

BILLY. What's f-f-funny?

CHESWICK. That mousey little nurse. Reminds me of the first time I ever saw a girl take off her clothes. I was eight, see, and I was sitting up in a tree looking through her bedroom window, and by the time she got down to her li'l panties, I got to shakin' till I fell outa the friggin' tree!

(BILLY stands up and goes to the Log Book.)

HARDING. *(Without turning his head.)* That's it, Billy, write it down.

BILLY. Well, we're sub-supposed to.

CHESWICK. Sure, get a gold star by your name.

BILLY. You write down everything *I* say.

CHESWICK. Yeah, and I'm going to write down some things you *did!*

HARDING. Shut up, you two.

RUCKLY. *(Roused.)* F-f-fuck 'em all!

HARDING. Oh, for heaven's sake, this place is a *madhouse*. *(Rising.)* Fellow psychopaths. As President of the Patients' Council I, Dale Harding, do hereby decree ten seconds of blessed — therapeutic — silence. *(Clasps his hands and bows his head. The silence is almost immediately shattered by a ringing, brassy, voice as the ward door is opened.)*

Begin McMURPHY. *(Off.)* Buddy, you are *so* wrong, I *don't* have to do this, and I *don't* have to do that, and *get* the hell away from me or I will take and ... *(Has backed into view in a fighting crouch, pursued by WILLIAMS who looks hot and angry and frustrated. Now he becomes aware of the room and the PATIENTS staring at him.)* Good mornin', buddies! Mighty nice fall day! *(Let's have a look at McMURPHY. Shaggy, with long sideburns. A devilish grin and a face battered and scarred across nose and cheekbone. He wears a black motorcyclists' cap, an ancient brown leather jacket and jeans faded almost to whiteness. On his feet lumberman's boots with a ring of steel in the heels. A wide-open extroverted air which registers almost shockingly in this environment. Now he hooks his thumbs in his belt and starts to laugh. It rolls big and free, and its vibrations jolt*

the PATIENTS openmouthed.) Damn, what a sorry-lookin' bunch!

WILLIAMS. Now, see here, mister —

CONTINUE McMURPHY. *Get away from me, boy, give me a minute to look my new home over, will ya? What the hell, I never been in a Institute of Psychology before! (As WILLIAMS goes into the Nurses' Station; advancing on the group.) My name is McMurphy, buddies, R. P. McMurphy, and I am a gamblin' fool. (Squinting at the hands.) What's this you're playin'? Pinochle? Jesus, ain'tcha got a straight deck around here? Well, say, here we go, I brought along my own just in case. (Distributing samples.) Every card a picture — and check those pictures, huh? (The MEN go bug-eyed at what hey see on the cards.) Fifty-two positions, boys, every one different. Easy now, don't smudge 'em, we got lotsa time, lotsa games. (WILLIAMS is expostulating unheard with NURSE FLINN who picks up the telephone but will get no help. McMurphy takes back his cards.) Y'see, buddies, what happened was I got in a couple hassles down at the Work Farm and the Court ruled that I'm a psychopath. And do you think I'm gonna argue with the Court? (Winks broadly.) Shoo, you can bet your bottom dollar I don't. If it gets me outa those damn pea fields I'll be whatever their little heart desires, be it psychopath or mad dog or werewolf, because I don't care if I never see another weedin' hoe to my dying' day — (WILLIAMS had come up behind him to renew the assault. McMURPHY seizes a chair and fends him off, lion-tamer fashion.) — and will you get the fuck away from me?*

WILLIAMS. Mister, we got rules. I gotta take your temperature, and I gotta get you showered.

McMURPHY. All you gotta do is let me get acquainted with my new buddies here, and if you do *one* thing more —!

WILLIAMS. *(Grimly.)* All right, fella, you askin' for it, you gonna get it. *(Turns and marches out of the ward.)*

McMURPHY. *(Laughs his wall-shaking laugh.)* That's a whole deal better, now we can get somethin' settled. Okay, which of you's the bull goose loony? *(The MEN gape at him.)* I'm askin', who is the bull goose loony?

BILLY. Well, it's not m-me, mister. I'm not the buh-buh-bull goose loony, although you could say I'm next in luh-line for the job.

McMURPHY. *(Sticking out his paw, which BILLY avoids.)* Well,

END

NURSE RATCHED. I understand you refused to take your admission shower?

McMURPHY. Well, as to that, ma'am, they showered me at the courthouse and last night at the jail, and I swear they'd of washed my ears for me on the way over if they coulda found the facilities. *(Explodes into laughter — alone.)*

NURSE RATCHED. That's quite amusing, Mr. McMurphy. But you must realize that our policies are engineered for *your cure*. Which means cooperation.

McMURPHY. Ma'am, I'll cooperate from hell to Thursday, but you wouldn't want me to be unpolite? I mean, had to get acquainted with my new buddies?

