

THE WAITING ROOM

By

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CHARACTERS

THOMAS

A man in his late 20's early 30's. Unaware and in denial of his inevitable death. Immature for his age.

JIM/GUARDIAN

The Guardian Angel of THOMAS. Intentionally mysterious background, very mature and calm. Reminiscent of an English Professor.

SETTING

An empty black box stage with two doors, one representing life, and one representing the unknown and a desk cluttered with books and a typewriter, similar to an English Professors office. There is an office chair on JIM's side of the desk, and a chair on the other side for the occasional meeting.

TIME

Time is non-existent in this purgatory like state. But in relation to the real world this occurs about a day after THOMAS's car accident giving THOMAS enough time to be put on life support and be placed into a medically induced coma.

ACT I

Scene 1

The waiting room.

now.

(Lights up on Jim as he is working at his desk. He works carefully so as to not disturb any of the clutter dominating his work area. He grabs a file and looks through it, he writes something in the file and puts it back. As he puts it back, he knocks a copy of "Plato's Apology" off his desk and he can't reach it. At this moment, THOMAS enters from stage right, he is very confused. The stage is now fully lit.)

JIM

Could you grab that book for me?

THOMAS

(to self)

"Plato's Apology"

(THOMAS retrieves the book)

JIM (continued)

Thank you, friend. I bet you wish you read this one in school.

(JIM returns to work as THOMAS gets increasingly confused)

THOMAS

(beat)

Um, sir? What is this?

JIM

Thomas, you're a smart kid. Granted, you can be a little slow sometimes, but I am sure you can figure this one out.

THOMAS

I'm not dead am I?

THOMAS (continued)

(beat)

No. No. no no no-

JIM

You were late for your moms birthday dinner, and you were going 20 miles over the speed limit in a single lane highway

THOMAS

No no no.

JIM

You had a Lynyrd Skynyrd album playing on shuffle at the highest volume

THOMAS

I know what happened-

JIM

You despise Lynyrd Skynyrd, but you continued to let it play

THOMAS

It was stupid ok?

JIM

You thought to yourself, "This music has kept me awake on my commute before, I'll just push my luck"

THOMAS

Stop.

JIM

I'll just push my luck

THOMAS

Please, please, I'm begging you, please stop.

JIM

NO. You need to listen. I know this is hard. Trust me Thomas, I am only here to help.

THOMAS

Ok, then help me. Send me back. Give me another chance.

JIM

(beat)

I can't do that.

THOMAS

Yes you can. You brought me here, send me back. You said you want to help? Then SEND ME BACK.

(JIM does not respond)

THOMAS (continued)

Okay then answer this, where am I?

JIM

We were just over this, bud

THOMAS

No, I know. But where am I? I mean I'm pretty sure this isn't where I'm supposed to be, right? I mean I did what was asked of me... I was a good person... I did everything right that I could, I worked hard, and I didn't break any of the rules. Where is my paradise?

JIM

Just be patient

THOMAS

If you weren't aware, I just died, I have no idea where I am, and all you can say is be patient?

JIM

Well, you're actually not dead yet. You're in the hospital, but it shouldn't be too long now. When it's time you will go through that door.

(JIM points to the door/wing on stage left)

THOMAS

And that's my only option?

JIM

Well, ya. But if you don't want to wait, I can stop your heartbeat now.

THOMAS

No no no, I'm fine. I want to wait this out. Thank you though.

JIM

(extended beat)

Connect 4?

THOMAS

Ya sure, why not.

JIM

Shouldn't be too long now.

(THOMAS sighs with nervousness)

JIM (continued)

Thomas, what's wrong?

THOMAS

should I be upset? I mean I am upset, ya I feel like I've lost something, but nothing really of significance, now that I'm here, I. I feel. I feel.

JIM

Numb?

(THOMAS gives a look of agreement, and then goes back to concentrating on connect 4)

JIM (continued)

Do you remember when you were six and your golden retriever, Roxy, do you remember when she died?

THOMAS

Ya, ya, she started getting really sick and then one day she just disappeared. My parents tried to convince me that she was sent off to a farm up in North Dakota.

THOMAS (continued)

They told me a nice man took her in and gave her all the land she could ever want, and all the little rodents she could ever chase. I knew they were lying.

JIM

And did that make you upset?

THOMAS

If anything, I was upset with my parents, or maybe myself for not figuring it out sooner. I know all they were doing was trying to protect me. But if she truly was going to this great farm, this so-called paradise... than why did my parents never mention her name again? I was happy for her, I was happy to hear that she was in a great place. It's like my family erased her memory from all existence. Things just didn't add up. It wasn't until about a year later that I found her in a little box in the back of a storage cabinet collecting dust. In that moment, everything was quiet, and it hit me. I was going to die. One day my life would be over and everything I left behind would be shoved into a tiny mahogany box and put on some shelf to collect dust. And I guess that day is today.

JIM

play again?

THOMAS

ya...

JIM

I've also got some strawberry milk, it's the good kind, Nesquick. It's here if you want any.

THOMAS

Thanks. I'm alright though.

JIM

I remembered growing up you and your mom would go to the bakery every Saturday morning and you would get a cheddar cheese kolache with a bottle of strawberry milk. And your mom, she would just get a cup of black coffee. It's not much, but I thought it might help.

THOMAS

I appreciate the thought. I do. But I'm not ten anymore.

JIM

Suit yourself. It's here if you want it.

