

## **Characters**

- Father (M)** - a man, 40s/50s, wears business clothes.
- Mother (F)** - a woman, 40s/50s, married to Father wearing comfortable clothes.
- Youth (M/F)** - a young person, 18-25, who is the offspring of Father and Mother.
- Client/Driver (M/F)** - a part that can be played by two people or one person in two roles. Client is a business person with a jacket and, possibly, a hat. Driver is a teenager with a ripped or torn shirt. The same person can play the part by wearing a jacket over the ripped shirt.

## Scene – Waiting Room

**(In the front and center is a row of chairs facing the audience. Behind the chairs on stage left is a desk or table with papers on it. Behind the chairs on stage right is another table with two chairs and partially filled glasses. At rise, Father sits in the last stage left chair. After several long moments of waiting, Father addresses the audience as if just noticing them.)**

**Father:** **(to the audience)** You new here? **(pause)** I thought so. Look, I know you're a little confused and uncertain but you need to know it will be alright. **(pause)** It's not that bad, really. It's comfortable and quiet... maybe a little too quiet I know but you'll get used to it. **(several beats)** You really ought to just sit and relax. It could be quite a long wait.

**(Father waits for a long moment before addressing the audience again.)**

**Father:** It's a quandary, really. I can't wait to see them... my wife and daughter. They will be along but I don't want to rush them either. By all means, they should take their time and enjoy themselves—they deserve that. **(pause)** It's just that I really do miss them and I can't wait for us to be back together. But... I must wait. That's all there is to it. They are there and I am here. **(pause)** I am here for them.

**(Mother comes on stage left then looks over some papers on the table.)**

**Father:** **(to audience)** My wife? She's an investment banker, a real go-getter. She tells me she's in it for people who need help. They need a community bank with friendly people who will help keep the small businesses going because it's the small companies, she says, that help the community the mom-and-pop grocery stores, the local pharmacy, the mechanic you know by name. They are the ones that sustain the town and its people. **(pause)** I guess it's how she gets past the office politics, the sexist comments from her male colleagues and insensitive business owners. **(pause)** It's how she keeps that twinkle in her eye that first caught my attention and caused me to fall in love with her.

**(Youth enters stage left and begins a silent conversation with Mother.)**

**Father:** My daughter **(or son)** is much like her mother. She likes to set high goals and then works hard to achieve them. Sometimes she's a bit too hard on herself, though. I think her goals are loftier than they should be and she sets herself up for failure. Just when you think she is about to hit an impenetrable obstacle, though, she breaks through and succeeds but the toll it takes on her can be hard.

**(As Father talks, client enters stage right and sits at the table. He takes a drink.)**

**Father:** I took her to parks and movies and we loved to go to lunch together when we had the chance. I'm just afraid she will become like me—driven to the point of blindness where you no longer see why a quiet dinner at home is more important than making the clients happy over drinks.

**Client:** **(looking towards Father)** Hey! Come join me. Have a drink!

**Father:** **(ignores the client and continues)** I told my boss I hate those things—those late night office parties; I detest them. You have to act as though you really care about what people are saying when all the time you are thinking about going home to have a nice quiet dinner with your family before watching TV and going to bed. It's all a game. You don't really care about the clients and they don't really care about you and everyone knows it but we just keep pretending that we are all having a good time. Then, at some point between the desert and the final cocktail, a small deal is struck. The clients are happy, the company is happy, everyone has another drink.

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**Client:** C'mon, man! The drinks are cold and the women are hot!

**(Father joins the client at the table and picks up the other glass but does not drink. He and the client have a mock conversation peppered with pompous and fake laughter between them. After a few moments, Father faces the audience while the client continues to silently laugh and carry on with Father as if he was still in the same position.)**

**Father:** **(to the audience)** I don't drink. I don't like alcohol. It turns people into maddening fools. Maybe that's why I hate these things—not only are you expected to be away from your family with a bunch of insincere con artists but you are supposed to drink heavily until you can belt out your deepest prejudices and arrogant conceits and blame it on the booze if anyone seems offended.

**(The client waves goodbye and exits with his drink. Father pats him on the back and then returns to his seat on the bench with his own drink.)**

**Father:** I get one drink and I nurse it all night. Sometimes I slip in another ice cube when

no one is looking until, by the end of the night, the glass is filled mostly with water. **(puts his drink down)** I always feared being the person you hear about the next morning—the one who was so drunk he crossed over the meridian late at night and smashed into an oncoming vehicle. **(pause)** But sometimes accidents happen anyway. Even if you are the most careful person in the world, even if you barely drink, even if you follow all the rules of the road and do what your parents taught you to do when you drive a car late at night, accidents still happen. Sometimes you are the drunken fool veering haplessly across the line and sometimes you are the unfortunate person on the other side of that line.

