

## A Special Visitor

By ReadWorks

It was still dark outside when Luke awoke in his bed. He rolled over, slipped on his glasses, and looked at his clock. 5:00, the red neon light read. He was right on time. Luke didn't need an alarm anymore; his internal body clock woke him up at the perfect time each morning, out of habit. He quickly got ready, pulled on his scrubs, and walked to the bus station. A group of students dressed identically had accumulated at the corner and they were shivering in the cold air of dawn. He nodded to his classmates, all too tired to have a decent conversation. The bus pulled around the corner and screeched to a halt. Everyone boarded, then off they went to start their day at the hospital.

Luke was in his fourth and final year of university, studying to become a nurse. His father was a neurologist, a doctor who specializes in the study of the nerves and nervous system, including the brain. When Luke was growing up, his father was often called to the hospital at random hours of the day and night to operate on patients who needed emergency surgery, which sometimes lasted up to twenty-four hours. Luke's mother, on the other hand, was a psychologist, and made sure to always be home when Luke arrived from school. She booked her hour-long appointments with her patients in the morning, and rarely was called out of the house except for emergency cases. She specialized in mental disorders, specifically depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. For Luke, it seemed natural to choose a career in medicine.

Nursing quickly became his specialty, mostly because of the interaction time with patients. He admired everything his parents did, but doctors were in and out of treatment rooms, rushed and frantic. He much preferred to spend time with his patients, as much as he possibly could. So he selected nursing as his major, despite his father's blatant encouragement for him to become a doctor.

The bus arrived at the hospital at 6:00 a.m. sharp. The group piled out with a renewed sense of energy—there was no time to be lazy during clinical rotations. Each semester, the nursing students enrolled in a different clinic in order to experience the different divisions of medicine so that they could choose one upon graduation. They spent time in the maternity wing, the psychiatric unit, the emergency room, and others to see what they enjoyed the most and where they wanted to dedicate their career. With each rotation came new realities and new lessons—students learned that the maternity ward wasn't all about newborn babies and loving families; they also had to deal with life-threatening postpartum complications. But despite the stress and drama and sometimes even danger, Luke found joy in each rotation. After all, hospitals were about healing.

That semester, Luke and his classmates were placed in the geriatric unit, dedicated to the elderly population to help them deal with the aches and pains that come with old age. Upon leaving the bus, they weaved through the hospital corridors to arrive there. They scrubbed in by vigorously washing their hands to remove any germs they might have picked up on the bus ride over. Then they began to make their rounds, checking in on their patients to see how they slept during the night.

“Good morning, Joe!” Luke said quietly, trying not wake him too abruptly. He slowly pulled back the curtains once he noticed the man flutter open his eyelids. “How did you sleep?” he asked.

Joe grumbled and took a few deep breaths. “Same old, same old,” the man replied.

Joe was grumpy, and Luke had noticed that he hadn’t received any visitors during the week he had been in the hospital. Luke always ignored his sulky comments—they didn’t bother him, so the other nursing students forced him to take Joe as one of his patients.

Luke had been caring for the 70-year-old man for the past week, and the two had quickly formed an odd friendship. Joe was recovering from heart bypass surgery—a necessary operation for him to fight his heart disease. Some of his coronary arteries were blocked, which had caused him to have a heart attack. During the operation, a heart surgeon had removed an artery from his chest and placed it at the location of the blockage. This redirected Joe’s blood flow so that his body could continue to pump blood to his heart. Although the surgery had gone smoothly, Joe needed to recover in the hospital in case any complications arose during the healing process.

While Luke checked Joe’s vitals to ensure he was doing well, breakfast arrived on a cart from the cafeteria. Luke grabbed the tray and placed it in front of his patient.

“This garbage again?” Joe said while inspecting the food.

“Yes, same as yesterday, but I noticed you finished all of the garbage yesterday...” Luke said with a smirk.

Joe kept silent, but gave Luke a dirty look. Luke smiled back at him, and said he would be back later.

