



THE SPECIAL CLINIC  
BY  
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Extract

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## CHARACTERS

MALCOLM RICHARDS A consultant, late middle aged. Mild mannered. Happy to live in his own little world in the shadow of others.

PRU ELLAWAY Late middle aged; the epitome of the word 'spinster'. She has been in love with Malcolm for years. She descends into a caricature of a warrior woman as the play progresses.

MARGIE WILSON Divorcee with no children. Senior nurse. A strong woman who takes her career seriously without being overly ambitious.

TONY LEVINE 30-something nurse. Gay and very camp to his friends but has been hiding his sexuality from his parents.

FIONA CHAMBERS Bright young nurse who is in the process of applying to medical school. Level headed and doesn't suffer fools gladly.

CARL TURNER Junior doctor. From a privileged background which has fostered a false sense of self confidence. He sees Fiona as a sexual challenge to be pursued.

JEAN LEVINE Tony's mother. Of Italian Catholic origin married to a Jew. She feels she knows very little about Tony's life but is determined to find out.

ASTON MURRAY A casual sexual acquaintance of Tony's.

CHRIS EGERTON Margie's long suffering 'boyfriend'. Not much personality but totally devoted to her. Margie sees him more as an old slipper. He carries a bunch of flowers that deteriorates gradually.

HARRY TEMPLETON Medical student. Geeky in appearance. Very quiet. Son of Martin.

MARTIN TEMPLETON Chief Executive of the trust. Married to money. Harry is his son. He has a secret life as a drag queen

SCENE 1

THE SCENE IS THE STAFF ROOM OF A SEXUAL HEALTH CLINIC. THERE IS A TABLE HOSTING KETTLE, MUGS ETC AND A SMALL FRIDGE TOWARDS THE CENTRE BACK OF THE STAGE. THERE IS A HORSESHOE SHAPE OF TYPICAL HOSPITAL EASY CHAIRS AT THE CENTRE FRONT OF STAGE WITH A COFFEE TABLE COVERED IN DOGEARED MAGAZINES. THERE IS A TELEPHONE ON THE COFFEE TABLE. STAGE LEFT AT THE BACK THERE IS A PLASTIC CHAIR. TO THE SIDE OF THIS THERE IS A COAT STAND. ALL ENTRANCES ARE THROUGH A DOOR STAGE RIGHT.

FI SITS ON ONE OF THE EASY CHAIRS WITH MEDICAL TEXT BOOKS SPREAD OUT ON THE COFFEE TABLE. SHE IS MAKING NOTES. PRU ENTERS. BOTH OF HER HANDS ARE BANDAGED.

PRU: You're here early, Fi.

FI: Just trying to catch up on some studying before everyone else gets in.

PRU: (MOVES ACROSS TO LOOK AT WHAT FI IS READING) What are you studying?

FI: Infectious diseases of the male genitalia. (SHOWS PRU A PICTURE). See?

PRU: Oh my goodness. Well I never. Is that - thingy - swollen? I mean, was it that size to start off with? I mean, I've not had much experience of these things myself but that just doesn't look - - oh my goodness - um

ENTER MARGIE. SHE HAS MOTOR BIKING GEAR ON. SHE REMOVES THIS AND HAS A NURSES UNIFORM ON UNDERNEATH.

MARGIE: Morning both.

FI: Morning, Margie.

MARGIE: You okay, Pru? You look a bit flustered.

PRU: I'm fine, thank you, Margie. It's not what you expect first thing in the morning, is it?

MARGIE: What isn't?

PRU: Swollen men's thingies.

MARGIE: Generally not.

PRU MOVES TO THE BEVERAGE TABLE AND  
STARTS FUSSING ABOUT.

ENTER HARRY WHO LOOKS AROUND TIMIDLY  
THEN SITS AT THE BACK OF STAGE  
RIGHT. THE OTHERS NOTICE HIM BUT SAY  
NOTHING.

MARGIE: What on earth have you done to your hands, Pru?

PRU: Oh, this? It's nothing really. Just a silly little  
accident. Nothing to worry about.

FI: It looks fairly significant to me.

PRU: Well, you know I volunteer at the bird of prey  
sanctuary?

MARGIE: Yes.....

PRU: There was a small incident at the weekend. It was  
just a bit of a misunderstanding really involving a  
kestrel and a guinea pig.

MARGIE: What was a guinea pig doing in a bird of prey  
sanctuary?

PRU: Funny you should ask.

MARGIE: I'm sure I'm going to regret that I did.

PRU: The patron of the charity was visiting with his  
grandson and he'd brought his new pet guinea pig -  
- I really don't want to talk about it. It was all  
very distressing. The look on that guinea pig's  
face will haunt me 'til I die.

