GETTING ON

A Docu-Comedy

Episode #101

"Born on the Fourth of July"

adapted by

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REWRITE

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A NOTE ON STYLE:

The following material will be shot with a moving, fluid, run-and-gun camera that is never locked down, that “grabs” coverage instead of dutifully capturing canned and static blocking. “Wheelchair Cams” as opposed to “tracks”, coupled with interesting and purposeful internal jumps and time-cuts. It both facilitates shooting time and increases spontaneity in the execution.

Also, an emphasis will be placed on faces and reactions, and performances directed to discover unguarded and unscripted moments. This “docu-comedy” style, intelligently rendered, takes material that might otherwise be earnest or melodramatic or broad or precious, and grounds it. It allows the dark, deadpan humor to emerge and performance to command attention and punch through. It’s a unique style (not “shaky handheld” or self-conscious “mockumentary”), that was one of the most winning aspects of the original format.

BALL-PARK MAIN TITLES:

Modern, automated doors whisk open as we enter Mount Palm Medical Center: gleaming floors, attractive “white-coats”, happy families, cheerful Mylar balloons. Down a hall, through double doors, following a red-line on the floor, through a tunnel, up an elevator and into the world of extended care: workers and patients “less spiffy”, uniforms less crisp. Wheelchairs, aging women in walkers; older equipment; quiet decrepitude. And our three lovely, middle-aged ladies at the desk: “Getting On”.

INT. BILLY BARNES EXTENDED CARE FACILITY - LILIAN'S ROOM- DAY

TILTING up from an age-spotted, wrinkled hand with an IV bandage... to an Elderly Woman's sleeping face (LILIAN)...

PANNING over to her other hand, clasped tightly by a much younger hand... A MURMUR of SOFT LAUGHTER...

ANGLE: Charge Nurse DAWN FORCHETTE, 40s, in a navy blue uniform, sits bed-side: "the hand clasper." Dawn's free hand texts on a iPhone. She GIGGLES, sex-kittenish.

ANGLE: on the bedside table, an elaborately iced, home-made cake that reads: "Happy 87th Birthday Lilian"... A RASPY, FINAL EXHALATION OF BREATH...

Dawn continues texting, then stops, glances at Lilian... she realizes Lilian's dead. She takes her pulse, checks her breathing. She puts her phone away, notes the time, jots it on a clipboard, removes the pillow from beneath Lillian's head. She puts drops of Visene into Lilian's eyes as--

MARTA ORTLEY, 60s, a Practical Nurse, opens the curtain:

MARTA
There's a turd on a chair in the hall.

DAWN
Excuse me?

MARTA
Someone shit on a chair.

DAWN
It's "feces". It's not "shit", it's not "a turd", it's feces.

MARTA
There's feces on a chair.

DAWN
Okay. I'm coming. Show me where.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - NURSE'S STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Marta and Dawn approach a common hall area. We glimpse adjacent "quads", filled with beds of Elderly Women, many of them dazed, with evident dementia.

Dawn looks down at the soiled chair (the offending "feces" ever O.C.). A crisp, wilting woman, BIRDY, 80s, with a sweatshirt over her pink hospital gown, sits in a near chair.

DAWN
Did you meet Birdy, yet?

MARTA
I don't think so.

DAWN
Birdy, this is Marta. This is her first day with us. Marta's from Las Vegas.

BIRDY
(stone deaf; shouting)
Oooh! Las Vegas! That's great! Pleased to meet you, Honey.

DAWN
Birdy's been with us a for awhile. She used to be in the industry. Birdy worked in public relations at CBS.

MARTA
It's very nice to meet you.

DAWN
Did you have a B.M., Birdy? Birdy, did you have a bowel movement?

BIRDY
When?

DAWN
The last fifteen minutes or so. In the chair?

BIRDY
I don't think so, Honey.

DAWN
Did you see anyone who did? Who maybe did have a B.M. in the chair?

BIRDY
No.

MARTA
I'll clean it up--

DAWN
Oh God, no, it's not that simple. You have to fill out an Incident Report.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - NURSE'S STATION - MOMENTS LATER

The chaotic Nurse's Station: files and papers everywhere, meager red, white and blue 4th of July decorations. Dawn is on the phone; Marta tentatively fills out an Incident report.

DAWN
Hi, it's Dawn Forchette in Extended Care--
(JUMP:)
Well when CAN they come? Because I-- they should probably take the whole chair-- So if it could be more like-- an hour? No, forget about it, then. It can't wait that long. We'll just red bag it. No, just forget I even called.

JUMP: Dawn on another call:

DAWN (CONT'D)
Yes, I'd like to speak with Mrs. Sandy Saks. Yes, it is-- it's about her sister Lilian-- No, I have to talk to her in person. Tell her to call me, okay? Nurse Dawn Forchette. At Mt. Palm-- in Long Beach. Yes. She knows who I am. Okay. Thanks.

She hangs up. Sighs. Marta shows her the form:

MARTA
Is this good enough?

DAWN
"Found a feces on a chair." No. Incident Reports have to be really, really specific.

MARTA
Like what else?

DAWN
Well first of all it's just feces. Not "a" feces.

MARTA
There was just one.

DAWN
But there's no singular form for feces. And you need to put what time of day it is, the exact time. You need to say what the incident was-- that someone deposited feces on a chair--

MARTA
Well that's more or less what I wrote.

DAWN
Yeah, but who found it? When did they find it?

