Making the Grade

by Frank Bath

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INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Large crowded waiting room filled with 20s to 40s couples. Cheap lino floor, crappy chairs, very old magazines. Bored RECEPTIONIST sits behind a battered desk.

Door opens and an early 30s couple enter. They look around and head for the receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST Can I help you?

BRIAN Uh, yeah. We're the Walkers, we have an appointment with MR. DAVIS.

RECEPTIONIST

File Number?

BRIAN Honey, do you have that slip of paper . . .

JANICE

Yeah

Janice digs through her handbag, setting it down on the desk to dig a little deeper. She looks up at the Receptionist and smiles handing over the slip

JANICE (CONT'D)

There you go.

Receptionist enters the number into her computer, waits a second or two, then.

RECEPTIONIST

Ah, yes. Mr. Davis is running a little behind. If you have a seat he'll be with you in a few minutes.

Brian and Janice find a seat. Moments later SOBBING can be heard from down the hallway. A 20s couple enter the waiting room heading for the exit. The woman is crying quietly, her husband holding her as he steers them out the door. The couples in the waiting room attempt to ignore the couple.

> RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D) Ah, Mr. and Mrs. Walker you can go in now. Room 314, on the left.

The Walkers get up and head down the hall.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The Walkers, holding hands, walk down a hallway lined with office doors. The cheap lino continues from the waiting room, old stained wood covers the walls. Very quite talking comes from behind the doors. Each door unadorned but for a number on it's upper glass panel.

BRIAN

Here it is.

Brian opens the door for Janice.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A small room with a desk opposite the door. Low shelves ring the room, filled with files, books and papers. Two chairs face the desk. A single window behind the desk lets in grimy light.

Mr. Davis sits at the desk, rising slightly as the Walkers enter, one hand holding a large sandwich, the other indicating they should sit. He chews quickly so he can speak.

> MR. DAVIS Hello, I'm Mr. Davis. You must be the Walkers. Please, have a seat and we'll begin.

Mr. Davis sits back down and takes another bite of his sandwich while accessing the computer.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) Let's see now, Walker . . . Ah, here you are.

Mr. Davis turns back to the couple and rummages through a very full "in" basket, producing a thick file. He opens the file and flips through a few pages.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) I see you've both past your medical exam, and the psychological exam has also been done. Good.

Mr. Davis continues to read something, and takes another bite of his sandwich. He swallows and looks up at the Walkers, who look tense. MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) We'll just go over a few things before we get to the important stuff. I like to go over some of the written exam questions. Mainly the ones that the couple got wrong or those questions they answered differently. Any questions before we get started?

Mr. Davis takes another bite of his sandwich.

BRIAN No, I think that sounds fine. Janice?

Brian looks at his wife. They're still holding hands.

JANICE

Well, if you don't mind Mr. Davis, may I ask, do you have any children?

Mr. Davis swallows and smiles. He turns a framed picture that's sitting on his desk around so Brian and Janice can see it.

MR. DAVIS Not at all Mrs. Walker. I have two children. Julia, who's almost twelve, and Mikey, who just turned eight this past weekend.

Mr. Davis looks very proud of his family. The picture shows him and his wife with the two kids.

JANICE Two children. You must be a very good father Mr. Davis.

Janice turns to look at Brian, smiling.

JANICE (CONT'D) I'm sure that Brian will make a fine father too. But I guess that's what we're here to find out, isn't it Mr. Davis?

MR. DAVIS Right you are Mrs. Walker. Shall we begin?

Janice takes a breath, and tightens her grip on Brian's hand.

JANICE Yes, I'm ready to know.

BRIAN

Me too

MR. DAVIS Alright then, let's see. . .

Mr. Davis turns back to his computer, punching a few buttons, nodding his head. He turns back to the Walkers.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) Brian, question 23. You got this one wrong I'm afraid. The questions was about time outs for unruly children. Specifically how long the time out should be for. You answered 2 minutes. The correct answer was 5 minutes. Studies have shown that this is enough time to let the child know he or she has misbehaved without injuring his or her self esteem. Janice, you got that one correct. Any questions?

