The Night Shift at Ward Nine (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Nobody had warned Dr Amara Osei that her first night shift would be so strange. The corridors of the old hospital were quiet, the lights hummed, and the coffee machine had broken again. She had spent seven years training for this moment, and her ultimate ambition was to run an emergency department of her own one day. For now, she was content to learn.

At half past eleven, an ambulance arrived with a young man who had fallen from a roof. He was unconscious when the paramedics carried him in, and his pulse was weak. Amara moved quickly, calling for scans and shouting instructions across the room. The next twenty minutes felt like a single long breath. Her senior colleague watched from the door, saying nothing, letting her lead.

The patient's identity was unknown, because he carried no wallet and no phone. A nurse checked his pockets twice and found only a bus ticket and a small silver key. It was unfortunate that nobody had reported him missing, since a name would have helped enormously. Amara decided that the surgery could not wait; the case was too urgent to delay for paperwork. She signed the forms herself and agreed to undertake full responsibility for the decision.

The man would undergo an operation lasting almost four hours. While he was in theatre, Amara sat in the staff room and watched the night unfold through the window: taxis, sirens, a fox crossing the empty car park. She thought about how small a single hospital was compared with the universe, and yet how enormous one life could feel inside it. Someone had left a note on the fridge complaining about the usage of other people's milk, and she smiled at the ordinariness of it.

At four in the morning came the unexpected part. A woman appeared at reception, breathless, holding a photograph. Her brother had not come home, she explained, and a neighbour had mentioned an accident. Amara took her to a quiet room and explained everything carefully. The woman's anger, when it arrived, was loud and raw; she said that the delay in identifying her brother was unacceptable and that somebody should have called her hours earlier. Amara did not argue. She listened, apologised for the confusion, and promised to explain exactly what had happened.

Ultimately, the man survived, and three weeks later he walked out of the building on crutches. His sister sent a card with a clumsy drawing of the hospital on the front. Amara kept it in her locker for years, because every ward has its routines but every patient is unique. On difficult nights she would take the card out, read the short message inside, and remember why she had chosen this work at all.

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