



by James O'Sullivan

CHARACTERS: HANNAH RAVI CHLOE TOM EMELI BEN

SCENE: A tree by the side of a road. HANNAH and RAVI enter.

HANNAH. This must be the place. My friend Mila said that Toni would meet us by the big tree.

RAVI. Cool, I like waiting. It gives me time to think.

HANNAH. About what?

RAVI. The big questions. Like why are we here?

HANNAH. We're here because Toni is going to lend us a copy of *Post-apocalyptic Zombie Super Hunters*, the greatest game ever.

RAVI. I was thinking in a grander sense.

HANNAH. In a grander sense, I need to go to the toilet.

RAVI. Go behind the tree.

HANNAH. Excuse me? I'm a girl. I don't go behind trees.

RAVI. Well go in front of the tree then.

HANNAH. I'm not going anywhere near a tree! Where's Toni? She should be here by now.

RAVI. I thought Toni was a boy.

HANNAH. I assumed she was a girl.

CHLOE enters.

HANNAH. Ah, this could be Toni now.
(*To Chloe.*) Are you Toni?

CHLOE. It's possible. Am I Toni?

RAVI. We don't know. That's why we're asking you.

CHLOE. I'm not sure. You seem to think I'm Toni. Now I'm so confused I don't even know why I'm here.

RAVI. That's exactly what I was thinking myself.

HANNAH (*exasperated*). Don't start on that again. (*To Chloe.*) What do people call you?

CHLOE. Chloe.

HANNAH. So you're not Toni?

CHLOE. Not when people call me Chloe.
Are you waiting for Toni?

RAVI. Yes.

CHLOE. I have a message from Toni.

HANNAH. You've met Toni? Is Toni a boy or a girl?

CHLOE. I've never seen Toni. I communicate with Toni by email.

HANNAH. Does Toni spell his or her name with a "y" or with an "i"?

CHLOE. Or what about three e's – as in T-O-E-N-E-E?

RAVI. Why would Toni do that?

CHLOE. I don't know. But have you seen my brother Ben?

HANNAH. What does he look like?

CHLOE. He's the most extraordinary boy in the world.

RAVI. Why is he so extraordinary?

CHLOE. When you meet him, you'll know. I must find him.

CHLOE begins to exit.

HANNAH. Wait! What's the message from Toni?

CHLOE. Oh – Toni will be late.

HANNAH. But I have to go to the toilet.

CHLOE. Just go behind that tree.

HANNAH. I am **not** going behind a tree.

CHLOE. No one will see.

HANNAH. I will see!

CHLOE (*shrugging*). Suit yourself. If you come across Ben, tell him I'm looking for him.

CHLOE *exits.*

HANNAH. But we don't even know what Ben looks like. Now here's someone else.

TOM *enters walking backwards. He is wearing his clothes back to front.*

RAVI. Hello. Are you Toni?

HANNAH. Or maybe you're Ben?

TOM. Why would I be either Toni or Ben?

RAVI. What is your name then?

TOM. Tom, if you must know.

RAVI. Why are your clothes on back to front?

HANNAH. And why are you walking backwards?

TOM. Isn't it obvious?

HANNAH. No.

TOM. I'm walking backwards so my clothes will be pointing in the right direction.

RAVI. Why don't you just change your clothes round?

TOM. I haven't got time to change my clothes round. I'm too busy looking for my friend Emeli. Have you seen her?

RAVI. We don't know what Emeli looks like.

TOM. I didn't ask what she looks like – I asked if you'd seen her.

HANNAH. We don't know.

TOM. How can you not know? You've either seen her or you haven't.

HANNAH. But we don't know what she looks like.

TOM. We've just been through this. I'm not asking what she looks like. I just want to know if you've seen her.

RAVI. We can't tell you whether we've seen Emeli because we don't know what she looks like.

TOM. Yes, I see your point. Well, I'll go and wait for her.

HANNAH. Why don't you wait here with us?

TOM. And stand still? It's much better to walk and wait. At least you get somewhere.

TOM *exits. EMELI enters.*

HANNAH. Are you Toni?

EMELI. Do I look like Toni?

RAVI. We don't know. We've never met Toni.

EMELI. So how would you know if I were telling the truth if I said I **was** Toni?

HANNAH. We wouldn't.

EMELI. So what's the point in asking me?

RAVI. We're just trying our luck.

EMELI. Well, lucky for you, I'm a truthful person. I'm Emeli if you must know. I'm looking for my friend Tom.

HANNAH. He was just here.

EMELI. I don't care where he's just been. I want to know where he is now. Do you know where he is now?

HANNAH. No.

EMELI. Then this conversation has been completely pointless. I'll go and wait for him.

