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To Ricky

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-TO RICKY-

Written by Rijamekee T. Veii

To Ricky is dedicated to everyone who's run out
of time

Chapter one

"...you have about five months left. It could be longer, that's only by chance. Our biggest fear is that your time could be less. The cancer cells are multiplying at an alarming rate. If there was anything more I could do..." Doctor Phillips took a deep sigh after saying that. He looked at Rachel, waiting for her to say something. Rachel didn't say anything. Her lips felt dry and she had reached into her purse to get some lip-gloss. She didn't know what to say. This was the last thing she expected to hear, the last thing anyone expects to hear. She didn't know how long it would take for the shock to settle in. Kelly. Her name kept playing over in Rachel's head when she finally felt a tear roll down her cheek. Doctor Phillips grabbed a tissue and passed it to her. He thought it better not to say anything. What could he or anyone say to make her feel better? The deafening silence lasted for a few minutes after he decided to say something. "You'll get the medication at the front desk. Those pills work wonders for headaches and...um...stomach flu. Please inform me if they aren't."

Rachel couldn't say anything, what good would it be. Her fate had been decided. Her throat felt dry.

She put her lip-gloss back in her purse and stood up to leave. Kelly must've been waiting for a while now, Rachel knew how restless she got in waiting rooms.

When Rachel got to the waiting room, Kelly was being her usual self. Telling all the other kids about a really cool story she had read a while ago. Everyone seemed to be on the edge of their seats with excitement.

Rachel went to the front desk to get her medication. The secretary gave her the most rehearsed smile she had ever seen, like something out of an American toothpaste commercial from the nineties. Rachel graciously smiled back and motioned for Kelly to come with her. She thought it best not to tell her anything, not just yet.

Once they got home Kelly ran to the lounge, her favorite cartoon was on and it seemed she hadn't received any homework for that afternoon.

"Keep the volume down will you?" yelled Rachel as she went up the stairs.

"Sure Mum!" Kelly replied once she got there.

Rachel didn't know who she'd tell first. Her parents were in France and she had no idea when they'd be back. Her younger sister Hayden was probably at the mall and her friend Marcia was probably still at work.

She didn't seem to know who to tell or what to say, she didn't really know if she wanted to admit it to herself.

Rachel went to her room and found her diary on her bed. She couldn't remember the last time that she had written in it so she picked it up and decided to go through it. Somehow she felt she was a different person from when she had written those entries so long ago. Most of the entries were about the books she had read, Friday's at the park with Kelly and Eric. Eric was her little brother and almost every second entry was about a prank he played or a new joke he told her. She wondered how he would take the news.

Rachel found a note on the last page, an old piece of paper. She didn't remember how it got there, but it had a name on it as well as an address. She read the name *Adrian Abenzio Moretti*, Rachel didn't remember ever hearing that name before and it was attached to what seemed like an Italian address.

Maybe she had forgotten who that was, the paper seemed old. She tore a page from her diary and decided to write Adrian a letter. She didn't know how she was going to introduce herself, she hadn't written anyone a letter since high school, and that was a long time ago. She decided she would write that letter. She needed to talk to someone, even if he was just an address she had come across.

Dear Adrian...she wrote. She scratched that out; she didn't want to sound weird since they hardly knew each other. She giggled at the thought and tore another page from her diary.

To Adrian

I don't know how to start. I really need to talk to someone and I happened to stumble across your address. I don't really know you and I'm guessing you don't know me.

She looked at the page, not knowing what to say next. She decided to say exactly what she needed to, ignoring civility and humility for the first time in her life it seemed.

My name is Rachel, I would prefer to use my alias 'Ricky'.

I got some really bad news today; turns out I'm going to die in a bit. I haven't really told anyone but you. I don't really know how to break the news, especially now that I finally got my dream job. Was planning on traveling next year, seems to be the only thing I really wanted to do.

Went to Hawaii once, adopted a child while I was there. I named her Kelly, prettiest little thing. Loved that country but I was only there for a week though. Tell me what was the most impulsive thing you have ever done. Guess I'm pretty Impulsive myself, didn't expect it all to end this soon.

