

VIEW ARTICLE PAGES

Features

THE MAN WHO KEPT MARILYN'S SECRETS

No one knew more about Marilyn Monroe's shattered dreams of escape to the magic of Camelot than Pete Lawford. He had introduced the excruciatingly fragile star to the high-stakes world of his brother-in-law Jack Kennedy and witnessed the crash ending of her much more serious affair with Bobby Kennedy—on the last day of her life. But why did Lawford ignore her final plea for help? JAMES SPADA reports in an excerpt from his new biography

MAY 1991 JAMES SPADA

Saturday, August 4, 1962, had been so hot in Los Angeles that by one in the morning the temperature still hovered in the upper seventies. On a quiet, palm-tree-lined street in West Hollywood, private investigator Fred Otash, sleeping fitfully in the heat, awakened to the insistent jangle of his telephone. A man used to late-night summonings, Otash snapped alert and picked up the receiver. "Fred," the voice on the line said, "this is Peter Lawford. I have a big problem. I need to come and see you."

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Otash had later left the police department and gone into private practice as an investigator, working for the likes of Sheilah Graham, Frank Sinatra, and Marilyn Monroe. One of his regular clients was *Confidential* magazine, a sensationalists monthly that often got the goods on celebrities.

In 1954, Peter Lawford had married Patricia Kennedy, the daughter of Joseph P. Kennedy, the former American ambassador to Great Britain, and sister of Massachusetts senator John F. Kennedy. This had put Lawford in a vulnerable position. *Confidential*, he had learned, knew about his frequent forays to brothels, and he was worried. "Fred," he told Otash, "now that I'm married to Pat Kennedy, I really can't afford this horseshit."

Otash had helped Lawford out of that scrape and gotten the story killed. In 1959, Lawford had called on the investigator again, this time to borrow electronic-eavesdropping equipment so that he could bug his own telephone. Otash knew the Lawfords were having marital problems, and he assumed that Peter suspected Pat was cheating on him.

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In 1962, Peter Lawford was the brother-in-law of the president and the attorney general of the United States, two men with enemies ranging from their political adversaries to the corrupt Teamsters boss Jimmy Hoffa to Mob members whom Robert Kennedy had

targeted for investigation. All of these factions, according to Otash, were expressing great interest in what the wiretaps in Lawford's home would reveal.

As Otash and other Hollywood cognoscenti knew, both Jack and Bobby Kennedy had been sexually involved with Marilyn Monroe, the world's reigning movie sex goddess, and their trysts—sometimes at Lawford's Santa Monica beach house—were also of interest to Otash's clients. The situation was explosive. A scandal involving the sex lives of these two Catholic family men could topple the Kennedy administration.

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"Me?" Otash responded. "You gotta be fucking nuts! If I went within four miles of that place—I mean, I'm too well known. I want no part of it."

But Otash did send over an associate—the same man who had installed surveillance wires in Marilyn's house several months earlier. "He knew the place very well," Otash said. "He finished the job that Lawford started, and he found things that Lawford had left behind."

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eter Lawford met Marilyn Monroe in his agent's office in 1951, and he dated both her and her best girlfriend, Jeanne Carmen. Initially, Peter was attracted to Marilyn, because at that time she had a wholesome, down-to-earth, athletic side, which he found

very appealing in a woman. But the more he got to know and like her, the less interested he was in her sexually.

After his marriage into the Kennedy family, Peter's relationship with Marilyn grew more complicated in proportion to his growing friendship with Jack Kennedy, the family's promising young politician. Both men had a lusty appetite for women, and neither felt constrained by his marriage vows to curb his desires. From 1954 on, Peter was happy to help Jack on what he called his "hunting expeditions" for girls in Hollywood. One of the women Peter made sure Jack met was Marilyn Monroe.

In the summer of 1954, Peter arranged for Jack and his wife, Jackie, to be invited to a party at the home of Charles Feldman, the powerful agent and ex-husband of Jean Howard. Peter knew that among the guests would be Monroe, the most talked-about woman in the world that year, and her husband of six months, former New York Yankee baseball great Joe DiMaggio. Their marriage was already on the rocks, and it would end a few months later, destroyed by DiMaggio's jealousy and Monroe's unwillingness to give up her burgeoning career, as DiMaggio insisted, and be a housewife.

Marilyn told her friend Bob Slatzer that she had felt uncomfortable at the party because Jack Kennedy stared at her the entire evening. "I may be flattering myself," she said, giggling, "but he couldn't take his eyes off me." Feldman noticed that Jackie saw what Jack was doing, and she was angry. DiMaggio was aware of what was going on, too. Every few minutes he would grab Marilyn's arm and say, "Let's go! I've had enough of this!" Marilyn didn't want to leave, and Feldman recalled that she and Joe had words about it.

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Marilyn told Slatzer that she and Jack Kennedy didn't "get together" until after her divorce from DiMaggio, early in 1955. She began to spend a good deal of time in New York during this period, and occasionally she and Jack would meet.

A few months after the party at Feldman's, Jack was hospitalized for surgery to alleviate a chronic back problem. Visitors to his room were amused by a color poster of Marilyn Monroe he had taped to the wall, in which she wore blue shorts and stood with her legs spread widely apart. Kennedy had hung the poster upside down.

Kennedy and Monroe continued to rendezvous in New York throughout the 1950s. Whenever a rift developed between Monroe and her then husband, the playwright Arthur Miller, she would drive into Manhattan from their Connecticut farmhouse and stay at her East Fifty-seventh Street apartment. If Jack was in town, she would meet him in his suite at the Carlyle hotel. At the time of the 1960 Democratic convention, which was poised to nominate Kennedy for president, Marilyn was in Los Angeles without Miller, and Kennedy's large contingent of Hollywood supporters made her far less conspicuous in his company than she would otherwise have been. The second night of the convention, Marilyn dined with Jack, Peter, and Kennedy aide Kenneth O'Donnell at Puccini, a Los Angeles restaurant co-owned by Peter and Frank Sinatra.

Before dinner, Marilyn and Jack had apparently been intimate, because Marilyn giggled to Peter that Jack's performance earlier had been "very democratic" and "very penetrating." According to Marilyn's longtime maid, Lena Pepitone, Kennedy was "always telling her dirty jokes, pinching her, and squeezing her.... She told me that [he] was always putting his hand on her thigh." This evening at Puccini, apparently, he continued northward, running his hand further under Marilyn's dress. "He hadn't counted on going that far," Marilyn told Lena, laughing. When he discovered she wasn't wearing any panties, "he pulled back and turned red."

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n the morning of Saturday, March 24, 1962, Marilyn emerged from the bedroom of her Spanish-style home on Fifth Helena Drive in the Brentwood section of Los Angeles before nine. Normally, she slept past noon, but this was an important day. "I'm going on a trip," she told her housekeeper-companion, Eunice Murray, who had been recommended by Marilyn's therapist, Dr. Ralph Greenson.

At noon, Peter Lawford arrived to pick her up. "Peter paced back and forth," Mrs. Murray recalled, "while Marilyn put the finishing touches on her attire." Nearly an hour later, she was ready—and wearing a black wig. Peter and the disguised Marilyn drove to Palm Springs to spend the weekend with President Kennedy at Bing Crosby's house. The president was throwing a party Saturday evening to meet some of the Southern California Democratic politicians.

Philip Watson, later the Los Angeles County assessor, was invited to the Crosby compound that night, and he soon discovered that there were in fact two parties—one at poolside and a smaller, more exclusive one in the president's cottage. He wasn't particularly surprised that Monroe was there. He had seen her with the president at another party, at the Beverly Hilton Hotel the previous November. What astonished him now was how little effort either made to disguise their intimacy.

As Watson told Anthony Summers, author of the Monroe biography *Goddess*, "The president was wearing a turtleneck sweater, and she was dressed in a kind of robe thing. She had obviously had a lot to drink. It was obvious they were intimate, that they were staying there together for the night."

A

year earlier, living in New York, Marilyn had hit rock bottom. She was depressed over the failure of her marriage to Arthur Miller and the death of her girlhood idol, Clark Gable, with whom she had just starred in *The Misfits*. "She took so many pills to get to sleep at night," recalled John Huston, the director of *The Misfits*, "that she had to take wake-up pills to get her going in the morning—and this ravaged the girl."

She had fallen deeper and deeper into a maelstrom of drugs and alcohol, convinced that at thirty-five she was too old to continue as a sex symbol, that two box-office failures in a row—*Let's Make Love* and *The Misfits*—meant her career was over. She despaired of ever having a happy marriage after three divorces, or a much-wanted child after three miscarriages.

Just before Christmas 1960, Marilyn had read that some of Clark Gable's associates blamed her for his death, citing the delays and headaches her emotional and marital problems had created on the Nevada *Misfits* location. Gable, in fact, had said a few days before filming ended, "What the hell is that girl's problem? Goddamn it, I like her, but she's so damn unprofessional. I damn near went nuts up there in Reno waiting for her to show. Christ, she didn't show up until after lunch some days. I'm glad this picture's finished. She damn near gave me a heart attack."

