

Lillenas®  Drama Presents

In Critical Condition

From *Walk A Mile In His Truths*

By Martha Bolton

Cast

DR. HENSLEY
HANK PICKLESMIER
SARA
PETE
NURSE 1
NURSE 2
RUDY

Setting

Hospital room

Props

Hospital bed, with bedding
Extra blanket
Trash can
Pitcher of water and cup
Dinner tray
Various items of paper dinnerware
Various food items, dinner rolls, etc.
Curtain or some type of partition (freestanding)
Clipboard with paper
Bouquet of flowers
Two wheelchairs
Bible (in DR. HENSLEY'S jacket pocket)

Costumes

Hospital gowns and pajama bottoms for HANK and RUDY
Appropriate medical attire for doctor and nurses
Modern-day wear for SARA and PETE

(Sketch opens with HANK in the hospital bed. The trash can and eating table are next to the bed. The pitcher of water and cup are on the eating table, as well as the dinner tray with various food items and paper dinnerware. The curtain should be pulled around HANK so the audience can't see him. DOCTOR HENSLEY is standing outside the curtain, writing some notes on his clipboard. PETE and SARA enter. SARA is carrying a bouquet of flowers.)

PETE: How's he doing, doctor?

DOCTOR: He's still in extremely critical condition.

HANK *(still unseen by audience yells from the other side of the curtain)*: You call this food? *(He sends his dinner tray flying over the curtain . . . away from the other actors, of course. All food on the dinner tray should be easy to pick up. Plastic food would be best.)*

DOCTOR: See what I mean. He's been this way ever since they brought him in.

HANK: Where'd you get these rolls? From the petrified forest? *(He sends a dinner roll flying over the curtain.)*

SARA: There hasn't been any improvement at all?

(HANK sends another roll flying over the curtain. DOCTOR catches it.)

DOCTOR: Only in his aim.

SARA: But the surgery . . . it went well?

DOCTOR: He came through with flying colors. *(HANK sends a half-eaten doughnut or other food item flying over the curtain. All duck.)* Now, if we could just get his lunch to quit flying!

PETE: May we see him now?

DOCTOR: Sure, but only stay a few minutes. Prolonged visits can be hard on one's health.

SARA: We know he needs the rest.

DOCTOR: I meant they can be hard on *your* health.

(DOCTOR exits. SARA and PETE pull the curtain back, revealing HANK to the audience.)

PETE: Hi, Hank . . . how are you feeling?

HANK *(sarcastically)*: Oh, great. Just what I need—company.

SARA: We brought you some flowers.

HANK: I'm touched. *(He takes the flowers and tosses them into the trash can.)* What are you trying to do? Kill me? I'm allergic to flowers!

SARA: We're sorry. We didn't know.

PETE: We were just trying to bring a little cheer into your room.

HANK: I need more than cheer in here. I need some heat? *(Calling offstage)*
Nurse! Nurse! When are you going to bring me that extra blanket I asked for over a minute-and-a-half ago?

(NURSE 1 enters, carrying blanket.)

NURSE 1: I have it right here, Mr. Picklesmier. *(She lays it neatly across him.)*
Now, is there anything else you need?

HANK: Yeah. Turn down that thermostat on your way out.

NURSE 1: But, I thought you were cold.

HANK: That was *before* you piled this extra blanket on top of me. What are you trying to do? Suffocate me? *(He yanks off the blanket and tosses it back to her.)*

NURSE 1 *(catching the blanket)*: But, I thought . . . Oh, never mind. *(She gives a sigh and exits.)*

HANK: Boy, getting proper medical care these days is next to impossible!

SARA *(glancing around the room)*: Well, at least you've got a nice room.

HANK: I liked my last one better.

PETE: Why did they move you?

HANK: I demanded it! I was right across from the nurses' station. Talk about noisy! There were buzzers going off day in and day out!

SARA: All the patients kept ringing them, huh?

HANK: No, just me.

PETE: Well, try to get all the rest you can. It's important to your recovery.

HANK: I know, but the nurses here are tyrants. My operation was only yesterday, and would you believe they're already trying to get me to exercise?

PETE: Really?

HANK: Yeah. So far, six nurses have told me to take a hike! One even asked me take a flying leap to the moon! Can you imagine even suggesting something *that* strenuous to a person in my condition?

PETE: Look on the bright side—at least your doctor said the operation was success.

HANK: That just means my check cleared the bank. As far as the operation goes . . . that's a different story.

SARA: You mean there were complications?

HANK: I'll say! The table was too cold, the lights were too bright, and they wouldn't give me a single bite to eat.

SARA: But, you were in surgery.

HANK: They could have rolled a salad bar in there. There was plenty of room. And with all the monitors they had hooked up, you'd think at least one of them could have been showing the football game.

PETE: They can't be airing a football game in an operating room.

HANK: Yeah, I guess you're right. If someone yells "score!" I wouldn't know if my team scored a touchdown or if the doctor just drop-kicked my gallstone through the bedposts. *(He pours himself a glass of water, takes a sip, grimaces, then calls offstage.)* Nurse! Nurse! *(NURSE 1 enters.)* I told you I wanted my water at *precisely* 48 degrees!