NURSE RATCHED. *(Ever-smiling.)* Please understand, I *do* appreciate the way you've taken it upon yourself to ... orient with other patients? But everything in its own time. You *must* follow the *rules*.

McMURPHY. *(Face close to NURSE RATCHED'S, smiling brightly.)* Ya know, ma'am — that is the *exact* thing somebody *always* tells me about the rules — just when I'm thinkin' a breakin' every one of 'em.

(LIGHTS DOWN FAST, but for a shaft on CHIEF BROMDEN. The stage does not go completely dark, but is covered by moving projections ... bizarre, intertwining patterns through which PEOPLE move, slowly, as in a dream, to the positions they'll occupy when the CHIEF has finished speaking. NURSE RATCHED and WILLIAMS go into the Station while WARREN exits. SCANLON pulls up a stool to the card table, and McMURPHY sits on the back of a chair.)

BEGIN CHIEF BROMDEN. New admission, Papa, now they gotta fix him with controls.

They got wires runnin' to each man and units planted in our heads.
There's magnets in the floor so we can't walk no way but what they want.
We got stone brains, cast-iron guts, and copper where they took away our nerves.

We got cog-wheels in our bellies and a welded grin,
And every time they thow a switch it turn us on or off.

They got a network clear across the land — factories, like this,
For fixin' up mistakes they made outside.

The Combine, Papa. Big, big, big. (*Listens a moment.*)

Oh, yes, there is *too* such a thing! They got me way back ago, the
way they got to you!

END

(*LIGHTS TO FULL on the Day Room. Music up simultaneously; it's miserable stuff, coming from the wall speakers. In the Station NURSE RATCHED has replaced NURSE FLINN and is penciling notes in files. At the card table McMURPHY is dealing Blackjack to HARDING, CHESWICK, BILLY, SCANLON and MARTINI. His cap is tilted forward until he has to lean back to see the cards. He holds a cigarette in his teeth and talks around it. His lingo sings like a pitchman's chant.*)

McMURPHY. Hey-ya, hey-ya, come on, suckers, you hit or you sit. Hit you say? Well, well, well, and with a king up the boy wants a hit, whaddaya know. So comin' at you, *too* bad, a little lady for the lad and he's over the wall and down the road, up the hill and dropped his load. Comin' at you, Mr. Scanlon, *and I wish some asshole in that nurses' hothouse would turn down that mother-lovin' music!* (*Rises, going toward the Station.*) Hooeee, I never heard such a drivin' racket in my life. (*Raps on the window.*)

NURSE RATCHED. (*Sliding back.*) Yes?

McMURPHY. Would you mind switchin' off that god-damn noise?

NURSE RATCHED. Yes, Mr. Murphy.

McMURPHY. Yes what?

NURSE RATCHED. Yes, I would mind. Music is considered therapeutic.

McMURPHY. What in the hell is therapeutic about Lawrence Welk?

NURSE RATCHED. Please don't lean on the glass, it makes finger marks.

McMURPHY. (*Turning away.*) Horse muh-noo-ur.

NURSE RATCHED. Oh, Mr. McMurphy, I should mention, we have a rule against gambling.

McMURPHY. We're just playin' for cigarettes.

HARDING. I'm disappointed in you, my friend. I had judged you were more intelligent. But it's evident I made a mistake.

McMURPHY. The hell with you, buddy.

BEGIN

HARDING. Oh, yes, I also noticed your primitive brutality. Psychopath with definite sadistic tendencies, probably motivated by unreasoning egomania. And *those* talents certainly qualify you as a therapist, my friend. Oh, yes, they render you quite capable of criticizing Miss Ratched, although she's a highly regarded psychiatric nurse with twenty years' experience in the field. But you, no doubt, with your talent could work subconscious miracles, soothe the aching id and heal the wounded superego. *You* could probably cure the whole ward, Vegetables and all, in six months, ladies and gentlemen, or your money back!

McMURPHY. (*Regards him levelly.*) Are you tellin' me that this crap that went on today is doing some kinda good?

HARDING. Why else would we subject ourselves to it? Miss Ratched may be a very strict lady, but she is not some kind of monster chicken, pecking our eyes out.

McMURPHY. No, buddy. She ain't pecking at your eyes. She is aimin' right square at the family jewels!

HARDING. Miss Ratched! Why, she's like a mother, a tender mother —

McMURPHY. Don't give me that tender-mother crap. She's a ball-cutter from way back.

