

TEN-PAGE SAMPLE

SCENES

ACT I - Winter & Spring 1972

- SCENE 1: Outside a Greenwich Village Cinema, Night.
- SCENE 2: Gay Activist Alliance Office & Counseling Room,
The Next Day.
- SCENE 3: A 'GayPA' Dinner Party, Home of Larry Schwartz,
That Evening.
- SCENE 4: Ron's Apartment, Also That Evening.
- SCENE 5: Barbara's Apartment, A Few Days Later, Evening.
- SCENE 6: The Office Of Charles Socarides, The Next Afternoon.
- SCENE 7: Ron's Apartment, That Evening.
- SCENE 8: Dallas Hotel Conference Room 1, A Month Later, Evening.
- SCENE 9: Dallas Hotel Conference Room 2, The Next Morning.

ACT II - Winter & Spring 1973

- SCENE 1: Nomenclature Committee Meeting, APA New York Offices,
Several Months Later.
- SCENE 2: A nightmare, Ron's Apartment, That Night.
- SCENE 3: The Honolulu Hilton, 1973 APA Annual Convention,
Several Weeks Later.
- SCENE 4: Panel Discussion, Honolulu Hilton Conference Room,
The Next Afternoon.
- SCENE 5: GayPA Gathering, A Honolulu Bar, An Hour Later.
- SCENE 6: Charles Socarides' Honolulu Hotel Room, Later That
Evening.
- SCENE 7: Robert Spitzer's Honolulu Hotel Room, Later That
Evening.

ACT II

SCENE 2: RON'S Apartment. That Night. RON is in bed, reflecting on the eventful day. His face shows a combination of satisfaction, pride, anxiety, and restlessness. He gets under the covers and turns off the light. Lights shift to blue. Discordant music. The head of the bed starts to slowly lift into a raked position. The blanket falls off of RON and we see that he is strapped down. RON'S MOTHER appears sitting at his bedside, holding his hand. Then, out of the darkness, a 1950s NEUROSURGEON appears, with icepick and hammer in hand.

RON
So, there's no other choice?

SURGEON
There are other options, but this is the best one.

RON
You gonna put me to sleep first?

SURGEON
Anesthesia is not called for this procedure.

MA
Ronnie, you just relax now.

SURGEON
We prefer a protocol of electroconvulsive shock. You'll knock yourself unconscious. Just try not to have too many convulsions, cause then things can get messy.

RON
OK.

SURGEON
This procedure is called a transorbital lobotomy.

MA
Uh huh.

(SURGEON maps Ron's forehead with his finger.)

SURGEON

We sever certain connections between different parts of the brain. When you wake up, you feel great.

RON

But aren't you opening up the front of my head?

SURGEON

Oh goodness no. That would be quite inelegant. Besides, you might get an infection. No, here we go through the eye cavity.

MA

The eye?

SURGEON

Oh, I can assure you, it's the quickest way in. I position the icepick at a thirty-degree angle, and with a little jab of the hammer, we go right into the exact spot, swish it around like a swizzle stick. It's fast and best of all, it's cheap!

MA

Oh, thank you, doctor.

RON

Ma, I'm afraid.

(MA clutches RON's hand)

SURGEON

Oh no, son. Fear not! We received the Nobel Prize for this procedure. It's fantastic! You know, some doctors still drill little holes and then pour the drugs into your brain. Others implant electrodes much deeper into the septal region. Those haven't yet yielded good results. Patients become mute, catatonic, delusional. One patient is said to have pulled the electrodes right out of his head, mid-procedure, running out of the operating room with the wires still sticking out of his brain. Now, you wouldn't do that, would you?

MA

No, Ronnie's a good boy.

RON

I'm a good boy.

SURGEON

Yes, you are. Are you ready?

RON

Yes.

(SURGEON begins the procedure. RON continues to converse.)

RON

Doc, have you heard of what the Nazi doctors are doing over there in Europe. Some pretty awful experiments on prisoners.

SURGEON

Now Ronnie, they are barbarians. We are skilled and compassionate *American* surgeons.

(A knock of the hammer reverberates in the theater. RON moans in pain.)

SURGEON

(To Ma)

So, your son, what is he—a schizophrenic, a lunatic?

MA

He's a... homosexual.

SURGEON

Oh, goodness, you're a fairy! Not to worry. Forty percent of my lobotomy patients are homosexuals.

(SURGEON drives the icepick deeper in.)

RON

You know doc, I've been reading up in the library about famous people in history who were homosexuals.

SURGEON

Good.

RON

There's Socrates, and Alexander the Great. Leonardo da Vinci, Oscar Wilde. And Tchaikovsky.

SURGEON

That's right, son.

RON

Would you have given them the procedure, if you could?

