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# The Dying Gaul

A Play

by Craig Lucas

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL  
FRENCH**

FOUNDED 1830

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In addition, the following *must* appear in all advertising and programs used in connection with performances of the Play:

The Dying Gaul was presented in New York City  
by the Vineyard Theatre

World Premiere at the Hartford Stage Company  
Hartford, Connecticut

Artistic Director      Managing Director  
Mark Lamos              Stephen Albert

# **The Dying Gaul**

*by*

**CRAIG LUCAS**

opened on May 31, 1998  
at New York's Vineyard Theatre

Douglas Aibel, *Artistic Director*  
Jon Nakagawa, *Managing Director*

## The cast:

<i>Robert</i>	Tim Hopper
<i>Jeffrey</i>	Tony Goldwyn (replacing the injured Cotter Smith)
<i>Elaine</i>	Linda Emond
<i>Foss</i>	Robert Emmett Lunney

*Directed by* Mark Brokaw

*Scenic Design by* Allen Moyer

*Costume Design by* Jess Goldstein

*Lighting Design by* Christopher Ackerlind

*Original Music and Sound Design by* David Van Tieghem

*Production Stage Manager:* Amy Patricia Stern

*Casting by* Janet Foster

## CHARACTERS

Robert  
Jeffrey  
Elaine  
Foss

*The Dying Gaul* takes place in 1995  
in Los Angeles, California.

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“Woe to him who seeks to please rather than to appall.”

— Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

*for Tony Kushner*

## ACT I

*(ROBERT alone.)*

ROBERT. "Self-salvation is for any man the immediate task. If a man lay wounded by a poisoned arrow he would not delay extraction by demanding details of the man who shot it, or the length and make of the arrow. Begin now by facing life as it is, learning always by direct and personal experience."

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*(Jeffrey's office. JEFFREY and ROBERT.)*

JEFFREY. So, Robert ... do people call you Robert or Bob?

ROBERT. Both.

JEFFREY. Which do you prefer?

ROBERT. I don't ... I sort of like to see which they prefer and then that tells them something, tells me something about them.

JEFFREY. I gotcha. Interesting. You're a very good writer.

ROBERT. Thank you.

*(Pause.)*

JEFFREY. What kind of movies do you like? You like movies?

ROBERT. Oh yeah.

JEFFREY. You do. What are some of your favorite movies?

ROBERT. Oh, you know, I like all kinds of movies.

JEFFREY. You do.

ROBERT. Oh yeah, I like, you know, movie movies, and I like old movies and foreign movies.

*(Pause.)*

## THE DYING GAUL

JEFFREY. What was your favorite movie last year?

ROBERT. Last year? I don't really go in for favorites, you know, I sort of think each movie, like each painting or book or ... national park ... is actually unique and to be appreciated as such, god I sound like an English professor, I like ... I liked very much ... um ... I thought that, uh ...

JEFFREY. That's okay.

ROBERT. No, I liked that English — *Howard's End*, and I loved the dinosaur movie. I mean I like all uh ... every thing along the continuum.

(*Short pause.*)

JEFFREY. Well, we're interested in your script.

ROBERT. What?

JEFFREY. We're interested in *The Dying Gaul*.

(*Short pause.*)

ROBERT. Okay.

JEFFREY. So. That's that ... (*Short pause.*) Your agent is ... ?

ROBERT. Dead.

JEFFREY. Oh.

ROBERT. Yeah. Malcolm Cartonis.

JEFFREY. I'm sorry.

(*Pause.*)

ROBERT. Yeah.

JEFFREY. Who's ... ? ... taken over for him?

ROBERT. Well, nobody, unfortunately, he was kind of a one-man band ...

JEFFREY. Well, a good one, obviously, because he got us the script and I read it and Kohlberg's read it.

ROBERT. He has?

JEFFREY. Yes. We don't greenlight anything without his approval.

ROBERT. Greenlight?

JEFFREY. No, I'm not saying we're making your script, I'm saying we've all read it and we all think it's good ... and that's why I'm talking to you. (*Intercom buzzes.*) Yes?

WOMAN'S VOICE. Your wife.

JEFFREY. All right. (*To ROBERT:*) Excuse me. (*Into receiver:*) Hi ... Sure ... Sure ... Sure ... Sure ... Okay. Love you too. (*He hangs up.*) Where do you think you want to go with the script?

ROBERT. I'm sorry?

JEFFREY. Where else do you want to go with the script?

ROBERT. Well, I ... I guess I could take it to some of the independents.

JEFFREY. No, no, no ... what a doll you are. What kind of work do you want to do on it?

ROBERT. Oh. Oh, sorry ...

JEFFREY. That's okay. That was just so sweet. From acceptance to total rejection, you took it all in stride. What kinds of things have you thought about, or do you think it's finished as it is?

ROBERT. Well, it's as far as I could take it without some sort of input from a director.

