

Waiting for Sunrise

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Lloyd I. Sederer, M.D.

A young Englishman, Lysander Rief, a London actor before the outbreak of the Great War, has a sexual problem. He decides to go to Vienna for treatment, the epicenter of the “talking cure”—where Freud himself has a practice and is gathering apostles.

I thought early on in the book that it would be a coming-of-age story, with the help of psychoanalysis. Instead, Lysander’s very first consulta-

tion occasions a set of events that the reader is not apt to encounter if seeking analysis. So begins this marvelous tale of intrigue, betrayal, romance, and war.

Lysander’s troubles were minor league upon arriving in Vienna compared with the major fix he soon finds himself in, thanks in part to his recovered sexual prowess, which is only partly attributable to his treatment. His skill as an actor serves him well (but not on the stage) in Vienna, then London, then the French trenches, then Geneva (neutral in war but bursting with danger), and finally London again for the denouement of

his un-sought-after new career as a counterespionage agent.

Waiting for Sunrise is the 17th book by William Boyd, a Brit who has joined great company in delivering spy stories. He has been selected by the Ian Fleming estate to write the next in the series of James Bond capers, due out in a year. His writing is tight and readily moves the reader through the plot twists this genre demands. Boyd opens this book by quoting Hemingway—“A thing is true at first light and a lie by noon”—heralding what lies ahead and foretelling the loss of innocence that our hero and the century past were about to suffer.

I am going to get another of his books to read. If you are a William Boyd fan, which would you suggest?

The reviewer reports no competing interests. ♦

Dr. Sederer is with the New York State Office of Mental Health and the Huffington Post.