

THE WAITING ROOM

By Noah Bennett

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“No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don’t want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life’s change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new.”

—Steve Jobs



THE WAITING ROOM

By NOAH BENNETT

CAST OF CHARACTERS (In Order of Appearance)

		<u># of lines</u>
RECEPTIONIST	emotionless and unattached to reality; a key source of the waiting room's eeriness	39
OLD MAN.....	timid, nervous old man; knows and understands what awaits behind the waiting room door	50
BUSINESSMAN	very energetic, sophisticated, and well-mannered young stock broker	12
MOTHER.....	frustrated and impatient mother who doesn't pay much mind to what her daughter feels	10
DAUGHTER	young, whiny, and unmannered child of Mother	7
GRANDDAUGHTER	caretaker of her helpless grandmother, she will do whatever she can to get her grandmother help	12
BLIND WOMAN	helpless old woman; realizes she is nothing but a burden to her granddaughter	n/a
IMPATIENT MAN.....	feels that his time and presence is of the highest importance; modern day jerk	3
ROBIN	lighthearted, fun man, much like an adult who never stopped being a kid on the inside	22
HUSBAND	desperate husband; not ready to let go, he struggles with moving on	11
WIFE	suffering wife of Husband	1
BEAUTIFUL WOMAN	cannot wait to get past the waiting room; this should lead the audience to believe that what lies beyond the door is worth anything	2

OLD WOMAN.....	mimics Old Man to a T; symbolizes that the events of the waiting room repeat endlessly	3
JUDGE.....	level-headed, by-the-book, and all business, yet is friendly, sincere, and believes in doing what's right	15

SETTING

Place: A waiting room.

Time: No specific time period.

The waiting room is very bland and not set in any particular time period. There are seven chairs, three STAGE RIGHT of the CENTER magazine table and four LEFT. The receptionist's desk and chair is DOWN RIGHT. UPSTAGE of the desk is an exit to the restrooms. A door DOWN LEFT is the ENTRANCE to the waiting room. A service bell rings every time this door is opened. UP LEFT is another door, the room's EXIT. It is impossible to see what is on the other side of this door.

THE WAITING ROOM

1 ATRISE: ELEVATOR MUSIC with an eerie undertone plays. RECEPTIONIST is at desk. OLD MAN ENTERS DOWN LEFT, holding a telegram. SOUND EFFECT: SERVICE BELL. OLD MAN is very nervous and makes his way to the receptionist desk as he examines the whole place.

5 **RECEPTIONIST:** Name?

OLD MAN: Earl. Earl Trent. I received this telegram telling me I have an appointment at this address, but it doesn't explain what the appointment is for exactly?

RECEPTIONIST: You're quite early. We have you down for a 1:14.

10 Please take a seat until we call you.

OLD MAN: Why do I have an appointment exactly? What is it for?

RECEPTIONIST: Please have a seat while you wait, Mr. Trent.

OLD MAN: *(Softly.)* Don't I have a right to know? *(Makes his way to a seat on the LEFT side of the table. Begins to rock back and forth in a very nervous fashion. Has a rugged look to him. [NOTE: Leave time to show that OLD MAN is alone and scared.] At first he sits in silence. SOUND EFFECT: a faint CLOCK TICKING. As it gets increasingly louder, OLD MAN'S fear becomes more palpable. SOUND EFFECT: a faint HEARTBEAT becomes increasingly louder until the DOWN LEFT door opens. SOUND EFFECT: SERVICE BELL. OLD MAN'S head snaps that direction and has an expression on his face as if his heart had stopped. A young and energetic BUSINESSMAN ENTERS. OLD MAN lets out a sigh of relief and collects himself as the BUSINESSMAN sits one chair down from him. BUSINESSMAN pulls out a newspaper and begins to read. OLD MAN stops rocking and points at the paper.)* Is that today's paper?

15

20

25

BUSINESSMAN: Yes, it is.

OLD MAN: *(Struggles to get out the words.)* What's today's date?

BUSINESSMAN: September 28.

30 **OLD MAN:** Thank you. *(Begins to rock back and forth.)* What do you do for a living?

BUSINESSMAN: Lenny Harris, Senior Stockbroker at Greenview Brokerage. Here's my card. *(Hands OLD MAN a business card.)*

OLD MAN: You must be making the big bucks then.

