

Characters

APOTHECARY...	deceased.
ROBERT MAPLETHORNE...	deceased.
“CHATTY” WESSON...	soon-to-be likewise.

The men are at the peak of their powers, in their mid-thirties. WESSON’s age is of no consequence.

The scene is a psychiatric hospital somewhere in Massachusetts.

Words in dialogue inside square brackets are meant as muttered asides, half-audible, etc. Da[e]sh them by all means, if you like.

ONE

MAPLETHORNE *and* APOTHECARY *enter. The latter is pushing WESSON in a wheelchair. She has a black pillowcase over her head. The men are wearing lab coats.*

APOTHECARY Ladies and gentlemen, hush!

MAPLETHORNE A moment of silence, please, in the memory of a remarkable talent, a poet.

APOTHECARY *stops. MAPLETHORNE grabs the wheelchair, turns it so that WESSON is facing the audience.*

APOTHECARY Who's that?

MAPLETHORNE, *irritated, nods toward WESSON.*

APOTHECARY Her? Whoa, she's no poet! She's a basket case!

MAPLETHORNE Shut your filthy mouth!

APOTHECARY My mouth is filthy? Mine is? Hey, look who's talking! Don't wanna know where those lips have been just moments before... besides. Hello, mister Maplethorne? She's not dead. You are, I am. We are.

MAPLETHORNE Oh, man. I'm confused.

APOTHECARY Take it easy, bro. Maybe we started with the wrong foot. Let's try again, okay? All right...

Ladies and gentlemen, what you're about witness, none of it is true. It's all in her head, and yours, consequently. We are going to make it come true, since that is the Method. That is the process, called The Shutter Island Cure. You'll see. You'll come to grips with reality. And we've reduced the war stuff to an

absolute minimum. So no worries! It won't be graphic. It won't be depressing. On the contrary, it's going to be a, a...

MAPLETHORNE Party?

APOTHECARY Absolutely.

MAPLETHORNE A feast of friends, alive she cried, waiting for me outside.

Pause.

WESSON I could have been someone!

Pause.

MAPLETHORNE Someone, somebody else, or...?

APOTHECARY Or anybody?

MAPLETHORNE Which? Try to be precise.

APOTHECARY Try being anybody.

MAPLETHORNE Try it. Dang!

APOTHECARY Tough.

MAPLETHORNE And yet people do it all the time.

APOTHECARY They do.

MAPLETHORNE That's raw ambition for you, dreaming of being nobody. The unsung heroes of our time do it day in, day out, come hell or high water, give it everything they've got, to achieve that goal: being nobody.

APOTHECARY Hats off to them. Those about to croak, we salute. Those about joke, we just shoot. Execution style, there.

APOTHECARY *touches* WESSON, *who starts*.

MAPLETHORNE Being somebody, however, wanting that...

APOTHECARY Oh, man!

MAPLETHORNE ... is just a pipe dream.

APOTHECARY That's what children dream of, I think, if they dream at all.

MAPLETHORNE It's plain childish.

APOTHECARY Okay? Moving on...

MAPLETHORNE To the present issue.

APOTHECARY That is your future.

Pause.

Hey, the future is yours! Whatever you desire... that kind of thing. A dream come true.

MAPLETHORNE Going through your file, I have to say I was impressed.

APOTHECARY Me, too.

MAPLETHORNE Your determination, devotion...

APOTHECARY A dream come true.

MAPLETHORNE (To APOTHECARY) You said that already.

APOTHECARY Sorry, boss. I'm sorry. Maybe...

MAPLETHORNE Yeah?

APOTHECARY If we slowed down a bit. I could keep up.

MAPLETHORNE (To WESSON) Sorry for the interruption. Won't happen again, I promise.

Compared to you, Miss Wesson, the girls from my neighborhood...

MAPLETHORNE *takes aim and kicks APOTHECARY in the ass.*

APOTHECARY Screw 'em!

MAPLETHORNE They're a bunch of dry flowers, you being the flame that devours them. (*Reads*) "What hours I lay awake in the night, with his precious sleeping body beside me, wondering why he wanted so much to escape from reality."

Jesus tap-dancing Christ! That's poetry.

