

# THE FROG AND THE SWAN

Robert Langs

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## Cast of Characters:

CONNIE: An attractive woman in her mid-forties.

MICHAEL: A good looking, enthusiastic but somewhat disorganized man in his mid-thirties.

**Setting:** A plainly appointed, dimly lit cocktail lounge. There are tables with plain table cloths and four chairs around them.

**At rise:** Early evening. CONNIE is seated at one of the tables. She's wearing a rather nice, red-print dress and her lightweight outer coat is on one of the other chairs at her table. Her purse, a three-quarters full bottle of red wine, and two glasses are on the table. One glass is empty and the other, from which CONNIE sips from time to time, is half full. CONNIE fidgets, looks at her watch, looks toward the entranceway, sips from her glass of red wine, gets up and paces.

CONNIE

Not good... this is not a good beginning. We have a million ways of dying, you'd think there'd be at least one fool-proof way a woman can find a decent lover. Whatever happened to those over-sexed men who couldn't stay away from a skirt if they tried? I suppose we have ourselves to blame for making them extinct.

*(She looks at her watch.)*

Five more minutes and this date goes into my diary as an empty page... and goodbye New York Review of Books, come and get me, AOL.

*(She sits down and sips some more wine. MICHAEL enters from stage right. He's wearing a sport coat with a bright red handkerchief in the upper pocket. He sees CONNIE, whose back is turned to him, and stares at her in disbelief. He speaks excitedly as he approaches her.)*

MICHAEL

I don't believe my eyes! It's a miracle, a goddam miracle.

CONNIE

*(Standing up; alarmed.)*

Michael? Michael? What are you doing in a place like?...

MICHAEL

Send me to heaven, it's the woman of my dreams.

CONNIE

What are you doing here, Michael?

*(She sees the red handkerchief.)*

Oh my God! Don't tell me you're...

MICHAEL

Red on red, it's me alright.

*(He approaches CONNIE and reaches out to shake her hand, which she does reluctantly.)*

Man, I am so glad to see you again.

CONNIE

It's... it's good to see you too, Michael, but I don't quite understand what you... how you got to be...?

MICHAEL

*(Interrupts)*

I had a hunch...

*(Pointing to his head.)*

Not here...

*(Pointing to his abdomen.)*

...here, in my gut... I had a hunch it was you on the phone... only I thought I was losing my marbles. I almost called you for an appointment.

CONNIE

You mean to tell me... that was you?... on the phone?

MICHAEL

It sure was.

CONNIE

And the letter?... you wrote the letter too?

MICHAEL

I sure did.

CONNIE

You're lying.

MICHAEL

Hell no, it's the truth, God's honest.

CONNIE

I'd have recognized your voice.

MICHAEL

I disguised my voice.

CONNIE

You did what?

MICHAEL

Disguised my voice. I've been doing it for a couple of years now.

CONNIE

Why on earth would you do a thing like that?

MICHAEL

It's for self-protection... you know what this dating business is like these days.

CONNIE

I do now.

MICHAEL

There are some pretty mean lady marauders out there. Present company excepted, of course.

*(Offering a sample of  
his phony voice.)*

"This is Mark, leave a message when you hear the tone and I'll get back to you sooner than possible." Sound familiar?

CONNIE

Mark, that's right... his name, your name... the name he used was Mark. It was on the letter too. Your name isn't Mark, Michael.

MICHAEL

Now she tells me.

CONNIE

But the letter, his letter... your letter... was so...

*(pause, then directly to MICHAEL)*

.. it was so warm, and so full of life... and charm... so sensual.

MICHAEL

I've answered dozens of ads, written dozens of letters, and every one of them was meant for you.

CONNIE

For me? What's this about, Michael?

MICHAEL

I had to use an alias, you know, in case it turned out it was your ad I was answering... in case I was right about you're being a player in this tough little ad game business. I wanted to meet you again and there was no way it could happen if I played it straight. I had to bend the rules a little.

CONNIE

Well, I'm going to bend them right back into place. It's been good seeing you again, Michael, I'm glad to see you're well and as shifty as ever. I hope you have a good life.

MICHAEL

Hey!... you agreed to have a drink with me.

CONNIE

I agreed to have a drink with Mark... he didn't show.

MICHAEL

Come on... we really hit it off on the phone.

CONNIE

How could you possibly think for one minute that I'd get involved with you in this kind of way? And here I thought you'd had a successful analysis.

MICHAEL

But I did, Connie... you don't mind my calling you Connie, do you?, I mean, that Dr. Gordon stuff was such a bummer. What I'm saying is that it's only because you're such a super-shrink that I had the courage to pull this off. It's the healthiest thing I've done in years.

