

THE
Celestial Bed

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To
Ed Victor
friend, literary agent, true believer

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In 1783 one of the most popular attractions in London was the Temple of Health, promoted by an amiable Scot named Dr. James Graham. The main feature of the Temple was the canopied Celestial Bed, supported by twenty-eight glass pillars and attended by a live nude Goddess of Health. Male visitors were invited to recline on the Celestial Bed for fifty pounds a night with the promise that this treatment would lead to a cure for impotence.

I

As he was driving home for dinner, having parted from his visitor and locked up his clinic, Dr. Arnold Freeberg decided that this was one of the best days—perhaps *the* best day—he had enjoyed since establishing himself in Tucson, Arizona, after having left New York six years earlier.

All because of his visitor, Ben Hebble, Tucson's most successful banker, and Hebble's announcement of an astonishing gift to him.

Freeberg recalled the essence of the corpulent banker's visit. "It's because your sex therapy cured my son," Hebble had said. "Timothy was a mess, and we both know it. Afraid to be with girls, because he couldn't get it up till his psychiatrist sent him to you. Well, you did the job, all right. In two months, you did it. After that, Timothy played the field for a while until he fell in love with a pretty young lady from Texas. They tried living together, and it was such a success that they're getting married. Because of you, I expect to be a grandfather yet!"

"Congratulations!" Freeberg had exclaimed, remembering how he and his sex surrogate, Gayle Miller, had so patiently worked to bring the dysfunctional banker's son to sexual adequacy.

"No, it's you, Dr. Freeberg. *You're* the one who deserves the congratulations," Hebble had boomed out, "and I'm here to thank you in a very practical way. I'm here to tell you that I'm setting up

a foundation to supplement your own clinic, a foundation that will enable you and your staff to help cure dysfunctional patients who can't afford to hire you. I'm talking about guaranteeing you one hundred thousand dollars a year toward this end for ten years. That's a million dollars to give you a chance to broaden your work and lend a hand to other unfortunate victims of impotence."

Freeberg recalled that he had felt faint. "I—I really don't know what to say. This is overwhelming."

"Only one condition attached," Hebble had added briskly. "I want this set up in Tucson, and all your work must be done here. This city has been kind to me. I owe it something. What do you say to that?"

"No problem. None whatsoever. This is most generous of you, Mr. Hebble."

Freeberg had parted from his benefactor in a daze.

Now, reaching home, opening the front door, he was humming to himself when he saw his plump wife Miriam waiting for him in the entry hall.

Cheerily, Freeberg kissed her, but before he could speak she whispered to him. "Arnie, you have someone waiting for you in the living room. The city attorney, Thomas O'Neil."

"Oh, he can wait a minute," Freeberg said, putting an arm around his wife. He and O'Neil were casual friends, often on the same committees together to raise money for local charities. "Probably just some more community business. Now, listen to what just happened to me at the clinic."

Quickly, he told her about Hebble's offer.

Miriam exploded with excitement, hugged her husband, and kissed him again and again. "How marvelous, how truly marvelous, Arnie. Now you can do everything you ever dreamed of."

"And then some!"

She took Freeberg by the arm and directed him toward the living room. "You better find out what Mr. O'Neil wants. He's been here ten minutes. You shouldn't keep him waiting forever."

Moments later, having entered the living room and greeted the city attorney, Freeberg sat down across from him. Freeberg was puzzled to see that the city attorney looked uncomfortable.

City Attorney O'Neil was apologetic. "I hate to break in on you during your dinner hour," he said, "but I have several appoint-

ments this evening, and I felt I must speak to you as soon as possible about an—well, an urgent matter.”

Freeberg continued to be puzzled. This did not sound like the usual charity fund-raiser.

“What is it, Tom?” Freeberg asked.

“It’s about your work, Arnold.”

“What about my work?”

“Well, I’ve been officially informed by—by several other therapists that you’re using a sex surrogate to cure patients. Is that true?”

Freeberg squirmed uneasily. “Why, yes, it—it is true. Because I’ve found that it’s the only means that works with many dysfunctional patients.”

