

Episode 9 – Playing With Fire

Scene 1

Kyle: Alright, so what you drinking?

Dr. Tucker asked David as the two of them took a seat in the corner booth of a small sports bar.

David: Brandy.

David replied like he had already made up his mind before setting foot in the bar.

Kyle: How symbolic of you, considering your father probably washed down half a bottle of this stuff every night before he went to bed.

David: Yeah you're right. My father drank a lot; probably more than he should have, but he was a good man and tonight I'm not drinking out of guilt or grief. Tonight is all celebratory.

Kyle: Oh yeah? And what is it that you're celebrating Dr. Kurt?

David: Everything.

David grinned with a sense of pride as he stared forward at the neuro surgeon who was sitting across from him.

Kyle: Well, in that case, why don't I go order us a couple of drinks while you take a look at this?

Kyle suggested when he held up a thickly padded manila folder. David glared back at it shadily.

David: Is that what I think it is?

Kyle: Yes.

Kyle nodded his reply as he sat the folder down in the center of the table.

David: And why are you giving it to me now? Isn't it again hospital policy or something?

Kyle: Or something, but never mind that. No one has to know that I gave this to you.

David: Is this the reason that you invited me here for a drink?

Kyle: Maybe a little, but two years ago I lost my partner to an accident. He'd been hit head on by a guy that had fallen asleep at the wheel. He was alive and conscious when the medics arrived but by the time they rushed him into the trauma center he was non responsive. Later on he was pronounced brain dead and I was the one left to make all the decisions.

Kyle shared as he began to explain the reasons for his actions.

Kyle: I went over and over his medical file both before and after I finally decided to have him taken off life support. It was the only way I could cope with what was going on.

David: Look Dr. Tucker, I'm sorry about your partner and as I said earlier I'm even sorry about the way I behaved last night, but you didn't have to invite me over here just to show me this.

Kyle: I know that I didn't have to but I also know how you think. You're a surgeon David and rumor has it you're a good one; which means you've been taught, programmed even to understand death in the terms of science. I think this file could help you.

David: So you think that giving me my father's medical file is gonna help me get over his death?

Kyle: No, but maybe it might help you to understand it better.

Kyle replied by pushing the file across the table and even closer to David. David sighed as he looked down at the file with contemplation. Then he reached out for the folder and picked it up...

3 Weeks & 2 Days before Thanksgiving

Scene 2

Ed sat up in bed and took a deep breath as he moved to the edge of the bed. Then he reached out to turn on the lamp that was sitting on the bedside table just a few inches away.

Regina: Is it you head again?

His wife asked groggily as she sat up in her side of the bed. Ed sighed and nodded his head.

Ed: Yeah, but I'll be fine dear. Just go back to sleep.

Regina: Ed this is the third time this week that you've woken up with a headache in the middle of the night.

Regina pointed out as she caught a glimpse of the clock that was hanging on the wall above their bed. It was only a quarter after three a.m. and she couldn't help but show concern.

Ed: I told you its fine Genie. I'll just go downstairs and grab some aspirin or something. That usually helps.

Regina: No, stay here. I'll go get it for you.

Regina insisted as she pushed the bed covers off and climbed out of bed hatefully. Ed sighed again this time impatiently as he stood up.

Ed: Genie get back in bed. I'm not a child. I'm capable of getting it myself.

Regina shook her head, pointing her finger at him with a reprimand in her tone.

Regina: Would you stop being so stubborn and let me take care of you? You're sick and I'm worried. This has been happening a lot lately and I think it's time for you to see a doctor about it.

Ed: Oh for crying out loud woman, I don't need to see a doctor. It's just a headache. I'll take some aspirin and then I'll be back to normal.

Ed assured as he picked a robe up from the side of the bed and went to put it on.

Regina: Yes, good as new, and for how long? Until it happens again tomorrow? How long are you gonna wait before you finally admit that you're not well?

