

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an *excerpt* from a Samuel French title.

This sample is for perusal only and may not be used for performance purposes.

You may not download, print, or distribute this excerpt.

We highly recommend purchasing a copy of the title before considering for performance.

For more information about licensing or about purchasing a play or musical, please visit our website.

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench.co.uk

The Normal Heart

by Larry Kramer

Foreword by Joseph Papp

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

NEW YORK HOLLYWOOD LONDON TORONTO

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Copyright © 1985, 2011 by Larry Kramer
Foreword Copyright © 1985 by New American Library
Portion of "September 1, 1939" Copyright © 1940 by W.H. Auden
Reprinted from *The English Auden*, edited by Edward Mendelson by
permission of Random House, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Cover Artwork by Paul Davis

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *THE NORMAL HEART* is subject to a licensing fee. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. In its present form the play is dedicated to the reading public only.

The amateur and professional live stage performance rights to *THE NORMAL HEART* are controlled exclusively by Samuel French, Inc., and licensing arrangements and performance licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur licensing fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a licensing quotation and a performance license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Licensing fees are payable one week before the opening performance of the play to Samuel French, Inc., at 45 W. 25th Street, New York, NY 10010.

Licensing fee of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

Professional/Stock licensing fees quoted upon application to Samuel French, Inc.

For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to: Casarotto Ramsay, Ltd., Waverley House, 7-12 Noel St., London W1F 86Q England; Attn: Tom Erhardt.

Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured in writing from Samuel French, Inc.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play: "Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

No one shall commit or authorize any act or omission by which the copyright of, or the right to copyright, this play may be impaired.
No one shall make any changes in this play for the purpose of production.
Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to Samuel French, Inc., for written permission before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre.
No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

MUSIC USE NOTE

Licenseses are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original music that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for all music clearances and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play and their licensing agent, Samuel French, Inc., against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of music by licensees.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of *THE NORMAL HEART* *must* give credit to the Author of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play, and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for the purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author *must* appear on a separate line on which no other name appears, immediately following the title and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent of the size of the title type.

In addition the following credit *must* be given in all programs and publicity information distributed in association with this piece:

**Original New York Production by
New York Shakespeare Festival
Produced by Joseph Papp**

IMPORTANT CREDIT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is the author's express wish that the following excerpt from W. H. Auden's poem be included in all programs along with the copyright acknowledgment of the poem (*see copyright page*):

The windiest militant trash
Important Persons shout
Is not so crude as our wish:
What mad Nijinsky wrote
About Diaghilev
Is true of the normal heart;
For the error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love
But to be loved alone.

All I have is a voice
To undo the folded lie,
The romantic lie in the brain
Of the sensual man-in-the street
And the lie of Authority
Whose buildings grope the sky:
There is no such thing as the State
And no one exists alone;
Hunger allows no choice
To the citizen or the police;
We must love one another or die.

— W.H. Auden
From "September 1, 1939"

THE NORMAL HEART opened on April 21, 1985 at the Public Theater in New York City, New York; a New York Shakespeare Festival Production, it was produced by Joseph Papp. The performance was directed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg, with sets by Eugene Lee and Keith Raywood, costumes by Bill Walker, lighting by Natasha Katz. The cast was as follows:

CRAIG DONNER Michal Santoro
MICKEY MARCUS Robert Dorfman
NED WEEKS Brad Davis*
DAVID Lawrence Lott
DR. EMMA BROOKNER Concetta Tomei
BRUCE NILES David Allen Brooks
FELIX TURNER D. W. Moffett
BEN WEEKS Phillip Richard Allen
TOMMY BOATWRIGHT William DeAcutis
HIRAM KEEBLER Lawrence Lott
GRADY Michael Santoro
EXAMINING DOCTOR Lawrence Lott
ORDERLY Lawrence Lott
ORDERLY Michael Santoro

* On August 19, 1985, Joel Grey assumed the role of Ned Weeks.

The revival of *THE NORMAL HEART* opened on Broadway in April 27, 2011 at the John Golden Theatre in New York City, New York; it was produced by Daryl Roth, Paul Boskind and Martian Entertainment; in association with Gregory Rae and Jayne Baron Sherman/Alexander Fraser. The performance was directed by Joel Grey and George C. Wolfe with set design by David Rockwell, lighting design by David Weiner, original music and sound design by David Van Tiegham, costume design by Martin Pakledinaz, and projection design by Batwin & Robin Productions, Inc. The production stage manager was Karen Armstrong. The cast was as follows:

CRAIG DONNER/GRADY Luke MacFarlane
MICKEY MARCUS Patrick Breen
NED WEEKS Joe Mantello
DAVID Wayne Alan Wilcox
DR. EMMA BROOKNER Ellen Barkin
BRUCE NILES Lee Pace
FELIX TURNER John Benjamin Hickey
BEN WEEKS Mark Harelik
TOMMY BOATWRIGHT Jim Parsons
HIRAM KEEBLER/EXAMINING DOCTOR Richard Topol

Understudies: Jordan Baker (**DR. EMMA BROOKNER**), Jon Levenson (**BEN WEEKS, EXAMINING DOCTOR, HIRAM KEEBLER, MICKEY MARCUS, NED WEEKS**), Lee Aaron Rosen (**BRUCE NILES, CRAIG DONNER, DAVID, GRADY, TOMMY BOATWRIGHT**).

CHARACTERS

CRAIG DONNER

MICKEY MARCUS

NED WEEKS

DAVID

DR. EMMA BROOKNER

BRUCE NILES

FELIX TURNER

BEN WEEKS

TOMMY BOATWRIGHT

HIRAM KEEBLER

GRADY

EXAMINING DOCTOR

ORDERLY

ORDERLY

TIME

The action of this play takes place between July 1981 and May 1984 in New York City.

SET

For the original 1985 production:

The New York Shakespeare Festival production at the Public Theater was conceived as exceptionally simple. Little furniture was used: a few wooden office chairs, a desk, a table, a sofa, and an old battered hospital gurney that found service as an examining table, a bench in City Hall, and a place for coats in the organization's old office. As the furniture found itself doing double-duty in different scenes, so did the doorways built into the set's back wall. In many instances, the actors used the theater itself for entrances and exits.

The walls of the set, made of construction-site plywood, were white-washed. Everywhere possible, on this set and upon the theater walls too, facts and figures and names were painted, in black, simple lettering.

Here are some of the things we painted on our walls:

1. Principal place was given to the latest total number of AIDS cases nationally: _____ AND COUNTING. (For example, on August 1, 1985, the figure read 12,062.) As the Centers for Disease Control revise all figures regularly, so did we, crossing out old numbers and placing the new figure just beneath it.
2. EPIDEMIC OFFICIALLY DECLARED JUNE 5, 1981.

3. The total number of articles on the epidemic written by the following newspapers during the first ten months of 1984:

<i>The San Francisco Chronicle</i>	163
<i>The New York Times</i>	41
<i>The Los Angeles Times</i>	37
<i>The Washington Post</i>	24

4. During the first nineteen months of the epidemic, *The New York Times* wrote about it a total of seven times:

1. July 3, 1981, page 20 (41 cases reported by CDC)
2. August 29, 1981, page 9 (107 cases)
3. May 11, 1982, Section III, page 1 (335 cases)
4. June 18, 1982, Section II, page 8 (approximately 430 cases)
5. August 8, 1982, page 31 (505 cases)
6. January 6, 1983, Section II, page 17 (approximately 891 cases)
7. February 6, 1983, Magazine (The "Craig Claiborne" article.) (958 cases)

5. During the three months of the Tylenol scare in 1982, *The New York Times* wrote about it a total of 54 times:

- October 1, 2, 3,4,5,6,7,8,9, 10, 11 , 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18,
19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
November 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, 17,21,22,25
December 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 14, 15, 19, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30
Four of these articles appeared on the front page.
Total number of cases: 7.

6. Government research at the National Institutes of Health did not commence in reality until January, 1983, eighteen months after the same government had declared the epidemic.

7. Announcement of the discovery of "the virus" in France: January, 1983.

Announcement of the "discovery" of "the virus" in Washington: April, 1984.

