

The Letter

by

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FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

LEENA (18), emaciated, lies in bed. A number of tubes run from her arms to an EKG machine. She smiles faintly at--

Her mother, DAINE (40s). Leena hands a letter to her.

LEENA

You never read it in full. The last paragraph is about you.

Diane reluctantly takes it.

LEENA

Read it aloud. Please.

Diane takes a deep breath and reaches for her glasses. She reads aloud, her voice shaky.

DIANE

Try to hear your mom when you grow up. And remember, she loves you more than anyone else.

Diane puts away the letter and shakes her head.

DIANE

Now she says it?

LEENA

Mom, please.

Diane takes a moment to respond.

DIANE

I'll go get us something to eat.

Leena nods. Diane rises and makes her way to the door.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Diane closes the door and reaches into her pocket for the tissue. DOCTOR ZALEWSKI(60s), a folder in hands, approaches.

DIANE

Doctor Zalewski. The tests should be in by now, shouldn't they?

Doctor nods. He takes a moment before responding.

DOCTOR  
The lump grows faster than I  
expected. I'm sorry.

DIANE  
You said she's got a couple of  
months.

The Doctor looks away. Diane bites her lip, reaches for a  
tissue and blows her nose.

DOCTOR  
I still can't believe you refused  
the therapy.

DAINE  
That's what she wanted.

DOCTOR  
Leena's the most selfless and brave  
girl I know.

DIANE  
I would love it if she was selfish  
and spoiled just like any other kid  
her age.

The Doctor opens the folder and points at something.

DOCTOR  
Here's the photo of the boy she  
saved. I'm going to show it to her.  
Forty thousand will buy him much  
needed treatment.

Diane retrieves a tissue from her pocket. She blows her nose  
and walks away.

INT. LEENA'S HOUSE - LEENA'S ROOM - DAY

Diane, eyes all cried out, and Leena wait beside the phone.  
The phone rings. They exchange a scared glance.

Diane picks up. It's Doctor Zalewski on the other line.

DOCTOR (O.C.)  
...Just like I suspected... she does  
have a chance. But a very small one.

Diane turns pale.

DOCTOR (O.C.)  
It's five to ten percent.

DIANE  
--We'll do the therapy. Anything.

DOCTOR (O.C.)  
That's the spirit. I'll be waiting  
for you in the office to discuss.

Diane hangs up.

DIANE  
You've got a good chance.

LEENA  
I heard him.

Diane starts getting ready. She puts on the jacket, buttons  
it up all wrong, frantically searches for her purse.

Leena doesn't move, just observes her mom bustle around.

DIANE  
Let's not make the doctor wait, dear.

Leena reaches for a drawer. She retrieves the letter.

LEENA  
I opened the letter.

DIANE  
The letter? Which letter?

LEENA  
The one I was supposed to open when  
I turn eighteen.

DIANE  
Oh. Good. We must hurry, dear.

Leena doesn't move.

LEENA  
It was a fun read.

DIANE  
I'm sure it was. Where's my check  
book?

Diane looks for it in the drawers.

DIANE  
They might ask for the first  
payment today.

LEENA

Listen.

Leena reads from the letter.

LEENA

Dad missed his chance to do the great deed. Don't make the same mistake as him. Don't put off the great deed.

DIANE

The deed. Right. I remember him obsessing about that. Put on another shirt, honey, this one is not good to wear to the doctors.

LEENA

You know, I thought about it. ...I thought what if my chances to survive were slim. Would it pay off to waste this much money?

DIANE

Don't you dare talk like that.

Leena shakes her head, hides her eyes. Lips thinned, jaw squared, she whispers, her voice adamant.

LEENA

I decided not to do the therapy.

DIANE

What? ...Why?

Leena takes a deep breath before breaking it to Diane.

LEENA

It's very expensive. Doctor said it'll cost us forty thousand.

DIANE

We'll use up your trust fund money.

LEENA

A 10 percent chance to survive - it's a freakishly small chance, Mom. I better donate that money, give it up for someone who's got better odds than me.

DIANE

Give it up? What are you saying?

Leena opens up the letter.

LEENA

If I die I'll never get to do this great act of kindness. I won't have time for the deed.

DIANE

Not the deed again! Dad didn't know what he was saying. He was sick.

Leena stares at the letter. Diane turns pale. She sits next to Leena grabs her arm.

DIANE

This is written by a silly little girl who barely knew how to spell.

Leena looks away.

INT. LEENA'S HOUSE - LEENA'S ROOM

Seated behind her desk is LITTLE LEENA (8). The room looks different now - it belongs to a little girl.

DIANE (O.S.)

Leena, dinner's getting cold. What are you doing in there?

LEENA

Writing a letter to myself. Isn't that cool?

DIANE (O.S.)

Very cool, dear, but you must hurry.

LEENA

I wrote about the deed. Dad's deed remember?

DIANE

Yeah, I do, honey.

LEENA

Only we can't open the letter before I turn eighteen, okay?

Leena shoves it into an envelope. She writes on it "Open in 2014 only!"

FADE OUT.