

## ACT 1

*It is a spring day and we are at the Nurses Station between two wards at St Victor's Hospital. On stage right there are double doors into one ward. Over the door a sign says "Clement Attlee". This is a mixed surgical ward. On the back wall there are two doors. One is a built in cupboard and another door leads to a new ward which has yet to be put into use. There is no sign over this door although someone has chalked "Tony Blair" where the sign would be. Also on the back wall is a button which operates the public address system. Anyone who presses this button can be heard all over the hospital. It works best if when operated the audience hears the amplified voice. There is a patients seating area. A desk and some office paraphernalia including a telephone. On the stage left wall there is a door which leads to the corridor to the rest of the hospital. When the curtain goes up there is no one on stage. After a few seconds MR KUTTER, the Consultant Head of Surgery, DR BACÓN-SLUCEUR and DR LOVE along with NURSE DARLING enter from the Clement Attlee ward. They have just finished doctor's rounds.*

**KUTTER:** So we are agreed. Mr Calthorn is OK and can go home on Wednesday. We need to up Mrs Paltry's medication by 30 mil an hour. Now the new patient, Mr Jenkins. We have examined him for the first time. What is your diagnosis?

**LOVE:** Well he . . .

**KUTTER:** Start with symptoms, girl. I have told you a thousand times start with the symptoms.

**BS:** Slight Fever.

**LOVE:** Some abdominal pain.

**BS:** Yellowing in the whites of the eyes.

**KUTTER:** So the diagnosis

**LOVE:** Gall stones?

**KUTTER:** Exactly, Gall stones. And what do you recommend to rid the patient of the fever, pain and discoloured eyes?

**LOVE:** Ultrasound will break up the stones.

**KUTTER:** Sentimental twaddle. Removal is the answer.

**BS:** Removal? But sir, invasive surgery isn't always necessary these days.

**KUTTER:** I'm not invading, I'm liberating! Cut it out. Get rid of the infernal thing. Book the theatre and I'll do it next week.

**LOVE:** *(Aside)* Eat your heart out George Bush. I'll book the . . .

**KUTTER:** And get on with it girl.

**BS:** What about Mr Campbell's food poisoning

**KUTTER:** Don't worry about that, it's just a passing thing. *(He laughs at his joke. After a pause they join in.)*

**BS:** And Mr Laurence?

**KUTTER:** Diagnosis?

**BS:** Chronic obstruction of the rectal orifice.

**NURSE:** Are we talking piles here?

**KUTTER:** This is beyond your medical capabilities Nurse Darling so keep quiet. Now we'll discuss the rest on the way back to my office follow me. *(As they move to the exit)* Where are you going, girl? We don't want you following us everywhere.

**NURSE:** Just going to wash my hands, Doctor.

**KUTTER:** Mmm. *(They exit to the corridor leaving NURSE on stage. OLIVER LAURENCE*

*enters.*)

**LAURENCE:** Did they say I could go home yet?

**NURSE:** Afraid not, Mr Laurence.

**LAURENCE:** But I am due at the Theatre Royal at Bedingstair the week after next to rehearse Measure for Measure.

**NURSE:** Sorry Mr Laurence but you'll have to go back to bed in there for the time being and think about leisure for leisure.

**LAURENCE:** I like Measure for Measure but I prefer the Bard's tragedies. It is said that I had a wonderful Lear. There was talk about my Lear appearing in the West End. Did I tell you about the time I did Lear with Ralph at Stratford? Oh he was a lovely chap Ralph.

“A man may see how this world goes with no eyes.

Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief.

Hark, in thine ear: change places; and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?”

**NURSE:** Come along, let's get you back to bed.

**LAURENCE:** As you like it Nurse, if that's the only offer I am going to get today I'd better take it.

*(LAURENCE exits into Clement Attlee as GLORIA SAMPSON, the senior hospital administrator enters from corridor.)*

**GLORIA:** Nurse Darling, where is Mr Kutter, he should be doing his rounds?

**NURSE:** They have done the rounds and gone to his office.

**GLORIA:** They?

**NURSE:** Yes, Mr, Kutter and Drs Love and Bacón-Sluceur.

**GLORIA:** I've just come from Mr Kutter's office and he wasn't there and I need him urgently. Put out a call for him.

**NURSE:** *(She goes to wall box she presses a button and we hear her amplified voice.)* This is a message for Mr Kutter. Would Mr Kutter please return to the Clement Attlee ward?

