

Waiting

By Linda B.

Here I sit...again.

Waiting.

Waiting for you to come out of surgery. Waiting for the doctors to come tell me you're okay. Waiting to be able to breathe again.

The clock on the wall says I've been waiting an hour. The doc said you'd be under the knife for an hour and a half to two hours. I know the time isn't up yet, but I keep watching the door. Drawn to it every time someone walks by or comes in.

But it's getting late, and I imagine there aren't many surgeries scheduled this time of day. Occasionally, someone enters or exits the elevator across the hall. They glance in here, at me, but then continue down the hall.

The television plays in the corner, but there isn't anyone here to watch it. I certainly don't care what's on. I've picked up the sections of newspaper scattered about. I've read through the magazines that litter the tables. Or, more accurately, I've flipped through the magazines. Nothing in them holds my attention. Only the door—and who's entering—draws my interest.

A mother comes in, a young child in tow. It makes me wonder who they're waiting for, but they don't stay long enough to ask.

There's a coffee pot in the corner, and a pop machine. I guess I'll get something to drink. It's been hours since I've eaten, and it's too late for the cafeteria to be open. Besides, I don't want to leave. The doc should be here soon.

Standing, it feels good to stretch my back. The chairs are far from comfortable. But then I don't think they're meant to be.

Damn, the coffee pot's turned off and the coffee's cold. I could have used a little caffeine. I guess a soda will have to do instead. Cola should do the trick. I drop in some change and push the selection button, but nothing happens.

Steps in the hall. I turn expectantly. But their sound fades as they continue past the door.

The wall clock says it's been an hour and a half. Okay, relax. It's too soon for news. Doc said it could take up to two hours.

I go back to pushing the button on the pop machine. Again, nothing happens. I try shaking the machine, but it's useless; everything rattles but nothing drops out.

Frustrated, I turn back and sink down onto one of the chairs. Leaning forward, elbows resting on my knees, I relive the night's events.

I shouldn't be here waiting again—and you shouldn't be hurting again.

It started out as a fun evening, part of a much-needed vacation. Dobeey finally gave us a couple days off and we drove up the coast. Found a motel along the shore to spend the night. Looking for a little excitement, we hit a local bar. It was a fun place—plenty of music, a few beers, dancing with a couple hot-looking girls. Then, a pair of locals—smashed—got carried away and began to argue. And you decided to step in to calm things down. And what did you get for it?—a knife in the side. And I get to wait. Again.

My watch says it's been almost two hours now. The doc should be coming anytime. I glance out into the hall, but nobody's coming. The hallway is empty. Eerily empty.

There's a talk show on the TV now. Switching channels aimlessly, I stare at the screen finding nothing to interest me.

I probably should find a phone and give Dobeey a call, but I'm afraid to leave. The doc said two hours. That means he should be here any minute.

Footsteps. I sit up. Ready. Anticipating.

But it's the cleaning lady. She comes in, nods, and empties the ashtray, straightens the magazines, and wipes the tables.

Two hours and fifteen minutes. Where is that doctor? My stomach is in knots. Something's wrong. I can feel it in my gut. Don't be silly, I reason. Things can take longer than they expect. Everything will be fine.

Standing, I wander back and forth in the small room. No, pace would be a better word. I look at the carpet below my feet and see the well-worn path that other's have left behind.

What's in this magazine? Did I look at it before? It's filled with decorating ideas, recipes. I toss it back down on the table. Two and a half hours. When's he going to come? I need to know everything's all right.

Running my hand repeatedly through my hair, my patience is departing and anxiety is filling the void. Something's wrong. I know it. The doctor should be here by now.

Steps again. I unconsciously hold my breath. A couple goes by. She's using a walker. He walks patiently by her side. I sigh. I'd give anything for you to be by my side at this moment.

Two hours and fifty minutes. It's wa-a-a-y too long now. Maybe I should go in search of some answers. Find someone who can tell me what's happening. But the hallways are empty, and if I leave now, how will the doctor know where to find me? No, I'd better wait. There's nothing to panic about. Right?

Where is that doctor?

I pick up the sports page, but it's old news, the TV having rattled off the scores from across the nation. My eyes scan the page, but are drawn above it to the empty hallway. When will someone come?

Okay, that's it; I can't wait any longer. I shoot from the chair and head to the door.

The doctor and I almost bump heads. I'm looking at the floor, not where I'm going.

I apologize as he leads me back to the hard seats. I try to focus on his words. Hopeful. Apprehensive.

Relief. That's what I feel. My partner is going to be fine. The doc apologizes for it taking longer than expected, but, frankly, as long as he tells me everything is going to be okay, I really don't care anymore. He said in ten minutes I can go down the hall and they'll let me into Recovery. There, I can see for myself that everything's all right.

Ten minutes—an eternity—is all I have to wait.

Until next time.

The End