

REVERSE PSYCHOLOGY

Charles Ludlam

Leonard, Freddie, (2 men)

Scene 5

The office of psychiatrist, Dr. Leonard Silver. His patient, Freddie, is lying on the couch.

LEONARD

Now, lean back. Put up your feet. Take off your shoes.

FREDDIE

I don't want to take off my shoes.

LEONARD

Why not?

FREDDIE

There's a hole in my sock.

LEONARD

Come now, Freddie. You can trust me. I won't think less of you for it. Take off your shoes.

FREDDIE

(coily)

No.

LEONARD

(coaxing)

Freddie, take off your shoes.

FREDDIE

(coily)

No.

LEONARD

(coaxing but firm)

Now, Freddie, you don't want people thinking you're a loony, do you?

FREDDIE

I don't care what people think! To hell with them!

LEONARD

Freddie, you're talking crazy. Take off your shoes.

FREDDIE

(petulantly)

No.

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LEONARD

Take off those shoes!

FREDDIE
(angrily)

No!

LEONARD

You're as batty as a bedbug, that's what you are. You're a goddam weirdo and everybody's going to know it and laugh about it behind your back.

FREDDIE
(terrified)

They will?

LEONARD

Yeah, they're gonna snigger and whisper (*whispers*), "See him? That's the loony! He hasn't got all of his marbles. He's crackers. He's off his rocker. He's ready for the funny farm."

FREDDIE

The dirty rats!

LEONARD

They're probably all against you anyway. So Freddie, be a good boy and don't give them an excuse. Let's have those shoes off and no arguments.

FREDDIE
(rational)

I'm sorry, Doctor Silver, but I really feel more comfortable with my shoes on.

(Leonard seizes him roughly and tries to pull his shoes off by force.)

LEONARD

Get those goddamn shoes off you little bastard or I'll give you such a smack!

FREDDIE
(struggling with the doctor)

Let go!

LEONARD

(raising his voice threateningly)

Give me those shoes! (slaps Freddie's face and pulls the shoes off of him.) There. Now how do you feel?

FREDDIE
(with a sigh of relief)

Thank you, Doctor. I feel much better now.

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LEONARD

Now, wasn't that a big fuss for nothing? I don't even see a hole in your sock.

FREDDIE

Look closer.

LEONARD

Why, Freddie, your left sock is painted on!

FREDDIE

I couldn't find the other one, Doc.

LEONARD

What are you feeling now, Freddie?

FREDDIE

I have so much more of a sense of myself. I feel stronger. Doctor, I have something to tell you. And up to now I've been afraid to tell you this. But now think I can. Although I've been afraid that you would take it wrong.

LEONARD

Go ahead, Freddie. You can be open with me.

FREDDIE

Doctor, I've gotten a new psychiatrist. I'm leaving you.

LEONARD

You what?

FREDDIE

I've gotten a new psychiatrist. I'm leaving you.

LEONARD

How can you do this to me? Not after all we've been through together.

FREDDIE

I'm sorry, but I feel we've gone as far as we can go. I'm grateful to you for the years we've had together. But people change. Their needs change. Sometimes they grow apart. There are some things we have to leave behind.

LEONARD

Oh, so that's what I am, huh? Some *thing* you're going to leave behind! That's all I've been to you.

FREDDIE

Now, Leonard, don't be upset.

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LEONARD

Don't be upset! Don't be upset! You waste the best years of my life and you say Don't be upset. Who is he? Some little Freudian you've been seeing on the sly?

FREDDIE

She's into Gestalt.

LEONARD

(exploding)

Ha! So it's a woman! You're leaving me for a woman. You'd better be careful there, Freddie. If you go to a woman psychiatrist people are going to think you're gay. I always suspected you were latent.

FREDDIE

I'm not worried about it.

LEONARD

(palsy-walsy)

Hey hey hey hey Freddie! Freddieeee! Hey hey hey hey hey! Don't do anything rash. Let's try to work it out.

FREDDIE

My mind's made up.

LEONARD

(incensed)

You ingrate! You're sick. You know that, don't you? You're sick. Two weeks out of my care and you'll be completely out of control. And don't come crying to me.

FREDDIE

I just don't feel I can make any more progress here.

LEONARD

(sweetly)

Freddie, I'm sorry. I didn't mean what I said. Please stay.

FREDDIE

I'd better be going. (*puts on his shoes*)

LEONARD

Where are you going? To her?

FREDDIE

I have an appointment with her this afternoon.

LEONARD

How will I live if you leave me? You're reducing my income substantially with this nonsense. You know that.

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FREDDIE

You have other patients.

LEONARD

(on bended knee)

None of them mean anything to me but you. I'll get rid of all my other patients if you stay.

FREDDIE

I wouldn't want you to do that.

LEONARD

(rising in indignation)

Oh, go and see if I care. And good riddance!

FREDDIE

I'm going.

LEONARD

(running to the window)

I'll kill myself!

FREDDIE

No you won't.

LEONARD

(suddenly regaining his composure)

You're right. I won't. (*nervous tic*) Forgive me. (*tic*) I lost my head. (*tic*)

FREDDIE

Are you alright?

LEONARD

Yes. (*tic*) I feel better now. (*tic*)

FREDDIE

You'll get over it.

LEONARD

(calmly and in a very pleasant voice)

Freddie, before you go, I want to tell you something.

FREDDIE

I'm a little late.

LEONARD

Come here, Freddie. Let me tell you this. It's important.

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FREDDIE

Go ahead.

LEONARD

Come here first. I want to whisper it.

FREDDIE

Oh, alright. (*crosses to doctor*)

LEONARD

(*whispers in Freddie's ear*)

It's just this. (*loudly*) I hate you and I hope you die.

FREDDIE

Goodbye.

LEONARD

(*holds onto Freddie's leg and gets dragged across the floor*) I didn't mean it! Forgive me!
Forgive me!

FREDDIE

There's nothing to forgive. Now let go of my leg.

LEONARD

(*under control*)

Very well. As you wish. Do you have my check?

FREDDIE

(*hands him a check*)

I almost forgot.

LEONARD

Huh!

FREDDIE

Goodbye. (*exits*)