CONNIE

If this is healthy, I'd hate to see what's sick. I'm sorry, Michael, but you were right in the first place, you should call me for an appointment... trust me, it's really urgent. As for a date, forget you ever dreamed it up... it's a nightmare.

*(She moves toward her coat  
and MICHAEL grabs her arm.)*

MICHAEL

We're talking life and death here, Connie.

CONNIE

*(Breaking loose.)*

Let go of me.

MICHAEL

Please... I'm begging you... stay... not just for me... do it, do it for yourself too. Your face lit up when you saw me coming down the aisle. There's a lot more going on here than you realize.

*(Laughs)*

Alright, I'm being presumptuous again, but you shrinks don't know everything, especially when it comes to yourselves.

CONNIE

And our patients.

MICHAEL

*(He pounds his fists on a wall.)*

I've been waiting three years for this... thinking about you... missing you... wanting to see you again. It's been blowing my mind to pieces.

CONNIE

So I see. You know very well what my ad said...

*(She goes to her purse and looks for the ad.)*

Where did I put that piece of paper?

*(She looks up at MICHAEL.)*

It should have been like a red flag for you...

*(She rummages some more, then stops and again looks up at MICHAEL.)*

I bring a copy of my ad to these little trysts in case there's a mix up... was I ever smart to do it.

*(She looks again. Frustrated, she dumps the contents of her purse onto the table, rummages through the contents, and finally finds the ad and MICHAEL's letter. She offers the letter to MICHAEL, who moves back to where CONNIE's standing, but does not take the letter.)*

I don't need this anymore.

MICHAEL

No, please keep it.

CONNIE

*(insisting)*

Game's over, Michael... take the letter and turn in your pieces.

MICHAEL

*(Still refusing.)*

Every word was meant for you, Connie.... now that I've finally reached you, don't blow me off just because we met under bizarre circumstances, like in your office.

CONNIE

How's this possible?

*(She looks at the letter and reads a part of it.)*

...I'm a dreamer too, searching high and low for a woman who wants to share the endless miracles of nature and the joys of passionate love with an imaginative, caring, sexual man.

*(Getting upset, she again offers MICHAEL the letter.)*

Please... take it... burn it.

*(Reluctantly, MICHAEL takes the letter and stuffs it into one of his pockets.)*

You shouldn't have done this, Michael...

*(Still upset, she picks up the ad and begins to read it to MICHAEL.)*

"Psychotherapist, married, mature, sexy, and fun-loving, seeks a man, age 35 to 60, of like..."

MICHAEL

"... of like mind and a penchant for exotic mysteries and great adventures. Be discreet. Write, Box 1250, Ansonia Station, New York, NY 10023." It sounded good to me when I read it, sounds even better now that I know who wrote it.

CONNIE

"Psychotherapist," Michael... it's right there, up front, in large letters. I put it there to keep patients away, not to attract them.

MICHAEL

Do you have any idea what I've gone through to get here? I've answered every psychotherapist ad in that rag for the last three years hoping you'd come out of the mist. Do you know how it feels like to have a drink with that many hungry, over-analyzing female wolves?

CONNIE

My poor baby... such sacrifices... and to think it's all for nothing.

*(Handing the ad to MICHAEL.)*

Here... take it as small memento... and a reminder.

*(Instead of taking the ad, MICHAEL takes out his copy and shows it to CONNIE, who*

*crushes her copy and throws it on the table. She shakes her head.)*

So much for that.

*(She begins to put her things back into her purse.)*

You always were full of surprises, Michael, but this one's beyond the pale.

MICHAEL

I worship you, Connie... I'm... I'm in love with you. I know it sounds weird, but that's how it is. I've been in love with you since I first laid eyes on you.

CONNIE

Patients don't love their analysts, Michael, they only think they do.

MICHAEL

*(Frustrated and waving his arms in the air.)*

Bull shit... they do. I know how I feel.

CONNIE

They don't, and you don't. End of story.

MICHAEL

Look, I knew damn well you were into this ad stuff.

CONNIE

How could you possibly think that I would...?

*(Interrupts herself.)*

I was about to make a fool of myself. All right, I've been placing and answering ads for a couple of years now. So do me something. But how did you know I was doing it?

MICHAEL

Right before I left my analysis, I began to see ads, ads that were circled... you know, in that magazine you had in your waiting room, The New York Review of Books. I recognized your handwriting.

CONNIE

They were circles, Michael.

MICHAEL

The ink, the purple ink... the ink you use to write out your bills.

CONNIE

Did I really circle those ads?

MICHAEL

I figured it was either you or that droopy husband of yours you share your waiting room with. I mean, he does look kinda sweet, but I figured that if it was guys he wanted, he'd go to the gay section, not to the hetero males.

CONNIE

I'm sorry I've gotten you flummoxed, Michael, but I don't see how...

