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SISTER. Mr. Harrison! Come on, Nurse; this man will be the death of me.

KEN (*cheerfully*). Doubt it, Sister. I'm not even able to be the death of myself

Start

(*SISTER goes out with NURSE SADLER. MRS. GILLIAN BOYLE enters. She is thirty-five, attractive, and very professional in her manner. She is a medical social worker.*)

MRS. BOYLE. Good morning.

KEN. Morning.

MRS. BOYLE. Mr. Harrison?

KEN (*cheerfully*). It used to be.

MRS. BOYLE. My name is Mrs. Boyle.

KEN. And you've come to cheer me up.

MRS. BOYLE. I wouldn't put it like that.

KEN. How would you put it?

MRS. BOYLE. I've come to see if I can help.

KEN. Good. You can.

MRS. BOYLE. How?

KEN. Go and convince Dr. Frankenstein that he has successfully made his monster and he can now let it go.

MRS. BOYLE. Dr. Emerson is a first-rate physician. My goodness, they have improved this room.

KEN. Have they?

MRS. BOYLE. It used to be really dismal. All dark green and cream. It's surprising what pastel colors will do, isn't it? Really cheerful.

KEN. Yes. Perhaps they should try painting me. I'd hate to be the thing that ruins the decor.

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MRS. BOYLE. What on earth makes you say that? You don't ruin anything.

KEN. I'm sorry. That was a bit...whining. Well, don't let me stop you.

MRS. BOYLE. Doing what?

KEN. What you came for, I suppose. What do you do? Conjuring tricks? Funny stories? Or a belly dance? If I have any choice, I'd prefer the belly dance.

MRS. BOYLE. I'm afraid I've left my bikini at home.

KEN. Who said anything about a bikini?

MRS. BOYLE. Dr. Emerson tells me that you don't want any more treatment.

KEN. Good.

MRS. BOYLE. Why good?

KEN. I didn't think he'd heard what I said.

MRS. BOYLE. Why not?

KEN. He didn't take any notice.

MRS. BOYLE. Well as you can see, he did.

KEN. He sent you?

MRS. BOYLE. Yes.

KEN. And you are my new treatment; get in.

MRS. BOYLE. Why don't you want any more treatment?

KEN. I'd rather not go on living like this.

MRS. BOYLE. Why not?

KEN. Isn't it obvious?

MRS. BOYLE. Not to me. I've seen many patients like you.

KEN. And they all want to live?

MRS. BOYLE. Usually.

KEN. Why?

MRS. BOYLE. They find a new way of life.

KEN. How?

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MRS. BOYLE. You'll be surprised how many things you will be able to do with training and a little patience.

KEN. Such as?

MRS. BOYLE. We can't be sure yet. But I should think that you will be able to operate reading machines and perhaps an adapted typewriter.

KEN. Reading and writing. What about arithmetic?

MRS. BOYLE (*smiling*). I dare say we could fit you up with a comptometer if you really wanted one.

KEN. Mrs. Boyle, even educationalists have realized that the three r's do not make a full life.

MRS. BOYLE. What did you do before the accident?

KEN. I taught in art school. I was a sculptor.

MRS. BOYLE. I see.

KEN. Difficult, isn't it? How about an electrically operated hammer and chisel? No, well. Or a cybernetic lump of clay?

MRS. BOYLE. I wouldn't laugh if I were you. It's amazing what can be done. Our scientists are wonderful.

KEN. They are. But it's not good enough, you see, Mrs. Boyle. I really have absolutely no desire at all to be the object of scientific virtuosity. I have thought things over very carefully. I do have plenty of time for thinking and I have decided that I do not want to go on living with so much effort for so little result.

MRS. BOYLE. Yes, well, we shall have to see about that.

KEN. What is there to see?

MRS. BOYLE. We can't just stop treatment, just like that.

KEN. Why not?

MRS. BOYLE. It's the job of the hospital to save life, not to lose it.

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KEN. The hospital's done all it can, but it wasn't enough. It wasn't the hospital's fault; the original injury was too big.

MRS. BOYLE. We have to make the best of the situation.

KEN. No. *We* don't have to do anything. I have to do what is to be done and that is to cash in the chips.

MRS. BOYLE. It's not unusual, you know, for people injured as you have been, to suffer with this depression for a considerable time before they begin to see that a life is possible.

KEN. How long?

MRS. BOYLE. It varies.

KEN. Don't hedge.

MRS. BOYLE. It could be a year or so.

KEN. And it could last for the rest of my life.

MRS. BOYLE. That would be most unlikely.

KEN. I'm sorry, but I cannot settle for that.

MRS. BOYLE. Try not to dwell on it. I'll see what I can do to get you started on some occupational therapy. Perhaps we could make a start on the reading machines.

KEN. Do you have many books for those machines?

MRS. BOYLE. Quite a few.

KEN. Can I make a request for the first one?

MRS. BOYLE. If you like.

KEN. "How to be a Sculptor with no Hands."

MRS. BOYLE. I'll be back tomorrow with the machine.

KEN. It's marvelous you know.

MRS. BOYLE. What is?

KEN. All you people have the same technique. When I say something really awkward you just pretend I haven't said anything at all. You're all the bloody same... Well,

there's another outburst. That should be your cue to comment on the light-shade or the color of the walls.

MRS. BOYLE. I'm sorry if I have upset you.

KEN. Of course you have upset me. You and the doctors with your appalling so-called professionalism, which is nothing more than a series of verbal tricks to prevent you relating to your patients as human beings.

