

44. The Problem

(In an office. #1 is packing up his/her personal things. #2 knocks.)

- #1: Come on in. The morgue's open.
#2: *(Enters.)* I just heard. Tell me.
#1: What's to tell? I got called into the president's office, told what a disappointment I've become, and fired. Short and sweet.
#2: I'm sorry. I...
#1: Hey, it's not all bad news. I was given a whole hour to clear out my things. *(Goes back to packing.)*
#2: *(Starts to exit. Then turns back.)* What are you going to do?
#1: Go over my non-existent options, I guess.
#2: Look, I gotta tell you something.
#1: What?
#2: I knew this was coming down.
#1: *(Pause)* When did you find out?
#2: About a week ago.
#1: And you didn't tell me!? Terrific. Thanks for the support. Why don't you just get out of here.
#2: Look, I tried to talk to you.
#1: Really. Obviously you didn't try very hard since I don't remember.
#2: I'm not surprised you don't.
#1: What does that mean?
#2: Last week. After work at Antonio's.
#1: *(Starts to think.)* I don't remember you trying to talk to me.
#2: You were at the bar. I told you to come and sit down. That I wanted to discuss something with you.
#1: Oh come on, it was after work. I didn't want to talk about business. I was unwinding.
#2: Yeah, I know. You "unwind" quite a bit, don't you?

- #1: OK, you've obviously got something you want to get off your chest. So why don't you just say it?
#2: Fine, have it your way. You're being fired because you have a problem. You're a drunk!
#1: Who told you that? It's a lie!
#2: It is? OK, you tell me. Why are you being fired? You're as smart as you were when you came here, aren't you? You're fully capable of doing your work, but you haven't been. Why is that?
#1: You don't know what you're talking about. Roswell just doesn't like me. He never has. I...
#2: Roswell likes you just fine. Or should I say liked you. He's just now seeing what everyone else already knows. You have a drinking problem and you can't do your job.
#1: Get out of here! I really don't need this now.
#2: Yes you do! Especially now. Look, I'm not saying this to you to throw salt in your wounds. We're friends, good friends and I want to help.
#1: How? By walking in here on one of the worst days of my life and making up lies about me?
#2: No, by coming in here and telling you what I know is true. I don't know who you think you're fooling, but it's not me. Or anyone else out there for that matter. You've been drinking today. I can smell it from here.
#1: Of course I had a drink. I just got fired. What should I do? Go and have a cookie or...or an ice cream cone to celebrate?
#2: OK, but what about yesterday or last week or last year. Every time you're in this office you're going to or coming back from getting a drink.
#1: You're exaggerating.
#2: Am I? Tell me, how long do you go between drinks?
#1: A while.
#2: A while? And how do you measure "a while"? In weeks...days...hours? By the way, sleeping doesn't

- count. (#1 says nothing.) Look, I'm not doing this because it's fun. You need help.
- #1: OK, I'm sorry if I'm coming off as difficult, but it's been a lousy day. Yes, I drink some, probably more than I should, but trust me I...
- #1/#2: ...can handle it. (#1 & #2 look at each other.) No really, I can.
- #2: You want to continue with this duet? I know all the verses.
- #1: (Looks at #2 then turns back to the packing. Softly) I'm doing fine.
- #2: (Grabs #1 and turns him/her around.) Doing fine!? Your packing up your belongings because you've just been fired! You call that doing fine!?
- #1: (Breaks free.) What is all this to you? You wouldn't happen to be worried that my being fired is going to reflect badly on you. After all, weren't you the one who brought me in here?
- #2: No, I'm not worried at all because when you came here you were doing great. I didn't know you had a drinking problem until later.
- #1: And why are you so sure that I have a problem?
- #2: Because I've been there, I've done it, and... (#2 reaches into his/her pocket pulls out a chip, and tosses it to #1.) I've got the chip.
- #1: You're...
- #2: Sober. Six years now.
- #1: I...I didn't know.
- #2: I hit bottom a couple of years before we met.
- #1: You really haven't had a drink in six years?
- #2: No, I really haven't.
- #1: I guess you don't want one.
- #2: Only all the time.
- #1: How do you...not drink?
- #2: One day at a time. Today's easy though.

- #1: Why?
- #2: All I have to do is look at you...packing.
- #1: (Tosses the chip back.) That's not fair!
- #2: Neither is being a drunk. And if you don't get some help, and fast, this is going to become a very familiar scenario for you. I can guarantee it.
- #1: Not very compassionate, are you?
- #2: Oh, I've got a lot of compassion, but for someone who's truthful with themselves. I can't afford to indulge a lie, and know what? Neither can you. And right now, you are living a lie.
- #1: You don't know anything about me! Yeah, we're friends, but you don't know all the pressure I have. Home isn't great, I have to compete all the time at work, I can never relax. Do you know what that can do to someone? Do you know how all this makes me feel about me?
- #2: Probably not too highly considering how much time you spend in altered states. But the thing is, and listen carefully, it can change! But you have to want it to.
- #1: Don't you think I want it to?! Don't you think I'd love to leap out of bed and look forward to the day? I just need time to straighten things out, and I can do it on my own without you or your meetings.
- #2: Who knows, maybe you can. Being unemployed will certainly give you the time to find out. (Takes a card out of his/her pocket and hands it to #1.) Even so, you might want to stop by a meeting sometime. There are only about 1500 meetings a week. See if you can squeeze one in. Who knows, maybe we can learn a thing or two from you. (Starts to exit and turns back.)
- #1: I'll get a handle on this. I'll be fine.
- #2: Well, you've got our number and believe me...we've got yours. See you. (Exits.)