

The Condition  
by  
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(An office. There are two chairs placed down stage, facing each other at an angle. Otherwise, furniture is spare – a couple of side tables, a counter, a plant with long stems.

On the upstage wall is a small bookshelf – it appears to be incongruously placed – it might look more at home in someone’s bedroom. A few chatchkes – dolls and action figures - are placed on top of the bookshelf.

The walls of the office are white. The only visible exit is an upstage right is a tall wooden door.

RUTHIE, a hot mess with untamed hair and wearing a plain grey sweater over a light blue t-shirt and jeans talks to DR. KICK, in his 50’s, in a long white coat and balding, with a serious but compassionate disposition. Dr. Kick holds a clipboard – during the conversation he frequently refers to it and jots down notes.)

Age. DR. KICK

29. RUTHIE

(Pause.)

39. RUTHIE

Weight? DR. KICK

132. RUTHIE

(Beat.)

152. RUTHIE

Occupation? DR. KICK

I’m an actor. RUTHIE

(Beat.)

Unemployed. RUTHIE

An actor. RUTHIE

In... DR. KICK

Acting. RUTHIE

No, I mean what were you acting in? DR. KICK

Do I have to be “in” something to act? RUTHIE

Yes. DR. KICK

Okay, but I mean in order to be one who *can* act... RUTHIE

Wouldn't you normally- DR. KICK

'Cause you know, only a small part of acting is *acting*. 99% of it is waiting and driving and drinking and getting depressed and- RUTHIE

But to stay an actor eventually you have to act in something, right? DR. KICK

Not necessarily. RUTHIE

But what then would qualify you as- DR. KICK

I'm kind of, you know, I'm not really an “actor” in the way that most actors are actors. RUTHIE

So, what sort of way are you- DR. KICK

I sort of keep watch. You know. (Making it sound really cool:) I'm like, “The Sentinel.” RUTHIE

The Sentinel. DR. KICK

Yeah. RUTHIE

The Sentinel of what? DR. KICK

Stardom. RUTHIE

You are the Sentinel of Stardom? DR. KICK

In that I watch stardom. Yes. RUTHIE

Whose stardom do you watch? DR. KICK

My own, eventually. RUTHIE

And what was the last paying occupation you had? DR. KICK

I was a Career Counselor. RUTHIE

Oh. DR. KICK

Yeah. RUTHIE

That's somewhat surprising. DR. KICK

Is it? RUTHIE

How long ago was that? DR. KICK

Eons. RUTHIE

How many "eons"? DR. KICK

An infinite amount. RUTHIE

DR. KICK

So what, a couple of years...

RUTHIE

Longer than that.

DR. KICK

Four years, ten years...

RUTHIE

Long long long long.

DR. KICK

So more than ten years.

(Ruthie nods.)

DR. KICK

And how long did you work as a Career Counselor?

RUTHIE

Well, I dabbled.

DR. KICK

You dabbled? In Career Counseling?

RUTHIE

Yeah.

DR. KICK

If you dabbled in it, you must not have been particularly good at it.

RUTHIE

I was *the best*.

DR. KICK

How could you be the best-

RUTHIE

People were in *awe* of me.

DR. KICK

What people?

RUTHIE

Well, first there were the people who were lucky enough to have benefited from my services. And then there were those who *watched*.

DR. KICK

And they were in awe.

RUTHIE  
Some of them were.

DR. KICK  
Only some.

RUTHIE  
Jealousy ruins things.

DR. KICK  
In awe of what?

RUTHIE  
What?

DR. KICK  
What were they in awe of exactly?

RUTHIE  
Well, I mean, you know, there was a *crisis*.

DR. KICK  
And you were helping people.

RUTHIE  
It was a tough time.

DR. KICK  
But you couldn't help yourself-

RUTHIE  
No, no, it was around that era of my life that I finally decided to follow my bliss.

DR. KICK  
Ah.

RUTHIE  
Kind of like the children of the village following the Pied Piper into the river, but yeah.

DR. KICK  
Okay. So outside of dabbling at Career Counseling, you've always been...

RUTHIE  
The Sentinel.

DR. KICK  
Right. The Sentinel. And how did you hear about us?

