

## IN WITH THE DOCTOR

a play in one act, adapted from a short story

A DOCTOR'S SURGERY: CHOPIN PLAYS, A NOCTURNE

SOUND A SLIGHT KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

DOCTOR [RISES FROM DESK, WALKS TO OPEN THE DOOR] Very tentative!

PATIENT Sorry sir I didnt see yer green light

DOCTOR Mmm.

PATIENT I was staring at the floor

DOCTOR PAUSE] Did you not hear my buzzer?

PATIENT I did not, no.

DOCTOR Do you have a hearing problem?

PATIENT No

DOCTOR An attention deficit disorder?

PATIENT Not at all

DOCTOR SUSPICIOUSLY] I see

PATIENT I suppose I was daydreaming, being honest

DOCTOR Aah!

PATIENT Sorry

DOCTOR Dont apologise to me, nothing wrong in daydreaming, I daydream myself. Come in.

PATIENT ENTERS

DOCTOR RETURNS TO SIT BEHIND HIS DESK] Close the door

PATIENT Sorry [CLOSES DOOR] I wasn't sure if you wanted me to

DOCTOR You're not a very assertive fellow

PATIENT Pardon?

DOCTOR You're not very assertive

PATIENT What do you mean, I'm assertive when I have to be

DOCTOR Mmm.

PATIENT My head's in other places

DOCTOR You first this morning?

PATIENT Aye eh yes

DOCTOR FRIENDLY] Well you better sit down then eh, that'll be a start

PATIENT WALKS TO SIT ON CHAIR. GROANS A LITTLE] Ohh my back [RUBS HIS BACK] Ohhh

DOCTOR PAUSE. CHUCKLES QUIETLY

PATIENT Why are you staring at me? You're staring at me.

DOCTOR CHUCKLES

PATIENT ANNOYED] Are you laughing at me?

DOCTOR Not at all

PATIENT Is there something wrong?

DOCTOR No no. [SIGHS] Oh listen to that [CHOPIN STILL PLAYS, SPEAKS DREAMILY] Aw Chopin's the man, no doubt about it, he can turn on a coin, he is mister supreme. If he was a footballer he would be man of the match, player of the tournament, player of the century, the Pele of classical music. [CHUCKLES] the Pele of classical music. I must be going crazy [CHUCKLES, THEN SUDDEN SHIFT IN MOOD] Oh hell, why didn't I emigrate to Canada?

PATIENT Pardon?

DOCTOR I had the chance. I could have married Charlene Wallace. Why didn't I?

PATIENT PAUSE. SNIFFS

DOCTOR Charlene Wallace, with a name like that she would have taken a chance, a brave step into the unknown, Wallace, that's a hero's name. [SIGHS] maybe I could have changed my name to hers.... She was brave.

PATIENT PAUSE, POLITELY] Mmm

DOCTOR Unlike me. I am such a damn... I dont know! What the hell am I? A man, I'm a man, nothing more nothing less. What time is it? [SIGHS] So! Hey! Fancy a coffee?

PATIENT Pardon?

DOCTOR CHUCKLES

PATIENT What...

DOCTOR I just asked if ye wanted a cup of coffee. Eh, do ye want one?

PATIENT Aye. Thanks. That would be great. (SNIFFS)

DOCTOR CHUCKLES] There ye go again. That sniff ye gave there, it signifies a lack of assertiveness

PATIENT Pardon?

SOUND MUSIC MEANWHILE ENDS

DOCTOR An inauthentic display of confidence ye might say. It's an exercise in bad faith. Somebody should do a book on it. The Study of the Sniff. What a title eh!

PATIENT It wasnt inauthentic

DOCTOR Ye sure?

PATIENT Yeh I'm sure, I know inauthentic behaviour when I do it, and that wasnt it, it was just a sniff. It's cold outside ye know, and there's all sorts of viruses flying about

DOCTOR AMUSED] Dont talk to me about viruses! [GETS ELECTRIC KETTLE, PLUGS IT IN. HE BEGINS WHISTLING UNDER HIS BREATH. HE SITS DOWN ON HIS CHAIR] Bit of music eh... [PUSHES START BUTTON ON HI HI. CHOPIN RESUMES] HE SIGHS.

PATIENT COUGHS DISCREETLY

DOCTOR CONTINUES WHISLTING ALONG WITH THE MUSIC

PATIENT COUGHS DISCREETLY

DOCTOR Ah yes [HITS ANOTHER BUTTON AND SWITCHES OFF THE TAPED MUSIC]  
I sometimes wonder if I should just play the music and hide under my desk. Let it soothe the patient. That was how the ancients healed, they laid the patient down on the ground and then they played him music - him or her. It was like balm. They recited numbers simultaneously

PATIENT Ye talking about the pre-Socratics?

DOCTOR Older than them.

PATIENT The Egyptians?

DOCTOR Older

PATIENT Who?

