

Don't Bypass Joy, My Love
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Erin Bambery
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This is not my ideal Valentine's Day. *It's definitely about a heart, but who knew my fiancé would need a triple bypass?* Both of his parents had cardiac disease. We were relieved by the news he hadn't had a heart attack and no damage was detected.

It's pre-op day. As we enter the hospital doors, my battle with fatigue and fear increases. I draw a deep breath, and squeeze David's hand.

He kisses the top of my head. "God promised me— 'I will take the stony heart out of you...and give you a heart of flesh.' I didn't realize He meant it literally."

We sit and wait for room registration at 6:00 am.

Father God, bring David through surgery and be his powerful healer.

They call us in for David's room assignment and give us his co-pay amount. *We owe how much? Maybe if I blink my eyes rapidly, the numbers will rearrange into a better formation.*

Nurse Brian interrupts our shock and ushers us into the blue curtained prep area. He instructs David, "Change into this wrap-around blue gown, open at the back, with lovely ties."

Um, where do I go while he changes his clothes? My engagement ring doesn't mean David and I are *that* familiar.

Loud beeps startle us and alert staff to a Code Blue. *Blue curtain...blue gown...Code Blue...might as well add my spirits to the blue list.*

A woman's monotone voice drones through the intercom and echoes into the hall, "Dr. Stevens, STAT, Cardiac Intensive Care Unit."

Next, a tranquil male voice drifts through the intercom, "Good morning, time for prayer..." The prayer was woven with powerful words like, "help the suffering, with healing, and wisdom."

The prayer floats overhead.

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In tears, David looks up, and closes his eyes, "Unexpected serendipity."

Within four hours, all of the pre-op is complete, and we're eager for the comforts of home. *I NEED big chunks of chocolate. Truffles...no...a chocolate heart!*

The clock points to a little over two hours since his surgery began. Breathe. Pray. I am in the family waiting room, sitting directly across from the gray, metal surgery doors. Maybe someone will update me soon.

Father God, I believe You kept him from death and want to give him more life. I must juggle so much...Be my amazing manager! This mountain of events is...crushing me...Impossible...unless I yoke myself to Your strength? I can't do this alone. You can do it! I MUST trust the outcome of Your perfect timing.

I open my iPhone and tackle my mountainous list of to-dos:

Call the leasing agent for David's apartment—*Is the new apartment ready to move in?*

Schedule appointment for Mom to see her new apartment—*Mom's spirit is low. Remove her fears. Help her adjust to a new neighborhood and give her the joy of an adventure.*

Call both of Mom's doctors—*why are her meds lost in transit to the pharmacy?*

Tax documents to the preparer—*Hope I set all those papers aside when I packed my files.*

Call my real estate agent—*My home appraisal came in \$2000 under the selling price. The buyers and their lender will need to battle it out. I don't have time to worry about that. God, please take care of that dispute.*

Call Salvation Army—*pick up boxes of donations. Make sure my sister's boxes aren't mixed into the pile.*

Call Sis—*Did her husband finish the sheetrock and flooring? God, grant him favor with the inspectors, schedules, and approvals. We need You to manage their home building project. You know she needs to move out before my escrow closes.*

Schedule junk haulers—*Remember to give them the sheet metal pieces from my roof repair.*

Email sitters for David's 24-hour care. Enough for several weeks, when he is discharged—*If that happens in the midst of moving, I need to cover ten morning and evening shifts.*

Email our wedding minister regarding his plane reservations and arrival time—*I need to select the rehearsal date and time.*

Email the florist and photographer with selections—*some of my other wedding plans can wait for a month or so, but I need Your help with those details, too...*

A voice scatters my thoughts. "Hi, how are you doing?"

I look up from my list. David's family stands before me.

One of David's brothers asks, "Any news yet?"

"I haven't heard. Surgery is estimated at four to six hours. It's been about three."

Twenty minutes later, I recognize David's surgeon, when he strides through the swinging metal doors. Beads of sweat drip from under his cap, trail down his face, and into his mask beneath his chin.

I leap up from my chair and step towards him. *What's wrong?*

"We are finished." In a low tone he confirms his reputation as the quickest surgeon. "Surgery went well. I am happy with the results. You can see him in about two hours."

Right on time, we enter David's recovery room. We gape at the heated air mattress laying on top of him. He is pale, still on a respirator, and tubes trail out. *Good thing they warned us about*

what he would look like. Go home...Four days until moving day. Innumerable boxes await my attention.

Two days post-surgery, David develops an irregular heartbeat.

I greet David with a kiss on his pale cheek.

He puffs, "I have A-fib. My heart beats hard. Like a symphony in my chest. Terrible. All night long. Dr. Levi wants echocardiogram. Possible shock. Blood thinners. Something's wrong. Honey, can you call the nurse?"

Breathe.

Nurse Hannah informs us, "Any minute the echocardiogram will be done. If he needs the defibrillator, we will slightly sedate him."

I text our people and request prayer for the A-fib. Some of them had healthcare careers. A few explain that a defibrillating machine on a conscious person is very painful...described as a jump start.

No! I don't like this at all.

The petite technician enters with the echo machine. She speaks in soft, broken English, "I see only this heart is dry."

Nurse Hannah responds, "Dry?"

"Yes. I see only that."

Dr. Levi arrives. He discusses the results with the petite technician and Nurse Hannah. He orders concentrated IV fluid.

Twenty minutes pass. Dr. Levi states, "No sinus rhythm for sixteen hours, still A-fib." He sends for the defibrillator team.

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I can't watch! Thoughts flee, like an erased script, and leaves a blank page in my mind.

“You really don't want to be here for this.” Tension is behind a team member's smile. She assembles the machine with speed and shoos us out of the room.

I wander down the hallway with David's brother. My thoughts return. I want to get out of earshot, because someone told me they scream from the pain. *Breathe. Is David's brother afraid? Keep silent. I can't cry with his brother watching me. PRAY...What can I ask? Father God, David says You PROMISED him a new heart. Would You give him a defective one? That's all I can think. Scripture says You give perfect gifts. Please fix his heart so they don't have to. Breathe.*

Five minutes pass. I call the ICU desk and ask for re-admittance.

A nurse answers. I hear—several voices, a big commotion, and...laughter. *A party?* She blurts, “Sorry, come on in...”

The buzzer sounds and the doors swing open.

We approach the nurses' station on our way to David's room.

I don't see any balloons. Dr. Levi and the defibrillator team are the noisy ones. I stop and stare. They are before a computer screen, pointing, and making exuberant, garbled comments. He calls out to me, “We didn't have to do it! I was just about to use the defibrillator and he went into sinus rhythm. It fixed itself!”

One team member declares, “I literally had the paddles, primed and ready, just about to place them, and it switched rhythm! We couldn't believe it! We are so relieved!”

They bob around Dr. Levi and laugh.

I must give Him credit, “Thank God! *He* fixed it!”

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A few of the team nod and smile. Some turn away. One credits the intravenous fluids. *But I know God, You fixed David's heart rhythm...and delivered him from horrible pain. We relied on highly skilled staff and medication, but A-fib persisted. "The heart is dry," sounded strange, but they listened and gave David fluid. Our loved ones prayed, and You answered. You did the part only You can do. You fixed the struggling heart. My fears are gone.*

My heart erupted with joy!