MARGIE: Right.

PRU: So, from now on I'm going to be volunteering in the  
gift shop. The trustees have asked me to avoid any  
contact with the birds.

MARGIE: Sorry, Pru. I've clearly given you the impression  
that I was actually interested.

PRU: Sorry Margie. I'll just sort out the beverages, shall I? I can assure you this won't affect my ability to work on reception. I can operate the telephone with my nose if need be.

ENTER MALCOLM. HE IS CARRYING A  
LARGE CHOCOLATE CAKE IN A CAKE BOX.

MALCOLM: Morning ladies. Good weekend all?

PRU: (A BIT OF A FLUSTER) Yes thank you Malcolm. What about you? Did you do anything nice?

MALCOLM: The wife and I had some friends around Saturday night for a dinner party then I had the house all to myself on Sunday while she spent the day at a WI bake-off.

PRU: Lovely.

MALCOLM: Hence this chocolate cake. Or should I say, award-winning chocolate cake?

MARGIE: That looks really tasty, Malcolm. Your wife is a very talented woman.

MALCOLM PUTS THE CAKE ON THE  
BEVERAGE TABLE.

MALCOLM: What on earth have you done to your hands, Pru?

PRU: Oh, this. I just had a little incident at the weekend with a kestrel and a guinea pig. It's nothing really. Shall I make you a cup of coffee, Malcolm? I've bought your favourite coffee and I've got full cream milk for you, not that semi skimmed nonsense.

MALCOLM: (PICKS UP COFFEE JAR) That's fine, Pru. I can make it myself.

PRU: It's no bother. (TRIES TO WREST THE COFFEE JAR FROM HIM BUT STRUGGLES BECAUSE OF HER BANDAGED HANDS). You men need to leave these domestic chores to us ladies.

MALCOLM: No, honestly, it's fine, Pru.

PRU: Please, Malcolm. You're a busy consultant. The least I can do is make you your coffee.

MALCOLM: I don't want any fuss, Pru. Besides which, your hands are bandaged.

PRU: It's no bother at all, Malcolm. I can function fully even with bandaged hands.

MALCOLM: Please, Pru, just leave me to make my own coffee.

THE COFFEE JAR FLIES OUT OF HIS HANDS AND LANDS NEAR MARGIE.

MARGIE: When you two have quite finished squabbling.

PRU: Oops. Sorry, Margie. I'll just clean this mess up.

PRU STRUGGLES WITH HER BANDAGED HANDS TO CLEAN UP THE MESS. ENTER CARL.

CARL: Morning everyone. I trust we've all had an amazing weekend. (SITS NEXT TO FI). Morning Fi. You would have adored the weekend I've had.

FI: Somehow I doubt it.

CARL: All the boys together in a flat in Henley. Gallons of bubbly and a whole load of silly drinking games. A right raucous time was had by all.

FI: Yep. I was right. If the word raucous was used to describe the weekend, you can pretty much guarantee I wouldn't have enjoyed it.

CARL: Ah, Fi. You really do need to stop playing so hard to get. You're in danger of losing my interest.

FI: Dear God I hope so.

CARL: (LAUGHS) Excellent. Keep up the act, girl. No one will suspect you secretly desire me.

MARGIE: Where's Tony? I really need to speak to everyone before we start shift this morning.

CARL: (SPOTS THE CHOCOLATE CAKE) Gosh, who's been baking? Did you make this amazing cake, Fi?

FI: As much as I'm sure it would feed nicely into your Neanderthal male construct of the little woman back at home, barefoot, pregnant and baking, I am actually one of the worst cooks in the history of soggy bottoms.

CARL: Oh, I'm sure that's not true. I bet your dumplings are a joy to behold.

FI: You have no idea of how close to death you are right now.

CARL: So, who is the Nigella Lawson of the department?

MALCOLM: My wife, Hilary. And if you make any comment at all about her dumplings, I shall be forced to defend her honour.

ENTER TONY. HE IS TALKING ON HIS PHONE.

TONY: (ON THE PHONE) But that's exactly why I said to him that he needed to forget the sequins this time and stick with the gold lame. The last time he wore sequins there was so much reflection onto his face that we saw every line and furrow. And you know how sensitive he is about exposing his furrows.

PRU: Morning, Tony.

TONY: Anyway. I've got to go. I'm in work now. Don't forget to check with Filippo if I left my thong in his jacuzzi. Okay. Later. (COMES OFF PHONE). Morning.

PRU: Good weekend, Tony?

TONY: Don't ask.

FI: You mean it wasn't raucous?

