

# Unexpected fate

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It was a cold autumn morning. I was 17 years old when we received the following message:

*„Dear Mr. and Ms. Bail,  
We are sorry to share with you that the test results were as follows: Your son, Malik Bail, has brain tumor. To 98.98% was determined that the cancer is unfortunately incurable.”*

We all were shocked. In the first few minutes nobody was saying a word, then... Mum started to cry: „No...no, they've made a mistake. No... they are lying!”

„Mum, please”, my brother said, „...calm down.” I saw that he tried not to cry, too. I sat at the table and stared into emptiness. My dad was sitting next to me and had clawed his fingers into the table top. Mum turned to my brother's shoulder and wept bitterly. „Calm down”, I said, „That doesn't help.” They looked at me as if I didn't know how serious the matter was. I stood up and went into my room. Once there, I slammed the door loudly. Mum wanted to follow me, but my dad held her back. „Leave him alone for some minutes. It will be the best.”

In my room, I ran to my bed and sat down. *Brain tumor... incurable...*these words swirled in my head up and down. „I'm going to die”, I whispered almost silently. Some tears ran down my face and sank into my pillow.

Two hours later someone was knocking at my door. „Who's there?”, I asked emotionless. „Here's Justin”, my brother answered. „What do you want?!” „Could I come in?” „It's open...”, I gave up. Justin came into my room and sat down on the edge of my bed. He patted me on the back. It was a comforting gesture. „I'm going to die”, I murmured, but I didn't look in his face. I couldn't. „No you're not going to die. I won't allow that. You're my little brother, you can't die before me! This is against the rules!” I heard him sniffle. My strong, big brother was crying silently in front of me. „Please, don't do this or I'll cry too”. My voice was struck and slightly brittle. „I'm sorry, but I can't understand this. I'm not able to comprehend... This is so unfair. You haven't deserved this! Nobody deserved something like that.” „I know... but you can't change it...” Every time it felt like a big hit into my face. „You have to promise me, not to give up hope! Please swear it!” I looked in the deadly serious face of my brother. He held out his little finger. „I swear”, I said and hooked my little finger. Then he pulled me

into a big hug. It was such a great feeling. „And you have to promise me, that you'll be there for mum and dad if I'm gone!", I mumbled. „I swear."

At the evening my brother and I went into the kitchen. Mum and dad sat on the couch. She had very red eyes and a lot of handkerchiefs were lying around her. „Malik my dear, please come to me", she sniffled and stretched out her arms to me. Slowly I approached her, sat down in front and gave her a warm hug. She clung desperately to me. „My sweetheart, we will get through this and ...", she began, but I interrupted her. Softly I pressed her back. „There won't be an 'and'. I don't want you thinking about things which are nothing more than empty promises. It will help me, if you're accepting what will happen in a few months..." My voice broke off. „No, I can't", she whimpered. „Don't say something like this! We'll fight against it and we'll win!", my dad said strictly. „The cancer is incurable! Didn't you hear it?", I yelled at him. „Malik...", my brother began. „Shut up! If you can't accept it, then I will go! I can't stand it here!" „You're angry because your family can't accept that you are going to die? Are you crazy?!", Justin yelled back at me. „No I'm not crazy! I am the only person here who perceives the realistic side!" This was the last thing I replied to my family at this evening, and then ran away. I ran through the cold night, without a plan where I wanted to go. Just far away from home...

