

ANTI-BIOTIC!

A Comedy in Two Acts

by

Keith Passmore

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Anti-Biotic!

Cast of characters

Sandy
Muriel
Liz
Joan
Jim
Dr. Mason
Dorothy
Ron
Ernest
Rashid
Wally
Ozzie
Brenda
Mike
Female Orderly
Male Orderly
Doctor 1
Doctor 2
Doctor 2's assistants (2)
Doctor 3

ANTI-BIOTIC!

Production Notes:

The success of this play is dependant upon the efficient use of lighting and teamwork from the performers to create quick and effective changes of scenes.

The scene changes – from the male ward (Ward 7 Room F) to the female ward (Ward 9 Room H), and vice versa, have to be directed by lighting only. The same beds and equipment are used in both wards.

The introductions to the opening two scenes include sufficient detail of the set requirements.

Those companies which have large stages (and money!) could use a revolving stage to create the scene changes.

Time: The present

Location: The male and female wards in a local hospital

Character Descriptions

Sandy: A horse riding, down to earth, buxom fair haired, married patient in her late forties.

Muriel: An octogenarian, tall, blunt, but motherly (or grandmotherly) ex – professional dancer. She is a patient who has a heart problem.

Liz: A hypochondriac. A professional, yet prudish, brunette in her early forties, married to Jim. She is a patient who appears to have muscular spasms.

Joan: An efficient, friendly nurse in her late twenties.

Jim: An unassuming, pleasant professional in his early forties, married to Liz.

Dr. Mason: Male hospital doctor, in his early forties.

Dorothy: An attractive brunette actress in her late forties. She is an orthopaedic patient.

Ron: A short, brash, balding heart patient in his sixties, who has a heart problem.

Ernest: A tall, well educated, patient in his early sixties. He has had growths removed from his stomach.

Rashid: A pleasant, mild mannered professional in his early thirties. He is a medical patient.

Wally: Short, brash, unwashed and his late seventies. He is an orthopaedic patient with a drinking problem.

Ozzie: A tall, mild mannered young professional in his early thirties. An orthopaedic patient who has also been bitten by a dog!

Brenda: A kind, efficient, buxom nurse in her early fifties.

Mike: A smart, dark haired professional in his late forties. He is Wally's suffering son.

Female Orderly: In her twenties.

Male Orderly: Well built, in his thirties.

Doctor 1: A tall hospital, female doctor.

Doctor 2: A male hospital doctor.

Doctor 2's assistants (2): male and female in their twenties.

Doctor 3: A male hospital doctor.

Doctor 4: A female hospital doctor.

Male visitor

Female visitor

Suggested Doubling for casting

Doctor 1/Dorothy

Doctor 2/ Mike

Doctor's assistants (2)/Male and female Orderlies

Doctor 3/Male visitor

Doctor 4/Female visitor

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ANTI – BIOTIC!

Scene 1: Hospital Ward 9 Room H, Night

The room consists of four beds and the usual hospital room equipment. Three beds are occupied by women patients, Sandy Upstage L, Liz Upstage R and Muriel Downstage R. Sandy is a buxom strawberry blonde in her late forties. Liz is a slim brunette in her early forties. Muriel is a petite grey haired octogenarian.

The play opens at night. The room is lit by a reading light above the downstage R bed where Joan, a nurse is attending to a patient who is asleep and completely hidden by bedclothes. The nurse completes her work and switches off the light. The room is in darkness. The nurse uses a torch as she approaches exit upstage R.

Sandy: We've company then Joan?

Joan: Yes, it's getting really busy. They'll be sleeping in the corridors soon, get some sleep now dear.

Joan exits.

Sandy: We have a new roommate, girls.

Liz groans a complaint.

Muriel stirs and slowly sits up

Muriel: The bloody noise those nurses make! I'm sure they think patients fall into comas at night and come alive in the morning.

Liz: *(sleepily)* Muriel, please, go to sleep.

Muriel: Hark at her. Who was it who kept us awake for hours last night with her moaning?

Liz: I was sick.

Muriel: Most people are in this place, dear. I'm wide awake now. I could do with a cup of tea.

She reaches across and presses the buzzer.

Sandy: You'll be popular.

Joan enters

Muriel: You were quick, must be a record.

Joan: What is it Muriel?

Muriel: Any chance of a cup of tea, Joan dear?

Joan: As much chance as a glass of champagne, I'm afraid. We're run off our feet.

Muriel: All I want is some hot water and a teabag.

Liz: Can't you be quiet?

Joan: There, you're waking the others.

Muriel: Don't mind her, she's always complaining.

Liz: I heard that.

Joan: Wait till morning dear, have some water for now. Shall I fill your jug?

Muriel: It's full.

Joan: Look I must go, try to get some sleep.

She exits

Muriel: What a bloody awful place this is.

Pause

The new patient stirs.

Muriel: Is she awake?

Liz: Why don't you ask her? You've woken everyone else.

The patient stirs again.

Liz: She's seems very uncomfortable, leave her alone.

Muriel: Yes, I'll leave her, to suffer.

The patient stirs again

Sandy: Welcome to Ward 9 Room H dear!

Liz: Sandy!

New Patient (Ozzie): (*weakly*) Thanks. Hi. (*he coughs*)

Suddenly the reading lights switch on and Sandy and Muriel sit up in bed.

Sandy and Muriel: It's a man!

Lights down.

Scene 2: Ward 7 Room F– early next morning

Ward 7 Room F, which is occupied by four males. Downstage L bed Ron, slight and outspoken, in his sixties. Upstage L, Ernest a tall, retired professional in his sixties. Downstage bed R is Wally an alcoholic, gruff, unkempt grey, long haired, in his late seventies. Upstage R. Rashid, an Arab who speaks well educated English, in his early thirties, is reading. Ron is sitting on the edge of his bed contemplating. Wally is lying on his back asleep and snoring loudly. Ernest is sitting up tidying his bedclothes.

Ron: I dunno it's like sleeping in a saw mill.

Ernest: You'll have to get used to it in here. Get yourself some ear plugs.

Ron: Nah! They give me earache. *(He eases himself to his feet and shuffles to end of the bed)* What time did he arrive?

Rashid: *(from behind book)* About one thirty. Like you, I had a disturbed sleep.

Ron: Oh well, I'm going for a pee. *(He shuffles to exit)* Bloody antibiotics! If I didn't have those piss bottles, I'd be up all night. I've filled four of 'em.

He exits

Ernest: A happy soul isn't he? A wonderful turn of phrase in everything he utters.

Rashid: We're all different aren't we? It's not much fun being sick.

Ernest: Quite, Rashid. Your profundity is remarkable.

Rashid: Sorry?

Ernest: It doesn't matter.

Pause.

Ernest reads a book.

Ernest: *(without looking up)* When do you leave?

Rashid: I'm not sure, soon I hope. I'm seeing the doctors this morning.

Ernest: You'll be lucky; I don't think they do their rounds on Sundays.

