

**MARKED by NIKKI ATKIN-REEVES**

**CAST:**

PATIENTS AND CARERS IN DEAN HOUSE:

LILY  
LIZ  
REG  
TRINA  
NADINE  
STEVE  
GILL - carer in charge of the half-way house  
DAVE - her assistant carer

MARK'S FAMILY:

MARK  
MARKSMUM  
MARKSDAD  
IAN - his younger brother  
LOUISE - his little sister

MRS PRENTISS  
DOCTOR VARA [female.]  
FIONA ANSTEY

The above sixteen characters form the nucleus of the play and should not be doubled. The following extra characters can, however, be doubled and could be divided between a minimum of ten further players:

FURTHER CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:

ARRESTING OFFICER  
JOHN - customer in Homebase  
JENNY -his wife  
KERRY - sales assistant in Homebase  
MR PARKER - Homebase manager  
DOCTOR JANE HARGREAVES  
MR PRENTISS - husband of Mrs Prentiss above  
MIDWIFE  
JOB CENTRE WOMAN  
MR HENDERSON - prospective employer  
MRS CAPIDOSE - prospective employer  
NURSE  
DENEICE - cleaner  
HAYLEY - cleaner  
MS WILLIAMSON-ELLIS - young keen teacher  
MRS SMITH - older teacher  
TOUR GUIDE  
NICOLA HARRIS - Year 10 pupil  
BEV - her friend  
SHARON MENZIES - another friend

In addition, throughout are needed the 'VOICES', PATIENTS and SCHOOLCHILDREN, CUSTOMERS, and so on. The play therefore needs a minimum of 26 players and could use more. The minimum of boys needed is: 8 [ 6 in the 'main' cast + at least 2 to play remaining characters.]

The play is full-length, lasting approx. two hours.

EXTRACT ONE

*Blackout. Music. Twentieth Century Blues. Into 'I'm the King of the Castle' sung out of tune and in a round.*

*Lights slowly up on group arranged in the acting area, tied with a big pink ribbon. The effect is that of a human birthday cake. The people within the cake have various postures: blank submission, urgency, excitement, etc.*

*There are figures around the outside of the cake who are stretched in attitudes as though about to storm a mountain. There is only the music and then the voices begin.*

VOICE 1

Once upon a time.

VOICE 2

Long ago and far away

VOICE 3

Atop a lofty mountain.

VOICE 4

Buried deep within the forest.

ALL

There was a castle, shaped like a fairytale wedding-cake.

*Small noises begin to come from the castle: some whimpering, sighing, soft chuckling, jabbering, singing - and with the noises the castle begins to move just slightly, almost imperceptibly at first, but gradually becoming more and more apparent.*

VOICE 1

And from the castle were heard

VOICES 2&3

Moans and cries

VOICES 3& 4

Slammings

*Pause*

VOICES 1&2

And longer silences

VOICE 3

Still and calm

VOICE 4

Atop the mountain ...

VOICE 1

...And the people grew suspicious.

VOICE 2

Frightened.

VOICES 3 & 4

Upset and angry

ALL

They wanted a change!

*They move towards the cake mountain with intent and as they do so they tear down the cake. As the cake is destroyed, the scene moves to the TV room in Dean House. Lily explodes into the room dressed all in pink, manically energetic.*

LILY

Pink! I'm going to wear pink, every day, head to toe for the rest of my life. Flaming fuchsia! Watch my brilliance!

GILL

Get out of the way of the telly, Lily!

LILY

You're watching your life pass you by! I can't get enough of my life! I want to live absolutely every moment of my life to the full. Life is good! Life is great! The world's too slow for me - speed it, speed it, I want to live it all at once!

*She spins around the chairs, getting in everyone's way and annoying Liz and Gill.*

GILL

Slow down, Lily, you're giving everyone a headache.

REG *without looking at her*

You'll be taken bad again, love, if you're not careful.

LIZ *belligerently*

Bollocks! Enjoy yourself when you can, no one else does. [*Looks around.*] Well, do they? [*Back to Lily.*] I don't, not in here.

LILY

The thing is, the thing is, I've got so much to do...

GILL

And so little time to do it in, eh, Lily? Reg is right love, you've still got to be careful; we haven't got you right yet. Remember what we said ... it's the building that's changed, not you.

LIZ *glaring at Gill*

She's alright, aren't you, Lil? She's alright, so don't you all start picking on her, because I won't have it, do you hear me? I won't have it. She's my friend and if you start picking on her I won't be answerable for my actions. Do you hear? Did you hear me? I won't be answerable for my actions! [*She has her face right up against Gill's.*]

GILL

Calm down, Elizabeth. There's a nice little family next door; you don't want to wake the children, do you?

LIZ

Don't you talk to me like that! I am sticking up for my friend here and no one else is helping me! I thought we were meant to be like a family; I thought we were meant to be helping each other! / You can't tell Lily what to do and you can't tell me what to do, ha!

Ha! Ha! Ha!

REG

/ My family never helped me out.

GILL

Stop it, Lizzie, / stop it!

REG

/ Hindered me, truth be told.

