

The Other Five Beds

CHAPTER 1

Monday afternoon 4pm

He had never experienced anything like it. Peacefulness on such a grand scale was hard to find. Nothing to match it. Not even on the 'Go Compare site'. Calmness on a level he never knew existed. Although dark, it was soft and fluffy. He could have been anywhere. But then, there was that noise. Rasping, grating, annoying, inaudible blur. Somehow, he just knew they were words spewing from the mouth of That, man. Wanting so much to stop it, his mouth would simply not move in a manner he wanted it to.

“..... I've been along there regularly with the dog And guess what? In amongst the shrubbery and leaves I saw this lily white arse bouncing up and down” Sitting in his chair, at the side of the bed, Arthur began to laugh. Although talking to the unconscious man, he gazed out of the window. “..... And every time he lunged one at her ... they slid further down the embankment” He laughed louder at his own story that time. So much so, tears ran down his cheerfully puffed cheeks. “Oh, dear”, he giggled as the laughter subsided. Wiping away the moisture, he continued in quite a serious tone. “The dog saw them off in the end, though”

From being in heaven, Godfrey had plummeted head first into hell. Blinding daylight began to stream in through his partially open eyes. A headache could be felt forming. His head slowly turned away from the verbal abuser. “..... Dus ferk en Bug orf” The instructions were issued just prior to the bed sheet being pulled over Godfrey's head.

Removing his stare from the outside, he looked at covered pillow. “Oh. Drop off again, did you?” Wheeling the NHS chair towards the head of the bed, it met with a bump against the metal bed frame.

From beneath his linen tent, the patient jolted awake.

“Come on, Goof. Daytime”, Arthur announced gleefully, ripping off the cover.

Godfrey rolled onto his back and blinked several times before turning his attention to the source of his irritation. “What do you want?” he growled despondently, still with a bit of a slur.

“I was telling you about the old railway at the back of us But, if you don’t want to know, then sod you!” Not being an expert with that strange vehicle, it again met with the bed frame several times as Arthur attempted to turn around. “Ungrateful bastard”, he grumbled, as he eventually wheeled away. Looking for someone else to cheer up, he glanced with a smile at the other five beds.

Next to his own in bed three, was Bernard Cummins. He lay on his side, asleep. Hemorrhoid operation, he remembered the doctors saying.

Beside him, was Steven Ferguson, pretending to be unconscious. He did that a lot.

Opposite, in bed six Andy Smith was awake but staring at the ceiling.

Between him and misery guts, was the reverend William Packett. Arthur knew full well no sense would be gleaned from him, as he had been hallucinating all night.

So, Andy was the one to benefit from Arthur Ramsbottom’s company. Wheeling his mobile seat closer, he witnessed Smith vomit furiously into the cardboard container that rested on his chest. Not wanting to catch anything, Arthur screwed up his face in disgust. Slowly spinning his wheels to face the other direction, he returned to bed one for a while.

Nurses were in and out all the time and Arthur knew he would not have to wait too long.

After struggling back onto his mattress, he got his sweetie tin prepared. That was a magical device for him, as there were many good looking female staff on that ward.

Barely was the tin lid off and a dark haired angel swooped to Godfrey’s bedside.

“So?”, she asked, poking a hand held thermometer in his ear. “You’re back with us, then Mister Haywire?”

“..... Mmmmmmmmm?”

Removing the gauge from his head, Nurse Kingston tried again. “You’re awake then?”

“Not yet”, came the gravely reply.

An inflatable apparatus was firmly wrapped around his upper arm and gradually pumped up like a balloon. Digital numbers revealed the extent of his blood pressure.

“..... I don’t know, yet”, Godfrey mumbled.

More electronic digits and a clamp to the forefinger, told the state of his pulse.

“Do you feel all right?” enquired Kerry, in her usual softly spoken manner.

“No. I’m becoming deaf”, the patient grumbled, rubbing his face trying to stimulate his senses.

“Oh. I’m sorry. Do you have a hearing aid?”, she checked a few decibels higher, while returning all the necessary test elements to their trolley.

“Don’t need one”, Godfrey insisted in his sharp, ‘You are an idiot’, kind of way.

“Can I get you anything?” Again she spoke loudly.

“A side ward An empty bathroom A laundry room perhaps ... Even a corridor” A weak pointed index finger on the end of his wavering right arm was aimed across the room.

“..... But keep me away from That man”

Kerry glanced in the general direction of bed one, the back to her present case. “Oh! He’s all right. He just needs some company”, she claimed, puffing Godfrey’s pillow into shape.

“Wouldn’t do you any harm. Some company. Someone to talk to”

“What!”, he snapped, clearly more awake than he was.

“Help pass the time, wouldn’t it? Go on. It would do you good”, she smiled.

