

THE WAITING ROOM

Written by

Diana Abousaleh

Registered, WGA
Dianaabousaleh@gmail.com

FADE IN:

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

TAP. TAP. CLOSE on fingers tapping against glass. A hand rolls a business card from one finger to the next. Stops.

INSERT-BUSINESS CARD

Dr. Jacovy. Professional Medium. HEALING FROM WITHIN.

A sigh.

RECEPTIONIST

(huge smile)

Welcome in, Mrs. Jones. Please follow me.

The RECEPTIONIST (30s, dark hair, dark eyes, welcoming) smiles professionally at our protagonist, FREDRIKA "FRED" JONES (40s, thin, fast-talker, easy-going).

RECEPTIONIST

Right this way.

As they walk, Fred notices several PATIENTS with VR headsets. She stares absentmindedly for a second or two.

The receptionist steps in front of Fred, snapping her back awake. She points to the waiting room.

RECEPTIONIST

Dr. Jacovy will be with you shortly.

Fred smiles at the receptionist as she leaves.

She sits down. She looks around. There's a minimalist feel about this place. A huge CLOCK looms over the room.

A somber-looking AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAN in his 30s sits next to her. He stares at the wall.

Fred fidgets in her seat, gazes at the clock. Fred examines the business card again:

Dr. Jacovy. Professional Medium. HEALING FROM WITHIN.

FRED

Have you done this before?

The man stares back in silence.

RING. RING. A red corded telephone sits and rings on the receptionist desk. Above it, a sign:

PHONE FOR EMPLOYEES USE ONLY

The LOUD ringing reverberates around the room. Fred waits. No one comes.

FRED

They must be busy, huh?

RING. RING. Fred stares at the phone, a bit uneasy.

The ringing stops. Fred relaxes.

FRED

I came here for my husband. He believes in this kind of stuff. Gotta do what makes him happy.

(reminiscing)

So he can just shut up about it.

She smiles, a little wearily. She looks down at her shoes, taps her feet together. Bored.

She notices the man's shoes.

FRED

I like your shoes.

(pause)

My husband thinks I should stop.

Buying shoes, that is. He thinks it's toxic. He says it could be, "detrimental to our relationship".

She laughs to herself, scans the room.

FRED

Gotta get to an interview downtown so I hope this is quick and easy.

Her neighbor's expression is deadpan.

FRED

You're not a talker, are ya? My motto is always better out than in. As a kid, I was like you. Kept things IN. Bottled up. Didn't do me any good.

She grabs a pen from the table near by. She clicks it out, then in. OUT, IN.

FRED

So I had a bad childhood. But you gotta make the best of it, you know?

She nods repeatedly. Fred turns to the clock on the wall again. TIC. TOC. She points to it.

FRED

(sly smile)

I've never seen one like that. I have a wall clock collection at home. Pretty proud of it. Been working on it for years. My husband thinks I have a slight-to-moderate obsession with time.

She leans over to the man.

FRED
(whispers)
I think he's jealous.

Fred surveys the reception desk and beyond.

FRED
Do they usually keep people
waiting this long?

The man next to her doesn't move. Awkward silence.

FRED
He insisted that I come. The other
day, he said I woke him up in the
middle of the night 'cause I was
talking to someone that wasn't
there.

She shakes her head in disbelief.

FRED
Or... the other day when he claims
that he saw me sleep walking and I
almost fell out the window!

Fred mulls over her memories.

FRED
I don't remember any of it. But
naturally, he worries, so... here I
am.

CLOSE on Fred's face. Her voice is pleasant, deliberate.

FRED
You got a family?

Nothing. The man lets out a long YAWN. Fred looks on,
curious.

FRED
At least you're not a robot.

There's an unusual pause. Fred shifts in her seat.

FRED

My brother died last week. He was a reckless son of bitch. But he was still young.

(pause)

When we were kids, he had this stupid rabbit. Ronnie, he called it. One day, he pissed me off, broke my game or something and I knew exactly how to get him back. I threw Ronnie into the lake.

As she speaks, she turns to the man again, REALLY takes him in.

FRED

Have we met before?

The man shakes his head slowly, not making eye contact.

FRED

Must have one of those faces then.

