



The Homosexualist
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The Homosexualist

THE HOMOSEXUALIST
Or, The Yellow Chair
A Closet Play on Plagiarism in Two Acts
(from the forthcoming anthology, *Triptych*)

NOTE

This play is, in some respects, a forgery. The first act, although much altered from its source, is very greatly drawn, in both substance and style (sometimes word for word, for long stretches at a time) from a case study described by Dr. Ludwig Eidelberg, M.D. in Take Off Your Mask, (an edition that might have been described more recently as “pop psychology”), first published in 1948 by International Universities Press (possibly a reprint or revision from a German edition), as read by this author in the text The Homosexuals: As Seen by Themselves and Thirty Authorities, published in 1954 by The Citadel Press, New York and reprinted in paperback up until at least 1966; there it was included as the chapter titled “Better Than the Love of Women.” The playwright believes he has transformed the original enough, in essence and in intent, to make of this work a new and original and very different thing, not exactly a parody but not entirely outside that term’s bounds; whether or not Dr. Eidelberg’s estate, if there is one, would care to disagree is not our concern here. (It is also not in the playwright’s interest to investigate the real Dr. Eidelberg and his research beyond this excerpt. If you are able to locate a copy of the original article, you are encouraged to make the comparison.) Being that the original case study may have been written in German or Polish (Dr. Eidelberg’s native language; he was schooled in Vienna) and translated into English by another person also puts this work at an even further remove from its source, some sixty years in the past. Nevertheless, without Dr. Eidelberg’s words and keen ability to make of a psychiatric case study a particularly affecting piece of literature, this complete work would never exist. Here is a collaboration with a ghost.

The playwright was drawn to this material not so much for its content as for its approach; Dr. Eidelberg appears to take as much pleasure in the drama of his confrontation with the “composite” patient as a novelist might; immediately upon reading it one can see its potential as a theater piece, though of course what already existed on the page would only be half the story. The original article, it seems to the playwright, is as much fiction as it is science, and like most science fiction it is indebted to the prejudices and misunderstood ‘truths’ of its day. Dr.

Eidelberg never uses the term "homosexualist," but that is one which of course would have been known to him, in the German equivalent, at least. Certainly, considering the era in which he thrived, the good doctor (from this evidence) might be considered tolerant, if not apologetic, in his attitudes and practices.

Names, locales, and other specifics have been changed from the original material, though it is important to note that, being a composite, those specifics had already been changed by Dr. Eidelberg or his editors, and this patient never really existed any more than a character in a novel truly might.

The second act, though of course dependent upon Dr. Eidelberg's teasingly inconclusive study, is entirely drawn from the imagination of the playwright, and for that the playwright is entirely to blame. It is suggested that those who manage to rustle up a copy of Dr. Eidelberg's report would find it perhaps a more entertaining enterprise to adapt the scene themselves, complete with a happy or unhappy ending of their own devising.

Epigraph: The Homosexual in the Classical Orchestra, Part I

*"The homosexual impulse might be compared to the bassoon in an orchestra; sometimes it plays solo parts; whenever it speaks at all, it gives distinctive coloring to the music; but often it is quite silent; the driving power, the player's breath, is not so significant to us as is the quality imparted to the concert. Let us suggest then... that homosexuality may be regarded as a pulsing, fluctuating coloring of an individual's way of living his life, and assert that its expressions in *habitus*, in personality and character, in genitility, in conflict and in psychosis, constitute an exceedingly challenging province in the field of psychiatric study."*

George S. Sprague, M.D., "Varieties of Homosexual Manifestation," 1954

CHARACTERS:

DR. GREENE: A respected psychoanalyst, trained in America and Europe. What is often called a "bland, unassuming" man, around fifty years old. He has a graying moustache and wears a bland, unassuming gray suit; nondescript club tie; and round tortoiseshell glasses.

CYRIL WYNDHAM: A more than promising young painter. He is a somewhat delicate, fairly striking young man, just turned thirty. He probably has lank if brilliant blond hair a little longer than most of his contemporaries, and wears a dark green double-breasted suit, a cerise

shirt, a green bow tie, cerise socks, smart shoes, and a bright yellow pocket handkerchief. He walks and moves and speaks languidly, if a bit haltingly, as if aware he is always being scrutinized—which he often is. Anyone not wholly innocent among his onlookers of the time would recognize at once that, while not exactly a “flaming queen,” he is a decidedly non-latent *homosexual*.

SCENE:

Dr. Greene’s office, on an upper floor of one of the less assertive Art Deco skyscrapers in downtown Chicago. The office is furnished in sleek early mid-century Moderne, all cherry-wood and chrome, though there is something not exactly stylish about it, even a bit old-fashioned for the mid-twentieth century. Someone, possibly the doctor’s wife or secretary, has made small but bold additions to these somewhat cold furnishings: a bright bouquet of long-stemmed flowers, a potted aspidistra or two, and several popular impressionist works on the fashionably beige walls. Outside the tall arched window on far stage right we see mostly clear blue sky and the tops of some of the taller skyscrapers in the Loop. A heavy transomed office door, far stage left, remains closed until the end of the act. There are of course the requisite African masks scattered about and a Venus of Willendorf figurine on the doctor’s broad shining cherry-wood desk, acting as a paperweight. Also on the desk are a large silver cigarette case and matching matchbox, a large art-glass boomerang-shaped ashtray, several thick medical texts in a pyramid, a discreet Bakelite clock, a chrome reading lamp, and various stationery items of the period. On the floor before the desk is some sort of large primitive-print rug, probably Mesoamerican. Most importantly there is a sleek black leather couch with one arm but no head-pillow, just a bit worn, a few feet from the desk, but at a safe remove from it and nearly perpendicular to the wall. Next to this couch, considerably more intimate with the desk, is a decidedly uncomfortable-looking chrome and black leather chair. A cherry-wood lamp hovers over this. The time is early afternoon, May, 1950.

THE PLAY:

Act One—A Case Study

As the lights go up we see CYRIL WYNDHAM languidly pacing the polished floor of the office, one hand casually thrust into his elegantly tailored trousers, perusing the room’s décor and possessions, while DR.

GREENE, wiping and adjusting his glasses, looks on somewhat amused from his Eames's chair behind the desk. Cyril stops at the couch before he reaches the chair, looking at the good quality Van Gogh reproduction between the chair and the couch on the wall. He strikes a pose with one hand on his hip and the other touching his chin, almost affectedly but quite naturally for his character.

CYRIL WYNDHAM: I see you—or your decorator—has adequate taste in paintings. This Van Gogh with the yellow chair—one of his ones from Arles—not bad! (*Nearly muttering:*) And so predictable. (*He glances one last time about him at the room. Suddenly he seems to relax, walks to the chair beside the couch, sits down with great precision, and manifests a gold cigarette case from one of his many pockets.*) Smoke?

Dr. Greene leans far over to take a cigarette but doesn't light it. Cyril studies him intently for a moment, with the eyes of a painter, then leans back in his chair, taking a cigarette, as well, but also not yet lighting it.

CYRIL (*continuing, as if he has already been talking for hours, though he hasn't*): Perhaps I'm still not sure, Doctor Greene, that you're the man I'm looking for! (*Dr. Greene looks at him with predictably raised eyebrows.*) I know how very busy all you doctors are, and I apologize once more for taking up your time this way, so *impromptu* of me. (*He pronounces impromptu and other words and phrases which might be taken for foreign very precisely and with the original accents.*) I'm afraid that I'm *not* the kind of patient to whom you're accustomed. I have, of course, many friends who have been or are being analyzed, and I've done my required reading about Freud. I've seen *Lady in the Dark* at the Lyric, and I know what you consider *normal* and *abnormal* and how you try to 'help' those who've lost their bearings to... . what is it, to 'return to their rightful place in the community.' (*He says this last bit with a trace of disgust, as if quoting something, which he is.*) However, the trouble with me is that I'm not one seeking a community—and I don't ever intend to! I *like* being apart, different... .

DR. GREENE: I see. (*Pats his desk and nods, trying to get Cyril to stop whining and fidgeting.*) Mr. Wyndham, you may—

CYRIL: Oh, why be formal in a joint like this? Cyril, please. (*Gestures coquettishly with his unlit cigarette as if just meeting someone at a bar.*) And I can call you—

DR. GREENE (*like a man avoiding a live trap*): Dr. Greene, if you don't mind. Let's stay on professional terms, please. (*A pause as both men appraise each other briefly, wondering if anyone has won this initial spar.*) Mr.

Wyndham— (*Cyril gives him a look*) —or if you insist, *Cyril*—there must be *something* about yourself which you don't like, or you wouldn't be here and wouldn't have wanted to see me in such a hurry.

CYRIL (*settling as deeply as he can into the rather unforgiving chair*): Oh, certainly, certainly! There is *something* I dislike, although you'll probably consider it a trifling detail—of secondary importance. (*He toys with a gold identification bracelet on his left wrist, which he almost waves in the doctor's face, as if taunting him.*)

DR. GREENE (*unphased*): Something connected, I presume, with your sex life?

CYRIL (*looking annoyed*): *Really*. Why use such a vulgar phrase? Why not call it my 'love life'? Or do you medical men consider love passé—a romantic dream of youth? (*Once again as if quoting or paraphrasing:*) 'Every male adolescent goes through a certain period of homoerotic longings, most often expressed only in what is vulgarly called *wet dreams*.' *Ugh*. Do great doctors of psychiatry recognize only glands and their hideous discharges?

DR. GREENE (*smiling*): I hate to disappoint you by saying that the discovery of glands and their functions doesn't change romance into a hackneyed matter. At least, not for me or my colleagues. However, I feel that you're not concerned with *my* views about love, but would prefer—shall we say?—some help for *your* glands.

CYRIL (*sitting up, alert*): You've hit the bull's eye, Dr., uh, *Greene*, if you insist. My love life is *perfect*. I love, and am loved, as few men are. However, there is a *certain* element of frustration—or shall I say, disappointment—in the *execution* of my love, which, because it passes so *ferociously*, interferes with my happiness. If you could help me eliminate this tiny *weakness* of mine, I'd be very grateful. (*Throughout this speech he has been lighting his cigarette with a match he has taken from the box on the desk, quite at ease, and now inhales and exhales a single puff, watching the smoke rise to the ceiling, toward Van Gogh's simple yellow chair. In the meantime Dr. Greene at last lights his own cigarette.*)

DR. GREENE: If you want my help, you'll have to be more precise. (*Draws in on his cigarette slowly, contemplatively, so as not to miss a word.*)

CYRIL: I know that I'll have to, but it's *rather* painful and humiliating. Still, there's no reason to beat around the burning bush. After all, you *are* some sort of doctor, aren't you? So I might as well get it over with... . (*Stops smoking and looks over the top of the desk, as if searching for something among the many items.*) Doctor, aren't you going to take notes? I thought *all* psychiatrists or psychologists took notes. They do in the movies.

DR. GREENE: That's *psychoanalyst*. Never mind, they're often confused. And it's just not my method to take notes during a casual interview like this. Don't worry, the pens and pads and ink-blots will all come out in due time—if I see you again, that is.

CYRIL: A bit like flinging oils about without making any preliminary sketches, wouldn't you say? Or is that a bad analogy? (*Receiving no response other than a noncommittal nod, he clears his throat, steadies his cigarette, and begins what sounds a bit like a prepared speech.*) I assume that my name was familiar to you before your secretary got my call the other day. Chicago is *so* provincial, especially its art world, when one hardly has to be around for more than a couple of seasons to become virtually 'legendary.' As you probably already know, I was born here—Evanston, actually—and that was, uh, *thirty* years ago last month—April 1, 1920. So like you I am now *dreadfully* old. But, maybe you realize this, I'm still a fairly well-known painter for an ingénue. Perhaps you've seen some of my little daubs? (*Dr. Greene nods, again noncommittally.*) My latest masterwork on exhibit at the Adler Gallery just a block or two from here has *already* been featured in the *Daily*: it shows a very young and very pretty boy looking into a mirror, from which he sees his image emerging somewhat changed and somewhat more *girlish*... . (*Looking the doctor directly into his eyes, leaning across the desk.*) Well, this pretty boy is *real* and he loves *me*.