The day after the picture wrapped, Gable suffered a massive coronary. As a girl in an orphanage, little Norma Jeane Baker had fantasized that Clark Gable was her father, and the thought that she might have hastened his death devastated her. One evening Lena Pepitone went into her bedroom and found her, disheveled and wearing only a terry-cloth bathrobe, leaning out of her high-rise-apartment window. Pepitone rushed across the room and pulled her back. "Let me die," Marilyn sobbed, "I want to die. I deserve to die. What have I got to live for?"

Less than two months later, her New York psychiatrist, Dr. Marianne Kris, persuaded her to enter the Payne Whitney Psychiatric Clinic in Manhattan. Expecting a cushy rest cure designed to help her withdraw from alcohol and sleeping pills, Marilyn was shocked by her treatment after she signed in as Faye Miller.

What Marilyn didn't know was that she was being admitted as a potentially self-destructive patient. All her personal property, including her clothes, was confiscated. As she sat in her room and stared at the iron bars on the windows, her worst nightmare, the fear she had fought all her life, seemed to be coming true. Her grandmother had died in a mental hospital. Her mother had been institutionalized for most of her life. Was she going insane, too? She began to pound on the door, screaming, "Open this door! Let me out!" Then she stripped herself nude and stood screaming in front of the window. She was taken to a maximum-security ward, where she threw a chair through a window and was put into a straitjacket. "They had me sedated," she later told a friend. "At night there was a steady procession of hospital personnel, doctors and nurses, coming to look at me. There I was, with my arms bound. I was a curiosity piece."

Finally she was allowed a phone call. She telephoned DiMaggio, who was able to get her moved to Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, where she was treated as a normal hospital patient and slowly weaned of her addiction to sleeping pills.

Within a year Marilyn had bounced back, and by early 1962 she had begun a new life in California. Although she kept her New York apartment, she purchased the first house she had ever owned, in Brentwood, about a fifteen-minute drive from Peter Lawford's house, and spent most of her time in Los Angeles. She strengthened her friendship with Peter, often visiting him and Pat in Santa Monica.

In the spring of 1962, Marilyn made preparations to begin her first movie in nearly two years, *Something's Got to Give*, took trips to Mexico to buy furnishings for her new house, and intensified her affair with Jack Kennedy. That the most powerful man in the world—and the handsomest head of state—found her desirable bolstered Marilyn's precarious self-esteem. Like a little girl at play, she delighted in disguising herself for their trysts and fantasized that Jack would divorce Jackie and marry her. "Can't you just see me as First Lady?" she asked Jeanne Carmen.

While Marilyn had seen Jack Kennedy only at intervals since their first meeting in 1954, by early 1962 she was trying to be with him as often as possible. They saw each other whenever Jack was in California, and on at least two occasions during the spring of 1962 Marilyn made a special trip to New York to be with him.

Tiny mincing steps were all she could manage in her skintight gown.

The first was a black-tie dinner party in the president's honor given by Fifi Fell, a socialite, in her Park Avenue penthouse. Around seven o'clock, Milton Ebbins, Peter's manager, and Dave Powers, a presidential aide, were dispatched to pick Marilyn up at her apartment. "We got there at about 7:30—dinner was at 8—and she wasn't ready,"

Ebbins recalled. "Powers didn't want to wait for her, so he told me to stay and went back to the party, then sent the limousine back for us."

As Ebbins sat and waited, he noticed that everything in the apartment was white—the rugs, the ceilings, the walls, the furniture, even a piano. At eight o'clock, Marilyn's maid told Ebbins that the hairstylist Kenneth was finishing up Marilyn's hair. "She should be out very soon." At 8:15, the phone rang, and Ebbins picked it up. It was Peter. "Where is she? The president's here. Everybody's waiting!"

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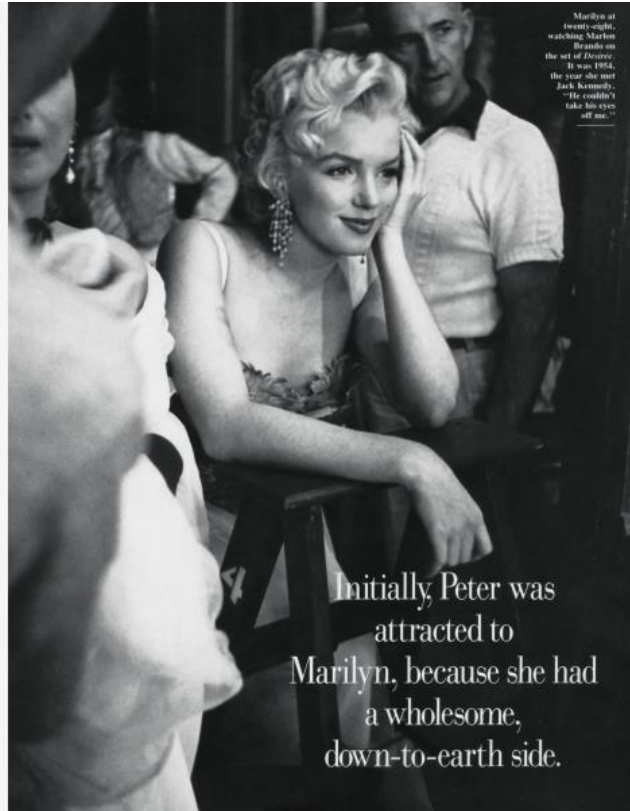
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Marilyn at twenty-eight, watching Marilyn Broun on the set of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. It was 1954, the year she met Jack Kennedy. "He couldn't take his eyes off me."

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"She's not ready yet. I'm sitting here waiting for her."

"C'mon!" Peter shouted. "Dinner's practically ready!"

At 8:30, the maid announced to Ebbins that Marilyn should be out in just a few minutes. By nine o'clock, there was still no Marilyn. Peter called again. "You son of a bitch!" he screamed at Ebbins.

By 9:30, Ebbins couldn't take it anymore. He opened Marilyn's door and walked into her bedroom. She was sitting at her vanity table, naked, staring at herself in the mirror. "Marilyn, for Chrissakes," he said. "Come on! The president's waiting, everybody's *waiting*."

Marilyn looked at him dreamily. "Oh," she said. "Will you help me on with my dress?"

"So I'm watching this giant international movie star standing there stark naked in her high heels," Ebbins recalled. "She puts a scarf over her hair so it won't get mussed and pulls this beaded dress over her head. This dress was so tight it took me ten minutes to pull it down over her ass! She says, 'Take it easy. Don't tear the beads.' I'm on my knees inching this dress down over her ass, and my face is right at her crotch. But I'm not thinking of anything but getting her to that goddamn party."

Finally, at ten o'clock, Monroe was ready. Ebbins was astounded. "Whew, did she look sensational—like a princess. I said to her, 'Jesus Christ, you sure are pretty.' She just said, 'Thank you.' "

Marilyn put a red wig over her hair, slipped on dark glasses, and rode in the limousine with Ebbins to Park Avenue. When they arrived, fifty photographers were milling around the lobby of the building. Not one of them recognized Marilyn. When she got off the elevator, three Secret Service men watched her slip off the wig, take off the glasses, and become Marilyn Monroe again.

As she and Ebbins entered the apartment, Jack Kennedy had his back to them. He turned around, smiled at Marilyn, and said, "Hi!" She sashayed up to him, and he took her arm. "Come on," he said to her. "I want you to meet some people." As they walked away, Marilyn looked back at Milt Ebbins and winked.

For a few seconds, Ebbins thought he was in the clear. Then someone grabbed him by the back of the neck and pulled him into a bedroom. It was Peter, red with fury. "You son of a bitch!" he hissed, and raised his fist, measuring Ebbins for a punch. Dave Powers grabbed Ebbins by the collar and tore open his shirt at the neck. When Ebbins managed to calm the two men down, he learned that there had been no dinner. "Everybody just ate hors d'oeuvres and drank and got blind drunk and happy as larks," he recalled being told. "Nobody cared about dinner after a while. They told me the chef tried to jump out the window. Here he had cooked a fabulous dinner for the president of the United States, and nobody ate it!"

Marilyn's reputation for tardiness became a running gag at a star-studded fund-raising gala in Madison Square Garden on May 19, 1962, held to celebrate the president's upcoming forty-fifth birthday. Attended by 15,000 loyal Democrats, the extravaganza featured Jack Benny, Henry Fonda, Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, and Maria Callas, among others.

It was Peter's idea to have Marilyn Monroe sing "Happy Birthday" to Jack as the evening's finale. Marilyn asked her favorite designer, Jean-Louis, famous for the sensational flesh-colored gowns he had created for Marlene Dietrich, to design something similar for her, a dress that would look like "a second skin." Made of flesh-colored mesh studded with rhinestones, the gown cost \$5,000 and had to be sewn on. Marilyn wore no underwear beneath it.

Mickey Song, who had cut Jack's and Bobby's hair for the occasion, begged Bobby to let him have a shot at Marilyn Monroe's hair. "She didn't want me to work on her, because she didn't know me. But Bobby convinced her. I didn't know if I'd get the chance until she showed up backstage at Madison Square Garden. Her hair had been set, but it needed some finishing touches." Song applied them in Marilyn's dressing room, and he added a sensational flip curl on Marilyn's right side, an effect he achieved by teasing her hair from beneath and "using lots of hair spray" to keep the curl in place.