JEFFREY. Uh-huh. And who's your dream director?

ROBERT. Oh, Gus Van Sant, I guess. Since Truffaut's dead.

JEFFREY. Good. He's very good. Would you like me to show him the script?

ROBERT. Yeah, sure, why not?

JEFFREY. Good. 'Cause I already have. And he likes it.

ROBERT. Do you have any smelling salts?

JEFFREY. You're really very charming. He likes it very much, and he has some questions as we all do, and ... who knows if he's the right person or not, but I wanted to talk to you first before we set up a meeting. What's the title, explain the title to me.

ROBERT. Well, you know, they go to that museum in Rome ...

JEFFREY. Ken and Maurice.

ROBERT. ... and they see the sculpture ...

JEFFREY. Yeah, yeah, yeah, but why is that the name of the movie?

ROBERT. Because. Oh, I see, because they feel that the statue in

depicting the, like, the defeated, the vanquished--

JEFFREY. Uh-huh.

ROBERT. ... and dying soldier, and the Gauls fought naked and without armor —

JEFFREY. Right.

ROBERT. — so he's so young and defenseless ...

JEFFREY. Beautiful.

ROBERT. With just this little hole in his side ... otherwise ... and being that the statue is *by* a Roman, by one of those whose side was responsible for all the slaughter, it would be like an American making a statue honoring the suffering of ... one of the countries we've fought, a person from ...

JEFFREY. From where?

ROBERT. One of, whatever countries we've invaded, not invaded. You know what I'm saying. Like ...

JEFFREY. Okay, so, Ken and Maurice see this sculpture of this ... Gaul. Who is dying ... And?

ROBERT. And they identify with the Gaul in a way because they're gay and so many of their friends are dying and they keep looking for some kind of response from the enemy ...

JEFFREY. Right?

ROBERT. And then remember where they talk about the sculpture and say ... "Well, what good did it do the poor guy who bled to death, the guy in the —?"

JEFFREY. Right. Right.

ROBERT. But at least ... maybe ... some kind of compassion was awakened in the Romans, and maybe at some time in the future as a result of someone *seeing* the sculpture, maybe some other ...

JEFFREY. Gaul.

ROBERT. ... was, somebody took pity or spared some other French peasant from ...

JEFFREY. Yeah, I get it. That's very ...

ROBERT. It's kind of oblique.

JEFFREY. No, I understand, and it has a political overtone.

ROBERT. That's right. Which I imagine ...

JEFFREY. No, no, we're not afraid of that, we're not afraid of anything, the idea, obviously, is to reach as many people as possible

and to have the broadest appeal, so that we can make money, but also so that ... to whatever degree the movie affects people, it can also serve as a kind of Dying Gaul for the viewers. I mean, if you even look at a movie like ... well, say, just to pick something, *Tootsie*, which we didn't make but which is a very good movie —

ROBERT. It's a great comedy.

JEFFREY. It says something ... in a small, but totally amusing way ... and you don't see it coming: about men and women. The guy is an arrogant ... you know, chauvinist, and he, for his own reasons, dresses up, feels he has to dress up as a woman, and as a result, he learns something about what it means to be a man. He finds, it's so obvious, if you know it's there, but he finds a feminine side to himself and vows: you don't actually see it happen, but you know he does it —

ROBERT. Uh-huh.

JEFFREY. — he vows not to be such an asshole, and you feel good for him.

ROBERT. Yeah.

JEFFREY. So that's the kind of political statement you can slip an audience without their feeling they've been had or they're being lectured.

ROBERT. Right.

JEFFREY. And ... Well, *The Dying Gaul* isn't a comedy, it's a weepie, what I call — *Like Terms of Endearment*. And these movies are *Very Hard To sell*.

(Pause.)

ROBERT. Uh-huh.

JEFFREY. They're *Very Hard*. (Pause.) And they're my favorite kind of movie. They just have to be made with care. And ... *The Silence of the Lambs* is another one which touches on feminist ideology without ... Did you like that movie?

ROBERT. Yes and no.

(Short pause.)

JEFFREY. Okay.

ROBERT. Did you make it?

JEFFREY. No, no. No, no ... Why didn't you like it?

ROBERT. The, uh, faggy portrayal of the killer.

JEFFREY. He's not gay. Jamie Gumm is not gay.

ROBERT. Yeah, that's what I heard, but I think that's a bunch of bullshit. Because he has the poodle —

JEFFREY. I had a poodle. My wife and I had a poodle.

ROBERT. Yeah, but I bet you don't wear nipple rings and put on eyeliner and, you probably don't cut up women because you want to be one.

*(Pause.)*

JEFFREY. You never know.

ROBERT. True.

*(Short pause.)*

JEFFREY. So what are we gonna do? Do you want to sell this script?

ROBERT. Sure.

JEFFREY. And ... do you want to do the re-writes?

ROBERT. Well ... what do you mean?

