

[facs] Story I requested

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Thanks for everyones help. I have posted it and where it came from for you because I got a zillions request I pass it on.

Colleen Whitley, "I'm Not Hurting You," New Era, Apr 1995, 44

He was always a good brother to Becky. Now, her very life depended on him.

"It's my life! I'm not hurting anybody else."

What most amazed everyone was that John* seemed so sincere when he said it. He really didn't seem to realize that he was hurting people all around him. He obviously loved his family. He was, in fact, remarkably sensitive and thoughtful. He saved his money to buy his mother a figurine she admired. He cleaned the garage for his dad when he hurt his back. He was consistently kind to his brothers and sisters, especially Becky, who was two years younger.

John had walked Becky to school when she started kindergarten, let her wear his baseball caps, and listened to her talk about which boys were really cute. The day she registered for junior high school, he showed her how to open her locker.

John's problems had started in the seventh grade when he had tried marijuana. He soon moved on to a variety of drugs. Despite prayers and counseling from both the bishop and professional therapists, he continued his drug use. He also began a life of flamboyant immorality. "Hey, I'm not hurting you. And I'm not hurting them. Every one of those girls knows what she's doing. What we do doesn't hurt anybody else. Besides, we're careful."

His whole family continued to love John and looked for ways to help him. Becky especially stuck by him, and he stuck by her. When Becky married Hal, John immediately put his arm around his new brother-in-law and said he'd always be available if they needed help. And he always was. He drove out into the rain to help pull a stalled car off the freeway. He helped clean the house when Becky was pregnant. He brought wonderful little surprises to his nephews as they came along. Sometimes he simply showed up with a bag of groceries and offered to fix dinner.

Then, suddenly, Becky needed a lot of help. When Becky became sick that summer, the doctors found that her constant cough stemmed, not from flu or pneumonia, but from cancer. Chemotherapy had very little effect; radiation helped but did not stop the tumor.

The cancer continued to spread so rapidly that the doctors said Becky's only chance would be to have massive radiation. The problem was that

radiation strong enough to kill all the malignant cells would also kill the healthy cells in her blood. They could be replaced by a bone marrow transplant, but the donor needed to be a person genetically similar to the patient, usually a brother or sister. When Becky explained the need, each of her brothers and sisters hurried to the hospital to give tissue samples.

A few days later, the entire family went with Becky to the hospital to learn the results. They sat together in the waiting room, watching anxiously as the doctor came toward them carrying a file folder and one of the little blue cards the lab technician had made for each of them.

When Hal asked if there was a match, the doctor said, "Possibly." Then he asked which one of them was John. John stood, and the doctor asked if he would come with him for a moment. They disappeared into a small office. When they returned, John sat down dejectedly at the end of a long couch. The doctor explained that John was the only member of the family whose genetic pattern was a close match to Becky's. He was, in fact, an excellent match, but he couldn't be a donor, at least not for six months.

John's blood test showed no infections, but his history of sexual activity and IV drug use put him at high risk for AIDS. If he were infected, he could pass that infection along to his sister. The doctor explained that there is no test for the AIDS virus itself. All that can be detected are the antibodies produced to fight the disease, and those take six months to develop. The hospital continued to look for a It turned out that Becky didn't have much time, certainly not six months. Within a few weeks the cancer was so widespread that even massive radiation couldn't stop it, and Becky was gasping for every breath she took. A friend, watching her labor to breathe, expressed his anger with John, but Becky simply said, "I knew when the doctor first told me about the tests that John's lifestyle would make it impossible for him to help me. I forgave him then."

Hal made arrangements for a burial plot and tried to explain to their children why Mommy couldn't play with them anymore. Becky's parents cared for their daughter and their grieving son.

And John? In some ways, his life changed. Yet his addictions and patterns of behavior are so strong that he has been unable to change them right away. But it's been a long time since anyone has heard him say, "I'm not hurting anybody."

A truly happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.

Progress always involves risk. You can't steal second base and keep your foot on first. F.B. Wilcox

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