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Acting Edition

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

by Dale Wasserman

From the Novel by
Ken Kesey

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST premiered on Broadway at the Cort Theatre on November 13, 1963, produced by David Merrick and Edward Lewis in association with Seven Arts and Eric Productions. The cast was as follows:

CHIEF BROMDEN	Ed Ames
AIDE WARREN	Lincoln Kilpatrick
AIDE WILLIAMS	Leonard Parker
NURSE RATCHED	Joan Tetzel
NURSE FLINN	Astrid Wilsrud
DALE HARDING	William Daniels
ELLIS	Arnold Soboloff
BILLY BIBBIT	Gene Wilder
SCANLON	Malcolm Atterbury
CHESWICK	Gerald S. O'Loughlin
MARTINI	Al Nesor
RUCKLY	William Gleason
FREDERICKS	Wesley Gale
SEFELT	Charles Tyner
COL. MATTERSON	Paul Huber
RANDLE P. MCMURPHY	Kirk Douglas
DR. SPIVEY	Rex Robbins
AIDE TURKLE	Milton J. Williams
CANDY STARR	Arlene Golonka
NURSE NAKAMURA	Michi Kobi
TECHNICIAN	Clifford Cothren
SANDRA	K.C. Townsend
AIDE	Paul Gumeny

ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST, revised from three to two acts and rewritten for a smaller cast, opened Off-Broadway at the Mercer-Hansberry Theatre on March 23, 1971, produced by Rudi Golyn and directed by Lee D. Sankowich. The cast was as follows:

CHIEF BROMDEN	William Burns
AIDE WILLIAMS	William Paterson Jr.
AIDE WASHINGTON	John Henry Redwood
NURSE RATCHED	Janet Ward
NURSE FLINN	Eve Packer
DALE HARDING	James J. Sloyan
BILLY BIBBITT	Lawrie Driscoll
CHARLES ATKINS CHESWICK III	William Duff-Griffin
FRANK SCANLON	Jon Richards
ANTHONY MARTINI	Danny DeVito
RUCKLY	Joseph Napoli
RANDLE PATRICK MCMURPHY	William Devane
DR. SPIVEY	Jack Aaron
AIDE TURKEL	Jeffrey Miller
CANDY	Louie Piday
TECHNICIAN	Kelly Monaghan
SANDY	Sydney Andreani
VOICES	John Garber, Doug Armand, Joseph Napoli, Danny Rich, Marc Nelsen, Teddi Kern, James Barnett, John Blakeley, Lee D. Sankowich

CHARACTERS

The Patients:

CHIEF BROMDEN

DALE HARDING

BILLY BIBBIT

SCANLON

CHESWICK

MARTINI

RUCKLEY

RANDLE P. MCMURPHY

The Staff:

AIDE WARREN

AIDE WILLIAMS

DR. SPIVEY

NURSE RATCHED

NURSE FLINN

AIDE TURKLE

Others:

CANDY STARR

SANDRA

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There is profanity and strong language in the play. Particularly as concerns educational institutions and community theaters, you may feel at liberty to modify or delete language which may give offense in your community without, however, altering the basic text.

DW

ACT I

*(The Day Room in a ward of a State Mental Hospital somewhere in the Pacific Northwest. A spacious, clean-lined expanse, impersonal and rather sterile. The furniture is plastic-covered. The trappings are at a minimum and disciplined in disposal. There are large, high windows opening on the ground level of a green world outdoors. Formidable locked steel grilles cover these windows, which are customarily left open. A door opens into the latrine. Next to this, a broom closet. There is a bulletin board, a magazine rack, a games cabinet, and, on a pedestal, the patients' Log Book. A locked door leads to the hallway; another door, unlocked, to the dormitory. The Nurses' Station is a large booth, somewhat elevated. It has sliding glass panels through which the charge nurse may keep all the room under scrutiny. It is always kept locked. Through the glass may be seen drug cabinets set in the wall. **NURSES** sit at a desk facing the room; on this desk a telephone and a microphone, and to one side a tape recorder. These latter two feed into speakers set in the walls or ceilings of the Day Room. Mounted on the wall behind the desk is an array of switches, dials, toggles, and knobs through which the **NURSES**, with godlike power, can monitor lights, sound, TV, etc. At the foot of the Station there is a gray, steel oblong, perhaps three feet long. This is the "panel" which houses the transformers, relays, and*

electrical cables feeding into the Station. It has a squat, brutish look, disguised by cushions which allow it to be used as a bench. There is a TV set, kept out of the way when not in use. The arrangement of tables and chairs is flexible.)

