

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## EYES WIDE SHUT 1999

Stanley Kubrick

**OVERVIEW** Set in New York City, this film explores the sexual desires harboured by a husband and wife. Shocked by his wife's revelation of her erotic fantasies, doctor Bill Harford embarks on a nightmarish odyssey to discover his own sexual desires. In the course of two days of exploration, he encounters seductive models, alluring prostitutes and a secret sexual club responsible for a young woman's death and the intimidation of a friend. Bill's wife, Alice, also endures a painful journey into her own erotic dreams and fears. The couple are reconciled at the end, but not without the hint of future problems.

**HISTORICAL/LITERARY NOTES** The film script, co-written by director Stanley Kubrick, is adapted from *Traumnovelle (Dream Story)* written by the Austrian writer Arthur Schnitzler and published in 1926. Transposing the story from Vienna to New York, Kubrick nevertheless retains many of the source-story's elements, especially a doctor's two-day exploration of sexual desire after hearing his own wife confess her sexual fantasies. In order to obtain an R rating in the United States (which still requires under-17s to have an accompanying adult), Warner Brothers altered some explicit sexual scenes. This was Kubrick's final film, which he did not live to see released as he died only days after showing the final cut to the producers. Although often described as an 'erotic thriller', some critics dispute that categorisation and consider the film to be a psychological study of marital relations.

### MAIN CHARACTERS

Bill	Bill Harford is a doctor in New York City.
Alice	Alice Harford is his wife.
Nick	Nick Nightingale, an old friend of Bill's, is a pianist.
Ziegler	Victor Ziegler is a wealthy patient of Bill's.
Marion	Marion is the daughter of one of Bill's patients.
Sandor	Sandor is a Hungarian man.
Mandy	Mandy is a prostitute.
Domino	Domino is also a prostitute.

### STORY

#### Party

*A party* The film opens with Dr Bill and Alice Harford in their apartment in New York City. As they leave for a Christmas Party, they kiss their daughter Helena goodbye and chat with the babysitter. They are an ordinary, if wealthy and attractive, couple with a sweet child. The party turns out to be a gala affair held in a mansion owned by Bill's patient, Victor Ziegler.

*Nick* They know no one among the large crowd, until Bill recognises the piano player. Nick Nightingale was a fellow medical student but dropped out and became a pianist. He and Bill exchange hearty hellos and promise to get together soon.

*Seductions* Meanwhile, as Alice waits for Bill at the bar, she is chatted up by an older man, a Hungarian. Alice is slightly drunk and returns his flirtation. As they dance, she notices that two young models are attempting to seduce Bill, who plays along until he is called away to Ziegler's private rooms upstairs. There, he attends to a young woman, Mandy, who has overdosed on a drug while having sex with Ziegler, the host. Bill treats the naked woman professionally and helps her recover full consciousness. That night, Bill and Alice make love.

#### Confession

*Heart-to-heart* The next day, Bill attends to patients in his office, while Alice plays mother to their daughter at home. That night, Bill and Alice smoke marijuana and begin to talk about their previous night's adventures. 'Did you happen to fuck those two girls?' Alice asks. A shocked Bill says no and that he was away for a long time because Ziegler wasn't feeling well, thus honouring his friend's request not to mention Mandy, the call-girl.

*Men and women* Intrigued, Bill wants to know what the Hungarian wanted, and Alice says, 'Sex. Upstairs. Right then and there.' He says, 'Well, it's understandable that he wanted to fuck you.' Alice is taken back by this, and Bill tries to explain that most men want sex. 'So, I should conclude that you wanted to fuck those two models,' she replies. He rejects this, explaining that he loves her, that they are married and that he would never lie to her or hurt her.

*True thoughts* Alice then points out that the only reason he didn't have sex with the models was out of 'consideration' for her, not because he didn't want to. After Bill dismisses her logic, she asks him about his sexual urges while examining women's bodies in his office. 'I happen to be a doctor,' Bill says primly, 'and sex is the last thing on my mind when I'm with a patient.'

