

WHEN GOD
MAKES
Lemonade

True Stories that Amaze and Encourage



CREATED BY DON JACOBSON

MARKED BY LOVE

SHARIE ROBBINS

I'll never forget my husband's face as he stood by my hospital bed, grinning ear to ear with joy as he held our youngest daughter for the first time. Our baby Justine, our third child, was healthy and happy in her father's arms.

I'll also never forget my husband's face as he told me about his own doctor's appointment. It had only been six months since we took Justine home, and we had just found our stride with our new family routine. Quinn explained that the doctors confirmed he had a genetic disease called Alport syndrome, and unfortunately there was no way to reverse it. They could provide medication and treatments, but eventually he would need a kidney transplant. When that time would come, we had no idea; it was anybody's guess. Fortunately Quinn's diagnosis was early, so his treatment was limited to dietary regulations and medication. He was healthy and strong enough to work, play with our children, and go to church with us on the weekends.

It was new for us as a family to attend a Sunday service, but

Quinn's health issues came with lots of questions about life and death. We found refuge in the story of God and comfort from the congregation members, and before long we had both accepted Christ and begun trusting him with our family, our careers, and yes, even our health.

Then it happened. Six years after we discovered his illness, Quinn could no longer survive without a transplant. The fears we had buried long ago about finding the right donor at the right time resurfaced. What if we couldn't find the right match? How long could he live without a transplant?

We were both very mindful that God was in control of our situation. And we had a sense of peace that surpassed all understanding of those around us. We drove to the hospital and met with the transplant team. "Quinn, you will be placed on a cadaver donor list," one doctor informed us. "Oftentimes it is a very long wait for a match, so we need to talk about other options." We held hands and listened to the suggestions. "First, do you know if any of Quinn's family members are able to donate? It's quite common for blood relatives to be identical organ matches, and it significantly speeds up the process." I could see Quinn shaking his head. His brother also had kidney disease, and his other family members could not donate due to their religious beliefs. Who else was there?

I looked back to the doctors. "I want to be tested!" The doctors looked at me in amazement. Quinn knew that I had talked about being tested, but in this moment he was still unsure if that was what he wanted me to do. It may have sounded like a surprise, but truthfully it was far from it. Since the day Quinn was diagnosed, I had been harboring the hope that I would be able to donate one of my own kidneys.

"Test me," I insisted. "I might be a match." The doctors shuffled

uncomfortably in their chairs. Clearly, they were convinced I hadn't been paying attention.

"The odds of a spouse being a successful donor are slim to none," said one doctor, speaking slowly so I was sure to understand him. I squeezed Quinn's hand and looked him in the eyes.

"I am sure that is true, but something in my heart won't rest until I am tested and I know for sure. God works best when the chances are slim to none." I looked back to the donor team. "Please, test me." Three days later our phone rang, and Quinn and I both were overcome with thankfulness when the doctor told us, "Not only are you a match; you're almost a perfect match!"

"Can you believe it?" Quinn shouted as he hung up the phone. He hugged me, and the phone calls started coming in from our family and friends, all doing their best to encourage us to reconsider our decision. Who would care for our children while we both recovered from major surgery? What if something went wrong, and they were left without a father? Or a mother? Or both?

We defended our decision, confident it was no accident that I was a donor match. Quinn and I were meant to be together. We knew it to be true the day we were married, and we believed it now more than ever. We would go through this ordeal together, side by side, sharing the surgery, the scars, and the outcome.

Two weeks before the surgery, I was asked to visit the psychologist at the hospital. He shared some of his experience from working with donors and asked me, "Are you aware that many donors end up resenting the recipient?"

"Resent Quinn? There is no way; he is my husband," I assured him.

"Yes, of course, but believe me: I have seen it before. This is a very difficult operation. The recovery is slow and painful, and there is a lot of time to think. There is also no guarantee his body will accept

your kidney. If that is the case, there is no rewind. You won't get your kidney back. What you will have, whether the transplant is successful or not, is a long scar running up your back."

Suddenly I was uneasy. Why was he telling me these things? Where was the support? Did no one think this was a good decision? "I appreciate your concern," I told the psychologist, regaining my resolve, "but I have made up my mind. I'm going to do this for my husband."

Later that night after the kids were down and Quinn was out running errands, I drew a hot bath. As I soaked in the warm water, I started thinking about what the doctor had said earlier that day. I wondered how I would cope with the ugly scar that would be left on my body. *Am I making the right decision?* I began crying. *What if they are right? What if it doesn't work? What if Quinn sees my scar and thinks I'm ugly? Will he still look at me in the same way, or will we both see it as a reminder of a bad decision?*

My tears dripped into the water and rippled toward the porcelain tub. "Lord, I am going to do this, but I need strength. Take away my vanity. Please help me."



Two weeks later Quinn was healing brilliantly. My kidney was cooperating with his system, and it looked as though his disease would be a thing of the past for our family. Still, I went to my two-week post-op appointment heavily burdened. I would finally see the extent of the damage to my skin, which I had only been imagining since the surgery. As the doctor removed my bandage, he chirped, "That looks beautiful!"

"Oh, is it healing well?" I responded, assuming his sarcasm. "How ugly is it, Doctor?"

Looking at me strangely, he asked, “Don’t you know?” When I said that I didn’t know, a small smile played on his lips. “We were able to have a visiting plastic surgeon come in to finish your operation,” he explained. “Your scar will hardly be noticeable in a year or so.” I stood and walked to the mirror, gently twisting so I could see my back. The scar was a vertical line no wider than a pencil, and it stretched from my hip bone to the bottom of my bra strap. Just two weeks since my surgery, and already the angry red was fading—as if a gentle hand had traced a smooth line across my skin.

It was beautiful.



Fourteen years after the transplant, my husband remains perfectly healthy. I don’t think about my scar every day anymore, but when I do, I take a moment to touch it with my fingertips. It is now a thin, pale line. In my scar I don’t see pain or sacrifice. Instead I see a mark traced on my body by love, connecting Quinn and me and inviting us to trust that there will be even more goodness and grace in the years to come.

SHARIE ROBBINS lives in La Canada, California, with her husband, Quinn. They have three children: Anthony, twenty-three; Ashley, twenty-three; and Justine, twenty-one. Quinn and Sharie have been married for twenty-five years.