EMELI *begins to leave.*



RAVI. Why don't you wait here?

EMELI (*pointing*). But what if he goes over there? I'd look pretty stupid waiting here if he turned up there. No, I've got a much better chance if I wait there.

EMELI exits. TOM enters.

TOM. Have you seen Emeli?

HANNAH. Yes, she was just here.

TOM. I'll go and wait some more.

RAVI. Why don't you wait here?

TOM. Has anyone turned up for you?

HANNAH. No.

TOM. Then this is a terrible place to wait. I'm waiting somewhere else.

TOM exits.

RAVI (*impatiently*). Where is Toni?

HANNAH. When I finally get my hands on *Post-apocalyptic Zombie Super Hunters*, I'm going to play it all day and all night.

RAVI. Me too.

CHLOE enters.

CHLOE. Have you seen my brother Ben?

RAVI. No.

TOM enters.

TOM. Have you seen Emeli?

HANNAH. No. You should wait here.

TOM. I keep telling you this is an awful place to wait.

HANNAH. But now we're all here.

TOM. Yes, we're all here waiting for people who don't turn up.

CHLOE. Why are your clothes on the wrong way round?

TOM. My clothes are on the right way round. It's me who's back to front.

EMELI enters.

EMELI. Tom! Where have you been?

TOM. Is that important? You can't exactly go back into the past to meet me.

EMELI. I guess not.

BEN enters.

CHLOE. Ben!

BEN. How are you all?

CHLOE. Ben is the most extraordinary boy in the world.

EMELI. What's so extraordinary about him?

CHLOE. Isn't it obvious?

TOM. No.

CHLOE. Ben, explain to them why you are so extraordinary.

BEN. Certainly. (*He holds up his hand.*) In my hand, I have iron.

EMELI. But you don't have anything in your hand.

BEN. I mean inside my hand there's iron.

RAVI. And that's extraordinary?

BEN. The iron atoms inside my hand were created deep within a giant exploding star at four and a half billion degrees Celsius. These atoms then travelled thousands of light years across space and eventually were incorporated into this solar system. Billions of years later, these iron atoms have worked themselves into my hand. When I die, these same iron atoms will become part of someone else's hand. And that is extraordinary.

HANNAH. I suppose that is extraordinary. But doesn't that make me extraordinary, too?

RAVI (*exasperated*). You're very extraordinary, Hannah. But where's Toni? We're waiting for Toni!

CHLOE. Oh, I almost forgot. I have another message from Toni. Toni can't make it. So you won't be playing *Post-apocalyptic Zombie Super Hunters* today.

TOM. I told you no one shows up here.

RAVI. I really wanted to play that game.

HANNAH. That's just great. I've been waiting here, busting to go to the toilet, and Toni isn't even going to turn up.

BEN. Well, why don't you ...

HANNAH. I am **not** going behind that tree!

BEN. What I was going to say is why don't you all come back to our place? We have that game at home.

TOM. Good idea. What are we waiting for?

ALL exit.

illustrations by
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Waiting for Toni

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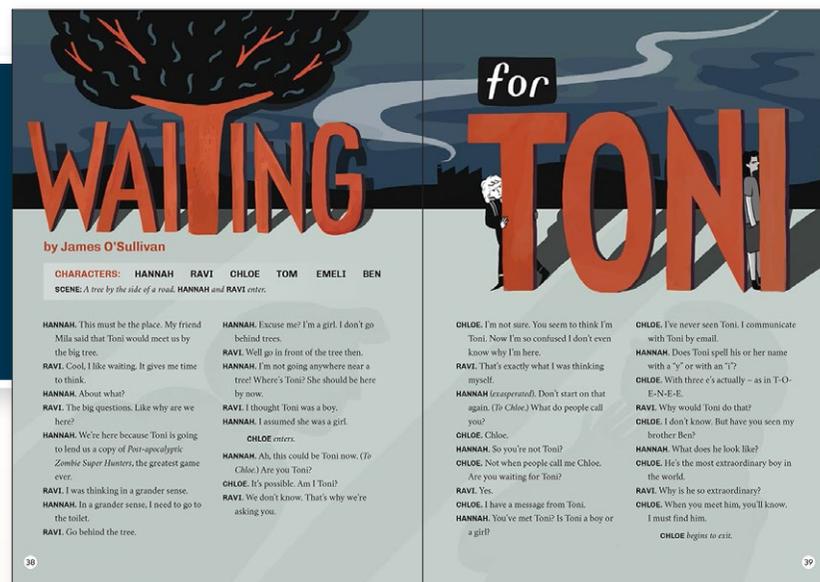
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