

PRESENTING

JONATHAN MARVEL'S



CHRISTMAS
POCKETS

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This is the message of Christmas:
We are never alone.



Jonathan Marvel’s mother and father raced through the double doors beneath the red EMERGENCY sign. In the waiting room a table with a small Christmas tree and a ceramic Nativity scene separated three rows of unoccupied plastic chairs from the admitting desk and the wide tile corridors that lead into the hospital.

Mrs. Marvel clutched her husband’s arm as they walked to the desk. At that moment, a double-wide door marked ‘No Admittance’ swung open, and a police officer hurried in their direction.

“I’m Officer Murdock,” she said. “Are you the Marvels?”

Mr. Marvel nodded. His wife looked anxiously at the officer.

“Jonathan—my son—where is he? Is he alright? Can we see him?”

Officer Murdock motioned to two chairs. “Sit down, please,” she said. “I’ll let them know that you’re here.” She went to the desk and spoke with the nurse. She pointed over to the Marvels and then came over to where they sat.

“Jonathan is in surgery,” said the officer. “The paramedics brought him in about 45 minutes ago. We found this in his jeans pocket.”

She handed Mrs. Marvel the laminated card with their home contact information that Jonathan carried when he was out and about.

“I don’t understand,” said Mr. Marvel. “He’s in surgery? What happened? Why is he here? How is he? When can we see him?”

Officer Murdock slid a plastic chair across the carpet and sat down in front of the Marvels. “Jonathan was in an accident,” she said. “He stepped off the curb into traffic in front of Yee’s grocery. He was hit by a delivery truck.”

Jonathan’s mother clapped her hand across her mouth. His father clenched the arms of his plastic chair.

“Hit by a truck,” he said slowly, shaking his head from side to side. “I don’t understand. A truck hit him? Were they running a red light? Were they drunk? Is the driver in jail?”

He turned to his wife and repeated, “Hit by a truck. Jonathan.”

She blinked back tears.

The Officer shook her head. “I was only a few yards away when it happened. I saw it all. Your son stepped into the street without looking at the lights. He was distracted... patting all of those”—she looked for the right word—“those odd-looking pockets on the front of that big overcoat of his.”

“The crosswalk light was still red but he stepped right off the curb and into oncoming traffic. The driver of the truck was too close. He couldn’t stop. He tried to pull to the left but the right front corner of his bumper clipped Jonathan and threw him hard against the curb.”

She leaned forward towards the Marvels and in a quiet voice added, “Jonathan’s head hit the curb. I got to him in seconds. He was bleeding and unconscious. We had him here in less than five minutes. They’re doing all they—they’re taking good care of him.”

Jonathan’s father swallowed hard. Mrs. Marvel wrapped her arms tightly against her chest.

“What was he doing there,” she said in a whisper. “None of his friends live by the Yee’s. It’s three blocks from our home. He’s only eight, for heaven’s sake. He’s not



allowed to just wander.” Her voiced trailed off.

“You said he was wearing a big overcoat with ‘odd’ pockets,” said Mr. Marvel. “What do you mean?”

“You know,” replied the officer. “All those different colored patch pockets on that big coat. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything like it.”

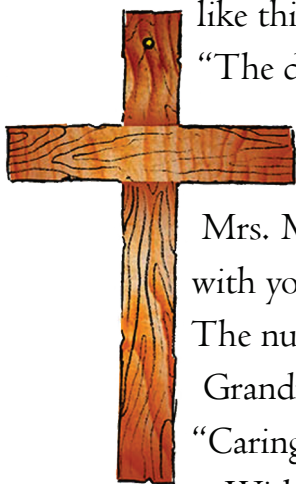
Just then Jonathan’s grandmother bustled into the waiting room. Mrs. Marvel held her in a long hug. When a nurse in green hospital scrubs appeared from a side door and looked around the room Officer Murdock motioned her over. Mr. Marvel stood up, and the little group formed a semi-circle in front of the nurse.

“Jonathan will be in surgery for a while,” said the nurse. “We were fortunate that Dr. Wise, who is a pediatric neurosurgeon from the capitol, was here this afternoon to do a seminar for our surgical staff. When Jonathan was brought in to Emergency, Dr. Wise was actually in the next room. He was told about your son and he scrubbed right in alongside our team.”

The nurse looked at Jonathan’s parents. “Your son is in excellent hands.”

Mr. and Mrs. Marvel both started to speak at the same time.

“How is he? What kind of surgery? How soon will it be over? What’s usual in cases like this?”



“The doctor will come and speak with you when surgery is complete,” said the nurse. “He’ll answer all of your questions and if there are any updates along the way I will come out and tell you.” She placed one hand on Mrs. Marvel’s forearm, and said, “A lot of very skilled and caring people are with your son right now. I’ll see you soon.”

The nurse turned and pushed through the doors that led into the surgical area. Grandmother Marvel pointed to the small cross on the wall above the door.

“Caring people,” she said to no one in particular. “I’m so very glad.”

