Monday, September 23, 1968.

To truly grasp its peculiar nuances, a person would have had to have been present the moment Jackie Kennedy introduced her mother to Aristotle Onassis for what she thought was the first time. Jamie Auchincloss was standing right there, though, and says that Janet and Ari gave no indication whatsoever that they’d ever before met. Apparently, they were each other’s equal when it came to remaining calm during awkward social situations. In other words, they pulled it off. Other than his knowledge of the time Janet walked in on Onassis in London [to confront Onassis about his affair with Lee], Jamie actually wasn’t sure there’d even been a previous meeting. He also wasn’t sure that there hadn’t been one. “In my family, we kept a lot close to the vest,” he would say. “Everyone was polite and welcoming when Aristotle Onassis showed up at our front door at Hammersmith Farm, as was our custom.”

As soon as she arrived at Hammersmith, Jackie realized that John Jr. had come down with the measles and would have to be quarantined. “When she wasn’t seeing to her son, Jackie was trying to encourage conversation between Mummy and Aristotle,” Jamie recalled. “He’s so fascinating, Mummy,’ she kept saying. ‘You really should try to get to know him. After all, he won over the Kennedys when I took him to meet them. Rose loved him!’ she said. [Jackie had taken Onassis to the Kennedy compound on July 28 to introduce him to that side of her family on the occasion of her thirty-ninth birthday.] Mummy was surprised to hear this and, given what she knew about the Kennedys’ view of Onassis, didn’t quite believe it. True or not, she would not be so easily swayed.”
Janet had two issues with Onassis. First of all, he had coaxed one daughter [Lee] into an extramarital affair. Now he was, apparently, trading her in for the other daughter. No matter how wealthy he was, Janet would never approve of any arrangement that would pit Lee against Jackie.

After meeting with Onassis in New York, [Janet] actually thought they’d reached some sort of understanding, at least where Lee was concerned. Apparently, this was not the case. More than anything, she now needed another private meeting with him to clarify things. She would get it on Wednesday afternoon, after Ari and Jackie returned from a day at Bailey’s Beach.

That morning, Onassis cut quite a figure in his tight little swim trunks. Eileen Slocum, sitting in her own cabana, was captivated—and not in a good way. “He was the strangest sight,” she recalled. “He had long, long arms, with short legs and a chest covered with dark hair.” She says she thought to herself, “He resembles a frog.”

Apparently, according to accounts of Janet’s talk with Ari from numerous sources, Ari told Janet that things had taken a dramatic and unexpected turn since their previous meeting at the Pierre Hotel. Because of RFK’s murder, he said, he now felt a responsibility to Jackie. She needed him more than Lee, he explained. She was worried about her children, he said, and he could take care of them all. His heart had gone out to Jackie, he told Janet, and he wanted to protect her and the kids. In fact, he now felt it was his “duty” to do just that.

“Just as you took care of my Lee?” Janet asked. “Has Lee ever complained to you about me?” Ari wondered. No, Janet had to admit that Lee had never found fault with him. Then again, Lee hardly ever mentioned him to her. “Then I would say that I have taken care of
your Lee,” he concluded.

Janet said she was certain Lee would never be able to accept Onassis being with Jackie, and that this surprising new relationship was sure to cause problems in the family. Janet was worried about her grandchildren, too, but she just felt there had to be some other way to protect them. She was as clear and as direct about it as possible: “Here’s what’s going to happen, Mr. Onassis,” she finally told him, according to all accounts. “You will stay away from both of my daughters. We all have to heal after what’s happened to Jack and Bobby, and we can’t do that with your interference.”

The meeting ended with Ari telling Janet that her daughters were grown women and that “they would make their own decisions,” said one source. “It wasn’t just up to him, anyway, he said. Jackie had a mind of her own and, apparently, she wanted to be with him. It would be up to her to work it out with Lee, he said, not him. None of this sat well with Janet. But what could she do? She stated her case. He stated his case. In the end, they reached a sort of impasse. It wasn’t as if they had weeks to work things out. He was leaving in a couple of days! Before the meeting ended, she asked him point-blank, ‘Do you love Jackie?’ He said, ‘Yes. Very much.’ So what could she say?”