O’Neil shook his head. “It’s against the law in Arizona, Arnold.”

“I know, but I thought I could cut a corner or two, if I did it quietly, to effect cures for my more drastically troubled patients.”

O’Neil remained adamant. “‘Illegal,’” he said. “It means you’re pandering, and the woman you’re using is playing prostitute. I’d like to close my eyes to what you’re doing. We’re friends. But I can’t. Too much pressure is being put on me. I can’t ignore it any longer.” He straightened himself and seemed to force out the next words. “What it comes down to is your losing your job or me losing mine. This has to be resolved immediately—and strictly according to the law. Let me tell you what you have to do. It’s the best proposition I can make to you, Arnold. Are you ready to listen?”

Pale faced, Dr. Arnold Freeberg nodded, and he listened . . .

Later, after City Attorney O’Neil had gone, Freeberg sat moodily through dinner, picking away at his food, unaware of what he was eating and totally lost in thought. He was conscious and grateful that Miriam was distracting Jonny, their four-year-old son, while he himself sought to recover from the knockout blow and to think out the consequences.

Freeberg had worked so hard and long, against such constant opposition, to achieve his success in Tucson and Hebble’s magnificent offer. And now, suddenly, the edifice of success had crumbled to dust.

He thought back to the start. The start had actually been when

Freeberg graduated from Columbia University in New York as a psychologist. Once he opened his own practice, the results had not been satisfying. The preponderance of his cases dealt with intimate human relationships, mostly involving sexual problems, and for many reasons, the psychological approach had not worked effectively, at least not for him. The patients who came and went, left him perhaps with more understanding of their problems but with little of use in the way of practical solutions.

More and more, Freeberg had begun to investigate other forms of sex therapy ranging from hypnosis to assertiveness training to group efforts. None of them impressed him enough until he attended a series of classes where a Dr. Lauterbach demonstrated the use of sex surrogates in therapy. The method, and the favorable results, had appealed to Freeberg at once.

After an in-depth study, Freeberg subscribed unconditionally to the idea of using sex surrogates. At one lecture, he met a warm, delightful young woman named Miriam Cohen, a successful department store buyer, who had been there seeking answers to her own problems and who had been one of the few females in the room who agreed with him on the value of sex surrogate therapy. Soon, Freeberg had found he had much more in common with Miriam; he began to date her regularly, and finally he married her.

At last content to continue his practice as a psychologist, but now planning to employ sex surrogates when required, Freeberg looked forward to carrying out this promising treatment.

Miriam had become unwell, suffering diminished lung capacity, which was diagnosed as a severe bronchial condition. Miriam's physician, seconded by a pulmonary specialist, advised an immediate move to Arizona. Freeberg had not hesitated to close down his affairs in New York and set up shop in Tucson. Miriam had fared well. Freeberg had not. The use of sex surrogates was strictly forbidden in Arizona.

Freeberg had soon established his new practice in Tucson. But once more, insight treatment as a psychologist was not fully effective with patients suffering serious sexual dysfunctions. In desperation Freeberg had decided to gamble. Secretly, he had trained, then employed, a female surrogate to use undercover. When five out of five of his patients suffering sexual dysfunctions had been fully cured, he knew true professional satisfaction.

And now, suddenly, this evening, his means of usefulness had been stripped away. In effect, he had been handcuffed and rendered helpless by the law.

There seemed to be no choice but to go back to being a limited and often ineffective talk therapist. He could continue making a livelihood in Tucson. But he could no longer cure.

It was impossible, yet there was no choice.

Then the realization came to him that there might be a choice, after all. There just might be.

First, it would require two telephone calls. And luck.

Freeberg looked up from his half-empty dinner plate and pushed away his chair.

"Miriam, Jonny," he said, rising, "why don't you both keep busy with television for a little while—I think there's a circus special on—while I go into the library and make a couple of important phone calls? I'll catch up with you soon."

Closing the door of the library, seating himself at the telephone, Freeberg called his wife's physician in Tucson. Freeberg had a question to ask. Then he waited for the answer.