*Alice's confession* In the course of their long discussion, and argument, it is evident that Bill believes that men are sexual by nature and that women are not. Alice takes pleasure in puncturing his illusions by telling him that she fantasised about leaving Bill and running off with a naval officer while on vacation. This disturbs Bill, who is then called to the house of a man who has just died.

#### Quest for Sexuality

*Another seduction* Bill goes the house and speaks with the dead man's grieving daughter, Marion. As she describes her father's passing, she mentions that she is about to get married and begins to cry; then, in mid-sentence, she begins to kiss the doctor. 'I don't want to marry him,' she says. 'I love you.' This would-be seduction is interrupted by the arrival of Marion's fiancé, Carl.

*Prostitute* Walking on his way home, Bill sees a man kissing a prostitute, fantasises about sex and is then roughed up by a group of young men, who call him a 'faggot.' He allows himself to be picked up by a prostitute, named Domino, who leads him to her apartment. They are about to have sex when Alice, home alone watching television, calls him. He lies about where he is, but when they hang up, Bill changes his mind, pays Domino without having sex and leaves.

*Fidelio* Back again on the streets, he stops at a nightclub where his old medical school friend, Nick, is playing piano. Nick tells him about another gig he does every month, in different places, where he plays blindfolded. As he speaks, Nick takes a call and finds out where he is to play later that night and what the entry password is ('Fidelio'). Bill says he wants to go to the event but is told that he also needs a costume and a mask to be allowed in.

*Costume shop* At a shop, once owned by one of his old patients, Bill is able to rent a costume by offering a very large sum of money. Inside the shop, the new owner looks for a cloak with a hood and a mask and finds his teenage daughter playing sex games with two men. The man is incensed, but the young girl, in bra and panties, gives Bill a welcoming smile.

*Sexual ritual* Riding in a taxi to the country house where Nick is to perform, Bill has more sexual fantasies. Using the password, he is ushered inside the mansion, where he puts on his mask and cloak, and finds a sexual ritual in progress. A man in a red cloak, chanting and waving a censor, is surrounded by a circle of young women in black robes and masks. On a signal, the women disrobe and stand in a G-string. Bill joins the audience of black robes and masks.

*First warning* One of the masked women leaves the circle and leads Bill down a hallway, where she warns him of impending danger. She takes him through another room, where masked couples are copulating in various poses. Again, she warns him to get away while he can. She refuses to divulge her name or take off her mask because it would be 'dangerous.'

*Unmasked* When she leaves him, Bill is ushered to a different room where he is questioned by the master of ceremonies. Bill is asked for a second password, which he doesn't know, and is told to take off his mask and undress. He removes his mask but balks at stripping, at which point the woman who warned him intervenes and says she is ready 'to redeem him.' The MC suggests that she is taking on a great risk, but she insists. Bill is let go after being warned that if he speaks of the event to anyone, he and his family will be harmed. Bill is concerned for his saviour's fate but leaves without knowing what will happen.

*Alice's dream* Unsettled by his experiences, Bill gets home very late, where he first hides his costume and wakes Alice. She explains that she was having a dream, in which she had sex with the naval officer and other men, while Bill watched. She doesn't want to tell him, but he drags it out of her. Crying, she says she wanted to make fun of him as he watched. She feels guilty and ashamed, mirroring Bill's feelings from his night at the sexual ritual.

*Investigation* The following morning, Bill tries to find Nick but the nightclub is locked. At Nick's hotel, he is told that his friend checked out earlier that morning, looking bruised and afraid, escorted by some tough-looking guys. Nick tried to pass an envelope to the reception clerk but the toughs prevented that and told the clerk that any messages for Nick would be 'collected by an authorised person.' Bill's next stop is the costume rental shop, where he realizes he has lost the mask. He also finds the owner is prostituting his teenage daughter with the same men he found her with the previous night. Bill drives out to the country mansion, the site of the orgy, where he is handed a letter through the iron gates to the property. The letter warns him to stop his enquiries, or else.

