

PRUDENCE. Perhaps not. But I can return to my apartment. You're making my headache worse.

STUART. I think we should finish the session. I think it's important.

PRUDENCE. I just can't talk anymore.

STUART. We don't have to talk. But we have to stay in the room.

PRUDENCE. How much longer?

STUART. *(Looks at watch)* 30 minutes.

PRUDENCE. Alright. But I'm not going to talk anymore.

STUART. Okay.

*(Pause; THEY stare at one another)*

STUART. *(Continued)* You're very beautiful when you're upset.

PRUDENCE. Please don't you talk either.

*(THEY stare at each other; lights dim)*

## ACT I

## Scene 3

*The office of CHARLOTTE WALLACE. Probably reddish hair, bright clothing; a Snoopy dog on her desk. If there are walls in the set around her, they have drawings done by children.*

CHARLOTTE. *(Into intercom)* You may send the next

patient in, Marcia. *(SHE arranges herself at her desk, smiles in anticipation)*

*(Enter BRUCE. HE sits)*

CHARLOTTE. *(Continued)* Hello.

BRUCE. Hello. *(Pause)* Should I just begin?

CHARLOTTE. Would you like to begin?

BRUCE. I threw a glass of water at someone in a restaurant.

CHARLOTTE. Did you?

BRUCE. Yes.

CHARLOTTE. Did they get all wet?

BRUCE. Yes.

*(Silence)*

CHARLOTTE. *(Points to child's drawing)* Did I show you this drawing?

BRUCE. I don't remember. They all look alike.

CHARLOTTE. It was drawn by an emotionally disturbed three year old. His parents beat him every morning after breakfast. Orange juice, Toast, Special K.

BRUCE. Uh huh.

CHARLOTTE. Do you see the point I'm making?

BRUCE. Yes, I do, sort of. *(Pause)* What point are you making?

CHARLOTTE. Well, the point is that when a porpoise first comes to me, it is often immediately clear... Did I say porpoise? What word do I want? Porpoise. Pompous. Pom Pom. Paparazzi. Polyester. Pollywog.

Olley olley oxen free. Patient. I'm sorry, I mean patient. Now what was I saying?

BRUCE. ~~Something about when a patient comes to you.~~

CHARLOTTE. (Slightly irritated) Well, give me more of a clue.

BRUCE. ~~Something about the child's drawing and when a patient comes to you?~~

CHARLOTTE. Yes. No, I need more. Give me more of a hint.

BRUCE. I don't know.

CHARLOTTE. Oh I hate this, when I forget what I'm saying. Oh, damn. Oh, damn damn damn. Well, we'll just have to forge on. You say something for a while, and I'll keep trying to remember what I was saying. (She moves her lips)

BRUCE. (After a bit) Do you want me to talk?

CHARLOTTE. Would you like to talk?

BRUCE. I had an answer to the ad I put in.

CHARLOTTE. Ad?

BRUCE. Personal ad.

CHARLOTTE. (Remembering, happy) Oh, yes. Personal ad. I told you that was how the first Mr. Wallace and I met. Oh yes. I love personal ads. They're so basic. Did it work out for you?

BRUCE. ~~Yes. I liked her, and I tried to be emotionally open with her. I even let myself cry.~~

CHARLOTTE. Good for you!

BRUCE. But she didn't like me. And then she threw water in my face.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, dear. Oh, I'm sorry. One has to be so brave to be emotionally open and vulnerable. Oh, you poor thing. I'm going to give you a hug. (SHE

~~hugs him and kisses him with her Snoopy doll. What did you do when she threw water in your face?~~

~~BRUCE. I threw it back in her face.~~

CHARLOTTE. Oh good for you! Bravo! (SHE barks for Snoopy and bounces him up and down) Ruff ruff ruff! Oh, I feel you getting so much more emotionally expressive since you've been in therapy, I'm proud of you.

