

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

No matter how Ronan or Emma or Adam tried to persuade her otherwise she insisted she wanted to die in a hospice. His heart was bursting with pride he wondered where did she get her strength from. She told him she got a second chance in life to live every day as her last and have a ball and for the most part she was very positive. She had good days and bad days but most days she remained positive. Ronan had no choice he had to watch her die. He knew he needed to find in himself an inner strength for her and the kids and he rose to the challenge. Emma was unbelievably strong but her pain and past disappointments had made her a strong woman. She was there for Katie, Adam and the kids.

Emma helped Katie record her memoirs as her health deteriorated. As Katie spoke Emma wrote and typed it up on the family typewriter. It became the focus of Katie's life and helped herself and her sister accept the upcoming death. She wrote and wrote and recorded in her memoirs the things that got her through the day by keeping herself busy. She prayed to Grace a lot for strength and she got it. She began a DVD and began writing a very detailed manual to accompany it: for childrearing and a rota for running the house. She listed in her manual daily menus, past sicknesses the kids had, allergies, favorite toys, helpful contacts to call in crises. Her teaching experience was showing it was a brilliant instructional DVD.

She wrote a letter saying goodbye to her kids and husband and added an appendix listing prayers and hymns and detailed funeral instructions. She hid this from Emma. She organized her funeral by firstly visiting the local undertaker Tom Coffey again with Emma to finalize and pay for his services and she picked a medium priced warm pine coffin. Her wreath from the family was to be white flowers only depicting the word mum. She asked for the public to send donations to The Irish Cancer Society and not to waste money on flowers. It was a surreally happy meeting of the Bowen women. She polished her mum's headstone. She visited the local priest and leaves a goodbye letter for her family to be read on her death mass. This was Katie's letter:

*"Woodhill",
Tralee,
Co.Kerry*

*Dear Ronan,
The doctors told me I have inoperable breast cancer and it is too advanced and I am dying. It is difficult to say goodbye to the people that matter most in your life but I must say thanks for all the journey we shared together, the good and bad times. Thank-you for our three children Sophie, Sean and Seamus, they are the most priceless gift a man can give a wife. If I am truthful I enjoyed the fights and the making up in the end. You always caved in first but it was your kindness and sincerity that attracted me to you and kept me loving you.*

I made the decision to go into a hospice and die to save yourself and the kids any more suffering than necessary. They can give me pain relief and support you and the kids afterwards. I have organised my funeral and will, everything is booked. Everything is selected the priest, the readings, the hymns, the coffin, the grave plot, the headstone. I used this diagnosis as a second chance in life and lived everyday as my last and enjoyed every minute of it. I got to say goodbye to my loved ones and organise my death and help organise your lives after my death.

"She asked the kids to sit on the bed and told them she had to go to Heaven to be an angel for God but she would be a star in the sky twinkling at them always"

Thank-you for allowing me to exercise my free will and I know I will you always leave me get my own way. I have left an electronic manual on DVD on housekeeping and child rearing as a survival guide for you. It has detailed electronic notes and indexes and video footage. The DVD can be printed and used as a reference guide.

Please do not weep but remember the happy times and mind our kids. If it is possible I will find a way to come back to earth to watch over you and a way to communicate I am safe and happy. I go to the next phase of life to be united with mum and my grandparents. As a Catholic I will be happy to be reunited with my Creator. I will watch over you all from heaven and keep a place for you all there. Please do not mourn my death but celebrate my life and what we had together. Through rich and poor days there was a bond that nobody could break.

Remember me as the girl who married you, the woman who had your babies, who kept your house, weeded your garden, your soul-mate and best friend. I was the woman who could make you laugh and cry. I could calm you when you were upset but yet infuriate you also like no other. For the passion and the love we shared, I thank-you. I could read your mind and finish your sentences. I knew everything you loved and hated and we had no secrets from one another. I knew what to say when you were upset to make things alright again. I felt your pain and I shared your joy. I embraced your strengths and celebrated your differences. I love you and everything about you and the physical limitations of worlds will not change that.

*Please love my babies and honour our sacred pact to rear and be there for our children always and please look out for Emma and Dad as I love you all. I will look over you all from heaven and be at your side always. Be strong for our kids. This is not goodbye but fare well until we meet again in the next life. Finally, please find enclosed my selected funeral mass layout. At the grave please have Emma sing Con Te Partiro by Andrea Bocelli and In the Arms of an Angel. Always and Forever Your Soul Mate,
Katie*

She left scribbled notes by her bedside listing a list of duties for the funeral undertakers. Her final visit was to the family solicitor Richard Dennehy, he recorded her will. She deposited the manual on DVD format to the family solicitor. She does not shed one tear in front of Ronan or the kids but in the dark of night in the hospice she cries herself to sleep as the pain of saying goodbye to her babies is too hard and the kids are too young to understand the finality of death. She had a series of hospice nurses call but her appointed cancer nurse was Mary and she administered morphine injections. Adam called her Scary Mary as she was the angel of death. She was assertive and professional and had the makings of a matron. In her defense Mary had great nature and was very patient and helpful to Katie. She never patronized or lied to her and administered pain relief and advice professionally. Katie was very

fond of her.