*Failures* Back in his office, he calls Marion to renew their contact, but Marion's fiancé answers and he hangs up. He then visits the prostitute Domino's apartment and finds that she is out but her flatmate invites him inside and propositions him. As he begins to fondle her, she informs him that Domino is HIV positive and he leaves.

*Morgue* Back on the street, Bill thinks he is being followed by a menacing-looking figure. He escapes into a café and looks at a newspaper, where he reads a story about the death of a 'beauty queen' from an overdose. Bill goes to the morgue to identify the body. It turns out to be Mandy, the call-girl, who was with Ziegler at the party.

*Revelations* Ziegler invites him to his house, where they exchange trivialities before Ziegler reveals that he was at the orgy and knows all about Bill's investigations. Bill feigns ignorance, but Ziegler convinces him that he is part of the cabal that hosted the orgy. It also emerges that Ziegler and his associates had Nick beaten up and sent out of town as punishment for compromising secrecy by telling Bill about the ceremony. Ziegler then reveals that the woman who 'redeemed' Bill at the orgy was Mandy, who is now lying in the morgue. Ziegler dismisses any putative connection between her rebellious action at the orgy and her death, but Bill is not convinced.

*Reconciliation* Back home, Bill finds his lost mask lying on his pillow next to the sleeping Alice. Overcome with guilt and confusion, he collapses on the bed in tears and tells Alice everything that has happened over the past 48 hours. Alice is distraught but rallies in time to take their daughter Christmas shopping. Helena wanders happily through aisles of teddy bears with her sullen parents, who discuss their future. They agree that they are fortunate that they love each other and should make love as soon as possible.

## THEMES

*Marriage* This is the story of a marriage that is severely tested by the sexual fantasies entertained by husband and wife. Bill and Alice Harford, both wealthy and attractive, appear to be a happy couple. They love their daughter, they're about to celebrate Christmas and they compliment each other on their appearance as they leave their apartment for a party. But the first shot in which they both appear is telling: Alice is on the toilet, while Bill stands a foot away adjusting his tie. It is the usual physical intimacy that couples share—no shame about their bodies, and bodily processes. It is mundane. It is not erotic. And that is the problem, not just for these two, but for everyone. What we gain in a marriage is the ease of being together; what we lose is the pleasure of fantasy, including fantasised sex. The marriage in the film is also based on mutual deception, as Alice's Hungarian seducer points out to her.

**Desire** On the other hand, marriage is what prevents us from giving in to our sexual desire, which, if unchecked, would land us every night in something like the orgy in the film. This tension between sexual desire and marriage is made explicit in the early argument between Bill and Alice, especially when she extrapolates his halting answers about his sexual desires into this convincing conclusion: the only reason you don't sleep with every attractive woman you see is that you're married to me. It's not that you don't want to, it's that you think you shouldn't. The rest of the long film is a test of Bill's marital fidelity, which he passes, only just. Again, not because he didn't want to sleep with the two models at the party or with the prostitute he met on the street or with the daughter of his deceased patient. No, he wanted to, he fantasised it, but in each case his infidelity was thwarted by accident: Bill is called away; Alice calls him on the phone; a woman's fiancé arrives. Alice has her own fantasised sex, imagined in a dream with a total stranger, which leaves her feeling guilty and depressed. Neither spouse actually commits adultery, which is what probably saves the marriage. The film dramatizes marriage as a difficult balancing act between sex with a stranger, which is thrilling, and sex your spouse, which snuffs out desire. Bill and Alice spend the whole film trying to negotiate an acceptable position between anonymity and intimacy, between the erotic and the mundane. In the closing scene, the film suggests that sexual love in marriage might be possible if we can imagine our spouse as the stranger, and thus rekindle our original desire for him/her.