DR. GREENE: Perhaps you ought to tell me something more about him. (*Leans back with his cigarette, prepared for anything.*)

CYRIL (*shrugs*): He himself is of as little importance as the original yellow chair that Van Gogh used as his model. (*Gestures with his cigarette toward the picture on the wall behind him.*) For your future records, in which, I presume, figures will be more important than ideas, you may note that he is nineteen, looks *all* of twenty, and acts like a pouting six-year-old. This pretty young boy loves me, but my ability to express my own love is... *impaired*. I'd like to eradicate this ridiculous *weakness*, that's all... . I know that you headshrinkers don't consider my love *as* love, but as a *perversion*—and that you'll probably advise me to do something about it. It's ridiculous, of course, to treat my love, just because its object happens to be a boy instead of a girl, as if it were an illness! What's so marvelous about *girls*? (*He shudders exaggeratedly and adjusts the wings of his bowtie.*) Why should an intelligent man waste his time, his ideas, and his love on those decorative, feeble-minded creatures? How can a female be expected to understand a man, to know what men really like, since they're so *different*, so alien? And how can a man love creatures so

dissimilar or expect to be loved by them? So what's wrong with my being happy in my own way? (*He sits back, satisfied, then jumps with pain—he has singed his well-manicured fingertip on his glowing cigarette butt as he was putting it out in the ashtray on the doctor's desk.*)

DR. GREENE (*almost as if smiling at Cyril's fleeting pain.*): But are you happy?

CYRIL: Certainly! (*Trying to talk while sucking on the tip of his burnt finger.*) I am as happy, and as *unhappy*, as the usual human being... . If Montgomery—oh, that's his name—if Montgomery's with me, I'm happy. Without him, I suffer. *Voila!* But I'm *not* unhappy simply because I'm in love with a boy instead of a *girl!*

DR. GREENE: Why do you assume that I'm against your choice of a love object?

CYRIL (*shrugs again*): Oh, I've read some of those analytical articles, the racy ones, and I know that you would call me an outright *pervert*.

DR. GREENE: Never mind the name. That's purely a problem in terminology. As a doctor, I'm only interested in helping the patient.

CYRIL: Does that mean that you can cure me of my sexual *weakness* without interfering with my ideas about life and love?

DR. GREENE: It means that I would try to help you to the extent you *want* to be helped. But I can't guarantee that analysis won't interfere with all your other problems.

CYRIL (*Gets up from his chair and paces the room once more, then pauses before another picture on the wall and strikes another pose*): That sounds tricky to me, doc!

DR. GREENE: It's really an honest warning. When we start an analysis, we can't predict how much the patient will decide to change.

CYRIL (*returns to his chair but doesn't yet sit down*): But I *know* what it is I want to change. I'm sure nothing you could tell me, nothing you could discover in my tormented, terribly symbolic dreams with all your modern medicine, would influence me in any other way.

DR. GREENE (*lowering his glasses*): Oh?

CYRIL: I know that I may be *forced* to change my mind against my will. That's what *you're* hoping, too. I know that, in analysis, everyone becomes dependent upon the analyst. I'm not entirely stupid—I've read enough books. At least the dirty parts.

DR. GREENE: Psychoanalysis is still a young science, but those books emphasize that modern science can only—

CYRIL (*saluting*): Hurrah, God bless you, science! What could be more wondrous than science, which has given us the armored bra, the steam-

powered razor, the A-bomb, and rubber baby buggy bumpers? *Science*, which in the past has told us you can judge a born murderer by the bumps on his scalp or the slope of his chin or else by reading résumés in the stars; *science*, which says we're cousin to the baboon—an insult to the baboon; *science*, which wants to take all the beauty and mystery out of life by telling us the moon is simply a big unpolished lump of coal and our hearts have only four chambers instead of room enough for the whole world!

DR. GREENE: No need to criticize further, Mr. Wyndham—I know science's limits well and envy your fancies; I envy you artists and your freedoms, I do, living among sunflowers and bullfights. If I were a painter, I often wonder as I'm hustled through the endless museums of Europe, what would I paint, and how? Forgive me for getting dangerously personal and unprofessional here, but a person such as you could answer me—does one have to be psychotic or an outcast to produce great, lasting art? These are old concerns of poets and painters, I know, but I really do think you have it easier—luxuriating in the attractive *surface* of things, exquisite bodies and lustrous seascapes, or at worst playing dress-up with your fears. (*He raises the top book from the stack, something flimsier than the rest, wanting to make an object-lesson of it but forgetting his point immediately.*) How... . how do I put this? From my very own cadaver in anatomy class to sounding the depths of the clinically insane's nightmares during my visits to the Cook County Hospital, I have seen and heard horrors that periodically make me ask myself if I am either masochist or misanthrope, for that's what the uglier side of science leads one to dwell upon in the wee hours—while one's blessedly ignorant wife snores away. (*A subtle look of revulsion, as if he has seen a spider dangling before him, crosses his face and is instantly erased.*)

CYRIL: See? This is why your science must be overhauled, before we are all madmen. I am a devotée of the new and I'm afraid the shocking, but this scientific culture of ours is too quick to subject us to cruel experiments of the sort they revealed at Nürnberg and too easily places new and improved Greek fire in the hands of bigots and bullies. From the Crusades to this so-called Cold War. Bah, *science*!

DR. GREENE (*lovingly stacking and aligning his books as Cyril speaks, as if to prove their weight and worth, then altering his tone*): This same science which crafted the bright colors on your canvases and allows us to hear the ghosts of Caruso and Galli-Curci as if they were in the room with us, singing to us alone. Trust me, I often see little difference between medicine and art, both as imperfect as ourselves and our nervous systems. We

are born questioning and probably will die with still more questions on our lips, but at least science tries to provide some answers along the way. If the answers are altered over the years, that doesn't mean the effort was futile. (*Pats the top of his pyramid.*) Think of penicillin and think of the growing need for a polio vaccine. Psychology too is the servant of man, doing its humble best to try to ameliorate some of mankind's pain, too much of which is self-inflicted. Maps we've been able to draw so far of the human psyche are still mostly empty, vaster than Antarctica, with only vague territories claimed or staked out. What can we ever *really* know? Yet, as is often said, the beginning of knowledge is to know what we do *not* know. So, please, if you will, allow us to return to the import of your visit.

CYRIL: Such *is* the import. I fear I'm going to be torn apart by your brand of science. I *know*, I *feel* that I can't change myself, even if I wanted to.

DR. GREENE: Then how do you expect *me* to change *you*?

CYRIL: Well, I'm not so terribly naive as to expect you to do it merely by *ordering* me to change. I told you, I've read enough. (*Changing his tact and his expression:*) Hmm... . I remember one case history in particular, about an unfortunate *married* man who merely fantasized about pretty boys, without ever daring to approach a single one. But, as he progressed in his treatment, he actually initiated his first affair with another man. That shows how clever you doctors are! For a while he enjoyed this affair, while he continued to *seek help*. He kept up the analytical treatment, reporting his dreams like the daily headlines, saying what went through his mind, and so forth... . He kept on with his analysis because the doctor was so very kind—and he was confident that nothing would interfere with this new love-life. His wife, of course, suspected nothing. Then the doctor surprised him! First he showed this poor misguided soul that the people he was afraid of represented his *father*—and then the doctor shocked him further by proving that his boyfriend really represented his *mother*! The man who, despite his marriage, thought that he had succeeded in freeing himself from females, was only to find out that the man he loved was not a *real* man at all! (*Once more he paces the room, this time stopping abruptly before the same Van Gogh he had admired at first, looks at it even more intently, then wheels back on the doctor.*) Since reading that case, I've lost my self-confidence. I've begun to doubt... . Can it be that Montgomery, my pretty little curly-headed Monty, isn't a boy, but a *girl*—to me? That, in spite of the anatomical facts which I see and enjoy, it's—well, shall I say 'his soul,' because it's not his mind—which makes

me crazy about him? (*Walks over to confront the doctor on the other side of the desk, firmly placing both palms down on the desk and leaning in.*) Do you know why you love *your* wife? Do you know the real reason why you spend half your life and half your income on that gorgeous, overdressed, stuck-up, excuse me, *bitch* I met outside the elevator? Positively *reeking* of White Shoulders, just the sort of fragrance a jealous husband buys... . No, I hope you don't put *her* through the X-ray—or you may find that she isn't a woman at all, but your father—or your grandfather! (*Turns back to his chair and sits, looking out of the window at nonexistent clouds, satisfaction on his face.*) I'm sure you don't bother about your own tidy unconscious. You couldn't afford to, not at your exorbitant fees—and not with the kind of hats and furs your wife wears! Georges Kaplan of New York, I presume? Balenciaga? (*A long pause, while he searches the doctor's face for any sign of being perturbed.*) What *did* that doctor mean, when he said that his patient's boyfriend represented his mother?

DR. GREENE (*trying not to seem ruffled, controlling any emotion by staring expressionlessly at Cyril*): He meant—I meant, because I know you know that doctor was me, as described in *my* paper, which you must have looked up at the library—that the feeling that man had for his 'friend' was, in part, the emotion he felt for his mother when he was a child.

CYRIL: Now, how was he able to discover *that*?

DR. GREENE (*stroking his moustache*): Good enough, since you've obviously done your research on me, you should be able to answer your own question. It was possible to see what this patient of mine wanted from his friend through his own dreams and associations. The desires expressed in them not only reminded him of the caresses he had received in childhood from his coddling mother, but were actual repetitions of his early experiences. However, there was one important difference. (*Assumes more of the tone of a lecturer now.*) In his relationship with his boyfriend, my patient not only played the role of the infant who is nursed by his mother, but also cast himself in the *part* of his mother, nursing a child—his friend. He not only insisted on being loved as an infant is, but also on the fulfillment of all his wishes at one and the same time.

CYRIL (*nodding enthusiastically, as if watching a play*): Yes, your description—or shall I say, your analysis?—seems correct. I know from my own perverted experience... . But what's *wrong* with my love, as long as it makes me happy?

DR. GREENE: Allow me if you will to quote from an article by an eminent authority that has just been published. (*He flips through the book he had previously removed from the top of the stack, since then open and lying await on his desk—and quickly finds the passage:*) ‘There are no happy homosexuals, and there would not be *even if* society condoned their actions.’ My emphasis. ‘Their problem is internal: Unconsciously they *want* to be disappointed to justify their feelings of being unfairly treated... . A man who unconsciously runs after disappointment cannot be consciously happy.’ It may be that I am unable or unready to entirely agree with that thesis, but in practice I fear I’ve found it to be as true as not. Now, as long as your way *seems* to make you happy, there’s no reason for me to interfere. But the fact that you’re here today shows that it doesn’t. Why *are* you here?

CYRIL: Well, a *normal* man isn’t always happy, either. Disappointments can’t be avoided. You can’t assert that being in love with a woman with her *breasts* and things, instead of a boy, is a guarantee against conflicts, unhappiness, and misery!

DR. GREENE: There are many different kinds of women.

CYRIL (*almost sneering*): But your own wife, you would tell me, is perfect! She loves only you! She has only one wish—to make you and only you and maybe whatever adoring children you might have happy. Ah, *perfection!* I suppose you’ll tell me next she’s every bit as glamorous and as seductive as she was the first day you met her. Doubtless. I suppose you *never* get irritated because this brainless creature is unable to discuss a problem intelligently. I suppose you’ve *never* suffered from the agonies of jealousy, because she is attracted to some feeble-minded, heroically muscled moron, who she’ll desert as soon as a man with more money and fame makes her an offer! (*Noticing that he has become agitated and is no longer really addressing the doctor or talking about the doctor’s problems, he reins himself in. There is an awkward pause as he collects himself.*)

DR. GREENE: So... . your pretty boy is really quite a bad boy, isn’t he?

CYRIL (*looking at his hands, which he has clasped so tightly together in his lap his knuckles are white*): He’s neither good nor bad. He can’t be, because he’s unable to differentiate between right and wrong. He’s a *child*... . He picks and chooses and takes what he likes and uses people and things, and he creates mayhem and destroys idylls, and what’s worse, *he* doesn’t mind, actually encourages me, to do the same... .

DR. GREENE: But *you* do mind, don’t you?

CYRIL (*lifting his hand, to study his gold identification bracelet, meekly*): Naturally I do.

DR. GREENE: I suppose it is difficult for any adult to play the role of an infant.

CYRIL: It's *humiliating*, degrading, demoralizing! Can't you teach me to take it as lightly as Monty does?

DR. GREENE: I'm afraid that I can't. Because I find your reaction to your friend's behavior entirely justified.

CYRIL (*after a sudden pause, forgetting his bracelet*): Then what shall I do?

DR. GREENE: Mmm—perhaps find another friend.