Rashid: Really?

Ernest: *(looking across at him)* I'm afraid you'll have to enjoy another night with us.

Rashid: I just hope we don't have a repeat of his snoring.

Ernest: As you said, we're all different aren't we? Not much fun being sick is it? *(He smirks and returns to his book).*

Rashid: (throwing him a questioning look) What? (then smiles knowingly) Oh yes.

Ron enters and shuffles towards bed.

Ron: That toilet stinks! Whoever was in there before me must have had a rat stuck up his arse. *(Wally produces a long louder snore)* God help us! *(He climbs into bed)* I've got bloody piles now. It's like sitting on glass.

Ernest: *(lowering book)* Must we have your intimate medical commentary?

Ron: What?

Rashid: Ernest, let him enjoy his sickness. Ignore him.

Ron: Have I upset someone Rashid?

Rashid: No Ron, not at all.

Ernest: I just don't like your graphic comments. *(He resumes reading)*

Ron: What's the matter with you then?

Rashid: Ignore him, we're all tired. Breakfast will be here soon.

Ron: You should've gone private, Ernie. You wouldn't have to put up with us riff raff.

Rashid: Thank you for including me in your disparaging comment.

Ron: What?

Ernest: And don't forget, my name's Ernest, if you please.

Ron: Oh yes. The importance of being bloody Ernest really applies to you doesn't it?

Ernest: *(giving him a searching look)* I'm surprised you would even know the play.

Ron: We're not all illiterate, yer know.

Rashid looks at the pair of them, shakes his head, smiles and returns to his reading. Ron turns away and lies down

Pause.

Suddenly Wally sits bolt upright and peers into the room.

Wally: 'Ere, what's going on? Where the bloody hell am I?

Lights down

Scene 3: Ward 9 Room H - The same day, early morning.

Ozzie in his thirties, the patient in the downstage R bed, is reading a magazine. Muriel is drinking a glass of water. Liz is knitting and Sandy is trying to make herself comfortable in a chair close to her bed.

Sandy: What're you in here for?

Muriel: A sex change?

Sandy and Muriel laugh

Liz: Don't be personal Muriel.

Muriel: *(to Liz)* God, you're such a kill joy.

Ozzie: I was told they were short of beds in the men's wards, so here I am. You'll have to put up with me for a bit.

Liz: I don't think it's right, men and women together.

Muriel: I'm not complaining dear. *(She gives Ozzie an exaggerated wink)*

Sandy: That's how we live, men and women together, we pro... procrastinate.

Muriel: What, don't you mean procreate?

Sandy: Whatever.

Liz: It's impossible to imagine it happening in this institution.

Muriel: Speak for yourself.

Liz: Anyway, I'm very pleased to meet you. My name's Liz.

Muriel: Don't get any ideas, she's married.

Sandy: I'm Sandy and as you heard, that's Muriel.

Muriel: I can speak for myself. How do you do young man?

Sandy: Muriel's eighty-two. She used to be a dancer, a very good one. She was on the box a few years back.

Muriel: Yes, and I shall be in one soon. (*She chuckles*) I wish you wouldn't talk about me as though I wasn't here. What's your name then?

Ozzie: Ozzie.

Muriel: Short for Austin, isn't it dear?

Ozzie: Not in my case it's not.

Liz: It's a pleasant name. Nice and informal.

Sandy: Now we know each other, how about sharing our problems. You know, why we're in here?

Liz: I can't think of anything more boring. In any case, he might not want to.

Sandy: Oh Liz, put some light into your life girl.

Liz: There's plenty in it, thank you.

Muriel: Well Ozzie, I'm getting over a stroke, love. Mind you, it was only a slight one. I'm being discharged at the end of the week. At least I hope I so. Only three days to go, thank the Lord.

Sandy: I fractured my pelvis. Not displaced, thank goodness! Just a hairline crack, that's all. I much prefer to sit in a chair. I can't stand lying in bed.

Muriel: (*chuckling*) Sounds good doesn't it? I can't 'stand' lying in bed.

Sandy: (*suddenly realising*) oh yeah (*she laughs*) You're a case, you are!

Ozzie smiles

Muriel: She fell off her horse near where she lives, in Dairy Flat. Of course before the accident, it wasn't flat, was it?

She and Sandy laugh.

Liz: What's so funny about that?

Sandy looks at Muriel and pulls a face.

Muriel: Never mind dear.

Short pause

Sandy: Well Liz?

Liz: You know what's wrong with me, he doesn't have to know.

Muriel: She keeps having muscular spasms. Just before she arrived here she was in bed with hubby and suddenly it happened!

Sandy: I can't imagine it, can you?

Liz: Don't be crude and personal. It's been very painful.

Pause

Sandy: Well Ozzie?

Ozzie: Pardon?

Muriel: I'm really interested to know what Ozzie is short for. Come on tell us.

Liz: Don't embarrass the lad.

Ozzie: Well, for my sins I was christened Orson.

Muriel: Poor bugger! Who the hell came up with that name?

Ozzie: I was brought up by my grandparents. Grandma named me after one of her favourite Hollywood movie stars. My Mum died while she was having me. She was still at High school. I was brought into this world as a result of a mad fling at a school dance, by all accounts.

Muriel: Oh dear, what a shame. I used to love the end of year balls when I was a teenager. There was some right goings on at our dances. I remember when I landed up in the caretaker's broom cupboard with a particularly impatient but gorgeous young beau.

Liz: Thank you Muriel. Please spare us the sordid details.

Muriel: What? (*With false innocence*) No, no Liz, we were looking for a pan and brush dear.

Sandy: And you found his vacuum extension instead!

Sandy and Muriel laugh

Liz 'tuts' and shakes her head.

Sandy: You were lucky to have such good grandparents.

Ozzie: I can't complain.

Pause

Muriel: Orson Welles was his name. The Hollywood star, you mentioned, dear. He used to give me goose bumps just listening to him, lovely rich voice he had.

Sandy: Aren't you going to share your disability then Ozzie?

Ozzie: I don't think you'd be interested.

Sandy: I would, we all would.

Muriel: Citizen Kane.

Sandy: What?

Muriel: Orson Welles's greatest film. It was called Citizen Kane. I loved every minute of it.

Liz: I remember seeing it on television a few years ago. Yes, it was very dramatic, but extremely dated.

Muriel: Yes a bit like me, dear. I was sixteen when I saw it. Mind you I looked a bit older than sixteen, a bit more developed you know. 1944 it was. A young corporal in the US Army took me to the local movie theatre. He was a dancer. Don't think he was too nimble on his feet to dodge the bullets, though. He soon went off to do his bit. I received only one letter from him.

Sandy: And I suppose you never saw him again.

Muriel: No, killed in action he was, poor lad.

Liz: How sad.

Muriel: His name was George. Not a very romantic name is it? I've still got his photo at home. A sweet boy, he was.

Liz: I often wonder how our lives would turn out if we'd married our first sweetheart.

