

THE HOSPITAL ROOM
(full-length comedy)

SYNOPSIS

Ben Peterson is admitted to the hospital for major surgery and finds himself sharing a room with a very annoying Donk Benjamin. The two eventually find common ground until Ben learns something about Donk which he finds very troubling. As he is being wheeled into the operating room Ben demands to be returned to a different room - if he survives.

CAST

3 Males, 60s
1 Male, 40s-50s
1 Female 60s
1 Female 40s
1 Male 30s-40s
Female Voiceovers

SET:

A Hospital Room

PRODUCTIONS/READINGS

New Play - 2015

THE HOSPITAL ROOM
DIALOGUE SAMPLE

BEN

(Seeing DONK in the other bed) Why am I not in a private room? I said I wanted a private room.

NURSE

I'm sorry Mr. Peterson. There are no private rooms available right now. Maybe after your surgery one will open up.

BEN

If it opens up because of a discharge that's fine. If it opens up because of a death forget it.

NURSE

Don't be silly.

BEN

(Reconsidering) Although I suppose it would be okay if you changed the bed itself. I guess people have to die occasionally. It is a hospital after all.

NURSE

Yes.

BEN

So do you change the bed if a person dies in it?

NURSE

Yes we do.

BEN

How would I know that? I mean how would I know you've changed the actual bed?

NURSE

When someone dies we wheel them to the basement morgue in their bed so it's not really an issue for you.

BEN

So you mean if I die you'll wheel me in this bed?

NURSE

Yes I suppose so. Now could you climb onto the bed please?

BEN

Climb? I didn't sign up to go mountaineering. Isn't this one of those wheelchairs that rises?

NURSE

I don't know what you mean? We don't have wheelchairs that rise.

BEN

I thought this was a good hospital. I hope your operating equipment is more up-to-date than your wheelchairs.

NURSE

Frankly I've worked in five hospitals and have never seen a wheelchair that rises.

BEN

Oh please I see them everywhere. I'm a patient. I'm going in for major surgery tomorrow. Why am I expected to climb up onto this thing?

NURSE

Mr. Peterson I didn't mean climb. I meant that you are well enough to stand up out of the wheelchair and - and get into the bed.

BEN

I would think you'd have a couple of orderlies to lift me.

NURSE

(Assisting him out of the chair) I can help you.

BEN

Why are the beds so high? I don't understand. I could jump out of bed and bang my head on the ceiling.

NURSE

They just make access easier for the staff.

BEN

You risk the lives of the patients so you don't have to bend down? What kind of a place is this?

(With the NURSE'S help HE makes it into the bed)

NURSE

Now that wasn't so terrible.

BEN

(Sarcastic) Where's the seatbelt?

NURSE

(Lifting the remote) Now this gadget is for you. If you push this button it's an intercom and you can summon a nurse. If you push these labeled buttons you can work the television (SHE points to where the television would be hanging)

BEN

Why is there only one television?

NURSE

That's how the rooms were set up.

BEN

I thought this was supposed to be a good hospital. Good hospitals have individual televisions.

NURSE

This is a good hospital and you'll be going into surgery early tomorrow so it really doesn't matter. You should try to get some sleep. Now is there anything else?

BEN

Yes. I'm worried about my valuables.

NURSE

They're secured.

BEN

I don't understand why I couldn't keep them with me.

NURSE

Mr. Peterson you're going in for surgery. You can't take anything in with you. Your valuables are safe. I assure you.

BEN

You assure me? Does that mean that if my valuables are stolen you'll replace them?

NURSE

Look Mr. Peterson I've worked here for five years and have never had a patient lose any valuables.

BEN

And every patient had them "secured" the way I did?

NURSE

If they didn't have family to take possession of them.

BEN

If anything is missing I'll take the hospital to small claims court.

NURSE

I'm sure that won't be necessary.

BEN

You might want to warn the people in charge of "securing" my valuables that I never lose in small claims court.

NURSE

You sue a lot of people don't you?

BEN

Of course I do. It's the only way to protect oneself. A warning should suffice. Please be sure to pass the word on that I am not one to try to take advantage of.

NURSE

Yes I'll do that. Now if there's nothing else...

BEN

Where's the bathroom?

NURSE

(Indicating) Through that door. Do you have to go?

BEN

Not now but I'm sure I'll have to go during the night.
(Looking at his situation on the high bed) How am I supposed to get back into bed?

NURSE

Well there are two options. I could give you a container...

BEN

A PEE CONTAINER? Are you crazy? Do I look like the type of person who pees into a container?

NURSE

Actually that's what you'll be doing after your surgery once we remove the catheter.

BEN

What catheter?