DOCTOR There's people older than the Egyptians?

PATIENT Aw I know

DOCTOR And I'm no talking about biblical characters

PATIENT IRRITATED] I know

DOCTOR DREAMILY] What they did, they laid the patient down on a bed of dried leaves, and then they brought in the musicians and had them play, and at the same time they recited magical numbers, secret numbers, numbers that healed. The very utterance of these words made a blind man see or a deaf man hear. A man with nay legs would rise and walk... [CHUCKLES] Well, maybe not, maybe not, but they were good, these auld healers, and their cures were good, not so much cures as remedies, and not for the disease itself but the patient's general well-being...inner strength outer resolve, inner resolve outer strength, it all makes such sense, just such sense... That was my kind of medicine [SIGHS, ABSENTLY] Ah well, ah well

PATIENT COUGHS DISCREETLY

DOCTOR Oh, sorry. It's this job, it's worse than people think! I was reading that story of Kafka's last night "The Country Doctor". Do ye know it?

PATIENT SUSPICIOUSLY] Eh aye

DOCTOR Gives me the fucking heebie jeebies so it does, I dont know about you

PATIENT Well naw

DOCTOR It doesnay bother ye!

PATIENT DEFENSIVELY] Eh naw, naw, no really, it's just a story

DOCTOR In this job ye fall into the habit of thinking everybody's a doctor!

PATIENT Pardon?

DOCTOR Ye start talking to everybody as if they're doctors

PATIENT Aw aye...

DOCTOR Never noticed that?

PATIENT No, cannay say I have

DOCTOR I dont suppose it's that strange, no when ye come to think about it... After all, we're surrounded by phenomena, or should I say, ephemera...that's nearer the mark. [SIGHS, THEN SUDDENLY] Bloody coffee. I put that kettle on hours ago and it still hasnay boiled. (REACHES TO KETTLE) Probably stuck in too much water and jammed the fucking thing! Or else them outside turned off the water, it's like we're giving on a building site. Did ye not notice? They're demolishing across the road

PATIENT It's next door actually

DOCTOR I know! Shocking. {SIGHS} Yes sir, shocking (HIS ATTENTION DISTRACTED, SPEAKS AS THOUGH TO HIMSELF] What's that out the window! [WALKS A FEW PACES TO THE WINDOW) It's Brenda, she's here at last! (HE OPENS THE WINDOW AND WHISTLES ON HER, THEN IN AN ASIDE) I'm fucking starving man...

PATIENT POLITELY] Mmm

THE NOISE OUTSIDE OF A BUSY DEMOLITION SITE

DOCTOR COUGHS] That demolition work going on, there's dust everywhere, it's terrible

PATIENT I know it's terrible

NOW BRENDA HAS ARRIVED ON THE STREET OUTSIDE]

BRENDA Good morning.

DOCTOR Hullo there Brenda. One piece on sausage hen and a cup of tea eh. (TO PATIENT)

What about yourself?

PATIENT Naw no thanks

DOCTOR Ye sure? Ye'll wait all day for that kettle of mine.

PATIENT No thanks.

DOCTOR CALLS) Heh Brenda I hope it's ready immediaely! Ye've no got to go and butcher the bloody cow have ye!

BRENDA SARCASTIC] Ha ha

DOCTOR I'm serious

BRENDA AS A JOKE] Not serious enough!

DOCTOR CHUCKLES. THEN ASIDE] What does that mean?

BRENDA Fried onion?

DOCTOR Ye kidding!

BRENDA Brown sauce?

DOCTOR You better believe it hen! (PAUSE) You are a lifesaver, a lifesaver!

BRENDA Dont kid me on!

DOCTOR Ye think I'm kidding, I'm no kidding. If it wasnay for you I'd be a dead man

BRENDA CHUCKLES] A dead doctor!

DOCTOR Thanks hen... [SHE PASSES HIM THE FOOD AND THE TEA] Mmm, that sausage smells good

BRENDA Be ready in a couple of minutes.

DOCTOR GIVES THE MONEY] keep the change [CLOSES WINDOW, BLOCKING OUTSIDE SOUND) Aye, nice lassie that. So... (RUBS HANDS, RETURNS TO CHAIR) One thing about the demolition work, it brings in the business. Sounds a contradiction but it isnay. No kidding ye, everywhere ye look there's mobile snackbars and dealers in scrap-metal...

PATIENT SQUIRMS ON CHAIR) Look eh doctor eh

DOCTOR RISING) Sorry. (GOES TO WINDOW, HAND IN POCKET FOR COINS. OPENS

WINDOW]

BRENDA here ye are

DOCTOR TAKES THE FOOD] ye're a lifesaver hen did I ever tell ye that

BRENDA SARCASTIC] Ha ha

DOCTOR So I'm repeating myself am I! Now tell yer maw I was asking for her! How's her pelvis, is it okay?

