

one comments on her butt. When she sashays down the street, she kind of wiggles it back and forth. A lot of people stop to pat her, just because of that butt. And when we get to the park, the whole gang goes nuts for her. Even though she's been spayed, they gather around. You should see Bowser, for example — oh and hey, I found this poem that Shakespeare wrote about her.

LESLIE. Shakespeare?

GREG. *(Recites.)*

"Who is Sylvia? What is she,

That all our swains commend her?..."

LESLIE. Greg.

GREG. "Holy, fair, and wise is she ..."

LESLIE. Greg!

GREG. "The heavens such grace did —"

LESLIE. GREG!

GREG. Yes?

LESLIE. I'm afraid we're confined to the fifty-minute hour.

GREG. Sorry. I get carried away.

LESLIE. *(Leaving the desk, standing in front of him.)* Greg, I'm going to do something here which I normally do much further along in the therapy process. I'm going to put myself into the picture.

GREG. Yourself?

LESLIE. What's my name, Greg?

GREG. Kate said it was Leslie.

LESLIE. Leslie it is, Greg. Now am I a man or a woman?

GREG. You're a ... *(Hesitates.)* Woman.

LESLIE. You hesitated, Greg.

GREG. Yes. Well. Sorry.

LESLIE. No, no. I wanted you to hesitate. I wanted you to select my gender. That's why I call myself Leslie. It's a name which works either way.

GREG. It does, doesn't it?

LESLIE. And that's why I wear these ambivalent clothes. I may be a man pretending to be a woman, or I may be a woman pretending to be a man. I let my patients select my gender, Greg.

GREG. I thought you were a woman.

LESLIE. Because you wanted me to be a woman.

GREG. I did?

LESLIE. We project our needs onto the world, Greg. Life is shapeless and absurd. We use words, names, and categories to give us a sense of shape. We need that sense of shape to get through the day.

GREG. O.K.

LESLIE. You even see it in the Bible, Greg. God has Adam name the animals. So that Adam can construct his own order out of the chaos around him.

GREG. Hmm.

LESLIE. Which brings us to your dog, Greg.

GREG. Sylvia.

LESLIE. Sylvia. You wanted your dog to be a woman, too. That's why you named her Sylvia.

GREG. She was already named Sylvia.

LESLIE. But you embraced the name. Because you needed a woman.

GREG. I already have a woman. Her name is Kate.

LESLIE. *(Becoming impatient.)* You wanted another *kind* of woman, Greg. You wanted the subservient little wife you once kept in the suburbs. You wanted the worshipful daughter who once hung on your every word. You wanted a Sylvia, Greg. If Sylvia didn't exist, you would have had to invent her.

GREG. You may be right, Leslie.

LESLIE. *(Sardonically.)* I think I am, Greg. *(All business.)* Now these are what we therapists call "the dangerous years."

GREG. The dangerous years.

LESLIE. The years between the first hint of retirement and the first whiff of the nursing home.

GREG. Oh God.

LESLIE. No, we should make the most of these years, Greg. I, for example, am exploring the boundaries of gender identification. Kate is moving beyond child-rearing to a career in the public classroom. You, on the other hand, seem to have retreated into a kind of pastoral nostalgia.

GREG. Pastoral nostalgia?

LESLIE. By acquiring Sylvia.

GREG. You think that's true?

LESLIE. I do, Greg. And I think it's time to move on. It's time for you to accept the challenges that come with later life.

GREG. Maybe so.

LESLIE. Drop the leash, Greg, and once again take hold of your wife's hand. See if you are capable of walking with her, side by side, toward the setting sun.

GREG. Thank you, Leslie. This all makes a lot of sense.

LESLIE. I think it does, Greg. I think it makes a great deal of sense. *(Gets up, stretches.)* I must say I'm exhausted. This has been a long, tough haul for all of us. *(Smiles.)* Well. Now may I bring in Kate so we can all sit down together and work through a few specifics.

GREG. Aren't you forgetting one thing?

LESLIE. What thing, Greg.

GREG. Sylvia.

LESLIE. Sylvia?

GREG. You've seen Kate, you've seen me, don't you think you should see Sylvia?

LESLIE. You want me to hold a session with your dog?

GREG. Not a *session*, Leslie! Jesus, what kind of a nut case do you think I am? No, I just think you should pat her, maybe play with her a little, possibly take her for a short walk. Because then you'll see, Leslie ...

LESLIE. See what?

GREG. Then you'll see that Sylvia is more than just a name, or a gene, or a psychological symptom, or anything else that tries to pin her down. Any dog-owner knows this. If you don't, Leslie, you should get one immediately. We should all have dogs. It should be put in the constitution. It's not just a right, it's an obligation. When you register to vote, you pick up your dog license. The world would be a far better place, Leslie. Why just think: you and I and Nelson Mandela and Yassir Arafat and Meryl Streep could all meet at Club Med or someplace, and what would we talk about? Our dogs, Leslie! Our dogs.

(Long pause.)

LESLIE. *(Quietly.)* Greg.

GREG. Yes?

LESLIE. Greg, I'd like you to leave right now. Quickly, if you would. And send Kate in on your way out.

GREG. *(Looks at watch.)* It's Sylvia's dinner time, anyway. *(Hurries out, as Kate comes back in.)*

KATE. What hap —

LESLIE. Kate, I want you to do several things.

KATE. Several...?

LESLIE. First I want you to divorce Greg.

KATE. Divorce —?

LESLIE. Take him for every nickel he's got!

KATE. Oh I couldn't —

LESLIE. Then I want you to get a gun.

KATE. A gun?

LESLIE. To shoot Sylvia. I hope you get her right between the eyes.

KATE. But ...

LESLIE. Sorry. I'm late for my shrink. *(Exits quickly, tearing up the case folder.)*

KATE. *(Remaining; to herself.)*

"If this were played on the stage now. I would condemn it as an improbable fiction." *Twelfth Night*. Act Three. *(She exits. Music: possibly Vera Lynn singing "Now is the Hour."* The apartment. Greg enters with Sylvia. She is now wearing a very attractive little black dress.)*

GREG. *(Taking the leash out of her hand.)* You look particularly glamorous today, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. Thank you, Greg.

GREG. You know why, don't you?

SYLVIA. Tell me, while I check out *le kibble du jour*. *(She goes off.)*

GREG. *(Calling after her.)* You look particularly glamorous because we've come to a major moment in our relationship.

SYLVIA. *(Returning.)* A major moment?

* See Special Note on Music and Recordings on copyright page.