Sandy: When you two have finished wandering down memory lane! (*to Ozzie*) Well, what are you here for?

Liz: Give it a rest Sandy!

Sandy: Oh, be quiet. (*to Ozzie*) Come on we're all women of the world, except you of course.

Ozzie: (*sighing heavily*) It's personal.

Muriel: Course it is. That's why we're interested.

Ozzie: You'll only laugh.

Muriel: Course we will. No seriously, we won't laugh dear.

Ozzie: (*sighs*) It happened last night. I'd been having a few drinks at the pub with friends at work, a sort of Bon Voyage celebration. One of the guys got a very good job in Dubai it was quite a night. Anyway, I'd had my quota of drinks and drove home. I had this sudden need to go for a ... you know?

Muriel: A piss?

Liz: Muriel, please.

Muriel: What's the matter with you, don't you go for them then?

Sandy: Be quiet the pair of you.

Ozzie: I was desperate and turned into a side road where there was a screen of trees. I made for the nearest tree and just made it in time and then, well....

Sandy: Well?

Ozzie: This bloody dog appeared from the bushes and bit me.

Muriel: Oh dear.

Sandy: Whereabouts?

Ozzie: From the bushes.

Sandy: No, no! Where did it bite you?

Ozzie: Er, you know, between my legs.

Short pause

Muriel: You don't mean your John Thomas?

Ozzie nods his head vigorously in embarrassment.

Muriel: Didn't I say he was in here for a sex change.

Sandy stifles her laughter. Liz slowly shakes her head

Muriel: Don't tell me the dog bit it off?

Ozzie: Of course not. I wouldn't be here, would I?

Sandy: Course you would. They'd stitch it back on again. It'd be as good as new in a few months, young man like you.

Liz: Don't be ridiculous Muriel.

Muriel: A similar thing happened to a friend of mine, her hubby I mean. He got it caught in a machine at work. How that happened I'll never know. Makes you think, doesn't it?

Sandy laughs

Ozzie: I knew you'd find it amusing. The bloody thing ripped off my foreskin!

Short pause

Sandy: Lucky the dog wasn't rabid.

Muriel: No, it was a Rabbi dog!

Muriel and Sandy laugh.

Liz: You're like a couple of schoolgirls.

Muriel: What happened then dear?

Ozzie: When I tried to get away from the dog I tripped and broke my ankle.

Sandy: Sod's Law.

Ozzie: Yer, in three places.

Muriel: Oh what a shame. I was going to ask you to be careful with me tonight dear, but you're no bloody good to me like that are you?

Liz: It must have been a small dog.

Ozzie: (*taken aback*) What d'yer mean?

Liz: If it had been a Pit Bull it would have ripped you to pieces. You were very lucky.

Muriel: What happened to the dog?

Ozzie: I didn't wait to find out!

A female orderly enters.

Fem. Orderly: You lot seem to be having fun. We can hear you from the other end of the ward.

Sandy: Yes, we're getting better and we're ready to go home.

Fem. Orderly: You'll be lucky. Breakfast is on its way and you might like to know the toast isn't burnt.

Muriel: Now that's enough to keep us here. I wonder what other delights we shall have today.

Sandy: Well, one thing it won't be!

Muriel: What's that?

Sandy: Hot dogs!

The Muriel and Sandy laugh, Ozzie smiles broadly and Liz shakes her head and turns away from them.

Lights down.

Scene 4: Ward 7 Room F - the same day, after Breakfast.

Wally is lying in bed staring at the ceiling. Rashid is sitting up eating an apple. Ron is sitting up outside his bedclothes propped up by pillows. Ernest climbs out of bed.

Ernest: It's time for a shower I think. (*He approaches exit carrying washing gear*)

Ron: (*sitting on edge of bed*) Before you go, Ernest, could I borrow your electric razor?

Ernest: What? It's not the height of hygiene is it?

Ron: I've had a stroke, not some contagious disease.

Ernest: I don't care. You wouldn't expect me to borrow your teeth, would you?

Ron: That's hardly the same is it?

Ernest: It's still a question of personal hygiene.

Ron: I'd clean it afterwards.

Ernest: You just fail to understand, don't you?

Ron: Cor, I dunno.

Ernest exits

Ron: (*calling after him*) You won't catch anything off me mate! (*to Rashid*) He's a miserable sod (*rubbing chin*) I'm desperate for a shave. I forgot to bring my shaving gear.

Rashid: Why don't you mention it to a nurse? There's a pharmacy downstairs.

Rashid: I don't have any cash on me, do I?

Rashid: Then I'm sorry, I can't help you.

Ron: D'you have any more of those apples? I'm starvin'.

Rashid: (*placing core on bedside cabinet and picking up a magazine*) No, sorry. It's not your day is it?

Ron: That's for sure. (*He notices Wally staring at the ceiling*) Is he alright? Look at him, still as a corpse. He hasn't blinked at all. He hasn't carked it has he?

Rashid: (*from behind magazine*) He's been in that position for some time.

Ron: He doesn't look good to me.

Rashid: (*lowering the magazine and looking across at Wally*) Perhaps we should call for a nurse.

Ron: D'you think we should have a look at him first?

Rashid: Ring the bell.

Ron: No, we might be wasting their time. I'll see if he's alright. (*He rises and shuffles to Wally's bed. He leans over him slightly*) Bloody hell, he stinks!

Wally awakes and cries out at the sight of Ron hovering over him. He draws away fearfully.

Wally: What d'yer think you're doing?

Ron: *(moving away)* I was just concerned about your staring up at the ceiling. I thought you were gone.

Wally: Gone? What d'yer mean, gone?

Ron: Dead, mate.

Wally: *(alarmed)* Dead! What's the matter with you? What a thing to say! You're creepy, you are! I can stare at the ceiling if I want to, can't I?

Ron: You looked odd, mate

Wally: You're the one who's odd; now bugger off and leave me alone. Bloody pervert!

Wally lies down

Ron: Hey, hang on mate. There's no need for that talk.

Rashid: Ron calm down. Leave him, just relax.

Ron returns to his bed and sits.

Ron: *(to Rashid)* He's bloody mad and he stinks.

Rashid: The nurses will sort him out.

Ron: Poor cows.

Wally sits up.

Wally: What time's breakfast?

Rashid: You missed it, you were asleep.

Wally: I'm famished.

Ron: Aren't we all?

Wally: Why didn't someone wake me?

Rashid: You were sleeping like a baby.

Ron: I don't think a baby could snore like he was.

Wally: *(to Rashid)* Can't you two swap places? I don't like the idea of him sleeping opposite me, staring at me and making comments all the time.

Ron rises and approaches exit.

Ron: I'm going to have a shower before I do something I might regret.

Wally: *(calling after him)* Good. Just stay away from me!

Ron exits, shaking his head.

Rashid: You completely misunderstood the situation. He was concerned about you; he was only trying to help.