Write back

Rachel leaned over the drawer and grabbed an envelope. She noticed it was yellow and tossed it aside.

'Who uses yellow envelopes?' She thought to herself as she reached over to grab a blue envelope instead. 'Not exactly a brighter concept, but blue will do'

She put the letter in the envelope, sealed it and wrote his address on it.

She was really going to do it...

Chapter two

Adrian didn't bother to put off the stove once he was done cooking the spaghetti and had put the pot on top of his fridge. He was really exhausted, it had been a long day at the office. At times like these all he wanted to do was lie down and think. He still couldn't get the letter he had received out of his head. He didn't know who this Rachel could've been. His friend Devin told him about a Namibian girl named Rachel once, but that was quite a while ago. He'd only been in Namibia for a month, Hardly enough time to get to know anyone well enough. He thought it was all a big joke that Eudora could have played on him. After all, she was the only Namibian girl he knew. He thought he would play along.

To Rachel, I take it you'd prefer to be called Ricky. You mentioned that you were going to die in a while. Not sure what's going to kill you, I think you forgot to tell me that. I really don't know how you got my address.

Adrian stopped writing. It all started making sense. He remembered Eudora telling him that she gave his address to a girl she knew, Ricky must be that girl.

Come to think of it, you probably got my address from

Eudora. She never told me much about you. So you adopted a baby in Hawaii, sounds interesting to say the least.

I think the most impulsive thing I've ever done was go blonde in middle school. I blame it on the hippie craze of the early 90's. My friends make sure I never live that down.

You could write back, but that's completely optional

He sealed the letter in order to post it the next day. He got up and walked over to the mirror to fix his hair. Isabella said she'd be there by eight. Adrian checked his watch to confirm that she was late.

Eudora had come by Rachel's place. Rachel told her about the letter and she smiled. Eudora had sneaked his address into Rachel's diary a few weeks ago. She had planned to hook them up since he would be coming to Namibia in a few months.

Rachel knew she had to tell her family about the Cancer, she wouldn't want them finding out the wrong way. She decided that tonight she was going to do it. Her parents had just come back from France and they were going to have a barbeque. Everyone was going to be there and she knew that she probably wouldn't get

another chance.

They got to the party a bit late and just as she had expected, everyone was there.

"Glad you could make it honey." Whispered her mom.

She sent Kelly to play with the other kids at the pool. Her friend Umuna was there as well.

Almost everyone was glad to see her as she took a seat next to her brother.

"Rachel, this is Julia. I think you met last year at my birthday party." Eric said as he introduced his girlfriend.

Rachel smiled at Julia, who gave her the most exaggerated grin imaginable.

This seemed to be the opportune moment to tell them.

"I'm not sure you've all heard the joke about the broken engine..." began her father as he told the oldest joke in the family. Everyone had heard that joke about a hundred times before but they all laughed out of politeness it seemed.

The table got quiet again and Rachel cleared her throat as she began what would be the most difficult sentence she ever had to say.

"I presume you all know I got the job at the firm." She said, trying to put the words together in her mind. Everyone applauded almost instinctively.

"I knew you would get it sis." Yelled Hayden from the far corner of the table

"That's not exactly what I wanted to say." She took another sip from her glass as the table grew quiet again

"I went to see the doctor about those headaches I've been having. Turns out I have brain cancer." It was quiet except for the noise coming from the pool.

"Turns out it's terminal." She added.

The silence became more deafening. Umuna thought she would say something, but audibly cleared her throat instead.

Eric decided to break the silence.

"When did you get the news, have you started with the chemo yet?"

"Yes I have, Doctor Phillips said the cancer cells were detected too late." she faintly replied.

She was almost shivering by now.

She felt the cold air on her face as a tear rolled down her cheek. Her mother put her hand over her mouth and Hayden ran to hug her.

It was going to be a long night.

Chapter three

Weeks had passed and Rachel was losing weight at an alarming rate. Kelly was being very helpful around the house and Hayden visited more often. Eric got into a lot more fights at school as well. Rachel almost wished she had never told them.

Rachel still hadn't decided whether she would write back. She hadn't written to Adrian in a while and she felt that she needed to, he did write back after all.

