

SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECIES

A ten-minute play

by Sterling Arthur Leva

Dramatis Personae

MICKEY: Twenty-seven years old, immaculate in dress, intelligent but neurotic.

DR. SEVILLE: MICKEY's therapist. Sixty-five years old, dressed in button up shirt, slacks, and Italian leather shoes. White-haired and bespectacled. Proper but also casual.

BRENDA: DR. SEVILLE's receptionist, who is only heard over speaker phone. Probably doesn't like her job very much.

Place

Dr. Seville's Office in Southern California

Time

2012

ACT I
Scene 1

Setting: A therapist's office. There are two plush chairs, a desk, and a bookshelf with various psychological books on it. There is an umbrella, hand mirror, and phone on the desk. Far center stage, a window should be depicted.

At Rise: DR. SEVILLE is standing at his desk. The phone rings and DR. SEVILLE presses a button on it.

DR. SEVILLE

Yes?

BRENDA (on speaker phone)

Dr. Seville, your one o'clock appointment is here to see you.

MICKEY (on speaker phone)

That's thirteen o'clock military time, Doc.

DR. SEVILLE

Indeed it is, Mickey. Send him in, Brenda.

BRENDA (sardonically on speaker phone)

With pleasure, Dr. Seville.

(DR. SEVILLE hits a button on the phone and picks up the umbrella from his desk. He turns to face stage right. MICKEY enters backwards and crosses himself in the manner used by Catholics. He turns around and faces DR. SEVILLE.)

MICKEY

Good afternoon, Doc.

DR. SEVILLE

(Opening the umbrella and holding it above his head.)

Good afternoon, Mickey. Please, have a seat.

MICKEY

(Clearly uncomfortable, he sits down in one of the plush chairs and begins biting his nails.)

Are you expecting a storm?

DR. SEVILLE

Are you referring to my umbrella? How does it make you feel, Mickey?

MICKEY

I think you know how it makes me feel.

MICKEY (Cont.)

(Takes a salt-shaker out of his pocket and shakes salt over his left shoulder. He puts it back in his pocket.)

Sorry, Doc. You can bill me for the mess, if you'd like.

DR. SEVILLE

(Closes umbrella and lays it down on the table.)

So no progress then.

(Sighs and sits down in the other plush chair opposite MICKEY.)

Did you do the assignment that I gave you in our last session?

MICKEY

Yeah, kind of.

DR. SEVILLE

Kind of?

MICKEY

I...I tried.

DR. SEVILLE

Tell me about what happened, Mickey.

MICKEY

Well, uh, I went down to the animal shelter and I told them I was interested in adopting a cat. I asked them if they had any black ones, just like you told me to. I was hoping they wouldn't, but the lady said they did. So she led me up some stairs to where they keep all the bad...all the *cats*.

(MICKEY swallows.)

DR. SEVILLE

Do you need a moment? Take your time.

MICKEY

No, I'm fine. So I asked if I could hold one, you know, take it for a test run before I take it home. The lady, she said that there was a real *cute* one that I would just *love* and that it had already had all its *shots* and I could hold it if I liked. So she brings me this...*cat*, just blacker than hell, and she plops it in my hands and I'm standing there with this *cat* and I'm thinking about bad luck and then diseases and then back to bad luck and then back to diseases and I'm torn about which one is bothering me most and before I know it, I'm...

DR. SEVILLE

Petting the cat, as I suggested?

MICKEY

(Looks down and mutters almost inaudibly.)

MICKEY (Cont.)

Throwing it out the window.

DR. SEVILLE

What was that, Mickey?

MICKEY

I threw the god damn thing out the window, ok? I figured I would only get three-and-a-half years instead of the usual seven because it didn't *technically* cross my path but...

DR. SEVILLE

Good heavens! If I would have known you would react so strongly, I never would have given you the assignment.

MICKEY

It was only two stories up. It landed on its feet anyways. Those things always do, from what I understand.

DR. SEVILLE

Lucky for them. What about the lady at the shelter?

MICKEY

I pretended the cat bit me and she ran out to make sure it was alive. It was.

DR. SEVILLE

Well, I'm glad that nothing serious came of it, at least.

MICKEY

I'm not finished. I was in such a hurry to get out of there after that I didn't see the construction going on in the lobby. I walked right under an open ladder. That's a full seven years, Doc. Add the three-and-a-half for the cat and that's a solid decade and change of bad luck tacked onto my head. The devil's really got me by the balls now.

DR. SEVILLE

You believe in the devil?

MICKEY

Absolutely.

DR. SEVILLE

And god?

MICKEY

Negative. I'm superstitious, not stupid.

DR. SEVILLE

I'm confused. How can you believe in one and not the other?

MICKEY

One makes his work evident, the other doesn't. I only believe in what I can see. In spite of my issues, I'm a man of reason.

DR. SEVILLE

So you admit that your superstitions are unreasonable then?

MICKEY

My *acknowledgement* of them is the most reasonable thing in the world. The *mechanisms* through which they manifest, however, are unreasonable in the extreme. But that's the devil's business if he wants to use ladders and black cats to do his dirty work.

DR. SEVILLE

Mickey, have you considered the possibility that you're falsely ascribing meaning to otherwise harmless objects in order to account for your perception that reality is inherently working against you, in the process inadvertently perpetuating the very conditions you claim to lament?

MICKEY

I love it when you take the gloves off, Doc. Self-fulfilling prophecy, right? That's what you're driving at?