*Reg begins to sob silently. It's a sob that's been there since the beginning of the play.*

LILY

Right! I've got to get some paint, liven this place up. Where's the kitty? I think we would all be better off without this gloomy old beige. You know what the trouble with this Health Authority is, don't you? It's got no bezazz! [*Makes to grab Liz.*] Come on, Liz, let's go! Don't look so worried, Gill, I'll take responsibility for her. She's not really ill at all. just bored with beige ... aren't you, my friend? Yes! Come on, matey, we'll paint the walls tonight, give Reg something to cheer him up. You know your problem, Reg?

REG *very quickly*

Reactive depression, hopeless, can't do anything about it, in and out of hospital since my wife died.

LILY

You see, that's where you're all wrong, Reginald, because I have been in and out of

hospital longer than you and I've been watching and learning! What's lacking, what's missing, is colour! No wonder you're depressed, look at you, you look like a winter sky - dark grey, light grey and brown.

LIZ

Where's the brown in the sky?

LILY

Shut up, Liz, I know what I'm talking about.

LIZ

Don't tell me to shut up!

LILY

I can tell who I like to shut up because I have discovered the secret of mental health; let me loose on a Dulux catalogue and I'll prove it to you. I know where we can get some money as well; you see, I've thought it all out. I'll get a grant from the National Lottery. You see? I'm not as mad as I look.

GILL

You're not mad at all, Lily, you've just been unwell. No one's mad - that's a completely outmoded form of expression. Now, if you're going to set Lizzie off, I won't be your friend.

LILY

You're not my friend anyway, you're paid. Did you two hear that? Pretending she's my friend now! I wouldn't be friends with you anyway, you're far too boring. I know what I'm doing and you don't, and the only reason you don't want me to cheer this place up is because you'd be out of a job and what would you do then, eh?

LIZ

Don't talk like that to Gilly. If you set me off again ...

GILL

No one's going to set you off, Liz. Now come on - let's watch telly. Reg, pass over the TV Times. I think Blind Date is on.

LILY

Right, I'm going out. Right out. I've got my key and I'm out of here, out into the wide blue yonder. I'm going. Bye!

GILL *affecting unconcern*

Don't forget, we lock up at eleven and you're not to drink with your medication.

LILY *suddenly like an adolescent*

I know! [*She exits.*]

*Gill snaps out of the scene and says:*

*GILL to audience*

Mentally disordered person found in a public place, section 136. Duration of detention, 72 hours maximum.

*Liz and Reg exit. Dave comes on, followed by the Arresting Officer*

*DAVE to audience*

Procedure: if a police officer believes that a person found in a public place is, speech marks, suffering from a mental disorder, close speech marks, and is, open speech marks, in immediate need of care and control, close speech marks, he can take that person to a

GILL

Speech marks, place of safety, close speech marks, full stop. Brackets, usually the local hospital or a police station, close brackets.

ARRESTING OFFICER

The purpose of the section is for examination by a doctor ...

## EXTRACT TWO

GILL

Did she take her drugs?

DAVE

Yeah, I think so.

GILL

You think so? Dave, you're supposed to ensure that she takes them, page two of your job description, remember? You know how important it is to get the client's medication right.

DAVE

Yeah, like I said, I think she took them.

GILL

Well, let's look in the Drugs book shall we? - see if it was accounted for.

DAVE

The problem is, I don't think I've really been keeping it as up-to-date as you like ... I thought the important thing was getting back into the community.

GILL *cold*

Yes.

DAVE

So how come you still want to treat Lily as though she's in hospital?

GILL

Because some of them have spent twenty, thirty, even forty years going in and out of hospital. They need help to start with. Look how long it took to establish the concept of food shopping with some of the old timers; poor old Maureen didn't have a clue.

DAVE

Only because she's been fed since the age of twelve. If you'd never had to make a decision in your life, I bet you'd find Tesco a bit daunting. Anyway, she loves it now - especially the patisserie.

GILL

Yes, and look at the size of her; it's not healthy.

DAVE

She's happy though, and we're surely not in the business of making her unhappy. I thought the whole point was to improve her life, not make it worse.

GILL

But they don't always know what's good for them.

DAVE

I hate it when you do that, Gill.

GILL

What?

DAVE

Calling our clients 'them.' 'Us and them;' is that what you're about?

GILL

No, of course not. But you've got to accept that there are boundaries, otherwise we would not have ultimate responsibility for them.

DAVE

We haven't. They have.

GILL

Oh, Dave, don't be so ridiculous! What! Lily's got responsibility for herself, has she? / She's on the acute ward raving about paint and policemen; she's bitten a doctor and got herself sectioned. Again. She's not responsible for herself, she's not capable of it. And Liz? And Reg? Surely you're not telling me that Maureen is the best judge of what she should do?

DAVE

/ Sometimes.

Why don't you lock them all back up again if that's your attitude? Stick Maureen back in an asylum and throw away the key? Lily's not a criminal. She gets manic and wears outlandish clothes and, yes, she's unsettling, I'll give you that, but what harm is she doing? The only person she's ever hurt is herself.