35 **BUSINESSMAN:** I'd like to believe that. You see, with this economy it's always changing.

OLD MAN: What do you mean?

BUSINESSMAN: Well, stocks are a very complex business. You see—
(Pauses.) What's your name?

40 **OLD MAN:** Earl.

1 **BUSINESSMAN:** Well, you see, Earl, stocks are all about the consumer.
It's all about who wants to buy versus who wants to sell. Supply
and demand, if you will. The whole objective with stocks is to buy
them cheap and let them build up value, making a profit. Well,
5 as simple as that sounds, most people are too idiotic to get that
concept, which is where I come in. I do all the petty work for them.
And what do I get in exchange? Commission. Of every stock I sell,
I make a percentage. Now—

OLD MAN: How much of a percentage do you receive?

10 **BUSINESSMAN:** One point three three. Quite hefty for my department,
but that's the Greenview difference, Earl.

OLD MAN: I see.

BUSINESSMAN: Hey, Earl, let me give you some advice. If you ever do
decide to roll the dice and take a chance with stocks, buy them low
and in large quantities. You see, all the guys on Wall Street want
15 is your money, not to get you rich. Now, Earl, the first thing a man
does when his stock increases is cash out. It's only natural. You
made some quick money, and now it's time to get out. But a smart
man will stay in. Wait out the rough patches and reap the rewards
of their patience. That's the system, simple as that. You seem like
20 a nice fellow, and I don't want to see some snotty young kid fresh
out of school rob you blind. So if you ever do decide to invest, give
me a call. But enough about me. What do you do?

OLD MAN: I'm retired now, but I spent over twenty years in the used
25 car industry.

BUSINESSMAN: Well, look at us. Two salesmen. Or as everyone else
knows us, "those bastards." (*Pats OLD MAN'S back and laughs.*)
Hey, Earl, what do you call a lawyer on the moon?

OLD MAN: What?

30 **BUSINESSMAN:** A good start! Now, what do you call one hundred
lawyers on the moon?

OLD MAN: What?

BUSINESSMAN: An even better start! Now, do you know what it's
called when ALL lawyers are on the moon?

35 **OLD MAN:** No, what?

BUSINESSMAN: Problem solved! (*He and OLD MAN both laugh, but
BUSINESSMAN is laughing much harder. DOWN LEFT door opens
and SERVICE BELL RINGS. OLD MAN jumps and becomes visibly
shaken. BUSINESSMAN looks at OLD MAN, very confused. MOTHER
and DAUGHTER ENTER. BUSINESSMAN gets up and places his
40 newspaper under his arm.*) Ma'am, would you like a seat?

1 **MOTHER:** Why, yes I would. Thank you very much. (*BUSINESSMAN
seats himself on the other side of OLD MAN, and begins to read.*)
Now, Samantha, I need you to sit here for just a moment while
Mommy talks to the receptionist, okay?

5 **DAUGHTER:** Okay. (*MOTHER makes sure DAUGHTER sits next to OLD
MAN and then approaches the desk.*)

RECEPTIONIST: Last name?

MOTHER: Fields.

RECEPTIONIST: Please have a seat while you wait, we'll be with you
10 both shortly.

MOTHER: Thank you. (*Sits next to DAUGHTER.*)

DAUGHTER: Mommy, why is his skin all wrinkly? (*OLD MAN looks at
DAUGHTER, hurt.*)

MOTHER: Samantha! That is a very rude thing to say! Apologize!

15 **DAUGHTER:** Sorry.

RECEPTIONIST: (*Loud.*) Harris! (*BUSINESSMAN quickly hops up,
places his newspaper under his arm, and raises his hand as he
walks towards the UP LEFT door and EXITS.*)

DAUGHTER: (*Stands, tugging on MOTHER'S arm.*) Mommy, I don't want
20 to be here! (*OLD MAN looks at her, horrified.*)

MOTHER: Don't worry, sweetie, it shouldn't be much longer.

DAUGHTER: (*Tugs harder.*) But, Mommy!

MOTHER: Samantha, please!

RECEPTIONIST: Hawkins!

25 **MOTHER:** You see, sweetie, that's us!

DAUGHTER: I don't want to go, Mommy!

MOTHER: Samantha, we have to go now!

RECEPTIONIST: Hawkins!

MOTHER: Samantha Lynn! You better come right now!