8. The public education budget for 1985 at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: \$120,000.

9. Vast expanses of wall were covered with lists of names, much like the names one might find on a war memorial, such as the Vietnam Memorial in Washington.

For the 2011 Broadway revival:

Once again, minimal everything. The walls of the set were stark white with hardly visible facts and newspaper headlines. Slides were used to convey various location exteriors, NYU Medical Center, Ben's office building, Ned's booklined apartment. As the play proceeded, actors when not in a scene sat along the walls of the set in the shadows, watching the play. Felix and Ned are married, with Felix standing beside him, relieving us of a gurney, and he steps back into the shadows when he dies. At various times in the action lists of names of actual people are projected on the walls, the list short at first, and gradually growing in length until by the final moment the stage and all adjoining walls are covered with names.

SCENES AND APPROXIMATE DATES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1:	The office of Dr. Emma Brookner	July, 1981
SCENE 2:	Felix's desk at the <i>New York Times</i>	September, 1981
SCENE 3:	Ben's law office	October, 1981
SCENE 4:	Ned's apartment	November, 1981
SCENE 5:	Ned's apartment	March, 1982
SCENE 6:	Ben's law office	May, 1982
SCENE 7:	Ned's apartment	October, 1982

ACT TWO

SCENE 8:	Emma's apartment	October, 1982
SCENE 9:	A meeting room in City Hall	October, 1982
SCENE 10:	Emma's office	October, 1982
SCENE 11:	The organization's old office	February, 1983
SCENE 12:	Emma and the Examining Doctor	
SCENE 13:	The organization's new offices-to-be	April, 1983
SCENE 14:	Ned's apartment	
SCENE 15:	Ben's law office	May, 1984
SCENE 16:	Felix's hospital room	May, 1984

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For the original 1985 production:

I am grateful to the following works of scholarship: "American Jewry During the Holocaust," a report edited by Seymour Maxwell Finger for the American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust, Hon. Arthur J. Goldberg, Chairman, March 1984, (the excerpt quoted herein is used by permission), *Israel in the Mind of America* by Peter Grose, Alfred A. Knopf, 1983; *American Jewry's Public Response to the Holocaust, 1938-44: An Examination Based upon Accounts in the Jewish Press and Periodical Literature*, A Doctoral Dissertation by Haskel Lookstein, Yeshiva University, January 1979, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan; *While Six Million Died, A Chronicle of American Apathy*, by Arthur D. Morse, copyright C 1967, The Overlook Press, Woodstock, New York, 1983; *The Abandonment of the Jews, America and the Holocaust 1941-1945*, by David S. Wyman, Pantheon Books, 1984.

I give special thanks and tribute to the late Dr. Linda J. Laubenstein.

I am exceptionally indebted to Gail Merrifield, the Director of Plays at the New York Shakespeare Festival, as I am to this remarkable organization's Literary Manager, Bill Hart, and to Michael Lindsay-Hogg for bravely birthing us.

There are no words splendid enough to contain and convey what Joseph Papp has meant to me, and to this play.

For the 2011 Broadway revival:

Daryl Roth, you are the greatest, most generous and loving producer any writer could ever have. There is no one to touch you. And everyone you have chosen to be around you – most particularly the indefatigable, loving Wendy Orshan, is as perfect as you are. You determined to find an audience for this play, and you did. You were especially determined to find a way to bring young people to see this play, and you did.

George Wolfe lives where only the greatest artists live, in some place far away and special, and private, and with luck, is sometimes dispatched preciously to mortal writers like me. George, I am so in awe of what you have done with my play and I want to work with you forever.

Together you have brought this great and perfect cast together, Joe and Hickey and Ellen and Lee and Jim and Patrick and Mark and Richard and Luke and Wayne.

Thank you all for the great gift of your talents.

Thank you too, Joel Grey, for starting this ball rolling. We might not have been here this time but for you.

What has been especially moving to me is that you have enabled so many of my people to come to learn our history. We have been a people singularly denied the right to know our history, and it continues to be my mission to bring this history to my people and the world.

So thank you all for helping me to do this in such a magnificent way.

—Larry Kramer

FOREWORD

Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* is a play in the great tradition of Western drama. In taking a burning social issue and holding it up to public and private scrutiny so that it reverberates with the social and personal implications of that issue, *The Normal Heart* reveals its origins in the theater of Sophocles, Euripides, and Shakespeare. In his moralistic fervor, Larry Kramer is a first cousin to nineteenth-century Ibsen and twentieth-century Odets and other radical writers of the 1930s. Yet, at the heart of *The Normal Heart*, the element that gives this powerful political play its essence, is love—love holding firm under fire, put to the ultimate test, facing and overcoming our greatest fear: death.

I love the ardor of this play, its howling, its terror and its kindness. It makes me very proud to have been its producer and caretaker.

—Joseph Papp, 1985

For Norman J. Levy, who succeeded where all others failed.

To gay people everywhere, whom I love so.

The Normal Heart is our history.

It could not have been written had not so many of us so needlessly died.

Learn from it and carry on the fight.

Let them know that we are a very special people,
an exceptional people.

And that our day will come.

ACT ONE

Scene One

(The office of DR. EMMA BROOKNER. Three men are in the waiting area: CRAIG DONNER, MICKEY MARCUS, and NED WEEKS.)

CRAIG. *(after a long moment of silence)* I know something's wrong.

MICKEY. There's nothing wrong. When you're finished we'll go buy you something nice. What would you like?

CRAIG. We'll go somewhere nice to eat, okay? Did you see that guy in there's spots?

MICKEY. You don't have those. Do you?

CRAIG. No.

MICKEY. Then you don't have anything to worry about.

CRAIG. She said they can be inside you, too.

MICKEY. They're not inside you.

CRAIG. They're inside me.

MICKEY. Will you stop! Why are you convinced you're sick?

CRAIG. Where's Bruce? He's supposed to be here. I'm so lucky to have such a wonderful lover. I love Bruce so much, Mickey. I know something's wrong.

MICKEY. Craig, all you've come for is some test results. Now stop being such a hypochondriac.

CRAIG. I'm tired all the time. I wake up in swimming pools of sweat. Last time she felt me and said I was swollen. I'm all swollen, like something ready to explode. Thank you for coming with me, you're a good friend. Excuse me for being such a mess, Ned. I get freaked out when I don't feel well.

MICKEY. Everybody does.

(DAVID comes out of EMMA's office. There are highly visible purple lesions on his face. He wears a long-sleeved shirt. He goes to get his jacket, which he's left on one of the chairs.)

DAVID. Whoever's next can go in.

CRAIG. Wish me luck.

MICKEY. *(hugging CRAIG)* Good luck.

(CRAIG hugs him, then NED, and goes into EMMA's office.)

DAVID. They keep getting bigger and bigger and they don't go away. *(to NED)* I sold you a ceramic pig once at Maison France on Bleecker Street. My name is David.

NED. Yes, I remember. Somebody I was friends with then collects pigs and you had the biggest pig I'd ever seen outside of a real pig.

DAVID. I'm her twenty-eighth case and sixteen of them are dead. *(He leaves.)*

NED. Mickey, what the fuck is going on?

MICKEY. I don't know. Are you here to write about this?

NED. I don't know. What's wrong with that?

MICKEY. Nothing, I guess.

NED. What about you? What are you going to say? You're the one with the health column.

MICKEY. Well, I'll certainly write about it in the Native, but I'm afraid to put it in the stuff I write at work.

NED. What are you afraid of?

MICKEY. The city doesn't exactly show a burning interest in gay health. But at least I've still got my job: the Health Department has had a lot of cutbacks.

NED. How's John?

MICKEY. John? John who?

NED. You've had so many I never remember their last names.

MICKEY. Oh, you mean John. I'm with Gregory now.
Gregory O'Connor.

NED. The old gay activist?

MICKEY. Old? He's younger than you are. I've been with
Gregory for ten months now.

NED. Mickey, that's very nice.

MICKEY. He's not even Jewish. But don't tell my rabbi.

CRAIG. *(coming out of EMMA's office)* I'm going to die. That's
the bottom line of what she's telling me. I'm so scared.
I have to go home and get my things and come right
back and check in. Mickey, please come with me. I
hate hospitals. I'm going to die. Where's Bruce? I want
Bruce.