Once that was done, Freeberg direct-dialed his old friend and onetime Columbia University roommate, Roger Kile, attorney-at-law, in Los Angeles, California.

Freeberg hoped Kile was in. He was.

Disposing of the amenities quickly, Freeberg got right down to it. "I'm in trouble, Roger," he said, unable to hide the urgency in his voice. "I'm in trouble, real trouble," he repeated. "They want to run me out of town."

"What are you talking about?" said Kile, plainly confused. "'They'—who are 'they'? The police?"

"Yes and no. Actually, no. It's the city attorney and his staff. They want to put me out of business."

"You're joking! Why?" Kile wanted to know. "Did you commit some offense? Is there a crime involved?"

"Well . . ." Freeberg hesitated, "maybe in their eyes . . . Maybe . . ." He hesitated once more, then blurted out, "Roger, I was using a sex surrogate."

"A sex surrogate?"

"Don't you remember? I explained it to you once."

Kile was clearly bewildered. "It seems to have slipped—"

Freeberg tried to contain his impatience. "You know what a surrogate is. A person appointed or hired to act in the place of another. A substitute. A surrogate is a substitute." Then, more emphatically. "A sex surrogate is a substitute sex partner, usually for a single man, a man who doesn't have a wife or cooperative girlfriend, a man who is suffering a sexual dysfunction, has a sex problem—so he uses a female sex partner to help him, a woman supervised by a sex therapist. The team of Masters and Johnson started it in St. Louis in 1958—"

"Yes, I remember," Kile interrupted. "I read about their use. And now I remember that you were considering using sex surrogates in Tucson. Well, what's wrong with that?"

"One thing," said Freeberg. "It's against the law, Roger. The use of surrogates is okay in New York and Illinois and California and a few other states, but in the rest of the states, it's against the law. That includes Arizona. Sex surrogates are considered prostitutes."

"I see," said Kile. "And you used them?"

"One—I used only one," said Freeberg. "But apparently one too many. Let me explain." He seemed to recover some balance in his voice. "I told you it's illegal here, so I started doing it underground. I *had* to, Roger. Talk therapy doesn't work in certain cases, the worst ones like impotence and sometimes premature ejaculation. It's essential to use a trained female partner to teach, to demonstrate, to give guidance. I found such a person, a great young lady. I used her to work with five difficult cases. All five were cured. One hundred percent cured. But somehow word got out. The therapists are very conservative here—and maybe jealous. . . . Maybe they resented my success. Anyway, word got to the city attorney, and he came over to see me at home, maybe an hour ago. I was pandering, he said, and using a prostitute, and that was against the law. Instead of arresting me, putting me on trial, he offered me an alternative. To avoid wasting time and money to prosecute me, he advised me to shut down my surrogate operation. Then he'd let me continue practicing as an ordinary therapist."

"Will you?"

"I can't, Roger. I can't be helpful to certain patients who come

to me without employment of a surrogate. Look what happened to Masters and Johnson when they were forced to give up the use of sex surrogates in 1970. Until then, using surrogates, their success rate was seventy-five percent. Once they gave up on surrogates, their success rate dropped to twenty-five percent. I can't let that happen. If I did, I shouldn't be in this profession. Yet I want to be in this profession. It's not a question of making a living. It's more. It's getting crippled people, sex cripples, healthy and virile. I don't want to sound Boy Scoutish. But that's it. And that's why, much as I hated to bother you, I decided to call you tonight."

"I'm glad you did," Kile said assuringly. "But, Arnie, what can I do for you in Tucson?"

"You can get me out of here," said Freeberg simply. "I remembered something you once said, when I was first moving to Arizona. You said, Why not come to southern California? You said it's freer country than anywhere else. You said you'd heard of a number of therapists who used sex surrogates in Los Angeles and San Francisco."

"Did I? I guess I did. Anyway, it's true."

"I resisted only because Miriam's doctor in New York had been adamant that Arizona was the best place for her bronchial condition. That was six years ago. Now her doctor in Tucson—I just phoned him—feels she's better and could fare as well in southern California."