JEFFREY. I mean ... are you interested in doing the re-writes or do you want to sell the script outright?

ROBERT. I don't ... *Of course.* I don't want somebody else ...

JEFFREY. Okay.

ROBERT. ... mucking around with this —

JEFFREY. Good. Great. I'm glad you're ... I'm sorry you don't have an agent, though. Are you going to sign with somebody else?

ROBERT. Oh, I don't know, Malcolm was a really close friend and ... *(Short pause.)* I haven't been able to find another agent.

*(Pause.)*

JEFFREY. We can deal directly with you. Or recommend a lawyer. Oh, I should let business affairs call you, we should stick to the

artistic discussion. They'll offer you more than minimum, so, with the re-writes, you know, this could be a couple hundred thousand, but ... don't let that sway you. What? ... Okay, so ... I understand your reasons for wanting the men to be men, because of the political dimension, but ... Ken and Maurice.

ROBERT. I'm not making them heterosexual.

JEFFREY. No, no. *Please.*

ROBERT. I'm sorry.

JEFFREY. No, I mean, I understand ... I read your script, Robert, I know what kind of person you are.

ROBERT. I'm sorry.

JEFFREY. I'm not asking you to jettison any of your principles.

*(Pause.)*

ROBERT. Sorry.

JEFFREY. We like. Your script. *(Intercom buzzes.)* Hold all my calls. *(Silence.)* What ... Presumably you are looking for something universal ... in the experience of two gay men ... which a wider audience can identify with.

ROBERT. You could say that.

JEFFREY. Would that be a true statement? ... Okay. You want to reach as many people as possible with the universal human ... *truth* about these two characters. One of whom is a Person With AIDS. Now. Don't. Say. Anything ... until ... Okay. Most Americans. Hate. Gay people. They hear it's about gay people, they won't go.

ROBERT. What about *Philadelphia*?

JEFFREY. *Philadelphia* is about a man who hates gay people. Period. And it's been done. To get people into the theater, the movie theater, they have to think it's going to be fun. Or sensational. Or ... some kind of — make them feel fantastic about themselves. No one. Goes to the movies. To have a bad time. Or to learn anything. To be improved. Do we agree with this?

*(Pause.)*

ROBERT. Yes.

JEFFREY. What is important is what they leave the theater with. Yes? ... And if they don't ... *enterrrrrr* ... the theater, they don't get a chance to leave it. Is this all acceptable to you ... as a thesis? *(Pause.)* No one is going to see *The Dying Gaul*. If you make it with Tom Cruise — who wouldn't go near it for a hundred million dollars, oh fuck, he'd blow me and you for a hundred million dollars, but you know what I'm saying, and with ... Clint Eastwood ... and got Steven Spielberg to direct it and released it in two hundred million screens ... No one. Is going. To see. *The Dying. Gaul.* *(Pause.)* I am sorry. Now. If we make Maurice a woman dying of AIDS, and let's face it, heterosexuals are also getting AIDS, in disastrous numbers.

ROBERT. I want nothing to do with this.

JEFFREY. We'll write our own script based loosely on *The Dying Gaul* —

ROBERT. Fine.

JEFFREY. Or we'll give you one million dollars for your script.

*(Pause.)*

ROBERT. A million dollars?

JEFFREY. With which you can go out and write four hundred new screenplays about men with, gay men with AIDS, without AIDS, a gay love story, whatever is the most important to you.

ROBERT. If you want the script so much —

JEFFREY. We think it is good. Robert. We want to make your script, and we will pay you for it. We will not make *The Dying Gaul* with two men in bed, falling in love, surviving pain and all the blah blah blah, it's not going to happen. Ever. Ever. Ever. I will guarantee you the first re-write, *twice* scale, because you are a wonderful writer, with a beautiful visual sense, and a realistic understanding of forward action, which is not nothing, and an appreciation of the innate laws of storytelling as it directly relates to movie-making, and there are about mmmmmaybe twenty of you. In the world. We want your script. We want you to re-write it.

ROBERT. This is so ...

JEFFREY. I know. Sit down. *(Pause.)* Please? You don't have to stay, or agree, you just, you could listen.

ROBERT. Ohhh ...

(Pause.)

JEFFREY. There can be minor characters who are gay. They don't have to be gags.

ROBERT. Oh, they can be noble, right?

JEFFREY. They don't have to be noble. They can be whatever you want. They cannot be the center of the story, because the center of the country is not gay and the center of the country is what pays for the movies to be made.

ROBERT. The center of the country isn't black, either, but they made *Malcolm X*.

JEFFREY. Yes. In fifty or twenty-five or maybe even who knows how many years we can make the gay version of *Malcolm X*, and people will go, but they will not go now in 1995, and how we know this is empirical observation.

(Pause.)

ROBERT. Were you serious about the million dollars?