MARTA
I found it. It's my name, see?

DAWN
Right. Marta Ortley. Okay. But. Technically, because it's a potential agent of infection, Environmental Services should come and collect it, but we can't wait for them, so we'll red bag it, which is what we do with all clinical waste--

MARTA
Twelve years ago we'd just pick it up with a Kleenex and toss it in a toilet.

DAWN
Yeah, well, twelve years ago they barely knew about C. diff.

MARTA
I barely know about it now.

DAWN
Believe me, you will--
(re: the form)
So. You need to make a copy for the floor report, and one for Beverly-- she's the "infections provost." And as long as we're at it-- These are your Start of Therapy OMRAs, these are your End of Therapy OMRAs-- they can be combined with a PPS assessment, but they can't replace it--
(JUMP:)
--if the answer is yes, then an End of Therapy OMRA is required. If it's no, the Part A Stay and Benefit both stop--
(JUMP:)
The original goes to Hospice, these two you keep for your files--
(JUMP:)
The electronic signature system isn't up and running, it never is-- so hard copies have to be kept here--

Marta, bewildered, as DR. JENNA JAMES, 40s to 50s, enters and approaches the Front Desk of the long, narrow station.

JENNA
I'm so glad SOMEONE enjoys working on a national holiday. I'm completely over it. Which bed is she in?

MARTA
The dead one?

JENNA
The "deceased party", yes.

DAWN
Quad Three.
(off James' clueless look)
The second quad on the right.

Marta looks to Dawn: who's this? Dr. James goes to check.

DAWN (CONT'D)
(avoids the look)
Did we go over skin assessments? It's really important you fill out a skin assessment on any new patients...

Marta nods, dazed and confused...

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - QUAD THREE - SAME TIME

ANGLE: Three Very Elderly Female Patients in the other beds, one compos mentis, the other two... not, staring at Dr. James as she puts her stethoscope to Lillian's chest...

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - NURSE'S STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. James returns.

JENNA
Yes, she is deceased. So could you get me a death certificate. Please.

Dawn goes for the form, leaving Marta and Dr. James in awkward silence. They haven't been introduced.

MARTA
Hi.

JENNA
Hello.

MARTA
I'm Marta Ortley. I'm new. I used to--

DAWN
I'm giving Marta her orientation.

JENNA
(flashes a smile)
How nice. Welcome aboard.

Dawn returns, hands the Death Certificate to Dr. James-- and Marta might as well have just vanished into thin air:

JENNA (CONT'D)
(to Dawn, re: the form)
I'm assuming respiratory arrest?
(Dawn nods)
You do know there's a fecal deposit on that chair.

DAWN
Uh-huh. We're on top of it.

JENNA
Is it mine?

Marta looks to Dawn, confused.

DAWN
(carefully)
Possibly.

JENNA
"Possibly"?
(half-beat)
Is it one of mine for my fecal collection?

DAWN
Uhm. I'm not sure--

JENNA
The Cleveland Conference, next month, is fast approaching, Dawn--

DAWN
Jenna--

JENNA
(a familiar, croaking rebuke)
Ehhh eh--?

DAWN
Yes, No, I know. I have been sending the samples to the lab, but-- I just didn't think since it was just, you know, just left on a chair--

JENNA
It's a perfectly good sample, as good as any other--

DAWN
Yeah, but I already asked Marta to red bag it--

MARTA
What ARE red bags, anyway? I don't even--

JENNA
Well clearly she hasn't, yet.

DAWN
But as soon as she does--

JENNA
Dawn, please. I don't want it red bagged. I want it put in a tray and sent to the lab: attention Dr. James.

DAWN
I know. It's just, we had to do an Incident Report on it, because of C. diff and infections, and ideally I still need to identify WHOSE it is--

JENNA
Well it's that patient's right there-- sitting right across from it, no?

DAWN
No. I don't think it's Birdy's.

MARTA
I wouldn't be so sure.

DAWN
Well, maybe, it could be--

JENNA
Does it look like a recent one of hers?

DAWN
It's along the same lines-- Uhm. It's just, Birdy's usually diapered and can't get them off herself, so--

JENNA
Look, there's no signs of C. diff. It's well formed, it has no irregularities-- So...?

DAWN
I guess we could put in a tray and call the lab to come and get it.

JENNA
Oh thank you. Would you do that for me? It's really important that I have enough data for my statistics to be absolutely air tight. "Scientific Method."
(re: the form and Lilian)
The deceased was eighty seven, I'm assuming? From the cake?

DAWN
Eighty seven, yes, it's actually her birthday, which means she was born on--

JENNA
(pro forma "Awww"; then:)
It looks delicious. I wonder if it's butter cream or--

DAWN
Her sister's coming in later, so--

JENNA
Well. That's a shame.

She finishes the death certificate, then hands it to Marta:

JENNA (CONT'D)
Nurse, I need a copy-- would you mind?

Marta takes the certificate and steps into the small office. Dr. James makes sure she's left, then turns to Dawn, sotto:

JENNA (CONT'D)
Listen, one last thing, Dawn. I need that bed-- the deceased's--

DAWN
I can't. Dr. Stickley already took it. An early onset Alzheimer's patient. Burned herself pretty badly.

JENNA
Do you have anything else opening up?

DAWN
No, nothing.

JENNA
It's for a patient who's recovering from prostate surgery--

DAWN
A man?

