

Judy Davenport

By Phil Gale

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Judy Davenport

Judy was a fairly tall woman, trim but not thin, very attractive, with warm, caring eyes. She wore a wool turtle-neck sweater which was soft to the touch and carried a light, multi-coloured, striped pattern. She sported a pair of dark blue slacks and black, casual low-heeled shoes. Her hair was golden brown and styled in soft waves that framed her face.

The aroma from her perfume blended perfectly with the sweet, delicate fragrance of her hair. Her eyes shone with intensity that belied her compassionate and caring nature. She was a sensitive girl, but mature in demeanor and outlook. At around 45-48 years, she stood out among women as the centre diamond in a cluster.

“I’m not sure what to do next,” she breathed a little anxiously, as she approached me with slight urgency.

As I looked into her eyes, I detected that Judy was coming close to tears, and I placed my hands on her upper arms to offer some assurance.

“You’re such a tender-hearted woman Judy,” I encouraged.

“And very capable too. You don’t really need my help.” But I could tell she was looking for comfort.

“Let’s work it out together.” I took her hands in mine and shot an encouraging look into her eyes. I smiled, and she responded in like manner.

“What must you think of me,” she said, as she moved to turn away but stopped herself and gripped my hands a little tighter.

“Judy, I know what you really want, but hugging is not permitted as you know. As much as I want to re-assure you, touching is restricted to that which is perceived to be non-sexual, or no body contact.” She nervously looked around to see if anyone had noticed the contact we had made. No-one was watching or even interested. As our eyes met again, I felt a dart shoot through my heart, and I realized for the first time that I was experiencing feelings for this extremely warm-hearted and uncomplicated woman.

“Without losing my composure, I dropped her left hand from mine and lead her to the table.

“Let’s just pause for a moment and examine your options.”

I gestured to Judy to take a seat and sat down myself, at the other end of the table.

“I know things have been hard for you, and ending up in here has been a total shock to your system.” But, “I continued, “you haven’t lost your ability or capacity to cope with everyday chores like cooking or cleaning.” She was looking at me intently, hanging on every word.

“Yes I know Paul, but I can’t seem to think straight. When I feel under pressure it’s as though I just want to run away.” Her voice, although replete with inflection, was not steady or nervous, just unsure.

“When this is all over,” I thought to myself, “I’m going to show Judy the cottage - if she’ll go.”

“Only a short while ago, you were promoting conferences for one of the largest hotels in Victoria.” She looked a little sheepish as I said this.

“You haven’t lost any skill, and no-one can take away your experience or qualifications” I said softly.

“All I need to work on is your confidence in your own ability,” and I smiled warmly into her deep hazel eyes.

“I don’t cope very well on my own.” Judy looked down at the table.

“Ever since the accident, I’ve felt all my strength drain right out of me.” Her voice began to quiver a little, and I kept silent to allow her to grieve. Tears began to slide down her cheeks, and although I’d seen this many times in my job, this time I had to work very hard to maintain my composure.

This beautiful, intelligent, professional woman had her entire life taken from her in an instant, resulting in her inability to care for herself. Her husband, her brother, who was her only living relative, and even her lovable dog, were all denied life one late August evening. Hit head-on but a drunken driver on the Malahat, they all died, leaving Judy entirely alone.

That evening as I drove up the Pat Bay Highway, I couldn't get my mind off Judy. She would be sitting down to eat the meal we were preparing earlier. For company she had Lori, Sandy and Lacey.

I felt a tinge of sadness as I thought how out of place Judy was in the transition home. Total mental breakdown, almost catatonic was how her condition was described. But with help, she had fought back and was improving weekly.

After supper I sat on my deck overlooking Brentwood Bay, and wished I had company. I was lonely.

I must have dozed off because I was suddenly alerted by the ringing of the telephone.

“Dr. Hastings?” the woman enquired.

“Speaking” I responded.

“It’s Judy Davenport sir, she’s crying uncontrollably and keeps asking for you.” The voice sounded very serious.

“Dr. Sally Barnes is with her now, trying to sedate her, but Mrs. Davenport is putting up some resistance. Do you think you could come sir?”

“Tell Dr. Barnes I’m on my way and not to pressure Mrs. Davenport. She’s very sensitive at the moment and I don’t want to undo all the improvement we’ve seen over the last three months. I’m leaving now. Ok.”

