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**THE HYPNOTIST**

by

Allan Havis

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## **CHARACTERS**

**Larry Wexler**..... .55 years old, lean, laconic psychologist & hypnotist  
**Mimi Hadley**..... neurotic, 45 years old, Wexler's newest patient, sunglasses  
**Richard Hoisington**.....60 years old, agent for the National Security Agency  
**Bruce Dykstra**..... late 50s, extroverted, narcissistic, glasses & moustache  
**Roxie**.....British, sexy, 40s, a lot of wild blonde hair  
**Sally**..... New Yorker, attractive 40s, scarf around her brown hair  
**Madeline Cohen**.....attractive redhead, 40 years old, Wexler's patient  
  
**Alicia Wexler**..... chilly, haughty, 45 years old, Wexler's ex- wife  
  
**Lexie Wexler**.....Wexler's 21 year old daughter, and college student

## **PRODUCTION NOTE - DOUBLING CASTING ASSIGNMENTS**

### **A play for six actors**

The same actor with a modicum of differentials should play Hoisington & Dykstra.  
 The same actor with a modicum of differentials should play Hadley & Sally

## **SETTING**

A professional office in Baltimore, showing a waiting room and a connecting room for hypnotherapy. The décor is spare, tasteful and lighting frequently subdued.

**The time is the present year mid spring**

**SCENE ONE**

**(The hypnotist office in Baltimore with leather furniture, wood table sporting flowers in a vase, watercolor landscapes on the wall, perhaps an aquarium off to the side.)**

WEXLER

Good afternoon. May I take your coat? Looks like a lot of rain today.

(He does)

Did you use the garage?

HADLEY

Yes.

WEXLER

Remind me to validate your ticket before we end the session.

HADLEY

What if I forget?

WEXLER

Then I'll remind you.

HADLEY

There is a heavysset man hanging outside your office entrance.

WEXLER

Oh, really?

HADLEY

Extremely heavy. Like a sumo wrestler in moth bitten, cardigan sweater.

WEXLER

I'll walk out with you at the end of our session.

HADLEY

Thank you. I'd appreciate an escort to my car.

WEXLER

Certainly. Either my receptionist or I will go with you.

(Pause)

We are scheduled for an hour according to Jasmine. And I thank you for filling out a very detailed questionnaire.

HADLEY

She doesn't look like a Jasmine.

WEXLER

I gave her that nickname. Her legal name is Ruth. Do you prefer Ruth?

HADLEY

Too biblical.

(Awkward silence)

An hour?

WEXLER

Yes. Up to an hour. Depending on today's success.

HADLEY

That is too much, Doctor. We need space to find intimate time.

WEXLER

That's a lovely way to phrase a complex thought.

HADLEY

Are you flirting with me?

WEXLER

Not at all.

HADLEY

You're blushing.

WEXLER

No, it's just that the A/C isn't working today.

(Trying to double back on his train of thought)

I would have said we need time . . . to find intimate space.

(Her cell phone rings and she looks to see the caller's ID)

I'm just playing with words.

(Pause. She gives him a stern look)

HADLEY

I have to take the call. Do you mind leaving the room?

(Wexler frowns quietly as Hadley puts the phone back into her purse)

I'm not rude, Doctor. My sister's rude. I'm just direct.

WEXLER

I admire direct people.

HADLEY

No you don't. I don't think you admire many people. Or do you?

(Pause)

Do you prefer Michelle Obama to Laura Bush? Or Laura Bush to Hillary Clinton? Do you like First Ladies or delinquent ladies?

WEXLER

That's amusing.

HADLEY

Of the three ladies, which one had the most dismal sexual life in the White House?

WEXLER

I really don't know.

HADLEY

You mean you don't care?

WEXLER

I don't care.

HADLEY

Sexual pleasure is supposed to increase with age – for women who lie about their age.

WEXLER

Good to know, Mrs. Hadley. Are you nervous? Uncomfortable?

HADLEY

I was. Not now. Are you uncomfortable?

WEXLER

I'm uncomfortable when people wear sunglasses indoors.

HADLEY

Dear Jesus, I didn't know they were still on.

(Takes sunglasses off)

WEXLER

You've had therapy before.

HADLEY

I think that's very private information.

WEXLER

That's what Dr. Northrop told me.

HADLEY

Dr. Northrop?

WEXLER

Yes, Dr. Eugene Northrop.

HADLEY

Oh shit. You talked to him?

WEXLER

I did. He made the referral.