"While I was working on Marilyn," Song recalled, "she was extremely nervous and uptight. The door was open, and Bobby Kennedy was pacing back and forth outside. Finally he came into the dressing room and said to me, 'Would you step out for a minute?' When I did, he closed the door behind him, and he stayed in there for about fifteen minutes. Then he left, and I went back in. Marilyn was all disheveled. She giggled and said, 'Could you help me get myself back together?' "

As showtime approached, Marilyn grew terrified. With the show's producer, Richard Adler, she had endlessly practiced the familiar verse to "Happy Birthday" and a stanza written especially for Kennedy. She had had trouble remembering the new material, and Adler warned the president that Monroe might flub lines. "Oh, I think she'll be very good," Kennedy responded.

As she waited in the wings to go on, Marilyn's nervousness threatened to undo her. She had been drinking to fortify herself, and by this point she was visibly tipsy.

With Peter onstage as an ad hoc master of ceremonies to introduce Marilyn, the pre-planned running gag began. As the president sat near Bobby and Ethel Kennedy (Jackie spent that day horseback riding in Virginia), Peter gave Marilyn the first of several introductions: "Mr. President, on this occasion of your birthday, this lovely lady is not only pulchritudinous but punctual. Mr. President—Marilyn Monroe!"

A roar arose from the audience, but Marilyn didn't appear. Then Peter introduced her again. A drumroll announced her entrance—but again there was no Monroe. After a long pause, Peter continued. "Mr. President, because, in the history of show business, perhaps there has been no one female who has meant so much... who has done more... Mr. President, the *late* Marilyn Monroe!"

Cheers rocked the Garden as Marilyn appeared onstage. Swathed in white ermine, taking tiny mincing steps that were all she could manage in her skintight gown, she sidled up to Peter, who removed her fur and exited stage left. The thousands of rhinestones on Marilyn's dress reflected the spotlights and made her seem more a celestial vision than a human being.

She stood silently in front of the microphone for several long moments, collecting herself. Then she breathed heavily, eliciting more cheers. After flicking the microphone with her finger to make sure it was working, she began to sing, slowly, breathily, sensually. She made the song seem somehow suggestive, particularly when she intoned, "Happy birthday ... Mr. Pres... i... dent... Happy birthday...to *you*."

Marilyn then urged the audience to join her—"C'mon, everybody, 'Happy Birthday!'"—and a huge cake was wheeled onstage. Within a few minutes, the president was at the microphone. "I can now retire from politics," he told the crowd, "after having had 'Happy Birthday' sung to me in such a sweet, wholesome way."

Later, Marilyn attended a private party in Kennedy's honor given by Arthur Krim, the head of United Artists. There her glittery presence mesmerized the male guests, who in addition to the Kennedy brothers included Vice President Johnson, Adlai Stevenson, and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. Stevenson wrote a friend that Marilyn was wearing "skin and beads. I didn't see the beads! My encounters, however, were only after breaking through the strong defenses established by Robert Kennedy, who was dodging around her like a moth around the flame."

Schlesinger later wrote, "Bobby and I engaged in mock competition for her; she was most agreeable to him and pleasant to me—but then she receded into her own glittering mist.... There was something at once magical and desperate about her. Robert Kennedy, with his curiosity, his sympathy, his absolute directness of response to distress, in some way got through the glittering mist as few did."

After Krim's party, Marilyn was whisked into the Carlyle hotel to spend a few hours alone with the president. It would prove to be their last rendezvous.

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y June 1962, Marilyn Monroe was as emotionally needy as she had ever been in her life. She once again was caught up in a spiral of insecurity, depression, alcohol, and drugs. She had just been fired from *Something's Got to Give* because of repeated lateness and absences. They were caused, she said, by illness, but her Twentieth Century Fox bosses mistrusted the excuse and pointed to her flight to New York to sing for the president as proof that she wasn't as ill as she claimed. Headlines such as MARILYN GETS THE SACK appeared across the country.

"What really has me scared is all the strange clicks I've been hearing on my phone lately."

Worse, Marilyn's involvement with John Kennedy, initially a euphoric high, had left her feeling abused. She soon realized that to Kennedy she was, like so many other girls, little more than another piece of what he called "poon," and it hit her like a fist in the face.

Jeanne Carmen had often been present at the Lawfords' with Marilyn and Jack Kennedy, and she hadn't liked what she'd seen. "Peter introduced me to the president at the beach house. He was the go-between. I like that term better than 'pimp.' It was so easy for Peter, because he had that house and that made it easy for everyone. I was always amazed, though, at anybody coming there, especially the president, because it wasn't a totally private house. There were houses right next door."

Like college fraternity brothers with a sexy coed, Peter and Jack had become more brazen with Marilyn as time went by. At first, she had been part of a small group to dine with the president at the beach house, and he would take her back to his hotel at the end of the evening. But before long, as Mrs. Dean Martin recalled, they got a little too "gleeful" and were "not discreet at all." Peter once telephoned Marilyn to invite her to a party, and she asked who else would be there. Among the names he gave her, she recognized two high-priced call girls. She coldly declined the invitation.

Jack Kennedy's cavalier treatment of Marilyn left her alternately clingy, belligerent, and despondent. Her Los Angeles psychiatrist's son, Daniel Greenson, now a doctor himself, remembered going to see Marilyn that summer when his father was out of the country. "This woman was desperate. She couldn't sleep, and she said how worthless she felt. She talked about being a waif, that she was ugly, that people were only nice to her for what they could get from her. She said life wasn't worth living anymore." Milt Ebbins tried to cheer Marilyn out of one of her depressive moods by telling her, "C'mon, Marilyn, you know everybody loves you." She replied, "Everybody doesn't love me. The only ones who love me are the guys who sit in the balcony and jerk off."

Marilyn was devastated when Jack Kennedy tried to distance himself from her. She began to call him at the White House and wrote him what Peter termed "rather pathetic letters." But if Marilyn hoped for some help from Peter, she soon realized it wouldn't be forthcoming, as he too began to avoid her. "I wonder where the hell Peter is?" she asked Jeanne Carmen. "I haven't been able to reach him for days." Increasingly now, Carmen noted, Peter was making himself scarce: "Peter would disappear on you when he didn't want to talk."

The president was also unavailable to Marilyn; her letters and phone calls to him went unanswered. Finally she threatened to reveal the affair to the press. This had the hoped-for effect: Jack responded. He sent Bobby to Los Angeles to talk to Marilyn and soothe her feelings.

According to Peter's third wife, Deborah Gould, Peter told her that Bobby's mission as messenger for his brother marked the beginning of an affair between him and Marilyn. They had been sexually intimate a few times before the encounter in Marilyn's dressing room at Madison Square Garden, but now they found themselves deeply drawn to each other—Marilyn out of a kind of desperate transference of her affection from Jack to Bobby, and Bobby because his physical attraction to Marilyn was now joined by a deep compassion for her suffering.

This affair, by all accounts, was far more serious than the one between Marilyn and Jack, and it developed quickly. Bobby began to spend more time in Los Angeles, always seeing Marilyn, often at the Lawfords' house. Lynn Sherman, a neighbor of Peter's, noticed that "there were many, many rendezvous there. The official car used to drive up, and you knew Robert Kennedy was in town, and then the help would come in and say, 'Marilyn's arrived.'... Sometimes I'd notice Bobby and Marilyn go out through the patio to the beach to walk."

Chuck Pick, a twenty-year-old parking attendant at Romanoff's whom Peter had befriended two years earlier, recalled working a party at the Lawford house one night. "Marilyn was there, and so was Bobby. One of the Secret Service guys said to me, 'You have eyes but you can't see, you have ears but you can't hear, and you have a mouth but you can't speak. You're gonna see a lot of things, but you have to keep quiet.' I didn't know what he was talking about, but a little while later I guessed. The party was breaking up, and Marilyn and Bobby were leaving together. I brought around his white 1956 T-bird, and Marilyn got into it, and I just sat there—I guess I wanted to sit next to Marilyn Monroe for as long as possible. Finally Bobby said, 'O.K., you can get out now,' and he got in and they drove away."

The Lawfords' next-door neighbor Peter Dye recalled Marilyn's telling him that she was "nuts" about Bobby. "Absolutely crazy. But it wasn't a physical attraction for her. It was more mental. Because she was depicted as a dumb blonde. You always want what you don't have, and Bobby was a bright guy. That's what turned her on."

Jeanne Carmen, who lived in the apartment building on Doheny Drive in Beverly Hills where Marilyn kept an apartment even after she purchased her home, remembered being at Marilyn's place once when Bobby Kennedy dropped in. "He was very surprised when I answered the door, and it seemed as though he was going to turn around and leave, but Marilyn came out of the bathroom with her robe on and her hair wrapped in a towel and she jumped into his arms and they kissed. Then we sat down, and they were kind of like two kids in love."

Marilyn had kept a diary for years, mostly to remind herself to do things and bring some organization to her sometimes jumbled affairs. Now, with the attorney general of the United States spending so much time with her, she began to jot down notes of the things she and Bobby discussed—especially after he complained that she didn't remember half the things he'd told her.

