

APPLE JUICE

DIARY OF A CAREGIVER



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What is this about?

If someone you loved must move on, the heaven don't get back the memories you created together. This is a diary I wrote in the time one of my closest friends got the diagnoses of cancer and accompanied her during this time till she moved on. That makes me a caregiver, someone who give physical and emotional care to find strength in this difficult times. This lines are written down for my own mental health and that others have the chance to see through the eyes of a caregiver, something that is hard to put in words. It were the hardest 13 days of my life.

Foreword

Thank you for opening my diary. A good book doesn't spoil the ending, but this isn't a book to entertain, this is my diary and I will be honest with you, it doesn't have a happy ending. I kindly ask you to put it back on the shelf, if you feel not ready to accept that there will be no miracle at the end, neither will a hero show up and save the day. This is a report of my emotions, the things I saw and witnessed during the last part of a beautiful path I shared with a wonderful person. I wrote all down with to the best of my knowledge and belief. I do not promise any kind of story like in hollywood, I do not promise a literary masterpiece, I do not promise to not repeat myself, I do not promise any laugh, smile, tear or cry. All I offer is my tale.

You have been warned.

If you can accept this, I invite you now with me to stroll in the halls of my memories, discover the way that lays behind me, dive into my emotional world and look through my eyes.

Why am I writing this?

“This isn't my first rodeo.” In my family cancer is a big thing, I lost in the last 2 years 3 family members to cancer, one aunt, two uncles. My family is huge, so I don't claim to know everyone or am close to everyone.

For this reason I'm supporting Relay for Life and The Cancer Society so far it is in my abilities.

Though, this is the first time I am along with two other lovely people, a “main” Caregiver and being in an active role to support someone who has emotionally grown on me.

I'm writing this down, to process what I experience, reflect my own feelings, writing things inside me I can't share at this point or just wish to write down to not forget.

I'm doing this for my own mental well being.

Who is my friend?

Chisato “Evelyn” Beans is a 23 years young Canadian woman with, for her age, a long history of health problems. At the point that I'm writing this she got the diagnosis of colon cancer. Her favorite drink is apple juice.

Who am I?

My Name is Akiko Yoshikawa Qinan. I'm one of her closest friends at this point, we met over 2 years ago and since then our friendship knew only one way, getting closer and growing bigger.

What is Second Life?

Throughout the Media Second Life is known for various reasons. Second Life is a Simulation of a virtual world that is so 95% created and populated by the Users. Many people think of it as a game and I understand that people see it in this way, it is hard to describe what Second Life really is.

I think you can ask 10 different people and you would get 10 different answers of what it is. So I do not claim to have a general explanation about it and will just give my opinion.

Second Life is a world where you can be whoever you want. Me, I'm a little girl, 12 years old, with a cute cat tail and a wardrobe that most models would get jealous of. That I'm obviously neither a little girl, or 12 years old or having a cat tail in front of my computer is more than obvious.

As well you can do whatever you want, create 3D objects, decorations, clothing, gadgets or funny things, load them up, sell them for a virtual currency, called Linden Dollars and if you are successful trade them into hard dollars. You can go to places to listen to live singers or musicians, learn a language in virtual classes, meet interesting people, or play some games that other

residents developed. Your possibilities are limited to your own imagination. No Quests, no path you can follow, it is up to you what you make out of it what you will, you alone.

Second Life is maintained and monitored by “Linden Labs”, the company behind it.

Second Life has its own dynamic, compared to the Real Life. I learned, people show with their avatars their real inside, who they are, people think a virtual world would be just another layer of masks hidden in anonymity, I tell you, it is exactly the opposite. There are the black sheeps, no question, but most people I’ve met over my almost 13 years in this world were very genuine and you will be amazed what you can learn about yourself, if you allow yourself time in this world.

Like Social Media, Games and many other things, it has of course a high addiction potential and I have seen people get dragged too deep inside.

For myself, I met and visited a lot of amazing people who still today I can call friends, the border of virtual and real world is not existent and at its best a thin fog.

My Second Life is about living out my inner self, here it doesn't matter what I do, so long as I can be myself.

You see, Second Life is not easy to put in words. If you need a short summary, so Second Life is what the name says, a Second Life.

What is Fantasy Faire?

It is simply one of the biggest events within Second Life. It stretches over 900.000qm², hundreds of creators, performers, live singers and artists gather together in different themed areas to collect donations for the fight against cancer.

But it doesn't end there, the people who work everywhere on it, the sellers, the support staff, all volunteers, everyone know only passion and love for everyone. There is no hate between everyone, in this, for me a magical time, all the little problems of daily life are not there. I am always excited when the Fantasy Faire opens their gates and we can once more celebrate life and fight cancer in one wonderful harmonic melody. This year, my Fantasy Faire is dedicated to Evelyn.

February 27th 2020

The official announcement

I'm reading her blog post, things I already knew since a while before everyone else, it is official, a colonoscopy confirmed it, colon cancer.

Memories of my uncle Michael flare up, I loved him, he was a humble man who didn't ask much from life besides good food on the table. He fought till the end. I smile with the thought that he could fall asleep in peace surrounded by his lovely wife and his sister.

My personal quote is terrible, till now I know only one person who won the fight against cancer.

I take a deep breath, at this point I've started to already have less sleep than I usually get, but nothing I can't compensate for.

It all looks like it is cancer in the first stage, so a surgery should do the trick. This is scheduled Tuesday, March 3rd at 9:30 am PST. But we can only know for sure after they open her up.

