

AND
I
FOUND
HER...

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As a young girl, I resided in a charming home in the heart of Dubai, a stunning country renowned for its breathtaking deserts.

My life felt like a beautiful dream, surrounded by wonderful friends, my caring mother, and our caregiver.

Everything seemed perfect, like a scene from a fairytale, yet there was one notable absence - my father.



From the tender age of one, my parents went their separate ways. Yet, life with my mom was awesome. Together, we wove a tapestry of beautiful moments—playing, studying, embarking on exciting adventures, and discovering the world through travel. The absence of my father never burdened my young heart; my mother's love and devotion were more than enough. In her, I found not only a mother but also the essence of a father figure, creating a seamless and fulfilling existence that required no questioning or yearning for what was absent.



My friends were always curious, often asking questions like "Where's your dad?" and teasing me about it. Yet, I stood firm, confidently affirming that I did indeed have a dad—"My MOM". They never bothered me because I knew and understood the strength of our bond, and I refused to let their words shape my perception of family.



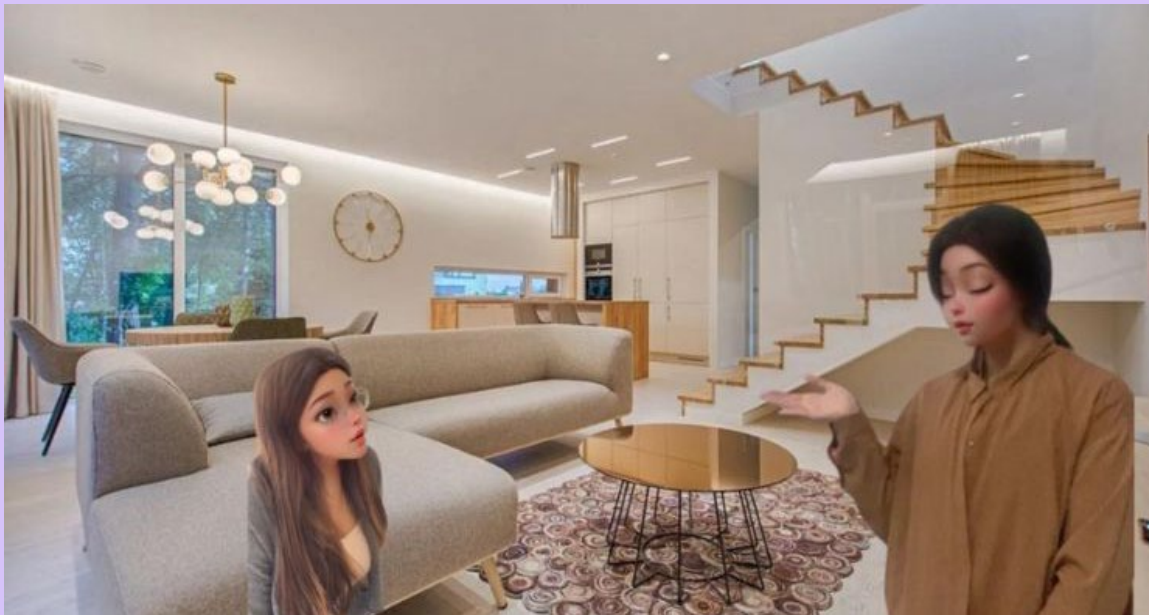
At the age of eight, a significant moment left an indelible mark on my life during a summer vacation in Lebanon. August 2008, a date I'll never forget. That day, my mother walked through the door with tears straining her cheeks, a clear change from her usual demeanor. Seeing her in such a vulnerable state broke my heart. Without hesitation, I rushed to her side, wrapping her in a tight hug. In a trembling voice, I asked the question that echoed in my mind, "What's wrong?"



That's when I learned the devastating news: my mother had been diagnosed with cancer, a serious and difficult illness. In that moment, I couldn't fully understand how serious it was, but what I knew is that I couldn't stop the Tears flowing freely down my cheeks as the fear of losing my mom consumed me. I felt overwhelmed by a mix of shyness and fear, unable to articulate the depth of my emotions to my family, especially my mom. So, I put on a brave face, pretending that everything was okay, although my heart was shattering into a million pieces. But eventually, the facade crumbled, and I retreated to the solace of my room, allowing myself to finally release the flood of emotions that had been bottled up inside me.

