

## Remember Jerzyk

### A Third Watch fanfiction story by AmandaK

"Boy 553, come in." The crackling voice of the dispatcher broke the silence that hung almost palpable in the ambulance cab. Bobby cast a quick look at Kim when she leaned forward to answer the call. A few strands of hair had come loose from her ponytail and hung untidily about her thin face. Her profile was backlit briefly by the glare from a street light through the window and Bobby had a sudden flashback of their one night together. That night, that seemed to hold the promise for so much more.

With an effort he forced his eyes away from her, back to the road. He didn't want to go where these thoughts were leading him. After that one night, and the brusque cold shoulder Kim gave him the next morning, he had made himself put all thoughts of her out of his head. They worked together, they were friends and partners, but that was it.

He stopped for a red light, staring at the wipers moving across the windshield, and listened to Kim talk to the dispatcher. Again Bobby glanced sideways, studying her from the corner of his eyes. She looked tired, he thought, and upset. So did he, most likely. He sure felt bad. It was nearly the end of their shift, after a long and busy day. They spent the last two hours trying to keep the young mother of two alive, while the firemen attempted to cut her free from her car. "Dammit," he swore below his breath at the memory. They had tried so hard. But in the end the woman had died, and the last thing they needed right now was another call.

Luck was not with them.

"Boy 553 out," Kim told the dispatcher before signing off. "You got that?" she asked Bobby.

"Yeah. Respiratory distress. 1455 Moore Street." He turned on the flashers and the siren while stepping on the gas without waiting for the light to change. He sure hoped this would turn out to be an easy call. They'd seen enough tragedy for one day.

A short while later the ambulance drew up to an old apartment block in a neighborhood that had clearly seen better days. Several of the houses had their windows broken, the frames covered with sheets of plywood. The glare of the few streetlights that weren't broken reflected from the wet pavement. At least it had stopped raining.

Bobby switched off the engine and he and Kim climbed from the cab and grabbed their bags. "Third floor," Kim said curtly after she scanned the faded numbers on the mailboxes in the hall of the building.

"And no elevator, of course," Bobby grumbled, pointing at the 'out of order' sign. Kim chuckled wryly in reply and started up the stairs, taking two steps at a time. Bobby hurried to catch up with her.

At the top of the stairs on the third floor an elderly lady was waiting for them. She wrung her hands nervously but relief washed over her face when she recognized the two paramedics. "Please hurry," she said, waving at them to follow her. "It's Mrs. Dobrowitz. She's not well."

She pattered ahead of them to the first apartment on the left side of the stairwell, explaining that Mrs. Dobrowitz was her aged neighbor and that she was keeping an eye on her. "She didn't answer the door this evening so I got out my key. I have it for emergencies, you know. That's when I found her like this." She pointed at the couch where a shrunken, wrinkly-faced woman lay gasping and struggling to breathe. "Oh Ms. Betty! I said no need for doctor," she protested upon seeing the paramedics. Her voice was frail and heavily accented. Bobby couldn't place the accent right away but he thought it was something European. Probably something Slavic, he decided, or maybe Polish. He remembered her name and took another good look at Mrs. Dobrowitz' face.

Kim was already kneeling next to the sofa. She raised her stethoscope and listened to the woman's breathing. "Hmm," she mumbled and lifted Mrs. Dobrowitz' hand to feel her pulse. She turned back at Bobby. "Pulse is weak but regular. I don't like the sound of her breathing though. It could be pneumonia."

Bobby nodded in reply. He didn't need to use the equipment to see that Mrs. Dobrowitz had trouble breathing.

Kim turned back to the sofa and got out the oxygen. "Ma'am, you're going to have to come with us. There's something wrong with your lungs and we should take you to the hospital for the doctors to check you out." She leaned forward to place the mask over the old woman's face.

"Child," Mrs. Dobrowitz said, grasping for Kim's hand. "Don't bother. I'm old woman..." Her eyes widened and Kim stiffened visibly for a moment before she pulled back her hand as if burned. Mrs. Dobrowitz began to cough raspily.

"I'll go get the gurney," Bobby said. He turned to go back downstairs.

"No, I'll go," Kim said, almost fleeing from the room. "You stay with her, keep an eye on her."

Bobby blinked and sat down on the edge of the couch, taking the spot that Kim had vacated. The neighbor followed Kim out of the apartment, muttering that she was going to call Mrs. Dobrowitz' children.