"She wanted so much to be a part of his world," Jeanne Carmen recalled. "She thought Bobby would be her passport to becoming a great lady. I saw the stuff in Marilyn's diary

—things about Jimmy Hoffa and Fidel Castro. It didn't mean anything to me, because I was just a stupid young girl and couldn't have cared less if they all killed each other."

It seemed unlikely to Jeanne, however, that Bobby had confided in Marilyn about sensitive issues as much as her diary notations seemed to indicate. "She told me she made notes of things he told her, but you never know when your girlfriends are telling you the truth. I think she made those notes when he was talking on the telephone, in the hope of having something to talk to him about later. It probably never occurred to Bobby that she was listening to his conversations."



Neither did it occur to him, at first, that anybody else was. But by late July 1962, he, Jack, and Peter had become aware of the fact that Peter's beach house and both Marilyn's house on Fifth Helena Drive and her apartment on Doheny were bugged. The Kennedy brothers' affairs with Marilyn Monroe, they both now realized, had left them extraordinarily vulnerable. The enemies the Kennedy administration had made—from the Mafia dons they had betrayed to the pro-Castro forces whose leader they had attempted to kill—were not lax in collecting as much evidence of Kennedy malfeasance as possible, in the hope of retaliation.

Suddenly, Robert Kennedy's relationship with Marilyn Monroe had become dangerous, and Bobby knew he would have to end it.

M

arilyn was frightened. She sat on the beach at Point Dume, north of Los Angeles, bundled against the growing chill and watching the remains of a blazing mid-July sun disappear behind the Pacific Ocean. Her old friend Bob Slatzer listened as she poured her heart out about Bobby Kennedy, wondering why he wouldn't return her phone calls. To Slatzer's astonishment, Marilyn said that the attorney general had promised to marry her. Slatzer tried to reason with her, tried to explain that there was no possibility that the president's brother, a staunch Catholic with seven small children, would risk such a scandal. Marilyn began to sob. "Then you're saying...that maybe...he never even meant it?"

Slatzer nodded, and Marilyn's mood changed from sadness to anger: "I was good enough to be around when he wanted to see me!"

Slatzer strongly urged Marilyn to forget the whole thing, put the Kennedys behind her, and go on with her life.

After a few moments of silence, Marilyn said, "You know something? What really has me scared is all the strange clicks and sounds I've been hearing on my phone lately. That's why I called you from a pay phone. I don't know what to think."

She had good reason to be afraid. By now, her house, like Peter Lawford's, was thoroughly bugged—a mass of electronic-eavesdropping lines intermingled with the

telephone wires throughout her attic. The installations allowed surveillance experts to listen both to her telephone conversations and to the activity in her bedroom through a hidden microphone.

The equipment had been in Monroe's house since March, shortly after Arthur James, a real-estate agent and friend of Marilyn's, received a call from an emissary of Carmine De Sapio, the New York Tammany Hall politician with ties to the Mafia and Jimmy Hoffa, who wanted to "get Marilyn away from her house for a while.... They wanted her place empty so they could install bugging equipment. I knew about Marilyn's relations with Robert Kennedy—she had told me—and that was evidently the reason for wanting to bug her."

According to Fred Otash, there were a number of people besides Jimmy Hoffa on whose behalf Marilyn Monroe's and Peter Lawford's houses were bugged. Initially, in 1959, certain elements of the Republican Party had hired Otash to bug Peter's house for purely political reasons. "Later," recalled Otash, "when things started developing with [Mafia dons Sam] Giancana and [Johnny] Roselli and the Kennedys, there were other electronic devices installed by other people for other reasons. Now you're developing another profile to embarrass the White House, because now the Kennedys are in power. Now they're fucking over a lot of people who are taking great offense at what they're doing. You've got the Teamsters, who had a hard-on for them; organized crime, who had a hard-on for them; the F.B.I., who had a hard-on for them. You had the C.I.A., who wanted to neutralize them because they didn't want them to take over control of the agency. And the Republican Party was still interested in a derogatory profile, because they wanted them out after four fucking years."

"One Secret Service guy said, 'You're gonna see a lot of things, but you have to keep quiet.'"

For more than two decades, Otash refused to say whether or not the Kennedys had been under surveillance, but when several of his deputies began to speak out, he joined them. "I would have kept it quiet all my life," Otash said. "But all of a sudden I'm looking at F.B.I. files and C.I.A. files with quotes from my investigators telling them about the work they did on my behalf. It's stupid to sit here and deny that these things are true. Yes, we did have the place [Lawford's house] wired. Yes, I did hear a tape of Jack Kennedy fucking Monroe. But I don't want to get into the moans and groans of their relationship. They were having a sexual relationship—period. ' "

According to Otash, Bernard Spindel, an East Coast wiretap specialist, approached him in the last months of Marilyn's life about bugging the star's house for a client Spindel would not name. "Spindel came out to California and wanted me to engineer the wiring of her home, the placing of illicit devices in the bedroom and wiretaps on the phone...

and I said, 'No, I don't want to be any part of that.' He said, 'Well, can you give us some support, some personnel?' And I said, 'Yes, I can.' "

Marilyn, it turns out, was already bugging herself. She had gone to Otash and asked him to give her electronic equipment with which she could bug her own telephone. "I have no idea why she wanted to do this, ' ' he said. "Maybe she wanted to have something she could hang over Bobby's head."

The Kennedy hairstylist Mickey Song learned that Marilyn was bugging herself from two conversations he had—one with Marilyn and one with Robert Kennedy. Late in July, Marilyn summoned Song, who assumed she wanted him to style her hair. When he arrived at her home, he was taken aback to find that she didn't want her hair done. Instead, she pumped Song for information about Bobby and Jack— where they had been, whether he had ever seen them with other women. "I didn't want to get involved, and I remembered how Peter, Bobby, and Jack had tested me to see if I was a gossip, so I kept telling her, 'I don't know...I don't know.' She told me that the Kennedys were using me just as they were using her. She tried to make us comrades against the Kennedys. I just said, '*I'm* not being used. They're treating me great.' "

Song told Marilyn nothing, and a few weeks later, after Marilyn's death, he was glad he hadn't. "I saw Bobby and he said to me, 'You're always defending the Kennedys, aren't you? That's good.' I just thought he'd heard something about me from someone, but then he said, 'I heard a tape Marilyn made of you a couple of weeks ago. '

"I was stunned. I had no idea she was taping me. I guess she was trying to get something on them, to keep them in line. At the time, I didn't really care about Marilyn and the Kennedys. Now I think she was abused. They played with her, and they tired of her, and I think they found her a lot of trouble to get off their hands. She wasn't going to go that easily."

By mid-July, both Kennedy brothers knew that their affairs with Marilyn had put the administration in great jeopardy. According to Otash, a disgruntled former employee of his had tipped Peter off about the bugging devices in his house. Suddenly it was clear that any number of Kennedy enemies could have gathered damaging information about the president and the attorney general.

Robert Kennedy's first gentle attempts to extricate himself from the Monroe affair were unsuccessful. Marilyn refused to accept the end of the romance without an adequate

explanation. "He should face me and tell me why," she said. "Or tell me on the phone. I don't care. I just want to know *why*." A reason was not forthcoming, and Marilyn called Bobby repeatedly to get one. He changed his private office telephone number, forcing her to place calls through the Justice Department switchboard. The calls—her phone records reveal eight in a little over a month— went unanswered. Angry, Marilyn called Bobby at home for the first time, and he was furious with her.

Matters continued to worsen, and Marilyn finally turned to Pat Lawford for help. According to Jeanne Carmen, Marilyn never blamed Peter for involving her with the Kennedys. "He was always the good guy. Peter could do no wrong as far as she was concerned."

Marilyn told Bob Slatzer that she had spoken to Pat Lawford about her problems with Bobby. "Pat told her that she really should forget it, that she should ignore Bobby's promises. She told Marilyn something like 'Bobby's still just a little boy. But you have to remember he's a little boy with a wife and seven kids.' She told Marilyn that marriage to Bobby was out of the question. She also said that part of the reason Bobby broke off with Marilyn was tremendous pressure from his mother, Rose. She strongly disapproved of Bobby and Jack's behavior. Rose laid down the law to Bobby about Marilyn about a week before he broke things off with her."

"Yes ,we did have the place wired. Yes, I did hear a tape of Jack Kennedy fucking Monroe."

Peter and Pat watched Marilyn's disintegration with alarm. She was taking more and more pills to sleep at night, drinking champagne earlier and earlier in the day to elevate her mood. Her fears of aging, of losing her appeal, had been so badly exacerbated by her firing from *Something's Got to Give* and by her rejection by the Kennedy brothers that she was now chronically depressed. Increasingly, she was "letting herself go." Bill Asher, the director, remembered playing volleyball at Peter's once when "Marilyn came out of the house, and it was so sad. She was wearing slacks, and she had a slit in the back of her pants. She had lost all of her sense of respect for herself. By then she was unkempt and dirty and wobbly on her legs."