SURGEON

Absolutely, Ron. I believe it would have helped them to be even better! Why did poor Leonardo only paint 14 paintings if he was so talented? He was likely paralyzed by his depression. Who knows how many hundreds of Mona Lisa's he would have painted if we could have treated him.

RON

What if you had hurt his eye on the way in, and he could never paint again?

SURGEON

Well, I'd certainly be very careful around his eye.

(To Ma)

You know he was arrested and thrown in jail for sodomy?

MA

No, I didn't realize.

SURGEON

Oh yes, for 3 month. With a minor! Disgusting. Is that what you want, Ronnie?

RON

No.

SURGEON

No.

RON

It's just, I don't understand. If we're so sick, why are we the ones that everyone always remembers?

MA

Ronnie, that's enough. Let the doctor do his work.

RON

OK. I'll be quiet now.

(Slight pause)

Ma. This isn't your fault. I don't want you to think that for one second! I don't care if you were too closely-binding and over-bearing. I loved you the most, and I still do. But now, they're disconnecting my brain. Oh god, it hurts.

MA

My Ronnie.

RON

It's OK, Ma, it's OK...

(DR. SPITZER emerges out of the shadows and saunters elegantly downstage. He is dressed in an immaculate tuxedo and holds a glass of scotch and a cigarette. He begins to sing, with a silky-honeyed voice.)

DR. SPITZER

*There was a boy
A very strange enchanted boy
They say he wandered very far
Very far over land and sea
A little shy and sad of eye
But very wise, was he.*

(Scratchy, black-and-white childhood home movies of RON, and Ron and MA, are projected on the back wall. Happier, carefree days. SPITZER continues to sing.)

DR. SPITZER (CONT'D)

*And then one day
One magic day he passed my way
While we spoke of many things
Fools and kings
This he said to me
The greatest thing
You'll ever learn
Is just to love
And be loved
In return*

(As the song comes to an end, RON's gurney is slowly wheeled off. Instrumental of song continues for an interval.)

ACT II

SCENE 6: SOCARIDES' Honolulu Hotel Room, Later That Night.
SOCARIDES paces aimlessly, mumbling to himself. He reaches for his presentation notes, as if to review them again, but throws them away in frustration.

SOCARIDES

(mumbling)

Bastards!

(Slight pause)

Degenerates...

(SOCARIDES then checks that his hotel room door is locked and walks over to his briefcase on the bed. He slowly takes out the gun. As he is handling it, turning it over in his hands, a bearded old man with round glasses quietly steps forward out of the darkness.)

FREUD

What are you gonna do with that, Mister?

(SOCARIDES remains with his back
to FREUD.)

SOCARIDES
Nothing. This was just for protection.

FREUD
Like a mobster.

(SOCARIDES puts the gun back in the
briefcase.)

SOCARIDES
You're here to critique me, to ridicule me, like everyone else?

FREUD
Well. Yes.

SOCARIDES
I tried to incorporate your theories...

FREUD
Did you? And?

SOCARIDES
I ended up questioning them.

FREUD
Didn't suit your needs, huh?

SOCARIDES
I admired you greatly. I just couldn't subscribe to all of them.

FREUD
That's because you universalize from your own experience,
Charles, because of your enormous ego. What those people were
saying today is true. Your research was skewed. Or you purposely
didn't research well-adjusted homosexuals.

(SOCARIDES finally turns around.)

SOCARIDES
I couldn't find any!

FREUD
Because you didn't want to. It was your conviction that
homosexuality was an aberration from the get-go, and you
proceeded to carefully create a body of evidence to support it.
You think you're outside of everything, a clean and impartial
observer, but you're not, Charles. You are prejudiced.

SOCARIDES
How could I be prejudiced? I'm a scientist!

FREUD

Scientists can be prejudiced. You somehow learned from your culture that homosexuality is bad, and you end up rationalizing it into your professional life. That sometimes happens with therapists. But those are not the best ones, I'm afraid.

(Slight pause)

You invoke my work, but I'm not sure you truly understand it. My work was meant to challenge mainstream values, expose the truth to a puritan society. Instead you stigmatize nonconformity with relish. You are unsympathetic, Charles, and unkind.

(Out of the darkness, another figure steps forward. It is a middle-aged woman with a briefcase.)

DR. EVELYN HOOKER

Oh, I'd go further...

FREUD

You're a schmuck!

HOOKER

Yes, you're a schmuck.

SOCARIDES

Who the fuck are you?!

FREUD

Oh, now it's a party!

HOOKER

So, you recognize him but you don't recognize me? Typical.

FREUD

Charles, That's Hooker.

SOCARIDES

She's a hooker?

HOOKER

Yes, I'm a hooker! Like I haven't heard that one before! What an asshole.

FREUD

Why didn't you familiar yourself with Dr. Hooker's research? It's been around since 1949. You don't like women scientists? You prejudiced against them too?

