

Family Visitation

by

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Cast of Characters

RANDY BENTON – mid-twenties. Working class. Preparing to let go of his dying lover.

ESTELLE MILLER – middle-aged. A conscientious nurse and good Christian. She makes a real effort not to let her beliefs affect the care she provides.

Setting

The corridor of a hospital in America's heartland. 1986

For RCB

RANDY (lowering the surgical mask)
Is he okay? Is there something wrong? Has he gotten worse?

ESTELLE (stepping away from the door)
Let's talk for a minute.

RANDY (follows her)
What's up?

ESTELLE
You come here every day, Randy.

RANDY nods.

ESTELLE
I know you're a good friend ...

RANDY shoots ESTELLE a look as they both know he's more.

ESTELLE
... roommate. But this might be the time to back off a little.

RANDY
Why? We both know there isn't much time left.

ESTELLE
It might be better for you if you started letting go now.

RANDY
I want every minute ...

ESTELLE
Preparing for the inevitable.

RANDY
This is how ... by having as much time as we can ...

ESTELLE
Do you do anything besides go to work and come here?

RANDY
You know I don't.

ESTELLE

That's not ... well ... it doesn't look ...

RANDY

He's got the "gay plague," Stella. I'm his "roommate," it's a little late to be worried about how things "look" ...

ESTELLE

To his family.

RANDY

They haven't spoken to him in months. And before that it was only to yell and cry and lecture ...

ESTELLE

There are times when a family moves beyond that. When it's time for ...

RANDY

Last time he was home, they kicked him out and told him not to ever ...

ESTELLE

When it really hits a mother that she is going to lose her child ...

RANDY

She told him she only had two sons, Grady and Tim!

ESTELLE

I'm sure she regrets that now.

RANDY

Ha! Have you met his mother?

ESTELLE

Yes.

RANDY

Really?

ESTELLE nods.

RANDY

When?

ESTELLE

Last night.

Last night? RANDY

ESTELLE nods.

Where? How? RANDY

Here. ESTELLE

She was here? Last night? She came here? RANDY

ESTELLE nods.

Oh my god. (a beat) How? How did she find out he was here? RANDY

The chaplain called his family. ESTELLE

What? Why? RANDY

He felt it was time ... if they wanted to say goodbye. ESTELLE

Oh my god. That's ... RANDY

And to find out what they want to do after ... ESTELLE

What they want to do? RANDY

They are his family. ESTELLE

I'm going to be sick. (a beat) So his mother has just swooped in and taken over ... RANDY

She's his mother. The legal next of kin. Surely you can see how she might have more say than a roommate. ESTELLE

RANDY

Oh my god. What are they ...

ESTELLE

They'll take him home to Mammoth Springs.

RANDY

"Home"?

ESTELLE

There will be a service at the church where he was baptized. He'll be buried at Whiteside.

RANDY

They wanted nothing to do with him ...

ESTELLE

It will be the little bit of comfort she can have.

RANDY

She's going to take his AIDS-riddled corpse back to Mammoth Springs?

ESTELLE

Friends will be told that they just didn't realize how bad the cancer was or how quickly it would take him.

RANDY

Of course.

ESTELLE

And Mrs. Hough wants this to be a time for family and close friends. There really isn't a place anymore for city friends or roommates.

RANDY

And you're okay with this?

ESTELLE

It's not my place to have a say.

RANDY

You've seen ... you know.

ESTELLE

I know that it's never a bad thing for a soul to come home to Jesus or a family to be united at the end.

RANDY

I ... I ... this is ... I ...

ESTELLE

You have other friends, family ... start spending time with them. Turn to them for comfort.

RANDY

He's my family. And I'm his.

ESTELLE

Do you have a church? This is certainly the time to find God's comfort.

RANDY

It wasn't enough that he's dying ... I didn't think it was possible to lose more ...

RANDY pulls the surgical mask back over his face and puts on the paper hair cover. ESTELLE steps between him and the door.

ESTELLE

I'm afraid you can't go in there.

RANDY

What?

ESTELLE

His mother has instructed that only immediate family members be allowed to visit.

RANDY

Stella ...

ESTELLE

I'm sorry.

RANDY

Can't I just go in to say goodbye?

ESTELLE

I'm afraid Mrs. Hough's instructions were quite clear.

He attempts to walk around her. She blocks him.

ESTELLE

Please don't make me call security.

RANDY

You wouldn't ...

ESTELLE

I have to respect the family's wishes.

RANDY

Two minutes ... Just let me see him one more time ...

ESTELLE

I'm sorry.

RANDY

Please Please ... oh god, please Just to say goodbye?

ESTELLE

It would be better if you would just go.

RANDY

You can't ... please ... I'm begging you ... Just let me ...

ESTELLE shakes her head.

RANDY

I'll be quick. No one will know ...

ESTELLE shakes her head again.

RANDY

You can't ... you have to let me ...

ESTELLE gently removes his paper hair cover.

ESTELLE

It will be better for you if you just go now.

RANDY

How? How will it be better.

ESTELLE

If Mrs. Hough finds you here, she will call security.

ESTELLE hands RANDY the stuffed animal and steps on the release for the lid of the biohazard can. She put in the hair cover.

RANDY

Please ... I know how close he his. That's why I brought Rowdy. Rowdy was our signal ...

ESTELLE looks at him blankly.

RANDY

That it was time. That is was okay for him to let go.

ESTELLE

We ... the other nurses wondered ...

RANDY

How he could still be holding on?

ESTELLE nods.

RANDY

He was waiting for Rowdy.

ESTELLE waivers.

RANDY

Please ... I'll run in ... a quick peck on his forehead ... slip him Rowdy and get out. ... Please?

ESTELLE shakes her head.

RANDY

Please ...

ESTELLE

I am sorry. But I can't let you go in the room.

RANDY

Please ...

ESTELLE

You have to go now, Randy.

RANDY

And if I refuse? ... If I just stand here in the hall? ... She can keep me out of the room, can she have me banned from the hospital?

ESTELLE

I can if I think you are disturbing a patient. Or threatening the family.

You wouldn't ...

RANDY

Don't test me.

ESTELLE

Why? You know ... You KNOW ...

RANDY

What will you gain by confronting his mother? What? ... What will he gain? The most loving thing you can do right now is let go.

ESTELLE

Will you do me one favor?

RANDY

What?

ESTELLE

Give him Rowdy.

RANDY (holding out the stuffed animal)

ESTELLE nods and takes the stuffed animal

Thank you.

RANDY

RANDY removes the surgical mask and gown and tosses them in the biohazard can.

RANDY doesn't move.

Goodbye.

ESTELLE

I can't just leave him ...

RANDY

You might take this opportunity ...

ESTELLE

"Opportunity"?

RANDY

To think about your life. Your choices.

ESTELLE

RANDY stares at her.

ESTELLE

You're not infected ...

RANDY shakes his head.

ESTELLE

Yet.

RANDY stares at her.

ESTELLE

You know if you keep on ... you will be. Don't do to your mother what Woody has done to his.

RANDY

You really aren't going to have the decency to let me say goodbye?

ESTELLE

I am going to have the decency to respect his mother's wishes.

RANDY shakes his head, turns and starts to walk away.

ESTELLE

Your shoes ...

RANDY stops.

RANDY (after a beat)

Something to remember him by.

ESTELLE watches RANDY walk off with paper covers still over his sneakers. When she is sure he is out of sight and not returning, she tosses the stuffed animal into the biohazard can, puts on fresh gloves and a fresh mask and returns to the room.

Lights fade to black.

End of *Family Visitation*.