

The Patient

CAST

Man 40's
Nurse Cratchit 20's
Doctor Gloss 40s

The stage is empty except for a hospital bed centre stage with a small cabinet next to it. A man lies under a sheet with a drip attached to his arm. He is apparently sleeping. Enter a good looking NURSE CRATCHIT with chart. She feels his pulse. Lifts his arm and drops it. Shrugs her shoulders. Records something on the chart. The pen doesn't work. She licks it. She goes to the cabinet pulls out a bedpan. Looks into it. Holds it up to the light. Records something on the chart. Puts the bedpan back. Shrugs. Goes off stage. Man opens one eye and looks to the left and then the right.

MAN

I don't remember being sick.

Pause

Perhaps I've had an accident. Everything is.. there...here, yes...legs, arms etc...Nothing hurts particularly.. What's this in my arm? Oh my God!

He discovers the tube leading to the drip.

I'm on a drip. I must be ill. What does it say... ?

He has to get up on his knees to read it

Saline, glucose.

Enter Doctor Gloss. Well dressed. White coat, stethoscope, five identical pens in the breast pocket. His hair is slicked back and he carries an ipad.

DR GLOSS

What are you doing?

I'm just trying to...
MAN

Where's the nurse?
DR GLOSS

She....
MAN

DR GLOSS
He shouts
Nurse ? Nurse?

Enter Nurse Cratchit
NURSE CRATCHIT
Yes Doctor?

DR GLOSS
There you are. Your patient is trying to get out of bed. He seems to be unruly. Please control him.

NURSE CRATCHIT
Of course Doctor.

MAN
But I.....

DR GLOSS
Hospital protocol. Nothing for you to be worried about. What's wrong with him?

NURSE CRATCHIT
He was admitted yesterday. He has a pain.

DR GLOSS
A pain? Good job Nurse .

NURSE CRATCHIT
Well the ambulance man said he had a pain.

DR GLOSS

Well done. I see training wasn't lost on you. Picking up important clues as to the patient's condition. Now why is he on an IV?

NURSE CRATCHIT

Precautionary.

DR GLOSS

Splendid.

MAN

But I don't think that

DR GLOSS

Sir. Please. Patients are not expected to think. This is where we heal you. Make you better. Send you home fit and well.

MAN

I appreciate.....

DR GLOSS

He should come up on my ipad. Patient number? Name?

MAN

Ummmm.

DR GLOSS

Nurse? What's his name?

NURSE CRATCHIT

I don't...

DR GLOSS

There on his wrist...

NURSE CRATCHIT

Of course... Stephen Smith

MAN

That's not my name.

NURSE CRATCHIT

Quiet.

DR GLOSS

What's he been admitted for?

NURSE CRATCHIT

Evaluation.

DR GLOSS

Well Mr Smith, rest assured here at St Crotchety's Medical Centre we are going to look after you. First we must do a preliminary evaluation. Signs of life and all that ... you understand. We are thorough and we have the technology.

MAN

Thank you Doctor but...

DR GLOSS

I know. You're worried. But you don't need to worry. We're here and Nurse Cratchit will be here.

MAN

I don't feel ill.

DR GLOSS

That's often the case. So many diseases creep up on us without us knowing. Cancer for example. Silently. We understand and we are on your side. The whole hospital is on your side.

MAN

That's very nice of you. But could you just check that my name's right. I don't think that's my name. I am a bit confused.

DR GLOSS

Nurse check his name with the office. I will have to do a full examination. Prepare for an examination. Confused about his name ummmm.

NURSE CRATCHIT

Of course Doctor.

Exit Nurse

DR GLOSS

Just sit on the side of the bed. Good. We will get your name sorted out. St Crotchety's a wonderful establishment. We made six million dollars last year. Our shareholders of which of course I am one are delighted. I am also on the Board. Right. Now just relax. I want you to tell me how many arms I have.

MAN

Two.

DR GLOSS

Excellent. Legs?

MAN

Two.

DR GLOSS

First class. Now I want to see if you can put your left finger in your right ear.

Man complies

Good. Well there doesn't seem to be much wrong there.

Now... look into my eyes. What do you see?

MAN

Your eyes.

DR GLOSS

Splendid. Now I want you to stick your finger in my.....

Re-enter Nurse, with goggles and covered in plastic pushing a trolley on which there are tools, hammers, screwdrivers, mallets, boxes of nails, a saw..

Well done nurse. Over here.

MAN

But... those don't....

DR GLOSS

Don't what?

MAN

They don't look like surgical instruments.

DR GLOSS

Don't they? They're the latest. I bought them at HomeDepot. Oh yes, we believe in the very best for our patients.

MAN

I think I need to go.

DR GLOSS

Go? Oh I see. Nurse. Bedpan please.

MAN

I mean leave...

DR GLOSS

You can't leave. You still have your examination. And we have to check all your paperwork. Well it's not paperwork now because we're fully computerized. Nurse screwdriver... large .

Nurse hands him a large screwdriver

Now this won't hurt. You'll just feel a little prick.

MAN

But that's a screwdriver.

DR GLOSS

Well of course. We're going to tighten you up. Too many loose screws.

MAN

Where did you train?

DR GLOSS

You can see where I trained on all my certificates.

MAN

But there aren't any.

DR GLOSS

Goodness me. Where are my certificates? Nurse where are my certificates?

NURSE CRATCHIT

You said you didn't want them up today.