GILL

And the policeman. Look, Dave, she needs help.

DAVE

Treating her as though she's incapable of remembering her medication is going to help her, is it?

GILL

Don't be so naive, Dave. You've got to acknowledge that they ... [*Corrects herself.*] ... our clients, have problems, otherwise they wouldn't be here. Surely you'll allow me that? Fair enough, they haven't got problems all the time - not when they take their medication and live sensibly - it's just that it's not easy to look after yourself when there's a voice in your head telling you not to, or you're so depressed you can't eat, or you're so high you haven't slept for a week. I mean, how can they take proper care of themselves in those circumstances? And it's our job; it's what we're paid for. Dave, if you really did forget to give Lily her medication last night, it would be a serious neglect of your duties and I wouldn't hesitate to report you.

DAVE *angry, but not as angry as Gill*

You're so uptight, Gill, do you know that? You make this feel like a prison, not a therapeutic community. Lighten up. [*Gets up.*] Right, I'm going off duty now. [*Pointedly.*] I've done the drugs round and I've phoned St. Peter's about Lily. Dr Fowler will see her in the morning, and if all goes well we should have her back with us on Saturday. N'night.

GILL

I'm only trying my best for the clients. We've got the drugs; we should use them sensibly.

DAVE

Yeah, I know - only doing what the doctor says. It's much easier to run an institution when half the residents don't know what time of day it is and can barely bring themselves to move from the chair for a shit.

GILL

Oh, you'd prefer Lizzie throwing it around, would you?

DAVE

Still, keeps the nights quiet for you, doesn't it? See you tomorrow night.

GILL

Have a good evening.

DAVE

Yeah.

*Pause. Dave makes as if to exit but steps forward and introduces the Haloperidol Shuffle. Music: Discordant tea dance type.*

*DAVE like a holiday camp entertainer*

You can always tell if someone comes from us, from Dean House. For a start, there's the walk, head down, feet dragging, sometimes a slight tremor to the hand. Let Elizabeth here demonstrate. [*Enter Liz.*] Lizzy, over to you. As you can see, the side effects of major tranquillisers are not attractive, but better than risk you sticking a fork in someone's neck, eh Liz? You might be a danger to the public and that wouldn't be acceptable, but we've got to let you out and about or else you'd forget what real life looked like. So, you're tranquillised, in order to keep the peace and preserve the furniture.

Spot the client who takes Chlopromazine, Perphenazine, Pericyazine, Promazine, Haloperidol, Droperidol, Beniperidol ... such pretty names and such a unifying effect: dizziness, drowsiness, dryness of mouth, blurred vision, constipation and lack of concentration. Not that that will bother our clients; they're all too

busy concentrating on their demons. [*Drum roll.*] The side effects! Facial grimacing. [*Patient enters, demonstrating and takes up dance position.*] Laboured breathing. [*Patient enters demonstrating and takes up dance position.*] Arching of the back. [*Patient enters demonstrating and takes up dance position.*] And prettiest of all, auto lingo bucco dysknesia [*tongue hanging out*] ... [*Patient enters, demonstrating and takes up dance position.*] ... with ocular giro crisis. That's eyes rolling around in the head, which gives you a wonderful style when you're dancing the Haloperidol Shuffle.

*Patients dance to the music and whirl around the floor while the washingup bowls are brought on for the next scene...*

### EXTRACT THREE

JOB CENTRE WOMAN

Trina Davies?

TRINA

That's me.

JOB CENTRE WOMAN

Just a few questions to establish your employment history and honesty. Have you got any references? It's just a precaution, in case you've escaped from a lunatic asylum or something! [*Chuckles mirthlessly; she has obviously been through this routine a million times before.*]

TRINA *pleasantly*

I have, as it happens.

JOB CENTRE WOMAN

Pardon?

TRINA

You know, come out of a mental hospital, like you said. Dean House. I accidentally overdid it on the drugs in January and I had a few problems afterwards. It wasn't anything really bad or anything - you know how it is - I was just dancing and dancing, spent all my money!

JOB CENTRE WOMAN *changing her attitude to one of barely stifled alarm*

I see. Miss Davies, there is an unemployment crisis in this country at the moment. No one - and you must understand this - no one is going to employ an ex-mental patient with a drug problem. Your best bet is to go to the DSS and sign on Incapacity Benefit. Good day.

TRINA *to audience*

I was gutted. Still, I wasn't going to give up. I mean, I was only in there a short time and all the people in there were all right, except Liz, and she was all right some of the time. They've got me on that Prozac now and I feel O.K., like I can do things. I don't know - perhaps I was depressed for a long time and never knew it. I used to be a right laugh at school, I tell you, but lately, since I left really, I suppose I got a bit down. [*Pause.*]

Anyway. Next try.

MR HENDERSON

Mr Henderson of Henderson Henderson and Shadbolt, how may I help you?

TRINA *as though reading from a script in a BBC accent*

I'm phoning in response to your advertisement in the Kent Messenger [*or appropriate local paper*]. Junior typist.

MR HENDERSON

Yes?