Ed: I'm not gonna admit anything because there's nothing to admit to. I've had headaches before. It's nothing to get yourself all worked up about.

Ed continued to argue with his worried wife as he made his way over to their bedroom door.

Regina: All worked up about? Ed, I'm your wife. I have a right to worry. Now please, tell me you're gonna stop ignoring this and see a doctor.

Ed let out one last sigh. His impatience with Regina had turned into frustration, but as usual he knew that arguing with her would get him nowhere.

Ed: Fine Genie, I'll make an appointment to see a doctor, but by god would you get off my back for a while? All you yammering is just making it worse.

Ed retorted as he reached out to open up the door to the bedroom. Then he walked out of the room, slamming the door behind him...

1 Week and 3 Days before Thanksgiving

Scene 3

Ed was sitting on top of an exam table when he glanced down at a watch on his wrist and sighed with impatience. Just then the door opened and a tall doctor with sandy brown hair and a pretty boy face enter the exam room.

Ed: You must be Dr. Tucker.

Ed said with relief that his waiting had finally come to an end.

Kyle: That's right. I'm Dr. Kyle Tucker and you must be Edward Kurt.

Dr. Tucker nodded his head as he read the name off the patient chart that he was holding in his hand. Ed nodded back to confirm it.

Ed: That would be me, but let's save the small talk ok doc? Your notes or whatever should be able to tell you why I'm here and I just wanna get to business and get out of here.

Kyle: Perfect. That'll save me some time. It says in your file that you originally saw your primary care doctor about a headache. Then it says that he ran some tests and then referred you to me. Do you want to elaborate on any of that?

Kyle asked as he sat Ed's patient file down on one of the counters and then made his way over to the sink to wash his hands.

Ed: Sure. I've been having them for a while now; the headaches that is. They used to come and go; once a month or so. Then about a month or so ago they started getting more frequent. They started in all day, every day, but they get really bad at night. Sometimes I can't even sleep.

Kyle: Your chart says that you tried taking over the counter aspirin and ibuprofen before your primary doc prescribed naproxen. Did any of those help?

Kyle continued to question. Ed shrugged back with yet another nod of his head while he watched the doctor wash his hands.

Ed: Sure. They all helped at one time or another. For a while they'd take the pain away or at least dull it down, but it always comes back. I usually just chalk it up to stress and I'm almost certain that's what it is. However, my wife's been hounding me to get it checked out and if you've ever been married I bet you know what it's like to have a nagging wife on your back.

Kyle: Well, I'd like to say you're right, but unfortunately I think we should search for other causes. The bloodwork that was that was sent over from your primary doctor was a little concerning; which is the reason he referred you to me in the first place. So, I'm going to give you an exam and then I'll put in the orders to run a few tests and another set of bloodwork before you leave here today. Since you said the headaches have been going on for a while now, I'd like to rule on the safe side here and it doesn't hurt to be cautious.

Kyle said as he dried his hands and then made his way over to his patient.

Ed: Oh come on doc. Do you really think all that's necessary for a headache?

Kyle: After what you just told me about the headaches and looking over your chart, yes I do think it's necessary and I wouldn't be wasting my time or yours with all these tests if I didn't think that it was. Between your habits of drinking and smoking and your history of high blood pressure, you're in a high risk category for many disorders and complications that might be the source of your pain. If nothing more I just want to rule out anything more serious before I send you on your way.

Ed: Are you really just doing this to be cautious or do you really think that it might be something more serious going on?

Ed seemed to be a little more concerned now that Kyle had brought up the subject. The doctor shook his head to try and ease the worry.

Kyle: It's best if neither of us jumps to conclusions, but with what you've describe I really don't think it's just stress. I think there's another condition causing your headaches and it's my job to find out what that is.

Ed: Ok doc. You're the expert here, so if you think it'll be necessary then we'll do it your way. Run all the tests you want. At least if nothing more they'll serve their purpose in getting my wife off my back for a bit.