MICHAEL

Right, you got me into this, now you've to help me find out where it goes.

CONNIE

*(Approaches MICHAEL.)*

Nowhere... it's going nowhere... That's what I've been trying to tell you, only you're not listening.

MICHAEL

Think about it, Connie. When I waltzed through that door, you acted like you were surprised... alright, maybe you were... but your face lit up like a Roman candle. It didn't take purple circles for you to know I play this game and to hear something in my voice when we set things up. From what I could see, you were expecting me.

CONNIE

Believe me, if I'd have known it was you, you'd be talking to yourself right now.

MICHAEL

Forgive me for saying it, but I think you're just a little out of touch. You need to go back to when I was seeing you... you had a lot of feelings for me then, I know you did, and they weren't all clinical.

*(pause)*

I know how to do hypnosis.

CONNIE

So?

MICHAEL

So we do it and see where it takes you.

*(He takes out a watch on a chain.)*

You bring letters and ads, I bring necessities.

CONNIE

You've got a warped mind, Michael.

MICHAEL

Come on... you've got nothing to lose.

CONNIE

Only my mind.

MICHAEL

Then we'll compromise... we'll do some relaxation exercises... looks to Dr. Michael that you sure could use them.

*(pause)*

Lighten up, will you? Patients fall in love with their analysts... analysts fall in love with their patients. We've got to find out if it happened to us.

CONNIE

*(Hesitant.)*

Please, Michael, you're making me crazy. I couldn't possibly let you...

*(She trails off.)*

MICHAEL

Come down from that tower of yours and face a few things. To quote a great analyst, "The truth can't hurt you, ever."

CONNIE

Thanks for the interpretation.

*(she looks at her watch.)*

What do you know, my time is up. These great sessions go by so fast. Goodnight, Michael.

*(She turns to get her coat.)*

MICHAEL

What would you think if a patient of yours ran out on you like this? You'd think she had feelings for you, that's what you'd think... that she was trying to run away from her feelings. But then you'd tell her... how many times did you say it to me?... you'd tell her she can't run from her feelings, they go where she goes. Look into your head, lady doctor, you were hoping to find me wearing this red handkerchief as much as I was praying you'd be the one wearing the red dress.

CONNIE

Stop it already... you're turning me, I mean turning everything, you're turning everything inside out. I didn't come here tonight to rediscover my feelings for you, Michael... whatever feelings I had, they're dead and gone.

MICHAEL

If they're dead, then they once were alive... and damn it, they can come to life again.

CONNIE

What's wrong, Michael? Why are you torturing me like this?

MICHAEL

Try another tune, Connie, this one's getting us nowhere.

*(Pause, then MICHAEL starts to move the watch on its chain, like a pendulum, in front of CONNIE's eyes.)*

Close your eyes...

CONNIE

*(She grabs MICHAEL's hand and stops him from doing what he's doing.)*

No matter what I felt for you, I can't possibly get involved with you like this. I'm your analyst, I can't be your date.

MICHAEL

You mean you were my analyst, you're not any more.

CONNIE

No, it's like having parents, once is for ever.

MICHAEL

Bull shit. March 14th, 1996, that's when you and me... when I stopped being your patient and you stopped being my analyst... when we both left that fairyland inside your consultation room and came back to the world of the living and the dead.

*(Pause)*

*(MICHAEL continued)*

Come on, you remember... you were damn upset with my leaving... it was right after you came back from the month you took off because of that emergency.

CONNIE

What emergency?

MICHAEL

Nothing. There was no emergency.

CONNIE

What emergency, Michael?

MICHAEL

It was a Freudian slip. Forget I said it.

CONNIE

Michael!

Shit. You know...

MICHAEL

What?

CONNIE

Your... your daughter.

MICHAEL

My daughter?

CONNIE

Can we get back to where we were a minute go?

MICHAEL

You mean Beth?... You knew about Beth?

CONNIE

It's not important, I mean, of course it's important, but it's getting in our way here. I'm really sorry about your loss, Connie, but I think we should get our shit together before we...

MICHAEL

You knew about Beth?

CONNIE

I'm so sorry, really I am... it slipped out. I didn't mean to upset you. Sure I knew, it was in the papers.

MICHAEL

But you never said a word about it. I'm sure you didn't.

CONNIE

*(Collapsing into a chair.)*

Neither did you.

MICHAEL

*(He also sits.)*

It was your place, not mine.

CONNIE

This is one of the really tough things about seeing you again like this, Connie, and us having another life together. There's a lot of stuff I didn't tell you back then, you know, things that woulda sent you into orbit. So I lied a little, white lies, the kind of lies that a

MICHAEL

guy's gotta tell when he's in analysis with a woman like you. No harm intended. I wouldn't lie to you now, I swear I wouldn't.

