## **Dreaming With the Angels**

## **JACK DANN**

Jack Dann is a multiple-award winning author who has written or edited over seventy books, including the international bestseller *The Memory Cathedral; The Man Who* Melted; *The Silent*, a novel of the Civil War; *The Rebel: An Imagined Life of James Dean;* and a number of short story collections: *Timetipping, Jubilee, Visitations, The Fiction Factory*, and the forthcoming *Promised Land*, a companion volume to *The Rebel*. Dann lives in Australia on a farm overlooking the sea and 'commutes' back and forth to Los Angeles and New York.

About this story, Dann writes, "Dreaming With the Angels' is part of my James Dean alternate history sequence of stories and a novel (*The Rebel: An Imagined Life of James Dean*). It is an alternate America as seen through the eyes of such icons as James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Jack and Bobby Kennedy, William Burroughs, and Jack Kerouac. I have been experimenting with writing science fiction as mainstream. All the characters in this story are real, but the events are ever so slightly skewed. My hope is that this technique might give new insights into our culture... and our icons."

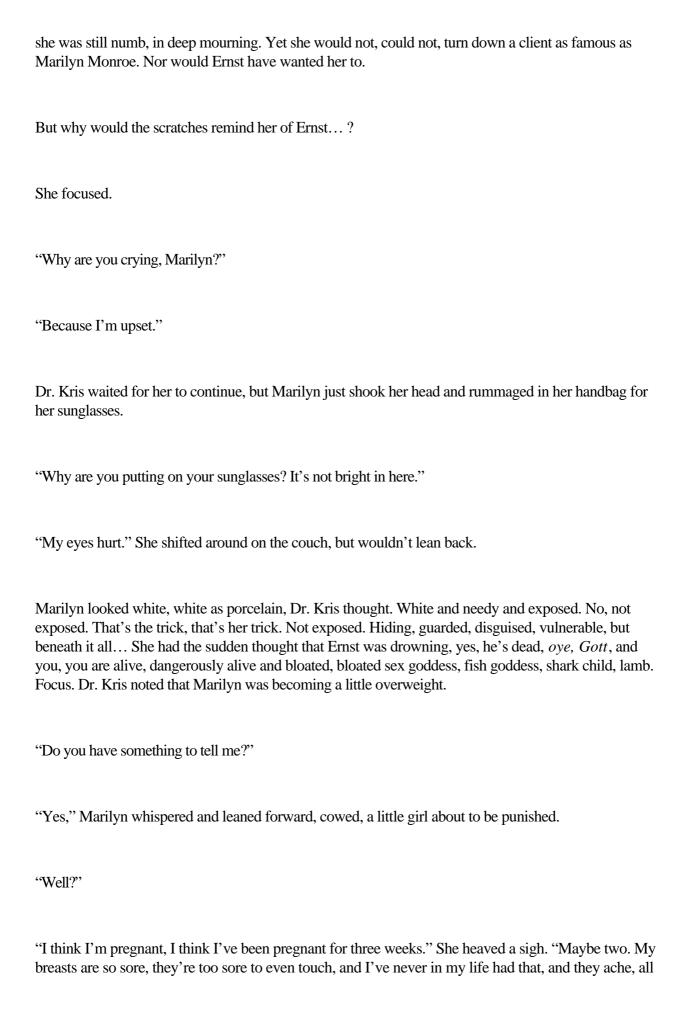
\* \* \* \*

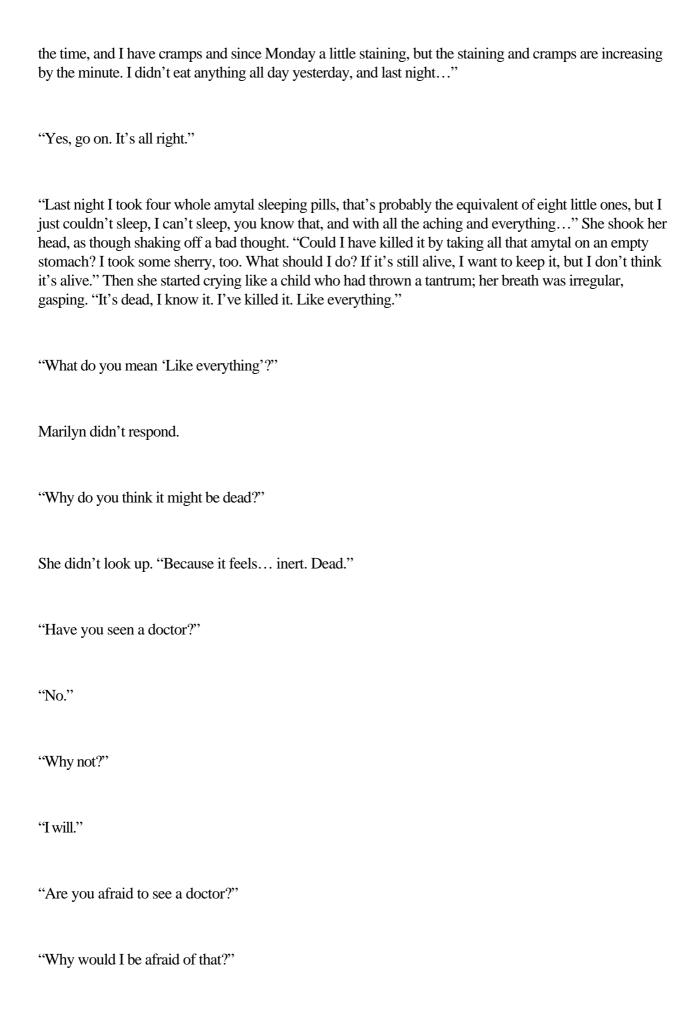
M

y adopted daughter."

That's what Sigmund Freud used to call Dr. Marianne Kris, who now sat in her upholstered tub chair and listened to Marilyn Monroe. Marilyn sat stiffly on a large, comfortable couch opposite Dr. Kris and cried softly, daubing her eyes with the tissues provided on the little table beside her. She wore high-heels, an aqua skirt and a blue-green square-shouldered jacket, and no make-up; her face looked washed-out, pale as her fingers fidgeting on her knees. She had shadows under her eyes, and her famous blond hair had broken ends.

It's lipstick, Dr. Kris thought. Without it, she's just an ordinary girl, an average, mildly pretty face. *Tabula rasa. Tabu. Taboo*. She noted her stray thoughts, which were distractions. She hated distractions. She prided herself on what she called her focus and noticed the wretched shaving cuts all over Marilyn's legs. She scribbled 'scratches' in a small, leather notepad resting on her lap. The scratches could be indicative of something carried over from childhood. Dr. Kris believed that the problems and dislocations of the child necessarily and absolutely explained the adult. Inexplicably, she thought of her husband. She exhaled and tried to focus, but Ernst had died exactly five weeks ago, and