**GLORIA:** And smarten yourself up Nurse, we're going to be on the television.

**NURSE:** Oh good God. Why us?

**GLORIA:** What's the matter? Don't you want to be featured on "Life Saving Hands"?

**NURSE:** Not much. When they did that programme from Leeds General a nurse told me that they were followed around all day by people with camera's and microphone's and it was a wonder the death rate didn't double.

**GLORIA:** But it will be such good publicity and if they can film Mr Kutter doing some life saving operation think what that will do for the hospitals profile. And it will boost fund raising so hopefully we will be able to equip and open up Tony Blair.

**NURSE:** We aren't really going to name it after him, are we?

**GLORIA:** All the wards in this hospital are named after former Prime Ministers.

**NURSE:** I know. Anyway Tony Blair isn't a former Prime Minister.

**GLORIA:** He will be one day. Anyway, do you have a better idea?

**NURSE:** How about Gladstone?

**GLORIA:** We can't have a ward named after a bag even if it does have links to fund raising.

**NURSE:** I hope you are going to spend the money on better equipment than you did last time.

**GLORIA:** What equipment is that?

**NURSE:** The phone system.

**GLORIA:** What's wrong with it?

**NURSE:** It doesn't work properly. The voice message recording system has never worked.

**GLORIA:** Specialised equipment like this always has teething troubles.

**NURSE:** And the firm that installed it.

**GLORIA:** What about them?

**NURSE:** Sampson and Sampson!

**GLORIA:** So?

**NURSE:** Belongs to your brother.

**GLORIA:** What of it? Besides, they submitted the lowest cost tender. Now, where's Sister?

**NURSE:** She went to the dispensary, she won't be long.

**GLORIA:** I hope not, now get on with your work Nurse Darling.

**NURSE:** Anyway, no one will want to work in a ward named after a horror film?

**GLORIA:** *(to herself)* Horror film?

**NURSE:** *(as she goes)* Yes. The Blair Witch project.

**GLORIA:** *(to herself)* I thought that was a prime ministerial question.

*(As NURSE exits into Clement Attlee BS rushes on from the corridor.)*

**BS:** *(out of breath)* Are you looking for Mr Kutter?

**GLORIA:** Yes, where is he?

**BS:** What do you want him for?

**GLORIA:** St Victors is going to be featured on the television programme "Life Saving Hands". The Department of Health don't like hospitals appearing on these programmes but say that if we chose to let them film here it is very important that we make the best possible impression. Mr Kutter as our chief consultant surgeon is absolutely vital to the television people making a successful programme. It's supposed to be a warts and all programme but I don't want any warts here at St Victors. We only found out they were coming just now. I've been told they're on their way and will be here any minute.

**BS:** Well, we finished our rounds and we were just going back to his office when his beeper went off.

**GLORIA:** An emergency? The television people will like that.

**BS:** No, I don't think so. He said something about golf and went dashing off towards the car park. When I heard the tannoy message I called the car park. They said he hadn't gone out yet so they'd stop him and send him back.

**GLORIA:** Good. The camera crew are on the way and I need him here when they arrive.

**BS:** He won't be happy at missing his golf. *(MR KUTTER thunders in from the corridor.)*

**KUTTER:** *(to BS)* How dare you stop me from leaving the car park. This had better be good

**GLORIA:** Mr Kutter.

**KUTTER:** That little Hitler wouldn't let me out. I tried to argue and the traffic piled up behind and it's your fault.

**GLORIA:** *(a little louder)* Mr Kutter.

**KUTTER:** I tried to tell the little Pol Pot who I was, then the damned plebs behind started blaming me for the hold up.

**GLORIA:** *(even louder)* Mr Kutter.

**KUTTER:** So I had to get back into the car and return to my allocated place. This was humiliating

and it's your fault and I'm going to have you sac ...

**GLORIA:** (*shouting*) Mr Kutter.

**KUTTER:** (*shouting back*) Yes. What do you want?

**GLORIA:** (*shouting*) I want to tell you ... (*then normal voice*) I want to tell you that I have heard that St Victor's is to be featured on the television programme "Life Saving Hands" and that the production people are on there way here to shoot a warts and all day in our lives.