30 **DAUGHTER:** But I don't want to! (*Throws a temper tantrum.*)

MOTHER: We're going. Now! (*Grabs DAUGHTER'S hand and EXITS UP
LEFT. A FAINT SCREAM is heard from DAUGHTER, followed by a few
seconds of silence.*)

OLD MAN: (*Gets up and crosses to RECEPTIONIST'S desk.*) Is everything
35 all right back there?

RECEPTIONIST: Everything is just fine, Mr. Trent. Please have a seat.

OLD MAN: But I just heard that girl scream.

RECEPTIONIST: I assure you everything is just as it should be,
Mr. Trent. Please return to your seat and wait. We'll be seeing

1 you shortly. (*OLD MAN returns to his seat. A CANE TAPPING is heard OFFSTAGE by the DOWN LEFT door. SOUND EFFECT: faint HEARTBEAT begins, then gets louder as the cane gets closer. OLD MAN looks very confused and horrified at the same time.*)

5 **GRANDDAUGHTER:** (*From OFF LEFT.*) Grandma, it's this way! (*OLD MAN lets out a sigh of relief. DOWN LEFT door opens, and the SERVICE BELL RINGS. GRANDDAUGHTER ENTERS DOWN LEFT.*) It's right here, Grandma. Just walk in! (*BLIND WOMAN ENTERS. GRANDDAUGHTER shuts the door and leads BLIND WOMAN across to the restroom.*
10 *BLIND WOMAN EXITS UP RIGHT as GRANDDAUGHTER sits next to OLD MAN. There is a bit of awkward silence with no social exchange. Finally, GRANDDAUGHTER breathes in.*) Nice day, huh?

OLD MAN: (*Politely nods.*) Yes, a very nice day.

GRANDDAUGHTER: So did you get a telegram, too?

15 **OLD MAN:** Yes.

GRANDDAUGHTER: So what are you here for?

OLD MAN: I don't know.

GRANDDAUGHTER: You don't know?

OLD MAN: No, why are you here?

20 **GRANDDAUGHTER:** (*To herself, looking toward the restrooms.*) I hope she's okay.

OLD MAN: (*Very nervous. Frantic.*) What's wrong with her?

GRANDDAUGHTER: Death has been knocking on her door for a long time, if you know what I mean, but what I don't understand is,
25 why did I get a telegram, too? It's not like I'm the one in need of this. My poor grandma struggles every day of her life, and I know, because I'm right by her side every single day. She is literally walking into death blind. A task as simple as putting her clothes on and getting her up and down the stairs every day can become
30 such a big, life-threatening production. I have to clean the house constantly, because even the slightest bit of dust will send her emphysema haywire. You're familiar with emphysema, right?

OLD MAN: Yeah, sure.

GRANDDAUGHTER: I mean it's that and her eyesight and just more
35 and more health problems every day. I don't know how much more she can take.

OLD MAN: (*Now very nervous.*) Yeah.

GRANDDAUGHTER: All of this, though, has taught me not to take life for granted.

40 **OLD MAN:** It's a wonderful gift.

1 **GRANDDAUGHTER:** Yes, but it can also be a curse. Life is just one
giant game. No matter how hard you try to win, you can't. Do
you know who wins? Death! Death always wins! Death is just one
giant black hole, and it's just a matter of who gets sucked in next!
5 Most of us believe that death is nothing but a curse, but some
see it as a gift. I hate to say it, but in my grandmother's case, it'll
be a gift. God, I really hope she's okay. (*DOWN LEFT door opens,
and SERVICE BELL RINGS. Both OLD MAN and GRANDDAUGHTER
immediately deadeye the door as IMPATIENT MAN ENTERS and*
10 *crosses to the desk.*)

IMPATIENT MAN: I have an appointment today.

RECEPTIONIST: Last name?

IMPATIENT MAN: Peters.

RECEPTIONIST: Your appointment is in two weeks, Mr. Peters.

15 **IMPATIENT MAN:** What do you mean my appointment is in two
weeks?! (*No answer.*) Okay, well, yeah. Thanks for wasting my time
and making me wait! (*Marches OUT the DOWN LEFT door. SERVICE
BELL RINGS. OLD MAN locks his eyes on the door.*)

OLD MAN: What was that about?

20 **GRANDDAUGHTER:** I guess some people just can't wait. (*Has a
realization.*)

OLD MAN: (*Turns to look at GRANDDAUGHTER.*) Are you okay?

