

## SYNOPSIS

It was in Central Park, on a Sunday afternoon in summer. There were two benches with the sky, trees, and foliage behind. Peter, a man in his early forties, was sitting on one of the benches and reading a book when Jerry, a younger man, entered and accosted him. They talked, even though under the pressure of Jerry's insistence, and this kind of conversation forced Peter to relate the way he lived albeit reluctantly.

He is a married man with two daughters, two parakeets for each of them, two TV sets, an apartment, an executive position in a small publishing house, and an annual of \$18,000 income. About Jerry's life, in turn, he told Peter that he lived in a small room in a rooming house in a poor section of the city. He knew who some of the tenants were, but did not know them as people for he never made contact with anyone. Unlike Peter he owned very little, but in detail, he listed them as; toilet articles, some playing cards and cutlery, empty picture frames, and a box containing rocks. His family history, related Jerry, was a tragic one. His mother abandoned the house in favor of promiscuous adultery and alcoholism and died at Christmas. His father had a fatal accident with a bus. A stiff, sour aunt took him in to stay with her. Jerry also confessed his sexual and emotional life; that he was a homosexual, that he had never been in love with a woman more than an hour. He slept with prostitute, to sex without love.

Jerry told Peter that he came from the zoo by walking northerly and taking a circuitous route. He said that "it is one of those things a person has to do, that sometimes a person has to go very long distance out of his way to come back a short distance correctly." Then, to begin with what happened at the zoo, as had

always been repeated many times by Jerry, he started it by telling 'The Story of Jerry and the Dog' in an intense monologue.

Firstly, he introduced the landlady, an ugly woman with a strong desire who kept pressing her disgusting body up against him, to corner him so she could talk to him. Instead of giving her pleasure by coming to her room he found a way to keep her out. He convinced her of the previous sexual session between them, which indeed never happened. It worked because it is confused the landlady mentally.

Jerry, then, began to tell the dog story. Everyday when he tried to enter the house, the dog attacked him savagely. To prevent these attacks, Jerry decided to kill the dog with kindness. And if it did not work, he would just kill it. Jerry offered the dog the gift of a hamburger, which was accepted enthusiastically, but still the dog attacked him. Jerry gave up on the seventh day he poisoned the meat, the dog ate it and became extremely ill. The fact was that Jerry no longer wanted it to die, he was anxious to experience their relationship. Should the dog lived? He began to regard the dog as a friend and became aware that if he succeeded with the animal he would be on the road to make contact with people.

After the dog recovers, each time Jerry confronted it, he realized that he loved the dog and wanted it to love him. But the dog was not able to understand. The situation became hopeless for Jerry. From that moment on, both Jerry and the dog ceased to bother each other. They neither loved nor hurt for they did not attempt to reach each other. The story ended with Jerry's statement that he has "learned that neither kindness nor cruelty by themselves, independent of each other, creates any effect

beyond themselves; that the two combined, together, at the same time, are the teaching emotion."

Jerry then continued with reintroducing the topic of the zoo. He went there to find out the way people exist with animals, and the way animals exist with each other. Jerry tickled Peter, punched him, and finally forced him to give up the bench. Jerry verbally attacked Peter by pulling a knife on him. Knowing that he was going to be killed, he finally picked the knife up after Jerry urged him to do so. Yet Peter only defended himself, without any intention to use the knife to do harm to Jerry. Then Jerry impaled himself upon the blade, and so he died.

### THE SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

Edward Franklin Albee, born in Washington DC, on March 12 1928, the playwright of *The Zoo Story*, *The Death of Bessie Smith*, and *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?*.

At the age of two weeks he was adopted by a multi-millionaire Reed Albee, whose father held a substantial business interest in a Chain of Vaudeville Theatres, and his domineering wife, Frances. Family life was not happy. His mother was twenty-three years younger and a foot taller than her husband, and it seems to have inspired gratitude and fear in almost equal quantities. She was the basis for the many portraits of domineering and threatening woman in his plays.

His early education was a very bad one. Expelled from two schools and one university for cutting classes, ignoring his academic work, not playing compulsory sports, and general bad behavior. Then he entered Choate School, whose teachers encouraged him to write, and which was for the first time he seems to have found himself in a sympathetic environment. Accordingly, he began to write, producing poems, short stories, a novel and play.

Graduated from Choate in 1946, Albee entered Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, but did not remain there long. He spent some month at various times, at Columbia and Washington Universities. In 1948 he left for New York City, with funds sent every month by his paternal grandmother. He shared an apartment with the composer William Flanagan, drifted from one odd job to another, even though still determined to be a writer, the works that he continued to write went unpublished.

During the years between leaving home and becoming a professional playwright, Albee, however, had set a deadline for the incubating period of his creative talent. By early 1958, an explosion took place in his life, Albee became gloomy and depressed. The mode of existence of his almost thirty years had lost its savor, he had accomplished nothing of importance. Then, in his apartment of West Fourth Street, he settled down at the kitchen table and wrote his one act play, *The Zoo Story* in three weeks. He sent the play on the rounds of theatrical producers offices in New York, from which it returned, universally rejected as too short, too experimental. Flanagan, his roommate composer liked the script and sent it to a friend in Italy, who passed it on

to a friend in Switzerland. After some circuitous journey, the play was finally accepted for production, and was given its first performance in Berlin, on September 28 1959, in a paired ticket with Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, and was later jointly produced in twelve other German cities. Both plays had their New York Premiere as a double bill at the Provincetown Playhouse on January 14, 1960. His career was not definitely launched, and in May 1960, he received the Vernon Rice Award for outstanding achievement in an Off Broadway Production.

Since becoming a public personage, in the sense that he is well known, Albee's personal life has really become his own, and the importance of his life has decreased with the increased interest in his work. He continued to write several plays and in 1962 he won the New York Critics Award for *Virginia Woolf* and in 1966 the Pulitzer Prize was for *A Delicate Balance*.

He found himself interested in the greater significance of his being-an-honorable playwright, thus in 1961, he became one of those who founded the Playwrights Unit, a project designed to subsidize and produce the works of young, unknown playwrights, to give

them the opportunity that the New York theatrical establishment had attempted to deny to him.

### **Plays by Edward Albee**

A Delicate Balance	1966
Tiny Alice	1964
Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf	1961-1962
The American Dream	1960
The Sandbox	1959
The Death of Bessie Smith	1959
The Zoo Story	1958
Seascape	1975
The Man who Had Three arms	1982
Three Tall woman	1991

### **Adaptations**

Malcolm	1965
(From the novel by James Trudy)	
The Ballad of The Sad Game	1963
(From the novella by Carson McCullers)	