

## CHAPTER X

THE MUTILATED

The Mutilated was one of two one-act plays by Williams printed in Esquire magazine in August, 1965. The other play was The Gnädiges Fräulein.

The Mutilated tells the story of two middle-aged women, Celeste and Trinket, who are both lonely and frustrated. Celeste is poor and has been depending on Trinket for financial aid. Trinket is rich, with three oil wells in West Texas, but she feels very low in spirit because she has had to have her left breast removed. Only Celeste knows of this secret, and she uses it to threaten Trinket for everything she wants. When Trinket cannot stand Celeste's selfishness any longer, she stops giving Celeste money and says she will have nothing more to do with her. By the end of the play, both women realize that they are better off together, enduring each other's disagreeable traits, but sharing their mutual troubles and occasional happiness.

After her estrangement from Trinket, Celeste is arrested for shoplifting and spends a few months in prison. She comes out poor and miserable. Her brother Henry, out of family loyalty, tries to find her a job in a bakery, though he does not care for his sister. With her future insecure, Celeste keeps thinking about the previous year, when she could

rely on Trinket for support. She tries to make peace with the only friend she is likely to have. She decides, however, to use the secret about Trinket's surgery to blackmail her in order to get money out of her. Celeste is talking to her brother :

. . . Well, this time last year, on Christmas Eve, Trinket Dugan and I were in her bedroom upstairs. . . . She's up in her room right now, and five will get you fifty, if I had five, that she's got herself a gallon jug of California Tokay. She's a terrible wino; can afford gin; drinks wine. . . . Well. She's rich and selfish. Purse-proud. But mutilated, oh, yes, ha ha, she's a mutilated woman. I know it, I'm the only one who knows it. - That's my ace in the hole. I'm going up there now by these side stairs and offer the peace pipe to her, I'll tell her on the evening of Christ's birthday even a pair of old bitches like Trinket and Celeste should bury the hatchet, forget all past wounds that either's given the other, and drink a toast to the birth of the Babe in the Manger with a sweet golden wine, with Tokay. . . .<sup>111</sup>

Celeste likes to drink and show off her sexy appearance. She would gladly sell herself, but she cannot get many men - just drunk men sometimes. When a sailor in the street tells her, "Get lost," Celeste replies " - I am . . . (She means lost.) When you're lost in this world you're lost and not found, the lost-and-found department is just the lost department, . . ."<sup>112</sup>

Trinket knows that Celeste can betray her by exposing her secret, yet she gets consolation from this almost unbearable friend. Celeste has a certain heartiness about her. Celeste says:

. . . I used to boost her morale. I'd say to her every day, Forget your mutilation, it's not the end of the world for you or the world. Hell, I'd say, we all have our mutilations, some from birth, some from long before birth, and some from later in life, and some stay with us forever. 113

Trinket is generous to everyone at the hotel she stays in because she is self-conscious of her physical deformity. She tries to escape her sufferings by listening to her old records, writing in her diary, and drinking wine. She needs love and sex but she is afraid that her secret will be revealed, so she has done without love and sex for three years, since the time of the operation.

. . . Why do I care so much? There's nothing criminal about an affliction, a mutilation! Oh, but - I've got to stop thinking about it. Somehow I've got to change the course of my life: revive the old Trinket Dugan, the Texas Tornado! . . . It's the change in my nature, the change in my spirit that matters. I used to be nice - kind - gentle. The physical mutilation has made me inhuman! . . . 114

- A woman, mutilated, belongs with the old bench sitters, but they go when the light goes out of the Square and then I come - when they go. . . . I am the night bench sitter of Jackson Square. They close the gates at midnight; I sit here from supper till the gates close; then go to the Café Bohème - have an absinthe frappe, sitting alone at my table; overtipping as if it were necessary to apologize for sitting alone at my table which is for two. The proprietor's name is Tiger but he doesn't burn bright anymore; an ex-prizefighter with mutilations, too, ears, nose. But they can be exposed: mine can't. He wears his mutilations, on his face, without embarrassment. But mine can't be exposed, without shame. . . . 115

Celeste threatens Trinket that she will expose her secret. She even writes a hint about Trinket's mutilation on the bathroom wall. Trinket tolerates this bullying because she has no way to fight against Celeste. And Trinket is really a very kind-hearted person. She talks to Bernie, the night clerk at the hotel.

Bernie, you know that I could afford to stay at a first-class hotel but I've stayed here out of loyalty and friendship. I dressed that Christmas tree. To all employees I passed out five-dollar gold pieces. I pity transients at Christmas. This hotel is full of derelicts, Bernie, lost, lonely, homeless at Christmas. . . . Heaven knows what secret sorrows they carry with them! And very few care!<sup>116</sup>

Trinket believes that her own solitude could be cured if only she could be with someone. She dares not try a lover, for fear her secret will become known.

. . . Too much solitude: it can be corrected. Yes, solitude can be corrected, corrected. . . . I will correct solitude by - how? Why not enter the Café Bohème tonight like a gladiator, shouting: "Here I am, the mutilated, the one-breasted woman, Trinket Dugan alias Nellie Jones!" - No, I won't. - She can't prove the mutilation unless I expose it to someone, but dread of exposure has made me go without love for three years now. Well, now, tonight I will give myself a lover for Christmas. I will, I will. - I'll go to bed with him with my padded brassiere on, and I won't let him touch it, I'll say, I'll say - I have a cold on my chest. Or something, I'll think of something, and I will find him tonight, and he will be - beautiful! Perfect! - Perhaps he'll be kind, even, so kind I can tell him about my mutilation. - . . . No. No depression tonight. Too much solitude. . . . How can solitude be corrected with a mutilation

that I'm so morbidly scared of exposing to a love partner? . . . 117

At the end of the play the two women are reconciled, and they feel as if a miracle has occurred. Since the time of the play is Christmas Eve, there are many hints as to the significance of this holiday. Carolers enter intermittently and sing of the lost and the loveless and the miracle of Christ's birth, bringing the gift of love to earth. In his short drama, Williams brings to a sordid atmosphere the experience of "Peace on earth, good will to men."