

Heart Disease

25-DE05-W30

A cardiologist learns about the heart from her patient.

## INT. CHRISTY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The apartment is neutral, slightly cluttered with medical books, and papers spread across the dining room and coffee table. A Photo ID card, attached to a lanyard stamped with ST. MATTHEW'S HOSPITAL rests next to a cell phone.

CHRISTY-ANNE PERDUE, 42, enters from the bedroom, scrapes her long straight brown hair back into a pony tail, pulls on a blazer over her button down shirt, grabs a backpack from next to the door and exits. The door SLAMS.

On the wall next to the door, a framed and faded cross-stitch sways precariously. It reads: "*GUARD YOUR HEART ABOVE ALL ELSE, FOR IT DETERMINES THE COURSE OF YOUR LIFE. Proverbs 4:23*"

The cell phone on the table RINGS. Christy re-enters, snatches up lanyard and phone, activates the call and...

CHRISTY

Hi, Mama.

...exits, once again slamming the door. The cross stitch falls off the wall. The frame breaks.

## INT. HOSPITAL - ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT'S OFFICE - DAY

HEATHER, 30ish, sits at a desk and types on a computer. There are two office doors on either side of the desk. Nameplates on the doors are: DR. C. PERDUE on the left and DR. B. VICTOR on the right. Christy enters through the door from the hallway.

HEATHER

Good morning, Christy.

CHRISTY

Morning, Heather.

HEATHER

Big day!

CHRISTY

Indeed. I'll send you my file as soon as I'm settled.

HEATHER

Perfect. Submit window is between 4pm and 6pm, so no rush if you want to tweak anything.

CHRISTY  
If it isn't ready now, it's never  
going to be.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHRISTY'S OFFICE - DAY CONTINUOUS

The office is orderly. The wall behind Christy's desk is adorned with various degrees, certificates and accolades with accompanying official looking photos and plaques.

Heather follows Christy through the door.

HEATHER  
You seem frazzled.

CHRISTY  
My mother called.

HEATHER  
Oh.

CHRISTY  
Right?

Christy dumps her back pack on her chair. She grabs her lab coat from a hanger on the back of the office door.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)  
I say, "Mama, I'm nominated for the Heartbeat award this year." And I tell her I've applied for promotion to Division Chief. She says, "Bless your heart, Christy-Anne. That's a lot."

HEATHER  
Ouch.

CHRISTY  
Mm. Well, you know what? The only approval I need right now, is Dr. Steven Cooper's and the Board's. If I can win the Heartbeat and get promoted? Big things, Heather.

HEATHER  
Speaking of Dr. Cooper, he just called and asked for a meeting at nine. He said it won't take long.

CHRISTY

Fine. You know, there's one bright spot in in this. Bruce is not submitting to Heartbeat, and he's not applying for Division Chief, so I won't be coming in second again. Although it would feel good to beat him fair and square.

Christy exits.

INT. HOSPITAL - DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is elevated in style from Christy's. Fine art adorns the walls.

DR. STEVEN COOPER, 60s sits behind a glossy solid wood desk. Two leather chairs face the desk, one is occupied by DR. BRUCE VICTOR, 40s. He's almost as glossy as the desk.

The office door opens and Christy is ushered in. She sees...

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

Bruce?

BRUCE

Christy.

CHRISTY

I'm sorry, I didn't realize--

STEVEN

I asked him to be here. It'll save me an extra meeting. Please, sit. I'm just going to get right to it. Bruce, glad to know you changed your mind about Heartbeat.

Christy looks at Bruce in disbelief. His smug grin matches his shrug. Christy's cell phone BUZZES ONCE. A text from Heather: "BRUCE SUBMITTED!!"

STEVEN (CONT'D)

St. Matthew's is pleased to have two accepted submissions. Also, I'm letting you both know, you are our final two candidates for Division Chief.

Christy's jaw drops as she looks at Bruce again. He winks. Christy's phone BUZZES again. Heather: "BRUCE APPLIED 4 DC!"

STEVEN (CONT'D)

The vote was split. As a result, the hospital board has decided to wait until after the Heartbeat Awards to vote again. Depending on the outcome, one of you will get the job.

CHRISTY

What if neither of us wins?

STEVEN

Then it may just come down to pulling a name out of a hat.

CHRISTY

That's rather arbitrary.

Bruce stands, shakes Steven's hand, pats Christy's shoulder and exits. Christy follows slowly.

INT. HOSPITAL - EXAM ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Christy sits at the computer desk. DANIEL LEON, 50, wearing a police uniform, sits in a chair next to the desk. Christy reads a chart on the computer screen.