TRINA

I wondered if the job was still going. [*Corrects herself.*] Available.

MR HENDERSON.

Yes. Do you have any experience?

TRINA *crosses her fingers*

Yes

MR HENDERSON

Wednesday, three ten.

TRINA

Sorry?

MR HENDERSON

Interview.

TRINA *addressing the audience directly*

Interview.

MR HENDERSON

Come. [*Looks at notes.*] Miss Davies. C.V? [*Trina passes it. He looks at it, examining it whilst Trina looks around the room.*] Seven GCSE's. Mmm. Pitman. Secretarial College. [*Looks up sharply.*] Where?

TRINA

Lucie Clayton!

MR HENDERSON

Good. Mmm. Mmm.

TRINA

If you want to check with my previous employers, they would be only too glad for you to contact them.

MR HENDERSON

So how long did you work at the BBC?

TRINA *airily*

Oh, nearly five years.

MR HENDERSON

Before or after you'd been secretary to a solicitor?

TRINA

After.

MR HENDERSON *beginning to smell a rat*

For how long?

TRINA

Two and a half years.

MR HENDERSON

And you are?

TRINA *mask slipping*

Eh?

MR HENDERSON *becoming impatient*

Your age.

TRINA

Oh. Right. Seventeen. Nope, I mean nineteen. [*Counting on her crossed fingers behind her back.*] Um, no! Twenty five! I'm twenty five! [*Lamely*] Forget how old I am sometimes. [*Attempts to get Mr Henderson to laugh with her but it's not working.*]

MR HENDERSON

Next!

TRINA *to audience*

I've always had a bit of a problem with over confidence. Don't know if this Prozac is helping much either. Still, got to have another go. Cleaning. Well, I'll do anything.

MRS CAPIDOSE

Good morning. I'm Mrs Capidose and you are ... Trina Davies. Now, Trina, tell me a little bit about yourself whilst I have a quick look through your C.V.

TRINA

Well, I'm very clean and tidy and I've always helped cleaning my disabled grandmother's flat as well as my own. I've got a long haired cat called Sorted and you'd never know I had a cat from the state of the carpets. I was Head Girl at school and I was nearly in the netball team in Year 9. Positions of responsibility include looking after the stationery cupboard in Year 7. My hobbies include reading and socialising.



MRS CAPIDOSE

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? We can check up , you know.

TRINA

Nope. I'm clean. Good that, as it's a cleaning job I'm up for. [*Tries to involve Mrs Capidose in the joke but Mrs Capidose merely looks up at her and says:*]

MRS CAPIDOSE

Can you start on Monday? You'll need to bring your own rubber gloves. Thank you.

*All the interviewers get up and leave together.*

TRINA *to audience*

Did it. Piece of piss.

#### EXTRACT FOUR

VOICE 2

You feel bad or unworthy practically all the time now.

VOICE 3

I feel as though I am very bad and worthless. I deserve to be punished. I want to be punished.

VOICE 4

I don't like myself.

VOICE 1

I am disgusted with myself.

VOICE 2

I hate myself. I am to blame for everything that goes wrong. I feel my family would be better off if I were dead.

VOICES 3 & 4

I would kill myself If I could.

REG

I used to be able to cry but now I can't cry at all, even though I want to. I am completely absorbed in what I feel.

*At this point the Voices wrap the grey blanket right up around Reg, muffling him from the reality of the scene.*

NADINE *as one of the Voices, turns to audience*

It's almost as though I just slowed down. One day I noticed the time going more slowly and then I was responding to it in kind. I woke up slowly, my eyes gummy and tired, looked around my room and thought, what am I supposed to do next? The struggle of dressing myself seemed insurmountable: too many decisions, too many drawers and hangers. I couldn't do up buttons, hooks and eyes, or zips, so I didn't get dressed. I sat on the floor waiting for the slow time to go. I didn't phone in sick; the phone was downstairs and the number was in my diary. Too much effort, I thought; they'll realise I'm not coming in soon enough. I sat in a puddle of clothes in a dark room with the curtains drawn for days. I didn't do anything; I just sat. And thought. And cried. We should have more words for crying, like the eskimos have for snow. First of all I cried little snivelling sobs that caught in the back of my throat and made my nose run, salty over my lips. Then I took deep breaths

STEVE *another one of the Voices, turns to audience*

that couldn't control the next deep sobs that were making my chest heave and my shoulders shake. And the crying went deeper, into my stomach, deep down and up again, through my throat, ripping out of my mouth in a wet gurgling.

NADINE

And the crying went deeper and deeper, mixed up with my stomach and my limbs and it had a life of it's own. I was nothing to do with it, a passive vehicle, as the crying took a

dangerous turn and became a crying cancer, dangerous, frightening, nothing to do with feeling sad.

STEVE

It was despair that tore the howl from me.

NADINE

I howled like an animal.

STEVE

All instinct, primal scream. Howled on my bedroom floor on a sunny day in a beautiful house.

NADINE

And I had no right to do it.

VOICE

You've got everything going for you, Nadine. Your whole life is ahead of you, look how well you're doing already.