*(MICKEY and CRAIG leave. DR. EMMA BROOKNER
comes in from her office. She is in a motorized wheelchair.
She is in her mid-to-late thirties.)*

EMMA. Who are you?

NED. I'm Ned Weeks. I spoke with you on the phone after
the Times article.

EMMA. You're the writer fellow who's scared. I'm scared,
too. I hear you've got a big mouth.

NED. Is big mouth a symptom?

EMMA. No, a cure. Come on in and take your clothes off.

NED. I only came to ask some questions.

EMMA. You're gay, aren't you? Take your clothes off.

*(Lights up on an examining table, center stage. NED
starts to undress.)*

NED. Dr. Brookner, what's happening?

EMMA. I don't know.

NED. In just a couple of minutes you told two people I
know something. The article said there isn't any cure.

EMMA. Not even any good clues yet. All I know is this disease
is the most insidious killer I've ever seen or studied or
heard about. And I think we're seeing only the tip of
the iceberg. And I'm afraid it's on the rampage. I'm

frightened nobody important is going to give a damn because it seems to be happening mostly to gay men. Who cares if a faggot dies? Does it occur to you to do anything about it. Personally?

NED. Me?

EMMA. Somebody's got to do something.

NED. Wouldn't it be better coming from you?

EMMA. Doctors are extremely conservative; they try to stay out of anything that smells political, and this smells. Bad. As soon as you start screaming you get treated like a nut case. Maybe you know that. And then you're ostracized and rendered worthless, just when you need cooperation most. Take off your socks.

(NED, in his undershorts, is now sitting on the examining table. EMMA will now examine him, his skin particularly, starting with the bottom of his feet, feeling his lymph glands, looking at his scalp, into his mouth...)

NED. Nobody listens for very long anyway. There's a new disease of the month every day.

EMMA. This hospital sent its report of our first cases to the medical journals over a year ago. *The New England Journal of Medicine* has finally published it, and last week, which brought you running, *The Times* ran something on some inside page. Very inside: page twenty. If you remember, Legionnaires' Disease, toxic shock, they both hit the front page of *The Times* the minute they happened. And stayed there until somebody did something. The front page of *The Times* has a way of inspiring action. Lie down.

NED. They won't even use the word "gay" unless it's in a direct quote. To them we're still homosexuals. That's like still calling blacks Negroes. *The Times* has always had trouble writing about anything gay.

EMMA. Then how is anyone going to know what's happening? And what precautions to take? Someone's going to have to tell the gay population fast.

NED. You've been living with this for over a year? Where's the Mayor? Where's the Health Department?

EMMA. They know about it. You have a Commissioner of Health who got burned with the Swine Flu epidemic, declaring an emergency when there wasn't one. The government appropriated \$150 million for that mistake. You have a Mayor who's a bachelor and I assume afraid of being perceived as too friendly to anyone gay. And who is also out to protect a billion-dollar-a-year tourist industry. He's not about to tell the world there's an epidemic menacing his city. And don't ask me about the President. Is the Mayor gay?

NED. If he is, like J. Edgar Hoover, who would want him?

EMMA. Have you had any of the symptoms?

NED. I've had most of the sexually transmitted diseases the article said come first. A lot of us have. You don't know what it's been like since the sexual revolution hit this country. It's been crazy, gay or straight.

EMMA. What makes you think I don't know? Any fever, weight loss, night sweats, diarrhea, swollen glands, white patches in your mouth, loss of energy, shortness of breath, chronic cough?

NED. No. But those could happen with a lot of things, couldn't they?

EMMA. And purple lesions. Sometimes. Which is what I'm looking for. It's a cancer. There seems to be a strange reaction in the immune system. It's collapsed. Won't work. Won't fight. Which is what it's supposed to do. So most of the diseases my guys are coming down with – and there are some very strange ones – are caused by germs that wouldn't hurt a baby, not a baby in New York City anyway. Unfortunately, the immune system is the system we know least about. So where is this big mouth I hear you've got?

NED. I have more of a bad temper than a big mouth.

EMMA. Nothing wrong with that. Plenty to get angry about. Health is a political issue. Everyone's entitled to good medical care. If you're not getting it, you've got to fight for it. Open your mouth. Turn over. One of my staff

told me you were well-known in the gay world and not afraid to say what you think. Is that true? I can't find any gay leaders. I tried calling several gay organizations. No one ever calls me back. Is anyone out there?

NED. There aren't any organizations strong enough to be useful, no. Dr. Brookner, nobody with a brain gets involved in gay politics. It's filled with the great unwashed radicals of any counterculture. That's why there aren't any leaders the majority will follow. Anyway, you're talking to the wrong person. What I think is politically incorrect.

EMMA. Why?

NED. Gay is good to that crowd, no matter what. There's no room for criticism, looking at ourselves critically.

EMMA. What's your main criticism?

NED. I hate how we play victim, when many of us, most of us, don't have to.

EMMA. Then you're exactly what's needed now.

NED. Nobody ever listens. We're not exactly a bunch that knows how to play follow the leader.

EMMA. Maybe they're just waiting for somebody to lead them.

NED. We are. What group isn't?

EMMA. You can get dressed. I can't find what I'm looking for.

NED. (*jumping down and starting to dress*) Needed? Needed for what? What is it exactly you're trying to get me to do?

EMMA. Tell gay men to stop having sex.

NED. What?

EMMA. Someone has to. Why not you?

NED. It is a preposterous request.

EMMA. It only sounds harsh. Wait a few more years, it won't sound so harsh.

NED. Do you realize that you are talking about millions of men who have singled out promiscuity to be their principal political agenda, the one they'd die before abandoning. How do you deal with that?

EMMA. Tell them they may die.

NED. You tell them!

EMMA. Are you saying you guys can't relate to each other in a nonsexual way?

NED. It's more complicated than that. For a lot of guys it's not easy to meet each other in any other way. It's a way of connecting – which becomes an addiction. And then they're caught in the web of peer pressure to perform and perform. Are you sure this is spread by having sex?

EMMA. Long before we isolated the hepatitis viruses we knew about the diseases they caused and had a good idea of how they got around. I think I'm right about this. I am seeing more cases each week than the week before. I figure that by the end of the year the number will be doubling every six months. That's something over a thousand cases by next June. Half of them will be dead. Your two friends I've just diagnosed? One of them will be dead. Maybe both of them.

NED. And you want me to tell every gay man in New York to stop having sex?

EMMA. Who said anything about just New York?

NED. You want me to tell every gay man across the country –

EMMA. Across the world! That's the only way this disease will stop spreading.

NED. Dr. Brookner, isn't that just a tiny bit unrealistic?

EMMA. Mr. Weeks, if having sex can kill you, doesn't anybody with half a brain stop fucking? But perhaps you've never lost anything. Good-bye.

(BRUCE NILES, *an exceptionally handsome man in his late thirties, rushes in carrying CRAIG, helped by MICKEY.*)

BRUCE. (*calling from off*) Where do I go? Where do I go?

EMMA. Quickly – put him on the table. What happened?

BRUCE. He was coming out of the building and he started running to me and then he...then he collapsed to the ground.

EMMA. What is going on inside your bodies!

(CRAIG starts to convulse. BRUCE, MICKEY, and NED restrain him.)

Gently.

(She takes a tongue depressor and holds CRAIG's tongue flat; she checks the pulse in his neck; she looks into his eyes for vital signs that he is coming around; CRAIG's convulsions stop.)

You the lover?

BRUCE. Yes.

EMMA. What's your name?

BRUCE. Bruce Niles, ma'am.

EMMA. How's your health?

BRUCE. Fine. Why – is it contagious?

EMMA. I think so.

MICKEY. Then why haven't you come down with it?

EMMA. *(moving toward a telephone)* Because it seems to have a very long incubation period and require close intimacy. Niles? You were Reinhard Holz's lover?

BRUCE. How did you know that? I haven't seen him in a couple of years.

EMMA. *(dialing the hospital emergency number)* He died three weeks ago. Brookner. Emergency. Set up a room immediately. *(hangs up)*

BRUCE. We were only boyfriends for a couple months.

