

The Dancing Doctor

So you've heard of Dr. Seuss, Dr. Jekyll, Dr. Who, Dr. Strangelove, Dr. Oz, Dr. Evil, Dr. Frankenstein, Dr. (Sheldon) Cooper, even Dr. B, right? But have you ever heard the story of Dr. Jay Danse? Probably not. But that's okay! Roll with me for a minute and it'll all become clear. Clear as crystal, I promise.

So Dr. Danse was quite a gifted fellow, a true Renaissance man, a classic man, if you will. He could have revolutionized any field, any line of work he chose. He was that gifted. But ultimately he realized he had to pick one to focus on, and so he chose psychology. He earned a doctorate degree in psychology from Harvard Law School and immediately opened his own practice. He started out in a lonely shanty in the middle of a desert, the closest sign of civilization being a gas station a mile down the road.

Undeterred, Dr. Danse set up shop and opened for business. And then he waited. And waited. And waited. He had no patients whatsoever. Perhaps they didn't know of his existence. Granted, Dr. Danse made no effort to advertise. That wasn't his thing. "Let them come to me," Dr. Danse would say to the Indian man who owned and operated the nearby gas station and who sometimes stopped in to chat, curious as to how Dr. Danse managed to stay in business. And so Dr. Danse waited. And he waited. But never once did Dr. Danse's confidence falter. He came to work everyday with a smile on his face and a spring in his step. And then one day it finally happened: a patient walked in.

Now, this wasn't a patient per se. He was just a lost tourist whose wife had nagged him to stop and ask for directions (though there was only one road for as far as the eye could see). He had tried the Indian man at the gas station first, but he couldn't make out what he was saying through his thick accent, and so now here he was in Dr. Danse's office.

"Greetings, my friend!" Dr. Danse exuberantly exclaimed. "What brings you here?"

"Well... I'm, uh..." started the tourist, "I'm a little lost. Could you please help me? I've got my wife in the car waiting for me, it's been a long trip, we're just trying to get home..."

"I understand completely. Please, have a seat," Dr. Danse pleasantly said and gestured to a chair in front of his desk. His desk was an upturned paint can.

"I... I don't think I have time. Please, could you just tell me..."

"Nonsense, man! Have a seat!" And so the tourist reluctantly sat down. He tentatively looked around, took note of the run-down condition of the office, and then turned back to Dr. Danse, who had been staring at him inquisitively the whole while.

"I..."

"So..." Dr. Danse began, "You say you are lost, correct?"

"Correct."

"Good. Now, first we must establish where you are going. Where, sir, are you going, exactly?"

"My home in San Diego. My wife and I are on our way back from vacation and..."

"Enough. That is not a satisfactory answer." The tourist looked flustered, Dr. Danse amused. Dr. Danse began again: "Where are you going, in the broader sense?"

"I... I... I don't know!" the tourist barked, starting to get really angry.

"Well, there's the problem! How can you ever hope to know where you are if you don't know where you're going?"

"Look, I'm not a highly metaphysical man. I'm a working man! Can you please just tell me how to get back to San Diego?"

"Listen, man, what have you done with your life?" Dr. Danse inquired, an eyebrow raised.

"What do you mean?"

"What have you done with your life?"

"I... I've worked and made money to support myself and my wife..."

"But have you ever actually done anything? Or have you just existed? Just worked, slept, ate, watched TV, held shallow conversations, you know. Have you ever actually done anything of consequence?"

"I got married."

"Good. Anything else?"

"Uh... Well, I..."

"I thought not. You know what you need? You need to join the dance of life."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"Life's short, my friend. You can't go through life existing, you must go through life doing." The tourist's eyes widened.

"But, I went on vacation..."

"And did you have fun?"

"No, I guess not... I really didn't even want to go, but everyone was doing it..."

"Case and point. You need to find something that really means something to you, something of consequence, something you can do. Don't seek money; money is only a means to an end, and not the only means, mind you. You need to find that end. Go find it."

"I see... I, I see what you're saying!" the tourist exclaimed, smiling radiantly.

"Very good. Now, off you go!"