“Ok sir.”

And that was it – now I was driving south along the Pat Bay, heading for Bodenham Hall once again.

I couldn’t help but think how complicated things could get if I really did have feelings for Judy Davenport.

I observed Judy for a few moments before I entered the room. She was lying on her right side facing the two-way mirror. Still weeping, Kleenex in hand, Judy was staring at a photo of Richard, her, and Molly the Golden Retriever. Every few moments she let out a huge sigh and cried from deep within her heart.

Nurse Fletcher was close by offering words of comfort, which seemed to soothe Judy for a while.

“I want to talk to Dr. Hastings,” she uttered very audibly through her heaves of crying. She sounded so emotional, almost desperate.

“I know you’re trying to help, but I need to talk to Paul Hastings.”

As I walked into the room, Judy burst into tears, and reached out from her bed like a child asking to be picked up. To hell with the rules I thought as I approached the bed. With a quick glance to the nurse, I told her not to leave us alone.

I sat on the bed and held the quivering, soft body of Judy Davenport in my arms.

It seemed an age, but it was only about ten minutes.

Judy wept openly and deeply, eyes closed, hanging onto me for all she was worth.

“You’ve done really well this evening Judy,” I whispered.

“Grieving is never easy – and very painful. But so necessary.”

Judy had been holding on to her feelings for over four months, and finally she had reached the place where she could begin to let go.

“You lost your entire world, and you’re entitled to cry and ask why.” I encouraged.

After a while, I explained to Judy that this evening’s episode would leave her tired, and it would be best if she had something to help her sleep and regain her strength.

Judy agreed to take a sedative and within minutes she had fallen asleep.

As I headed north up the highway, I had to admit to myself that not only was a struggling with my emotions, but that I also gained a lot of satisfaction from being able to hold Judy. Just like a whimpering infant, she had fallen asleep in my arms.

Arriving back home, I poured myself a drink, rye whisky tonight. I felt I needed it, even though in reality I knew a glass of milk would have done me more good. My pre-occupation with one of my female patients was troubling me, and I had to deal with it.

“How many times have I told someone that they have to deal with their issues – not hide them in a closet somewhere hoping they would be forgotten or go away.” I said out loud. Well now it’s my turn.

“Deal with it Hastings, Deal with it!”

“Darn it!” I woke with a start – sat bolt upright and glared at the clock. “Blast- I hate being late. Bloody alarm clock!”

Banging the timepiece took some of the tension out of my body. But I had neglected to set it the previous night.

“Hi Sam, is Sally Barnes still there?” I thought I’d better phone ahead and let them know I’d be late.

“No Dr. Hastings, she just left. Said something about a meeting.”

“Oh , right, at the medical centre – yes.” I tried to pretend I hadn’t forgotten about Sally’s meeting at 8:30 with a new consultant in town.

“Sam, can you tell Donna to start the group session on time, and I’ll be there shortly.”

“Sure thing sir, I’ll pass on the message to Nurse Bradley.”

The door creaked as I slipped into the room. A few heads turned as I settled into my seat. I did a rapid

mental count of those present - two were missing, Leanne and Judy.

Donna, Nurse Bradley, was in the middle of her presentation on the subject of “The Importance of Goal Setting.” She was an exceptional nurse, and a gifted communicator. Her style was always interactive, and as now, she was making the participants work.

I glanced at her notes on the attendance sheet.

“Leanne – bad night – allowed to sleep in.”

“Judy-difficult night- needs to rest.”

Donna glanced in my direction, “That just about wraps it up for this morning.” she announced, “but I think Dr. Hastings would like to make some concluding remarks.”

After the morning session, participants have a coffee break and get to relax a little. As they begin to leave the room, I turned to Nurse Bradley.

“Sorry I was late Donna,” I apologized.

“Traffic on the Pat Bay was it Dr. Hastings?” Donna smirked.

“Something like that,” I offered in response.

“Nice job again Donna. Sometimes I wonder if you prefer our group sessions over your nursing duties.”