NADINE

But I was howling for the past.

VOICE

Snap out of it, Steve. Have a drink and a laugh with us; you need to get out more.

STEVE

But I was howling for the past.

VOICE

Get dressed, get yourself out for some fresh air.

STEVE

But I was howling for Auschwitz and Kosovo and Rwanda. Unemployment, homelessness, torture, lack of love.

NADINE

Hatred, poverty, intolerance and guns. Abuse, deceit, exploitation.

STEVE & NADINE

Loving, loathing, life, drugs, drones and daily bloody struggle.

NADINE

The sunrise made me cry.

STEVE

The sunset made me cry.

REG

And the utter impossibility of living made me howl. [*Sobs.*] I need asylum ... I need asylum.

*He pulls the blankets right over himself until he is a grey heap in the middle of the stage.*

## EXTRACT FIVE

DR VARA

We'll pop him along to Fiona Anstey. She'll sort him out. [*Gets up and exits.*]

MARKSMUM *to audience*

Fiona Anstey was based at the hospital. [*Slight pause.*] The mental hospital.

*The Voices, at least eight and more might be better, begin to enter and form ever-changing lines of corridors with the intention of entrapping and disorienting Mark and Marksmum.*

VOICE

High above the town

VOICE

Surrounded by a whispering wood

VOICE

Grey, cold stone

VOICE

Grey, cold faces

VOICE

And the corridors. Straight, unadorned, grey and white miles of corridors.

MARK

I was lost in the maze.

MARKSMUM

And the patients!

MARK

Grey faces.

VOICE

Dribblers.

VOICE

Laughing men.

MARKSMUM

Loonies.

VOICE

Dribbling women.

VOICE

Little periods of calm.

*Wait a beat before the next line.*

VOICE

And long sweeps of chatter, all at different pitches, all expressing an extremity of emotion.

VOICE

Masturbators.

VOICE

Shakers.

VOICE

Jilted lovers.

VOICE

The disappointed in business.

VOICE

The damaged.

VOICE

Withdrawn.

VOICE

Locked away.

VOICE

Mentally ill.

*Marksmum pulls Mark by the hand and moves increasingly fast along the corridors.*

MARKSMUM

This is no place to bring my Mark. He's doing his exams next year.

FIONA ANSTEY *enters through the maze of human corridors*

You are Marksmum? And you must be Mark. I'm Fiona Anstey.

MARKSMUM *to audience*

She didn't look old enough to be a doctor.

FIONA ANSTEY

Tell me, Mark, do you ever feel afraid or anxious? How do you sleep? Have you got many friends, would you say? Do you worry that people may be trying to influence your thoughts?

*No response from Mark save grunting.*

FIONA ANSTEY *slight pause before she asks this next question*  
Have you ever heard someone speaking to you and when you look there's no one there?

*Mark looks startled and grunts in the affirmative.*

MARKSMUM *equally startled*  
I thought we were here about drugs. I wasn't expecting this; hang on a minute! [*She takes a sharp intake of breath, looking horrified.*]

FIONA ANSTEY

Thank you, Mark. Why don't you go and get a cup of coffee for yourself and your mother? There's a machine in the corridor. She'll be out directly.

*Mark moves to corridor but makes no effort to get a coffee. He sits, slumped, echoing the facial expressions and the posture of the other clients who occasionally drift down the corridor.*

FIONA ANSTEY

I'd like to bring him in for some clinical observations and some tests. We need to build up a better picture but to be honest, he's looking textbook. He doesn't wash you say? [*Marksmum shakes her head.*] Did your GP mention anything to you about the possibility that Mark may be suffering from a schizophrenic illness? [*Marksmum reacts as though someone has punched her in the solar plexus.*] So we'll admit him for a short time while we get him on to the appropriate drug therapy. Did you drive here? I'll phone up to the ward and let them know you're coming. It's clearly signposted: Hopeless Ward ...

MARKSMUM *to audience*

... Is what I thought she said.

NURSE *entering briskly*

Hopewell Ward? Follow me.

FIONA ANSTEY *an afterthought*

Out of curiosity, any family history of this type of illness? Your husband or your parents, for example?

MARKSMUM *reacting violently to the suggestion*

No! And neither does my Mark. You're over reacting.

FIONA ANSTEY *cutting her off*

Good day, Marksmum.

MARKSMUM *to audience*

I walked very fast out of her office, pulling Mark by the hand. He was nothing like these people. Nothing. [*Slight pause.*] But when I looked again and saw the pain and hurt in Mark's face, and the pain and hurt in the faces that we passed in the corridor ... [*Finding it difficult to keep a brave face on things.*] Well ... you know ...

*Whisper from the voices in the corridor.*

VOICES

Schizophrenic.

MARKSMUM

My son is not mad. He's got his exams next year. He's not ... [*Finds it hard to say the word.*] ... He is not ... [*Whispers.*] ... Schizophrenic....

