

SEE YOU MONDAY

I met her at work. She was my patient, for lack of a better word, and looking back, I realized I was her only friend. No pressure to be someone's only friend, right?

Cindy Thrift called me on a Saturday night, but after the week I'd had, I decided to ignore the call until Monday. I checked the message to make sure she wasn't about to kill herself. I checked the message to make sure she didn't need a ride to the hospital. It was perfectly possible that she could remember my number and not 911. I checked the message because maybe her husband was busy—busy doing business and busy being in denial. Maybe she was alone. Yeah, I wasn't going to call her back unless it was a full-blown emergency. Not this week. As I was listening to the desperate message, detailing everything about her condition—everything but the thing we all knew—my phone rang again. It was her again. I shouldn't have answered the phone. I deserved to not answer it. I'd done enough. I'd listened enough. I answered it anyway.

"Hey Cindy, how's it going?"

"Hi, this is Cindy Thrift. May I speak to Taylor?"

"Yeah, Cindy, it's me. You ok?"

"Goodness, you knew it was me. My name probably came up on your phone. And who else would answer your phone? I'm such a dummy these days. This depression is just plain awful."

"It's ok. I do it all the time." The depression was the least of her worries.

"I used to be so smart. I have degrees up the wazoo! Anyway, I'm not doing well at all. I feel like I'm getting worse and I don't know what to do. My Jim is telling me that I should do that electric shock thing next."

"That works sometimes. Maybe that's the thing." That—Electric Convulsive Therapy—is almost never the thing, and it is never the thing for early-onset dementia.

"This darn depression has just made me dumb. I used to be so smart. I have more degrees than I know what to do with," she said. "What should I do? I just don't know anymore. And what's that doctor's name? I always forget. See? Is my amygdala just dead?"

She was obsessed with her amygdala and I'd given up explaining all the other broken paths to wherever she wanted to go.

"I forget his name too, so I don't think your amygdala is dead."

"He's out of town, right?"

"Yes, but I'm going to get you in to see someone else. There's a really nice lady here, and I think I can get you in Monday or Tuesday."

"Pudge has been sweet to me at least. He knows when I'm sad. He gets in the bed with me and licks the tears off my face. Dogs are way better than people. I'll take a dog over any person any day."

"He sounds like a good dog."

"I guess my Pudge doesn't care if my amygdala works."

"I'm sure he doesn't."

"What am I going to do? Can I get into see Dr...um. I can't remember his name."

"He's going to be out of town, but I think I can get you in to see someone else. There's a really nice doctor lady who works with Dr. Finkelstein."

"Ok," she said. "You know what I think? I think God is a fucking asshole."

It still shocked me when she would say “fuck” or whatever. I said, “You might be right; God might be an asshole.”

“I feel like I make about as much sense as that Irish guy who wrote *Ulysses*. Did you read that? James Joyce, right? Yes, James Joyce. Maybe my amygdala isn’t dead today.”

“Cindy, you make a lot more sense than James Joyce.”

“Who is James Joyce?”

“Are you going to be ok?”

“I don’t know. Do you think this treatment has done anything for me?”

“I don’t know.”

“I guess I’ll be the first person in history that it doesn’t work for. If God was a doctor, I would sue the asshole. I used to be a lawyer too. I just don’t want to be here anymore if it’s going to be like this til I die.”

It’s going to get a lot worse.

“We’ll give it another couple days and talk to the other doctor on Monday.”

“It’s like Jim doesn’t even care anymore. He doesn’t. Just that car. Just the business. Just everything but me. You’re the only person I have left. I don’t know what I’m going to do when I don’t get to see you every day for my treatment.”

“Well, maybe we can get together for coffee. Would you like that?”

“Yes, but I don’t know what I’m going to do between those times. I know I seem like I’m doing pretty well when I’m there, but I’m a mess at home. It’s so lonesome here.”

“I know exactly how you feel. Like you’ve gotten to be too much for everyone. You’re not how you used to be and they don’t want to be around you anymore. I know.”

“Pudge is the only one who still likes me. I think Pudge should be in charge. He would be much better than that asshole, God.”

“Probably so.”

“Oh my, Taylor. I’m so sorry to call you on the weekend. I’m sure the last thing you want is to listen to an old lady blather on like that Irish guy. James something. Shit.”

“It’s ok, Cindy. You can call me any time.”

“You’re my only friend.”

“That means a lot. I’ll see you Monday, ok? I’ll get you in to see the other doctor. Ok?”

“Yes. Thank you so much. I won’t call you again.”

“You can call me any time.”

“I know you don’t mean that, but it’s so nice of you to say. I’ll see you Monday.”

“See you Monday.”

What else could I do? I’m just an ex-drunk who used to have depression.