CYRIL (*looking petulant*): But they're *all* like that! You don't know *them*, the call-boys and hustlers and punks, or you wouldn't suggest— After all, I've had some experience with them, with their instability, their fluctuations of affection, their promiscuity, their lies... . But that's somehow precisely *why* they attract me.

DR. GREENE: Exactly. Now, in analysis you may discover that this attraction is based on some sort of misunderstanding, that you stick to this attraction because you're afraid of another, and that, while this fear was justified when you were a child, it's senseless at the present time. As a result, you may decide to act as an adult, to cease repeating your childhood experiences, and to accept the fact that you're no longer an infant. You may even fall in love with a mature woman. You see, that's why I can't guarantee that analysis will affect only your sexual weakness. It may change your whole personality. You may, in the end, become a different man.

CYRIL (*with some agitation*): But what about my *painting*? Will I stop painting when I discover what art means to me—unconsciously? You may be an excellent analyst and an expert in cleaning the sewers of the soul; you may know, exactly to the minute, how long love should last, and how much a man should pay to make it last longer, but—

DR. GREENE: But—

CYRIL (*more softly*): Don't be offended. I really like you, as I like all people who live by their wits. You're not like those crazy Viennese analysts who explain all things by *sex*... I assume that, in spite of being a *psychoanalyst*, you don't share in the materialistic outlook of Freud and don't try to reduce the infinite variations of our thoughts to symbolic representations of our ugly genitals... . Nobody denies the existence of the sex drive, but for God's sake, let's admit that there are additional drives, desires, and tendencies!

DR. GREENE: I don't know why you accuse Freud of being some kind of sex maniac. Even if you haven't bothered to read his books, you must

admit that his standing, as well as the results he achieved, should show that he wasn't interested solely in sexual intercourse!

CYRIL: As I said, I've read enough of the dirty parts, *doc*. Doesn't Herr Freud preach that all neuroses are caused by the lack of sexual intercourse? Isn't psychoanalysis based on the dogma that the human being is impelled by the desire to *fornicate*?

DR. GREENE: If that's the impression you got in school from reading psychoanalytical books or articles, then there may be something wrong with your ability to interpret the nuances. (*Standing to the side of his desk and once again beginning to sound like a lecturer, as if he were facing a classroom.*) First of all, Freud never preached. Psychoanalysis is not a religion. On the basis of facts he collected in treating neurotics, Freud developed a theory in which two instincts were suggested: the sexual and the narcissistic. After more years of work, he changed that theory into one in which he defined the two main instincts as sexual and aggressive. But he never insisted that his theory was the *only* possible approach to the problem of instinctual drives. He even referred to his theory as a sort of 'mythology,' and always stressed the difference between the actual facts he collected and the assumptions he made. The theory of instincts, far from being a psychoanalytic credo, is a sort of, well, filing system for the collection and organization of the material we get from the patients' unconscious. (*Returns to his chair and sits down again with some finality.*)

CYRIL (*apologetically*): You may be right, Dr. Greene. You see, I'm not a scientist. I am an *artist*, and I hope to become a great one. When I read Freud in Psych 101, I wasn't interested in ascertaining whether his texts contained truths, but wanted to obtain a certain *aesthetic* pleasure from them—and I did receive that, to a degree, just as those hacks Dali and Ernst and Magritte do. Many of his ideas appear highly stimulating, while others sound exaggerated. (*Now standing, too, and doing a bit of lecturing himself.*) But, *as an artist*, I know that, in creating new things, we all exaggerate. Without the feeling that what we've produced is the most important thing in the world, we would never disturb the peace of our fellow man. You see, I know that we all prefer to be unperturbed; we all like the status quo. But some of us are forced, at times, to interrupt our monotonous lives. Something penetrates our defenses, explodes in our hearts and our brains, and we have to rise and give testimony to what's happened. We discover new continents, new realms of the imagination; we tame nature and change man's thoughts about himself and his universe! (*Now as if speaking to a vast audience, from a podium, his voice rising almost to a shout.*) Yet they arrest us, jail us, try us, burn us, hang us,

crucify us! We are their scapegoats, their cracked mirrors, their own nightmares. We suffer all the passions of a million Christs. Just because we are *different*, we see things *differently*. But we have no choice (Almost collapsing, finding his chair and sitting, but now much calmer and practically whispering.) You see, you shouldn't compare me to your other run-of-the-mill patients. You would *admire* me too much, and, after all, I'm not here to be admired. I want your help. I want it, that is, on the condition that you won't interfere with my love life or try to destroy my work. You must understand that it would make me miserable to be deprived of my ability to paint and to love, just to be cured of a sexual *weakness*. I'm not the *ordinary* patient. . . . You'll have to treat me in a different way. Compare me with anyone, confuse me with no one. . . .

DR. GREENE (*emitting a low whistle*): Now I'm confused. Am I supposed to compare you with other patients to see how *different* you are, or shall I abstain from comparisons, lest I *admire* you and your talents too much?

CYRIL (*flattered, grinning, gives a mock salute*): *Touché!* Next time, I must not forget my riposte! You *are* as clever as she said you would be. . . . Say, I have a *splendid* idea. . . . Would you like to lunch at The University Club with me some day soon and meet my young Montgomery? He *is* a divinely handsome boy.

DR. GREENE (*briskly, professionally*): I'm sorry. We don't meet our patients socially, and you may become one. You see, it would interfere with your treatment.

CYRIL: Now, really! I must salute you again! In order to help me—that is, if I decide to start my treatment—you're willing to give up an opportunity to meet a rising star such as myself socially and mingle with Chicago's most glittering *artistes!*

DR. GREENE: And how do you know that my refusal is a sacrifice? How do you know that I *would* like to dine with you and your glittering friends, even if you weren't my patient?

CYRIL (*after a shocked pause, as if he has never been denied before, then covering the insulted look on his face with his hands*): Oh, well. . . . (*somewhat louder and clearer*;) Why, this is preposterous! I feel it is very possible that you *don't* like me. That you even despise me. For being—*different*. *Abnormal*. But why?

DR. GREENE (*leans back in his chair, folding his hands*): Why should a lack of interest in dining with you indicate that I despise you?

CYRIL (*hands still over his face, softly again*): I suppose you think people might talk, seeing the three of us together. (*Peers between his fingers*;) Oh,

this *is* terrible! You should never have said that, you philistine! Everyone wants on *my* dance card. Oh, I'll never get over it!

DR. GREENE (*unmoved by Cyril's half-serious gestures*): Well, if you want to be analyzed, many such blows will have to fall. To be cured, you must be able to give up the idea that everyone admires you, and that the lack of admiration means disaster. (*Cyril looks up from his hands, tears nearly dripping from his reddened eyes.*) Now, don't be ridiculous. You're not an infant, and you don't need exaggerated care and attention. You're strong enough to take rejections, indifference, even—

CYRIL: But you don't *understand*! An artist who gives so much to others *must* get something in exchange, or he freezes to death! After creating, I feel empty, and I need love.

DR. GREENE (*dryly*): We *all* need love. However, you may be right. A creative man may need more than others. But don't you get enough love from your Montgomery?

CYRIL (*suddenly animated once again, half-rising from his chair, spreading his arms*): I'll never have enough! The more I get, the more I want! Even when I'm with him, when I'm happy, I'm not fully satisfied. When the doorman rings me at last, when I hear the elevator rise, and feel the tension rising inside me, which mounts floor by floor until it hurts like hell as I wait for him, begins to dissipate, even then... . When I unlock the door and see it really, really is Monty, my prodigal boy, I begin to breathe more freely, and life magically becomes a joy! I feel happy, satisfied—at least in those first few moments of reunion... . But those minutes pass, and his words, his caresses, the way he looks at me and the way I look at him—everything which helped me release my tension—begins to produce a new, even stronger desire. (*Dramatically, like a silent movie vamp.*) My lips, which quenched my thirst when I kissed him, grow fiery, and the fire spreads. I feel my soul in flames. The bed could be on fire! While Montgomery, so cool—

DR. GREENE (*somewhat amused by his histrionics*): —seems to be different?

CYRIL (*flatly*): Yes. You see, when I love someone, just the fact that I love him makes him the most desirable, the most beautiful person in the world! Montgomery, on the other hand, feels that anyone who loves him must be inferior. Knowing how worthless he really is, he has *contempt* for anyone who admires him.

DR. GREENE: Then your relationship isn't so happy, after all.

CYRIL (*deflated*): It isn't. Yesterday, I spent three *tiresome* hours at a cocktail party on that street Chicagoans persist in calling *Go-eeth-ee*,

forced to answer all sorts of silly questions. And why was I there? Because I was hoping that he would show up, and I'd be able to talk to him, light his cigarette, touch his hand... . (*His mouth twitches, as if he might cry again.*) But he didn't show up... .

DR. GREENE (*subtly, inevitably thrusting the dagger deeper*): Perhaps then he doesn't love you.

CYRIL (*soberly looking at his nails, switching tactics*): Oh, but he *does*. These brainless brats all fall for brains, don't you know. He loves me in the way any infant loves its nurturer. He loves me because he needs my love, my protection; when I paint him, he becomes truly beautiful; talking to me, he feels witty; going out with me, he is rich. Without me, he is no longer so distinctive. He returns to the anonymous masses. Yet, he does love me, doctor—and I think that's why he hates me. Why—he tries continuously to hurt, humiliate, and escape me!

DR. GREENE (*after clearing his throat*): Why don't you let him go, then?

CYRIL: It's not so simple as that. By seeing him, I don't have to *think* about him. You see, *I* need him, too! Montgomery is a creature without a brain. This incarnation of beauty, without memory, without conscience, completely inhuman, half-animal and half-god, might as well be my twin brother! He is too much like me and we are too much like all half-men such as ourselves. We understand each other, and agree on practically everything—with the exception of those considerable points on which he is wrong. Without him, I'm bored; I have no ideas and can't paint. I *need* my Montgomery, and I need the pain, the frustration he brings me. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not a masochist. I abhor whips and chains. I don't like to suffer, but I can't create without it. My brain is—I hate to say it—like the womb of a *woman*. There, I have said it, and unfortunately it's true. My ideas are like—what are they—*ovula*. They must be fertilized to multiply, develop, and grow. I'm like the humble oyster, which to produce a shining pearl, must be irritated by a grain of sand. And fuck me silly if I don't throw my pearls before swine... . (*Seeing that his profanity hasn't gotten much of a response from the doctor.*) Ah, you will *never* understand what I mean! But if Monty, who can't distinguish a Picasso from Norman Rockwell, can sometimes guess what my paintings try to say, then, by a similar miracle, you too may get what I *feel*. (*Draws a deep breath, and looks anxiously across the desk.*)

DR. GREENE (*rising from his chair again*): I'm glad you've given me a sporting chance. In reply, I'd like to assure you about your work. As a rule, I don't reassure my patients. Rather, I stimulate their self-criticism and increase their worries. (*Moves around desk to face Cyril.*) But in this

case, I don't mind telling you that my experience, and that of my colleagues, indicates that analysis does not destroy artistic ability—even in the case of geniuses. (*Taking a cigarette from the case on the desk and lighting it as he talks:*) To be sure, the neurotic defense mechanism and artistic creation are based on similar drives. But if an individual has the ability to produce a work of art, he usually avoids becoming neurotic. We don't touch that part of your unconscious which forces you to create. Therefore, I think I can promise that, should you start your analysis and be cured, your work won't suffer. In fact, it might even improve. (*Exhales a cloud of smoke.*)

CYRIL (*looking up at the doctor as he puffs his cigarette*): But what about Montgomery? As I've explained, I'm unable to work without him.

DR. GREENE: You worked before you met him, didn't you?

CYRIL: Yes. But there was always *some* Montgomery in *some* bar.

DR. GREENE (*sits on edge of desk, closer to Cyril*): Was it always a boy?

CYRIL: *Always*, of course. Girls just don't appeal to me.

DR. GREENE: Did you ever try to discover why?

CYRIL: Yes, I suppose I did. First of all, women are frigid. That is, practically all of them. Perhaps not that gorgeous wife of yours, I presume.

DR. GREENE (*biting his tongue as he prematurely puts out his cigarette*): Wait a minute there. *Practically* all? Then you admit there are some exceptions?

CYRIL (*pursing his lips*): Mmmm—I just thought of Doris.

DR. GREENE (*triumph awakening in his eyes*): Doris? Now, who is she?

CYRIL (*waving his braceleted hand languidly*): Oh, just some nice pretty girl who's in love with me.