## EXTRACT SIX

HAYLEY

They should put them all back in the hospitals and get them off the streets. Our road's really gone down hill since they arrived and it's affected the value of our house and my hubby's not happy about that. We've worked hard to get that house nice and along come a load of loonies, probably never done a stroke of work in their lives and they get the nicest house in the street. And next door to little kiddies. Now, you're not telling me that's right.

DENEICE

Oh, that's terrible. Next door to little kiddies? You want to get onto your councillor, that's what you want to do. Oh, that's shocking.

HAYLEY

What do you think about that then, Trina? House full of psychos in my street and we weren't even consulted about it.

TRINA

They might not all be psychos. They might have other problems; you don't know.

HAYLEY

I know all I want to know. You've got to be a nutter to go into Dean House; it doesn't matter what kind of nutter; they're all psychos to me.

TRINA *no longer able to contain her anger*

Bollocks.

DENEICE

What are you - an expert?

TRINA

One in three people suffer from some form of mental illness at some time in their lives, you know. And most of them get better. Official.

HAYLEY

That means one of us could crack up then, doesn't it? [*Silly giggle.*]

DENEICE

Where did you get a figure like that then, anyway? [*To Hayley.*] She's making that up, you can tell. It's obvious.

HAYLEY

I dunno - number of nutters you see roaming around, seems fair enough to me. Come on then, girls, which one of us do you reckon it is then? Which one of us is a loony?

*There is a pause. They look around at each other and it is initially funny. Then the pause becomes too long and Trina is obviously struggling with herself, whether to say anything. Then, unexpectedly, Deneice speaks.*

DENEICE

Alright. I was on pills for my nerves when Don left me; but I wasn't a loony, no way! So it's me, O.K.? Well, I'm not a nutter, am I?

TRINA *confidently*

No, you're not, Deneice. And I had a stay in Dean House for six months and I'm not a loony either, am I?

*Pause. Hayley and Deneice look at her and then walk off in disgust.*

DENEICE *as she leaves*

I always thought she was weird.

*Trina whirls round, suddenly confused. She starts talking very fast, almost like Lily but with a more logical train of thought.*

TRINA *furious, shouting after them*

I only took a bloody E! I wasn't a nutter or anything, I just couldn't cope with the come-down. You try it! You try feeling like I did, and living in hospital for weeks. I could have died! I'm not weird, I'm like you. [*Building up.*] I bet your daughter's doing E's at her precious University! Tell you what, I bet she's dealing them! [*Beside herself.*] You try and do what I'm trying to do! You try to come back after a come-down like that.! [*Slight pause. She hits below the belt.*] At least my bloke stayed with me!

*Trina cries. She drops her cleaning materials and gets out her handbag mirror and a lipstick. She writes upon her forehead. The word is 'MAD'. ...*

## EXTRACT SEVEN

*Dave comes up. He has been looking for Reg and Liz. Deducing that all is not well he says to Mrs Smith:*

DAVE

Any problem here?

MRS SMITH

Are you in charge of this young woman?

DAVE

In a way. What seems to be the problem?

NICOLA

She's mental, that's what the problem is.

MRS SMITH

Nicola, Sharon and Beverly, go and rejoin the others! [*They hesitate.*] Now! [*They go slowly. To Dave.*] Am I right in assuming that the young woman has some kind of mental problem?

DAVE *relieved, thinking that the problem will blow over*

Yes, we're from / Dean House ...

MRS SMITH *cutting him off*

/ Well what on earth were you thinking of, bringing them here where there are school children?

DAVE *misunderstanding*

I know children can be cruel but ...

MRS SMITH *cutting him off*

They're obviously not safe to be near children! They should be locked up.

DAVE

Now, look here. That is precisely the kind of attitude that children shouldn't be taught!

*Mrs Smith snorts and walks off. She catches up with Nicola, Bev and Sharon and as she leads them off they fall behind, one by one and begin to follow Dave and Liz.*

DAVE

I'm going to see where Reg got to. [*They are followed at a distance by the girls.*] Just ignore them, Liz, they're not worth your time. [*They walk into the shop area. Mark, Marksmum and Louise unfreeze and are browsing near the postcard rack.*] Look, there's Reg.

*Reg is going through the postcard rack, rifling through the cards, rearranging them without purpose, except to put some order into what has just happened to him. The girls watch him.*

SHARON

Look at him. What's he like?

BEV

Yeah, what's he like, Nick, eh?

*Long pause. The girls stare at Reg and past him at Liz and Dave who are on the opposite side of the postcard rack.*

NICOLA

He's like a bloody nutter, girls, that's what he's like. [*Aggressively to Reg.*] Aren't you?

*Liz advances threateningly. She thrusts her face close to Nicola's.*

LIZ

What did you just say? What did you just say? What did you just say?

DAVE

Calm down, Liz.

NICOLA *backed up by the others*

Yes, calm down, Liz.

LIZ *to Nicola*

Shut it!

DAVE *warningly*

Liz...

NICOLA

You shut it!

LIZ

Say you're sorry to him!

NICOLA

You going to make me?

LIZ

Yeah.

*A fight is in the offing and the girls gather round. Reactions from Mark's family who are also watching the situation. Less reaction from Mark, who is still a step removed from reality.*

NICOLA

Go on then, you mad cow, make me!