In the hope that a change of scenery might do Marilyn some good, Peter and Pat took her in late July to the Cal-Neva Lodge in Lake Tahoe, a casino resort allegedly co-owned by Frank Sinatra and Sam Giancana. It was a disastrous weekend during which, according to restaurateur Mike Romanoff's wife, Gloria, "they were all drinking a great deal." Marilyn told Gloria that she had become so immune to the effects of barbiturates that they no longer worked for her except in large doses. "So she'd begin about nine in the evening, and build up that lethal combination of booze and pills."

Employees of the Cal-Neva Lodge recall a depressed, withdrawn Marilyn Monroe, so afraid of being alone that she left her telephone line open to the casino switchboard when she went to bed. It was this open line that saved her life on Saturday night. The operator heard labored breathing and alerted Peter and Pat, who rushed to her room and found Marilyn on the floor, drugged, barely conscious, apparently having fallen out of bed. They revived her with coffee and long walks around the room.

On the trip back to Los Angeles, Marilyn and Peter were drunk. (Pat had flown from Tahoe to Hyannis Port for a visit with her family.) After landing at the L.A. airport, a staggering, barefoot Marilyn went home in a limousine, and the pilot, Frank Lieto, and two other crew members gave Peter a ride to Santa Monica. A few blocks from his beach house, Peter insisted that Lieto stop the car. Peter hopped out and stepped into a phone booth, where he spoke to someone for half an hour while the others waited for him with growing impatience and wondered why he couldn't have made the call from his own telephone, minutes away.

The reason, of course, was that his phone was bugged, and what Peter said during the thirty-minute conversation was of a very sensitive nature. He was warning Robert Kennedy that Marilyn had begun making threats—threats that, given her highly unstable condition, could not be taken lightly.

The most disturbing of them was Marilyn's ultimatum that unless she heard from Bobby, unless he explained to her face-to-face why their relationship was over, she would hold a press conference and reveal their affair. She hinted to Peter that she had tapes of herself and Bobby, tapes she would play to prove what would be a startling revelation.

Marilyn's near-daily sessions with her psychiatrist were not enough to ease her pain, and she constantly telephoned friends, indiscreetly telling them about her travails with Bobby. From phone booths, she called Arthur James to complain that Bobby had "cut me off cold." On August 3, she called her old friend from the time she was married to Arthur Miller, poet Norman Rosten. He thought her voice sounded frenetic and unnatural. She called Anne Karger, the mother of an early lover, to whom she sounded depressed. She told Karger she was going to marry Bobby Kennedy. Incredulous, Karger pointed out the absurdity of that notion. Marilyn quietly replied, "If he loves me, he will."

Peter tried his best to keep Marilyn calm and rational. On Thursday, August 2, she attended a gathering at his house. Peter's friend Dick Livingston remembered her vividly that night. "She came in carrying her own bottle of Dom Perignon champagne. She

drank it over little ice cubes from Peter's ice-cube-maker. She had on the damndest outfit—a pair of hiphuggers with a bare midriff that revealed her gallbladder-operation scar and a Mexican serape wrapped around her neck. She was absolutely white, the color of alabaster."

When Livingston said to her, "My God, Marilyn, you ought to get some sun," she looked at him and whispered, "I know. What I need is a tan...and a man."

The next night, Friday, August 3, Peter took Marilyn to a local restaurant to dine with him and Pat Newcomb, one of Monroe's press agents and an intimate friend. Once again Marilyn became badly intoxicated, so much so that she failed to recognize Billy Travilla when he came over to the table to say hello. Travilla had designed Marilyn's clothes in eight of her biggest hits, and created her most famous outfit, the pleated white dress that swirls up around her in *The Seven Year Itch*. "She looked at me with no recognition at all," Travilla recalled. "Then all of a sudden she said, 'Billy!' I left the table very hurt and upset."

Marilyn returned home that evening drunk and determined to talk to Bobby Kennedy. She had made her last call to the Justice Department on the previous Monday, July 30—a call that lasted eight minutes, according to her phone records. Whether she spoke to Bobby or to his secretary, Angie Novello, is unknown, but she was clearly left unsatisfied. After Bob Slatzer told her that Bobby was due in California at the end of the week, she called Peter to ask where Bobby would be staying. Peter told her to call Pat in Hyannis Port. Pat told her that Bobby had a reservation at the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, along with his wife, Ethel, and four of his children.

The late New York *Daily News* reporter Florabel Muir, according to her former assistant Elizabeth Fancher, attempted after Marilyn's death to re-create her last days. Muir paid an operator at the St. Francis for information and was told that Marilyn called Bobby several times during the day on Friday, August 3, and left messages. As far as the operator knew, the calls were not returned.

Now, in the late-night hours of August 3, while Pat Newcomb slept over in another bedroom, a drunk, angry Marilyn called the St. Francis and left yet another message. Then she took some Nembutal sleeping pills and tried to go to sleep.

She was unsuccessful. As she told Jeanne Carmen early the next morning, she had been disturbed repeatedly throughout the night by a series of anonymous telephone calls. The

caller, a woman, kept repeating the same words: "Leave Bobby alone, you tramp. Leave Bobby alone." The calls didn't stop until 5:30 A.M. "Marilyn said she couldn't tell who it was," Carmen said. "She didn't think it was Ethel—she said she'd recognize Ethel's voice—but she did think it was somebody Ethel had put up to it. She said the voice did sound kind of familiar, but she couldn't place it."

Deeply rattled, Marilyn couldn't get to sleep even after the calls stopped, and by daybreak she was exhausted. She called Jeanne Carmen and suggested she come over with a bag of sleeping pills and drink some wine with her. "We were sleeping-pill buddies," Carmen recalled. But she was busy that day and begged off.

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he murky details of Marilyn Monroe's last hours alive, and of Peter Lawford's involvement in them, have fueled speculation for three decades. Many of the principals are dead, and others have steadfastly refused to speak about these events. In recent years, however, the fog has begun to lift. More and more witnesses have come forward for the first time, and many participants have changed their stories, admitting that the rumors they had denied for years were in fact true.

It is now possible to re-create a plausible scenario, based on eyewitness accounts, of the events that led up to Marilyn's death. She was clearly frantic after her harrowing night of telephone harassment. Eunice Murray's son-in-law, Norman Jeffries, who was doing some renovation work on Marilyn's home, recalled his shock at her appearance that Saturday morning: "She looked sick, desperately sick—not only in the physical sense—and I thought there must be something terribly wrong. She must have taken a lot of dope or something, or maybe she was scared out of her mind. I had never seen her look that way before."

Peter became alarmed after talking either to her or to Pat Newcomb. Marilyn had demanded that Bobby tell her face-to-face that their relationship was over, and Peter realized that the situation was now so volatile that Bobby would have to do just that.

For years Peter would deny that Bobby was even in California that weekend, but contemporary newspaper reports and eyewitnesses prove that he was in San Francisco. Peter's neighbor Ward Wood places Bobby in Los Angeles on Saturday afternoon. Sam Yorty, then the mayor of Los Angeles, recalled, "I do know that Bobby Kennedy was in town that day. He was staying at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. This was all told to me by the police chief, [William] Parker. He was very adamant that Kennedy was seen at the hotel the night of Marilyn's death." L.A.P.D. Chief of Detectives Thad Brown told associates he believed Bobby was in Los Angeles that day, as did former deputy D.A. John Dickey.

And according to both Marilyn's former business partner Milton Greene and Peter's third wife, Deborah Gould, Peter admitted to them that Bobby was in L.A. and that he went to see Marilyn. Frank Neill, a former employee of Twentieth Century Fox, later stated that Bobby arrived by helicopter at a landing pad near the studio's Stage 18, which was often used by the Beverly Hilton Hotel for that purpose. A confidential police source supports this story.

A number of surveillance experts— among them Fred Otash and Bernard Spindel's aide Earl Jaycox—have stated that they listened to some of the tapes made at Monroe's home, including one recorded on the day she died. Their accounts of what is contained on the tape are remarkably similar. A third, anonymous source who listened to Spindel's tape is quoted in *Goddess*. His version, similar to the others, added an element that is especially interesting in light of the new information revealed by Fred Otash and Mickey Song about Marilyn's bugging of herself and Bobby's knowledge of it. "First," the source told Summers, "you could hear Marilyn and Kennedy talking. It was kind of echoey and at a distance.... Their voices grew louder and louder. They were arguing about something that had been promised by Robert Kennedy. Marilyn was demanding an explanation about why Kennedy was not going to marry her. As they argued, the voices got shriller."

Bobby apparently had just learned about Marilyn's own wiretaps and was looking for a recording device or microphone. "He was asking again and again, 'Where is it? Where the fuck is it?' " The tape ended with the sound of a door slamming and then resumed, this time with another voice in addition to Marilyn's and Bobby's. Summers's source didn't recognize the voice, but was told by Spindel that it was Peter Lawford's. "R.F.K. was saying words to the effect, 'We have to know. It's important to the family. We can make any arrangements you want, but we must find it. '

"Apparently, he was still looking for the recording device. Then they apparently came close to where the transmitter was. There was a *clack, clack, clack* on the tape, which Bernie said he thought was hangers being pushed along a rail.... Kennedy was screeching, and Lawford was saying, 'Calm down, calm down... ' Monroe was screaming at them, ordering them out of the house."

