One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest by Ken Kesey
Part 1 Chapter 7 /35

#### AnnotationsMake 5 connections. Label © /5Ask 5 questions. Label (?) /5Highlight 5 quotes that reveal characterization. O-/-< Discuss. /5 Define the vocabulary on the line. /5Write a summary of this chapter. Label (S) /5Answer questions in the margin. /10

 First time for a long, long time I'm in bed without taking that little red capsule (if I hide to keep from taking it, the night nurse with the birthmark sends the black boy named Geever out to hunt me down, hold me captive with his flashlight till she can get the needle ready), so I fake sleep when the black boy's coming past with his light.
 When you take one of those red pills you don't just go to sleep; you're paralyzed with sleep, and all night long you can't wake, no matter what goes on around you. That's why the staff gives me the pills; at the old place I took to waking up at night and catching them performing all kinds of horrible crimes on the patients sleeping around me.
 I lie still and slow my breathing, waiting to see if something is going to happen. It is dark my lord and I hear them slipping around out there in their rubber shoes; twice they peek in the dorm and run a flashlight over everybody. I keep my eyes shut and keep awake. I hear a wailing from up on *Disturbed*, loo loo looo—got some guy wired to pick up code signals.
 “Oh, a beer, I think, fo' the long night ahead,” I hear a black boy whisper to the other. Rubber shoes squeak off toward the Nurses' Station, where the refrigerator is. “You like a beer, sweet thing with a birthmark? Fo' the long night ahead?”
 The guy upstairs hushes. The low whine of the devices in the walls gets quieter and quieter, till it hums down to nothing. Not a sound across the hospital—except for a dull, padded rumbling somewhere deep in the guts of the building, a sound that I never noticed before—a lot like the sound you hear when you're standing late at night on top of a big hydroelectric dam. Low, relentless, brute power.
 The fat black boy stands out there in the hall where I can see him, looking all around and giggling. He walks toward the dorm door, slow, wiping the wet gray palms in his armpits. The light from the Nurses' Station throws his shadow on the dorm wall big as an elephant, gets smaller as he walks to the dorm door and looks in. He giggles again and unlocks the fuse box by the door and reaches in. “Tha's right, babies, sleep tight.”
 Twists a knob, and the whole floor goes to slipping down away from him standing in the door, lowering into the building like a platform in a grain elevator!
 Not a thing but the dorm floor moves, and we're sliding away from the walls and door and the windows of the ward at a hell of a clip—beds, bedstands, and all. The machinery—probably a cog-and-track affair at each corner of the shaft—is greased silent as death. The only sound I hear is the guys breathing, and that drumming under us getting louder the farther down we go. The light of the dorm door five hundred yards back up this hole is nothing but a speck, dusting the square sides of the shaft with a dim powder. It gets dimmer and dimmer till a faraway scream comes echoing down the sides of the shaft—“Stay back!”—and the light goes out altogether.
 The floor reaches some kind of solid bottom far down in the ground and stops with a soft jar. It's dead black, and I can feel the sheet around me choking off my wind. Just as I get the sheet untied, the floor starts sliding forward with a little jolt. Some kind of castors under it I can't hear. I can't even hear the guys around me breathing, and I realize all of a sudden it's because that drumming's gradually got so loud I can't hear anything else. We must be square in the middle of it. I go to clawing at that damned sheet tied across me and just about have it loose when a whole wall slides up, reveals a huge room of endless machines stretching clear out of sight, swarming with sweating, shirtless men running up and down catwalks, faces blank and dreamy in firelight thrown from a hundred blast furnaces.
 It—everything I see—looks like it sounded, like the inside of a tremendous dam. Huge brass tubes disappear upward in the dark. Wires run to transformers out of sight. Grease and cinders catch on everything, staining the couplings and motors and dynamos red and coal black.
 The workers all move at the same smooth sprint, an easy, fluid stride. No one's in a hurry. One will hold up a second, spin a dial, push a button, throw a switch, and one side of his face flashes white like lightning from the spark of the connecting switch, and run on, up steel steps and along a corrugated iron catwalk—pass each other so smooth and close I hear the slap of wet sides like the slap of a salmon's tail on water—stop again, throw lightning from another switch, and run on again. They twinkle in all directions clean on out of sight, these flash pictures of the dreamy doll faces of the workmen.

