

Gladys In Wonderland excerpt

GLADYS

Don't they have things to do here?

ETHEL

Well, yes, but if you don't get the drill here, right away, you'll find yourself with a fate worse than death.

GLADYS

What do you mean?

LILLIAN

If you behave as if you have an ounce of brains, you automatically get put into the active group, dearie.

GLADYS

What's so bad about that?

ETHEL

You have to make things.

LILLIAN

They put cardboard toilet paper rolls in front of you and you have to make thanksgiving centerpieces and Easter bunnies and flag holders for the fourth of July.

ETHEL

Do one, and quick as a wink, they come up with another. Every day, it's a new one. You'll be weaving strips of construction paper until you're blue in the face. And coloring and painting and gluing---

LILLIAN

Yarn, string, glitter they stick in front of you day after day after day.

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GLADYS

Can't you say you don't want to?

ETHEL

Oh, you can say it. But they won't leave you be. If you don't make their yarn-covered coat hangers or whatever the project of the day is, they---

LILLIAN

Watch it!

GLADYS

What's the matter?

ETHEL

(whispering)

Ssssh!

LILLIAN & ETHEL sit motionless with blank looks. Pause.

LILLIAN

(whispering)

Is she gone?

ETHEL

She went in the office.

LILLIAN & ETHEL relax.

LILLIAN

That was close.

GLADYS

Who was that?

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LILLIAN

The head therapist.

ETHEL

Miss --- "Are we having a good time today?"

LILLIAN

Madam --- "I'm only here to help you." What a crock. We never let her see us talking. If we did, we'd be in the activities room quick as a wink.

ETHEL

The last thing you want to do is act normal around her.

LILLIAN

The absolutely last thing. Haven't you ever been to a nursing home?

GLADYS

Well, sure.

ETHEL

Did the people look normal to you? Didn't you think it strange that everyone there seemed to have lost their minds?

LILLIAN

Like they all had some sort of collective illness, like the blue flu when cops all call in sick the same day?

GLADYS

I guess I didn't give it much thought.

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LILLIAN

Why, if they didn't, they'd be doomed. Be making cardboard placemats with paper hearts stuck to them 'till the cows come home.

GLADYS

So you mean everybody pretends to be---

ETHEL

Nuts. Of course. You know where nursing home therapists come from, don't you?

GLADYS

Not exactly.

LILLIAN

Nursing home therapists are kindergarten teachers who have bad knees.

ETHEL

See, they can't sit down on the floor with the little kids, but it's the same job.

LILLIAN

They all go to the same school.

ETHEL

That's where they all learn to talk like that, and make all that junk with cardboard and glue.

LILLIAN

Then, the ones who can sit cross-legged on the floor get jobs in kindergarten. The rest---

ETHEL

Get jobs in nursing homes.