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Fighting Chance

A Play

N. J. Crisp

Samuel French – London
New York – Sydney – Toronto – Hollywood



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FIGHTING CHANCE

First presented in London, at the Apollo Theatre, by Bill Kenwright, in association with the Thorndike Theatre, Leatherhead on 8th August, 1985, with the following cast:

Physiotherapist	Joyce Rac
Tony	Brian Marshall
Len	Victor Maddern
Douglas	Lewis Jones
Philip	Simon Williams
Kathy	Elizabeth Quinn
Speech Therapist	Penny Brownjohn
Nurse	Kate Dunn
Ken	Robin McDonald

Directed by Roger Clissold
Designed by Stuart Stanley

The play takes place in a residential rehabilitation centre for neurological patients, near London, and is based on the author's experience as a patient in 1976 and for a shorter period in 1982

Time—the present

ACT I

Scene 1	Gymnasium	9.40 a.m. Monday	Philip's Week 1
Scene 2	Speech Therapy	2.30 p.m. Tuesday	Week 2
Scene 3	Room 6	5.30 p.m. Wednesday	Week 3
Scene 4	Physiotherapy	10.00 a.m. Thursday	Week 3
Scene 5	Patients' Lounge	9.00 p.m. Thursday	Week 4

ACT II

Scene 1	Room 6	7.30 a.m. Monday	Week 5
Scene 2	Patients' Lounge	9.30 p.m. Thursday	Week 6
Scene 3	Speech Therapy	2.15 p.m. Monday	Week 7
Scene 4	Physiotherapy	3.30 p.m. Tuesday	Week 7
Scene 5	Patients' Lounge	6.45 p.m. Monday	The Last Week
Scene 6	Gymnasium	9.40 a.m. Friday	The Last Week

PRODUCTION NOTE

The prologues preceding each scene were initially used to cover the scene changes, together with music. In the West End production of the play it was found possible to dispense with the scene prologues, and use suitable interval music only. The prologues preceding Act I and Act II were, however, retained throughout

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CHARACTERS

Philip, a freelance journalist

Kathy, a teacher

Len, a crane driver

Tony, a salesman

Douglas, a company director

Nurse (Mary)

Speech Therapist (Ann)

Physiotherapist (Helen)

Kevin, a wheelchair patient (non-speaking; played by an A.S.M.)

PRE-CURTAIN SEQUENCE

*The Lights are lowered, but the CURTAIN does not immediately rise
After a brief pause, the following dialogue comes from loudspeakers*

Nurse Can you bath yourself?

Philip Yes, thank you.

Nurse Manage the loo on your own?

Philip Yes.

Nurse Normal diet?

Philip Yes.

Nurse Do you wear dentures?

Philip No.

Nurse Eyesight?

Philip Fine.

Nurse Any need for regular pain killers?

Philip No.

Nurse How about sleep? Do you need drugs?

Philip I've brought some with me.

Nurse You hand those in, collect any drugs you need from the drugs trolley every night. You were warned not to bring much money with you, or any valuables?

Philip Yes.

Nurse Right, Philip, wait outside, and doctor will see you soon. After that you'll be given your programme, and I'll take you along to the gym.

The voices stop

After a brief pause, the CURTAIN rises

ACT I*

SCENE I

The Gymnasium. 9.40 a.m. Monday, Week 1

Sets are described throughout as though they were conventional, but since we are using several different sets, the descriptions are only meant to serve as a basis for the designer

The Gymnasium is just a big room with wall bars. At one end, a square stool on which the Physiotherapist will sit. At the other end, more stools are stacked two or three high. Patients drift in, those in wheelchairs park themselves, those who can walk fetch a stool each, with varying degrees of difficulty

In real life, there would be fifteen to twenty patients or more, rather than just "our" five. Perhaps either use some additional patients, who do not speak, or the scene could be staged so that the audience are persuaded that there are more out of sight