Wally: I know his sort. You haven't seen his eyes have you? Evil, they are!

Short pause

Wally: I'm starving! I could eat a horse.

Rashid: Call the nurse. I'll buzz her for you *(He does so)* She should be here soon.

Wally: I don't need your help.

Rashid shakes his head.

Rashid: Why you are so disagreeable?

Wally: I'm alright. Just let me be.

He pulls the covers over himself. At that moment Brenda a nurse enters.

Brenda: *(to Rashid)* What's the problem dear?

Rashid: I rang on his behalf.

She approaches Wally.

Brenda: Mr. Gorman, what is it dear?

Wally peers from behind bedclothes.

Wally: I'm hungry. I didn't have any breakfast.

Brenda: That's alright. I'll see what I can do. While you're waiting, why not have a shower?

Wally: *(scornfully)* I don't want a shower!

Brenda: A wash then? We could give you a bed bath, if you like.

Wally: You leave me alone. I don't want a bath, shower or a wash! And I certainly don't want a bloody bed bath. I don't want your hands round me goolies.

Brenda: Don't be silly. You'll feel much better dear. In fact, you'll feel like a new man.

Wally: I don't want to be a new man. I'm happy being me, as I am.

Brenda: (*smiling*) Please yourself. I'll go and get some food. OK?

Wally: (*suddenly pathetic*) Thank you dear. That's kind of you.

Ernest enters as Brenda approaches exit.

Brenda: I'm glad someone's had a shower.

She exits

Ernest: (*to Wally*) Good morning. I'm Ernest.

Wally: Ernest? Why? What for?

Ernest: I beg your pardon? (*suddenly realising*) No! No. My name's Ernest.

He approaches Wally's bed holding out his hand

Wally slowly relaxes and sits up. He offers his hand. Ernest looks at Wally's hands grimaces and changes his mind.

Wally: (*grinning, grabbing his hand and shaking it*) I'm pleased to meet yer, er... Ernie.

Ernest: Ernest.

Wally: Oh alright, Ernest then.

Ernest quickly moves away from Wally, looking at his hand with some concern and looking for something with which to wipe it.

Ernest: I'm just going to the bathroom.

He exits

Wally: My Dad's name was Ernie.

Rashid: Really?

Wally: I didn't see much of him though.

Rashid: Why, was he in the armed forces?

Wally: No, prison. He was a violent man. Aggravated assault and robbery were his trademarks. He spent most of his life locked up. No, I didn't see much of him. I was there when he died though.

Rashid: That was good.

Wally: He died at visiting time. I was sitting behind the grill. He smiled and fell off his chair. Well, he didn't fall off his chair, he stood up and then fell.

Ron enters.

Ron: It's impossible to have a shower. All the cubicles are in use. What's wrong with Ernest?

Rashid: Nothing. Why?

Ron: I passed him in the corridor, and he was looking at his hands in horror. He reminded me of Lady Macbeth, you know (*as dramatically as he can*) out damn spot!

Rashid: I would never have guessed you were a Shakespeare fan.

Ron: I'm not but my wife likes to see a good play. I enjoyed Macbeth, although some bits were difficult to understand and bloody silly.

Rashid: (*smiling*) Bloody would be the right word for it.

Short pause

Wally: Hello son, he said. Hello Dad, I said.

Ron: He's not about to have another go is he?

Rashid motions him to be quiet.

Ron shuffles to his own bed. He watches Wally curiously and listens.

Wally: Where's your mother, he asked. Dunno, I said. What d'yer mean you don't know, he growled. She's run away with your best friend, Barry, I said. What! He yelled. He suddenly stood up, clutched his chest and fell. It was a good way to go though, sudden and not much pain. That's what the doctor said. Not much pain, he said. Fifty-nine he was. No age really, is it? No, I didn't see much of him. I didn't get to know him, properly that is.

Rashid: What a pity.

Wally: He wanted to be cremated. He told his cell mate that. If I die before my release, tell them I want my ashes scattered into the sea at Devonport Naval Base, he told him. Yer see my dad had spent a short time in the Navy when he was young. We had to get special permission though. I carried the urn. I had to scatter him. Mum didn't want to, nor did Barry. Anyway as I scattered his ashes, a gust of wind came off the sea. We all ducked. Typical of him to be awkward, my Mum said. In the end I had to sweep him off the wharf with a stiff broom. Yer, Ernie Gorman, died 20 April 1957, aged fifty-nine. Wasn't old was it?

Rashid: No age at all.

Ron: *(with a hint of sarcasm)* Very interesting I must say.

Wally waves aside his remark with a scowl.

Brenda enters with a plate of food. She approaches Wally.

Brenda: There you are dear, a freshly made sandwich.

Wally: I don't want a sandwich. That's not breakfast food! Rice Krispies, toast and a boiled egg is what I like.

Brenda: Don't be awkward Mr. Gorman. Breakfast finished an hour or so ago.

Wally: Then you should have woken me up, shouldn't you?

Brenda: I'm not going to argue with you. I'll leave this here. *(She places it on the bedside cabinet)* It's food and you're hungry. And I really do feel you should have a shower. Your body odour is becoming stronger by the minute.

She approaches exit.

Wally: Bloody cheek! *(sniffing under arms and calling after her)* There's nothing wrong with my odour.

She exits

Wally: *(calling)* I want a proper breakfast!

Ron *(climbing into bed)* Alright there's no need to shout at the poor girl.

Wally: Shut yer mouth and mind yer own business!

Wally folds his arms like a spoilt child. Rashid picks up a magazine and reads.

Ernest enters.

Ernest: What was all that about?

Wally: Piss off!

The remark stops Ernest in his tracks as the lights go down

Scene 5: Ward 9 Room H - An hour later

The bed curtains are closed around all the beds and they suddenly open one after the other as each doctor leaves. Doctor 1 crosses from Ozzie's bed to the exit.

Doctor 1: Thank you, Mr. Moore. I'll be back on Wednesday. Be good and do as you're told.

Doctor 1 acknowledges Sandy

Doctor 1: *(smiling broadly)* Keep away from those horses for a while, my dear. Good morning.

Sandy: I could ride side saddle.

Doctor 1 laughs and exits in a flourish.

Doctor 2 and two assistants cross from Muriel's bed. The Doctor exits quickly, followed by the assistants at a trot.

Doctor Mason and Joan are at Liz's bedside.

Liz: *(calling after him)* I'm not imagining it Doctor Mason.

Doctor Mason smiles and pats her shoulder.

Joan: *(kindly)* No one's suggesting you are.

Doctor Mason: Just relax, take your medication and you'll be fine.

Liz: It doesn't seem to be working.

Doctor Mason: Think positively my dear and things will improve. Good Morning.

He crosses to exit with Joan in animated discussion and they both exit.

Muriel: So that's the end of today's entertainment. The other day I had six of them. They all stood round smiling their false smiles, hoping that suddenly I might have another stroke, I think. I should have got up and danced for them.

