WAITING: AN EXISTENTIAL CRY OF DESPAIR
By John Ott

SCENE: In front of a wall, outside a hospital. September 11.

RUNNING TIME: 10 minutes

CHARACTERS:

(2 EITHER SEX)
*see note in opening stage directions

TWO-THOUSAND-ONE-HUNDRED-AND-EIGHTY-SIX, missing her father.

FOUR-THOUSAND-THREE-HUNDRED-AND-FORTY-THREE, missing her fiancé.

SETTING: This play has two central characters who can be either male or female, of any race, religion or sexual orientation.

For sake of ease, we will assume these characters are both female. Pronouns may be altered unobtrusively, as needed. Changing the word “fiancé” to “lover” is also permitted.

(TWO-THOUSAND-ONE-HUNDRED-AND-EIGHTY-SIX and FOUR-THOUSAND-THREE-HUNDRED-AND-FORTY-THREE stand or sit out of doors, in front of a wall, the wall of a hospital, although this need not be made clear from the set.)

(Two-Thousand One-Hundred and Eighty-Six is missing her father. Four-Thousand Three-Hundred and Forty-Three is missing her fiancé. All characters in the play are in a deliberate, trance-like state.)

TWO-THOUSAND: You know anything?
FOUR-THOUSAND: I know nothing.
TWO-THOUSAND: Who was it? Can I ask?
FOUR-THOUSAND: My fiancé. You?
TWO-THOUSAND: My dad?
FOUR-THOUSAND: How… Where?
TWO-THOUSAND: Ninety-first floor.
FOUR-THOUSAND: Ninety-first floor?
TWO-THOUSAND: North Tower.
FOUR-THOUSAND: Man. My... he worked in the lower... coffee-shop.
TWO-THOUSAND: A lot of them got out real quick.
FOUR-THOUSAND: I know.
TWO-THOUSAND: But you...?
FOUR-THOUSAND: I haven't heard anything.
TWO-THOUSAND: Yeah. Me either. *(Their eyes follow an unseen nurse.)* Any news?
FOUR-THOUSAND: *(overlapping)* Can you say...?

*(Their reactions make plain the nurse has no news. Pause. TWO-THOUSAND and FOUR-THOUSAND shift in body posture, indicating a passage of time.)*

TWO-THOUSAND: It would have been a nice day.
FOUR-THOUSAND: You mean the weather?
TWO-THOUSAND: Yeah, the weather.
FOUR-THOUSAND: I don’t even remember.
TWO-THOUSAND: Sunny this morning.
FOUR-THOUSAND: I don’t even remember.

*(Pause.)*

TWO-THOUSAND: You got posters?
FOUR-THOUSAND: His friend is out. Parks and lamp-posts. Anywhere, you know?
TWO-THOUSAND: Yeah, get the face...
FOUR-THOUSAND: The face is what’s...
TWO-THOUSAND: We got free copies.
FOUR-THOUSAND: That’s nice.
TWO-THOUSAND: The place, they said, “On us.”
FOUR-THOUSAND: That’s nice. You?
TWO-THOUSAND: Huh?
FOUR-THOUSAND: You got posters?
TWO-THOUSAND: Yeah. Free copies.
FOUR-THOUSAND: Oh, right. *(Pause. They shift in posture.)* What will you do when you find out?
TWO-THOUSAND: I’ll be relieved.
FOUR-THOUSAND: I guess what you do depends on what you hear.
TWO-THOUSAND: I’m gonna hear good news.
FOUR-THOUSAND: Me too. *(pause)* But what are you going to do when you find out?
TWO-THOUSAND: I don’t know. What are you going to do?
FOUR-THOUSAND: Go home and have a drink.
TWO-THOUSAND: Yeah, a drink. (pause) I hope it’s not bad news.
FOUR-THOUSAND: Yeah.

(Pause. They shift in posture.)

FOUR-THOUSAND: Waiting, huh?
TWO-THOUSAND: I just... I want to know, you know?
FOUR-THOUSAND: Sure, sure. Waiting.

(Pause.)

TWO-THOUSAND: I wonder if someplace...
FOUR-THOUSAND: Will you do me a favor?
TWO-THOUSAND: What?
FOUR-THOUSAND: If anyone comes by-- Will you?
TWO-THOUSAND: Yeah. What?
FOUR-THOUSAND: If anyone comes by, don’t let them go around the corner.
TWO-THOUSAND: Yeah, but-- Okay. (pause, shift in posture) Waiting.
FOUR-THOUSAND: I know what we’re doing. There’s no need to narrate.
TWO-THOUSAND: You don’t have to stand here.
FOUR-THOUSAND: Sure I do, ’cause this is where the news comes.
TWO-THOUSAND: I’m not sure this is where the news comes.
FOUR-THOUSAND: I think it is.
TWO-THOUSAND: So stand here or don’t.

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