DR. GREENE: Oh?—Who's not frigid? (*Seats himself on the other side of the desk now.*)

CYRIL: Neither frigid, nor a nymphomaniac, nor inhibited, nor vulgar. Just a nice, normal girl. Or woman, what have you. Normal. Well, not quite *normal*, or she wouldn't have fallen in love with *me*.

DR. GREENE: Does she... ?

CYRIL (*with a sigh*): Yes, of course she knows... . A few days ago, we had it out. I'd begun to notice that she was getting a little *too* interested in me and my paintings... . You see, she's a pupil of mine in a studio workshop I teach now and then at the Art Institute. An older student, thirty-two or so, and a tad maternal, I'm afraid... Well, she's been coming on strong this spring, and I'm beginning to feel embarrassed—for her. (*He stares down at his fingernails.*)

DR. GREENE: Perhaps—even annoyed?

CYRIL: No, not annoyed. Just embarrassed. A little scared, perhaps. She's only a shopgirl, after all. She wouldn't *rape* me, but I don't want her to waste her time. After all, there are plenty of *normal* men around just waiting for her. So, a few days ago, while we were sitting in the Palmer House lobby sipping vermouth after class, I asked her rather bluntly what she expected of me. Her answer was just as blunt—'You.' Providentially, as they say, some friends arrived just then, and we interrupted our conversation. The next day, I received an *enormous* bunch of mimosa from Carson Pirie Scott, with a letter—a nice one. She writes well. She ought to be a writer, not a clerk or a painter; there's no money in painting! (*Looks up at the doctor and puts his hand into the inside pocket of his elegant jacket.*) I have the letter here. Would you like me to read it to you?

DR. GREENE (*nodding, barely able to contain his interest*) Mmm...

CYRIL (*pulls out a plain white envelope, removes the letter, unfolds it, and reads, imitating the breathy voice of a young woman*): 'I want you. As simple as that. It's not too much, because less wouldn't satisfy me. And it's not too little, because you mean so much to me, and it's not just some school-girl crush... .' (*Looks down at the letter after he has finished reading it, smiling. He folds the letter carefully and replaces it in its envelope. Gently, ironically, he puts it back into his pocket with a flourish.*)

DR. GREENE: And what was your response?

CYRIL: Oh, I felt flattered, of course. Who wouldn't? Well, perhaps you wouldn't, because all your patients are in love with you. At least, so I've heard... . But my patie—my pupils, have better taste, on the whole. They fall in love with each other, poor things. (*A pause, then smiling, to take the sting out of his words.*) Really, I wonder what your patients see in *you*. That moustache! I'm not at all impressed. But maybe it's just because you're not my type.

DR. GREENE (*smiling as well*): You see, the patients begin to 'fall in love' with me, as you put it, only after they've spent a few weeks on that couch. We doctors merely call it transference.

CYRIL: Oh? (*Pats couch on his right*): This hideous Merchandise Mart couch has some magic power?

DR. GREENE: No, no, not at all. But when they lie on it, they can't see me!

CYRIL (*laughing*): Good... . *rather* good! I probably should keep a score of your sallies... . But, to return to Doris, if I may—I wish you'd advise me how to handle her. You see, I *do* like her. I think I like her a great

deal. For an older woman who likes playing the flirt and the temptress—one gets used to such types in the art business. But she doesn't induce the flaming response, the heart palpitations, the drying lips, that I get just by thinking of my Monty!

DR. GREENE: What kind of emotion does Doris produce in you?

CYRIL (*shrugs*): Oh, I feel at most pleasantly relaxed, rocked in a crib, at ease.

DR. GREENE: But sometimes you do get... . embarrassed?

CYRIL: Only if sex is mentioned.

DR. GREENE: And she knows about Montgomery.

CYRIL: Of course, of course.

DR. GREENE: Is she jealous?

CYRIL: Curiously enough, she *isn't*.

DR. GREENE: How come?

CYRIL: She's convinced that I'll drop him in the end.

DR. GREENE: —and fall for her?

CYRIL: Exactly. When I told her to look for someone else because I couldn't love her, never could love her the way she wants to be loved, she just laughed, and said, 'But you *do* love me... . You're just not aware of it!'

DR. GREENE (*raising his eyebrows*): Quite a smart girl!

CYRIL: I knew she—you—would like the idea of *her*... . (*Stares out of the window, his back to the doctor, silently stroking the arm of his chair. Jangling his bracelet again, he suddenly assumes a confessional stance.*) Oh, I might as well admit it. *She's* really responsible for my being here. She said, 'I think you love me, but you're afraid to recognize it. Why don't you go visit one of those doctors, and find out for sure? I've heard of a nice one, a school-friend went to him... .' She meant *you*. And she forced me to call your office on Monday.

DR. GREENE: I see. Are you disappointed?

CYRIL: I really don't know. You don't seem so bad. You're not quite as stuffy as the bearded shrinks one sees in the cartoons. But that's beside the point... . What do you think I should do about Doris?

DR. GREENE (*crossing his legs and folding his arms*): Mmmm... . She seems to be very alert.

CYRIL: Do you actually think that she could be right?

DR. GREENE: Well, you did what she wanted, and you—

CYRIL (*interrupting*): Only to prove how *wrong* she was! At first, I refused to come to see you, but she said that my refusal was a sign of fear. That sounded like some sort of double talk to me, but after all, I could

spare a few hours, you're close by, and I had a few questions I wanted answered, so I came to the mighty oracle. Now, what *is* your advice?

DR. GREENE: You'd better stay away from both Doris and myself, or you may discover that she's right. You may find out that your lack of interest in women isn't genuine!

CYRIL (*looks astonished at first, then glares at the doctor*): Do you think that I'm a liar? That my love for Montgomery is just an act? That I'm just some sort of cracked actor? (*Gets up from his chair as he talks and strides restlessly about the room as the doctor watches him. Cyril goes to the vase of flowers and fiddles with the blossoms while the doctor returns to his chair.*)

DR. GREENE (*whirling in his chair to face the wall, not Cyril*): By no means. But your embarrassment whenever Doris mentioned sex, may not be as simple as it appears... . It may well be that you're concerned not only with *her* falling in love and its resulting disappointments... . Obviously, her emotion represents no danger, or, as, you aptly put it, she wouldn't rape you. But your own emotions may overpower your defenses, and force you to admit that you're not quite as—shall we say 'different'?—as you would pretend to be.

CYRIL (*turning sharply from the flowers, then tossing one of them onto the floor, next returning to the doctor's side and standing over his chair, furious*): That's nonsense! Are you suggesting that I'm afraid of my emotions? I, who regard myself as the mere executor of my desires, who preaches that an artist should disregard all inhibitions, in order to express the eternal truths? (*His voice begins to tremble, and he drops his cigarette case as he brings it out of his pocket. He retrieves it, and, glaring at the doctor, picks up next the silver box of silver-tipped matches from the desk. Once he has fished out a match from the holder with fumbling fingers, he puts it into his mouth, instead of a cigarette. Seeing the doctor notice his error, he tries to correct himself, inadvertently dropping the match onto the floor.*)

DR. GREENE (*lighting another match and holding it to a cigarette he places between Cyril's shaking fingers. For a very brief moment he must hold Cyril's wrist to steady him as he lights the cigarette*): Now, please, do calm down. There's no use getting excited—at least, as long as you're not on the analytical couch. Scientific problems aren't solved that way. You asked my advice and I expressed my opinion. I didn't say that you *did* love Doris and repressed your love for her. I merely said that I have a suspicion that such is the case. If you're interested in proving that I'm wrong, I'm ready to help you.

CYRIL (*sitting down with his cigarette, much calmer now as he takes a puff*): How long would this—proving your case—take?

DR. GREENE: Oh, a few weeks, or a few months, or—

CYRIL (*exhaling smoke, exasperatedly*): Just to unearth what I feel deep inside? Pompeii hardly took longer to excavate. And how long would it take to *change* me, just in case you're ...

DR. GREENE: A year, perhaps two—perhaps more.

CYRIL (*looking astonished and disappointed*): But that's far too long!

DR. GREENE: Didn't Doris warn you?

CYRIL: She did, but I couldn't believe it! She said she would wait for me, even if the cure took five years.

DR. GREENE (*smiling*): That sounds like her five-year plan.

CYRIL: To me, it sounds like a five-year sentence in hell! Curse that woman!

DR. GREENE: At least, *she* knows what she wants.

CYRIL (*grimacing*): That's why I prefer Montgomery. He's more... . flexible.

DR. GREENE: And less serious.

CYRIL: You *doubt* that I love him?

DR. GREENE: No. I'm convinced that Montgomery sometimes makes you happy, then again makes you miserable, and I certainly won't deny that he may have stimulated your work. But the emotions you have for him—are they the only ones you can produce? Or do you use these emotions to repress others—like the man who hires one gangster to protect himself against another?

CYRIL (*scowling*): Thanks for the flattering simile. Why don't you stick to your biology and speak of all those toxins and antitoxins?

DR. GREENE: I'm sorry. Anyhow, you get what I mean. The fact that you're so tolerant with your feelings, so interested in their expression and satisfaction, doesn't mean that you're not using them to keep other emotions behind a regular iron curtain of repression. (*Chuckles at his own joke.*)

CYRIL: Why *should* I be afraid of them?

DR. GREENE: Because they caused you so much trouble when you were an infant, and because you believe that they're as powerful now as they were at that time. Your love for Montgomery is like his love for you—love *and* hatred!

CYRIL (*almost pugnaciously*): Who says so?

DR. GREENE: You did. You told me that Montgomery continuously tried to hurt and humiliate you. You paid him back by calling him—forgive me, you know I haven't been taking notes yet, but I think

you said something like a 'monster without conscience, a brainless brat—'

CYRIL: But is it possible to love without hating? Don't you hate the person who rejects and frustrates you?

DR. GREENE (*leaning back in his chair, drawing a deep breath*): Your hate is not the result of your being in love, but of your choice of Montgomery as its object.

CYRIL: You mean—if Monty were someone else, I'd be able to love without frustration, and without hate?

DR. GREENE: (*nods*) Mmm... .

CYRIL (*fidgiting in his seat*): You may be right. But if Monty would love me as I *want* him to, I'd never paint. Since he doesn't, I want the whole world to give me that love!

DR. GREENE: Perhaps you wouldn't paint, but you'd be a happier man.

CYRIL (*staring out the window, about to become theatrical again*): I don't want to be happy... . Not at that price! No *real* artist would sell his work for a cheap romance. You, darling doctor, will never understand me... . To me, painting is more important than happiness, than life itself!

DR. GREENE: Some artists are able to love *and* to paint.

CYRIL (*turning away from the window, looked directly at the doctor*): I doubt it. Most of them are like me—more interested in love than in the boys they love.

DR. GREENE: I know some artists who prefer girls. In fact, I have it on the best authority that most of them do.

CYRIL (*wearily*): Let's not quarrel about it. I'm prepared to concede that a few do. But their love for women is no different from my love for Montgomery.

DR. GREENE: Allow me to point out something else. There are artists who have quite normal relationships with their love-objects.

CYRIL: What do you mean by this word we keep bantering about—'normal'?

DR. GREENE: There's a good quotation here. (*Takes up a large volume on the desk, shuffles its pages for a moment, then finds his place.*) Normal, normal, let's see... 'A relationship in which the object does not unconsciously represent the father or mother, and is not regarded as merely a part of one's body, but as another human being... .' (*Without a pause looks surreptitiously at the clock on the desk, which faces only him.*) We have no more time for this kind of discussion... . Mr. Wyndham, Cyril, although I'm no artist myself, I'm aware of the difference between your approach

to reality and my own. But you aren't the only painter in the world, as I'm not the only scientist. In addition to your work, you're entitled to a *normal* life. The happiness of a normal life is certainly not reserved solely for the uncreative masses. We may both, say, spend a few happy hours looking at that yellow chair of Van Gogh's... . (*waves his hand at the picture; Cyril turns to admire it once again*)but we don't have to try to sit on it. I prefer something more, well, *comfortable*.

CYRIL: Well, *I* don't. At least, I *think* I don't... . Oh, you're a dangerous, dangerous man, Dr. Greene. A few more hours with you, and I'd fail to differentiate between right and wrong. I'd begin to doubt—am I a coward or a hero? ... You're like a married *woman*, who can make a genius feel like a heel!

DR. GREENE: Some married women make a heel feel like a genius, Cyril.