Katie had a lot to do she was dying. She must prepare her kids and husband Ronan for her pending death. She was dignified and bore her prognosis with courage. She was the strong one in the marriage and Katie always looked out for Ronan. After months she began to get weaker and needed to attend the hospital more frequently for blood transfusions and she spent periods in the hospice to stabilize her health and then she would go home again. She would get sick get a bit better but as the twelve months came to a close soon the daily morphine injections would not be strong enough. Her nurse Mary told her the time had come to enter the hospice full time as she needed stronger medicine through an iv which was available only in the hospice. She told her she would have no pain and the doctors and nurses would help the family after she passed away. By now she was bedridden she could not read or eat or watch television. She had no quality of life. She had bed-sores and was in constant pain. She had difficulty in keeping fluids down and swallowing. She was ready to die.

She booked her bed and asked Mary to go ahead to the hospice while she said goodbye to her family and kids. Mary arranged to send an ambulance to bring her to the hospice later that evening. Ronan was called home from work and she said goodbye to him alone. She begged him not to mourn her death but celebrate the life they had together and honor their secret pact to rear their kids. She then sent him for her two sisters Emma and Sarah and her father Adam. They all sobbed privately and said goodbye to her and left as the kids Seamus, Sean and Sophie came in for school to allow them some private time with their mum. She asked the kids to sit on the bed and told them she had to go to Heaven to be an angel for God but she would be a star in the sky twinkling at them always. She told them she would never forget them and watch over them from Heaven and protect them from danger. They sobbed bitter tears begging her not to die. Ronan called aunt Emma to mind them as he travelled in the ambulance to the hospice with her. The kids were screaming crying trying to hold on to her bed jacket asking her to stay telling her they needed their mum. They begged her to ask God to seek another angel. Mum was always at home minding them she had a job on earth. She was their angel on earth minding them. She put on a brave face for the kids and waved goodbye to them.

She could not walk and was as weak as water. She pretended to the kids she was excited she was going on a divine adventure to meet nana Grace and God. She had to be brought out in a stretcher and she was drifting in and out of consciousness. Aunt Emma and the children waved goodbye. From the ambulance she could see the kids screaming and crying running after the ambulance screaming "mum come back. Well be good. Please ask God to leave you with us. We love you more than anything." Emma brought them into the house. It hurt Katie to see what this terrible cancer did to her family. Her kids and husband were suffering as much as

her. In the ambulance she cried as she left her family, her homestead and her dream home, her life never to return again. The curtains were coming down and death was around the corner. Ronan held her hand and told her he loved her again and again. She held his hand and smiled at him. She knew he was telling the truth. She warned him not to cry, she wanted no tears. She had accepted God's will and he needed to be strong for the kids.

In hospital she was shown to her own room in the hospice. The doctors put on pure morphine and a drip to keep her alive. They warned Ronan she could die any time soon. She remained very ill drifting in and out of consciousness for three weeks until she went to sleep and didn't wake up. It was agony for the kids and Ronan praying by her bed every day and when she died it was a relief. Her suffering had ended. Emma and Ronan were by her side when she passed away at 4 am in the morning. She had flat lined and the alarms sounded. Suddenly she lifted her body and smiled and said "Goodbye my friends. It is time to leave you. I see a tunnel of light a warm channel of attractive light calling me. I see Grace in the distant floating with her arms opening saying it is my time to pass on." With that she closed her eyes and never reopened them. The room was dark and silent and one could hear a pin drop. Suddenly a bright yellow thunderbolt of light left Katie's body and drifted up towards the sky. Her soul and spirit had departed earth. There was totally shock in the room. Ronan however, cried and cried until he had no more tears left. A doctor came and gave him a sedative. The kids came late with Adam and Emma were grateful they didn't witness their mum's passing.

Ronan and the kids are devastated after her death, the twelve months did not prepare them for the final goodbye, nothing could the shock was too great. On the rosary night it was very tough and painful for Ronan and Emma to see the lid been put on the coffin and the final burial day the lowering of the coffin in the ground was so sad and the thud of the earth of the coffin was so loud and real and echoed in Ronan's ears as was the deafening sound of silence afterwards. At the mass Ronan, Emma and Adam gave a Eulogy for Katie.

At the graveside Emma sang In The Arms of an Angel and Con Te Partiro as was Katie's request. Suddenly the roaring wind stopped unexplainably. Ronan was very lonely and Katie as a ghost watched her funeral with mixed emotions. She felt sad at leaving her family but happy that he gave her a beautiful and fitting farewell. She blew a warm breeze on his face and rustled his hair and embraced him in a warm haze and he felt her non-threatening presence. She looked down and saw his face stained with tears, nobody could reach him in his grief but she could. He saw her and blew her a kiss goodbye. She flew down in a haze in a white dress with wings and whispered into his ear "please don't cry I am in a better place. Marriage is forever. Love and life is forever. My body died but my soul lives on for eternity". Nobody could hear or see Katie the ghost. Ronan had become a ghost whisperer but he hadn't realized it yet that was to come later. The rain stopped suddenly and the grey sky cleared into a bright blue color and a glowing warm orange sun appeared to show her appreciation. A perfect blue sky remained on the dark winter's day until after the ceremony and the hailstone and rain commenced again and the dark sky reappeared as the funeral car drove away.