Evy is tired of endless hospital and pain already at this point, it has been 5 weeks now that she has struggled with stomach problems.

When we met, she told me open and honest about her general health issues, that maybe her time with us is limited between 2 and 5 years. On top of it now this.

I'm not shocked, I'm surprisingly calm, for a while I've had this suspicion but I admit, I didn't want to see it and as the doctors were already investigating what was going on, I decided not to mention my opinion, no need to give unnecessary panic.

So tough and self confident Evy appears at times, I know the last years have worn her out and she needs people to lift her spirits. Her boyfriend Matt is a great support, I'm smiling, thinking of them together, they are so different yet, I can't imagine two people who fit better together.

I feel responsible for her so, I will be the one that she can throw all her feelings on, that is what I want, being there for her.

February 28th 2020

The stone starts to roll

Evy just went to sleep a bit.

I spent the rest of the day yesterday learning about colon cancer, healing chances, therapy methods, I contacted people I know from the American Cancer Society and Relay for Life. They are great and provide me with a lot of information and contacts. Olde I know from the Fantasy Faire, the highlight of my year together with Kadaj*1. He introduced me to Sandie, a wonderful woman who shows an amazing enthusiasm of helping other people.

I provided the numbers and facts to Evy, so she could understand that the chances are there and that the way will be not an easy one.

In my head, it depends all on if the cancer has spread or not and it looks all like it is just stage 1. I share this positive view with everyone and selected carefully my words to not give the impression that I'm worried.

There is a voice deep in my gut telling me something else. This voice screaming at me, yelling "You see the signs dumbass! Don't look away! You know the truth, don't be stupid!"

All that I've learned in the last few hours about this type of cancer, reports of survivors and victims, my own experience with cancer in my family, I expect the worst. To be fair, it is my nature, I always found to hope for the best and expect the worst, is the best way to approach things, maybe I'm tricking myself?

*1: Kadaj is my father in Second Life and one of my best friends, if not the best friend in Real Life.

February 29th 2020

A quiet day

Evy and I goofed around a bit. Of course, we had talks about the upcoming surgery, but the day was dominated by fun and laughing. She laid down now, pain wore her out and painkillers made her sleepy.

I went shopping today for clothing for my brother's upcoming wedding. As his witness I'm supposed to look good, so much money spent, I dislike to spend money on clothing and I will likely wear this only one time in my life. And so much to do still, it's in 3 weeks!

I could rest tonight. My inner voice keeps lurking around and whispering terrible things in my ears.

I report daily to Olde*2 and Sandie*3 about any news from now on.

Kadaj shows confidence that all will run well with Evy, he is a man proven by life, if he says

something, he means it. This doesn't mean I don't see his doubts, for that we've known each other too long and too well.

*2: Fellow Relay for Life Volunteer

*3: Supporter for Cancer Caregiver

March 1st 2020

The storm can be seen on the horizon

I think the information about what is going on has reached every corner. Everywhere people pop up, asking about Evy, sending her best wishes or asking me to forward them, I don't want to know how it must look on Evy's phone display. I attended a little party, just to listen to music while I'm doing my things, but people kept asking about her. I understand slowly that I must not only be here for her, but also for everyone else who is not that close.

My inner voice started to scream louder, that led me to request a song from the DJ for Evy. Later when the DJ announced it it made her cry.

Poets of the Fall – Dancing on Broken Glass

Best approach I figured out for Evy is this; I talk with her about the Daily happenings, let her know how my life is going, the small things become so important now. I don't mention this inner voice to her, but told her my plan for Kadaj, he has a birthday tomorrow, as she is focused on other things I told her I'll take care to give him a gift in

her name. She showed me clearly gratitude that I keep this little “daily to-do things” running for her.

It is one of the days I feel how good I have it, loving family, good job, nice apartment, a handful but true friends and being healthy.

I still got enough sleep, less than last night, but still enough.

March 2nd 2020

One day before surgery

Today is Kadaj's birthday, a good day. Talli*4 of course forgot about it, so I took care that there is a gift in her name as well for him.

My packet is sadly delayed, I guess because of this Covid19 thing going on.

He had good spirits, I enjoyed seeing him less tense, it has become rare these days as he is constantly super busy and overloaded with work.

Evy gave me some instructions on how I should handle information, who will be informed by who, what should be said and what not and when.

At one point she expressed being ashamed of puking up so much at the moment and having literally no control over her body functions, especially in front of Matt.

Pictures of my cat jumped into my mind while she was writing it, we chatted a lot while I got my daily business done.

My Cat "Sir Banzai who ate the Bonsai of Kitty the Cat" or Banzai for short, passed away November 21th 2019. I had him for over 5 years from a shelter. On one of his bad days he tried to climb in his litter

box, couldn't hold the balance, falled down in front of it, peed all over himself and couldn't stand up by himself.

Sitting there in his own pee, looking at me, asking for help with his eyes, it broke my heart. I loved him to every little piece and still miss him a lot. There is no day passing I think at least one time on him.

Now Evy is telling me these things and I see my cat in front of my eyes, I very much understand her feelings. I had a very hard time finding the right words to comfort her, but here I found the best approach putting myself in Matt's position, I wouldn't mind at all.

As she went to sleep and it became silent around me, I couldn't hear this voice inside me, at least that.

*4: Talli is my sister in heart and a dear friend.

March 3rd 2020

Day of the surgery

I didn't expect to talk with Evy again today, but I'm happy to have a little talk with her before going to the hospital. All is prepared, all papers are filled.