*Liz lunges at Nicola but Dave leaps in between them, trying to stop a fight. Too late, Nicola has already begun to swing a punch but Dave has leapt in to intervene. He takes the full weight of the punch, which winds him. Liz leaps on Nicola and the girls begin to fight, pushing over the postcard rack that Reg has taken such pains to put in order. Reg is knocked over with the postcard rack and cowers, finding it very difficult to get up. When he does get up, he scurries off unobserved, agitated.*

*Gill and Mrs Smith walk in simultaneously and both bellow at their respective charges.*

GILL & MRS SMITH

Stop this at once!

*Nearly at its conclusion anyway, the fighting abruptly stops. Mrs Smith takes the girls out, Gill takes the residents out. On the way out Dave, who has taken the worst of the fight, addresses Mark's family.*

DAVE

Sorry. [*He exits.*]

*Silence. The family reanimate, Marksmum taking care of Mark and Louise. The*

*postcards lie scattered all over the floor. During the following the Voices and rest of the cast, except those named later, drift quietly on.*

LOUISE

Mum? Mum?

MARK

It's all right, Louise.

MARKSMUM *to Louise*

It's all right, love. [*To Mark.*] Are you all right, love?

MARK

Mmm.

LOUISE

Tell me a story, Mark.

MARK

O.K. [*Pause.*] Well ... once upon a time ...

VOICE 1

Long ago and far away.

MARK

There was a beautiful castle ...

LOUISE

Like the Disney one?

VOICE 2

High on a hill.

MARK

With tall turrets and

VOICE 3

Long corridors.

MARK

And the corridors rang with the sound of laughter.

VOICE 4

Until one day

VOICE 1

The laughter turned to howling.

LOUISE

Was it a wolf?

MARK

No, it was the howl of an unhappy princess. The wicked fairy had marked her with a magic pink dot on her forehead and it made her very sad.

LOUISE *doubtful*

I don't like this story.

MARK

There's a happy ending.

LOUISE *simply*

Well, just tell me the happy ending then, silly.

MARK

You choose the happy ending.

LOUISE *off pat*

The princess lived happily ever after with her mum and dad. [*Slight pause. Adoring.*]  
And her biggest brother.

MARK

And Ian?

LOUISE

No, not Ian. [*Pause.*] What's your happy ending?

MARK

I don't know. [*Pause.*] Um ... the prince went back to school ... and did his exams and lived happily ever after?

REG *walking back on as an actor representing Reg*



The prince woke up with the sun streaming through the curtains and realised he felt glad to be alive.

TRINA *entering out of character too*

The princess got a new job, better than her old one and never got any hassle off anyone.

DAVE *entering*

When the castle fell down in a heap of rubble, the king and Queen agreed never to build it up again but to give the keys of the kingdom to their subjects.

LIZ *entering*

And all the witches and demons were locked up in the dungeon and never seen again. Then the princess got a job...

REG

On the cheese counter.

MRS PRENTISS *entering*

The court magician decreed that when the baby prince was born it would be blessed with the kindness of its mother's love for ever..

DR VARA *entering with Fiona Anstey*

The magician invented a wonderful pink potion which made everyone in the kingdom happy.

FIONA ANSTEY

But not too happy.

NADINE *entering with Steve*

And some of the villagers took the potion and got out of bed without any trouble.

STEVE

And went to work.

LILY *entering*

Back to their own jobs with their old friends in their old homes. And the mark on the princess' head was soon nothing more than a little pink dot. [*Musing.*] Ballerina pink. Or maybe rose white.

MARK

And when the mark faded away, everyone lived happily ever after. The end.

LOUISE

I quite like that story ... but it's only a story, isn't it?

EXTRACT from Production Notes

## PRODUCTION NOTES & TECHNICAL CUES, ETC.

### INTRODUCTION: THEMES, THE PLAY'S INTENTIONS

Interspersed with the main characters, some of whom we follow through their stay in a halfway house, some of whom are in different states of clinical depression, though not yet hospitalised, are short scenes exploring 'ordinary people' and their perception of and fears about their own mental health. Occasionally, the people at the halfway house infringe on 'society' and we see the ripples this causes. And those who are still out in the world, but need help, also cause ripples with, in particular, their own families.

The main intention of the play is to expose the weaknesses in the mental health system. A secondary intention is to confront the audience with people in different states of disintegration, to ask us to reassess, to face up to our own embarrassments and preconceptions. The mentally unstable are people that so-called healthy society don't want to know about. They'd rather sweep them under the carpet. This play asks us to take another look, with compassion and understanding.

We see how hard it is to get a job for those who have been mentally ill. We see how difficult it is to assess mental illness on any normal 'scale', though doctors attempt to do just that. What mainly comes over is the extraordinary lack of understanding of these people by the medical profession.

The second half of the play begins with a study of Mark who is a teenage schizophrenic. During the course of the second half he is returned to his family under medication. It is clear he is never going to be quite 'normal'.