**Secrets** Although the conflict between desire and love is reconciled at the end, the film makes clear the power and potential danger of dreams. Here, it is Alice's experiences that take central stage. Her confession of fantasising about running away with a naval officer is the trigger to Bill's jealousy and inspires his fantasies. It only took one look, 'a mere glance,' as Alice explains, for her to become obsessed with him. But Bill has been blind all this life, never seeing that his wife has sexual desires just like him. Alice has to rip away his blinders about sexual fantasies. 'If you men only knew,' she says during their argument about gender and fidelity. Bill, by contrast, has to wear a mask in order to witness untrammelled sexual desire at the orgy. He is then unmasked and wants to expose the reality of the orgy but is warned not to do so. He doesn't actually believe Ziegler's story that it was all a dream, but finds it convenient to do so. Again, the concluding scene is significant in expressing the validity of both dreams and reality. Bill asks if Alice is sure that they can keep their marriage together, and she says, 'Only as sure as I am that the reality of one night, let alone that of a lifetime, can ever be the whole truth.' In other words, reality is limited. Bill replies to this by saying, 'And not a dream is ever just a dream.' In other words, dreams are partly true.

**Dreams** Alice has a dream about enjoying wild sex with the officer and other men, while Bill (in her dream) watched. Her dream mirrors Bill's visual experience of the sexual ritual in the mansion, where couples copulate. Alice's sex is a dream, and Bill's sex is imagined, with the prostitute, with the daughter and with the woman at the orgy. Indeed, the orgy is a dream-like version of the Christmas party, hosted by Victor Ziegler. Although the same people attend both events, the 'party' at the mansion involves masks and ritual music, which make it all seem ephemeral, not real. Ziegler himself makes this point when he tries to convince Bill that what he saw was not real; he says it was 'staged, fake, a charade.' The film is subtle in dramatizing the ambiguities between dreams and reality. When Alice is dreaming, her eyes are wide shut.

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Bill** William ('Bill') Harford is a young, dedicated and successful doctor. He shows professionalism at all times and has a good 'bedside manner.' He is also an ordinary man, with typical sexual fantasies and stereotypical views on female sexuality. He attempts to 'do the right thing' when confronting wrongdoing, but is hampered by his confusion about his own potential infidelity.

**Professional** An early illustration of Bill's professionalism occurs during the party hosted by Victor Ziegler. Bill is being verbally seduced by two young models when he is summoned to Ziegler's private room, where he finds a prostitute unconscious from an overdose of some drug. She is completely naked. Bill treats her without any hint of sexual interest and brings her around. Ziegler then wants to get rid of her, to remove the potential embarrassment from his wife and guests, but Bill tells him that she must remain in the room for at least another hour. The doctor is more concerned for the young woman's health than for his friend's reputation. Bill does agree not to mention the incident, but his collusion with Ziegler's deception does not extend to any compromise of his professional duty to the young woman.

**Unimaginative** Bill is a consummate professional, objective and dispassionate, but also somewhat

obtuse when it comes to understanding women, and especially his wife. This side of his character is illustrated in the long conversation/argument with Alice in the early part of the film. As they talk about their respective sexual fantasies, Bill falls back on old gender stereotypes, such as, 'Well, you know what men are like.' When she pins him down about his sexual urges concerning half-clothed women patients, he gets frustrated and comes out with more platitudes. Do his female patients fantasise about him? Alice wants to know, and Bill says, 'This is ridiculous. Women just don't think like that.' Alice challenges him, parroting his conventional views of the sexuality of men and women. 'I see, she says. 'Men are horny and women want security.' Again, Bill feels cornered and admits, 'It's a little oversimplified. But, yes, something like that.' Bill then goes on the attack, claiming that Alice is 'trying to make [him] jealous' when he is not 'the jealous type.' Enraged at this, Alice wants to know why he has never been jealous of men who might desire her, and he shouts back, 'Well, maybe it's the simple reason that you're my wife.' Poor Bill, he has a lot to learn in the course of the film.