BRENDA She's improved.

DOCTOR Good stuff. (SHUTS WINDOW) Ach a nice lassie that know what I mean, a nice lassie - Brenda, d'ye know her?

PATIENT Naw... (MOVES IMPATIENTLY)

DOCTOR I hope ye're no expecting that kettle to work! [BEGINS EATING]

PATIENT Eh naw, eh look doctor it's my back

DOCTOR What is it sore?

PATIENT Sore! Aye it's sore, it s fucking killing me, I can hardly lie down!

DOCTOR Hh! (ANOTHER BITE AT HIS SAUSAGE SANDWICH, MUNCHES)

PATIENT I think maybe it's cause of the damp in these auld houses.

DOCTOR Mmm [MUNCHING SANDWICH, THEN A BRIEF PAUSE] I see ye looking at that photograph on the wall. It's me in my graduation gown. Ye probably think I look old

PATIENT POLITELY] Not at all

DOCTOR I was a mature student. I came late to this, the medical profession. I just started three years ago, believe it or not. In fact, even less than three years. Ah christ ye know it has to be said about doctoring, to a fairly big extent, it is a young man's job

PATIENT I wouldnay say that

DOCTOR You're just being polite. [SIGHS] Truly, it's a young man's job...

PATIENT PAUSE) Well, right enough, it needs a lot of training

DOCTOR Naw but it's no just that (EATS LAST MOUTHFUL OF THE SANDWICH. THEN

ASIDE] The sausage is a bit fucking over-cooked this morning... (SIPS AT THE TEA, SIGHS) I shouldnay complain but I shouldnay complain. You married?

PATIENT Eh... Yes and no

DOCTOR Separated?

PATIENT In a manner of speaking

DOCTOR Ah.

PATIENT SIGHS

DOCTOR Same as myself! I'm divorced

PATIENT I'm no divorced.

DOCTOR ABSENTLY] My own fault... Up at the university I got involved with this lassie and she found out, the wife - so bang, out the door, that was me. And she dumped the fucking suitcase out in the street as well

PATIENT Did she?

DOCTOR More or less, bloody terrible. Never seen her since! Never. No even at these family kind of ceremonial affairs - weddings, births and marriages, deaths and baptisms. It's funny. When I dont go to one she does. And when I do go to one she doesnay! And we never get in touch aforehand. It's sort of mental telepathy or some fucking thing, who knows, we seem to clock into each another. This auld uncle of mine's, he's having a laugh with me, he says when he goes to these family events he never knows if he's coming or going, will he see me or will he see her! Makes him dizzy he says.

PATIENT POLITELY] Mm

DOCTOR Then there's the weans...!

PATIENT The weans...aye

DOCTOR Ye know what I'm talking about eh!

PATIENT I do,

DOCTOR Two I've got, how about yerself?

PATIENT Five

DOCTOR Five! Christ, you do know what I'm talking about

PATIENT I suppose so, aye

DOCTOR My two are okay but, nay complaints there. Nice weans; I miss no seeing them...  
(PAUSE. SIPS REMAINDER OF HIS COFFEE) What was I talking about?

PATIENT Eh...

DOCTOR No remember?

PATIENT IRRITATED] To do with women I think, something to do with women

DOCTOR Right, women, the fair sex. So it was. I might have known, a question of women, of course. What can ye say.

PATIENT IRRITATED SIGH

DOCTOR Naw but this job, the way ye feel at the end of a shift, it's well nigh impossible, I mean if ye're wanting to meet the fair sex. Ye're just, knackered. Knackered, ye always seem to be knackered. Ye dont feel capable of anything, except sleeping, or boozing or watching the telly, Ye dont have the energy to read a book. And I'm no talking about good literature, I'm talking about rubbish pot boilers. Ye're no up to it. No intellectual energy. Nay energy at all. Nothing, ye're just shattered. I've got this colleague and he's in the same domestic situation except he does something about it. I dont know where he gets his energy. He's aye running about these Single and Divorced clubs and what he says - what he was telling me - from his own direct experience, what he was saying, about these clubs. It saves all the initial carry on, the introduction stuff, ye by-pass all that cause the expectations arenay the same, all that beating about the bush ye have to do under ordinary circumstances if ye're a single person, well ye dont have to do it, no at these clubs, cause it's mostly divorced and separated people, ye've been through it all before, so it sounds good, the way my colleague was talking about it. So I was thinking of giving it a go, thinking about it, I mean...

PATIENT NON-COMMITAL] Mmm

DOCTOR Mind you, I'm no sure whether I fancy the idea, being honest, ye hear these stories...

PATIENT STILL NON-COMMITAL] Mmm

DOCTOR BRISKLY) Right then so it's yer back is it?

PATIENT Well aye.