As the CURTAIN rises, Tony is sitting and doing the Telegraph crossword. Tony is a bit either side of forty years of age, a big, well built man, were he not confined to a wheelchair. From the waist up, he is still strong, and "drives" his wheelchair energetically. He seems to be always laughing and cheerful, if not always kind. A pair of elbow crutches are hooked across the back of his wheelchair. He wears a tracksuit and gym shoes. Like all the other patients, he wears a plastic wristband on his left wrist, on which are his name, date of birth and religion

Douglas makes his way towards the stools. He wears a short sleeved shirt, ordinary trousers and shoes. Douglas is about fifty, a man who always took care of himself, slim build, decisive features. A stroke has affected his left side but, since he is right handed, his speech is unimpaired. As he walks, he holds his affected left hand in front of himself with his good right hand. However, he has perceptual problems due to the loss of the left half of the visual field, and he has to take care not to bump into things on his left side. Douglas's left leg has been fitted with an ortholon splint—made of plastic, moulded to fit under the foot and behind the calf, worn over the sock. Lacking sensation in the affected leg, part of the problem is simply to believe that it will support his weight. Douglas tends to "hop" off the affected leg as fast as possible

The Physiotherapist comes from the entrance to an equipment store (where

*N.B. Paragraph 3 on p. ii of this Acting Edition regarding photocopying and video-recording should be carefully read.

the record player is kept) as Douglas is moving across the gymnasium, and speaks as she heads for the corridor

Physiotherapist Put your weight on that left leg, Douglas. It'll support you. Come on.

The Physiotherapist goes into the corridor

Douglas fetches a stool for himself, carrying it in his good right hand, puts it down, sits on it. He begins to lift his affected left arm with his right hand, getting it up as far as he can above his head. It is an exercise he should do automatically and frequently throughout the play

Len enters, wearing shirt, trousers, ordinary shoes. He is in his middle fifties. He walks with something a bit like a sailor's roll, but otherwise there appears to be little wrong with him. Len is a Londoner, the salt of the earth working class type. Decent, amiable, not much formal education, but a fair bit of natural intelligence

Tony Done your number twos, Len? I heard you grunting away in the thunder box.

Len It's not funny mate. I nearly bust a gut, trying.

Tony (*wagging a finger*) No number twos for nurse? Naughty boy. It'll be the enema for you, my lad.

Douglas You do love the sound of your own voice, don't you?

Tony Who said that? Who said that?

Tony looks at Douglas, who is raising his clasped hands

(Imitating Douglas) Why, hallelujah.

Len has collected his stool, and sits down on it

The Physiotherapist brings Philip in. At this stage, Philip is wearing shirt, trousers, and ordinary shoes. Philip is in his early to middle forties. He slowly makes his way in using elbow crutches. Were we able to see his legs, both would have suffered considerable muscle wasting, and the left would be markedly thinner than the right. He leans heavily on his elbow crutches. When walking, they are used alternately, as with two walking sticks

Physiotherapist You can change into track suit and gym shoes after this.

Philip Right.

Physiotherapist (*to the others*) This is Philip.

Tony Hallo, again. Saw him arrive.

Physiotherapist He's in your room.

Tony Ah, the new boy.

Physiotherapist (*indicating*) You'll need a stool.

The Physiotherapist goes back into the equipment store

Tony Room Six. Sister reckons she can match people up. Reserved for the bright ones. Well, Len there's not too bright, but he's all right.

Len (*unruffled as ever*) Hallo.

Philip Hallo, Len.

Tony The praying mantis is Douglas. He's not all right.

Douglas How do you do.

Philip Hallo.

Len I'll get a stool for you.

Philip Thanks, but I think I can manage. (*He manoeuvres a stool into position beside Tony, by edging it forward, a few inches at a time, with one of his elbow crutches*)

While Philip is doing this, Tony reverts to his crossword

Tony This should be easy. "Let all detainees go to rehabilitation centre."

Two words, four and six. Come on, Len. Let all detainees go to rehabilitation centre—Two words, four and six.

Len Er . . . patients exit.

Tony Four and six, dummy, not eight and four. Patients exit! It's supposed to make sense, you great wally.

Douglas Mass escape.

Tony (*scornfully*) No!

Douglas All right. What is it?

Tony I'm thinking.