GRANDDAUGHTER: I'm okay, I just hope she's all right. (*OLD MAN
nods in agreement and returns to staring at the door.*) I better
25 go see if she's okay. It was nice chatting with you. (*Stands up
and EXITS RIGHT, then RETURNS almost immediately with BLIND
WOMAN.*)

OLD MAN: You know, your grandma probably needs this appointment
more than I do. Why don't you take my place? (*Rises out of his seat
30 as GRANDDAUGHTER accepts the idea and brings BLIND WOMAN
over.*)

RECEPTIONIST: Gunthrie!

GRANDDAUGHTER: Oh, that's us, Grandma! (*OLD MAN slowly
retreats back to his seat, disappointed, and stares at the floor.*
35 *GRANDDAUGHTER and BLIND WOMAN EXIT UP LEFT. OLD MAN
stares at the entrance door again. The faint CLOCK TICKING and
HEART BEATING are heard again. OLD MAN looks both ways, then
rises and crosses to DOWN LEFT door. He attempts to open the
door casually, but it will not budge. Places both hands on the door
40 and gives one big yank, but it still does not budge. Now frustrated,
he begins to aggressively tug on the unyielding door. Gives up as
the CLOCK TICKING AND HEART BEATING CEASE. Crosses to desk.*)

1 **RECEPTIONIST:** May I help you?

OLD MAN: Could I change my appointment to a later date?

RECEPTIONIST: No, we are all booked up, and besides, this date was chosen far in advance. (*OLD MAN, frightened, turns away and begins to make his way back to his seat, then goes back to the desk.*)

OLD MAN: Are you sure there isn't any way I—?

RECEPTIONIST: I'm sorry, but your appointment has been set in stone. (*OLD MAN heads back to his seat. Right before he sits down, ROBIN bursts IN DOWN LEFT, coughing continuously. SERVICE BELL RINGS.*)

ROBIN: (*Goes straight to the desk.*) Oh, ya gotta help me! I'm dying here, kid! I'm dying! (*RECEPTIONIST does not look up. ROBIN knocks on desk.*) Hello? (*Coughs.*) Anyone home? How about—(*Coughs.*)
15 —a knock-knock joke?

RECEPTIONIST: (*Looks up.*) Last name?

ROBIN: Why, yes, I do have a last name. (*Coughs.*) What about yourself?

RECEPTIONIST: (*Unamused.*) Last name?

ROBIN: Woods.

20 **RECEPTIONIST:** I'm sorry, we don't have you down for an appointment. Please come ba—

ROBIN: Another time. Yeah, Yeah. (*Coughs.*) Look, sugar. I'm dying! D-Y-I-N-G! Dying! (*RECEPTIONIST ignores him.*) Well then! I'll just wait over here! (*ROBIN sits "crisscross applesauce" style in the seat closest to the UP LEFT door.*) Just going to wait right here! (*Silence.*)
25 Still waiting. (*Silence. Coughs.*) Don't worry, I'm preparing to wait! (*Silence.*) Bracing for waiting! And LIFTOFF! (*Silence. Laughs and turns towards OLD MAN.*)

ROBIN: So are they making you wait, too?

30 **OLD MAN:** I guess so.

ROBIN: (*Coughs.*) So what are you here for?

OLD MAN: I don't know.

ROBIN: You don't know?

OLD MAN: I don't know.

35 **ROBIN:** Well, aren't you just a wealth of information! (*Laughs.*)

OLD MAN: You can take my spot if you want.

ROBIN: That sounds like a splendid idea! What's your last name?

OLD MAN: Trent.

ROBIN: Trent. Got it. (*Stands up and does a graceful walk to the desk.*)
40 *RECEPTIONIST looks up. ROBIN smiles as he raises a finger to give*

1 *an explanation. RECEPTIONIST immediately looks back down. ROBIN stands for a moment, taking it in, and then turns towards OLD MAN.)*
I'd say that went well. Wouldn't you say that went well?

OLD MAN: I suppose so.

5 **ROBIN:** You live and you learn. *(Returns to his seat. A young HUSBAND and WIFE burst IN DOWN LEFT. SERVICE BELL RINGS. HUSBAND is frantic, as WIFE is clearly in severe pain. They rush to the desk, and the RECEPTIONIST looks up.)*

HUSBAND: Hi! Last name is Thompson! We need to get in immediately!

