

Discipline of Silence

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. INTERSECTION DOWNTOWN - DAY

PHIL, in his 60's, tries to read from a paper as it flaps in the wind. He desperately searches nearby street signs, growing increasingly agitated. Standing nearby in a lab coat, DR. DEBRA GREEN, late 30's, notices and steps forth, but then hesitates, stares, and eventually looks away.

EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE SHOP - DAY

A disheveled STREET PERFORMER with oily skin is playing the guitar so beautifully, lost in his world. DAVID WYCRAFT, 40, dressed in a black suit and blue tie, listens, surreptitiously glancing over with admiration. He spots the open guitar case, then checks his wallet, finding only one twenty. The performer finishes his song with gusto. David remains silent.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

MICHAEL, a formally dressed, slick-haired man lifts his attaché on the table and opens it. Next to him is EILEEN, an older stern-faced woman in a wheelchair. Settling down on the other side of the table is SAMUEL, a stocky man in a suit one size too small, and Debra.

MICHAEL

My client has gone on disability and will be unable to work for at least the next six months to a year. She also asks for compensation for the agonizing, life-altering pain she has suffered as a result of Dr. Debra Green's reckless malpractice.

Debra's head pivots to Samuel, who only takes notes, then to Eileen, and then back to Michael.

DEBRA

I performed the procedure by the book. There is no chance I could have caused this. She was fine after the procedure, and went home the same day.

Debra stares at Samuel in disbelief, and leans in, quiet but firm.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
C'mon, this is fraud. Please don't
let this happen.

SAMUEL
Don't worry. We'll discuss this
later.

Debra finally meets the eyes of Eileen, who quickly looks away, suffering under her glare, as Michael starts laying evidence on the table.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

FRANK, 60, and RHIANNE, 40's, formally dressed, sit across from David, who shifts anxiously.

RHIANNE
Look, David, no one likes things
like this dragged out, so I'll get
to the point. We've decided we're
letting you go. Immediately.

David goes white.

FRANK
Your...
(clears throat)
Your belongings will be sent home to
your address, and you'll be escorted
to your car by our security.

DAVID
But, why? I thought I was doing such
great work at this firm. You gave me
a big raise last month!

Frank exhales over pursed lips, but soon mimics Rhianne's stoicism and silence.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Frank? I'm still fairly new to the
healthcare insurance industry. Can I
at least use you as a reference?

Frank lowers his eyes. David stares in disbelief between him and Rhianne.

INT. MILLIE'S CAFE - DAY

Debra and David recline across from each other in a café, unwinding over a pair of sandwiches.

DEBRA

What jerks. How could they do that to you?

DAVID

From what you told me, I'm not sure whose day has been worse.

Debra gathers her belongings and tray, then David follows suit.

DEBRA

Okay, let's get through the rest of the day, shall we?

DAVID

Umm, my day's already over, remember?

Debra frowns in concern, but David smiles reassuringly.

DEBRA

Hey, how about we meet up for dinner tonight and commiserate?

Debra fixates on the door, hesitating for a long pause. David's smile falters.

DAVID

Well, let me know if you change your mind. I guess tomorrow I'll try to help with that lawsuit?

Debra nods and follows David's lead as he stands to leave.

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE - DAY

Debra, in lab coat and stethoscope, stands next to the bed occupied by her patient AMANDA, early 20's, with a vibrant smile despite a tired face and bald scalp.

AMANDA

I don't know if I can keep doing the chemo. But I still want to go scuba-diving in Belize, and, would you believe I've been studying archaeology for this long and I haven't seen the pyramids in Egypt yet? Have you been there?

Debra grimaces, holding emotion back.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

When I was little, I used to dream
about what it would be like inside
one.

Debra sheds a tear, and looks away to wipe it, then turns
back with her weakly forced smile.

EXT. INTERSECTION DOWNTOWN - TWILIGHT

Thoughts linger in David's eyes as he gets distracted by the
appearance of the same flustered man, Phil, with the same
paper in his hands, once again trying to make sense of the
street signs. People flow past, and eventually David leans to
approach, but a groan of anger stops him. Phil crumples up
his paper and tosses it into the trash bin, then sulks.

Phil suddenly loses his balance and catches himself on the
trash bin, his eyes wide. He hears a voice.

KATIE (O.S.)

Why is your nose so hairy?

David's face slackens. Phil looks down. A six year old child,
cute as a button, challenges him.

A woman rushes up and grabs her hand, glancing apologetically
at the man, who begins laughing.

KATIE'S MOTHER

I'm so sorry.

She steals the girl away as a jovial David takes her place.

DAVID

Kids can just say anything.

Phil rubs his leg.

PHIL

That girl's got a football career
ahead of her! All I need is another
knee replacement.

DAVID

You'll be fine, shaggy snout. Hey,
do you need help finding something?

A ringtone blares from David's pocket.

EXT. WALKWAY NEAR HOSPITAL - TWILIGHT

Debra stands in front of a bench, phone to ear.

DAVID (V.O.)

Debra?

Debra stays silent, then consciously breathes.

DEBRA

Still up for dinner?

FADE OUT.