

## **The Waiting Room**

By

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Cast: Shaper, man, mid-thirties Cause of death: murdered.

Plant, woman, mid-thirties Cause of death: suicide.

Monitor, man, mid-fifties. Cause of death: disease.

Set: A waiting room, perhaps suggesting a hospital waiting room.

Monitor and Plant are already seated in the waiting room at rise. Shaper enters, he is tense, worried, in a hurry. Monitor counts, initially ignoring Shaper. Monitor is calm with an inner stillness. Plant repeats what Shaper says, but always with a different (subverting) inflection. Plant behaves in an obsessive-compulsive kind of way, partially absorbed in making thin little cuts on her arm.

Drill: periodically an alarming sounding drilling noise, like an old-fashioned dentist's drill, but with a more industrial harshness to it, can be heard from the room they are waiting to enter.

Plant [Makes a little cut on her arm.]

Monitor Three hundred and sixty-one.

Plant [Makes a little cut on her arm.]

Monitor Three hundred and sixty-two.

Plant [Makes a little cut on her arm.]

Monitor Three hundred and sixty-four.

Plant [Makes a little cut on her arm.]

Monitor Three hundred and sixty-five.

[PAUSE. PLANT STOPS CUTTING, MONITOR STOPS COUNTING.]

[SILENCE.]

Monitor One.

Shaper [ENTER SHAPER.]

Hello.

Monitor Two.

Plant Hello.

Monitor Three.

Shaper Is this the right room?

Monitor Four.

Plant Is this the right room?

Monitor Five.

Shaper Yes, the room. The waiting room.

Monitor Six.

Plant Yes! The room. The waiting room.

Monitor Seven.

Shaper Good.

F/X DRILL

Monitor Eight.

Plant Good?

Monitor Nine.

Shaper I'll wait then.

Monitor Ten.

Plant I'll wait, then?

Monitor Eleven.

Shaper Why does she keep repeating everything I say?

Monitor Twelve.

Plant [MOCKING, LIKE A PETULANT CHILD.]  
Why does she keep repeating everything I say!

Monitor Thirteen.

Shaper Stop counting.

Monitor Four - ...

Plant Stop counting.

Shaper Stop repeating!

Monitor [SILENCE.]

Shaper [SILENCE.]

Plant [SILENCE.]

F/X DRILL

Monitor It helps to pass the time.

Shaper What does?

Monitor Counting.

Shaper Is it a long wait?

[SILENCE.]

Have you been waiting long?

Monitor Fifteen.

Plant Have you been waiting long?

Monitor Sixteen.

Shaper I just got here.

Monitor Seventeen.

Plant I just got here.

Monitor Eighteen.

Shaper Stop repeating.

Monitor Nineteen.

Plant Stop repeating?

Monitor Twenty.

Shaper Yes. Stop repeating.

Monitor Twenty-one.

Plant Yes . . .

Monitor Twenty-two.

Plant Stop . . .

Monitor Twenty-three.

Plant Repeating.

Monitor Twenty-four.

Shaper I haven't got much time. I'm on a meter. I can't wait long. They won't keep me waiting, will they?

Monitor [SILENCE. STARING AT SHAPER.]

Plant [SILENCE. STARING AT SHAPER.]

Shaper Only I can't wait. Not long. I have things to do. I have to get on.

Monitor [LAUGHS.]

Plant [LAUGHS.]

Shaper What's funny?

Plant What's funny?

Monitor [LAUGHS.]

Shaper Yes, why . . . why are you . . . laughing at me?

Monitor We're not laughing at you.

Shaper No?

Plant No?

Monitor We're laughing with you. We're laughing at this . . . this, waiting.

Shaper I'm in a hurry.

Plant I'm in a hurry.

Monitor I was here before you.

Shaper Yes, of course. I wasn't implying that you - ...

Plant I'm in a hurry.

Shaper That you weren't also waiting. After all it is a waiting room. Isn't it.

Plant I'm in a hurry.

Monitor Yes, a room, for waiting.

Shaper We're all in a hurry.

Monitor I was here before you.

Shaper Yes, okay, you were here first.

Monitor You're after me.

Plant I'm in a hurry.