DR. SEVILLE

In a word, yes.

MICKEY

Technically, two words. "Self-fulfilling prophecy." Well, three, but two are joined by a hyphen and only count as one. Maybe two-and-a-half then. It doesn't matter, it's not a self-fulfilling prophecy.

DR. SEVILLE

You seem quite certain about that.

MICKEY

Do you know when my birthday is, Doc?

DR. SEVILLE

I'm sorry, I don't recall offhand. I'm sure it's in your file.

MICKEY

April thirteenth.

DR. SEVILLE

Your birthday isn't for six months.

MICKEY

I was born on a Friday.

DR. SEVILLE

I see now. Friday the thirteenth. And how does that make you feel?

MICKEY

I think you know how that makes me feel. But I don't want to talk about my feelings. I'm trying to illustrate that I had nothing to do with whatever prophecy I am currently fulfilling.

DR. SEVILLE

Let me make sure I understand you: Are you suggesting that because you were born on a certain date, under a bad sign as you seem to be implying, that you are subject to unlucky forces that continually assail you and negatively impact your life?

MICKEY

You don't look convinced. Do you know that something horrible has happened to me on every single Friday the thirteenth of my entire life? Every single one. When I was five, I fell out of a tree and broke my collarbone. When I was twelve, my pet goat died. When I was sixteen, I got hit by a car. When I was twenty-three, my fiancé told me she had been cheating on me with my best friend. I can go on and on. What do you call that?

DR. SEVILLE

Perspective, perhaps. Coincidence...

MICKEY

Coincidence! Haha. There are no coincidences, Doc. That's the devil trying to collect on his dues. And I suspect he'll collect in full pretty soon.

DR. SEVILLE

What do you mean by that, Mickey?

MICKEY

Last Friday the thirteenth I turned twenty-seven.

DR. SEVILLE

And what happened?

MICKEY

Nothing yet. But twenty-seven—that's when all the unlucky ones go.

(MICKEY gets up and walks over to the desk. He knocks his fist on it.)

Knock on wood.

(MICKEY sees the mirror on the desk and takes a step back.)

What's the mirror for? Another one of your exercises?

DR. SEVILLE

(Stands up and walks over to the desk.)

Actually, yes.

MICKEY

You gonna bust it up and watch me squirm?

DR. SEVILLE

(Picks up mirror and holds it out.)

No, I'm not going to bust it up. You are.

MICKEY

Haha! I am? Maybe you're the one who needs their head checked, Doc. No way that's happening.

DR. SEVILLE

Why not? It's just a mirror, Mickey. A common, ordinary, every-day hand mirror.

MICKEY

To you, maybe. To me, that's seven years of hell in that glass there. I already caught ten-and-a-half because of your other assignment. You know, I could probably sue you for malpractice.

DR. SEVILLE

Would you really do that?

MICKEY

That depends. Would you still see me as a client if I won?

DR. SEVILLE

No, I don't think I would, Mickey.

MICKEY

You're a good shrink, Doc.

DR. SEVILLE

Thank you, but you're avoiding the issue at hand.

MICKEY

The hand mirror.

DR. SEVILLE

The hand mirror.

MICKEY

I'm not touching that thing. I'm sorry.

DR. SEVILLE

Very well. What if I were to break it instead? Right now, right in front of you. How would that make you feel?

MICKEY

I'd feel sorry for you, Doc. You don't want the devil dangling that kinda time over your head.

DR. SEVILLE

The devil, indeed.

(Puts mirror down on table and looks at watch.)

Speaking of time, ours is about over for today. We can continue next week.

MICKEY

Sure thing, Doc.

DR. SEVILLE

Friday at one it is then. Let me just get you in my calendar.

(Pulls cellphone out of pocket.)

I just got this. It's miraculous, isn't it? Technology, I mean.

MICKEY

I don't believe in miracles.

DR. SEVILLE

Of course not. It's truly something, though. The calendar on here, for example. I can look at any day, present, future, or... Mickey, when was your birthday again?

MICKEY

April thirteenth. Friday.

DR. SEVILLE

Yes, I recall. Which year?

MICKEY

1985.

DR. SEVILLE

(Looks at phone for a bit and then looks at MICKEY.)

Mickey, I regret to inform you that you were born on a Saturday.

MICKEY

No. That's impossible.

DR. SEVILLE

See for yourself.

(Holds phone up for MICKEY to see.)

MICKEY

Saturday the thirteenth... How miraculous...

DR. SEVILLE

How does that make you feel, Mickey?

MICKEY

I think... I don't know how that makes me feel, to be honest.

DR. SEVILLE

Perhaps your assignment this week will be to think about how that makes you feel.

MICKEY

I guess I can do that. Easier than tossing black cats out of windows probably.

(Starts walking stage right. DR. SEVILLE looks to far center stage where a window is depicted.)

DR. SEVILLE

One moment, Mickey. It's started raining. Would you like to take my umbrella?

MICKEY

(Turns around.)

Oh, yeah. Thanks.

(Walks over to DR. SEVILLE and gets umbrella before walking stage right again. MICKEY turns around, opens the umbrella, and smiles.)

You're a good shrink, Doc.

(MICKEY exits stage right.)

DR. SEVILLE

Ha! Calendar behavioral therapy! They certainly didn't teach *that* at Yale...

(Shakes his head and picks up the hand mirror. He raises it as if to smash it, then looks into it.)

You're a good shrink, Doc. You're a good shrink...

CURTAIN