CONNIE

I wonder how many of my other patients knew.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry I brought it up. Can we get back to...

CONNIE

Did anyone say anything to you?... you know, in the waiting room... Anything?

MICHAEL

No, not a word. It's a terrible thing, losing a child. I don't know how you were able to work after it happened.

CONNIE

I should have asked them what they knew. Not asking leaves too many holes... too much unfinished business... like this

MICHAEL

Hey, except for wanting to share your pain and help you get over your tragedy... except for that, my being here with you has nothing to do with your daughter.

CONNIE

*(She gets up and hugs herself,  
chilled.)*

I'm freezing. I've got to go.

MICHAEL

*(Also getting up.)*

This sucks. I don't blame you for wanting to run, but you know damn well, you won't make peace with it by running away every time it comes up.

CONNIE

You're like a tight ball of yarn... What are you using these days, Michael?

MICHAEL

Nothing, I swear it. I'm high on seeing you, I don't need junk.

*(He takes CONNIE'S arms in his  
hands, holding them firmly.)*

Relax, will you? Listen to me... we're gonna slow everything down a little. Close your eyes... close your eyes and take a deep breath...

*(He drops his hold on CONNIE;  
there's a pause)*

Come on, do it...

*(Pause)*

Close your eyes...

*(Pause; shaking her head, CONNIE closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.)*

Good. Now another one... in and out... slowly... in and out...

*(Pause)*

Again, only this time let out a huge sigh when you exhale...

*(CONNIE follows his instructions; MICHAEL now joins in.)*

And again...

*(They both do it.)*

One more time...

*(They both repeat the exercise. There's another pause, and MICHAEL shifts back to instructing CONNIE.)*

Now get hold of your tensions... locate where they are in your body... find them and take a deep breath, take a deep breath and drain them from your body...

*(CONNIE follows his instructions.)*

Good... again...

*(CONNIE obeys again; pause, then MICHAEL escorts CONNIE to a chair as he continues to speak.)*

Now sit down... keep your eyes closed... here, sit in this chair...

*(Eyes still closed, CONNIE sits and puts her hands on the table; MICHAEL stands in front of her.)*

Take another deep breath...

*(CONNIE does it.)*

That's the way. Now get yourself an eraser... a mental eraser... take it in your hand and clean the slate... empty your mind... empty your mind until you're in the middle of nowhere...

*(Pause)*

*(MICHAEL continued)*

Good. Now think back... wend your way back... slowly, gently...

*(MICHAEL closes his eyes too.)*

...wend your way back to when I was seeing you. Picture yourself coming to get me in your waiting room... look into my eyes... use them as a mirror so you can see the joy on your face as you greet me... feel the warmth you felt when you saw me sitting there... the gentle excitement that filled the room...

*(Pause)*

Now take me into your consultation room... lie me on your couch... listen to what I'm saying... listen a while, then speak... hear yourself talking... hear the embracing tones in your disembodied voice as your words float through the air, moving from your mouth to my

eager ears... feel the peacefulness we share... the bond we forged... the small sexual urges we fought off...

*(Pause)*

See it all... hear it... feel it.

*(Pause)*

Just you and me, alone... patient and analyst, secret lovers...

*(There's a very long pause.)*

CONNIE

*(Opening her eyes and shaking her head.)*

I could actually see you, Michael... It was so strange.

MICHAEL

*(Opening his eyes.)*

I could see you too... it was beautiful, Connie.

CONNIE

*(Changing her tone and standing up, as does MICHAEL.)*

This is pointless. We have a name for this... it's called a transference-countertransference bind... it means we both got caught up in some kind of misguided feelings for each other, but the fact is, they belong to the past... they have nothing to do with the present. They're supposed to disappear after the analysis is over... mine have, yours haven't.

MICHAEL

Stop reading to me from one of your fairy tale books, will you? Go with your ovaries for once, instead of your head.

CONNIE

I'm sorry, Michael... what you're feeling toward me is really meant for someone else. Find out who it is and leave me in peace already.

MICHAEL

Don't you ever come out from behind that analytic double speak?

*(He takes hold of CONNIE'S hands and she allows it.)*

Get with it, Connie... we're doing this cat and mouse stuff so we can find a common meeting ground. 'Till we do, tell me what you need and I'll give it to you... to you, and not some fake dummy I built out of the ruins of my childhood.

CONNIE

*(She pulls her hand away.)*

There's absolutely no point in trying to talk sense to you. I must have been out of my mind to have let you terminate your analysis, but you were doing so well... you had a good job, lot's of women. How could there have been so much madness under that much sanity?

MICHAEL

On and on with this sickness stuff... it's getting boring, really boring. You act like it's impossible for a guy like me to be in love with a woman like you, but you're wrong, dead wrong.

