

The Departure Lounge
By
Craig Cooper-Flintstone

09/12/09

craigcooper1@sky.com

FADE IN:

INT. LUXURY DEPARTURE LOUNGE - DAY

The huge windowless room bustles with activity. People sit- some chatter- others wait patiently.

KEITH, seventies, wearing a smart suit, bow-tie and a flat cap, enters through the double doors in a fluster. He checks his watch then scans the room- searching for an empty chair.

He heads over towards a vacant seat at the far end of the room. He addresses BARRY, seventies, wearing shorts, T-shirt and a baseball cap, who reads a newspaper -

KEITH

Excuse me, is this seat taken?

Barry adjusts his glasses then looks up from his paper. He mutters to himself -

BARRY

I don't know why I still wear these, I don't need them any more. Force of habit I suppose...

He removes his spectacles.

BARRY

Kei... Keith? Is that you?

Keith's face adopts a blank expression.

KEITH

Sorry... Do I know you?

Barry leaps to his feet then grabs Keith by the hand.

BARRY

I'll say. I take it you don't recognise me then? It's Barry, remember?

Keith scratches his chin as Barry continues to shake his hand wildly.

KEITH

Barry... Barry Price, is that you?

BARRY

The one and only! How've you been? It's been what, twenty years now?

Barry releases the grip on Keith's hand then sits back down. Keith sits beside him.

KEITH

Probably longer. We weren't all as jammy as you. Bloody early retirement! I had to stay in that hell-hole until my sixty-fifth birthday.

Barry laughs.

BARRY

Yeah, I got out when I could... Took up golf.

KEITH

Golf eh? I thought you looked tanned!

BARRY

I love it. Always will.

Barry jumps from his chair then swings an imaginary golf-club. Keith scans the room with a faint look of embarrassment.

KEITH

It's good to have a hobby... Now this is what I call a comfy chair!

BARRY

They're heavenly aren't they?

Barry sits back down.

BARRY (cont'd)

So how are you, buddy? You're looking well.

KEITH

I'm much better now thanks.

BARRY

Now? You've been ill, I take it?

KEITH

You could say that. It was touch and go for a while.

BARRY

My God. Was it...

Keith removes his cap revealing his completely bald head.

KEITH

The big 'C', yeah. You never think it will happen to you, do you?

BARRY

Oh Keith, I don't know what to say. I'm sorry to hear that... It's all water under the bridge now though, eh?

He points at Keith's head.

BARRY (cont'd)

And that look is all the rage these days.

KEITH

It might be all the rage, but it's also bloody freezing. I hate wearing this stupid hat.

BARRY

I hear you there, buddy. It'll grow back though you know.

KEITH

Yeah, I guess. I wish it would bloody well hurry up, I look like a boiled egg.

Barry stifles a laugh.

BARRY

It's good to hear that I'm not the only one that's been in the wars...

Barry points to his chest.

BARRY (cont'd)

Dicky ticker.

KEITH

Sorry to hear that. I'm surprised, a keen sportsman like yourself...

BARRY

I took more interest in the nineteenth hole, if you know what I mean? I take so many tablets that I swear I can hear myself rattle when I move... It's so frustrating- I feel twenty-five not seventy-five.

Keith nestles further back into his chair. He smiles.

BARRY (cont'd)
You're really loving that chair aren't you? I have to admit they are great. Can't beat a bit of special first-class treatment, can you?

KEITH
I'll say. It makes a change.

BARRY
Hey, it's only the best from now on... Are you excited?

Barry rubs his hands together with a look of glee on his face.

KEITH
I'd say more nervous than excited. I'll feel a whole lot better when we get there.

BARRY
Really, how come? I don't remember you as the nervous type, Keith. Why so worried?

KEITH
I dunno... It's just the thought of going on another plane. Don't like the idea.

Barry laughs as he slaps his hand on Keith's knee.

BARRY
The getting there is all part of the experience. I can't wait, I've had enough of this foul weather. It's always sunny over there, you know.

KEITH
Yes, so I hear.

Keith smiles as he straightens his bow-tie. He surveys the surroundings.

KEITH (cont'd)
It looks as though I got the last seat. I was a bit flustered.

BARRY

About being late? Stop worrying,
you're here now. It's all good from
now on.

KEITH

Mmm, I suppose... You're looking
good, anyway Barry. Life obviously
treating you well, eh?

BARRY

Yeah... It was...

A rhythmic beeping noise fills the room. People fidget and
look around with excitement.

BARRY (cont'd)

Oh, sounds like it's time to go,
Keith. We'll catch up later no
doubt. Cheerio!

Keith slowly gets to his feet. He looks around with a blank
expression.

BARRY (cont'd)

That's you, buddy!

KEITH

Are you not coming?

BARRY

No. Not just yet. I'm gonna wait
here for a while.

Barry shoos him away with a smile. Keith forces a smile back
then heads off.

Barry yells -

BARRY (cont'd)

See you over there, buddy.

The room fills with a brilliant white light.

It grows in intensity, brighter and brighter.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD- DAY

SANDRA, sixties, wearing a floral dress and cardigan, stands
beside a NURSE at a hospital bed.

The rhythm from the heart monitor grows steadily slower
until- a single DRONING beep.

Sandra holds a tissue up to her nose with one hand. The other grips tightly to the patient in the bed.

She sobs uncontrollably.

The nurse leans forward, then gently closes Keith's eyes.

She places her arm around Sandra's shoulders.

NURSE

He's not in pain anymore, my
darling. He's gone to a better
place now.

FADE OUT