

you really imagine you can account for Me? Totally, infallibly, inevitably account for Me? . . . Poor Doctor Dysart!

[*He enters the square.*]

Of course I've stared at such images before. Or been stared at by them, whichever way you look at it. And weirdly often now with me the feeling is that *they* are staring at *us*—that in some quite palpable way they precede us. Meaningless, but unsettling . . . In either case, this one is the most alarming yet. It asks questions I've avoided all my professional life. [*Pause.*] A child is born into a world of phenomena all equal in their power to enslave. It sniffs—it sucks—it strokes its eyes over the whole uncomfortable range. Suddenly one strikes. Why? Moments snap together like magnets, forging a chain of shackles. Why? I can trace them. I can even, with time, pull them apart again. But why at the start they were ever magnetized at all—just those particular moments of experience and no others—I don't know. *And nor does anyone else.* Yet if I don't know—I can never know that—then what am I doing here? I don't mean clinically doing or socially doing—I mean *fundamentally!* These questions, these Whys, are fundamental—yet they have no place in a consulting room. So then, do I? . . . This is the feeling more and more with me—No Place. Displacement . . . 'Account for me,' says staring Equus. 'First account for Me! . . .' I fancy this is more than menopause.

[*NURSE rushes in.*]

NURSE: Doctor! . . . Doctor! There's a terrible scene with the Strang boy. His mother came to visit him, and I gave her the tray to take in. He threw it at her. She's saying the most dreadful things.

[*ALAN springs up, down left. DORA springs up, down right. They face each other across the bottom end of the stage. It is observable that at the start of this Act FRANK is not sitting beside*

*his wife on their bench. It is hopefully not observable that he is placed among the audience upstage, in the gloom, by the central tunnel.*

DORA: Don't you dare! Don't you dare!

DYSART: Is she still there?

NURSE: Yes!

[*He quickly leaves the square, followed by the NURSE. DORA moves towards her son.*]

DORA: Don't you look at me like that! I'm not a doctor, you know, who'll take anything. Don't you dare give me that stare, young man!

[*She slaps his face. DYSART joins them.*]

DYSART: Mrs Strang!

DORA: I know your stares. They don't work on me!

DYSART [*to her*]: Leave this room.

DORA: What did you say?

DYSART: I tell you to leave here at once.

[*DORA hesitates. Then:*]

DORA: Good-bye, Alan.

[*She walks past her son, and round into the square. DYSART follows her. Both are very upset. ALAN returns to his bench and NURSE to her place.*]

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**START** [*Light up on the square.*]

DYSART: I must ask you never to come here again.

DORA: Do you think I want to? Do you think I want to?

DYSART: Mrs Strang, what on earth has got into you? Can't you see the boy is highly distressed?

DORA [*ironic*]: Really?

DYSART: Of course! He's at a most delicate stage of treat-

ment. He's totally exposed. Ashamed. Everything you can imagine!

DORA [*exploding*]: *And me? What about me? . . . What do you think I am? . . .* I'm a parent, of course—so it doesn't count. That's a dirty word in here, isn't it, 'parent'?

DYSART: You know that's not true.

DORA: Oh, I know. I know, all right! I've heard it all my life.

It's *our* fault. Whatever happens, *we* did it. Alan's just a little victim. He's really done nothing at all! [*Savagely*.] What do you have to do in this world to get any sympathy—blind animals?

DYSART: Sit down, Mrs Strang.

DORA [*ignoring him: more and more urgently*]: Look, Doctor: you don't have to live with this. Alan is one patient to you: one out of many. He's my son. I lie awake every night thinking about it. Frank lies there beside me. I can hear him. Neither of us sleeps all night. You come to us and say, who forbids television? who does what behind whose back?—as if we're criminals. Let me tell you something. We're not criminals. We've done nothing wrong. We loved Alan. We gave him the best love we could. All right, we quarrel sometimes—all parents quarrel—we always make it up. My husband is a good man. He's an upright man, religion or no religion. He cares for his home, for the world, and for his boy. Alan had love and care and treats, and as much fun as any boy in the world. I know about loveless homes: I was a teacher. Our home wasn't loveless. I know about privacy too—not invading a child's privacy. All right, Frank may be at fault there—he digs into him too much—but nothing in excess. He's not a bully . . . [*Gravely*.] No, doctor. Whatever's happened has happened *because of Alan*. Alan is himself. Every soul is itself. If you added up everything we ever did to him, from his first day on earth to this, you wouldn't find why he did this terrible

thing—because that's *him*; not just all of our things added up. Do you understand what I'm saying? I want you to understand, because I lie awake and awake thinking it out, and I want you to know that I deny it absolutely what he's doing now, staring at me, attacking me for what *he's* done, for what *he* is! [*Pause: calmer*.] You've got your words, and I've got mine. You call it a complex, I suppose. But if you knew God, Doctor, you would know about the Devil. You'd know the Devil isn't made by what mummy says and daddy says. The Devil's *there*. It's an old-fashioned word, but a true thing . . . I'll go. What I did in there was inexcusable. I only know he was my little Alan, and then the Devil came.

[*She leaves the square, and resumes her place. DYSART watches her go, then leaves himself by the opposite entrance, and approaches ALAN.*]

STOP

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[*Seated on his bench, the boy glares at him.*]

DYSART: I thought you liked your mother.

[*Silence.*]

She doesn't know anything, you know. I haven't told her what you told me. You do know that, don't you?

ALAN: It was lies anyway.

DYSART: What?

ALAN: You and your pencil. Just a con trick, that's all.

DYSART: What do you mean?

ALAN: Made me say a lot of lies.

DYSART: Did it? . . . Like what?

ALAN: All of it. Everything I said. Lot of lies.

[*Pause.*]