Sandy: If you'd have done that you'd be in the psychiatric ward now.

Muriel: Might be more bloody exciting than this place.

Sandy: Better class of people, though.

Muriel: *(to Ozzie)* Orson Moore, eh? Sounds good, very distinguished. Better than Orson Cart eh? *(she laughs)*

Sandy: Orson Moor. Sounds like a location for a horror movie. Orson Moor. *(Sinisterly hobbling across the ward)* He stumbled across the moor through gorse and tussock. The mist thickened and caught his throat. In the distance he could hear the hounds and imagined their flashing crimson eyes and gnashing jaws as they salivated.

Muriel: Sally what?

Sandy: Salivated, gobs of saliva dropping from their open mouths. Suddenly a cat-like figure sprung at him and...

Muriel: And bit off his...

Liz: *(interjecting)* Don't you dare! You never give up do you?

Sandy: It seems to me that as you get older, the muckier you get.

Muriel: Muckier? When you get to my age dear, you just don't care. Sandy, I was impressed with your bit of acting dear.

Sandy: I used to do amateur dramatics before I was married.

Muriel: You should get back into it.

Sandy: I have the horse now, not much time for any other hobbies.

Muriel: That's a pity; I could just see you as Richard the Third. 'A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a soddin' horse!'

Liz: Don't you mean a sodden horse?

Muriel: Why was it raining on the day of the battle?

Ozzie: Bosworth Field.

Muriel: Sorry?

Ozzie: That was the name of the battle.

Liz: Yes, indeed.

Sandy: You couldn't imagine me as Richard the Third though, not with these boobs.

Sandy pushes them up

Muriel: I don't know; you could say he's hump slipped from his back to his front couldn't you?

Sandy, Ozzie and Muriel laugh

Short Pause

Sandy: Ozzie, any news about your discharge, dear?

Ozzie: I shall be here for about a week. There's a complication with the ankle. Oh yes, and I am being moved into a men's ward, tomorrow morning.

Muriel: Oh, what a shame. I've enjoyed your company, my dear.

Sandy: Yes, we shall miss you. How long have you got, Muriel?

Muriel: What? A few years yet, I hope!

Sandy: No dear. When are you going home?

Muriel: No idea. Tomorrow or the next day I hope. My man, the doctor, talked so fast, I couldn't keep up with him. I couldn't understand him and I was put off by his assistants. One had such a fixed smile I wanted to turn a key in her back to make her more, you know, animated. The other was making notes, but looked as though she was preparing a shopping list, while the boss rattled on. How about you?

Sandy: I should be out of here by the end of the week.

Liz: You've a few days yet. It's only Tuesday.

Sandy: Tuesday? Doesn't time fly when you're having fun? That bloody mad physio will be back again tomorrow. She'll have me running around the ward and doing handstands I shouldn't wonder! I showed her my bruises last time, but she didn't seem impressed, dozy cow.

Muriel: *(to Ozzie)* Has she shown you her bruises?

Ozzie: No, I haven't had that pleasure.

Sandy: You are very welcome to look. One bum is the same as another.

Ozzie: I'll take your word for it.

Sandy: (*faking shock*) I've been jilted!

Muriel: I don't blame him.

Sandy: Thank you, both of you. In that case I'll show you.

Muriel: You can't do that!

Ozzie: Please, you don't have to.

Sandy: I feel suddenly very wicked!

Liz: Sandy, have some decorum!

Andy: Just a peek?

Ozzie: No honestly.

Ozzie attempts to shift up his bed in embarrassment

Sandy stands, turns her back to Ozzie and lifts her gown, exposing her bottom. She then adjusts her gown, turns to him and pulls an innocent demure face.

Muriel laughs

Muriel: You brazen hussy! Fancy doing that!

Liz: What a thing to do!

Sandy: It was only a bit of fun, Liz.

Liz: If that's your idea of fun, well!

Sandy: Might've turned him on.

Ozzie: (*smiling*) No sorry, it looked like the surface of the Lonely Planet.

Sandy: Cheeky sod! (*mocking annoyance*) So far as you're concerned son, it's the Forbidden Planet.

Muriel and Ozzie laugh

Muriel: I reckon you've put him off his dinner.

Sandy: What is it tonight?

Ozzie: Rump steak I shouldn't wonder.

Sandy and Muriel: Whoo!

Sandy: Isn't he the funny one.

Muriel: You'll find him at the end of your bed tonight, sali, whatever it's called.

Sandy: Salivating? I'll look forward to that.

Ozzie: You should be so lucky.

Sandy and Muriel: Whoo!

They all laugh except Liz.

Short pause

Liz: They can't find anything wrong with me. I might go private.

Sandy: You haven't had a spasm lately, have you?

Liz: In the night I did.

Ozzie: Yes. I heard her moaning.

Muriel: That's nothing new.

Liz: *(indignantly)* Thank you very much Muriel.

Muriel: I reckon it's stress.

Liz: That's what the doctor said.

Muriel: There you are then, you should take those pills.

Liz: I prefer homeopathic treatment.

Sandy: Well, you're wasting your time. You won't get it in here, will you?

Muriel: Your homo, whatever it's called, hasn't worked in the past has it? You might as well take the pills.

Sandy: You work too hard Liz. *(Giving Muriel a knowing look)* Even your Jim says so.

Muriel: Twelve hour days, he says. He never sees you until it's time to go to bed.

Liz: Is that what he told you?

Sandy: Yes. He's worried about you Liz, very worried. That's why he's here nearly every night.

Liz: So he should, he's my husband.

Sandy: He's in at five and leaves at eight. Three hours. It's not as if you are on the way out, is it?

Liz: What do you mean?

Muriel: Well you're not at death's door are you?

Liz: We like each other's company, he misses me.

Muriel: Then you're very lucky dear.

Liz: He doesn't visit me on Wednesdays and lately he hasn't been in on Fridays. He's a busy schedule you know.

Muriel: He sees you more now you're in here than when you were working.

Sandy: That's what he said.

Liz: (*becoming flustered*) I can't believe it. I'm surprised Jim would divulge personal information behind my back! We normally keep those sorts of things to ourselves.

Muriel: Hardly highly confidential is it dear? He told us he was worried about you, nothing else.

Liz: (*to Muriel*) He discussed me with you as well?

Muriel: (*throwing a knowing smile at Sandy*) Oh yes. Told me everything he did.

Liz: What else did he say?

Muriel: (*falsely serious*) I wouldn't like to say.

Liz: What then?

Muriel: What?

Liz: Don't play games with me Muriel.

Muriel: Alright then.

Muriel reaches for a glass of water and drinks.

Liz: Well?

Muriel: Well what?

Liz: For God sake what did he say!

Muriel: Nothing!

Sandy: All he said was that he was worried about you, that's all.

Liz: Then why, Muriel, did you say he told you everything?

Muriel: I was having you on dear. A bit of fun that's all.

