

## Hospital Food by Eugene O'Hare

*This play is set in a children's cancer ward. All the patients are teenagers with varying stages of cancer. In this scene GUS is trying to explain to his friend why he wants to stop treatment.*

GUS:

I don't wanna just live, Josh - not like I'm living now - not like I'm gonna keep living - I wanna be alive. Just for a bit. Just be alive for a bit. All these things Mum has planned - this clinic in the States, this new life, these...therapies, prayers - whatever they are - if they don't work I'll do them for her anyway. Anything she wants. But I'll be free for me. You get me? Do you see what I mean?

I keep dreaming of those few seconds when the plane finally gets out of the clouds and you look down and you're above them all? Right up above them? I can hear the motor of the engine in my dream and I'm looking out the window just looking down at them - a mad white floor of clouds and it looks so solid - like there's not danger - like I could go take a walk on it - but it's not that kind of dream - it's a real dream. And I fall asleep on the plane but when I waken - the floor of clouds - it's still there - and we're still moving above it and we're still escaping everything below it. Do you see?

I'm sick of being sick, mate. I'm sick of feeling, trapped, attached to this thing - I'm sick of feeling sore. I'm spending so much time with my head in the toilet - getting dizzy with it - and everything, everything is sore. My skin, my fingertips, my lips, the skin on my back, the heels of my feet are hot. I waken some days feeling like I'm up to my neck in warm cement - but not poured over my body - poured into it - poured into it - into my body - from the inside of my big toe right up through to the inside of my mouth. You hear me some mornings when they're all round me - about seven of them all just trying to get me to breathe, just to breathe, like it's the easiest thing in the world.

Cos I understand - I understand see? - I'm like maybe three of us, no four of us, on this ward, who really understands their diagnosis; understands it, accepts it. Relapsed neuroblastoma - secondary brain tumour to boot - brain tumour they can't shift, they can't shrink, and I can't scream it out. I tried. One night, in bed, screaming inside of my head to scream the tumour out - but then I thought - what if it works? - what if it works and I can scream this tumour out of my head? I'd still have here to go (touches his abdomen) and here (touches his left side) and here (touches his right side) And here (touches his chest). And I can't scream that loud.