CONTINUE HARDING. (*His talk speeds up, his hands dance and flutter, a wild puppet doing a high-strung dance.*) Why, see here, my friend, my psychopathic sidekick, Miss Ratched is a veritable angel of mercy and — why, everybody knows it. She's unselfish as the wind, toiling thanklessly for the good of all, day after day, seven days a week. Why she has no life, no husband, nothing but her work, and everybody *knows* it. Do you think she *enjoys* being stern with us, asking those questions, probing our subconscious till it hurts? Oh, no, my egomaniac buddy, she is *dedicated*, she gives every bit of herself, she de-

sires nothing more on earth than to see us walk out of here adjusted and capable once more of coping with life. So you're wrong, I assure you. Our Miss Ratched is the kindest, sweetest, the most benevolent woman that I have ... that I have ... ever ... *(Stops. Begins to laugh. Then he is crying.)* Oh, the bitch. The bitch ...

END

(The MEN are silent. HARDING fumbles for a cigarette. McMURPHY takes it from him and lights it.)

BILLY. *(At length.)* You're right. About all of it.

McMURPHY. Okay, why'ntcha do something?

HARDING. Why? Because the world belongs to the strong, my friend. The rabbit recognizes the strength of the wolf, so he digs holes and hides when the wolf is about. He doesn't challenge the wolf to combat. *(Laughs.)* Mr. McMurphy ... my friend ... I'm not a chicken, I'm a rabbit. All of us here, rabbits. Billy, hop around for Mr. McMurphy here. Cheswick, show him how furry you are. Ah, they're bashful. Isn't that *sweet*?

McMURPHY. *(Violently.)* Shut your mouth!

HARDING. *(Quietly.)* All right, friend, what would you have us do?

McMURPHY. Raise jack. Tell 'er to go to hell!

CHESWICK. *(Jeering.)* Try it, buddy. They'll ship you right on up to Disturbed.

SCANLON. Or down to the Shock Shop.

McMURPHY. The which?

HARDING. Electro-Shock Therapy, my friend. A device which combines the best features of the sleeping pill, the electric chair and the torture rack.

McMURPHY. You kiddin' me?

SCANLON. *(Touching his temples.)* Hell, no.

HARDING. *(With malicious relish.)* They strap you to a table. You are touched on each side of the head with wires. Zap! Punish-

MARTINI. (*Excitedly.*) Don't you see them? Don't you see them?

CHESWICK. There's no one there, I tell you. Now stop it. There's no one there ... (*He takes MARTINI in his arms and quiets him.*)

MARTINI. (*Sadly.*) I thought I seen them.

(*The OTHERS enter. Their attitude is subdued, brooding. The CHIEF sits in the rocking chair. McMURPHY enters, head down, and seats himself, too. WARREN and WILLIAMS enter with almost military precision, preceding NURSE RATCHED.*)

BEGIN NURSE RATCHED. Boys, I've given a great deal of thought to what I am about to say. I've talked in over with the Staff and we all came to the same conclusion — that there should be some form of punishment for the unspeakable behavior of yesterday. (*A pause. No comment.*) Most of you are here because you could not adjust to the outside world. You broke the rules of society. At some time ... in your childhood, perhaps ... you were allowed to get away with that. But when you broke a rule you knew it. You wanted to be punished — *needed* it — but the punishment did not come. That leniency on the part of your parents may have been the germ of your present illness. I remind you of this, hoping you will understand that it is *entirely for your own good* that we enforce discipline. (*Looking straight at McMURPHY.*) Is there any comment? (*Silence. McMURPHY riffles the cards in his hands — splat! — then waves an apology.*) Then I assume you understand me and agree. You also understand that it is *difficult* to enforce discipline in these surroundings. After all, what can we do to you? You can't be arrested. You can't be sent to an institution, you're already there. All we *can* do is take away privileges. And so, after carefully considering the circumstances, we have decided to take away certain privileges which allowed — no, *encouraged* the rebellion to happen. (*Referring to her memorandum.*) First, for thirty days there will be no viewing of televi-

sion. *(A groan from SCANLON.)* Second, the privilege of playing cards during recreation hours is hereby rescinded. *(The cards in McMURPHY'S hands go "splat" again. The MEN'S eyes go to him, hopefully.)*

McMURPHY. *(Putting the cards away.)* 'Scuse me.

HARDING. *(Sounding sick.)* Is that all?

CONTINUE NURSE RATCHED. Not quite. There is one more matter ... the behavior of a patient who has been here almost as long as I. Longer, I believe, than any of you. *(Smiling.)* You know, of course, to whom I refer? *(The MEN are puzzled at first, then turn eyes to CHIEF BROMDEN ... so long a fixture, never a subject in these meetings.)* Mr. Bromden long ago was diagnosed as catatonic. And for that reason — because it was assumed we could not communicate — we gave him up. We forgot poor Mr. Bromden. *(Smiles warmly at the CHIEF but there is apprehension gathering in his eyes and his hands grip the sides of his chair.)* That was wrong of us. But Mr. Bromden acted wrongly, too. Please don't misunderstand. We are happy to know that Mr. Bromden can be reached — but disappointed to learn he would *conceal* it from us, thereby refusing to cooperate in his own cure. And if Mr. Bromden can hear, isn't it logical to assume that he can also speak? I think Mr. Bromden should speak to us, don't you? His first contribution to Group Therapy. And how appropriate if those first works were an apology.