BRIAN No, I guess not. Seems clear enough.

Janice nods in agreement.

Mr. Davis turns back to the computer looking for another question the couple didn't answer correctly.

MR. DAVIS Okay, here's another one. Brian, you got this one right, but Janice you missed this one . . .

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE - DAY, LATER

MR. DAVIS Okay, that's all of the questions that you got wrong on the written exam. Hmm, let me see. . .

Mr. Davis reads something on his computer, popping the last small piece of his sandwich into his mouth.

Mr. Davis turns back to the Walkers with a big smile on his face.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) I'm happy to tell you that you have passed. You are now licensed to procreate. This will allow you to have one child. Congratulations.

The Walkers jump up and hug each other. Tears of joy in Janice's eyes. Brian hugs her hard, lifting her off the ground and kissing her. When he's done he puts her down, his arm around her as he turns to Mr. Davis.

> BRIAN Thank you very much Mr. Davis.

Brain reaches out his hand to shake Mr. Davis' hand. Mr. Davis shakes hands with Brian.

MR. DAVIS Don't thank me Mr. Walker, you and Mrs. Walker put in the work. I just know you two will make great parents. You might even qualify for a second child someday.

The Walkers sit back down. Mr. Davis busy once again at his computer. A printer whines to life somewhere behind Mr. Davis.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) Okay, we just have some documents to sign and I'll give you your medical dispensation forms so you can receive your anti-sterilization drugs. The doctor will go over all of that with you, but basically it allows you to conceive. The doctor is authorized to give you enough medication for two months, with a further three month supply available after that. If by that time you have not gotten pregnant you will have to be re-examined. But I'm sure you won't have any trouble conceiving.

As he talks Mr. Davis gathers the documents that have been printing, arranges then and staples them together.

He begins to go through the document, putting small x's wherever the Walkers need to sign.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) Here we go. Now, you just need to sigh where ever you see an x.

He slides the document in front of Brian and hands him a pen. He goes back to his computer, punching more buttons. The Walkers sign the document, not bothering to read it.

> MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) So, I just need to know your gross family income.

JANICE Uhmm, let me see.

Janice digs into her bag again, producing two sets of tax returns for the last year.

JANICE (CONT'D) Here you go.

MR. DAVIS Great. Let me see . . .

Mr. Davis taps away at a calculator. The Walkers finish signing.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) So, that's a gross income of \$68,892. So, the fee will be . . .

More tapping on the calculator.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) \$5511.36. Please make that payable to the Department of Child Welfare. Now, that fee entitles you to all the services this ministry makes available to all parents. Things like child care services, the house keeping service, in home medical services. There's other stuff, but that's the meat of it. Here's a brochure that will tell you all about the services.

Mr. Davis hands a colour brochure to Brian as Janice finishes writing the check. She hands it over to Mr. Davis, who attaches it to their file with a paperclip.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) Well I think that's it, we're all done here.

Mr. Davis closes their file and stands. The Walkers stand also. Mr. Davis sticks out his hand to Brain.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) Best of luck Mr. Walker, Mrs. Walker. We at the Department of Child Welfare just know you'll make great parents.

BRIAN Thank you so much Mr. Davis.

Brain shakes Mr. Davis' hand.

JANICE Yes, thank you Mr. Davis.

The Walkers take their paper work and turn to leave.

MR. DAVIS Good luck folks.

Mr. Davis sits back down, a large smile on his face. He presses a button on his phone.

MR. DAVIS (CONT'D) Mrs. Brown please send in my next appointment.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

The Walkers enter the waiting room heading for the exit. The room is still full.

RECEPTIONIST Mr. and Mrs. Garcia, you can go in now.

A couple get up and head into the hallway, holding hands as they go. The Walkers leave and \ldots

FADE OUT.