

## “THE NURSING HOME” (Book Review)

Written by Allan Dart

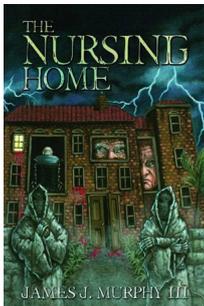
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James J. Murphy III's THE NURSING HOME (L&J Publishing) is the worst book I have ever read. I mean that. I really do. I don't say things like that lightly, and I've never said this about a book before. If I had to estimate, I'd say I've read close to 4,000 or so books in my life (and those aren't Wilt Chamberlain-inflated numbers), and THE NURSING HOME is by far the worst. Hands down. It's the nadir of narrative. The low watermark of literature. An inept and feckless effort. It's truly, egregiously awful. Like TROLL 2 awful.

Oh, and it's also an unintentionally hilarious and entertaining experience. One that I'll never forget. Come, let me explain and show you the strange allure of this atrociously engaging novel. Come, let me take you to...THE NURSING HOME.



To attempt to describe THE NURSING HOME in my own words would be a foolish exercise in ineffability. Instead, I'll give you the CliffsNotes version of the plot and then allow the book (and author Murphy) to speak for themselves. Trust me, it'll be more fun that way.

OK, we have the Grover family: the angry and irritable father, Sam; his wife Jude, who puts up with not only her stupid husband's nonsense, but that of her wiseass and hateful son Todd; and Sam's octogenarian father, Morris, who is getting old and forgetful and so is being put into a Florida nursing home. Morris is just as angry and execrable as his son (they both despise each other) and grandson (it runs in the family), and he's equally furious and depressed about having to live in an old-age facility.

And, boy, Rigg's Nursing Home is quite the facility. The staff treat their helpless patients

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horribly. I'm not just talking about insensitivity or short tempers here. Nurse Ratched has nothing on these “caregivers” who take absolute delight in torturing and beating up the elderly residents. And you thought Grandpa Simpson has it bad. Morris and his old fogey pals constantly complain, but nobody believes them. Then some of the staff and residents start mysteriously dying. That's when Jay, Jeff, Beth and Ron—the incredibly irritating and obnoxious teenagers recently hired at Rigg's—and a pair of unfunny and clueless cops named Conway and O'Connor begin to investigate.

There's the breakdown. Now, let Mr. Murphy's words speak for themselves. For reasons that will be made clear, I've separated the following quotations into seven different categories.

### 1) INTRODUCING CHARACTERS

Subtlety is lost on the author, who awkwardly and amateurishly establishes his generic principals. This is only the beginning of the book's faults. Trust me, it gets worse...

- *Bill was forty-three years old and born in Houston, Texas. He graduated from the University of Florida with all honors. Bill appeared to be just over six feet tall and a good two hundred pounds. His hairline was receding, his breath was repulsive, and everything about him disgusted Morris.*

- *Beth was nineteen years old and a student at the University of Miami, where she became a huge fan of the Miami Hurricanes. She planned to major in Astronomy and always wanted to become a scientist. In her spare time, she liked looking through microscopes and mixing chemicals together.*

### 2) PROFANITY

All of the book's scurrilous characters are invariably foul-mouthed and unpleasant people who specialize in berating and yelling at one another—especially the Grover family, who enjoy telling each other to f\*\*k off.

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- Sam to Morris: *“You are a stubborn, old son-of-a-bitch who doesn’t give a f\*\*k about anybody except yourself.”*
- Morris to Sam: *“Sam, I’m staying here whether you like it or not, so I suggest you leave me the f\*\*k alone!”*
- Morris to grandson: *“Shut up, you little bastard! F\*\*kin’ brat!”*
- Bill (a mean aide) to old patient: *“Time to eat, you f\*\*king idiot!”*
- Bill: *“Mrs. Douglas, I bet you were a hot piece of ass forty years ago. Too bad you’re nothing but a wrinkled piece of shit now.”*
- Eddie (a Rigg’s employee) discussing a patient who just passed away: *“Old F\*\*k Crombert. He’s old; he deserved to die.”*
- Sue and Pearl (nurses): *“Hey bitch!”* addressed Sue. *“Who you calling ‘bitch,’ bitch?”* Pearl kidded back. *Sue was beginning to notice that Pearl was a bigger bitch than she was. Even worse, a bitch with no conscience.*
- Jeff on Morris: *“Look at his clothes and look at the fact he smells like shit.”* Beth: *“Jeff, you think all old people smell like shit.”*

