. Why? Because I can't bear to be there at your trial, facing your mother and father. He's destroyed you, us. If you are near, please don't judge me, but, please tell me. (Eleanor puts her hand on the mirror and then puts on Theresa's coat, blond wig, scarf, and dresses like Theresa from the opening. Eleanor put on the RING.)

THERESA

We won't stay for the trial. We are so much, so much. Settle your nerves, and show me a quaint smile. Don't turn your head from the truth you seek. Stay with me and I'll show you something. We have something in common. I will give you what you need and then you are on your own. These are the images you seek and they are released only to you to help you in your life's choices.

ELEANOR MOVES  
WITH A PURPOSE  
AND LEAVES THE  
STAGE AS  
THERESA.

JOE

(getting ready to be married  
talking to himself)

One more piece of the puzzle. My lawyers were owed a big time favor. Where is she? I wonder where we can get lunch and a few beers afterwards to celebrate. I've got to keep these thoughts out of my head, about the event, no need to worry about that thing that will follow me the rest of my life. What I like is feeling free driving my Buick. I love that car. When I get out I'll get a better one.

JOE GRABS HIS  
PARKA AND STANDS  
NEAR HIS BUICK  
COUPE.

JOE

It's freezing out here.

JOE HOPS IN HIS  
CAR AND TURNS IT  
ON AND TAKES  
OFF.

THERESA ENTERS.



JOE

(rolling down the passenger  
window)

Hey. Hey! You need a ride home?

THERESA

(shakes her head no)

JOE

Where are you headed?

THERESA

(no answer)

JOE

It must be thirty maybe forty degrees out there. It's going to snow soon. All right, suit yourself. (Joe sees a familiar face.) Hey you're that girl that dropped her books the other day. Remember? I helped you? I turned up the heater. Ahhh, sure is nice and warm in here. This is getting silly. You remember me? I picked up your books and gave them to you. It was just a few days ago. Come on I'll give you a ride home.

THERESA

Okay.

She gets in and sits beside him.

JOE

(reaches over her to roll up  
the window)

How far is your house?

THERESA

About a mile up the road. You've been drinking.

JOE

Just a few.

THERESA

Maybe you should let me out.

JOE

You know the Nifty Nix? Why don't we stop there for a minute and get a little warm up. Even on a cold night like tonight, they come out to your car. Not too far. Here we are.

THERESA

I don't want anything.

JOE ROLLS DOWN  
HIS WINDOW AND  
YELLS.

JOE

(to unseen waitress)

Two beers and a cup of coffee.

Joe hands Theresa the cup of coffee  
and downs the two beers.

JOE

That didn't take long. Now, where to?

THERESA

Take a right on Broadway and then a left on Spruce. Right  
here, make a left. Slow down.

JOE

We're going up a little ways till I find a place to turn  
around.

THERESA

You can turn around now. Stop the car!

JOE

There's nothing to be afraid of, nothing.

They sit quietly for a moment as  
the car speeds up. Theresa adjusts  
her books on the floorboard of the  
car.

THERESA

My books were getting heavy.

JOE

Sure, just put them down.

THERESA

Can you slow down?

JOE

In a few. Alright, I'm turning around now. Hold on a minute, I think I have a flat tire.

Joe reaches over to touch Theresa.

THERESA

Keep your hands to yourself. Take me home.

JOE

You're going to like me.

THERESA

What would your wife say?

JOE

I'll get you back home in no time.

Joe grabs a flashlight from the dash of his car. He is flustered as he gets out of the car. He looks at the tire but there is no flat.

JOE PULLS OUT  
THE .45 CALIBER  
GUN.

He opens the trunk and suddenly is at the passenger door and yanks Theresa out.

JOE

Now, either you're going to do as I say or we're going to have some serious problems here.

MOMENTS LATER  
JOE APPEARS WITH  
ELEANOR'S PANTS  
AND THROWS THEM  
INTO THE TRUNK.

Theresa walks to the trunk to put on her pants and she grabs a wrench. She screams as she hits Joe in head two times. Joe buckles, then comes to, and gets violently angry.

JOE

(grabbing both of her hands, he wrestles the wrench from her hand and he rips the ring off her finger.)

THERESA

My ring!!!

JOE

Stop yelling, I said I wasn't going to hurt you.

(In a dance and light sequence) They struggle in front of the lights in and out, back and forth until Theresa trips and falls on the gravel and now is not seen. Joe jumps on her back, pulls out his gun and repeatedly strikes the back of her head.

MOMENTS LATER

ELEANOR ENTERS  
FOLLOWED BY JOE.

PRIEST

(not seen)

You may now kiss the bride.

Eleanor turns her cheek.

ELEANOR

Okay, you are now on your own.

JOE

Wha..

ELEANOR

You've made it easier for yourself, you've squashed the truth, and now, I can't testify. I'm not coming to your trial.

JOE

But I need your there.

ELEANOR

It's better for me not to be there. I'm going to live with your mother in Santa Monica.

JOE

But mama is going be at the trial.

ELEANOR

I'm not going to face Theresa's mother, father, and all of her siblings. I did what I said I was going to do and now I'm going to say goodbye.

ELEANOR EXITS.

JOE

All of my family is going to be there. Well, my mom and my brother all the way from Ohio. They won't desert me. They'll be here by my side. I told you the truth, the God's honest truth and this is what I get. All I ask is that you believe what I say, that you love me, and I love you. Believe me! Believe me!!! I told the truth. Everyone else was lying. I never lied to you or to anyone else. I told the truth. The truth!!!

THERESA APPEARS  
ON STAGE A PHOTO  
IMAGE OF HER  
GOING OFF TO  
COLLEGE.

FOREMAN

(not seen)

We find the defendant Joe Sam Walker guilty of second degree murder.

Theresa disappears.

**THE END**