She tore another page out of her diary and began writing.

To Adrian

It's me again, Ricky. I don't know why it took me so long to write back. Eudora told me you were coming to Namibia in a while.

So I wasn't really specific in my last letter, I've got cancer. A lot has happened since I told everyone. The cancer is really eating at me in more ways than one.

It was great of you to write back, I was hoping you would. I also did my hair blonde in high school. I thought it looked great, till it all broke off the next week.

I have difficulty sleeping sometimes. My dreams depress me. Don't we always think death would be the easiest thing? Cancer feels like an appointment with death. I hate the way it makes me feel so powerless.

This might sound strange but for the first time in my life I feel mortal. Don't we all feel immortal? Like death happens to everyone but us.

If anything, my cancer made me think more about the other side. What makes you think about the other side?

Write back

Rachel folded the paper and put it in her purse. She was going to mail it later. She stood up and walked towards the mirror. She looked at her frail figure and pulled the loose hair out of her head. It made her think of her life, her impending death. It made her think about God, about Jesus and the cross.

She hadn't talked to God in a long time. She couldn't believe it but she hardly remembered the last time she prayed. Rachel knew she had to talk to God, she just didn't know what to say. She kneeled to pray.

Heavenly Father

I know I haven't talked to you in a while, I don't know where we lost touch.

I need your help Father, to deal with this. Give me courage Lord, and your grace.

Rachel's voice was shivering. She took a heavy sigh and continued.

**Hear me Lord, I plead. Lord Jesus, remember me and not my sins. Forgive me, forgive me. In Jesus name I pray
Amen**

Rachel looked up to the ceiling and smiled, she couldn't explain the peace she felt even to herself. She opened her eyes and knew her prayer was heard.

"You've got mail, certain Rachel carver. I take it you finally broke up with Isabella." Said Adrian's secretary as she walked into his office. Adrian looked up from his desk and smiled. "Please tell Beniamina to bring me coffee on your way out." He replied, opening the letter. She flashed him a cheeky grin as she turned around to leave. Adrian walked over to the door and closed it. He started reading the letter as he walked back to his desk. After reading it, He decided to write back.

He grabbed a paper and pen, stopped to think, and started writing.

*To Ricky
You didn't tell me how old you were. Then again, it doesn't really matter.*

Adrian stood up and walked to the window, he thought long and hard about what he was going to say next. He walked back to the desk after a while and picked up his pen.

What you wrote really made me think about life, death, God. The other side does seem more real when you've got an appointment with death I guess. I never saw cancer as an appointment with death till I read your letter. I guess I don't define these things or ever really think about them.

Adrian stopped writing to think. He didn't know what to say next, he'd never been put in such a position.

I don't really see death as something that happens to everyone else, I see it as something we all try to elude. You know, everything we do is to stay alive. That's why we work or study, right?

Adrian giggled and continued to write.

By the way, my name is actually Adriano but Eudora calls me Adrian and now you too. I don't really know what makes me think about the other side, Heaven or hell.

*Tell me more about yourself
Write back*

Adrian put the pen down and leaned back in his chair to think about the letter. He started asking himself questions he had never before asked. His thoughts were interrupted when Beniamina came in with the coffee

It was getting more difficult for Rachel to get out of bed. She had received Adrian's letter but hadn't written back yet. The chemo was a nightmare for by now she was almost bald and had grown deathly thin. Her father thought she should fly to Houston for treatment but her doctors didn't think traveling was such a good idea.

Kelly would bake her cup cakes almost everyday and Hayden would skip school at times to help her around the house. She decided to write back to Adrian eventually, she had to find the strength.

She tore another page from her diary and weakly began to write.

To Adrian

I'm still alive. Don't mind my sloppy handwriting. It's getting harder for me to use my arms [or legs for that matter].

Next week's my birthday. A few months ago I never thought I'd live to see my 25th birthday.

She stopped writing to laugh at the thought. She hadn't noticed it but she was crying too, soft tears that almost didn't feel like her own.