Kyle: Alright then. Let's get that exam done shall we? The sooner we get it all done; the sooner we'll have an answer and the better our chances of treating it will be...

3 Days before Thanksgiving

Scene 4

Kyle opened the door to his office to find Ed Kurt standing on the other side of the door.

Ed: Good morning Dr. Tucker.

Kyle: Mr. Kurt. You're right on time. Come in.

Dr. Tucker moved out of the way of the door as he gave the invitation; an invitation that was accepted immediately. Ed stepped into the office and as soon as he was inside, the surgeon shut the door.

Ed: How you doing doc?

The older man asked for the sake of making small talk and avoiding the fact that he was nervous.

Kyle: Go ahead and have a seat Mr. Kurt. I'd like to go over the results of your tests.

Kyle avoided the question as he pointed to one of the empty chairs in his office.

Ed: This must be bad news doc; otherwise you'd have been able to give me the news over the phone. So tell me, what did you find? What is it that was so important that I had to drive all the way out here to find out in person?

Ed said as he took a seat in one of the chairs that were in front of Kyle's desk. Kyle moved around to the opposite side of his desk and straightened his lab coat before taking a seat. Then he turned his eyes across his desk to look at the man that was sitting on the other side.

Kyle: Mr. Kurt I know that you're a man that likes to get right down to business so that's what I'm going to do. After reviewing the results of your MRI and lab work I found out what's been causing your headaches, but you're right, it's not good news.

Ed: Just come out with it doc. What did you find, an infection, aneurism cancer?

Ed sighed as he rushed for Kyle to get to the point. He was unwilling to wait for whatever bad news the doctor was building towards. Kyle sighed back sympathetically as he finally blurted out the answer that Ed was waiting for.

Kyle: It's a tumor.

Ed: A tumor?

Ed repeated Kyle's response in the form of a question. He didn't seem to have even an ounce of surprise on his face. Kyle nodded to confirm.

Kyle: Yes, but more specifically a glioblastoma or GBM. It's aggressive, but I think we've caught it early enough that with surgery your prognosis is high.

Ed: How high?

Kyle: That depends on how much of the tumor I'm able to get to with surgery. Best case scenario I'll be to get it all and it doesn't come back.

Ed: And worst case?

Kyle: Worst case is that you die during surgery.

Ed: But you still think that surgery is the best course of treatment?

Kyle sighed again as he nodded his head and answered the question that his patient was asking.

Kyle: Based on the type of tumor we're talking about, yes I do. Typically these types of tumors don't respond well to radiation or chemotherapy. Those treatments may slow down or postpone any further growth but more often than not they're only a temporary solution. I only recommend it if we're not able to remove the entire growth.

Ed sighed as the weight of the information was beginning to sink in.

Ed: So if I choose to accept treatment it's either surgery or nothing?

Kyle: No Mr. Kurt. The surgery is only part of it. You're also going to have to make significant changes to your lifestyle as well. That means a proper diet, exercise, and giving up the smoking and the drinking.

Ed: I see, but what happens if I choose not to have surgery? What if I choose no treatment at all? How long would I have to live then?

Kyle: Six months, maybe a year tops, but they wouldn't be comfortable. Eventually you'll start having problems with speech, motor function, and those are just the tip of the iceberg.

Ed: But you did just say that I could also die on the table? Aren't there other risks? For Christ's sake you'd be meddling around in my brain. I could end up a vegetable right?

Kyle: There is that risk yes.

Ed: Alright doc, so what would you do in my situation?

Kyle: Honestly, I'd take the treatment.

Kyle replied as he sat back in his chair, tapping his foot on the floor as though the conversation were making him nervous.

Ed: And is that your medical opinion or your personal opinion?

Kyle: Both.

Kyle replied with no sign of reluctance. Ed shook his head with dissatisfaction.

Ed: You know, you may or may not know this already doc but my youngest son also happens to be a surgeon. I know how you guys think. Your solution to everything is cutting rather than treating. How do I know that you're not just trying to add points to your resume by using me as a guinea pig?

