

WAIT UNTIL MORNING

Written by

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INT. STONE & STOCKTON - RECEPTION: DAY

The furnishings and decor in the office suite are priceless pieces collected from throughout the course of history.

Books like "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare That He Never Got Around to Writing" line the majestic shelves.

Paintings depict famous men and women signing contracts as identical-looking functionaries watch.

A clock on the wall ticks loudly, repetitively and slowly. Tick. Tick. Tock. The endless clicking is like torture.

THE RECEPTIONIST, 30s, sits at the desk, writing on a piece of paper. The pencil scratching against it is earsplitting. She is bored. Killing time.

REED FISCHER, 30s, intelligent, cautious, anxious, sits in the waiting area, hugging his portfolio case to his chest.

He glances at the magazines on the coffee table. They have titles like "Authoritarian Monthly" and "Let's Learn Nothing From History."

Reed flips through one. The content is written in a strange alphabet. The photos are of momentous historical events from before the camera was invented.

Reed, confused, sets it down and crosses to the receptionist.

REED

Just reminding you I'm here. In case he forgot about me.

RECEPTIONIST

(Not looking up)

He's in another meeting.

Reed, bored and frustrated, sits back down. He looks at his phone to see he has a text message from his mother reading, "how did it go?" He puts it back in his pocket.

The intercom buzzes, reverberating around the room. It nearly makes Reed jump out of his seat. The receptionist ignores it, focused on the piece of paper in front of her.

The intercom buzzes again. She rolls her eyes, frowns and presses a button on the intercom.

SUTTON (O.S.)

(On the intercom)

Is he still here?

The receptionist leans forward so her mouth is right in front of the intercom, then presses the reply button.

RECEPTIONIST
(On the intercom)
Yes.

The intercom buzzes again. The receptionist stares at it as though she's never seen it before. She presses the button.

SUTTON (O.S.)
(On the intercom)
I'll see him now.

The receptionist releases the button and turns to Reed.

RECEPTIONIST
He'll see you now.

Reed nods as the receptionist stands up and motions for him to follow her back into the main part of the office suite.

INT. HALLWAYS - DAY

Reed follows the receptionist through a maze of corridors without windows. The floor is covered in plush carpeting and the decor has an outdated yet pristine elegance.

INT. BULLPEN - DAY

The receptionist leads Reed through an immense room with sweeping city views.

Rows of desks are occupied by NUMEROUS IDENTICAL-LOOKING MEN IN SUITS, 20s, as they pore over ledger books and perform calculations on old-fashioned adding machines.

Reed stares quizzically at them, then races to catch up with the receptionist as she reaches the entrance to a hallway.

REED
Those men. They look exactly
alike.

The receptionist ignores him as she disappears down the hall. He furrows his brow as he tries to keep up with her.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Reed follows the receptionist down an adjoining corridor with painted white walls and floors covered in industrial tiles. Windows look into lab spaces. Reed peers into one.

INT. LABORATORY (REED'S POV) - DAY

THREE IDENTICAL-LOOKING MEN, 20s, examine an immense brass bull statue. TWO MORE IDENTICAL-LOOKING MEN, 20s, wheel a cauldron of fire beneath it.

TWO OTHER IDENTICAL-LOOKING MEN, 20s, wearing lab coats over their suits, coax A MAN, 50s, into the bull via a side door.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Reed, horrified, turns away from the lab window and peers in the other direction. Another window looks into a second lab.

INT. SECOND LABORATORY (REED'S POV) - DAY

A MAN, 40s, lies between two canoes nailed together so only his head protrudes through an opening at the front. TWO IDENTICAL-LOOKING MEN, 20s, stand over him.

One tries to feed him something, but he closes his mouth. The other one pricks the man's eyes with a pin and he opens his mouth so the first worker can feed him.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Reed watches, appalled, then turns to see the receptionist waiting impatiently. He scurries after her as her heels click clack and he races to catch up to her.

When she reaches a closed door, she raps sharply upon it.

SUTTON (O.S.)
(From inside)
Come in, please.

The receptionist opens the door and gestures for Reed to go inside the office.

INT. SUTTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Reed hesitantly makes his way into the lavish room, which is airy and well-lit.

Behind an opulent desk, SUTTON STONE, 60s, urbane, intelligent, duplicitous, who looks like an older carbon copy of the identical-looking men from the lab, crosses to Reed.

SUTTON
(Holding out his hand)
Sutton Stone. Pleasure to meet
you.

Reed reflexively shakes Sutton's hand. Sutton waves his hand to indicate that the receptionist should leave and she does, closing the door behind her.

SUTTON (CONT'D)
(Leading Reed to the desk)
Please. Make yourself at home.

Sutton steers Reed to the chair on the visitor's side of the desk and eases him into it. He crosses to the far side of the desk and sits, then picks up Reed's resume.

