

**Scene One:** *“The Session.” A therapist’s office on Central Park West.*

**PROJECTION:** *“The Session” - Central Park West. Right now.*

*A sofa, stage right, faces a desk, stage left, with the desk chair pulled out to face the sofa. Several framed diplomas are on display, stage left—either on the wall or on top of a table or bookcase,*

*As the scene begins, the PATIENT is sneaking around the room examining things. He finally peeks at some papers sitting in folders on top of the desk.*

PATIENT      *(looking at the papers)* I never said that!

*The PATIENT quickly closes the folder and looks over at the door. The THERAPIST enters. The PATIENT comes to attention.*

THERAPIST    *(pointing at the sofa)* Oh, you’re not... You don’t have to wait for me. You can sit down—you know that! *(beat)* Is there something wrong?

PATIENT      *(indicating the door)* Who was that? What’s so special about him you had to keep me waiting so long?

THERAPIST    Oh, did we go over? I’m sorry.

*The THERAPIST moves over to her desk chair and sits down.*

PATIENT      I’m not used to being kept waiting like that. I’m a busy man.

THERAPIST    I know. I’m sorry.

PATIENT      I could have had a manicure in the time I sat out there. Hey, that’s not a bad idea! Put a manicurist out there. Maybe a massage therapist too.

THERAPIST    *(amused)*      Interesting idea.

PATIENT      Extra income. Never a bad thing, you know.

*The PATIENT sits on the sofa.*

PATIENT      By the way, your magazines are out of date. The *Esquire’s* from last year. Time for a fresh supply, don’t you think?

THERAPIST    *(no longer amused)*    Thanks, I’ll take care of that.

PATIENT      And the plant? The big one out there in the corner? What is that thing anyway? Well, it needs watering.

THERAPIST It's artificial.

PATIENT Oh. It needs dusting, then.

THERAPIST *(peevd)* I'll see to it.

PATIENT So, who was he?

THERAPIST Who?

PATIENT The guy who used up some of my time.

THERAPIST He's just a patient like you—and we can make up the time at your next session.

PATIENT Must have serious problems. Going through a life crisis, maybe? He looked kind of goofy.

THERAPIST I'm sorry; I can't discuss my other patients.

PATIENT Of course not.

THERAPIST *(switching gears—the session has now begun)* So—how are you?

PATIENT Me? Oh, right! Wait, are you really asking how I am—I mean in a psychological sense—or was that just an icebreaker?

THERAPIST *(as if humoring a child)* You've been here before. I want to know how you are. Take the question any way you want.

PATIENT OK. I've got the hang of it. *(after a pause—in a patronizing way)* I'm fine. *(pointing at her)* See, I can tell you're disappointed! You didn't go to graduate school all those years and spend half your adult life building up your practice to hear your patients tell you they're fine. *(triumphantly)* Well, of course I'm not fine, or else I wouldn't be here!

*The THERAPIST covers her eyes and shakes her head as if to join him in a joke. She finally looks up and smiles at him.*

PATIENT Hey, I understand. Being a therapist is no picnic. Dealing with an endless procession of neurotics day after day. You know, I have this friend who always makes a point of saying he's not just a therapist—he's a PSYCHIATRIST. Because he likes working with people who really need his help. PSYCHOTICS, not neurotics, he says. He says neurotics are just people who don't have any friends to talk to.

*The PATIENT sees that the THERAPIST is no longer amused and shifts gears, suddenly all business.*

PATIENT        The thing is...sometimes I think it's not making any difference. Sometimes I think she and I are just doomed. Just absolutely not suited to be together.

THERAPIST     Then why do you keep coming here?

PATIENT        Because I feel a responsibility to give the relationship a shot. To make sure I'm not throwing something away that could be...maybe...I don't know—or maybe once was—something good. Something valuable. *(angrily)* Because I will not be accused of walking away from this relationship without being absolutely certain it's hopeless!

THERAPIST     *(calmly)* And is that what you're thinking? It's hopeless?

*The PATIENT ignores the THERAPIST's question. He gets up and walks around, eventually making his way over to examine the display of diplomas. She continues to stare at the sofa, refusing to look at him while he walks around the room, as if waiting for him to return to his seat.*

PATIENT        *(irritated)* Hey, why do therapists do that? Put their diplomas on display? As if we didn't trust them to have degrees and be properly licensed. As if we didn't know you could fake these things anyway with the right connections.

*The PATIENT reads a diploma. Picks it up and shows it to the THERAPIST.*

PATIENT        Now, c'mon—THIS one's a bit far-fetched! A Certificate in Graphic Design from Parsons? Degrees are one thing, but bragging about taking a few courses is pathetic. Especially when it has nothing to do with your practice!

*The PATIENT drops the diploma onto the THERAPIST's desk.*

PATIENT        I mean, why don't you go frame your god-damned Girl Scout badges while you're at it?

THERAPIST     Could we please . . . ?

PATIENT        It's just that...God...Jeez! ... Jesus H...! We're at an impasse. ... I don't know.

*The PATIENT starts to walk back to the sofa.*

PATIENT        A block. A big fat block in the road. That's it—a big fat block! And there's no way around it. There's just no hope!