Liz: (*with rising anger*) Having me on? How cruel. What's the matter with the pair of you? Poking fun at my expense and at his expense!

Sandy: Steady on Liz.

Ozzie: It's all harmless stuff Liz, just passing the time away.

Muriel: You should take the pills love. You're obviously under stress.

Liz: I'm not.

Muriel: They'll do you good.

Liz: (*angrily*) I have never been under stress. I take everything in my stride. My condition occurred after my own doctor prescribed some drugs which greatly upset me.

Muriel: Surely the one you're on now should help.

Liz: (*sighing*) Not really.

Short pause

Ozzie: It could be psychosomatic.

Liz: (*irritably*) Who asked for your opinion?

Ozzie: (*innocently*) I was just trying to help.

Liz: Well, you're not!

Short pause

Muriel: (*knowingly to Sandy*) I'm right. It's stress.

Liz: (*beside herself*) I am not stressed!

Muriel: (*calmly*) Hark at you.

Liz: I am not under stress! Look, I have had enough of this conversation.

She quickly reaches for her pills and swallows them with water. Muriel and Sandy look at each other and pull faces.

Muriel: That's right, take your pills dear.

Liz glares at her, sinks into her bedclothes and turns her back on her.

Sandy: You'll feel better for taking them.

Liz suddenly sits up holding her shoulder and grimacing

Ozzie: (*concerned*) Are you alright Liz, shall I call the nurse?

Liz: It's a spasm! Thanks to you lot!

She rises from bed and approaches exit quickly

Liz: I'm going to be sick!

She exits

Muriel and Sandy look at each other.

Muriel: It's stress alright!

Ozzie: (*concerned*) Do you think she's OK?

Muriel: She'll be fine my dear, don't worry.

Enter Jim, who seems perturbed. He is tall, slim, slightly nervous and in his mid-forties. He carries a bunch of flowers.

Jim: What's up with Liz? She almost bowled me over, didn't seem to recognise me.

Muriel: Hi Jim. She's had one of her spasms dear; she'll be back in a minute.

Jim: I wish they'd get to the bottom of it. I often wonder whether it is er...

Ozzie: Psychosomatic?

Muriel: He's grown fond of that word; haven't you love?

Jim: *(to Ozzie, slightly bewildered)* Should you be in this ward?

Ozzie: It's a long story.

Sandy: Sex change patient.

Jim: Huh, whatever next. Mind you it doesn't surprise me.

Ozzie: Wait a minute, was that a general remark or was it based on your observation of me.

Jim: Pardon?

Sandy and Muriel laugh. Ozzie smiles and shakes his head.

Ozzie: There's no room in the men's wards. They've got them lying on top of each other. It's that bad. Tiered medical care they call it.

Muriel: Don't you get any ideas in here young man.

Liz enters and stops as she confronts Jim.

Liz: What are you doing here at this time of the day?

Ozzie picks up a magazine and reads. Sandy and Muriel watch them intently and when Liz notices their interest they turn away, pick up and hide behind magazines.

Liz: *(returning to Jim)* What's wrong?

Jim: Nothing dear. I've a meeting tonight so I thought I'd take some time off and pop in and see you.

Liz: So you won't be coming tonight or tomorrow night?

Jim: Er, well I don't normally come on a Wednesday, you know that.

Liz: OK then. *(she climbs into bed)* Jim, I want to go home.

Jim: Of course you do, dear. What do the doctors say?

Liz: Nothing. That's the trouble; I think they have given up on me.

Jim: Well, it is a difficult situation. They have tried *(handing her the flowers)* Here, your favourites.

Liz: *(sharply, which sparks the others interests)* What do you mean by that, they've tried?

Jim: Sorry? (*sudden realisation*) Oh! Well, perhaps they can't establish the cause or how to treat you as much as they would like.

Liz: I am not imagining it, you know that don't you?

Jim: Of course I do. Look I'm sure that they'll find a solution soon.

Liz: Solution? You make it sound like some board game.

During this conversation Sandy and Muriel have become an interested audience again.

Jim: You know what I mean.

Liz: No, I don't know what you mean, we never discuss it, properly that is.

Jim: You don't give me much of a chance, do you?

Liz: What? (*gesturing at the others*) You are as bad as that lot! Nobody believes me and (*gesturing at Ozzie*) and he thinks it's.....

Ozzie: (*Interjecting without looking up*) Psychosomatic.

Liz: (*sharply and throwing the flowers onto the bedside cabinet*) And you've been talking to them behind my back!

Jim: What?

Liz: Pull the curtains round!

Jim immediately pulls the curtain round the bed after raising his eyebrows and shaking his head for the benefit of the others.

The others look at each other

Sandy, Muriel and Ozzie in unison: Stress!

Lights down

Scene 6: Ward 7 Room F, the same time.

The same ritual occurs as earlier in the women's ward. The curtains around Ron's and Ernest's beds are closed. Rashid is sitting up reading a magazine. Wally's bed is empty.

The curtains open, one after the other

Doctor 3 leaves Ron's bed quickly and crosses to exit

Doctor 3: *(on the move)* Stay calm, Mr. Phillips and you must also be patient.

Doctor 3 exits

Ron: *(calling after him)* Be patient? I am a bloody patient!

Doctor 4 leaves Ernest's bed and crosses to exit

Doctor 4: I shall see you on Friday.

Ernest: With some good news I hope.

Doctor 4: *(on the move)* I certainly hope so Mr. Watts. That's really up to you.

Her exits

Ernest: Up to me? I've had two growths cut out of my abdomen and he thinks I abuse my body. Thank god they were not malignant. I eat healthily, what more does he want?

Ron: Then they must be waiting for a bad one.

Ernest: What!

Rashid: *(admonishingly)* What a thing to say, Ron, really! That was tactless.

Ron: It's true. They don't care about you or me, they're too busy covering their own backs. They don't know what to do so they keep us in here in the hope that we recover or just get worse and peg out.

Ernest: *(annoyed)* That is absolute balderdash!

Rashid: Quite!

Ron: Please yourselves. My one can't wait to leave me. He's always in a bloody hurry, terrible bedside manner he has.

Pause

Ernest: I heard you're leaving us soon, Rashid.

Rashid: I hope so. They've discovered I might've been allergic to a particular drug, but more tests might have to be carried out.

Ron: Typical! If the symptoms don't kill you the drugs will.

Ernest: Sometimes Ron, you really offer a great deal of cheer.

Rashid: There are some remedies worse than the disease.

He chuckles

Ron: What the bloody hell does that mean?

Rashid: It's an old philosophical quote. Apt, don't you think?

Ernest: Publilius Syrus

Ron: Which pub?

He chuckles

Ernest: He was a Latin writer.

Rashid: Originally from Assyria, now Northern Iraq.

Ron: I dunno. I feel sorry for your wives; it must be like going to bed with a couple of encyclopaedias

Rashid chuckles

Short pause

Ron: Where's the messenger from hell?

Ernest: Who?