JENNA
Well, obviously. I'm working on another study to see if this particular drug helps prevent dementia and memory loss after general anaesthesia in the elderly--

DAWN
Beverly is gonna flip out--

JENNA
Oh, please, do we have to rehash this EVERY time I need a bed? None of these women will even know the difference if there's a man on the floor--

DAWN
(leading, cueing)
Maybe if we had a private room open--

JENNA
Oh. Well. What is the situation with the private rooms--?

DAWN
There's-- Mrs. Robinson. Recovering from shoulder surgery. Rehab.

JENNA
Okay. Mrs. Robinson. I could take a look at her. And then, Dawn, you'll make sure I get what I need?

DAWN
Yes.

Marta returns, shutting down the conversation. Dr. James steps off, then turns back:

JENNA
All good. And we're totally aware of what needs to happen with that stool?
(MORE)

JENNA (CONT'D)
It goes into a tray then straight to the lab, right? We're all on the same page? Everything clear?

DAWN
Yes. Absolutely. Got it.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - FRONT ENTRY - MOMENTS LATER

Three Male Medical Students (including ANDREW CESARIO, early 20s) kill time in front of the elevators. Dr. James arrives:

JENNA
Sorry, guys, you're giving up your holiday, but bonus points for diligence. Glad to finally have you with us, Mr. Cesario--

JUMP: leading them onto the floor, past a vista of Elderly Patients in various stages of Geriatric Distress:

JENNA (CONT'D)
(mostly for Andrew's benefit)
We've got 36 beds on the floor, 14 sub-acute, 17 dementia and Alzheimers, the ventilator suite--

JUMP: passing a very wrinkled patient with a bandaged nose:

JENNA (CONT'D)
"Know your population". In Southern California, if it looks like a melanoma, it IS a melanoma. Save yourself the trouble: just cut it out.

Passing a woman pushing a cart:

JENNA (CONT'D)
Hello Irma. Como esta?

Dawn steps in, leads Dr. James and Students into a quad, then to the bed of a LOUDLY YAMMERING Asian Patient, late 70s.

JENNA (CONT'D)
(leaning in)
Good morning! I'm Dr. Jenna James. How are you? Do you know where you are? You're in the Billie Barnes Extended Care Unit. Do you know what day it is?

DAWN
She doesn't seem to speak English.
(to Patient)
(MORE)

DAWN (CONT'D)
This is Dr. James. She's our Director of Medicine--

JENNA
(to Students)
Temporarily. I'm just filling in til they find the right person. I'm actually a "real" doctor over in the hospital
(to Dawn)
Where's her chart?

DAWN
She doesn't have one. She was an emergency admit last night during the diversion.

JENNA
You would not believe the chaos in that E.R. from one AM on--

DAWN
Yeah, but diversion shouldn't mean just dumping them over here-- it means taking them to another HOSPITAL.

JENNA
The Paramedics are too lazy to drive over to PHLB or Memorial.

DAWN
She was found by Long Beach P.D. walking along the shoulder of the 110 near San Pedro in her nightgown.

JENNA
Tsk. Increasingly common, isn't it? Very sad.

DAWN
So we don't actually know who she is.

Marta, nearby, listens as she feeds an elderly woman patient with a syringe through a feeding tube...

DAWN (CONT'D)
She's got a very high temperature.

JENNA
(to Students)
She's got a high temperature.

DAWN
Her blood pressure's low.

JENNA
(to Students)
Low blood pressure.

DAWN
And she's very confused.

JENNA
(to Students)
She's confused.

DAWN
We think. She can't tell us whether she's confused, because, you know-- we don't understand her language--

JENNA
(to Students)
We can't really tell. We should assume she's confused.

DAWN
Is it Chinese you're speaking?

JENNA
No, Chinese is not-- that's not a language, Dawn. It's not a language.
(to Students)
There are dozens-- dozens of languages, dialects, in China.

DAWN
Is it-- maybe it's Indonesian.
(to Patient)
Are you speaking Indonesian?

JENNA
No. That's the same. The same-- thing. Well, the E.R. is up and running, so just send her over to the hospital.

DAWN
But we're not allowed to move emergency admits until after a complete physical evaluation. So...
(off some more BABBLING)
Is "Patty" your name?
(more BABBLE)
That's it--? Your name is "PATTY?"

JENNA
It sounded like Paw-tee, to me. She's saying "Paw-tea". She's not saying "Patty".

DAWN
Well, maybe with her accent-- it comes out as “Paw-tea”, but--

JENNA
I think Patty is a pretty unlikely name for a--
(more BABBLE)
Wait-- “Polly”? Is it “POLLY”--?

DAWN
That’s PRETTY much what I said--

JENNA
Yes. Well for the time being, we should just assume it’s Polly.
(to Students)
So. Differential diagnosis, Men. Where do we start here? Mr. Cesario?

ANDREW CESARIO
The feet?

JENNA
(Scowls, then re: his pocket)
What is that, Mr. Cesario? Is that a scalpel?

ANDREW CESARIO
Yes. We had a lab this--

She plucks it from his pocket and puts it into hers:

JENNA
Well we don’t go wandering around with sharp objects over here in Extended Care. We’re not the Crips and the Jets.
(puts on her stethoscope)
I’m going to have a little listen to your chest, now, Polly--
(listens, then:)
I can’t hear a thing because of all her--
(makes a yapping gesture with her hand; to Dawn)
Really, Dawn. I think you’re going to have to call Language Line.

