

T H E D O O R S

**BY
JOE VIVIANO**

Enter Mr. J.

J:

Strange.

(he doesn't seem to understand where he is; two men are in the room; one older man is fabricating a door (Charles), while another younger man (John) is watching)

John:

What's the matter?

J:

I don't seem to remember how I got here.

John:

You used the door didn't you?

J:

Uh; Yes, of course... the door.

John:

Then don't play dumb with us; we all use the door.
(John motions to the door by which J entered)

J:

Right, forgive me.

John:

Whatever.

J:

Say... what's he doing there?

John:

He is making a door, very important work.

Charles:

New door.

(the old man looks up briefly at J)

J:

I see... well gentlemen, I think I best be going.

John:

Where do you think you're going?

J:

The door I came in.

John:

I wouldn't do that if I were you.

J:

Why's that?

John:

Bad things.

(pause)

Wait for Charles' door.

J:

Looks the same to me.

(examining the door)

John:

Don't be so stupid; they're different.

J:

Different, how?

John:

Charles can explain.

J:

Hey there, how does all of this work?

Charles:

Shhhh... I'm almost finished!

John:

Bah! Leave the man alone, won't you?

J:

I was just asking him what you told me!

John:

Yeah? And what did he say?

J:

That he's "almost finished."

John:

Well, there's your answer.

J:

Look, I'm going to need something better than that.

John:

What's the matter, is that not good enough for ya?

J:

The hell it is.

John:

Well, it should be. I don't see you making a door.

(we see J becoming more frustrated now)

J:

Hell. (whispering)

John:

My advice, is for you to sit tight and wait for Charles here to finish his door. The time will come, soon enough.

J:

Fine. I'll wait.

John:

A wise choice.

J:

(suspicious)

Say, what's your name?

John:

John's the name.

J:

I'm J.

John:

Rotten name that is. What kind of name is J?

J:

I don't know, but it's my name.

John:

Well, at least you've got a good first letter.

(pause)

How do you spell that?

J:

J.

John:

As I thought.

J:

What?

John:

(pause)

Nothing.

J:

So, do you remember how you got here?

John:

No. Do you?

J:

No... that's why I feel so strange.

John:

Yes; you announced that when you arrived.

J:

Does Charles know?

John:

I don't think even Charles knows that.

(pause)

But I believe the man can make a door though.

J:

I don't suppose there's some way I can learn?

John:

You'll never learn how to make a door.

J:

What makes you say that?

John:

It's beyond your, shall I say, talents.

J:

John, come on now...

I'm feeling pretty lost here.

John:

Look, if you had it in you to make a door, you'd be making one now, but you're not making a door, you're annoying me. If you want to learn how to make a door, then go read some of the books on door-making; but my advice is for you to read no books and to wait for Charles' door, like me.

J:

And why shouldn't I read these books?

John:

You'll fuck up your brain.

J:

And why shouldn't I leave through the door I came?

John:

You'll fuck up your brain.

J:

And how do you know.

John:

I know.

J:

Did Charles tell you that?

John:

Yes; he did.

J:

So Charles here, he warned you against the books?

John:

Yeah. And I'm not afraid to admit it. I trust Charles; he's been around here far longer than me.

J:

I just wish I could comprehend the difference between Charles' door, and the other door.

John:

Hey, you and me both buddy.

J:

It's really distressing.

John:

Do what I do: try not to think about it.

J:

I mean, to be frank: I can't think about anything else.

John:

That's going to be a problem then. You're really far better off watching Charles. He's got it all figured out. Trust me; he means well; I've been helping Charles for a long time now.

J:

Trust you. (pause) Say... about how long have you and Charles been here anyway?

John:

I don't know. Time flies when your having fun I suppose.

Charles:

(still busy fashioning the door)

Hammer.

(whispering)

J:

Fun?

Charles:

Hammer.

(slightly louder)

John:

Yeah. I'm endlessly amazed by what Charles can do.

Charles:

Hammer!

(shouting angrily)

John:

Geez, are you deaf? Give the man a hammer already!

J:

Okay okay. Where's the hammer?

John:

Hammer wall.

(points to the hammer wall)

J:

(approaching the hammer wall)

Which hammer? There's a lot of hammers here!

John:

Pick one! You're holding up the door!

J:

Fuck! Okay!

(he grabs a hammer and gives it to Charles)

Here.