BRUCE. ~~Maybe it was my fault. I probably came on too strong.~~

CHARLOTTE. Uh, life is so difficult. I know when I met the second Mr. Wallace...you know, it's so strange, all my husbands have had the same surname of Wallace, this has been a theme in my own analysis...Well, when I met the second Mr. Wallace, I got a filing cabinet caught in my throat...I don't mean a filing cabinet. What do I mean? Filing cabinet, frying pan, frog's eggs, faculty wives, frankincense, fornication, follies bergère, falling falling fork, fish fork, fish bone. I got a fish bone caught in my throat. (Smiles.)

BRUCE. And did you get it out?

CHARLOTTE. Oh yes. Then we got married, and we had quite a wonderful relationship for a while, but then he started to see this fish wife and we broke up. I don't mean fish wife, I mean waitress. Is that a word, waitress?

BRUCE. Yes. Woman who works in a restaurant.

CHARLOTTE. No, she didn't work in a restaurant, she worked in a department store. Sales...lady. That's what she was.

BRUCE. That's too bad.

CHARLOTTE. He was buying a gift for me, and then

he ran off with the saleslady. He never even gave me the gift, he just left me a note. And then I was so very alone for a while. *(Cries. After a bit, he gives her a hug and a few kisses from the Snoopy doll. She is suitably grateful.)* I'm afraid I'm taking up too much of your session. I'll knock a few dollars off the bill. You talk for a while, I'm getting tired anyway.

BRUCE. Well, so I'm sort of afraid to put another ad in the paper since seeing how this one worked out.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, don't be afraid! Never be afraid to risk, to risk! I've told you about "Equus", haven't I? That doctor, Doctor Dysart, with whom I greatly identify, saw that it was better to risk madness and to blind horses with a metal spike, then to be safe and conventional and dull. Ecc, ecc, equus! Naaaaaaay!

*(For Snoopy)* Ruff ruff ruff!

BRUCE. So you think I should put in another ad?

CHARLOTTE. Yes I do. But this time, we need an ad that will get someone more exceptional, someone who can appreciate your uniqueness.

BRUCE. In what ways am I unique? *(Sort of pleased)*

CHARLOTTE. Oh I don't know, the usual ways. Now let's see. *(Writing on pad)* White male, 30 to 35, 5'7"-5'10", 160-185 lbs, green eyes, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, into Kierkegaard, Mahler, Joan Didion and sex, seeks similar-minded attractive female for unique encounters. Sense of humor a must. Write box whatever whatever. There, that should catch you someone excellent. Why don't you take this out to the office, and my dirigible will type it up for you. I don't mean dirigible, I mean Saskatchewan.

BRUCE. Secretary.

CHARLOTTE. Yes, that's what I mean.

BRUCE. You know we haven't mentioned how my putting these ads in the paper for women is making Bob feel. He's real hostile about it.

CHARLOTTE. Who's Bob?

BRUCE. He's the guy I've been living with for a year.

CHARLOTTE. Bob. Oh dear. I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else for this whole session. You're not Thomas Norton?

Tammy  
BRUCE. No, I'm Bruce Lathrop.

CHARLOTTE. Oh yes. Bruce and Bob. It all comes back now. Well I'm very sorry. But this is a good ad anyway, I think, so just bring it out to my dirigible, and then come on back in and we'll talk about something else for a while. I know, I mean secretary. Sometimes I think I should get my blood sugar checked.

BRUCE. Alright, thank you, Mrs. Wallace.

CHARLOTTE. See you next week.

BRUCE. I thought you wanted me to come right back to finish the session.

CHARLOTTE. Oh yes, see you in a few minutes.

*(He exits)*

CHARLOTTE. *(Continued)* *(Into intercom)* Marcia, dear, send in the next porpoise please. Wait, I don't mean porpoise, I mean . . . pony, pekinese, parka, penis, no not that. I'm sorry, Marcia, I'll buzz back when I think of it. *(She moves her lips, trying to remember.)* Lights dim)