A beat. Fred rubs her chin, considers her next words.

FRED

I went to an interview yesterday. You wanna know what they asked me? They asked me how many cabs are in New York City. Pfft. Who gives a shit? They always wanna get you in the end.

Her neighbor doesn't even crack a smile. Fred leans in, places her arms on her head. CLOSE ON her EYES.

FRED

Anyway, I said I've never been to New York. Stupid answer, I know.

(pause)

You know what I shouldda said? That New York probably has a population of 15 million people. Read that in

a book once. Husband grew up in Manhattan. He says the avenues have 4 to 5 lanes. There's probably 3 taxi per lane ...

The man doesn't acknowledge her. Fred's words become muffled, DISTANT. We focus on the sound of the CLOCK. TIC. TOC.

QUICK SHOTS of her eyes, blinking a little too much. Her mouth talking away.

She stands up, PACES around the room.

BACK TO NORMAL SOUND:

FRED

But what about bridges... or tunnels? Maybe on each of the main bridges and tunnels which connect Manhattan to the airports, there are 100 taxis on average. If there are roughly 3 bridges or tunnels which are considered routes to the airports, that makes 300 additional taxis.

She shakes her head, amused with herself.

After a beat, Fred sits down. There's an irritating, endless silence in the room. We can hear Fred's labored breathing.

FRED

Don't you hate that? You think of a fucking amazing answer hours later. But it's pointless.

Fred smirks.

FRED

My husband would've had a better answer. He's clever like that. But

he still thinks I got a chance.
"They'll call before you know it,
Freddie". Don't you give up,
Freddie".
Don't know how he puts up with me.
He will always be better than me.

A beat. She shakes her head, laughing off a memory. She
clears her throat, looks up at the clock.

FRED
I'm Fredrika by the way. Fred.
Freddie. Whatever works.

Fred turns to her purse, opens it

FRED
It's getting warm in here, isn't
it?
(pause)
Is that clock working?

She turns her purse inside out, rifling with increasing
frustration.

FRED
Got any cigarettes?

The man shakes his head. Fred sighs, the epitome of
restlessness.

A loud piercing ALARM startles the mysterious man next to
Fred.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
This is just test. Please remain
calm.

The alarm continues to BLARE across the room. Fred doesn't
flinch.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
This is just test. Please remain
calm.

A beat.

FRED
Whoa. Easy there.

She stares at the man.

FRED
(re: cigarettes)
I had them right here. See, the
husband thinks I quit.... he'd be
real disappointed if he found
out...
(shrugs)
so I just keep putting them in
different places.

The red phone RINGS. Fred stops looking, sets her purse down.

RING.

FRED
You're seriously not gonna get
that?

The man remains silent. Fred looks around again, glances at
the "PHONE FOR EMPLOYEE USE ONLY" sign.

RING.

FRED
No one is gonna get that?

RING.

Fred approaches the telephone.

RING.

FRED
Alright, then.

She picks up.

FRED
Hello?

A beat. Fred tenses up, listening.

FRED
Yes, this is she speaking.

She relaxes.

FRED
Oh, how you doin' Nancy?
(pause)
What?

She listens. CLOSE on Fred's reaction. She sighs.

FRED
Just give me a straight answer, am
I walking into a trap here?
(pause)
Fine!

She hangs up, agitated. She throws a pen across the room.

FRED
"We'll be in touch". I know exactly
what that means.

A piercing stare from Fred. The man raises an eyebrow.

FRED
You know what's wrong with this
economy? Why it's so hard to
find a god damn job? It's this new
generation! Nothing is sacred to
them! They think they know
everything. And how to fix it.

Fred's lips curl with disdain.

She slaps the man's shoulder as she tries to get her attention.

FRED

You think our generation didn't care? That we didn't suffer? We suffered more. But in silence.

Fred sits up straight, believing her life choices have made her fit for a pedestal. She stands up abruptly, makes jerky head movements without any purpose. She approaches the glass door, turns the knob.

Fred turns the doorknob again. Nothing. She clenches her fist. She BANGS her head against the door. She lets it rest there for a beat.

FRED

(measuring every word)

You know... I'm not really good in confined spaces.

A beat.

She breathes in deeply. Taps her fingers against the door repeatedly. TAP. TAP. TAP.