MICKEY. It's like some sort of plague.

EMMA. There's always a plague. Of one kind or another. Mr. Weeks, I don't think your friend is going to live for very long.

Scene Two

(**FELIX TURNER'S** desk at The New York Times. **FELIX** is always conservatively dressed, and is outgoing and completely masculine.)

NED. (entering, a bit uncomfortable and nervous) Mr. Turner?

FELIX. Bad timing. (looking up) "Mister?"

NED. My name is Ned Weeks.

FELIX. You caught me at a rough moment. I have a deadline.

NED. I've been told you're gay and might be able to help get vital information in *The Times* about –

FELIX. You've been told? Who told you?

NED. The grapevine.

FELIX. Here I thought everyone saw me as the Burt Reynolds of West Forty-third Street. Please don't stop by and say hello to Mr. Sulzberger or Abe Rosenthal. What kind of vital information?

NED. You read the article about this new disease?

FELIX. Yes, I read it. I wondered how long before I'd hear from somebody. Why does everyone gay always think I run *The New York Times*? I can't help you...with this.

NED. I'm sorry to hear that. What would you suggest I do?

FELIX. Take your pick. I've got twenty-three parties, fourteen gallery openings, thirty-seven new restaurants, twelve new discos, one hundred and five spring collections... Anything sound interesting?

NED. No one here wants to write another article. I've talked to half a dozen reporters and editors and the guy who wrote the first piece.

FELIX. That's true. They won't want to write about it. And I can't. We're very departmentalized. You wouldn't want science to write about sweaters, would you?

NED. It is a very peculiar feeling having to go out and seek support from the straight world for something gay.

FELIX. I wouldn't know about that. I just write about gay designers and gay discos and gay chefs and gay rock stars and gay photographers and gay models and gay celebrities and gay everything. I just don't call them gay. Isn't that enough for doing my bit?

NED. No – I don't think it's going to be.

FELIX. I really do have a deadline and you wouldn't like me to get fired; who would write about us at all?

NED. Guys like you give me a pain in the ass. *(He starts out.)*

FELIX. You in the phone book?

NED. Yes.

Scene Three

(The law office of BEN WEEKS, NED's older brother. BEN always dresses in a suit and tie, which NED never does. The brothers love each other a great deal; BEN's approval is essential to NED. BEN is busy with some papers as NED waits for him.)

BEN. Isn't it a bit early to get so worked up?

NED. Don't you be like that, too?

BEN. What have I done now?

NED. My friend Bruce and I went out to Fire Island and over the whole Labor Day weekend we collected the grand sum of \$124.

BEN. You can read that as either an indication that it's a beginning and will improve, or as a portent that heads will stay in the sand. My advice is heads are going to stay in the sand.

NED. Because so many gay people are still in the closet?

BEN. Because people don't like to be frightened. When they get scared they don't behave well. It's called denial. *(giving NED some papers to sign)*

NED. *(signs them automatically)* What are these for?

BEN. Your account needs some more money. You never seem to do anything twice. One movie, one novel, one play...You know you are now living on your capital. I miss your being in the movie business. I like movies. *(unrolls some blueprints)*

NED. What are those?

BEN. I've decided to build a house.

NED. But the one you're in is terrific.

BEN. I just want to build me a dream house, so now I'm going to.

NED. It looks like a fortress. Does it have a moat? How much is it going to cost?

BEN. I suspect it'll wind up over a million bucks. But you're not to tell that to anyone. Not even Sarah. I've found some land in Greenwich, by a little river, completely protected by trees. Ned, it's going to be beautiful.

NED. Doesn't spending a million dollars on a house frighten you? It would scare the shit out of me. Even if I had it.

BEN. You can have a house anytime you want one. You haven't done badly.

NED. Do I detect a tinge of approval – from the big brother who always called me lemon?

BEN. Well, you were a lemon.

NED. I don't want a house.

BEN. Then why have you been searching for one in the country for so many years?

NED. It's no fun living in one alone.

BEN. There's certainly no law requiring you to do that. Is this...Bruce someone you're seeing?

NED. Why thank you for asking. Don't I wish. I see him. He just doesn't see me. Everyone's afraid of me anyway. I frighten them away. It's called the lemon complex.

BEN. I think you're the one who's scared.

NED. You've never said that before.

BEN. Yes, I have. You just didn't hear me. What's the worst thing that could happen to you.

NED. I'd spend a million bucks on a house. Look, Ben – please! (*He takes the blueprints from him.*) I've – we've started an organization to raise money and spread information and fight any way we can.

BEN. Fight who and what?

NED. I told you. There's this strange new disease...

BEN. You're not going to do that full-time?

NED. I just want to help it get started and I'll worry about how much time later on.

BEN. It sounds to me like another excuse to keep from writing.

NED. I knew you would say that. I was wondering...could your law firm incorporate us and get us tax-exempt status and take us on for free, what's it called, *pro bono*?

BEN. *Pro bono* for what? What are you going to do?

NED. I just told you – raise money and fight.

BEN. You have to be more specific than that. You have to have a plan.

NED. How about if we say we're going to become a cross between the League of Women Voters and the United States Marines? Is that a good-enough plan?

BEN. Well, we have a committee that decides this sort of thing. I'll have to put it to the committee.

NED. Why can't you just say yes?

BEN. Because we have a committee.

NED. But you're the senior partner and I'm your brother.

BEN. I fail to see what bearing that has on the matter. You're asking me to ask my partners to give up income that would ordinarily come into their pocket.

NED. I thought every law firm did a certain amount of this sort of thing – charity, worthy causes.

BEN. It's not up to me, however, to select just what these worthy causes might be.

NED. Well, that's a pity. What did you start the firm for?

BEN. That's one of our rules. It's a democratic firm.

NED. I think I like elitism better. When will you know?

BEN. Know what?

NED. Whether or not your committee wants to help dying faggots?

BEN. I'll put it to them at the next meeting.

NED. When is that?

BEN. When it is!

NED. When is it? Because if you're not going to help, I have to find somebody else.

BEN. You're more than free to do that.

NED. I don't want to do that! I want my brother's fancy famous big-deal straight law firm to be the first major New York law firm to do *pro bono* work for a gay cause. That would give me a great deal of pride. I'm sorry you can't see that. I'm sorry I'm still putting you in a position where you're ashamed of me. I thought we'd worked all that out years ago.

BEN. I am not ashamed of you! I told you I'm simply not free to take this on without asking my partners' approval at the next meeting.

NED. Why don't I believe that. When is the next meeting?

BEN. Next Monday. Can you wait until next Monday?

NED. Who else is on the committee?

BEN. What difference does that make?

NED. I'll lobby them. You don't seem like a very sure vote. Is Nelson on the committee? Norman Ivey? Harvey?

BEN. Norman and Harvey are.

NED. Good.

BEN. Okay? Lemon, where do you want to have lunch today? It's your turn to pay.

NED. It is not. I paid last week.

BEN. That's simply not true.

NED. Last week was...French. You're right. Do you know you're the only person in the world I can't get mad at and stay mad at. I think my world would come to an end without you. And then who would Ben talk to? (*He embraces BEN.*)

BEN. (*embracing back, a bit*) That's true.

NED. You're getting better at it.

Scene Four

(NED's apartment. It is stark, modern, all black and white. FELIX comes walking in from another room with a beer, and NED follows, carrying one, too.)

FELIX. That's quite a library in there. You read all those books?

NED. Why does everybody ask that?

FELIX. You have a whole room of 'em, you must want to get asked.

NED. I never thought of it that way. Maybe I do. Thank you. But no, of course I haven't. They go out of print and then you can't find them, so I buy them right away.

FELIX. I think you're going to have to face the fact you won't be able to read them all before you die.

NED. I think you're right.

FELIX. You know, I really used to like high tech, but I'm tired of it now. I think I want chintz back again. Don't be insulted.

NED. I'm not. I want chintz back again, too.

FELIX. So here we are – two fellows who want chintz back again. Excuse me for saying so, but you are stiff as starch.

NED. It's been a long time since I've had a date. This is a date, isn't it? (FELIX nods.) And on the rare occasion, I was usually the asker.