REED
Thank you for seeing me. The
agency said you specifically
requested me.

SUTTON
You're the only person I'm
interviewing for this position.

Reed looks as though he doesn't understand.

SUTTON (CONT'D)
Your last boss, Myron Leonard. I
know him, in a way.

REED
He's a colleague of yours?

SUTTON
More like a potential client.

REED
I brought my portfolio, which has
some really strong work samples.

SUTTON
I'm familiar with your work. It's
innovative and complex.

REED
I'm a team player and easy to get
along with, but I can also take the
initiative when necessary.

SUTTON

Stone & Stockton has been around for hundreds of years and it feels like it. Do you want to hear my vision to bring it into the twenty-first century?

REED

Sure.

SUTTON

I'd rather hear your ideas.

REED

That's really a source of confusion. The company has no website and when I searched online, I got no results.

SUTTON

Let's not get bogged down in particulars. I want to build a team of out-of-the-box thinkers.

REED

The agency didn't have a job description for me to look at.

SUTTON

I'm looking for visionaries. Do you want to see a job description or make your own?

REED

What was going on in those labs with the bull and the canoes?

SUTTON

For too long, the employees of this company have coasted, but I take the blame. This is a difficult business and I haven't incentivized them enough to take the initiative.

REED

I love graphic design. I take joy in the process of finding the most effective way to visually convey information.

SUTTON

Here you'd be doing a different kind of design. You'd be creating scenarios.

REED

Like the space landscapes I created
for that energy drink campaign?

SUTTON

We want to improve our image.

REED

I don't think anyone knows you
exist.

SUTTON

The work you did for Myron won
awards for innovation. He took the
credit and got a huge promotion,
but those were your ideas.

REED

How do you know that?

SUTTON

You come work for me and you'll get
the credit you deserve.

REED

I need more information.

SUTTON

You've been out of work for over a
year. You've run through your
savings and borrowed money from
your mother for rent and food.

REED

No, the agency was supposed to tell
you, the gap on my resume is from
taking care of a sick family
member.

SUTTON

I admire your dishonesty, but
there's no point trying to trick
me. It must be humiliating to take
money from your mother at your age,
especially since she can barely
afford it.

REED

What? Why would you say that?

SUTTON

Hopefully, we can reach an
agreement about salary.

REED

I haven't accepted the job yet.

SUTTON

I'll contact the employment agency with an offer. No point in muddying the waters between you and I by having a disagreement about numbers.

REED

Isn't this the part where you ask me if I have any questions for you?

Sutton rises from his chair, crosses to the other side of the desk and ushers Reed to the door.

SUTTON

Wonderful to have met you. I feel positively inspired by our chat and I know we're going to do fantastic work together.

REED

Maybe we can talk about that a little bit more.

Sutton smiles reassuringly at Reed, then opens the door. Reed is startled to see the receptionist waiting as if she's been there the entire time.

SUTTON

Thank you so much for coming in.

Sutton offers his hand and a bewildered Reed shakes it. Reed looks between Sutton's beaming face and the receptionist's stony countenance, unsure what to make of things.

The receptionist walks back the way they originally came and Reed once more dashes after her.

EXT. STONE & STOCKTON - DAY

The streets of New York are empty as a puzzled Reed walks through the Financial District. He stops in his tracks at an intersection as he has a thought.

INT. LOZENGE STAFFING - DAY

The elevator doors open and Reed steps into the reception area. A RECEPTIONIST sits at a desk, behind which is an open bullpen in which RECRUITERS drum up business.

LESLIE, 30s, clever, diligent, faithful, notices Reed and crosses to him with an excited grin.

LESLIE
So? How'd it go?

REED
What did they say when they called to schedule the interview?

LESLIE
I was just about to make a smoothie. This day has been insane and I haven't had breakfast yet.

Leslie's phone rings and she glances at it with a tortured expression as though trying to resist the urge to answer it.

She puts it away and takes Reed by the arm, steering him down a hallway towards the kitchen. They pass a sign that reads, "Lozenge Staffing - we take the sore throat out of hiring."

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Reed stands near the doorway as Leslie opens the refrigerator and rifles through it, pulling out plastic bags filled with vegetables and piling them onto the counter.

LESLIE
Did you totally fall in love with the place?

REED
The interview did remind me of my relationship with my ex-girlfriend.

LESLIE
They seem super eager to bring you in.

REED
Did they give you any information about what I'd be doing?

LESLIE
Reed, you've been out of work for over a year. The pay is almost double what graphic designers usually make.

Leslie takes the vegetables out of the bags and vigorously washes them in the sink.

REED

Yeah, but to do what?

LESLIE

You're a graphic designer. I assume doing graphic design.