A workman's eyes snap shut while he's going at full run, and he drops in his tracks; two of his buddies running by grab him up and ***lateral*** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ him into a furnace as they pass. The furnace whoops a ball of fire and I hear the popping of a million tubes like walking through a field of ***seed pods***\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . This sound mixes with the whirr and clang of the rest of the machine
 There's a rhythm to it, like a thundering pulse.
 The dorm floor slides on out of the shaft and into the machine room. Right away I see what's straight above us—one of those ***trestle*** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ affairs like you find in meat houses, **rollers on tracks to move carcasses from the cooler to the butcher without much lifting.** Two guys in slacks, white shirts with the sleeves turned back, and thin black ties are leaning on the catwalk above our beds, gesturing to each other as they talk, cigarettes in long holders tracing lines of red light. They're talking but you can't make out the words above the measured roar rising all around them. One of the guys snaps his fingers, and the nearest workman ***veers*** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in a sharp turn and sprints to his side. The guy points down at one of the beds with his cigarette holder, and the worker trots off to the steel stepladder and runs down to our level, where he goes out of sight between two transformers huge as potato cellars.
 When that worker appears again he's pulling a hook along the trestle overhead and taking giant strides as he swings along it. He passes my bed and a furnace whooping somewhere suddenly lights his face up right over mine, a face handsome and brutal and waxy like a mask, wanting nothing. I've seen a million faces like it.
 He goes to the bed and with one hand grabs the old Vegetable **Blastic** by the heel and lifts him straight up like Blastic don't weigh more'n a few pounds; with the other hand the worker drives the hook through the ***tendon*** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ back of the heel, and the old guy's hanging there upside down, his moldy face blown up big, scared, the eyes scummed with mute fear. He keeps flapping both arms and the free leg till his pajama top falls around his head. The worker grabs the top and bunches and twists it like a burlap sack and pulls the trolley clicking back over the trestle to the catwalk and looks up to where those two guys in white shirts are standing. One of the guys takes a scalpel from a holster at his belt. There's a chain welded to the scalpel. The guy lowers it to the worker, loops the other end of the chain around the railing so the worker can't run off with a weapon.
 **The worker takes the scalpel and slices up the front of old Blastic with a clean swing and the old man stops thrashing around. I expect to be sick, but there's no blood or innards falling out like I was looking to see—just a shower of rust and ashes,** and now and again a piece of wire or glass. Worker's standing there to his knees in what looks like clinkers.
 A furnace got its mouth open somewhere, licks up somebody.
 I think about jumping up and running around and waking up McMurphy and Harding and as many of the guys as I can, but there wouldn't be any sense in it. If I shook somebody awake he'd say, Why you crazy idiot, what the hell's eating you? And then probably help one of the workers lift me onto one of those hooks himself, saying, How about let's see what the insides of an Indian are like?
 I hear the high, cold, whistling wet breath of the fog machine, see the first wisps of it come seeping out from under McMurphy's bed. I hope he knows enough to hide in the fog.
 I hear a silly prattle reminds me of somebody familiar, and I roll enough to get a look down the other way. It's the hairless Public Relation with the bloated face, that the patients are always arguing about why it's bloated. “I'll say he does,” they'll argue. “Me, I'll say he doesn't; you ever hear of a guy really who wore one?” “Yeh, but you ever hear of a guy like him before?” The first patient shrugs and nods, “Interesting point.”
 Now he's stripped except for a long undershirt with fancy monograms sewed red on front and back. And I see once and for all (the undershirt rides up his back some as he comes walking past, giving me a peek) that he definitely does wear one, laced so tight it might blow up any second.
 And dangling from the stays he's got half a dozen withered objects, **tied by the hair like scalps.**
 He's carrying a little flask of something that he sips from to keep his throat open for talking, and a camphor hanky he puts in front of his nose from time to time to stop out the stink. There's a clutch of schoolteachers and college girls and the like hurrying after him. They wear blue aprons and their hair in pin curls. They are listening to him give a brief lecture on the tour.
 He thinks of something funny and has to stop his lecture long enough for a swig from the flask to stop the giggling. During the pause one of his pupils stargazes around and sees the gutted Chronic dangling by his heel. She gasps and jumps back. The Public Relation turns and catches sight of the corpse and rushes to take one of those limp hands and give it a spin. The student shrinks forward for a cautious look, face in a trance.
 “You see? You see?” He squeals and rolls his eyes and spews stuff from his flask he's laughing so hard. He's laughing till I think he'll explode.
 When he finally drowns the laughing he starts back along the row of machines and goes into his lecture again. He stops suddenly and slaps his forehead—“Oh, scatterbrained me!”—and comes running back to the hanging Chronic to rip off another trophy and tie it to his girdle.
 Right and left there are other things happening just as bad—crazy, horrible things too goofy and outlandish to cry about and too much true to laugh about—but the fog is getting thick enough I don't have to watch. And somebody's tugging at my arm. I know already what will happen: somebody'll drag me out of the fog and we'll be back on the ward and there won't be a sign of what went on tonight and if I was fool enough to try and tell anybody about it they'd say, Idiot, you just had a nightmare; things as crazy as a big machine room down in the bowels of a dam where people get cut up by robot workers don't exist.
 But if they don't exist, how can a man see them?
 It's Mr. Turkle that pulls me out of the fog by the arm, shaking me and grinning. He says, “You havin' a bad dream, Mistuh Bromden.” He's the aide works the long lonely shift from 11 to 7, an old Negro man with a big sleepy grin on the end of a long wobbly neck. He smells like he's had a little to drink. “Back to sleep now, Mistuh Bromden.”
 Some nights he'll untie the sheet from across me if it's so tight I squirm around. He wouldn't do it if he thought the day crew knew it was him, because they'd probably fire him, but he figures the day crew will think it was me untied it. I think he really does it to be kind, to help—but he makes sure he's safe first.
 This time he doesn't untie the sheet but walks away from me to help two aides I never saw before and a young doctor lift old Blastic onto the stretcher and carry him out, covered with a sheet—handle him more careful than anybody ever handled him before in all his life.