



Just the Ticket

It's not like waiting for the bus or the train :
Glasgow to Edinburgh, Dundee or Aberdeen.

Peoples' names called out by the woman at her work
like the names of places, stations : Mrs Kirk, Falkirk.

Lily Gow. Linlithgow. I sit here going nowhere.
I sigh in and out with my newspaper. A man there -

out of it with his chug, chug of a cough.
He has the look of someone needing a week off.

A doctor's line is a ticket to take it easy.
The woman before me is called, rises, queasy,
somebody now—Mrs Carr. Awkward carriage, vexed.
A knowing door closes like a secret. I'm next.

My turn to pass through that door,
to tell what hurts, where, to whisper, implore.

My turn to imagine I'm elsewhere,
to joke to the young, dishy Doctor :

if only we'd met under better circumstances.
He could have said, "Can I have the last dance ?"

I could have said, "Listen to my heart sing.
Listen to my heart beat its wings."

Jackie Kay

This poem was commissioned by the poet David Hart on behalf of the Arts Council. It is one of a collection of fifty poems by different UK poets - each on the subject of waiting. The poems are for display in waiting rooms.