Shaper Yes, yes, we're all busy. It's . . . tiresome . . . frustrating . . . I know. I mean, I've only been here, well, less time than you . . . but already, already I can feel that . . .

F/X DRILL

Monitor Yes? What? What do you feel?

Shaper That it's going to be a while.

Monitor [LAUGHS.]

Plant [LAUGHS.]

Shaper [SILENCE.]

Monitor [LAUGHS.]

Plant [LAUGHS.]

Shaper [LAUGHS.]

There's nothing like a good laugh. Breaks the ice, doesn't it, humour, works wonders.

[SILENCE.]

Monitor [LAUGHS.]

Plant [LAUGHS.]

Shaper [PAUSE]

Yes.

[LAUGHS.]

Plant Yes.

Shaper Will it be long, do you think?

Monitor [SILENCE.]

Plant [SILENCE.]

Shaper Waiting . . . it's so . . . it's one of those things . . . one of those . . .  
things I was never very good at.

Monitor You can learn.

Shaper Waiting?

Monitor You can learn.

Shaper Yes, yes, I suppose one can learn . . . well, anything, really.

Monitor You'll learn.

Plant Really.

Monitor In time.

Shaper I haven't got a lot of time.

Monitor [SILENCE.]

Plant [SILENCE.]

Shaper That's my problem, you see, not a lot of time. It's why I'm here. I  
wanted to see . . . to see if they could do something about it.

[F/X LOUD, HARSH BUZZER.]

ALL [SILENCE. FROZEN.]

[F/X LOUD, HARSH BUZZER.]

Monitor They're ready for the next person.

Plant They're ready for the next person?

Monitor [TO PLANT.] It's your turn.

[F/X LOUD, HARSH BUZZER, MORE INSISTENT.]

Monitor Better go.

Plant Yes, better go.

[RISES, RELUCTANTLY.]

I'm going.

Shaper See if you can keep it short.

Plant [STARTS TO MOVE TOWARDS THE DOOR THEN STOPS.]

[TO MONITOR.] You're sure it's...

Monitor Yes. Go. Don't be afraid.

Plant I've been waiting so long. And now. Now I don't want to go.

Shaper I'll take your turn.

Monitor No. It's your turn you have to go.

Shaper [MOVES TOWARDS THE DOOR AND TRIES TO OPEN IT BUT NO  
MATTER HOW HARD HE TRIES HE CANNOT OPEN THE DOOR.]

Fill in for her. I'm sure they won't mind. Seems to be stuck.

Monitor [TO SHAPER.] It's not your turn. [TO PLANT.] Go.



Plant [WALKS TO DOOR, OPENS IT WITH OUT ANY PROBLEM, EXITS.]

Shaper [AFTER PLANT EXITS MOVES HESITANTLY TO THE DOOR AND TRIES THE HANDLE AGAIN, AGAIN IT WON'T MOVE.]

Monitor It wasn't your turn.

Shaper I was just trying to help her out.

Monitor Why are you in such a hurry?

Shaper Well, I shouldn't be here. I've sneaked off, snatched a bit of time. You know how it is.

Monitor No. Tell me.

Shaper My wife thinks I'm working late.

Monitor Naturally.

Shaper But I'm not.

Monitor Naturally.

Shaper I'm here. Instead.

Monitor Why?

Shaper It's personal.

F/X DRILL

Monitor Oh, that.

Shaper What d'you mean, 'Oh that'?

Monitor Something personal.

Shaper Anyway, it's very inconvenient. If my wife knew I was here. Well . . .

Monitor Well what?

Shaper She'd kill me.

Monitor Surely not.

Shaper Yes, yes, you don't know my wife. She has a very nasty temper. If I'd known, before I married her, what a very nasty temper she had. Well, I can tell you.

Monitor You can?

Shaper Yes, it's not easy living with her, I can tell you. It would try the patience of a saint.

Monitor Are saints patient?

Shaper I don't know.

Monitor St. Francis, for instance, he doesn't strike me as a very patient fellow, dashing all over the place, talking to animals, converting the heathen, daring people to walk into flames. Does that strike you as the actions of a patient man?

Shaper Well . . . no, I suppose not.

Monitor Exactly. It's a stupid saying.

Shaper Regardless, he didn't have to live with my wife. If he did he'd walk through flames to get away from her.

Monitor So what did you do?

