**Ethical Decision Making**

**The Practitioner's Dilemma**

Narrator: Dr. Scott Marley, licensed social worker and certified chemical dependency counselor, worked with Mrs. Victoria Monroe for over three years. During that time she presented symptoms of depression and anxiety, exacerbated by alcoholism. After a six-week inpatient treatment program prescribed by Dr. Marley, Ms. Monroe began attending Alcoholic Anonymous meetings organized especially for alcoholic women. Dr. Marley is proud of her success; and his as well. He is relatively new in his practice treating the chemically dependent, and Dr. Marley believes he may have saved Mrs. Monroe's life.

**Victoria**: I have been doing so well in my recovery, Doctor. Really remarkable. I have been sober for eight months. You know that. Before my grandbaby was born, I made my promise to John and to you. But you, Doc, you, more than anyone else in my life - - you know how hard I have tried and how well I have done.

**Scott**: You have, Victoria. You have done so well. I am so proud of you. (pause) I am sure John is proud of you as well.

**Victoria**: Do not be proud of me, Scott. I humiliated myself last Friday. I made a fool of myself. You know what? I thought of you as I took that first drink. I thought of this moment when I would have to tell you.

**Scott:** Stop it, Victoria – do not be so hard on yourself. Remember our rules for recovery?

**Victoria:** I will try. I will try. Okay. (takes a deep breath) No negative messages. Only positive messages. I remember.

**Scott:** Now, go on. Tell me what happened last Friday.

**Victoria**: It was so easy, Dr. Marley. I did not know it would be so easy, after eight months of sobriety. You know I have not stayed out of the bars. Being in the bars has not been a problem. But it was Friday. Friday, for some reason, for some crazy reason…I fell. I fell hard, Scott - - no one forced me. No one pushed me. No one was even there with me. But I drank six martinis.

**Scott:** Victoria…

**Victoria**: I was totally looped. I could not believe it. And by the time I got home, I felt like the total loser I am; right back where I started.

**Scott:** Oh, Victoria, I am so sorry.

**Victoria**: Don't be sorry, Scott. It is not your fault. It was me. Me. me, me. But that is not all. That whole night, I felt so awful, so guilty, so filled with shame. And of course, with all the gin, I could not get to sleep. I tossed and turned. And here is the killer. I do not think John had a clue about how drunk I was. Poor fool. He had to get out of bed and move to another room because I was so agitated. And of course this all happened when the new baby was spending the first night with her grandparents. In the middle of the night she woke up with a wet diaper. She cried and cried. I knew I should get up to help, but I could not. I was too…I knew John would be upset, but I did not care.

**Scott:** So, John got up with the baby? That is not that big of a deal, Victoria.

**Victoria**: Well, it felt like it to me, Doc. I could not get out of bed because I was too drunk to take care of my own granddaughter; too drunk to be a good grandmother.

**Scott:** Oh, Victoria…

**Victoria:** You know that John's dad is still with us. We put him in the spare room on the first floor – the one that used to be John's work-out room. We moved a hospital bed in there, and it seems to work out with the hospice people. He will probably be dead before the holiday

**Scott:** I remembering you telling me about this. You are such a good woman, Victoria. Not many wives would be willing to do such a generous thing for their husbands. Good for you.

**Victoria**: Well, you might not think that when I tell you what I did. The next night, I really needed to get some sleep. First the Martinis, then the shame, then the insomnia…I needed some help. So I took two of the old man's Vicodin. How low can you go?

**Scott**: Oh, my dear girl, please do not cry. I can not bear to see you cry. You have done so well. It is all going to be okay. You have done the right thing in coming to me. You know how good we are together. I am going to help you.

**Victoria**: Scott, what would I do without you?

**Scott**: Do not be silly. This is what you pay me for! (They both laugh – the tension lifts.) Now, here is what we're going to do. First, if I remember correctly, , you used to drink at the casino before your sobriety. Is that right? (Victoria nods.) There was something about that environment that helped. (Victoria nods again.)

**Victoria**: The girls and I used to gamble the slots.

**Scott:** Well, what about bingo? Next time you feel like you want to stop in at the bar, do not. Instead, go to the bingo hall on Division Street. Play a little bingo. Heck, invite your girl friends along!

**Victoria**: Really?

**Scott**: Absolutely. It will take away the itch a little bit. There is something about a little innocent Bingo that really helps when you want a drink. And Vicky, do not beat yourself up about the Vicodin. I completely understand. There are some nights when I wish I had a little help falling asleep.

**Victoria**: Really?

**Scott:** Absolutely. And like you said, John's father won't miss them. He will be gone in a few short weeks. If they can give you some relief during this difficult time, go ahead. And Vicky, I have another idea.

**Victoria**: What, Dr. Scott?

**Scott:** I love it when you call me that. (They both smile and lean into each other.) I think we need to spend more time together. You might need a little more support right now. Becoming a grandmother is a difficult passage for a woman as vital and youthful as you.

**Victoria:** It has been. Yes.

**Scott**: How about breakfast? Julie heads out to the office early, about 7 A.M. I could pick you up at the condo, and we could try that great little bistro that just opened on Lake Street.

**Victoria**: Scott. Dr. Scott. That sounds wonderful.

**Scott:** So, here is our plan. When you feel the pressure is building, get in touch with your friends. Play a little bingo. When you feel like you need a little help to get to sleep, let your father-in-law's condition be a little blessing to you, and when you feel like you need some special attention, call me. And we will start all this tomorrow morning at breakfast.

**Victoria:** Thanks, Scott.