10 Here's the telegram!

RECEPTIONIST: She can go right ahead, but I'll need you to wait out here, sir.

HUSBAND: Please, is there any way I can go back with her?

RECEPTIONIST: No.

15 **HUSBAND:** *(To WIFE.)* I love you, darling. I'll be right here when you get out.

WIFE: *(Understanding.)* I love you, too. Don't ever forget that. *(Begins to EXIT UP LEFT as HUSBAND makes his way to the seat closest to the desk.)*

20 **ROBIN:** Oh, I see how it is. Let the ladies go right ahead, but not the guys! *(Laughs.)* Am I right? *(WIFE EXITS as ROBIN jumps up curiously trying to see behind the door.)* Boy, sure is dark in there. *(Returns to his seat.)*

OLD MAN: What did you see in there?

25 **ROBIN:** I couldn't really make out much, but— *(Caught off guard by HUSBAND, who jumps up and marches straight to the desk.)*

HUSBAND: Ma'am, I have to go back there!

RECEPTIONIST: I can't let you do that, sir. You don't have an appointment.

30 **HUSBAND:** *(Pleading.)* That's my wife! I need to be with her!

RECEPTIONIST: I already told you, the answer is no. Now please take a seat and relax.

HUSBAND: How am I supposed to relax when my wife is alone in there?

35 **RECEPTIONIST:** I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

HUSBAND: *(Almost in tears.)* This isn't fair! You can't do this!

RECEPTIONIST: Life is not fair. I'll ask you one more time, sir. Please leave and do not come back until you have an appointment.

HUSBAND: Can I at least wait on her?

40 **RECEPTIONIST:** You can't wait around forever, but if you'd like to give it your best shot, go ahead and take a seat. *(HUSBAND, with tears*

1 *in his eyes, opens his mouth, but can't get any words out. Nods his head and then takes a seat.)*

ROBIN: Hey, pal, everything is going to be just fine.

HUSBAND: Thanks.

5 **ROBIN:** No, I mean it.

HUSBAND: I just can't stand the thought of being without her. If anything happens to her back there, I'm going to lose it. I can't live without her, you know? I mean, really, I cannot see myself living without her. What would be the point? She's my one and— *(Comes to a realization.)* Excuse me. *(Hurries OUT the DOWN LEFT door. SERVICE BELL.)*

10 **ROBIN:** *(Calls after him.)* Good talk, champ. *(He and OLD MAN watch him leave, followed by a few seconds of silence.)* It's a sad, sad world we live in.

15 **OLD MAN:** I agree.

ROBIN: But, hey, I'll tell you what. There sure are some things that make it worth living. Don't you think so?

OLD MAN: I suppose. *(BEAUTIFUL WOMAN ENTERS DOWN LEFT. SERVICE BELL RINGS. Goes straight to the desk.)*

20 **RECEPTIONIST:** Last name?

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN: Bern.

RECEPTIONIST: I'm sorry, but we don't have an appoint—

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN: I know, I know. Is there any way I could get in? I just can't wait any longer!

25 **RECEPTIONIST:** *(Beat.)* Go right ahead. *(BEAUTIFUL WOMAN EXITS UP LEFT.)*

ROBIN: *(Jumps to his feet, shocked.)* What is this about? You let the beautiful women go right ahead, but *(Indicates OLD MAN.)* not a sick man who needs it! Meanwhile, I'm here, and I wait, and I wait, and I wait, only to be told to come back another time. *(In an operator voice.)* "Please hold, sir, your call is very important to us!" And when I do wait—wait for that agonizing limitless amount of infinity—guess what happens? *(OLD MAN shrugs silently. To the RECEPTIONIST.)* Guess what happens, Captain Smiles?