The end of the play brings all the characters together in an outing. There, chaos ensues as school-children wind up those they perceive as 'nutters.' The situation is not helped by a stick-in-the-mud teacher who reinforces their attitude and says the patients should be locked away. The limited success of this outing leaves us with no clear idea as to answers. Perhaps there aren't any to be had - and that is what the writer is pointing out. Being locked away, as in the old days, is not an answer - but there are all sorts of problems re-integrating recovering 'mental cases.' This is the issue the writer wants to address and leave the audience with plenty of material for debate.

The play is written in a physical theatre style, which means that the smaller 'characters' have plenty of chances to be involved throughout as Chorus or Voices or a number of subsidiary characters. Against this style, many of the characters voice their thoughts, sometimes naturalistically in conversation, sometimes through narration. The play is challenging, thought-provoking and rewarding to tackle.

## CHARACTERS

**LILY** - resident in Dean House. She is volatile, loud, hard to contain, flung between extremes of mood.

**REG** - resident in Dean House. He has lost his son three years ago, been in and out of hospital since his wife died, also three years ago. Gentle and timid, behaves as if stuck in a rut, or there is a wall [of medication?] between him and his surroundings. He makes it clear that this muffling wall is his depression. He can see things, but not feel. He is obsessive about washing up - repetitive actions. This helps mask his feelings of hopelessness. This OCD [Obsessive Compulsive Disorder] is seen in various forms throughout the play.

**LIZ** - resident in Dean House. Gets angry very easily and becomes hard to handle then. Cannot handle her own anger issues, which make her violent. We see her moving into part-time work, though still resident at Dean House. She is beginning to handle her anger issues a bit better but flips at the end. It is clear that she was abused by her father as a child.

**TRINA** - resident of Dean House in the first half. Out in the world in the second half. A young woman who pushed herself over the edge by overdoing drugs. Clubbing and drugs was her life. Now she's pulled herself together and is trying to find a job preparatory to going back into the world. She is bright, chirpy and a little in love with Dave - which he is too professional to notice.

**NADINE** another person with clinical depression. She has reached a stage where she cannot make a decision about anything at all, not even what clothes to wear or whether to get up at all. The actor taking her part would have to work at a character to make her more integral to the Dean House scenes, since she is not given a lot to say.

**STEVE** - also has depression. He describes his despair as a reflection of the horrors he sees everywhere in the world. He, Nadine and Reg all have many of the same symptoms, though Reg is the most developed of the characters. Like Nadine, Steve is not given a lot to say. The actor needs to make a more definite character for him. Aim to make a contrast to Reg.

**GILL** - carer in charge at Dean House. Plays everything by the book. More cautious and experienced than Dave. She knows that some things that do seem in Dean House just odd could be dangerous or frightening to people in the outside world. She believes that they have to take responsibility for these people who are unable to take responsibility for themselves.

**DAVE** - assistant carer at Dean House. Has a good heart but does not always play things by the book. Careless about writing up whether medication has been taken or not. Rather woolly and idealistic. He represents the idea that we should be working to integrate them; that these people are not really harmful, just odd or eccentric. He is against overuse of medication.

**MRS PRENTISS** is one of the characters on the 'outside.' She was depressed after the birth of her baby boy. The depression was unrecognised and she came close to killing the baby. But now she dismisses this event as perfectly normal, her mind shying away from the very thought of mental sickness. She denies that the term mental sickness could be applied to her.

**MARK** - a teenager suffering from schizophrenia. During the course of the play we see him first taunted by his 'voices' and then allowed out under medication, where he is very reliant on his mother.

**MARKSMUM** - wanting the best for her son but frightened by the fact of his illness being a mental one. She tries to deny it and fights against the label but in the end gives in to the realisation and after an initial desire to cut him off from her, she tries to be as supportive as she can.

**MARKSDAD** - finds it impossible to accept Mark and feels protective towards the two younger children. He feels Mark should remain locked away from the family.

**LOUISE** - Mark's adoring little sister, about eight years old.

**IAN** - Mark's younger brother. Around thirteen years old. Just becoming aware of girls - but only just. Not close to Mark, embarrassed by him.

The other characters each have good sections of script and action in their places. They are either brisk and professional - like most of the medical practitioners, who come over as uncaring but others might say they are just doing their job - or showing different attitudes of the public to mental illnesses. Deneice and Hayley, the two cleaners who work with Trina are bigotted and cannot see their own illogicality. The school-children have the same attitudes in the making. The prospective employers will not even consider someone who has been in a mental institution.

## **SETTING**

The second half needs the height of a castle rampart. I suggest then a stagesetting that is as open and neutral as possible, allowing for plenty of action and different locations, as in the Leeds castle scene.

Scaffolding, ideally a lighting tower or similar, needs to be built at the back, with, against it, along the back, rostra, preferably at two different heights, like a castle wall. Make a feature out of these rostra so that they look tumbled and random - like bricks falling apart - or ruins - or the castle which is a central image to the whole piece which ought to be safe and pretty as in a fairy-tale - but isn't.

The rest of the stage should be bare, furniture as necessary being brought on by the cast...