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1-THE PATIENT

Staunch feet hurried down the corridor of the institution's ward. The ward seemed cold and uninviting however the smell of fresh cut flowers gave it the faintest whisper of hope. Finally arriving at his destination, the good doctor held the patient's file in one hand and gently opened the door with the other. His head of curly, black hair popped into the room.

"Good morning," he smiled, "I am Dr. Ross. May I come in please?"

"Sure," came the reply.

Upon entering the room, the doctor's trained eyes took in all they saw. Never in life was there a patient who seemed less likely to kill himself! Clad in white pajamas, Carl exuded a still confidence which was almost unnerving. His posture was erect, unlike that of most patients and the way he devoured his chicken sandwich showed clear signs of an undisturbed appetite. He stared at Ross coming towards him while he energetically cut his bacon strips.

"I can see you are enjoying your breakfast. Should I wait until you're done?" asked the doc.

"Not necessary," said Carl as he loaded the bacon squares onto the fork and ate them all in one swoop.

Dr. Ross occupied an empty folding chair then proceeded to ask Carl a series of detailed questions which

led to a forty-five-minute discussion. After their somewhat tense interaction he ascertained one important fact: This man was not suicidal. So, what on earth was going on? Why had Carl been found standing on a window ledge on the top floor of a twenty-five-story building?

“Carl if I am to help, you must tell me what’s really going on.”

Carl gave a slight smile. “But you already know what’s going on,” he said dryly, “I’m suicidal. Why else would I be here doctor?”

Dr. Ross gave Carl a direct look. Sympathetic stares met with cold calculative eyes and, with certitude, Ross knew he needed to change his tactic. If he was to ever find out what was going on, a different approach needed to be adopted. He sighed at the realization that these thoughts would be the very ones consuming his mind that night.

The morning of January 29th, 2016 wore on as the various staff members of the Hartford-Walsh Health Institute in downtown Portland continued with their usual routines. After the session with Carl, Ross saw three more patients. At twelve the doctors all had an hour-long meeting with the chief of staff to discuss impending matters concerning their work schedules. After a quick one o’ clock lunch Dr. Ross stepped out onto an office balcony only to find Dr. Fields already there. His search for mental peace was at once disturbed. He knew the notions she had expressed at the meeting earlier were correct. The thought of it infuriated him. He lit up and took a long pull on a cigarette, one of the rare times he smoked.

“I’m surprised you didn’t bite my head off in there,” he lashed out.

She took a replenishing breath as she fought to keep those brown eyes off of him. “Well not all of us are loud and opinionated as you obviously think.”

He threw a partial glance her way without saying a word and kept smoking.

Fields spoke again, “You were wrong at the meeting, Ross. You know this don’t you?” Her eyes remained focused on the trees afar.

“I stand corrected,” he responded, in a tone which blatantly indicated anything but that.

Dr. Fields pursed her pouty, cherry-painted lips. He could be such a pompous prick sometimes; most times, as far as she was concerned. Such an insult to the profession! Therapy demanded humility not haughtiness. She turned and headed back inside the office, all the while hating his arrogance. Didn’t he realize even intellect as high as his had its limits? No one was perfect. Unknown to her, his dark eyes were following her every movement as she walked away; it was an intense gaze which sifted through cigarette smoke to capture her curvaceous form moving towards the building’s inner layers; Ross was cognizant of how far into the gutter his mind already was. But honestly, which heterosexual male wouldn’t get lost in her physique? Within seconds Fields was gone and Ross turned his attention back to himself. Alone on the balcony, his thoughts began to go deeper. He did see her point but he would eat dirt before ever admitting it to her; his emotional attachment to the situation had clouded his judgment about the long-term viability of the outreach program. He had been so eager to help this particular community by

providing a safe after school environment for the children that he had failed to properly research the sustainability of such a program. However Fields had done her research fully and pointed out exactly why this program, although a noble cause, would not work out in the long run. After taking only a few more puffs on the cigarette he discarded it and went back inside to inform those involved, of his decision to postpone the plans for the outreach program.

2 -THE 'MOONER'

“So, Thomas, did you moon anyone this week?” asked Dr. Ross.