DOCTOR Okay

PATIENT Sometimes it gets really sore, docto,r I mean really, really sore. It aches, ye know

DOCTOR CHEERILY) Yeh, aches and pains aches and pains, I know what ye're talking about. hey, what's that? It's a bit of bread on my desk. Look. (SOWS THE BREAD)

PATIENT POLITELY] Oh

DOCTOR LAYS BREAD BACK DOWN ON DESK, AND ABSENTLY) Naw, Kafka, funny thing, from what I hear, he was setting out to write this straightforward Chekov-type doctor yarn, ye know the kind, emergency calls in the middle of wintry nights, sultry young widows with sick children, pardon my cynicism. Naw but such was Kafka's intention, and what fucking happens! Ha! (CHUCKLES. THEN SERIOUSLY) I've had my bellyful of country doctors, country doctors and country practices. I'm no kidding ye. I was down in Galloway when I was serving my time, that's in the country [CHUCKLES] That is the country. But I'll tell ye something, I dont want to see another blade of grass. Being in a small-town community, it was funny at first; all the gossip and the petty intrigues, the innuendo... It was so ridiculous it was comical, but then after a while ye got used to it. Know what I mean? Ye got used to it! I mean once ye get used to something like that...it's the downward path.

PATIENT COUGHS DISCREETLY]

DOCTOR Are there many patients waiting out there?

PATIENT Eh aye quite a few, last I saw. [THEN POINTEDLY] There might be more now right enough!

DOCTOR Yeh... [SIGHS] Being honest, they deserve better than me. Nay point denying it. [PAUSE] Naw, nay point denying it.

PATIENT EVENTUALLY) It probably isnay so much that eh... I wouldnay think, probably, I mean no really, it's just ye dont seem to have the interest

DOCTOR Mmm [SIGHS) Ye're right; ye're right. [Think I'll have another coffee - what about yerself?

PATIENT Eh aye okay, okay

DOCTOR RISES FROM DESK) Brenda's tea's always that wee bit stewed. (MAKES A STICKY NOISE BETWEEN HIS LIPS) It aye leaves ye with a funny taste in yer mouth - nothing against the lassie, she's good as gold. Good as gold... (LIFTS THE KETTLE TO MAKE SURE THERE'S ENOUGH WATER] I dont think the plud was in right, that's why it didnay boil [FIDDLES WITH ON/OFF SWITCH) To be frank with ye, I only went to university to get involved in the ideas. Metaphysics I'm talking about, the history of the intellect and so on, the past and the future and aw christ fuck knows what, everything, the meaning of life, past present and future, the lot, everything, a to b and x to zee! Christ! (LOUD SIGH) Nay point talking, nay point talking. Them out there in that waiting room, they wouldnay understand, they just wouldnay understand...

PATIENT Mm

DOCTOR AMUSED] They wouldna. And it isnay for me to tell them. But listen, see me and that lassie, the one I was telling ye about - well she wasna really a lassie she was a married woman - but see me and her, no kidding ye, all we were interested in was yapping away the gether, about all sorts; Kepler and Copernicus, auld fucking what-dye-call him - Tycho Brahe. Plus we were relating it all, the different theories and systems, we were relating it to the artists of the period. Really interesting I mean, really. I was enjoying it all anyway I must admit, christ, and that's how I went there in the first place, to get involved in things that were interesting. That's what university is for, surely. Ye ever read that HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RELIGION AND SCIENCE by John William Draper?

PATIENT Eh aye, aye

DOCTOR SURPRISED] Ye have?

PATIENT Yeh

DOCTOR Well I'll tell ye something for nothing, I think that's a great book, a magnificent book. A magnificent book.

PATIENT Mmm

DOCTOR What...?

SOUND TENTATIVE CHAP AT THE DOOR

DOCTOR STEPS TO OPEN DOOR. THEN SARCASTICALLY:) Yes, what is it? (PAUSE) Yeh yeh, mmhh. (PAUSE) Aye well I'm busy the now so ye'll just have to wait yer turn. Well if I had finished with my patient I would have stuck on the bloody green light then wouldnt I! (SHUTS DOOR FIRMLY. PAUSES, THEN TO PATIENT] See that!

PATIENT What?

DOCTOR That picture there on the wall

PATIENT Aw

DOCTOR Canada!

PATIENT Right

DOCTOR Canada! (WISTFUL SIGH) The place I never went. The woman I never went with. Nay gumption, that's me. Doctor Naygumption, at yer service. And then of course ye're thinking about my size, because I'm wee. Ye know it never ceases to amaze me how people can still act surprised because I'm smaller than the average.

PATIENT What?

DOCTOR Telling ye! Because I'm what they call a small man, they still act surprised!

PATIENT Honest?

DOCTOR Never ceases to amaze me!

PATIENT I wouldnt have believed it

DOCTOR Would ye no?

PATIENT Of course not

DOCTOR Aye well there ye are

PATIENT I suppose it's because they're used to doctors being this that and the next thing, cause they've got certain expectations about what doctors should and shouldnt be

DOCTOR Exactly. Ye're dead right - they think doctors are like the fucking police, ye've got to be six foot tall to get in!