Charles:

That's a mallet! Go back and get me a hammer!

J:

Alright.

(obeys Charles)

Charles:

That's better.

J:

(to Charles)

Why's there a mallet on the hammer wall?

Charles:

I'm busy.

John:

That is a really stupid question.

J:

Is it?

John:

Mallets belong on the hammer wall.

J:

You don't have a mallet wall?

John:

No; there will never be a mallet wall. Why would there be a mallet wall? Are you stupid?

J:

I don't see why there couldn't be a mallet wall.

John:

If Charles wanted a mallet wall, there'd be a mallet wall, but there's no need for a mallet wall, so there's no mallet wall. Is that not obvious to you?

J:

Look, all I'm saying is that a little warning about the mallet would have been nice; like, I don't see why Charles had to get so upset that I brought him a mallet rather than a hammer.

John:

Upset? You're the one who's upset; instead of learning from the ordeal, here you are making a lot of hoopla about some stupid mallet wall which doesn't even exist. You see, this is why you're clearly not a door-building person.

J:

Not a door-building person? Okay. Tell me. Just what kind of person am I?

John:

You know.

J:

No; I don't think I do.

John:

Heh. In denial, as always.

J:

What exactly do you mean?

John:

Well, you're you; I'm me; and Charles, is Charles.

J:

(staring blankly)

John:

It's pretty obvious if you ask me.

J:

Alright.

(pause)

Look friend, whatever you are... just level with me, will ya?

John:

(folding his arms)

Okay...

J:

(suspicious)

What's this all about, exactly?

John:

We're waiting for Charles to complete his door.

J:

Where does Charles' door lead to?

John:

Where we're going.

J:

Where does the door I entered lead?

John:

Where you came.

J:

Don't you see my difficulty?

John:

(shrugging his shoulders and unfolding his arms)

I'm honestly not sure that I do.

J:

Well, so far, I really don't understand either one.

John:

Join the club. Not everyone understands the doors.

J:

Yeah, but... If I don't understand them, why am I here?

John:

Kid, I'm not sure that I get you.

J:

(struggling with his thoughts)

If I don't understand where we're going... Do I deserve to go there? Both places are beyond my understanding; and here you are, someone I've never seen before, telling me what to do.

John:

So you're saying that, because you can't make a door, that you shouldn't be allowed to use a door?

J:

Sure! Otherwise I'm just being pushed from door to door.

John:

Hmm. "just" ... you use this word a lot.

J:

Huh?

John:

Just an observation.

J:

(pause)

Don't you feel a little weird, if not uncomfortable, being between these two things, these two incomprehensibilities?

John:

Woah! Big words. And no; I'm totally fine with this.

J:

(scoffs)

Big words. (repeating) How can you be fine with this?

John:

I just am. You gotta trust me, okay? Charles is a nice guy!

J:

Is he?

John:

Yeah. Believe me he is.

J:

Well he did yell at me earlier.

John:

Right. He did. But you know he's working on a door.

(pause)

Anyway, that's beside the point.

J:

Which is?

John:

Charles and I, we're nice people.

J:

Great! So you're nice! So what?!

John:

So what!?! (repeating)

J:

Yeah. You say “people.”

John:

(impatiently)

And?

J:

And, I don't even remember being a person before.

John:

Same here, we're in the same boat!

J:

Are we even going to be people, nice people, then?

John:

Then? (repeating)

J:

After we go through this... mystery door.

John:

(pause)

I suppose I don't know.

(he looks at Charles while stroking his chin)

Charles?

Charles:

(not looking up from his work and waving his hand)

We'll be fine.

John:

I suppose that settles it. We'll be fine.

J:

Fine. (repeating)

John:

You don't seem too pleased.

J:

I'm not.

Charles:

(grumbles)

Molecules.

J:

(curiously)

What's that?

Charles:

Be quiet. I'm trying to focus.

John:

Leave the man in peace, will you?

J:

(to John)

Okay, but I'm just trying to understand his door.

John:

Hey, maybe that isn't your job. Charles is the one who's making the door around here, not you. Me? Why I just want to walk through it with Charles.

J:

God. I feel like I'm losing my mind.

John:

But J, you've only had it for a little while.

J:

I know. I don't understand why this is all so, unfamiliar.

John:

Why should this be familiar?

J:

I don't know.

John:

Who gave you the idea that this is something to understand?

J:

I don't know!