JEFFREY. Are we having a conversation, Robert —

ROBERT. I'm going to take the script to Paramount —

JEFFREY. Yes, we are serious about the million dollars.

ROBERT. Somebody wants to be in my movie. Who wants to be in my movie?

JEFFREY. I told you that Gus Van Sant is interested, he has not committed —

ROBERT. Oh come on, you're not gonna let Gus Van Sant direct this movie until he makes a giant blockbuster which he will never do —

JEFFREY. He might.

ROBERT. — and you'll fire him before we ever go into production and bring in Joel Fucking Schumacher.

JEFFREY. It's not a bad idea, you know, and he's gay!

ROBERT. *Who wants to be in the movie?* Tell me now or it's a million and a half.

## THE DYING GAUL

JEFFREY. Tom Cruise and Michelle Pfeiffer. And Denzel Washington, Martin Sheen, Jim Carrey and Winona Rider, Meg Ryan, Daniel Day Lewis, Debra Winger and Johnny Depp ... among others. I wish you would sit.

ROBERT. Word travels fast. Who wants to play Maurice?

JEFFREY. They all want to play Maurice, but we can work that out.

*(Pause.)*

ROBERT. You have virtually no idea how much one million dollars would mean in my life. I live in a basement apartment which floods when it rains, because I am still paying off my college loan. I have a son for whom I pay child support, and Malcolm who just died, my agent, was also my lover.

*(Pause.)*

JEFFREY. I'm sorry.

ROBERT. I can't in good conscience ... take this money from you.

JEFFREY. You are an amazing and lovely person, Robert, and you have succeeded in making me feel like a total scumbag.

ROBERT. Good. I'm glad.

*(Pause.)*

JEFFREY. How's your health?

ROBERT. It's okay. I'm negative.

JEFFREY. Good.

ROBERT. Yeah, I check it every two seconds, Maurice and — I mean Malcolm, god oh god, Malcolm and I always had safe sex. Can't I write you a new script, something altogether —

JEFFREY. We want *The Dying Gaul*, and we want you to write it. Take the million and write something else.

*(Pause.)*

ROBERT. Oh Jesus ...

JEFFREY. Yes? *(Pause. ROBERT nods. Into the intercom:)* Liz, would you call Albert in Business Affairs and ask him to come on down here, please, give me two minutes. *(Pause.)* Congratulations. You are a millionaire. *(Pause.)* Do you want to see the brand new Mike Leigh? Have you seen it?

ROBERT. No.

JEFFREY. Are you interested?

ROBERT. Sure.

JEFFREY. *(Into the intercom:)* Liz, would you arrange a private screening for this evening with Robert Isaacson and me for the Mike Leigh, then book a table at Spago for ten-thirty — *(To ROBERT:)* You have plans?

ROBERT. No. No.

JEFFREY. *(Into intercom:)* And call my wife and tell her I have to work late, please, tell her I'll call her from the restaurant. *(Pause.)* You're very talented, and very lucky, and so we are we. I feel good about this, Robert ... I want you to feel good. *(Short pause.)* Yes? *(Pause.)* What's wrong?

ROBERT. I can't really ... I can't say.

JEFFREY. What? Tell me? *(Short pause.)* Hey. Hey. Hey. Hey. It's going to be a beautiful movie, and you are going to write more movies, and some day ... you are going to be able to write your own. Ticket. Do you ... Look at me. I mean that ... I mean that, Robert. Look at Spike Lee. He makes movies he cares about ... About his own people. And they make money. And that will happen. For you. I want that for you. Come here ... Give me a hug. *(They hug.)* Okay? *(ROBERT nods.)* You are very very handsome ... And I'm getting ... a little ... turned on ... Are you? *(Short pause.)* You can do anything you want. As long as you don't call it what it is. You understand?

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*(ROBERT alone.)*

ROBERT. "The first fact of existence is the law of change or impermanence. Life is a bridge, therefore build no house on it. Whoso-

ever clings to any form, however splendid, will suffer by resisting the flow.”

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(Jeffrey's home. ROBERT, ELAINE and JEFFREY.)

ROBERT. So beautiful.

ELAINE. Well, spend a few hours driving around up here in the canyon and nearby, you'll sneer at us.

(Short pause.)

ROBERT. But your garden.

JEFFREY. Two seconds, sorry!

ROBERT. These incredible bromeliads.

ELAINE. You know plants?

ROBERT. Some. Malcolm, my lover who ...

ELAINE. Yes.

ROBERT. Was obsessed with herbs and all flowers, he knew everything.

ELAINE. You have a garden?

ROBERT. Well, I have the remnants of what he left in a, oh, it's a little fenced in plot behind my apartment; when he was really sick, I, he would tell me what to pull up, when to water ... Now it's ...

ELAINE. I don't have a single idea what all this is, the gardener put everything in, I planted these couple of lettuces and mache or these edible flowers —

ROBERT. Nasturtium.

ELAINE. — in between, so I could make fresh salads which I hardly ever do.

