

The Gift (8)

As far as doctors' offices went this was nothing like she had ever seen. Well, actually it was because she had been here only a few days before but that had been the first time. The family doctor to whom they had gone their entire married life had recently moved his office to a brand new building that had been built only about five minutes from where they now lived. As far as convenience went it was nice but she certainly hoped that she would not become a regular customer.

Her first real thought after letting one of the office girls know they had arrived and after sitting down was that if she didn't know better she would never have guessed this was a doctor's office. From the outside the building appeared very modern but once through the entrance it felt as though she were on vacation to a retreat in the woods or perhaps a lodge deep in the mountains. Although the offices and examining rooms were decorated normally and equipped with the most up to date medical equipment the patient waiting room was designed to look and feel like the inside of a large log cabin right down to the log walls. There was even a large stone gas fireplace in the middle of the room that lent a warm and quiet ambiance to the whole room. In the far corner there was a small play area with a number of toys for the smaller children to play with and even a small sandbox. Opposite that corner and off to the side there were four televisions, two hooked up to Xboxes and two hooked up to PlayStation 2's. Other than this modern technology the remainder of the room was very simple and yet very relaxing. The seating consisted strictly of log rocking chairs, regular chairs, and couches.

In her last visit here a few days ago Janet had asked the doctor about it and he said that in part it was simply that he loved log cabins and thought it would be fun to work in one. The more practical side of it, however, was that they hoped it had a calming effect on the people who came in for office visits. They wanted the atmosphere to be peaceful and relaxing and so far in the two months they had been in the new building they were seeing success. She had to admit that it seemed to work for her too.

She had, of course called Jack at work after the doctor had phoned and he had come home early in order to come to the appointment with her. Now he sat next to her on a couch that was positioned in such a way that they could watch the flames in the fireplace dance along the logs that lay in the hearth. She could tell that Jack was nervous and to be honest, so was she. It was clear that there was something wrong. Were that not the case they would have simply been told the results of the tests over the phone and that would have been that. That was the logical thought but she kept hoping that maybe this was just how they treated all of these types of cases.

When they had arrived and before they got out of the car Jack had said a short prayer in which he prayed for good news but especially for the grace to be content and accept God's will, whatever it was. The request he had made that God make it so that no matter what his plan was that he be glorified went through her mind over and over. Not necessarily because she couldn't forget it, but more accurately because she knew she may not forget it. That had been her testimony to Mr. Michealson that very morning. The words had come so easily, almost without thinking. Now, however, facing the reality of the situation seemed a completely different story. Suddenly the doubts and the fears became so real that even the calming atmosphere that surrounded her failed to ease them. Reaching over she took her husband's hand in her own.

A few minutes later the doctor came into the waiting room and after seeing them, came to where they were sitting.

"Jack and Janet, thanks a lot for coming," he said as they stood up and he shook each of their hands. "Why don't we head back into one of the consulting rooms."

They followed the doctor all the way down the hallway to a room at the end on the left. This room, though not decorated in the log style of the waiting room, was warm and personable. Along one wall there was a couch to which the doctor directed them. He moved one of the chairs in front of the couch and sat down in it after they had seated themselves.

"Well, first of all, I am really glad both of you were able to come. I am sure you have been a bit apprehensive so I am going to get right to the test results," he said as he opened a small folder that he had carried with him.

"The X-ray that we did a couple of days ago showed what appears to be a tumor high up on Ruth's left leg." He took an X-ray film out of the folder and after standing up, slid the film into the receptacle on the wall. "You can see it right here," he said as he pointed at and then circled the mass with his index finger.

He sat down again and after looking both in the eye he continued, "So, right now you're probably asking yourselves if this could be true and whether I am sure about this. Well, I always consult in cases like this and unfortunately the doc that I talked to agreed with what I see." He gave them a minute then to take in and attempt to comprehend what he had just told them.

Jack was the first one to speak.

“Janet and I talked about this and I thought we had a pretty good handle on it but I have to tell you, I am not so sure anymore,” he said, the last few words coming out with a slight flutter as his emotions took hold.

The doctor folded his hands and looked first at Jack and then at Janet with sympathy in his eyes.

“I know when you were here earlier this week I told you that it was possible this could be something serious and I am sure you have thought about it since then but I am sure too that this is still a bit of a shock. It is going to take a little time for this to sink in.” Scooting to the edge of his chair in order to get a little closer to them he went on, “But I want you to know that I think we have caught this thing in time and the odds of getting on top of it and getting rid of it are pretty good.”

Jack and Janet looked at each other then and tightened their grip on each other’s hands.

“But, this is still serious, right?” Janet said as she felt a tear forming in the corner of her eye. She had told herself that she wouldn’t cry, no matter what the news was but she just couldn’t quite hold it all back.

“Yes,” he said as he nodded his head slowly. Then, with a slight smile he said, “Serious but do-able.”

“So where to we go from here?” asked Jack.

“Well,” the doctor began, happy that they had taken it so well up to this point and eager to move on to some more positive information, “to begin with I would like her to see an orthopaedic specialist, actually he is the doc I consulted. His name is Dr. Kearny and he is one of the best in the state at what he does.”

They talked for a while longer about tests that Dr. Kearny would probably want to do and why, and a bit about what treatments he may order and then after a hug for both they said their good-byes.

As they walked out of the office they both felt as if they were in a daze, the world around them moving along as normal but for them everything suddenly slowing down to what seemed a crawl. After getting in the car without having said a word to each other since leaving the consulting room, they embraced and the tears they had both held back while in the office now flowed freely for both. Unbeknownst to them the doctor stood by a window that overlooked the parking lot and watched as they embraced, his own tears slowly running down his cheeks. He just never got used to

things like this. He was happy however to see Jack and Janet now embracing and crying. They had both showed very little emotion and as they had left he was afraid that either they had not fully comprehended what he had said or were simply in denial.

He walked back to his office, closed the door behind him, and knelt beside his desk in the same spot that only a little while ago he had asked God for strength to bring the news. Now however he knelt to pray for strength for this family to which he had just given this life changing news and for Ruth too. You see, Ruth was not only his patient but she and her family were members of the same church he and his family attended. His youngest son was the same age as Ruth and both were in the same class in school, in the same catechism class at church. Before he began to pray he thought a moment how helpless he felt. Even with all his education and the great advancements in medicine, when it really came down to it, there was nothing he or anyone else could do. It was all in the hands of God. So, to the Great Physician he went.