She is nervous, but today my chili plants have started to show sproutlings. I sent her pictures of it and she was astounded. I see it as a sign that she has support from upstairs. She agreed with me.

I prepared my waiting time, soda, a cartoon series on DVD, some junk food, and I'm ready to make the waiting time as comfortable as possible. Matt promised to inform me the moment he gets news and she is out of the operating room.

Yesterday I had a long talk with another friend. I will not write down her name for various reasons, but she is not feeling well and is having a hard time herself at the moment. It is something sadly I couldn't need right now, but I felt she needed someone to talk to, so we did, long. I'm very exhausted from it, but still it was the right thing to do.

I only shared with Talli my concerns, the inner voice that keeps yelling at me. I had to tell

someone, she stated that it makes her super nervous, because I have in the past always had an unnatural accuracy at predicting things. I shouldn't share my feelings with others, it makes them feel bad at times, I should be the strong one.

March 4nd 2020

My gut was right

My activity was this, even if I tried partly to close my eyes I end up staring at my phone. My phone has an LED, blinking in different colors if I get a message. As it is always silent and no vibration I´m dependent on a visual signal. Red light for whatsapp messages, green for Second Life and Blue for Discord. On the blue one I was waiting and after another try to rest I opened my eyes, I saw the blue light, blinking, telling me the news was here.

Stage 4, spread, the surgery was abandoned.

I got the message late in the night and brought the machinery rolling to inform everyone as Evy instructed me. To my surprise someone else was informed as well by Matt, who spread the world already in one part of Evy´s surroundings. I´m very grateful about it, that makes it a bit less work for me.

I stuck to the facts and little information I got, tried not to make the people panic or be too insensitive.

The voice inside me is now fully unleashed, it laughs at me, screams and yells at me, mocking

me, while my brain tried to stay focused and be there for the people around Evy, many need to talk, many have questions, many don't want to be alone with their pain right now.

I briefly informed Olde and Sandie as well. Who to my surprise focused more on my well being, how is that now important?!

I didn't sleep tonight and I start to feel the long hours of being awake already, but I want to be there now for Evy, I must be there for her now.

My heart is itching and somehow weird shaking, not like beating fast, more like its cold and your muscles start to shake because of it. A very uncomfortable, almost painful feeling.

March 5th 2020

That was unnecessary

I talked with Evy after she woke up, I kept maintaining my supportive role to her, not showing surprise or my inner screaming. Unlike others, I don't play the false hope monkey.

She filled me in with all the details, it was an absolut death sentence. They gave her 6 weeks.

At first, she didn't want any chemo for various reasons, even though the doctors suggested it. I explained my point of view, that both decisions are correct, for the reasons they have. It was hard for me to maintain this neutral point of view, my inner voice is having fun mocking me with my own wish about what she should do and try, everything I express it.

Kadaj didn't get what my preference is out of my words to her, that means I had success with covering it. Later she told me, she will try chemo, not to turn the page, but that she can still get a liquid diet, especially apple juice, and maybe extend her time with us a bit more.

My smile stayed inside me, I know, she can't win this fight, this ship has sailed. My wish is that if

she has to go, she should go fast after all is done she wanted to do, without more pain and suffering, she's had her fair share.

It was easy to understand for me, this decision is just for comfort and life quality, not for fighting the cancer. She gave me the impression most people didn't get that.

I asked her to not worry about me and focus alone on herself, no need that myself or others should put their own emotions on her, she has to deal with enough. She made a wish, a statue in the store of Kadaj, a piece from my imaginary creativity, should be her memorial. We agreed and will customise it for her to her liking.

Fighting with my tears, I even had to leave the office for a moment and go into another room so that I could cry a bit without someone seeing it, while my mind is prepared all the time for this, my heart isn't.

I wrote Matt a message and gave all the support I can provide, Evy was thankful for it.

I talked to Olde a lot, he tried the strategy with me to talk about god and the world, distracting me, keeping my thoughts away from Evy, I know this game, but thank you Olde for trying.

Kadaj tried the same with me, we even gifted me a pony/horse because I mentioned ones that I somehow took a liking for them, we're talking of course about a virtual one. Evy wanted me to name it "Beans" after her last name, so I did. My Pony/Horse is now called Beans.

Evy had now many visitors and everyone around me, specially Kadaj, notice how overtired I was, so he went nuclear on me*5 that I go to bed and rest a bit, I didn't want to, but with what he said, he hurt me a lot, even though he meant it in the best way, but was it necessary? I have the feeling Olde had to do with it.

I had no choice but to surrender, tiredness, my anxiety about losing someone, all the day being strong for everyone else, I still tried to watch a movie but, I am all worn out. It took me like seconds to fall asleep.

To be fair, I took it like a sportsman, it hurt, but necessary? Is good to know that I have friends who are willing to make uncomfortable decisions. Thank you Kadaj.

*5: Saying or doing something with the purpose to hurt the other.

March 6th 2020

Keep going

I'm not sure what wears me out more, the fact that Evy will leave us soon, or that people around me focus so much on me.

A "Hey there, how are you?" becoming "Hi, did you sleep? Did you eat something?"

It's not the time to care for myself, that comes later. Well, maybe there is a way to deal with the situation, grabbing on something they believe they can still change.