WESSON *starts to cry. She tries to control herself. She can't.*

APOTHECARY Miss!

MAPLETHORNE Miss, it's alright!

APOTHECARY Don't cry!

APOTHECARY Miss, please...

WESSON Don't you have a speck of humanity left in your charred-black petty hearts?

MAPLETHORNE and APOTHECARY *look at each other, shrug, raise their eyebrows, spread their hands.*

Those weren't my words, you sick bastards!

This is worse than *A Clockwork Orange* the movie! Torturing me with my beloved Martyr.... You're not humane!

WESSON *calms down at last.*

MAPLETHORNE You think this is torture? [We haven't even started yet.]

APOTHECARY That's what you're implying, you're wrong.

MAPLETHORNE So wrong, Frank Lloyd Wright.

APOTHECARY We have your best interests at heart.

MAPLETHORNE The best, we do. The thing is, listen to me now, the thing here is:
Given proper guidance, you could easily get better.

APOTHECARY If you put your mind into it.

MAPLETHORNE That's right. Try a little, I'm not saying tenderness, all I'm asking is
try building up a little, teeny weeny speck of trust. A spark—all right?

WESSON "Where's your spark now?"

MAPLETHORNE Come again?

APOTHECARY What was that?

MAPLETHORNE (*To* APOTHECARY) What did she say?

APOTHECARY Didn't catch it.

MAPLETHORNE Me neither. (*To* WESSON) Could you please repeat?

APOTHECARY Repeat, please.

MAPLETHORNE What you just said.... Encore! What was it?

APOTHECARY I don't know.

MAPLETHORNE Shit.

APOTHECARY Something like...

MAPLETHORNE Yeah?

APOTHECARY "Where's your bark now?"

Pause.

MAPLETHORNE Goddammit!

APOTHECARY All bite and no bark, as they say.

MAPLETHORNE No, they don't, say. It's the other way 'round.

APOTHECARY Hey, but she speaks!

MAPLETHORNE That's right.

APOTHECARY She doesn't cry. Man, what can I say? That's progress.

MAPLETHORNE Right. And not a nanosecond too soon...

APOTHECARY Hip hey hooray!

MAPLETHORNE After wasting 20 years of our time.

APOTHECARY What's with the brass tacks? *(To WESSON)* Pick up a person.

MAPLETHORNE Not so fast.

APOTHECARY I think it's time.

MAPLETHORNE No.

APOTHECARY It is.

MAPLETHORNE Miss, if you excuse us for just a sec? Something came up.

APOTHECARY *and* MAPLETHORNE *step aside to negotiate.* WESSON, *panicking, gets up.*

APOTHECARY Miss!

MAPLETHORNE No need for alarm, Miss.

APOTHECARY Miss, sit down. Please.

MAPLETHORNE Miss Wesson!

APOTHECARY SIT!

WESSON *does.*

MAPLETHORNE Relax, relax. We just needed a little, um, sidebar?

APOTHECARY An assessment of the situ... and lo and behold, we've decided to move on.

MAPLETHORNE It's time to speed up the process.

APOTHECARY To take a step, a big one, towards getting better!

MAPLETHORNE Isn't that swell? Isn't that grand?

APOTHECARY Isn't she lovely?

MAPLETHORNE So.

APOTHECARY It's time for you to pick up a person.

MAPLETHORNE Anyone will do.

APOTHECARY Not just anyone, no. You have to look up to that person.

MAPLETHORNE Admire her, or him. To break it down [for you].

APOTHECARY Think of him, her, as your spirit animal.

MAPLETHORNE With the exception, of course, that it's not an animal.

APOTHECARY Of course.

MAPLETHORNE It's a human being.

APOTHECARY Like John Merrick, you know.

An ocean of confusion.

MAPLETHORNE No, Abu. We don't know.

APOTHECARY Don't you watch movies? "My name is John Merrick. My... name...
I'm a human being!"

MAPLETHORNE Timeout.

APOTHECARY The Elephant Man.

WESSON has heard enough. She pulls the hood off, looks around. She runs off.

MAPLETHORNE A knockout, soon. And I don't mean her.

APOTHECARY David Lynch, before *Twin Peaks*, he made his first film, *The Elephant Man*, about John Merrick, the elephant man.