**KUTTER:** But I'm supposed to be playing the front nine with the Chief Constable. I wanted a word with him. I thought since I tidied up his knee last year he might get me off this motoring thing . . . .

**BS:** What motoring thing?

**KUTTER:** Never you mind. Appearing on television, eh?

**GLORIA:** Yes. We must put on a good show.

**KUTTER:** Yes you're right. In fact you're very right. This could be the making of me. Old butcher Harrop at Gainsborough Royal got a knighthood out of that op he did on screen and there was hardly any blood around. I must perform a really gory operation. Sir Horace Kutter. Has a certain ring, don't you think . . . .

**BS:** I never knew your name was Horace.

**KUTTER:** There are a lot of things you don't know about me, Doctor.

**GLORIA:** There should be more than a Knighthood in this for all of us. So, what operation will you perform? I'll have to get theatre ready and the operating team together.

(*MRS AINSLEY an elderly patient enters from the corridor in a wheelchair. She is accompanied by ELAINE ROBINSON who apart from pushing the chair seems to be her minder.*)

**BS:** What operation will you do? Because you were supposed to be playing golf we have none scheduled.

**KUTTER:** (*spotting AINSLEY*) You'll do.

**AINSLEY:** What?

**KUTTER:** What's wrong with you?

**AINSLEY:** Is this the hospital

**BS:** Yes

**AINSLEY:** Thought so.

**KUTTER:** What's wrong with you?

**AINSLEY:** What?

**KUTTER:** What are you suffering with?

**AINSLEY:** Pardon?

**KUTTER:** (*slowly*) What is your ailment?

**AINSLEY:** What ointment?

**KUTTER:** No not ointment, ailment.

**AINSLEY:** Are you a doctor?

**KUTTER:** Yes.

**AINSLEY:** Then you should know already. I'm pregnant. It's my ninth you know. I had twins last week. I've got a scar. Would you like to see it?

**KUTTER:** No. Certainly not.

**GLORIA:** (*calling down the ward.*) Nurse.

**AINSLEY:** Can you do something about the food.

**BS:** Food?

**AINSLEY:** Yes, the food, well more the drink actually. I had some iffy lemonade yesterday.

*(NURSE enters from Clement Attlee.)*

**KUTTER:** Nurse. What's this dodgy lemonade you've been feeding this patient?

**NURSE:** It's not dodgy lemonade. She's got two bottles, one for input and one for output and sometimes she gets them mixed up. She's just a sweet mixed up old lady. They brought her in because she had a fall and now she thinks she's pregnant. We play along with her, it's the best way. She doesn't belong here she should be in the Margaret Thatcher ward,

**AINSLEY:** Why did they put me in there I hated the woman.

**NURSE:** It really is a very nice ward.

**AINSLEY:** Can't I go to Anthony Eden. Ooooh, he was a lovely man.

**NURSE:** No Mrs Ainsley. Anthony Eden is only for spinal injuries.

**AINSLEY:** Can't I have one of them then?

**NURSE:** No you can't have a spinal injury and be pregnant. Now come with me, Mrs Ainsley. *(To the others)* I'll take her back to bed.

**AINSLEY:** Can't I have a book to read first. The lady with the books promised me the latest Barbara Rendle book

**NURSE:** I'll see if I can find her. What's the book called?

**AINSLEY:** It's a whodunit called "A Painful Death" or something like that.

**NURSE:** I'll see what I can do. Now come on let's get you back to bed.

**AINSLEY:** Ooh you are a nice girl. You should get like me. Pregnant, I mean. *(To MR KUTTER)* Can't you help her out with that? You are a doctor, after all.

**KUTTER:** Well I'm . . . .

**AINSLEY:** Can you give her a bucketful of that artificial emulsion or whatever they call it. Come on Nurse.

**NURSE:** *(to ELAINE)* You wheel her back to Thatcher. I'll come with you so we'll find your bed. *(NURSE follows ELAINE and AINSLEY exit to the corridor.)*

**GLORIA:** Well you can't operate on her.

**KUTTER:** Why not?

**GLORIA:** Because we want someone who is likely to get better and you don't generally recover from age related diseases.