NURSE

(Taking pleasure) The one that the surgeon will insert into your penis at the start of the surgery.

BEN

Nobody told me about a catheter. There has to be another way.

NURSE

There is no other way. It's standard procedure.

BEN

Whoa, whoa, whoa. I need to talk to the surgeon right now.

NURSE

I'm sorry he's not available.

BEN

What do you mean not available?

NURSE

He's not on duty.

BEN

Then send in the attending physician - whoever is on duty. This is supposed to be a good hospital. There has to be a doctor on duty.

NURSE

I can't summon the attending so that you can discuss your objection to the catheter. You can speak to the surgeon before the operation begins tomorrow.

BEN

What if they want to put me out while he's still scrubbing?

NURSE

You can ask to speak to him before they do that.

BEN

This is not a pleasant thought. You don't understand. You're a woman. Penises aren't made for tubes to be stuck into them. Did you ever see how small the penis hole is?

NURSE

Mr. Peterson if you use the bathroom just push the nurse's button and we'll help you back into bed. Now if there's nothing else...

BEN

I need water. Can you bring me a pitcher of water?

NURSE

(Indicating) This is your water pitcher. Would you like me to pour it for you?

BEN

Is that leftover water from the last patient?

NURSE

No it's fresh water.

BEN

Did you change the water personally?

NURSE

No an orderly did.

BEN

And the cup. Did he change the cup?

NURSE

I'm sure he did.

BEN

Did you see him change the water and the cup?

NURSE

Mr. Peterson please. I have other patients to attend to. This is a good hospital. The water and cup have been changed, the bedsheet has been changed, even the remote has been sanitized.

BEN

I saw a story on Dateline where a hospital was cutting corners to save money at the risk of the patients.

NURSE

Not this hospital.

BEN

You could have left the old water in the pitcher. How would I know?

NURSE

How would that save the hospital money?

BEN

Believe me it all adds up.

NURSE

It's water.

BEN

What does a catheter look like? Do you have one that I can look at?

NURSE

I don't actually. They keep them in the O.R.

BEN

Just the thought of it is making me queasy.

NURSE

Would you like a pan?

BEN

You mean a vomit pan?

NURSE

If you're queasy...

BEN

You know I was fine when I walked into the lobby today but since then I've been going downhill quickly.

NURSE

It's anxiety.

BEN

I'm thinking of rescheduling. How does that work - with insurance and all I mean.

NURSE

Mr. Peterson everything will be fine. You're just stressing and the best thing would be for you to sleep.

(Intercom buzzes)

BEN

(Panicky) Oh my God. Is that me?

NURSE

It's the intercom. You don't have anything connected to you. (Pushing the intercom button) Yes?

VOICE

Mrs. Raymond in 1206 needs her drip changed. Can you do it?

NURSE

(On intercom) I'll be right there. (To BEN) Okay Mr. Peterson try to get some sleep. I'll check in on you a little later. And remember no water after midnight.

BEN

Yes maybe I need to sleep. Take my mind off all this.

(NURSE nods and exits. Within seconds DONK begins to snore loudly)

BEN (Cont.)

What the... (HE grabs the intercom buzzer and pushes it)

VOICE

Yes may I help you?

BEN

Can you send my nurse in?

VOICE

What's the problem?

BEN

My roommate is buzzing.

VOICE

Buzzing?

BEN

I mean he's snoring.

VOICE

I'll let your nurse know.

BEN

How am I supposed to sleep with all this noise?

VOICE

Is there anything else?

BEN

No there's nothing else. Wait. Do a lot of patients call you because they're having pain with their catheter?

VOICE

Is your catheter bothering you?

BEN

Very much so.

VOICE

I'll tell the nurse.

(The snoring seems to be getting louder)

BEN

This is ridiculous.

(HE pulls the curtain between the beds but it doesn't help lessen the sound)

BEN (Cont.)

(To himself) You would think they would have soundproof curtains. This is supposed to be a good hospital. (HE opens the curtain again and speaks to DONK). Hello. (The snoring gets louder so HE speaks louder) Hello. (The snoring gets louder still so HE yells) HELLO!

(The snoring stops as DONK awakens and groggily turns towards BEN)

DONK

Hey roomie how are ya?

BEN

Roomie?

DONK

Well I don't know your name. I'm Herb but everyone calls me Donk.

BEN

Well sorry to wake you but your snoring was making it impossible for me to fall asleep.

DONK

Oh sorry. My wife has the same complaint and usually hits me with an elbow.

BEN

Yes well maybe if you turn over or something. I need to sleep.

DONK

(Reaching across to shake hands) And you are?