FELIX. That's what's thrown you off your style: I called and asked.

NED. Some style. Before any second date I usually receive a phone call that starts with "Now I don't know what you had in mind, but can't we just be friends?"

FELIX. No. Are you glad I'm here?

NED. Oh, I'm pleased as punch you're here. You're very good-looking. What are you doing here?

FELIX. I'll let that tiny bit of self-pity pass for the moment.

NED. It's not self-pity, it's nervousness.

FELIX. It's definitely self-pity. Do you think you're bad-looking?

NED. Where are you from?

FELIX. I'm from Oklahoma. I left home at eighteen and put myself through college. My folks are dead. My dad worked at the refinery in West Tulsa and my mom was a waitress at a luncheonette in Walgreen's.

NED. Isn't it amazing how a kid can come out of all that and wind up on *The Times* dictating taste and style and fashion to the entire world?

FELIX. And we were talking so nicely.

NED. Talking is not my problem. Shutting up is my problem. And keeping my hands off you.

FELIX. You don't have to keep your hands off me. You have very nice hands. Do you have any awkward sexual tendencies you want to tell me about, too? That I'm not already familiar with?

NED. What are you familiar with?

FELIX. I have found myself pursuing men who hurt me. Before minor therapy. You're not one of those?

NED. No, I'm the runner. I was the runner. Until major therapy. After people who didn't want me and away from people who do.

FELIX. Isn't it amazing how a kid can come out of all that analyzing everything incessantly down to the most infinitesimal neurosis and still be all alone?

NED. I'm sorry you don't like my Dr. Freud. Another aging Jew who couldn't get laid.

FELIX. Just relax. You'll get laid.

NED. I try being laid-back, assertive, funny, butch...What's the point? I don't think there are many gay relationships that work out anyway.

FELIX. It's difficult to imagine you being laid-back. I know a lot of gay relationships that are working out very well.

NED. I guess I never see them.

FELIX. That's because you're a basket case.

NED. Fuck off.

FELIX. What's the matter? Don't you think you're attractive? Don't you like your body?

NED. I don't think anybody really likes their body. I read that somewhere.

FELIX. You know my fantasy has always been to go away and live by the ocean and write twenty-four novels, living with someone just like you with all these books who of course will be right there beside me writing your own twenty-four novels.

NED. *(after a beat)* Me, too.

FELIX. Harold Robbins marries James Michener.

NED. How about Tolstoy and Charles Dickens?

FELIX. As long as Kafka doesn't marry Dostoevsky.

NED. Dostoevsky is my favorite writer.

FELIX. I'll have to try him again.

NED. If you really feel that way, why do you write all that society and party and fancy-ball-gown bullshit?

FELIX. Here we go again. I'll bet you gobble it up every day.

NED. I do. I also know six people who've died. When I came to you a few weeks ago, it was only one.

FELIX. I'm sorry. Is that why you agreed to this date?

NED. Do you know that when Hitler's Final Solution to eliminate the Polish Jews was first mentioned in *The Times* it was on page twenty-eight. And on page six of *The Washington Post*. And *The Times* and *The Post* were owned by Jews. What causes silence like that? Why didn't the American Jews help the German Jews get out? Their very own people! Scholars are finally writing honestly about this – I've been doing some research – and it's damning to everyone who was here then: Jewish leadership for being totally ineffective; Jewish organizations for constantly fighting among themselves, unable to cooperate even in the face of death: Zionists versus non-Zionists, Rabbi Wise against Rabbi Silver...

FELIX. Is this some sort of special way you talk when you don't want to talk? We were doing so nicely.

NED. We were?

FELIX. Wasn't there an awful lot of anti-Semitism in those days? Weren't Jews afraid of rubbing people's noses in too much shit?

NED. Yes, everybody has a million excuses for not getting involved. But aren't there moral obligations, moral commandments to try everything possible? Where were the Christian churches, the Pope, Churchill? And don't get me started on Roosevelt...How I was brought up to worship him, all Jews were. A clear statement from him would have put everything on the front pages, would have put Hitler on notice. But his administration did its best to stifle publicity at the same time as they clamped down immigration laws forbidding entry, and this famous haven for the oppressed became as inaccessible as Tibet. The title of Treasury Secretary Morgenthau's report to Roosevelt was "Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews," which he wrote in 1944. Dachau was opened in 1933. Where was everybody for eleven years? And then it was too late.

FELIX. This is turning out to be a very romantic evening.

NED. And don't tell me how much you can accomplish working from the inside. Jewish leaders, relying on their contacts with people in high places, were still, quietly, from the inside, attempting to persuade them when the war was over.

FELIX. What do you want me to say? Do you ever take a vacation?

NED. A vacation. I forgot. That's the great goal, isn't it. A constant Fire Island vacation. Party, party; fuck, fuck. Maybe you can give me a few trendy pointers on what to wear.

FELIX. Boy, you really have a bug up your ass. Look, I'm not going to tell them I'm gay and could I write about the few cases of a mysterious disease that seems to be standing in the way of your kissing me even though there must be half a million gay men in this city who are fine and healthy. Let us please acknowledge the law of averages. And this is not World War Two. The numbers are nowhere remotely comparable. And all analogies to the Holocaust are tired, overworked, boring, probably insulting, possibly true, and a major turnoff.

NED. Are they?

FELIX. Boy, I think I've found myself a real live weird one. I had no idea. *(pause)* Hey, I just called you weird.

NED. You are not the first.

FELIX. You've never had a lover, have you?

NED. Where did you get that from?

FELIX. Have you? Wow.

NED. I suppose you've had quite a few.

FELIX. I had a very good one for a number of years, thank you. He was older than I was and he found someone younger.

NED. So you like them older. You looking for a father?

FELIX. No, I am not looking for a father! God, you are relentless. And as cheery as Typhoid Mary.

(NED comes over to FELIX. Then he leans over and kisses him. The kiss becomes quite intense. Then NED breaks away, jumps up, and begins to walk around nervously.)

NED. The American Jews knew exactly what was happening, but everything was down played and stifled. Can you imagine how effective it would have been if every Jew in America had marched on Washington? Proudly! Who says I want a lover? Huh!? I mean, why doesn't anybody believe me when I say I do not want a lover?

FELIX. You are fucking crazy. Jews, Dachau, Final Solution – what kind of date is this! I don't believe anyone in the whole wide world doesn't want to be loved. Ned, you don't remember me, do you? We've been in bed together. We made love. We talked. We kissed. We cuddled. We made love again. I keep waiting for you to remember, something, anything. But you don't!

NED. How could I not remember you?

FELIX. I don't know.

NED. Maybe if I saw you naked.

FELIX. It's okay as long as we treat each other like whores. It was at the baths a few years ago. You were busy cruising some blond number and I stood outside your door waiting for you to come back and when you did you gave me such an inspection up and down you would have thought I was applying for the CIA.

NED. And then what?

FELIX. I just told you. We made love twice. I thought it was lovely. You told me your name was Ned, that when you were a child you read a Philip Barry play called *Holiday* where there was a Ned, and you immediately switched from...Alexander? I teased you for taking such a Wasp, up-in-Connecticut-for-the-weekend-name, and I asked what you did, and you answered something like you'd tried a number of things, and I asked you if that had included love, which is when you said you had to get up early in the morning. That's when I left. But I tossed you my favorite go-fuck-yourself yourself when you told me "I really am not in the market for a lover" – men do not just naturally not love – they learn not to. I am not a whore. I just sometimes make mistakes and look for love in the wrong places. And I think you're a bluffer. Your novel was all about a man desperate for love and a relationship, in a world filled with nothing but casual sex.

NED. Do you think we could start over?

FELIX. Maybe.

Scene Five

(*NED's apartment. MICKEY, BRUCE, and TOMMY BOATWRIGHT, a Southerner in his late twenties, are stuffing envelopes with various inserts and then packing them into cartons. Beer and pretzels.*)

MICKEY. (*calling off*) Ned, Gregory says hello and he can't believe you've turned into an activist. He says where were you fifteen years ago when we needed you.

NED. (*coming in with a tray with more beer*) You tell Gregory fifteen years ago no self-respecting faggot would have anything to do with you guys.