**KUTTER:** OK. Dr Bacón-Sluceur. Find me someone to operate on and get Dr Love. We'll need her as well.

**BS:** She's off duty, now. She was she going fishing.

**KUTTER:** Good Lord, this is much more important than that. I'm angling for a knighthood.

**BS:** Right *(He goes to the PA)* Calling Dr Love. Dr Love you're wanted in Clement Attlee. Now I'll try and see if I can drum up someone for you to operate on. *(He exits into Clement Attlee as SISTER STONELY enters from the corridor.)*

**SISTER:** Good morning Mr Kutter. Nice to see you. Sorry I missed your rounds. Mrs Sampson, what are you doing in my territory?

**GLORIA:** I came to tell Mr Kutter and you that this hospital is going to be featured on the TVs "Life Saving Hands" programme.

**SISTER:** When? Why was I not told?

**GLORIA:** And they're coming here today to record the programme.

**SISTER:** Why do these people have to come here to mess up our lives? (*NURSE enters from corridor*) What do you want, Nurse?

**NURSE:** Mr Mitchelson needs a bedpan.

**SISTER:** Oh not again, that's five times this morning.

**NURSE:** Well it is his prostate, Sister..

**KUTTER:** (*not listening*) Prostate?

**NURSE:** Yes. It's a man thing.

**SISTER:** I'd knock him prostrate if I had a chance. Go on Nurse get one out of store. (*NURSE goes into the cupboard.*) So, Mr Kutter. Are you going to just wait around here until the television people come to blight our lives?

**KUTTER:** No Sister, but they want me to operate and I'm trying to decide which one of the patients here is most likely to get me a knighthood.

**SISTER:** No wonder people in the community call us St Victim's rather than St Victor's. Tell me, are you going to pause while they play the adverts?

**KUTTER:** Oh, my.... I'll need to build in advert breaks, I must select an operation that can take them in. After all, I wouldn't want to be saving someone's life while the cameras weren't running. Haemorrhoidectomy's probably out, once you start with those little beggars you just have to get it finished.

**LOVE:** (*Enters from the corridor carrying a (about 6 foot) long canvas bag containing her fishing rods*) I was just about to leave. What's going on? I'm off duty. I haven't been off duty for thirty-six hours.

**KUTTER:** I am going to be featured on Life Saving Hands so you're going to have to work another few hours.

**LOVE:** Really? I'm going to be on the telly? Will someone help me with my make up, is my hair straight. Clothes! Does my bum look big in this???

**KUTTER:** Yes it does but don't get excited, just like the Lone Ranger you'll be wearing a mask so you could be anyone.

**GLORIA:** This is for the sake of the hospital, you know.

**LOVE:** Yes of course.

(*LAURENCE enters and sits in one of the "public seats"*)

**KUTTER:** You. I could operate on you.

**LAURENCE:** Me – operate – (*He faints as BS enters.*)

**SISTER:** Oh blimey, you can't operate on this poor old sod. Come one Mr Laurence wakey wakey (*she slaps him lightly around the face*) He's out cold. Anyone any good at fainting.

**BS:** I am. (*He faints*)

**SISTER:** Dr Bacón-Sluceur get up and stop playing the fool.

**LAURENCE:** (*coming round*) The thin night darkens. A breeze from the creased water sighs the streets close under milk waking wood . . .

**SISTER:** It's all right Mr Laurence. No one's going to operate on you. (*She sits him on one of the seats and hands him a glass of water*) Here, drink this.

(*NURSE comes out of the storeroom carrying a bedpan.*)

**NURSE:** What's happened?

**SISTER:** Nothing for you to worry about, Nurse . . . .

*(We hear the sound of a wasp. Everyone's eyes follow the flight of the wasp until it lands on the desk. SISTER comes slowly forward opens the drawer and takes out a swat. She takes aim and hits the desk. We hear the wasp once again in flight. This time it goes round the room landing on LAURENCE's head.)*

**SISTER:** *(through her teeth)* Sorry Mr Laurence. Got it.

*(SISTER swats his head. Just like dominoes falling He throws the glass. BS catches it. The wasp flies at DR LOVE who swings round her fishing rods catching NURSE on the back causing her to fetch MR KUTTER a frightful whack on the head with the bedpan. MR KUTTER collapses like a stone.)*