Kyle: Because regardless of my reasons for pushing this surgery, it's still has the best odds for recovery and because I'm the best at what I do.

Ed: I like over confidence Dr. Tucker. It's a trait that most people might find rude or annoying but not me. I can make the changes that I need in order to live healthier, but before I let you cut into my head I have to know if you're really as good as you and everyone else claims you to be.

Kyle: I'm not going to lie to you Mr. Kurt. You're taking risks here no matter what you decide or who performs this surgery, but you're taking even more with someone else. If you really want a second opinion or someone else to give you another approach then I'd be willing to give a few names of other surgeons you can speak to. However none of them will be as good as I am and in the time that it would take you to shop around, you would only be putting yourself at risk for further complications. I've done this surgery before and I've had a higher success rate than any of my colleagues.

Ed: So then, how quickly do I have to make a decision here doc? I mean, the Thanksgiving weekend is coming up. My son's flying in from out of state. I haven't even told my wife that I

was coming here today. I've been reassuring her for weeks now that my headaches have all been stress related. What the hell do I say to her now?

Kyle: Ed, like I told you, the longer you wait the higher your risk of complications, but we do still have some time for you to weigh your options. This is not a decision that you should make on your own though. What you should do is go home. Take the weekend. Enjoy your family. Discuss it with your wife and your kids and then let me know what you've decided by Monday morning.

Ed: It's not the surgery that I need to think about doc. I want the treatment. I want the chance to beat this, but I also want the chance to have one last normal holiday with my family. According to your best case worst case scenarios, come Christmas time I'll either be lying in a pine box or recovering from brain surgery. Either way my family's gonna spend the rest of my life staring at me like I could die at any minute. I'd just like to have one more family holiday before everything goes to shit.

Kyle: I understand that Ed and I agree that you should have that. If you want the surgery and you know you want it, then I can schedule you for first thing Monday.

Kyle urged as he knew that time wasn't a luxury for Mr. Kurt. He knew that the quicker he operated the better odds were that Ed could survive his illness.

Ed: It's funny Dr. Tucker. You just told me that I have a tumor in my brain and that there's a higher chance of it killing me than the treatment has for saving me. Still, the only thing I'm really worried about is my family and what they're going to do now. I'm not so much worried about my wife. She's strong, bull headed, and she's got God on her side. Personally I've never been a real believer in all that garbage, but she's got her faith. I know she'll turn to that if the worst happens and I don't make it off the table. It's my sons that I worry about most. They're both gonna be angry; especially David. He's always gonna feel like there was something he could have done.

Kyle: He's the doctor?

Kyle questioned. He was both trying to gather knowledge about Ed's family as well as scratching his own curiosity to something that Ed had mentioned earlier. Ed nodded his head.

Ed: Yeah. He spent a few years in med school, a few more in Iraq as an army medic, and then a few more at a VA hospital treating trauma patients. He even worked here at Madison West under Dr. Branson for a stretch before he finally got fed up and told him where to stick it. I knew that was coming though, because I knew how miserable he was here. Now he's in Oregon in this little town called Mercy. Hell, I'd never even heard of it until he mentioned it, but he seems to be happy there and I'm happy for him. I may never know what it is, but there's something in Mercy that he needs; something he can't find here and never will.

Kyle: Are you're afraid that being sick will cause him to change his mind and come back here?

Ed: Yes. That is exactly what I'm afraid of.

Ed nodded. Kyle sighed. He knew that he couldn't promise to Ed that everything would be alright. The truth was that in situations like this one, there was no clear cut answer that vowed a positive outcome.

Kyle: Ed I know that all of this is hard to process, but don't give up yet. I'm gonna do my best to get you well, at least on the physical side of this. The rest of it is gonna be up to you and your family...

Thanksgiving Night

Scene 5

Regina was standing over one side of the sink when Ed made his way into the kitchen with a stack of dirty dishes in his hands.

