



“Get an OR ready. I think I’ve stopped the bleeding,” Dr. Shelby Durning called out as she ran with the gurney, the injured man from the ER lying lifeless as they rushed down the hallway.

“I’ve got it. You go have a seat.”

“I’m fine,” she gritted at Dr. Jim Sowers, the on-call surgeon.

“We’ll take it from here.” RN Talia Masterson gave her a wink, pulling the gurney away from Shelby’s hands.

Taking a deep breath, Shelby leaned against the wall, steadying her nerves. The ER wasn’t a typical stop in her job. But this? A hostage and an injured man?

“Dr. Durning? There’s an officer out here who wants to speak with you.”

“Tell him to give me a minute, okay, Sam?”

The orderly nodded and headed back to the front as she closed her eyes.

*God, give me strength to face today. No matter the outcome of this situation, help me to see what You want me to see.*

It was a daily prayer every morning as she headed to work. But today, she needed to say it twice.

Letting out a deep breath, she slid into one of the open

rooms and scrubbed her hands. Pink-hued water pooled in the silver basin, finally running clear after several washes. Shaking and drying off, she trudged back to the ER, stripping off her jacket and folding the bloody stains into the cloth.

As the doors opened, the smell of antiseptic and bleach smacked her in the face. Sam, along with a few others, were still trying to clean the floor where she had worked on the injured man.

“Dr. Durning?”

Turning to the officer, she nodded.

“We need to go over what happened.”

“Sure.”

“Is there somewhere else we can speak?”

Motioning the officer back, they walked through the ER doors and found an empty room.

“I just need you to tell me everything from this morning.”

Leaning against the counter, Shelby crossed her arms and began. “I was upstairs doing my rounds when I was called to the ER. A patient had requested me at the ER desk.”

“Why?”

She shrugged at the officer. “I have no idea.”

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“YOU’RE NOT LISTENING. Randal was attacked. He defended himself.” Jeff argued with the officer in charge.

“Then he used a girl as a hostage.”

“I never said that.”

“You didn’t have to.”

Jeff took a step toward the officer, and Buck intervened. “The officer needs your statement, Jeff. This isn’t the place to debate intentions.”

“And you are?” The officer turned his stern glare to Buck.

Jeff did his best to keep his mouth clamped shut as Buck stepped forward. “Buck Thompson. I’m in charge of the TRT.”

Buck turned back to Jeff, pushing him away from the officer. “The last thing we need right now is bad press,” he mumbled.

Surveying the room, Jeff nodded. Several of the other witnesses sat in the ER, watching the interaction. Hopefully they hadn’t recorded it on their phones and posted it to social media. After the events a few months ago, they were slowly earning back police trust and attempting to mend their tarnished image. A bad confrontation would be a disaster.

“Fine.” Jeff motioned to Buck. “I’m going to check on the attacker.”

“You mean victim?” the officer scoffed.

“Get the footage from those cameras. If my testimony and the other witness testimony isn’t enough for you, then maybe that will be enough proof.” Jeff walked away from the officer and toward the surgery wing, Buck on his heels.

“I’m sorry, you can’t go in there.” A short nurse in scrubs stood from the desk. Her hands planted on her hips as she blocked their entrance into the OR.

“I was here during the stand-off, and I need to know about the injured man that was brought in.”

“I’m sorry, but I’m not allowed to give out that information.”

“I need to know—”

“It’s okay, Talia.”

The same doctor from the ER walked around the nurse with a smile. Jeff stood tongue-tied. He hadn’t noticed just how pretty she was earlier.

“Buck Thompson. I’m Jeff’s boss.” Buck stuck out his hand, and the woman shook it with a nod.

“I’m Dr. Shelby Durning. I was here during the hostage situation.”

“Jeff Powers.”

“Mr. Powers.” Shelby returned Jeff’s handshake. “The patient is in surgery. We’ll know more later, but he lost a lot of blood.”

Jeff frowned. “I was hoping for better news.”

“Me too. Good job out there, by the way, getting Randal’s

attention.” Shelby pocketed her hand as a smile spread across her face.

“It was ... an intense situation. I’m glad we had someone here that could take care of it.”

“From what I’ve heard, Jeff’s lucky you were there to step up, help keep that man alive.”

She grinned bigger as her gaze turned to Buck. “That’s what I do.”

Her smile was amazing. But then again, so were her eyes and the way her eyebrow perked ...

“Excuse me. I’ve got a call,” Buck mumbled and bumped Jeff’s arm as he walked past.

Jeff cleared his throat. “You mind if we go over a few things? I just want to know what you saw.”

“Sure thing. How about we step away from the OR?”

Jeff grinned at the beautiful doctor, following her to another corridor, his mind on overdrive.

Man, where was his focus?