TONY: Not entirely. And who uses the word 'raucous'?

FI: Carl does, apparently.

CARL: Oh dear. Is all not well in Tony's life of endless clubbing?

TONY: Saturday was a blast. Spent most of it with a totally fit Romanian called Stefan in the Topsy Flamingo club. What that man could do with a Curly Wurly is nobody's business.

CARL: What about Sunday?

TONY: My mother came to stay. I had to pick her up from the station. She's here for a week.

PRU: Oh, that's nice, Tony.

TONY: No it isn't. My mother is the stereotypical Italian Catholic grandmother. Nothing I could ever do would be good enough for her - she criticises everything. Mainly that I haven't given her about ten grandchildren by now. Oh and I need to warn you she may pop in here to see me. She's dying to meet the people I work with.

PRU: Well, that's lovely.

TONY: No it isn't. She fusses around me like a demented mother hen and, um, she doesn't know I'm gay so please don't say anything to her if she does turn up.

FI: She doesn't know you're gay?

CARL: Seriously, mate?

TONY: Yes.

FI: But you're one of the campest men I've ever met. How on earth would she not realise you're gay?

TONY: Because I'm really hetero when I'm with her.

FI: You? Hetero?

TONY: Yes. I just think 'butch male' and the spirit of Russell Crowe comes over me - which is not the same as the dream I had when Russell Crowe --

MARGIE: Yes, thank you Tony. That's quite enough for first thing in the morning.

PRU: I've already been disturbed by a nasty, swollen thingy, so I don't need any more distress.

CARL: (TO FI) What is she talking about?

FI SHOWS CARL THE PICTURE IN THE BOOK. CARL LOOKS SHOCKED.

TONY: Look, if you want to avoid a mafia-esque blood bath, please don't tell my mother I'm gay and please avoid this type of banter around her.

MALCOLM: You can rely on me to be the soul of discretion, Tony.

PRU: I won't say a word.

TONY: Margie? Please don't tell my mother.

MARGIE: On the grand scale of what I consider important in my life right now, your lies to your mother about your sexuality register just a little bit lower than which so-called celebrity housemate is about to be evicted from the Big Brother house.

TONY LOOKS PUZZLED

TONY: Oh, I know. I think it's going to be Jeremy Hunt but my friend Fernando is convinced it'll be Brian Cox.

MARGIE: Tony! I don't care!

TONY: Oh, okay. (PAUSE) Pru, what on earth has happened to your hands?

MALCOLM: It was an accident.

FI: Involving a kestrel and a guinea pig.

MARGIE: And now she's banished to the gift shop. Got it? Good. Now, are we all here because I've got something really important to talk to you about.

TONY: (NOTICES THE CAKE) Oh, wow. Look at this cake. Who made this cake?

MARGIE: Tony! Never mind the bloody cake.

CARL: Malcolm's wife made it.

MALCOLM: For a WI competition.

MARGIE: Aargh!

TONY: Did she win?

MALCOLM: Of course. Want a slice?

TONY: Only if it's dairy free, gluten free, nut free and kosher.

FI: Kosher? You said you were Catholic not Jewish.

TONY: Catholic on my mother's side, Jewish on my father's. Twice the number of holidays but, on the downside, twice the amount of guilt.

MALCOM: Well, I'm not really sure what the dietary considerations are with this cake, Tony.

TONY: Then I'll just have a small slice. (HELPS HIMSELF TO A SLICE OF CAKE).

ALL THE OTHERS DECIDE THEY ALSO WANT A SLICE OF CAKE AND IT BECOMES SOMETHING OF A FREE-FOR-ALL AROUND THE BEVERAGE TABLE. THEY ALL CHATTER LOUDLY.

MARGIE: (STANDS ON A CHAIR) Look! Everyone! How many times do I have to say, I've got something really important to tell you! Can you all stop fussing about the bloody cake!

EVERYONE FALLS SILENT.

PRU: Sorry, Margie.

CARL: Yes, sorry Margie.

MALCOLM: So sorry, Margie. Do go ahead.

MARGIE: Right. Now that I have your attention. Malcolm and I met with our divisional management team on Friday and, well, I'm afraid it's not good news. There's a trust-wide reorganisation going on - (TO HARRY), sorry, who exactly are you?

HARRY: Oh. I'm Harry.

MARGIE: I'm still none the wiser.

HARRY: I'm a medical student. Here to shadow Dr Turner.

CARL: Oh, right, that's me. Sorry. I'd forgotten I had a student today. Um, we just need to let our senior nurse here do her little speech and then I'll give you a tour of the department. Do you want cake?