DR GLOSS

Did I? Well make sure they get put up again. I don't want people to think I am not qualified. Put up the big ones, written in Latin, that confuses everybody. Particularly the really really big one from Karachi. It cost me twenty dollars.

NURSE CRATCHIT

I will Doctor. Do you want the blood now?

DR GLOSS

Yes...

MAN

Blood?

DR GLOSS

Got to have blood otherwise people think you're not doing your job. Sprinkle it round a bit. Oh and nurse. Put up some more of those pictures of internal organs, particularly the genital areas. They make everyone feel a bit nervous seeing all the inside bits and pieces. Medical pornography I call it. They make Me feel nervous. Now where were we.... ?Tightening you up. I think I need a smaller screwdriver. Nurse smaller screwdriver.

She hands him a spanner.

Not the spanner. Really nurse you will have to do better than that.

NURSE CRATCHIT

Sorry doctor. It won't happen again.

DR GLOSS

That could have led to a very nasty accident. Now where was I? Oh yes, screwing you up.

MAN

Doctor I think I would prefer that you didn't screw me up... not that I don't have confidence in your knowledge and expertise but I am totally confused.

DR GLOSS

I quite understand. Medicine is confusing. Far too many long complicated names . Pulmonary bifurcation of the duodenal ileocecal canal. How is the ordinary man to understand that? What is important though is that the doctor shows confidence. I show confidence don't I? The Doctors we train here all have passed tests in sounding confident. My great uncle Dr Mengel always said. It doesn't matter if you're wrong but sound confident. He made a fortune removing people's colons. Thousands flocked to his surgery to have their colons removed because he sounded confident. He retired to the Bahamas after only ten years.

MAN

Yes... that's all very well... quite honestly. I am feeling much better and if you would take this drip out of my arm I think I will just.....

DR GLOSS

Mr Smith. I have to warn you that your condition is serious. I was taught that a good Doctor diagnoses his patient's illness in the first thirty seconds and you Mr Smith are a sick man. Nurse give me the saw.

NURSE CRATCHIT

Yes Doctor.

Hands him the saw

MAN

What are you going to do with that?

DR GLOSS

We are going to remove the sick bit. That's how we do it. If it's bad, we saw it off, cut it out, and remove the offending piece.

MAN

But I am very attached to my organs.. Please Doctor. I don't want to lose any of my organs, or limbs or any other bits. I'm functioning... Really

DR GLOSS

Maybe now but later on what do you know? Surgery saves lives. Nurse.
Blood please.

NURSE CRATCHIT

Yes Doctor.

DR GLOSS

I won't take it down to the bone.

Climbs on bed, presses Man down and gets ready to saw.

MAN

Would you please leave me alone. I am perfectly well.

About to saw there is the sound of an air-raid siren.

DR GLOSS

We're under attack. Nurse my goggles. My helmet. My joy stick

*Doctor dons goggles and flying cap. Clasps large wrench
as joy stick and faces out. Towards audience at the end
of the bed.*

Bandits at five o'clock. Coming out of the sun. Hang on Smithy. We're
going to give Jerry a run for his money.

MAN

But... you were about to....

DR GLOSS

Hang on.

Man puts his arms around Dr Gloss

I'm putting her into a dive. We'll come up behind those damn Japs and
their damned zeros. Too many zeros,

MAN

But there's nobody there.

DR GLOSS

Can't see them yet. Into the dog loop. There they are. Got you now Jerry.
Come on Smithy fire those guns. Let 'em have it.

MAN

What?

DR GLOSS

You got him. He's going down. Aaaargh... what was that?

MAN

What was what?

DR GLOSS

He got me. Nurse the blood. Didn't see him coming. Damned 109.

NURSE CRATCHIT

Here.

She pours blood over his right breast.

DR GLOSS

They got me Smithy. It's a bad wound. I'm not going to make it. Take over the joy stick. Send my love to Carolyn.

He hands him the joystick

MAN

But.... Look I really think I have to go.... and I just remembered who I am. My name is Jones. Peter Jones. Yes that's my name.

DR GLOSS

Peter Jones....

MAN

Yes.

DR GLOSS

Let me check that.

He checks the name on the ipad.

MAN

I got hit by a car on the way to work. I remember now.

DR GLOSS

Peter Jones... yes... but..... But..... YOU HAVE NO INSURANCE

MAN

No... I have no insurance. I couldn't afford it. I am a poor man. I have insurance for my wife and the children... but I don't have....

DR GLOSS

How dare you come in here, pretending you are sick, pretending you are ill, taking advantage of our knowledge, the years and years of training, the financial hardship, our Hypocratic oath to bring the benefits of medical science to humanity, to alleviate the suffering of humankind and YOU HAVE NO INSURANCE. You hypocrite, you snake in the grass. You leech on the commonweal of society. You expected ME out of my own pocket to use my medical skills free of charge for your miserable hypochondriasis. Shame on you. I will have nothing more to do with you. Nurse, disconnect him and clear up this mess.

Exits.

NURSE CRATCHIT

He does get a bit upset sometimes. He's a very good doctor.

She takes out the IV

MAN

I'm sorry... honestly... I didn't mean to take advantage. I got knocked over and I must have lost my memory.

NURSE CRATCHIT

Don't worry. It'll all sort itself out. I am glad you're well. Oh by the way. Here's your bill.

MAN

Four hundred and twenty three thousand dollars.

NURSE CRATCHIT

Medical care's not cheap nowadays.

MAN

AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.

Falls back prostrate

Curtain.