PATIENT CHUCKLES] Aye but it's probably a class thing

DOCTOR Probably, aye. (SUSPICIOUSLY) What d'ye work at yerself?

PATIENT Aw eh...I'm no actually working just now eh... (SNIFFS)

DOCTOR Ah I see, I see. Unemployed eh?

PATIENT Nearly wo year

DOCTOR Two year! Jesus christ!

PATIENT Aye

DOCTOR Whhohh! Well well well; whhoh!

PATIENT What's wrong?

DOCTOR Pardon?

PATIENT Naw I mean ye just seem awful surprised... Is it cause I've read guys like Kafka and John William Draper?

DOCTOR Not at all; naw naw. Naw. (PAUSE) Honest

PATIENT Ye sure?

DOCTOR Aye christ it's nothing to do with that, nothing to do with that at all, it's just - well yer suit for one thing

PATIENT My suit!

DOCTOR Yer suit; aye, ye're wearing a good quality suit

PATIENT Ye kidding?

DOCTOR Naw. I'm talking about the cloth, I can tell from here just by looking at it, it's a good yin. I used to work in a gents' outfitters before I went to university so I know about the business - in the old days ye would have called it natty

PATIENT SUSPICIOUS] Natty?

DOCTOR Aye, you would have been a natty dresser. He's a natty dresser, that's what they would've said about ye [PAUSE] It wouldnay have been an insult

PATIENT Right. Okay, well aye, it was quite a good suit. Past tense. It's an auld yin now right enough. I've had it for years; and there's a lot of folk walking about with better. And they're unemployed as well.

DOCTOR So?

PATIENT So? What d'ye mean so?

DOCTOR CHUCKLES

PATIENT Eh, what d'ye mean so? Yer inference; there's an inference ye've made there

DOCTOR There's aye an inference

PATIENT Aye but this wan shows ye're no really in touch with what's going on. [IRRITATED) Know what I think?

DOCTOR ABSENTLY) What?

PATIENT What I really think?

DOCTOR AMUSED] Tell me.

PATIENT I think ye're an elitist wee bastard.

DOCTOR Hh!

PATIENT Yer attitudes...

DOCTOR COLDLY AMUSED) My attitudes...

PATIENT Aye yer attitudes; especially considering ye were a mature student when ye went to university

DOCTOR Well well!

PATIENT I'm serious. Different if ye had been a boy when ye went but ye werent, ye were a man; I'm talking about when ye went to uni, ye werent a wee boy ye were a grown man

DOCTOR What's that got to do with it?

PATIENT What's that got to do with it it's got everything to do with it, I'm talking about yer attitudes for christ sake I'm talking about politics, politics, that's what I'm talking about

DOCTOR AMUSED) Aw I see, so that's what ye're on about, that hoary old chesnut about mature students and politics, as if they're all politicised and aware, like they're all good socialists or some such fucking nonsense!

PATIENT What?

DOCTOR A right load of shite that, I'm surprised at ye. Christ ye want to have seen the people I met with up there! They were all upper class, no even middle class, upper class! They were fucking royalists, they might even have been aristocrats!

PATIENT SUSPICIOUS] What?

DOCTOR CHUCKLES. THEN SUDDENLY) How come you said 'sir' when I let ye in?

PATIENT Pardon?

DOCTOR Ye heard what I said. When ye first came into my office here, ye called me 'sir'. How come?

PATIENT Dont talk rubbish

DOCTOR Was it because I'm a doctor?

PATIENT Naw it wasnay because ye're a doctor?

DOCTOR Are ye sure? [PAUSE] Eh?

PATIENT Naw I'm no sure. (PAUSE) I'm no

DOCTOR Ah...

PATIENT Well how can I be christ!

DOCTOR Mmm

PATIENT At least I'm being bloody honest. I've been trying to figure it out myself - while ye were getting yer piece on sausage off that lassie Brenda - I was trying to figure it out, how come I said it.

DOCTOR And what did ye come up with?

PATIENT I mean I never say that - sir, no to anybody

DOCTOR And did ye come up with an answer?

PATIENT Naw. I dont know...

DOCTOR Exactly. The truth is ye were impressed because I'm a doctor

PATIENT It's no as simple as that.

DOCTOR Aye it is

PATIENT Naw it's no, it's no. I mean I thought of that first, Aw aye, here we go, here I am being impressed cause the guy's a doctor... See, I thought of that. But it cannay be. Cause I mean I've met stacks of doctors ower the years, stacks of doctors. And I mean I cannay mind ever calling one 'sir' before, never. Fuck sake I never call anybody sir, sorry, but I never.

DOCTOR Mmm

PATIENT It was just a figure of speech

DOCTOR Aw naw, it's no a figure of speech...