TOMMY. I was twelve years old.

BRUCE. We're not activists.

MICKEY. If you're not an activist, Bruce, then what are you?

BRUCE. Nothing. I'm only in this until it goes away.

MICKEY. You know, the battle against the police at Stonewall was won by transvestites. We all fought like hell. It's you Brooks Brothers guys who –

BRUCE. That's why I wasn't at Stonewall. I don't have anything in common with those guys, girls, whatever you call them. Ned, Robert Stokes has it. He called me today.

NED. At Glenn Fitzsimmons' party the other night, I saw one friend there I knew was sick, I learned about two others, and then walking home I bumped into Richie Faro, who told me he'd just been diagnosed.

MICKEY. Richie Faro?

NED. All this on Sixth Avenue between Nineteenth and Eighth Streets.

MICKEY. Richie Faro – gee, I haven't seen him since Stonewall. I think we even had a little affairlet.

BRUCE. Are you a transvestite?

MICKEY. No, but I'll fight for your right to be one.

BRUCE. I don't want to be one!

MICKEY. I'm worried this organization might only attract white bread and middle-class. We need blacks...

TOMMY. Right on!

MICKEY. ...and...how do you feel about Lesbians?

BRUCE. Not very much. I mean, they're...something else.

MICKEY. I wonder what they're going to think about all this? If past history is any guide, there's never been much support by either half of us for the other. Tommy, are you a Lesbian?

TOMMY. *(as he exits into the kitchen)* I have done and seen everything.

NED. *(to BRUCE)* How are you doing?

BRUCE. I'm okay now. I forgot to thank you for sending flowers .

NED. That's okay.

BRUCE. Funny – my mother sent flowers. We've never even talked about my being gay. I told her Craig died. I guess she knew.

NED. I think mothers somehow always know. Would you like to have dinner next week, maybe see a movie?

BRUCE. *(uncomfortable when NED makes advances)* Actually... it's funny...it happened so fast. You know Albert? I've been seeing him.

NED. That guy in the Calvin Klein ads? Great!

(TOMMY returns with another carton of envelopes and boxes.)

BRUCE. I don't think I like to be alone. I've always been with somebody.

MICKEY. *(looking up from his list-checking)* We have to choose a president tonight, don't forget. I'm not interested. And what about a board of directors?

BRUCE. *(looking at one of the flyers)* Mickey, how did you finally decide to say it? I didn't even look.

MICKEY. I just said the best medical knowledge, which admittedly isn't very much, seems to feel that a virus has landed in our community. It could have been any community, but it landed in ours. I guess we just got in the way. Boy, are we going to have paranoia problems.

NED. (*looking at a flyer*) That's all you said?

MICKEY. See what I mean? No, I also put in the benefit dance announcement and a coupon for donations.

NED. What about the recommendations?

MICKEY. I recommend everyone should donate a million dollars. How are we going to make people realize this is not just a gay problem? If it happens to us, it can happen to anybody.

NED. (*who has read the flyer and is angry*) Mickey, I thought we talked this out on the phone. We must tell everybody what Emma wants us to tell them.

MICKEY. She wants to tell them so badly she won't lend her name as recommending it. (*to the others*) This is what Ned wrote for me to send out. "If this doesn't scare the shit out of you, and rouse you to action, gay men may have no future here on earth." Neddie, I think that's a bit much.

BRUCE. You'll scare everybody to death!

NED. Shake up. What's wrong with that? This isn't something that can be force-fed gently; it won't work. Mickey neglected to read my first sentence.

MICKEY. "It's difficult to write this without sounding alarmist or scared." Okay, but then listen to this: "I am sick of guys moaning that giving up careless sex until this blows over is worse than death...I am sick of guys who can only think with their cocks...I am sick of closeted gays. It's 1982 now, guys, when are you going to come out? By 1984 you could be dead."

BRUCE. You're crazy.

NED. Am I? There are almost five hundred cases now. Okay, if we're not sending it out, I'll get *The Native* to run it.

BRUCE. But we can't tell people how to live their lives! We can't do that. And besides, the entire gay political platform is fucking. We'd get it from all sides.

NED. You make it sound like that's all that being gay means.

BRUCE. That's all it does mean!

MICKEY. It's the only thing that makes us different.

NED. I don't want to be considered different.

BRUCE. Neither do I, actually.

MICKEY. Well, I do.

BRUCE. Well, you are!

NED. Why is it we can only talk about our sexuality, and so relentlessly? You know, Mickey, all we've created is generations of guys who can't deal with each other as anything but erections. We can't even get a meeting with the mayor's gay assistant!

TOMMY. I'm very interested in setting up some sort of services for the patients. We've got to start thinking about them.

BRUCE. (*whispering to NED*) Who's he?

TOMMY. He heard about you and he found you and here he is. My name is Tommy Boatwright... (*to NED*) Why don't you write that down? Tommy Boatwright. In real life, I'm a hospital administrator. And I'm a Southern bitch.

NED. Welcome to gay politics.

BRUCE. Ned, I won't have anything to do with any organization that tells people how to live their lives.

NED. It's not telling them. It's a recommendation.

MICKEY. With a shotgun to their heads.

BRUCE. It's interfering with their civil rights.

MICKEY. Fucking as a civil right? Don't we just wish.

TOMMY. What if we put it in the form of a recommendation from gay doctors? So that way we're just the conduit.

NED. I can't get any gay doctor to go on record and say publicly what Emma wants.

BRUCE. *(suddenly noticing an envelope)* What the fuck is this?

MICKEY. Unh, oh!

BRUCE. Look at this! Was this your idea?

NED. I'm looking. I'm not seeing.

NED. What don't I see?

MICKEY. What we put for our return address.

NED. You mean the word gay is on the envelope?

BRUCE. You're damn right. Instead of just the initials. Who did it?

NED. Well, maybe it was Pierre who designed it. Maybe it was a mistake at the printers. But it is the name we chose for this organization...

BRUCE. You chose. I didn't want "gay" in it.

MICKEY. No, we all voted. That was one of those meetings when somebody actually showed up.

BRUCE. We can't send them out.

NED. We have to if we want anybody to come to the dance. They were late from the printers as it is.

BRUCE. We can go through and scratch out the word with a Magic Marker.

NED. Ten thousand times? Look, I feel sympathy for young guys still living at home on Long Island with their parents, but most men getting these... Look at you, in your case what difference does it make? You live alone, you own your own apartment, your mother lives in another state...

BRUCE. What about my mailman?

(MICKEY lets out a little laughing yelp, then clears his throat.)

NED. You don't expect me to take that seriously?

BRUCE. Yes, I do!

NED. What about your doorman?

BRUCE. What about him?

NED. Why don't you worry about him? All those cute little Calvin Klein numbers you parade under his nose, he thinks you're playing poker with the boys?

BRUCE. You don't have any respect for anyone who doesn't think like you do, do you?

NED. Bruce, I don't agree with you about this. I think it's imperative that we all grow up now and come out of the closet.

MICKEY. Ladies, behave! Ned, you don't think much of our sexual revolution. You say it all the time.

NED. No, I say I don't think much of promiscuity. And what's that got to do with gay envelopes?

MICKEY. But you've certainly done your share.

NED. That doesn't mean I approve of it or like myself for doing it.

MICKEY. But not all of us feel that way. And we don't like to hear the word "promiscuous" used pejoratively.

BRUCE. Or so publicly.

NED. Where the world can hear it, Bruce?

MICKEY. Sex is liberating. It's always guys like you who've never had one who are always screaming about relationships, and monogamy and fidelity and holy matrimony. What are you, a closet straight?

NED. Mickey, more sex isn't more liberating. And having so much sex makes finding love impossible.

MICKEY. Neddie, dahling, do not put your failure to find somebody on the morality of all the rest of us.

NED. Mickey, dahling, I'm just saying what I think! It's taken me twenty years of assorted forms of therapy in various major world capitals to be able to do so without guilt, fear, or giving a fuck if anybody likes it or not.

TOMMY. I'll buy that!

NED. Thank you.

BRUCE. But not everyone's so free to say what they think!