NURSE 1: It was at 48 degrees when I brought it to you, Mr. Picklesmier.

HANK: Well, it's not at 48 degrees *now*.

NURSE 1 *(exasperated, she takes the pitcher and the cup)*: Sir, let me explain something. Most of my patients are totally helpless. They're either in traction, in full body casts, or on life support . . .

HANK: Is that *before* or *after* you were assigned to them?

NURSE 1: They came to me in that condition, sir. The point I'm making is that there are a lot of patients here who happen to be much sicker than you.

HANK: Don't you think I know that? That's why I want you to shut my door on your way out, so I won't catch any of their germs!

(NURSE 1 shakes her head, gives another big sigh, then exits with the pitcher and cup.)

HANK *(calling out to her)*: And bring that blanket back. I'm freezing! *(To PETE and SARA)* Can you believe these nurses?

SARA: Maybe you're being too hard on them. They're doing their best.

(NURSE 1 enters with blanket.)

NURSE 1: Here's your blanket back, Mr. Picklesmier. *(She hands him the blanket.)*

HANK: What'd you bring this for?

NURSE 1 *(losing patience)*: You said you were cold.

HANK: I *was* cold. But you took so long bringing my blanket back, my temper warmed me up.

NURSE 1: 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . .

SARA (*aside, to NURSE 1*): What are you doing? Counting to stay calm?

NURSE 1: No, I'm counting how many times I'm going to short-sheet his bed this week.

(HANK *hands the blanket back to NURSE 1. She sighs and exits.*)

PETE: Have they said when you might be going home?

HANK: Oh, not for a while yet. I overheard two lab technicians saying I was one of the most critical patients they'd ever seen. In fact, everyone here's been so worried about me, the entire hospital is planning on throwing a big party the day I get discharged.

SARA: That should be fun for you.

HANK: Oh, I'm not invited. They said they'd throw it *after* I leave. I guess they think the excitement would be too much for me.

(NURSE 1 *enters with a wheelchair.*)

NURSE 1: Good news, Mr. Picklesmier. The doctor said you can go home now.

HANK: Now? But . . .

SARA: Isn't that great?

HANK (*to NURSE 1*): Are you sure he said *now*?

NURSE 1: Positive.

HANK: Maybe I should get a second opinion.

NURSE 1: No need. I've already asked everyone in the hospital. They all said you should go home now. In fact, "immediately" was the word they used. So, c'mon, we're going for a little ride.

(HANK *hesitantly gets out of bed and looks over the wheelchair. Unimpressed, he reluctantly climbs into it.*)

HANK: Is this the best wheelchair you could find?

NURSE 1: No, but it's the fastest.

HANK: What was that?

NURSE 1: Uh . . . I said your stay went by really fast, Mr. Picklesmier.

(*After NURSE 1 wheels HANK offstage, DOCTOR enters and walks over to SARA and PETE.*)

SARA: You decided to send him home?

DOCTOR: We've done all we can for his physical problems. Unfortunately, his critical nature is something we just can't operate on.

HANK (*from offstage*): How come it's so cold in this hallway? Turn up that thermostat! . . . Hey, tell that stretcher to get out of our way! . . . And slow this thing down! You're not in the Indy 500, you know!

PETE (*to DOCTOR*): Can't anything be done for him?

DOCTOR: I've given him a prescription, but he'll need to follow it to the letter.

SARA: A prescription?

DOCTOR (*takes Bible from coat pocket*): A double dose of this every day.

PETE: The Bible?

DOCTOR (*nods*): It's a proven remedy. Been around for ages. The Lord can change his critical condition, but Hank needs to do his part. He needs to take his medicine.

SARA: And if he doesn't?

DOCTOR: Then I'm afraid it's hopeless.

PETE: You mean he'll die?

DOCTOR: No. Everyone around him will just wish that he would. He'll get more and more critical with each passing day. He'll become bitter, spiteful, judgmental. He'll lose his ability to smile, and will eventually become 100 percent laughter disabled.

SARA: But, the condition is reversible, isn't it?

DOCTOR: One hundred percent reversible . . . if he takes his medicine.

(NURSE 1 *wheels HANK back into room.*)

HANK: Sorry, Doc, but I forgot something.

DOCTOR: . . . You mean, this? (*He hands HANK the Bible.*)

HANK: I'm going to take it just like you said.

PETE (*to HANK*): But what made you finally decide to start taking control of your attitude?

HANK: I saw myself in a mirror.

DOCTOR: Ah, I see . . . Wait a minute. There aren't any mirrors in the hospital corridors.

HANK: This one was on wheels.

(NURSE 2 *pushes* RUDY, *also in a wheelchair, into the room.*)

RUDY: Turn up the heat in here! Is this a hospital or a meat locker? And what are all these people doing here? This isn't Grand Central Station, you know. And bring me some water. I want it 42 degrees. Not a degree more, not a degree less!

(NURSE 1 *shakes her head, sighs, then pushes* HANK, *in the wheelchair, offstage.* PETE and SARA *follow.* NURSE 2 *begins to remake the bed for* RUDY, *with RUDY grumbling all the while.* DOCTOR *looks out at audience . . .*)

DOCTOR: I knew I should have been a plumber instead.

(*Blackout.*)



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