I was caught off guard, Chi came with Talli to say hello, I didn't expect to see her so soon. Overwhelmed doesn't even state how I was feeling at that moment. I excused myself to go for a short walk to take some air, the truth is, I went in another room because I couldn't hold back my tears. All inside me broke loose again, my stomach was cramping, my heart racing, my legs got wiggly. I gathered myself as fast as I could before returning to my visitor and I was really glad to see her.

But she had to go to rest, it was exhausting for her.

Then I had to take care of this project, my diary. I asked Talli, a native speaker of english, to review it.

It means of course that she reads “too early” what I'm writing here, but she promised to keep it a secret and not make any remarks about what I'm writing.

Rest of the day I didn't feel well, felt annoyed by every word that was addressed to me and was kinda passive aggressive.

Kadaj and I decided to dedicate our activities this year at the Fantasy Faire for Evy, I'm sure she will love it.

I worry about him, he doesn't have it easy too at the moment for various reasons, yet he stays strong, less for Evy and rather for me. My reluctant hero?

Chuu*6 decided to join our idea. I really like her, always a gentle and friendly person. For an unknown reason I always act in front of her as if I dislike her or am being very rude, without wanting to, something I must deal with after this and fix.

My sleep is ok, not too much, not too less. A healthy amount of tea is the key.

*6: Fellow Merchant and Creator

March 7th 2020

A bit more sun

Yesterday I could work from home, so I had more time to do other things. This morning I met with Evy. She had a good day, we went to Margy's and danced to "Dancing on broken glass", it was a happy moment for me. A moment that blew away the cruelty of the upcoming moment.

For a moment I can forget the empty holes of the skull of the reaper, that slowly glide over the dark clouds in the direction of Evy, stretching it's greedy fingers out, to bring her to a place, where she will have no use for her broken body anymore.

We went to her home. She wanted to be in my arms, so I held her tight while we sat on her favorite couch. It was good to talk to her, about apples, childhood memories, about the bliss of ice chips, purred with apple juice. It was a precious good time, without visitors, guests or friends around. I really enjoyed these 2 hours just us both.

But it came to the point she needed to rest, I thought it was a good day this way.

I went to my own treatment for a little issue I have myself, worked with a more light feeling inside me at home.

Later in the day, she informed me that she had way too many visitors, insurance, lawyer, doctors, this stuff. The Paperwork and that today start her Chemo. Let's see how it will exhaust her and, let's hope it will work, that she can have at least a liquid diet.

Apple Juice

She felt suddenly worse, decided against the chemo. Her words were clear, she felt the moment is sooner than first expected.

Dilaudid and Apple Juice it is now. She wished Apple Juice for a while, her favorite drink, it's well deserved.

We lifted our glasses together, I bought some as well. It has been years I drunk a glass of apple juice, less sore, more sweet, as I had it in my memories.

Hospice care now, a few days, maybe a week, seems we reached the gate of the park we stroll in together.

I don't feel the urge to argue with her decision, I keep telling myself, she has her fair share of pain and suffering. We talked about how we had a good run and the last 2 years were a blessing for me, it's wonderful to share such moments together.

Everything is said, nothing is unspoken. I told her it's ok for me to move on, I would continue the path we walked on together for a little while longer and tell her, if my time came, how the rest of the

path looked like. I will be prepared with a bag full of stories and memories.

She told me, I was a great help to make this decision, I can't recall if I made any comment in one or the other direction. I feel somehow guilty about it, a fist in my stomach.

About the rest, I feel absolutely, nothing. There is a big empty silence inside me, like standing in an sporthall and nobody is there, only the echo of your own footsteps.

Fake

I heard only a little update, that she got a Hospice place.

One person I know said it's all fake, I wish she would be right. Denial, one of the common reactions of such news. I thought I would react with anger or rage, more than just understanding and looking over it didn't come up through my throat. I believe, everyone should have the right to deal with it as it best suits them.

Went out for a bit, to get some fresh air, no sun, just clouds, wind and chill. I bought some apples and the requested peach juice. Not sure what is with me, Evy can't eat apples anymore, maybe it is a replacement reaction from my side.

My enemy has got a name, silence. While I'm writing this I'm listening to a live radio stream, chasing away the nagging thoughts. Cold logic has taken over, in front of my eyes running down like a list of things that maybe have been forgotten to be taken care of. Music, voices and simple sounds helping me keep a tight grip around myself.

I learned that besides Matt I'm the only one who knows about her decision and the time that is left,

days, maybe a week. Some asked, I kept quiet. Some worried, I comforted. Some wish a tight turn of events, I smiled. Many are wondering what will happen now, I understand.

Normally at least 2 other people besides me should know about it, they don't. I start to understand what is in Evy's mind and why she is doing it. I can hold it.

March 8th 2020

Waterdrop

“The closer you are to someone, the sooner they leave us.”

Daisuke Aramaki*7

The masks and walls I maintain around me are getting rifts and cracks. I carried with me the whole day long this “secret”. People started to notice something is different. They kept asking, I kept being quiet. I didn't expect it would wear me out at such rate, like being pulled over sandpaper.

I’m used to keeping things to myself, a dear friend said once, that I would always know more than I would tell or admit. I’ve always liked this thought, even just thinking to myself, that I like to be well informed.

Now it is reality, and I do not like it a bit. I talked to Kadaj and later to Olde about it. Kadaj because he knows me too well, as I could keep something like that a secret and I know how keep my inner well protected within his heart and mind.

Olde turned my mind to a garbage can I just trash all the waste inside me in. Not a nice picture, because I feel so guilty to do so and I start to really

like him. A caregiver for a caregiver, sounds like the worst joke I ever heard of.

