

Brooke Gardner

Pensacola, FL 32514

(850) 368-5017

Brookegardner1014@gmail.com

English Graduate, UWF

### **The Drawer**

By Brooke Gardner

"Dr. Demisē, you have a patient downstairs needing your attention," echoed an electronic voice from my radio. The voice came from my medical assistant, Miles. He has been aggravating me all morning. After twenty long years in the medical field, I hardly need a constant reminder of my daily tasks.

As I trudge down the sanitized tiles, fumes of bleach and alcohol fill my nose. My white, non-slip sneakers squeak as I turn every corner. My stiff, white lab coat gently blows behind me. As I approach the old elevator, I examine the circular buttons. After pressing one, a dim light flickers from the button with the *down* arrow.

"Dr. Demisē, sir, a-are you coming?" asked a hesitant Miles.

"Yes. I will be there as soon as this bloody elevator delivers me there." I sigh, rolling my eyes. Flipping the *Off* switch on my

radio, I slide the nuisance into the pocket of my viridescent scrubs.

*Ding!* Painfully slow, the old elevator doors open. As I step into the elevator, I select the bottom level. Light, instrumental music spills out of the speakers, competing with the humming of the machines. Leaning against the steel wall, I start my descent. Faint, orange numbers flash above the doors, decreasing with each level. After two minutes, I reach my destination. I swiftly exit the elevator, heading toward Laboratory 01. A lanky, pale figure enters my peripheral vision.

"Dr. Dem--"

"Miles," I rest my hand on his bony shoulder. "How many times have I told you to focus on doing your job and to stop bothering me about mine?"

"At least a dozen times, sir." He looks away from me. "I just think you should take a look at this one in a timely fashion. I-I wasn't trying to offend you, sir."

"I have been working at this facility for as long as you have been alive, Miles. I do not need your constant nagging. If I wanted to be pestered daily, I would have gotten married a long time ago."

"Sir, I just think--"

"Enough!" I walk through the heavy double doors. To my dismay, Miles follows.

"I'm sorry, sir." He hands me a box of large gloves. After washing my hands, I glove up. Without taking his eyes off of me, he does the same.

"Tell me about our patient." I sigh, changing the subject.

"Ophelia Davenport. Age: 32. She's already on the exam table."

I walk through the second set of doors, fidgeting with my gloves. Without looking at the girl, I don my medical apron, mask, and goggles. Still not making eye contact, I approach the exam table. I gather my medical instruments on a small steel cart. As

I look up, I am stunned. Her hair is fiery, red. Her eyes are open, begging me to admire their emerald shade. Her pale, plump lips are ever so slightly chapped. Her jawline is as sharp as paper. Her chin has a slight cleft. I stare in awe, as I've never witnessed such beauty. Her pale complexion is almost see-through. I reach out my gloved hand and caress her high cheekbone. As my hand makes contact with her face, she makes no reaction. A few moments pass as I am hypnotized by this enchantress. My eyes examine the rest of her thin frame. Her collarbones peek through the top of the white blanket. Hesitantly, I slide the blanket down further. Two mounds sit atop her chest. Her ribcage is visible underneath. Sighing, I slide the blanket back to her neck. *Stop this.* I think. *Maintain your professionalism.* Stepping away from the table, I massage my temples.

Leaving the room, I tell Miles I will continue my examination tomorrow. He could see the sweat dripping from my forehead and my goggles beginning to fog. As he tries to protest, I wave my hand at him, shooing him away. Panicking, I remove my apron, gloves, and goggles.

"But sir-" Miles tries to stop me.

"Tomorrow." I say firmly.