Regina: Oh Ed it was wonderful. Did you see the way David and Kayla hit it off at dinner? I just knew it was a good idea to invite her over.

Regina gloated proudly as she turned to look at her husband. Ed sighed with irritation as he handed the stack of dishes to his wife.

Ed: Don't be ridiculous Genie. The only thing I saw was you cornering that poor girl and David coming to her rescue.

Regina: Oh please Ed. You're the one that's being ridiculous. I told you that inviting Kayla was a good idea. You argued with me but I told you and now you're afraid to admit that I was right.

The woman mocked as she retrieved the stack of dishes from her husband's arms and then sat them in the sink. Ed sighed again, this time with a slight growl.

Ed: No, you're the one that's afraid to admit that these little fix ups aren't doing a bit of good. Your son doesn't have any interest in that girl and you're too stubborn to see it.

Regina: No. I just don't understand what the big deal is.

Regina argued stubbornly as she turned on the faucet and began to rinse off the dishes.

Ed: The big deal is that David doesn't need you playing matchmaker with his romantic life. It's time for you to stop trying to fix him up and just let him find someone on his own.

Regina: Well, maybe I won't have to try and fix him up anymore. Maybe this time I've finally found him the right girl.

Ed: You're delusional if you think that's even remotely possible Genie. I told you that your son doesn't have any interest in that girl. Why can't you just listen?

Regina: Because I refuse to believe the alternative.

Regina snapped as she turned off the faucet and then grabbed a sponge from the top of the sink.

Ed: Why, because the alternative would cause you to love your son less?

Regina: Don't you dare say that. There's nothing in this world that could make me stop loving him. It's because I love him that I am doing everything in my power to save him from himself.

Ed: Oh get off it Genie. Your son is gay and there's nothing that you can do to change it.

Ed raised his voice as he shouted to contend the point. His wife turned her head and shook her finger at him with scorn in her eyes.

Regina: Bite your tongue Ed. You're playing with fire here and it's not true. My son is not gay. He's just confused and we can fix that by encouraging him to follow Gods path. All he needs is to find the right girl.

Ed: No Genie. You can't fix him, because there's nothing to fix. He's gay, but that doesn't mean he's broken.

Ed shouted as he tried to reason with Regina and maintain his ground. Then he watched as the look of scorn in her eyes flared up along with her nostrils. She was just about to open her mouth and continue on with her side of the argument when a sudden pain in the side of his head kept Ed from being able to listen. And then, just as suddenly he felt a wave of nausea rush through him. He reached up and touched the side of his head where the pain had started and was most severe.

Regina: Ed is you ok?

Regina asked as she saw her husband grab his head. His face had gone pale and he looked as though he were about to be sick.

Ed: I'm f... fa... fa... fine.

Ed stuttered and slurred his words as he replied. Regina shook her head with distrust.

Regina: No you're not fine. I can tell something's wrong. I'm calling 911...

Scene 6

David's legs just couldn't carry him fast enough when he ran through automatic doors of Madison West Hospital. He had made his way through them many times so he knew the way, but never before had he rushed through them in such a panic. He made his way to an elevator, to the

third floor and then stormed through the doors of a waiting room where his family was waiting his arrival. David took in the scene right away. Charley was busy pacing back and forth while Sunny flipped through a magazine, pretending to read. Regina was knitting, trying to keep her mind busy. All three of them stopped what they were doing and looked up as David entered the room.

David: Charley, Ma, I got your call. Where is he? Where's dad?

David questioned before any of the other three could say a word.

Charley: The ambulance just got him here. They haven't told us anything yet.

David: Alright then, that's good. No news so far, that's good news.

David was relieved for a moment by the feeling of hope. He was just about to take a seat when another man stepped into the room.

Kyle: Are you the Kurt family here on behalf of Edward Charles Kurt?

David turned around just in time to see a tall man with sandy brown hair and a pretty boy face enter the room. He took a breath of relief; happy that he was going to get some news sooner rather than later.

