

START

(The bell rings.)

Now what?

NURSE RATCHED. *(Over the speaker.)* Group Meeting. Time for Group Meeting.

(The MEN get up quickly. The table is snatched from under MCMURPHY's elbows and chairs are arranged in a semicircle.)

MCMURPHY. What's goin' on?

CHESWICK. Group Therapy. Every day this time.

(MCMURPHY wanders around, puzzled. The acutes take their places. NURSE RATCHED flips a couple of switches in the Station as though setting it on automatic pilot. Picks up her wicker basket and goes to take the Log Book from its stand, then seats herself left of center, leaving the center chair vacant.)

NURSE RATCHED. Mr. McMurphy, would you like to join us?

(MCMURPHY takes an empty chair.)

Now, then, would anyone like to begin?

(Her eyes are on BILLY, who at length stirs uncomfortably.)

BILLY. *(Touching the bandage on his wrist.)* I guh-guess I ought to talk about this.

(NURSE RATCHED waits.)

It was on account of my mother. Every time she comes to visit it leaves me feeling just awful.

NURSE RATCHED. Your mother loves you, Billy.

SCANLON. *(Mimicking.)* Billy-darlin'. Billy-baby.

BILLY. *(Disregarding SCANLON.)* I know. That's the trouble. I'm such a duh-disappointment to her, but she won't admit it. She won't suh-see me like I am! I say to her, "Mama, I'm nuh-not right in the head. I can't even tuh-talk straight." But she goes right on. And pretty soon I want to k-kill myself. So I try.

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NURSE RATCHED. Is it possible that you may be trying to punish *her*?

BILLY. Sure, it's possible! (*Desperately.*) Muh-Miss Ratched, couldn't we tuh-talk about somebody else today?

NURSE RATCHED. You really ought to face it, Billy.

(*BILLY turns away, and MCMURPHY is watching in amazement. At length:*)

Very well.

(*She opens the Log Book.*)

At the close of Friday's meeting we were discussing Mr. Harding's young wife...the fact that she is extremely well-endowed in the bosom. Does anyone care to touch upon this further?

(*Silence, then MCMURPHY holds up a hand and snaps his fingers.*)

MCMURPHY. Touch upon what?

NURSE RATCHED. The subject.

MCMURPHY. Oh, I thought you meant touch upon her...

(*He makes a mammary gesture and unleashes his laugh. But the MEN are gazing at him blankly and the laugh dies of malnutrition.*)

NURSE RATCHED. To continue. According to notes entered by various patients in the Log Book -

(*DR. SPIVEY enters, moving fast. He is a resident psychiatrist, a pipe-smoking, glasses-fumbling, harassed fellow of no great force. He seats himself.*)

- Good afternoon, Doctor.

DR. SPIVEY. Sorry.

(*He makes a vague gesture meaning "please continue," and drops his eyes despondently to the floor.*)

NURSE RATCHED. Yes...we were talking about Mr. Harding's relations with his wife...

MARTINI. Whose wife? Oh. Yeah, I see her!

MCMURPHY. (*Jumping up.*) Where?

MARTINI. Mama Mia...! Una poppona! La figura d'una dea!
Ma fa allungare!

MCMURPHY. (*Peering vainly.*) God, what I wouldn't give for
that man's eyes.

*(DR. SPIVEY has awakened from his stupor
and is staring at MCMURPHY. He puts on his
glasses for a better look, takes them off and
turns to NURSE RATCHED, who calmly extracts
a folder from her basket and opens it.)*

NURSE RATCHED. (*Reading.*) McMurphy, Randle Patrick.
Committed by the State for diagnosis and possible
treatment. Thirty-five years old. Never married. A
history of drunkenness, assault and battery, disturbing
the peace, *repeated* gambling, one arrest for rape.

MCMURPHY. Statutory!

NURSE RATCHED. With a child of fifteen.

MCMURPHY. Said she was *seventeen*, and she was plenty
willin'.

NURSE RATCHED. A court doctor's examination of the child -

MCMURPHY. Doc, she was *so* willin' I took to padlockin' my
pants.

NURSE RATCHED. Our new admission, Doctor.