Ron: Our Wally.

Rashid: He's having an x-ray. On his hip, I believe.

Ron: I thought for a minute he'd been discharged. I was about to cheer and demand a drink, a real drink.

Rashid: He seems to have acquired a walking stick, he's quite taken with it.

Ron: It's a pity he hasn't acquired some soap. Have you seen his finger nails? Like talons and my God, they're grimy.

Rashid: Thank you Ron. I'm glad you didn't save it for dinner time to mention it.

At that moment a male orderly enters with Wally in a wheelchair. Wally is covered in a blanket.

Wally: I nearly caught my death of cold waiting for that radio-whatsit. She kept me waiting ages, silly tart.

Male Orderly: There we are Mr. Gorman.

He parks the chair at the side of the bed and approaches the exit.

Wally: Aren't you going to help me get into bed?

Male Orderly: I'll get the nurse to do that, if you don't mind.

Orderly exits

Wally discards the blanket and reveals a walking stick and a small parcel.

Ernest: Where did you find those Wally?

Wally: I didn't find 'em, they were given to me.

Rashid: Is it your birthday?

Wally: No. Ages since I received a birthday present. My friend Tommy gave them to me, well, sort of.

Ernest: You won't have much use for the stick in here.

Wally: I dunno, (*glaring at Ron*) I could ward off some evil spirits.

Ron shakes his head and reads a paper.

Rashid: That was very generous of your friend.

Wally: Well, he hasn't got much use for it now.

Rashid: Is he bed ridden, then?

Wally: No, he's dead.

Ron sniggers.

Ron: (*from behind the newspaper*) It's the way he comes out with them, isn't it?

Wally: Mad sod you are! No. It seems he wanted me to have these. I've got a note 'ere from his lawyer. It was delivered to the hospital this morning. My son suggested it. It might cheer me up, he said.

Rashid: And the parcel?

Wally shakes it.

Wally: Dunno. *(he opens it and reveals a hip flask, which he shakes)* It's a hippame thing. It's full! *(unscrewing top and sniffing)* Rum! Smells like a good 'un too.

Ron: *(putting down newspaper)* Bloody hell!

Wally: The best medicine this is. Good for yer.

Ron: *(teasingly)* You should know, you being a former naval officer.

Wally scowls at him

Ernest: You can't drink that in here.

Wally: Can't I? You just watch me. *(He takes a swig at which moment Brenda enters)*

Brenda: Come on let's get you into bed Mr. Gorman.

Wally quickly swallows and coughs and splutters.

Brenda: Are you alright Mr. Gorman? *(she observes the flask which she snatches from him and sniffs)* What's this? Alcohol! Where did you get it from? You know you're not allowed to drink. What a stupid man you are.

Wally: Stupid? I'm not bloody stupid. It was a gift. 'Ere, give it back!

Brenda: Certainly not! I'm glad I arrived when I did. You would've passed it round and you'd all be sick.

Ron: We're all sick, sick of this place.

Ernest: I can assure you I would not have accepted the offer, nurse.

Brenda: *(to Wally)* You can have this back when you're discharged.

Wally: *(outraged)* What? You can't do that!

Brenda: You're not allowed alcohol Mr. Gorman, certainly not in here.

Wally: I'm in here because of my hip, not because of alcohol.

Ron: You mean he's an alcoholic as well as mad?

Wally: I ain't an alky! And I'm not mad! I had a few drinks and fell over and damaged my hip!

Brenda shakes her head

Brenda: (*helping him into bed*) Come on, have some water. That'll get rid of the taste.

Wally: I don't want any water; I like the taste. (*groans as he is manoeuvred into bed*) Watch my hip!

Brenda: Alright. I'm nowhere near it.

Wally: Then why am I in bloody agony?

He groans louder.

Brenda: There we are.

Wally lies on his back.

Wally: Supposed to be a bleedin' 'ospital? More like a bloody abattoir.

Brenda: Well gentlemen, the excitement's over.

Ernest: Well done Brenda.

Brenda smiles broadly and exits with the wheelchair.

Ron: I bet the nurses lace their tea with that rum.

Wally: They'd better not! (*He groans*) Oh, my hip! That rum would have eased the pain, thieving cow.

Pause

Ernest: (*looking at watch*) Only four hours to opening time.

Ron: Opening time? (*not impressed*) Oh yer, visitors.

Ernest: I feel sorry for them. I'm reminded of the times I used to visit my mother in hospital. I couldn't wait to get away.

Rashid: That's very sad.

Ernest: I didn't mean it like that. It was lovely to see her of course, but the conversation was not exactly stimulating, poor soul. She would lie there with her eyes fixed on the ceiling. She wouldn't say a word.

Ron: When I last visited my old dad in hospital I'd been talking to him for half an hour before I realised he'd gone, snuffed it.

Rashid: That's also very sad.

Ron: I dunno, he never listened to me when he was alive.

Wally: I've left my stick on the floor. Could someone get it for me?

Rashid gets up and hands it to him.

Wally: Thank you. You're very kind. My son should be coming in soon.

Pause

I wonder how my Sammy is.

Rashid: Who's Sammy?

Wally: My dog. A Fox Terrier cross, he's a lovely dog, a good friend. Eight years old he is. My son's looking after him for me.

Rashid: That's good. I have a dog, a Poodle.

Wally: That's not a bloody dog.

Rashid: It's very intelligent. My wife adores it.

Wally: Yeah, of course, a woman's dog.

Ron: Course it would be intelligent. He feeds it on encyclopaedias.

Rashid laughs

Wally: Who asked for your input?

Ron: A Fox Terrier is not exactly macho, is it?

Wally: My Sammy's a great watch dog! You wouldn't want to mess about with him. He's got teeth like razors.

Ron: *(picking up a paper cup and crossing L to dispose of it)* You wouldn't know what a razor looked like.

Wally: What's that supposed to mean?

Ernest: Please Ron, don't tease him.

Ron: *(lowered voice)* Filthy old sod.

He returns to his bed.

Pause

Ernest: I have a cat.

Ron: Oh yer?

Wally: Can't stand the smell of 'em, nothing worse than cat's pee. Cats spray everywhere. They're bloody messy things, the times I dig my vege garden and find cat shit in it.

Ron: *(smiling broadly)* Don't you mean cat mint in it?

Wally: *(tetchily)* What're you on about?

Ron chuckles and shakes his head. Ernest utters a chuckle.

Rashid: *(to Ernest)* What is it?

Ernest: Pardon?

Rashid: Your cat.

Ernest: Oh, a Persian.

Rashid: Really? I like Persians. If I didn't have a dog I'd have a Persian cat.

Wally: Flea bags, that's what they are.

Ernest: It's a beautiful animal and such good company for my wife.

Wally: Nah, I'd be scratching all the time, all that combing and de-lousing, coughing up fur balls.

Ron scoffs

Ron: You or the cat?

Wally throws him a scornful look.

Ernest: It's a very clean cat.

