

Diagnosis
by
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INT - WAITING ROOM - DAY

There are a few people in the waiting room. One of them is TANYA (female, average build, normal clothes.) She's sitting, waiting patiently but she appears anxious. She's talking on the phone.

TANYA

Yeah, yeah no it's just that this is the 5th appointment I've had for this thing. Each doctor just bounces me towards another doctor. I'm just hoping to get some answers.

In front of her is JACK (male, 4 years old). Tanya's attention is set entirely towards him. He's fiddling with some toy trains. A door opens, and Tanya's head immediately snaps towards it. A NURSE walks out.

NURSE

Tanya and Jack?

Tanya raises her hand and nods.

TANYA

Yeah, I have to go they're ready for us. Alright, talk to you later.

She hangs up the phone and puts it in her purse. She also picks up Jack's toy trains and puts it in her purse. The nurse waves her hand, telling her to come. Tanya holds Jack's hand.

TANYA (CONT'D)

Let's go Jack.

Jack seems hesitant to move, so she picks him up and carries him towards the door and follows the nurse inside.

INT - EXAM ROOM - DAY

The nurse guides them towards one of the exam rooms. Tanya places Jack on top of the examination bed. The nurse walks out and grabs the door.

NURSE

Dr. Underwood will see you shortly.

TANYA

Thank you.

The nurse shuts the door as Tanya sits down. That anxious look still hasn't left her face. Jack begins to make a sound, and she looks over to him. The anxious look melts off of her face, if only for a moment. She looks at the clock. She's tapping her foot.

She looks back at Jack, who points to Tanya's purse. Tanya nods, and she opens up her purse to take his toy trains. He begins to play with them, smashing them together.

TANYA (CONT'D)
Jack, why don't you try it like
this?

Tanya takes one of the trains from Jack and begins calmly roll it along the ground.

TANYA (CONT'D)
Chugga chugga choo choo!

Tanya looks at Jack, who starts to make noises. Tanya hands the train back to Jack. He starts to roll one along the exam table, before crashing it into the other train. Tanya sighs and looks at the clock again.

She takes her phone out and opens Facebook. She starts to scroll down her feed. Jack makes another noise and she looks up, he's dropped one of his trains. Jack starts to look upset before Tanya picks up his toy and hands it back to him.

INT - EXAM ROOM - DAY - LATER

There's a knock on the door, and Tanya's attention snaps towards it. DR. UNDERWOOD (female, 30s, doctor attire) peaks her head out the door.

DR. UNDERWOOD
Hello hello!

Dr. Underwood walks inside. She's carrying a clip board and wearing a dry smile.

DR. UNDERWOOD (CONT'D)
How are you today, Tanya?

TANYA
I'm good, just a little nervous I
guess.

Dr. Underwood pulls up a chair in order to sit across from Tanya. She makes eye contact with her,.

DR. UNDERWOOD
Are you ready to hear the news?

Tanya takes in a deep breath and exhales slowly. She looks towards Jack and then back towards Dr. Underwood. She smiles faintly.

TANYA
Ready as ever, I guess. I just want to know what's wrong with my son.

DR. UNDERWOOD
Well, after our last session, I'm ready to make a diagnosis.

Tanya braces herself

DR. UNDERWOOD (CONT'D)
Jack has Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Tanya's smile quickly fades away, and it grows into a face of fear and concern. She looks at Jack worryingly, and then faces Dr. Underwood again. She's barely able to speak, almost like she's in shock.

TANYA
What?

DR. UNDERWOOD
It's a developmental disorder that impairs his abilities to communicate and to interact with others.

Tanya looks down at the ground, the fear in her has only grown. She doesn't know what to say, she's speechless. She can barely choke out her next words.

TANYA
Why?

DR. UNDERWOOD
Well, we can't really say for certain. We don't really understand the causes yet.

Tanya buries her face into her hands. Unsure of what to say or do.

TANYA
What did I do wrong?

DR. UNDERWOOD

It's nothing you did wrong. Autism is quite common. Stats say it's something like 1 in 59 kids. Not to mention there's a good chance it's caused by something genetic.

Tanya lifts her face from her hands and makes eye contact with Dr. Underwood. She's scared.

TANYA

I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.

Dr. Underwood grabs her clipboard and straightens up.

DR. UNDERWOOD

It's also more common in boys.

TANYA

What, what do I do?

DR. UNDERWOOD

There are some therapists that you can go see. And I also recommend you continue to see me, developmental disorders like this are my specialty.

Tanya straightens herself up and tries to calm herself down. She's still anxious

TANYA

Okay.. okay..

Tanya looks back at Jack. She stands up to walk towards him. He's still playing with his trains, crashing them into each other. She walks over and touches him on the shoulder. He flinches back and makes a noise.

DR. UNDERWOOD

I'm going to go and get some literature on Autism. I'll be right back.

Dr. Underwood gets up and leaves the room. Tanya then gets up on the exam table and sits next to Jack. She hugs him, but Jack appears uncomfortable with it.

TANYA

Jack, I love you.

Jack just stares back at her blankly, still uneasy with what's going on. Dr. Underwood walks back in and places some brochures on the table.

DR. UNDERWOOD

Here are the pamphlets I was
telling you about. I unfortunately
have to attend to other patients,
you can schedule a follow-up with
the receptionist up front.

Dr. Underwood then leaves the room. Tanya picks Jack up and then sets him down on the ground and she then gestures him to come with her. However he seems to not want to go, he's more interested in his trains. She picks him up and then takes him out of the room.

INT - CAR - DAY

Tanya is driving her car, Jack is in the back seat. She keeps looking at Jack through the mirror. She adjusts the mirror, still looking at Jack through it. She looks concerned, but it's obvious she's trying to hide it.