John:

Hey, not even Charles understands everything.

J:

But I want to understand.

John:

Right, of course.

J:

This is so frustrating for me.

(pause)

I wish I never entered this place.

John:

You what?

J:

I said I wish I never entered this place. What is the point when Charles over there won't speak to me?

John:

He's busy!

J:

He's busy! (repeating) He's busy! Doesn't he care that I'm new around here? I know he can hear us, but he continues to busy himself, working on his stupid door, not noticing me. What's this place gonna do, explode?!

John:

J... I should tell you something.

J:

What is it?

John:

(pause)

We're dying.

J:

(pause)

We're what?

John:

Dying I said, dying! Don't you understand?!

J:

What exactly is, dying?

John:

(grimly)

This place... I don't know how or why, but it's killing us.

J:

(serious)

What does this mean?

John:

It means that we won't be able to do anything anymore.

(pause)

No more me.

(pause)

No more Charles.

J:

(swiftly)

Good.

John:

(staring blankly)

Charles:

(staring blankly)

J:

(shifts his head, glares at Charles and John, alternately)

Charles:

Disgusting.

(whispering)

John:

(to Charles)

Charles. What's wrong with him?

Charles:

I don't know.

(pause)

John?

John:

Yes Charles?

Charles:

Fetch me a measuring tape, will you?

John:

Surely.

(walks over to the table and picks up a measuring tape and walks it over to Charles and hands it to him)

Here you go.

Charles:

Thank you.

(resumes working on the door)

John:

(walks over to J and says)

J... I know you didn't mean what you said.

(pause)

You're in shock.

J:

(somber)

I'm sorry ... I just ... I don't know.

John:

You're not alone.

J:

I guess; I don't see what my value is around here.

John:

Ah.
(frowns)

J:

It's not like I really have a choice around here...
(pause)

You said, that if we died, that we wouldn't do anything.

John:

(slight nod)

J:

And I'm not doing anything!

John:

Come here J.
(puts arm around J's shoulder)
Let's watch Charles make the door.

J:

He ha ha!
(neurotic)

John:

Focus on his work with me, let yourself be transfixed by it.
(they move together closer to Charles)
See him hard at his task?

J:

(sad)
Yeah.

John:

He's absorbed in it. Measuring. Sanding. Building.

J:

I suppose it is rather remarkable, watching him work.

John:

Can you try to feel, what he feels? I want you to do that.

J:

Okay. I'll just... wait here for a while.

John:

That sounds good.

(he slowly removes his arm from J's shoulder)

The two stand there for several minutes observing Charles work.

J:

John?

John:

Yes J?

J:

Thank you.

(nods respectfully)

John:

(smiles)

You're welcome J.

The two continue to stand there for a while longer, until...

J:

John?

John:

Yes J?

J:

Charles' door... Is it going to kill us?

John:

(after a brief pause)

Kill, I think, is certainly not at all the right word for what Charles' door will do to us, J.

J:

But, what is it going to do to us?

John:

It will... Improve us.

J:

But, what about us will be improved?

John:

I don't know. Pleasure, I think.

J:

Pleasure. (repeating)

(pause)

Weird.

John:

What?

J:

I don't know.

John:

Hey, keep watching Charles with me.

J slowly walks over towards the workbench where Charles continues to work, picks up a block of wood, which he examines, timidly and with reverence. J pets the block of wood with the tips of his fingers, carefully feeling its magnificent, fine surface.

J:

Is this, the wood for the door?

John:

Yes.

J:

(in awe)

I wish I knew how it worked.

John:

I doubt that is something we can know.

J:

What is the reason for that?

John:

It's beyond our abilities, I'm afraid.

J:

Oh. That's too bad. I really wanted to know.

John:

Yes; it's really good wood.

J:

It is?

John:

Yes.

J:

(pause)

It's hard to tell...

(to Charles and John)

Is there any way I can help you?

John:

Help us?

J:

Yes; I mean help you both.

John:

We're already here.

(pause)

So you cannot help us, J.

J:

Oh. I see.

(dejected)

I suppose I'll put this back now.

John:

(nodding)

Mmhmm.

J seems dazed. He carefully places the block of wood back on the workbench, where Charles continues to work on the door. After a few moments of uncertainty, he walks back over towards John.

J:

How much longer will it be?

John:

Not much longer.

J:

It's just...

(pause)

I'm not sure how much longer I can take this.