

# **Dr. Placebo**

**By**  
**Nkosi Moyo**

Dr. Placebo

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I dedicate this book to Bill Gates for making computers ubiquitous, blue screen of death notwithstanding, and Al Gore for inventing the Internet. Without these modern marvels, I would have been too lazy to write this book and get it published.



## Chapter 1

Dr. Placebo clearly understood that there were those who could view him as evil. In his mind, however, he wasn't necessarily evil. Honest with himself, he never denied that his past was riddled with stolen moments, cherished times and shameless deception. As he saw it, it was all for the good of his clientele. Such was the life he'd chosen. His mind went over the many clients who'd come to him with their lives in shreds and feeling hopeless, despondent and at times suicidal. He thought about how he'd entered their worlds and helped them pick up the pieces. There was no way he couldn't feel justified – even *good* – about the impact he had on their lives.

It was ten minutes before midnight in Athens, Georgia. Hands behind his back, Dr. Placebo paced up and down his office as he'd done for the past half hour. His office, located on the bottom floor of a huge Victorian-style home on a street just off South Milledge Avenue, was dimly lit. Since he lived alone in the upper section of the home and wasn't going to be seeing any more clients that night, he knew he wouldn't be disturbed. He could be alone with his thoughts.

His mind went to those clients who'd come to him with what he secretly termed the Big Baby Syndrome and the Bitch and Moan Disorder. In those instances, he coddled them and supported them, making them feel better. He made sure they understood that their problems were not their fault. Fault was with the rest of the world. He knew how to make them feel cozy, leading to their need to come back to him – so he could bill them.

On nights such as this, which were very rare, he questioned his counseling methods. The questioning,

however, never seemed to last for long. Sure, his methods could be viewed as ethically questionable by the Licensing Puritans, but his methods *worked*. They worked and that's what he stood by. After all, what was really important here? Wasn't it the well-being of the clients? He figured if his clients came to him in need of help and he steered them to a better state of being, he was doing exactly what a psychologist was supposed to do. How he steered them to that better state of being was no one's damn business.

He was Dr. Placebo, Licensed Clinical Psychologist. No client of his ever forgot him. No client of his ever wanted to. Even so, there were nights such as this which ended with him standing in front of the mirror. He stood unblinking, looking deep into his own dark eyes. On nights like this, he was never sure whether he was looking into the eyes of a genius or the soul of a madman.

Maybe a change in his ways was warranted. He shrugged. Screw everything, time would tell. It was time to go upstairs and take a shower.

## Chapter 2

Annette looked at Dr. Placebo before quickly looking away. She wondered if he could tell she was desperately trying not to look embarrassed. Thank goodness Dr. Placebo had asked Anna, her six-year-old, to wait in the next room. Anna's presence would have made her discomfort worse.

"The reason I asked Anna to wait next door, Annette, is that people's behavior tends to be affected by what they have heard others say about them," said Dr. Placebo, his demeanor calm and composed.

"I understand," she responded. "I really do. That's why, when I told her we would be coming here, I just said that we needed to go talk to someone for a little while. If I'd said we were going to visit a doctor she'd have wanted to know why. She'd also want to know why we weren't going to our regular doctor. So, when she asked if we were visiting a friend of mine, I just said yes. I felt a little bad about lying to her but I couldn't wiggle out of it." She paused as Dr. Placebo nodded in understanding. "What I was trying to say earlier is that I found out that my husband spanked Anna and I want you to fix her." She closed her eyes and looked away. Once again, that hadn't come out the way she'd wanted. Looking up at Dr. Placebo, she found him still calmly looking at her.

"You'd like me to fix your daughter because she got a spanking from daddy? Is that what I understand you to be saying?" His eyebrows arched up inquiringly. "Help me get an understanding of what it is that needs fixing, Annette."

"Well, nothing yet. I mean . . ." She paused. She had to get her act together or this man would think she was an idiot. "I'm just not getting my words out correctly. I mean,

there's nothing wrong with Anna – yet.” She laughed nervously, hoping Dr. Placebo would laugh with her. Instead, she saw him look down at his desk, shuffling some papers around as if looking for something. She wondered if he was looking away because he was embarrassed for her.

“There is nothing wrong with Anna but you'd still like me to ‘fix her,’ as you put it?” His eyes were on her again. He seemed to be studying every move she made.

“Well, let me see if I can do a better job of explaining this. I've always been opposed to spanking children. My husband has always been the opposite of that.”