*(At rise: The stage is dark but for a single shaft of light on **CHIEF BROMDEN**. He is a huge, bull-muscled Indian who stands six and a half feet, but when people are about carries himself like a small man. Head cocked, he is listening. Vague and milky light-patterns wreath and intertwine across the stage.)*

(There comes the soft, puissant thunder of machinery and, contrapuntally, the pinging rhythm of electronic music. Behind the glass of the darkened Nurses' Station, colored lights pulse and dance accompaniment.)

CHIEF BROMDEN. You hear it Papa? The Black Machine. They got it goin', eighteen stories down below the ground. They're puttin' people in one end and out comes what they want. The way they do it, Papa, each night they tip the world on its side and everybody loose goes rattlin' to the bottom. Then they hook 'em by the heels, and they hang 'em up and cut 'em open. Only by that time they got no innards, just some beat-up gears and stuff, and all they bleed is rust. You think I'm ravin' 'cause it sounds too awful to be true, but, my *God*, there's such a lot of things that's true even if they never really happen!

*(A bell rings. The sounds and dancing light are gone, and the stage lights up with the effect almost of an explosion. Whistling is heard from off as the **AIDES** approach. **CHIEF BROMDEN** freezes into the catatonic stance. A key hits the lock, and **AIDES WARREN** and **WILLIAMS** enter, their rubber-soled shoes making no sound. They wear starched and*

spotless white uniforms, and they lope in tandem or abreast like a team of splendid, lithe panthers.)

WARREN. Well, well, here's the Chief.

WILLIAMS. The soopah-Chief.

WARREN. Ol' deaf an' dumb.

WILLIAMS. Had his breakfas' an' rarin' to go.

WARREN. (*Coming close to CHIEF BROMDEN.*) Don' you know better? Don' you know keep to your room till that bell ring?

(CHIEF BROMDEN slides away.)

Haw, look at 'im shag it! Big enough t'eat apples off my head and he scared like a baby.

WILLIAMS. What you want, baby? Yo' broom? (*Going to fetch it.*) Thassit. He want his broom.

WARREN. Ol' Chief Broom. Thassit, baby, thassa good loony.

WILLIAMS. (*Thrusts the broom into CHIEF BROMDEN's hands.*) Start sweepin', baby.

WARREN. Ol' Broom Bromden.

WILLIAMS. Ol' Chief Broom.

(They bray with laughter. Unseen by them, NURSE RATCHED has entered. She is a handsome woman, her age hard to tell. There is an odd perfection about her: face smooth as flesh-colored enamel, skin a blend of white and cream. A brilliant warm smile which appears often. Her body is ripe and womanly, evident even under the starched white uniform. Now she moves up on the AIDES, silently as though she were on wheels.)

NURSE RATCHED. If you don't mind, boys?

(The AIDES are startled.)

I don't think it wise to group up and stand around like that. Mean ol' Monday morning, you know, *such* a lot to get done?

WARREN & WILLIAMS. Yeah, Miz Ratched.

NURSE RATCHED. That's fine, boys. Warren, you might start by getting poor Mr. Bromden shaved, and Williams, you have dormitory duty, don't you?

WILLIAMS. Yeah, Miz Ratched.

NURSE RATCHED. That's just fine.

(WILLIAMS disappears into the dormitory and WARREN plucks the broom from CHIEF BROMDEN and tows him toward the latrine.)

(NURSE FLINN enters hurriedly. She is a vapid girl with apprehensive eyes who wears a gold cross at her throat.)

NURSE FLINN. Good morning, Miss Ratched.

(NURSE RATCHED looks at her watch.)

I'm sorry I'm late, but I went to Midnight Mass, and then I overslept, and –

NURSE RATCHED. *(Smilingly unlocks the Station.)* Never mind, we'd best get started, hadn't we?

(NURSE FLINN scurries into the Station and starts popping pills into paper cups. NURSE RATCHED throws a series of switches, then picks up the microphone. Her voice booms out over speakers in the Day Room and the dormitory.)

Medication. All patients to the Day Room. Medication.

(She clicks off the microphone. Leaves the Station, ready to greet patients as they enter.)

(To the FIRST PATIENT, cheerily.) Good morning, Mr. Harding.

HARDING. *(Pausing briefly.)* Are you sure?

(He goes to NURSE FLINN. He is in his late thirties, handsome, effete. Rolling his eyes aloft.)

Dear Lord, for the tranquillity we are about to receive, we thank Thee.

