

Finding Words

Category: At the Pharmacy

written by Tina Harrach Denetclaw | May 4, 2024

I moved through my work with steady precision. One hundred and eighty-three scripts accomplished, one technician and I, alone on a Saturday. This, plus the order needed to be put away. And the phone kept ringing. And there was a steady stream of questions and counseling on how to use medications correctly.

"Pharmacist needed at the counter," my tech summoned me as she returned to crates full of drugs, sorting the bottles and finding their slots on the shelves. I made note of my place in the check process for the prescription in front of me and pulled myself away.

A slight and elderly gentleman stood at my window, his middle-aged son towered behind him in a suit coat and tie, silent.

The gentleman's words rasped as I approached. "I've lost my voice. What can I take for it?"

"What do you think has caused you to lose your voice?"

"Shock. My wife just died."

The window and walls and rush of the pharmacy fell away from my sight. The tiny man in front of me became the only person in the world. I spoke to him slowly.

"Your wife died suddenly."

The gentleman nodded, turned to his son, then softly repeated my words, explaining, "*My wife died suddenly.*"

Stricken by the deep moment, son met his father's gaze and held it.

"You were married for many years."

"We've been married for so many years."

"Stay with your family."

"I need to stay with my family."

"Keep in touch with your doctor."

"I'll keep in touch with my doctor."

"And, give it time."

"This is going to take some time."

The last statement seemed to give permission for his grief. He said the words to his son almost as a revelation.

The elderly gentleman thanked me. As they left, his son stopped for a moment, "You're very kind." I nodded to him as my eyes filled.

Their loss took my words, too.

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