The following week, my mom gently took my hand and said, her voice filled with both determination and sorrow:

- "Mia, this year will be different. We won't be able to go back to Dubai; we are staying in Lebanon."
- My heart sank as her words sank in. "What about my friends, my school?" I couldn't help but ask, feeling a knot form in my stomach.
- "We'll live here. I will enroll you in a school that's similar to yours, where you'll make new friends and enjoy it," she said, trying to sound upbeat despite the heaviness in her eyes.
- Tears welled up in my eyes as I protested, "But I don't want new friends. I am happy there; I don't want to come." The thought of leaving everything familiar behind filled me with a deep sense of loss and uncertainty.

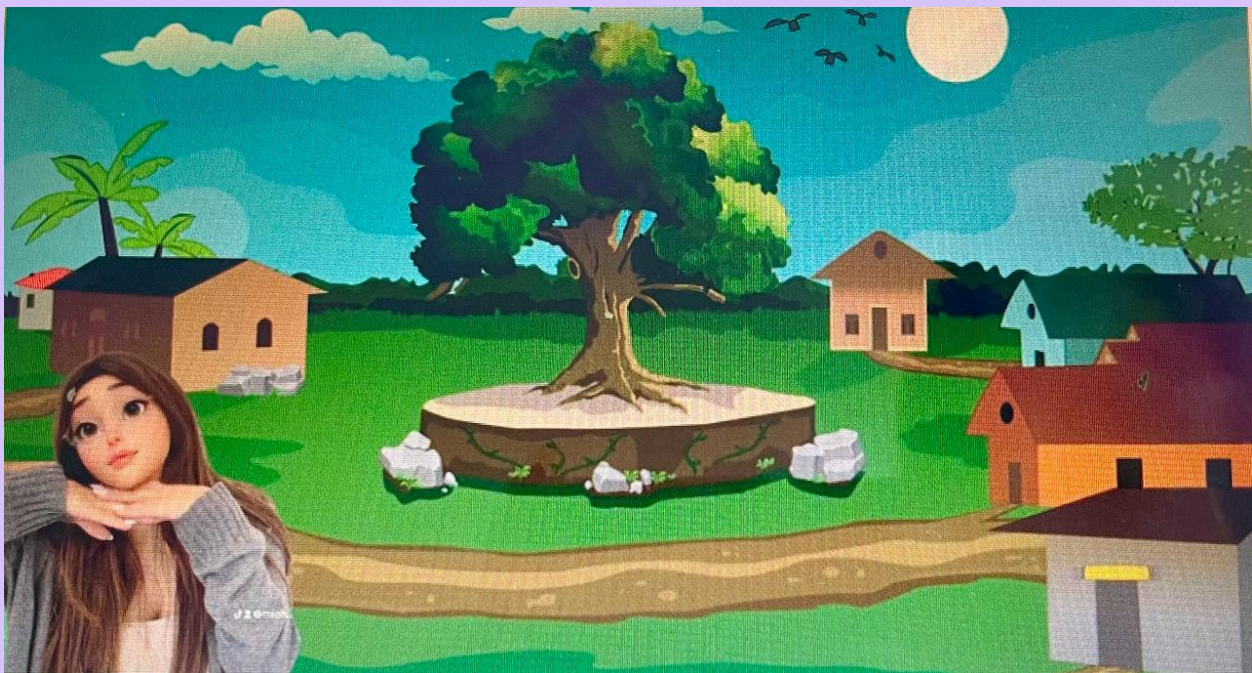


Days passed without a glimpse of my mom, leaving me wondering where she was. As I asked, they assured me she had traveled for work, as she always did, and would be back soon, but deep down I knew something wasn't right. This time, her absence stretched on longer than usual. Each passing moment without her presence felt like an eternity, amplifying the emptiness that lingered in our home.