MARGIE: Can I continue? As I said, there's a trust-wide reorganisation going on and certain services are going to be concentrated onto single sites. Sexual health is one of them. Unfortunately the site they've decided to concentrate it on is St Margaret's Hospital, not here. So, this department

is scheduled for closure. We're all going to be displaced from our jobs and we'll have to reapply for a smaller number of posts on the St Margaret's site. If you aren't successful in that, then you will be placed on the redeployment register.

TONY: What does that mean?

FI: It means they can send you to wherever there's a vacancy in the Trust. You could end up on some god-awful ward in the back of beyond, wiping dirty old men's arses and doing night shifts with a mad old matron who's not allowed out during the day.

MARGIE: Or worse, they can put you in the audit department - the department for the terminally incompetent.

TONY: They can't do this to us.

MALCOLM: I'm afraid they can. The money situation is dire so it makes no sense to them to keep two departments open.

PRU: So what are we going to do?

CARL: Well, you're probably alright Pru. You could take retirement.

MALCOLM: Pru and I are both close to retirement but not that close. Sadly this affects all of us.

FI: Apart from Carl. He's a junior doctor. They'll just move him to the new department.

CARL: But I'm sure the totty won't be as good as it is here.

FI: Oh. Please.

TONY: I'm too young to be put out to grass. I've got so much more to give.

CARL: We all know what you've got to give. It's advertised on the back of the toilet doors in the Topsy Flamingo.

TONY: And how would you know what's written on the back of the toilet doors in the Topsy Flamingo, Dorothy? Maybe I'm the totty you're going to miss, not Fi.

CARL: I hardly think so.

TONY: Methinks the queen doth protest too much.

MARGIE: Ladies, will you please put your handbags down. This is serious. If you don't want to risk the interview process and the possibility of redeployment to a job you'll hate, may I suggest that you start looking for other posts straightaway.

PRU: They can't close this place down. Think of all the good work we've done over the years. There must be something we can do.

CARL: When they tried to shut the paediatric ward they had one of the local councillors go to the press and talk about how the ward had saved his son's life.

MALCOLM: I hardly think one of the local councillors would be willing to talk to a reporter about the time we cured his son of the clap. Although, thinking about it, we have had some of the councillors themselves in here over the years.

PRU: Oh, yes. Remember that one who ended up infecting half the typing pool in the poll tax department?

MALCOLM: Oh, I do. What did we used to call him?

PRU: Mr Pole Pox.

MALCOLM AND PRU FIND THE JOKE  
HILARIOUS. NO ONE ELSE DOES.

MARGIE: Any more bright ideas?

TONY: What about a nude calendar to raise money?

PRU: Who would be nude?

TONY: We would.

CARL: I'm game!

FI: Definitely not.

TONY: That's a shame. I quite fancied being Mr November.

MARGIE: Why November?

TONY: Bonfire Night is in November and I'm a right little sparkler.

FI: You mean you're something that has to be handled with a protective glove that fizzles disappointingly for a few minutes then just falls apart in your hand?

TONY: Rude.

PRU: What about a raffle? I could crochet some toilet roll covers in the shape of different birds of prey. My bald eagle was a real success at the Christmas fare at the bird sanctuary.

MARGIE: Look. I think we all just have to accept that this closure is going to happen and nothing we can do is going to change anything. If the powers that be have decided that this will be a wise financial move for the trust, then how on earth would we get them to overturn that decision?

CARL: Well, I thought you'd have a bit more of a fight in you, Margie.

MARGIE: I just know which battles are worth fighting.

TONY'S PHONE STARTS TO RING.

TONY: Sorry. I do need to take this.

MARGIE: I'm done now anyway.

TONY: (ON THE PHONE) Hi there. Did you see it? Is it red? Any scratches on it? Well, he did say he looks after it. I know. Employed some man to rub it down every weekend apparently. Ok. Well I'll arrange to pop around and look at it after work. Ciao.

FI: What on earth?

TONY: I'm buying a new car. Alex's friend Steven has one for sale. A red sports car. It's very me.

FI: Ah. Now it makes sense. Although I thought red sports cars were a bit more midlife crisis. Why do you want one?

TONY: Always fancied one. Maybe it's the tempestuous Italian blood in me and the thought of a big, red, powerful Ferrari.

CARL: It's a Ferrari you're looking at?

TONY: No. Mazda MR2.

CARL: So, your tempestuous Italian blood is calling you to buy a Japanese car.

TONY: I'm not sure if I'm definitely going to buy one. One side of my brain says "get a sports car" but the other side says "get something sensible". I use my car a lot for helping Fernando get to his drag queen gigs - and he has loads of stuff. So I'm thinking I need something with bigger doors because, whenever I open my back door, it's a real squeeze to get in.