"You mean you'd consider moving here?"

"Yes," said Freeberg. "There's no other choice." He swallowed. "Roger, California is unknown country to me. I need your help. You're a Californian now. You know your way around. You could be of enormous assistance, if it's not asking too much."

"It's asking very little. You know I'd do anything I can for you, Arnie."

"I'm not rich," Freeberg went on. "I have everything invested in my clinic here. No big thing getting rid of it, once I have a real estate agent put the building on the market. It's a valuable property. I'm sure I can sell it in no time at all and come out your way with sufficient money to set up another clinic in southern California." He swallowed nervously again. "But I do need help. I'll pay you for your time, of course."

"Cut it out, Arnie," Kile said with a pretense of annoyance.

"This is friendship. What are friends for, anyway? I'll tell you what. If I ever run into trouble myself—can't get it up one day—you can pay me back by contributing your services and loaning me one of your lady surrogates. So you've got a deal. What do you want from me?"

"A promising location in or around Los Angeles. A building I can afford and can remodel as a clinic. I'll send you details tomorrow. Photographs of the two-story place I have right now. And I'll let you know, in round numbers, how much I can afford to spend."

"You've got it," said Kile. "Let me start making inquiries right away. Once I have your specifications and limitations—well, give me two weeks, Arnie. I'll call you when I have something for you to see. Meanwhile, give my regards to Miriam, and I look forward to meeting that little boy of yours. It sure will be good to see you again."

Freeberg was reluctant to hang up. "Roger, you're positive I'd be welcome there? I mean, with sex surrogates and all?"

"Not to worry. I'll double-check the criminal code, but I'm absolutely certain it's not against the law. Arnie, this is freedom land. I guarantee it. Now, let's get going."

It worked. It went smoothly. Every aspect of the move worked out.

Today, four months later, Dr. Arnold Freeberg could sit comfortably in his high-backed leather swivel chair behind the wide oak desk covered with a custom-fitted black felt blotter and listen to the muffled sounds of hammering outside the entrance downstairs. The workmen were putting into place the blue and white sign that read, in block letters: FREEBERG CLINIC. The sign was being mounted over two glistening glass doors that led to the reception area.

Today, too, early this afternoon, Freeberg would be briefing the five new sex surrogates he had selected out of the six he would be using. He wished that his sixth surrogate, his most experienced, the one he had employed in Tucson, could also be here right now. Gayle Miller had agreed to join him, go on with him, in a few weeks, after she had graduated from the University of Arizona. Then she would apply for graduate school at the University of

California at Los Angeles to get her masters degree and doctorate in psychology. The imminent appearance of Gayle Miller gave Freeberg confidence. He was certain the new surrogates would be good, but Gayle was a gem—young, attractive, serious, and experienced. She'd been his sex surrogate on all five cases in Tucson, and she had been faultless. Every problem male had been discharged to go forward with a normal sex life.

Absently gathering his notes together, notes he had jotted down the past few days to remind himself of points he wanted to cover in addressing the new surrogates, Freeberg's gaze roamed around the walls of his spacious office. There was still the pungent, stinging smell of the fresh paint on the walls. The oak wainscot had been stained deep brown to give it a rich paneled look. Hung from the walls, in cream matted frames, were Freeberg's impressive panoply of idols: Sigmund Freud, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, Theodore H. van de Velde, Marie Stopes, Alfred Kinsey, William Masters and Virginia Johnson.

On the nearby wall, there was a decorative mirror, and Dr. Arnold Freeberg's eyes came to rest on that and on the reflection of himself. Sheepishly, he inspected himself—high comb of wiry black hair, somewhat stiff and unruly; thick horn-rimmed spectacles over small myopic eyes; hooked nose; full dark mustache and short beard encircling his fat lips. Fleeting, closed in by his predecessors, he felt embarrassed. He didn't measure up to them. Not yet, not yet. But one day soon, perhaps. He believed and he would try.

His eyes moved to the silver-framed photograph on a corner of his desk. His wife, Miriam, attractive in her midthirties, and their smiling son, Jonny, a delight. Freeberg became conscious of his own years, his late fortyishness, late to have a first child. But not really, not actually.