MRS. BOYLE. You must understand; we have to remain relatively detached in order to help...

KEN. That's all right with me. Detach yourself. Tear yourself off on the dotted line that divides the woman from the social worker and post yourself off to another patient.

MRS. BOYLE. You're very upset...

KEN. Christ Almighty, you're doing it again. Listen to yourself, woman. I say something offensive about you and you turn your professional cheek. If you were human, if you were treating me as a human, you'd tell me to bugger off. Can't you see that this is why I've decided that life isn't worth living? I am not human and I'm even more convinced of that by your visit than I was before, so how does that grab you? The very exercise of your so-called professionalism makes me want to die.

MRS. BOYLE. I'm... Please...

KEN. Go... For God's sake, get out... Go on... Get out... Get out.

End

(She goes into SISTER's room. SISTER hears KEN's shouts.)

SISTER. What's the matter, Mrs. Boyle?

MRS. BOYLE. It's Mr. Harrison... He seems very upset.

KEN *(shouting)*. ...I am upset. *(SISTER closes the door.)*

SISTER. I should leave him for now, Mrs. Boyle. We'll send for you again when he's better. *(SISTER hurries in to KEN. He is very distressed, rocking his head from side to side, desperately short of breath.)*

KEN. Sis... ter... *(SISTER reaches for the oxygen mask.)*

SISTER. Now, now, Mr. Harrison, calm down. *(She applies the mask and turns on the oxygen. KEN gradually becomes calmer.)* Now why do you go getting yourself so upset? ... There's no point...

KEN *(muffled)*. But...

SISTER. Stop talking, Mr. Harrison. Just relax.

(KEN becomes calm. SISTER sees NURSE SADLER going past. MRS. BOYLE is still hovering.)

SISTER. Nurse.

NURSE. Sister?

SISTER. Take over here, will you?

NURSE. Yes, Sister. *(NURSE SADLER holds the mask. SISTER goes to the door.)*

MRS. BOYLE. Is he all right?

SISTER. Yes, perfectly.

MRS. BOYLE. I'm sorry...

SISTER. Don't worry. It was not you... We'll let you know when he's better.

MRS. BOYLE. Right... Thank you. *(She goes. SISTER stands at the open door.)*

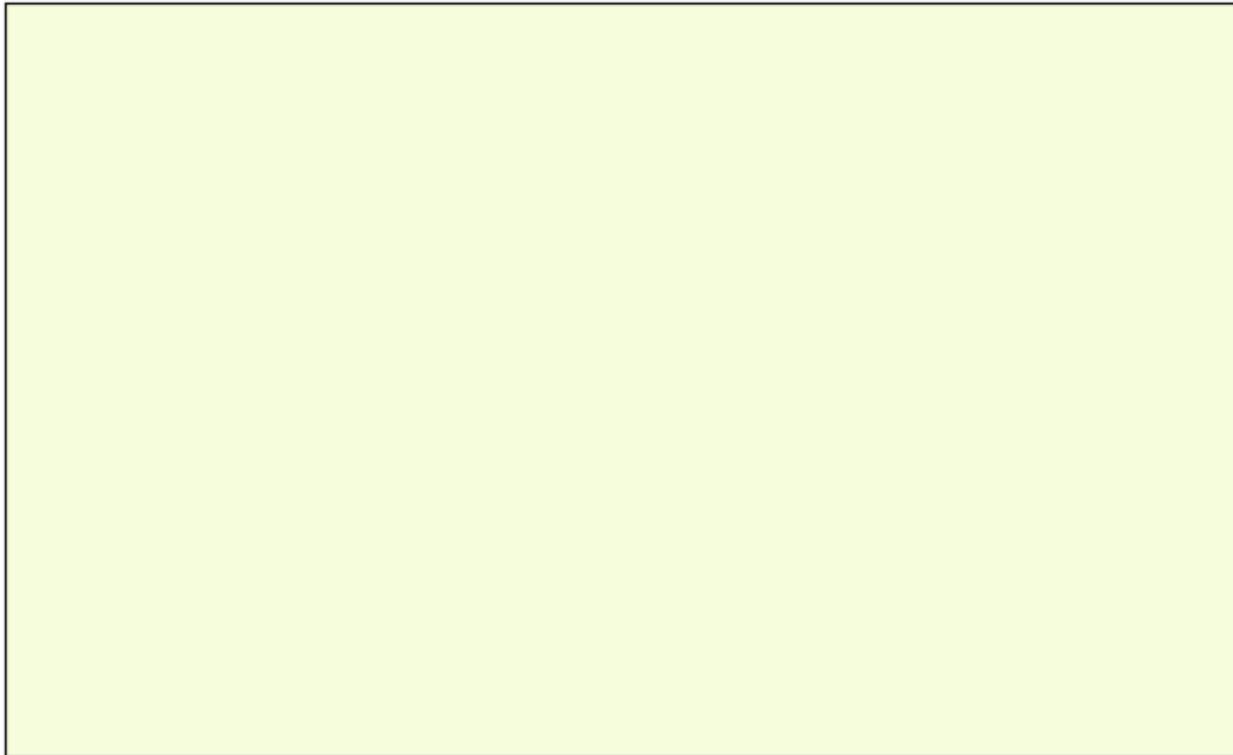
SISTER. Just give him another ten seconds, Nurse.

NURSE. Yes, Sister. *(SISTER takes a pace back behind the door and listens. After ten seconds, NURSE SADLER removes the mask.)*

Set / Furniture Plan

Draw, below, the "set" you plan to use for your scene.

SR



SL

Downstage