DAWN
Yeah, if they’re even in today. Should we think about giving her something to calm her down, maybe-- I mean she’s pretty agitated.

JENNA
Yes. That might be something we should think about.

MARTA
Are you really going to sedate someone who's just talking a little too much?

Jenna and Dawn's eyes, like deer caught in the headlights:

JENNA
Well, no one-- No one's being "sedated"-- No one said--

DAWN
No. We're not one of those places that just dopes patients up for our own convenience--

MARTA
Well, I know, but--

DAWN
The signs of distress, Marta, are pretty clear, so, you know, she's agitated-- she could benefit from something that just calms her down.

JENNA
(to Students)
The point is we're looking at the best interest of the patient here-- And--
(to "Polly")
I can't really give you a proper evaluation until we get Language Line. But we're going to take very good care of you and you're going to be as good as new. Dawn, where are we going next?

DAWN
We have Mrs. Drabinsky over here...

As Dawn, Dr. James and the Male Students move off, Marta leans down to "Polly" and takes her hand:

MARTA
It's okay. They found me wandering along the 405 in my pajamas after my brother's 50th. Don't ask me how I got there. Don't worry, we're going to figure out who you are and everything's gonna be fine.

"Polly" goes silent, immediately responding to Marta.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - LILLIAN'S BED - DAY

Lillian lies dead while Marta removes things from a drawer in a bedside table, putting them in a plastic bag. Dawn keeps inventory on a clipboard.

DAWN
Did you see how she claims she's a "real" doctor-- well she's not. She's just a hired, staff-doctor at the hospital-- that's how come they can make her fill in over here.

Marta takes a large bag of Gummy Bears from the drawer:

MARTA
What about-- can I take these--?

DAWN
What are they?

MARTA
Gummy Bears. My grandchildren love--

DAWN
Grandchildren? Gosh, you don't look old enough--

MARTA
I'm three hundred and forty years old.

DAWN
Yeah, some days I know what you mean. Well, really, it's our legal responsibility to return ALL of Lillian's possessions, and give them to Sandy when she comes, but it's okay. Just go ahead and take them.

Marta noisily stuffs the bag into her pocket.

DAWN (CONT'D)
But we're definitely saving that cake for Sandy. It's obviously homemade, not out of some box-- she went to a lot of trouble to make it and she should get it back.

MARTA
Do you really think she wants to have her dead sister's birthday cake?

DAWN
Why not? I would.

MARTA
(from the drawer)
Here's some dentures.

DAWN
Could you hand me those with the Vaseline? I've got to get 'em back in her mouth.

MARTA
What's the Vaseline for--?

DAWN
Her lips-- so I can slide the teeth in-

MARTA
An "Architectural Digest". Wow. What on earth do you suppose she was doing with that?

DAWN
Never too old to dream.

MARTA
(not so sure)
I guess.

DAWN
She still has her original uppers. She did pretty good for 87. My family has horrible teeth--

Marta roots around and finds another small case and opens it:

MARTA
Jesus. Here's more. These are uppers.

DAWN
Those were her husband's. She kept her husband's teeth. Isn't that sweet?

MARTA
It's a pretty ghoulish souvenir.

DAWN
I dunno. It's something personal.

MARTA
I guess. You could wear them on a nice, subtle silver chain.

DAWN
Hand me that Visene? We have to keep her well lubricated. She's a Tissue Donor.

MARTA
Oh wait, here's a book-- "The Menendez Brothers: Bad Blood."

DAWN
That was ages ago. Didn't they-- right, right, they were those cute guys who killed their father.

MARTA
Ugh. Could you kill your own father?

DAWN
I don't really even want to think about it. You know?

MARTA
I could have killed my mother, though. Very easily. I spent years trying.

DAWN
You're funny.

Dawn stands, hands Marta the Visene, prepares to leave:

DAWN (CONT'D)
Here-- just keep putting drops in her eyes until Antoine gets here. The lab gets pissed off if they dry out. I guess that's it, everything she came in with. Hand me the cake, file this in her folder-- call over to the hospital and see if they have anything to add-- I'll call Antoine. Wait til you meet Antoine-- so cute. But don't get any ideas-- sex with someone in the workplace is a real bad idea, believe me. And put a pad beneath her mid section.
(off Marta's look)
Trust me. Just do it.

She exits with the cake and the bag of belongings.

<u>INT. FIFTH FLOOR - BATHROOM - DAY</u>

Marta, on her cell, by a cracked window in the tiny, cramped bathroom, unwraps a condom:

MARTA
I'm in so far over my head. There's like five hundred million forms thrown at me, none of it is sticking. I can't remember a thing, I'm like five years away from being in one of these beds with dementia myself. I don't think I can do it, I really don't-- Hold on--

She hops up on the toilet, covers a sprinkler head in the ceiling with the condom, lights a quick cigarette, then returns to her phone:

MARTA (CONT'D)
(lighting her cig)
I'm back. What time is your interview?
(half-beat)
I know it's "beneath you"-- but you've got to at least try. I mean it's something...
(half-beat)
Don't say that, Dave, you're not too old, that's not true. We've got-- we've got to hang in there. Oh, God. Don't cry. We'll get by. We will.

An ambulance siren passes outside.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - NURSE'S STATION - DAY

Marta, a bit-bug eyed, taking everything in, behind the desk. Dawn on the phone, on hold.

The "feces" chair near the station, hastily marked off with a couple of bands of "Yellow Caution" tape.