As I couldn't run anymore, I stopped panting. White fog ascended. I found myself on the playground at the end of the city. There I broke down and screamed. I screamed loudly and so full of pain. A few minutes later I stared again into the emptiness, still kneeling on the wet grass. „What's up?! I heard someone screaming and wanted to see what's going on", a boy said. He was about my age. „Nothing", I said quietly. „Come on! Nobody screams at a playground only for fun. I think you've got something. But first I suggest we sit down in the dry. There's a small cottage." I stood up and followed him hesitantly. „Before I forget, my name is Noah", he introduced himself. „Malik", I did like him. On a little bench we sat down. „So Malik, what's your problem?" „Sorry, but it isn't something you need to know. It's very private.", I replied. „Hm, okay. Perhaps you'll tell me later.... Cigarette?", he offered me. A few seconds I stared at the little fag. „Now it doesn't matter, I don't have anything to lose anymore." I took the cigarette. Noah gave me some fire and then he lit his own. I took a deep breath and slowly blew the white smoke out. „Now I'm even more interested", he said. „Well, today I have got the message that I am going to die". Silence. „Oh fuck! That is really bad. And ... how are you feeling now?", he asked me. „What do you think?", I asked sarcastically. He observed me with pity. „I really feel sorry for you! What do you do now?", he wanted to know. „I don't know, but I won't go home. They're all crying and something like that and I don't want to see that." Sadly I looked at the ground and kicked off a small stone. „Come on man, you come with me! I know that we're still strangers, but you've got nothing to lose", he smiled at me. „You're right. I've got nothing to lose", I smiled back. Then I threw the cigarette end on the ground and crushed it with my shoe.

„Ok, and now?", I asked as we went a little bit through the night. It was cold and very silent. „You see the white house at the corner? There is my apartment. I could make us some tea", he said. I laughed. „Are you doing this with every stranger?" „Doing what!?", he looked at me irritated. „Invite someone you don't know for tea?" „Well", he also smiled at me, „I think you aren't like others. You were sympathetic to me from

the beginning." Thankfully I smiled at him. He unlocked the door and we came in. „You're not better than me", he said as he closed the door. „Oh really? Why do you think so?" „I'm a stranger for you like you for me, but you trust me and come with me. What if I had been a sneaky guy who attracts young strangers in his house?" I thought for a moment: „I've got nothing to lose." This was my only answer. He shook his head in amusement. „Do you live here alone?", I wanted to know as I followed him into the kitchen. „Yeah, I moved out from home, because I couldn't endure it there." „I wish I could do that, too." He made some hot water and I sat down on a chair. „And why don't you do it?" „Because I'm only 17 and my parents don't let me go", I said. „17, really? I thought you're older", he laughed in astonishment. I nodded. „How old are you?", I asked interested. „21", was the short answer. The kettle beeped and Noah took two cups and a packet of tea bags. „Could you take the kettle? We're going into the living room. There it will be more comfortable." I picked up the kettle and followed him into the living room. There was a big chimney. „Oh really nice. Can you turn it on?", I asked while I looked fascinated at it. „Of course I can", he opened the glass door, put some firewood into and ignited it. The fire crackled softly. „Will you tell me how it came about? I mean, if you haven't had a suspicion, you weren't gone to a doctor, am I right?", he asked me casually while he poured the hot water over the tea bags. „Wow, I must be very crazy to tell you this. On the other hand I'm crazy. I'm here!", I had to laugh again. „Yeah, you're crazy! But tell me. I'm curious to know." He took a little sip of tea. „Oh shit, that's damn hot!" I giggled. That guy was funny. I liked him. „Ok. It started some time ago. I think... hm... it's been a few months. I had a very bad headache. I thought it is normal, like a common headache or something, like a migraine. So I told it nobody. I thought it wasn't as important. You understand?" He nodded to me. „Ok and after some days the headache went away. But ... I think, about one month later the headache started again, harder than before. That's not normal, I thought and so I went to my mother and told it to her. She meant that I've got a migraine and gave me some medicine to alleviate the pain." „So your mum said it is nothing bad?", he interrupted me. „Yes. And as the headache came the third time again and was even worse than before, my mum drove with me to a doctor. He said that I drink too less and stuff likes that, but he gave me some tablets." „So, nobody has really taken this so seriously?" „Nope", I confirmed him. He shooked his head in disbelief. „And if somebody had taken the matter seriously..." „Then maybe something could have been done", I finished his sentence. „Wow, this is hard. And how they know that you have... wait, you don't say what you have", he remembered. „Brain tumor", I said. With slightly wide eyes he looked at me. „Oh fuck. But for this, you look very well", he tried to cheer me up. „Thanks" I even brought a small smile on my lips. „The first signs of cancer were the severe headaches and the nausea later. Because it went from bad to worse to me, we went to the doctor again where they x-rayed my body and looked for the causes. As they were ready and the doctor had the pictures he said that he had a suspicion of cancer. My Mum was very mad at the doctor and she even insulted him." „Your mum is a very impulsive woman", he said after a few minutes. „Yes she is, but I love her." I smiled thoughtfully into nothingness. „And what happened next?", he wanted to know. „Well, I had another doctor's appointment where they did an MRI. Do you know what this is?" „Yes I think so. This is something like an extension of X-ray, isn't it?", he mused. I nodded and took a sip of tea. „I'm very glad to know you. It feels so good to speak with someone about it." „No problem", he said. I took another sip. „It tastes good, what is it?" „A mix of rooibos and peach" he informed me.

