

# Away from Home

## Characters

Steve  
Roland

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*[Music “Morning” (from Peer Gynt) until Roland has entered. Lights up on a common room at Greentrees Place – an old peoples home. There are a couple of easy chairs in one of which an elderly man, Steve, has nodded off and may even be quietly snoring with his mouth agape. After a short time, a man of similar age – Roland – comes in, somewhat irate. He doesn’t move freely as he suffers from gout.]*

ROLAND: Did you hear what that woman said to me? She said ... *[Steve wakes with a start.]*

STEVE: What?

ROLAND: Did you hear ...? *[He realises that he has disturbed Steve.]* Oh. Sorry, mate.

STEVE: What were you saying?

ROLAND: I said, “Did you hear what that woman said to me?”

STEVE: No I didn’t.

ROLAND: Of course you didn’t. You were asleep.

STEVE: No I wasn’t. I was just resting my eyes.

ROLAND: You coulda fooled me.

STEVE: I was. I was just resting my eyes. *[Roland obviously doesn’t believe him.]* Anyway. What woman? And what did she say?

ROLAND: That nurse, or whatever she is.

STEVE: Which nurse?

ROLAND: The one on afternoon shift. I don’t remember her name. Is it Julie? Or Judy? You know, the one with glasses, the wart on her chin and the huge ... *[a gesture to indicate bosom.]*

STEVE: Oh yes. I know the one. What did she say?

ROLAND: She told me to get in here, sit quietly and stop making a nuisance of myself.

STEVE: How were you making a nuisance of yourself?

ROLAND: I simply asked if we were on limited rations or could I have another cup of tea.

STEVE: Nothing unreasonable about that.

ROLAND: ’Course not. Absolutely no reason for her to complain that she’d already brought me three cups. It’s not my fault if my gout’s playing up.

STEVE: I always thought these people were employed to look after us.

ROLAND: Most of 'em aren't worth a crumpet.

STEVE: Petty tyrants, most of 'em.

ROLAND: You're not wrong there. If only they were all like that one on at nights over the weekend.

STEVE: Which one's that?

ROLAND: You know. Oh what's her name? Irene?

STEVE: *[doubtfully]* Irene?

ROLAND: No. Eileen. That's it. She's pretty special, is Eileen.

STEVE: Oh that one. Yeah. She's all right.

ROLAND: All right!? She's special. And I reckon she fancies me.

STEVE: She fancies you?

ROLAND: I reckon she does. She calls me "darling".

STEVE: She calls everyone "darling".

ROLAND: *[Disbelievingly]* No she doesn't! *[Pause.]* Does she?

STEVE: She calls me "darling".

ROLAND: Oh. *[Pause.]* I still reckon she fancies me. *[Steve looks doubtful.]* I reckon she'd like a bit of slap and tickle.

STEVE: *[scornfully]* From you?

ROLAND: Why not?

STEVE: I can think of lots of reasons ...

ROLAND: In my heyday, I could have handled a woman like her every day.

STEVE: In your heyday? In your dreams!

ROLAND: I've a good mind to put her to the test.

STEVE: I'm not sure that's a good idea, Ronald.

ROLAND: Roland.

STEVE: What?

ROLAND: Roland.

STEVE: Roland?

ROLAND: Roland. That's my name.

STEVE: Are you sure?

ROLAND: Of course I'm sure.

STEVE: I always thought you were called Ronald.

ROLAND: Well I'm not. I've been Roland all my life.

STEVE: If you say so. [*He is still not convinced.*] Why don't you just sit down and watch the cricket? It'll start soon.

ROLAND: Is there cricket on?

STEVE: [*not quite certain*] It is Saturday? [*Roland nods.*] Then yeah. Channel 9. Two o'clock. A day-nighter.

ROLAND: Who's playing?

STEVE: Oh. I don't know. Does it matter?

ROLAND: I don't suppose it does. As long as it helps to fill in the time.

STEVE: Yeah. At least it gets us from lunch time to dinner time. And then from dinner time to bed time.

ROLAND: That's the main problem with this place. There's not enough to do, is there, mate?

STEVE: You're right. It takes a lot of adjusting leaving your old home and coming to live in an establishment like Greentrees Place where there's not nearly as much to do. I wish I was still in my own home.

ROLAND: Just think what it was like. What would you have been doing if you were still in your own home instead of in here?

STEVE: That's easy. I'd have been watching the cricket.

ROLAND: But you'd've been doing it in your own time.

STEVE: Yeah. Two o'clock on Channel 9.

ROLAND: That's the main problem with this place. You can't do things when you want to. You have to do them when **they** want you to.

STEVE: Yeah. I have to say I haven't got used to being organised so much yet. When I was on my own, I did things when I wanted to.