BEVERLY RHAYNES, the Supervising Nurse, an African American woman in her 50s approaches.

BEVERLY
How you doing, Marta?

MARTA
Good. Great, thanks.

BEVERLY
How are your feet?

MARTA
Swollen. I mean, more than usual.

BEVERLY
It takes about a week to get used to being on them again all day.

DAWN
(to Beverly)
We're still waiting for Antoine, can you believe it?

MARTA
I keep putting in the Visene but I'm afraid her eyeballs may be getting a little-- they're kinda-- crunchy...

DAWN
(to Beverly)
Tissue Donor.

BEVERLY
(sniffs something)
What is that smell?

DAWN
Uhm, I think, well, yeah, I don't know. I mean, It could be for Dr. James' fecal study.

BEVERLY
Excuse me?

DAWN
Oh. I thought you knew about-- I mean, Dr. James is doing a study. On--

BEVERLY
No, no, no-- you did NOT let that woman talk you into--

DAWN
Yes, no, we've been collecting--

BEVERLY
Turds? Oh no you have not. How many? For how long?

Marta, mouthing "feces" off Beverly's "turds".

DAWN
A couple weeks now. She said she sent you a memo--

Dawn indicates the "feces" chair; Beverly, aghast, lunges at the chair, rips the "caution" tape off, then turns to Dawn:

BEVERLY
How long has it been sitting there?!

DAWN
A couple hours. I didn't want you to have to see it--

BEVERLY
No, no, no--

DAWN
No, I know-- But I need to identify whose it is, before the lab takes it--

BEVERLY
For fuck's sake, Dawn! We get an infections report with rampant C. Diff, almost lost our fucking license--

DAWN
I know, that's why I'm trying to identify it, for the Report, to build a record--

BEVERLY
(to Marta)
Get this out of my sight. Please. Right away.

MARTA
I tried to take it, but then I was told to leave it--

BEVERLY
No. Now. Right now.

DAWN
Maybe you should talk to Dr. James--

BEVERLY
Make it go away.

MARTA
I don't want to get into any trouble--

BEVERLY
(to Dawn)
And you-- I mean, I can't believe how you suck up to her. She's only nice to you when she wants something from you-- she uses you for all her bullshit studies-- well we are done collecting turds for that crazy ass woman. We are inches away from losing Medicare reimbursement altogether--
(off Marta's hesitation)
What are you waiting for?

MARTA
Okay, but--

Beverly fixes her with a look. Marta grabs a Kleenex and snatches it up.

BEVERLY
What is the one thing I have brought up with you again and again and again in your assessments?

DAWN
Floor cleanliness.

BEVERLY
Well I'm just saying.

DAWN
I'm sorry. I'm really, really sorry, Beverly.

Marta crosses in front of them, exiting with the "Kleenex."

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Marta flushes the "Kleenex" down the toilet.

Distant THUDS from fireworks, outside.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - ASIAN PATIENT'S BED - DAY

"Polly", now sitting upright in bed, still YAMMERING away. Dawn tends to a Patient, nearby. The phone RINGS at the Nurse's Station and Marta runs to answer it:

MARTA
Hello, Extended Care, fifth floor. Nurse Ortley.
(yells across)
Dawn?

DAWN
Yeah?

MARTA
It's the Language Line to translate.

DAWN
Jesus. Finally. When are they coming?

MARTA
They can't send someone til tomorrow.

DAWN
No, that's not good enough. We have to take care of this now. If we can tell them what she's saying-- Can they just translate it over the phone? Wait--

Dawn listens to Polly, then repeats the gibberish to Marta:

DAWN (CONT'D)
(stumbling, at first:)
Yung-- in a yung a yule tea?
(with more confidence:)
Ina yunga-yulatee.

MARTA (INTO PHONE)
Ina-yunga-yulatea.

DAWN
Nuva nah da took soom.
(nails it)
Nuva nada tucksom.

MARTA
Nuva nada tucksom. He says the first one doesn't mean a thing.

DAWN
What? Hang on, We have to do it over.
(JUMP:)
Soom nyack-- nyack me bock.

MARTA (INTO PHONE)
Soom nyack me bock.
(to Dawn)
No, that doesn't mean anything either.

DAWN
Put it on speaker.

MARTA
How?

DAWN
Press hold then intercom then line--

MARTA
Hold what then what?

DAWN
Intercom then line, whatever line--

MARTA
How do I know which line--

DAWN
Cause it BLINKS--

MARTA
What blinks--?

DAWN
Marta, it flashes-- can't you see it flashing--?

MARTA
I don't know how it works, okay?!

DAWN
Just-- then just put the phone up, hold it out, and if they can-- see if they can hear it that way--

Marta holds the phone out so the translator can hear Polly:

DAWN (CONT'D)
(shouts)
Tell them we think it's something Chinesey--
(after a good riff of Polly)
Yeah, that was a really good one--

MARTA (INTO PHONE)
You did get that? Great--
(half-beat; then to Dawn)
He says she said "I can't stand this, I wish I were dead, please kill me." It's Khmer. She's Cambodian.

DAWN
Cambodian! Fantastic! I knew it was something like that. Keep him on the line til we can figure out who she is and what her story is--

MARTA
I need-- I need to get a pad and a pen.

DAWN
Hurry, Marta, or we'll get into more trouble with Beverly-- Language Line charges by the minute!

