

The Master Room

By
D. Terry Petrie

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STORY OF THE PLAY

A young assistant has been hired by an old keeper. It is the Keeper's dream to have the young man accept his offer to continue the tradition of loving care and the keeping of the priceless treasures found in the Master Room. The Keeper's last hope, for the future and a peaceful death, lies in the acceptance of his offer by the young man, who despises the room and job because it has restricted his ideal of life. Thus, in quiet desperation, the Keeper purposely activates the time lock of the vault door, trapping them for the night. He has one last night to convince his assistant to inherit this task. They spend the night sharing thoughts, play-acting various characters and exploring the treasures of the boxes in the room. The young man finally comes to accept his inheritance as the Keeper dies. This is a play of accepting one's role in life, and the eternal process of teacher and student. The characters are nameless, yet represent characteristics found in our own reality. Their situation is, to an extent, representative of a growth process each of us must confront.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE OLD KEEPER: A caretaker of a museum and keeper of its special treasures.

YOUNG ASSISTANT: Hired by the Old Keeper to work as his assistant.

SETTING

In the vault room of the museum where there are many boxes and crates; each containing materials and objects that have been inventoried and stored for many, many years.

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(Two men have been carrying boxes into the vault room of a museum. The ASSISTANT pauses, watching the KEEPER carry a box. The Keeper, in pain, sets box down. As he exits for another box a coughing spell causes him to momentarily pause before continuing his work.)

ASSISTANT: Are you ill ...? Can I help...?

(The KEEPER does not hear. The ASSISTANT continues to inventory and store boxes. He stacks each box in it's proper place. As the Keeper enters, the Assistant stops and watches him.)

ASSISTANT: *(Continued.)* Are you all right? What's taking you so long?

(HE takes a box from the KEEPER who turns to exit again.)

ASSISTANT: *(Continued.)* Let me help you so we can get finished and get out of here. It's almost quitting time.

(ASSISTANT stacks the box and checks his inventory sheet. As he does, KEEPER shuts the vault door.)

KEEPER: No!

ASSISTANT: What?

KEEPER: I'm afraid we'll have to wait 'til morning.

ASSISTANT: What?

KEEPER: The door is shut.

ASSISTANT: What do you mean, the door is shut?

KEEPER: It closed.

ASSISTANT: Then open it.

KEEPER: Can't.

ASSISTANT: Can't?

KEEPER: Can't.

ASSISTANT: Here, let me try--I'll open it.

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KEEPER: Might as well relax and make ourselves comfortable.

ASSISTANT: You can't be right. You don't know what you're talking about. This door has got to open! *(HE tries to open it but is unsuccessful.)* This stupid piece of junk-- why won't it open?

KEEPER: That's a time lock--unbreakable.

ASSISTANT: You mean we're locked in here? *(KEEPER nods.)* For how long?

KEEPER: 'Til nine o'clock, tomorrow morning.

ASSISTANT: I don't believe it.

KEEPER: *(Pours from lunch kit thermos.)* Coffee?

ASSISTANT: How did that door shut?

KEEPER: *(Shrugs.)* Coffee?

ASSISTANT: Why did this have to happen? I don't like this place--it reeks of old age and uselessness.

KEEPER: Why are you so upset?

ASSISTANT: Why am I so upset? You've got to be kidding!

KEEPER: Apple?

ASSISTANT: I can't stand this. I could just... *(Raises his fists above his head to pound the door.)*

KEEPER: Go ahead.

ASSISTANT: *(Catching himself.)* Why?

KEEPER: You might feel better.

ASSISTANT: Ah! What's the use? *(Turns slowly to KEEPER.)* I get the feeling you know something about this...

KEEPER: Perhaps. *(Throws an apple to the ASSISTANT.)*

ASSISTANT: This won't work. I'm not going to talk to you.

KEEPER: I'd hoped you would.

ASSISTANT: That's why you did it, right? To get me to talk to you again. *(KEEPER shrugs.)* Well, it's not going to work. *(KEEPER shrugs again.)* Why tonight?

KEEPER: What about tonight?

ASSISTANT: Nothing...

KEEPER: You can tell me. *(PAUSE.)* Dancing? Were you going dancing?

ASSISTANT: Me and my friends... yes, we were going...

KEEPER: Dancing?

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ASSISTANT: Yes. What am I talking about? Do you think it's dark outside yet?

KEEPER: Yes. Tell me--what makes you so angry?

ASSISTANT: I'm not angry!

KEEPER: Something has made you boil inside--you can tell me--I'm just a tired, old man.

ASSISTANT: You're right about that.

KEEPER: I know your heart cannot be as hard as you pretend it is.

ASSISTANT: I don't like working here.

KEEPER: Then why do you stay?

ASSISTANT: I haven't found another job yet... I should have left a long time ago--before you made your offer.

KEEPER: You're a good worker. This room needs your abilities; oh, you are somewhat hot-headed. But, you'll do the job.

ASSISTANT: I want to do things...see things...be free to do what I want, when I want and not be caged up in old storage rooms.

KEEPER: I know how you feel.

ASSISTANT: How could you? *(Pause.)* Has this happened to you before? Being locked in? *(KEEPER shrugs.)* Help me. Maybe we can break out.

KEEPER: If we only could--sit down.

ASSISTANT: What do you mean sit down?

KEEPER: Sit.

ASSISTANT: *(HE does.)* You know what's really sad? No one cares what happened to me or to you as a matter of fact. If I don't accept your offer, then what will you do? You know, we're both in the same boat.

KEEPER: No--I care.

ASSISTANT: You ... I guess you would. I would too, if I were as old as you. You could die next week, tomorrow or even tonight. Who knows... we might never get out of here. That's all we'd need... to be locked in here 'til we die.

KEEPER: I'm not ready to die...

ASSISTANT: You won' leave me alone until I accept your offer, will you?

End of Freeview

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