"Yes! Thank you, Mr..."

"Dr. Danse."

"Thanks, doc. I really appreciate it."

"My pleasure." And with that, the tourist exited the office and rejoined his wife, and they drove off to a new future. And then came the waiting again, like a plague. But the whole time Dr. Danse never once forgot to smile. His reward: another patient, this one blown in like a tumbleweed.

"Hey-ey, dude! How you been, my fellow spaceman?!?" the newcomer asked. He was young, dressed like a beach bum, had bowl-cut blonde hair, and was clearly a stoner.

"Hi there," Dr. Danse replied. "What can I do for you?"

"I just, I was out there walkin', travelin' through space, and I saw this place and I was like, woah, dude! Let's check it out!"

"And that's what you're doing now? Checking my office out?"

"Yeah! It's a nice place, bro. I could get used to it." The stoner sat down in the chair across from Dr. Danse and put his feet up on the desk-bucket.

"Well, let me ask you this: what do you do in life?" Dr. Danse queried.

"I..." the stoner was at a loss. "I just hang out, man, float through space."

"I see. Floating through space is a very admirable pastime. But that's all there is to you? You're pretty much an empty shell then. You need to find something tangible, my friend. You need to join the dance of life."

"The dance... of... what now?"

"Of life. You need a life. Not just an existence. You need to find balance, my man. While it's perfectly okay to 'hang out,' you can't do it all the time. You got to DO something. Something that will make living on spaceship earth worthwhile. Some purpose for your space suit, ya dig?"

"I'm vibin' with ya, right now, man, that really hit me deep," the stoner replied.

"So what are you going to do now?" Dr. Danse asked.

"I'm going to go find something to DO!"

"Very good. Now, out with you! And stop using drugs. They're superficial."

"Will do, doc. Thanks, bruh. If you ever need a place, you're always welcome on the East Coast. Represent!" With that, the stoner ran out the door. And then more waiting. Only, that stoner-kid went home and told all his buddies about the down-to-earth new doc, and so there was a mass migration of East Coast stoners and surfers to Dr. Danse's office. The building was surrounded by a sea of board shorts, bro tanks, sandals, and blonde bowl cuts. There were so many people that it made national news, which only brought more people to Dr. Danse's door, curious to see what was so great about this new "miracle doctor." The Indian who managed the gas station down the street could not believe his luck. Dr. Danse soon became very wealthy (though money was only a secondary concern to him), and began construction of a new office, complete with water slides and ping pong tables, right next to his original office. It was Dr. Danse's homecoming, what he had waited for all along.

"Next!" Dr. Danse called outside. An immaculately dressed young man entered.

"How do you do, Dr. Danse," the young man said.

"I'm always well. The question is, my friend, how are you?" Dr. Danse replied.

"I... I'm a bit stressed, I admit. Really stressed."

"Why do you think that is?"

"I... I'm put under so much pressure at work. I'm an investment analyst, you see, and I work for Goldman Sachs managing a mutual fund. And... The pressure... Always worrying about the market... What's the market doing? Where's the market right now?... Have to beat the market... And my co-workers... Have to beat them too... It's all about performance. If I don't perform, I..."

"Stop. I've heard enough. Do you know what you need?"

"A crystal ball?"

"Hell, no! What are you doing worrying about money so much, when you should be worrying about your happiness? You need to start living. Everybody dies but not everybody lives. You, my friend, are not living."

"So what do you suggest?"

"Join the dance of life."

"Uhm... what?"

"I suggest a healthy dose of indifference. Do your best at work, but don't care too much. Go do something that will change your life, give it some gravity, you know. You know what Giles Corey said when he was being pressed? He said, 'More weight!' That's what you need: more weight. To your life, that is. Not your body. Don't take me out of context."

"Yes, yes... I see. No, I really understand. I get it. I'm going to join the dance of life. Really, I'm going to do it! Thank you, Dr. Danse. You're a life-saver."

"I do my best. Speaking of life-savers, would you like one?"

"The candy?"

"No, silly, candy is bad for you." Dr. Danse then proceeded to pull an actual life-saver out from one of his desk drawers and handed it to the young man. "Take this, and go ride the waves of life!"