*The PATIENT sits down.*

PATIENT THAT's what I'm thinking.

THERAPIST Tell me about it. Describe the block.

PATIENT (*irritated*) Oh, come on! I've described it many times. You know the story.

THERAPIST Tell me again.

PATIENT (*to himself*) Round and around we go. (*singing*) "Round and round the mulberry bush." (*to the therapist*) Hey, is that how that goes? (*to himself*) I don't know. Maybe that's the point. Just go round and around. Keep her busy. Keep her payments coming. Don't actually resolve anything, for God forbid her waiting room ever cleared out because people started leading satisfying lives. (*to the therapist*) All right. I get the drill. I'll be a good boy.

*The THERAPIST looks displeased.*

PATIENT Sorry—retract that. I'm not trying to turn you into my mother. O.K., here we go. She and I—that is, my wife and I—have different physical needs. And she just doesn't get it.

THERAPIST You've said that before. Why do you think such a thing? (*harshly*) Do you think she lacks the intelligence to understand your needs?

PATIENT (*sarcastically*) I don't know—maybe that's it. (*all business*) No, no, of course that's not it. She's a highly intelligent person. She has lots of degrees. I respect all that. But she's all IQ, no EQ.

THERAPIST (*pleasantly*) You've used that term before. I still don't think I understand what you mean.

PATIENT EQ. Emotional Quotient. Something I read about in a magazine. *Newsweek* maybe. Or *The New Yorker*. You know, if you kept your magazines more up to date, maybe you'd have heard about it!

*The THERAPIST refuses to react.*

PATIENT Sorry. It's, um...it's knowing how to get along with people. Being good at figuring out what they need—that sort of thing. It's like some people are very good at analyzing data—or they can do the Sunday New York Times crossword puzzle in fifteen minutes—but they're stupid when it comes to figuring out people. That's what I mean. High IQ, low EQ.

THERAPIST And you think your wife doesn't know how to get along with people? (*harshly*) Despite all she's accomplished in her career, you think she's not good at figuring people out?

*The PATIENT looks at the THERAPIST and backs down.*

PATIENT      *(to himself)* No point upsetting the woman! *(to the therapist)* Obviously she's good with people. I'm just saying maybe some people are good at being helpful to others in a general sort of way but not so good when it comes to dealing with the person they share their bed with. I mean, I don't think I'm a beast or anything. *(suddenly acting out a movie line)* I AM NOT AN ANIMAL! Hey, what's that from?

*The THERAPIST doesn't react.*

PATIENT      Forget it! I just like sex. Is that a crime? I'm a very sensual person. I've got Mediterranean blood in me, you know.

THERAPIST   You're referring to your maternal grandmother, I believe.

PATIENT      That's right. She was from Calabria—the toe of Italy. Very sensual people, the Calabrese. Now, I'm not saying it has to be every night and twice on Sunday, but my wife doles it out like an old maiden aunt with a limited supply of bonbons.

THERAPIST   That's rather harsh, don't you think?

PATIENT      I thought I was supposed to be able to speak my mind here.

THERAPIST   I'm sorry. Go on.

PATIENT      I know this is hard for you. I'm sure your other patients are a piece of cake by comparison.

THERAPIST   I already told you I'm not allowed to comment on my other patients.

PATIENT      Like the guy before me—he's your favorite, right? I bet you see him whenever he needs you. Any time, day or night, no appointment necessary! Just squeeze him in.

THERAPIST   So, you're feeling jealous? Is that what this is all about?

PATIENT      It's not about me. It's about my WIFE. The old maiden aunt. You said that was harsh. I said I thought I could speak my mind here. You apologized. And here we are.

THERAPIST   Yes, here we are.

PATIENT      *(beat)* Okay, back to my wife.

THERAPIST   Yes, back to my wife.

PATIENT No, back to MY wife. You don't have a wife.

THERAPIST Yes, YOUR wife. (*pointedly*) You DO have a wife.

PATIENT What I mean is—my wife doesn't like to have sex with me very often. Once every couple of weeks, maybe. MAYBE! That's not normal. And then she acts like she's done me this huge favor. ... Take New Year's Eve. The biggest night of the year, right? Between the holidays and my flu and her colds, we hadn't made love for weeks, and I was really pent up. So, we pack the kids off to Grandma's. We go to an expensive restaurant and have a wonderful time.

THERAPIST I'm sure she appreciated it.

PATIENT Fine, and what happens? We get home at two thirty, and she falls right asleep. Now, I can understand that. The drinking. The late hour. O.K., I get all that! But come morning, don't you think it's payback time?

THERAPIST You make it sound like a business transaction. Dinner for sex. Maybe she doesn't appreciate being thought of in that way?

PATIENT I didn't SAY any of this. I was just looking forward to some good New Year's sex. Is that so wrong? So what happens? She can't even be bothered to brush her teeth the next morning, so we make love without any kissing. And I shouldn't even call it love. I mean, there isn't any intercourse or anything. She says she isn't in the mood—so, she gives me a hand job instead. Thank you very much! Happy New Year to you, too!