

Dan Nielsen

Can a Weighty Idea be Uplifting?

The Players: HUGO
DOCTOR
NURSE

The Scene:
A hospital room. A hospital bed. Machines. Beeping. Flashing.

Stage Directions:

At rise, HUGO is standing beside the bed. He lifts his arms above his head. He wriggles his fingers. He moves his torso in a circular motion. A NURSE enters.

NURSE

Hugo, I have the information you requested.

(She consults a clipboard. Reading.)

Veggie burgers are vegetable hamburgers. The main ingredients are water and soy protein.

HUGO

Are there any vegetables involved?

NURSE

Onion powder was mentioned.

HUGO

(Stops. Sits on the edge of the bed.)

I've had amnesia for as long as I can remember.

NURSE

You should eat as much as you can for as long as you are still alive.

HUGO

Yes ... to keep my strength up ... and kick the tires before you buy a car ... or whenever you see one parked on the street ... or when

one is speeding by. What is wrong with me, nurse?

NURSE

(Consults her clipboard. Reading.)

You have boils and pustules, Hugo. Some bleed. Others ooze.

HUGO

Why can't I feel or see them?

NURSE

(Consults clipboard. Reading.)

They are subcutaneous.

HUGO

When I feel bad because something reminds me of something else, am I feeling bad about something or something else?

(A DOCTOR enters. Moves to the bed. Lifts HUGO's arm by the wrist. Glances at his watch. Lets go of the wrist. The arm stays in place and then slowly falls.)

NURSE

(As the arm falls.)

With modern medicine it is now possible to live forever.

DOCTOR

And I like to pretend that my bike is a horse and my car is a spaceship.

HUGO

A cockroach ate the glue from the spine of my book ... on purpose.

(Yelling.)

Come on everyone! I'm dying here! Let's try to be more specific!

DOCTOR

At the beginning of time everything was cold ... because it was January.

(HUGO screams. Flops down on the bed. Curls into a tight ball.)

NURSE

Hugo, stop being a namby-pamby.

DOCTOR

For a bug, it hurts extra bad to get hit in the feeler.

NURSE

(To the DOCTOR. Touches her nurse's cap.)

I finally got my hair untangled, but it's still matted.

DOCTOR

(Kisses the NURSE.)

In bowling, the most difficult spare I ever made was all twelve pins.

HUGO

(Curled up. As kissing continues.)

When I was little I was not allowed to cross the street. When I got bigger I was afraid to cross the street. Now I just don't bother.

NURSE

(The kissing ends.)

If people were trees, the oldest would be tallest. If trees were people, we'd grow our leaves for warmth in winter.

(The kissing resumes.)

DOCTOR

(The kissing ends.)

Cleaning your fingernails is a branch of forensic science.

(The kissing resumes.)

NURSE

(The kissing ends.)

Treat every fire drill as though it were a false alarm.

(The kissing resumes.)

HUGO

(Uncurls. Sits. Stands.)

I have a few questions.

(Removes a sheet of paper from this pajama shirt pocket.

Unfolds. Reads. The kissing continues.)

If two negatives make a positive, how many negatives does it take to make a superlative? If there is nothing dirty about sex, isn't every conception an immaculate conception? If death is nothing, and nothing makes me happy, why am I still alive?

DOCTOR

(The kissing ends. The DOCTOR puts a hand on HUGO's shoulder.)

Keep your nose to the grindstone, Hugo, and use elbow grease to prevent chafing.

NURSE

(Puts a hand on HUGO's other shoulder.)

To save an endangered species it is often necessary to cause a thriving species to become extinct.

DOCTOR

(Hand remains on HUGO's shoulder.)

It's fine to unwind as long as you don't become completely unwound.

HUGO

(Screams.)

What I do is more important than what happens!!!

DOCTOR

(Removes hand from HUGO's shoulder.)

Hugo, I diagnosed your disease. I consulted a specialist. The specialist consulted an extra-specialist. There is nothing more to do but die.

HUGO

In high school I never sat at the cool table, but I once mistakenly thought someone had waved me over.

NURSE

(Removes hand from HUGO's shoulder.)

Hugo, if life is but a dream, and you're going downstream ... why row?

HUGO

Jesus arose after three days because three weeks was too long and three minutes would be silly.

NURSE

(Consults chart. Excited.)

Hugo! Your medical records are world's records!

HUGO

When I have insomnia, it's so boring I fall right to sleep.

DOCTOR

I have almost no imagination ... but what little I have is extremely vivid.

(The DOCTOR exits.)

NURSE

Nothing makes much sense ... but it does make perfect sense.

(The NURSE exits.)

(HUGO stands. He lifts his arms above his head. He wiggles his fingers. He moves his torso in a circular motion. He continues to do this as the lights fade to black.)

THE END

Dan Nielsen spreads his limited talents thinly so as to cover writing, music, art, and stand-up comedy. Old credits include Random House and University of Iowa Press anthologies. Recent work has appeared in *The Ottawa Object*, *Lockjaw Magazine*, *The Fem*, *Semaphore Magazine*, and *Minor Literature[s]*. He has a website: Preponderous.