Then, according to the source, there were "thumping, bumping noises, then muffled, calming sounds. It sounded as though she was being put on the bed." Two other people confirm the existence of this tape. Michael Morrissey, a Spindel employee who is now a Washington lawyer, listened to a few minutes of the recording and heard a bang or thump, as though someone were falling. And Bernard Spindel's doctor, Henry Kamin, said Spindel told him about the tape, described a "violent incident" on it, and was "very nervous" about having it in his possession.

Bernie Spindel's Monroe tapes were seized during a raid on his home in 1966 by New York District Attorney Frank Hogan's office. Spindel told *Life* reporter John Neary, "Hogan really did Kennedy a favor by pulling the raid. They stole my tapes on Marilyn Monroe and my complete file." Spindel's lawyers sued to recover the seized materials, stating in their suit that among the items they sought to have returned were a "confidential file containing tapes and evidence concerning circumstances surrounding and causes of death of Marilyn Monroe, which strongly suggests that the officially reported circumstances of her death are erroneous." The suit failed, as did a later one by Spindel's widow.

The F.B.I. says that it routinely destroyed its investigative file on Spindel, but at least one document still exists to reveal that a confidential source had informed the F.B.I. of what Spindel's tapes contained. More than half of the document is blacked out, but this remains: "He also said that Senator Bobby Kennedy was present at the time Marilyn Monroe died and ——— wanted to 'get' Bobby Kennedy off his back ——— could do so by listening to the various recordings and evidence ——— concerning Bobby Kennedy's presence there at the time."

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n the decades since Marilyn Monroe's death, there has been so much obfuscation, so much evasion, so many lies told about the circumstances, that many people have come to believe that Robert Kennedy and Peter Lawford were directly involved with her death, that they may even have murdered her to keep her from revealing her involvement with the Kennedy brothers. The confidential source who listened to the Spindel tapes, for instance, believed that when Peter and Bobby left Marilyn's house on Saturday afternoon she was dead.

There was, without question, a coverup, and Peter Lawford was a part of it. But the weight of evidence points only to a cover-up of Marilyn's relationships with the Kennedy brothers, not of her murder. It is virtually certain that Robert Kennedy did not see Marilyn again after his last visit to her house, and that Marilyn was still alive throughout the evening hours of August 4. She spoke on the telephone to a number of people that night, including a studio hairdresser, Sidney Guilaroff, at 9:30; a recent lover, Jose Bolanos, between 9:30 and 10; and Jeanne Carmen at 10.

It is likely that Marilyn was overwhelmed by a crushing depression after Bobby and Peter left her house that afternoon. At 4:30 she urgently telephoned her psychiatrist, Dr. Ralph Greenson, who made an unusual weekend house call and spent two and a half hours with her. He found her, he later told the suicide-prevention team that investigated her death, "depressed and somewhat drugged" and "furious." Circumspectly, Greenson

said only that Marilyn had been involved sexually with "important men in government" and was feeling "rejected by some of the people she had been close to."

Peter had planned a dinner party for Saturday night with Marilyn and a few others, including his close friends Joe and Dolores Naar; George "Bullets" Durgom, an agent friend of his; and Milt Ebbins. Despite the earlier scene with Bobby, Peter still hoped Marilyn would come, and at six o'clock he called Joe Naar and asked him to pick her up on his way over. Around 7:30, just as the Naars were leaving the house, they got another call from Peter. Marilyn wasn't feeling well, he told them, and wouldn't be coming.

Peter didn't tell the Naars, but he was deeply disturbed by a conversation he'd just had with Marilyn. "I could hear the depression moving in on her," he would say later. "Her voice sounded slurred. She seemed to be slipping away. She didn't understand everything I said." Peter told L. A. Police Department investigators in 1975 that he had yelled at her, to give her a "verbal slap in the face," but that she had simply said, "Say good-bye to Pat, say good-bye to Jack, and say good-bye to yourself, because you're a nice guy." Then there was silence, as though Marilyn had not hung up but had just put the receiver down—or dropped it.

too. Every few minutes he would grab Marilyn's arm and say, "Let's go! I've had enough of this!" Marilyn didn't want to leave, and Feldman recalled that she and Joe had words about it.

Marilyn told Slatzer that she and Jack Kennedy didn't "get together" until after her divorce from DiMaggio, early in 1955. She began to spend a good deal of time in New York during this period, and occasionally she and Jack would meet.

A few months after the party at Feldman's, Jack was hospitalized for surgery to alleviate a chronic back problem. Visitors to his room were amused by a color poster of Marilyn Monroe he had taped to the wall, in which she wore blue shorts and stood with her legs spread widely apart. Kennedy had hung the poster upside down.

Kennedy and Monroe continued to rendezvous in New York throughout the 1950s. Whenever a rift developed between Monroe and her then husband, the playwright Arthur Miller, she would drive into Manhattan from their Connecticut farmhouse and stay at her East Fifty-seventh Street apartment. If Jack was in town, she would meet him in his suite at the Carlyle hotel. At the time of the 1960 Democratic convention, which was poised to nominate Kennedy for president, Marilyn was in Los Angeles without Miller, and Kennedy's large contingent of Hollywood supporters made her far less conspicuous in his company than she would otherwise have been. The second night of the convention, Marilyn dined with Jack, Peter, and Kennedy aide Kenneth O'Donnell at Puccini, a Los Angeles restaurant co-owned by Peter and Frank Sinatra.

Before dinner, Marilyn and Jack had apparently been intimate, because Marilyn giggled to Peter that Jack's performance earlier had been "very democratic" and "very penetrating." According to Marilyn's longtime maid, Lena Pepitone, Kennedy was "always telling her dirty jokes, pinching her, and squeezing her. . . . She told me that [he] was always putting his hand on her thigh." This evening at Puccini, apparently, he continued northward, running his hand further under Marilyn's dress. "He hadn't counted on going that far," Marilyn told Lena, laughing. When he discovered she wasn't wearing any panties, "he pulled back and turned red."

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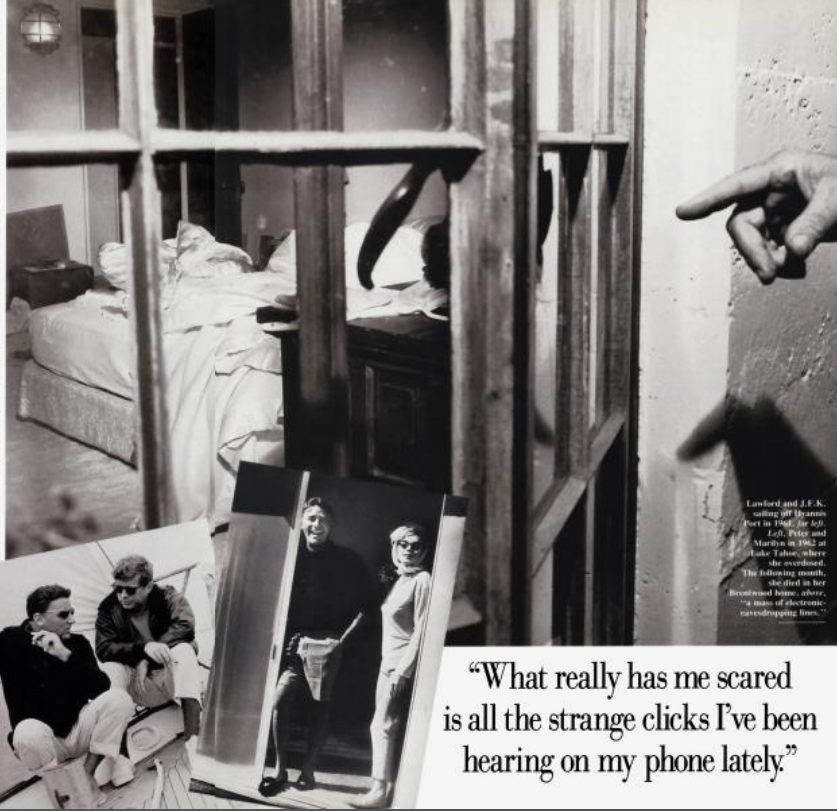
On the morning of Saturday, March 24, 1962, Marilyn emerged from the bedroom of her Spanish-style home on Fifth Helena Drive in the Brentwood section of Los Angeles before nine. Normally, she slept past noon, but this was an important day. "I'm going on a trip," she told her housekeeper-companion, Eunice Murray, who had been recommended by Marilyn's therapist, Dr. Ralph Greenon.

At noon, Peter Lawford arrived to pick her up. "Peter paced back and forth," Mrs. Murray recalled, "while Marilyn put the finishing touches on her attire." Nearly an hour later, she was ready—and wearing a black wig. Peter and the disguised Marilyn drove to Palm Springs to spend the weekend with President Kennedy at Bing Crosby's house. The president was throwing a party Saturday evening to meet some of the Southern California Democratic politicians.