In response to the doctor’s question, the man lowered his head.

This was Thomas Mellor, a marketing director in his late forties. To most people, Thomas seemed quite exemplary. He was an ardent family man with a wife and two children. He was a regular church attendant and also taught adult bible classes. Thomas, however, possessed an annoying foible which fought to be the source of his undoing. He seemed to have an incessant need to expose his rear end to adults who were in positions of authority. He got some sort of sick thrill from going around and ‘mooning’ strangers.

Ross understood what the head lowering meant. It took everything he had inside to retain a straight face. To him, the situation was the very embodiment of eccentric humor (his favorite kind). Here was a guy who picked a specific location once a week and went out in public to deliberately expose himself to unsuspecting people. This was Ross’s most abstruse patient, the most therapeutically demanding in his cluster. At their initial session he had refused to believe that Mellor was actually afflicted with this problem; after all, statistically what were his chances of

encountering such a rare psychological challenge? He had thought it to be a prank orchestrated by one of the other doctors. But after they had spoken for some time, Mellor had shown him the legal charges, the fines paid and finally a copy of the court mandate for seeking psychiatric help at the institution.

Dr. Ross continued, "OK, so you exposed yourself in public again I presume."

Thomas nodded. Ross could sense his shame.

"When?" asked the doctor. He tightened his grip on a pen.

"It was this morning."

"Could you describe the feeling you got from this last exposure?"

Thomas agreed to do so. "A total rush. Better than the times before. I felt so alive."

"Thomas, do you see a pattern of progression here? You are going for greater and greater thrill. It's not necessarily about the exposure but more about the need for thrill enhancement. It's more about the need for a greater and greater emotional high."

"So, what does this mean? Thomas asked.

"Do you think there will ever be a time when you won't have the need for the thrill?"

"No."

"Therefore, this habit will continue its elevation unless you take control of the urge itself." Tell me, other than exposing yourself, what gives you a great rush? Or has there ever been anything in your life which has given you a rush similar to the rush you get from the exposures?"

"Well...during childhood when I went to school once."

“Going to school gave you that rush?”

“No not going to school; just something that happened at school.”

“Would you like to explain a little more?”

“I would rather not.”

“Mr. Mellor you already know whatever you say here is absolutely confidential. You should feel free to say anything to me at any time during our sessions. It all goes no further than my ears. And I’m not going to judge you for anything you say, do or have done.”

The middle-aged man strove to control a wave of panic which had just come over him. He looked at his chest to reassure himself that his heart wasn’t really about to jump out of it. Before his mind had a chance of persuading him to do otherwise, he continued with the explanation.

“There was once a group of us kids did something wrong and the teacher beat us on the butt with a ruler. It should’ve felt bad but for me it felt great.”

“Was this a feeling of general exhilaration or sexual arousal?”

“Exhilaration. I wasn’t into sex yet at the time; I couldn’t have cared less about it.”

“Interesting,” noted Ross, “Didn’t it make you feel a bit nervous or humiliated to know the other kids were looking on?”

“Nope, it made the whole thing even better. But I never got spanked again though.”

“Why hadn’t you told me about this during any of our previous sessions?”

“Well, I didn’t think it had anything to do with the matter. What does getting beat in class have to do with mooning folks?” asked Mellor.

“Mr. Mellor it’s not necessarily the mooning or getting spanked. It’s the feelings you derived from these incidents. It is possible that the feeling sparked by the childhood spanking automatically registered itself in your subconscious. Your brain experienced its first “rush.” It also associated that rush with your posterior and being observed by a group of people. Your brain tried to find a similar situation which would give you the same rush you felt all those years ago, thus developing the mooning habit. Additionally, the teacher may have been seen as an authoritative figure in your mind, which is probably why you only moon people who have certain degrees of authority, like law enforcement officers and business owners. Do you understand?”

Ross contemplated for a moment. Mellor’s case was unique. His exhibitionism had no link to childhood trauma or any of the usual root causes. Outside of this one dysfunctional activity, his personality and lifestyle would be considered normal by most people. The way in which his exhibitionistic disorder manifested itself was also unusual: the man mooned both genders and did not receive any sexual enjoyment from the acts.