\*\*\*

The next day, I come into the facility with a bouquet of yellow daisies for Ophelia. Upon entering the lab, I place them inside a beaker and fill it with water. I set the beaker of daisies next to the examination table. I pull the blanket down, revealing her gorgeous features. "Good evening, Miss Ophelia." I caress her cheek. "I apologize for yesterday. I had to excuse myself before I lost control." Without blinking, she stares up at me. "I brought you flowers--daisies instead of roses. I think you'd assume roses to be too cliché. They smell wonderful." I fiddle with their yellow petals. "It's definitely better than the alcohol fumes." I pull

the wheeled stool over to the examination table and take a seat. I rest my elbows on the examination table and admire her pale skin. "I told Miles to take the weekend off, so he shouldn't interrupt us. You'll learn that he can really be a nuisance." Looking down, I take notice of her hand. It's thin, much like the rest of her figure. Her nails are painted the color of a red apple, complimenting the color of her hair. "Your nails are beautiful. You must not use your hands much. Your polish isn't chipped one bit." I place my hand over hers. My hands are objectively larger. Rubbing my thumb on the side of hers, I look up at her, regaining eye contact. "I don't want to disrespect you, my dear. You can feel safe with me." Closing my eyes tightly, I place a kiss atop her forehead. I stand up and take notice of the tools on the steel table. Forceps, sharp-end scissors, round-end scissors, a scalpel, and a bone-saw sit neatly in front of me. "Darling, it is my job to exam your body. Using these instruments, these tools will penetrate your flawless skin." I turn toward her and place my hands on her hollow cheeks. "I can't do that to you. I won't."

Placing my hands underneath her body, I lift her up into my arms. My muscles strain as I carry her to a steel drawer. I rest her body on the surface, gently. "I will come back tomorrow, darling." I reassure her, kissing her cheek. Closing the drawer, I look down at my sneakers. Sighing, I begin walking to the doors of the laboratory. My hand freezes on the door. Tears start to emerge from my eyes as I look back at the collection of drawers. Dozens of silver handles, dozens of names, dozens of bodies enter my mind. Without hesitation, I retreat to the drawer that reads *Ophelia Davenport*. As I yank the drawer open, my heart races inside of my chest. Searching my scrub pockets, I find a pack of *Camels* and place them on their side in the bottom corner of the drawer. I hoist myself onto the surface and allow the drawer to close, the pack of *Camels* holding the drawer open just enough for oxygen to

seep through. Her cold skin touches mine, sending chills up my spine. I pull her against my chest, and I inhale the smell of her hair. Slowly, I close my eyes, and my heart begins to calm down. My breath becomes steady once again, and I begin to fall asleep.

Each night afterward, I join Ophelia inside her drawer. I consciously place the pack of *Camels* in the corner, allowing me to breathe. Spending the night with her has become part of my routine. Each night, my love for her grows stronger. Since meeting her, I have had dreams of us traveling the world, falling deeply in love, getting married, and even having children. I imagine us dancing to vintage love songs in our living room as the fire from our fireplace warms the room. Our children resemble her, with their emerald eyes and ginger hair. They have freckles and pale skin. We have a golden retriever named Daisy, who plays with the children. Our neighbors resent our happy life, envying our blissful marriage and obedient children. As we grow old together, our children grow up to be wealthy doctors or lawyers. They take care of us in our elder years. We have many grandchildren who aspire to have a love like ours. As we take our last few breaths, we die in each other's arms, never leaving each other's side.

The last night I stayed with Ophelia, I wrapped my arms around her cold, stiff body. "I love you," I confessed. I gazed down at her lips as they begged me to kiss them. I placed my lips upon hers and held her face in my hands. While I was lost in the moment, I did not notice the footsteps approaching the drawer. I looked down at my feet and noticed a lanky, pale hand reaching inside the drawer. Before I could protest, the hand snatched the box of cigarettes from the drawer and shoved the drawer closed.

"Help! I'm locked in here, you idiot!" I called out.

Footsteps retreated to the end of the laboratory until I could no longer hear them. Moments later, my heart began to slow as I

took my last few breaths. My eyelids grew heavy as I held Ophelia.  
"I love you, darling."