“I see, go on.”

“This past weekend, Anna went to visit her dad. She spends her weekends with him, except when I want to take her on a special trip some place.”

“She visits your husband?”

“Yes, we're divorced.”

“Oh, I see. How long have you been divorced?”

“It's coming up on two years.”

“It's interesting that you still call him your husband. Most women make no mistake about emphasizing the ‘ex’ in ex-husband.”

Realizing he was right, Annette stared at him. She had never stopped referring to him as her husband. She wondered what thoughts coursed through Dr. Placebo's mind as he continued to watch her intently.

“Go on,” Dr. Placebo said. “You've been divorced for almost two years. The way I understand it, your ex-husband used to spank your child while you were married but you were opposed to that. He did it again this weekend.”

“That's right. But don't get me wrong. He was a good man; a wonderful man. Still is. I just didn't agree with the spanking part. He really didn't do it that often anyway, and it was never severe or abusive. It has never been anything

that would leave marks on her. But I always felt like we should both use other ways of disciplining Anna.”

“What made him a good man?”

Annette thought for a moment. “He was a good provider, for one.”

“What does ‘good provider’ mean? Is that another way of saying he was rich?”

Annette hesitated before saying, “I don’t know if I would call him rich. He was comfortably well off. He runs his own business here in Athens. I never had to work outside the home while I was with him. I still don’t, actually.”

“Was it just the money that made him ‘a good man,’ as you put it?”

“No, he was loving and caring.” She still wasn’t sure what this doctor thought of her. She wondered what was going through his head. “He loved us dearly. Anna never got afraid of him as a result of the spankings. They remained close even with that.”

“I see. So we have a good man, who was a good provider and was loving and caring.”

“And he had the craziest sense of humor. I remember a friend of mine asking me to take her to Atlanta for the viewing of her great aunt’s body. I couldn’t drive because the day before the trip, I’d sprained my right ankle while jogging. Anyway, he offered to drive us there. So, naturally, he went in to view the body with us. As we’re about to walk out after the viewing, he leans over to me and whispers that the great aunt had winked at him and told him not to tell anyone.”

Dr. Placebo slowly nodded his head. His smile was a pleasure to look at even with his slightly misaligned teeth.

“So, what happened?” he asked.

“I wasn’t going to burst out laughing in a church full of mourners,” she replied, her own smile spreading across her face.

“I mean, how did the divorce come about? Seems to me, you have very fond memories of this man. You still refer to him as your husband and not your ex. Your face brightened when you began to talk about the winking corpse incident.”

She felt her smile leave her face and immediately realized that he would note the change. Her eyes went to the floor before going to the window across the room, through which she could see tree limbs swaying in the wind. She’d known that family history would be brought up if she wanted to get some counseling for Anna, but for some reason, she hadn’t expected this question to come up. When her eyes drifted back to Dr. Placebo, she found him still looking at her, waiting patiently.

Taking a deep breath, she said, “Well, things happened and we ended up not being together.”

“I’m sensing that this may be a little uncomfortable for you to talk about.”

“It’s just that I don’t see what relevance it has to anything.” She tried not to sound angry, although she could tell a trace of defiance was in her voice.

“You have a daughter that you want me to fix,” he said again.

She hated having used that word. Not sure whether he was making fun of her, she wondered if he was trying to get back at her for the slight hint of contempt in her voice.

Dr. Placebo went on, “It’s always important to get a good understanding of environmental issues in cases like this.”

“I know that.” She didn’t want him to think she was just some dumb house wife.

“And yet you don’t see the relevance of my question?”

Trying hard to soften her glare towards him, she wondered how she could answer that question and not sound like an idiot. Wringing her hands nervously she said, “It’s a personal issue, Dr. Placebo.”

“And counseling sessions are about personal issues,” he responded before she could completely finish her line.

She could just pour out whatever information Dr. Placebo wanted. That could be helpful. On the other hand, she wasn’t sure if it was necessary for her to just bare her soul to this man. After all, it wasn’t her issues that had brought her here. Actually, she really had no issues to speak of, as far as she was concerned. She should tell him that. He’d probably just go back to saying that environmental issues were important and all that. Maybe she should just end this and try a different psychologist. If she did, there was no way of telling if she would have to face the same line of questioning elsewhere. These people were probably all the same. They took the same classes. Different textbooks, perhaps, but the same classes.

This was certainly not going as smoothly as she had hoped. She seriously wanted to make sure that her only child got the help that she needed, or might need.

