

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

The hammer falls down, somehow in slow motion, and smacks the mahogany forcing it to cry. A deep, thundering bellow that echoes around the courtroom bouncing off the walls and into my ears, yanking me awake from my sombre stare.

'Psychopath?... Institute of Psychology?' The words rattle around in my head for a moment or two. I look to the judge; dressed to depress in stark black and white robes and a face to suit: 'An Institute of Psychology?' The glare from those cold eyes freezes the air as the words fall from dry chapped lips. A pale cream uniform arrives at my side, accompanied by a remarkably unremarkable man as plain as his shirt. His badge reads 'Malcolm' but his face is blank and unremorseful as his snowy hand clamps my right forearm in a vice-like grip, stalling the blood in my hand whilst a second squeezes my shoulder, chilling to the bone.

'Why thanks, I sure could use a friend right about now.' He lets out a bitter mechanical hiss and thrusts me from the stand. It remains this cheerful as he shoves me into the dark seats of the waiting 'taxi', if it could even be called that.

A rusting mini-bus sits in the car park; the writing on its side faded to a faint blue smudge on a dirty white background. Sitting in a grubby seat I'm stuck down with gum. I rub my arms, trying to ease the shaken timid blood back to my hands. Inside, the walls are damp and the air musty and dust is blown up by fans hidden in the shadows. I inhale a deep breath that sucks up the wandering dust in a swirling vortex. It's clinging tightly deep in my throat, clogging up my lungs...

(In a dark, dank murky room I lie; a scrawny pasty-faced kid with a shock of curling red hair, a gift from a mother lost in a world I could barely comprehend. A hunched father figure towers above me on my greying mattress. His sunken eyes wreathed in the shadow from the glowing embers falling from a cigarette hanging between pursed lips. With grubby fingers he plucks it from rose lips, a brief pause, then smoke streams out; stinging my eyes, burning my skin. The ash throttles me and I splutter. He wheezes, the cigarette is strangling him too, smothering his words. But he *needs* it. He says, it keeps him sharp, keeps *them* from taking the both of us to wherever she is. And I believe him, so every night he's here and I'm here, in our house, and he whispers to me through his torn voice; 'that's how it gonna stay, cos der aint nuthin or no one that gonna keep us apart.' And as he rasps the cigarette in his mouth it bobs up and down and my head follows suit, but my eyes are adoringly fixed on his 'cos I trust the man sitting all alone behind those faded blue eyes. And I smile.)

I'd usually make an effort to ...hmm... charm my way out of a situation such as the one I find myself in, but maybe this time I'll just see where Lady Luck leads me...

She's certainly playing me for the fool this time. The mini-'taxi'-bus-wreck shudders to a halt. I peer out from under my dusty old cap, through the dirty windows. A clean yet deserted car park surrounded by perfectly trimmed grass that's greener than green. Perfect bushes trimmed with precision and care, perfect flowers that stand to attention like colourful little brain-washed soldiers in perfect formation lining the paths. I've seen their kind back in the real world. This certainly ain't my kinda place. It's so

clean, so perfect it's creepy and it's sendin' chills running down my back. I feel like goin' and beatin one of them damn soldiers just to bring some sense to this place.

Malcolm's still here. He tears back the door with such force I'm surprised the hinges stood it.

'Out,' he says with a voice that would cause a viper to creep back into its basket and quiver. He marches me down the pristine path past the soldiers, glaring up at me with innocent smiling faces, but I know no soldier is innocent. Ahead is my new home, the Institute. I glance through the gleaming glass panels in the doors and all I can see is... white. Clean sparkling white so bright my poor eyes struggle to cope, but I bet that's what they wanted to happen. Unless their decorator was crazy too.

The doors silently slide open. Malcolm seems to know what's he doing so I let my shoes glide across the tiled floor. The door closes with a quiet 'click'. Malcolm calls down the seemingly deserted corridor:

'Admission, come sign for him,' breaking the silence. Three silhouetted heads appear from the walls. One is staring up at me, thermometer in hand. Paperwork exchanges hands and in the blink of an eye Malcolm is gone.

'It time for your admission shower, mister m-Murphy,' mumbles one of the three. As they slide towards me, arms outstretched I break into a fast-paced saunter across the tiles away from them, calling over my shoulder:

'I'm already plenty damn clean, thank you.'

Surprised at this the shower musketeers stand startled and momentarily bemused.

I continue to saunter on into a room filled with the poor sods they presumably call patients.

'They showered me this morning at the courthouse and last night at the jail. And I *swear* I believe they'd of washed my ears for me on the taxi ride over if they coulda found the facilities. Hoo boy, seems like every time they ship me someplace I gotta get scrubbed down before, after, and during the operation. I'm gettin' so the sound of water makes me start gathering up my belongings.' Over my shoulder I spy the winking shine of that damned cheeky thermometer, reflecting the light, 'And *get* back away from me with that thermometer, Sam, and give me a minute to look my new home over.' Pausing, I turn to look at the confused faces of the resident inmates.

'I never been in an Institute of Psychology before.'

They stare at me in awe; a gaping hole of wonderment has opened up in each of their faces.

'Good mornin', buddies.'

Not the most talkative group of fellows it seems. Their eyes follow my hand up towards the ceiling to flick a small orange bat hanging down over me. It struggles to spiral downwards but its string is holding it back. I drop my hand back into the pockets of my dirty trousers.

'Mighty nice fall day.' But the looks on their faces tell me such notions are wasted on these ears.