35 *(RECEPTIONIST does not respond.)* I wait some more! And it's at that point I realize, I haven't lived a life. I've waited a life. And for what? This? Where do I go next? Where are we now? What is this place?! What is the point in these telegrams? *(Grabs OLD MAN'S telegram and reads.)* "Dear Earl Trent, you are requested by the

40 highest authority to report to the Mapplethorpe Building in the downtown district on September 28 at exactly 1:14 pm. Please

1 bring your most current form of identification.” That’s it. That’s all
they tell you. They pull people away from their lives, so they can
live a life of waiting! *(Walks to desk throughout next sentences.)*
Oh, that’s right. Some get to go right on in, like they were given a
5 fast pass in life. But that’s all life is, it’s waiting. It’s waiting for the
next thing, which is more waiting. Everyone grows up basking in
innocence and loathing in adolescence, thinking that we live in a
big, great world and that anything’s possible. “Oh, if you don’t like
the world, you can change it.” Buzz! Wrong! No, you can’t change
10 the world. We all just have “appointments.” We’re all just another
wave in the sea, getting a little bit older. The teenage years, where
your mindset is to rebel against everything you’ve ever known,
because you have the world by the tail! The truth is, no one has
any idea what’s going on! Life is one big mess! *(Slams his hands*
15 *on the desk, but RECEPTIONIST does not react or look up.)* Life is
one big disaster, like this place! *(Walks back to table and picks up*
a pile of magazines off the table as OLD WOMAN ENTERS DOWN
LEFT. SERVICE BELL.) Why is it such a mess in here?! This place
is a mess, life is a mess! *(Throws the magazines up in the air*
20 *as he comes to a sobering realization and OLD WOMAN, startled,*
EXITS through the DOWN LEFT door. Another SERVICE BELL.) I’m
a mess. Earl, I have a question. If God is real, then why are
we forced to wait, to suffer? *(A few seconds of silence. SOUND*
EFFECT: GUNSHOT OFF LEFT by the DOWN LEFT door.) What the
25 hell was that?! *(HUSBAND ENTERS DOWN LEFT, his hands covering*
a gunshot wound in his stomach. SERVICE BELL. He staggers to the
desk.)

RECEPTIONIST: Go right ahead, Mr. Thompson, we’ve been expecting
you now.

30 **HUSBAND:** Thank you. *(EXITS UP LEFT.)*

ROBIN: *(To OLD MAN.)* Well! Isn’t this day just full of surprises?! Hey,
Earl, I got a joke for you! Do you think they call—?

RECEPTIONIST: Woods!

ROBIN: Hold on! Can’t you tell I’m in the middle of a—?

35 **RECEPTIONIST:** Now.

ROBIN: *(Crosses to the UP LEFT door, but doesn’t yet open it. To OLD*
MAN.) Hey, chief.

OLD MAN: Yes?

ROBIN: Laughter’s a wonderful medicine. It’s no cure, but you
40 should try it sometime. *(EXITS UP LEFT. OLD MAN sits in silence*
for a moment. JUDGE ENTERS DOWN LEFT. SERVICE BELL. JUDGE
crosses to the desk.)

- 1 **RECEPTIONIST:** Last name?
JUDGE: Brown. The Honorable Judge Brown. *(Curtly laughs.)*
RECEPTIONIST: We'll be with you shortly, Mr. Brown. Please take a seat while you wait.
- 5 **JUDGE:** Thank you. *(Sits in the farthest seat from OLD MAN.)*
RECEPTIONIST: *(Beat.)* Mr. Trent. Whenever you're ready. *(JUDGE watches as OLD MAN goes to the UP LEFT door and places his hand on the doorknob, takes a moment, and decides he can't do it. He returns to his seat.)*
- 10 **JUDGE:** Everything all right?
OLD MAN: *(Beat.)* I'm—
JUDGE: Scared?
OLD MAN: Yes.
JUDGE: Of what?
- 15 **OLD MAN:** What might be on the other side.
JUDGE: I know that feeling. I think everyone knows that feeling all too well. It's a deceptive feeling. Is the grass greener on the other side? We can never know for sure, but every human being has a fascinating ability to sense the truth. The right in a situation. A gut instinct, you may call it. The best part of a gut instinct is that
20 no matter how much you convince your mind of the other, the gut knows what's right. What's your name?
- OLD MAN:** Earl. Earl Trent.
JUDGE: Ed Brown. It's a pleasure to meet you, Earl.
- 25 **OLD MAN:** Thank you. You as well. *(Beat.)* So you're a judge?
JUDGE: Why, yes I am.
OLD MAN: I bet that must be tough.
JUDGE: In most cases, yes. As a judge you have to make some really tough calls sometimes. At times, you don't even want to, but the
30 law makes you. There is only one law, Earl.
- OLD MAN:** I see.
JUDGE: One time, I had to decide whether or not to sentence a man to death or not. To this day, it was the hardest decision I ever had to make.
- 35 **OLD MAN:** What did you do?
JUDGE: Well, the facts were there. This man was guilty beyond a shadow of a doubt. He was guilty of a dehumanizing crime, and it made me sick to see the victim's family so broken by what this man had done. After being found guilty, it was time to do my job,
40 to give him a sentence. Life in prison or death? Immediately my