HADLEY

I'm not here for therapy. That's ludicrous.

WEXLER

Why is that ludicrous?

HADLEY

I'm here for hypnosis.

WEXLER

Hypnosis is therapy, Mrs. Hadley.

HADLEY

Not for weight loss. Please call me Mimi. That's what my hairdresser calls me.

WEXLER

You're not here for weight loss, Mimi. But we can address that issue too.

(Looks over his clipboard quite casually)

Was my assistant mistaken?

HADLEY

I never spoke to your assistant.

(She removes her sunglasses and shows a bruised left eye)

WEXLER

You have an addiction.

HADLEY

I have an *infliction*. Eugene told me *you* have an *addiction*.

WEXLER

Dr. Northrop said no such thing.

(Turning on a lamp)

It won't help if we are contentious, Mrs. Hadley.

HADLEY

I agree.

(Pause)

Why don't you display your college diploma? All I see are these inane watercolors.

WEXLER

My diplomas are behind my desk in the next room.

HADLEY

Didn't you go to Yale?

WEXLER

Yes.

HADLEY

So did my husband. He knows you.

WEXLER

I don't know your husband.

HADLEY

Neither do I. Isn't that tragic?

WEXLER

What is his name?

HADLEY

Oscar Hadley. Calhoun College at Yale. He said you're Jonathan Edwards.

WEXLER

That's right. I don't remember Oscar Hadley.

HADLEY

Calhoun was a slave owner. What's wrong with Yale, Dr. Wexler?

WEXLER

Mrs. Hadley . . .

HADLEY

Oscar Witherspoon. Oscar's birth name was Witherspoon but he's taken his mother's maiden name after Oscar was written out of the family will. Oscar has a prosthesis leg.

WEXLER

Yes, I think recall Oscar Witherspoon.

HADLEY

Oscar's a good man, all in all. 23 years of marriage. Oscar runs a successful investment firm. But he lost all interest in sex. What are hedge funds and are they legal?

(Pause)

I guess you never attend Yale reunions? You can fly to Hartford and take a shuttle.

(Pause)

What sort of hypno-physician are you, Dr. Wexler?

WEXLER

I'm a serious therapist, Mrs. Hadley and I don't come with your health plan.

HADLEY

Well, that means we have to do three quick sessions and be done.

(Laughing at her throwaway joke.)

I saw a movie on Netflix yesterday where a grandfather forces his grandson to shoot a squirrel.

WEXLER

An unpleasant image.

HADLEY

Exactly. It's on my mind all day. I think Donald Sutherland played the grandfather. That old actor with the eyebrows. Always playing weird monsters while smiling like a Nordstrom's shoe salesman.

WEXLER

It's time we get started please. Dr. Northrop emailed me your medical records. You're an alcoholic with some damage to your liver, Mrs. Hadley. He writes that you occasional black out and you have a DUI on your license. Can we please identify what we are focusing on?

HADLEY

Yes, that is so true. We must focus.

WEXLER

You're here in my office to stem this dependency and also work on your driver's responsibility. After all, you put others on the road at risk.

HADLEY

I do. You're so right. And I'm acting like a teenager. But really, without dependency we all die.

WEXLER

That's not true . . . and it's a bald rationalization.

(Pause)

Why are you really here?

HADLEY

My attorney said I should see you to fix everything that is wrong.

WEXLER

Is that right?

HADLEY

He's not your typical lawyer. Far from it. He doesn't have business cards.

WEXLER

Have you ever been under hypnosis before?

HADLEY

Yes, once. At a Las Vegas hotel. He was an entertainer with a cape and I volunteered. He had me walk like a duck and I think my sleeveless evening gown was removed at the MGM Grand Hotel.

(Laughing)

My husband has the video on his cell phone.

WEXLER

Yes, well, I'm not a Vegas entertainer and that form of hypnosis is not reputable.

HADLEY

You look like a hotel entertainer.

WEXLER

(Adjusting room lighting for a softer atmosphere)

Hypnotherapy has been shown to be more successfully experienced by people with a particular porous personality type.

HADLEY

Porous?

WEXLER

What happened to your eye, if I may ask?

HADLEY

I walked into a revolving door.

WEXLER

I don't believe you.

HADLEY

I'm not paying you to believe me, Dr. Wexler.

WEXLER

I can only treat you if you find your honesty, Mrs. Hadley.

HADLEY

I make you angry.

WEXLER

Yes. But we need to accomplish something today.