*Sexuality* As implied in the descriptions above, Bill is portrayed as a man with typical male attitudes toward sex. Men want it, and women try to avoid it. Unlike Alice, he doesn't dream but, in terms of sexuality, he has been sleepwalking for most of his life. He is blind, unconscious and uninterested in exploring the topic. On the other hand, he certainly responds to overtures from attractive women. Bill is the target of female seduction four times in the film, but he never actually has sex with those women. However, and as Alice said, that is not because he didn't want to. For him, illicit sex is mentally exciting but morally taboo.

*Desire* The first seduction occurs at the party hosted by Ziegler. At exactly the same time that Alice is propositioned by the debonair Hungarian, handsome Bill is chatted up by two young and beautiful models. They sway back and forth, up close and further back, as they laugh and feast their hungry eyes on him. Bill is flattered and plays along with their flirtation and sexualised banter, which grows more and more explicit. He holds one woman on each arm and strolls across the room, until he suddenly asks, 'Now, tell me, ladies. Where exactly are we going?' They laugh and answer that they are 'going where the rainbow ends. Don't you want to go there?' Bill hesitates for a moment, recovers and says, 'Now, that depends on where that is.' He is just about to find out when a man interrupts and says Ziegler wants to see him. Bill hesitates, again, not wanting to halt the sexual pleasure he is deriving from the two adoring women. He gives them a little bow and leaves, but not before adding, 'To be continued.' This is classical Bill behaviour. He allows himself to be transported away by the promise of sexual gratification with strangers. But he really doesn't want to reach the end of the rainbow. He enjoys the temptation, the delicious fantasies that he can entertain, while still maintaining a technical fidelity to Alice. The pleasure he gains from the seduction is enhanced by the very fact that he knows he will not go through with the physical act. When he's called away, to attend to Ziegler, his regret is tinged with relief.

*Seduction* Bill's second escape from sex with a strange woman occurs just after he has been aroused by the grieving daughter of one of his patients, who has declared her love for him with a deep kiss. Bill leaves her house and walks along the streets of New York with images of Alice making love to the naval officer in his head. He also sees a man fondling a prostitute in front of a store. He allows himself to be picked up by a prostitute, who is more a glamorous call-girl than a street-walker. Inside her apartment, he appears nervous, coughs and says, 'Should we talk about money?' She says that depends on what he wants to do. Non-committal Bill answers, 'What do you recommend?' This makes her laugh, and she says, 'I'd rather not put it into words. Why not leave it up to me?' Bill smiles and says, 'I'm in your hands.' She leads him to the bedroom and they kiss. Bill is in erotic heaven, staring dumbly at this beautiful and sexy woman. Then Alice calls on his mobile. Bill lies about where he is and hangs up. The prostitute asks if he has to go, and he repeats her question: 'Do I have to go? I think I do.' He leaves but pays her anyway. Even a sexually frustrated Dr Bill is a kind man. This second seduction is more physical and gets closer to consummation than the flirtation with the models. He appears to be ready to have sex with the call-girl, and his behaviour is a delicate balance between desire and reluctance. She makes the first move, but he is already primed to follow. As always, he is both willing and hesitant, neither eager nor shy.

*Orgy* Bill's other major sexual scene is both different in context and similar in his motivation. Intrigued by Nick's mysterious reference to a party, Bill is given the password required and acquires the necessary disguise. Arriving by taxi, he enters into what he soon realises is a sexual ritual, complete with a cloaked master of ceremonies. Gazing through his mask, he sees nubile and near-naked women participating in a mysterious ceremony. In a repetition of his first seduction scene, Bill is led away by one of the women to another room, where multiple couples are copulating. She warns

him that he must leave before he is unmasked and harmed. He wants to know who the woman is and to see her face, but she refuses. Although he is masked, Bill can see her fantastic figure, and we can easily image his state of arousal, heightened by the mysterious surroundings. This scene furthers our understanding of Bill's sexuality by focusing on his attraction to secrecy and anonymity. Behind the mask, Bill feels free to explore the dark corridors of this mansion and to witness the wild sexual acts. It confirms our suspicion that Bill is a certain kind of voyeur, a person aroused by other people's sexual fantasies.