MARGIE: Well, as delightful as this all is, shall we get onto the shop floor and start dealing with the customers? Another day, another dollar in the riveting world of the sexual health clinic. (EXITS)

CARL (GETS UP FROM HIS CHAIR AND CROSSES TO HARRY) So, what's your name again?

HARRY: Harry.

CARL: Ok, Harry. You stick with me and I'll give you a fascinating insight into the world of the high flying junior doctor.

HARRY TAKES A NOTEBOOK AND PEN FROM HIS POCKET. HE IS POISED READY TO TAKE NOTES.

FI: High flying? Aren't you in sexual health because you failed in cardiology?

CARL: (TO HARRY) Don't listen to her. I chose sexual health as a career because I feel our patients are stigmatised and deserve a first rate clinical service.

FI: So it was nothing to do with the fact that you were struggling with your cardiology exams and the nurse who happened to be burning off your genital warts at the time suggested you try a career in sexual health instead?

CARL: (TO HARRY) She's just joking. This is exactly the sort of banter we have all the time here. Why don't we have a tour of the department to get you orientated and then I can start taking you through the basics of how to ask someone about their sexual

history. (CARL AND HARRY TURN TO LEAVE) She's got the hots for me really.

EXIT CARL AND HARRY.

TONY: (TO FI) So, which one of us is covering drop in today?

FI: You've drawn the short straw.

TONY: When did we draw straws?

FI: Just now. In my imagination. You lost.

TONY: But it's Monday. Mr Weeping Willow always comes in on Monday.

FI: Exactly. The heavy duty surgical gloves and long handled forceps are in room three.

TONY: It's not fair.

FI: Life isn't. Get over it.

EXIT FI AND TONY.

MALCOLM: Ah, Pru, what's to become of us?

PRU: (HOPEFUL) Us, Malcolm?

MALCOLM: Our jobs, Pru.

PRU: (DISAPPOINTED) Oh. I'm not sure. I suppose, from a practical point of view, as long as they find me a nice little admin job somewhere then I'll be happy to sit things out to retirement. I will miss being with you - and the others, of course.

MALCOM: I just feel like I'm being put out to grass, Pru. Like some knackered old pony that's had its day.

PRU: Oh, no, Malcolm. I don't think you're a pony that's had its day. I think there's loads of life in you.

MALCOLM: Really, Pru?

PRU: Yes, Malcolm. If you were a pony, I'd still ride you.

MALCOLM: That's one of the nicest things anyone has said to me in a long time.

PRU: Well, I mean it Malcolm. This department wouldn't be what it is if it weren't for you. You are the figurehead. I know Margie is the nurse manager but the inspirational leader is you. These people follow you like disciples.

MALCOLM: Do you really think so?

PRU: Absolutely. They would follow you into the very gates of hell itself.

MALCOLM: Well, I don't really think that's on the cards, Pru.

PRU: If you chose to fight this closure, they would all rally round you - and I would be right by your side.

MALCOLM: Steady on, old girl. That's fighting talk.

PRU: I would be Cleopatra to your Mark Anthony; Bonnie to your Clyde; Sybil to your Basil.

MALCOLM: You're starting to get a little giddy now, Pru.

PRU: I don't care, Malcolm. This is important. We can't go down without a fight. You inspire me, Malcolm Richards. You make me want to gird my loins like Queen Boudicca and rush into the enemy flanks.

MALCOLM: I think we need to keep the involvement of flanks and loins to a minimum.

PRU: You know what you need, Malcolm? You need an inspiring campaign speech.

MALCOLM: Do I?

PRU: Yes. And you need to deliver it to the department today before they all go home. Something based on a famous piece of oration that people can relate to. Like Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech.

MALCOLM: (UNSURE) Okay...

PRU: I'll reorganise your diary for the day to make sure you have time to write it.

MALCOLM: Really? You think I should give the department a bit of a pep talk to get them to fight this closure?

PRU: More than a pep talk, Malcolm. An emotion-stirring call to arms for the masses. You need to stir us, Malcolm.

MALCOLM: Are you sure?

PRU: More sure than I've ever been. Stir me, Malcolm, stir me.

MALCOLM: Well, I'll need time to think about it.

PRU: Of course you will but you need to seize the moment. You need to start writing now, while the fire is in your belly.

MALCOLM: Oh, okay. Right then. I'll just - um - exactly.  
(EXITS).

PRU LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM IN TRIUMPH. SHE SPOTS THE CAKE AND WITH A GRAND FLOURISH DUMPS IT IN THE BIN. SHE THEN EXITS.