ROBERT. You should, I think you should be careful about —

JEFFREY. (*Overlapping to ELAINE:*) Offer him something to drink.

ROBERT. I think this here might be monkshood —

JEFFREY. Baby?

ELAINE. What can I get you to drink?

ROBERT. Oh, gosh, I feel I should say spring water, but I'd

really like a vodka.

ELAINE. Peppered? Lemon? Ketel One?

ROBERT. Oh, I'll drink 'em all and we'll stay all night. Just a plain ... But you know —

ELAINE. (*Overlapping:*) Up?

ROBERT. Sure. But ... you should ... (*ELAINE exits.*) Some of these ...

(*JEFFREY is on hold.*)

JEFFREY. Some view, huh?

ROBERT. Oh god.

JEFFREY. There are days I can't believe, I wake up early or come home especially late — (*Into the phone:*) Uh-huh? Okay. (*He hangs up.*) I'll look out and think: I live here. This is actually my home. When is someone going to march in and demand the keys back ...

(*He kisses Robert, gropes him.*)

ROBERT. Should ... ?

JEFFREY. It's okay. I want to lick you from head to toe ... and ... and have you inside — (*ELAINE returns.*) — the foreign markets and video, you'll be able to have a second house looking down on *us* ...

ELAINE. Oh, everyone looks down on us, that's nothing. What part of town do you live in, Robert?

ROBERT. Oh god. I live in West Hollywood in a rental.

JEFFREY. Not for long.

ROBERT. Oh, I don't want to change anything, not for now. I don't want to get used to ...

ELAINE. Oh, you will. Elevator going up! Up and up; the context shifts, things you thought were luxuries become essential ...

ROBERT. Uh-huh.

ELAINE. Suddenly your decisions are ... *informed* by your desire to own *another* Balthus.

JEFFREY. Darling. He's just made the first money he's ever seen in his life, he's paying child support and alimony, he's not thinking about ...

ELAINE. No? Take a look at *Faust*, that's all I'm saying. Decide for yourself.

JEFFREY. They told me not to marry Cassandra, but I don't know, she seemed so ... prescient.

*(Pause.)*

ELAINE. How many kids do you have?

ROBERT. One. We had him the second it was clear to both of us that our love was probably not gonna make me straight, and I think we thought in that ... idiotic way of our ... fear and twenty-four-ish-ness ... that ...

ELAINE. Oh, but you must love him.

ROBERT. Oh yeah, but ... Yeah, of course. He's ... he's my life now. He and his mom live in New York.

*(Pause.)*

ELAINE. I'm sorry about your friend. *(Short pause.)* When did he die?

ROBERT. January.

ELAINE. Of this year?

ROBERT. Uh-huh.

ELAINE. So you're still ...

ROBERT. Uh-huh.

ELAINE. Oh god.

JEFFREY. ... Rough.

*(Pause.)*

ROBERT. Sides of me ... things I didn't know were there have sprung up ... taken over.

ELAINE. Such as?

ROBERT. Oh, I'm like famished, you know, for distraction.

ELAINE. Such —

JEFFREY. Well, I mean,  
that — it stands to reason.

ROBERT. Oh ... the computer.

ELAINE. I just got my first.

ROBERT. Oh really?

JEFFREY. As we limp into modernity ... the last on the block to have e-mail at home.

ELAINE. I hear it's already passé, I'm so ...

ROBERT. Oh, not to me. Send me e-mail, I'll answer, I sit all day, days in a row — surfing the Internet?

ELAINE. Do you do those chat rooms? (*To JEFFREY:*) What?, he doesn't have to answer.

ROBERT. No, I don't mind. I love them. Actually. They're like life after death, I think ...

ELAINE. How so?

ROBERT. There's all these voices, you know? (*Jeffrey's cell phone rings.*) ... these disembodied ... souls ...

JEFFREY. (*Into phone:*) Yeah ... Oh, fuck him ... Fuck him ... No, tell him I said it ... I'm perfectly — This is, okay —

ELAINE. Go on. Please.

ROBERT. No faces, no cor —

JEFFREY. (*Same time:*) This is my message: Fuck you, Scott. Fuck — If he asks —

ELAINE. Jeff!

JEFFREY. — why I'm angry, tell him I said "Fuck. You."

(*JEFFREY's conversation continues, unheard.*)

ROBERT. Sorry. No corporeal being at all —

ELAINE. Uh-huh.

ROBERT. ... floating in this ... *place* where, that doesn't even exist, really ... You ... only touch in the sense that you see a reflection of them and they see some sort of reflection of you, but only what you want them to see: it can be the most essential part of you, but that's your choice, you know?

ELAINE. Well ... not really: I haven't seen them, I've only heard.

ROBERT. I mean, well, the Buddhists — You know anything about Buddhism? — Buddhists believe that the only thing after life is the cumulative effect of our actions: karma, and that's what it's like,

all this karma just colliding in the middle of *nowhere* —

(JEFFREY hangs up and re-emerges.)

