



I Can and I Care

By Anna Anderson

A huge storm that night was vicious and unforgiving, like an infuriated genie released from a bottle. Powerful winds and torrential rain did not discriminate between houses, people, animals and trees, leaving as much destruction on their path as they wanted to. It was a difficult time for everyone, slowly coming to an end.

The next morning Peter came in late for his coaching session. Apologised for not arriving on time and slumped into the chair. Unshaven, his eyes were red and tired. His breathing was deep and slow. Very slow, in fact, as if he was considering each time whether to take the next breath or not.

“You didn’t sleep well,” I stated, rather than asked.

“I was called at 2 am to a car accident. A falling tree hit a car on the river bank...difficult rescue....Two people died. Two survived.” He wiped his face with both hands as if trying to remove the memory of that painful scene.

“Yes, the storm... it was pretty bad,” I nodded, looking out the window. It was still raining quite heavily. A percussion of big, heavy drops crushing on the roof was making its presence known in the room.

“Why do you do this, Peter?” I asked.

“You mean...volunteering at the State Emergency Services?...You know,” - Peter’s eyes lit up – “it is such a strangely fulfilling...privilege, I’d say. To go and help... save someone’s life... give a hand...to just be there, when you are needed...” He was struggling to come up with the right words not because he couldn’t find any, but because there were too many flowing through his mind.

“Ok. So after a long day at the office, where you work hard for your money, running your business as best you can, you get up in the middle of the night in a heavy storm, drive to the middle of nowhere to help people you don’t know, risking your own life and sacrificing your sleep and rest for no pay.” I got out of breath, but I did make the point. He looked pensive.

“Why do you do this, Peter?”

“Because I can,” he said proudly, sitting tall in the chair. “And...” he paused and looked down at his muddy shoes searching for the missing part, “and... because I care.”

“That’s right. You can and you care. Now, remind me please from our earlier conversation, what’s stopping you from making the first move to speak with your wife and save your marriage from falling apart.” There was no question mark in the tone of my voice. I simply stated the fact.

“It’s too late, there is no point.” Peter closed his eyes, temporarily shutting off his painful reality.

“And HOW do you know this, exactly?” I asked. There was no escape.

Silence.

The rain joined into our conversation with no apology. A crescendo of its arguments was rising and falling, with strong emotions permeating the room – anger, self-pity, regret, guilt, blame, confusion, unfulfilled expectations and more anger, again. With the racket of heavy rain pounding on the tiles, a soft, loving murmur of the raindrops washing off the trees was barely noticeable...and yet, it was there.

“Do you love your wife, Peter?” I asked.

“Yes, I do” he quickly replied. I poured a glass of water from the cooler and put it on the table right next to him.

“How bad was the storm?” I continued, giving him a subconscious choice of response to address the weather or his marriage.

“Pretty bad.” Peter opened his eyes and looked at me. “I think that was the most severe storm we’ve had here for a very long time. Maybe ever..?” His handsome face was showing engraved signs of strain. He was very tired.

“Gosh, it was hard...the rescue seemed impossible...raging water in the river, the wind ...so strong...dangerous conditions.... We knew the passengers were most likely dead.” Peter reached for the glass of water and drank it all in one go. His mind wondered off again.

“Sorry...where was I?”

“I can and I care”

“Oh, yes...” He slipped into silence again.

“So,”- I continued – “if you believed that it was not possible to save those people under the circumstances, that it was too late, you would have quit and wouldn’t go.” Again, that wasn’t a question but a statement on my part.

“Of course not!” Peter loudly objected to my thoughtless presumption. “I will always go to the rescue no matter what, unless it’s called off or changed to recovery....even then...I always check...maybe it’s *not too late*...”

His muddy shoes must have been a great source of inspiration as Peter studied them again for a while.

“Did you hear that?” he suddenly looked up, with a relief in his voice.

”Hear what?”

“The rain has stopped”

“Oh, yes,” I smiled. “It has stopped, indeed...well, a storm can’t last forever....”

The sun, liberated by the parting clouds, gently swept the room through the open blinds.

“I need to call my wife.” Peter returned his empty glass to the table and slowly got up. “I will make the first move. I will save my marriage.”

He was standing tall, strong and confident in his new determination. Didn’t look tired anymore.

“Remind me please, *why* would you want to do that?” I asked, looking him straight in the eye. Peter shook his head, somewhat embarrassed, and replied with a cheeky smile.

“Why?... There are two good reasons for that – *because I can and because I care.*”

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