KTalk 1098. RUTHIE

KTalk? DR. KICK

“Where news never gets old.” RUTHIE

I’m- DR. KICK

No, wait. I think that’s wrong. RUTHIE

K... DR. KICK

Did I get the motto wrong? RUTHIE

I’m just not sure what KTalk *is*. DR. KICK

It’s a radio station. RUTHIE

Oh. DR. KICK

*Talk* radio. RUTHIE

I see. DR. KICK

The only kinda radio I like. RUTHIE

You don’t listen to music? DR. KICK

I get bored. RUTHIE

Music bores you? DR. KICK

Eventually. RUTHIE

DR. KICK  
Do other things bore you?

RUTHIE  
Most other things.

DR. KICK  
For example...

RUTHIE  
Examples bore me.

DR. KICK  
What else?

RUTHIE  
Interviews.

DR. KICK  
Interviews bore you.

RUTHIE  
I think most questions are unnecessary because most answers are predictable.

DR. KICK  
Really.

RUTHIE  
Most. Not the *tough* ones. But, yeah, most of the shit that people start saying is pretty much headed down the same well-worn trail.

DR. KICK  
So you often find yourself -

RUTHIE  
...completing other people's sentences. Yes. I do.

DR. KICK  
And you're able to do so because-

RUTHIE  
...they're always so predictable. They are.

DR. KICK  
Which is-

RUTHIE  
...boring. (again being cool:) They once called me "The Answerer."



DR. KICK

I thought they called you The Sentinel.

RUTHIE

They *used* to. That was before I became The Answerer.

DR. KICK

So you're no longer The Sentinel?

RUTHIE

No, I still am, they just don't call me that.

DR. KICK

Who's they?

RUTHIE

What?

DR. KICK

Who is the "they" that keeps coming up with creative ways of naming you?

RUTHIE

Oh. Just some guys.

DR. KICK

Okay.

RUTHIE

Yeah. They're all... Just... you know... they're not doing it to be *funny* or anything. They just, you know, *observe* me and then they chime in with some ideas.

DR. KICK

They observe you.

RUTHIE

Yes.

DR. KICK

Why do you suppose they observe you?

(Pause.)

DR. KICK

And what are you hoping to get out of our study?

(Long pause.)

RUTHIE

Um...

DR. KICK

Maybe you want to get *better*?

RUTHIE

Yeah, yeah. Well, of course, I'd like to get *better*. Yeah.

DR. KICK

You would.

RUTHIE

I mean, I'd have to know what *at*, specifically, but yes.

DR. KICK

The Condition.

RUTHIE

The Condition?

DR. KICK

The affliction you heard advertised on the radio.

RUTHIE

Oh, right, yeah.

DR. KICK

The Condition you're supposed to *have* in order to take part in this study -

RUTHIE

Oh! Oh! Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah! *That!* Yes. Right. I would definitely like to be cured of *that*.

DR. KICK

Good.

RUTHIE

I mean, come on, *enough already*.

DR. KICK

Hm.

RUTHIE

Wow. Shit. *Shit*. So... do we get paid *today* or do we have to wait for-

DR. KICK

I'm afraid I have to bore you with a few more predictable questions first. I realize you're The Sentinel and The Answerer and everything, but it's exceedingly important that we are indeed able to identify you as suffering from The Condition.

RUTHIE

Oh, God, yeah. I suffer. Jesus. The agony is unbearable.

DR. KICK

Right.

RUTHIE

*Unbearable.*

DR. KICK

And if I determine that you *are* suffering, we will proceed with the experimental treatment and you will receive a payment.

RUTHIE

The same amount that was advertised?

DR. KICK

You understand, we have to weed out certain personalities.

RUTHIE

Sure. Weed. Uh-huh.

DR. KICK

We often get people in here who seem to do this sort of thing professionally.

RUTHIE

This sort of-

DR. KICK

They go to medical experiments and pretend to have various afflictions purely for financial gain.

RUTHIE

No!

DR. KICK

Since they're not really afflicted, it skews the results of the study.

RUTHIE

Oh, God, that's just... Oh.

DR. KICK

So we have to be careful.

RUTHIE

Yeah, dog. I read you.

DR. KICK

It's of paramount importance that our results aren't affected by unwanted inconsistencies.