(He pops pills and water into his mouth. Crosses to set up a card table and get a pinochle deck from the cabinet.)

NURSE RATCHED. *(Warmly, to the next PATIENT.)* Billy, dear.

(Linking arms with him affectionately.)

I spoke to your mother last night.

(BILLY halts apprehensively. In age, almost thirty, but appears more like a boy.)

I had to tell her.

BILLY. Whu-what did you say?

NURSE RATCHED. *(Pulls back his sleeve, revealing bandages on the wrist.)* That you were very sorry and had promised not to try it again.

BILLY. Th-thank you, Miss Ratched.

NURSE RATCHED. *(Handing him his water.)* Drink it all, dear.

(Calling to another PATIENT who has entered.) Good morning, Mr. Scanlon. Mr. Cheswick.

(SCANLON, a man nearly bald, in his fifties, stalks across to a table without answering. He sets down a box he is carrying, pulls up a chair, and starts working with tools inside the box. CHESWICK is short, chubby, with a crew cut; his manner alternately truculent and cringing.)

CHESWICK. *(Examining the pills NURSE FLINN hands him.)*

Wait a shake, honey, what're these?

NURSE FLINN. Medication.

CHESWICK. Christ, I can see *that*. What kind?

NURSE FLINN. *(Trying a flirting technique.)* Just swallow them, Mr. Cheswick – just for me?

CHESWICK. Don't gimme that crap, all I want to know, for the luvva God –!

NURSE RATCHED. *(Laying a hand on his arm.)* It's all right, Charles.

CHESWICK. Whattaya mean, it's all right?!

NURSE RATCHED. You don't have to take them.

CHESWICK. That's what I mean, you just shove any old shit at a man...! I don't? Well...that's okay then.

(He takes the pills and water and downs them without further fuss. MARTINI, a little Italian, bounds into the room, eager and bright-eyed, dashes into the latrine, immediately reappears.)

NURSE RATCHED. Good morning, Mr. Martini.

MARTINI. *(Addressing absolutely no one.)* Mornin'!

(He goes to NURSE FLINN and downs his pills. Then, as CHESWICK has done, he joins HARDING and BILLY at the card table. RUCKLY enters, herded by WILLIAMS, shambles across stage. A once-powerful body now undirected by intelligence, blank-faced and empty-eyed, with shaven skull.)

NURSE RATCHED. *(Greeting him.)* Mr. Ruckly.

RUCKLY. *(Pausing, his lips working in a fury of inarticulation.)* F-f-f-fuck 'em all!

(He backs into the wall as though yanked by a rubber rope and freezes there, crucified.)

NURSE RATCHED. *(Taking a note from her clipboard.)*

Williams, we've a new admission today. I'd like you to meet him at Receiving.

WILLIAMS. *(Taking the slip of paper.)* Yeah, Miz Ratched.

NURSE RATCHED. Miss Flinn, I'll be in the Staff Room.

(To the patients.) Behave yourself, boys!

(She exits.)

CHESWICK. *(Mimicking.)* "Behave yourself, boys!" What choice we got?

(The latrine door bursts open and CHIEF BROMDEN comes floundering out in flight)

from WARREN, who pursues, brandishing an electric shaver with its long cord dangling.)

WARREN. Come back here, yuh damn redskin! Don' like this, huh?

(He raises and brandishes it at CHIEF BROMDEN, making a buzzing sound, and CHIEF BROMDEN recoils and plops into the rocking chair, huddling in fright.)

Hmm. Can't say I like that look in your eye.

(Takes a restraining strap from his back pocket, skillfully whips it around CHIEF BROMDEN's chest, cinching it behind the chair.)

Yeah...tha's some better.

(NURSE FLINN has crossed with a medical tray to SCANLON and now sets it down on his table.)

SCANLON. *(Indignantly, shoving the tray away from his box.)* Look out, there!

NURSE FLINN. No, no!

WARREN. *(Grinning.)* Sweet thing, you want some help?

NURSE FLINN. *(Primly.)* I don't need any, thank you.

(WARREN exits, laughing. NURSE FLINN retrieves her tray, and retreats to the safety of the Nurses' Station.)

HARDING. Your deal, Martini.

MARTINI. Huh? Oh, yeah, here we go!

(He deals enthusiastically, sailing an extra set of cards off to his left to a player who isn't there.)

CHESWICK. Hey, cut it out!

MARTINI. What'sa matter?

CHESWICK. There's nobody there.

MARTINI. *(Doubtfully.)* You sure?

