

SUITE SURRENDER
by Michael McKeever

(We are in the Presidential Suite of the Palm Beach Royale Hotel & Spa. This is one of those old, classic Mizneresque rooms that they just don't make anymore. High vaulted ceilings and hardwood floors. On the upstage wall are large double doors leading to the hall and the rest of the hotel. Just Stage Left of these doors is a small closet. Past the closet is another door leading to one of the suite's two bedrooms. Stage Right of the hall door is a set of French doors leading out to a balcony overlooking the pool and beaches ten stories below. Past the French doors is yet another door. This is the suite's second bedroom. A sofa, a bar and some occasional chairs and tables are placed tastefully about the room. Prominent in the room is a baby grand piano.)

(This is a room that exudes breeding and wealth. Not cheeky nouveau riche wealth...but old-world, formal wealth. Palm Beach wealth.)

(It is late afternoon, May, 1942.)

(After a moment we hear the rattle of a key in the hall door lock. It opens and two bellhops, FRANCIS and OTIS, enter the room. They wear the classic bellhop uniforms of the period. Between them, they carry four dozen long stem white roses.)

OTIS. So where do we put all these?

FRANCIS. Dunlap didn't say. He just said to bring them up here.

OTIS. So where do we put 'em?

FRANCIS. Around, I guess.

(They place the flowers around the room.)

OTIS. I haven't seen this many flowers since my grandfather's wake.

FRANCIS. Dunlap says she insists on having white roses everywhere she stays.

OTIS. I guess when you're as big a star as she is, you can afford to do such things.

FRANCIS. I heard she once threw a bellhop off a fifth floor balcony of the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco.

OTIS. No!

FRANCIS. Because he accidentally brought her red ones.

OTIS. Noo!

FRANCIS. Really.

OTIS. *Nooooo!*

FRANCIS. That's what I heard.

OTIS. Well, you're wrong.

FRANCIS. Okay.

OTIS. You are. You're wrong.

FRANCIS. I'm just telling you what I heard.

OTIS. She couldn't have. She's a very nice lady. I saw her at the Paramount with my cousin Lester. It was a triple bill with Bing Crosby and Frankie Lane. She wore a pink dress and waved right at me.

FRANCIS. And that makes her a nice lady?

OTIS. She sang God Bless America, and everybody cried.

FRANCIS. *(Ignoring him:)* Hey look, they fixed the piano.

(FRANCIS moves to the baby grand.)

OTIS. I've never actually seen a celebrity up close before. I mean, one time last December I saw the back of Douglas Fairbanks' head walking through the lobby, but I don't think that really counts. You know? And a few years back, I valet parked Tallulah Bankhead's Packard. But I think that counts even less.

(FRANCIS sits and plays a few chords.)

FRANCIS. No, it's a new one. I guess the old one was so smashed up, it was beyond repair.

(He plays a bit of a song.)

FRANCIS. It's a beaut. Listen to that.

OTIS. *Hey, that's right!* You used to be in the show business.

FRANCIS. *(Stops playing.)* Where did you get an idea like that?

OTIS. You told me.

FRANCIS. I what?

OTIS. You told me.

FRANCIS. No I didn't.

OTIS. Yes you did. That night we all went out to Marty's Pub. You drank all that scotch and told me how you used to play the piano for some girl.

FRANCIS. I did no such thing.

OTIS. In some cabaret in Los Angeles.

FRANCIS. Otis—

OTIS. She had this funny name.

FRANCIS. Otis—

OTIS. Mooshie. Or Meeshie.

FRANCIS. Otis—

OTIS. Something with an M.

FRANCIS. *Otis!* You're wrong. I was never in show business. There was no girl. There was no—

OTIS. *Myrtle!* I think you said her name was Myrtle. (*Beat.* FRANCIS glares at him.) Maybe it wasn't an M.

FRANCIS. I'm gonna have a smoke.

(He moves to the French doors, opens them, steps out onto the balcony and lights a cigarette.)

OTIS. (*To himself:*) Maybe it was a P name. Polly. Pamela. Petunia. (*Beat.*) No, I'm sure it was an M.

FRANCIS. (*Indicating the pool ten stories below:*) Speaking of girls, come check out the cutie in the blue swimsuit by the pool.

OTIS. (*Moving onto the balcony:*) We shouldn't be goofing around up here. They're going to be looking for us downstairs.

FRANCIS. You worry too much Otis.

OTIS. I do not.

(FRANCIS shoots him a look.)

OTIS. *I don't!*

(Beat. He looks over the balcony.)

OTIS. Did she really throw a bellhop off a fifth story balcony?

(BERNARD S. DUNLAP enters the suite. A dapper man in his 50s, he is the General Manager of the Palm Beach Royale. He is beautifully dressed and has all the attitude of someone of his position. Yet, somewhere under the calm surface of his polished demeanor and perfectly pressed suit, is a hysteric screaming to come out.)

(Upon hearing DUNLAP enter, FRANCIS and OTIS immediately step back in from the balcony.)

OTIS. Hi Mr. Dunlap.