PATIENT So what is it then?

DOCTOR (CHUCKLES) A phenomenon

PATIENT (SARCASTIC) Aw, I see

DOCTOR Alright then, these people sitting through there in the waiting room, I dont see ye rushing to let them in!

PATIENT Pardon?

DOCTOR SARCASTICALLY] Pardon!

PATIENT I dont know what ye mean!

DOCTOR Of course ye do

PATIENT Ye havent even examined me yet!

DOCTOR BUSINESSLIKE] Okay. Sore back ye says?

PATIENT Aye. And it's bloody genuine as well!

DOCTOR I didnay say it wasnay

PATIENT Look it really is genuine, it gets very painful

DOCTOR Aye okay

PATIENT Really

DOCTOR Fair enough

PATIENT It's just like painful

DOCTOR I apologise for the flippancy

PATIENT Ah well, I suppose I was a bit out of order myself.[PAUSE] I mean here I am sitting down chatting to you and there's folk sitting suffering ben the room, all waiting to see ye.

DOCTOR Mm

PATIENT There again but you're the doctor eftir all, so relating it for instance to the way I says Sir then maybe picking that up with the wey you flash the green light for people, yer wee buzzer and all that

DOCTOR Aye the formalities, true; that plus expectations, what a doctor should and should not be, at least insofar as the ordinary man or woman in the street's concerned. That was one of the things Kafka got great in THE COUNTRY DOCTOR - no think so?

PATIENT Eh...

DOCTOR Aw beg yer pardon, you'll no understand

PATIENT Eh...well

DOCTOR Do you!

PATIENT (SNIFFS) What I was meaning there myself, to let ye understand, with you being the doctor and all that, holding the position of power I mean in a way it's up to you to dismiss me, you've got to tell me to go, else I might be stuck here for the rest of my days!

DOCTOR (AMUSED) Yeh, functionalism. (CHUCKLES. COMES TO PATIENT) Okay, just open yer jacket and pull the shirt out yer trousers

PATIENT (DOING AS ASKED)

DOCTOR Ye're wearing a vest eh. Sign of the times, aye, ye dont see many vests these days at all, some of us doctors are making a wee bit on the side doing market research in undergarments

PATIENT What?

DOCTOR I'm jesting I'm jesting [CHUCKLES. USES STETHOSCOPE, BRISKLY, TAPPING PATIENT'S CHEST AND BACK ETC.

PATIENT Aahh!

DOCTOR Is the stethoscope cold? My apologies. You got a lumpy mattress by the way?

PATIENT Pardon?

DOCTOR (AMUSED) Naw, I dont want to disappoint ye...

PATIENT What?

DOCTOR Breathe in now and say "A"

PATIENT (BREATHES IN) A

DOCTOR (GUFFAWS. PAUSE) Sorry, just thinking of somebody there... Naw sorry, it was just - an auld guy I know

PATIENT Look believe it or not I did come here to find out if there was anything seriously up

DOCTOR How dye mean?

PATIENT My back!

DOCTOR Aw aye, sorry

PATIENT If there was anything seriously up with it, that's what I'm bloody here for!

DOCTOR Sorry, I know, it's just...in my experience... See there's a lot of folk like to get telt bad news about their health - especially males - it means they can lie down and die in peace, without being bothered by naybody

PATIENT Pardon?

DOCTOR CHUCKLES

PATIENT What dye say there?

DOCTOR It's an amazing phenomenon

PATIENT What, what's an amazing phenomenon?

DOCTOR Nah I'm just saying... [AMUSED] Okay, tuck in yer clothes

PATIENT Tell ye something, you're a smug wee bastard. Ye are. I dont like the wey ye think ye know everything!

DOCTOR Mm

PATIENT Naw I'm no kidding ye

DOCTOR Aye it's a bad habit I've picked up. (YAWNS, STROLLS TO LOOK OUT THE WINDOW, WHISTLING UNDER HIS BREATH) I see ye looking at the clock

PATIENT So what?

DOCTOR It's one of these digital efforts, fucking useless as far as I'm concerned. (CLEARS HIS THROAT. PAUSE; BEGINS TUNELESS WHISTLING)

PATIENT EVENTUALLY) Aw aye, I see, beg yer pardon - so ye've finished?

DOCTOR YAWNS]

PATIENT Eh? [ANNOYED] Have ye finished? [PAUSE] To hell with it. [WALKS TO DOOR, OPENS DOOR AND GOES OUT, CLOSING IT BEHIND HIMSELF.

DOCTOR WHISTLING UNDER HIS BREATH, SWITCHES ON HI FI. CHOPIN. THEN DOOR OPENS

DOCTOR Oh it's you.

PATIENT ENTERS, RAISED VOICE] Aye it's me. I want a word with you!

DOCTOR LOUD WHISPER) Sorry but ye've missed yer turn

PATIENT I have not missed my turn!