David: Yeah that's us. I'm David. Ed's my father. Are you his doctor?

Kyle: Yeah. I'm Dr. Kyle James Tucker. I'm the head of the neuro department here at Madison West and I'm afraid I've got some bad news about your father. He's had a stroke.

Charley: A stroke? Please tell us that's he's going to be alright.

Charley pushed his way over to be part of the conversation.

Kyle: I'm afraid not.

Dr. Tucker paused. Then he let out a deep and labored sigh. It was something that David was far more familiar with than he wanted to take credit for at the moment.

David: Oh my god. Please don't say it.

Denial gave way as David's brain and heart were trying to stall reality from taking hold. Then Kyle returned with yet another sigh.

Kyle: I'm sorry Mr. Kurt, but there's no easy way to say it. Your father died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. He's dead.

Charley: What do you mean he's dead?

Charley asked, acting on the instinct of denial.

Kyle: Ed had a hemorrhagic stroke caused by bleeding from a tumor that's been growing in his brain. I did everything I could to try and save him, but unfortunately neither myself nor my team were able to revive him. His brain had been deprived of oxygen for too long and his organs began to shut down. His heart wasn't able to take the stress. It gave out and I was unable to restart it.

David: A tumor? How the hell did you know it was a tumor if he died on the way to the hospital? You didn't even have time to run any tests.

David snapped rudely at the other surgeon.

Kyle: I know because I ran the tests two weeks ago. You're father came in to see me because he was experiencing headaches. He thought they were caused by stress but it turned out that he had a tumor growing in his brain instead.

David: You're talking about an extremely rare condition. Only ten percent of hemorrhagic strokes are caused by tumors. Are you certain that that's what caused it?

Kyle: No. I'm not completely certain, but going on what I know of your father's case it's what I suspect. Yes, it's a relatively rare occurrence, but it does happen and after an autopsy I'll know for sure.

David felt like he had just been punched in the gut and was frozen in place with shock. He stared at Dr. Tucker: the man that had just delivered the news that his father was dead.

David: What was his time of death?

David questioned ignoring the instinct of denial that would have only hindered his judgment.

Kyle: The time of death was 1:34 a.m.

Kyle replied sympathetically. David sighed heavily, like he wanted to cry but wouldn't allow the tears to come out.

David: Can we see him?

Kyle: If you choose so yes

Kyle nodded just before Charley and his in denial jumped back into the conversation.

Charley: No... no way. He can't be dead. You guys can't be serious here. All this talk of brain tumors and strokes; it's just a big joke right? Dad's gonna be fine. The two of you are assholes for even trying to pull a prank like this.

It was then that Regina stood up from the chair she'd been seated in next to Sunny. She had already dropped her knitting materials when Dr. Tucker had entered the room with news about her husband.

Regina: Charley that's enough. Dr. Tucker's only doing his job and he's right. You're father has been sick. He's been complaining of headaches for months now. I told him to get it checked out when they began but he insisted that it was only stress.

Kyle: I'm deeply sorry for your loss, for all of you. Ed had come to me about the headaches and I diagnosed the tumor. He was scheduled for surgery to remove the growth. He was going to come in on Monday, but he wanted to have one more chance to have a normal holiday with his family. I'm sure that he was only waiting for the right time to tell all of you.

Kyle sighed, shaking his head as he continued to show sympathy for Ed Kurt's family. David watched as his mother's face was filling with tears. He knew that she was about to break down with grief. However, he couldn't help but feel anger at what Dr. Tucker was trying to tell him.

David: Yeah, well it looks like perfect fucking timing now doesn't it?

David retorted snidely. Regina sighed and returned back with a sharp warning.

Regina: David watch your mouth.

David: No ma. It's bullshit. Dad got to have his normal little Thanksgiving holiday, and all we get is to remember for the rest of our lives that this is the day we lost him. Forget this. I change my mind. I don't wanna see him. I'm out of here.