MICKEY. Or able to afford so much therapy. Although God knows I need it. (*looking at his watch*) Look, it's late, and we haven't elected our president. Ned, I think it should be...Bruce. Everybody knows him and likes him and...I mean, everybody expects you to –

NED. You mean he's popular and everybody's afraid of me.

MICKEY. Yes.

TOMMY. No.

MICKEY. No.

TOMMY. No, what it means is that you have a certain kind of energy that's definitely needed, but Bruce has a... presence that might bring people together in a way you can't.

NED. What's that mean?

TOMMY. It means he's gorgeous – and all the kids on Christopher Street and Fire Island will feel a bit more comfortable following him.

NED. Just like high school.

TOMMY & MICKEY. Yes!

NED. Follow him where?

TOMMY. (*putting his arm around him*) Well, honey, why don't we have a little dinner and I'll tell you all about it – and more.

NED. Uhn, thanks, I'm busy.

TOMMY. Forever? Well, that's too bad. I wanted to try my hand at smoothing out your rough edges.

MICKEY. Good luck.

NED. (*to BRUCE*) Well, it looks like you're the president.

BRUCE. I don't think I want this.

NED. Oh, come on, you're gorgeous – and we're all going to follow you.

BRUCE. Fuck you. I accept.

NED. Well, fuck you, congratulations.

TOMMY. There are going to be a lot of scared people out there needing someplace to call for information. I'd be interested in starting some sort of telephone hotline.

BRUCE. (*his first decision in office*) Unh...sure. Just prepare a detailed budget and let me see it before you make any commitments.

MICKEY. (*to NED*) Don't you feel in safe hands already?

TOMMY. (*to BRUCE*) What is it you do for a living, if I may ask?

BRUCE. I'm a vice-president of Citibank.

TOMMY. That's nothing to be shy about, sugar. You invented the Cash Machine. (*picking up an envelope*) So, are we mailing these out or what?

BRUCE. What do you think?

TOMMY. I'll bet nobody even notices.

BRUCE. Oh, there will be some who notice. Okay.

TOMMY. Okay? Okay! Our first adult compromise. Thank y'all for your cooperation.

(**FELIX**, carrying a shopping bag, lets himself in with his own key. **NED** goes to greet him.)

NED. Everybody, this is Felix. Bruce, Tommy, Mickey. Bruce just got elected president.

FELIX. My condolences. Don't let me interrupt. Anybody wants any Balducci gourmet ice cream – it's eighteen bucks a pint?

(**NED** proudly escorts **FELIX** into the kitchen.)

MICKEY. It looks like Neddie's found a boyfriend.

BRUCE. Thank God, now maybe he'll leave me alone.

TOMMY. Shit, he's got his own key. It looks like I signed on too late.

BRUCE. I worry about Ned. I mean, I like him a lot, but his style is so...confrontational. We could get into a lot of trouble with him.

TOMMY. Honey, he looks like a pretty good catch to me. We could get into a lot of trouble without him.

(**NED** comes back and starts clearing up.)

MICKEY. I'm going home. My Gregory, he burns dinner every night, and when I'm late, he blames me.

BRUCE. (to **NED**) My boss doesn't know and he hates gays. He keeps telling me fag jokes and I keep laughing at them.

NED. Citibank won't fire you for being gay. And if they did, we could make such a stink that every gay customer in New York would leave them. Come on, Bruce – you used to be a fucking Green Beret!

TOMMY. Goodness!

BRUCE. But I love my job. I supervise a couple thousand people all over the country and my investments are up to twenty million now.

MICKEY. I'm leaving. (He hefts a carton and starts out.)

BRUCE. Wait, I'm coming. (to **NED**) I just think we have to stay out of anything political.

NED. And I think it's going to be impossible to pass along any information or recommendation that isn't going to be considered political by somebody.

TOMMY. And I think this is not an argument you two boys are going to settle tonight.

(**BRUCE** picks up a big carton and heads out.)

TOMMY. (who has waited impatiently for **BRUCE** to leave so he can be alone with **NED**) I just wanted to tell you I really admire your writing...and your passion...

(As **FELIX** reenters from the kitchen, **TOMMY** drops his flirtatious tone.)

...and what you've been saying and doing, and it's because of you I'm here. (to **FELIX**) Take care this good man doesn't burn out. Good night. (He leaves.)

NED. We just elected a president who's in the closet. I lost every argument. And I'm the only screamer among them. Oh, I forgot to tell them – I'm getting us something on the local news.

FELIX. Which channel?

NED. It's not TV, it's radio...It's a start.

FELIX. Ned, I think you should have been president.

NED. I didn't really want it. I've never been any good playing on a team. I like stirring things up on my own.

Bruce will be a good president. I'll shape him up.

Where's the ice cream? Do you think I'm crazy?

FELIX. I certainly do. That's why I'm here.

NED. I'm so glad.

FELIX. That I'm here?

NED. That you think I'm crazy. *(They kiss.)*

Scene Six

(BEN's office. In a corner is a large model of the new house under a cloth cover.)

BEN. You got your free legal work from my firm; now I'm not going to be on your board of directors, too.

NED. I got our free legal work from your firm by going to Norman and he said, "Of course, no problem." I asked him, "Don't you have to put it before your committee?" And he said, "Nah, I'll just tell them we're going to do it."

BEN. Well...you got it.

NED. All I'm asking for is the use of your name. You don't have to do a thing. This is an honorary board. For the stationary.

BEN. Ned, come on – it's your cause, not mine.

NED. That is just an evasion!

BEN. It is not. I don't ask you to help me with the Larchmont school board, do I?

NED. But I would if you asked me.

BEN. But I don't.

NED. Would you be more interested if you thought this was a straight disease?

BEN. It has nothing to do with your being gay.

NED. Of course it has. What else has it got to do with?

BEN. I've got other things to do.

NED. But I'm telling you you don't have to do a thing!

BEN. The answer is No.

NED. It's impossible to get this epidemic taken seriously. I wrote a letter to the gay newspaper and some guy wrote in, "Oh there goes Ned Weeks again; he wants us all to die so he can say 'I told you so.'"

BEN. He sounds like a crazy.

NED. It kept me up all night.

BEN. Then you're crazy, too.

NED. I ran into an old friend I hadn't seen in years in the subway, and I said, "Hello, how are you?" He started screaming, "You're giving away all our secrets, you're painting us as sick, you're destroying homosexuality" and then he tried to slug me. Right there in the subway. Under Bloomingdale's.

BEN. Another crazy.

NED. We did raise \$50,000 at our dance last week. That's more money than any gay organization has ever raised at one time in this city before.

BEN. That's wonderful, Ned. So you must be beginning to do something right.

NED. And I made a speech appealing for volunteers and we got over a hundred people to sign up, including a few women. And I've got us on Donahue. I'm going to be on Donahue with a doctor and a patient.

BEN. Don't tell your mother.

NED. Why not?

BEN. She's afraid someone is going to shoot you.

(BEN rolls the model house stage center and pulls off the cover.)

NED. What about you? Aren't you afraid your corporate clients will say, "Was that your faggot brother I saw on TV?" Excuse me – is this a bad time? You seem preoccupied.

BEN. Do I? I'm sorry. A morning with the architect is enough to shake me up a little bit. It's going to cost more than I thought.

NED. More?

BEN. Twice as much.

NED. Two million?

BEN. I can handle it.

NED. You can? That's very nice. You know, Ben, one of these days I'll make you agree that over twenty million men and women are not all here on this earth because of something requiring the services of a psychiatrist.

BEN. Oh, it's up to twenty million now, is it? Every time we have this discussion, you up the ante.

NED. We haven't had this discussion in years, Ben. And we grow, just like everybody else.

BEN. Look, I try to understand. I read stuff. (*picking up a copy of Newsweek, with "Gay America" on the cover*) I open magazines and I see pictures of you guys in leather and chains and whips and black masks, with captions saying this is a social worker, this is a computer analyst, this is a schoolteacher – and I say to myself, "This isn't Ned."

NED. No, it isn't. It isn't most of us. You know the media always dramatizes the most extreme. Do you think we all wear dresses, too?

BEN. Don't you?

NED. Me, personally? No, I do not.