**BS:** Oh my Gawd, Mr Kutter? *(They all gather round him on the ground)* Quick, get a Doctor.

**SISTER:** You are a doctor.

**NURSE:** He's out cold. *(BS gets astride him and starts CPR which involves pulling him up and pushing him down.)*

**SISTER:** Get the smelling salts from the desk. *(NURSE goes to the desk and returns with smelling salts.)*

**SISTER:** *(taking the smelling salts)* Come now Mr Kutter. Can you hear me? *(The telephone starts to ring)*

**LOVE:** *(taking charge)* Come on now, move away give him some room and will someone answer that wretched phone.

**GLORIA:** *(answering the phone)* Hallo. Clement Attlee ward, you're through to Gloria, how can I help you.

**SISTER:** I just wish she wouldn't make my ward sound like a bloody call centre.

**GLORIA:** Yes of course. Send them up. Give them the directions. *(Replaces the receiver)* They're here and on they're way up here.

**SISTER:** Who?

**GLORIA:** The Television people.

**LOVE:** They can't come up here, now. Not with Mr Kutter out cold.

**SISTER:** We'll just have to send them away. Tell them to come back when Mr Kutter is better.

**GLORIA:** We can't do that. They'll just go off and film somewhere else. Some other hospital will get the money er . . . kudos. No, whatever happens, we must get them to film their episode here.

**SISTER:** Well, just how are we to do that when the star of the show is in more need of an operation than any of the patients.

**GLORIA:** Someone will have to pretend to be Mr Kutter. *(They all look around. Their eyes eventually fall on BS.)*

**BS:** Oh no. I can't be Mr Kutter

**GLORIA:** Yes you can.

**BS:** Can't Dr Love do it. She's the registrar.

**GLORIA:** You might not have noticed but Dr Love is a woman. The television people know who Mr Kutter is. They're coming to film him. They may not be all that bright but they are bound to notice that Dr Love is not a man. Come on Doctor. This is for the sake of the hospital. A successful programme will benefit all of us. We're counting on you.

**BS:** *(Looks around desperate but sees there's no one else.)* But I can't.

**GLORIA:** You must. Quickly. Get his clothes off and hide him in the cupboard.

**BS:** Why do we need to take his clothes off?

**GLORIA:** Because Mr Kutter is a consultant. Like all consultants he wears nice expensive suits and like all junior doctors you dress like a sack of potatoes.

**BS:** But his clothes won't fit and anyway, I can't do the operation, I am not senior enough.

**GLORIA:** No. Dr Love will have to operate.

**LOVE:** Oh? What about "the television people may not be all that bright but they are bound to notice that Dr Love is not a man"?

**GLORIA:** When you're scrubbed up and in your operating greens with a mask over your face no one is going to be able to tell your gender. Mind you, you might have to use a deep voice when asking for instruments.

**LOVE:** (*deep voice*) Scalpel, swab.

**GLORIA:** Perfect. Now quick help me get him into the cupboard. (*DR KUTTER is manhandled into the cupboard by BS. GLORIA closes the door on them.*) Mr Laurence. I require one big favour from you.

**LAURENCE:** Alas poor Kutter, I knew him well. Anything Mrs Sampson.

**GLORIA:** I need you to be the patient that Mr Kutter is to operate on.

**LAURENCE:** Except that. When he said that just now about operating on me I came over all unnecessary.

**GLORIA:** We won't really operate on you. I just want you to pretend.

**LAURENCE:** No.

**GLORIA:** But St Victor's needs you.

**LAURENCE:** Sorry. No chance.

**NURSE:** (*aside*) May I have a go at him.

**GLORIA:** Be my guest.

**NURSE:** Mr Laurence. Would you like to audition for a part in this film the hospital is making?

**LAURENCE:** What sort of part.

**NURSE:** A very important part. The working title of the film is Mr Allsorts gets better.

**LAURENCE:** What part do you want me to play?

**NURSE:** The title role.

**LAURENCE:** Mr Allsorts eh?

**NURSE:** That's it. Now the producer will be in here in a minute and I want you to convince him you're ill. That way you will get the part in the film.

**LAURENCE:** There's no script?

**NURSE:** No it's an improvisational piece. I thought after your long years in the theatre you could do that.

**LAURENCE:** Oh yes of course. Did I ever tell you about the time I did Hamlet at the Old Vic with Larry? He was a wonderful Hamlet. Such power, such presence  
"What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason!"

