

NOTHING'S GONNA CHANGE

I can still remember that it was March 2005 when it all started. I was arranging everything for my best friend's wedding like what I promised her. Serenity (Serene for short), my best friend, was so busy for she was only counting a couple of months away before she would be married. The much awaited wedding would be done on June, and everyone was so thankful that my cousin Drei finally asked Serene to marry him. They have been together for seven years and everyone was telling them that they are not getting any younger. Serene was 26 by that time and Drei was 28. Everything was perfect - the time, the place, the set up. Everyone was thinking that it was best for them to marry each other and have a family of their own. They were both established individuals in their chosen careers and very much stable to raise their own family. Besides, Serene's foster parents died two years ago on a plane crash and she was all alone then. That was a very tragic part of her life and we thought she could never make it. She was always looking at the wall, staring at nothing with a blank expression on her face. We (the barkada) supported her and helped her gain her hope and confidence in life back once more. She was giving up but then we all encouraged her and told her that her life would not end by then, and that she still had a role to fulfill in this world. I also felt like giving up, because she would not talk to me, she won't talk to anyone. It seemed like she doesn't care at anything, even with her life.

But I knew we can do something for her.

Drei and I never left her. We were by her side when she needed us. We talked to her from time to time, hoping that she would respond and finally smile.. Ah. How I miss her sweet smile..

Four months passed and that was it. I could not bear to see her in that miserable situation. She is my best friend and secretly the only one I love but then I could not do anything for her. I felt worthless.

One night, while Drei was not around for he bought the three of us dinner, I decided to talk to Serene. I found her sitting on the sofa and staring out of the window. Still, she was wearing that blank expression on her face. "Serene", I called her. But it seemed like she did not hear me. "Serene", I called her again, and like what I expected, she looked at me like I was invisible. I ignored that look, instead, I knelt in front of her. I

held her hands and looked deeply into her eyes. I was trying to find some hope that somehow, I could get her back into what she was before. But I saw nothing. I felt real hopeless. I wanna do something for her, make her smile and pull her back into the world she once loved. Right at that moment, I felt the tears run down my cheeks. I cried harder and harder as the thought of giving up and losing her flooded my mind. "I don't wanna lose you, Serene. Please come back. I can't imagine myself living while you are like that", I told her. I pulled her into my arms and held her tight..and I never expected that I would be able to murmur out what I feel for her. "I love you Serene, and I always will...please come back.." Realizing what I did, I let her go, and just on time, Drei entered the room. I felt grateful he did not notice anything. I went out of the room to recall what i just did. "Stupid! Why did you do that? She will never love you. You are only a FRIEND", my mind told me. "Yeah right, a friend. JUST A FRIEND", I said. I fell asleep with that thought in my mind.

Early next morning, I found myself awoken by an inviting smell of breakfast that i guess was still being cooked. I wondered who was doing the job for i knew Drei doesn't know how to cook. I rushed to the kitchen and I was amazed when I found out who was cooking. It was Serene. There she was, humming her favorite lullaby and busy cooking breakfast. I felt my heart skip a beat. "You're back", I said. She turned around and looked at me. And the smile I missed for so long, was there on her face, drowning me. "Miss me?", she asked. I was about to approach her and pull her to me. But to my dismay, Drei entered the room. Serene's attention immediately switched from me to the man she loves. Drei rushed unto her and hugged her tightly. He was crying. In between sobs, i can hear Drei saying "Thank God, honey, Thank God", over and over again.

After that faithful day, it took only a while when Drei proposed to Serene. Undoubtedly, my best friend accepted my cousin's wedding proposal.

By the middle of the wedding preparation, I noticed that something changed in the way Drei used to deal with certain matters, and most of all with Serene. Everyone noticed that he was acting cold towards Serene. They fought often and it gave a negative impression about the coming wedding. But i told them "Nah.. I think that's just normal. Maybe they're just nervous about the wedding and everything concerning it.. They would soon be okay." But I knew I was just trying to drive the confusion out of them. Deep inside me, I knew there's something wrong with my cousin.

Days later, i found out that i was right. Something weird was going on with Drei's life and he doesn't want us to know about it.

My confusion was broken when one night, I saw an unfamiliar medicine bottle upon the kitchen table. I examined it and tried to recall what was it for. But Drei appeared and he snatched the bottle from my hands. "Painkiller", he said. "My tooth was aching." Guess what? I did not believe him.

The next day, I tried to research about that medicine and I found out that it was some sort of medicine given to cancer patients. I felt nervous, but before concluding anything, I made an appointment with our family doctor to ask about it. Then it was confirmed. The medicine I saw was indeed for cancer, liver cancer to be exact.

I was on my way home to confront my cousin when I received a phone call from Serene. She was crying and hysterical. I was so worried about her so I decided to come and see her. When i got to her house, she told me, "Drei cancelled the wedding. He called me up. He said he would be marrying another woman and that he would be going away from the country.. How did this happen? All this time I thought he really loved me.." She broke down. There was nothing I could do but to hug her and console her while she was still weak. I never left Serene until she fell asleep. I went home and looked for Drei, but he was nowhere to be found. Instead, I found a letter addressed to me. It was from Drei.

Sander,

I am aware that by the time you would be reading this, I am out of the country and spending the remaining hours of my life thinking if what I did to Serenity was right... But God gave me no choice... I don't wanna see Serene mourning once again with that dead expression on her face. It would be much better for her to think that I left her for another woman so that she would be able to move on in just little time. I know that you already knew about my situation. I want to ask you a favor. Take good care of Serenity. I know you love her even before I came into her life. It's my final wish. I want her to be happy, to smile always. I really love her Sander. I never loved any woman like this. You will take care of her, that I'm sure of. Love her with all of your heart, with all you can give. Do whatever it takes to make her happy.. And PLEASE... Never tell her about this. I trust you cousin... Goodbye.

Two years passed. Serene and I got married. We never heard about Drei, but I let Serenity know what really happened. She cried at first but then she was able to accept everything. She said that maybe it was God's will for us to be together. And of course, she was so thankful to Drei for what he did.

Two years ago, I found out that I was Serene's first love. I never let go of that for I felt the same way, too. I courted her and she became my girlfriend. After a lot of waiting, I finally asked her to marry me. Everything went smoothly and now we have a twin. We are a very happy and contented family.

I can still remember our promise to one another: *"Nothing's gonna change... From now till forever.. You are my happily ever after... I love you..."*

THE END