

START

MCMURPHY. (*Offstage.*) 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...

(*He's 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, open-mouthed.*)

Damn, what a sorry-lookin' bunch!

WILLIAMS. Now, see here, mister -

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?

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(The MEN go bug-eyed at what they 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 dyin' 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.

(He 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, buddy, I'm truly glad you're next in luh-line for the job, but since I'm thinkin' a takin' over this whole shebang maybe you better take me to your leader.

BILLY. Mister Harding...you're President of the Pay-Pay-Patients' Council...

HARDING. (*Leans back, looks at the ceiling.*) Does this... gentleman...have an appointment?

BILLY. Do you have an appointment, Mister-Mc-Muh-Murphy? Mister Harding is a busy man.

MCMURPHY. This busy man Harding, is he the bull goose loony?

BILLY. That's right.

MCMURPHY. Well, you tell Bull Goose Loony Harding that R. P. McMurphy is waitin' to see him and this nut-house ain't big enough for the two of us. You tell him either he meets me man to man or he's a yaller skunk and better be outa town by sunset.

HARDING. Billy, you tell this young upstart McMurphy that I'll meet him in the main hall at high noon and we'll settle this affair once and for all, with libidos a'blazin'.

MCMURPHY. Billy, you tell him that R. P. McMurphy is used to bein' top man in *every* situation, so if he's bound to be a loony he figures to be the stompdown dadgum biggest one of all!

(HARDING rises and attempts to go around MCMURPHY, who quickly stops him by stepping in his path. MCMURPHY holds out his hand and HARDING, conceding defeat, takes it.)

There, by God, and we ain't spilled a drop of blood!
Now, who's the rest of these fellers?

HARDING. Well, on this side of the room we're the Acutes.

MCMURPHY. What's acute about you?

HARDING. That means we are presumably curable. Over there, the Chronicles.

(Pointing out the types.) A Walker and a Vegetable.

MCMURPHY. And they ain't curable? Well, what the hell!

(Attempting to shake hands with MARTINI.) Hiya, buddy, R. P. McMurphy, howdye do?

(MARTINI refuses to acknowledge his presence.)

(To CHESWICK.) Randle P. McMurphy...

CHESWICK. *(Ignoring his hand.)* Got any cigarettes...?

MCMURPHY. Nothin' butt. Get it?

(Hands him the pack. On to SCANLON, a slap on the shoulder:)

Buddy, how'rya?

SCANLON. *(Slamming the lid on the box.)* Careful!

MCMURPHY. What's that you're makin'?

SCANLON. *(Darkly.)* A bomb - to blow up the whole stinkin' world.

MCMURPHY. Oh man, you got *competition*.

(Trots on to RUCKLY, pulls up short to regard him reproachfully.)

Buddy, my name is R. P. McMurphy and I don't like to see a grown man sloshin' around in his own water. Now, why'nt you go get dried up?

HARDING. Pull the nails out.

MCMURPHY. The -? Oh, sure! *(Pulls the invisible "nails.")*

RUCKLY. F-f-fuck 'em all! *(Staggers off to the dorm.)*

MCMURPHY. *(Stops short at CHIEF BROMDEN strapped in the chair.)* Hooeee! What have we got here?

CHESWICK. That's Chief Bromden.

MCMURPHY. What's your story, Big Chief?

BILLY. He can't hear you. He's duh-deaf and dumb.

MCMURPHY. Well, what they got him strapped down for? I don't like that, no, *sir*.

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