ELAINE. Uh-huh. But I'm interested in hearing about the sex part.

JEFFREY. Of course you are, and that's why we love you, more vodka, Robert?

ROBERT. No. Yes, please.

ELAINE. You want to, hey, you want to see my ... *lllllaptop?*

ROBERT. Ssssssure.

JEFFREY. (*Overlapping:*) Oh, great.

(JEFFREY exits; ELAINE gets her laptop.)

ELAINE. I can't figure out a fucking thing about this thing ... Jeffrey's busy making his ... twelve figures and my kids are too young ... The guy —

ROBERT. Oh, wow, look at this.

ELAINE. Is it good?

ROBERT. Well, it's kind of a Silver Cloud compared to my used bicycle.

(JEFFREY returns with bottle of vodka.)

JEFFREY. Let me just say that we have to be relatively sober, or I do, by the time the scores come in after the screening ...

ELAINE. I hate hate hate hate these screenings.

JEFFREY. You don't have to go.

ELAINE. I hear about a project for years sometimes and never meet the writers until we go to the mall. I think they should spell it M-A-U-L. So I insisted on meeting you before I had to see you completely crestfallen — whenever your movie does get made — shaken, trembling, cast aside. And Jeffrey made you sound like there was a glint of a human being in there, so I had to see for myself. Watch everyone's faces when the scores come in. Just *watch*.

JEFFREY. It isn't —

ELAINE. The harder the writers have struggled to keep some sort of sense or artistry or meaning in their story —

JEFFREY. It —

ELAINE. — the worse the picture does, always, because Jeffrey is always right ... (To JEFFREY:) Hm?

JEFFREY. Nothing.

ELAINE. Maybe as a Buddhist you won't be so susceptible to all that.

JEFFREY. You're a Buddhist?

ROBERT. Well ...

ELAINE. So show me how to get online. Oh, I'm already on. *Rob131?*

ROBERT. I signed on as your guest.

ELAINE. So this is the name you use ... ?

ROBERT. Sometimes. You can have as many names as you want.

ELAINE. You can?

ROBERT. Make up a completely different profile.

ELAINE. So for every facet of your personality ... ?

ROBERT. Exactly.

ELAINE. Mmmm. So how do we get to the really filthy rooms?

JEFFREY. Yeah, I want to see, too.

ELAINE. I can sign on, and that's about it.

ROBERT. Okay, let's see, click on MEMBER rooms —

ELAINE. And then you see peoples' members?

ROBERT. Well, you can, actually, I mean, you know, people send naked photos ... Here, I like this room, *Men4MenParkBench*.

ELAINE. Park bench?

ROBERT. Yeah, you know, you pretend you're sitting on or sometimes under or maybe, you know, walking by a park bench and then ... stuff happens ...

ELAINE. How?

ROBERT. What do you mean?

ELAINE. What happens?

JEFFREY. Nothing, that's the point: safe sex.

ELAINE. But, okay, can I just ask how you type and do that at the same time?

ROBERT. Well, you alternate.

## THE DYING GAUL

JEFFREY. Isn't this nice we're all getting to know one another so fast?

ROBERT. So you can click on someone's name —

ELAINE. *ILove2Lick!?*

ROBERT. — and check their profile.

JEFFREY. We gotta go, kids.

ELAINE. "Investment banker. Affectionate, tactile, roMANtic —"

JEFFREY. Gotta go.

ELAINE. "Discrete, no guy can be too hairy" ...

JEFFREY. I agree, but we can just make it in time if we —

ELAINE. (*Overlapping:*) "My idea of quickie is the entire week-end —"

JEFFREY. (*Continuous:*) — leave now —

ELAINE. "Let me teach you the Vulcan Lip Lock!" No wonder you —

JEFFREY. All aboard that's going ashore!

ELAINE. (*Without stopping:*) — want to do this all the time —

JEFFREY. Elaine — !

ELAINE. (*Overlapping, exiting:*) I gotta pee, you're the boss, Jeff, Jesus, you've kept me waiting often enough!

(*She is gone.*)

JEFFREY. She insisted. She had to meet you. Least this way she won't suspect.

ROBERT. (*Mouthed:*) SH!

JEFFREY. No, we had cork put in every room so we could be loud as we liked, Max and Debbon couldn't hear us when we came. FUCK ME, ROBERT, COME ON! INSIDE ME! (*His voice low again:*) She likes you. She really does. She's just playful and ...

ROBERT. I like her.

JEFFREY. She's incredibly smart and frustrated and ... unfulfilled and ... working on herself and I really couldn't live without her and I really can't wait till the movie starts so I can feel you in my hand ...

(*ELAINE returns.*)

ELAINE. Were you calling me?

JEFFREY. Nope, let's go.

