



Time Flies Slowly By

written by
Michael Cotter

+359 88 20 80 904 (Bulgaria)
michaelcotter_ck@hotmail.com

INT. WAITING ROOM, ONCOLOGY DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Muted hospital noises mix with the low murmur of a TV in the corner.

Waiting room chairs line the back wall.

THOMAS (79) sits alone, posture as stiff as the chairs.

He glances up at the wall clock: TICK. TICK. TICK.

He opens his shaky hand, and looks at a **POCKET WATCH** in his palm, its second hand ticking with the same steady pulse.

He closes it. But his knee continues the pulse, bouncing nervously.

The door opens. **VICTORIA (40)** enters - thin, pale, bandana wrapped around her head, colour in her cheeks from makeup.

She sits next to Thomas. They exchange small polite nods and smiles.

BEAT

THOMAS

First time?

VICTORIA

Huh? Oh, third. -- Third time lucky, I guess.

Thomas nods, embarrassed.

THOMAS

Sorry, I didn't mean to pry.

VICTORIA

You didn't. I suppose everyone shares something in here.

She nods towards his bouncing knee. He forces it still.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Waiting on someone?

THOMAS

Results. And you?

VICTORIA

Same. Just hoping the chemo wasn't a complete waste of time.

THOMAS

Each new set of results is like learning about the diagnosis all over again.

Victoria smiles faintly.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Been through it all before - my wife passed away five years ago from thyroid cancer.

VICTORIA

(shocked and saddened)
That's awful, I'm so sorry.

Thomas' knee bounces more rapidly now.

THOMAS

Now I'm here taking the reins.

Thomas looks down at his pocket watch again, and then up to the wall clock. TICK. TICK. TICK.

VICTORIA

(re: pocket watch)
That's a beautiful piece.

THOMAS

It was a gift from my wife.

Thomas rubs his thumb over the lid.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

She would always give me little gifts; gifts which would make me think about the very thing I don't want to think about -
(chuckles)
- to make me realise how silly I am for worrying at all.

Thomas looks down again at his pocket watch.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

She bought me this from an antique shop before she...
(swallows)
I don't even know when she found the time. I was with her every -
(stops himself)
She used to say I watched the clock too much. That I'd miss the good bits. Well -

Thomas takes out a handkerchief and wipes his eyes.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

- here I am, waiting again.

Embarrassed, Thomas corrects himself -

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to burden you.

VICTORIA

(almost in tears herself)

It's okay. It's understandable to want to speak of your wife - it's a beautiful present, she clearly had good taste.

THOMAS

Helen. She did.

Victoria reaches over, gently places a hand on his forearm. He doesn't move away.

VICTORIA

It's lovely to have had that. Had something. -- After the diagnosis, I kept plants. They don't worry about living. They just... live. If the soil's good, they bloom. If it's not... they bloom anyway. -- Made me think maybe I should try that.

Thomas looks up at her - truly looks.

THOMAS

I wish I could. Helen and I were married for forty-nine years. It's hard to accept that a flower that has grown for that long is just gone.

Victoria squeezes his arm.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

We lived on the coast, and every day we would walk the line of the ocean together. -- Now, I walk the very same coast by myself, expecting to see her, for her to return to me.

VICTORIA

Maybe she wouldn't want you waiting.

Thomas studies her - a stranger who suddenly understands.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

It's hard to manage a lifetime of feelings if there is no one to share it with.

DOOR OPENS

A nurse steps out and announces to the room -

NURSE

Mr. Thomas Roberts?

THOMAS

That's me.

Thomas rises slowly, then turns back to Victoria.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I hope not to see you again in here, dear. Everything will work out for you, I'm sure of it.

VICTORIA

Thank you. And good luck, truly.

Thomas gives her one last, grateful smile, then disappears inside the office.

Victoria exhales, alone once again.

INT. DOCTORS OFFICE - LATER

DR. MADHI-ROGERS (55) beams behind his desk as he gestures to Victoria's results on the screen.

DR. MADHI-ROGERS

So this is great news, Victoria! Really great. You've responded better than anyone expected. You should be very proud of yourself.

Victoria tries to hold back tears of relief.

DR. MADHI-ROGERS (CONT'D)

I hope you can try to get back to some of your normal life. I'm very pleased! -- And so should you.

VICTORIA

I am! This is such a relief! Thank you so much for... Everything.

DR. MADHI-ROGERS

Just doing my job. Though it's made easier with news like this. -- We'll check again in a few months, but today - today's a win.

She nods, emotional, breathless.

INT. WAITING ROOM, ONCOLOGY DEPARTMENT - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Victoria steps out beaming from the office.

She scans the room expectantly, but finds no one but strangers in the waiting room.

A WOMAN in the waiting room approaches her -

PATIENT

Are you Victoria?

VICTORIA

(confused)

Yes?

The woman hands her a small object wrapped in a tissue.

PATIENT

A gentleman asked me to give this to you. Said you'd know why.

Victoria unwraps it, inside is the POCKET WATCH.

A folded note slips out. She opens it with trembling fingers.

INSERT - NOTE: *"Thank you for making the waiting easier."*

She clutches the note and pocket watch close to her chest.

For the first time in a long time, she simply sits. Still. Breathing. Alive.

FADE TO BLACK.