Philip Open prison.

Tony Brilliant. (*He writes the answer in*) An acquisition, this lad. Another great brain in Room Six at last.

Len I don't get that.

Tony "Open prison" - let the inmates go. And if this dump isn't a prison, I don't know what is. Besides, it fits with seven down.

Kathy has arrived, and is moving across the gymnasium to fetch a stool. She is in her thirties, wears a loose dress and flat shoes. She would be attractive, except that she moves as though she has lost pride in her own femininity, does not hold herself erect, her movements are rather lax. She has a letter in one hand

Philip has laid his elbow crutches on the floor, and is looking at his programme - a small card. Tony peers at the card

Tony That your programme? What have you got?

Philip Physiotherapy after this, then Gymnasium . . .

Tony (*reading for himself*) And Occupational Therapy *before* and after lunch. Aren't you the lucky one?

Philip I thought there'd be more physiotherapy.

Tony Good God, man, what do you think this is? A rehabilitation centre?

Philip What happens in Occupational Therapy?

Tony Whenever they can't think what to do with us next, they stick down O.T. Keeps us occupied.

Philip (*looking round*) What's it like, this place?

Tony A cross between Butlin's and Belsen. Morning, Kathy.

Kathy is on her way past them with her stool. She pauses, turns her head towards Tony

Kathy Hallo . . . uh . . . (*She breaks off. The word "Tony" has momentarily eluded her*)

Tony's attitude is wrong. He should allow her time to find the word. He does not. He also speaks as if she were an idiot child

Tony Me Tony, him Philip. Nothing to it. Good morning, Tony. Good morning Philip. Right? Oh, never mind. Read your love letter.

Kathy smiles uncertainly, moves on, sets her stool down some way in front of them, and sits. Tony sighs in Philip's direction, exaggeratedly rotates his right forefinger, indicating, "she's potty"

She's not all there. Car accident. Her boy friend driving, been to a party, thought he was James Hunt. (He mimes a car rolling over and over) Added her brains.

The record player starts playing—off in the equipment room. It is not the best record player in the world, and certainly not hi-fi. The record is Trini Lopez, singing If I had a Hammer (or similar style and vintage)

Where they dig up these discs, I'll never know. Buried for posterity somewhere, I should think.

The Physiotherapist comes in, sits on her stool, facing them

She begins to make rhythmic movements, arms, legs, body. As she does so, she speaks, echoing whatever movements she is making: e.g. "Hands on head, shoulders, sideways, back, forward . . ." etc.

The Patients follow her movements as best they can, in time to the music, according to their various disabilities

Tony can follow the arm and body movements, but not of course the leg movements

Douglas can use his right arm and right leg, but his left arm remains motionless, and movements of his left leg are hesitant and belated

Len can do it all, but he follows lackadaisically and without interest

Philip, never having done it before, is all at sea. Even when he begins to get the hang of it, and keeps roughly in time with arm and body movements, his legs are not under full control, tend to arrive where they should be late, and he loses the rhythm

Kathy follows the Physiotherapist not only with precision, but with flair, losing herself in the pleasure of doing it

The Physiotherapist stands up

Physiotherapist Those who can, stand up. (*Her movements are now with her legs, as well as arms. One foot sideways - back. The other sideways, back. One leg forward, heel on the floor, back. And so on, all to the beat of the song. Again, she speaks, matching whatever movements she makes; e.g.*

*“Right foot sideways, back, left foot sideways, back, forward, back . . .”
etc.)*

Tony, of course, remains in his wheelchair and cannot move his legs. He compromises by following with his hands and arms

Douglas can stand, but he is unhappy about placing weight on his left leg, and, with the weight on his right leg, his left does not answer too well. The overall effect is clumsy and out of time

Kathy is a revelation, suddenly a different woman, graceful and feminine, delighting in the use of her body. Although she remains gyrating on the same spot, she looks as if she is floating and dancing

Philip has groped for his elbow crutches, got them into position, and levered himself to his feet – which all takes time. Leaning on his crutches, he can clumsily imitate some of the leg movements, but when there are arm movements as well, he staggers, nearly losing his balance