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Meanwhile almost 5 months have passed away. At this night, I stayed at Noah's. He was so friendly and we understood each other excellently. The next day, Noah took me home. My mother was overjoyed and jumped me almost to the neck. „Please, don't do this again!“, she shouted and wept with relief. „I swear“, I answered and said goodbye to Noah. „We have to repeat this someday“, were my last words. „Yeah, we should do this.“ Then he went away and I never saw him again.

Now I lie here in the hospital and wait for the day I'll die. Every day it gets worse. My headaches are so strong that I think my head could explode. Why can't it finally stop? A soft knock on the door makes me look up. „Who is it?“, I croak. Slowly the door opens and someone comes in. „Hey“, says a familiar voice, „You're still alive. I'm glad to see you.“ „Five months passed as we saw us the last time“, I say. Noah approaches and sits down at the end of the bed. „How are you?“ „I wish I could die“, I say truthfully. Sadly he looks at me. „How did you find me?“, I want to know. „I felt it somehow“, he answers and stares at the devices to which I go. „A bit dreary here“, he says straight out what he thinks. „You've got luck that you caught me in a phase without headache or similar.“ He smiles encouragingly. „I've got something for you. A little present...“, he takes out a little cassette and Walkman. „I thought you've got nothing like this here. A little alternation.“ I don't know what to say. „Thank you that wouldn't have been really necessary“, I whisper and suppose the gift. He stayed a few hours and as my headaches came back, he had to go. It was wonderful to see him one more time.

Middle of the night. I wake up. I can't go back to sleep and listen to the uniform pipe of the devices around me. I feel weak and broken. When turning my head to the side I recognize the Walkman of Noah. I reach carefully for it and get it with a little strain to me to put the earphones on. A few songs I still know from the time as I stayed with Noah. I try to sleep but I can't. Do you know the feeling? You want to sleep, but you can't, because you are sure that there is something you've forgot to do? I still listen to the music... The last song starts quietly. It sounds like wind - then a piano starts to play and a male voice begins to sing:

*Sing me to sleep,  
sing me to sleep.  
I'm tired and I,  
I want to go to bed.  
Sing me to sleep,  
sing me to sleep  
and then leave me alone.  
Don't try to wake me in the morning  
'cause I will be gone.  
Don't feel bad for me.  
I want you to know,  
deep in the cell of my heart  
I will feel so glad to go.  
Sing me to sleep,*

*sing me to sleep.  
I don't want to wake up  
on my own anymore.  
Sing to me,  
sing to me.  
I don't want to wake up  
on my own anymore.  
Don't feel bad for me.  
I want you to know,  
deep in the cell of my heart  
I really want to go.  
There is another world,  
There is a better world.  
Well, there must be.  
Well, there must be.  
Well, there must be.  
Well, there must be.  
Well ...  
Bye, bye.  
Bye, bye.  
Bye ...*

And with these last words I say goodbye, too. Goodbye to this world. Goodbye to my family. Goodbye to my friends. Goodbye, Noah. Even if I could get to know you only briefly, I was still happy.