“I’m not sure” Donna replied. “Running a short life skills workshop is like pulling teeth sometimes. I try to make sure everyone contributes at least once.” Donna looked at her watch, “But then again, it’s better than dealing with bed pans and injections in the buttocks.” We both laughed and she slipped out the door leaving me alone in the room.

“Good morning Dr. Hastings.” Judy was standing in the doorway wearing a gown over her pyjamas.

“I’m sorry I missed the life skills program, only –“

“Judy, how are you doing today?” I couldn’t hold back the beaming look on my face. “Didn’t expect to see you until later – and it’s Paul, okay?”

“I’m just a little embarrassed about last night.” Judy moved hesitatingly towards the table.

“Come and sit down for a minute, “I said as I pulled out a chair for her.

“Did you have breakfast yet?” I asked rather clinically.

“Oh yes, thank you – Sandra had some put by just in case.”

I had already decided that it may be a good thing to have a talk with Judy today. A sort of de-briefing on the previous evening’s episode.

“How do you feel about having a little chat today?” I gently inquired.

“I haven’t showered yet, and I need to get dressed.” Judy gesticulated with her hands explaining her lack of proper attire.

“Plenty of time Judy – we could set aside half an hour after lunch. Would you be up for that?”

Judy gazed out of the window. “I’m not sure – em – Paul. Maybe...”

“Tell you what Judy. Why don’t you go and sort yourself out and get dressed. That’ll probably make you feel a little better.” I encouraged. “And after we’ve cleaned all the lunch dishes, we’ll see how you feel then.”

Judy reluctantly agreed, and as I had some phone calls to make, Judy headed for the washrooms.

“I understand you slept like a log all night,” I said to Judy as she entered my office.

“I sure don’t remember much after I saw you come in last night,” Judy replied.

“I looked at my watch and it was 10:30 in the morning.”

“Well at least we know the sedative worked.”

Judy sat down on a small couch I keep in the office, and I settled into the easy chair directly opposite.

“What do you remember about last night Judy?” I asked as gently as I could.

“I was in bed early – around 9:30. Most of the others were in the TV lounge, but I needed some quiet. I was reading for most of the evening on and off – mostly off. I told Dr. Barnes I was tired and she suggested I take an early night.” Judy spoke slowly, but very articulately.

“I think I fell asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow.” She began to look pained. “I had this dream – Richard came home from work and wanted to take me out to dinner.”

Judy paused for quite a long time, and fought to hold her emotions in check. “He insisted we take Molly along too, and give her a good run in the park. I put my coat on and turned to follow Richard of the door, and they were gone – Molly too.”

Judy took a few deep breaths and continued, “Then it all changed and I was sitting in the car by myself in the front passenger seat. I had this great wave of emptiness flow over me – and I woke up crying.”

Tears trickled down Judy's soft face. "I don't remember much more – I was holding a picture of Richard and Molly, and," she hesitated, "I asked for you."

Having said that Judy broke down and it was all I could do to remain in my seat and wait for her crying to subside, as her situation tugged once again on my heart strings.

"Judy, what you experienced last night was perfectly natural. Grief is going to come and go in waves. One day you'll feel a bit stronger, but the next, it will hit you all over again, and hit hard," I explained.

"It just takes time. Getting over a trauma of that magnitude can't be rushed," I ventured.

Judy looked up at me with her beautiful brown, teary eyes and attempted to nod in agreement.

"I think we should call it a day and speak again soon, Judy" I offered, feeling that there was a possibility that I could once again open the wound that was still fresh from last night.

And I knew I had to extract myself or I might cross the professional line at any moment to once again hold her in my arms to comfort her.

"Okay," was all Judy managed to get out.

As I lent her my arm and guided her out of my office, I wondered what the future held for this attractive, once, successful woman who was on top of her game and had it all – career, house, a happy marriage, everything that had come crashing down around her in an instant. Would she return to the driven professional she once was? And, would there ever be room for me in her new life? I knew, from experience, that time is the greatest healer, and that she would become stronger and life would resume for her again, an empty new life, at first anyway.

"Oh boy, I'm in too deep already. Get a grip Hastings. Get a grip!" I scolded myself for allowing my thoughts to run away from me.

"You're a professional," I reminded myself for the second time in as many days.

And yet the stirrings in my heart were coming dangerously close to telling me otherwise.....I would have to tread carefully, very carefully.