THOMAS

Can I see my family?

JIM

Pardon me?

THOMAS

If I can't go back, I want to see my family before I move forward.

JIM

You can see them through the keyhole in the door you came from, be careful though.

THOMAS

(THOMAS moves over to the door he came into and his demeanor changes, after a few moments of looking through the door and pulls back to gather his thoughts)

Everyone's here; everything's here

(THOMAS takes another look)

THOMAS (continued)

My dad, I've never seen him cry like that. I don't think I've actually seen him sad. He was never the emotional type. Well maybe he was, but maybe there just wasn't enough room in the house for him to show that side. I mean he's my dad. He's supposed to be the one keeping us together, right? God, he took so much shit from us. He spent so much time playing therapist and holding this family together, I don't think any of us stopped to ask if he was doing ok.

THOMAS (continued)

(THOMAS takes another look)

And my sister, Jordan, she has been cold to me for quite a while now. But that's my fault. After what I did to her, I'm surprised she didn't cut me out of her life for good. She forgave me, after I ran the love of her life away, I just didn't want to lose her. I didn't want her to leave. But out all the ways I could have handled that, I had to go about it like an idiot. After that, we never really learned how to talk again. We tried, but there was just too much pain. And now she is sitting here, probably exhausted. Hoping I wake up.

JIM

Have you apologized?

THOMAS (continued)

I mean, I've tried, but I never was brave enough to tell her how much I screwed up. That all I was trying to do was keep our relationship strong, like it had always been. But I made things so much worse than they needed to be. She will never know how much I needed her... This pain, it's unbearable, it's dull and empty, like I'm hollow. If this is what Hell is, I understand.

(beat)

I LOVE YOU JORDAN!

THOMAS (continued)

(he takes another look through the peephole)

And my mom. She gave me the world. She sacrificed everything to make sure that her ungrateful bastard of a son got everything he could ever want. And how the fuck did I repay her? I didn't. I'm a piece of shit and I don't deserve anything from her. I didn't think she would still care about me after all the shit I sent her way.

JIM

Then why is she crying at your bedside, Thomas?

THOMAS

I can't. I just. WHY DOES SHE STILL CARE? I gave her every reason in the world to get out and stop worrying about me. It almost hurts more that she never gave up. And now I have never seen her more defeated, All because I wanted to push my luck.

(THOMAS stops for a second, then goes to the door handle and tries to force the door open)

THOMAS (continued)

MOM! DAD! JORDAN! I'M HERE! I'M OK! YOU CAN STOP CRYING! There's no need to cry.

JIM

What are you doin buddy?

THOMAS

One way or another I am getting out of here.

JIM

What are you not understanding? I can't do that for you.

THOMAS

I know. I know I can't stay. I just want five minutes. Just give me something. I need to tell them I'm sorry. Im so so sorry. God I'm such an idiot.

(beat)

I messed up ok? I'm not worth caring about. I want them to stop crying. Oh my god what I have done. This is it. There's no more anything. Nothing. This is all I've got left. I just want to apologize. I just want things to be ok. Why do they care about me? I just want to be forgotten. I've ruined everything. EVERYTHING.

(THOMAS collapses to the floor and cries hysterically)

JIM

I'm sorry. I'm actually very sorry. Look, if I could let you back I would, without question, but that is just not up to me. You need to find it in yourself to let go and move on.

JIM (continued)

Now get up. Dust yourself off. And get yourself ready. You won't be here for much longer. And Thomas, you worth caring about. You're a good kid, and I truly mean that. You just got too caught up with what the future might hold that you didn't stop to think that there might not even be one.

THOMAS

(beat)

I'll take that strawberry milk now.

(JIM throws THOMAS the strawberry milk, he opens it and slightly chugs it)

THOMAS (continued)

Roxy didn't feel this way did she? She didn't look back did she? I don't wish this feeling on anyone. Knowing that I alone caused this much pain to the ones who loved me the most.

JIM

(beat)

I can end this if you want.

THOMAS

End what?

JIM

Your pain, I can take it all away.

THOMAS

And why would I want that?

JIM

You're upset, I can help.

THOMAS

For the first time in my life I feel like I understand something. Of course, it hurts, but this is good. Even if all I have is the next five minutes with this, I want to feel it through. I want to know what I have done to my family. I want to understand just how much I have hurt them.

THOMAS (continued)

I want nothing more in the world than to reach through that door and let everyone know I am okay. No, I'm more than okay, I'm alive and awake for the first time. And I'm not going to give that up.

(JIM's early 2000's flip phone interrupts THOMAS's speech with a loud obnoxious ring tone, JIM checks his phone and JIM is suddenly very delighted)

JIM

Ok.

THOMAS

Ok?

JIM

You're all set.

JIM (continued)

(THOMAS gathers his thoughts, gears up and slowly makes his way over to the door to the unknown on stage left, he gets to the doorknob and struggles to turn it)

Oh sorry, wrong door.

THOMAS

What?

JIM

You're going back bud.

THOMAS

What?

JIM

All I said was I can't make it happen, I never said anything about your own ability.

Thank you.

THOMAS

(THOMAS enters the door, closes it behind him, and exits stage right. JIM regains his composure, cleans his glasses, and gets back to work. He pulls out a file, writes down a few notes and puts it back where he found it. In the middle of putting it back, the same copy of "Plato's Apology" falls back down to the floor. JIM studies the fallen book for a second, LIGHTS OUT)

END PLAY