David said coldly as he started towards the exit of the waiting room.

Regina: David please wait.

Regina called back to her son, but with no luck. He didn't even bother to turn around or even acknowledge her begging. Instead he just walked out of the room, taking his anger, his denial, and his grief with him...

Scene 7

David felt ill when he stepped through the doors of the Madison West Hospital and out into the cold Texas fall night. He rushed from the doors and made his way over to a trash can where he hunched over and emptied the contents of his stomach. The stress from the news that he'd just gotten about his father was too much for him to handle. The stress had induced the vomiting, bringing back up everything he had eaten during Thanksgiving Dinner. Then he stood upright, wiped his mouth off onto his sleeve, and then pulled his phone from the pocket of his jacket. Within seconds he had dialed Andrew's cell number and listened to it ring until someone finally answered the other end of the line.

Andrew: Hello?

Andrew's voice came through. It filled David with a sense of relief and half a second later he finally managed words. His voice cracked with the built up emotions he was feeling.

David: Hey. Am I interrupting something?

Andrew: Nah man you're fine. I wasn't busy. What's up?

Andrew returned with a fib; one that David caught onto right away but selfishly ignored.

David: My dad's dead.

David blurted out. He couldn't handle the idea of a slow build up and he knew that easing into the announcement would only steal the courage right out of him.

Andrew: What?

David heard his friend gasp with shock through the phone and he knew that he must have caught Andrew off guard with the information.

David: He's dead. He died about an hour ago. His doctor said he had a hemorrhagic stroke caused by a glioblastoma.

David repeated himself; only this time he chose to elaborate. Then there was another half second of silence before Andrew gasped yet again. His shock was still noticeable in his tone.

Andrew: Oh my god man. What the hell?

David: I'm still at the hospital. My whole family's here. We just got the news a little bit ago.

Andrew: Gawd man I'm so sorry.

Andrew muttered the wrong words. It was exactly what David didn't want to hear. However, he knew that they came out of reflex as well as a lack of anything better to say.

David: I know man, but hey... I probably shouldn't stay on the phone long. I was kind of an ass to my mom just now. I snapped at her and I shouldn't have said what I said to her. I just... I just needed ahh... I... I don't know.

David tried to speak between his stuttering and moments of hesitation. Andrew didn't butt in. He listened and waited for his friend to get everything out, proving that he was more than willing to remain patient. When David spoke he nearly choked on his words.

David: I don't know what I need. Maybe I should just hang up the phone and let you get back to whatever or whoever you were doing before I called.

Andrew: Dude I told that you weren't interrupting anything; and shit man, even if you were, it wouldn't matter to me. You're more important than any ole piece of ass could ever be.

David: Thanks man, but I'm ok... I mean, I will be, I think. I'm just still in shock you know? I didn't even know he was sick. He didn't say anything to anyone. He was supposed to go in for surgery on Monday to remove the tumor and he didn't even bother to say a single God damned word about it to his family.

David swore with aggravation. Again, Andrew remained patient with his roommate as he waited for him to say the things that needed to be said.

David: Gawd, what am I saying? Hell, the man hasn't even been dead an hour yet and already I'm running him down. What the hell is wrong with me?

Andrew: Nothing is wrong with you man. You're in shock and you're grieving. It's understandable to be upset. You're father kept a huge secret from you and because of it you lost him. Don't beat yourself up for feeling like crap.

David: But it's not ok to take it out on my family. It's not my mom's fault. She lost him too.

Andrew: I'm sure your mom understands but hey man, do you want me to come down there?

Andrew questioned with concern. David shook his head, forgetting that Andrew couldn't see his actions through the phone.

David: Nah man. It's ok. You know you don't have to do that.

Andrew: Sure, but you also know that I would in a heartbeat if you told me you wanted me to. So, if you need me or even just want me to be there, just tell me now. I'll get the first flight I can and I'll be there.

