

THREE CONFESSIONS ABOUT WORK

Read the following confessions three people make about their present occupations. Match sentences (0-9) with people (A-C)

A.

Everyone told me to be careful. "Watch out: you're burning the candle at both ends". And I would wave them away dismissively. Of course I could cope. They hadn't seen anything yet. So I sailed on, hitting target after target, making my company more successful than it had ever been until suddenly I couldn't do it anymore. I felt physically sick in the presence of colleagues; I couldn't make decisions, take notes or sit in meetings. Thank goodness I had someone to support me through it all. My partner quietly gave me space to get well, encouraged me to see a psychotherapist and never judged. I traded my job for one with greatly reduced hours and on significantly less pay. I rediscovered the family I had always loved, but had forgotten how to be with. I learned to fail and not be ashamed of failing, and I learned to understand that I was nothing particularly special, except to my family and friends. And after all, who else matters?

B.

I get called in when parents fail to agree over their children: who they live with, who they visit. So off I go to visit the first parent. Sad story: treated very badly by the other parent, who is detestable and should never be allowed near the children again. Then I visit the other parent: another sad but completely incompatible story. I feel sorry for them both. It is down to me to attempt to unpick which parent is lying the most. Sometimes talking to the children helps me find out, but you can't ask them to dish the dirt on their parents, unless they volunteer it. I try to mediate a realistic compromise – but if they'd been prepared to compromise, it probably wouldn't have got to court in the first place. Sometimes my sympathies, and the evidence, come down clearly on one side. Mostly I file a report to the family court suggesting something that won't please either; but a court can't legislate that two grown adults must be nicer to each other. And I go home upset by how behaving badly after a separation is more supported than challenged by our friends and family.

C.

People assume I get bored, but I enjoy the solitude. I like the hourly walks through the quiet corridors and listening to the rain on the windows while enjoying a cup of tea. I look forward to finishing a good book or watching the birds in the car park feeding on the muffins I put out yesterday. The tiredness is the hardest. Sometimes I have a good routine and my sleep is not affected. Other times, I walk into doors, zombie-like, and occasionally I've been surprised to find that I've actually made it home. My husband tells me I should find a new job, and I have been applying for some since I began working here. It is the death knell for a CV: it says key holder, not stakeholder. It says, I live in the dark like a monster, or some kind of weirdo; no good with the sun. Though my job perpetuates my hatred of people, I am still compassionate towards those in need. I never think twice about letting someone in from the cold, or giving away a free room if it is a genuine cause. But if the intercom goes off at 2am and I see a couple who can barely stand, I'll more than likely say there are no vacancies even when it isn't, especially if I've just made a tea and I want to drink it peacefully.

0	dealing with children	
1	a dead-end job	
2	a non-people person	
3	being at the end of one's rope	
4	being charitable	
5	losing one's fear	
6	inaccurate stories	
7	making tough decisions	
8	moving down the career ladder	
9	overworking	