DOCTOR Yes ye have

PATIENT Naw I've no

DOCTOR SIGHS

PATIENT Ye dismissed me before I was ready, playing yer wee class games

DOCTOR I was not playing any wee class games

PATIENT Aye ye bloody were!

DOCTOR I wasnt

PATIENT Ye were

DOCTOR SIGHS] I've got nay time for this sort of stupid carry on, just state yer problem  
(RETURNS TO SIT AT HIS DESK

PATIENT There's nay problem, just facts, facts, statements of fact

DOCTOR Aw I see, statement of facts, is that it!

PATIENT Statements of bloody facts, that's exactly it

DOCTOR Good. (SIGHS, BORED) On ye go then, I'm listening.

PATIENT Aye it's all hell of a boring, I know - but I'll tell ye something, what I really object to, it's the way you've made yer assumptions about me, about what I am and what I believe, that's what I object to. But never mind all that, what I really object to is having to sit here listening to all your fucking crap when there's these poor cunts sitting in that waiting room ben there getting ignored, getting ignored, when for all you know they're dying - literally dying, some of them. Literally bloody dying, that's what I'm talking about, and all you're doing's shovelling out a load of verbal guff, like a guilt trip only it isnay a guilt trip.

DOCTOR What do you know about guilt trips?

PATIENT Plenty

DOCTOR DISMISSIVELY] Plenty! Now ye really are letting me down. I would never have expected you to come away with a statement like that, literally dying! We get that sorted out the

first day up at medical school, know what I mean, we're all literally dying [AMUSED] I truly believed you had a genuine interest in the whys and wherefores of the medical business. That's how I went yapping on, being honest, I thought we had something in common: d'ye think I go about offering everybody a coffee?

PATIENT I'm still fucking waiting for it!

DOCTOR Oh. Sorry

PATIENT Aye I know, sorry!

DOCTOR Naw I mean it, these kind of things make a difference

PATIENT Aye ye're fucking right they do!

DOCTOR Ye should've said, I do get forgetful, I admit it

PATIENT Ach it doesnay matter, I was only taking the coffee out of politness anyway I mean I wasnay even bothering, no till ye offered. Anyhow I dont want that to detract from my main point, which is you, lumping me in the same boat as yerself, cause as far as I'm concerned you're an elitist wee shite and I resent getting linked to you and your beliefs, yer presuppositions, I fucking resent getting linked to them - okay? And the sooner we get a new doctor here the better. Aye and dont think I'm the only person that's saying it!

DOCTOR I'm saying it! [PAUSE] Me! [AMUSED] I'm saying it. I'm never fucking done saying it!

PATIENT Aye!

DOCTOR Ye heard me!

PATIENT Aye!

DOCTOR Ye fucking heard me! It's me that's spreading the word! Who else!

PATIENT Ah well you would wouldnt ye!

DOCTOR Aye maybe. Maybe I would and maybe I wouldnay. It doesnay mean it isnay the case, it's no gony detract from the overall point. To be perfectly honest with ye I only came back to this place out of a sense of duty. Actually I hate the dump. It was some kind of filial obligation. That's all, that's all it was. (PAUSE) That's all it was.

PATIENT What do ye mean?

DOCTOR GUILTY] I wanted to impress my father

PATIENT Yer father

DOCTOR Aye. And he's fucking deid too that's the best of it, that's the joke, the auld cunt's deid

PATIENT Pardon?

DOCTOR He's deid

PATIENT How dye mean like?

DOCTOR I mean he's deid. Well, he was deid. When I was trying to impress him, he was deid. Sorry, it's a bit confusing

PATIENT Ye knew he was deid and ye were still trying to impress him?

DOCTOR Exactly

PATIENT Christ

DOCTOR Too much Hollywood with me... That was always my problem, even as a boy - A J Cronin and all that crap, doctor as hero of the people. Ibsen done it better. But maybe he didnay! Take a look out that window there, look at that, a demolition site, and here's me, I'm trying to run a fucking doctor's surgery. I can hardly get moving for dirt and dust and dods of dogshit blowing in the fucking window and under the door I mean you're talking about that crowd ben the waiting room I mean how come they dont go out there and build a barricade!

PATIENT What!

DOCTOR MUTTERS) How green was my valley... How green was yer fucking bollocks!

PATIENT Heh wait a minute...!

DOCTOR They could erect a barricade, to stop all the garbage blowing in!

PATIENT Aw aye! That's a great idea! That's really brilliant! Why dont ye go and join a private medical company!

DOCTOR Yes, thanks very much. I appreciate these kind thoughts

PATIENT Well nay wonder man that's bloody pathetic what ye're saying

DOCTOR Aw pathetic, I'm pathetic.

PATIENT Ye're being stupit!

DOCTOR Do ye know something - Chekov, he never practised medicine

PATIENT Nonsense

DOCTOR It isnay nonsense

PATIENT It's total nonsense!

