

## The Gift.

Organ donation. We all heard those words. But how distant and unrelated they sound to the most. Something from a billboard or commercial, from the world that isn't ours. Until it is. People die. Sometimes those people are our relatives or friends. It is crazy and surreal then, how life can flip, throwing you and your family on the other side of the looking glass. Suddenly there are situations to deal with, choices to be made, questions asked, and questions answered. But sometimes in the middle of this chaotic world, one timely made decision can save somebody's life. Maybe more than just one.

### 1. Life on hold.

I am 28. Shopping for a school dress for my 6-year-old girl. The dress is a bit big cause school isn't starting till September and they grow so fast. My beautiful girl, so happy about her new pretty dress and all I can think of is that I might never see her growing into it. And definitely not growing out.

If only. Every dream and every plan comes with "if only" now. If only I live. It's been like this for the last 4 and a half months. Starting the day, I was diagnosed. That day I began waiting for a new heart. I can't stop thinking that now someone must die so that I can live. Do I wish for someone to die? Does me simply wanting to live already mean that? I don't know. I know that numbers aren't looking good for me. Every 10 minutes another person is added to the waiting list. 20 people die every day waiting for a transplant. Only 3 in 1,000 people die in a way that allows for organ donation.

I do hope for the best, but if it's not meant to be, my body will be donated. To make the numbers a little better for someone else.

### 2. Silent voice.

I am 19. And I am dead. My heart is still beating, pushing blood throughout my body. But I am not my heart and I am not my body. I am my thoughts and my dreams, my memories and my feelings. My body does not have any of it. It doesn't think or dream, it doesn't remember or feel, it doesn't even hurt anymore. But it works. And it can keep working for someone else, giving the second chance. Letting go of the body, I won't ever need anyway, can avert the horrible tragedy for those, who's only hope is a donor organ. For them and their families. It was up to me once to make it happen, but it's not up to me anymore.

### 3. Tragedy behind scenes.

I am a neurosurgeon. Years of training. Personal sacrifices. Endless shifts. But saved life makes it all worth it.

Hours of surgery. The whole world has shrunk to this operating room. I am my hands and my eyes, everything else is numb. Life at the tips of my fingers is all that matters right now, all that exists. After hours of surgery, and we lost the patient, we lost this battle. 19 years old, ruptured aneurysm, brain hemorrhage, death. Suddenly my body is back, tired, exhausted and hurt. Still the worst is ahead of me. Once I exit the operating room, once I say it out loud, I make the death real. Because the death isn't tragic, the loss is.

#### 1. The death.

The heart that started beating inside my belly is still beating. And it will keep beating, making life possible. Another life, because my son is dead. 19 years old, ruptured aneurysm, brain hemorrhage, death. There was nothing doctors can do, there was nothing anyone can do, there was no power that could have brought him back.

Back in the days death used to be clear and final and irreversible. It is still final and irreversible, but it is not that clear anymore. From time to time it is hiding behind fancy machines and new medications. The death of the body anyway. But body is what we see, is what we feel and what represents the presence of a loved one in our life. Of course, it was hard to let it go.

Death makes us scared, angry and frustrated. Not a state of mind for making decisions. Especially when the decision is whether to give another life a chance. The grief takes up so much of ourselves, that every thought and every feeling is poisoned with it. They took my son's heart. I was devastated. What if there was a chance? What if they made a mistake? What if there was hope still? Today I am glad they did. Time does not heal, it only alleviates the pain, but it helps knowing that my son's life wasn't taken away in vain.

They say there will be a day when we will grow needed organs from the cells of the patients who need them. No waiting lists anymore. But until then, supporting organ donation means giving someone the most precious gift - a gift of life. It takes nothing from you and it might give the whole world to someone.