The whole day, silence, this beast that covers my thoughts, ripping my strength out of me. I feel slowly like feeling desperate, but I know, being strong doesn't mean you don't fall down, strong means you fall down and being able to stand up again.

Later the day I had a short talk with Evy, telling me she is now in the Hospice, a little apartment, nurse care, as much juice she wants, an extra bed for Matt. The juice gets pumped out, as she can't drink and eat anymore. She also doesn't get fed either. But at least she can taste it.

We just texted, but I could feel the tiredness in her words, she said 1, maybe 2 weeks, my heart telling me something else.

*7: Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex (The Quote is free translated due missing access to the original english Version)

Match 9th 2020

Escape in my Imagination

I'm so tired, sleep over the weekend is becoming rare, I keep eating normally but my stomach is cramping and my belly hurts. I keep that to myself and try to compensate for it with some fennel tea. My eyes are constantly hurting from the long hours in front of screens, be it the computer at work, the computer at home or my mobile phone.

The Park I keep as my picture in my mind has got grey clouds, soon it will rain. If I close my eyes I'm not in my bed, neither at work or in my home. I'm on this path. I imagine it like a nice cobblestone way, to the left a little lake with some geese, to the right some trees and in front of me the gate with a sunset.

If I open my eyes, I understand it is not a place out of my imagination, it is a virtual existing place, Hikari.

The place I have my little hideout. A place that I keep returning to in the major turns of my life, so I'm doing now.

I went there, sat down on my old pillow with a view of the memorial stone of my little Kitty Banzai. To my surprise, there were other people sitting not far from my place, enjoying the sunset. It was enjoyable to listen to them, talking about cookies, how the family is going and how he had no mood to go to work. I had the feeling I witnessed a date. I wish you both the best for your own path.

Yesterday Evy gave me the permission to tell others about her decision, I can't describe how big a relief this was for me, not carrying this secret anymore with me.

I talked with Vanilla*8 and gave her the news, after Evy asked her to talk to me, I would explain. As expected a big shock for her, but she agreed, thankfully, with the decision. We talked a bit about the necessary steps, we decided to inform only the closest people, not only to give Evy peace, but also to protect ourselves. Every person you have to tell bad news needs immediate comfort, needs someone to listen, someone they can share their feelings with, obviously, it's most of the time the messenger.

It feels like I'm not the only one who is racing with full speed to their own limits, a big wall we will crash sooner or later into it with our own emotions.

My own emotions jump back and forth between a world of grey tones, complete numbness and a world full of contradictory feelings. My heart is starting to poke and itch again, I need to calm down.

With Sandie I don't talk anymore about all, she seems so busy and always on the jump, I don't feel good about bothering her and with Olde I'm developing the same feeling.

The only ones I keep talking to are Kadaj and Talli. Kadaj keeps holding me together, I'm so thankful to him for it and Talli who keeps supporting me in many ways, not only with my diary.

I just worry a lot about her, she reached her limits this morning and I needed to get her back on track with drastic words. I hope she is not angry at me, but if she is, I would understand.

Good bye

03:20pm local time, Evy sent me a goodbye message. She told me, she wouldn't stay long anymore and how much I mean to her and that she feels sorry we didn't have more time, but is thankful for the time we could spend together. Tears running down my eyes, unable to think or act. I thanked her once more for the amazing time and that she have a place in my heart.

I don't believe I will sleep today, waiting now for the unavoidable moment. My heart and thoughts are with her and Matt, nobody deserves this, nobody.

*8: Evys sl mother.

March 10th 2020

Silence

Didn't sleep, no rest, I feel like I'm squeezed into a way too tight box. Is that the famous silence before the storm?

I meet with Vanilla and Patty*9 and we discussed the uncomfortable details for what should be done, if the message comes.

Now it is just, waiting. I listen to music, try to focus on my job, I don't do well, I'm slow, unconcentrated, make mistakes. My eyes are burning already after 15 minutes of looking at the screen. Decided to go to the bathroom, throw some water in my face.

I look up in the mirror, I don't recognize myself anymore, dark rings under my eyes, on my sclera are the red veins clearly to see, I let my head hang a bit to the side, like the weight would be too much to keep it straight.

Slowly I closed my eyes, supporting myself on the sink. I see again the cobblestone way in front of me. Dark clouds over me, but no rain, just a nice rainbow. In front of me, the gate of the park, someone standing there. Pressing the heavy rusty

gate open and going through it, only to vanish next moment. The wind blows through my hair, it's getting cold, I'm alone now in the park. The geese in the lake are gone, the flowers and trees lost their beautiful green, all turns slowly in an autumn brown and grey.

I open my eyes, I still have this stranger in front of me. Taking a deep breath, time to go back to work.

First I did after I sat down was look at my phone, no messages. I wrote to a friend I haven't talked to for quite a while.

Her answer "you have a terrible timing I'm getting ready for work lol"

I just wrote "always, have a good day bye"
her reply "@.@ wow ok"

It took me a moment to understand that I must sounded terrible rude for her. Well, she don't know what is going on, can't blame her, will sort that later.

I'm switching the playlist on my phone, I need something now to chase all the thoughts away. A Mix of Fernanda Martins does the trick. With a fresh cup of tea I feel now like I can work a bit, focusing for what I get money for, helping other people with their problems.