Giving his head a shake, he drew his notes closer and tried to concentrate on them. Quickly, he skimmed them, then pushed them aside. He knew them all by heart and would not need them for reference when he spoke to his new surrogates.

He still had fifteen minutes to spare before his five surrogates appeared, and almost as a relaxation, he began to review the events of the last four months that had brought him to these moments. He relived those four months in the present.

Within two weeks of Freeberg's initial phone call from Tucson to Roger Kile in Los Angeles, Kile had finished his investigations and found the location. Not in Los Angeles proper, as it turned out. Los Angeles was too heavily populated with sex therapists, Kile had learned, and furthermore, centrally situated properties were overpriced. But following expert advice—Kile had always been a clever investigator, even in law school at Columbia, and although a tax attorney his knowledge and interests were widespread—he had found the community in which his friend might prosper an hour north of Los Angeles.

The community proved to be Hillsdale, California, a burgeoning incorporated city on the coast highway and close to the rolling blue Pacific Ocean. It was a sprawling city of three hundred and sixty thousand. There were plenty of psychiatrists and psychologists there, but not one sex therapist yet. Roger Kile had been assured, by knowledgeable contacts, that a practice would flourish for any reputable sex therapist who set up shop in Hillsdale with a team of trained and professional sex surrogates. Hillsdale, Kile learned from medical contacts, had more than a fair share of disturbed, troubled, and sexually dysfunctional persons.

After that, Kile found two well-recommended realtors, and they quickly led him to four small office buildings that appeared to be possibilities. Freeberg spotted the perfect building immediately, a vacant two-story construction abandoned by a clothing store chain and set in the middle of Market Avenue, three blocks off bustling Main Street. After that, everything fell into place rapidly. Freeberg hired an excellent young architect to remodel the vacant building along the lines of his Tucson clinic. Then Freeberg flew back to Tucson to divest himself of the old clinic. Meanwhile, Miriam got rid of their ranch-style adobe tract house, breaking even.

They went to Hillsdale four times in the period that followed. While Freeberg stood by to oversee the remodeling of his clinic, Miriam sought a new house and found a wonderful eight-room one-story residence about three miles from her husband's offices.

Immediately, Freeberg began to install the necessary personnel in his clinic. Through an M.D. nearby, Dr. Stan Lopez, a general practitioner that Freeberg had come to respect, Freeberg was able to obtain Suzy Edwards as his personal secretary. Lopez had been

using Suzy as a part-time second secretary and knew that she wanted a full-time job. Freeberg interviewed Suzy, a solemn and interested redhead of around thirty. She was eager for the job, and Freeberg had already heard that she was trustworthy. After that, he hired Norah Ames for his practical nurse and Tess Wilbur for his receptionist.

Next, Freeberg sent personal letters to every medical person around the country that he had met at conventions and seminars, announcing the opening of the Freeberg Clinic in Hillsdale, California, and offering intensive treatment and the use of female and male sex surrogates when they were found necessary. While awaiting responses, Freeberg instigated his search for sex surrogate candidates. To obtain applicants, Freeberg wrote personal letters to psychoanalysts in Hillsdale and to fellow therapists in Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Francisco, Chicago, and New York. Within a few short weeks, he received twenty-three applications from those wishing to become sex surrogates, and even as the replies came in, Freeberg received referrals of patients who were in desperate need of his kind of therapy. From these referrals, Freeberg knew that he would require five surrogates, four women and one man, plus the services of Gayle Miller, who would shortly be leaving Tucson for Hillsdale.

As the surrogate candidates gradually arrived, Freeberg began to screen them, interviewing each personally. Many were short interviews, because the candidates did not qualify. If a candidate gave for her motivation that she thought this would be interesting work, she was disqualified. Interesting work was not good enough—not motivation enough. If any candidate showed the slightest concern about being a candidate, or any hesitancy whatsoever, she was eliminated.