CYRIL: That may be your own experience, but I don't care for the type. If there were only a woman who could make a genius feel like one... . I'm afraid that if there *is* such a woman, she's already somebody's wife. You assume, don't you, that I'm talking about your *own* beautiful wife now. That's the trouble with you. You take everything *so* personally, and you behave as if the patient were interested solely in *you*! (*Gets up abruptly from his chair and moves toward the door. The doctor looks again at the clock, this time more pointedly, rises, and accompanies Cyril to the door. Cyril pats him tentatively on the back with a sigh.*) No, I'm afraid that you're not the man I'm looking for, doctor. You may succeed in curing my sexual weakness, but your price is too high. (*The doctor looks at him, very close now, while Cyril hastily adds:*) At least, I'm *so* busy right now, that I couldn't spare as much as four or five hours a week, even if I wanted to. Perhaps I'll be able to, when I finish my present work and my teaching.

DR. GREENE (*quietly, shaking Cyril's hand*): Perhaps ...

CYRIL (*energized one last time, tossing down Dr. Greene's hand, stepping three paces back, away from the door, and appraising the other man from head to toe*): But really, doctor—I'd *love* to paint you. In a way, I *do* find you stimulating. So—*carnal*. Or is it *carniverous*? You're a perfect *type*, after all! Or would my painting you be considered a sacrilege? After all, your Commandments say, 'Thou shalt not make graven images unto thy Lord!' (*Pauses dramatically.*) Listen, when would you care to sit for me?

DR. GREENE (*looking both surprised and amused, then trying to seem grave*): I'd like to, very much, Mr. Wyndham, I'd really love to—but I'm so busy right now, you see, that I can't accept the honor. Perhaps some other day... .

CYRIL (*looking deflated but conceding the verdict as he turns the doorknob*): Well, anyway, it's your loss as much as mine. If you'd sooner remain moral, I mean, *mortal* rather than immortal... . Ah, well! Thank you even so, my good Doctor Greene. (*Opens the baize-covered door and speaks with total sincerity, if that is possible for him.*) Thank you, sir, for your kindness. Thank you. But I can't give my dear Montgomery up. I *like* pretty boys, and I *don't* want to change. I hope you have no hard feelings because really I don't... . (*Steps over the threshold hesitantly, looking back one last time, as if hoping the doctor will change his mind—or he will.*)

DR. GREENE: Of course, no hard feelings, of course not. Best of luck to you, Mr. Wyndham. Cyril. (*Cyril mumbles thanks again. They shake hands briskly, impersonally, this time like strangers at an airport. The door closes slowly behind Dr. Greene, and he stands staring at it for a long moment, then sighs—whether with relief or sorrow, it is hard to say. Lights down.*)

Act Two: A Rebuttal

Epigraph: The Homosexual in the Classical Orchestra, Part II

“... .it [homosexuality] cannot *possibly* be compared to a relatively insignificant single instrument like the bassoon in an orchestra... .it is like the strings in the orchestra, which are not so loud as the horns, maybe, but have a very important part to play... .”

Karl A. Menninger, M. D., *ibidem*

SCENE:

The same office, looking almost exactly the same, although it is nearly five years later. The flowers are different, a lampshade or two, as well; there has been perhaps been a substitution of one or two of the paintings on the walls (though “The Yellow Chair” is in its same place); and the various items atop the desk have been rearranged, but otherwise there is little to tell us that much time has passed. Outside the room's tall window this time, however, the sky is violet-gray and we may even see a few snowflakes coming down. The time is late afternoon in early February, 1955.

When the lights go up we see Cyril Windham gazing intently out of the window far stage right, at the opposite end of the stage from the door. As the scene progresses the sky darkens and even now the effect is

of an early, nearly lavender, twilight on his face, which looks pale and pained. Unlike before, he is now in a sober but still exquisitely tailored gray pinstripe suit, a more elegant reflection of the Dr. Greene's own more nondescript gray suit. His shirt is ecru linen and his handkerchief and tie a restrained dusky blue; when we see his socks, they are the same subdued color. His hair is more conventionally groomed now, looking a little less brilliant, though still with a somewhat extravagant wave. The doctor's moustache is completely gray now, and his glasses are no longer tortoiseshell, but more severe metal-gray hornrims. There is at present a piperack among the cigarette accoutrements on his desk (including a curious object whose function will be made clear later), and he is puffing meditatively on a cherry-wood pipe, sitting on the edge of his desk a long distance from Cyril. Perhaps somewhere afar we hear things we never noticed before: the rush of wind up the skyscraper's façade, faint typing, a mysteriously submarine-sounding bell like that from a drowned ship clanging now and then.

CYRIL (*his forehead almost touching the frosted windowpane*): That poet was wrong; February is by far the cruelest month. Mercifully short, perhaps, but still so cold, so gray, so dead.

DR. GREENE (*knocking his pipe against his pinstriped knee*): Then you're here because you're feeling depressed? Suicidal?

CYRIL: I never said that. (*Leaves the window and crosses the room, observing the pictures as he moves along, like a docent evaluating a museum. His walk and gestures are weightier and more angular than they used to be, but also less fluid, and it seems at times as if he is just barely holding back other forces deep within his still slender frame. One might say that he seems to be impersonating someone's idea of masculinity rather than personifying it, and the effect is uncomfortable to behold.*) Impressionists, Post-impressionists, Pointillists, they all bore me! Give me Expressionists, Fauvists, Vorticists, even Art Brut—life raw like a wound, full of broken figures and infernal machines and suffering. I'm surely a better artist now than I was five years ago, doctor, but why is it the older I get the *harder* it is for me to paint? Don't answer that; that's not why I'm here, either.

DR. GREENE (*laying down his pipe in the ashtray and folding his arms as Cyril approaches nearer*): Then why was it so urgent that you see me, Mr. Wyndham?

CYRIL (*ignoring him*): You know, I used to fear that if I *changed*, really *changed*, so would my art—and I don't mean for the better. You reassured me it wouldn't have to, I remember that... . Well, at first it was

neither worse nor better—just *different*. Not even I knew exactly why or how. But the critics noticed it right away, said I'd become surer, more mature, less of that *enfant terrible* they'd made of me themselves. Actually, they were all just relieved that I'd turn the mirror of my canvas no longer toward pretty boys, but to pretty girls. Critics *hate* having to admire *masculine* beauty; that is why there are relatively so few nude males in museums or art books. Of course, such pictures are all over the ateliers and garrets, but few dare to buy them! (*He sits hard down on the couch.*)

DR. GREENE: Careful of that couch, remember. It might bite you!

CYRIL (*jumping a little*): I'm no longer afraid—I've seen plenty of these couches over the past few years. Leather ones, plush ones, hard ones, soft ones, ones like quicksand—ones wide enough for two, if you get my drift. And the doctors! They came in all different types, too. Ones with goatees, ones with antebellum beards, Edwardian beards, unkempt free-love beards, moustaches spare or questionable and others bristling with anger, even one analyst who was clean-shaven—though that was a *woman* doctor, would you believe it? I could never tell *her* my secrets! (*Pats the couch lovingly.*) Oh, I've become *quite* the acolyte of St. Freud since you saw me last. I've ingested terms now like 'regressive autoerotic behavior' and 'polymorphous' and 'mechanism of psychogenic potency disturbance.' Magnus Hirschfeld is now someone I often meet and smile at, as if at parties. The *Pyschopathia Sexualis* makes a classy doorstop. (*Interrogating the desk-lamp:*) Am I intersexed? Oversexed? Am I a morphite or an urning or third-sexer or changeling or simply some creature from Mars? 'Check Box A or B, please.' Arrested development or over-development? Latent or Overt? I must be one thing or the other, they all say! Oh, why can't I just be protean, like the gods? (*Looks toward the doctor, as if expecting more of a response.*)

DR. GREENE: Go on please, Mr. Wyndham, you're just as locquacious as ever, I see.

CYRIL: *Cyril*. Otherwise it makes me feel like you're another former student of mine. Some plump heiress who *adores* painting hoboos... . You know, one doctor suggested a lobotomy. One of those foreign ones with a Toscanini beard. I might have gone through that for Doris, but I'm *so* afraid of losing even so much as the memory of a single French lesson—or a lifeguard in an indigo-blue bathing slip I saw on Oak Street Beach in the summer of 1934! And then there's hydrotherapy and shock therapy—I'm certain they work well in cases like mine, your medical books are full of smiling faces, but I just can never find the time between sittings and dental appointments. (*Begins to recline on the couch, though one*

foot remains dangling over the floor, as if he might have to leap up at any moment.) Hypnosis did no good, though for some reason I started craving men with pocket-watches... . Another doctor wanted to fasten electrodes—down there—and make me watch a filthy sort of stag show, but he just seemed *too* interested in wanting to get my trousers down. Besides, I'd already done that business with pornographic flashcards and connect-the-dot charts and Rorschach tests—and they *all* look like butterflies to me, every single one, damn it!

DR. GREENE: Yes, some methods are a bit extreme, I admit, but the science is still young—and some men will do anything to change, even if the cure is, as you know, worse than—

CYRIL: Will they, now? Well, I did *change*, eventually, all on my own, easy as quitting cigarettes—right?—just by acquiring a marriage license. And Doris will tell you it's been a very happy eighteen and a half months.

DR. GREENE (*standing and brushing his knees of any tobacco ash*): Ah. I remember now. You see, my memory is good enough without notes and even nearly five years later. She was in love with you long before you realized you were in love with her, am I correct? Smart girl!

CYRIL: I suppose you could say that. She supplanted Monty—Montgomery, my pretty model, if you remember—in my psyche, just as you said she could. Whether she is my father or my mother or my aunt or my second cousin twice-removed I still don't know.

DR. GREENE (*smiling, going over to the couch to extend his hand*): I'm very glad to hear that! Truly, *very* glad. Congratulations! It is a very difficult transformation, I assure you. I had a fellow in here last month who needed a sort of 'refresher course,' if you understand. (*Muttering:*) Couldn't keep away from bus stations... .

CYRIL (*acting as if he hasn't seen the proffered hand, shrinking back further on the couch*): Doris is very happy. So satisfied with me. And she's knitting jumpers these days, not painting the way she used to. Odd how women can give up their talents so readily when the stork comes knocking. She had some real potential, for a woman.

DR. GREENE: Now, I really must congratulate you again! (*Insists this time that Cyril take his hand and shake.*) Believe me, once you're a father your life will change in ways you never expected.

CYRIL: Or *wanted*. (*Withdraws his hand and slaps the couch. Dr. Greene retreats a bit*) Oh, I've been ever-so faithful to her, *completely*, since the moment we were engaged. I can't even talk to a good-looking boy these

days without feeling a little *sick* inside. I gave up teaching at the Institute precisely for that reason, though I no longer need the money, anyway.

DR. GREENE: Is this what's troubling you, then? This 'sick' feeling you get?

CYRIL (*sitting up, adjusting his tie*): Not exactly. I can take antacid for that. Oh, the doctor I see now—not another damned analyst, just my general practitioner—prescribes *yummy* things for me: things to help me relax, to help me to sleep, to wake me up again, even to facilitate *relations* with Doris, not that I really need those. *She's* never been one to complain. Science *is* wonderful, don't you agree? In the future, I suppose they'll be able to bottle talent—though I'm sure it will taste like cod-liver oil going down.

DR. GREENE (*chuckling as he moves back to his desk chair*): Ah, yes, but I'll never believe it's all just a matter of chemical imbalances or glandular supplements. There are dreams to be interpreted, and family dynamics to re-engineer—and those all-important infantile stages, quite fascinating stuff... .

CYRIL (*with a little of his old drama, grasping the chrome arm of the couch, tilting his chin to the side*): You were wondering why I had to see you... . Well, it's a bit difficult to know where to begin... .

DR. GREENE: Then begin at the beginning.

CYRIL: As they always say. Listen, I need a smoke—offer me one, please, doc. (*He rises to go to the desk, where Dr. Greene is quick to remove a cigarette from the silver case.*)

DR. GREENE: Of course. And a light—no matches this time, just that new-fangled lighter. (*He demonstrates an oversized lantern-like mechanism on the desk which automatically flares up like a genie and lights the cigarette.*)

CYRIL: That sort of thing could take the romance out of a streetlight encounter! Thanks awfully. (*Draws in a long, luxurious puff, like a man who has been famished.*) I *could* begin with the letters and telegrams and phone-calls. (*Trying to squeeze all the drama he can out of these hints.*) They just won't stop!

DR. GREENE (*lowering his glasses, stroking his moustache*): Whose letters and phone-calls? Need I guess?