Stay seated if you’d rather Philip. (Not ceasing her movements, speaking above the sound of the music)

Philip shakes his head and carries on, grimly determined

The effect should be a kind of weird ballet, almost surrealistic – normal life out of sync – both funny and touching. And, with the exception of Kathy, none are too good, all clumsy and uncertain – we need to see a progression in a later Music and Movement session

The Physiotherapist sits down as the record nears its end, and continues with movements sitting down. The Patients follow suit. In Philip’s case, by the time he has sat down, placed his crutches on the floor, and got roughly in time with the music again, the record is nearly over

The record comes to an end. The Physiotherapist stands up

Physiotherapist All right, relax, everybody, while I go and change the record.

The Physiotherapist goes into the equipment store to put the next record on

The Patients sit waiting, mostly somewhat apathetically. Tony looks round

Tony (to Philip) Like a loony bin, isn’t it! A bunch of cripples, trying to wave their hands and feet about.

Philip (about Kathy) She seems to enjoy it. . . .

Tony Kathy? She doesn’t know any better. Like the Irish turkey looking forward to Christmas.

In front of them Kathy, half sensing that she is being talked about, looks round. Tony smiles and waves at her cheerfully

All right, Pavlova? That’s the spirit. Keep it up.

Kathy gives her subdued uncertain smile, faces front again

Another record starts to play. The Floral Dance, the brass band version with a thump-thump beat but no vocal

Here we go. Where we all quick march in a soldierly fashion. You'll be all right, Len. You must have done National Service.

Len Good days, they were.

The Physiotherapist comes back in, remains standing

Tony Doug, too, I expect. I'll bet he was an officer, though, by George.

Physiotherapist Stand up, those able.

The Physiotherapist starts with her movements, variations of the previous ones. As before, the Patients follow as best they can

Quite soon, the Physiotherapist's movements come to resemble those of marching on the spot. The Patients' attempts to follow are so ragged as to be pathetic - very different from what we shall finally see

The Lights fade to Black-out

PROLOGUE TO SCENE 2

Dialogue from loudspeakers

Nurse Philip, Sister thinks it would be all right for you to go home for the weekend, if you'd like to.

Philip There may be some mail I should deal with. May as well, I suppose.

Nurse Well, this place can be pretty depressing at weekends. How are you finding it?

Philip It's good to be out of hospital, and doing something positive. But it's a lot more tiring than I'd expected.

Nurse The first week's usually the hardest. Are you settling in with Tony and the others?

Philip Yes, fine.

Nurse Good. Back Sunday then, in time for supper or soon after. Have a good weekend.

SCENE 2

The Speech Therapist's office 2.30 pm. Tuesday. Week 2

An ordinary, quite small office. Bookshelves, two chairs either side of a desk. This could be simply illuminated to one side of the stage

The Speech Therapist wears ordinary clothes, a dress or skirt and blouse. Kathy is sitting facing her

Speech Therapist Remember all the words are connected with transport.

Kathy ... driver ... ticket ... elevator ... platform ... under ... (*She hesitates*) underground ...

Speech Therapist Good.

Kathy ... conductor ... fare ... bus ... destined.

Speech Therapist Are you sure?

Kathy (*looking at the word again*) Destin ... a ... tion.

Speech Therapist Well done. A couple of others weren't quite right. You said "elevator". It's escalator, isn't it?

Kathy Oh yes.

Speech Therapist And it was "bus stop", not "bus". Still that's better. You're making progress. Right. Let's run over some of the exercises we've done. What is your address, Kathy?

Kathy Flat ... (*Pause. She looks tense*) Flat number ... (*Pause*)

Speech Therapist The name of the block?

Kathy Redfearn Court.

Speech Therapist Good. In?

Kathy Atherley Road.

Speech Therapist Fine. Nearly there. Now all we need is the flat number.

Kathy I think ... it's ...

Speech Therapist Don't guess. Is it a single number, or more than one?

Kathy One.

Speech Therapist Well, we know you can count from one to ten quite easily.

Kathy I want to ... know it ... without that.