EXT - TANYA'S HOUSE - DAY

Tanya pulls her car into her driveway and then exits the vehicle. She unbuckles Jack.

TANYA

Jack, come on, we have to go
inside now.

Jack is unresponsive, as he's more interested in his toy trains. She takes him out of the car and then places him on the ground. She gestures him to go, but he still won't move. She then picks him up and takes him inside.

INT - TANYA'S HOUSE - DAY

Tanya walks into her home with Jack behind her. He wanders off to go play in his room while she lays down on the couch. For the first time, she breaks. She starts crying.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT - TANYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tanya is still laying down on the couch, her spot on the couch seems sunk in. She's blankly staring into space. But then, she hears Jack crying. She puts herself together and walks over to Jack's room to see what's wrong.

INT - JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jack is having a meltdown, he's quickly wandering around his room when Tanya walks in. He's crying bad and his face is bright red. He starts to make noises that resemble grunting more than they do talking.

TANYA

Jack!! Jack, what's wrong? What's wrong!

Jack makes more grunting noises.

TANYA (CONT'D)

Jack, please. I need you to calm down. Can you please calm down?

Jack makes more grunting noises, Tanya starts to get more upset.

TANYA (CONT'D)

Jack, please. What is it?

Jack makes more grunting noises, and then he starts hitting himself. Tanya loses it again and she starts crying. She rushes over him to grab his hands to stop him.

TANYA (CONT'D)

Jack, Jack, you can't do that! No!
No! Can you please calm down and tell me what's wrong?

Jack just starts to get louder and louder with his noises.

TANYA (CONT'D)

Please calm down, please calm down, please calm down, please clam down, please calm down.

Jack isn't getting any calmer. Tanya then breaks eye contact with Jack and she starts to scan his room. Her eyes begin to widen with a slight smirk on her face. She quickly picks Jack up and then she picks up a flash light. She then takes him out of his room.

EXT. - TANYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tanya carries Jack towards the driveway and puts him down, she's shining her flashlight towards the ground. She scans it for a few moments before she sees it. A toy train on the ground. She picks it up and then hands it to Jack. Jack starts to calm down almost immediately. Tanya just crouches near Jack, and takes in a deep breath and exhales.

INT - JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tanya tucks Jack into bed. She turns around to turn off the light and then to leave the room. She turns back around to Jack one last time before she leaves.

TANYA

I love you Jack, goodnight.

Tanya leaves the room abruptly. She makes her way to the couch to spend her time like she was before, but then her laptop on the counter catches her eye. She makes her way towards it, passing by a clock that shows us that it's 9:30 PM. She opens up her laptop. and then opens up Google.

INT. TANYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT: MONTAGE

A. Tanya Googles "what is autism?" She reads through various articles and websites.

B. She Googles "what causes autism?" she reads more articles. One article tells her that vaccines cause autism. She shakes her head and laughs, the first sense of positivism from her. Scene paces faster.

C. She Googles "autism history" she reads an article. Scene paces even faster.

D. She gets up and leaves the laptop for a moment.

E. She comes back to the laptop with a notebook, passing by a clock that says that it's 10:37 PM. She starts Googling more things and scribbles in her notebook. Scene paces faster.

F. She Googles "cure for Autism." She checks article after article, each one telling her that there is no cure. Scene paces faster.

G. She Googles "treatments for autism." She clicks on a few articles.

H. An article that talks about a text-to-speech keyboard device. Pace slows down.

I. She Googles "Autism independence." She scans some articles, scribbles in her notebook, scene paces faster.

I=J. She Googles "autism help" and scans through some articles, scribbles in her notebook. Scene paces faster.

J. She Googles "autism parenting." She scans some articles, and scribbles in her notebook. Scene paces faster.

K. She finally seems to slow down and gets up from her seat. She walks past the clock again, this time it reads 2:13 AM. She walks back to the couch and collapses onto it. Passing out almost immediately.

FADE IN:

EXT - TANYA'S PORCH - DAY

Tanya is sitting on her porch, with a bottle of water in her hand. She looks different. A car pulls up in front of her house, and she walks down the stairs to greet it. She opens the door and helps Jack get out of the car. Jack has a backpack with train graphics on it. She closes the door and then leans into the open window to talk to her FRIEND.

TANYA

Thanks for picking him up Liz.

Tanya holds Jack's hand as they walk up the stairs. Jack is clearly a few years older. They walk inside.

INT - TANYA'S HOUSE - DAY

Jack walks in and he seems happy. He places his train-themed backpack down and takes the text-to-speech device out of it. He then goes to sit down next to Tanya, who has already sat down on the couch. Jack starts to type on it, and it then emits words.

JACK

I am getting better at this, mom.

Tanya smiles and nods.

TANYA

I know! I'm so proud of you, Jack.

Jack types.

JACK

Thank you.

TANYA

You're welcome. Now, how was school?

Jack types.

JACK

It was good. I learned about the planets.

TANYA
That's good! What about them?

Jack types

JACK
I learned what order the planets
are in, and I also learned about
orbits.

TANYA
That's wonderful! Tell me more!

Jack begins to type, but then stops. He deletes what he
typed and types something else instead.

JACK
Hey mom.

TANYA
Yes?

Jack types.

JACK
I love you, Mom.

Tanya does a double take as her eyes begin to well up. She
begins to move towards Jack, but then hesitates for a
moment. She's holding back tears.

TANYA
Can I hug you, Jack?

Jack nods his head yes, and she immediately embraces him.
He hugs her back. Through the tears, she cracks a smile.

THE END.