

My trip to the A & E Dept.

During the summer I had the experience of visiting the A & E of my local hospital. I arrived to a fairly full waiting room. Took my place in the queue. Eventually I was called to Reception and was half way through giving my details when there was an interruption from on high. Now I have the luxury of having not one but three tall and may I add good looking men in my life, so I am used to having to tilt my head to make eye contact – but I looked and I looked and I looked mesmerized at the height of the gentleman who interrupted me – mid sentence to tell the Receptionist that he was an emergency. Not a budge out of my friend at Reception. He quickly informed him that I was an emergency too. The first I heard of it. But on second thoughts if one is not an accident in this Dept. one has to be an emergency. I finished my details and was asked to take a seat for triage. Now that had me floored but on enquiry was told that that was the Dept. that evaluated patients according to their urgency.

We took our seats once more and because of a severe headache I could not read, so I focused on the people around me. I will not dwell on the very ill patients, but there was a flow of traffic out the front door in all kinds of night attire. The incongruity of it - smoking and damaging ones health on the hospital door step. One particularly attractive young girl caught my attention for two reasons – the weight she was carrying and the choice of navy satin dressing gown with large white polka dots. There was nothing minimalist about it.

My turn came to go into the inner sanctum – the A & E dept. What a transformation - it was beautifully decorated, and not a white coat or white uniform in sight. The Doctors sported dark green and the nurses royal blue. Everyone that I met was charming and kind. In the ward that I was directed to, there were four cubicles divided by beautiful co-ordinated curtains. Here again questions were asked. To my left there was a lady who did not believe in monosyllables. She was giving her life history

My next port of call was the CDU - Clinical Diagnostic Unit - there's posh. This was a stay over ward. But the Architect who designed the new wing, took the theme of the trolleys right through and where four beds could have fitted he put four trolleys. The logic escapes me. Even the trolley was a luxury at this stage to lay my weary head and sleep the night away. In this room there was the little box not in the corner, but suspended from the ceiling. They really picked the programmes that night – first came Marian and John Finnucane telling the sad story about their daughter's fatal illness, followed by a programme about five sisters who all had breast cancer. These stories did nothing by way of reassurance for me who was going for a brain scan the next morning.. Next came the panacea for all ills – tea and biscuits and then lights out. Peace at last for my poor head. Not so, at 11 o'clock

in came my polka dot friend huffing and puffing and wheezing. She eventually got herself onto her trolley. My pity for her turned into something else when at exactly 11.40 she proceeded to make a call to lover boy and proceeded not to whisper but to talk loudly 'sweet nothings' into his ear. This call lasted 11 minutes and 17 seconds. No wonder Vodofone showed such a high profit in their last financial year. Phone call finished peace at last. Until 12.30 when in came the tenant for trolley No 4. – the lady that could talk for Ireland. Now the party started in earnest - it was like 'morning coffee break' at Beweley's Café. She was server tea and biscuits and was giving us a blow by blow account of her trip to another hospital because the scanner in ours was out of order. Eventually she ran out of petrol and stopped talking. Then sleeping tablets were dispensed. I got none because of my headache – I was being monitored. Ten minutes later the sleeping tablets kicked in and a symphony or should I say cacophony of snoring started. They would build to a crescendo and then fade. At the first fade I thought peace will come, but no such luck. They were only refuelling, and this time the sound resembled the sounds in the pit stop at the formula 1 race.

Four o'clock replaced three. I decided I would have to get a few winks of sleep. I tried relaxation Exercises, followed by amateur hypnosis, followed by TM. Then I went back to the old faithful counting sheep. If I got headage payments for every sheep I counted I would be driving a Merc today. Frustration took on a whole new meaning for me by then. I was sitting up in my bed trying to decide whether I would strangle them with my hands or suffocate them with their pillows. 6 am arrived and miraculously sanity was restored. I decided to turn adversity into triumph and catalogue my experiences to enter a 'short story competition' where I won first place. So all was not lost. !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Etta B.