Sharing

Kadaj finished the statue, the memorial for Evy, it is wonderful and pushed me close to tears again. I must say we had a good talk, long ago we talked deeply about our feelings and it stole a smile from me, that he spoke so openly to me, even he wished I would do the same. It was time, I wanted to fulfill this wish. As Talli before, I gave him access to my diary.

A long silence grew up, as he was reading carefully line for line what I have written till this point. After a while finally he broke the silence and I decided to not quote what he said, I got something else in mind.

I offered him to add a chapter in my diary, not an entry, but a possibility to let his voice be heard as well, how he witnessed this time. I promised him that I will not touch whatever he will write and include it without any “but” in my diary. I will offer Talli the same, both earned it to speak up.

*9 Owner of the place Evy is living

March 11th 2020

With you till the end

Another bad night, trying to sleep has become an annoying necessity, I have a terrible migraine and decided to stay home today, taking one pill after another to get this poking pain out of my head. I'm dizzy, my field of view is reduced and I just wish to puke.

At 13:00 my time I got the message I was waiting and afraid of.

“Hello. I'm Evelyn's designated representative. I'm just writing to let you know that she passed away peacefully yesterday morning. I'm very sorry for the loss of your very special friendship.”

That distanced and cold words shattered inside me everything. Her last words to me flashes in front of my eyes, the last moment I spend time with her flaring up and then, nothing. She is gone, nobody will bring her back.

October 16th 1996 – March 10th 2020, that cold numbers sum up a life, no, not a life, the life of Evy and a long path of memories for me.

I just passed along the message to everyone who was close, I don't have own words for anyone else right now.

She is free now, free from her broken body, free from pain, free from suffering.

Tears run down my cheeks while I write this, I don't know any word in any language I'm capable of to describe the pain inside me.

I'm closing my eyes, my poking pain in my head getting stronger. I'm so glad her sorrow is over, my lips shake uncontrolled between a smile and despair. A heavy weight is falling from my shoulders, I didn't want this message, but it is somehow a relief now.

Yet, I lost a friend, someone I spend a wonderful time with, all the good moments jumping in my mind. As well as the moments we had our arguments and issues but, what friendship is without edges?

I don't call many people a true friend, in fact there are only a handful, these people that really care for you not only in the good, but also in the bad and the terrible times. She was one of them. She proved more than once to be there for me if I needed it, she accepted my flaws and stayed by my side even

if I was not fully myself. I had more than one chance to pay back this favor.

Now there is just pain inside me. I know, many people ask themselves questions, the big whys, I don't ask myself that. There are no more questions open for me, we've reached the gate of the park, She went through, I had to stay.

I fulfilled my promise, all the way with you, till the end.

If I give myself a moment to breathe, one question I have.

Will we see each other again?

Now I must turn around, with my heavy heart, it seems the stones from my shoulders fell onto my heart, there are now people who feel like I do, I need to face them with a straight back.

I asked the representative if there is a possibility to contact Evy's boyfriend Matt.

This I got as an answer:

“That was not in her wishes. Peace.”

Cold like ice, a fist in my stomach.

Whoever you are “representative” FUCK YOU!
What am I to you? Just a bunch of Pixel?! Do you
think I have no feelings? Do you really think only
because I´m behind a computer I worth
nothing?!*10

Breath, just damn breath.

*10: This is an afternote. I wrote this in real time
and I was at this moment very upset. I decided to
leave it in, even with the vulgar choice of words,
because it was my raw emotion this moment. I
apologize deeply if someone feels offended by my
words.

Last Entry

This is my last entry, it has been now a few hours since I got the message. I feel worn out, tired, my eyes hurting from crying. I talked with a lot of people, I was the one who spread the word, it was overwhelming how many emotions got reflected.

It is now time to focus on myself, I did all in my strength and best to my knowledge to accompany Evelyn on the last part of the path we shared, so it seems now for me, a short time.

It has been a rough thing, being a caregiver, but I would do it again nevertheless. There is nothing you need to ask for, if you can give someone without strings, comfort, care and love.

Everything I wanted to say I told her, everything she wanted to tell me, she told me in her last message. I'm thankful about this fact, not everybody gets the chance, something precious I will keep close to my soul.

I don't feel alone, yet, very empty inside. My life goes on, and I thankfully have people around me that I still want to accompany a long time on the path that is still in front of me.

So, I do my turn now to the right, another round in the Park. One day, I will find my smile again, my tears will be dried and from Evelyn's pain will be nothing left in my mind, just wonderful memories of a wonderful time.

Wherever you are now Evy, Thank you for everything, you will always be in my heart.

Akiko.

Amino acids

by Kadaj Yoshikawa

Empty sheet.
Blank canvas.

Starting this chapter is painful, as this page is reflecting my emotions.
They are here, yet they are so hard to imprint in the form of a text.

How could one resume the life and the impact of such a wonderful being in such a short and framed space?
It's impossible.

The impact Chisato has left in every person she met is so visible, so tangible, that I would end up filling this chapter with lines everyone would agree with.

For this reason, I will decide to do something fairly selfish, and try to provide my point of view of the last days that anticipated Chisato's departure.

Being the caregiver of a caregiver can be tough.
How could I provide hope and optimism to both Akiko and Chisato, when hope seemed to have abandoned this place?

I've always said that positivity will only bring positivity, and that light will shine through, if you let it.

This is the approach I have decided to apply during these challenging days.

Before her surgery, I told Chisato that I was waiting for the moment for her to contact me to finally tell me that she made it, that cancer was gone.