I feel like I weigh a thousand tons. It seems to be all that occupies my thoughts these days. I don't mean to depress you. Enough about that, why don't you tell me something you bet I don't know. Don't have much fun facts to share, unless terminal cancer sounds interesting.

She laughed even harder as the tears ran down her face more violently.

I guess I miss the days I loved being me. I remember myself so many years back. The moment I graduated from high school, I was off to America with my friends. We had this idea that we would make it big in Hollywood, ha.

That never happened though, we ended up spending a year auditioning for millions of roles we never got. After that year I was off to law school in S.A. I was done last year so I decided to practice back home in Namibia this year. You know the rest by now I'm sure.

She grabbed a pillow to lean against. She was overwhelmed with fatigue but she wouldn't let herself sleep. She had to write that letter. She didn't want to admit it to herself but it could have well been the last letter she would ever write him. She forcefully picked herself up and fixed her glasses.

I was engaged to be married once. My fiancé went to the mall to get the groceries, I was reading a novel that day.

Rachel stopped writing; the pain of that day was coming back to her like a cold breath of air. She didn't want to remember that day, she promised herself she wouldn't.

*He never came home. He was caught in a drive by shoot out and you can imagine the rest I'm sure. I pray a lot more than I ever did. I guess I want to know what will be next, don't really need any more surprises.
Write back*

She placed the letter in an envelope and wrote his address on it. Hayden had promised to mail it that afternoon.

Chapter four

It was a few days later when Adrian got Rachel's letter. He was almost excited to open it. He read it and laughed when he read the part about her Hollywood dream. His heart felt heavier when he read the rest. Once he was done reading the letter he leaned back on his couch staring at the portrait on the wall. The painting of a butterfly with a broken wing, he remembered painting it in high school. He stared at it and thought it would be the best gift he could give Ricky on her 25th. He was going to Namibia for a meeting in a while. He thought that would be the opportune moment to meet her. He grabbed a book from the table and tore a page from it. He found a black pen in his suitcase and began to write.

To Ricky

Congratulations on turning 25 this week. I remember turning 25 a few years back. I don't know about you but I felt old that year.

I wish I had half as much fun as you did after high school but I was straight off to college. I'm sorry about what happened to your fiancé. It must be hard losing someone that close to you so violently. I can't say I know what it feels like.

Apparently a bird chews with its stomach, that's something I bet you didn't know. Something I wish I didn't know though, ha-ha

I started praying a lot more once I realized I had so much to pray about. You're letters really changed me in more ways than one.

Write back

Adrian folded the letter and put it in his case. This time he would deliver it by hand.

Rachel woke up that morning with a shock. She felt that the alarm sounded a bit louder that morning. She looked at the calendar and softly smiled. Today she would be 25, she would finally wear the purple dress her fiancé had brought her but never got the chance to give her. She had found it amongst his belongings in a red box. He had probably planned to give it to her later that day that he never returned home. She stood up and walked to the mirror on the wall. Pulling her hand through her hair, she watched in utter shock as another lump of hair broke off in her hand. She looked at her hand for what seemed like an hour and then looked back at her reflection.

This was her birthday and nothing was going to ruin it for her.

Kelly and Hayden came home with a lot of excitement. They had planned to surprise Rachel that day and were at the restaurant preparing it all as soon as school was out. Eric and her father had gone to pick her up later that afternoon. Her mother would await her arrival at the restaurant. "C'mon Ricky, you don't want to be late!" yelled Eric from the hall.

"On my way" Replied Rachel in a soft almost shriveled voice.

"Right, I'm starting the car" Said her father as he was leaving through the door. He somehow wanted to run from the sight of his daughter in her final days.

Rachel grabbed her purse and headed downstairs. She tried to be careful on the stairway but eventually took off her heels and carried them all the way down. She saw Eric in the hall wearing what looked like a shirt that he had spent days ironing. He smiled when he saw her.

"So, what do you think kid?" she asked as she slipped her shoes back on. "You look like a star sis" replied Eric. He reached out his arm to escort her to the car.

She faintly smiled as they walked to the car in what seemed like an eternity.

Somehow, every step she took felt like a leap, she had almost lost all strength in her bones.