DANIEL

Heart disease?

CHRISTY

Your heart scan shows Aortic Stenosis. A build up of calcium around the aortic valve, causing it to restrict blood flow.

DANIEL

How? I feel good. I'm in the best shape of my life. I eat right, I exercise.

CHRISTY

Your family history would indicate it's probably genetic. It's a sneaky disease. Sometimes there are no symptoms until it's too late.

DANIEL

What do I do?

CHRISTY

Exactly what you're doing for now.  
We'll schedule another scan to  
determine the true extent of the  
damage, explore meds, but most  
likely a valve replacement.

DANIEL

Surgery? Open heart surgery?

CHRISTY

It's scary, but don't panic yet.  
My assistant will reach out with  
next steps.

Christy picks up a document from the desk and hands it to  
Daniel.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

In the meantime, here's more  
information, including a list of  
symptoms to watch for. If you  
start experiencing them, call the  
office or come in to the ER.

Daniel takes the information and stands.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Daniel, I know it's not  
what you expected, but it's good  
we caught it sooner than later.

Christy's phone BUZZES. Heather: "CALL MY CELL."

INT. HOSPITAL - ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT'S OFFICE - DAY

The room is empty until Christy marches in. She bangs on  
Burce's door and waits. Her phone BUZZES. Not a text.

CHRISTY

(Answers phone)

I was just about to call you. Can  
you believe Bruce--

HEATHER (O.S.)

Kyla's school called. She fell and  
knocked out a permanent tooth. I  
have to get her and the tooth, to  
the dentist.

CHRISTY

Is Kyla okay?

HEATHER (O.S.)  
 I think so, but listen. I couldn't  
 send the package yet. I had to  
 revise it to include Bruce, that  
 lying--Anyway, you didn't send me  
 your paper.

CHRISTY  
 It's been a day.

HEATHER (O.S.)  
 I get it, but everything is  
 prepared and in the drafts folder.  
 You just need to attach both  
 papers.

CHRISTY  
 Heather--

HEATHER (O.S.)  
 I know, it's a huge ask. Drop your  
 file in the folder on the desktop  
 before you attach it. We can trash  
 Bruce tomorrow, but please?

CHRISTY  
 I'll need your password.

HEATHER (O.S.)  
 Texting it now. Don't tell IT.

Christy ends the call. Her phone BUZZES. She sits at the  
 desk and TYPES, scrolls and CLICKS on the mouse.

A few more scrolls, and a couple more CLICKS. Christy has a  
 folder open. She drags and drops a file from it onto the  
 desktop folder named "HEARTBEAT SUBMISSIONS," then double  
 CLICKS the folder.

Two files: "HEARTBEAT\_PERDUE\_CHRISTY-ANNE\_STMATTHEWS," and  
 "HEARTBEAT\_VICTOR\_BRUCE\_STMATTHEWS."

The curser hovers over Bruce's file. Double CLICK.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT'S OFFICE - LATER

Christy stares at the screen. In a fit of pique, Christy  
 throws a pad of sticky notes across the room.

Christy turns her attention back to the computer. She closes Bruce's paper and stares at the two file names. With deliberations she deletes, "VICTOR" and types "PERDUE."

DISSOLVE TO

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - AFTERNOON - 3 WEEKS LATER

Daniel Leon lays on a bed. There are IVs and monitoring leads attached to him. Oxygen flows and he breathing is shallow. The curtain is swept aside and Christy, in scrubs, enters followed by an ORDERLY and a couple of NURSES. Christy studies the monitor and looks at the chart.

CHRISTY

Hi Daniel. How're you feeling?

DANIEL

(Weakly)

I had some symptoms.

CHRISTY

Looks like more than just symptoms.

DANIEL

It happened fast.

CHRISTY

Sometimes it does.

DANIEL

What happens now?

CHRISTY

Unfortunately the options have been removed. We'll go in and replace the valve.

DANIEL

Just like that?

CHRISTY

Pretty much.

Christy nods to the others in the room and they begin to prepare to move Daniel.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

The team here is going to get you into pre-op and get you prepped for surgery. Is there someone whom I can update as to your progress?

DANIEL

My wife is coming. She'll be here shortly. Can we wait? I'd like to pray with her.

CHRISTY

We'll direct her to pre-op so she can be with you for a bit. I'll see you in the OR.

ORDERLY

Ready?

Daniel nods and Christy pulls the curtain as they wheel him away. As she is about to drop the curtain into place, she notices Daniel's vest on the floor beside a chair.

