

Fate had dedicated that love's path was not to run smoothly. Katie kept a terrible secret from her husband Ronan but can they survive this? She only wanted to protect him but she needed him more than ever now. She walked the floors at night with the pain in her chest and then suddenly when showering she spotted a large lump under her arm and extending across her breast. She feared the worst and could not cope with it she went into denial. She was terrified it was cancer; her mum had died of it. She cried herself to sleep at night terrified that she could lose her dream life with her perfect husband and kids in her dream home. That was a terrifying prospect. The pain got gradually more and more intense.

An orange peel scab slowly spread all over her left breast and the shape of her breast changed and it became tender. Then she noticed a small lump on the other breast with the same disfigurement and pain. She walked around the house alone by day when Ronan worked and the kids were at school with a hot water bottle up against her chest. Inwardly, she was sick with worry but outside she pretended everything was fine. She was literally fighting to hold on to life. She was getting weaker by the moment and her strength was slowly by surely diminishing. Ronan kept asking her if she was losing weight and not well, she feigned it was only a virus. There was something wrong with her but he could not put her finger on it. He saw pain and anxiety in her eyes. She looked tired and deadly pale. He feared she had an affair and was pregnant by an old ex-boyfriend Alex. He was suddenly ringing her a couple of times a week and he had sent her a couple of bouquets of flowers. When he discovered the truth he was tortured with guilt. Psychic Katie knew his fears but loved him too much to confront him. She had in a way betrayed his trust confiding in an ex boyfriend. Recently she had received lots of flowers and cards from Alex.

Katie could confide in Alex as he was outside the family but there was a relationship of trust there. They often told each other secrets and exchanged phone calls and Christmas and Birthday cards. He looked up his reference books in his home library and told her it sounded like cancer and begged her to get immediate medical help. Alex also did research on hospices and even on assisted suicide in Holland for her at her request and got her all the information she needed. He did not pressure her to make a decision in whether to commit suicide or go into a hospice. He agreed to bring her to Holland if she wanted a lethal injection to die should she choose to prevent being a burden on her family and to die with dignity. He knew she had great strength and pride like himself and that was what had attracted him to her. He felt that was tough love and he was prepared to do that for her. He wept when he was alone he had always loved her. He settled to be her best friend instead. Even on her deathbed he felt he could not tell her he loved her. Katie knew and it said a lot she turned to him when she was in most need when she couldn't confide in her husband. He kept a picture in his safe of himself and Katie dancing together when they were dating in the Tralee Manor Hotel. He kissed it everyday, although now a happily married man. He regretted she was the one that got away from him.

A month later Katie helped Emma her sister organize an anniversary mass to commemorate their mum's ninth death anniversary. She threw herself into work and family. During the mass Katie felt a sudden harsh bolt of pain and collapsed. She had been praying to her mum to help her, her kids were so young they could not survive without a mum and

Goodbye

By Annette Dunlea

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poor Ronan depended on her for everything. She fainted with the pain and was unconscious for a few minutes. Emma her sister brought her around but she had not the energy to get up. She knew she was in trouble, it was as if Grace gave her the help she begged her for in her prayers. It was a release not to hide her unbearable pain, her secret was out. She asked Ronan to call an ambulance by a whisper in his ear. She had got the gift of acceptance from her mum that she was very ill. Her legs would not carry her, she could not support her own weight.

Ronan soothed her that everything would be alright she just got a fright. She was taken by ambulance with Ronan to the Accident and Emergency Room of the local hospital. He held her hand tightly and kissed her forehead talking reassuringly to her. There she was examined by a number of doctors and put in a private room in the Emergency Room. Then a senior surgeon on duty in ER Professor O'Callaghan was called and he ordered his think tank to do immediately a series of tests. He examined her breasts and she screamed in pain but he would not commit to any diagnosis. He was solemn and only asked medical questions and was able to describe her pain and tenderness exactly. He sent the team into quick action. He got her a bed on a ward upstairs but first he gave her an injection, which gave her pain relief. She sighed with relief she had been in agony for weeks. She had many blood tests and was then sent for a series of x-rays. She was up and down to the x-ray dept all night. It came as no surprise to her she was placed in the cancer ward. Ronan made sure she was settled before Ronan got a taxi home at 2 am. She stayed in hospital for a few days but not before her diagnosis of breast cancer was confirmed.

She wasn't surprised by the results, she knew them as Grace her mum had appeared to her as a ghost in the hospital and stood at the foot of her bed and told her she had a fatal breast cancer and she had a place in Heaven for her, her suffering would soon end. Grace said to her The Bowen Family had always had the psychic gift to speak to the other side. She promised she would suffer no more pain she would get pure morphine right up to the end. She told her of the hospice nurses and facilities and that Alex and Emma would be a rock of help to her in her final days. Grace reminded her that she had a good life the kids never had any serious accident or illnesses and nobody died prematurely in their family except herself and she had agreed to go. When she was drawn to the light she followed the angel willingly. That night Katie was given an emergency blood transfusion. Katie held her tongue when the doctor asked to meet her with Ronan the following day to give her the results. She held Ronan's hand to support him as the doctor told

she had stage 4 cancer. She squeezed his hand gently and he could not stop the tears flow down his face. His one and only love was dying. His life was put on sudden stop and he would never be happy again not without his wife and mother of his children. He was heart broken. Katie rose from bed and was now stronger after the blood transfusion and hugged him. Tests revealed she had inoperable cancer. Surgery was no use nor was chemotherapy or radiography. She had twelve months to live maybe less.