"I will!"

"You must find them first."

"I will!"

"Good. Get to it, now, go!" Dr. Danse saw an unsatisfied social worker next. She was unhappy because many of her clients failed to appreciate her laborious efforts. They didn't miraculously "change."

"You need to join the dance of life," Dr. Danse told her.

"What?" the social worker asked, clueless.

"The dance of life." Some conversation ensued, and then the social worker returned to the world, revitalized, with a new vision. Meanwhile, Dr. Danse moved into his new office. Despite all his building expenses he was wealthier than ever, but he didn't know what to do with all his money. The solution: he started throwing wild dance parties. These were happy times. Dr. Danse's popularity was skyrocketing, and he was now a household name. Even famous athletes turned to him for advice.

"How have you been, doc?" LeBron James asked, entering Dr. Danse's new office.

"Fantastic, my friend, fantastic! What can I do for you?"

"Well, I'm not feeling the best right now. I moved from Cleveland to Miami, hoping to win my first ring, and we were runners-up this past season, our first season together. It really feels like a bust year, man."

"Let me ask you something, 'Bron: did you have fun?"

"Haha, of course, man, I always do. I'm a gamer."

"Then it was not a bust year."

"I see what you're sayin'."

"Do you know what you need to do now?"

"What?"

"Dance."

"What... What do you mean? Like, go on *Dancing with the Stars* or something? I got an invite last week."

"No. You have to join the dance of life before you can dance with the stars, my friend. The dance of life is where it's at. Join it." LeBron won his first ring the following season. He dedicated it to his children and Dr. Danse.

Dr. Danse began to see all sorts of people. A factory worker who was injured on the job came in. Dr. Danse told him to join the dance of life. A single mother raising eight children stopped by. Dr. Danse told her to join the dance of life. Recent immigrants who didn't speak English paid him a visit. Dr. Danse told them to join the dance of life. Then came a broken, debt-ridden farmer. Dr. Danse told him to join the dance of life. Then a pop icon who couldn't escape

the paparazzi and superficiality. Dr. Danse told her to join the dance of life. B.o.B flew in for a spell.

"I play the guitar," B.o.B said.

"Indeed." Dr. Danse replied. Then came a homeless man, a divorcee, a widow, a widower, a plumber, a teacher driven insane by Common Core and standardized testing, a ditch-digger, a CEO, a socialist... Dr. Danse told them all to join the dance of life. At one point, the entire middle class of America came to Dr. Danse. Do you know what Dr. Danse told the middle class? To join the dance of life. And then, one fateful day, came the fat man.

"I want to do something about my weight. It really depresses me," said the fat man.

"You better start dancing," Dr. Danse replied.

"You mean the dance of life?" the fat man asked, the first person ever to grasp the "dance of life" concept without further explanation from Dr. Danse.

"No," Dr. Danse said. "I mean literally dancing. You'll lose weight that way." The fat man promptly enrolled in a Jazzercise program and dropped 50 pounds. Dr. Danse was the epitome of a successful man. He was a workaholic, but he loved his work. And when not at work, he went wild. He barely aged from year to year. He was dancing the dance of life. And then, at the peak of Dr. Danse's career, in walked none other than Korey Huskonen, explorer/pioneer/leaf-hunter extraordinaire. Dr. Danse was taking a wine bath at the moment. Red wine, that was.

"Hello," Korey said.

"Howdy. What are you doing?" Dr. Danse asked.

"Keepin' it real," Korey answered.

"I know exactly how you feel." Dr. Danse then got out of the wine bath. He had been bathing in a full business suit. A black suit, that was, with a black tie.

"So what do you want to talk about?" Dr. Danse inquired, toweling off his suit.

"Rocks," Korey answered.

"Really?"

"No."

"I see." Dr. Danse walked to stand in front of Korey. "Korey," he began, "Why can't you ever be direct with people?"

"It's not in my nature."

"Quite right. Well, get on with it."

"Very well," Korey said. He looked at you, who was reading this story. "You better start dancing."

The End