**NURSE:** (*quickly*) This is a more natural role. You won't need to quote Shakespeare

**LAURENCE:** Not even a little bit? You know "medicine life may be prolonged, yet death will seize the doctor too."

**NURSE:** (*firmly*) No Shakespeare. Just go up for the part they are offering. The man who is sick!

**LAURENCE:** All right then. To be sick or not to be sick, that is the question. Whether 'tis

**NURSE:** You're ill, not Hamlet! (*DR LOVE comes out of the cupboard.*)

**GLORIA:** What have you done with him?

**LOVE:** We put him here. There was no chair, you see.

*(She opens the cupboard door and we see they have hung MR KUTTER by his vest from a hook on the back of the door. At that moment three people enter from the corridor. DR LOVE shuts the door quickly and gets as far away from it as possible. JOYCE, MAURICE and TANSEY enter from the corridor. JOYCE is a former Blue Peter presenter, MAURICE is an arty farty effeminate film director and TANSEY is the world's shyest camera operator.)*

**JOYCE:** Hello. My name is Joyce Everard-Smythe from the "Life Saving Hands" team. You might recognise me I've been on Blue Peter. This is our film crew. This is Maurice Spatchcock, the director and Tansey Evans our cameraperson.

**MAURICE:** Where will we be filming? I need to feel the creative vibes of the space.

**TANSEY:** Space, yers.

**MAURICE:** Here would be good. Can't you just feel the atmosphere oozing out of these walls?

**TANSEY:** These walls, yers.

**NURSE:** Funny. I thought it was blood.

**MAURICE:** Blood. Can't stand the sight of the stuff. It's a good job I'm behind the camera for this.

**TANSEY:** Camera for this, yers.

**LOVE:** Why does she just keep repeating what he says?

**JOYCE:** *(ignoring this)* Now I have to meet your head surgeon, Mr Kutter.

**GLORIA:** *(Opening the cupboards door and pulling out BS and pushing him forward.)* Here is Mr Kutter.

**BS:** But . . . .

**JOYCE:** Good to meet you Mr Kutter. I used to be on Blue Peter, you know. Now what have you for us today?

**BS:** Nothing.

**MAURICE:** Nothing?

**GLORIA:** Nothing in the operating theatre just at this moment but we will be having someone sick, in this very room, in a minute.

**NURSE:** It's time for your audition, Mr Laurence,

**LAURENCE:** Remind me, what was the part?

**NURSE:** The sick man.

**LAURENCE:** Right. *(Moving to JOYCE.)*

"Who worse than a physician Would this report become? But I consider,  
By medicine life may be prolong'd, yet death will seize the doctor too. How ended she?"

**JOYCE:** What?

**LAURENCE:** It's from Measure to Measure.

**JOYCE:** What's that?

**LAURENCE:** It's Aaaaaaahhhhhhhh *(He falls to the floor clutching his stomach)*  
Aaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!

**JOYCE:** Is he all right?

**NURSE:** It's his condition.

**JOYCE:** What is his condition?

**NURSE:** He has a problem with the cartilage in his left knee.

**LAURENCE:** It's the awful pain — in my leg.

**MAURICE:** Then why's he clutching his tummy? (*LAURENCE moves his hands down to his leg.*)  
Now why is he clutching his right leg? (*LAURENCE moves his hands to his other leg.*)

**NURSE:** It's the nature of this condition. The pain travels his body. (*LAURENCE moves his hands back.*)

**JOYCE:** Again, what is his condition?

**NURSE:** Well he's got, er well ... What is his condition Mr Kutter?

**BS:** How the hell do I know?

**LOVE:** It's his cartilage. He has a cartilage problem, don't you remember Dr Kutter. We are going to operate to sort it out for him, aren't we?

**BS:** Oh yes. Yes that's right. Sort out his mobile cartilage.

**JOYCE:** Is that the operation you were planning for Life Saving Hands?

**LOVE:** Oh yes. It's very unusual a mobile cartilage. Is that OK?

**JOYCE:** Well it's not very interesting. I mean it's only a cartilage. Doesn't he need a new leg or something?

**LAURENCE:** (*clutching his leg*) Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhh!!!

**JOYCE:** Or perhaps brain surgery?

**LAURENCE:** (*clutching his head*) Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhh!!!

**JOYCE:** Or heart transplant or something?

**LAURENCE:** (*he clutches his chest*) Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhh!!!

**LOVE:** His heart is fine.

**JOYCE:** Well can't we transplant it anyway. It'll make great television.

**MAURICE:** I can see it now. This sick old man.

**LAURENCE:** Here, less of the old, if you don't mind.

**MAURICE:** At death's door but refusing to cross the threshold. Then this eminent surgeon (*indicating BS.*)

**BS:** (*to DR LOVE*) Which eminent surgeon?

**MAURICE:** Steps into the limelight. He tears the heart from one body and inserts it into this unfortunate individual. (*LAURENCE starts to get up.*) With his "Life saving hands" he restores this miserable fellow to full health.