DOCTOR He didnay

PATIENT Aye he did!

DOCTOR He didnay

PATIENT He fucking did!

DOCTOR No the way I mean.

PATIENT What ye mean Shettleston, of course he didnay, he was in fucking Yalta. Or Moscow or something

DOCTOR SIGHS] Ye're missing the point.

PATIENT Well tell me the point

DOCTOR Look I dont even envy him because he was a great writer, and he was a great writer, naybody can deny that - some of these doctor yarns are fucking beautiful - naw, I just...I suppose I envy him because...well, probably because he was able to get so bloody engrossed in ideas

PATIENT That's rubbish

DOCTOR Listen, you ever counted up the number of doctors who became writers? Plus artists and musicians. Ever counted them?

PATIENT Never.

DOCTOR AMAZED] Ye've never counted them?

PATIENT Never

DOCTOR Good god

PATIENT IRRITATED] Of course I havenay fucking counted them what ye talking about counted them?

DOCTOR I thought...I thought people knew

PATIENT Knew what?

DOCTOR Just how many there was. Because there's a lot, a hell of a lot

PATIENT So what? what does it prove?

DOCTOR SNIFFS] What does it no prove

PATIENT You trying to tell me it's better being one of them artist-doctors than the poor guy who just goes about the place trying to heal the sick?

DOCTOR PAUSE) The question doesn't even interest me any longer.

PATIENT Hh!

DOCTOR At one time it did, but no now. These days have gone. The way I see it I have to survive as best as I can. And sometimes that means upsetting people like you. But that can't be helped. I'm bound to do it. Things that upset ye, I'm bound to do them

PATIENT What things?

DOCTOR Just things

PATIENT Aye but what kind of things? Ye mean like sitting about gabbing to me when there's a waiting room stowed out with sick people waiting to see ye! Eh? is that what ye mean!

DOCTOR Ye're beginning to repeat yerself.

PATIENT Aw am I?

DOCTOR AMUSED) You're keen on facts aren't ye!

PATIENT I'll tell ye something, there's people through there waiting to see ye and you're no even bothering to acknowledge them, their actual existence, ye're no even bothering

DOCTOR Mm

PATIENT Just sitting here moaning to me and then picking up a big wage packet at the end of the month!

DOCTOR Who's moaning?

PATIENT You!

DOCTOR Me!

PATIENT Ye've done nothing but moan since I came into this place. Ye hate yer job and ye hate this room and ye hate the patients and the fucking city and ye act like ye want to go away someplace to spend the rest of yer life gabbing away to a crowd of bourgeois pseudo-intellectual wankers... Christ ye're even reduced to hating yer auld man, and he's deid! Hating a dead man, that's a new yin. (PAUSES) I think ye've got an outsize chip on yer shoulder

DOCTOR Ah, right, so that's what it's about

PATIENT Aye, that is what it's about!

DOCTOR Mmhh, I see...

PATIENT One huge chip on yer shoulder: end of story

DOCTOR Oh well, maybe ye're right

PATIENT I'm sorry, Look, ye're wee - at least ye think ye're wee - weer than the average. And ye think ye're too auld - aulder than yer contemporaries: whatever that might mean - the team ye went to uni with. And ye wear the wrong clothes. And judging by yer nose ye're inclined to hit the booze too much. Plus yer hair's went prematurely white and then it's thinning a wee bit tae I think so ye're going baldy as well...

DOCTOR Thanks

PATIENT Then yer wife, she threw ye out cause of some lassie ye messed about with. And from what I read into the situation yer sex life is absolutely zero, I'm talking about nowadays. Not only that but yer overall communion with women seems nonexistent

DOCTOR CLEARS THROAT, AND QUIETLY] I doubt if you've truly understood one single thing I've said

PATIENT Ah well I think the opposite.

DOCTOR So, nothing more to be said.

PATIENT Exactly

DOCTOR BRISKLY] If you would just advise the next patient on yer way out

PATIENT Naw, do it yerself

DOCTOR AMUSED) I knew ye'd say that

PATIENT Good

DOCTOR That's how I gave ye the opportunity, which ye took

PATIENT That's right

DOCTOR Ye see I've got a wee button just over there which I can switch on to give the next patient a green light, d'ye know what a green light is!

PATIENT CHUCKLES

DOCTOR How does that suit ye!

PATIENT Oh fine, fine, it suits me fine, so does the music by the way

DOCTOR Glad to hear it suits ye

PATIENT I know ye are

DOCTOR Do ye?

PATIENT Yes

DOCTOR Good

PATIENT I know, good

DOCTOR Good

PATIENT Yes

DOCTOR PAUSE ] So are we just going to sit here looking at each other

PATIENT I dont know. Are we?

DOCTOR BEGINS WHISTLING UNDER HIS BREATH: THE TUNE IS UNINTELLIBLE.

END