

Thoughts and Prayers

By

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Cast of Characters

Grace: The Hygenist; Age open
Debbie: The Receptionist; Age open
Jeremy: A Former Patient; Age open

Scene

The Lobby of a Dentist's Office

Time

Just after closing time...

THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

(At rise, DEBBIE is at her desk as GRACE enters from the interior of the office, heading for the front door)

GRACE
You're still here?

DEBBIE
No, I left an hour ago.

GRACE
You wanna talk about it?

DEBBIE
No!

GRACE
Suit yourself.

DEBBIE
Look, it's... I'm just still feeling a little funny, and so Jake was gonna come pick me up. Why don't you wait til he gets here? He can walk you to your car.

GRACE
That really isn't necessary.
(pats her purse)
You know me.

DEBBIE
You're not really saying that you...
(Grace pulls a gun out of the purse)
Woah! Woah! Rhetorical question!

GRACE
I know... but I just do so love fucking with you.

DEBBIE
Yeah, well can we just put it on hold for a little bit?

GRACE
Yeah... you sure you haven't seen my lighter?

DEBBIE
For the third time, no.
(Grace turns to go)
Grace, seriously... just wait for Jake.

GRACE

Honey, it ended hours ago.

DEBBIE

We don't know that, didn't you hear?
 (gets out her phone)
 The man they found in the adjacent alley...

GRACE

What, he might not be the guy?

DEBBIE

"The coroner has not been able to determine conclusively that the fatal gunshot wound was self inflicted, and police have yet to find a survivor who can positively identify the body"

GRACE

The body that all the weapons were on.

DEBBIE

Maybe he's one of your "good guys with a gun"

GRACE

(looking at Debbie's phone)
 Yeah, he looks a lot like a good guy. For all we know the shooter's some guy in a Mickey Mouse shirt walking around with his gun in a fanny pack...
 (laughs as she exits)
 'Night, snowflake.

DEBBIE

Don't forget to lock the door behind you!

(we hear the sound of the door being locked. Debbie goes into the back and is gone a while when JEREMY enters, in a Mickey Mouse shirt and a fanny pack.)

JEREMY

Hello?

(He places a lighter on the counter, then goes over to the waiting area and sits down. DEBBIE returns from the back and sees the lighter)

DEBBIE

Oh my god.
 (gets out her phone and starts dialing)
 Come on, pick up...

(she starts texting, then sees JEREMY
and screams)

I'm sorry, I- JEREMY

Oh shit, you- DEBBIE

I didn't mean to- JEREMY

You scared the shit out of me. DEBBIE

I'm sorry... JEREMY

No, no it's not your fault. Grace was supposed to lock up,
and I'm just waiting here for... DEBBIE

Well, actually... JEREMY

Is there something you needed... you are one of Dr.
Marshall's patients, right? DEBBIE

Well, uh... yeah. JEREMY

Did you need to make or change an appointment? DEBBIE

No. JEREMY

Make a payment? DEBBIE

Actually, I came to see you. JEREMY

To see me? DEBBIE

You don't remember me, do you? JEREMY

DEBBIE
Should I?

JEREMY
No, I guess not. I was sitting right here, you know?

DEBBIE
Okay...

JEREMY
My wife was sitting right across from me... I mean... well,
that was after I threw the pen.

DEBBIE
Threw the pen?

JEREMY
First I was right over here by you, at the counter. Filling
out the insurance forms, when I lost my temper.

DEBBIE
And you threw the pen at me... uh, I think I would remember
that.

JEREMY
Well, not exactly at you.

DEBBIE
Okay, fine. Whatever you want to call it, my husband is
going to be here in a few minutes to pick me up. Can you
just tell me what it is I can do for you?

JEREMY
I just wanted to apologize.

DEBBIE
Okay, done. You're forgiven. Can you please leave?

JEREMY
No, no please, just listen... I didn't exactly throw
it. When I finished, I just kind of... you know, slapped it
down.

DEBBIE
That could have been a lot of people. I'm sure I wouldn't
have even noticed.

JEREMY
You noticed.

DEBBIE
Okay...

JEREMY

See, I didn't know you noticed, but when we sat down over here the place was still really crowded. She didn't want to say anything to me about it. Not out loud, at least, but she sent me a text. Can you believe that? Two feet away, and that's how she talks to me.

DEBBIE

So...?

JEREMY

"You know, Jeremy, everybody in here saw the way you slammed that pen down, and now they all think you're an asshole"

(pause)

I'm sorry.

DEBBIE

Look, I already told you. We're good.

JEREMY

No, not for that.

DEBBIE

What, then?

JEREMY

I liked it.

DEBBIE

Liked what?

JEREMY

The text... it made me feel good. I liked seeing what you thought of me.

DEBBIE

Sir, this is really...

JEREMY

I mean, you could have blamed it all on the easy access to pens.

DEBBIE

How long have you been in here?

JEREMY

Or something you could have tried to diagnose about the state of my "mental health"

DEBBIE

Were you listening to me and Grace?

JEREMY

(exploding)

Are you listening to me?!

(there is a moment of shocked silence)

Yeah, that's it... that's what it was, wasn't it? Nobody was listening then, either. Nobody noticed. And then all of a sudden somebody did. Everybody did. And I liked it! I liked it, and for that I am sorry.

