

A Journey, a Waiting Room, and a Terminal
By: Floyd H., from the Woodlands Group, Texas

There once was a man who was sick and tired of being where he was. He wanted to get out of that place. So he paid the price and did all it took to be able to begin his journey. Because he wanted to fly away to a better place, he went to the terminal and looked at all the posters on the wall and he found a glimpse of a better place. So he was given the opportunity to go there. The next day, he told himself, he would start.

The following morning found him sitting in a waiting room near the entrance, maybe a distance of 12 steps away from the door, and passing the time with other people who were there. One or two had traveled to his special dream place before and spoke of its beauty, but they couldn't really tell the man how to get there because it had been so long ago for them since they traveled there and enjoyed the place. Most, like our man, had instead sat many days near the door, but had never made the trip. They sat and talked and visited and found that they had much in common: they were all sick and tired of being where they were. And they talked and talked and talked, and missed their opportunity that day to go.

The next day, they showed up at the terminal again. Some had a good day, and shared that; some had a rotten day, and shared that. They all looked forward to being in a better place. They talked excitedly about that place. Some said they knew how to get there, but the more knowledgeable knew the route they spoke of would never get anyone to the special place. They debated the best route. They got angry. But in the end they made up and hugged, for they were going to make this journey together and wanted decent fellowship. They left the waiting room for a few minutes to get coffee and pie, but as they visited there, they missed the flight again.

Now they were getting frustrated. The next day, they showed up even earlier. Some had gone to three different waiting areas already that morning, looking for any flight available. But they missed every opportunity. They visited with people in each waiting area and some whined about the frustration. Many could relate. One man said that when he got this upset, he visited more and more waiting areas, sometimes three, sometimes four, sometimes even five a day. He felt better after those visits, sensing he was really going somewhere now - sensing he was close to a big breakthrough that would put him on a flight. He spoke eloquently of how all those visits helped him, and as the others sat spellbound, listening to this great storyteller, they felt motivated, as if they were sky-high; and as they sat and listened to each other, the last plane that day left without them again.

The next day, the entire bunch was about ready to burst, so filled with anxiety and anger they were. They could not see that they were also in fear that they might never get out of the waiting room. But any chance of seeing that fear for what it was would soon leave, for gradually they had become comfortable in their waiting room. Each had his own chair; they saw the familiar faces of fellow-would-be-travelers; they saw friends sitting in their same places, and they had a coffee server who knew just how they liked it by then. This waiting room for many seemed like home, if not better. They also liked the waiting room, because when they talked with other people outside the waiting room who knew what they were up to, and saw them doing the same crazy thing every day, those outsiders just criticized them and told them they were nuts. And maybe they were, but they could sure comfort each other in that waiting room. Only people who had missed as many flights as they had, and kept on missing them, could possibly understand.

But in truth, sitting in that terminal and really getting nowhere along their intended journey, they were getting more and more miserable. They were starting to notice how insane some of the other people in the waiting room were - coming every day to the terminal, talking and loving and fighting, and missing the flight, day after day after day. Some were so in delusion that they began to imagine that getting up and going to the waiting room WAS the journey - that "terminal" was the right word because

this was the destination. And, indeed, maybe it was better than sitting at home in their frustration of not being on the journey, what with kitchen knives and guns nearby that might be used as instruments to end the frustration. That's how crazy they were getting. And as they sat about, discussing that benefit of having a waiting room to come to, the plane left again.

They consoled each other. They felt a bond - all of them suffering from the same thing. Each was unable to get off their butt, once having gotten to the terminal, each unwilling to take the steps required to make the flight. So close, yet so very far away. Ultimately, it happened: one day, one by one, they gave up hope of ever getting on the flight. But they were willing to live out the rest of their lives in the waiting room. That seemed to be okay to them. They soon came to believe that that would be enough. They decided that they didn't really need a journey. They didn't really need to get out of the place where they were. They just needed the company of fellow non-travelers. They had sat in that waiting room for so long that they thought they were comfortable there.

"Better than being at home alone," one said.

"I feel safe in here," shared another.

Said another: "My wife thinks I'm nuts to sit here in the waiting room every day and miss my chance to take the journey. But she doesn't understand what we have here. She doesn't have a clue. People who have never missed as many opportunities as we have could never understand why it's enough each day for us to sit in the waiting room together. They just can't get it. And actually, I feel sorry for them, not having what we have here. This is my new world. This is my journey. This is my destination. I feel so much better here than I ever felt there."

And the woman at the ticket booth just shook her head, wondering, "What the heck is wrong with these people? Why don't they either get off their dead behinds and get on the plane or get the heck outta here? All they gotta do is take a few steps!"

And her friend said, "The waiting room is open to all who want to come. You can't make them leave and you can't make them take the necessary steps to get to where, deep inside, they'd like to get to."

And the first lady replied, "But it seems to me that this whole bunch is suffering a terminal illness. Get it?! Ha! Sitting in the waiting room at the terminal."

"Yeah," her friend said, I got it. Real comedienne, you are."

"But really," the first lady continued, "this could be the commencement of a great journey, but instead it really is their termination."

And her friend said: "Well, at least they're alive as long as they're sitting here."

And her friend said, "Do you really think so? Do you think this existence could qualify as 'a life' to anyone looking at it objectively?"

And then, they both grew silent in that moment and they looked into the faces of each person sitting there. And behind the forced laughter; behind the ringing out of people declaring "Fine. Just fine, thanks. And you?"; behind everything else that seemed to mask the truth, they looked into the eyes of these people, and they saw a tremendously sad, deep depression, a longing to make the journey and to get out of this place. But one more time, those people in the waiting room sat and talked and watched as the plane left without them.

And the two women then watched as the people stood and held hands, and they watched as the people slowly walked out of the waiting room. And the two ladies knew that the entire bunch would return again to the waiting room again tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day. And the two looked at each other for a moment. And then they looked down at the floor. And then, both women, very quietly, began to cry. then, both women, very quietly, began to cry.