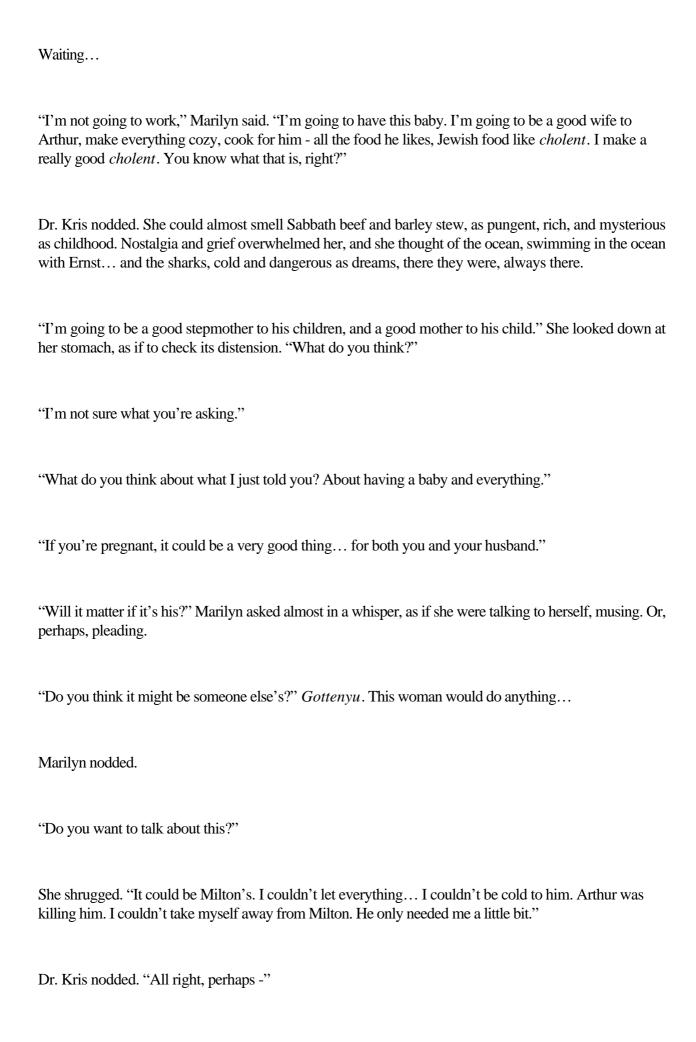




Dr. Kris suppressed a smile, for the phrase 'out of gas' came to mind. Where had she heard that? she wondered, then focused. "Who wants control?"
"Everybody. Arthur, he wants me to get rid of Milton Greene - he's my business partner and dear friend - and he wants to move his own asshole friends into MMP."
"MMP?"
"My production company. Arthur resents Milton, and it's Milton's fault, too; he's always putting Arthur down. 'Go write your little play, this isn't your business.' Milton's a shit, a complete shit, but he's a genius, too, and he loves me, and"
"And what?"
"And he's the only one I could trust. I couldn't trust his bitch of a wife, although I care about her because there's a good side to her, she'll take care of people, but then she'll use it against you, but Milton isn't like that, but he wants Arthur out of everything, and he wants to be the pig producer and -"
"Pig?"
"I meant big. It's all the goddamn Dilantin that fucked him up. I shouldn't talk, but he he did it to himself."
"Is he an epileptic? Dilantin should help control his seizures. Perhaps he needs to be re-evaluated."
"No, he's not epileptic, or diabetic, or anything else. He was using it to counteract all the Nembutal he was taking, and he heard somewhere that it gives you energy. Makes the electrical impulses in the brain go faster, or something. So he was taking it all the time."
"Do you use it?"
"I tried it, but it didn't help me sleep. Made me sick." She laughed. "Thank God, huh." She continued. "So I'll have to go along with Arthur and hurt Milton. That's always the way, isn't it? No matter what you do, no matter how careful you try to be, you hurt everybody. So there goes Milton, who I trust, and









"Because it will be Arthur's, no matter what, like I told you, but if it was Jimmy's, it would be more mine."

Dr. Kris finally took a note, and Marilyn looked up at her expectantly. Now she was radiant as a new bride a new mother a child, and as blond and hopeful as the morning sun warming the cold emptiness of the therapist's apartment.

\* \* \* \*

Marilyn's apartment on the thirteenth floor of 444 East Fifty-Seventh Street was a freeze-frame snowstorm, a glacier: walls and ceilings painted chalk white, a mirrored living room expanding her life into cocaine infinities. Living room, dining room, bath room, bedroom, empty, achingly white cold white lactescent white stone white bed... white Franklin baby grand piano - her mother's; ivory chess pieces adrift, suspended on snow white and slush-white squares; eggshell chairs, pearl sofa, frosted draperies and lily soft shag carpet; white motes of down in the air, snow... blond visions behind dark glasses. But shadows were everywhere, impurities, objects, dark, discordant discolorations: books with garish and pastel covers piled on tables and chairs and scattered on the floor, gilt framed photographs of Abraham Lincoln hanging all in a row, the muddy ribbon of the East River seen through a living room window.