She had to focus on what was important. She had to weigh her feelings about revealing her past versus getting help for her daughter. Partially telling him everything he wanted to know could be the answer. But that wouldn’t be telling everything if any part of it was partial . . .

“It was a wonderful life, Dr. Placebo,” she began. “I had it all. The kind of husband I dreamed of ever since I was a little girl. A wealthy man with a nice house who wanted to have a family. I wanted to be a mother. I’ve always wanted to be a mother. Nothing made me happier

than being able to be a stay-at-home mom and raise my daughter.” She paused, feeling her voice about to shake. She couldn’t believe that this man had her on the verge of tears. And she wasn’t even here about her own issues. She had to stop worrying about whether or not she’d cry, since that seemed to make tears well up in her eyes even more quickly.

“Here,” he said, handing her a box of tissue.

She took the whole box, setting it on her lap. She dabbed her eyes before blowing her nose. Feeling too embarrassed to look up, her eyes remained on her tissue as she fumbled around with it.

“Annette,” his voice was soft and encouraging.

She looked up at him.

“There is nothing you can tell me that I’ve never heard before. It may be a little uncomfortable or embarrassing to you, but believe me, telling me about it won’t mean the end of the world for you.”

“I cheated on him,” she blurted out, looking him dead in the eye. She was surprised by how quickly she said that.

“I see.”

Throwing her hands up in the air, she continued, “I know it’s somewhat baffling to hear me talk of how he was the man of my dreams one minute and then tell you that I cheated on him.”

“That question does come to mind. At the same time, however, I know that these things can happen as a result of many different scenarios.”

“Finding out what I had done deeply wounded him. It hurt me so badly to know how much I had hurt him.” Her eyes wandered around the room again before she continued. “I loved him, Dr. Placebo. We loved each other very much. He couldn’t bear to live with me knowing what I had done.”

“You loved him very much but something drove you into the arms of another man.”

She wasn't sure whether or not he had just asked her a question or simply made a statement. Either way, she knew she was supposed to respond. What would be the best way of putting what she wanted to say?

“I wanted to have an orgasm.”

The few seconds that Dr. Placebo looked at her without saying anything to her seemed like an eternity. “I'm assuming then that there were problems reaching an orgasm while with your husband.”

“I've never had an orgasm with my husband.”

“Ever?”

“Never.”

“Ever tell him that?”

“No, I didn't want to hurt his feelings. I loved him.”

“I see.”

“And how long were you married? I know your daughter is six but that doesn't say much about how long you may have been married.”

“Seven years. Seven years of very frequent sex.”

“And yet no orgasm.”

“No orgasm. I faked it every single time he thought I had one.”

“I see.”

“I enjoyed sex with him. There was plenty of foreplay. He loved it as much as I did and was always ready to go. But there were never any orgasmic experiences for me.”

“Did you try to explain this to him when he finally found out you had been cheating on him?”

“No, I didn't try to explain it. He wouldn't have believed it. He'd have thought that I was just making excuses. Besides, the way I faked it and for as many years

as I did . . .” She shook her head. “There was no way he would have believed it. It might have made things even worse instead of helping.”

“Was your lover able to help you reach an orgasm? How many lovers was it, by the way? Just one, or more?”

“It was three.”

“All at the same time or one after the other?”

“One after the other. I didn’t have an orgasm with any of them either. After that, I figured the problem had to be with me.”

Just then the cooking timer on Dr. Placebo’s desk went off. As they both looked at it Annette wondered how in the world Dr. Placebo, with all his apparent sophistication and success, hadn’t been able to find a more appropriate timer. That one just looked so amazingly out of place.

“Looks like we’re out of time, Annette,” he said. “I think that more sessions could be beneficial but I’d let that be your decision.”

Not sure whether or not she was supposed to make that decision immediately, Annette just looked at him.

“By the way,” Dr. Placebo continued, “I never found out why Anna was spanked this past weekend.”

“Oh, she let some Jehovah’s Witnesses into her dad’s house. He was upstairs looking for a movie that they both like to watch.”

Dr. Placebo’s laugh was infectious. Annette couldn’t help but join in as well.

“The issue wasn’t that they were Jehovah’s Witnesses. She’s been told countless times not to open the door for anyone,” Annette added, still laughing.

“You can either give me a call about scheduling the next session or you can email me at DoctorPlacebo, all one word, @aol.com. That’s Doctor Placebo, spelled in full.”