

EMMA. Who are you?

NED. I'm Ned Weeks. I spoke with you on the phone after the *Times* article.

EMMA. You're the writer fellow who's scared. I'm scared, too. I hear you've got a big mouth.

NED. Is big mouth a symptom?

EMMA. No, a cure. Come on in and take your clothes off.

NED. I only came to ask some questions.

EMMA. You're gay, aren't you? Take your clothes off.

Lights up on an examining table, center stage. NED starts to undress.

NED. Dr Brookner, what's happening?

EMMA. I don't know.

NED. In just a couple of minutes you told two people I know something. The article said there isn't any cure.

EMMA. Not even any good clues yet. All I know is this disease is the most insidious killer I've ever seen or studied or heard about. And I think we're seeing only the tip of the iceberg. And I'm afraid it's on the rampage. I'm frightened nobody important is going to give a damn because it seems to be happening mostly to gay men. Who cares if a faggot dies? Does it occur to you to do anything about it. Personally?

NED. Me?

EMMA. Someone's going to have to tell the gay population fast.

NED. You've been living with this for over a year? Where's the Mayor? Where's the Health Department?

EMMA. They know about it. You have a Commissioner of Health who got burned with the swine flu epidemic, declaring an emergency when there wasn't one. The government appropriated \$150 million for that mistake. You have a Mayor who's a bachelor and I assume afraid of being perceived as too friendly to anyone gay. And who is also out to protect a billion-dollar-a-year tourist industry. He's not about to tell the world there's an epidemic menacing his city. And don't ask me about the President. Is the Mayor gay?

NED. If he is, like J. Edgar Hoover, who would want him?

EMMA. Have you had any of the symptoms?

NED. I've had most of the sexually transmitted diseases the article said come first.

A lot of us have. You don't know what it's been like since the sexual revolution hit this country. It's been crazy, gay or straight

EMMA. What makes you think I don't know? Any fever, weight loss night sweats, diarrhea, swollen glands, white patches in your mouth, loss of energy, shortness of breath, chronic cough?

NED. No. But those could happen with a lot of things, couldn't they?

EMMA. And purple lesions. Sometimes. Which is what I'm looking for. It's a cancer. There seems to be a strange reaction in the immune system. It's collapsed. Won't work. Won't fight.

Which is what it's supposed to do. So most of the diseases my guys are coming down with - and there are some very strange ones - are caused by germs that wouldn't hurt a baby, not a baby in New York City anyway. Unfortunately, the immune system is the system we know least about. So where is this big mouth I hear you've got?