The longer interviews were given over to women who were well motivated. There were divorced women, with no children living at home, who'd had sexually inadequate husbands. There were women who'd had problems with lovers suffering sexual dysfunctions. There were women who'd seen sexual troubles in their parents, siblings, other relatives. All the candidates, no matter what their previous callings, were bound by a common desire to assist sexually crippled men in becoming fully normal males.

Always, in his interviews, Freeberg kept in mind something that

a colleague had once remarked: "A good surrogate is sensitive, compassionate, and emotionally mature." A qualified surrogate was someone who was also comfortable with her own body and her own sexuality. Every female that Freeberg seriously considered, if she was presently unmarried, had to have had a normal sexual relationship, had to know that she was sexually responsive, and had to have confidence in her own femininity. Above all else, she had to burn with the desire to repair the sexually wounded among the male population.

In the end, Freeberg wound up with four highly promising female sex surrogate candidates—Lila Van Patten, Elaine Oakes, Beth Brant, and Janet Schneider. Once trained, they would make a perfect group to team up with his soon-to-arrive Gayle Miller.

Freeberg had required only one male sex surrogate. Male surrogates to work with dysfunctional female patients were not in demand. Freeberg had discovered that a male surrogate did not fit the value system of most females. It was the old nonsense, lingering into the 1980s: If a male had numerous women, he was okay, a cocksman. If a female had casual sex with many men, she had round heels and was a fool. Generally, having sex with a stranger—in this case, a male surrogate—was unthinkable by American social standards. Usually women, far more than men, needed time to build toward a satisfying relationship. But this was California. Times were changing. A little, just a little. Freeberg could see that there would be a female patient now and then, and so he would need at least one male sex surrogate. In Freeberg's screenings, a single applicant had stood out. He was a young man from Oregon, experienced, interested in his personal growth, thoughtful, warm, and with a real desire to help troubled and suffering women patients become normal. His name was Paul Brandon. Among the handful of male candidates, Brandon was the one that Freeberg selected for training.

The door to his office had opened, and Freeberg came out of his reverie. "They're here, Dr. Freeberg," his redheaded personal secretary, Suzy Edwards, was saying. "The surrogates you selected. They're seated in the all-purpose room, waiting for you."

Freeberg smiled and heaved his stocky body to his feet. "Thanks, Suzy. Time for the curtain to go up."

* * *

Dr. Arnold Freeberg shut down the piped-in music, left his office, and walked briskly to the far end of the all-purpose room—a thirty-foot room that resembled a sparsely furnished living room. Here and there, on the floor, lay mattresses, and at the far end was the sofa facing the five surrogates, who ranged in age from twenty-eight to forty-two. They were seated on folding chairs in a semicircle.

With a smile, Freeberg nodded to them, pleased to see they were all neatly dressed and alert. He knew that they were comfortable—his nurse Norah had already introduced them to one another—but on their faces were expectant expressions.

Freeberg sat down on the sofa, settled back, and crossed one leg over the other.

“Janet Schneider,” he said as if reading a roll call, “Paul Brandon, Lila Van Patten, Beth Brant, Elaine Oakes—I’m so pleased to have you here. Welcome to the Freeberg Clinic. I am delighted to tell you that you are all, without exception, decidedly qualified, highly qualified, to become valuable and useful partner surrogates.”

He observed their immediate and unanimous pleasure at the compliment.

“I am going to speak to you today about your training program, which will begin in this room tomorrow at nine o’clock in the morning. Your training will be entirely under my supervision, five days a week, for six weeks. Only in the final stages will I bring in outsiders. When we get to penile-vaginal contact, I will require the assistance of four males and one female recommended by the International Professional Surrogates Association in Los Angeles. These will be former patients—or clients, as some call them today—who once suffered their own sexual problems, have gone through full courses of exercises with reputable therapists and experienced surrogates, and have been pronounced cured and ready to deal with their own intimate lives.

“At this time, I am going to brief you on the training period that lies ahead of you so that you know what to expect. This will be a monologue. I will speak without pause. If you have questions, save them for when I have finished. Also, of course, I will shorthand the whole procedure, so to speak—just give you the highlights, since