SOCARIDES

I'm not prejudiced against women.

HOOKER

Then why haven't you reviewed my study. It plainly demonstrates that all the top experts in the world failed their own tests. Couldn't distinguish between the gay boys and the straights.

FREUD

Good for you, Evelyn!

HOOKER

Thank you, Doctor.

(SOCARIDES is bewildered.)

FREUD

You should have read it, Charles.

HOOKER

Look, I understand. It's very painful when you're attacked and discredited, especially when you are as committed to therapeutic concern as you are. We all want to be right! The thing is, you genuinely thought you were doing science, but you were really just moralizing. You, and Bieber, and Rado, the whole lot of you. You were fooling yourselves. I'm not sure if it's just a lack of empathy? It could be that you're just stupid. And I say that with a lot of compassion. You might not be sophisticated enough to be a mental health professional.

FREUD

Not everyone can or should be a psychiatrist.

HOOKER

Well, you can be one, but not a very good one.

SOCARIDES

I'm furious with both of you!

FREUD

The thing is Socarides, you're dealing with real human beings. There's complexity and nuance. I think people willfully misinterpret *me* because tolerating ambiguity is difficult. But you can't just make categorical judgments, cast an entire group of people.

HOOKER

No, you can't.

FREUD

What if I said that... Greeks can only run diners. How would that make you feel?

SOCARIDES

Well, that's just insulting.

FREUD

Yes. Dealing with people... it's more of an art. What I was doing with family dynamics, early childhood experience, it was just a way of analyzing. It was a metaphor. It wasn't to indict people, it was to try and unpack their shit. And it was very much inspired by poetry and drama. I was a neurologist with an imagination. I relied on my intuition, but I never thought it was definitive. And I assumed one day people might prove me wrong.

HOOKER

You get five shrinks in a room, you get five opinions.

FREUD

That's right. And many of those opinions are made by very driven, very narcissistic people. Some want to see their patients five times a week for their ego, to control them, to fatten their own purse. Who knows? It's not all so admirable.

SOCARIDES

I never did this to get rich! God knows there were other research areas that would have been much more rewarding. But the homosexuals. They're the ultimate example of childhood neurosis. What about fear of competing with the father, the incest barrier, castration anxiety. These are your theories!

FREUD

Eh, they were just theories. Stories. The castration one I *really* overused. Anyway, the point is, even if some of them are valid, why can't you accept that there are happy homosexuals—just the way they are? If it's not causing them distress, why do you care so much?

SOCARIDES

It's causing me distress.

HOOKER

Well, maybe you should get some therapy.

SOCARIDES

These activists, they wouldn't be succeeding if we weren't so ravaged by internal disputes.

FREUD

Well, listen to your colleagues! Disagreement is good.

HOOKER

Why?—Why would you choose this area to make such a big deal about?

SOCARIDES

It's God's will.

HOOKER

Oh, Christ!

FREUD

Stop invoking god, Charles. It's unscientific! Do you know that some of the greatest men in Western culture have been homosexuals? Plato, Aristotle, Michelangelo.

HOOKER

Liberace.

(Slight pause)

What?—I love him!

FREUD

You, Charles, I'm afraid are not one of them.

SOCARIDES

You! You more than anyone, should know! The worst, the most sadistic of the Nazis that killed your people—*they were all homosexuals!*

(FREUD and HOOKER look at each other with astonishment.)

FREUD

Oh, dear man. It wasn't their homosexuality that made them cruel, it was their prejudice. And inhumanity.

HOOKER

You're grasping at nothing, Charles. And it's disgraceful.

(Slight pause)

Charles!

(A beat, then)

Your son will be gay.

SOCARIDES

What?!

FREUD

Your son.

(Slight pause)

My daughter too.

SOCARIDES

(To Hooker)

No. You're a sorcerer! A witch!

(To Freud)

And you, I thought your people were supposed to be a light unto the nation!

FREUD

Light?—What light?

SOCARIDES

Get out! Both of you! No son of mine will be a homo!

HOOKER

It's true, Charles. David, by your second of, I believe it will be *four* wives. He will come out to you in about 10 years. I suggest you start working on a sympathetic response.

SOCARIDES

Get out!

(FREUD and HOOKER head toward the door.
Before they leave, they both turn around.)

HOOKER

You wasted your life, Charles. If history remembers you at all, it will only be for your cruelty.

FREUD

We have to be careful who we decide to shun. They may end up being our children.

(FREUD and HOOKER leave. Charles is in crisis. He bangs on the wall. He yells out a few barely intelligible things.)

SOCARIDES

Homo Jews! Hawaii! I'll give you electric shock!

(SOCARIDES falls to the bed in convulsions.
Discordant music. Lights fade.)