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

Dr. James enters with Dawn (consumed with deep resentment at her) to discover a frail MRS. ROBINSON, 70s, in the bed:

JENNA
Good Afternoon, Mrs. Robinson. Koo-koo-ca-choo!

DAWN
(not amused)
That's "I AM THE WALRUS."

JENNA
Oh. Well. I just thought-- Joke...
(to Mrs. Robinson)
And how are we feeling, today?

MRS. ROBINSON
I just really, really want to go home.

JENNA
Well, that's exactly what we like to hear-- because believe me-- we want you out and in your own home, too.
(not really looking)
Now, going over the results here-- of your scans-- it looks like your shoulder has responded very well.

MRS. ROBINSON
The Physical Therapist says she won't let me go until I can raise my arm.

Mrs. Robinson demonstrates a pathetic lack of mobility.

JENNA
Yes, I've read her report. I definitely need to consult with her.

MRS. ROBINSON
Could you really do that for me? She said if I left it would be against her medical advice and--

JENNA
Well, is SHE a doctor? No. I'm the doctor, aren't I?

A glance between Dawn and Jenna.

MRS. ROBINSON
It's just the soup cans and tuna fish are all on the top shelves, I can't reach. But I don't care. I'll eat crackers.

DAWN
Do you have anyone who can help you once you get home? Any children--?

MRS. ROBINSON
We're not talking. I'll be fine on my own. I'm very independent. That's the only thing that matters to me.

ANGLE: across the hall, Marta and ANTOINE ROBERTSON, a so-so looking African American orderly, 30s - 40s, emerge from Lillian's room pushing a morgue cart-- essentially a cheap metal coffin on wheels.

ANTOINE
Hold on--

He grabs a fitted, cheery, quilted Calico cover and spreads it over the cart. It fools no one; patients still stare...

MARTA
That's some cologne, Antoine.

ANTOINE
It's the cart cover. "Apple Sauce." They come in different fragrances.

MARTA
Like you get at a car-wash?

ANTOINE
Pretty much.

MARTA
Do they have "New Car Smell?"

And they're down the hallway and turn the corner...

JENNA
Well, I admire your resilience and we certainly know many patients can recover more quickly in familiar surroundings.

DAWN
I just-- I think I need to mention there are liability issues.

JENNA
This isn't a prison and no one can stop you from signing yourself out.

MRS. ROBINSON
I've never felt better in my life.

JENNA
Well here's to you, Mrs. Robinson!
(to Dawn)
If all our patients had this can-do spirit-- well-- what would we doctors do for a living? Just do the paperwork, Dawn.

DAWN
I'll get it ready--

JENNA
Thanks a lot-- I appreciate it.
(under her breath)
And I need the bed right away-- so let's make it a priority, okay?

Dr. James leaves. Dawn turns to Mrs. Robinson.

DAWN
Let's get you up and dressed--

MRS. ROBINSON
I'm so excited to get out of here--

DAWN
(not happy about this)
Of course you are. Who wouldn't be?

INT. MOUNT PALM HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA - DUSK

Dawn and Marta at a table, eating their dinners. Dawn eats from a cafeteria tray, Marta from a brown bag from home.

DAWN
Dr. Garibaldi was a really good Director of Medicine, really handsome, too-- but he got shit-canned over the bad infections report. They've been interviewing for three months. You'd think, with this economy-- maybe it's that report, everyone says we're dragging down the whole medical center. Plus, people think extended care's boring-- but it's not-- it's totally where the action is. We're about care, not just all slam-bam-thank-you-ma'am.
(half-beat)
God. We could use some testosterone in the unit, though. I went to an all-girls' Catholic School-- and just forget about it. I really don't believe in gossip in the workplace.
(MORE)

DAWN (CONT'D)
It's so negative-- I mean, I know people talk about me behind my back-- but Dr. James is actually on estrogen replacement therapy. Plus her marriage is on the skids. They bought a new house in Mar Vista, and her husband makes her pay for half the mortgage.
(re food Marta unwraps:)
What's that?

MARTA
Carrots and celery.

DAWN
No-- that--
(the wrapper)

MARTA
Wax paper? It's a-- kitchen-- thing.

DAWN
I really don't cook much, anymore. Just for myself. How long were you in Las Vegas?
(off Marta's shrug)
No, seriously. Blah, blah, blah. I talk too much.

MARTA
Almost twenty years. We left after the Northridge Quake in '94. I couldn't take it anymore. Not much gets to me-- but after that my nerves were crap. And I was burned out on nursing.

DAWN
Yeah. That can happen.

MARTA
Then the bottom fell out in Vegas, we lost our shirts and came crawling back. So here I am, fresh out of mothballs and back in the workforce.

DAWN
It takes a while to get the hang of it. I cried every night on my way home from work for my first two months.

MARTA
Why?

DAWN
Well... Cause I take my job really seriously. Maybe I care too much. I mean-- nothing is more important to me than taking care of the women-- the elderly women-- that have been entrusted to my care. I'm sorry--
(she begins to cry)
We work just as hard as anyone over in that hospital, ten times as hard-- And-- I've almost been fired twice. I'm sorry-- I just got off four month's probation for cleanliness infractions-- I have to go now--

Dawn leaves. Marta pensive, sips her coffee...

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - NURSE'S STATION - NIGHT

Antoine pushes a wheelchair with JUDY NIELSEN, late 70s, quite beautiful, a vase of red roses on her lap, up to Dawn, slumped at the computer.