CHESWICK. There's only *four* of us.

MARTINI. Okay!

(He picks up the cards and starts dealing again, this time sailing off an extra set to his right.)

HARDING. Martini, will you for God's sake stop hallucinating? Oh, give me the cards!

(He snatches them and starts to deal himself.)

CHESWICK. *(Chortling suddenly.)* Ha!

BILLY. What's f-f-funny?

CHESWICK. That mousy little nurse. Reminds me of the first time I ever saw a girl take off her clothes. I was eight, see, and I was sitting up in a tree looking through her bedroom window, and by the time she got down to her li'l panties, I got to shakin' till I fell outa the friggin' tree!

(BILLY stands up and goes to the Log Book.)

HARDING. *(Without turning his head.)* That's it, Billy, write it down.

BILLY. Well, we're sub-supposed to.

CHESWICK. Sure, get a gold star by your name.

BILLY. You write down everything I say.

CHESWICK. Yeah, and I'm going to write down some things you *did*!

HARDING. Shut up, you two.

RUCKLY. *(Roused.)* F-f-fuck 'em all!

HARDING. Oh, for heaven's sake, this place is a *madhouse*.

(Rising.) Fellow psychopaths. As President of the Patients' Council I, Dale Harding, do hereby decree ten seconds of blessed – therapeutic – silence.

(He clasps his hands and bows his head. The silence is almost immediately shattered by a ringing, brassy, voice as the ward door is opened:)

MCMURPHY. (*Offstage.*) Buddy, you are *so* wrong, I *don't* have to do this, and I *don't* have to do that, and *get* the hell away from me or I will take and...

(He's backed into view in a fighting crouch, pursued by WILLIAMS, who looks hot and angry and frustrated. Now he becomes aware of the room and the PATIENTS staring at him.)

Good mornin', buddies! Mighty nice fall day!

(Let's have a look at MCMURPHY. Shaggy, with long sideburns. A devilish grin and a face battered and scarred across nose and cheekbone. He wears a black motorcyclists' cap, an ancient brown leather jacket, and jeans faded almost to whiteness. On his feet lumberman's boots with a ring of steel in the heels. A wide-open extroverted air which registers almost shockingly in this environment. Now he hooks his thumbs in his belt and starts to laugh. It rolls big and free, and its vibrations jolt the PATIENTS, open-mouthed.)

Damn, what a sorry-lookin' bunch!

WILLIAMS. Now, see here, mister –

MCMURPHY. *Get away from me, boy, give me a minute to look my new home over, will ya? What the hell, I never been in a Institute of Psychology before!*

(As WILLIAMS goes into the Nurses' Station; advancing on the group:)

My name is McMurphy, buddies, R. P. McMurphy, and I am a gamblin' fool.

(Squinting at the hands.) What's this you're playin'? Pinochle? Jesus, ain'tcha got a straight deck around here? Well, say, here we go, I brought along my own just in case.

(Distributing samples.) Every card a picture – and check those pictures, huh?

*(The **MEN** go bug-eyed at what they see on the cards.)*

Fifty-two positions, boys, every one different. Easy now, don't smudge 'em, we got lotsa time, lotsa games.

*(**WILLIAMS** is expostulating unheard with **NURSE FLINN**, who picks up the telephone but will get no help. **MCMURPHY** takes back his cards.)*

Y'see, buddies, what happened was I got in a couple hassles down at the Work Farm and the Court ruled that I'm a psychopath. And do you think I'm gonna argue with the Court?

(Winks broadly.)

Shoo, you can bet your bottom dollar I don't. If it gets me outa those damn pea fields I'll be whatever their little heart desires, be it psychopath or mad dog or werewolf, because I don't care if I never see another weedin' hoe to my dyin' day –

*(**WILLIAMS** had come up behind him to renew the assault. **MCMURPHY** seizes a chair and fends him off, lion-tamer fashion.)*

– And will you get the fuck away from me?

WILLIAMS. Mister, we got *rules*. I gotta take your temperature, and I gotta get you showered.

MCMURPHY. All you gotta do is let me get acquainted with my new buddies here, and if you do *one* thing more –!

WILLIAMS. *(Grimly.)* All right, fella, you askin' for it, you gonna get it.

(He turns and marches out of the ward.)

MCMURPHY. *(Laughs his wall-shaking laugh.)* That's a whole deal better, now we can get somethin' settled. Okay, which of you's the bull goose loony?

*(The **MEN** gape at him.)*

I'm askin', who is the bull goose loony?