Down the hall was Arthur's study, a smoky, wood-panelled, masculine cave of a room. A man's room. Marilyn and her decorator John Moore had designed it.

Arthur was away in the country, and Marilyn was home in bed.

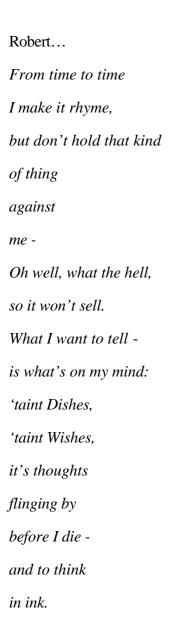
On the cross-legged night table beside her were tissues, a long-necked decanter of Portuguese sherry, a water tumbler and half-filled glass, a thin book of poetry by Robert Frost, her diary, a phone, and scattered plastic vials of pastel pills.

Marilyn had just overdosed on Dexamyl, amytal, and Phenobarbital because the sonovabitch bastard gynaecologist had told her she wasn't pregnant. False alarm. But he was a liar, a sonovabitch bastard of a liar. She felt the pills take hold. She was cold and hollow and numb inside. The air whooshed in her ears. The clocks and watches and pendants ticked, counting her out, tick, tock, ticking fucking tocking, and she reached for the faux ivory French phone and dialled Nick Ray's number. Nick knew Jimmy. He was Jimmy's director. He would get a message to Jimmy. Jimmy had left her. How could he do that? She needed him right the fuck now because Arthur needed to be alone in Amagansett, Long Island to get his creative self back. She had a good head for numbers, one, two, three, she would dial all the numbers in the world.

A voice as faraway as childhood answered the phone.

Maybe it was Nick. Maybe it wasn't. She told him to get a message to Jimmy, "I love him, tell him that, you know how much I love him, and I'm sorry that everything is over, but that's the best thing for everybody, and tell him that I'm -"

Asleep, dreaming with the angels, floating through Phenobarbital clouds of poetry. She tried to reach for her diary and a pen, but her arm weighed a thousand pounds and her hand was a white, squashed spider. A poem had come to her, full and rich and finished, and if she didn't write it down, she'd forget it. She had to tell Robert Frost, oh how I love Robert Frost, and she remembered hours spent with the poet, but right now minutes might be hours, or maybe she had it backwards, and hours were minutes, minutes seconds, and she would fall asleep and die without writing down her poem. The words, so cold and profound...



She giggled and mumbled, "Robert, Robert, don't let me die...

"Jimmy, Arthur, Milton bye bye bye."