

MY ANGEL

“I’m sorry to tell you that...” Dr. Keegan couldn’t continue his words. My mother, Tesse, held onto my hand tightly. “I’m sorry Ramona. You have liver cancer...” Dr. Keegan’s voice trailed off. I was still for a moment. Then it started sinking in. I was diagnosed with cancer. Suddenly, a wave of panic swept past me. “What will happen to me? Why is this happening to me? Will I die? What if I do, what will happen to my mother then?” I thought to myself. I just stared at the doctor. I pinched myself in the arm under the table. If this was a nightmare, I wanted to get out of it immediately. I could give anything to make the situation into a dream. However, Dr. Keegan’s eyes were too serious. I was hospitalized right at that moment. While I waited at the hospital, Mother went to our house to collect my clothes. I paid for the fees and I went into the room I would be staying. It smelled like medicine, I hated it. However, I couldn’t move because of the acute pain in my abdomen. It had swollen a bit and I was too tired to even move my body.

After a week, my condition wasn’t any better. The chemotherapy went on and on. I didn’t have any appetite and I lost so much weight. I also needed to shave off my hair. Dark circles, thin cheeks, bald head, yellow skin and yellow eyes. I didn’t want to believe that the monster was me. It disgusted me. I just stood in front of the sink, staring at my own horrible reflection on the mirror. My heart sank as I saw the word cancer written all over my face. It was destroying my life. Cancer was ruining and taking away my life little by little. I was only 25 and my mother was 50. We still had our future waiting for us. It was only a week since I got diagnosed with cancer, but it seemed like a much longer time. Like about a year. It was too painful, too depressing. The biggest reason was because of my mother. She was just getting to live a better life. My dad, her husband, turned into an alcoholic after his business failed. A few months later, he committed suicide after having so much alcohol. This all happened when I was only 5, and my mother 30 years old. After my father’s death, my mom had to go through all sorts of difficulties. She did so many jobs, like cleaning and washing dishes in a fast food restaurant. She always went early in the morning and came back very late at night. Even though I was very worried that my mother would get sick, I had become very cold and quiet since the day my father passed away. After all the hard life my mother went through, I got a job, and my mother was starting to get a good life, and I had ruined it, made it worse for her.

One evening, Dr. Keegan came into my ward with a very grim face. My mother and I looked at Dr. Keegan, and my heart beat raced. Dr. Keegan finally opened his mouth, “Ramona, your liver is not responding well to the treatment. I think you should get a liver transplant, Ramona.” My mother’s eyes wavered. I looked at my mother, and my head went blank. My mother asked, “How long will it take to find a liver donor?” “Tesse, we don’t know too. The donor has to have the same blood type and similar height and weight and has to be healthy. It depends; it could take a long or a short time.” Dr. Keegan told her. My mother looked devastated, however, somehow determined. When the doctor left, I just went to bed and secretly sobbed under the covers. She wept too, but she didn’t say anything. I went straight to sleep after all the crying. The next morning, I found my mother sitting beside my bed lying on me. To not wake her up, I carefully got up from my bed. I looked at my mother who was fast asleep. She had aged so much, more than she had to. Working and going through difficulty made her wrinkles at least twice long and hair twice as white. After hearing that I needed a liver transplant, my mother started going out really often. She didn’t tell me what she was up to though. So one day, I asked her. “Mom... Why do you go out so often these days?” However, my mother seemed to have not heard the question properly. “Pardon?” she asked again. I just said it was nothing. Days passed like that, and I still didn’t know what my mother was up to. One night, my mom asked me if I could say “I love you” to her. It was awkward, so I just said, “Mom, just go to bed...” I really wanted to tell her those three words, but I wasn’t ready, it was just too awkward.

Finally, one morning the doctor told me that there was a liver donor and she was ready to give me a part of her liver. I was so happy, so for the first time after my father passed away, I smiled widely in front of my mother. Of course, tears were rolling on my mother's cheeks. However, the doctor didn't look so happy, more like worried. I was confused by his reaction, but I was just too happy that I just ignored it. After Dr. Keegan left, I went straight to bed. My surgery was to be on the next day. I was nervous but also full of hope that I'll recover. The next morning, for some reason, Dr. Keegan looked for my mother. My mother looked white like she was nervous when she went out. They didn't come back even until it was time for me to have the liver transplant. Eventually, I had to go to the operating room. I wondered where my mom had gone. Suddenly, I remembered that I didn't say "I love you" to her. Was she really mad at me because of that little thing?" I thought. I was still half regretting and telling myself that I would tell her that I loved her after the surgery when I slowly fell asleep due to the medicine they injected. When I woke up, the first thing I did was to look for my mother. They said I wasn't allowed to see my mother until I was fully recovered. I had to wait for a week. It made me suspicious, but I just obeyed the doctor's recommendation. However, I wasn't aware of what had happened to me.

Out through the week, my condition was great. The surgery had succeeded. I couldn't wait to see my mother. I was ready to tell her "I love you" for everything she'd done for me. "I love you", these three easy words never came out of my mouth since my father's funeral. I was rehearsing the words when I finally arrived in front of my ward. It was strange though, when I went into my room, there was nobody. Suddenly, one of the nurses started weeping. I was still wondering what happened when Dr. Keegan confessed, "Your mother is dead Ramona. Tesse was the one who gave you a part of her liver. Unfortunately, the surgery didn't turn out too well. Sorry Ramona, dear. Sorry." And he left the room. After hearing that my mother left me forever, I just sat on my bed. I stared at the ground. Tears started flowing. I just sat there and wept like a kid. "Mom... Mom... Tell me that it's a lie. Mom! Come out! I know you're joking! Mom! Why? Why?" I yelled. I couldn't believe that she left me. She had donated her liver and risked her life for me. Then I knew why she wanted to hear me say "I love you" to her. I regretted so much that I didn't say those three words. Later, the nurses took me to my mother's grave. At first I just stood in front of my mother's grave. All the good memories we had flashed into my mind. The way she hugged me to put me to sleep... the smell of her... Now it was gone with her soul. She was gone forever. While thinking of my mother, I cried so much and fainted. When I woke up the next day, a nurse gave me an envelope. She told me that it was from my mother to me. She had written it just in case before the surgery. It hit me that she actually risked her life for me. She had known that she could die. I opened the letter. "Dear Ramona. I'm sorry I'm leaving you like this Ramona. I'm sorry for not telling you earlier. Forgive me sweetheart. Thank you Ramona, I survived until now because I had you. Thank you. Please recover and make me happy. I will always be in your heart. I love you, Ramona." The letter was smudged from my mother's tears. I was sprawled on the floor and bawling. My voice was blocked by my cries. All I did was make an extra effort to call her name out. "Mom... I miss you... Mom, please... Come back to me... Please... Mom! I was going to tell you that I love you! I love you mom... I love you..." I cried. I just couldn't accept the fact that my mother had died for me, and that she wasn't here anymore.

About a year after, I was fully recovered, my hair was growing back and I was strolling somewhere near my mother's grave. We had just put flowers there. My eyes were red from weeping and crying. Suddenly, it started raining. After the rain had stopped, a rainbow appeared. I swear I saw my mother's smile in the middle of the rainbow. "Mom, you'll always be my angel. I love you." I said to her in my heart and smiled back.

By Gyurie Moon