That was the day in which my hopes were slowly shattered; torn to pieces, little by little, by the weight of reality. Nobody, Chisato included, expected the terrible news.

Stage 4. This is something a 23 year old girl should never mention.

As soon as I read the news, my heart stopped for a moment.

She will fade away, along with my positive attitude. I knew Akiko would have read the news as well in the matter of hours, minutes; I knew she would have been broken, and I knew that I would have been unable to fix her. I had to prepare for the worst, with no solution at hand.

I decided to temporarily grab my sorrow, and seal it in the deepest corner of my heart. I had to be strong, I have to be strong.

Being a father means being responsible for your daughter's well being, and ensuring that her smile, no matter what, won't wither.

Happiness was not an option, but small moments of brightness would have been miracles, so I went after them.

I've listened to Akiko, given her the space she needed. We shared our thoughts, and most importantly, we shared our silences.

I've watched her grow into an incredibly responsible soul, and for a moment, seeing her surrounded by her dear supporting friends, my heart was at peace.

During these past days, it was all about moments like these, when for a brief moment we could forget about cancer, and genuinely have a wonderful time with Chi. We were building precious memories. We were providing her with the most natural type of painkiller: family.

I was aware that Akiko was holding back a lot. She took on the mantle of the Caregiver, and wore it with pride and a marvelous sense of duty. She gave support to whoever needed. She was the rock to keep the tide under control. But I felt that sometimes the tide was too high for one person. She never gave up.

Despite the incoming storm ahead, she never staggered. And this is when I began to seriously be worried about her.

A father should never see his daughter being beaten by life and do nothing. And yet, I could feel that she didn't care at all, because she was holding on for Chi.

My heart broke when Akiko gave me the news we all felt.

Chisato departed. Forever.

I didn't know how to react. I had to do something. I did the most simple thing: being there for Akiko. I knew that she felt lost, without a guide. She didn't feel alone, but empty.

The most bitter tears are those we do not let out. They stagnate in the heart, and never drain.

The most painful thing for me, was making her memorial statue. She gave us precise directions. She felt she was fading.

23 years old. How can a young girl ask for her own funeral dispositions? How badly stained is this world, if such a beautiful soul is doomed to ask for her own grave?

She simply asked us to use a statue, a collaboration between Akiko and me. A statue that already represented Chi: a woman dancing with death.

I couldn't agree to give her something that everyone else might have had so, at 3 am, with a glass of whisky by my side, I began remaking the whole statue anew, for her. Not a grave, not a

symbol of death, but a commemoration of life and love overcoming it.

I thought of her, of all the memories we've shared, and flashbacks of the past ran through my eyes while adding more details to the statue.

This is the creation I like and despise the most.

I am going to miss her terribly. And this is not an understatement.

As I told Akiko, she will never leave Harshlands bloggers team, because I am sure that somewhere, she's still receiving all the goodies, and making the wonderful landscapes that she was able to create. Heaven will surely look like a much better place, now that she's in charge of its landscaping.

Chisato Beans (aikaybee4orty8): blessings forever, Kadaj

This is the very last thing she told me, before gradually starting to cross, towards another adventure.

Until her very last breath, she never cared for herself, but only about the others. She wanted to make sure that everyone felt loved.

And we loved you Chi. So, damn, much.

Until we meet again.
Kadaj.

Musings

by Talli Winter

You know it's funny, during the last few days there was always something to say, a word of comfort or something silly to try and brighten the mood but now that I'm sitting here having been asked to add my own thoughts and perspective to this diary about what has happened in the last few weeks the words are hard to come by.

When my SL sister Akiko asked me to proofread and edit her diary of this event to help clean up her English of course I said I would. However, seeing behind someone else's eyes, hearing their own thoughts of this painful event proved to be intense.

I live on the West Coast of the U.S., three hours behind Chi and nine hours behind Kiki. My days and nights became flipped around. I would do my best to be on while they were on to offer support, a shoulder to lean on, a few words or even just to sit silently nearby. Afterwards I would dive into the diary having to push my own misgivings about how this was all going to turn out aside, only to find them echoed in Kiki's head. Pages of text hover on my screen bringing me to tears but I can't let myself be distracted by my feelings. I have a

simple job to do and I am determined to see it through and pay the cost later.

Chisato was a fascinating woman, at turns warm and silly or at times she could be abrasive or downright rude. However she had this way about her that if you could look past the quirky personality there was something genuine there, something thoughtful and introspective. The soul of an artist perhaps. I can think back on quite a few conversations with her where once you got her talking about art she would come alive, animated and passionate. A woman of strong opinions, a bright mind and warm soul. I will miss her deeply.

A few years ago I ran into a friend I'd not seen in quite a long time. She was happy to see me and we talked for a bit, halfway through the conversation I turned to her and remarked, "Isn't it odd these days that we seem to be attending more funerals than weddings?", she chuckled but agreed. The worst part of all this is that we were attending a funeral of a mutual friend. Gallows humor perhaps? Things such as this memory have been floating through my head since we all got the news of Chi's cancer. It is difficult to keep my spirits up but then I see how much everyone else around me is suffering and I try to pull myself together.

Reading the message that Chi was gone I found myself relieved for her, her suffering is over. Now I find myself feeling angry at little things, the phrase “she went peacefully” for instance, I’m sure she would have rather lived instead. She should have had many many more years ahead of her. Forgive me being vulgar but “Fuck Cancer”.

I feel like I am rambling but please indulge me for a little while longer.

