

## THE DOG TANK

by Scott Crain

**GENRE:** Drama

**SYNOPSIS:** A young husband struggles with trusting God as his wife lies in a coma.

**TIME:** Under 5 minutes

**CAST BREAKDOWN:** 2

**TOPIC:** Doubts, Trust

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:** Psalm 46:1-3, Philippians 4:6-7

**CHURCH YEAR SEASON:** Any

**SUGGESTED USE:** Worship Service

**CHARACTERS:**

JIM—a middle-aged man

DAVID—his son, perhaps in his late twenties

**PROPS:** A handkerchief and an individual-sized packet of crackers

**COSTUMES:** Contemporary

**SOUND:** Two wireless microphones

**LIGHTING:** General stage

**SETTING:** The waiting room of a hospital

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### Director's Tip:

A general rule in all stage drama is to have your actors “pick up the cues”—in other words, one actor’s line should be beginning exactly as the previous actor’s line is ending, with no “dead space” between them. This is a dynamic that is specific to theatre, as TV and film cameras can provide close-ups, changing angles, and musical scores that can make silences more interesting to watch. On stage, however, gaps of silence between lines (also called “movie moments”) can be treacherous and kind of act like dandelions: if you let one or two slide, the next thing you know, they’re everywhere. Another deceptive thing about stage silences is that they often feel so good to the actors doing them—they may feel like they’re in the middle of an Oscar-worthy performance, while the audience is checking their watches and wishing they would just get on with it!

That having been said, there are exceptions to every rule, and *The Dog Tank* is a script that provides plenty of opportunities to “play the silences.” A great deal of the power of this scene lies in what’s not being said, and the actors should be encouraged to play with those silent moments in which truth is still being communicated, but nonverbally. Keep the scene moving forward and let your actors know when the pauses are getting to be too much, but don’t be afraid of the silence: if used wisely, it can speak volumes.

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*Lights up on a hospital waiting room. DAVID sits with his chin in his hands, staring blankly forward. His eyes and nose are red from crying. After a few moments JIM enters, carrying a packet of crackers. He sees DAVID, crosses to him, and sits gently beside him.*

**JIM:** This hospital’s like a maze; they oughtta give you a piece of cheese when you find your way out. They said you were in the third floor waiting room, and I couldn’t even find the elevators. *(DAVID barely responds to this; then, genuinely)* So how’s my son?

**DAVID:** *(Smiles weakly)* I’ve been better.

**JIM:** *(Softly)* Yeah. *(Pause)* Your mom’s up in Lisa’s room. She told me to try to get you to eat something. I found a vending machine—I don’t know where the cafeteria in this place is.

*He hands DAVID the pack of crackers; DAVID takes them numbly and puts them in his pocket as he speaks.*

**DAVID:** Fifth floor, past the nurses’ station. There’s another one up on the ninth. *(Quietly)* You get to know your way around here after a couple of weeks.

*JIM nods and the silence spins out for a few moments. Then, carefully:*

**JIM:** Did you talk to the uh...neurologist?