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Warnings We Do Not Heed

1827 Words

Blue Skies On a Bright Day

After the accident, the sky lost its blue. Every bit of it. Just drained away into gray. Unlike moments before when Anne could clearly see the big, beautiful sky of deep cerulean blue from the passenger seat of her husband's Ford pickup. And the deep greens and gold of manicured lawns rushing by as they raced across town to catch their son's ballgame. She even saw the yellow traffic light cycle to red moments before barreling through the intersection and hitting the big white truck with silver grill and decorative bull horns. But after flying through her own windshield, across the hood and landing flat on her back in the middle of the roadway, Anne couldn't see any more colors. The sky faded to gray.

"Ma'am, are you okay?"

What a silly question, she thought. A car accident, a busted windshield and me lying flat on my back in the roadway? What kind of idiotic question is that?

"Ma'am, can you hear me?"

A stranger's face appeared above her, hovering. But to Anne, he was as gray as the sky above – blending till one was a silhouette surrounded by the other.

"Ma'am?"

Oddly enough, she felt calm. Calm and peaceful lying on her back. Like she'd finally found that comfortable spot in bed and didn't want to move so not to disturb the pleasant sensation.

"Is she dead?" a nearby voice asked.

"I don't think so. Her eyes are open."

"That don't mean alive. Check her pulse."

"Okay."

The gray faced man reached down to check, but Anne croaked, "*Don't touch me!*" and he pulled his hand back like he'd been burned. Then the world flooded back in and Anne could hear the truck horn blasting, distant sirens approaching and someone nearby moaning. All while a woman prayed over them, '*Help them, Oh, Lord. Preserve them in this time of terrible ordeal. Heal them from their accident and cradle them in the bosom of Your Love! Because You are great, oh Lord! Your Will be done. Dear God, I ask in your holy name.*'

Which, of all the sounds Anne was hearing, the woman praying annoyed her most. She hated those kind of histrionic woman -- who got their rocks off praying in the most demonstrable fashion at accidents and catastrophes and such. Like it was for your benefit, but really just so everyone would notice them -- see them praying out loud like they were a saint. Anne knew, for all this woman's pretense, she'd leave the accident scene very pleased with herself and go home without giving Anne, or anyone at the scene, another thought. Not a one. Such hypocrisy, Anne thought, deserved a punch in the mouth.

"Can you tell that lady to shut up, please," Anne croaked to the gray man standing over her. "If I'm dying here, the last thing I want to hear is that woman's voice."

"Don't worry, I'm not gonna let that happen, ma'am," the gray man replied. Though Anne didn't know if he meant he wouldn't let her die or he wouldn't let the woman pray any longer. She figured the odds were fifty-fifty.

"Thank you," Anne croaked.

"Sure. Now, let's see if we can't find out how you're doing. My name is Darren by the way. I was in the truck you crashed into. Do I have your permission to touch you? I'd like to check your pulse. And check for injuries."

"Sure. But can you first do something about turning the color back on?"

"The color?"

"Yes. I can't see colors anymore." Anne didn't know why she said that, but it seemed important. Very important. The grayness of everything was creeping her out and she didn't like it.

"I'm not sure about that one. But I'll see what I can do, ma'am."

"And what about the dinosaur standing behind you? Are you going to deal with him too?"

"Umm. You see a dinosaur behind me?"

"No. Fooled you. A little accident humor just to keep you on your toes."

"Ahh, I see."

"Don't look so serious. I'm just trying to lighten the mood."

"Well, you're doing a good job. I feel better already. Now about checking for injuries. Does it hurt anywhere? Anywhere more than other places?"

"No. Actually, I feel fairly good, all things considered. Don't ask me why. It doesn't hurt anywhere. Which is surprising."

"She might be in shock," the voice nearby spoke.

"No matter," Darren replied. "You're doing great ma'am."

"Call me Anne."

"Okay Anne."

"So, how's it looking, Darren? Am I still in one piece?"

"I think so. But you hit your head pretty hard. And you have a few lacerations across your face and neck that are bleeding. Do you think you can sit up under your own effort?"

"Sure." She tried. She really did. But, as Anne discovered, in addition to losing her color of sight, she'd lost her ability to move. Not an arm or leg. Not even a twitch of a finger or to bat an eyelash. All she could do was lie on her back and stare up at the gray sky. Along with Darren's gray face looking down. "I don't know what's wrong, but I don't seem to be able to sit up. It doesn't hurt. But I can't sit up. Or move." She should've panicked. Been upset or scared. But she wasn't.