Shaper You know how it is.

[PAUSE]

I took solace in the arms of a co-worker.

F/X DRILL

Monitor Same old story.

Shaper But what arms . . . And the rest.

Monitor And now you're here.

Shaper Her arms would seem to be more generous than I had originally supposed.

Monitor And your wife?

Shaper Will kill me if she found out. I was here. Which is why I don't have much time.

Monitor I see.

Shaper She's a very jealous woman. I think she suspects. I wouldn't be at all surprised if she was having me followed. I have to be in and out quick.

Monitor Yes, yes, of course you do.

Shaper Can I go in front of you?

Monitor [SILENCE.]

Shaper Would it be all right if I went in before you? I won't keep them long. I'm sure it's just a quick, if humiliating, procedure.

Monitor No.

Shaper What?

Monitor No. You can't go before me.

Shaper But I've taken you into my confidence. Did I mention she's started keeping a gun by the side of the bed? It makes me nervous, puts me off. If you let me go before . . .-

Monitor Sorry, pal, but I'm in an even bigger hurry.

Shaper What's the problem?

Monitor Liver.

Shaper Liver?

Monitor Yes. As in 'Liver and Bacon'. Damn thing's packing up on me. It is, and I can tell you this for nothing, extremely inconvenient.

Shaper I'm sure - . . .

Monitor To put it mildly.

Shaper Yes, yes - . . .

Monitor So I'm in an even bigger hurry than you. I haven't got much longer with this liver.

Shaper Oh, that's - . . .

Monitor I need a transplant. Got a spare?

Shaper [SILENCE.]

Monitor Only kidding.

Shaper So you're on a . . . waiting list?

F/X DRILL

Monitor That's what they call it. Problem is this waiting list, it takes this long [STRETCHES OUT HANDS] but my time left with this liver see, is [PULLS HANDS CLOSER TOGETHER] this long.

Shaper Problem.

Monitor Exactly. So don't tell me about being in a hurry.

Shaper Isn't there something you can do about it?

Monitor There is something.

Shaper Yes?

Monitor But I can't bring myself to do it.

Shaper What is it?

Monitor Plenty can though, plenty do.

Shaper And what would that be?

Monitor I could go to China.

Shaper [SILENCE. PUZZLED.]

How would going to China help? Have you always longed to see the Great Wall?

Monitor To get a liver, from China.

Shaper They deliver liver?

Monitor In a manner of speaking.

Shaper But, how?

Monitor It's the how that's the problem. See, in China just about every crime in the book can carry the death penalty, see.

Shaper What's that got to do with it?

Monitor It has everything to do with it.

Shaper But? - . . .

Monitor Let me spell it out for you. I go to China. They give me an examination. They get all my details, blood type and the rest, and they say, we'll see if we have a matching donor. You have to have a matching donor. You have to have the right kind that matches you so you don't reject the liver.

Shaper I see.

Monitor And what d'you know! They always have the right kind. Ask me how.

Shaper How?

Monitor Because some guy banged up in prison, he has just the right kind of liver for me, and what d'you know if he don't suddenly get his sentence brought forward.

Shaper Is that legal?

Monitor There it is. They'd harvest me a liver for thirty thousand dollars. I could raise it, mortgage my house, sell my car. But I can't bring myself to do it.

[PAUSE.]

F/X DRILL

Monitor What kind of a decision is that? Killing someone else so you can live longer. I'd be walking around with some other guy's liver inside me who I'd killed. But there are plenty of people prepared to do that. They want to cling to their own life so bad they'd do anything, even steal someone else's liver. It makes you think.

Shaper It does.

Monitor So who's in a hurry now?

Shaper Didn't I tell you about my wife? She'll kill me if she knows I'm here.

Monitor And I'm dying anyway.

Shaper Exactly. It doesn't matter to you. You're dying anyway.

Monitor Or going to China.

Shaper Or going to China.

Monitor Don't be in such a hurry. Relax. Pull up a chair. Take the weight off your feet.

Shaper [HE SITS FOR THE FIRST TIME.]

Monitor It's not the wait. It's what you do while you wait that counts.

F/X DRILL

[THE DRILLING GETS LOUDER AND LOUDER AS THE LIGHTS  
FADE TO BLACK.]

END.