



Joyful in Hope

by Christa Planko

Pleats of light penetrated the room, dissipating the darkness. A brand-new day presented itself, making all things new again.

Christa smiled as the sun's warmth kissed her skin. She walked over to the window and raised the blinds. Immediately, her heart swelled with gratitude. Spring's arrival brought pink-blossomed trees, hyacinths, and birdsong. The colors and sounds spoke life and new beginnings. They gave her joy and hope beyond the grey walls.

In the distance, the Philadelphia skyline jagged across the horizon. An orange glow pooled behind the skyscrapers as the sun rose above their peaks. The buildings glistened—sparkling promises of work and paychecks for the employed. Christa imagined all the people bustling throughout the city as they prepared to start their day.

“Do they pause to see the beauty?” she wondered, still taking in the blue sky and budding branches. “Do they marvel at the season in bloom? With all creation awakening around them, does it stir them? Maybe give them reason to take the longer route to work?”

Christa reflected on her own working days in the city. She once treaded urban sidewalks, sighing at the opportunity to show up at a job and perform her tasks. Winding through streets lined with towers, she had tunnel vision. Her focus was not on earning to live but living to earn. Her day-to-day commute was simply part of a mundane routine to get her by in life. Meanwhile, she felt dead inside.

She never stopped to soak in the warmth of the sun, the beauty of the sky, nor the greenery of the parks. No, neither did she ever pause to listen to the birds. She was too absorbed in the roaring traffic and putrid odors emanating from the subway system below. Her thoughts hung on the number of emails she had to address at the office. The meetings in store. The pressure of deadlines. Her life seemed as grey as the walls that surrounded her now.

“Miss Christa?”

The voice came from outside the door.

“May I enter?”

“Yes, please come in.”

The nurse wheeled her cart toward the bed. She smiled cheerily.

“How is our patient today?”

Christa approached the bed, gently stroking the sheets.

“The sun is out, spring is here, it’s a new day,” she said. “What’s there to complain about?”

The nurse glanced at the bed.

“Well, I haven’t heard our patient complain yet,” she smiled. “And, yes, it is a beautiful day, isn’t it?”

Christa watched as the nurse removed the IV bags from her cart and began to hang them. Chemotherapy was not something one looked forward to—rather, it was the promise on the other side of therapy.

“OK, it’s time,” the nurse sang once the chemo was ready for her patient.

Christa slid onto the bed and exposed her port. The sun still warmed her skin through the window. It gave her joy.

“Ready when you are, Nancy!” Christa smiled, humming as the nurse hooked her up.

“You are pure joy!” Nurse Nancy commented. “Where do you get it from?”

“Well, my strength lies in the sun,” Christa said. “It rises in my spirit, which lifts me up and gives me hope.”

“Then what do you do at night?”

“I count my blessings, say a little prayer, and wait for the promise of a new day,” Christa smiled. “Then I go to sleep, knowing that God will lay peace upon my soul until the sun’s return. So, even the darkness can’t steal my joy!”

“Not many patients feel the same way as you,” Nurse Nancy said. “They don’t have the strength that you have.”

“The problem is they don’t know joy,” Christa answered. “Once you surrender to the Lord, He carries you and gives you joy. We’re not meant to do this thing called life alone.”

“I need to remember that,” Nancy said. “Thank you for being a light.”

Christa smiled then, as she still smiles today, reflecting on that time and how the Lord carried her through. Today she is cancer free. She continues to be the light, sharing the Lord’s Word and His goodness with anyone who is willing to listen.



“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.” – Romans 12:12