With that she sank into a chair and pulled a tissue from her purse.





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An hour passed. Mr. Marvel met with the admitting staff and filled out what felt like an endless stack of forms. Their Pastor arrived, followed moments later by Mr. and Mrs. Yee, who owned the little grocery store at the site of Jonathan’s accident.

Mr. Yee had a sack of cookies and donuts, Mrs. Yee carried jugs of coffee and hot chocolate. As the late afternoon sun flooded the waiting room the Pastor rounded up cups and helped to serve.

Mr. Marvel returned from the admitting desk. He shook Pastor’s hand and gratefully accepted a donut and coffee from Mrs. Yee.

“It’s very kind of you to come,” he said to the Yees.

“We are so sorry about Jonathan,” said Mrs. Yee.



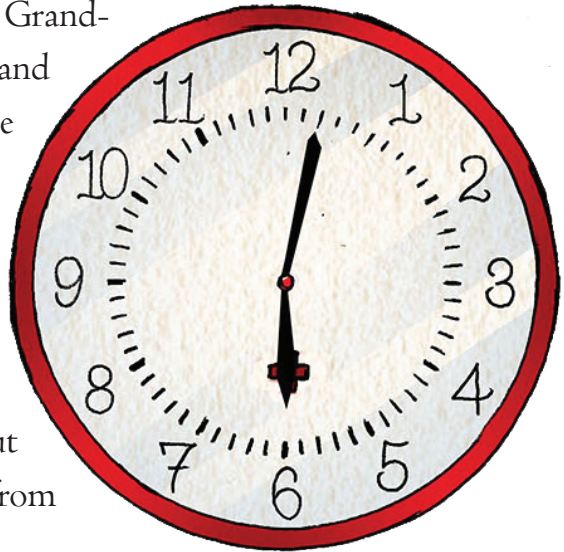
“And we always close on Christmas Eve afternoon,” added her husband. “So, no problem for our business.”

Mrs. Marvel shot a glance at her husband. He understood. They knew the Yees did not close their store on Christmas Eve, or any other day of the year.

The Pastor went over to the Nativity scene and adjusted a few of the ceramic figures. “I’d almost forgotten what day it was,” he said. “Imagine that.” He looked around the waiting area, which was empty except for Jonathan’s family and friends. “Not the busiest day of the year for hospitals, it seems.”

The little group spoke in hushed whispers. Grandmother Marvel had a bag of crochet supplies and Mrs. Yee sat down beside her to watch as she brought a small decorative doily to life stitch-by-stitch.

As Mr. Marvel was pulling a sweater around his wife's shoulders a few minutes after 6:00 PM the 'No Admittance' door opened. The nurse who had spoken with them earlier came out followed by a tall man dressed in surgical green from the coverings on his shoes to the cap on his head.



Mr. Marvel grabbed his wife's hand and leapt to his feet. Grandmother and the rest of the group formed a line behind them. The doctor shook the Marvels' hands and introduced himself. His eyes were steady and his voice was calm and assuring but his news was very frightening.

"Jonathan is a strong boy," he began. "And that's the best thing going for him. He took quite a blow on the head. He suffered a subdural hematoma, which is what happens when blood collects between the layers of tissue that surround the brain. The bleeding is under the skull and outside the brain, not in the brain itself."

The doctor paused, waiting to make sure that the Marvels were following his explanation. "As blood accumulates," he continued, "pressure on the brain increases. The pressure on the brain is our concern in these cases. If pressure inside the skull rises to very high level and we are not able to reduce it a subdural hematoma can be fatal."

Mrs. Marvel's face went blank. Her husband held her arm and the Pastor stood behind them and placed a hand on each of their shoulders.

Grandmother dropped her crochet needle on the floor and the Yees took a few steps back to give the family privacy

"The procedure we just completed has reduced the swelling and pressure—for now," said the surgeon. "We're going to be monitoring him very closely. A nurse will be sitting beside his bed for the next several hours."

Mr. Marvel took a deep breath. He had to ask the question. But before he could form the words the doctor anticipated what was coming and answered without hesitation.

“Jonathan is a very sick little boy. He has suffered a terrible injury. But the brain is a remarkable organ; it’s resilient and tough and so is he.”

The doctor stepped closer to the Marvels and took their hands in his. He nodded in the direction of the cross above the surgical department entry. “This is a very special place,” he said. “And today is a special day. I will see you both a little later.”

He turned to go, then turned back. “I have to ask you about that coat he was wearing,” said the doctor. “All those funny pockets stuffed with something—the paramedics said it was so well padded that it actually helped to cushion his fall—probably saved him from some broken ribs. I saw it at the nurse’s station; I have to tell you I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Mr. Marvel shook his head. “That’s the second time today someone has mentioned Jonathan’s coat. We have no idea where it came from or what’s in it. Seems to be the mystery of the day.”

The doctor smiled. “Whatever the story behind that coat may be,- today was the right day for Jonathan to be wearing it.”

