

Losing My Mother

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Losing my mother was a very traumatic experience for me. It happened 2 years ago. My mother got so sick during Hajj break. She was suffering from hepatitis C and liver cirrhosis. She was so pale and slept a lot. Shortly after I returned to Riyadh, my sister called one night and told me that our mother was at the hospital in Mecca. My whole body was shaking and I could not stand up. I called the airport but it was too late to go as the last flight was at 11 p.m. and I only had half an hour to get to the airport. I could hardly fall asleep that night. My neighbor was kind enough to drive me to the airport 5:30 in the morning. I took the 7 a.m. flight and was at the hospital in Mecca around 10:30 a.m.

When I arrived at the hospital, she opened her eyes and smiled. My brothers, sisters, and myself were all at her bedside. She could not leave her bed, could not eat nor do anything herself. We had to take her to the bathroom, bathe her, change her clothes, and feed her. For more than two months, I flew to Mecca at least once a week, depending on how bad her health condition was. Many times I went to the airport with no luggage, just my handbag. Most of the time I had to buy my ticket at the airport.

Every time I went there, I noticed that my mother got weaker and paler as she was jaundiced. The best doctors were taking care of her, but she was at an advanced stage, as her liver was not functioning and it was difficult for them to control her blood sugar.

Her blood sugar went up and down for no obvious reason. She went in a coma several times and once she fell in the bathroom 1 a.m., injured her head and had severe bleeding.

I was there one weekend and stayed with her in the hospital room. I was grading the liaison interpreting tapes while watching over her. I had to say goodbye to her and leave for Riyadh Saturday afternoon as my students had their final exam the following morning. My students took the test Sunday morning, and I was planning to grade the test before I go back to see my mother. I was calling the hospital every few hours to see how my mother was doing. On Monday, I called 5 p.m. My cousin answered the phone and told me that my mother was in the same condition as I left her. Two hours later, my sister called and said that my mother had passed away. I started trembling and crying. A friend of mine, who was my student many years ago, was staying with me. She tried to calm me down and accompanied me to the airport. I took the 9:30 p.m. flight. When I arrived in Jeddah, I took a limousine and was in Mecca 1 a.m. When I arrived, our house was full of people who came to offer their condolences. I watched the ladies wash my mother and get her ready for her final destination. Her eyes were closed and her face was so pale yet peaceful. She looked as if she were asleep. Soon, she was taken to the Al-Haram in Mecca for dawn prayer.

Hundreds of people came to offer their condolences and pay their tribute to her. They were talking about her and what she did to each of them. I never realized how kind and good my mother was to all these people until after she passed away. I was thinking

about my mother, her sickness, with her children all around her and asking myself “Who will cry when I die”. Life and death had a new meaning and a new feeling.

Having good and supportive friends in moments of darkness is the greatest gift of all. I remember that every time I came home from Mecca, I was exhausted, disoriented and starved. A friend of mine (Mrs. Nahed) was always generous enough to bring me food or take me out for dinner every time I returned to Riyadh. I would eat as if I saw food for the first time in my life.

I lost many dear people. But losing my mother was a unique experience. Without my mother, I am a real orphan and an outcast. I lost her abundant love, care, and endless support. Without her, days are bleak. Every time I go to our house in Mecca, I feel that our home is not our home any more. It is so barren, so desolate. I can hear my nieces and nephews run and play the way they always did, but I cannot see or hear my mother anymore. She is gone and gone forever. May God rest her soul!