Wally: Give me a dog any day.

Ron: Me too, a hot one with plenty of mustard.

Rashid and Ernest chuckle

Wally: A right bloody comedian, aren't yer?

Ron: What I'd give for a hot dog, eh. I can smell it now.

Ernest: Please don't torment us, not that a hot dog really appeals to me.

Ron: Yes, a hot dog washed down with a beer (glancing at Wally) or a rum of course!

Wally: (*scornfully*) Hah!

Brenda and Male Orderly enter with a wheelchair.

Wally: That ain't for me is it?

Brenda: Not this time. (to Rashid) Mr. Bishara, we're moving you. Mr. Gorman, I have your pills.

Wally: Pills? What for?

Brenda: Painkillers, orders from the doctor, for your hip. I'll make sure you have two with water three times a day.

She hands him the pills and pours water into a glass from his jug on the bedside table.

Come on take them.

Wally swallows the pills reluctantly and drinks. Brenda takes the glass from him and places it on the bedside cabinet.

And don't you dare drink anything other than water.

Wally: Not even a cup of tea?

Brenda: That's OK (*firmly*) but nothing else.

Wally: Last time I took your pills I had the runs.

Brenda: They won't disturb your bowels. They'll make you sleep like a baby.

Ron: Forever I hope.

Wally throws a scornful look at Ron

Rashid: Am I being discharged?

Brenda: You are off to a day ward. You should be leaving tomorrow morning, if all goes well.

Rashid: Why the urgency?

Brenda: We need the bed. Another patient is on his way.

Ron: I hope he's sane. Mind you he soon won't be after a day in here.

Brenda: *(to Rashid)* Get your things together. Empty your cupboard and bring your bag of clothes.

Rashid starts collecting his belongings

Ron: Pick up your bed and bloody walk, man.

Brenda: We rather you didn't walk. Please sit in the wheelchair.

He does so holding his possessions in front of him.

Ernest: This is quite a sad occasion Rashid.

Rashid: Sad?

Ron: I'd give my right leg to leave this dump.

Ernest: I've really enjoyed your company.

Rashid: I must say I am overjoyed.

Brenda: Hurry along now.

Ron: Don't you dare say you'll come and visit. You know you won't.

Rashid: No, I don't think so. Perhaps we'll meet again under different circumstances.

Ernest gets out of bed and shakes his hand.

Ernest: Good luck.

Ron: All the best mate.

Rashid: Goodbye Wally.

Wally: What? You going are yer? You made a quick recovery.

Rashid: I hope your hip gets better soon.

Wally: Thanks. I 'll be alright. I don't think I'll be out of 'ere soon, though.

Ron: That's made my day.

Wally: *(to Ron)* What's that?

The Male Orderly pushes the wheel chaired Rashid out of the ward amidst farewells from Ernest and Ron.

Brenda exits

Ernest *(sitting on bed)*: What a gentle man.

Ron: Makes you think. If anything major happened to us in here, we'd be wheeled out of this life clutching a brown paper bag and our teeth in a glass of water.

Wally: Morbid sod.

Pause.

Ron reads, Ernest pours himself a glass of water and Wally snuggles under sheets. A loud fart is heard.

Ron: *(gesturing towards Wally)* I hope it wasn't those bloody pills.

Ernest: Indeed. He'll be up all night.

Wally suddenly sits up bolt upright.

Wally: Where's me stick!

Ron: What are you on about?

Wally: She's had me rum and now she's taken me walking stick! *(calling)* Nurse! Nurse! Where's me bloody stick!

Ron groans as the Lights fade slowly

Scene 7: Ward 7 Room F – after midnight, a few hours later

There is a general symphony of light snoring. The room is in darkness, but there is some light from the moon. Ozzie is wheeled in to the room by Brenda and the orderly.

Brenda: We'll come back soon to make up your bed.

She exits

There is a stirring from one of the beds and then the symphony continues.

Wally stirs in his bed and gets up. He carries his walking stick. He mutters inaudibly and then we hear him softly calling.

Wally: Sammy? Is that you? Where are you? Sammy? Come 'ere mate, it's your dad.

He stumbles between the beds. Ernest turns in his sleep.

Wally: Come on we're going for walkies. Come on then, you like a walk, don't yer. We'll go to the park, shall we? Just the two of us, I'll throw a stick for you eh? Come on then.

He is at the end of Ron's bed and seems to be staring straight at him.

Wally: I've got me new walking stick. *(he looks down at the imaginary dog)* I'll just put your collar on. *(he mimes the act of stroking and fussing with the dog)*. When we get back I'll give you one of your favourite treats, an arrowroot biscuit. Look at yer tail wagging. Yes, I know you like 'em. Come on then, let me put yer collar on. 'Ere come back!

He approaches the side of Ron's bed and looks under it. Ron has his back to him.

Wally: Sammy, come out from under there. What yer doin'?

He beckons him by making a clucking sound.

As Ron stirs and rolls over Wally rises and they are face to face with one another.

Ron awakes and sits up. Wally recoils, raising his stick.

Ron: Oi, what the bloody hell do you think you're doing, you maniac?

Wally: Get away from me! What 'ave you done with my Sammy?

Ron: I'll do something to you if you come any closer.

Wally: *(raising stick and backing away)* Don't you come near me! I'll whack yer with this!

Ron: You're bloody crazy!

Ernest and Ozzie awake. Ernie sits up.

Ernest: What's going on?

Ozzie murmurs inaudibly

Wally: *(gingerly approaching Ron with raised stick)* Where's my Sammy? What have you done with him?

Ron: What are you on about? Get back into bed, filthy old goat!

Ernest: Wally, you're in the middle of a bad dream my friend. Sammy is at home, probably in dreamland, where we should be. Now put the stick down, get back into bed and go to sleep, there's a good man.

Wally: He's got my Sammy! I know he has.

Ron: How can I have your bloody flea bitten dog! Go back to bed!

Wally suddenly charges at him with the stick, yelling. Ron quickly leaves his bed and falls heavily on the floor. Wally approaches him and Ron scrambles across the floor towards Ozzie's bed. Wally raises the stick and Ron dodges a blow which comes down heavily on Ozzie's lap, who yells and sits up clutching himself. Wally recoils and returns to his bed yelling hysterically.

Wally: Sammy! What have they done with you? The bastards!

Ron slowly gets up and suddenly clutches his chest.

Ron: *(fighting for breath)* I can't breathe!

He holds onto Ozzie's bed frame.

There is pandemonium. Ernest hurries awkwardly to Ron's aid. Brenda and the Male Orderly hurry into the room.

Brenda: What's going on in here?

Ernest: Quick, Ron's in pain!

Brenda *(to Ernest)* Get back into bed dear.

He does so reluctantly and Brenda goes to Ron's aid. Wally continues yelling uncontrollably as the Orderly forces him down onto his bed.

Wally: Let go of me! They've got my Sammy!

Lights down quickly

End of Act One