DEBBIE

Alright, fine. Can you please leave?

JEREMY

No...

(sees her reach for the phone)

Don't touch that phone!

(she backs away)

That's where I was at when I came in here with my wife that day. Now do you remember?

DEBBIE

No. Or I guess, maybe I... I don't know!

JEREMY

Three years ago. First and last time we came in here. The one place where we could still use the insurance. And it just pissed me the fuck off that I was having to come in here and fill out more forms. Verify that it was still good for a month after everything I...

(collects himself)

You know what the worst part of it was? When I got home, after they'd let me go, what she had to say to me about it... "Jeremy, I told you to just go into that meeting and go along with whatever they tell you. Nobody cares what you have to say."

(snorts)

"Nobody cared what he had to say", they'll put that on my gravestone. I was the invisible man... until that moment. Sure, it's fucked up but you can understand, can't you?

DEBBIE

(slowly)

Yes.

JEREMY

It bothered me for the longest time after we left. Wondering why that text made me feel so good, but then it hit me. Do you have any idea how much better it feels to know that everybody thinks you're an asshole than to know that none of them are aware you even exist?

DEBBIE

I think I know what you mean.

JEREMY

(approaching the counter)

So then why the fuck is this such a big mystery? A world filled with those who'll have the same exact thing on their gravestones, people who know that if you wanna get ahead you just tell the idiots in charge what they wanna hear.

DEBBIE

Alright, you need to step back.

JEREMY

But God help you if you're cursed with something intelligent to say.

(she pulls a gun out from under the counter and points it at him)

DEBBIE

Get back, I'm warning you!

JEREMY

We act surprised about this, when every day we're reminded that if you want to be heard then the only way to do it is to walk into a church, and...

(he reaches into his fanny pack)

DEBBIE

Hands where I can see them!

(he pulls out his phone and swings it in her direction like it's a gun, and she pulls the trigger several times... the gun just clicks. He places the phone on the counter, then reaches out and lowers her gun)

JEREMY

Debbie, Debbie...

DEBBIE

What do you want?

JEREMY

I told you... I just wanted to explain everything. Let you know I'm not like that anymore. That was me then. But some people just... you know, do what I did.

(shows her pictures on the phone)
 I wanted you to see the kids. Okay, well they're not exactly "mine". My wife and I never had any. But I still think of them as mine.

DEBBIE

Basketball?

JEREMY

Yeah, got a new job coaching the basketball team for the school at my church. The pay wasn't the same, and as you know they didn't offer the best dental plan. But it did, shall we say, have it's perks.

DEBBIE

And so you wanted show me?

JEREMY

(starting to leave)

I just wanted you to understand.

DEBBIE

Hey, don't forget your-

JEREMY

Keep it!

(he is out the door. She stops and takes a deep breath, then picks up her keys and runs to the door to re-lock it. When she gets to it she is puzzled to see it already is locked. She goes back to her desk and sits, and then we hear someone else opening the door)

DEBBIE

Oh, shit!

(GRACE enters)

Oh my god, you...

GRACE

Who'd you think it was? You said you found it?

DEBBIE

What? Oh...

(checking her phone)

I didn't think that one went through...

(hands her the lighter)

Here... Grace, you think you can help me load the gun under the counter?

GRACE

Woah! I thought you weren't going near that "damn thing"

DEBBIE

I know, but when-

(pause... decides against telling)

You think you could just show me?

GRACE

You need the introductory course?

DEBBIE

No, I just... could you just show me how to load it in case I ever need to... you know.

GRACE

It is loaded.

DEBBIE

No, it's not.

GRACE

How do you suddenly-

DEBBIE

Okay, I didn't feel safe so I checked to make sure it was there right after you left. And I saw it wasn't loaded... can you just show me?

GRACE

Really? Hmm...

(she goes to get the gun and checks it)

Honey, are you sure you don't need that course?

DEBBIE

Yes, if I ever have to-

GRACE

The gun is loaded.

(shows her)

You sure you're alright?

(no answer... stunned silence)

You know, if it'll make you relax, they've confirmed.

DEBBIE

Confirmed?

GRACE

Wife of the first victim made the identification, see?

(shows her phone)

They say he walked right up to them both in the pews and said something to her before he started shooting... she says there's no way she'll ever forget that face.

DEBBIE

(staring at the screen)

And that's...

GRACE

No, that's the husband. Threw himself in front of her and a bunch of kids. I think they say he was the coach of the school's basketball team, or something... are you okay?

DEBBIE

Yeah. Yes, I'm fine.

GRACE

(turning to go)

Alright... goodnight.

DEBBIE

Wait! Can't you just stay for a few more minutes until Jake gets here?

GRACE

You're really still that freaked out?

DEBBIE

No. I just thought... thought maybe we could talk.

GRACE

Talk?

DEBBIE

Yeah, sure. You could tell me... tell me more about what you were saying earlier.

GRACE

About...?

DEBBIE

About the church... what did you call it, a "gun free zone"?

GRACE

I thought you wanted me to "put it on hold"

DEBBIE

No, it's fine, really. Tell me.

END OF PLAY