BEN

(Considering the height of the bed HE is reluctant to reach out) I don't want to reach out and end up falling off the bed. At this height it could be deadly.

DONK

(Withdrawing hand) I understand. You could get a nosebleed up here (HE laughs at his own joke making a unique and annoying sound. BEN cringes a bit) Well anyway what's yer name?

BEN

I'm Ben.

DONK

Ben Dover? (Pause as HE waits for a response which is not forthcoming) Bend over - get it? (Unique laugh again)

BEN

Okay well I'm really tired so goodnight. (HE turns away)

DONK

(Oblivious) So what are you in for?

BEN

(Turning back annoyed) Apparently I'm in for a long night,

DONK

I mean what brings you here. And don't say a taxi (Unique laugh)

BEN

I'm having surgery in the morning so if you don't mind I really need to get to sleep.

DONK

Oh sure. You don't want to be tired when they put you out tomorrow. (Unique laugh)

(The two lie quietly for a few moments)

BEN

Did you ever have to use a catheter?

DONK

Sure plenty of times.

BEN

Was it - bad?

DONK

I'd rather have someone push a nail through my ear lobe.

BEN

(Cringes) There must be another way.

DONK

There is but the doctors don't really want you to piss all over them. Selfish bastards. (Unique laugh)

BEN

(Still annoyed at the laugh) Okay. Well goodnight.

DONK

Sleep tight. Don't let the bedbugs bite. (Unique laugh)

(BEN squirms now thinking the bed may have bedbugs)

BEN

You don't think they have bedbugs here do you? This is supposed to be a good hospital.

DONK

Nah I'm sure they don't have bedbugs. That's just what you call an expression.

(The two lie in silence for a few moments)

DONK (Cont.)

The last hospital I was in should have been called the roach motel.

(BEN squirms and starts rubbing his hands on his body as if searching for bugs)

DONK (Cont.)

What's wrong?

BEN

I think I felt something crawling.

DONK

That's just your mind playing tricks on you. I mention bugs and you feel bugs. It's called mental suggestivity or something like that. I should mention massage girls.
(Unique laugh)

BEN

How about you don't mention anything and we just go to sleep.

DONK

(Locking his lips with his fingers) The vault is sealed.

(The two start to fall asleep. Within a few moments DONK begins to snore loudly)

BEN

Hello. (DONK snores louder so BEN speaks louder) Hello.
(DONK snores louder so BEN screams) HELLO!

DONK

(Waking up groggily) Why do you keep saying hello? I'll never fall asleep if you keep talking.

BEN

You were asleep. You were snoring again.

DONK

Really?

BEN

(Pushing the intercom button) Hello. Hello.

VOICE

May I help you?

BEN

I thought you were sending my nurse in.

VOICE

I'm sorry she's with another patient. Is there something I can help you with?

BEN

How can you help me? You're just a voice.

VOICE

What seems to be the problem?

BEN

The problem is that my roommate snores and I can't fall asleep.

DONK

I can hear you.

BEN

(To DONK) I'm not telling state secrets. (To intercom) I need you to switch my room.

VOICE

I'll let your nurse know but I don't think there's another empty bed right now.

(BEN puts the intercom down and is clearly upset)

DONK

Look I'm not trying to be a bad roomie. Why don't you try to fall asleep and I'll stay awake until you do. That way my snoring won't keep you up.

BEN

Alright. Thank you. (Reflecting) I'm sorry it's just that I need to sleep. I'm very anxious.

DONK

Okay no problem. Stop yapping already and go to sleep.
(Unique laugh).

(The two lie quietly and BEN appears to be falling asleep as DONK twiddles his thumbs and appears to be bored. HE spies the television remote, aims it and pushes the button as BEN is now clearly asleep. Suddenly gunfire sounds and sirens wailing comes from the crime show on television. A startled BEN jumps up in bed as DONK desperately lowers the sound)

BEN

(Screaming) Ahhhhh. What's going on? (HE realizes it's the television)

DONK

Sorry roomie. I didn't know the sound would come on so loud.

BEN

I'm having surgery tomorrow goddamit. What the hell is wrong with you?

DONK

I said I was sorry.

BEN

You're the roommate from hell.

DONK

Now you definitely sound like my wife. (Unique laugh)

BEN

What is so funny? Why do you keep laughing that annoying laugh? You laugh at everything you say but nothing that you say is funny. Ben Dover is not funny. Blasting the TV while I'm trying to sleep is not funny.

DONK

It was an accident. The TV I mean not the Ben Dover line.

(THEY both become distracted by the television and stare for a few beats)

BEN

I didn't know they allow nudity on network television.

DONK

It's cable. This is a good hospital.

(THEY stare at the television, engrossed.
BLACKOUT)