**Alice** Alice is an attractive and spirited woman, who used to run an art gallery but now helps her daughter with the homework. She wears glasses at home but looks glamorous when she dresses for a party. She is a matter-of-fact person who wants to discover the truth about herself and husband. She is also frustrated with her marriage to Dr Bill and is capable of flirtation and fantasising sex with other men.

*Candid* Alice's most endearing characteristic is her unstinting honesty, an open-eyed willingness to explore her bond with her husband, especially their sexual relationship. This candour is articulated vividly in the marijuana-fuelled discussion she has with Bill at the beginning of the film. As they talk about Ziegler's party the night before, she asks Bill if he 'by any chance happened to fuck those two girls [you were flirting with]?' Bill, typically, pretends he doesn't understand, but Alice is unrelenting in her forensic examination of his ideas regarding sexual desire. His obfuscation leads her to reveal a long-withheld secret that devastates him. She explains that on their holiday last summer she fantasised about having sex with a naval officer, who had only glanced at her once. As Bill's mouth drops in disbelief, she goes on to describe her desire for this stranger and concludes by saying, 'If he wanted me, I would give up everything. You. Helena. My whole fucking future.' Bill is flabbergasted and starts to wheel out stereotyped ideas about men and women's sexuality, but Alice won't listen. She continues to probe, anxious to strip away the falsehoods upon which their marriage has depended.

*Faithful* Despite her desperate fantasy regarding the officer and her painful dream of infidelity (see below), Alice never wavers in her commitment to her marriage with Bill. That steadfast allegiance is made clear at the end of her argument with Bill about sexual attitudes of men and women. She has just confessed that she had once, on a summer vacation, been willing to chuck everything over board and run off with the naval officer. 'But it was really weird,' she says, 'because at the same time you were dearer to me than ever. My love for you was...tender.' She continues her story by saying that when she woke up the next morning, she wasn't sure if she was afraid that the officer left or that he might still be there. 'And by dinner, I realised he was gone and I was so relieved.' Alice might imagine being unfaithful, and she might enjoy the fantasy, but she would not enjoy the reality because, at heart, she wants to remain with her husband.

*Sexuality* Like the lead female singer in Beethoven's opera 'Fidelio' (which is the ironic password to the orgy), Alice is faithful to her husband, at least in her actions. She does approach the cliff edge of infidelity, but only once, while Bill is tempted at least four different times. Her sexuality has been driven underground, into dreams and harmless flirtation, because her sexual relationship with her husband is predictable and dull.

*Enigmatic* The first scene in which Alice appears is one of the most memorable because it is ambiguous. Even before the film proper begins, just after the major credits are displayed, we see Alice slide out of a black dress and stand naked, with her back to the camera and, presumably, to her husband. Her movements are slow and languid like a striptease, but we are unaware of her intentions, in part, because we cannot see her face. Is it a seductive disrobing? Or simply undressing? Alice is capable of both, and that enigma in her sexuality is central to her character.

*Flirtatious* Alice displays her pleasure in sexual game-playing in the opening scene at the Ziegler's party. Waiting at the bar for Bill to appear, she is approached by an older and suave Hungarian man. He is dripping with seductive charm and does not conceal his intentions. Charmed, Alice allows herself to be whisked away by him onto the dance floor. As they move around, she responds to his innuendoes with the perfectly pitched performance of a coquette. When she says she is married, she does so with a light laugh that suggests the irrelevance of that bond. She is a little tipsy, but that is part of the role-play, allowing her to escape self-reproach. When he leans in close, their lips inches apart, she cocks her head in a provocative manner, smiles up at him and utters another remark with a sexual implication. Like Bill, however close she comes to actual physical seduction, she steps back at the last moment. When the Hungarian man says he wants to see her again, she says that's not

possible. And when he asks why, she holds up her wedding ring and says, 'Because I'm married.' But even that remark is accompanied by a dismissive chuckle. Alice uses that ring like a magic wand, which protects her while also allowing her to flirt.