CONNIE

It may not have occurred to that one track mind of yours that I have a few needs of my own, and that none of them have anything to do with you. There are two people here, Michael, not one.

MICHAEL

Jesus! You know something?... You're getting me pissed. You're a goddam coward. I know you're not, but you are. Fuck.

*(He sits down and hits his head gently on the table.)*

Fuck.

*(He keeps his head lying against the table.)*

CONNIE

Stop acting like a child. Admit I'm right about this so we can end this charade. Please.

*(MICHAEL is immobile.)*

Michael!

*(Pause)*

This isn't about me, I'm telling you.

*(Pause)*

And it isn't about you either.

*(Pause)*

Alright, have it your way. I'm leaving.

*(She gets her coat and begins to leave. She stops to look back at MICHAEL, who takes a large bottle with screw cap from his pocket and puts it on the table, after which he goes back to putting his head on the table.)*

*(CONNIE continued)*

What's that?

*(Pause)*

What's in the bottle?

*(Pause; CONNIE comes back  
to where MICHAEL is sitting.)*

MICHAEL

*(After another pause, looking  
up at CONNIE.)*

Nothing... it's just another piece of my wild imagination.

CONNIE

What's in the goddam bottle, Michael?

MICHAEL

*(After another pause.)*

Whatever you want it to be.

CONNIE

Damn you! I'm trying to shake some sense into you and this is how you behave.

MICHAEL

It's the best I can do... I'm really sorry. I wish I could express myself better, but I can't.

CONNIE

*(She pauses, and then sits down  
at the table.)*

You're too damn smart for your own good... and God knows, for mine as well.

MICHAEL

*(Brightening up.)*

Yeah, I know... isn't it awful? But it's sincere, Connie, from the heart.

CONNIE

There's... there's truth to what you've been saying, even if you are blowing it all out of proportion.

MICHAEL

Maybe I am... but then again, maybe I'm not.

CONNIE

*(Pause)*

I... I was sitting here, before... you know, earlier tonight, waiting to see if you'd, I mean, if Mark would show up.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry about that too, I had trouble getting out of my office.

CONNIE

I was sitting here when suddenly the thought popped into my head: "What if a patient shows up tonight?"

*(Pause)*

Then suddenly, out of nowhere, your face crossed my mind.

MICHAEL

You see?

CONNIE

I started thinking about you. I kept trying to get rid of you, but it's not possible.

MICHAEL

You must have recognized my voice on the phone. How many times did you tell me that the unconscious mind is incredibly perceptive, while the conscious mind sucks?

CONNIE

Then, when you showed up, I panicked... I thought I was hallucinating.

MICHAEL

But you didn't run.

CONNIE

No, I didn't run... I didn't even think of it.

MICHAEL

*(He pulls out a single yellow rose from inside his jacket and offers it to CONNIE.)*

You're only woman I've ever known whose face belongs next to this rose. You're a miracle of grace and beauty, Connie. If a rose could talk, it would have your voice; if it had a mind, it would be your mind.

*(Pause. He continues to offer her the rose.)*

Think of all the wasted roses... of all the sad, lonely women I never offered them to... I saved them all for you.

*(Pause; MICHAEL holds the rose out to her.)*

It's your favorite color.

CONNIE

*(Still hesitant.)*

How did you know that yellow is my?...

*(She pauses sadly and then*

*takes the rose and smells it.)*

This is so dear of you, Michael.

MICHAEL

Put it next to your cheek... it'll light up your face.

CONNIE

*(She holds the rose to her  
cheek. Upset, tears come to  
her eyes.)*

You see what you've done?

MICHAEL

Your tears are immaculate.

*(He wipes her cheeks with his  
red handkerchief.)*

CONNIE

*(Touching MICHAEL's cheek.)*

What am I going to do with you?

MICHAEL

I want to hold you... make love to you... take you to a world where yesterdays are forgotten and tomorrows hold only the promise of love, and passion.

CONNIE

I... the truth is, I missed you, Michael... I thought of you a lot... wondered what you were doing... who you were with.

MICHAEL

I made dozens of calls to your office. Dumb shit, I'd hang up as soon as I heard your voice.

CONNIE

Those hang-ups were you?

*(With affection; shaking her head.)*

You're such a naughty child.

MICHAEL

Hey. When a guy's in love, he does a lot of dumb things.

CONNIE

*(Long pause; CONNIE has trouble breathing.)*

I'm having trouble breathing. I really need to go home now.

MICHAEL

Home?... to that small, ugly guy with the bent nose and the balding head... you want to go home to that?

CONNIE

Yes. Yes.

MICHAEL

It'll help, I'll make another confession. I went to see him... for a consultation.

CONNIE

You didn't?

