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HOOKING UP WITH STRANGER WILL BE LIFE-GIVING AFFAIR

My friend Dave is hoping to hook up with a stranger. Their meeting will be on the most intimate level imaginable, shrouded in secrecy. In fact, so secret will be this tryst that one will never know the identity of the other.

This mysterious stranger will respond to Dave's attention by giving him a priceless gift -- a liver.

The past year opened to Dave and his family a window to eternity as specialists sought a reason for his declining health. Symptoms pointed in one direction; his yellowed eyes, jaundiced skin, incessant itching and insomnia spoke to the need for a liver transplant.

So began the most arduous part of the journey toward health -- waiting.

It's a wait like no other.

Dave awaits the death of another. The harsh - and eerie reality - is that his life journey requires a tragedy: a fatal car crash, an inoperable brain tumour, a child-birth gone horribly awry.

Relief must flow from demise. Hope stirs amidst the ashes of despair. His family's joy will be carried on a river of someone's tears.

Dave has had much time to ponder this paradox. The daily ingestion of drug-cocktails sparks bouts of sleeplessness that arrive at unorthodox hours. And amidst those midnight vigils, lying wide-eyed in the shadows, he thinks and prays; then prays some more. He asks his God to prepare a family out there, somewhere, for the turmoil that will soon burst into their lives. He weeps for those who will weep. He grieves for families that will soon suffer loss. He pleads for strength before its needed and grace before it must be applied. He innately knows that sleeplessness must not be squandered, but invested. Such is the responsibility of fore-knowledge, the privilege of receiving an unparalleled gift.

So there he lies, amidst the presence of the One who never slumbers or sleeps. And God comforts and listens and reminds him of promises recorded in His Word until Dave slips into dream-land. Then the Divine rides the prayers of his now-slumbering son into situations that are about to unfold elsewhere in this Land of the Maple Leaf.

A mother awakens to the distinct sense that God loves her and will never abandon her, no matter what unfolds that day. A young man senses an uncanny urge to phone his fiancée to express

undying love. A father has an epiphany of the utter foolishness of harbouring unforgiveness, then tracks down a prodigal son.

Parents are stirred awake by incessant knocking. They crack open the door to a police officer who nervously begins, "I'm sorry to inform you, but there's been an accident ..."

Dave's cell phone rings. An excited voice declares, "A liver has come available. A plane will meet you at the airport ..."

And there stands God in the midst of it all, grinning and weeping, high-fiving and comforting. The seeming disparity between undeserved gift and unfair death are bridged by His presence in each.

His experience with such situations is impressive; He is privy to another death – one on a cross – that we, like Dave, might know life.