TIC. TOC. It becomes increasingly LOUDER until it transforms into a piercing noise. Fred shakes her head violently.

Her fists BANG against the door. She's a time bomb. She wheels around to face the man. And in one fluid motion, she grabs him and pushes him against the wall. CLOSE on her eyes, as they blink excessively.

FRED

What the hell is wrong with you?
I've been talking to you all day
and you won't say a fucking word.
Show some respect.

The man keeps his gaze on the floor. She scowls at him.

FRED

Say something!

Fred goes back to the door. She kicks it. ONCE. TWICE.

MAN (O.S.)

(soft)
Time's up.

Fred wheels around.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

PRISONER 534. You have failed your
exam. Please wait for further
instructions.

FRED

What? No.

MAN

(soft, disappointed)
I'm Dr. Jacovy, Fred. I'm sorry,
you failed again.

Fred is stung by his abruptness. They exchange a knowing
look.

FRED

Have we... met before...

A tiny hint of compassion in Dr. Jacovy's eyes. Dr. Jacovy
STABS a hefty syringe in Fred's right arm.

Fred slowly collapses to the floor. Her pleading eyes meeting Dr. Jacovy's. She slowly slips into unconsciousness.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK, the hushed conversation of TWO MEDICAL INTERNS.

INTERN #1 (O.S.)
She didn't yawn.

INTERN #2 (O.S.)
She didn't react the alarm either.
She totally failed.

FADE IN:

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE on Fred's sleeping face resting on a hospital bed.

TWO MEDICAL INTERNS (mid 20s, both wearing scrubs) sit on the floor next to Fred's bed. They are laid back and informal.

INTERN #2
Is that even a real thing, the yawning?

INTERN #1
She seems so... harmless.

INTERN #2
Harmless? She impaled her husband with a stiletto heel and wore it to her interview.

Intern #1 shrugs. A beat.

INTERN #1
What brand of stiletto?

Intern#2 stifles a laugh. *Seriously?* DR. JACOVY, now dressed in medical scrubs, enters. He clears his throat. The interns rush to stand up, straighten their stance. Dr. Jacovy moves on.

DR. JACOVY
 Prisoner 534. Schizophrenia.
 Psychotic behavior. Etc.

INTERN #2
 How long has she been here?

DR. JACOVY
 Five years. You can turn to page 30
 for full diagnosis.

The interns turn to page 30.

INTERN#1
 What are you going to do now?

A beat. On cue, two LASER BEAMS point at Fred's forehead.

CLOSE on Fred's sleeping face. Closer and closer...

HUSBAND (V.O.)
 How was the interview, Freddie?

INT. VR LAB-DAY

Fred's eyes blink open. We notice the fresh burn marks on her forehead.

HUSBAND (V.O.)
 Freddie? It's me, I'm here. How
 was the interview?

A heavy sigh.

HUSBAND (V.O.)
 You're going to be fine. You'll get
 them next time, Freddie. Don't you
 give up now!

There is a hypnotic quality to her husband's voice. A gentle smile spreads across her face.

PULL OUT the dimly lit VR Room. The room hosts other patients in VR headgear.

We PAN across each one: each patient dressed in attire from a different decade. Meditation music continues to play. As we PAN through each patient, new voices (VO) fill the room.

SOUND: Echos of laughter..I love you's... I miss you's... I'm sorry's...Meditation music drowns out the voices.

ANGLE ON: The receptionist/nurse as she shuts the glass doorway, sealing the patients in their trance. She makes her way to --

INT. THE WAITING ROOM - DAY

She approaches the clock, turns it counterclockwise. She moves methodically, like she's done this a million times. Day-to-day stuff. She fixes the pen, the chairs... opens up a drawer: filled with business cards. She selects a pile that reads: **DR.KELLER -- PSYCHOLOGIST.**

ANGLE ON -- Dr. Jacovy, now Dr. Keller, enters the room. He gives her a slight nod.

DR.KELLER

(huge smile)

I gotta a good feeling about this one.

She nods.

RECEPTIONIST

(sotto)

You always say the same thing.

She walks over to the entrance. We stay on her.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome, Mr. Rodriguez. Please follow me.

FADE TO BLACK.