*(MCMURPHY obligingly takes the folder from
her and passes it to DR. SPIVEY, who puts on
his glasses and starts reading. In the silence,
DR. SPIVEY clucks disapprovingly; chuckles
at a spicy bit; whistles incredulously; and
generally runs through a repertoire of
reactions as MCMURPHY beams on him. He
looks up to find all eyes on him.)*

DR. SPIVEY. Oh...ah...it seems...you've no previous history.
Any time spent in other institutions?

MCMURPHY. Well, sir, includin' state *and* county coolers -

DR. SPIVEY. *Mental* institutions.

MCMURPHY. Ah. No. This is my first trip. But I *am* crazy, Doc, I swear it. Here – lemme show you – that other doctor at the Work Farm –

(He leans over DR. SPIVEY's shoulder, thumbing through the file.)

Yeah, here it is. "*Repeated* outbreaks of passion that suggest the possible diagnosis of psychopath." Way he explained it, Doc, psychopath means that I fight and fuck – oh, 'scuse me, how did he put it? – I'm over-zealous in my sexual relations. Doc, is that real serious? I mean, you ever been troubled by it?

DR. SPIVEY. *(A little wistfully.)* No, Mr. McMurphy, I'll admit I haven't.

MCMURPHY. That bit about fightin' I can understand, but who ever heard of a man gettin' too much poozle?

DR. SPIVEY. *(Referring to file.)* I am interested in this statement: "Don't overlook the possibility that this man might be feigning psychosis to escape the drudgery of the Work Farm." Well, Mr. McMurphy? What about *that*?

MCMURPHY. *(Turns his cap sideways; with a maniacal grin.)* Do I look like a sane man?

(He laughs uproariously at this joke.)

NURSE RATCHED. Perhaps, Doctor, you should advise Mr. McMurphy on the protocol of these meetings.

DR. SPIVEY. Yes. One of the first rules is that the patients remain seated.

MCMURPHY. *(Seating himself.)* Why, sure, Doc.

DR. SPIVEY. You see, we operate on the principle of the Therapeutic Community.

MCMURPHY. The which?

DR. SPIVEY. Ther-a-peutic Com-munity. That means that this ward is society in miniature, and since society decides who is sane and who isn't, you must measure up. Our goal here is a completely democratic ward, governed by the patients – working to restore you to

the outside. The important thing is to let nothing fester inside you. Talk! Discuss! Confess! If you hear another patient say something of significance, write it down in the Log Book for all to see. Do you know what this procedure is called?

MCMURPHY. Squealing?

DR. SPIVEY. Group Therapy. Help yourself and your friends probe the secrets of the subconscious. Bring those old guilts out into the open!

MCMURPHY. (*Blankly.*) What guilts?

DR. SPIVEY. You have them or you wouldn't be here.

MCMURPHY. Oh yeah, yeah... I think I'm beginnin' to ketch on...

DR. SPIVEY. Excellent.

MCMURPHY. Like this dream I had the other night, couldja maybe tell me what it means? Y'see, it was like me in the dream, but then again it wasn't...me, I mean... more like somebody that *looked* like me...like...like my *daddy*.

DR. SPIVEY. Interesting!

MCMURPHY. Yeah, that's who it was! It was my daddy for sure, because when I saw me - him, I mean - he had this big iron bolt through his jawbone like Daddy used to have.

DR. SPIVEY. (*A pause.*) Your father had an iron *bolt* through his jawbone?

MCMURPHY. A regular Frankenstein!

DR. SPIVEY. How fascinating. I don't believe I've ever heard of a similar -

NURSE RATCHED. (*A rescue operation.*) If I may suggest, Doctor, Mr. McMurphy might learn best by example? (*Re-opening the Log Book.*) According to notes entered by various patients in the Log Book, Mr. Harding has stated that he was uneasy when walking with his wife on the street because of the manner in which other men stared at her. He has further said, quote -

HARDING. (*Flat-voiced.*) She damned well gives them reason to stare, unquote.

NURSE RATCHED. Yes. He has also been heard to say that he may give *her* reason to seek sexual attention elsewhere. What reason, Dale?