Mellor looked at him. “I guess what you’re saying could be a possibility. So, what do I do about it?”

“Let me ask you this: Have you ever thought of replacing the mooning activities with any other act, similar or not similar to exposure?”

“No, not really.”

“Well, why not give it a try? Find a safe substitute,” said Dr. Ross.

“Well as long as I’m laying all my cards down, I gotta say I really liked the spanking.”

“Then why not try the spanking in a safe environment? How about trying spanking with your wife when you get the urge for exposure? She could spank you. Although your specific case of exhibitionism is not sexually motivated, the activity with your wife may give you the exhilaration you need but in a safe, acceptable environment.”

“But won’t she think I’m some kind of pervert? The mooning is already a lot for her to take in. She can’t quite wrap her head around how someone can have this problem.”

“If you explain the situation to her, the way you explained it to me today and told her everything about the childhood spanking incident, you would be surprised how understanding she may be. After all, she is your wife. Part of her role is to support you, right?”

“Well, she has been very supportive so far, God bless her heart.”

Ross smiled. “There you go. Have a talk with her first and then you two can take it from there.”

“OK doc, I will. But hey, do you think I will get the same feeling from this? I mean no one will be watching me.”

“That’s true. How about adding a video camera to the event, videotaping your actions? It will be like someone’s right there in the room with the two of you.”

“Good idea. Thanks Dr. Ross”

“You’re welcome. By the way, it would be a good idea for your wife to participate in some of our sessions. It will be insightful for you both to know how this is affecting her and how she feels about being an active part of your

recovery. Also, there are some cognitive behavioral techniques which could benefit you as a couple. So please ask her to come with you to our next session.”

“Sure thing,” said Thomas. He then left the room.

This afforded Dr. Ross the opportunity to make some more notes in his file.

After work that day Dr. Ross went to Mucca Osteria, a restaurant not too far from the Hartford-Walsh Health Institute where he worked. Mucca had a sturdy reputation for class, with most first timers falling in love with its ambiance, cuisine and extensive selection of alcoholic beverages. Ross smiled as he saw his old friend already sitting at a table- always fifteen minutes earlier, this guy. Quin Zouleskhar stood up to welcome his friend with the usual greeting. They both then proceeded to sit and order drinks which came immediately. Dr. Ross was grateful for this friendship. It was one of the few, from his youth, that he had managed to keep. He and Quin had done their undergraduate studies at the same Alaskan university at the exact same time. He had been Quin’s best man at his wedding and had also been there to help him through a bitter divorce. Quin was also appreciative of their friendship and its longevity; it was he who had suggested meeting once a month as a male bonding routine. During these meetings the men would play soccer, have drinks, participate in some charitable activity or simply catch up on each other’s lives.

“How’s the legal world Q?” Ross loosened his gray-striped, silk tie. “Justice still blind?”

“It will be as long as I’m around,” the attorney joked back.

Ross respected his friend’s legal valor and desire for justice though he often thought of the legal world as a pool of sharks. Knowing there were still some truthful beings within the legal systems did little to suppress his contempt for the profession. Among the few trustworthy legal administrators were far too many untrustworthy ones, a fact which sometimes irked him. Quin was one of the few attorneys he trusted, probably because he had known him personally for so long.

“I think you’re in the right place man,” Ross continued.

“You mean law? Yea. I’ve got a legal mind; wouldn’t be of much use elsewhere.” Quin’s eyes lazily observed the bar’s physical environment as he drank.

“You wouldn’t be happy anywhere else either. So, I’m glad this worked out for you. You’re successful at what you like doing. It’s great.”

“Yea. It’s the same with you and health. You’re good at what you love. Damn good, if you ask me.”

Dr. Ross’s smile betrayed his ego. “Thanks.” He raised his glass slightly in the air, “To good jobs,” he said coolly.

Quin raised his beer in agreement as he smiled also, “To good jobs. How’s your dad, man? Still hanging in there, right?”

Ross was thoughtful. “Yea. Doing the best he can.”

“Good.” Quin took a drink.

Both men scanned the bar for a subject distraction.