### 3) “AND IT’S MORRIS”

When called “Mori,” a miffed Morris exasperatingly replies, “And it’s Morris” or some variation. I

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stopped counting, but the old geezer probably says this about 50 times in the story.

- *“I’m fine...and it’s Morris.”*
- *“It’s Morris to you...”*
- *“I’m not, Pauly. And it’s Morris.”*
- *“Real funny, Pauly. And it’s Morris to you.”*
- *“By the way, Pauly, my name is Morris.”*
- *“You’re out of your mind, Pauly. And it’s Morris to you.”*
- *“Okay, okay. Give this old man some space. And that’s Morris to you.”*

### 4) CONWAY AND O’CONNOR

These Keystone Kops are dumb as rocks and absurdly stereotypical: O’Connor the vet, and Conway the rookie. In the “And it’s Morris” vein, O’Connor continually tells Conway, “Listen, rookie...” These unbelievable characters are a lesson in how *not* to write dialogue. And if you thought the Bad Lieutenant was a terrible cop...

- O’Connor: *“Conway, I’ve been on the police force since about the time you were born...”* (O’Connor spouts around 100 more “rookie” and “kid” quotes just like this one, but I’ll have mercy and let this one represent the whole.)

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- Conway on a murder scene: *“I examined the whole breakroom area and the only evidence we found was a kitchen knife. The knife had blood on it. I wonder, because it was bloody, could it have washed off the fingerprints.”*
- O’Connor to Conway, who roughs up and tries to arrest Morris because he dislikes him: *“Conway, what the f\*\*k are you doing? We don’t have enough evidence to book him.” “What do you mean, O’Connor?” “I mean, just because you don’t like this guy, we can’t arrest him until we catch him in the act.” “Fine,” a disappointed Conway agreed.*
- Conway on Bill beating the crap out of Morris: *“He took some good punches for a man in his eighties.”*

Which leads me to THE NURSING HOME’s theme:

### 5) CONTEMPT FOR AND BEATING UP OF THE ELDERLY

The employees at Rigg’s make Clancy Brown in THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION look like a softie. They’re sadistic oppressors who love to pound and pummel these senior citizens.

- *“Time to eat, you f\*\*king, idiot!” When Felix didn’t listen, Bill would purposely spill food on him.*
- *So Bill held out the cane while Mr. Gothersorg grabbed for it, and then continued teasing him by playing Keep-Away. After ten minutes, Bill finally threw it to him after the senior citizen defecated himself.*
- *Bill knew he overpowered him and he thrived on it. He took his first swing and nailed Morris right in the jaw.*

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- Helen to Pearl about punching Morris (which most of the staff seems to enjoy doing): *“I’m not stupid, Pearl. You hit him, didn’t you?” “And if I did, who cares? He’s a useless piece of shit anyway!”*
- Pearl to Helen: *“When families drop their loved ones off here, we treat them like shit... I had no excuse for what I did to Grover, that old f\*\*k.”*

### 6) INEXPLICABLE DIALOGUE, ACTIONS AND BEHAVIOR

THE NURSING HOME reads like a badly dubbed kung-fu movie.

