

# THE DREAM CURE\*

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## CAST

### *The Mentor/Photographer*

The two are to be played by the same actor. They are not the “same” man, but for each woman they represent the fantasy of the man. As a result, the actor must be able to play both “ages.”

### *The Mentor*

Medical professor. Late 50s, but still very sexy. Gray hair. Showing slight signs of age in his weight. Deep, resonating voice. His eroticism inheres in his masculine role and in his self confidence.

### *The Photographer*

Early to middle 40s. Handsome, with evident bisexuality. In touch with the feminine side of himself. Dress, avant garde.

### *The Doctor*

Female. About 40 years old. Vibrant, intelligent and morally courageous. Attractive, with a well-worked-out professional persona. Confidently sexual when she is with the Mentor. Well dressed.

### *The Patient*

Female. Early 30s. Extremely vulnerable and obsessive. Thin to the point that one is reminded of her illness. Still able to make it as a model; elegant and stylish after a concerted effort.

[Synopsis of the first three scenes]\*\*\*

[The Doctor and Mentor are having an affair. They are first seen together dancing in the Doctor’s apartment. The Mentor must leave at eleven o’clock to get home to his wife before she misses him. He leaves the Doctor alone and she feels lonely.

[The Doctor and Patient talk in the Patient’s hospital room. The Patient has leukemia. They are friends and talk about the men in their lives. The Patient believes that her boyfriend, who has not called for about two months, will be coming back at any

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\*\*\* Synopsis provided by the editors.

moment. She puts on a wig to be sure she looks good for his arrival.

[The Doctor describes her relationship with the Mentor to the Patient. He had been her Medical Ethics professor in medical school. They had had an affair until the Mentor's wife tapped the phones and found out about the Doctor. The Mentor ended the affair, but, through the Doctor's persistence, they got back together. The wife does not know the Doctor and Mentor are together again. The Doctor and Patient agree that they have a lot in common—an absent man.]

#### SCENE 4

(A flower shop. The Mentor holds a box with roses. The Doctor walks in and hand picks flowers for a bouquet. She does not see The Mentor. He moves forward and embraces her from behind. Startled, she jumps and turns around, then realizes who is there. She hugs him, pleased at the surprise meeting.)

*The Mentor*      You looked so happy picking your flowers. I love to see you like that, so completely involved in what you are doing that the rest of the world doesn't exist. Even me. And yet you always tell me I am the most important part of your life.

*The Doctor*      You are. You know that. You just like to hear me say it. Over and over again. You are the most important part of my life. So, isn't it your turn? What's the most important part of your life? But what are you doing here? It isn't like you to take time out from work in the middle of the day. At least not now. You've been so busy lately . . . or at least too busy for me.

*The Mentor*      No, not for you. For anything. Soon I'll have more time. I promise. I do.

*The Doctor*      So, then who are the flowers for? Who are the flowers for? Why me, of course. Who else could they be for? How nice.

*The Mentor*      No. No. They aren't for . . . you. They're for my wife. Don't be angry, there is no reason for you to be angry. I told you that as long as I am still with her, I am going to keep up appearances. After all, it wouldn't be fair to her otherwise. But this means nothing.

*The Doctor*      What does mean something, then, if not flowers?

- The Mentor* It means . . . they mean . . . that I am keeping up appearances. It's our anniversary and I felt I should try to do something, that's all. Ever since she found out about you things haven't been the same. Forget about it, will you? Come on. You wanted me to say it. Now I will. You are the most important part of my life.
- The Doctor* You're just trying to distract me. Those words are true for me. I've waited so long to hear those words.
- The Mentor* I meant what I said, too. Please understand what I am trying to do.
- The Doctor* Oh, I do understand. Make "it" up to her. I can imagine, your marriage hasn't been the same since she found out about me. But then I wasn't the first . . . as we both know. That she found out about.
- The Mentor* Don't you know that you are different from the rest. The rest were—Oh, you know what they were. In a long marriage these things just happen.
- Doctor* Things?
- Mentor* You know what I mean. Let's not go over my past again. You know you are special and I am not going to say it again. But who are you buying flowers for? Why for me, of course.
- Doctor* No, not for you, for my patient.
- Mentor* I told you, you shouldn't get so involved. You have one serious weakness as a doctor. You don't know how to draw the line between professional responsibility and emotional involvement. This woman is your patient. I know you feel sorry for her. And obviously you identify with her. God knows, you talk about her all the time. But you have to be careful.
- Doctor* I am being careful. That's exactly what I am being—full of care.
- Mentor* You are relating to her in a way that is inappropriate for a doctor. Friends, lovers send you flowers—not your doctor.
- Doctor* You don't understand. I am not sending her flowers as her doctor. I am sending her flowers as if I were the man who left her.
- Mentor* I . . . what? You are right. I don't understand.