MICHAEL

*(He pulls out a piece of paper.)*

I knew you wouldn't believe me, so I kept his bill.

*(He hands the bill to CONNIE.)*

Don't be pissed at me.

CONNIE

*(Kindly)*

Of course I'm pissed at you.

*(She looks at his name on the bill.)*

Again with Mark? Let me guess... self-protection against marauding psychotherapists, right?

*(She looks at the bill again.)*

The sneaky bastard... he raised his fees without telling me.

*(To MICHAEL.)*

You mean to tell me you were going to leave your analysis with me and go into analysis with him?

MICHAEL

Hey, I may be crazy, but I'm not psychotic. No way. It was while I was still seeing you. I was ready to make my move, you know, to tell you how I felt... when outta nowhere this thought came to me: Hey, maybe I've got it all wrong... maybe there's a man hidden beneath that effeminate facade of his... to be fair about it, I should find out what kind of a guy he really is... I mean, if by some miracle he turned out to be for real, then what?

CONNIE

All this scheming going on right under my nose... and you never said a word about it.

MICHAEL

The fact is, I almost gave it away. I doubt you remember, but after I set up the appointment, I had this weird dream about being in bed with him. You interpreted it as my

homosexual wishes for my father. I hate to tell you, but it actually was about my heterosexual wishes for you.

CONNIE

Now we have it, the light at the end of the tunnel: he's the one you really want... I'm just a poor substitute for my husband.

MICHAEL

God forbid.

CONNIE

So... what did you find out?

MICHAEL

That's he's an unlovable buffoon.

CONNIE

*(Laughs)*

Not a bad diagnosis for an amateur.

MICHAEL

I mean, he was very cooperative, a regular chatterbox. He actually talked more than I did. By the end of the session, I knew more about him than he did about me. How do you stand living with him?

CONNIE

Why do you think I'm here?

*(Pause)*

This is all very flattering, Michael... that you'd go so far in trying to get to me...

MICHAEL

I'd go a lot farther if I had to.

CONNIE

You already have.

*(Pause)*

Michael, can you understand how I'm feeling?... Why I can't do this? I'm tempted, God knows I am... I'm sure you'd make a wonderfully playful and tender lover, but it's not going to happen.

MICHAEL

No, Connie... it is. I've played out this scene in my head a thousand times... you give me a good fight, but you end up in bed with me every single time.

CONNIE

You see what I mean?... you're just trying to suck me into your fantasies...

MICHAEL

You know something?... You're one incredibly stubborn...

*(Brief pause)*

I won't say it, but you really are.

CONNIE

Wait a minute! I know where this is coming from. Why didn't I think of her before? This is about... what was her name again?...

you know who I mean...

MICHAEL

I do?

CONNIE

Your... your sister.

MICHAEL

My sister?

CONNIE

You know, the pretty one... the one who wandered off and died while you were in analysis with me.

MICHAEL

Drew.

CONNIE

That's right, Drew. This is all about Drew and her dying on you. You're trying to undo her loss by bringing our relationship back from the dead. You did the same thing after she died, chasing after those old girlfriends of yours. I thought I helped get past it, but I can see now that I missed something. I'm sure as hell paying for it now... You too, I'm sorry to say. This is all about Drew, Michael, it has nothing to do with me.

MICHAEL

*(Paces)*

Must every fucking thing have another meaning? You use that bull shit analytic stuff like a suit of armor. Drew is irrelevant.

CONNIE

Thank God I saw it. You're just attractive and cunning enough to have fooled me, and God knows, I'm needy enough to have let you do it. Drew's the truth of this, and I'm nothing but a lie.

MICHAEL

Damn you, Connie... This is one battle you don't want to win.

CONNIE

You want more, do you?... You want me to remind you of what went on between you and her?

MICHAEL

I never should have gotten you to feel anything... it's more than you can handle. You're killing me off, lady doctor, and you're taking a piece of yourself down with me. Make sure it's what you want.

CONNIE

Go find a therapist who can help you get rid of this obsession, Michael... and not my husband.

MICHAEL

More psychobabble.

*(MICHAEL grabs CONNIE and tries to kiss her, but she fights him off and breaks away.)*

CONNIE

What the hell are you doing?

MICHAEL

Hey, meet your new lover!

*(He goes after CONNIE again, but she pulls away and slaps his face.)*

CONNIE

I'm sorry... I didn't mean to... you're so...

*(Pause)*

There's got to be a tunnel out of this prison.

*(Pause)*

Listen to me, Michael... you're a very sweet guy and really quite appealing... but it's more than your being, your having been, my patient. You're simply not the man I'm looking for. The last affair I had lasted almost two years and I'd still be with him if he hadn't gotten cancer and died. I need someone with staying power. Your idea of commitment is two weekends in a row with the same woman.