- Bill on beating up Morris: *“I admit it; in the heat of the moment, I smacked him. I felt I had to defend our nursing home.”*
- Eddie explaining to Cyndi why he let the fired Bill into the nursing home to beat the crap out of Morris: *“The only reason you fired Bill is because of that old f\*\*k. I was just helping out a friend. All Bill wanted to do was shake Morris up a little. I just wish I could’ve done it.”*
- Jeff: *“All we are witnessing here are a few deaths and Ron’s crying like a baby. How the f\*\*k are you gonna explain what Hitler and Stalin did when they had power? These seem to be a few simple deaths. What Hitler and Stalin did was much worse.”*
- How Murphy not-so-subtly arranges it so that Morris and Rigg’s staff can’t contact the Grovers about the murders and Morris being a suspect: Sam: *“Todd...the only thing I ask of you is that you leave everything at home.”* Jude: *“What are you talking about, Sam? I need my clothes and makeup.”* Sam: *“I don’t mean that. I mean our electronic stuff, like our cell phones or the laptop. I don’t want any contacts.”*

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- Jeff talking about his promiscuous sibling: *“My older sister...was a cheerleading slut back in high school... I know it’s not very nice to say, but it’s the truth. She is my sister, though, and I will always be there for her.”*
- *“There’s no easy way to tell you this.” The way Officer Conway was talking, it seemed like he was about to announce her mother died. In Cyndi’s case, she wouldn’t have to worry about that because her mother died in a boating accident when she was twenty-one.*
- *“Don’t hang up!” her voice said loudly. (Her voice????)*
- *Beth arrived ten minutes late. “Thank you for coming. I’m sorry I’m late. I had to brush my teeth.”*
- *“Before I made a career in arts and crafts, I grew up in Detroit.” He assumed they all knew that it was in Michigan.*
- When Sam and his family arrive home, there’s an alarming message saying that Morris has been accused of murder. This is Jude’s response to Sam saying that they should head over to Rigg’s ASAP: *“Can’t I wash the dishes first? Or at least put the food away.” Jude hated leaving the kitchen untidy.*

### 7) RACIST MATERIAL

I would feel really bad about lambasting this book, but Murphy’s racist depiction of minority characters is both offensive and asinine—especially the Stepin Fetchit character of Clevon, a black janitor at Rigg’s. I betcha Murphy’s favorite movie is BIRTH OF A NATION.

- Clevon (after finding a dead body): *“Who dun it? Who dun it? Pearl, call da po-lice.”*

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- Clevon: *“We hear dat. When I’s sees Suzi layin’, her cigz wuzn’t far from her. Da cigz looked like it’s sayin’ ‘1843.’ Wutt dat mean?”*
- Clevon: *“Nows, which one’s da key?”*
- *The kids were handed menus by a Mexican waiter named Perez. He was about five foot six with slicked back, greasy black hair of average length and had a skinny, greasy mustache. It looked and smelt like he hadn’t showered in days. (Additionally, the only word Perez knows is “Sí.”)*
- Nurse Rochelle: *“Is it because I’m black and you’re nuttin’ but a whacked-out white boy?” She began getting racy and started going ghetto on the old man, moving her large body around, waving her hand in the air and putting her finger in his face. She was about five foot six and wearing a lot of gold jewelry.*

Clevon: *“I’s don’t wants to die.”*

I’s don’t wants to goes ons much longas, but looking over all these quotations, I find that simply listing them doesn’t do justice to how terrible THE NURSING HOME is. Like the BATTLEFIELD EARTH movie, its outright awfulness can only be appreciated by experiencing it yourself. I also must admit that while I was dumbfounded by THE NURSING HOME’s sheer stupidity, I was also laughing my ass off and reading passages and dialogue aloud to my Fango colleagues in the office, one of whom asked me for the book when I finished. I, of course, said yes. But I also asked for it *back*. I guess I really do like this f\*\*king book. Oh, and it’s Morris to you...

*(THE NURSING HOME defies a skull rating. While it deserves zero skulls for being an unskillfully and incompetently written book, it also deserves four skulls for being an unintentionally uproarious and rollicking read.)*

{jcomments on}

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