Reed frowns at Leslie from his perch near the doorway.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

OK. I got a call from the head of the company a few weeks ago.

REED

Sutton Stone? The guy I met?

LESLIE

He specifically asked for you.

Reed ponders this as Leslie chops vegetables and scoops up the pieces, then places them into a food processor.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

The company is named after him.

She senses his lack of enthusiasm and dials it down a notch.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

Did you meet Mr. Stockton?

REED

Just Mr. Stone. Have you ever been over there?

LESLIE

No. Why?

REED

Almost everyone looks the same. It's not possible.

LESLIE

Corporate culture can be like that.
(Changing the subject)
I'll call them on Monday to follow up. I think you should take it.

Reed's expression reveals his lack of other options.

INT. REED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Reed sits upon the couch as he searches the Internet on his laptop. He types "Sutton Stone" and gets one result. It's a site about the Black Death in England.

In 1348, a man named Sutton Stone appeared in Winchestershire, bringing the plague and wiping out the village. It no longer exists.

On the page is an engraving from 1348 that depicts the Sutton Stone who brought the plague to Winchestershire. He vaguely resembles the same man who Reed interviewed with earlier.

Reed studies the engraving, his brow furrowed. He frowns at the similarity, then closes the laptop and leaves the room.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Reed, carrying a bottle of wine in a plastic bag, walks up the driveway and heads to the front door. He takes a set of keys out of his pocket, unlocks the door and goes inside.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Reed looks around, surprised to find the house empty.

REED
(Calling out)
Mom?

PAULA (O.S.)
(Calling out)
In the backyard.

Reed heads into the den and crosses to a set of glass doors.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Reed walks outside to see his mother PAULA, 60s, setting the table on the patio.

In the center is a platter of roasted red peppers and fresh mozzarella cheese. Italian sausages sizzle on the grill.

PAULA
(Kissing Reed)
How was the train ride out?

REED
Not bad. I slept most of the way.

PAULA

If you get that job, you'll have to stop napping during the afternoon.

Reed hands the bottle of wine to Paula.

REED

It's that sparkling rose you had on your trip to Positano last year.

PAULA

Oh, that's so sweet. I'll pop it in the fridge next time I go in.

Reed takes a seat and reaches for the roasted red peppers and mozzarella as Paula pours them each some iced tea from a pitcher on the table.

PAULA (CONT'D)

So tell me.

REED

Not much to tell. Really.

PAULA

I hope you get it. I can't afford to keep giving you money the way I have this past year.

REED

I know, Mom. I really appreciate how much you helped me out.

PAULA

You should have at least one parent who cares about you.

REED

I wouldn't even remember what he looks like if it weren't for the pictures.

PAULA

That makes it worse.

She holds out the plate of peppers and mozzarella to him.

PAULA (CONT'D)

Have some more.

REED

We still have the sausages.

PAULA

I'll put the leftovers in a container. You'll have dinner for the rest of the week.

REED

I can afford to buy food.

PAULA

I hate to see everything go to waste. I'm leaving on Thursday.
(Changing the subject)
So when do you hear back?

REED

The guy I interviewed with said he wanted to hire me. I should have an offer next week.

Paula is noticeably pleased as she refills Reed's glass with more iced tea. She breaks off some fresh mint from a plate and adds it to his glass.

REED (CONT'D)

There's something weird about the place. I don't know.

PAULA

Do people use graphic design firms for nefarious purposes?

REED

It's not a graphic design firm. I'll be creating scenarios, whatever that means.

PAULA

Maybe it's like being a set designer for a movie.

REED

It's not a production company.

PAULA

Video games?

REED

I don't know how to do that.

PAULA

I'm sure it'll be great.
Congratulations.

Reed nods, trying to accept his mother's enthusiasm.

EXT. ROOFTOP BAR - NIGHT

From Williamsburg, the Manhattan skyline looks breathtaking. The outdoor area pulses with the energy of a weekend evening as BARTENDERS make drinks while PATRONS laugh and talk.

Reed sits at a table with JARED, 30s, loyal, smart, urbane, and Leslie. A WAITRESS, 20s, hands drinks to Jared, who passes them along.

JARED

(To Leslie)

A wheat beer for my lovely
overworked wife.

(To Reed)

And a whiskey sour for my soon-to-
be employed best friend.

REED

Thanks. Once I start working
again, the drinks are on me.

JARED

Don't worry about it. This is a
joint celebration.

REED

You guys bought it?

JARED

You are now looking at the owners
of a three-bedroom fixer-upper on
five acres of land in bucolic
Upstate New York.

REED

If you ever need someone to watch
you do repair work, I'm your man.

Jared grins as the three of them clink glasses, but his countenance changes to worry as he notices someone nearby.

Reed swivels around to see MARIGOLD, 30s, confident, emotional, loving, standing behind him as she holds hands with COLE, 30s, selfish, cowardly, boring.

