

HEARTBEAT

Written by

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Based on PULSE

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

A heart monitor beeps.

ANTOINE, 23, in bright green jogging shorts, a white tank, and worn out running shoes, fills a vase with fresh flowers.

JULIA, 26, in bed, wears a bandage around her head, unconscious. Her oxygen mask fogs with each breath.

Antoine places a "Get Well Soon" card beside the vase.

ANTOINE

I ran into Mark and Sheryl at the park today.

MARGARET, 63, in a business skirt, reads "Losing Faith in Faith" by Dan Barker in the corner.

Antoine tucks a blanket around Julia.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)

They asked how you've been. You're in their prayers.

Antoine dabs Julia's brow with a bandana. He rests his hand on Julia's cheek.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)

I told them you're doing well. You're fighting.

Margaret crosses her legs and adjusts her glasses. She turns a page and frowns.

Antoine pulls a Bible from his backpack.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)

God hears our prayers, He listens. He gives you strength and courage to keep fighting.

Margaret removes her glasses and closes her eyes. She pinches the bridge of her nose.

Antoine turns to a page in the Bible. He holds Julia's hand.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Isaiah 40:31.

A soft knock on the door is heard.

DOCTOR HARRIS, 47, enters.

DOCTOR HARRIS
Good evening.

He closes the door.

DOCTOR HARRIS (CONT'D)
I'm afraid that I have some
difficult news.

Margaret plants both feet on the floor, closes her book.

MARGARET
Don't draw it out.

Doctor Harris walks to the bedside.

DOCTOR HARRIS
After six weeks, there have been no
signs of improvement.

MARGARET
Tell me something I don't know.

Doctor Harris examines Julia.

DOCTOR HARRIS
We made a discovery during pre-
surgery. The patient...

Antoine straightens in his chair.

ANTOINE
Julia.

Doctor Harris marks his clipboard.

DOCTOR HARRIS
...is pregnant.

Antoine's knuckles turn white as he grips the Bible.

ANTOINE
She's with child?

DOCTOR HARRIS
By our calculations, she is about
two month along. It's a miracle she
didn't miscarry.

Antoine hugs the Bible to his chest.

DOCTOR HARRIS (CONT'D)
The surgery was unsuccessful.

Margaret paces in the corner.

MARGARET
What are the odds, Doctor Harris?

He flips a page over.

DOCTOR HARRIS
At this rate, there is a ninety-
nine point eight percent chance
your daughter will never wake up.

A pager beeps.

He pulls the pager from his pocket, looks at it.

DOCTOR HARRIS (CONT'D)
It's your decision to continue life
support. I'll give you some time to
think it over.

Doctor Harris exits.

Antoine watches Margaret pack her book into her purse.

ANTOINE
There's still a chance--

MARGARET
Not nearly enough for the price.

Margaret lifts her purse strap onto her shoulder.

The heart monitor beeps.

ANTOINE
Her heart's still beating.

MARGARET
My daughter has been in the
hospital, in a coma, six weeks.

Antoine holds up the Bible.

ANTOINE
Julia will wake up.

MARGARET
Can *you* afford the bills?

Antoine glances at the contents of his open backpack: a sketchbook, dirty clothes, a container of coins.

ANTOINE
My caricatures will sell--

MARGARET
Get a real job.

Antoine squeezes Julia's hand.

ANTOINE
Julia supported my dream. I can't
let her down--

MARGARET
My daughter had a dream, too. Look
at her now.

Antoine watches the fog in the oxygen mask gather and recede.

The heart monitor beeps.

Julia's hand twitches.

ANTOINE
Wait. Her hand moved!

Margaret walks to the bedside. Her eyes scan over Julia.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)
She moved, Margaret! Julia hears
us, she's still fighting.

Margaret covers her eyes with her hand, hides her tears. She turns and walks to the door.

Antoine stands. His chair screeches on the floor.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)
You can't end it. She's with child.

Margaret clenches her hands into fists.

MARGARET
Who are you to tell me what to do?

ANTOINE
I've been here everyday--

MARGARET
Be grateful I allowed you in.

ANTOINE

The doctor said it's a miracle the child survived--

MARGARET

If you have faith, why are you so reluctant to let my daughter go?

Antoine looks down at the Bible. He runs his hand along it.

ANTOINE

You can't end their lives.

Margaret clutches her purse strap. She turns to leave.

MARGARET

You are not married to my daughter. You do not have a say.

Antoine slumps in his chair.

Margaret exits.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Sunlight leaks in through stained glass windows. A PRIEST lights candles by a statue of Jesus.

Antoine kneels at a church pew, his head bowed and hands pressed together in prayer.

ANTOINE

Father in Heaven. Julia is carrying our child. I know I have asked a lot from you--

His words catch in his throat.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)

Please, please let Julia wake up. Dear God, I'm lost. I don't know what to do.

His shoulders shake with uncontrolled sobs.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)

Please... Amen.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Antoine sits on a bench, his backpack beside him. He sketches in his book, glances up at a MAN standing before him.

ANTOINE

All done.

He removes the caricature from the sketchbook.

The man takes it.

MAN

This is great. How much?

ANTOINE

Whatever you think it's worth.

The man hands Antoine a five-dollar bill and walks off.

Antoine places the bill into his tin can.

MARK and SHERYL walk down the path. Sheryl pushes a stroller. They pause when they reach Antoine.

MARK

Hey, saw you made a sale.

Antoine pats his tin can.

ANTOINE

Yep, business is steady.

MARK

How are you, Antoine?

The BABY begins to cry. Sheryl rushes to sooth him.

Antoine begins to pack up his things.

ANTOINE

Things are looking up. Yesterday,
the doctor said Julia's pregnant.

Mark and Sheryl exchange a look.

The baby sucks on a pacifier.

ANTOINE (CONT'D)

I'm going to the hospital now.

SHERYL

We'll pray for you all, Antoine.

MARK

See you in church?

ANTOINE

Yeah. See you Sunday.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Antoine sits by Julia, holds her hand. His other hand hold the Bible.

Margaret enters. She takes her seat in the corner.

There's a soft knock at the door.

Doctor Harris enters.

ANTOINE

Doctor, Julia moved her hand.

Margaret huffs.

MARGARET

Ridiculous.

ANTOINE

Last night. Her hand moved.

Doctor Harris looks down at his clipboard.

DOCTOR HARRIS

It is probable that the patient had an involuntary movement. There is no record of response.

ANTOINE

She's listening to us. You said yourself that it's a miracle the child survived.

Doctor Harris continues to flip through the charts.

DOCTOR HARRIS

A miracle she did not miscarriage. With the patient's current condition, it's highly improbable she'll wake up. She won't be able to sustain the pregnancy.

Margaret removes "LOSING FAITH IN FAITH" from her purse.

MARGARET

I have made my decision, Doctor.

She stares at the book for a moment, places it on the table. The "Get Well Soon" card falls to the floor.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

It is about time you read something
different, Antoine. God is not in
this room.

Margaret exits.

ANTOINE

Doctor, I will find a way to pay--

Doctor Harris exits.

Antoine places the Bible on the bed. He holds Julia's hand,
watches the fog in the oxygen mask gather and recede.

The heart monitor beeps.

END.