CYRIL: I'd given him up, you must know! Could go for *days* without thinking of him once. Destroyed the sketches I had and gessoed right over the last portrait. Once in a while I couldn't hold back a phantasm or a fantasy, but Doris was always there, she has a terrific knack for knowing when and when not to try to hold me—and so even *he* began to fade. Like a print left too long in a shop-window... . But I should have known

he wouldn't so easily forget *such* a powerful influence as myself. I should have known he'd not had the last of me.

DR. GREENE: Is it blackmail? In that case, I know of several lawyers accustomed to cases such as this.

CYRIL: No, it's not exactly blackmail of that sort, in my case. You see, I'd been sending him money when he needed it, during the transitional period of all those doctors and Doris's incredible patience. He has quite enough now, and a new lover, a Chilean tennis player indulged by a family with far more than I could ever dream of making. So it's not that.

DR. GREENE (*leaning in closer across the desk, considering taking his pipe back up*): Then what could it be? What is the subject of these harassments?

CYRIL: What, indeed! Montgomery was always such a temperamental, high-strung young man; he is capable of forming fierce attachments to the silliest things—a rescued teddy bear from his nursery days, a nasty little dog I once gave him, a painted-up hag he calls the Virgin Mary, and *me*. He doesn't want to let me go, not that he wants to leave the Chilean and all his Incan ingots, either. I've told him I'm a married man now, a father soon enough, and can't see him or be part of his darkling world any longer. It's an old, old story. A muse spurned. Nostalgia for something that never was. Don't think I'm so naïve that I didn't foresee this happening.

DR. GREENE: Still, he has no *real* pull over you any longer—can't he see that? The logical side of him must accept that you're reformed. You've undergone the cure, so to speak.

CYRIL (*taking another long draw of his cigarette, then tossing it still burning into the ashtray on the desk*): Certainly, I've been cured, just like a side of pork. There was this one crazy doctor who told me I needed to love *him* instead of Monty! Cured me of about five-hundred dollars before I realized I could never fantasize *kissing* that moustache.

DR. GREENE (*unconsciously touching his own moustache*): Psychoanalysts are, I'm afraid, like the rest of mankind, fallible and often foolish.

CYRIL: Monty does really still love me more than his Chilean, I know, and I can't condemn him for his good taste. But I can't see him, either.

DR. GREENE: Good for you. It would only be *regression*. Sorry—that damned word!

CYRIL (*gesturing with fist to his heart*): Oh, but I *want* to! See him. Desperately want to—but can't.

DR. GREENE: Yes, think of Doris. Think of the baby.

CYRIL: No, I'm not thinking of *either* of them at all. The truth is in a very agonizing, lingering way I still love my dearest Monty, too. Oh, Monty! (*Begins to cry a little into his sleeve.*) That part of me *never* changed. You see, maybe you can change all outward signs and inflections, redirect urges and sublimate and substitute, but you can't alter the soul the way a plastic surgeon alters the body. (*Recovering from his crying jag, and with increasing passion:*) Thanks to doctors and Doris, I am no longer a *homosexualist*; I can't *act* upon those desires I once had without making myself ill and betraying my legally wedded wife and all we stand for together, but I am afraid that I have the soul of a *homosexual* and always shall have. As the philosopher says, is evil something we do or something we *are*? Whether I was born this way or not maybe your science will never be able to tell me, but this is one part of me I *don't* want to change; I insist it is the part which most makes this miserable thing I call myself *me*, it is my *essence*!

DR. GREENE (*controlling his own emotions by smoothing his lapels*): Please, Cyril, you are declaring the war over before the outcome of the first skirmish has been declared. I've heard these sort of arguments time and again from other men who *believed* they were permanently condemned to be homosexuals, as well. Men who now thank me for helping to redirect their orientations, even when it takes years—sometimes decades—of hard effort. Remember that you love Doris, too, and that is what will win the battle for you. And you will love your little child, who will need a normal upbringing.

CYRIL (*suddenly enraged, leaping from the couch*): Normal! There's that hideous word! Remember how I told you I never *wanted* to be normal, that I spit on *normal*? I don't want to be bourgeois or Biedermeier; I am a modernist and merely wanted to discover the truth about my love life, why I wasn't fully satisfied. Why Monty left me wanting. You and most of the other doctors told me it all had to do with *sex*, because of some blind clubfoot prince and his crazy mixed-up family—because I needed to love a woman, or needed the love of a woman, and I did as I was told because I was tired of the sniggering and deceptions, and I thought that was how *I* felt, too. Up until the letters started to arrive, and the late-night phone-calls, I could have gone on deceiving myself forever. Perhaps.

DR. GREENE: Then it seems you no longer *want* to be helped. You should give up Doris and go on back to Montgomery, then, if you truly believe that will make you happier! I warn you, though, that the research shows that after forty your life might as well be over... .

CYRIL: No, *no*, you don't understand! I want them *both*, and yet I am not what you classify as a "bisexual." I've browsed that Dr. Kinky's report since I saw you last, and I see I am an unregenerate Six! Or at least a Five. Not afraid of women any longer, but closer to recognizing my true self at last, thanks to Monty's lamentable pleas.

DR. GREENE: Oh, the infamous zoologist *Kinsey*! To think I've heard of frustrated, vengeful wives placing that book by Mr. Vidal on their husbands' nightstands, a novel you must know pretends to vindicate Kinsey, followed the next week by the Report itself... . Kinsey. Honestly! I'm not sure I would trust such biased research, until—

CYRIL (*slyly looking over his shoulder as he faces a nearby painting, at last onto a topic he wanted to bring up long ago*): Why, doctor? Afraid you might tilt the scale a bit too far yourself? A little too near to those who loiter among the lower four percent? Maybe it's contagious; maybe we're rubbing off on you. Ah-hah—*frottage*! Naughty!

DR. GREENE: Let us not be juvenile. I'll admit to certain things like all healthy heterosexuals, but I am a happily married man.

CYRIL: *Just* like myself.

DR. GREENE: No, not *like*—sorry, sorry, I don't mean to compare. But I regretfully have to say to you, as unprofessional as it might be to talk about my own private life, that I've never had a homosexual experience, 'to the point of orgasm,' as that man phrases it. Anyone can see I am no Caspar Milquetoast. But neither do I pretend to be a Casanova for the ages. I do my duties in the world and in the bedroom as a modern free-thinking American male does, and it pleases and does not trouble me.

CYRIL: Certainly your wife might not agree.

DR. GREENE (*stopped in his tracks*): I do not understand at all what you're implying.

CYRIL: 'Conjugal incompatibility' is what the *Sun Time's* gossip columnist reported—which is I suppose a fancy way of saying there's something a bit peculiar about your marital habits. (*Quickly, knowing he will be interrupted.*) And gosh golly, she's still such a knockout, as the collegiates would say—could be a stand-in for Rita Hayworth! No wonder she looked familiar to me that time I saw her in the hall the first time I visited here—I'd been seeing her in the society pages for *years*. Elspeth, a name you don't forget, either, (*as if parroting Debrett's:*) 'the youngest daughter of Wilmette's celebrated Blauvogel dynasty, of innumerable foundries and charitable foundations.' You were lucky to snag her, old boy... . Tell me, in a complicated case like this, who gets the alimony?

DR. GREENE (*furiously*): Mr. Wyndham! I can do without your sense of humor, and I remind you this is a *professional* visit.

CYRIL (*barely batting an eyelash*): But I am not really your patient, so I imagine I can say anything that pops out of my id until you throw me out that door. But you won't do that because I am charming and I *am* on your side and I have much more to say.

DR. GREENE (*his anger only slightly abated*): My soon-to-be ex-wife and I are on very good terms, if that is any business of yours; otherwise I really would be insulted.

CYRIL (*slyly*): But what about your handsome son?

DR. GREENE: My *son*? My wife with her background as you know might not be able to avoid the notoriety of the scandal sheets, but you must leave my son out of this.

CYRIL: Well, as a father-to-be I could use some advice on how to deal with differences with my wife in the rearing of our son—or daughter, as are usually the options.

DR. GREENE: All couples have their disagreements concerning parenting. It's all a matter of compromise. Our son has always been a special case, since he has a remarkable IQ he hasn't managed to corral yet and as an only child has been more susceptible to a higher degree of spoiling than I might have wished. He is a headstrong lad who I admit his mother makes too many excuses for. But that isn't—

CYRIL: Which brings us back to Monty and why I dared to tread these turbulent waters in the first place. You see, I wasn't bringing up your divorce out of some wish for a little *schadenfreude*, as you German-trained doctors would have it put. I was trained in France myself and we prefer to spread the ol' *joie de vivre* whenever possible, so I hate having to bring up these disturbing matters concerning other people's problems—and their problem children.

DR. GREENE: Morris is not a problem child. He was a musical prodigy, for one thing. He has a great deal of potential.

CYRIL: Exactly what I used to say about Doris, and yet I have such problems with her, too! But, please, tell me more about Morris—he sounds *darling*.

DR. GREENE (*unable to stop himself, as if this is a rant he regularly inflicts upon his friends*): Once a darling child, all right; then a sullen, hard-headed, insolent, impulsive, compulsive *teenager* with too much grease in his hair. And a motorbike! We tried so many methods—Piaget, Montessori, Waldorf, Suzuki; it began to feel more like we were dealing with a feral child raised among wolves, rather than one brought up

among au pairs and tutors. Even though I insisted that he try pre-med, Elspeth bought him that blasted saxophone; he was cutting classes and reading those dreadful EC comics when he should have been reading the classics! Have you ever looked at that book that came out last year, *Seduction of the Innocent*? Proof that the horror genre leads to juvenile delinquency, and I am afraid my son Morris might have become a certified hoodlum if we hadn't curtailed his allowance and called in the Marines. By which I mean a pair of highly qualified child psychologists. One must practice what one preaches, after all.

CYRIL (*shaking his head in either sympathy or disagreement*): Poor kid probably should be wearing one of those sort of cages the Victorians locked on their children to keep them from touching themselves, right? This fabulous twentieth century! When I am a father I wonder what I shall do when my son wants to scratch a tattoo of Jayne Mansfield onto his chest, or worse, wants to study for the bar. (*Stroking an imaginary moustache*;) Your Morris must be acting out domestic anxieties all over the place, under such tremendous pressure to perform like a trained seal while still developing, courtesy of your bankbook, a very expensive personality all his own.

DR. GREENE (*waking up with his eyes shut tight, as if that will make Cyril disappear*): Stop! Stop! I fail to see how my son Morris is any of your concern. Let's please refrain from mentioning him again and get back to your *own* desperations. You so urgently wanted to talk of them!

CYRIL: And *this* is most urgent of all. You see, Monty might have his virile tennis champion, but he still likes a good night on the town. I wouldn't be surprised if he were still picking up a little milk money on the side. Half of his calls come after midnight from some bar so far, far south in Chicago I suspect it is run by equatorial negroes, negroes of the sort who throw drag balls and enjoy getting whatever they can from innocent young, good-looking white boys. I suspect you would categorize Monty as an alcoholic pseudo-homosexual, and I'd agree he is not entirely trustworthy, but last week he seemed so *very* despondent, and so adamant I hear him out, that for once I didn't hang up the phone. Doris was asleep in the next room, but it's a wonder she didn't wake up when she heard my protests.

DR. GREENE: This is all growing quite tedious. Please come to your point.

CYRIL: All right, then. Monty meets a lot of interesting people at this club and he has a way of drawing even the shyest, most reticent of souls out of their pretty shells. Once he even met that actor—what's-his-

name—Rock Something there. Or was it Charlton Heston? Well, Monty has a fantastic flair for remembering names and faces, much better than mine. So when he bought your son a drink or two or twee—

DR. GREENE: My son? *Morris*? Your friend must be mistaken. Morris I admit has had his share of setbacks at school, and that conservatory he last attended brought out some of the worst tendencies in him and his choice of music and friends, but he would never frequent the sort of den of inequity you have insinuated that one is.

CYRIL: Then I guess Monty was lying when he told me that your son Morris was soon feeling so gay and ebullient that he was telling Monty his entire life story—about his father the eminent shrink who didn't love him and his mother the spoiled princess who would have been happier with a girl and the prep schools he was asked to leave and the smashed-up sports cars and the best friend who's a dope fiend? That's Morris, according to Monty, and Monty remembered how I'd once visited you and talked of you nonstop for weeks—Monty with his remarkable memory—and Monty thought maybe *I* should get in touch with *you* again so *you* can get in touch with *him* so people won't be talking about your underage son visiting this very special bar of ill repute! Monty knows how things get into the papers.