Katie booked herself out of Tralee hospital a few days later as she had a funeral to organize and the rest of her life to live. She rang Alex on his mobile phone and told him in a matter of fact way that her diagnosis of stage 4 breast cancer was confirmed. She was dying. He promised to help her any way he could and pledged any money she needed. She asked him to contact the hospice and book her a bed. He agreed and was taking down her instructions when the tears flowed down his face. He had not shown such emotion since both his parents were killed in a car crash. Katie and himself were close, they were like family. They could say anything to one another and keep each other secrets. He sent her a huge basket of exotic flowers through Interflora and a box of handmade luxury chocolates.

She was not going to waste one minute of life, her time left on earth was precious. Once home she contacted the hospice and organized a nurse to visit her home and administer morphine. Alex arranged for a second consultant in Cork in a private clinic to get a second opinion. He confirmed the inevitable and showed the cancer spread all over her by x-rays, shadows were everywhere. There was no denying it, it just had to be accepted by all, even shell shocked Ronan. Ronan was in pieces but Katie was once again the strong one and consoled him. They promised each other the happiest and most memorable year of their lives. Emma was a brilliant sister and best friend and allowed her to pick her moment to tell their dad Adam herself. Katie arranged to go to the house one Sunday when her sisters Emma and Sarah were out to speak to him alone. She made the coffee and smiled and told him he was the best dad she could have wished for and that made saying goodbye so hard. She thanked him for rearing her, his love and sincere friendship and told him she was dying of breast cancer. He dropped the cup on the floor and let a scream out of him. It broke his heart he cried heart felt sobs from the pain and agony of surviving a child, it was too much. He saw how it ravished Grace and to steal from him his beautiful young Katie was too cruel. He pulled himself together after a few minutes and hugged her tightly. They stood wrapped in each others' arms crying affirming their love for each other and wishing it didn't have

to end. He got a tissue from his pocket and wiped his eyes and then sat Katie down and made her a stiff Brandy. He handed her a clean tissue to wipe her tear stained face. Stronger now after the initial shock, he pledged any money and help she needed and to be there for Ronan and the kids always. He volunteered to mind her and administer medicine when the kids and Ronan were out. She told him of her last deeds and will, he was speechless. He could not believe she was organizing her own funeral and a DVD survival guide for Ronan and the kids.

Alex flew home from his villa in France to Ireland to say goodbye to her when she was still good. It would be the last time they would meet he wanted to remember her as her old self not a sick person dying in hospital. He did not want to see her die, he would not be able to deal with that pain. He drove her to the hospice and pushed her in a wheelchair and gave her a guided tour of it. They met with the staff and talked to some of the patients. She wanted to protect Ronan from that he would not have been able for it. Alex drove her to the funeral undertakers and to the solicitors. He was her rock. He left after two weeks and goodbye really was goodbye. He pecked her goodbye on the cheek and told her he would step back and leave her have the next few months with her family. He promised to ring her regularly and attend her funeral. They both wept as he drove off. It was the end of a very special friendship.

Emma went out all the hospital appointments with her and minded the kids and cooked for them all. She remained a very strong and brave woman, the one who kept the family together. Emma bought her often her favorite bouquet of flowers, cooked all her favorite meals, cleaned the house, did the laundry, ran the house behind Ronan's and the kid's backs. She helped cover her sister's illness from the kids and lied for her. When Katie told them at the end of her time she was dying and they would never see her on earth again aunty Emma was a safe place to fall. They cried hysterically and begged her not to go and kept asking why was their family been torn apart? They prayed to God to seek an angel for Heaven in a different home. They loved and needed their mum and they were just beginning to get big and they had plans for so many adventures with mum and dad.

However, in the dark of night Katie snuck down stairs for coffee and wept at the prospect of leaving her beloved husband and the kids she would not see grow up. While she sobbed downstairs Ronan sobbed silently in bed. She used have her cry and wash her face and then make two cup of coffees and bring one up to Ronan. She was by then composed and he was surprised that she always knew when he was awake and upset. He missed her body heat from the bed and woke automatically when she left it. They use sit up and chat into the early hours of the morning. She appointed Emma and Ronan as her carers when she was so ill she could do nothing for herself. She forced him to face her death and spoke frankly to him about it and her choices. He allowed her use her free will to organize things for when she was so ill she could not help herself. She told him she had booked herself into a hospice for the end when she was near dying. Sometimes they laughed at the old stories long in the early hours in the morning but a lot of times they cried as they said everything they wanted to say to each other before she died. Other times they just hugged each and cried in silence or they stood at the foot of the kids beds and watched their babies asleep peacefully.

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