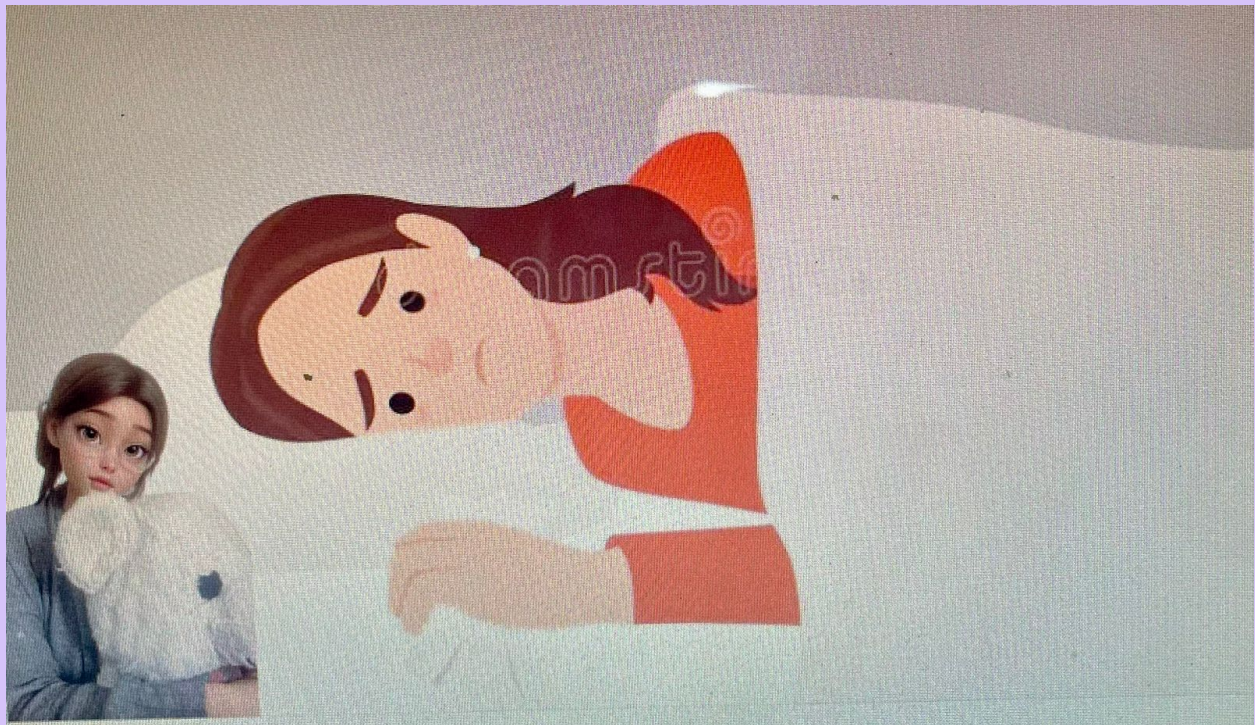
As a month passed, reality hit me like a ton of bricks; my mom had been in the hospital all along, battling her illness. The truth left me feeling even worse, unsure of what was about to come.

As weeks turned into months, it became increasingly evident that our plans to return to Dubai weren't happening anytime soon. Starting school in Lebanon felt like stepping into a world where I didn't belong. My new classmates were nothing like my friends back home. They felt strange, and I felt alone; they were different from me. Each day, I came home in tears, wishing my mom was there to comfort me in my new journey, as she always did, but she was nowhere to be found. All I had from her was that beautiful and comforting voice I could hear through our Phone Calls.



After two long months, she finally returned, but she wasn't the same vibrant and lively mom who had left me earlier.

Instead, she appeared tired, weak, often sleeping or shedding tears. Seeing her in such a vulnerable state left me feeling lost. As a little girl, I felt completely helpless, unsure of how to navigate or act. All I knew was how to play with dolls and color, but in the face of my mother's suffering, I felt paralyzed with fear. I was afraid to come too close, terrified of accidentally causing her pain, so I always tried staying far away from her. In that moment of darkness, I realized just how much I needed her—her love, her strength, her unwavering support; I just wished for her hug and feeling her presence by my side.



My caregiver, and my family—none of them left my side. They were all there, trying to shield me from my sadness. But in my pain, I lashed out at everyone without realizing it. I started biting, hitting my teachers, unable to focus at school. My grades plummeted from A's to F's. Despite making new friends, it wasn't the same as before. I felt a void, like something essential was missing from my life.

After all this chaos and confusion, a glimmer of hope sparked within me. I got an idea! Why not search for my dad? Why not bring him back to help us through this? I began digging, asking, and talking to anyone who might have information. But despite my efforts, I never found a single trace of my dad. Each dead end felt like a blow to my heart, crushing my hopes and leaving me feeling more lost and alone than ever before.

In 2011, a glimmer of hope emerged when my mom began to feel better. She made an unexpected decision to marry a new man who would support her.

That's when I finally dared to hope: "I will have a dad." The thought filled me with overwhelming joy. When they decided to return to Dubai, it felt like a dream come true. I was bursting with excitement.



OH NO!

It didn't turn out the way I hoped. He couldn't be my dad. He didn't care about me like my mom did. I didn't feel this connection, I didn't enjoy spending time with him like I did with my mom, nor did I like playing with him. Why was that? Because he wasn't my dad. That's where I realized, I had to stop searching for him, because no one could ever replace a dad.

