

Beautiful Mess

John Herrick

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Beautiful Mess is an ode to a bygone Hollywood era.

John Herrick's *Beautiful Mess* explores the life of an aging Hollywood actor whose life changes when he discovers an important script.

Del Corwyn used to be somebody. Once, he was a studio gopher, assisting the glamorous Marilyn Monroe on set; then, he was an A-list Hollywood actor with an Oscar nomination.

Now in his seventies, Del may still have luck with the ladies, but he is struggling in uncertain economic times. Forced to sell his house, Del comes across an envelope containing a screenplay written by Marilyn herself. The script could save Del, but it could also end up costing him much more than he bargained for.

Beautiful Mess is an ode to a bygone Hollywood era and a celebration of harsh, but sometimes silly, Los Angeles. This compelling story explores the absurdity of stardom and celebrity, which is brought to life through clever description and engaging action.

Compelling characters—especially when it comes to real-life personalities—are the novel's strongest attribute. Marilyn is luminous on the page, respectfully brought to life with gestures, looks, and intonations that only someone who has carefully watched her movies can portray. Herrick touches on some of the controversies around her too, but provides her with a depth that is rarely acknowledged in her public persona.

Other characters are just as realistically drawn. Herrick captures Del differently at the various stages of his life: as a star-struck teenager, as a rising actor, and through his twilight years. This gives the character a rich range of emotion. A starlet, Nora, is drawn to be like Marilyn, with her giggles and sexualized femininity.

Beautiful Mess is an engaging work of fiction, a compelling and delicious "what if" about one of the most celebrated and tragic figures in Hollywood history. It shows that celebrity may fade, but true stars never stop shining.

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