DR. GREENE: That's black—

CYRIL: —It's really just Monty's primitive way of trying to do a kind deed at the same time as insinuating me further back into his life.

DR. GREENE (*exploding, slamming closed a book which has been lying open on the desk*): *Blackmail! Blackmail me to save my son, your recidivist boyfriend— (Half mutters, half cries:) The filthy faggot! The dirty scheming lying fucking faggot!*

CYRIL (*remarkably calm*): Steady now, Dr. Greene, steady—there is no call for clinical terms such as those. Not very professional of you now!

DR. GREENE: All right, all right, I'm going to have to ask you to leave now. (*Gestures toward the door.*) Just because my son was seen at that kind of place—*claimed* to have been seen by a disreputable person who might just as well have learned all he told you through other means—doesn't signify a thing. Morris has always had an adventuresome streak. He plays bebop jazz. He has smoked hemp-weed, yes. Admitted it. And burnt a few bridges. But that doesn't make him any sort of *criminal*.

CYRIL: Like me? Like Monty and all my old prancing, mincing crowd?

DR. GREENE: That's not what I meant, and you know it. My son is barely 20. This is indubitably just another one of those adolescent phases I deal with all the time. Read about them in any of these books or a

thousand others. (*Shuffles and tosses the texts across his desk.*) It doesn't prove a thing. I will not pay any blackmail for someone's demented figment of the imagination. And neither will Elspeth. Believe me. She'd sooner kill or be killed.

CYRIL: Come now! Monty has not breathed a word to me about money. He is *not* one of those ordinary blackmailers who haunt north Michigan Avenue or the rocks near the Belmont marina, able to spot a wealthy man even with most of his clothes off. Trust me, I've dealt with that other sort before. But, here, let me give you his number—(*pulls a business card from his pocket and scribbles a number on the back of it, which he flings upon the desk*)—just in case you'd like to talk this over with Monty himself. If you don't believe me. I wouldn't if I were you. Call him, I mean. I find this whole business sordid and reprehensible, but what can I do when Monty threatens to hurt himself, berates me, and then tells me he still loves me, too? How can I *ever* give him up? He's not bad, no worse than your son. I didn't mean to implicate *you* in anything. Doris be damned, I probably *should* see Monty just to shut him up.

DR. GREENE: You must be out of your mind.

CYRIL: Well, aren't all of your patients?

DR. GREENE (*managing to laugh despite it all*): So, Cyril, this is why you insisted on seeing me at such short notice. (*Pause as he rearranges himself.*) Listen, I am sorry if I lost my temper, truly sorry, but this could be a very serious matter. We've seen our share of deputies and deans in the past. Yes, it could be serious again.

CYRIL: Or not. These things have a way of working themselves out. Cool down. No one is claiming your prodigy is working his way down the pansy-strewn path. He's just a kid. Probably only out for a lark. Picking up band-mates. I agree, that music is *atrocious*. Monty is obviously only trying to use you and your son to get back at me. *I'm* the victim here. Don't you see that? I am the victim. No harm will come to your son, as if Monty were ever capable of doing even a Chihuahua any real harm—and once again I don't get a single *frisson* that your son is *comme ça*—neither does Monty, I'm reasonably certain. It's just a nasty turn *I* have to follow through on... . If I decide to see Monty again, if I can bear it... . (*Straightens himself and his tie.*) Yet, oddly enough, that is still not the entire reason why I needed to see you today.

DR. GREENE: Oh, really? Now that you've reassured me that my son is possibly not really an invert or transvestite or drug addict, was just slumming it, trying to *epatér* the bourgeoisie once again like one of these

hot-rodding beatniks one reads about, you actually think you can still have more to ask of me.

CYRIL: I do, actually. See, you're a *nice* man! Lately, after all my frustrating analytical encounters, I've been doing a lot of reading, catching up with the latest advancements in the medical field, as it were—reading books as boring as bank statements and books as lascivious as Hollywood tabloids, reading books such as your own. Reading them with eyes wide open in the back of my head.

DR. GREENE: I'm not sure what you mean. Books such as mine, I'm afraid, are what they expect us doctors to write these days, the publishers. And the patients. Still, I suppose I should be flattered.

CYRIL: I wouldn't be.

DR. GREENE (*a little taken aback, but hiding it by polishing his glasses*): Tell me why not. I'm not vain about my writing style. Without a good editor... . My wife always says my prose reads like the instructions on a jar of wheat germ.

CYRIL: Ha! No, that's not the problem—you write adequately enough, for a doctor. But I'm referring, as you probably well know, to the chapter on I think it is 'issues of sexual misidentification and misalignment.' The interview with the 'typical young homosexual'—

DR. GREENE (*looking as if he's slowly sinking in wet concrete*): Of course, that patient is a broad composite; I've seen many such confused men as yourself, dozens and dozens of them over the decades, in fact. I hardly recall our sole interview, and you can't accuse me of taking notes! What small part of you may have filtered through to those pages I camouflaged more than adequately, I would say. No one could look you up in the telephone directory no matter how closely one dissects those pages.

CYRIL: Naturally, you lent me a carnival mask. But really! "Cerise" socks and shirt and a saffron-yellow handkerchief! I was never quite so outré, even when my naughtiest. Maroon and pale amber, at most. But worse was the way you described my mannerisms—a simpering, skimping, nelly queen. A prattling *hat-maker*! My god! (*He places hands on hips, whether in defiance or self-parody, it is hard to tell.*) As if I haven't had to negotiate with hulking he-men such as yourself all my nearly thirty-five years and never learned to temper my instincts or inclinations, even in a relatively tolerant atmosphere. *Really!*

DR. GREENE (*going for his pipe at last*): As I said, that is a composite, an amalgamation, a quasi-mythical creation—a unicorn, in a sense. That character represents something which exists maybe only in mankind's collective unconscious. A necessary device in my line of work.

CYRIL: So, in other words, a Frankenstein's monster, stitched together from dead milliners and cross-dressers and child-molesters. *Fabulous*. I suggest, doctor, that you leave that sort of creation up to the artist. We assemble figures all the time from various models—a lovely face here, a shapely thigh *there*, an enigmatic scowl, all from this or that Adonis or Diana who fluttered by our studio window even for a moment—but we don't create to instruct or exploit, rather to show the world things it might otherwise overlook or dismiss. You, on the other hand, are a *plagiarist*. You stole the Sea Island cotton shirt off my back, the quintessence of my Hong Kong-tailored soul. Even in the cheapest, most transparent *roman à clef* one can't get away with what you pretend is just research. Like so many doctors I saw, you took *delight* in mocking what you see as my affectations!

DR. GREENE (*lighting his pipe he grips tightly in his hand, speaking thoughtfully after a pursed-lipped pause*): Mmm... . I don't see how the scientist's task is all that different from yours as an artist. You're speaking of discovery.

CYRIL: I am speaking of *art*, which is a sort of self-discovery, I concede, for the artist at least. What it means to men like you I can't imagine. (*Looks up to the painting above him.*) Something to brighten up a wall, is all. A yellow chair in a rough-hewn room, only to be admired, not to be questioned.

DR. GREENE: How does one question a chair?

CYRIL (*sighs and takes out his handkerchief to pat his forehead*): By sitting on it! That is, to experience it, to *feel* it under you. Every splinter and warp. (*He stands to spread his arms, as if sweeping in all the pictures in the room.*) To feel the anguish of a Van Gogh, the joy of Klee among his twittering birds, the unutterable melancholy of a Surrealist's still life of boxing glove and astrolabe! Oh, how can you *ever* know what I mean? The sciences would like to drown all men such as myself in formaldehyde, complete with labels. Eradicate us forever, or at best, make of us a sideshow.

DR. GREENE: Are you speaking of artists or homosexuals? Anyway, you might as well know, my wife chooses the artwork here and at our homes.

CYRIL: And have you ever met her art dealer? Her dressmaker? Her cosmetician? Her interior decorator? Her caterer? Her landscape gardener? Her poodle groomer? *All* homosexuals, I assure you, every one! See, *we* make possible what small amount of beauty and taste you manage to bring into your dreary gray life. But none of those men is a true artist, in

the sense I was just speaking of. The true artist creates and does nothing *useful* whatsoever. The soul of a true artist is beyond your petty concerns with who loves whom and why and what-for. We bring the dawn up like the thunder of the El. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with angels.

DR. GREENE: So you came here not for help with your sex life, or to blackmail me, but simply to debate what you consider an unflattering portrait? Surely you must have it on good authority that all your models are not always pleased.

CYRIL: Oddly enough, now that they are women, ladies of society and good standing whose husbands can well afford me, they *are*. I make them all much younger and more alluring than they really are, just like Estée Lauder. It was the *men*—especially Monty—who complained: the nose is positively Durante, the coloring looks like a bad case of rubella, the teeth are crooked! But to get back to your chapter—why do you put such *nonsense* into my mouth? And such platitudes! Why do you make it seem as if I am speaking for all men of my stripe when I am just an individual, like you? As if Shylock has to stand for all Jews or Othello for all coloreds? My wrists do *not* dangle like parched lilies. Honestly, I never stuck a match in my mouth thinking it was the inevitable phallic cigarette. You made of me a pathetic figure! A fool! Why is that he-men, hetero-men, so-called *real* men can't just be satisfied with kicking us around the schoolyard and punching us in the groin for fun? Why go on doing it all through our lives? Why, *why* did I have to *change* just to satisfy society—or was it just to confound society's expectations? Oh, why did you tell me I must marry Doris to save myself?

DR. GREENE: I never ordered you to do any such thing. I merely wanted you to find your way to your truest feelings. Those feelings you compensated for with arrested anal-oral fixations. You *have* told me you love her—

CYRIL: And I *do*. She is not like most women; I've never had to hide anything from her. And I'll love our child. It's just that—that she *lacks* something. Something *I* lack, too. Maybe I think Monty has it. I don't know, but after talking with you as openly as this, I do know now that I want to see him again, I *must* see him again.

DR. GREENE: My advice is to stay as far away from him as possible, lest he want even more from you than he no doubt wants from me or my family.

CYRIL: You don't know him; he was made the way he is by unfortunate circumstances. In a sense, you two are not altogether dissimilar. You share a certain *je ne sais quoi*, perhaps a stubborn determination to wrest

a living in a world designed by physicists and podiatrists. Like you he must live by his wits, even if it is a different sort of wits. You are by far more dangerous than he is. And I do feel sorry for him, I who was given everything by doting parents, a spoiled-rotten only child who always got his way. I gave Monty the single thing he could never really connive or wheedle or outright steal from someone—*unconditional love*. Would it be inexcusable for me to ask if your wife gives or gave you that much? Why, then, would she be divorcing you?

DR. GREENE (*removing the pipe from his mouth as if its taste had gone bad*): Once again, Mr. Wyndham, I should not allow you to say such things in my presence. If I didn't feel somehow sorry for you—

CYRIL: Sorry! (*Mockingly, but more as if he is mocking himself*;) An overpriced quack such as yourself feeling sorry for someone of *my* good breeding and talents. (*Straightening his back*;) And my perfect posture. Would you be less sorry if I took off for Denmark like that poor little in-between we've all read about in the papers? That gives you *real* men some comfort, I'm sure, waving your magical surgical knives and wishing us into what you always thought we should be. Artificial *women*. And here I sit still ever so glad to be totally male, despite it all... . Well, I *never*. (*Fans himself with a nonexistent fan as Dr. Greene continues to puff*;) You know, the amusing thing is, my delightful Doris has recently met your wife at more than one Lady's Auxiliary or Fortnightly Club salon or some-such tiresome fundraiser. Chicago is a small, small world—witness your son and my Monty. You see, now that she is my wife, people want her at certain ladies' social do's, of course—adds just a bit of bohemian flair by proxy, I gather. People always ask if I'm as terrible as I'm made out to be. Or as *beauteous*. By the way, Doris said your wife is *trés noblesse oblige*—imposing, if perhaps a little shrill. And they discussed my painting *her*! Apparently *your* wife was so interested she gave *my* wife your unlisted home number—and you know what, I might just do that! Paint her, I mean. I wouldn't mind another commission in the coming slack season. (*Assumes dreamy expression, with half-closed eyes*;) Yes, I can see it clearly: "Profile in Aquamarine," or "Elsbeth in Emeralds" or something like that, with a sort of nacreous sheen and a nautilus shell or hand-mirror in her palm and perhaps the suggestion of seaweed in her swept-back hair. Yes, yes... .a siren!