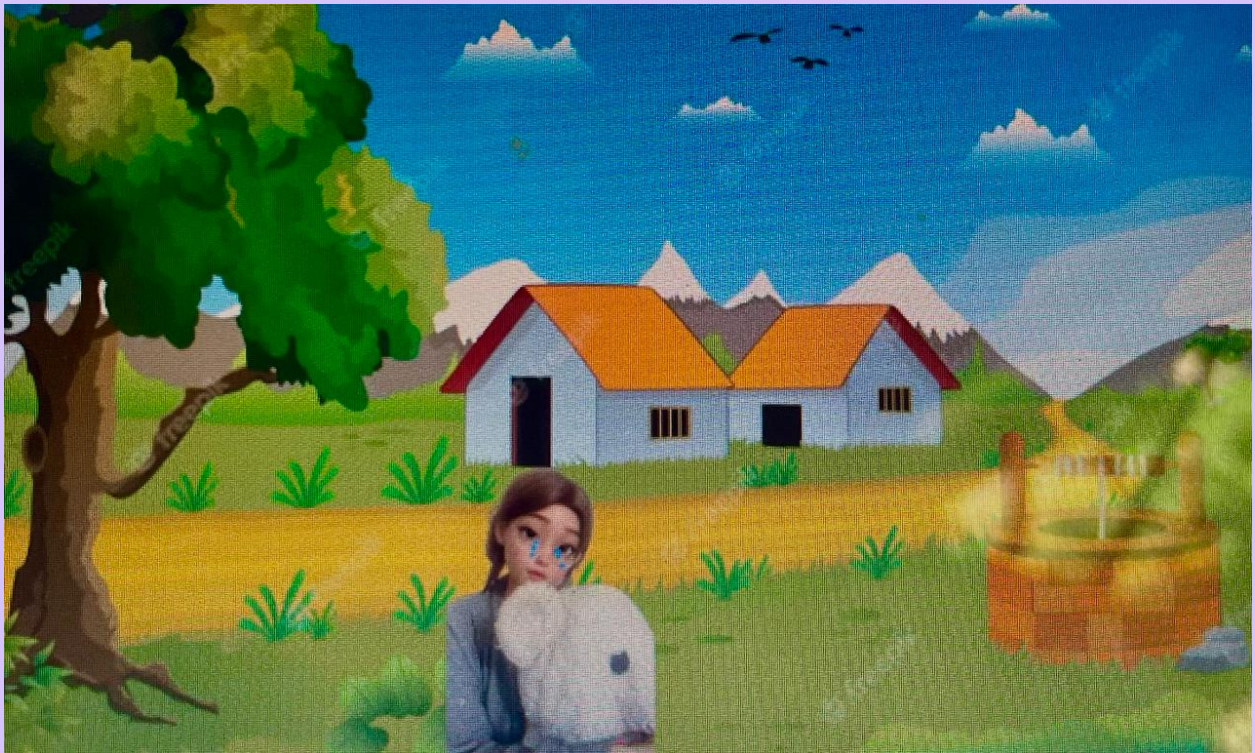


Years flew by, and now I am 18. I made the difficult decision to leave my home in Dubai and venture to Lebanon alone. Life with my stepdad had been tough, and I found myself feeling deeply unhappy. Eventually, I even quit school because my mental health was suffering.

But then, I made a vow to myself: it was time for a fresh start. I was determined to carve out a new path and focus on building a better life. I landed my first job as an assistant teacher, and it was there that I discovered my passion. Working with children brought me so much joy, and being back in a school environment felt like a return to my childhood.

Encouraged by this newfound purpose, I enrolled in a technical school and threw myself into my studies. Despite my happiness, there was one thing missing: my mom. Unable to leave the country, I longed for her presence every single day. I yearned to feel her warm embrace, to see her smile, to run my fingers through her hair, and to breathe in her comforting scent. Though we spoke on the phone constantly, nothing could replace the feeling of having her by my side.

One night, as I was sleeping, I woke to a phone call that changed my life completely: "Your mom is not feeling well, we rushed her to the hospital". The fear gripped me instantly. When I called back, I received the devastating news I never wanted to hear: my mom was gone. It felt like my whole world crumbled in an instant. The pain was unbearable, and I was lost in a sea of grief. The pain was so overwhelming, that it felt as though I had been plunged into darkness, with no hopes of finding my way out.



Then it hit me, like a gentle breeze on a warm day:

I Found Her...

I hadn't lost my mom; she's right here with me.

She's my rock, my guiding star. Even though she's not beside me, I feel her presence all around. It's like she's whispering words of encouragement, guiding me through life's twists and turns from up above. With her watching over me, I find strength in her love, and suddenly, the sadness fades away.

She may be gone, but she's never truly left, she is in my heart.

Every time I lift my eyes to the sky, hope fills my heart. At night, I find myself counting the stars, searching for the brightest one, and in its luminist glow, I see my mom watching over me.

The end.....