MICHAEL

That's because I've been outta my mind with love for you, Connie. I was using them as stand-ins for you... no way it could work.

CONNIE

*(Pause; speaking vacantly)*

I was going leave him... my sad excuse for a husband... that self-absorbed, humorless, asexual buffoon... my punishment for crimes unknown. But Beth's death put an end to

that. That part of my life is in shambles, but a small piece of it seemed to be in place, my practice, only now, thanks to you, I have my doubts about that. But this last piece... my freedom... my affairs... my having a relationship that gives me a thimble-full of self-worth and a few drops of femininity... that's all I really own, and I'm not about to risk losing it by getting involved with the likes of you. I'm sorry if it hurts you, but that's how it is.

*(She turns and picks up her coat; MICHAEL grabs her firmly.)*

MICHAEL

My life's going down the drain without you. I've been doing loads of shit, though I swear I cleaned up last week on account of tonight. I've been doing crazy things... high wire stuff... messing with the wrong people. I'm gonna get myself killed for sure.

CONNIE

*(Pulling free.)*

You're trying to black-mail me, Michael... it's not going to work.

MICHAEL

*(He picks up the bottle.)*

It's acid, sulfuric acid. You start walking and I'm gonna...

*(He menaces CONNIE.)*

Just get your face outta here.

CONNIE

*(Moving right up to MICHAEL's face.)*

Go ahead, do it... do my face.

*(They stare each other down.)*

What are you waiting for?

*(Another long, frozen pause.)*

I was too busy to see how sick Beth really was... and I wasn't there to take her to the hospital when she went into crisis. By the time I finally got around to doing it, it was too late. She died in my arms. I kill the people I love, Michael, kill them... Is that what you want?

MICHAEL

Yes... it's what I want.

*(He puts the bottle on the table.)*

CONNIE

I have cancer.

MICHAEL

Cancer?

CONNIE

God in his infinite wisdom doled out justice by giving me breast cancer... two years ago.

MICHAEL

Jesus. I'm sure as hell sorry to hear that.

CONNIE

It was in my genes: my mother had it, her mother too. The doctors watched me like I was an experimental animal... mammograms, fancy blood work, genetic studies, you name it... but the little monsters slipped right through their surveillance machines.

MICHAEL

*(Pause)*

Does that mean that you're?....

CONNIE

Reconstructed, yes. I'm not a goddess, Michael.

MICHAEL

What a bummer. I never imagined that you...

CONNIE

And I'm not the woman in your imagination either... anything but.

*(Pause)*

MICHAEL

But how do you?... how can you...?

CONNIE

Spare me your pity.

*(Pause)*

It's alright, you can go...

MICHAEL

*(Distracted)*

What'd you say?

CONNIE

You won't be the first... just leave the bottle and go.

MICHAEL

*(Pause; uncertain as to what to do.)*

What guts, playing this game with a secret like that.

CONNIE

It's not guts, Michael, it's... desperation.

MICHAEL

*(Long pause)*

No way, no fuckin' way. I'm not splitting. What kind of a fair weather lover do you think I am? Forget that cancer business... all I see is perfection. And I've got Superman's eyes.

*(Pause)*

What are we doing, standing here like this? It's time we sat down and sipped some of that wine... talked a while... got acquainted, you know, in this new way.

*(Motioning about sitting.)*

Come on... there are two glasses sitting there feeling useless, waiting for us to lift them to our lips.

CONNIE

*(Hesitating)*

What the hell... I've already paid for the wine. Bad joke.

MICHAEL

Waste not, want not, why not?

CONNIE

*(Pause)*

Alright. Half a glass, but not a drop more.

*(Speaking as MICHAEL takes her hand and escorts her to a chair.)*

Now I'm sure of it... I'm the one who needs more analysis, not you.

MICHAEL

We talk... we listen... we see where it goes. If I'm outta my head, then drop me in the garbage pail on your way out. Only it's not gonna turn out that way.

*(CONNIE sits, as does MICHAEL.  
He pours himself some wine  
and refills CONNIE'S glass.)*

A toast.

*(CONNIE hesitates, then slowly  
lifts her glass.)*

To frogs and swans, may they turn out to be princes and princesses.

CONNIE

*(Pause)*

To frogs and swans...

*(Pause)*

May they have the courage to accept the fact that all they are, are frogs and swans.

*(They clink glasses and then  
drink. There's a pause.)*

MICHAEL

So, pretty lady... fill me in... tell me about yourself. You slammed me with the big surprise, now tell me the rest.

CONNIE

*(Standing up.)*

I can't do this, Michael.

MICHAEL

Come on, you made a commitment.

CONNIE

*(Sits again)*

But you're so glib... and so damn intense... it turns me off.

MICHAEL

Which means you were turned on. Good.