ELAINE. Thank you for showing me your secret world, Robert, I appreciate it.

ROBERT. It was nothing.

JEFFREY. Come!

---

(Jeffrey's home. ELAINE alone.)

ELAINE. The screening turns out to be surprisingly interesting, a project Jeffrey fought for under the old head of production — and the scores are good, and we all ride back together and laugh and celebrate our new friendship and their joint project, and after we drop Robert off, after we get back and put the children to bed and Jeffrey and I have made love, he was unbelievably *excited*. Jesus, it's ... it's a little ... well, it's new having him enthusiastic about ... another human being ... not just sex, I mean, but ... and it's another, possibly one more part of his life I won't get to share in. Oh, I know Jeff likes men. And I've never minded what doesn't threaten ... us. But ... the way he kissed me ... just now ... I have to find some way in, a means to join in whatever it is they ... have or don't have ... A way — ... Well, I don't have to decide what it is I'm going to do exactly, do I? I find my little online manual ... with the house dark and all of the valley stretched out and flickering like phosphorescent fish, the tiny lights on the sound system and the fax machine, the security system, the pool, the walkways, all the faint glowing electric underpinnings of our lives which hint at the excitement I feel as I figure out how to make up a new screen name ... and sign on now as: (*Types into her laptop.*) *Skin-flute7*. Profile: "33. Venice Beach. Landscape architect." Find my way to *Men4MenParkBench*. I know he has to have a more salacious moniker than *Rob131*, but is it one of these? *MrThick*: Medical professional. *HornyZack*: Favorite quote: "If I blow your mind, you have to promise not to think in my mouth." I don't think so.

JEFFREY. (*From off:*) Come to bed!

ELAINE. I'm checking my e-mail, I'll be in! (*Pause.*) *HotHandSm*: "If you're not happy with what you have now, how can

## THE DYING GAUL

you be happy with more?" *He* certainly doesn't work in Hollywood. *DGBottom*. Dig — ? *DogBottom*? Quote: "The purpose of life is the attainment of Enlightenment ..." Blah, blah, "the process consists in becoming what you are, look within, thou art Buddha." *Thank* you. (*She types.*) You are in *Men4MenParkBench*.

(*Under here, we hear overlapping voices murmured in the darkness, overlapping:*)

FOSS. I haven't tasted  
a cock in three and a half  
years.

JEFFREY. What's up?

ROBERT. Big juicy un-  
cut dick ready to be serviced.

FOSS. Like UR handle.

ROBERT. Me, frankly.

JEFFREY. Me too. Wanna call me?

FOSS. (*Overlapping:*) Real cannon when it goes off, huh?

ROBERT. (*Overlapping:*) Can't give out my number.

FOSS. Wanna call me?

JEFFREY. Can't give out my number.

FOSS. (*Overlapping:*) Can't give out my number.

(*The voices drop in volume, whispers under:*)

ELAINE. Like entering a warm bath. And he's right: it is like life after death ... a din of restless souls searching for the impossible, contact where there is no flesh. (*Elaine types and enters an Instant Message:*) "Hi Guys!"

FOSS. — two fingers, you're moaning, acting like you're just checking out the scenery —

JEFFREY. Hi, Skin.

ELAINE. Hi there, *Bubba*. (*A little ping sound.*) Oh, I got an instant message:

FOSS. Can I play your flute?

ELAINE. Oh, go away. (*She types.*) Anyone here ever lost a friend or a lover?

JEFFREY. — plowing your hole —

FOSS. You're in the wrong room. Skin, go to keyword "Grief," you'll find all sorts of bulletin boards and support groups.

JEFFREY. Good luck!

FOSS. You'll get through it.

*(Another ping. ROBERT and ELAINE begin exchanging Instant Messages:)*

ROBERT. I have.

ELAINE. Dogbottom! Yes. I can barely type, my fingers are shaking so badly: *(Her IM:)* It's only been a feq — a few weeks.

ROBERT. It gets worse.

ELAINE. I can't believe he said that, what if I'm suicidal? *(An IM to ROBERT:)* I think I may be suicidal.

ROBERT. I was, too. It's good you're telling someone.

ELAINE. I think about it all the time.

ROBERT. I do, too. But you need to see a professional, it's imperative.

ELAINE. Imperative, he's assuming I'm smart. *(To ROBERT:)* Do you still think about killing yourself?

ROBERT. Yes.

ELAINE. Do you picture how you'll do it?

ROBERT. I know how I'll do it.

ELAINE. How?

ROBERT. It's painful, and I don't want to give you any ideas. See a shrink!

ELAINE. Where do I find someone? *(Aside:)* Saying anything to keep him on the hook ...

ROBERT. Call the lesbian and gay hotline.

ELAINE. I don't just want anybody.

*(Short pause.)*

ROBERT. They'll refer you to several people.

ELAINE. He loves to help, doesn't he? *(Her IM:)* Did you go to a shrink?