**Dreamer** A more explicit illustration of Alice's sexual desire occurs later when she is awakened by Bill, who has just returned from the orgy. She has been laughing in her sleep but awakes with a frightened look as if it were a nightmare. She tells Bill to lie down beside her and get some sleep. But he asks about her dream. 'Just weird things,' she says, but he wants to know more. She sits up, head in hands, and speaks in a pained voice. 'We were in a deserted city...We were naked and I was terrified.' Alice breaks down in tears and struggles to continue. 'And I felt ashamed. I was angry because I thought it was your fault. You rushed away to find my clothes...and when you were gone, it was completely different. I felt wonderful. I was in a beautiful garden, stretched out naked. A man came from the woods. The naval officer.' Bill realises that there is more and wants to hear it, but she says it's 'too awful.' Pressed hard, she embraces him and says, 'He kissed me and we were making love. Hundreds of people all around us were fucking. And I fucked them. So many men. I don't know how many. I wanted to make fun of you, watching me fucking all these men, and I wanted...to laugh in your face.' In this scene, the roles of truth-seeker and concealer are reversed from the couple's previous discussion. Now, it is Bill who forces Alice to reveal all. As she describes her dream, Alice is overwhelmed with guilt and humiliation: the animalistic sex with unknown numbers of partners and her intention to mock her husband with that scandalous sight. She is horrified by the strength of her desire. The shame is all the greater because she still cherishes her husband.

**Ziegler** Ziegler is a wealthy and powerful man, who lives in an enormous mansion, like Bluebeard in his castle. He represents the darker side of masculinity in the film, a man with a large sexual appetite and little compassion. He is a confidant of Bill only because he was once his patient. He appears to show concern for Bill's welfare, but his primary motivation is to protect his own image. He is a master of pretence.

**Self-centred** Ziegler's crass egotism is revealed in an early scene during his party, when Bill is summoned to his private room on a floor above the dancing couples. We see him, putting on his pants and looking down at the naked prostitute, slumped on a chair. She is vulnerable, exploited and helpless, while he towers above her, in full control. When Bill comes to the woman's medical assistance, Ziegler points to her like she is an accidental spillage on his marble floor. He then blames her, saying that she was shooting up and had a bad reaction. In other words, I'm not responsible. Standing in front of a portrait of a nude on the wall, he can hardly remember the name of the real woman he has just used. While Bill is ministering to the woman, Ziegler turns abruptly and adjusts his tie; it's over, he's moved on, back to normal. Bill says she'll recover, and Ziegler asks, 'Is it all right if I get some clothes on her and get her out of here?' He reluctantly agrees to let her stay before sending her away. At the end of the scene, he asks Bill to keep 'this just between us.' Ziegler is only concerned with his social reputation, without a thought for the person who nearly died while having sex with him.

**Sinister** Ziegler summons Bill to his private quarters a second time, and in that scene the host reveals his truly dark and dangerous nature. This scene parallels the first in that Bill has just seen Mandy's body in the morgue, the same body he had seen unconscious in Ziegler's house on the first occasion. The affable Ziegler greets him with his usual bonhomie. Casually dressed with rolled-up shirt sleeves and no tie, he distractedly plays with the billiard balls on a table. He hands Bill a glass of expensive whisky and offers to send him a whole case of it. He hems and haws, as if he's genuinely upset, but finally comes to the point. He knows that Bill was at the orgy because he, too, was there. He also reveals that the dead Mandy is the woman who rescued Bill at the orgy. With feigned concern for Bill, he tries to convince his guest that he is mistaken about the nature of the orgy, about Nick's beating and Mandy's death. Slowly, it emerges that Ziegler is at the centre of the wealthy men who run the orgy and use violence to protect its secrecy. Ziegler never raises his voice, never makes a direct threat and never admits to any wrongdoing, but he is both powerful and amoral. A sinister combination.



(Bill and Alice at the party)



(Bill being seduced by two models)



(Alice questions Bill about his sexual desires)