Speech Therapist You will. Meantime, it's better to get it right.

Kathy One, two, three ... (*A murmur. Subconsciously, she counts on her fingers at the same time*) ... four, five, six, seven, eight, ... (*Louder*) Nine. Flat nine.

Speech Therapist (*a smile*) Well done. You're home. Now again. Your address?

Kathy Flat ... (*A brief struggle*) ... nine, Redfearn Court, Atherley Road.

Speech Therapist Right. Good. Until it comes to you at once, and it will in time, don't worry about arriving at the right number by working your way up to it. It only takes a few seconds. Now let's try the really hard one.

What is your telephone number, Kathy?

Kathy Oh, dear ... um ... (*Guessing madly*) Two, eight, three ... no ... Oh two three ... no, that can't be ...

Speech Therapist Why can't it?

Kathy Oh first ... is ... a long ... way ...

Speech Therapist That's right. A trunk call. Good. Have one more try. Is the first number a high one? (*She writes Kathy's telephone number down on a piece of paper*)

Kathy No ... small ... not one ...

Speech Therapist Right. Not one.

Kathy Two? ... no ... three ... three? ... is it three? ...

Speech Therapist Yes. So it's three ... ?

Kathy Three ... (*A murmur*) One, two three ... two?

Speech Therapist Good.

Kathy Three ... two ... (*Pause. A determined rush*) Three, two, eight, oh, seven, nine, four.

Speech Therapist (*amused*) Well, that's certainly a brave try. (*She passes a slip of paper to Kathy*) This is your number. Read it aloud.

Kathy (*reading*) Three ... two ... oh ... two ... eight ... seven ... three ... (*Disappointed*) It is ... nothing like ...

Speech Therapist Numbers are a problem, Kathy. We know you can now say the days of the week and the months of the year from memory, but the sequence in a telephone number—there's no rhyme or reason to it. On the other hand, until you *can* memorize your phone number, it doesn't matter. At home, it's on your telephone, if anyone wants it. Let's do something more concrete. Where you can see the problem. Handling money. (*She takes some money from her handbag*) Suppose you've been shopping, and it comes to one pound, forty five pence. I'd like you to give me the exact amount.

Kathy First, can I say the ... (*she forgets "alphabet"*) the A B C?

Speech Therapist Kathy, I have explained, being able to memorize your A B C doesn't matter. The alphabet isn't used in communication.

Kathy Alphabet, yes. Say it.

Speech Therapist Kathy, even if you can, you don't go around saying the alphabet to other people.

Kathy Please. Let me.

Speech Therapist Well, all right. If it's important to you, it's important. But try taking the letters in small groups.

Kathy takes a breath. This self-imposed hurdle is vitally important to her

Kathy A ... B ... C ... (*Pause*) ... D ... E ... H ...

Speech Therapist D, E, F.

Kathy F ... D ... E ... F ... (*Pause*) ... H ... K ...

Speech Therapist G, H, I.

Kathy (*getting distressed*) G ... K ... M ...

Speech Therapist Let's leave it, Kathy. Don't worry about it. It is very difficult.

Kathy is on the verge of frustrated tears

Kathy It won't come ...

Speech Therapist There's a reason. Let me tell you. All right?

Kathy regains control. She nods

We need language to communicate, to express thoughts and ideas. But because of your accident, your retrieval mechanism is faulty. You sometimes lose access to the language store—but you haven't lost the language store itself. That's still there, in your mind.

Kathy I know. I know it's there. But I can't ... I can't find ... find things. Names of things. I know what they are, but ... what they're called ... it won't come out.

Speech Therapist Exactly, and that's what we're working on. That's the point of all these exercises, and you've improved a lot, you know.

Kathy Some things. But . . . lots of things, not. Simple things. Like the A B . . . alphabet. (*Softly, as if drumming it into her head*) Alphabet.

Speech Therapist The alphabet isn't simple, Kathy. There are only seven days in the week. One to ten, ten numbers; twelve months in the year. But the alphabet has twenty six letters, and that's too many factors at this stage. It's not easy, and honestly it's not something you should worry about.