*Doctor* She was just waiting. To make the waiting bearable, she had to pretend he was going to come. It was too much for me to watch. And she doesn't have much time left. She can't even dream of another man in the future.

*Mentor* You don't know that. Remission is always possible. That's the point of treatment, the possibility of remission. Treatment is about hope.

*Doctor* Her only hope is that he will return. So I write her letters, send flowers. As if I have been her lover. I have given her a remission already.

*Mentor* Your doing what?

*Doctor* You heard me. I am giving her a remission from her despair. Not the medicine. Me. That's the "real" remission.

*Mentor* It can't be true.

*Doctor* Believe it.

*Mentor* Obviously in my class of professional ethics I taught you nothing. It's paternalism. You have no right to violate her autonomy in this way.

*Doctor* Right? What right did he have to desert her when she was sick? What right did he have to break all his promises? What I am doing is beyond right, I know that. But I still believe I am doing what I should be doing.

*Mentor* You have lost touch with reality.

*Doctor* No I have not. I am making up a bearable reality. For both of us.

*Mentor* She knows that it is you sending the letters?

*Doctor* If she suspects, she has bowed to the mystery of circumstance.

*Mentor* You're trying to create the illusion that he is still in love with her.

*Doctor* Yes, and so I will continue to write her love letters, one a day.

*Mentor* You pretend to be such a feminist. And then you treat this woman like a child incapable of facing up to reality.

*Doctor* What's so good about facing up to reality, when the reality is that you are dying? My way she can still have her fantasy. There's an emotional logic in all this.

*Mentor* No. There is absolutely no logic to it. The logical thing would be to keep out of it and to fulfill your duties as her doctor. You are taking the truth away from her.

- The Doctor* No I am not. I am making the dream come true for her.
- The Mentor* Truth isn't something created. Truth just is. And the truth is, he's gone.
- Doctor* No he isn't. Not in her mind. Because I'm standing in for him. Besides, I have no choice. Otherwise, she will die in despair.
- Mentor* You can't keep her from this pain.
- Doctor* Actually, yes I can. She told me yesterday that she has had 18 days without despair. That is the most significant gift I've ever given to anyone.
- Mentor* What if she gets out of the hospital. What if she has a real remission? What if she calls him? You can just imagine the scene. What are you going to do when he denies the whole thing? You better hope she dies, and soon.
- Doctor* She might die. Meanwhile, she is going to have her 19th day without despair because I am going to send her flowers. You never sent me roses. I love roses. I hate to think of her getting those flowers.
- Mentor* You shouldn't be jealous.
- Doctor* Why not? You always tell me I'm your "true" wife. Roses are the symbol of true love. So exactly what are you doing? Your marriage isn't only illusion—it's delusion.
- Mentor* And your little fantasy isn't a delusion?
- Doctor* Not at all. I am not pretending to love someone I don't love anymore. I am only being him because I want her dream, our dream of love to live. If her dream can come true, well, so might mine.
- Mentor* But all love isn't a dream. There's day to day life. There is love and . . . love. I am no longer in love with her, but I do love her. So it's not a delusion, but a celebration of a different kind of love. You make it too simple, there is more than one kind of love.
- Doctor* You swore there was only one true dream of love. If you had a real marriage you would not continue to play with me as if our love was still true.
- Mentor* Who are you to say what love is?
- Doctor* Who am I to say? The woman to whom you promised the dream as our truth.

(The Doctor exits up stage left.)