Reed and Marigold lock eyes for a long moment. She smiles uncertainly at him as his composure instinctively crumples.

MARIGOLD

How are you?

REED

Doing my best to stay off social media.

MARIGOLD

This is awkward for everybody.

REED

Not as awkward as when I discovered you two were sleeping together behind my back.

Cole extends his hand to Reed to shake. Reed looks at it.

COLE

That's ancient history. Get over it.

Marigold glares at Cole, then turns to Reed with tenderness and longing in her eyes.

MARIGOLD

It'd be nice to catch up sometime.

COLE

(To Marigold)

I'll get us some drinks. The smell of sore loser is overpowering.

Cole wanders away to the bar as Marigold narrows her eyes at his departing figure. She turns to Reed, who is losing his struggle to remain dignified.

MARIGOLD

It'd be nice to have a cup of coffee and just talk sometime.

REED

If I saw you on the street, I wouldn't acknowledge your existence, but I'd give you my kidney if you needed it.

She is taken aback by his statement. They stare at each other with enough intensity to melt the ice in everyone's drinks. Regaining her composure, she turns to Jared.

MARIGOLD

(To Jared)

Good to see you again.

Marigold looks wistfully at Reed, then leaves to join Cole at the bar. Reed's expression becomes tight and faraway.

JARED

I'm sorry, buddy. You want to go somewhere else?

REED

Yeah. Home to bed so I can get under the covers and question every decision in my life that's brought me to this point.

LESLIE

I know the breakup was hard, but three years is a long time to harbor so much anger. She's obviously torn about the whole thing.

Reed is silent as he sips his drink and stares into the distance as Jared and Leslie look at him with concern. Leslie's phone ring and she impulsively grabs it.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

(On the phone)

Oh, hi. Nice to hear from you.

(Listening)

Yes. I'm sure he'll be thrilled.

Leslie looks at Reed, who returns the gaze questioningly. She holds up a finger to indicate he should wait a moment.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

(On the phone)

I'll pass that along. Thank you so much for calling.

Leslie hangs up the phone and smiles at Reed.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

That was Sutton Stone. He wants to know if you can start on Monday.

REED

Did he explain what I'd be doing?

LESLIE

You'll find out Monday. Right?

Reed is silent as he mulls it over.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

They offered you three times your hourly rate. Go check it out and if you don't like it, you can quit.

REED

Rent is due in a week.

LESLIE

I think we need to have another
toast.

Leslie picks up her glass and clinks it against Reed's. She does the same to Jared's as her husband happily puts his arm around her. Reed has a doubtful expression upon his face.

EXT. GREENPOINT - NIGHT

Reed walks through the deserted streets near the Williamsburg border as his footsteps echo on the cracked pavement.

He nearly jumps when he sees Sutton across the street. Staring at him. In an instant, the sidewalk is empty. Reed catches his breath, then quickens his pace.

INT. REED'S BEDROOM - DAY

The alarm on Reed's phone goes off, jolting him awake. He hits "snooze" and closes his eyes. Realizing he has to get ready for his first day of work, he drags himself out of bed.

INT. STONE & STOCKTON - DAY

Reed enters the reception area and crosses to the desk, where the receptionist is making complex origami figures out of construction paper. She doesn't look up as he approaches.

REED

Can you let Mr. Stone know I'm here
for my first day of work?

The receptionist stares at Reed, then returns to making elaborate shapes out of the construction paper.

RECEPTIONIST

Have a seat, please.

Reed frowns as the intercom buzzes. The receptionist looks longingly at the construction paper, then presses a button on the intercom.

SUTTON (O.S.)

(On the intercom)

Has Reed Fischer arrived? He's the
new hire in the Scenario Design
Department.

The receptionist once again pauses for a long moment, then moves her mouth up to the intercom.

RECEPTIONIST
(On the intercom)
Yes.

SUTTON (O.S.)
(On the intercom)
Bring him back, please.

The receptionist releases the intercom button, gets up and heads towards the doorway leading into the office suite.

RECEPTIONIST
I'm supposed to bring you to the back.

Reed nods, then follows the receptionist through the doorway.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Reed trails the receptionist as they once again traverse the corridor containing the labs with the interior windows. He turns to peer into the first window.

INT. LABORATORY #1 (REED'S POV) - DAY

A NAKED MAN, 40s, is tied to a chair as a blinding light shines on him. Speakers beside his ears play speed metal at top volume.

MORE IDENTICAL-LOOKING MEN, 20s, wearing sunglasses and earplugs, adjust the sound level on a mixing board.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Reed, concern etched across his face, turns away from the lab window to see the receptionist standing in front of the elevators with her arms crossed.

RECEPTIONIST
That's Research & Development.

One of the elevators pings and the doors open.