Kathy It is important. One of the first things I learned . . . now I can't say it . . . I want to . . .

Speech Therapist The trouble is . . . (*A quick glance at her watch*) . . . there's only so much time. Suppose I put it on a cassette, so that you can listen to it in your own time?

Kathy (*happy*) Oh, yes, please.

Speech Therapist Play it over and over, and try and see the letters in your mind.

Kathy (*studying money on desk*) The . . . what you said I bought . . .

Speech Therapist Shopping.

Kathy Shopping. How much?

Speech Therapist We'd better leave that until tomorrow, now. Time's running out.

Kathy Could I . . . (*pointing at book*) . . . that . . . the . . . um . . .

Speech Therapist Poem?

Kathy Yes . . . the one . . . by . . . (*She cannot remember*)

Speech Therapist Robert Herrick?

Kathy Yes . . . read . . . again . . .

Speech Therapist It might be better to keep to simpler things for a while. You did find it very difficult last time, Kathy.

Kathy Try . . . please . . . I could . . . once . . .

Speech Therapist Why is that particular poem so special?

Kathy At school . . . when I was . . . small . . . one Parents' Day . . . I had to . . . say it . . . no book . . . there's a word . . .

Speech Therapist Recite it.

Kathy Recite it, yes.

Speech Therapist Well, since you once knew it by heart, that could help. Let's look at it again in a week or two.

Kathy Now . . . please . . .

Speech Therapist It'll take us a long time to work our way through it, and I think Andrew's waiting outside.

Kathy Not hard . . . words . . . I was . . . small . . . could then . . . words short . . .

Speech Therapist Yes, but the concepts are difficult, you found that before. (*Glancing at poem in book*) Suppose I mark it for you, where you might have problems. Then you can look at it on your own, before we have another shot at it. All right?

Kathy Yes.

Speech Therapist Fine. We'll do that. See you tomorrow, Kathy.

The Lights fade to Black-out

PROLOGUE TO SCENE 3

Dialogue from loudspeakers

Philip is having a bath. Sound of water splashing, and a door being rattled hard—and then again

Philip Yes? Who is it?

Douglas Will you be long, Philip?

Philip Just got in. The shower's free.

Douglas It's not. Len's in there. Besides, I don't like showers. I prefer a bath.

Philip Give me five minutes.

Douglas I always make a point of bathing immediately after tea. I thought that was understood.

Philip Douglas you can't reserve the bloody bathroom. Today I got here first for once, all right?

Douglas (*after a pause*) I'll just hang on outside, if you don't mind. If I turn my back, someone else'll get in before me.

SCENE 3

Room Six. 5.30 pm. Wednesday. Week 3

A ward for four men. Four hospital beds, four bedside lockers, four smallish wardrobes. But only one wash-basin, with a large mirror, above which is a notice. NO SMOKING. The electric razor plug is set low—so that it can be used by patients in wheelchairs. The door is propped open. Outside, a corridor at right angles

Douglas's bed is on the right hand side. Len has the equivalent one on the left hand side. The other two are Philip's and Tony's, Philip's on the right hand side, Tony's on the left

It is late afternoon. Treatment for the day is over. Philip and Douglas have bathed, and are changing for the evening

Philip has shirt and trousers on, and is sitting on his bed, putting his shoes on. After that, he waits until Douglas has finished—their wardrobes adjoin and there is not much space between Douglas's bed and the wardrobes

Douglas has his trousers on, and a vest. He takes a shirt from a hanger in the wardrobe, puts it on, coat style, and buttons it, using his right hand. He is pretty adept at this by now

During this, Philip has eased his shoes on, bending forward, using his body weight to slip them on, and then picks up the Patients' Handbook from his locker and begins to study it

Douglas You must know that off by heart.

Philip Pretty well.

Douglas (*quoting*) "All patients should bring any appliances they normally use, such as crutches, supports, leg braces, wheelchairs . . ."

Philip Sounds familiar. Another student of the *Patients' Handbook*.

Douglas Read it once. I have that kind of memory.

Philip "Appliances patients normally use." What's normal about appliances?

