

EXTRACT

grace

a short play

by

Alex Broun

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abroun@bigpond.net.au

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Cast

GRACE

MARILYN

DIANA

The characters may be played by actors of any age, young or old.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

It is important there is no attempt to mimic the appearance, voice or actions of any of the characters until later in the play. At the start of the play the audience should have no idea who the women are. Gradually they will work it out in clues through the dialogue. The play tries to capture the spirit of the women, not imitate their skin and bone. Their outer personas were only developed later in their lives and often who they were perceived to be was a long way from who they actually were – and the burden of that public perception was in large part why they never found true happiness in their lives.

GRACE: November 12, 1929.

DIANA: July 1st, 1961.

MARILYN: June 1st, 1926.

GRACE: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

DIANA: Sandringham, Norfolk.

MARILYN: Los Angeles, California.

GRACE: Aires.

DIANA: Cancer.

MARILYN: Gemini.

GRACE: Active, Demanding, Determined, Effective, Ambitious.

DIANA: Emotional, Intense, Impulsive, Selective, Diplomatic.

MARILYN: Communicative, Indecisive, Inquisitive, Intelligent, Changeable.

GRACE: Pretty close.

DIANA: Not sure about the last two.

MARILYN: Spot on.

GRACE: Two sisters and a brother.

DIANA: Two sisters and two brothers.

MARILYN: One of each.

GRACE: Middle daughter.

DIANA: Youngest daughter.

MARILYN: Same.

GRACE: Third of four.

DIANA: Fourth of five.

MARILYN: Last of three.

GRACE: John, but he was known as Jack.

DIANA: John, known as John.

MARILYN: Could have been either. But I did know a Jack, who called himself John.

GRACE: Triple Olympic-gold-medal-winning sculler –

MARILYN: Scull-who?

GRACE: Rower and he owned a construction company.

DIANA: Earl.

MARILYN: His name was Earl?

DIANA: He was an Earl.

MARILYN: Like I said. Could have been either.

GRACE: Strict Roman Catholic.

DIANA: Lapsed Anglican.

MARILYN: Pentecostal then Judaism, though deep down I was probably always a Buddhist.

DIANA: Riddlesworth Hall

GRACE: Ravenhill Academy,

MARILYN: Van Nuys High.

DIANA: The New School.

GRACE: The Stevens School.

MARILYN: The Van Nuys High *School*.

DIANA: Then the *Institut Alpin Videmanette* in Switzerland.

GRACE: I didn't get into Bennington College, my maths scores were too low.

MARILYN: I got married when I was 16, who had time for College?

GRACE: A Prince.

DIANA: A Prince.

MARILYN: A cop, a ball player and a playwright (OR: A John, a Joe, and an Artie.)

DIANA: Two boys.

GRACE: Two girls and a boy.

MARILYN: Two and one.

THEY LOOK AT HER.

MARILYN: Two miscarriages and one ectopic pregnancy. I wasn't lucky, in life or love.

GRACE: My parents were married over thirty years.

DIANA: My parents divorced when I was eight. My mother had an affair. Just like ...

MARILYN: Hey, him first!

DIANA: I remember my father loading suitcases in the car and my mother crunching across the gravel forecourt and driving away through the gates.

MARILYN: I remember my mother carrying me out of my foster's parent's house in a duffel bag. I don't think they had a gravel forecourt.

DIANA: Bulimic, depressed, suicidal.

MARILYN: Hypersexuality, sleep disturbances, substance abuse, disturbed interpersonal relationships.

GRACE: I was frustrated my husband wouldn't let me act. At first. Then I decided not to.

THEY LOOK AT **GRACE**.

MARILYN: Is that it?

DIANA: They used to call her, Her Serene Highness.

MARILYN: (TO **GRACE**) How come you got off so easy?

GRACE: My mother, my children. My father made me very ... strong. I had to be.

MARILYN: I was strong ... for awhile.

DIANA: I was strong, until ...

MARILYN: Say it.

DIANA: Until I realised my husband could never ...

GRACE: I was lucky. My husband loved me.

MARILYN: All my husbands loved me. For awhile.

DIANA: (TO **GRACE**) Everyone in the world loved you.

MARILYN: For awhile.

GRACE: And you.

DIANA: At the start. And ... after ... But not in the middle. When I needed it.

MARILYN: That was pity. Not love.

GRACE: (TO **MARILYN**) Every man in the world loved you. They still do.

DIANA: (TO **GRACE**) Says Miss Pin-Up. Those photos in Jamaica ... Hot stuff!

MARILYN: (TO **DIANA**) And you weren't a boyhood fantasy. So pure, dressed in white.

DIANA: Then ...

BEAT.

GRACE: September 14th, 1982.

DIANA: 31st of August 1997

MARILYN: 5th of August, 1962.

GRACE: Monaco.

DIANA: Paris.

MARILYN: Los Angeles.

GRACE: 52.

DIANA: 36.

MARILYN: Same.