**LAURENCE:** Crying God for Harry, England and Saint George.

**JOYCE:** He seems better now.

**NURSE:** (*glaring*) It's only an intermittent problem it comes and goes. (*She kicks LAURENCE he falls down in pain*) There you are, you see. The pain has returned.

**JOYCE:** OK. We'll do the cartilage but we need something else as well. Find us something more major surgery. Now take us to the operating theatre where this will all be filmed.

**GLORIA:** It's this way. We just follow the signs to John Major.

**JOYCE:** You've named the operating theatre after John Major?

**GLORIA:** Well you did want "major surgery". (*She opens the door to the corridor and JOYCE, MAURICE and TANSEY exit.*) You'd better come too, Mr Kutter.

**LOVE:** That's you Mr Kutter.

**BS:** (*through his teeth.*) I'm only going if you come as well.

**LOVE:** All right, I'll come. We're coming Mrs Sampson. *(They all exit through corridor door.)*

**LAURENCE:** Was that all right, Nurse?

**NURSE:** Yes, Mr Laurence. They'll let you know if you've got the part later on. Come on, let's get you back to bed.

**LAURENCE:** Oh, you are a darling, darling. *(They return to Clement Attlee.)*

**SISTER:** Typical. One minute it's bedlam in here, the next they've all gone. *(MRS MARJORY KUTTER enters from the corridor)*

**MARJORY:** Is Horace in here?

**SISTER:** Horace

**MARJORY:** Yes Horace.

**SISTER:** We have a ward full of patients but I don't know any Horace. Could it be one of the other wards, Wilson or Heath?

**MARJORY:** Not Wilson, not Heath, Horace. *(Desperate)* I want my husband. What have you done with him? I've had the Chief Constable on the phone. He said that Horace was to meet him in the clubhouse before they played a round.

**SISTER:** Your husband is playing around with the Chief Constable?

**MARJORY:** Listen I hate having the Constabulary on the phone, even if it is the Chief Constable. We have to have him for tea you know, horrible man. What have you done with my husband, Mr Kutter?

**SISTER:** Oh, you're Mrs Kutter.

*(NURSE enters from Clement Attlee to see what the noise is all about. The cupboard door opens revealing DR KUTTER still hooked on the back.)*

**MARJORY:** Marjory Kutter, yes. Now please tell me where my husband is?

**SISTER:** Have you any idea where Mr Kutter is, Nurse?

**NURSE:** *(as she closes the cupboard door.)* Oh I expect he's hanging about somewhere.

**SISTER:** I tell you what. I'll put out a call for him. Perhaps you'd like to go to the waiting area.

**MARJORY:** Can't I wait here. The waiting area is full of . . . sick people. *(Sits at desk.)* Please let me wait here until you find him.

**SISTER:** All right. You keep an eye on the cupboard Nurse. We don't want the door opening unexpectedly, do we? I'll go and check the ward. *(SISTER exits into Clement Attlee.)*

**MARJORY:** Don't you worry about me, Nurse. I expect you've got some work to do. My husband doesn't understand how hard you all work.

**NURSE:** Yes I do have work to do. I'll just slip in here and get on with it. *(She eases herself into the cupboard – pause – AINSLEY enters from the corridor pushed by ELAINE. ELAINE speaks in song lyrics. She speaks her lines, she doesn't sing them.)*

**AINSLEY:** Are you the book lady?

**MARJORY:** What book lady?

**AINSLEY:** The lady who brings round all the books. I'm after Barbara Rendle's latest it's called "A Painful Death".

**MARJORY:** Sorry?

**AINSLEY:** My name is Ainsley and this is my friend Elaine Robinson from Thatcher.

**ELAINE:** Two wheels on my wagon and I'm just rolling along.

**AINSLEY:** Now Elaine, stop talking in riddles. I like Barbara Rendle. I hope her latest book is up to standard.