

## WAITING...

"Well, admit it, it's pretty well freezing in here. I should be used to it, because I've been here long enough. I wonder if the others find it freezing too. You might have thought that, because there are so many of us, all so close, we'd find warmth together, but it just doesn't seem to work that way.

"Yes, we do communicate. Not with words, because that option isn't open to us... but with thoughts. And we are a pretty mixed up bunch I can tell you. Some of us have been here for years, as I have, others came in as recently as yesterday. Naturally no-one knows how long they will stay. They may call for me today, or tomorrow, or not for fifty years. I simply don't know.

"The others find this pretty disconcerting, but I guess I am more philosophical than they are. I just wait to see what will happen. And one day it will. But who knows when?

"This is a rum sort of place. There are rows and rows of us, each in a little bottle. And, until we really set up a sort of thought transference system with a newcomer, we don't know much about him - or her. And even then, some aren't curious, as I am, to find out. Others are just plain angry at where they are and why they are here. Others again, simply don't care.

"But I do. I care - very much.

"I want to know everything I can about who I am, and the past. And - although the toffs in white coats think we can't find out - I know we can! I know enough about where I came from, and the sort of man who fathered me. What I don't know is the sort of family I will be born into, and indeed if it will be a family at all! And, above all, and this really upsets me, I don't know when. I don't know when the door will be open and the toff in the white coat will come in and pick me off the shelf. And I certainly don't know what will happen after that. Will my new life, when I get born, be happy? Will I feel fulfilled? I know what I am capable of, what my father's genes have left me with. Will I get the chance to express my talents?

"And how will I feel about the nature of my birth? All this will be a huge journey into the unknown for me - and not just for me, for all of us here. My father's genes, in me now, will bring

me talents of thinking, sensitivity, and analysis of what life's about. And, because of the sort of man he is (perhaps was... I don't even know whether he is still alive), I will be plagued by doubts about my self-worth, about my capacity to fulfil my potential, about my capacity to love others and be part of a team, let alone a family. Let's face it, my father's a loner - he has never been happy, drifting from one relationship with a woman to another, abusing his body with drink and drugs, having skirmishes with the law as a result of his short fuse and fierce temper. But then I can forgive him his faults because of his great capacity to stretch the frontiers of thinking, and to dare to travel in his thoughts where others would not even dare to try.

"What really pisses me off is the way the others don't care about who and what they are. They consider that we are all just part of a chemical process, a product factory, a part of the supply and demand equation of modern life. But that is to dismiss everything about human beings - to downgrade them utterly, to show contempt and disgust to all those who went before and helped to stretch the human mind and body and to prove the wonders that both are capable of. I am not like that - and I despise those who are. But it has to be said that the present position is pretty humiliating for a human being, waiting to be born, in a test tube, in a freezing cold storage room! How I wish, every day that my position was different. But, as I said, I am philosophical, and so I must accept it and make the best of it, if I am to retain any part of my sanity and not suffer the fate of others who "went bad" and were washed down the drain of the nearest sink!

"The real question which bothers me now is when will it happen for me? When will the waiting be over? When will I start on the all-important voyage into the unknown, the journey to my birth? And the next question which worries me is this: if it doesn't happen for, say, another twenty or thirty years, how will I feel about it then? Then the father who was still relatively young when he put me in this test tube, may be an old man by the time I get born. He may even be dead by now. Will I still feel, as I do today, reasonably relaxed about him, or will the passage of time sour me so much that all I will feel is anger and resentment and then, when I do get born, work to get my own back and take my anger out on all those around me? These are questions I cannot answer. I guess no-one can.

"So now, all I do is wait." But, hang on a minute, the door is opening and the toff in the white coat has come into our room. He is looking at some information on his clipboard and, yes, he is walking up to my shelf His hand is stretched out. He looks as if he has decided on someone else, but no, he is about to pick me up!

"At last, the waiting's over..."