1 mind went to death, because in a situation like that, it seems like
the only way to provide justice. But then I thought for a moment
and asked myself, “What makes his life any less valuable than
yours?” On the other hand, there are things from that hearing I
5 will never be able to wipe from my mind. That girl’s mother crying
and screaming as she had to relive the horror of those events in
the courtroom, the jury members with pale ghostly faces as the
facts of the case began to surface, the defense attorney wiping
the sweat off his forehead as he tried to defend this beast. But the
10 worst of it all was the look on this monster’s face. You could tell he
didn’t regret a single thing that he had done. I wanted to give this
man a second chance so badly, but sometimes life doesn’t give
you a second chance, Earl, and that’s the reality of it. I remember
the crack in my voice as I declared this man’s fate to the members
15 of the courtroom. I will never forget that day.

OLD MAN: Goodness.

JUDGE: I apologize for getting so serious with you. Some things will
shake you to your core, but you can’t let that keep you from moving
forward and doing what’s right.

20 **OLD MAN:** I guess so.

JUDGE: Earl?

OLD MAN: Yes?

JUDGE: In order to breathe in, you’ve got to breathe out first.

RECEPTIONIST: Brown!

25 **JUDGE:** *(Crosses to the UP LEFT door, stops, and turns to OLD MAN.)*
See you soon, Earl. *(EXITS. SOUND EFFECT: faint CLOCK TICKING*
and HEART BEATING. After OLD MAN reflects for a moment, he
stands up and heads towards the UP LEFT door. He stops, takes a
breath, then EXITS through it. SOUNDS STOP. The waiting room is
30 *now empty. ELEVATOR MUSIC with an eerie undertone plays. OLD*
WOMAN ENTERS DOWN LEFT. SERVICE BELL RINGS. Very nervously,
she makes her way to the receptionist desk as she examines the
whole place while walking.)

RECEPTIONIST: Name?

35 **OLD WOMAN:** Mindy. Mindy Ferris.

RECEPTIONIST: We have you down for a two o’clock. Please take a
seat until we call you back.

OLD WOMAN: Why do I have an appointment exactly? What is it for?

RECEPTIONIST: Please have a seat while you wait, Mrs. Ferris.

40 **OLD WOMAN:** *(Softly spoken.)* Don’t I have a right to know?
(RECEPTIONIST ignores her, and OLD WOMAN makes her way to the
same seat Old Man sat in and begins to rock back and forth in a

- 1 *very nervous fashion. SOUND EFFECT: CLOCK TICKING and HEART BEATING. Sound crescendos, then BLACKOUT.)*

END OF PLAY

PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES ONSTAGE

Seven chairs, small table with magazines, reception desk, and chair.

PROPERTIES BROUGHT ON

Telegram (OLD MAN)

Newspaper, business card (BUSINESSMAN)

Cane for the blind (BLIND WOMAN)

MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS

Elevator music, door service bell, ticking clock, beating heart, gunshot.

FLEXIBLE CAST

Though each character is written as a specific gender, most roles can easily be changed with very few line changes.

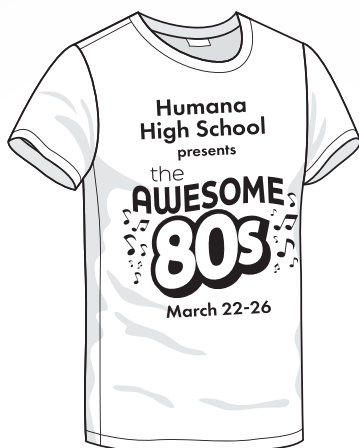
ABOUT THE RECEPTIONIST

The receptionist is totally removed from anything happening in the waiting room, with a vocal quality that's almost mechanical. She only looks up when speaking or being directly spoken to.

ABOUT ROBIN

The character is inspired by and a tribute to the late and great Robin Williams, and thus should be played as childish and playful, though still burdened by the weight of the world and the darkness of reality is taking its toll, leading to his ultimate mental breakdown.

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