

THE NURSE AND THE HUMMINGBIRD

Written by

Michael Ricketson

INT. ICU NURSES' STATION - DAY

CYNTHIA, 23, in front of an open laptop. Phone to ear.

CYNTHIA

I know sweetheart, but the hospital  
needs mommy.

Sadness in her face as tears well up.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

I tell you what, Saturday we'll go  
to the park and get ice cream cones  
and play on the swings okay? Deal.  
Now you be good for Nanna... I love  
you more... Yes, I do.

She hangs up and forces a smile.

MRS. KURT, 54, head nurse, walks up.

MRS. KURT

Cynthia, I went over your charts  
from last night. Too many mistakes.  
You have got to get it together.

CYNTHIA

I'm sorry. It's just the divorce  
and every--

MRS. KURT

You're a nurse for God's sake.  
These patients depend on you.

CYNTHIA

Yes, ma'am.

MRS. KURT

And I was told you cried when the  
patient in 27C died the other day.

CYNTHIA

His name was Edward Richmond.

Mrs. Kurt shakes her head.

MRS. KURT

You need to grow a thicker skin.  
Maybe you're not cut out for this.

She turns and leaves.

Cynthia frowns, reaches across the desk and touches a framed  
picture of a little girl.

She turns back to the computer and types the words 'Letter of Resignation.' The phone rings and she answers it.

CYNTHIA

Lake Regional ICU, this is Cynthia,  
how may I help you... I understand.  
I'll see if she's awake and let her  
know... Thank you. Good bye.

She stands and walks through an open doorway.

INT. PATIENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cynthia walks to the bed. MARY, 82, takes her gaze away from the window and looks at Cynthia.

CYNTHIA

Hey, you're awake. Mary, I just got  
a call from Derek. He had car  
trouble. He's on his way.

MARY

Okay. Thank you so much, dear.

CYNTHIA

Can I get you anything?

Mary shakes her head and smiles.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Don't you worry. Your son will be  
here before you know it.

Cynthia smiles down at her and turns to leave. Mary reaches up and touches Cynthia's arm. She turns and looks at Mary.

MARY

What's the matter, sweetheart?

CYNTHIA

With me? Nothing. Nothing at all.

Mary raises her eyebrows.

MARY

You wouldn't be fibbin' to an old  
lady, would you?

Cynthia laughs and rubs Mary's hand between hers.

CYNTHIA

You don't need to worry yourself  
with little old me.

MARY

I don't like to see people  
sufferin'.

Cynthia smiles at her.

CYNTHIA

I thought I was the nurse.

MARY

And a damn fine one at that.

Cynthia puts both hands over her heart.

CYNTHIA

Aw, Mary. That means a lot to me.

MARY

I've been told I have a discerning  
spirit. Could get a feel for people  
when they were in pain.

Mary motions Cynthia closer.

MARY (CONT'D)

I'll tell ya a secret. I used to be  
a nurse, too.

Cynthia's jaw drops. She smiles.

MARY (CONT'D)

Yup. Back in the days when we had  
to wear white, starched uniforms,  
white shoes, and those hats. Look  
at what ya'all run around in today.

CYNTHIA

That's amazing. You didn't have all  
the computers back then either.

MARY

Paper and pencil. We had to do the  
math for dosing.

Cynthia puts both hands on the bed rails and moves closer.

MARY (CONT'D)

What's wrong, child?

Cynthia's shoulders slump. Tears form in her eyes.

CYNTHIA

It's just me and my daughter now.

Mary takes Cynthia's hand and cups it with her own.

MARY

When I was your age, right out of nursing school, I left my husband. Took my two boys and ran. He was a mean drunk. I did fine. So will you.

Cynthia laughs and wipes away tears.

MARY (CONT'D)

You're feelin' the weight of the world. Being around all this pain and death isn't easy. I know.

Cynthia nods. She fidgets from foot to foot.

CYNTHIA

I... I'm sorry. This really isn't appropriate. My boss would--

Mrs. Kurt sticks her head in the door.

MRS. KURT

Cynthia, 25A needs you. Hurry it up. You have other patients.

Mary watches her leave then looks at Cynthia.

MARY

She's a bitch, that one.

Cynthia's eyes go wide and she giggles.

Mary opens her mouth and covers it with her hand.

They laugh.

Cynthia shakes her head and calms down.

CYNTHIA

I'm sorry. I shouldn't be bothering you with any of this.

MARY

I brought it up.

Cynthia looks around, avoiding eye contact with Mary.

MARY (CONT'D)

Why did you become a nurse?

Cynthia looks at her.

CYNTHIA

When... I was eight my Grandma died. I never knew her. But my mom was a wreck. I took care of her. She always said I got her through it. Since then it's all I ever wanted to be.

Mary lets out a weak chuckle.

MARY

Almost the same. Though I was seven when my dad died. I took care of my momma, too.

Cynthia takes in a deep breath and lets it out. She smiles.

MARY (CONT'D)

It takes a special person to give comfort in times of need.

CYNTHIA

I'm okay with that. It's being there when someone dies.

MARY

Oh, baby girl, that never gets easy. But there is no greater honor than to be at a person's side when they leave this earth.

Cynthia's eyes widen. A look of shock covers her face.

MARY (CONT'D)

None of God's creatures should die alone.

Cynthia smiles.

MARY (CONT'D)

I always say that people are never really gone as long as we remember them with love and joy. Some don't understand at first, but no matter, I tell 'em anyway.

Cynthia nods. Mary looks out the window at a rose bush. A hummingbird flies around the blooms.

MARY (CONT'D)

See that hummingbird? He flies from flower to flower.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Sometimes he sticks his beak in and there ain't nothin' there. But most of the time he gets that sweet nectar.

Cynthia laughs and squeezes Mary's hands.

CYNTHIA

That's beautiful, Mary.

They look into each other's eyes. They nod.

MARY

Those times when I was with someone in peace while passing to the Lord... how it fills my soul.

Mary squeezes Cynthia's hands.

MARY (CONT'D)

It will be the same for you.

Mary closes her eyes. Her hands fall on the bed. The flat line monitor alarm sounds. Cynthia stares at Mary.

Cynthia, tears in her eyes, turns off the alarm.

DEREK, 52, enters and stops. Cynthia turns. Their eyes meet.

DEREK

Oh, God. No.

He walks to the bed. He takes Mary's hand and kisses it.

DEREK (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. I tried to get here.

Cynthia rubs his shoulder as he cries.

CYNTHIA

I'm so sorry, Derek.

DEREK

You were with her when...

Cynthia nods.

He wipes tears and forces a smile.

DEREK (CONT'D)

Thank you.

CYNTHIA

You know, she's not really gone as long as you remember her...

DEREK / CYNTHIA

With love and joy.

They both smile.

CYNTHIA

She was a special lady.

Derek looks at his mother beaming.

DEREK

That she was.

CYNTHIA

Well, I'll leave you alone. Take all the time you need.

DEREK

Thank you again.

He turns back to his mother.

She watches Derek for a moment and closes the door.

INT. ICU NURSES' STATION - DAY

Cynthia walks to the nurses' desk and sits. She opens the laptop and looks at the screen and back at Mary's room.

She wipes tears away, composes herself and looks at the computer. She taps the back space key as the words 'Letter of Resignation' disappear. She closes the laptop.

Mrs. Kurt hurries past the desk and points with her thumb down the hallway behind her.

MRS. KURT

Cynthia! 25A! Now!

Cynthia watches Mrs. Kurt disappear down the other hallway.

CYNTHIA

Yes ma'am, Mrs. Kurt.

She smiles and rushes down the hall.

THE END.