Left alone with the patient, Bobby glanced around the room. Worn rugs with faded colors were placed strategically on the floor. The furniture was old, but well cared for. The room breathed of a long life. Not wanting to seem too curious, he redirected his gaze at his patient. Mrs. Dobrowitz stared up at him with the rheumy eyes of the aged. She fumbled for his hand and once she got hold of it, she held it tightly.

Bobby suddenly felt a strange warmth course through him. A pleasant wave, like the one you get when you drink a shot of brandy after a long day out in the cold of winter. Mrs. Dobrowitz eyes widened and Bobby wondered if she felt it too. A spark appeared in her eyes and there was a hint of a smile playing around her lips. She must have been beautiful when she was young, he thought absently.

"Ah. It is you. You like her," she said. It wasn't a question.

Bobby blinked. "Huh?"

"Your lady friend," Mrs. Dobrowitz explained. She gave a slight nod in the direction of the door through which Kim had just left.

"Oh." For a moment Bobby didn't know what to say. "Kim. Yeah, she's good people." He tried to smile his innocence but the heat that radiated from Mrs. Dobrowitz' touch made his skin tingle and it was distracting him.

"She like you too," Mrs. Dobrowitz continued. "Very much." She struggled to push off the mask and sit up and Bobby leaned forward to gently push her back into the pillows.

"No, she doesn't," he said soothingly. "She's just a good friend."

Mrs. Dobrowitz wasn't about to give up. She pulled on his hand instead, refusing to let him sit back up. Her voice lowered to a whisper that seemed to reach his ears from far away.

"I knew such love once," she said. Her voice was so soft that Bobby had to strain to make out the words. Her gaze drifted across his face to focus on some unseen point on the far wall. No doubt she was looking back into past memories. "I knew such love," she repeated. "Ah... my Jerzyk. He was beautiful man. Kind and strong. But my father say, no, Irena, you not marry Jerzyk. You go to America and marry Donek Dobrowitz. I listen to my father and marry Donek. Oh, he was good man too and I had happy life. But I never forget Jerzyk..."

She blinked and her eyes focused on Bobby's face again. "Make not mistake," she said urgently. "Like me. Do not give up. She love you. But she afraid. Have..." She frowned, searching for the right word. "Patience." Exhausted the old woman fell back onto the sofa, her raspy breathing shallow until she started another coughing fit. It broke the spell for Bobby and he quickly reached to put the mask back on her face.

At that moment Kim returned with the gurney. Glad for the distraction, Bobby quickly lifted the woman from the couch and placed her on the stretcher -- he was surprised at how light she was. Together they cautiously maneuvered her down the flights of stairs and into the ambulance.

"I'll drive," Kim said before closing the door behind Bobby. He didn't even get the chance to

protest and with a sigh he sat on the bench next to the stretcher, once again looking down at the old woman's face. She frightened him, forcing him to think about things that he had long thought put behind him.

Much to Bobby's relief, Mrs. Dobrowitz dozed all the way to the hospital, bordering on the brink of unconsciousness. To give himself the illusion of being useful, he adjusted the oxygen mask that covered her face and checked her pulse. When he was satisfied with her condition, he quickly let go of her hand again, as if afraid that his touch might wake her.

The ambulance stopped and he glanced out of the rear window. He was glad to see that they had pulled up at the hospital's emergency entrance. A doctor was already waiting for them and pulled open the ambulance door while Bobby pushed up from the bench. Kim came around the back and helped him get the stretcher out, while Bobby filled the doctor in on the patient's condition.

"We'll take it from here," the doctor said, motioning for the orderly to start pushing the gurney into the hospital. That's when Bobby felt cold fingers clamp around his wrist. He looked down and found himself staring into Mrs. Dobrowitz' knowing eyes. "Remember," she told him. "Remember Jerzyk! Patience!"

Her hand dropped away limply and her eyes drifted shut. "Let's go," the doctor ordered and the hospital orderly began wheeling the gurney to the entrance. Kim and Bobby stared after them. When the double doors closed, Kim turned to Bobby. "What was that all about?" she asked curiously. Bobby swallowed.

"Nothing," he said, his voice hoarse. "Nothing."

**Disclaimer:** This story is based on the NBC/Warner Brothers' series *Third Watch*. The original creators own all original characters. It is meant for entertainment purposes only and does not have the intention to infringe on any copyrights.