ANTOINE
This is patient: Nielsen, Judy.
(reading from her wrist band)
Birth date: four-thirteen-thirty four. Judy's looking pretty good to me.

He hands Dawn her chart.

DAWN
Yeah, okay, but what is she doing here? I don't have any beds.

ANTOINE
Beverly told me to bring her up to 506, the private room.

DAWN
She didn't tell me about this--

Dawn frantically reads the chart--

ANTOINE
All I know is I was told to bring her here to the private room.

DAWN
But I can't do that-- right now. Antoine! Who is her referring doctor?

ANTOINE
Isn't it on the chart?

Dawn throws down the chart and comes around to Judy and takes the roses from her lap.

DAWN
Hi, Judy. I'm Dawn. We're going to get this all worked out. Okay?
(hands Antoine the roses)
These aren't allowed on the floor any more, so you're gonna have to take them away. Too many patients try to eat them--

Marta arrives, Dawn's all business, again.

DAWN (CONT'D)
What's going on with 506?

MARTA
It's ready. Look at those roses, they're gorgeous.

ANTOINE
So 506 is available?

DAWN
No, it's not, it's already been--

Jenna arrives at the station with an Elderly Male Patient in a wheelchair. She parks him next to Judy.

JENNA
Is the room ready?

DAWN
Uhm-- yes.
(re: Judy)
But this patient is apparently going into 506--

JENNA
Fine. But my patient is just out of recovery and has a time sensitive questionnaire to go over-- so maybe we could settle him in the private room, and then you can situate her in 506?

DAWN
It's just-- 506 IS the private room.

JENNA
Well-- that's impossible. And is there a particular reason why SHE needs a private room?

Beverly arrives at the station:

BEVERLY
I hear you've been very busy.

JENNA
Well you know. It's a holiday. I love to keep busy when everyone else is taking the day off!

BEVERLY
Well to answer your question-- SHE has to go into the private because we're monitoring her heart.

JENNA
Yes, but I need that bed.

BEVERLY
She came in for surgery and then had a stroke on the operating table. She's been in the hospital for two weeks but her heart still hasn't stabilized-- so she's going into that room.

MARTA
Should I take her now?

BEVERLY
Yes.

JENNA
No-- Beverly-- You can monitor her heart in a quad-- You cannot take that bed away from me-- It's mine, damnit--

BEVERLY
You do not OWN this floor, Jenna. You do not get to waltz over here and do studies for drug companies or shit studies or whatever--

JENNA
(glares at Dawn; then:)
It's really none of your business how many studies-- OR what I do my research on, is it--?

She suddenly notes the "chair" has been removed.

JENNA (CONT'D)
Nurse, what happened to the feces that was on that chair?

MARTA
I flushed it. Down the toilet.

JENNA
You flushed it down the toilet.
(Marta nods, nervously)
You-- You just flushed away an important lump of information--

BEVERLY
Are you finished, Jenna?

JENNA
No, I am not finished--

BEVERLY
Then let's just move this right on off my floor--

JENNA
Have you ever even heard of the Bristol Stool Chart?

MARTA
Yes. Actually-- they taught us THAT in Nursing School, back in the dark ages--

JENNA
I am trying to expand the Bristol Stool Chart from seven to an exhaustive sixteen types of patient feces. It's the twenty first fucking century. Do you really think there are still only seven categories of stool!

MARTA
Beverly told me to flush it, so I flushed it--

BEVERLY
And I'm tired of you using MY nurses--

JENNA
I need to stress that this work is important. To me-- and to the prestige of this Medical Center-- and if I say I need a stool sample put in a tray and sent to the lab, then--

MARTA
Dawn told me to flush it, too.

JENNA
You're not listening to me-- I do not care who told you what, I am telling you to--

MARTA
Save. Your. Shit.

JENNA
If you want to put it like that--

MARTA
Okay. Fine. I'll do that from now on. I'll even save my own shit for you.

JENNA
Oh. Lovely. Just lovely--

BEVERLY
You can't just use this facility for every crazy--

JENNA
Excuse me-- you are not MY Supervising Nurse, Beverly. And YOU can't talk to a DOCTOR at this hospital-- like that.

BEVERLY
You're on STAFF at this hospital and right now you are in MY facility.

JENNA
Yes. I run back and forth! Back and forth from dusk to dawn! Forty of the last forty-eight hours! I could be in Maui at a Luau for Christ's sake! But no-- I work tirelessly, I work on holidays-- And in exchange? Just maybe a little respect--
(distraught; struggling to remove her lab jacket)
Do you want to know why no one is taking this shitty job--?! Because it's a dead end--! Because no one with any kind of self respect or a career still on the rails would ever work over here in this dump--!

BEVERLY
Do I need to call security?

JENNA
I don't care any more, I really just don't care--

She throws her lab jacket--

CLOSE: the scalpel tumbles out onto the table.

CLOSE: Dr. James' angry face, staring at it...

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - DIRECTOR OF MEDICINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dr. James sits in the tiny office directly adjacent to the Station. She stares into space, an unguarded moment where we see a near existential weariness...

There's a quick RAP on her door. She comes to, dons her armor, glances up:

JENNA
Paul! A friendly face! How are you?

In the doorway: DR. PAUL STICKLEY, pompous with oily authority.

STICKLEY
Am I interrupting?

JENNA
Of course not. You? I'd ask you to sit down but... this awful, claustrophobic office. Thank God, it's only temporary! I'd rather die...