Douglas Ghastly word.

Philip Why not "aids which patients temporarily need"? Something more positive.

Douglas (*quoting again*) "Daily Timetable. Seven fifteen a.m. Early morning call. Male patients are expected to shave before breakfast." That's positive enough.

Philip One or two of the female patients as well.

During the above, Douglas has crossed to Philip, and holds out his right arm

Douglas Would you mind?

Philip buttons Douglas's right sleeve

Meantime, out in the corridor, we hear the sound of Kathy's cassette recorder as she approaches. The Speech Therapist's voice saying the alphabet, slowly and deliberately, A . . . B . . . C . . . etc.

Kathy pauses at the doorway, the cassette recorder in one hand and a cellophane wrapped bunch of flowers in the other, and glances in through the open door. She sees Douglas, and moves out of sight to her own room, the cassette recording of the alphabet receding, until it is unheard

Neither Philip nor Douglas take any notice—they have become used to it, part of the scenery

Douglas God, I never expected to find myself anywhere like this.

Philip (*drily*) No. Serious illness is something which happens to other people.

Douglas Me? Have a stroke? Never crossed my mind. Always looked after myself, played squash two or three times a week. Why me?

Philip Why any of us? It doesn't much matter. We're all here.

Douglas Damned hard to come to terms with, though. You must feel the same.

Philip I suppose I've turned inwards. I can only think of getting better. Being able to walk without "appliances", play tennis again, there's no room for anything else.

Douglas Some have settled already, you know. Given up. Accepted it. (*About his arm*) I'll get this blasted thing working again if it kills me. (*He moves to his wardrobe*) This leg too. I need to get back to the office as soon as possible. (*He reaches into his wardrobe, takes his jacket from a hanger, slips it on, using his right hand in a practised way, locks his wardrobe door, pockets the key*)

Philip Don't you run your own company?

Douglas I'm one of the directors. I don't own it.

Philip Well, your speech hasn't been affected.

Douglas That's not the point. I'd just taken delivery of a new Mercedes.

Philip On the company?

Douglas Naturally.

Philip They can give you a chauffeur.

Douglas I don't want a chauffeur. I intend to drive my own car, thank you. I refuse to ask for special treatment. I refuse to be disabled. Simple as that.

Douglas goes, though his left side brushes the door as he leaves, and we hear the slightly uneven sound of his receding footsteps

Philip takes a small bottle of whisky from under his pillow, and swallows a mouthful. There is a tap on the door

It is Kathy, who is holding a notebook. The propped open door shields her from Philip's line of vision. Philip puts the bottle back under his pillow

Philip Come in.

Kathy enters hesitantly, although with inner determination

Hallo, Kathy.

Kathy Excuse me . . .

Philip It's all right. Come on in.

Kathy has geared herself up for this and the most important word comes out first

Kathy Writer.

Philip (*taken aback*) Sorry?

Kathy Writer . . . (*Pointing at door*) . . . they say . . . (*Pointing at Philip*) . . . you . . .

Philip Oh, I see. Well, I'm a journalist.

Kathy But you write . . . things . . .

Philip Yes. Features, mostly.

Kathy Please . . . teach me . . . will you? (*She offers her notebook*)

Philip To write?

Kathy Yes.

Philip Well . . . what do you have in mind? Articles? Reports for your local paper or something?

Kathy No . . . if you . . . write . . .

Philip Yes? Go on.

Kathy You must know . . . how . . . (*Miming handwriting*)

Philip Oh. Yes. Well, I generally use a typewriter.

Kathy But . . . you can.

Philip I can. Yes.

Kathy I could. Not now . . . only print . . . not proper writing . . . joined up . . .

Philip Handwriting?

Kathy Yes. Will you show me, please?

Philip We'd better sit down. (*He makes his way to his bed, sits down, parks his elbow crutches*)

Kathy sits beside Philip and he takes the pad

Kathy Thank you . . . (*She twists his plastic wristband to see his name*) . . .
Philip . . . I did know . . . but it went . . .

Philip My handwriting's pretty awful. Still . . . What would you like?