CONNIE

I'd sure like to see you with a pile of horse shit.

*(Long pause)*

I'm not comfortable with this, Michael, telling you about myself. It doesn't feel right.

*(She quickly gulps down the rest of her wine and stands up again; MICHAEL also stands.)*

Don't try stopping me this time. Please. You're right, it's more than I can handle.

MICHAEL

Do you have any idea how scared I am? You're an analyst. Can't you see the suffering that's underneath this grotesque mask I'm putting on? I'm scared, Connie, I get scared and I start whistling in the dark, wisecracking. I'm scared of everything... of making a fool of myself... of how much I love you... of losing this chance to make it work with you... that I'm destroying my life.

CONNIE

I'm sorry, Michael... God knows, I know how it feels to be scared, terrified... but I'm afraid you'll have to find a way to make peace on your own... I can't help you with it, not any more.

MICHAEL

Sure you can. It's the bottom line, helping others to survive. You're a shrink, you know damn well I'm right. Come on, baby, be there for me, and open up so I can be there for you.

CONNIE

*(She readies to leave.)*

No, Michael, No!

MICHAEL

Don't do this, Connie... You're hurting me, but you're hurting yourself even more. I've got so much to give you...

*(Long pause)*

Come on, baby, it's pay-off time... tell me you're with me...

*(Pause)*

Put us on the same page...

*(Long pause)*

Don't be a dumb bitch, say it!

*(Long pause)*

I give up, I fucking give up!

*(He grabs the bottle and briefly menaces CONNIE with it. She tries to grab the bottle from him, but he puts it out of reach and begins to storm out.)*

CONNIE

*(Calling after him, softly.)*

Michael.

MICHAEL

*(Furious, he turns around to answer.)*

Screw you!

*(He turns and moves further toward the exit.)*

CONNIE

*(Calmly and seductively.)*

Michael, darling.

MICHAEL

*(He stops and turns around again.)*

What?

CONNIE

Stop pouting and come back here.

MICHAEL

I'm not pouting.

CONNIE

I've got something for you.

MICHAEL

I've had enough of your somethings. What?

CONNIE

Come here and see.

MICHAEL

Give me a break, will you?

CONNIE

Now who's backing away?

MICHAEL

I'm not backing away.

*(He hesitates and then walks back to where CONNIE is.)*

What is it already?

CONNIE

*(She takes an atomizer of men's cologne from her purse and offers it to MICHAEL.)*

I like my lovers to smell sexy.

*(Puzzled, MICHAEL takes the atomizer and looks it over. He sprays some on his hands and rubs his face and neck with the cologne. CONNIE approaches him.)*

*(CONNIE continued)*

You are one irresistible, good looking, great smelling guy, Michael Ward.

*(She gives him a kiss and he then kisses her with a longer kiss and embrace.)*

MICHAEL

*(There's a pause; MICHAEL pulls back, looking perplexed.)*

Jesus, that was weird...

*(He kisses Connie again and pulls back again. He talks to and waves at the air.)*

Stop buggin' me, will you?

CONNIE

*(Also pulling back.)*

What is it, Michael? Who's bugging you?

MICHAEL

*(Again, waving off the air.)*

Get the fuck outta here.

*(To CONNIE)*

It's her.

CONNIE

Who?

MICHAEL

*(Waving her off more absent-mindedly.)*

Her... Drew.

CONNIE

*(She pounds MICHAEL on the chest.)*

You bastard! You sick, deceiving bastard!

*(She grabs her coat and gets ready to leave.)*

You are one sick bastard... and I'm one gigantic imbecile!

MICHAEL

Hey, it's over... she's gone.

CONNIE

And so am I.

*(She picks up the rose, crushes it, and throws it to the floor. As she turns to leave, MICHAEL grabs her arm, but CONNIE breaks loose.)*

I'll see you hell!

*(She rushes out, exiting stage right.)*

MICHAEL

*(Shouting after CONNIE.)*

God damn you, Drew, shit, I mean, Connie...

*(He picks up a chair and flings it, and then picks up the bottle and starts to unscrew the cap, but suddenly stops and speaks to himself.)*

Were you listening, ass hole? Did you hear what you just said?

*(He puts the bottle down on a table.)*

Isn't that what Connie, I mean Dr. Gordon... isn't that what Dr. Gordon's been trying to tell you all along?

*(Pause)*

Looks to me like you owe her an apology, man... the woman's offered you a cure and you're too dumb to appreciate it.

*(He starts to pick things up.)*

Now get your shit together and go find yourself a real life. And try being nice, and a little humble, for a change... that might be the you, you've been hiding under all that braggadocio and bullshit. It'd be such a relief if it turns out to be true.

*(BLACKOUT)*

(END OF PLAY)