

Audrey And I

A chilly fall evening, seven-year-old me sprints to the Punter Street Park. My mother, trying to catch up to me. "Slow down, Michael!" She shouts as I run up the slide, and jump off of the third platform on the big kids' park. Free-falling for a fraction of a second, I feel like Superman. Except, the charcoal grey asphalt is my Kryptonite. I land, adrenaline pumping through my veins. Mom isn't watching, so I step up to the fourth platform. Even more excitement as I fly off. I land, I climb back up, I step up to the fifth platform. Seems do-able. I jump off, adrenaline. Pain. Dizziness. I don't remember anything after that, until I wake up on a strange bed, in a strange room, surrounded by strange people. Now it's not adrenaline pumping through my veins, it's IV drip.

I've always hated the hospital, all the sick people going in and out, and now, I was one of those people. The doctors said I had a broken ankle, and a concussion. It hurt like crazy. On the bright side, I shared a room with a girl named Audrey Hill, a sweet, dark-haired little girl who was wise beyond her years. She was in the hospital for a disease called Cystic Fibrosis. Her parents

name. As soon as I get home, I call her. Turns out, she only lives three streets away from me, but goes to a different school. Over the course of the next five months, we become best friends. I still enjoy going to the Punter Street Park, except now I only jump off the third platform. The jumps have lost all excitement, like when you chew gum. At first, it tastes so good, but then it loses flavour. Audrey's a different kind of gum, she's the kind that gets better after time.

Audrey and I are still best friends to this day. Now, we're both 16 and go to the same high school. Audrey looks the same as she did when we were seven, but more grown-up. Her freckles, faded but still there, her chestnut hair is longer, and usually in a perfect yet messy bun. It was a normal day. Audrey was usually unusual, and I was normal. As I've always been. We had our morning classes and sat down at the same lunch table we sit at everyday. Audrey broke the silence, "I have bad news," She said. "I'm going into surgery again. In one week, I didn't want to tell you too soon." Apparently, Audrey's donated lungs had started to catch the disease too. They had to do another transplant. This time, the donor was a 48-year-old woman. "People can be so kind sometimes. The lungs I have now were once the only healthy part of a bone-

cancer patient named Ed. He gave up his life for me, a stranger whom he barely knew.” Audrey was never the type of person to do that sort of thing, so I understood how grateful she was.

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It was an extremely long week, but the day came eventually. When it came time for Audrey to go to the hospital, we hugged her, and said goodbye. After Audrey left, my mother told me who the donor was. *Her mother.*

When Audrey finished surgery a few hours later, she called me. Except, this Audrey wasn't the same one I knew years ago. This Audrey was a sad, hollow shell filled with tears. “Why didn't she tell me? “Why would she try and save my life by ending hers?” It broke my heart to hear Audrey like this, and she clued in, so she excused herself and left to sleep away the pain and anesthetics.

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Audrey's mother. Her name was Nina, beautiful name. At Audrey's house, we sat down on the pull-out couch in Audrey's basement. She hugged me tight, closed her eyes, and sniffled, “Why do I, of all people deserve this? I'm so sorry, Michael,” She cried. “I'm sorry I'm a mess, I'm sorry I dragged

you into my life, I'm sorry I'm alive!" I hugged her tighter. "Don't be sorry, be thankful. Be thankful that you dragged me into your life, be thankful that you're alive!" My voice was giving out, but I forced it to keep talking. "Audrey, you're the best thing that has ever happened to me, and you know it." She cry-laughed. "I bet your mom is looking down on us right now, thinking; wow, that's my daughter." And Audrey smiles.

Nina's funeral was nice, as funerals are, and it was catered by her company, 'Nina's Pastrinas'. Audrey couldn't stand the funny name. With everyone in black, the outdoor church was very humid. I saw Audrey, she was hunched over her knees on the concrete bench, her hands over her eyes. she notices me and looks up. "I'm supposed to do the eulogy, Michael." She whispers, "I don't think I can, I'm a terrible daughter!" I hug her. "Well," I whisper, "you're not a *terrible* daughter, but I'm sure you'll be *terribly* magical, stupendous even," We both smile.

The priest gets up behind the altar, "Please be seated" He announces, "Well, I'd better go," Audrey gets up, and I head to my seat beside mom. It's time for Audrey's eulogy. She adjusts her microphone to meet her lips, and looks around. She trembles, then, she eases her grip on the microphone, and

half-smiles, "I know most of you are here to pay respects to my mother, Nina, and others for the free food, but that's not important. "Let me list what I love slash loved about my incredible mother, but not everything, because then we'd all be here until it'll be so that I can tell my mom in person, if you know what I'm saying," Audrey continued on, pausing to cry a few times, but even so, her eulogy was terribly magical, stupendous even.

"Michael Benjamin Ramone" I pick up my cell phone and hear Audrey, extremely calm, calling me by my full name, which I didn't even know she knew. "Yes?" I gulp. "What's up, Audrey?" "Michael, I found a note from my mom under the fridge, she probably left it on the fridge, and it fell off!" I'm so curious as to what the note says! "So what does it say?" I inquired. Audrey starts reading. "Audrey, my love" She starts, "I know you are probably extremely angry with me because of my sudden attempt to save your life, and if you're reading this, it was a success. "Please turn the page for frequently asked questions," I hear the crinkling of paper, "number one: why I did this. You were at school, honey. I was meeting with the doctors the day before your surgery. They told me that there were no other healthy lung donors available,

and if you didn't have the surgery, you would die, and I would never get to see your freckled face ever again." ...*Silence* "Sometimes you have to sacrifice peace to save a life," she whispers.

"Number two, if anyone else knew. My love, I only told Abigail, Michael's mom. They were sworn not to tell you. If you are confused, go to question one. I know you will do great things for yourself, Audrey, and now, you have a little piece of me inside you all the time, literally. I love you. ~Mom."

Audrey stops sniffing. "Figures, she'd write something quirky like that," She whispers, "Michael, thank you so much for always sticking by my side, you're the best friend anyone could possibly dream of," Audrey insists.

"Yes, Audrey, I love you too."

I can practically hear her grinning.

Epilogue

“All rise”

“Here comes the bride dressed all in light

Radiant and lovely she shines in his sight

Gently she glides graceful as a dove

Meeting her bridegroom her eyes full of love.”

I’m not listening to what the priest is saying, I’m focused on Audrey’s radiant green eyes, the ones that have been through thick and thin with me. We say our vows. Audrey’s are a lot funnier than mine, she’s always been a good writer. The audience chuckles at her jokes, and I can’t breathe.

“You may now kiss the bride,”

Everyone cheers.

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The whole crew of Audrey and I catering comes out wheeling in a huge three-tier wedding cake topped with Audrey in my arms at the very top. It’s a

white fondant-covered cake decorated with blue bows and pearls, Audrey and I stand behind it, and cut the first slice. *Flash!* We are bombarded with a slew of flashes. After dessert, dancing starts, and the best night of my life continues, however, now that Audrey and I are married, there will probably be many more to come.

The End.

Word count: 1,485