Philip Watson, later the Los Angeles County assessor, was invited to the Crosby compound that night, and he soon discovered that there were in fact two parties—one at poolside and a smaller, more exclusive one in the president's cottage. He wasn't particularly surprised that Monroe was there. He had seen her with the president at another party, at the Beverly Hilton Hotel the previous November. What astonished him now was how little effort either made to disguise their intimacy.

As Watson told Anthony Summers, author of the Monroe biography *Godless*, "The president was wearing a turtle-neck sweater, and she was dressed in a kind of robe thing. She had obviously had a lot to drink. It was obvious they were intimate, that they were staying there together for the night."

A year earlier, living in New York, Marilyn had hit rock bottom. She was depressed over the failure of her marriage to Arthur Miller and the death of her girlhood idol, Clark (Continued on page 186)



Lawford and J.F.K. dining at Puccini, Port in 1962. (See left.) Left, Peter and Marilyn in 1962 at Lake Tahoe, where she overheard. The following month, she fled to her Brentwood home, where "a mass of electronic eavesdropping lines."

"What really has me scared is all the strange clicks I've been hearing on my phone lately."

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"Pat said that part of the reason Bobby broke off with Marilyn was tremendous pressure from Rose."

Concerned, Peter called back fifteen minutes later, but got only a busy signal. Around eight, he called the operator to check on the line. He was told that no one was speaking on the telephone and it must be out of order.

Now Peter was deeply worried. He knew that Marilyn had very good reason to be depressed, even suicidal. Most people would have jumped in their car and sped to her house. But Peter Lawford was not a decisive man. Instead of rushing to Marilyn's aid, he picked up the telephone. The first person he called was Ebbins, who earlier had begged off the dinner party. "Milt, a very strange thing just happened," Peter told him. He then

related Marilyn's series of good-byes and said he wanted to go over and see if she was O.K.

"For God's sake, Peter, you're the president's brother-in-law," Ebbins told him. "You can't go over there. Your wife's out of town. The press will have a field day. Let me get in touch with Mickey Rudin [Marilyn's attorney]. It's better to let someone in authority handle this."

Ebbins telephoned Rudin at about 8:15 and got his answering service. The service located Rudin at a cocktail party, and the lawyer called Ebbins back about 8:30. When Milt explained what had happened, Rudin told him to sit tight while he telephoned Eunice Murray, Marilyn's housekeeper-companion .

Around nine, Rudin called Mrs. Murray at Marilyn's house. According to her, the attorney asked about Marilyn's welfare but did not tell her of Ebbins's inquiry or suggest that there was any reason to suspect trouble. Murray, knowing Marilyn was in bed, and having no reason to suspect all was not well, told Rudin that as far as she knew Marilyn was fine.

In 1962, Rudin was interviewed by police investigators. (He has refused all requests for interviews on this subject since.) According to the interviewer's report, Rudin said that after speaking to Mrs. Murray he believed "Miss Monroe was suffering from one of her despondent moments" and that he had "dismissed the possibility of anything further being wrong."

Rudin called Milt Ebbins back to tell him that there was no cause for worry. "Milt," he said, "you know there isn't anything in the world I wouldn't do for Marilyn. Please don't be concerned about her."

"Well, Lawford's very worried," Ebbins replied.

"You just tell him what I said."

Ebbins called Peter, who told him that he wanted to hear directly from Rudin. When Rudin called Peter, he said, "Believe me, she does this all the time. If there was any

reason to be alarmed, we'd be way ahead of you, because Mrs. Murray would have called us."

Still, Peter told Milt he wanted to go over to Marilyn's. Finally Ebbins said to him, "So go. Get in your car and go. I can't stop you." But Peter didn't go. Instead, he made more phone calls. One of the calls, according to Dr. Robert Litman, one of the members of the suicide-prevention team, was to Washington. Another was to Bill Asher, who gave him the same advice Milt Ebbins had: "I don't know, Peter. You're the president's brother-in-law. We don't want to break into Marilyn's window and find out something happened."

While all this was going on, Peter did an excellent acting job in front of his guests. "I picked up on nothing," Dolores Naar recalled. "Except that during the evening there was a call and Peter said, 'Oh, it's Marilyn again'—like she does this all the time. His attitude didn't change. It was a very light, up evening."

But by the time the Naars left the Lawford house at around eleven, Peter was very drunk. Shortly after the couple arrived home, he telephoned and asked Joe to go by Marilyn's house and check on her. Joe was headed out the door when Peter called again. "He said that he'd spoken to Marilyn's doctor," Dolores Naar recalled, "and he had said that he had given her sedatives because she had been disturbed earlier and she was probably asleep, so don't bother going. He said, 'You'll just wake her up.' " Dolores later felt that the two calls were "calculated to mislead us. Joe and I wondered, Why did he call us the second time and tell us not to go? Maybe because by then he knew that Marilyn was dead."

Or dying. For Marilyn Monroe's press agent—traditionally the first person notified in a Hollywood emergency—did receive an urgent telephone call during a performance at the Hollywood Bowl. Arthur Jacobs and his fiancée, Natalie, were enjoying the Henry Mancini orchestra when they were disturbed about an hour before midnight. According to Natalie Jacobs, now Arthur's widow, the call was most likely from Pat Newcomb, who worked for Jacobs, and the news was that Marilyn Monroe was dead. "Pat Newcomb was the first one at the house," Natalie Jacobs insisted.

In light of the recollections of other witnesses, however, it is more likely that Arthur Jacobs was summoned because Marilyn had fallen into unconsciousness and could not be roused. Such a situation, demanding official medical assistance, would have required under any circumstances that Marilyn's press agent be alerted.

If Pat Newcomb alerted Arthur Jacobs to Marilyn's condition, it is likely that she also alerted Peter. This would explain his abrupt about-face with the Naars. By now, Peter would have been very near panic. If Marilyn Monroe were to die, it would be impossible to keep reporters and photographers from descending on her house and discovering any number of items linking her to the Kennedys—her diary, her personal telephone book, perhaps even a suicide note.

According to a number of sources, the extraordinary late-night events of August 4 finally pushed Peter Lawford into action. As Dolores Naar said, "Peter probably called Jack or Bobby and was told to take care of things—do whatever he had to do. And *do it yourself*—don't involve anybody else under any circumstances."

The first thing Peter did, from all appearances, was help Bobby Kennedy leave Los Angeles. According to L.A. Police Chief William Parker, Kennedy was seen at the Beverly Hilton Hotel on Saturday night, so he did not return to San Francisco immediately after he left Marilyn's house that afternoon. William Reed Woodfield, a photographer who had taken some of the last nude photographs of Marilyn, during the filming of *Something's Got to Give*, embarked on an investigation of Marilyn's death with *New York Herald Tribune* writer Joe Hyams within a few days of the event. Woodfield heard that Bobby Kennedy had been rushed by helicopter from Peter's house to Los Angeles International Airport late Saturday night. On a pretext, Woodfield gained access to the flight logs of the helicopter company Peter used most frequently. There, for the night of August 4, he found a notation that a helicopter had been dispatched to the Lawford house for a trip to the L.A. airport sometime around midnight.

Hyams and Woodfield knew that they had the makings of a sensational story. Hyams called Robert Kennedy's Washington office for comment and was told that the attorney general would be very appreciative if the story were not run. As Woodfield recalled it, "Joe said to them, 'It will eventually come out. Why don't you just say you were at Peter Lawford's?' We weren't saying that Bobby was involved in Marilyn's death. No one would have guessed from the story that Marilyn and Bobby were involved. Still, they refused to comment and asked us not to do that story."

Hyams did file the piece with the *Herald Tribune*, but the paper decided to kill it. The reporting contained, the editors felt, potentially libelous innuendo about the president and his brother.

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While Robert Kennedy was leaving Los Angeles, there was a great deal of activity at Marilyn's house on Fifth Helena Drive. By the time Arthur Jacobs arrived at the scene, an ambulance had been called.

The official version is that when Marilyn was found she was dead in her own bed, the telephone receiver in her hand. According to James Hall, the ambulance driver, when he arrived with his partner, Murray Leib, Marilyn was in the guest bedroom, not her own room, and she was comatose but still alive. "We had to move her," Hall recalled, "because you have to put the patient on a hard surface to do CPR or else the chest just sinks into the bed. We picked her up to lay her on the floor, and we dropped her. I'll never forget it, because she was the only patient I ever dropped. The coroner talked about an unexplained bruise on her hip—that's where we dropped her. Dead bodies don't bruise, so she was definitely alive.

"I applied mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and she was coming around. Pat Newcomb was hysterical. She was trying to climb over us to get to Marilyn while I was working on her. She was screaming, 'She's dead! She's dead!' over and over again, and I wanted to knock the crazy bitch on her butt.

"Just as Marilyn started coming around, this doctor arrived. I believe it was Dr. Greenson. He had a bag with him and he looked legitimate. He said, 'I'm her doctor,' and Pat Newcomb didn't say he wasn't, so I figured everything was O.K., because she never would have allowed anyone near Marilyn who didn't belong there. I yielded to him, and he leaned over her, pushed her breast to one side, and gave her an injection in the crease of her breast.