As they got into the car Rachel felt a great dizziness she couldn't understand.

"Ricky! Are you ok?" she heard her brother yell.

"Lets get her in the car, I'll call Doctor Phillips!!" she could barely hear her Father's voice but somehow made out the words.

She saw her brother crying but couldn't hear what he was saying anymore, it seemed as if he was yelling.

Rachel closed her eyes and felt almost nothing as they rushed her into the hospital. Doctor Phillips ran to meet them. They put her on the stretcher and rushed her into the emergency room.

A long while later Doctor Phillips came out from the emergency room. He looked faintly around the room. Kelly had fallen asleep in Hayden's lap by now. He turned to face her mother but the look on his face was more than anything he could say. For a quiet moment everyone had come to understand one thing, Ricky was dead.

Chapter five

Adrian woke up just as the plane was about to land. He was a bit surprised when he didn't find Eudora waiting for him at the terminal.

He got his luggage, sat down on one of the benches and waited for her. She soon arrived with a friend. "Benvenuto Adriano!" yelled Eudora as she ran to hug him.

"Ciao Eudora, glad to see you" he said as he embraced her. "This is my friend Hendrick" she said introducing the tall man besides her.

"Hi Henry" He said and they broke out laughing. "What are you laughing about?" he shyly asked. "Forget it kid, let's get out of here" Eudora replied as they made their way to the car.

Adrian couldn't get the thought of finally meeting Ricky out of his head. He had thought of so many things he wanted to say to her. Once they got to the apartment and Hendrick had left Adrian thought he'd ask about Ricky.

"So, where's Ricky? I have something to give her" He said as he looked for the letter he had written her.

Eudora grew quiet, almost as if her breath was knocked out of her. She didn't know what to say to him or how to tell him what had happened.

Adrian looked through the door at Eudora, she seemed almost lifeless.

"What's wrong" he whispered as he walked over to her. The moment was interrupted by a loud knock on the door. "I brought the sweater you asked for!" yelled the voice as Eudora went to open the door. "Thanks Hayden" she replied tearfully as she opened the door.

"Why are you crying?" asked Hayden and she turned and saw Adrian in the lounge. "This is Adrian, my friend from Italy" Eudora replied, ignoring her tears. Hayden remembered him as the man who had written his sister letters before she died. "Yes, I think I know him" she said quietly.

Adrian was slightly shocked at what was going on but decided to ask about Ricky again.

"Hi, My Name is Adriano, or Adrian if you would like. I would like to meet Rachel if I may" he said a bit louder.

Hayden struggled to contain her tears and took a deep sigh. "You want to see Ricky? I'll take you to Ricky, follow me" she said as she turned towards the stairs.

Adrian followed her as he quickly forced the letter into his pocket.

Eudora threw her hand over her mouth and watched as Adrian followed Hayden. They walked in silence to the car and once they got there Adrian ran over to Hayden.

"Can you please tell me what is going on, I just wanted to know where Rachel was" he said almost out of breath.

Hayden looked at Adrian almost angrily and turned around to open the door to the car. She didn't say anything but waited for Adrian to get into the car. They drove in silence for a while. Hayden parked the car and motioned for Adrian to follow her. They walked through a wide gate to what seemed like a cemetery. Adrian looked around and understood it all. They walked to a gravestone that looked very polished and new. "You want to see Ricky? There she is!" yelled Hayden, her voice shaking and tears streaming down her face.

It was the first time he noticed her crying but what was a bigger shock was the tragedy of that moment. Adrian took a while to grasp the situation, he remembered Rachel writing about her cancer. He just never imagined he would be that late.

He turned to her grave stone and read her name.

Rachel Vivienne Carver
1987-2012

He kneeled down and leaned on her grave stone. He saw his tear falling on a bouquet of freshly picked flowers.

He closed his eyes as he felt all the excitement of finally getting to meet Ricky die out. He wiped his face and stood up. Hayden looked at him, not sure what to say.

He looked at her and then into the distance. As he put his hand into his pocket he felt the letter he had written and pulled it out. He looked at it, then put it on her gravestone and softly whispered.

"To Ricky"

Proof

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