

'Oops there goes his testicles'

a historical play

Narrator: As the final rays of sunlight set on the Old Operating Theatre, Dr Robert Liston, is relaxing after a hard days surgery. He is in a good mood as today he has broken his record for amputating a leg - 26 seconds. However, there is a nagging thought at the back of his mind...

Enter Nurse Seacole, a Jamaican woman who speaks with a mild Scottish accent

Liston: Nurse Seacole, I have a nagging thought at the back of my mind. Why is it that over half of my patients die after I have operated on them?

Seacole: Well doctor, there is the obvious pain that they are in, that comes as quite a shock. I am sure that there is something that can be done to knock the patient out.

Narrator: All of a sudden the room went cold as if a ghostly figure had entered the room. There was a strange smell and a greenish cloud floated over the operating theatre.

Spirit of Simpson: Hey there, you want to check this out, it's a real trip. My friends and I sniffed some back in '47 and we were out like a light. Chloroform's the gear, I'll shot you some for a few nuggets.

Liston: Thanks but that stuff can kill you if you take too much of it, and I don't think that the boss upstairs will approve of us interfering with her ideas about giving us humans some pain.

Spirit of Simpson disappears in a cloud of green smoke

Seacole: What a strange man. Anyway where were we?

Liston gets out of his chair and slips in a pool of blood left over from the last operation

Seacole: Ah yes the blood. I am sure that there was this French geezer ... yes Ambroise Pare was his name, he had a few ideas about dealing with the red stuff, if only he was around to tell us how

Narrator: All of a sudden the room was filled with screams and shouts resembling a battle-field, the grey smoke of gunshot wafted in the air and a strange man with a goatee and a dusty book appeared

Pare: Bonjour, tout le monde, je suis Ambroise Pare docteur extraordinaire.

Liston: speak English mate, I failed my GCSE French!

Pare: Typical Anglais. Well I have here my book, 'Works on Surgery', which I wrote in 1575 and if you look here you can see my ideas about ligatures - are there any cats nearby? I have heard from my friend Joe Lister that they have excellent guts, perfect for tying around a spewing blood vessel. And how about some roses? Or eggs? Or maybe you've been doing a bit of decorating and have some turpentine handy? Shame as I could knock up a lovely

Remedy for healing wounds.

There is a huge explosion and a cannonball rips through the ceiling of the Operating Theatre

Pare: Zut Alors, I must go, another 30 legs blown off by that cannon, if only those boy's legs would stop going green and smelling of rotting flesh.

Liston: Anyway, back to my nagging thought. I can see possible solutions to the pain and to the blood, but there is still something missing.

Nurse Seacole: Yes Pare was onto something with that rotting smell and strange greenish black pus like things that seem to grow out of the patients wounds ...

Task:

You need to finish off the play. You will need to add material about Joseph Lister and antiseptics and the development of Aseptic surgery.