She picks it up. A patch sewn on the inside in the spot that would cover Daniel's heart reads: PROVERBS 4:23.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHRISTY'S OFFICE - DAY

Christy is on her desk phone. On her computer screen is the "Contact Us," page for the Heartbeat Awards.

CHRISTY

I think what really matters now is not how it happened, but how we can fix it...What do you mean the email's been sent. I haven't heard anything yet.

An email notification PINGS on Christy's computer. Christy massages her forehead. She hangs up and opens the email.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

No, no, no , no, no...  
Thank you for your submission,  
blah blah blah...you have not been  
selected as our award recipient  
this year. What? That means Bruce  
wouldn't have won...

(Exhales)

Okay, Christy, there's still a  
chance you're in the clear.

A loud WHOOP is heard. Bruce. Christy's head drops into her hands. She hyperventilates. Heather appears in the doorway.

HEATHER

Christy, I'm so sorry.

CHRISTY  
It's okay. It's okay.

Bruce appears behind Heather and physically moves her into the room.

BRUCE  
It is too soon for you to call me boss?

He disappears. Christy can barely contain her rage.

HEATHER  
What can I do?

CHRISTY  
Nothing. It's too late. I have to go.

She grabs Daniel's vest and flees from her office.

INT. HOSPITAL - DANIEL'S ROOM - DAY

The room is dim. Curtains closed. The glow from the over the bed lamp illuminates Daniel as sleeps. The steady beat of Daniel's heart is announced with each beep of the machine. Chelsea places the vest on a chair beside the bed. She checks the stats on the monitor.

DANIEL  
Hey, Doc. How am I doing?

CHRISTY  
Really well. How do you feel?

DANIEL  
Like my chest's been cracked open.

Christy sanitizes her hands. She lifts the chest bandage.

CHRISTY  
Incision looks good. No sign of infection. We'll get you up for a short walk this afternoon.

DANIEL  
How're you doing, Doc?

CHRISTY  
I'm...fine.

DANIEL

When my wife says that, I know  
she's not.

Christy picks up the vest from the chair beside the bed.  
She shows the verse.

CHRISTY

Tell me about this.

DANIEL

The vest or the verse? They both  
help to protect my heart.

CHRISTY

"Guard your heart above all else,  
for it determines the course of  
your life." My grandmother loved  
it.

DANIEL

She was a believer.  
(Christy nods)  
And you?

CHRISTY

Yes, but lately? Even I'd be hard  
pressed to know it. I've been so  
focussed on winning this award.

DANIEL

Did you win?

CHRISTY

Yes. And no. A whole lot of no. I  
did something. Something I'm not  
proud of. It's too late to change  
it.

DANIEL

When I was first on the force, I  
was young and sure of myself. I  
went to church, read my Bible, but  
I saw a lot of things. Slowly I  
let them change me, you know?  
Inside? I made choices too. Not  
good ones.

CHRISTY

What made you realize this?

DANIEL

I took a bullet to the chest.  
Center mass. My vest stopped it.

CHRISTY  
That's terrifying.

DANIEL  
Sure is. The next Sunday, I was in church listening to the pastor explain the verse. How there is no greater priority than to protect our hearts from the dangers of letting in sin. It made me think.

Daniel motions for Christy to hand him the vest.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
The thing is, the vest is bullet proof, but not foolproof. A lapse in concentration or attention; a wrong approach, and something sneaks through and drastically change your life.

CHRISTY  
And the verse?

DANIEL  
It's bullet and foolproof. If we live by it. But it's easy to get complacent. Drop our guard. Change priorities. We let in little things--resentments, wants, envy--pretty soon we start to show signs as to the state of our heart.

CHRISTY  
Like heart disease.

DANIEL  
Sin is a symptom of that disease. It's effects lead us to do things we're not proud of. We all have it. Even you, Doc. It's genetic.

CHRISTY  
So what's the treatment.

DANIEL  
Eat right. Exercise. Get in the word and pray. Ask forgiveness.

Daniel starts to drift off. Christy stands. She switches off the light over Daniel's bed. Her phone BUZZES once. A text from Bruce: "WHAT DID YOU DO?!?!" Christy closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.

CHRISTY  
Take care, Daniel.

DANIEL  
Doc? You're a good cardiologist.

CHRISTY  
So are you, Daniel.

Christy exits.

INT. HOSPITAL - DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Christy stands outside the door. She pauses to brace herself with a deep breath. Her hands tremble. She knocks firmly.

STEVEN (O.C.)  
Come!

Christy opens the door.

CHRISTY  
Hi Steven, do you have a minute?  
There's something I need to tell  
you.

Christy closes the door behind her.

FADE TO BLACK.