ROLAND: I know exactly what you mean, mate. The main problem with this place is that it's full of bossy staff. All they want to do is boss you about. Like that one who told me to stop being a nuisance and get in here. And I was only asking for another cup of tea. It wasn't like I was asking for more food.

STEVE: Well, we all know about asking for more food. Not that the food's good enough for anyone to want to ask for more. The only food I like eating is the cake that Milmol brings when she visits.

ROLAND: Milmol?

STEVE: Oh. My daughter. Her name's Amanda and when she was little I nicknamed her Milmol – short for Milly Molly Mandy. She hates me calling her that now.

ROLAND: So why do you call her that?

STEVE: Serves her right. She's the one who put me in here. She and that woman from the government who reckoned I couldn't look after myself any longer.

ROLAND: You look to me like you could look after yourself.

STEVE: 'Course I can look after myself.

ROLAND: Not like me with my gouty leg and high blood pressure. I had no one at home who could give me my medication, so I had to move in here.

STEVE: They told me I'd be happy here. But I'm not.

ROLAND Nor am I. If I just had someone who could manage my medication and do a bit of shopping and cooking, I'd be much happier outside.

STEVE: I was **much** happier outside. Doing what I wanted, when I wanted. Just a bit short of company though.

ROLAND: Tell you what. Why don't we just leave here and live together? We could look after each other.

STEVE: We can't just leave.

ROLAND: Don't you want to leave, mate?

STEVE: Doesn't matter whether I want to or not, we can't just leave. They'd never allow it.

ROLAND: They can't stop us. It's not a prison.

STEVE: It might as well be. They've got locks on the doors and security posts all over the place.

ROLAND: We'll just have to escape.

STEVE: How?

ROLAND We'll just have to come up with a plan.

STEVE: What sort of plan?

ROLAND: Don't know yet, but I didn't watch all those war escape movies for nothing. You know – *The Great Escape*, *The Wooden Horse*, *The Colditz Story*.

STEVE: They were just movies.

ROLAND: No they weren't. They were real life stories.

STEVE: So you reckon we could dig a tunnel out of here? Or build a glider in the attic and fly over the walls? This place doesn't even have an attic. And you can't disguise yourself as an SS Officer and walk out.

ROLAND: I'll think of something.

STEVE: In your dreams!

ROLAND: The question is, will you be in it?

STEVE: How can I know if I'll be in it if I don't know what it is that I'm being in?

ROLAND: Do you want to get away from here?

STEVE: 'Course I do. I can just imagine the look on Milmol's face when she discovers I've gone.

ROLAND: Then you'll be in it?

STEVE: Anything's worth a try.

ROLAND: Then just let me think. *[A period of silence while he concentrates.]* That's it!

STEVE: What's it?

ROLAND: No. That won't do.

STEVE: What won't?

ROLAND: *[Another burst of concentration.]* It will have to be at night. Not as many people about and they're probably not as alert.

STEVE: After the cricket should be okay.

ROLAND: I've got it! I'll lure the night nurse into the dispensary and lock her in. Then we'll climb out the window of my room and shin down the drainpipe.

STEVE: With your gouty leg?

ROLAND: Blast! Forgot about that.

STEVE: Back to impersonating an SS Officer.

ROLAND: That's it!

STEVE: There aren't any SS Officers ...

ROLAND: But there are nurses. And most of 'em are just like SS Officers. Once we've got the night nurse captured, we'll commandeer her uniform. We'll dress you up as a nurse and tell the night porter you're taking me to the doctor because my gout's playing up. And it jolly well is, too. We'll get him to call us a taxi and we'll be on our way out of here.

STEVE: With me dressed as a nurse?

ROLAND: That's the plan. Brilliant, isn't it?

STEVE: You're going to commandeer her uniform?

ROLAND: No problem. In my heyday I could handle any woman and I'm still good enough to manage this.

STEVE: *[doubtfully]* You want me to dress up as a nurse?

ROLAND: That's right. No problem for a man who assures me he can look after himself.

STEVE: And just how do you think I'm going to look like a nurse with this beard?

ROLAND: Blast! *[Pause]* I know! I'll have to be the nurse.

STEVE: How do you think you're going to squeeze into her uniform? You're a lot bigger than Eileen.

ROLAND: Eileen? Did you say Eileen? Is this Saturday?

STEVE: It's Saturday. And it will be Eileen.

ROLAND: Then the plan's off.

STEVE: I thought you could handle her no problem.

ROLAND: No. Just think about it. Once I've got her out of her uniform, she's sure to want me to have my evil way with her. And apart from the fact that that would take up an awful lot of time, I'd be too exhausted by the end to be able to lock her up. Sorry, mate. I'm afraid we're going to have to call the whole thing off.

STEVE: Oh well, never mind. I expect the cricket will have started by now. *[With a shrug, he picks up a remote and presses it. The sound of a cricket match is heard as the lights fade.]*