BEN. But then you tell me how you go to the bathhouses and fuck blindly, and to me that's not so different from this. You guys don't seem to understand why there are rules, and regulations, guidelines, responsibilities. You guys have a dreadful image problem.

NED. I know that! That's what has to be changed. That's why it's so important to have people like you supporting us. You're a respected person. You already have your dignity.

BEN. We better decide where we're going to eat lunch and get out of here. I have an important meeting.

NED. Do you? How important? I've asked for your support.

BEN. In every area I consider important you have my support.

NED. In some place deep inside of you you still think I'm sick. Isn't that right? Okay. Define it for me. What do you mean by "sick"? Sick unhealthy? Sick perverted? Sick I'll get over it? Sick to be locked up?

BEN. I think you've adjusted to life quite well.

NED. All things considered? (**BEN** *nods*.) In the only area I consider important I don't have your support at all. The single-minded determination of all you people to forever see us as sick helps keep us sick.

BEN. I saw how unhappy you were!

NED. So were you! You wound up going to shrinks, too. We grew up side by side. We both felt pretty much the same about Mom and Pop. I refuse to accept for one more second that I was damaged by our childhood while you were not.

BEN. But we all don't react the same way to the same thing.

NED. That's right. So I became a writer and you became a lawyer. I'll agree to the fact that I have any number of awful character traits. But not to the fact that whatever they did to us as kids automatically made me sick and gay while you stayed straight and healthy.

BEN. Well, that's the difference of opinion we have over theory.

NED. But your theory turns me into a man from Mars. My theory doesn't do that to you.

BEN. Are you suggesting it was wrong of me to send you into therapy so young? I didn't think you'd stay in it forever.

NED. I didn't think I'd done anything wrong until you sent me into it. Ben, you know you mean more to me than anyone else in the world; you always have. Although I think I've finally found someone I like...Don't you understand?

BEN. No, I don't understand.

NED. You've got to say it. I'm the same as you. Just say it. Say it!

BEN. No, you're not. I can't say it.

NED. (*He is heartbroken.*) Every time I lose this fight it hurts more. I don't want to have lunch. I'll see you. (*He starts out.*)

BEN. Come on, lemon, I still love you. Sarah loves you. Our children. Our cat. Our dog...

NED. You think this is a joke!

BEN. (*angry*) You have my love and you have my legal advice and my financial supervision. I can't give you the courage to stand up and say to me that you don't give a

good healthy fuck what I think. Please stop trying to wring some admission of guilt out of me. I am truly happy that you've met someone. It's about time. And I'm sorry your friends are dying...

NED. If you're so sorry, join our honorary board and say you're sorry out loud!

BEN. My agreeing you were born just like I was born is not going to help save your dying friends.

NED. Funny – that's exactly what I think will help save my dying friends.

BEN. Ned – you can be gay and you can be proud no matter what I think. Everybody is oppressed by somebody else in some form or another. Some of us learn how to fight back, with or without the help of others, despite their opinions, even those closest to us. And judging from this mess your friends are in, it's imperative that you stand up and fight to be prouder than ever.

NED. Can't you see that I'm trying to do that? Can't your perverse ego proclaiming its superiority see that I'm trying to be proud? You can only find room to call yourself normal.

BEN. You make me sound like I'm the enemy.

NED. I'm beginning to think that you and your straight world are our enemy. I am furious with you, and with myself and with every goddamned doctor who ever told me I'm sick and interfered with my loving a man. I'm trying to understand why nobody wants to hear we're dying, why nobody wants to help, why my own brother doesn't want to help. Two million dollars – for a house! We can't even get twenty-nine cents from the city. You still think I'm sick, and I simply cannot allow that any longer. I will not speak to you again until you accept me as your equal. Your healthy equal. Your brother! *(He runs out.)*

Scene Seven

(NED's apartment. FELIX, working on an article, is spread out on the floor with books, note pad, comforter, and pillows. NED enters, eating from a pint of ice cream.)

NED. At the rate I'm going, no one in this city will be talking to me in about three more weeks. I had another fight with Bruce today. I slammed the phone down on him. I don't know why I do that – I'm never finished saying what I want to, so I just have to call him back, during which I inevitably work myself up into another frenzy and hang up on him again. That poor man doesn't know what to do with me. I don't think people like me work at Citibank.

FELIX. Why can't you see what an ordinary guy Bruce is? I know you think he has hidden qualities, if you just give him plant food he'll grow into the fighter you are. He can't. All he's got is a lot of good looking Pendleton shirts.

NED. I know there are better ways to handle him. I just can't seem to. This epidemic is killing friendships, too. I can't even talk to my own brother. Why doesn't he call me?

FELIX. There's the phone.

NED. Why do I always have to do the running back?

FELIX. All you ever eat is desserts.

NED. Sugar is the most important thing in my life. All the rest is just to stay alive.

FELIX. What was the fight about?

NED. Which fight?

FELIX. Bruce.

NED. Pick a subject.

FELIX. How many do you know now?

NED. Forty...dead. That's too many for one person to know. Curt Morgan, this guy I went to Yale with, just died.

FELIX. Emerick Nolan – he gave me my first job on *The Washington Post*.

NED. Bruce is getting paranoid: now his lover, Albert, isn't feeling well. Bruce is afraid he's giving it to everyone.

FELIX. Maybe it isn't paranoia. Maybe what we do with our lovers is what we should be thinking about most of all. (*The phone rings. NED answers it.*)

NED. Hello. Hold on. (*locating some pages and reading from them into the phone*) "It is no secret that I consider the Mayor to be, along with *The Times*, the biggest enemy gay men and women must contend with in New York. Until the day I die I will never forgive this newspaper and this Mayor for ignoring this epidemic that is killing so many of my friends . If..." All right, here's the end. "And every gay man who refuses to come forward now and fight to save his own life is truly helping to kill the rest of us. How many of us have to die before you get scared off your ass and into action?" ...Thank you. (*He hangs up.*) I hear it's becoming known as the Ned Weeks School of Outrage.

FELIX. Who was that?

NED. Felix, I'm orchestrating this really well. I know I am. We have over six hundred volunteers now. I've got us mentioned in *Time*, *Newsweek*, the evening news on all three networks, both local and national, English and French and Canadian and Australian TV, all the New York area papers except *The Times* and *The Voice*...

FELIX. You're doing great.

NED. But they don't support me! Bruce...this fucking board of directors we put together, all friends of mine – every single one of them yelled at me for two solid hours last night. They think I'm creating a panic, I'm using it to make myself into a celebrity – not one of them will appear on TV or be interviewed, so I do it all by default; so now I'm accused of being self-serving, as if it's fun getting slugged on the subway.

FELIX. They're beginning to get really frightened. You are becoming a leader. And you love to fight.

NED. What? I love it?

FELIX. Yes!

NED. I love to fight? Moi?

FELIX. Yes, you do, and you're having a wonderful time.

NED. Yes, I am. (*meaning FELIX*)

FELIX. I did speak to one of our science reporters today.

NED. (*delighted*) Felix! What did he say?

FELIX. He's gay, too, and afraid they'll find out. Don't yell at me! Ned, I tried. All those shrinks, they must have done something right to you.

NED. (*giving FELIX a kiss with each name*) Dr. Malev, Dr. Ritvo, Dr. Gillespie, Dr. Greenacre, Dr. Klagsbrun, Dr. Donadello, Dr. Levy...I have only one question now: why did it have to take so long?

FELIX. You think it's them, do you?

NED. Dr. – I can't remember which one – said it would finally happen. Someone I couldn't scare away would finally show up.

FELIX. At the baths, why didn't you tell me you were a writer?

NED. Why didn't you tell me you worked for *The Times*? That I would have remembered.

FELIX. If I had told you what I did, would you have seen me again?

NED. Absolutely.

FELIX. You slut!

NED. Felix, we weren't ready then. If I had it, would you leave me?

FELIX. I don't know. Would you, if I did?

NED. No.

FELIX. How do you know?

FINISH READING THIS SCRIPT

Visit our website to purchase the full script or to explore other titles.

www.samuelfrench.com

www.samuelfrench.co.uk

To stay up to date on all that we are doing, follow us on social media:



*Titles for licensing are subject to availability depending on your territory.