

## Transfusions

*JM Reinbold*

It was 3 a.m. Will Diamond's daughter was dying and there was nothing he could do to save her. Not knowing what else to do, he had come to the hospital Chapel to pray. He was on his knees staring blindly at the carpet under the pews feeling confused and uncertain. There was no cross; in fact, there were no religious symbols at all. He asked a night duty nurse about it and she told him it was because the Chapel was for patients and visitors of all faiths, not just Christians. Four walls of magnificent stained glass depicting children frolicking in gardens and wooded glades surrounded him. The pastoral scenes were meant to soothe and comfort, but Will, trying to find words to ask for a miracle from a God he hadn't acknowledged in years and wasn't even sure he believed in, barely noticed the vibrant colors. He made a few false starts before realizing he had no idea what to say. He thought for a few minutes, and then with sweaty palms pressed tightly together he tried again. "Please God, please save her. She needs a miracle."

When he was done, it occurred to him that in his entire life he had done little or nothing for God, and so perhaps he had no right to expect God to do anything for him. "I'll go to church," he promised, "I'll go to church and I'll take Susan and make sure she goes to Sunday school. And," he added with a sigh, "I'll read the Bible, too." Will groaned. What a pathetic prayer. He rested his forehead on his clenched hands. Tears leaked from the corners of his eyes. Finally, he gave in to desperation. "Listen," he said, half choking out the words. "Listen, I'll do anything. There must be something. Anything. Whatever you need; I'll do it. Please, please, just save my little girl."

Will awoke with a jolt. He felt like he'd just been body slammed into the pew. His heart

was racing and a bullet of panic was ricocheting around inside his head. For a few moments he had no idea where he was. He gripped the pew in front of him and tried to calm himself down. *Take it easy; just take it easy. It was only a dream.* Some dream; he couldn't remember when he'd been so scared. He sat up and rubbed the sleep out of his eyes. Scratching the stubble on his cheeks, he wondered how long he'd been asleep. The dream memories were beginning to slip away. The last thing he remembered was praying. And he had a hazy recollection of talking to someone. He didn't have time to worry about it now. He checked his wristwatch. 8 a.m. He couldn't believe it. He'd been asleep for five hours. A blast of adrenalin roused him. He had to get back to Susan. What if she'd woken up and found him gone? What if she needed him? He pushed through the Chapel doors and ran through a maze of corridors to Susan's room.

Will lurched forward and nearly fell off his chair. He had dropped off again. The nightmare he'd had earlier was still churning around in his head. He remembered that the person he'd been talking to was a fierce looking old man with long, white hair and an equally long beard. But his appearance kept changing – first male, then female, young, old, middle-aged and shifting race and ethnicity, too – never staying the same for more than a few seconds, and finally becoming nothing Will recognized as human, just colors, smells, sounds and shifting patterns of light. Sometimes it spoke, and sometimes he felt its thoughts in his head. Then he was standing on a stage, like he'd had to do in high school at graduation. He wanted to run away, but above him a powerful light switched on leaving him exposed and vulnerable. Beyond the column of light he could see only shadows. Shadows that murmured and cried out as they pressed closer and closer. They were reaching for him, exuding a terrible longing that gripped him and drew him nearer and nearer the darkness. That's what had scared the bejesus out of him and woke him up. That and

the blood. He remembered the blood and the awful, overwhelming anxiety flooding through him. He didn't want to think about blood. Blood had ruined his life. Blood was why his wife was dead and his daughter was dying, all because of a blood transfusion.

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