"That's okay. I heard that kind of thing happens after a shock to the system. Temporary paralysis, you know, so the body can protect itself. What's important is that you're awake and talking to me."

"If you say so. But things don't seem as rosy as they were just a few minutes ago. How's John? My husband? Is he okay?"

"Was John the other person in the truck with you? The guy who was driving?"

"Yes."

“Well, I can’t see him from here, but he’s in good hands. The other guys I was with in the truck are tending to him. We were all in the truck together.”

“Where were you guys going? John and I were heading over to Lansing Field to watch our son’s baseball game.”

“That sounds nice. What position does he play?”

“Third base. And he just made the All-American All-Star team for Lancaster County. He’s only sixteen, but he’s being scouted by several colleges to play for them next year, you know.”

“That sounds amazing.”

“Oh, it is. And my daughter, Amy, she’s a senior in high school right now. She plays the flute and is so good, she just got a full scholarship to the Berklee College of Music. That’s in Boston. Not the one in California.”

“That sounds wonderful.”

“You know, it may sound odd to hear, but I’m worried about next year.”

“Worried?”

“Sure. If Brian – that’s my son – leaves for college at the same time Amy does, then both will be out of the house. I’ll be...oh, what do they call it when your kids leave home?”

“An empty-nester?”

“Right! Empty-nester. I’ll be an empty-nester.”

“That doesn’t sound so bad. You get a break after all the years of raising them. And you’ll finally have enough free time to maybe travel with your husband. That’s what people normally do, right?”

"I wish. But John doesn't like to travel. Plus, he works a ton and doesn't usually come home except on weekends. Hey, can you keep a secret if I tell you one?"

"Yes, of course. You can tell me anything."

"We haven't told the kids yet, but John says he's moving out of the house once the kids go away to college. He's tired of being married and says he wants a divorce."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Me too. You spend your life devoted, you know? Caring for his needs, giving him children, raising his family, taking care of his home. Making sure he gets everything he needs. And when it comes time to get your own – when the kids are leaving and it's your turn to be taken care of -- what does he do? Tells you he's leaving. Moving out. Not because he's met someone else, but because he claims I've changed. I'm not the same woman he married all those years ago and he doesn't love me anymore. Can you believe that? Because *I'm* the one who's changed. How's that for a 'howdy do!'"

"I'm sorry to hear that, ma'am."

"Damn right! It's messed up is what it is! But I'm not the kind of woman to take something like that lying down. No sir! So, I told him, 'Look pal! Like hell you're leaving me! Cause if you do, I'm gonna take everything you've got! House, cars, money, ALL of it!' I told him right there in that truck not even minutes ago and I meant it too! After all I've sacrificed! After all I've done for him – so he and the kids could have a good home and a good life. So he could play golf with his friends every Saturday, and sit around every Sunday watching football or baseball or whatever sport playing on the tv. All because he needed to unwind. While I cooked and cleaned and chauffeured the kids around. Paid bills and made repairs and did everything needed so he and the kids could have a good life. And now he thinks he's going to leave me after

all that! When it's finally my turn? *'Absolutely not!* I told him. *Not in your wildest dreams!* Ain't gonna happen, pal."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And I tell you this too. He won't be talking about leaving after today. I made sure of that when I grabbed the wheel and yanked it over into that truck. Told him I'd kill him before I'd let him do that to me. And I'll do it again, too. If he lives that is. I'll do it again!"

"Umm, ma'am?"

"And I'll say, 'good riddance!' and not bat an eye. Cause if he's dead, serves him right. And if he's not and thinks I'm gonna nurse him back to health, then he can kiss my big ol' butt."

"Ma'am? Anne? Can you hear me?"

"What's wrong?" came the voice nearby.

"She stopped talking. She's moving her mouth, but no sound is coming out. I'm not sure what she's trying to say."

"Check her pulse, Bobby."

"I am, I am."

This time, Anne didn't say anything. Didn't object or make any noises. Just laid on the ground looking up.

"I can't feel her pulse."

"Hold tight, Bobby. Just stay with her. Keep her talking. The ambulance is almost here."

Anne didn't know that. Nor did she see or hear or know anything more. The grey sky, the grey faced man, the traffic accident -- all had faded to black. Leaving her to wonder if that woman was still praying over her.

"Truthfully, I could probably use a prayer or two at this point," Anne thought.

The End.