

## The Doctor's Waiting Room

The appointment was already scheduled. It was just as mum had said; 'You, young man are going. And that's final.' I nervously glanced up at the clock; it was half past two in the afternoon, ten minutes remained until we had to leave. I thought of a way to make time go slower. The old saying 'time flies, when you're having fun' jumped into my mind. So I pulled out my maths book; now that was a drag. Art homework was way too fun; time would surely fly like the wind. My eyes caught sight of the clock once more, seven minutes to go.

Concentrating on my homework was not an easy task. As much as I tried, my mind wandered constantly as did my eyes which always ended up glued to the face of the clock above my bed. It was now two forty-two. The humid air clung to my skin; I was now so tense my stomach was twisted in what felt like one thousand knots.

'Jeremy!' My mother's shrill voice sent a shiver up my spine, the terror breaking into a cold sweat on my forehead. 'We've got to go, or else we'll arrive late!'

Too tense to respond, forced myself off my chair and picked up my trainers. I then concentrated on placing one foot in front of the other as I climbed down the stairs.

The temperature inside the car was unbearable, and despite the cold weather, the stuffy car air seemed to hang over me like a cloud. I had not eaten much for lunch, but all the same my stomach felt full and waves of nausea washed over me.

The ride had been way too short I realised as mum parked the car in front of the clinic.

We walked towards the main entrance, each stride seemed a mile long and my legs felt as heavy and as stiff as concrete. The clinic was a small building; it could not have had more than two floors. Inside it was pretty much as you would expect. Everything seemed white, and too clean. The floor was covered with crisp white tiles, and everything from the chairs in the waiting room to the staff's attitude seemed plastic. Numerous leaflets cluttered a billboard opposite the front desk, the messy image contrasting with the rest of the sterile room.

'Please take a seat.' The receptionist behind the front desk uttered these words as if it pained her. She then stifled a callous smile before turning her attention back to the computer screen.

The plastic chair caught me just as I thought my legs would crumble under my weight. I sat for a moment, and then I glanced at the clock. It bore two fifty-nine; eleven minutes to go. I again thought about passing the time, without making it go too quickly. I relaxed slightly, and closed my eyes. The humid air enveloped me as I began to doze.

'No!' I thought. I forced my eyes open. Falling asleep would mean I would not be conscious of time passing and time would fly, surely. My eyes led themselves back to the clock face, the arrow ticking lazily. To my relief, only two minutes and forty-three seconds had passed.

I looked around the room, at the other people waiting for the shot. There were at least three strollers folded up behind the door, but at least six children below three bouncing on their mothers' lap. Three minutes passed three. 'Slow down!' I thought to myself.

The door opened, and a very frustrated looking mother struggled to get inside. She was pregnant, but also handling what looked like a very old stroller, inside it screamed a red-faced toddler of about two years. It had recently started raining heavily outside, and both mother and child were soaked to the bone. The stressed woman fought through the row of seats, starting a sort of Mexican wave of 'tuts' until she finally sat on a seat at the end of the row. With a deep breath, she unbuckled the child and set about trying to tempt him with a bottle of orange juice. Yet she failed miserably, I noticed, as the child thrashed about and threw the carton out of reach.

My stomach then twisted in knots again when I realised that two minutes had passed as I had been observing this commotion. Three minutes left, I broke into a sweat again, despite the cold, humid air. I'd heard terrible stories of injections; people at school told me that afterwards you can't move your arm for weeks, and that the needles can be up to

a foot long. The clock's ticking boomed in my ears, the toddler's screams were deafening.

Two minutes remained. 'I can't do this!' said I. Maybe Swine Flu won't be such a bad thing, but who says I'll get it at all? Mum says I have a good immune system, but she also said 'better safe than sorry'. Yet no flu can be any worse than an injection. Just then, another boy about my age walked out of the room where it all takes place. He was clutching his left arm and whimpering.

'Jeremy Tiller?' Never has my own name filled me with such dread, made my mind swim with such fear. My jaw was clenched so hard I could think of no excuse. Mother took me by the wrist and dragged me into the room. There was no escape now.

I plopped down on the stool. The room was just as sterile as the waiting room, only it smelt of rubber gloves and disinfectant. The nurse was the receptionist from the front desk. She was short and plump, her face, like a map, creased with lines and wrinkles. She took the instrument out of a small plastic packet and asked me to roll up my sleeve. With one last callous, sly smile, she told me to relax. And it was over in a second.