

## The Medicine

“Well, looks like your husband will be alright,” the doctor said, putting the clipboard aside and looking up at Ms. Murphy. She smiled, reassured by the doctor, who smiled back warmly.

“Nothing serious – just some high blood pressure. Make sure he doesn’t have very intense emotions. And of course, take the medication,” the doctor handed a slip of paper over, “here’s the prescription. Make sure he takes it regularly. The label contains the instructions on dosage and any other details you might need to know. If you have any concerns, don’t hesitate to call. Of course, I would invite you to come in person, but, perhaps that’s not very practical,” the doctor chuckled.

“Of course, it would certainly be nice if we lived in the city. Thank you so much. We’ll be off then,” said Ms. Murphy. “I certainly don’t want to waste anymore of your time.”

“Not at all, not at all. It was a pleasure,” the doctor said, not very truthfully.

The doctor got up, shook Ms. Murphy’s hand, and showed her to the door. Her husband was waiting for them at the end of the long corridor. Mr. Murphy was certainly relieved to hear the news. He was, of course, slightly annoyed that his wife was told before him. After all, *he* was the patient, and not her. Nevertheless, he put on a radiant smile of relief and said nothing. Previously, he thought himself to have some sort of rare and deadly disease. He nearly scared himself to death, staying at home, day and night, afraid to go anywhere or make any sudden movements. He was often paranoid at small things. The tapping of a branch at the window or the slamming of a door would make him jump. But one thing that he was particularly afraid of – blood. He dreaded the sight of blood. Even to mention blood in front of him would cause him to grow pale. He had fainted once, in college, when his biology professor showed a slideshow on the human heart. So it was to no surprise that he hated hospitals. It certainly took much persuasion on the part of his wife to get him to see a doctor on his heart condition. After many heated arguments, Mr. Murphy finally gave in and decided, rather reluctantly, that he *should* go to the hospital. Now that it was over, he was happy about his decision. It was certainly a lot better than sitting at home, paralyzed on the bed, awaiting his imminent death.

The trip home was silent. The drive was long; and soon, rain began to fall. It was late autumn and rain was plentiful. Precipitation in the area was very frequent in all the seasons. The rain tapped quietly on the windows. They had fogged up and nothing could be seen of the outside.

“Any new projects coming up?” Mr. Murphy asked, breaking the silence. He hated silence.

“No. I’ve just finished the last one. It was the donation to the hospital, don’t you remember?”

“Yes, that’s right. It was a very lovely painting,” he said, not altogether wholeheartedly. He hated that painting. It was a painting of someone covered in wounds. He didn’t think the hospital would like it, but, to his surprise, they loved it.

The conversation stopped there. They rarely discussed art as Mr. Murphy knew very little of it. Ms. Murphy was a very talented painter. Her paintings were lifelike. Nobody could tell the difference between her paintings and the actual thing itself. Though she enjoyed high esteem in the art community, she never actually sold any of her paintings. She was not employed, but she often received commissions to paint for various events. She would never take the money offered to her. If she did, she would always donate it to charity. Not that she needed the money. Her husband had inherited a fortune from his father. A fortune so big, it was said, that he would be able to leave it for his children and they still wouldn’t have to work. Of course, nobody really knew how much money he actually had, they could only guess. His wife was the only other person who knew just exactly how rich they were. But, of course, he trusted her.

They got home late in the evening and ate a hasty dinner, as it was very late, and prepared to go to bed. Mr. Murphy sat reading, waiting for his wife to come. He usually waited only a couple of minutes, but on that day, he waited nearly a half an hour. He was just getting up to see what the matter was when Ms. Murphy came in, a cup in her hand.

“Your medicine,” she said.

“That looks home made,” Mr. Murphy said, rather puzzled.

“Well, that’s the way it’s supposed to be. I followed the instructions on the package. Trust me,” she said, reassuringly.

“I trust you, of course. It’s just...” his voice trailed off. He took the medication. It tasted like any other type of medication, nothing unusual.

“Anything wrong with it?” Ms. Murphy asked, apprehensively.

“No. Why?”

“Nothing,” she said quickly. “Nothing. Well, good night,” she said curtly.

“Good night.”

Ms. Murphy got into bed. She winced slightly.

“Anything the matter?” Mr. Murphy asked.

“No. Everything is fine.”

A month went by since the visit to the hospital. Mr. Murphy’s medical condition had gotten better considerably, mainly due to the effectiveness of the medicine. He felt healthy again. His heart no longer skipped beats and he could breathe normally. He had never felt better in his life. Ms. Murphy, however, was not in a very good condition. She often sat, huddled near the fire, covered from head to toe with blankets. She got thinner every day. She often went out at irregular times – something she never did before. But she would always be back to give him his medicine. Not once did she ever fail to do that. She rarely painted anymore and most unusually, she recently bought what seemed like the local department store’s entire stock of bandages. But when Mr. Murphy asked her what was going on, which was rare, for she now avoided him, she would always shake her head and say that it, whatever *it* was, would get better soon. He knew something was wrong, but he decided he would wait and see. And one night, he did see.

It was a cold December night. The wind howled outside so loudly that even the creaking of the floorboards could not be heard as Mr. Murphy wound his way downstairs to get a glass of water. He did not feel so well. His heart condition seemed to have returned, though he had just taken some medication. That was it! He would just go get some medicine. He searched everywhere for the bottle, but he couldn’t find it. He flipped through the cupboards, the drawers, everything, but it was nowhere to be found. He decided he would go up to bed, having found no trace of the bottle. He was just about to lie back in bed when he noticed something. A little cap was just visible, sticking out of his wife’s pocket. He grabbed it, without waking her, and examined the bottle closely. He squinted in the dim light of the moon, and could just make out the word “Preparation Instructions”. He read the first few instructions. They seemed quite simple. But the last instruction caught his eye. “Finally, add 150g of human flesh.” No, he was reading it wrong – it couldn’t be. He re-read it at least ten more times. “Finally, add 150g of human flesh.” There

was no mistaking it. And then, it all made sense. His wife becoming thinner... the bandages... her wincing...it all made sense. He felt dizzy. His heart raced. But it could be a coincidence, after all, he had no proof. It had to be. But just to make sure, he reached over and lifted her blankets, one by one. A foul odour began to fill the room. He had seen nothing more horrid than what he saw before him now. Her body was full of scars. Some were old, others were new. Gashes were cut in her stomach. Her legs had pieces carved out of them. Pieces of muscle could be seen in her arm. And one, particularly large wound still had blood gushing from it. He felt nauseas and even dizzy. The sight of the blood and the wounds made him sick. He stood there, unable to move for some minutes. His bad heart did nothing to ease him. And then his heart stopped – literally. He fell, crumpled to the floor.

His wife opened her eyes. She got out of bed. She kicked him – no reaction. She felt his pulse – there was nothing. His eyes stared up, lifelessly into hers. He was dead, she was certain of it. She breathed a sigh of relief. It was about time, she thought to herself. After all, covering her body with paint every night was really beginning to get on her nerves...