Kathy Anything. That. (*She points to the Patients' Handbook*)

Philip (*reading it*) Oh, the *Patients' Handbook*. "Getting well is a full time occupation for you, so treatment goes on. . . ."

Kathy (*shaking her head*) No. One . . . a few words, and then . . . more.

Philip One phrase at a time.

Kathy Yes. I forgot my pen.

Philip That's all right (*He produces a pen*)

Philip writes slowly and carefully. Kathy watches the movements of his fingers and pen intently

Kathy (*As he writes*) Getting . . . Well . . . is . . .

Philip Well, at least you can read it.

Kathy I can read! (*She snatches the handbook and begins to read from it painfully*) "... special treatment . . . re . . ." (*She breaks off*)

Philip Required.

Kathy Let me.

Philip Sorry.

Kathy "... special treatment . . . required . . . to speed . . . recovery . . ." (*Looking at Philip*) More?

Philip If you like.

Kathy "... only by your . . . own . . . efforts . . . can you . . . get better; we will show you . . . how . . . to do it . . ." (*She returns the handbook to Philip*)
 I can . . . it is hard . . . the words . . . but I can . . .

Philip That's good. But what I meant was, you can read my handwriting.

Kathy Yes. "Getting well is . . ."

Philip Right. Well, you copy it underneath.

Kathy takes the pad and pen, studies the pad dubiously, and looks at Philip

Kathy First . . . if I . . . big letters . . . (*She mimes the act of printing letters*)

Philip Print. Fine. You do it your way first. (*Pointing*) Down here.

Kathy That's a nice pen. (*She carefully prints the phrase*)

Philip Getting . . . well . . . is . . . OK. Now copy what I've written in your own hand. On the line underneath.

Kathy seems to need to steel herself for this task. She bends her head, childlike, over the page, concentrating fiercely. But the pen scarcely moves. For a long moment, she appears to be frozen. Finally

Kathy I can't . . .

To Philip's horror, he perceives that Kathy is unreasonably distressed, and weeping

Philip Kathy, come on . . . try again . . . there's nothing to cry about . . .

Philip attempts to place a consoling hand on her arm. Kathy openly sobbing now, hurries blindly towards the door

Kathy, wait. (*He grabs for his elbow crutches, and attempts to stand up in order to follow her. It is a reflex action, but Philip's physical condition is not geared to sudden movements. He loses his balance, and falls awkwardly on to the floor with a crash, losing his grip on his elbow crutches, which go clattering and flying*)

The noise brings Kathy to a stop. She sees what has happened

Kathy Oh! (*She hurries back to Philip*) Philip . . . you all right?

Philip (*shaken*) Don't know . . . (*Lying on his face, he pushes with his hands, trying to turn over*)

Kathy Let me . . .

Philip If I could just sit up.

Kathy, nothing wrong with her body, straightens his legs

Sorry.

Kathy Come . . . against the bed . . . (*Suiting action to words, she slides Philip round until he is leaning against the bed*)

Philip gets one elbow up on to the bed, attempts to lift himself and fails

Philip Oh, hell.

Kathy Just . . . arms . . . here . . . (*Putting Philip's arms round her*)

Philip Careful. You'll hurt yourself. You'd better ring for the nurse.

Kathy It's all right . . . this way . . . there . . .

And Philip is back on his bed sprawling, somewhat breathless. With Philip's arms levering on the bed, and hers under his legs, Kathy has been able to lift him up. She retrieves his elbow crutches, hands them to him, and stands beside him

Philip (*as she does so*) You're stronger than you look.

Kathy Are you all right? (*Her distress has gone*)

Philip I think so. (*He prods his legs experimentally*) One thing about not much sensation in the legs, it doesn't hurt if you knock yourself. I really am sorry, Kathy.

Kathy Not you. Me. My fault.

Philip It's so bloody humiliating.

Kathy Please? I didn't . . . you speak fast . . .

Philip (*more slowly*) I said it was very humiliating.

Kathy What?

Philip Falling down. Needing help to get up again.

Kathy You can speak . . . you can write. For me, it is . . . what you said . . .

Philip Humiliating.

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