**(As Father talks, Driver walks onstage looking confused and sits in the last stage right chair.)**

**Driver:** **(looks around)** Where am I? **(pause)** What am I doing here?

**Father:** **(speaks softly but does not look at Driver)** Waiting.

**Driver:** **(looks at Father)** What?

**Father:** **(looks into the far distance)** You must wait.

**Driver:** Wait? Wait for what?

**Father:** For those you left behind.

**Driver:** **(panicked)** No! I'm not staying here. I have to get back.

**Father:** You can't. **(pause)** All you can do is wait... Wait and remember.

**(Driver looks around desperately then realizes he has nowhere to go. He sits down dejected. Mother enters stage left. She walks to the desk and begins shuffling through the papers. She seems very distressed.)**

**Mother:** **(to offstage)** Have you seen my flashlight?

**Youth:** **(from offstage)** What?

**Mother:** My flashlight, my flashlight! Have you seen it?

**Youth:** **(walking onstage)** Isn't it in the desk drawer?

**Mother:** (still searching) I've looked and I can't find it anywhere.

**Youth:** It might be in the kitchen. I was about to make some coffee. I'll see if I can find it. (starts to leave)

(Mother gets frustrated with looking then starts to cry. Youth turns to her.)

**Youth:** Oh, mother... (she moves toward Mother)

**Mother:** (slams down the papers on the desk) Oh, why did he have to go to that party?

**Youth:** (taking Mother in her arms) I don't know.

**Mother:** Couldn't he have said no? Just this once? He could have!

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**Youth:** I know, mom. I guess he felt he had to. Here, let's look again for that flashlight. (searches then finds the flashlight) Here it is.

**Mother:** Oh, thank you. I have to go down to the basement to look for some documents and I think a fuse is out.

**Daughter:** Would you like me to go with you? I think there's another flashlight in the kitchen.

**Mother:** (drying her eyes) Yes, please. I hate going down there in the dark.

(Mother and Youth exit the stage. As they do, the stage lights go down. Driver begins to cry.)

**Father:** (still in the dark) I remember when I cried like that. It was just a few months after my little brother's accident. My dad said it was time to be strong and to stop crying but I couldn't stop. I loved my little brother. They said the pain would eventually go away and that I would stop hurting but every day that he was not there was just as painful as the last. I tried to be brave. I just whimpered and hoped that no one would hear me. I didn't want anyone to know that I thought of that moment every day—the day my little brother was taken by a truck—ripped away from his seat while the rest of us just watched in horror. I couldn't

understand why he was taken and not me. I thought it should have been me. It *should* have been me.

**(From offstage, Mother and Youth flip on their flashlights and point them to the back of the stage. They walk onstage and direct their beams to circle around from the back until they are pointed toward Father as he talks.)**

**Driver:** Who's out there? Is anyone out there?

**Father:** Usually when you drive late at night you are only vaguely aware of the streams of white lights that pass by to your left. Like a pair of low flying jets they appear in the distance and glide past you smoothly and evenly but the lights I had noticed on the edge of my consciousness were darting about as if they were searching for someone. **(pause)** By the time I realized that those lights had sought me out and were headed right for me, it was too late for me to react in any useful way. Like the hapless deer in an open field, the bright lights captured me and froze me into a state of fear that made it impossible to respond. The lights blinded me for a moment until they shot heavenward and I saw the undercarriage of the car. Like a cannonball, the car shot upward over the median strip and then descended directly toward me. The whole event took no more than a few seconds but I remember every single part of those few seconds and, to me, the time slowed until I could see the events of every microsecond as if they were separate frames in a movie. When the front of the car came toward me, I could see how my headlights briefly penetrated the cab of the car coming at me. It was then that I saw her **(his)** face. She was young and afraid. Her eyes were heavy like she was exhausted or maybe she had been drinking. Her hands clutched the steering until they were whiter than ghosts and I imagined her foot was pushing the brake in a futile attempt to stop what was happening.

**(Driver screams. The lights come up. Both Driver and Father stare forward.)**

**Youth:** Fixed the fuse. **(switches off flashlight)**

**Mother:** **(switches off flashlight)** Oh, thank you. **(she looks around and see the papers on the stage right table)** There they are.

**(Mother takes some papers and looks over them then begins sobbing. Youth goes to Mother and puts arm around her and helps her exit stage right.)**

**Driver:** **(still facing forward)** I... uh... I'm sorry. **(pauses then turns very slowly**

towards **Father**) I'm so sorry.

**(Father stares ahead for a moment then slowly turns toward Driver. He begins to recognize him/her. First, he is confused then he becomes angry. He begins to say something then stops himself. He calms down.)**

**Father:** (to **Driver**) It's all right. It's all right now. Everything will be alright.

**(As Driver talks, Father rises from his seat and stands next to it.)**

**Driver:** **(looks forward)** I'm new here **(pause)** Confused and uncertain but I think... I hope it will be alright. **(pause)** It's comfortable and quiet—maybe a little too quiet—but I'll get used to it.... I'll get used to it. **(looks down)** I'll get used to the waiting.

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**Father:** **(to the audience)** I remember when I first came here. I remember when I saw him sitting there. **(motions to the seat where he was just sitting)** He was exactly how I remembered him. He was young and vibrant and looked at me with that smile that always made me feel so good. He was just how I remembered him before the accident. **(pauses to look toward the seat)** I remember his face. It was a face of understanding and peace. It was a young face filled with ancient wisdom. **(turns back to the audience)** He told me he had been waiting... waiting for me and that he was fine. He told me that I would be fine. Everything will be alright, he said. Then, he hugged me with those little arms and I felt waves of love, peace, and beauty surround me. It was in the midst of that embrace that I understood it all. I knew why I had to wait. He was right, of course everything would be all right. I watched him look at me before he walked away and disappeared but I knew he would always be with me in my heart. Just as he had waited here for me that it was now my turn to wait. **(sits back down in the seat)** So, I wait.

**(The lights slowly fade.)**