HADLEY

Okay. I'm all honesty.

WEXLER

If you've a trance-friendly personality then we can move forward. Alcohol dependency tends to help this treatment, but you must respect the process. Relaxation can help access your unconscious mind so as to find the root cause of your addiction.

HADLEY

Of course.

WEXLER

Using hypnosis to examine your lifestyle . . .

HADLEY

My lifestyle?

WEXLER

Lifestyle . . with better coping strategies free of alcohol.

HADLEY

And my speeding habit. I drive my Porsche like a nuclear missile  
(Making a noise sounding like Zoom, Zoom, Zoom)

WEXLER

One malady at a time, Mrs. Hadley.

HADLEY

You must call me Mimi or I'll cry. Any more points on my license and off to Maryland Correctional. I've seen my share of women's prison films.

(Wexley takes out from his desk a novelty prop – the five suspended metal balls in a tight row)

WEXLEY

This is Newton's Cradle. Science classes love playing with this. Great demonstration of transferred motion. Now no more talking please.

(He sets one ball in motion which hits the other four balls)

HADLEY

Oh what fun.

WEXLEY

(His finger to his lips, shushing her softly)

Sit back in your chair, Mrs. Hadley. I'm going to count to ten. Then I want you to count from ten backwards to one.

(Pause)

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten.

HADLEY

Ten. Nine. Eight. Seven. Six. Five. Four. Three. Two. One.

WEXLEY

Keep watching the swinging balls.

Watching all the balls at once.

Keep watching please.

It is pleasant and restful.

The speed never changes.

You like the sound of my voice.

Your breathing never changes.

Everything is so even.

Keep watching the movement.

Watching each silver ball.

So restful and pleasant.

The speed never changes.

Your breathing never changes.

Everything is so relaxing.

Good. Wonderful.

So good.

(He lowers his open palm just under her eyes)

You are very relaxed and the chair is like a cloud.

You are feeling wonderful.

Life is beautiful.

Everything is lighter than a balloon.

The balls go freely.

Like planets and heavenly spheres.  
 Mrs. Hadley.  
 There is no speed.  
 There is no velocity.  
 There is no rushing.  
 Your eyelids are heavy  
 Close your eyes.

(She closes her eyes)

Your eyes are heavy.  
 Cup your eyes with your hands.  
 Go ahead.  
 You'll feel better.

(She cups her eyes)

Mrs. Hadley.  
 Mimi.  
 Please know.  
 I care about you greatly.  
 Your Porsche doesn't race.  
 Your car wants to cruise.  
 You want to be safe.  
 You want to enjoy  
 Without speed.  
 All the scenery  
 All the landscape  
 All the memories  
 When you drive  
 Your Porsche

HADLEY

It's a red Porsche.

WEXLER

Your red Porsche.

HADLEY

Tomato red. Convertible.

WEXLER

The last thing  
 You ever want to do  
 Is to speed like a demon.  
 Say that you want to behave better.

(From behind her chair, he puts his hands over her hands.)

HADLEY  
I want to behave better.

WEXLER  
Yes.

HADLEY  
I know I should behave better.

WEXLER  
Yes.

HADLEY  
God will punish me if I don't behave better.

WEXLER  
God will not punish you.

HADLEY  
God strikes me with a branch.

WEXLER  
Not anymore. From this day forward.  
This I do swear.  
(Pause)  
Why do you feel bad about yourself?  
(Pause)  
Tell me.

HADLEY  
I'm jealous of everyone. Rich, beautiful, aloof.  
(Pause)

I like cocaine, champagne and sex. I really like cocaine.

WEXLER  
Cocaine will kill you, Mimi.

HADLEY  
Cocaine . . . is my friend.

WEXLER

Cocaine will kill you.  
Oh yes it will.  
I'm serious Mimi.  
I'm deadly serious.  
Do you understand?

WEXLER

Yes.

WEXLER

Together, alcohol and cocaine will kill you.  
It's time to stop.  
Today.  
You can stop. You will stop.  
That's the time, Mimi. Today you will stop.  
Cocaine and alcohol are not natural.  
I'm going to put on some music.  
Mozart. A sonata.  
The music will cleanse you.  
After you hear the music, Mimi.  
When the room is totally quiet.  
You will have stopped hating yourself.  
You will begin to love yourself.  
And loving yourself means  
No more cocaine.  
No more alcohol.  
No more poison, Mimi.

(She takes a deep breath. Wexler puts on a recording of a Mozart sonata)

End of Scene