Drip, drip, drip, droplets slide down the glass, puddling on the table beneath, small smudges from fingers break up the patterns on the sides and a shimmer of gold liquid swirls alone left behind in the bottom. The room is empty now, quiet, motes of dust sparkle in the still air. You are gone now my friend, only a memory and a tiny sip of apple juice remain.

Talli.

My special Thank you to Kadaj

After all this, I want to take a little bit of time to tell something, that is important to me.

First I want to thank Kadaj Yoshikawa, one of my best, if not, best friend, and father in Second Life.

During this time he was there for me day and night, He tried to be the strong pillar even though I refused to accept this generous offer.

Kadaj and I have known each other in SL as well as RL, not long ago we had the pleasure of spending 4 wonderful days together.

He always gave me more than I ever could ask from a friend, and he has proven to be there in the darkest times, so he did now, again.

Someone you love to spend time with is the first step, accepting and loving their flaws is the next step, staying with you if you really messed up, that is the last step.

I never expected to find a friend like him and couldn't be more grateful about it.

We've already shared many stories, had great adventures and built up wonderful memories together. I look forward to what is coming next.

But most importantly, you always stayed true to yourself and never bent for anyone or anything.

Thank you Kadaj, thank you for being my light in this dark hour.

My special Thank you to Talli

Dear Talli,

You helped me more than you ever could imagine, you always think you are not strong, not smart or very clever, these days you proved everyone who thinks that wrong.

You were the first one I could speak to a bit about the pain inside me, you are the one who gave me paths to find my words, you are the one who held my arm while I was writing this diary.

As well I want to mention, that you belong to the people I feel comfortable to talk with about my own feelings, my weaknesses, my thoughts that keep my mind always busy.

You share the pain with me right now, she was your friend as well, yet you found not only the strength to deal with your own, but my sorrow as well.

The words you found to comfort me are unique in a calm, sweet and warm way. They inspired me a lot in my entries.

And you are the one who reviewed my diary, such a burden I couldn't ask from everyone.

I can't wait to see the next years, which paths we will discover together.

Thank you Talli, for being with me in this labyrinth of emotions, that I never felt me alone.

Thank you

I can't name everyone here, but I want to thank everyone who was with me this time and afterwards.

Thank you Olde and Sandie for being the wall I could punch against, you both didn't have it easy with me, thanks for holding up.

Thank you for the big Relay for Life and Cancer Society Family, everytime I meet one I receive nothing but support and strength.

I thank everyone of Evy's friends and family I didn't know well, but had a chance to meet now and I hope that some friendships can grow out of these shattered dreams.

It has been a blessing to be surrounded by so many wonderful people, I feel lucky right now.

Music

Music is a very important part of my life, not a day goes by that I don't listen to music. Let it be simple to relax with some calm songs, strengthening my soul with powerful vocals or comfort my heart with touching lyrics.

Here is a little list of songs that helped me through this time to keep going. I believe nobody has the same taste, so I do believe you will not like some of the songs, but you don't need to, you can pick the ones you like and keep them for yourself, if at least one song can reach your soul, then I reached my goal. Every song has a personal story behind it for me and has a memory I link to it. They don't have a particular order, I just wrote them together from the notes I took over the time.

AKB48 - Fortune Cookie (japanese)
Juice = Juice - Fiesta! Fiesta! (japanese)
Juice = Juice - Hadaka no Hadaka no Hadaka no
Kiss (japanese)
Angerme - One by one (japanese)

Dinah Washington - This bitter earth (english)
Thomas Bergersen - Remember me (instrumental)
Seether feat. Amy Lee - Broken (english)
Unheilig - An deiner Seite (german)
Hurts - Wonderful Life (english)

Louis Armstrong - What a wonderful world
(english)
Voicians - Empire (english)
Smash Into Pieces - Let me be your Superhero
(english)
Ravenscode - Letting you go (english)
Die Toten Hosen - Nur zu Besuch (german)

Kokia - Hontou no Oto (japanese)
Dub FX feat. Reeps one - Stars (english)
Nano feat. My first story - Savior of Song
(japanese)
Tommee Profitt feat. Sam Tinnesz - With you till
the end (english)
Poets of the Fall - Partir Avec Moi (french)

Poets of the Fall - No End No Beginning (english)
Poets of the Fall - Everything Fades (english)
Poets of the Fall - All the way 4u (english)
Poets of the Fall - Given and Denied (english)
Poets of the Fall - War (english)

Celine Dion - Ashes (english)
Linkin Park - Lost in the Echo (english)
Linkin Park - One more light (english)
Red - Hymn for the missing (english)
T & Sugah - Demons (english)

Poets of the Fall - Dancing on broken glass
(english)

Epilogue

Dear Reader,

you know now my story, the tale has been told. I thank you for sharing these precious moments once more with me and I hope that the sparks of my heart flared up the value of the time you have with the ones you love and love you.

I wish you all the good in the world, I wish you many years of smile and happiness, I wish you amazing adventures, that you are surrounded by love and wonderful memories. I wish you the best health, and most important of all, I wish you never have to endure what so many of us had to witness.

Enjoy life to the fullest, tell the ones you care for everyday how much you love them. Don't waste your time bearing a grudge, every stone on your shoulders makes it harder to look up and go on your own path. Let it go, nobody is perfect and these edges make life interesting, not more difficult. You never know when you'll reach the gate of the park.

Follow this advice and you will live a life without regrets.

Thank you for gifting me with your time by reading my diary, I will always value this precious gift.

If you want to contact me, feel free to do so:

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