STICKLEY
I came over to make sure my patient got into her bed and I heard about the little dust up--

JENNA
Oh, that. Just a bad joke at the end of a long shift-- but "the fireworks" are over.

STICKLEY
When people heard about it they were frightened-- for you, of course--

JENNA
Paul. It was just a little-- a dramatic gesture-- some "gallows" humor.

STICKLEY
You threatened everyone on the ward with a scalpel--

JENNA
I did not. Such ridiculousness. And if by some chance it was construed that I did, you know me, it was tongue very much in cheek--

STICKLEY
Security escorted you out.

JENNA
(simply)
I left before they arrived.

STICKLEY
(not:)
Well you don't have to worry, Jenna. Everyone's firmly on your side.

JENNA
Oh, that's so good to know.

STICKLEY
There's great affection for you from all your colleagues at the hospital. What would Geriatrics do without you?

JENNA
(in a "baby voice")
That's so sweet of you.
(half-beat)
Do you have a minute?

STICKLEY
For you I'll make one.

JENNA
Really, just between us, something's got to be done about Beverly...

She closes the door on "us".

<u>INT. FIFTH FLOOR - BIRDY'S ROOM / BATHROOM - NIGHT</u>

As Marta wheels Birdy into the bathroom, Dawn pops in:

DAWN
Hey-- how about having a piece of cake? I can't get Sandy, so what the heck, let's celebrate. It's still the Fourth. And it's your first day.

MARTA
Okay. Let me just finish up in here.

Dawn leaves. QUICK, DISCRETE CUTS as Marta toilets Birdy: Marta kneels; gloves on--

MARTA (CONT'D)
Can you stand?

BIRDY
I can, but I get dizzy.

MARTA
Hold on to the rail, put your other hand on my shoulder.

Marta's hands slide the diaper down Birdy's smooth thighs, then calves; one foot steps out, then the other; the diaper tossed away.

MARTA (CONT'D)
Go ahead and sit-- lean forward--

Marta bent over-- wiping. Then the fresh diaper; one foot in, then the other-- sliding up the legs, pulled up over the waist-- a playful snap of the elastic--

MARTA (CONT'D)
Clean as a whistle and ready for bed.

BIRDY
Can you help me find my purse, Honey? I need my keys. I need to get to the office.

MARTA
Here-- let me help you to the office.

LONG: Marta "walks" Birdy from bathroom to bed: Birdy weak and unsteady, her hands on Marta's shoulders, Marta's hands under Birdy's arms, holding her up, a mutual embrace, Birdy in her shorty pink gown and big, puffy fresh, clean diaper... Marta sets her gently on the bed.

BIRDY
Thank you, Honey.

Marta tucks Birdy in.

MARTA
Good night, Birdy. Sleep well. Do you want your light left on or off?

BIRDY
Off, I think. Thank you.

Marta turns to leave.

BIRDY (CONT'D)
Don't leave me, Honey. I get scared.

MARTA
(beat)
I know.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - NURSE'S STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Dawn scarfing down the cake. SANDY SAKS, a stooped, resigned and soft-spoken 80, enters.

DAWN
Oh, God--

She shoves the cake out of sight. One last mouth full, then:

DAWN (CONT'D)
Sandy! Hi!

SANDY
Hello.

DAWN
(chewing, swallowing)
Hello. Thanks so much for coming in.

SANDY
I got your message.

DAWN
(clears throat)
Yes. I just need to talk to you about your sister.

She escorts Sandy to a quiet area with two chairs.

DAWN (CONT'D)
Would you like to sit down.

SANDY
No.

Suddenly the elevator dings open and a Beverly whisks over:

DAWN
Beverly, listen, I'm really sorry--

BEVERLY
How did you hear already?

DAWN
(riffing)
People gossip.

BEVERLY
Yeah. Well that crazy white bitch got my ass fired.

DAWN
Oh my God. Oh-- I'm so sorry.

BEVERLY
I thought you already heard.

DAWN
(she hadn't)
Yes, but I'm still sorry.

BEVERLY
God I'm happy to get away from her-- you couldn't pay me to stay--
(she hugs Dawn)
You've been a really good friend-- a good nurse--

Beverly turns and quickly hurries away--

DAWN
Beverly--

Sandy, meanwhile has taken a seat. Dawn sits across from her:

DAWN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about that.

SANDY
It's okay.

DAWN
I just wanted to tell you that I'm so sorry, but Lilian, she passed away this morning.
(takes Sandy's hand)
I'm really Sorry.

SANDY
She's dead?

DAWN
Would you like to see her? To hold her? I can make arrangements.

SANDY
Thank you. Okay. That would be good.

Marta steps from Birdy's quad, to observe:

DAWN
We have the partially filled out death certificate that you need to bring to the funeral home. Do you have a funeral home in mind?

SANDY
No. I didn't think it would happen so fast.

DAWN
I was with her when she died.

SANDY
You were?

DAWN
I was holding her hand.

SANDY
Did she ask about me?

DAWN
Yes. She did. She said she loved you very much.

Marta, moved, steps forward:

MARTA
Hello, Sandy. I'm Marta. Can I get you anything? Water?

DAWN
A glass of water?

SANDY
Yes. Water would be nice. Thank you.

MARTA
Sure thing. No problem.

DAWN
Thanks very much, Marta.

Marta nods, walks past the front desk, and wipes frame. She's found meaning here. A purpose. We sense she's "in"...

END OF EPISODE.