HARDING. Well... I can't say that I have been notably ardent...

NURSE RATCHED. Do you mean sexually inadequate?

CHESWICK. Maybe she's just plain too hot for him. That it, Harding?

BILLY. (*With malice.*) I'll b-bet he's afraid of her.

HARDING. Not afraid!

MARTINI. Okay, scared!

HARDING. It might be fair to say...intimidated.

CHESWICK. Same thing.

NURSE RATCHED. I see Mr. Harding has also stated that his wife's ample bosom gives him a feeling of inferiority.

SCANLON. So why does he marry a broad with such big knockers to begin with?

CHESWICK. (*Wisely.*) I'll bet he's got a mother fixation.

SCANLON. I'll bet he was never *weaned*.

HARDING. (*Goaded...and MCMURPHY is taking it in with growing incredulity.*) That's not so! I wanted a *womanly* woman. One who would not compete, but who might help me to... (*His hands wave.*)

NURSE RATCHED. (*Referring to notes.*) She has commented, Dale, that she finds you less than masculine.

CHESWICK. Yeah, like the way you use your hands.

(*HARDING captures his hands between his knees.*)

How about it, Harding?

NURSE RATCHED. You chose a woman who was quite obviously your inferior. Don't you find significance in that?

HARDING. Yes, of course, but I theorized...it seemed to me...
sexually, at least...

BILLY. Yeah. You're always saying she's such a guh-good lay.

CHESWICK. Yeah, what happens in the sack?

HARDING. Complete...complete psychic impotence - oh,
damn, why do I always *cry*!

SCANLON. Say, Harding, wouldn't it be a lot easier if you
was to just come and *admit* you're a faggot?

MCMURPHY. (*Up out of his chair with a roar.*) Awright,
knock it off!

NURSE RATCHED. Mr. McMurphy.

MCMURPHY. Leave the guy alone!

NURSE RATCHED. Sit *down*.

MCMURPHY. (*To HARDING.*) Lissen, buddy, you don't hafta
take this shit!

NURSE RATCHED. (*Closing the Log Book with a "Splat!"*)
Doctor, I suggest we close the meeting.

DR. SPIVEY. Oh?

NURSE RATCHED. Close it until *discipline* has improved.

(*DR. SPIVEY obediently rises and makes his exit. NURSE RATCHED gathers up her paraphernalia, restores the Log Book to its podium, and exits also. There is silence among the MEN, a subtle sense of shame at once again having betrayed one of their number. HARDING remains seated. His cheeks are knotted and he hums a shapeless tune. MCMURPHY straddles a chair, facing him.*)

MCMURPHY. Say, buddy, is this the way these leetle meetings
usually go? Bunch of chickens at a peekin' party?

HARDING. Pecking party? I haven't the faintest notion what
you're talking about.

MCMURPHY. Why, I'll just explain it. The flock gets sight
of a speck of blood on some chicken and they all go to
peekin' at it, see? Till there's nothin' left but blood and

bones and feathers. But usually a couple of the flock gets spotted in the fracas, then it's *their* turn.

HARDING. (*Lacing his hands together, forcing himself to be casual.*) A pecking party. That certainly is a pleasant analogy, my friend.

MCMURPHY. That's right, my friend. And that's exactly what that meeting reminded me of.

HARDING. And that makes me the chicken with the spot of blood, eh, friend?

MCMURPHY. That's right, friend. And you want to know who pecks the first peck? It's that ol' nurse, that's who.

HARDING. So it's as simple as that. As stupidly simple as that. You're on our ward six hours and have already simplified the work of Freud, Jung and Maxwell Jones and summed it up in one analogy: it's a peckin' party.

MCMURPHY. I'm not talkin' 'bout Fred Yoong and whosis Jones, buddy, I'm talkin' 'bout that crummy meeting and what that nurse did to you.

HARDING. Did to me?

MCMURPHY. In spades.

HARDING. Why, this is incredible! You completely disregard the fact that everything she did was for my benefit.

MCMURPHY. Horse apples.

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.

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 HARDING 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.

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 desires 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...

(*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.

END