DR. GREENE: Very amusing. Do it then, she has the money. And discuss me all you like. Tell her I'm a Neanderthal. A cad. But not our son, don't mention him, I beg you. She is very sensitive on the subject.

CYRIL: You know, it's remarkable how silent both I and my subjects are when I paint. The air of a chapel or even the tomb, until something has risen from it.

DR. GREENE (*glancing boldly at his clock*): Now—about that small section of my book—I'm completely within my legal rights, you know. No one could accuse me of not altering the facts to, ahem, 'protect the innocent.'

CYRIL (*hurt in his eyes*): How awfully *crude* of you—as if I would ever think such a thing. We both have an agreement, don't we—that the character is more caricature? And that I never wore cerise socks? And I don't talk like a case-study in a textbook? If a friend were ever to read that, no one's ever going to tell him who posed for the portrait? You're not going to name names when you've had too many sidecars at the next American Psychiatric convention?

DR. GREENE: All my confidences are like Swiss bank accounts—you would need a special key and a special code. And I promise to never use so much as an eyelash of yours again!

CYRIL: As pretty as they are... . Good, then, that's settled... . As for my other *complexes*, or what you will, Doris has already suggested a marvelous young doctor who does miraculous things with injections. Oh, I *do* hope he's good-looking! Just teasing—in fact, I hope he's as old and sexless as you are, with an even worse moustache.

DR. GREENE: For your own sake, I concur.

CYRIL: Despite everything I've said, sometimes I wish I were as sexless and analytical as a scientist myself. Just to rely upon cold facts and figures, instead of trying to snare the flitting purple shadows of fancy in a muslin bag or tracing the contours of the soul in *conté*. How dashing I would look in a white smock, surgical mask, and those smart rubber elbow gloves, leaning over the smoking abyss with gas-mask and Geiger-counter. (*He mimics gazing into a void, as a warlock into a cauldron.*) A modern interpretation of Blake's Jehovah with his caliper circumscribing the universe. Oh, Galileo! Oh, Edison! You had it easy, and if one was burned at the stake and one was made a millionaire, it makes no difference—they both realized that the sky is blue not because it is prettier that way but because of some trick of the light. William James, scientist and philosopher, you make even a diaphanous being such as myself feel whole and solid.

DR. GREENE: Such *abstruse* abstraction this late in the afternoon is not very scientific, I can tell you that. (*Glances again at his clock.*)

CYRIL: Oh, for heaven's sake, you doctors and your infernal clocks! As if a few extra minutes ever made that much difference in anyone's life. My models don't complain if I hold them an extra hour or so—money in their pockets. And you can charge me this time, I don't mind. It's after five, I'm sure, so you can't have anyone else waiting, either. (*Glancing out window:*) Look, the snow is coming down like excelsior now—and tomorrow is Valentine's Day, the cruelest day of the year, and I haven't even been to my favorite *chocolatier*. I wonder—do divorcing couples still trade cards? Just out of habit?

DR. GREENE: To tell you the truth, I hadn't even thought of it! And I'm afraid Elspeth goes in more for pearls than bon-bons. Listen, Mr. Wyndham—Cyril—now that we are really more than just doctor and patient, if we were ever even so much as that, now that we are in a sense, *friends*, could I ask you something quite frankly, man to man?

CYRIL: *Really!* (*Winking:*) Such propositions usually only come much later in the evening.

DR. GREENE: Ha-ha. What I mean to say is, Cyril, a man like you has more the elusive emotions of a woman, wouldn't you say? I intend that in that best possible way.

CYRIL: If you mean that I am more *honest* in my emotions, the way a woman is, then I could accept such a comparison gladly. Contrary to their reputations, I have always found women to be the most incompetent liars, especially when it comes to matters of the heart, despite Mata Hari, despite Tokyo Rose. Remember *Lysistrata*! I can read a woman's soul as others do tea-leaves. Oh, females can fib about who forgot to put Rikki Tikki Tavi out or who misplaced the tickets for the Cunard, but their hearts are crystalline. One could even admire them for that.

DR. GREENE: Well, then, maybe you can help me to understand why when it comes to a woman and her, her *offspring*, a mother can so often love the things a father hates most? You can guess what I'm alluding to, no doubt. And I know you're yet to be a father and your Doris loves you despite any flaws in those diamonds you flash about, but can you understand why women make the choices they do? Do they do these things just to confound the beasts they call men, or is it just that they just... can't... help themselves?

CYRIL (*striking a Rodinesque pose, fist to chin*): I see... Well, I'm no lonely-hearts columnist. But I could venture that your problem is that you're asking a woman to divide her heart, a heart which much like mercury is indivisible, to ask her to stop loving one to appease the other. Doris, bless her, never wished that of me—she accepted Montgomery,

knew that she, despite any ultramodern psychological theories, couldn't really replace or substitute what only *he* could offer—but instead made of herself something different, appealing in its own right. She didn't try to compete or to conquer; she merely lay down an offering and waited.

DR. GREENE: I'm afraid Elspeth is not like that. Elspeth smothers like an early frost. All her life she has commanded—if not *demand*ed. Every bit her father the general's daughter. Someone in love can enjoy following orders, including me, damn the woman. She has played astonishing tricks upon Morris's adolescent urges and repressions. All the *Sturm und Drang* you've doubtless read about is absolutely correct. It's ironic, isn't it, that Morris hates me more than he could ever hate her.

CYRIL: Maybe *that's* why you want to ruin him.

DR. GREENE: Ruin him? That's absurd. I love him much more than his mother ever could, and he can't see that.

CYRIL: All fathers want to destroy their sons, eventually—or is it the other way around? What *does* Freud say? Really, you know so much more about these sorts of things than I do. I'm a ninny of an artist, one who's barely educated despite all those years at the Sorbonne.

DR. GREENE: Pardon me, I suppose I hadn't thought out my question well enough. It's a muddle, life. A muddle and a mystery. I suppose in the end we are *both* unhappy men.

CYRIL: Speak for yourself! I'm determined to find a balance in *my* life, as I have in my art—and to love and be loved no matter what form or function that takes. Yes, talking over these things with you today has *convinced* me that I absolutely *must* see Monty again. Doris will understand. She always understands. I could either envy or hate her for that. She would have no qualms with sharing me; she has been in on the game from the start. After all, I married her and introduced her to *people*, people she might otherwise never have met. She can never be anything but *happy*. Somehow I need to know if I can be *happier*. Only when I see Monty again, though, after all these many months, will I know exactly what it is I feel and what it is I need now. Whether you intended to or not, you've helped me to see that. But don't worry—I'll reassure Monty that that couldn't *possibly* have been your son Morris he talked with, no matter how much money it might take. You can tear up that number I gave you; you need never talk to him.

DR. GREENE (*touched, on the verge of crying*): You would—would do this for me?

CYRIL (*imitating a tough guy*): Listen, buster, I'm no magic fairy bestowing blessings... . I'm doing it out of my own selfish needs—as a way

to keep Monty under my control. It's complicated, but, you see, I know it works with him. It's not about the money, as I've already said. He's never asked for more than just enough. Remember, he's ancient now—almost 25, and other younger and prettier faces have supplanted him. He is a neurotic with morbidly onanistic tendencies. Homosexuality, I will repeat to him from texts I just can't swallow myself, is not a drive, but a defense mechanism. Listen to me analyze—who's the doctor now?! Anyhow, he'll be grateful this time in a way he never was before. Whether or not he severs ties with that coffee-colored tennis player matters not a whit to me; men like ourselves are good at sharing. Monty is stupid and pliable. And no doubt any memory of your wayward son dried up along with his hangover. When he hears I want him back he'll forget anything I tell him to forget.

DR. GREENE: But what about Doris? The baby? Your home-life?

CYRIL: Doris! Doris is strong enough and smart enough to know that she can live with or without me and that I am not so cruel as to depart her side at her hour of need. She will be an excellent mother, too, with and without me. Maybe I'm deluded in that way all we boy-lovers are, but I can keep one foot in the twilight and the other in the sun—it's my ability to adapt like a chameleon that I admire most about myself. It's funny, but the critics say much the same thing about my art—how *fluid* it is, *ambiguous*, neither this nor that, and yet that is its charm. (*Waving his handkerchief like a victorious banner:*) Oh, why ever have to choose? Why not just *be*?

DR. GREENE: I am sorry I never really had you for a patient, Cyril. It would have been a privilege, I see now. We might have gone on a remarkable odyssey together, if I'm not sounding overly poetic.

CYRIL: Ah, yes, like those goatish Argonauts of old. Seeking some gilded illusion.

DR. GREENE: Oh, we all are, Cyril, we all are! But, pardon me, to be honest, I really *must* be going to see my attorney at the Drake for dinner. *He charges by the quadrant, you know. (Pauses as he rises from his chair one last time.)* Say, do you remember when you asked me out for dinner, to meet Montgomery?

CYRIL: One never truly forgets an honest insult. (*He rises for the last time, smoothing the knees of his suit-pants.*)

DR. GREENE: I've often regretted that due to professional reasons I had to decline, but I should have been more delicate about it. Perhaps one day we can make another date?

CYRIL: A date with a distinguished older man? I like that—as long as *he's* paying! But somehow I doubt we'll cross paths again, Dr. Greene. Chicago is *such* a large city.

DR. GREENE: And yet you've often told me how small and provincial it is.

CYRIL: It's all a matter of perspective, isn't it? But I suppose I must run, too, before all the State Street stores close like steel traps on procrastinating lovers.

DR. GREENE: Of course. But do tell me—will you be buying one card or two? Ha!

CYRIL (*as they cross room toward the door together*): A gentleman never kisses and tells! Oh, God, the clichés I can spout when I haven't had anything to drink since lunch... . Oh, my handkerchief! (*Without warning he has turned to go back and retrieve the item from the chair; once he has picked it up he comes face-to-face with the Van Gogh in the center of the room again and, stands examining it one last time.*) The yellow chair, the *yellow* chair—like a misplaced theatrical prop, a symbol out of Maeterlinck, but what for? You psychologists say every dream and artistic gesture hides some truth. Here, something bright in a dull, dark room. *Obvious*. But, tell me, why something as common as *that*? (*Bows to the reproduction and returns to Dr. Greene's side.*) Goodbye, Dr. Greene. It has been a most *entertaining* afternoon. And I am truly sorry for any... . *misunderstandings*. (*Both men fumble for their coats and hats on a chrome and cherry-wood rack which we never noticed before. Cyril's are, of course, the more dashing articles.*)

DR. GREENE: As am I. And my occasional *unfortunate* choice of words. (*Their hats on, he shoves open the door:*) But please, call me Edmund now, won't you? If we ever do meet again, which we're bound to. No more false formalities... . Will you accompany me down in the elevator?

CYRIL: *Edmund?*—no, sorry, it doesn't sound right. (*Perhaps impulsively Dr. Greene takes Cyril's coat from him and holds it open for Cyril to shuffle into.*) You should be a Ludwig or Horace, maybe—but *never* an Edmund... . (*Smiling as he buttons and pats down his overcoat:*) As for the elevator—I never told you about this little *phobia* of mine, did I? Thank God I only live on the fifth floor. Ah, now that I think of it, *that's* what we should have been working on! So, no thanks—taking thirty flights of stairs down will act as the other half of my calisthenics for the day. (*Stepping over threshold as Dr. Greene holds the door.*) And give me time to think of what to say on my card—or cards. (*Winks—or did he?*)

DR. GREENE: Then I suppose I must bid farewell to you here.

CYRIL: Yes, it seems you must.

DR. GREENE (*standing in doorway*): And I do wish you happiness.

CYRIL (*looking back as he exits, tilting his hat*): Oh, I know you still consider me a sick, confused man, doctor. Perhaps some day, far in the future, it won't always be so, your seeing me as your inferior. Maybe science will discover that what we both have perceived to be a weakness is actually a strength— Though I doubt things will ever change *that* much... . *Tant pis!* In the meantime, I won't fret about it! *Adieu, Herr Doktor Greene!* (*He starts to walk off, and his voice echoes and gradually fades down the hallway.*) You've been a true gentleman, even if I can't say a single doctor has ever *really* been able to help me—except maybe that man with his happy pills—nevertheless, I don't and can't blame you. You too are a victim of your conditioning and society's expectations and you probably clung to your mother, and your father held... . (*He can no longer be heard as we hear elevators chime in the distance and perhaps a little celestial music. Dr. Greene walks off alone with his overcoat over his arm, looking somewhat like a distracted oracle as the lights go down.*)

End

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