"This guy was inept. He was very rough. I winced and thought, God that must hurt. Then I heard a pop. It was quite a snap. One minute later she was dead." For years Hall felt that she had been given an adrenaline shot in an attempt to save her and it had failed. But now he doesn't believe it was an accident. He thinks the shot was intended to kill her.

Hall's story has been both partially corroborated and vehemently denied. Walter Schaefer, the owner of the ambulance service, confirmed that an ambulance *was* called to Marilyn's that night. Pat Newcomb said that she did not go to Marilyn's house until four in the morning, when she received a call from Mickey Rudin that Marilyn was dead. But Natalie Jacobs insists Pat Newcomb told her that she was the first on the scene, and Natalie believed it was Pat Newcomb who called the Hollywood Bowl that evening.

Thomas Noguchi, the Los Angeles coroner who performed the autopsy on Marilyn, stated that he examined her body carefully for needle marks, using a magnifying glass, and found nothing. But according to a bill submitted by Marilyn's physician Dr. Hyman Engelberg to the Monroe estate, he gave her an injection the day before she died. Shouldn't Noguchi have noticed an injection mark that recent? Could he have missed another?

Dr. Daniel Greenson, Ralph Greenson's son, vociferously defended his father. "Marilyn was dead when my father arrived at her house. He felt so awful that a patient of his killed herself. It really hurt him terribly, on a personal level. If he saw someone kill her, he certainly would have said something, because he would want to relieve himself [of that burden]. I hate all this speculation, and especially that guy who says he saw my father plunge a needle into Marilyn's heart. That's ridiculous, and I've got to say that it hurts me."

Little of what has been said about what occurred that night has gone unchallenged—including reports of Peter Lawford's activities. That Peter finally did go over to Marilyn's house in an attempt to remove any evidence linking her to the Kennedys, and then to see Fred Otash, has been attested to convincingly by Otash, by an associate of his who prefers to remain anonymous, and by two of Peter's wives. Deborah Gould states emphatically, "Peter did say that he was the first one there that morning. He never admitted that he took a suicide note, but he didn't deny it, either. I still believe to this day that he did."

The caller, a woman, kept repeating, "Leave Bobby alone, you tramp." Peter's last wife, Patricia Seaton Lawford, told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1985 that Peter told her that he had gone to see Fred Otash sometime after Marilyn's body was discovered. "He approached Otash afterward," she said. "I don't know exactly what it was about, but I think it was to make sure that nothing would harm Peter's family."

There can be no question that a massive cover-up began the moment Marilyn Monroe died. It started with a several-hour delay in notifying the police and continued with carefully rehearsed versions of what happened from Eunice Murray and Marilyn's doctors, versions that contain glaring inconsistencies and (it was later learned) evasions. It extended the next morning to the confiscation of Marilyn's telephone records by the F.B.I.

It is certainly plausible that Peter Lawford would do everything possible to protect the Kennedys and that he would have turned again to the person who had helped him with sensitive matters in the past—Fred Otash.

Milton Ebbins and several other of Peter's closest friends, however, firmly believe that Lawford could not have done any such thing. "Peter never did anything by himself," Ebbins said, an observation confirmed by many of his associates. "He would have called me to go over with him, or Joe Naar or [his longtime friend] Peter Sabiston—*nine people* he would have called. And even if he did go over there, why wouldn't he have told me about it afterward? He told me everything. He knew implicitly that I could be trusted."

Another of Ebbins's objections to this scenario concerns time. "I spoke to Peter at his home at 1:30 that night. Bullets Durgom told me he was there until 1:30. At three o'clock I called Peter and there was no answer. He always disconnected the phone when he went to bed. He was very drunk when I spoke to him at 1:30, and he couldn't have driven in that condition. I'm sure he passed out, and that was that."

That Peter did not answer his phone when Ebbins called him at three A.M. is not proof that he was in bed, passed out. He could just as well have been at Marilyn's house or at Fred Otash's. According to Otash, Peter was "half crooked or half doped" when he arrived at his door.

The police wanted to question Peter, but were told that he had left town on a trip and was unavailable. Investigators never followed up with him, although he had gone no farther than Hyannis Port.

Some observers believe that those who maintained their silence were rewarded. Eunice Murray, who began to change her story in 1985, took seven trips to Europe in the years immediately following Marilyn's death, and she was not a wealthy woman. Pat Newcomb was rumored to have gone directly to the Kennedy compound in Hyannis Port and from there on an extended vacation. Truman Capote, a close friend of Monroe's, said, "The Kennedys didn't kill her, the way some people think. She committed suicide. But they did pay one of her best friends to keep quiet about their relationship with her. The friend knew where all the skeletons were, and after Marilyn died, they sent her on a yearlong cruise around the world. For a whole year no one knew where she was."

Peter, for his part, never said on tape anything other than that Marilyn's death was a tragic accident that left him deeply remorseful that he hadn't gone to her aid immediately. He insisted until his death in 1984 that Bobby Kennedy was on the East Coast the night Marilyn died and that the talk of affairs between Marilyn and the Kennedy brothers was nothing but "nonsense."

"Say good-bye to Pat, say good-bye to Jack, and say good-bye to yourself, because you're a nice guy."

He repeatedly turned down large sums of money to tell the story. In 1976, he signed a contract with a New York publisher to write his autobiography for an advance of \$60,000 and was offered another \$100,000 from the *National Enquirer* for serialization rights to the book. An editor worked with Peter in Palm Springs, but after two weeks the man gave up in despair and the publisher canceled the contract: Peter refused to talk about what they really wanted him to talk about—Marilyn and the Kennedys.

In 1984, Peter told the *Los Angeles Times*, "Even if those things were true, I wouldn't talk about them. That's just the way I am. Plus the fact, I have four children. I'm not going to embarrass them. I'm not going to embarrass the rest of the family."

To avoid "embarrassment" at the time of Marilyn's death, Peter proved himself a master of prevarication. There was a great deal of press speculation over the identity of the "mystery caller" to whom Marilyn was supposed to have been speaking when she died, telephone in hand. Peter "revealed" to columnist Earl Wilson that it had been he. "She said she felt sleepy and was going to bed," Peter said. "She picked up the phone herself on the second ring, which leads me to believe that she was fine. She did sound sleepy, but I've talked to her a hundred times, and she sounded no different."

In another interview, a few days later, Peter claimed to know nothing of Marilyn's tortured emotional condition toward the end of her life: "If she had fits of depression, they were behind closed doors. She was not the kind to come moaning around with her troubles. She was always gay—she 'made' our parties when she came."

On Monday, August 6, Pat Lawford flew back to Los Angeles from Hyannis Port to attend Marilyn's funeral. To the Lawfords' shock, they and all of Marilyn's celebrity friends were barred from the services by Joe DiMaggio, who had taken over the funeral preparations. Peter was outraged at his exclusion. "The whole thing was badly handled," he said. "Marilyn had lots of good friends here in town who will miss her terribly and would love to have attended her final rites."

Joe DiMaggio said publicly that the exclusions were necessary to avoid "a circus," but his private comment got closer to the truth about the snub: "If it wasn't for her so-called friends, Marilyn would still be alive today." It was a barb that hit home for Peter, as did another, from Dr. Ralph Greenson, when he was asked who—or what—bore responsibility for Marilyn Monroe's death: "There's enough blame for everyone to share."

Peter spent the rest of his life haunted by the knowledge that a large portion of that blame was his. He had brought Marilyn into the sexually charged, politically dangerous vortex of the Kennedys, a world with which she was emotionally unable to cope. He had watched ineffectually as she repeatedly courted death with drugs and alcohol. He had been instrumental in creating the situation that would finally send her over the edge. And after she called out for help, he vacillated for hours as her life slowly slipped away.

For years afterward, Peter would break into tears whenever the subject of Marilyn's death was raised. "I blame myself for the fact that she is dead," he told journalist Malcolm Boyes in 1982. In his 1984 interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, he said, "To this day I've lived with this. I should have got in my car and gone straight to her house. I didn't do it." At that point in the interview, he broke down and cried.

The most vivid example of just how much Peter was haunted by Marilyn's death occurred about a year after the event. In Judy Garland's Los Angeles house, Scottie Singer, her young secretary-companion, was watching television; Judy was in her bedroom. Suddenly Singer heard frantic pounding at the front door. She jumped up to open it, and Peter rushed in. "Where's Judy?" he shouted. "What's happened to her?"

"Peter, what are you talking about?"

"I've gotta get to her!" He pushed past the startled young woman and ran down the hallway. Frightened now, Singer stayed right behind Peter. He swung open Judy's bedroom door and found her in a deep sleep, the telephone receiver still in her hand. He looked at her and his face went chalk white. "Is she breathing?" They listened in deathly silence, and in a few moments Singer said, "Yes, Peter, she's breathing normally."

Singer told Peter to come back into the living room with her, sit down, and have a drink. After about five minutes he had calmed down enough to explain himself to her.

"Peter told me that he was talking to Judy on the phone," Singer recalled, "and she had taken some sleeping pills. She fell asleep in the middle of the conversation and Peter just freaked. Can you imagine what a horrible ride that was for him, driving clear the hell out to Judy's house, terrified that she might have died—just like Marilyn?"