Vanessa Jackson

Teacher’s name

CLASS

2019

Patients and Obituaries

“So what seems to be the problem, Edgar?” I asked him. Edgar Ducain crouched in the patient chair, guilt and anxiety and adrenaline coursing through his shaky body, his clammy hands in his lap fidgeting his fingers. Clear beads of nervous sweat appeared on his forehead. His back and neck curved as he slouched, staring at the floor. He stuttered, “I…I… I need help.” I waited patiently to hear his problem, but he and I already knew what he was referring to. Substance abuse, another alcoholic; poor guy’s dependence on liquor for several years lead him to a divorce from his wife of six years and her taking custody of his son and daughter. The demotion of his job of fifteen years only made the addiction worse.

“Now I’m completely out of job, and I thought it was *great* to leave such a crappy company…” Edgar explained. His hair, messy and oily hung over his face, he had a dark grey sweatshirt on with blue jeans. “I’m lucky enough to be around friends who didn’t let me drive, but I keep waking up with bad headaches and the need to barf, and... And…” He stopped and collapsed; Edgar’s hand hanging from his knee, the other on his face. I sat up straight, following the man as we squirmed from one position to the other in his seat. I had a black pen behind my ear, and I moved the notepad from my hands to the black coffee table that stood between us. His eyes, puffing red, trying to hold back his tears, “I just don’t know how to… I’ve been sober for only 2 days and I was fired from work and the company, and I was out drinking because I was ‘celebrating’, and… and…” he stopped again. I leaned forward, “It’s going to be OK.” I said to him. His eyes shed only a couple of tears. He lifted his head and faced me, “Well,” he sniffles a little, I hand him the tissue box. “What’s the solution, doc?” He gazed at me, waiting for my answer. I was still leaning towards him. “Well, there’s only one thing you can do… Find a permanent solution to your problem.” I assured him. He sat up, took a deep breath, and fell back in his chair, staring out the window, dim daylight, clouds covering the sun.

“Look, I can’t give you any kind of medication to solve this, this problem will forever dangle around your throat until you decide to let it go…” I know that’s not what he wanted to hear, but it was what was easiest. “We’ve been working together on this issue, and we both know that only so much can get done.” I smiled reassuringly, “The rest of your life is up to you.” I put his hand into mine and met his eyes with mine. “Once you make the decision, it will be for the better,” I smiled. He smiled back, His eyes with a small glimmer of hope. “Thank you.” He whispered. “You’re the light at the end of a dark tunnel,” I smiled and turned away for a second. “Once you’ve made the right choice, you’ll see the end of the tunnel for yourself.” He got up, slowly, but stood tall. We stood and looked at each other. “Thank you.” he whispered into my ear as he embraced me, still tearing up. We let go of each other, smiled, and he walked out of my office.

It was several days later, I finished speaking with another patient, Ari Jenerson. I walked out of my office shortly after Ari left. The kids that work at Reception, sat playing cards; it was one of those slow days. Vanessa and Dexter, about 23 years old, give or take, stopped as soon as they saw me walking by the Reception desk. “Calm down, I’m not the police.” I chuckled, “Hey Vanessa, Edgar Ducain, age 45, he didn’t show up to his appointment... Could you reco--”

“Dr. Jacobs, I guess you haven’t been told, but…” Vanessa was nervous.

“What happened to Edgar?” I asked them. She hesitated.

“Dr. Jacobs, Edgar was found dead less than a week ago.” Dexter answered. “According to the autopsy, he was found dangling from his ceiling fan. Don’t get how he did tha-”

“SHHH.” Vanessa interrupted him; she hit him on the shoulder.

“Edgar committed suicide?” I asked. They nodded sadly. Vanessa found the local paper and handed it to me. It was released days after our last appointment. “His obituary is on page 6,” she sighed.

I read the title of the small section on page 6. EDGAR DUCAIN: born July 16, 1970-August 23, 2015. I was reactionless. I kept staring at the paper.

“Dr. Jacobs, I’m sorry” Vanessa said.

I stood silently.

“Dr. J., you alright?” Dexter asked.

I placed the newspaper back on the counter. “You kids have a good day.” I grinned at them and calmly walked away from Reception.

“I hope she’s OK,” Dexter said from behind me.

“She just needs some time...” Vanessa reassured him.

I got home. I hung up my jacket in the closet, walked up the staircase, and took a shower. I put on my pajamas and slippers. I walked back downstairs. I poured myself a glass of red wine and popped some popcorn in the microwave, I strolled into my living room with a bowl of cheddar popcorn and red wine. I glanced at the dim ceiling fan above the living room. “Guess he found the light for himself,” l said aloud. I sat on the couch, placed my wine on a coaster on the table, and the popcorn next to it. I noticed by notepad on the glass table, and I still had the pen in my ear. I scribbled notes about all of my patients, including Edgar Ducain. I grabbed my pen and scratched out his name. Out of the twenty-one people listed, 7 of them were scratched out. I grinned and placed the notepad and pen back on the table. I grabbed the remote and reclined back on the couch, turned on the TV; I didn’t want to miss another episode of *How to Get Away with Murder.*

(1,041 words)