After making his rounds with each of his patients, he joined his fellow classmates to give a presentation on the few pathogens—microorganisms that can cause disease—that they were assigned the week before. At 1:30 p.m., class was dismissed, and Luke rushed to the cafeteria to scarf down his lunch. He wanted to get back to his patients before the day ended. He set off for Joe’s room, prepared to receive the man’s complaints about that day’s lunch.

“Hey Joe, how was lunch?” he asked as he stepped into the room.

“Same old, same old, just a pile of nothing good,” Joe replied.

Luke smiled as he picked up the empty tray. “Sure looks like it,” Luke said under his breath. He avoided asking Joe if he was expecting any visitors that day, since the answer had consistently been no. But just as Luke was about to take Joe’s vitals once again, he heard a knock behind him. He snapped his head around to see a young woman standing in the doorway. Luke turned back to look at Joe. Much to his surprise, his eyes were full of tears.

After a few seconds, Luke shook himself out of his surprise.

“Do you two need a moment alone?” he asked the woman.

She ignored him and rushed toward Joe on the bed. He opened his arms and enveloped her in a big hug.

“Dad, I’m so glad you’re okay,” she said into his chest. “Sorry I didn’t come sooner.” It was the first time Luke had seen Joe smile.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is Luke studying to become?

- A** a doctor
- B** a psychologist
- C** a nurse
- D** a neurologist

2. What is the main setting of this story?

- A** Luke's apartment
- B** a hospital cafeteria
- C** the maternity wing of a hospital
- D** the geriatric ward of a hospital

3. The author describes Joe as grumpy. What evidence from the text supports the description of Joe as grumpy?

- A** "Luke had been caring for the 70-year-old man for the past week, and the two had quickly formed an odd friendship. Joe was recovering from heart bypass surgery—a necessary operation for him to fight his heart disease."
- B** "'This garbage again?' Joe said while inspecting the food.  
"'Yes, same as yesterday, but I noticed you finished all of the garbage yesterday...' Luke said with a smirk.  
"Joe kept silent, but gave Luke a dirty look."
- C** "'Good morning, Joe!' Luke said quietly, trying not wake him too abruptly. He slowly pulled back the curtains once he noticed the man flutter open his eyelids. 'How did you sleep?' he asked."
- D** "But just as Luke was about to take Joe's vitals once again, he heard a knock behind him. He snapped his head around to see a young woman standing in the doorway. Luke turned back to look at Joe. Much to his surprise, his eyes were full of tears."

4. Based on his actions, how does Joe most likely feel when his "special visitor" arrives?

- A** grumpy, sulky, and upset
- B** confused, worried, and nervous
- C** indifferent, bored, and neutral
- D** emotional, loving, and surprised

**5.** What is the main idea of this story?

- A** During clinical rotations, nursing students experience the different divisions of medicine.
- B** A student nurse cares for an elderly patient who seems to be grumpy most of the time.
- C** A student nurse tries to find someone to pay a visit to a grumpy elderly patient of his.
- D** A man recovering from heart surgery does not like the food from the hospital cafeteria.

**6.** Read these sentences from the text.

"She ignored him and rushed toward Joe on the bed. He opened his arms and enveloped her in a big hug. "Dad, I'm so glad you're okay," she said into his chest."

As used in this context, what does the word "envelop" mean?

- A** to prepare to mail
- B** to stretch deeply
- C** to surround completely
- D** to push away

**7.** Read these sentences from the text.

But just as Luke was about to take Joe's vitals once again, he heard a knock behind him. He snapped his head around to see a young woman standing in the doorway. Luke turned back to look at Joe. Much to his surprise, his eyes were full of tears.

How could the last sentence be rewritten without altering its meaning?

- A** Much to Luke's surprise, Joe's eyes were full of tears.
- B** Much to Luke's surprise, his own eyes were full of tears.
- C** Much to Joe's surprise, Luke's eyes were full of tears.
- D** Much to Joe's surprise, his own eyes were full of tears.

**8.** Who visits Joe towards the end of the story?

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**9.** How does Joe's emotional state change over the course of the story? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**10.** Why might Joe have acted grumpy and sulky during the week that Luke had been caring for him? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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