ROBERT. Yes, I still do.

ELAINE. Where did you find them?

ROBERT. Oh, my boyfriend and I saw him together for couples counseling when he first got sick. He'd already been seeing him for years. Tell me about your lover.

ELAINE. He's beautiful, very muscular, *before*. I still talk about him in the present tense.

ROBERT. Of course.

ELAINE. Do you do that?

ROBERT. Sometimes. How did he die?

ELAINE. God. *(To ROBERT:)* TB.

ROBERT. Mine too.

ELAINE. Really?

ROBERT. Was he on the protease inhibitors?

ELAINE. *(Aside:)* Jesus — *(To ROBERT:)* ... Yes, but it was too late. Yours?

ROBERT. No.

ELAINE. Why not?

ROBERT. His doctor said he didn't qualify for any of the trials.

ELAINE. I C.

ROBERT. But I should have tried harder — gone to the underground, bribed somebody or broken into a lab — anything ...

ELAINE. You did everything you could, I'm sure.

ROBERT. You don't know that.

ELAINE. You sound like a very loving guy, I'm sure you did. *(Pause. Aside:)* I don't know where I'm getting half of this, but — *(To ROBERT:)* Did you help him die? *(Silence. Aside:)* Shit, wrong. *(To ROBERT:)* Hello?

ROBERT. Did you help yours?

ELAINE. Yes. *(Aside:)* Sure, why not?

ROBERT. You did?

ELAINE. He asked me to. You?

ROBERT. Can't say.

ELAINE. Why?

ROBERT. Don't really want to.

ELAINE. Okay. *(Aside:)* I'm blowing it.

ROBERT. Yes. I did. *(Short pause.)* You're the first person I've told. My shrink doesn't even know. No one.

ELAINE. Wow ... My grief has me thinking I'm losing my mind.  
Is that natural?

ROBERT. Yes.

ELAINE. What can I expect?

ROBERT. The worst.

ELAINE. I've been like ... crazy for sex.

ROBERT. That sounds about right.

ELAINE. What does one do?

ROBERT. Well, if you're me you trawl these rooms half the  
night and sleep with all the wrong people.

ELAINE. Like?

ROBERT. Like people you have no business fucking.

ELAINE. Like me?

ROBERT. That's right, it's too soon.

ELAINE. You don't want to fuck me?

ROBERT. See a shrink!

ELAINE. I will, please don't go.

ROBERT. Okay.

ELAINE. It would feel so good to have someone here ... Have  
you started dating again?

ROBERT. Not really.

ELAINE. Just sex.

ROBERT. Right.

ELAINE. Who's the last person you slept with? (*Pause.*) It turns  
me on to hear people tell their experiences.

ROBERT. Oh ... I met this guy through work?

ELAINE. What kind of work do you do?

ROBERT. I'm a writer.

ELAINE. Go on.

ROBERT. And he's straight or says he is, and he's got kids.

ELAINE. Wow. That's hot.

ROBERT. And he likes me to fuck him.

ELAINE. So what's wrong with that?

ROBERT. He's my boss on a project.

ELAINE. I C.

ROBERT. Yeah, so ... see a shrink.

ELAINE. (*Aside:*) He rode with me in my car and laughed at my

fucking jokes ... an hour ago.

ROBERT. Hello?

ELAINE. Did you find yours through the hotline? (*Aside:*) Where am I going with this?

ROBERT. No, he was recommended by a friend.

ELAINE. And he's really good?

ROBERT. Yes. But lots of people are good, you'll find the right one.

ELAINE. I'm afraid I'll get someone who just happens to have a lot of free time, I'm desperate. (*Aside:*) Nothing comes back, he's debating whether it's ethical to give me his shrink's phone number.

ROBERT. I'm sure my shrink can recommend someone really good, I'm seeing him tomorrow; can I e-mail you?

ELAINE. Can't I call him direct? (*Pause.*) Again, he's thinking, and in that instant it all comes clear: what I *could* do if I wanted to know more about him — this man my husband — ... if I wanted to know everything about him ...

ROBERT. Dr. Michael Foss, he's in Beverly Hills, in the book, say I said to call for a reference.

ELAINE. Thank you! My name's Sean, by the way.

ROBERT. Robert. (*Short pause.*) And you're welcome! (*Short pause.*) Night.

ELAINE. Night. Thanks again. X--X--X. (*ELAINE alone.*) Perfect and complete, like an egg, it falls at my feet ... all I have to do is pick it up. Jeffrey says it's simply a matter of what you give yourself permission to do: and there are no limits to what you can accomplish ... Assuming you can pay, he leaves that part out ... That's all it ever comes down to, isn't it?

---

(*Foss's office. ROBERT and FOSS. FOSS takes notes.*)

FOSS. Who do you want to kill? (*Pause.*) This is a dream of annihilation.

ROBERT. Me.

(*Pause.*)

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