Andrew stated with absolute conviction and though what he was offering was quite the feat, David knew that it was made with the full intention of being honored. It wouldn't be necessary though. David was sure that he would be fine on his own. He didn't feel the need to steal Andrew away from Mercy for his own benefit.

David: Nah man, it's cool. I'm fine. I just have to keep my head clear that's all. My family's gonna need me for a while; which means I probably won't be coming back on Sunday like I planned. I'm gonna have to stick around here to help my mom take care of everything.

Andrew: Alright, but let me know if you change your mind and don't forget to take care of yourself while you're taking care of everything else.

Andrew cautioned. It was a warning that David mostly just ignored before letting out a heavy, guilt filled sigh.

David: Yeah. I will, but I really should get going now. Thanks for answering and for being there. I really needed someone to talk to.

Andrew: David you know I'm always here for you. I don't want you to hesitate if you need anything from me; especially now.

David: I appreciate it man, but I'm good. I'll talk to you sometime later and update you on everything ok?

David was feeling a little antsy now and almost desperate to get off the phone. It felt silly how desperate he had felt in needing to make this call, only to feel just as anxious to hang up now.

Andrew: Yeah, ok. I'll leave my phone on and you can call anytime you need to.

David: Thanks Andrew.

David said appreciatively. Then he heard his friend sigh through the phone.

Andrew: You're welcome David, you're welcome.

Andrew said supportively. It was the last thing that David heard before he hung up his cell phone and then shoved it back into his pocket. He hoped that his friend would be sympathetic to his lack of manners in hanging up. Then, before he had the chance to let his mind wander onto unwanted thoughts, David turned and headed back towards the entrance of Madison West Hospital...

Scene 8

David stood in the doorway of his father's den. The air was filled with the lingering smell of stale brandy and cigar smoke; a scent that comforted him as he stared at the empty chair where his father used to sit.

"Come in here kiddo." Ed would say if he were there. "Come in and have a drink with your ole man. We've still got so much to discuss."

David could still see his father's face. He could picture him sitting in that chair with a brandy in one hand and a cigar in the other. He could hear his voice and he remembered the words that had been given to him months ago.

"What are you doing kid? Why are you still here, wasting your greatness?" Ed had said. "From the moment you were born I knew that you were gonna be different. I knew that out of all my sons you were gonna be the one to choose the greatest path in life."

Charley: It's so unreal isn't it?

Charley voice interrupted the memories that David was replaying in his mind. He turned to look at his brother who was standing behind him in the doorway.

David: Yeah. It still hasn't really sunk in yet.

Charley: I know what you mean bro. I keep waiting to wake up from this nightmare or wishing that this is all just some crazy messed up joke.

Charley said with a sigh as he put his hand on the top of David's shoulder. David sighed back as a moment of disbelief struck him. It was followed by an over whelming, gut wrenching sensation of guilt. He pushed it back and tried to think of anything else.

David: Where's mom, still upstairs?

Charley: Yeah, and still crying. She's starting to calm down a bit, but Sunny's still with her.

David: It's nearly 5 a.m. You two should go home and try to get some rest.

Charley: You actually think either one of us is gonna be able to sleep?

Charley questioned as he turned his back to lean up against the frame of the door. David shrugged and shook his head.

David: Probably not, but you should still try. You're gonna need it.

Charley: And what about you?

David: I'll stay with mom in case she needs anything.

Charley: What, Sunny and I need sleep but you don't?

David: Sure and I'll get some when the two of you get back, but I'm a doctor and I'm used to working long hours with very little sleep.

Charley: Fine, but we're not gonna leave. We'll just crash here, in my old room. That way we'll be here if you guys need us.

David: The only thing we need is for dad to be alive again, but you're right. It's a good idea for you to stay. We should all be under the same roof right now. Just let me know if you guys need anything. In the meantime I'll go sit with mom and see if she needs anything.

David sighed again as the guilt in his belly turned to regret. Then he turned around and walked away, leaving Charley alone in the doorway to their father's den...

Scene 9

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