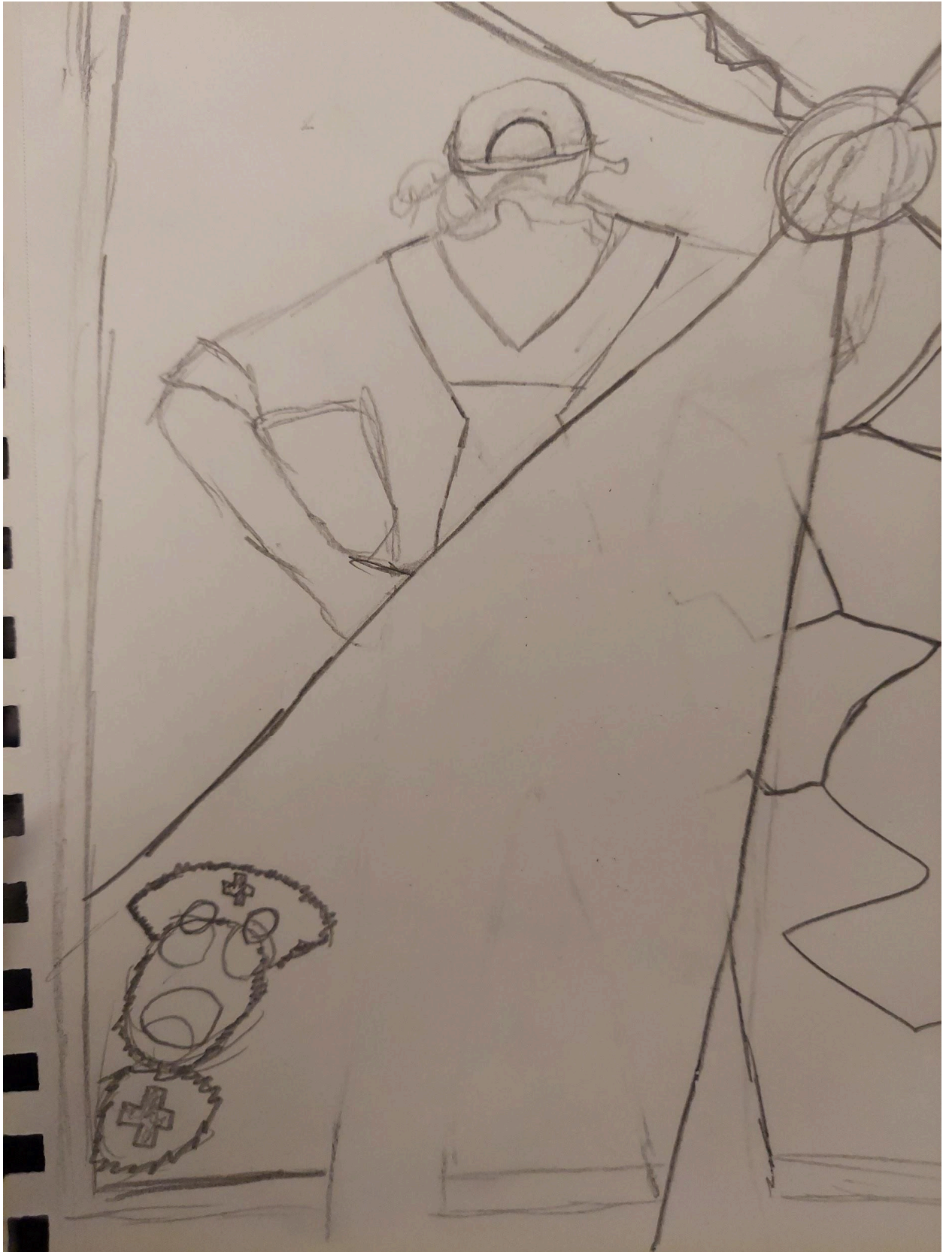


A Punch Beyond Space

A Psychiatric Ward. One of the many definitions that the book *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* fails to support is: "A facility that provides inpatient acute care and treatment for people who are experiencing serious mental health issues."¹ Throughout the story, we see patients mistreated and handled poorly by staff and nurses alike. Dangerous medical practices such as lobotomies and electro-shock therapy are administered to patients who otherwise wouldn't need them, further hindering any chance of recovery. By thoroughly and strategically using her authoritarian power, Nurse Ratched has managed to squash any and every ounce of hope for rebellion out of the patients, keeping a firm grip on the ward for decades. However, with the arrival of McMurphy, we've begun to see her violent and oppressive tactics fall flat, as he challenges this hierarchy. Below I drew one of McMurphy's key rebellions where he crashed through Nurse Ratched's glass to grab a cigarette, inspiring chronics and acutes alike.

¹ [What Is a Psych Ward: An Overview](#)

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As Chief Bromden narrates the harsh experiences of his life as an inmate in the ward, we begin to compare the patients' sanity to that of the staff. However, as the story progresses, we soon learn that one of the only barriers separating the patients from staff is physical rather than mental. "The nurse watches the day room from her glass case; the scene before her takes on that blue-steel clarity again, that clean orderly movement of a cartoon comedy." (24) Through the glass barrier in the Nurse's office, the patients have been controlled and manipulated by staff for years being treated as lesser people. In this case, the glass does more than just separate power and class in the ward — it separates the patients from a life of normalcy. "You're no crazier than the average asshole out walkin' around on the streets and that's it." (157) Despite their diagnosis as relatively normal, Nurse Ratched and the rest of the ward continue to treat the Acutes as if they're broken, lowering their self-esteem and strengthening the barrier. That is until McMurphy took action. From the perspective of Bromden, I drew McMurphy triumphantly acting to the beat of his drum, smashing the surrounding glass and putting cracks in this mindset that has plagued the ward for years.

Even though McMurphy has rebelled against Nurse Ratched before, it holds a unique purpose of being for the chronics, rather than his own personal gain/stubbornness. Unlike in previous rebellions, McMurphy was completely aware that his actions against the staff and Nurse Ratched moving forward would affect his release time from the ward. "You bums didn't tell me what a risk I was running, twisting her tail that way." (165) Knowing that Nurse Ratched is against any possible future "share of victories..." (200) he and the Acutes could gain by being rebellious and that his sentence was on the line, his action was completely unthinkable to me—from the cracks in the glass shone a heroic light, that left the patients hopeful of a better future. From the impact of his fist, I drew this figurative light as powerful rays shining down on Bromden and the rest of the ward. However, these rays of light didn't just affect the patients but also impacted Nurse Ratched.

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Being opposed to an institution where patients would express any amount of independence, Nurse Ratched has held a tight grip on the ward for decades. Throughout these years, structures have been put in place (without the consultation of trained professionals given that her uncooperative nature made them leave) to restrict the patients as much as possible. “What she dreams of there in the center of those wires is a world of precision efficiency and tidiness like a pocket watch with a glass back, a place where the schedule is unbreakable...” (19 PDF) This lack of independence plunged the patient into a state of depression, leaving them powerless to resist her subjugation. However, with the unexpected shattering of her glass window, attitudes began to change for the better. “She knew she’d lost one big round and was losing another...”(174) Until McMurphy arrived, Big Nurse had complete control over the patients, remaining the biggest and baddest person in their eyes. Yet, after being resisted several times by McMurphy, we weren’t sure anymore. Suddenly, The “Big Nurse” wasn’t so big. I decided to draw her shrunken status as a fading chibi character, weak when compared to McMurphy. Her squiggly art style is the effect of the shining light, diminishing her power and control over the ward.