END

CHIEF BROMDEN. *(A whimpered plea.)* Mac ...

NURSE RATCHED. An *apology* for the behavior that made yesterday's rebellion —

CHIEF BROMDEN. *(In terror.)* McMurphy ...!

(NURSE RATCHED snaps her fingers and WARREN comes across toward the trembling, retreating CHIEF BROMDEN. McMURPHY'S foot comes out — operating independently of his will — and WARREN trips over it and crashes to the floor.)

NURSE RATCHED. *(A warning.)* Mr. McMurphy — !

WARREN. *(Comes to his feet, catlike.)* Man, you *beggin'* for it!

McMURPHY. *(Rising to block WARREN'S way.)* Let 'im alone.

NURSE RATCHED. Mr. McMurphy, I am warning you.

WARREN. *(Starts toward CHIEF BROMDEN once more and McMURPHY swings, a powerful but clumsy roundhouse right. NURSE RATCHED calmly signals to the Station. NURSE FLINN throws a switch that starts an alarm bell ringing. WARREN ducks lithely and sinks a fist in McMURPHY'S belly that doubles him over. Joyfully, dancing about.)* Come on, you bastard, I been waitin' for this. Come on, stan' up an' — Ugh! *(He is gripped from behind and lifted high off the floor in CHIEF BROMDEN'S hands. WARREN yells in terror.)*

(BLACKOUT. The ALARM BELL sounds. The alarm bell continues, fading as: a tight pool of light reveals the electroshock table being readied by a TECHNICIAN who hums as he works. [This may be DR. SPIVEY if preferred.] McMURPHY, then BROMDEN, are pushed roughly into the area by the AIDES. Both are in straitjackets. McMURPHY begins to chuckle. CHIEF BROMDEN looks at him uncertainly.)

BEGIN McMURPHY. *(Laughing.)* Jesus, that look on Warren's face. That *look* when you threw the ol' bear hug on 'im. Aw, c'mon, Chief, why don't you laugh right out loud? You got to laugh — 'specially when things ain't funny. *(Laughs again, throws a shoulder block at the CHIEF, stands back and gets him to retaliate.)* That's the ticket! That's the way ya keep yourself in balance. Hey, y'know something? You're gettin' bigger. Look at that foot. The size of a flatcar! You keep growin' that way and pretty soon they'll have ta spring ya. And there'll be Big Chief Bromden, cuttin' down the boulevard, men, women and kids rockin' back on their heels to peer up at 'im! "Well, well, well, what giant's this here, takin' ten feet at a step and duckin' for telephone wires? Comes stompin' through town, stops just long enough for virgins, the rest o' you twitches

END don't even bother linin' up!" *(His laugh rolls free, and the CHIEF joins him, this time more easily. NURSE RATCHED enters escorted by the AIDES.)*

NURSE RATCHED. *(Friendly.)* What's so amusing?

McMURPHY. I ain't sure you'd get the point.

NURSE RATCHED. Don't you boys feel sorry for what you did?

McMURPHY. I don't guess so, ma'am. So whatever you're goin' to do, get on with it.

NURSE RATCHED. We had a meeting, Randle. The Staff agreed it might be beneficial if you were to receive shock therapy. But we won't — provided you are prepared to admit your mistakes.

McMURPHY. You got a paper I can sign?

NURSE RATCHED. A paper?

McMURPHY. Yeah, then you could add some other things. Like how I'm part of a plot to overthrow the government, and how I think life on your ward is the sweetest fuckin' thing this side of Hawaii.

NURSE RATCHED. Randle, we are trying to help you.

McMURPHY. Do I get my pants slit? You gonna shave my head? *(NURSE RATCHED turns from him, nods her head abruptly to the TECHNICIAN, and exits.)* Don't be scared, Chief. I'll go first. If they can't hurt me, they can't hurt you. *(CHIEF BROMDEN whimpers as the AIDES grab McMURPHY and strap him to the table. The TECHNICIAN smears a compound on his temples.)* What's that?

TECHNICIAN. Conductant.

McMURPHY. Anointest my head with conductant! Do I get a crown of throns?

CHIEF BROMDEN. *(Whimpering.)* Papa. Papa.

McMURPHY. Don't holler, Chief. Or if you got to holler, make it "Guts ball."

CHIEF BROMDEN. *(Trembling.)* Guts ball.

McMURPHY. Atta Injun! *(The TECHNICIAN sets the voltage and timer on his machine; clamps a pair of "ice tongs" on McMUR-*