

THE WAITING ROOM

Written by

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INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

ERIC (early 20's) a generic everyman that looks perfect for a hotdog commercial, sits in a casting office waiting room. Clearly, Eric has not been on many auditions before, as he nervously bounces his leg and rapidly flips through his sides.

SLOANE, (also early 20's) a man who looks nearly identical to Eric but carries himself with more self-importance, enters the room. Both men wear white tees with black leather jackets and jeans. Eric doesn't notice the entrance.

Sloane cracks his neck, startling the jumpy Eric. Sloane throws up a hand, like you would to an animal to show you're not a threat. Sloane signs in and then, almost lazily, sits down opposite Eric.

After a couple moments of studying the ball of combustive nerves in front of him, Sloane breaks the silence.

SLOANE

What's your name?

Eric's eyes dart up.

ERIC

Hmm?

SLOANE

Your name?

ERIC

Oh yeah. I mean, Eric.

SLOANE

You, uh, you doing alright there, Eric? I think your foot's a couple seconds away from catching a light.

Eric looks down at his bobbing leg, noticing it for the first time, and forces himself to stop.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

I'm Sloane, by the way.

ERIC

Thanks. That obvious, huh?

SLOANE

Ah, it's only natural. All of us go through it.

(MORE)

SLOANE (CONT'D)

If you don't feel like you're about to shit your guts out before they call your name then you may not be a real person.

Eric lets out a constrained laugh, the first chip in the wall.

ERIC

So, you go through this every time?

SLOANE

Can't think of a time I haven't. The key is to not try to stop it. You have to channel that energy into the scene.

ERIC

Well, I've been reading through th-

SLOANE

Yeah, but not really. Right now they're just words on a page. Actually read it. We're lucky this time; this script's actually funny. A luxury not always afforded to us.

Eric looks at his sides as if they're something brand new, his body much more still.

ERIC

Yeah, I guess it is actually pretty funny.

SLOANE

What's funny about it?

ERIC

Uh, I guess, the dialogue's really snappy.

SLOANE

Mm-hmm. What else?

ERIC

And, the character doesn't even realize what's happening till half-way through.

SLOANE

Exactly. It's fun. This guy... he's having fun. And so should you.

(MORE)

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Don't get caught up on something else that takes you outta the moment. Because if you're not in it, having a blast, what's the point?

Eric finally sits fully back in his chair.

ERIC

Huh, you know, I think you got the right idea. Hey, thanks for helping a greenie out.

SLOANE

Don't sweat it. We all need someone to give us a little push sometimes. For me? That was my brother. If I can do the same I think he'd be proud.

ERIC

Oh, did- is he an actor, too?

Sloane slows down a bit, seemingly lost in some other thought.

SLOANE

Yeah, yeah he was. You know, he's the whole reason I'm even doing this. We grew up doing school plays together in high school, but we never really got along.

The air in the room feels like it's barely moving at all. Any joviality there was before has left.

ERIC

I'm- I'm sorry about that.

SLOANE

Nah, don't be. Years later, he said that was one of the only parts of school he enjoyed, the times he got to have fun with me, in the moment.

(beat)

He told me that two days before he died. Cancer.

Eric's posture freezes like a deer in headlights.

ERIC

That's- I... I don't know what to say.

SLOANE

That's what keeps me going. In the face of all the relentless, crippling rejection I know that when I perform, I get a few of those moments back. And I savor every last one of them for all they're worth.

Eric just stares, dumbfounded at what he's heard. The door clicks open, and a casting assistant steps out.

CASTING ASSISTANT

Eric Maynard.

Eric doesn't even register. Sloane's eyes stay locked on him, and Eric just can't break the trance.

CASTING ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

(clears throat)

Eric Maynard?

Eric returns to the real world.

ERIC

Uh, yeah?

CASTING ASSISTANT

You ready, hon?

Eric looks down at his script, he has to shake his head to make the words make sense. He tries to put on his best 'happy actor' face.

ERIC

Sure am.

Eric gets up and starts to follow after the assistant before looking back at Sloane who bares a devilish smirk on his face.

SLOANE

Good luck.

Eric realizes too late what he's done, and the casting assistant closes the door behind them.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Eric walks down a hallway and stops in front of a door, but his demeanor has changed. The inexperienced greenie's been replaced by an actor that's been through the ringer. His biker outfit is gone as well.

He now wears a brown suit with a bowtie that's covered in fur. He takes a breath, cracks his neck, and opens the door...

INT. DIFFERENT WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...to find his old pal Sloane sitting across from a newbie actor HARRISON. Harrison's 19 but built enough to make up for his youth. All three men have some variant of furry bowties on.

HARRISON

That's actually great advice.

Harrison's taken the bait for another tale that Sloane has spun.

Eric walks past them to the sign-in. Him and Sloane share a silent nod of greeting: Sloane abrasive, Eric non-confrontational.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

Thanks for helping me out man.

SLOANE

It's nothing. My dad would be kicking me if I didn't offer a hand.

HARRISON

Oh... yeah?

SLOANE

Yeah, he was a great man.

Eric cringes.

HARRISON

I'm uh, I'm sure he was.

SLOANE

You know he told me something the day he died I'll never forget.

Eric's heard enough. He slams his pen back on the table and turns around with a smile as wide as if he were a church greeter.

ERIC

Sloane! Well if I wasn't so lucky as to see you here.

Eric sits down next to Sloane and wraps his arm around his shoulder.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(to Harrison)

You better watch out; this guy's stolen more parts from me than I care to admit. Speaking of which, hey Sloane, how is that pilot going? I was really gunning for that one.

Sloane shifts around in his seat.

SLOANE

It, uh, it didn't get picked up.

Eric feigns surprise.

ERIC

You're kidding. Well, I'm sure it had nothing to do with you.

Eric pats Sloane on the knee.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(to Harrison)

Hey, I didn't get much time to look over this thing. Day job. You mind helping an old geyser rehearse?

Harrison's more than happy to bail the situation.

HARRISON

You bet.

The two get up and walk to the other end of the room, just as the CASTING DIRECTOR opens the door.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Hey Sloane. You ready?

SLOANE

You know it.

Sloane walks in as the others watch.

HARRISON

Hey, thanks for bailing me out back there. What was up with that guy?

ERIC

Don't sweat it. I've dealt with his ilk before.

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)

So insecure with themselves that their only solution is to bring someone else down with 'em.

HARRISON

Wow, you almost make me feel bad for him.

ERIC

Don't. He knows what he's doing. Just be careful of whose self-proclaimed 'help' you accept.

HARRISON

Roger that.

Sloane walks out of the room, smiling cheerfully, until he closes the door and his facade drops.

SLOANE

Later boys.

Sloane leaves.

HARRISON

That was fast. Guess we know how that one went.

ERIC

You know, I actually do kinda feel sad for him.

HARRISON

Oh yeah, how come?

ERIC

I find that he reminds me a lot of my brother.

HARRISON

Your brother?

ERIC

Yeah. You know, it's funny. I used to always act with my brother in our high school theatre group.

Eric looks at Harrison and gives him a somber smile that turns devilish. Harrison leans in.