“It will not do me good. It will drive me insane. Damned fellow even talks to me when I’m asleep, God damn it! No! The very last thing I need is the company of that annoying little squirt and his individual happiness” Haywood seemed adamant about that point.

Kerry stood up straight. “Ah, that’s not fair. He has had major surgery that’s going to change

the rest of his life. He just needs some time to accept certain things. It helps to talk it over with someone. You should know that?" She knew he had some, strange ways but he was a likeable man, never the less.

Picking up his daily paper, delivered earlier that morning, Godfrey flicked it open and scanned the large pages for any interesting articles. "I'm sure the hospital has counselors at its disposal. Let him talk to one of them. I'm not a social worker" His casually spoken words were dismissive and handed out with no interest at all. It was common knowledge his manner was far from friendly. Not accepting fools gladly, Kerry was not afraid of calling things how she saw them.

"You're barely sociable at all!", she told him quietly.

Newspaper holding hands slumped on his knees in surprise. "I beg your pardon?!" he growled.

"You heard me. We have enough problems in here without your disruptive attitude" Kerry then turned and started to walk out.

Godfrey was far from used to being put in his place. "Young woman! Your days here are numbered and your position severely compromised, talking to me like that!"

She stopped abruptly, turned and strode back the few steps to his bedside. Leaning towards Godfrey, she told him firmly, "I think you must be confusing me with someone who gives a toss. Your days here are numbered too, and if you expect some cooperation from me I suggest you start giving some. And remember Your position is extremely vulnerable" Standing up, she cheerfully added, "Do we understand each other?"

Haywood was stunned at the impertinent whipper snapper, and a female one at that. How could she dare to address him with such audacity? None of this left his lips, mind you. He was clearly too afraid to, but that did not stop his face from glowing red with rage.

Kingston understood his silence only too well. "Good", she smiled. "I'll be back to see you

later”

Glancing around to ensure all was as it should be, she began walking back to the nurse’s station which was across the corridor at the end of that short ward.

“Nurse?”, Arthur called politely.

“Yes, Arthur”, Kerry answered equally courteously. Diverting from her course, she made for his bedside.

“Would you be kind enough to pick my jumper up from the floor? It seems to have fallen off the back of the chair”

“Yes. Of course I will” Seeing the pullover in a heap between the material covered armchair and the beech effect bedside unit, she squat down to retrieve it. To keep her balance, her uniform rode up a little and her knees parted slightly. Reaching right to the back with her right arm, her ample bosom forced another button to pop undone at chest height. “Got it”, she strained with a sense of achievement. Standing upright, she gave the patient his clothing then quickly and discretely tidied herself. “There you are, Arthur. Would you like me to close the window now?”

From his laying position on the hem of the mattress, he replied, “Would you mind. I know that you’re busy. I don’t want to disturb you” The open tin was reached for.

“It wouldn’t look good for me if you caught a cold, would it?” With a smile, she willingly obliged. Stretching over the chair back, her uniform again rose to reveal a little more thigh than usual. “There. That’s better”, she claimed.

“Thank you. You are a sweetie You deserve the best one from the pot” The round tub, containing colourfully wrapped weight increasing treats, was offered at arm’s length.

“Arthur! You’re incorrigible”, came her flattering words, while scanning for her favourite flavour. Pulling out a pink one, she unwrapped it and popped it in her mouth. “Thank you”, she smiled.

From the end wall, there was a loud thudding sound. Nurse Kingston looked and saw that Steven was no longer in bed. She sighed, before striding briskly to assist. In the short gap between his bed and the wall, lay the patient. That behaviour had become a regular occurrence of late. A fresh wound dribbled blood from just above his left eyebrow.

“What happened, Steven? Did you fall out of bed?”, Kerry checked. She struggled hard to pick up the limp body from the floor on her own. Seemingly unconscious, his soggy limbs kept sliding between her arms. As if trying to pick a large jelly off a plate, she felt she was going nowhere fast.

Then, an alarm sounded in the adjoining ward.

“Oh, shit”, uttered Kerry mid lift. Bundling him onto the mattress in an untidy heap, she slammed up the chromed side guard to hold him in position. “Stay there”, she called, running towards the noise. Other staff ran past with a trolley and defibrillator.

CHAPTER 2

Monday afternoon 4.55pm

“Do you want to borrow my book?”, called Arthur from his bed and waving some novel in his hand.

“You, have a book?”, Godfrey replied facetiously. “No. You read it” Snuggling into his freshly puffed pillows, he mumbled, “If you can read Maybe it’s all pictures Let’s hope it’s as thick as you”

Dropping the book despondently on the sheets, Arthur sighed. “Are you rude to everyone, Goof?!”

There was a brief pause while that short sentence was absorbed. Godfrey then glanced over his shoulder and snapped, “What?!!”

“Rude? Are you rude to everyone? I know the nurses aren’t best pleased with you, and I think

you're a pig!", he explained honestly.