

A Doctor for all Seasons

Judith Nolan



“Try not to become a man of success. Rather become a man of value.”

Albert Einstein



“We see too little of you, Peter.” Vincent clasped the other man’s shoulder companionably. “You should come Below more often. And not just to see how Catherine is doing.”

“He’s afraid his patients won’t miss him.” Catherine stood within the circle of her husband’s free arm, her gown of white silk and lace shimmering in the candlelight of the Great Hall. “He likes to feel needed.”

“Well, I need him to explain some of these new medical advances to me.” Father limped up, carrying an armful of magazines Peter had brought down for him. “When I read these, I realise just how out of touch I can get in only a few short months. I feel I should see you more often.”

“Stick to what you know, Jacob.” Peter looked at the three of them, shaking his head as he looked beyond them, to where William and his helpers were setting out the evening meal. “You have created something far more enduring down here, than the fickle world in which I live.”

“What’s wrong, Peter?” Vincent tightened his grip in his friend’s shoulder, his eyes narrowing, as he surveyed the doctor’s tired face and sensed his restless disquiet.

“I’m sorry...” Peter gave him an apologetic smile. “Holidays like Easter and Christmas are never a happy time for me. Winterfest is no better. Too many memories...”

“Elaine?” Father asked, putting aside the periodicals on the table behind him. “Do you still grieve for her, even after all these years?”

“Seems like it was only yesterday, sometimes.” Peter passed a hand over his eyes. “I watch all of you. I see Catherine and her child.” His eyes dropped to her waist and his mouth twisted. “I see the promise of things to come. New life that has so much potential... and I cannot help, but remember that I could possibly have had all that too...once.” His shoulders lifted helplessly. “I guess life is truly what happens to you, while you’re making other plans.”

“Your wife’s death was an accident.” Father sighed abruptly. “A simple accident. You could not have prevented it from happening.”

“I know all that, and yet...I still feel guilty, even after all this time...” Peter looked from Father’s sympathetic eyes to Vincent’s intent regard and then down to Catherine’s concerned gaze. “I wasn’t there. I was working a double shift. I should have been driving that car.”

He swallowed tightly, before continuing. “You would think that, after so many years, I could begin to forget. But, then something happens to remind me and I can see her face so clearly once again. Surely a doctor should, at least, be able to save the life of his own wife.”

“Could I have saved Margaret from her pain?” Father thumped the end of his cane on the floor. “Do you think I didn’t wish that I had the skills, the knowledge to keep her from dying? Some things cannot be changed, Peter. Some things were always meant to be. No matter how much we strive against the cruel hand of fate.”

“But, it is that same hand of fate that gave two wonderful people a chance at living the love they share.” Peter moved his shoulder beneath Vincent’s clasp, feeling all the strength of this unique man’s love for his beautiful wife. “I’m sorry, I’m just

being a depressive old fool on such a night filled with so much friendship and love. But, talking of the holidays made me realise how quickly they lost their magic for me a long time ago.”

“Then need to find.” A blond head inserted itself into the conversation, Mouse’s gaze deeply thoughtful. “Should always search for what is lost. Only way to find it again. Mouse good at looking and finding. Always willing to help.”

“Mouse certainly has a way of cutting to the heart of the matter.” Father laughed suddenly, as he shook his head. “Come and stay with us for Easter, Peter. I promise you, you will be surprised. William creates the most stunning egg hunts, and you can always rely on the children to lighten your heart and your mood.”

“Easter, lots of William’s good food and drink. Winterfest, see everyone again. Christmas, lots of presents.” Mouse nodded sagely, his eyes sliding sideways to where Jamie was talking to Shannon, and then further to where Mary was feeding Jacob his supper. “Lots of good things to seek and find. Easter eggs are good to eat.”

“No surprises I don’t know about first.” Father admonished the grinning tinker, his frown promising dire retribution at the slightest sign that he was not listening to him. “I’ve had enough of your big ideas to last a lifetime of lifetimes.”

“Always tell Father.” Mouse bobbed his head and kept his own counsel. “Best not to surprise him.”

You, know, you almost tempt me.” Peter laughed at Mouse’s pensive expression. “I don’t remember the last time I actually took a holiday.”

“Your patients will all be there when you get back.” Catherine took his hand. “And we will not allow you to become bored.”

“With Mouse in charge of the entertainment, I doubt anyone will have the time to be bored,” Vincent interposed smoothly, as he watched the tired strain ease from Peter’s face at the thought of another holiday he wouldn’t have to spend alone.

Catherine took his hand and kissed it, her eyes filled with gratitude. “Let’s make this a Winterfest to truly remember.”





“In three words I can sum up everything I’ve learned about life: it goes on.”

Robert Frost