

The Promise

A heart wrenching journey of a husband's love for his terminally ill wife both in life and in death.

By Community Relations Team
HCA Hospice Care

47-year old Mrs. Yeo Chin Hong bravely fought against cancer till the very end with the love and support of her husband who stood by her throughout the ordeal.

"She was a very loving, righteous and passionate person," said her husband and caregiver, Mr. Eric Yeo, 47. The loving couple, who have been married for 20 years, first met while they were studying at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). Mr. Eric reminisces fondly, "She didn't like me in the beginning because I came across as rowdy to her, so she played hard to get." His perseverance and sincerity paid off. After their graduation in 1991, they started dating and eventually married in 1996. Mrs. Yeo gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, Xuan, who is now 16 years old.

Mrs. Yeo first discovered she had cancer during a CT scan check, after experiencing pain in the upper abdomen area. A further detailed scan showed several other cancerous lesions throughout her body.

"I was devastated," Mr. Eric recalled, when he first heard of the diagnosis.

Hope Amidst Darkness

The next few months proved to be challenging. She had hopes of bringing the cancer under control despite the bleak prognosis, all in a bid to live for her family. However, the doctor had pre-empted and prepared her for a difficult chemotherapy process.

"We didn't want to start her on chemotherapy as we had heard about the numerous side effects. We tried and tested every possible treatment that you can possibly imagine. But at the end of the day, chemotherapy seemed like the best option for us," said Mr. Eric.

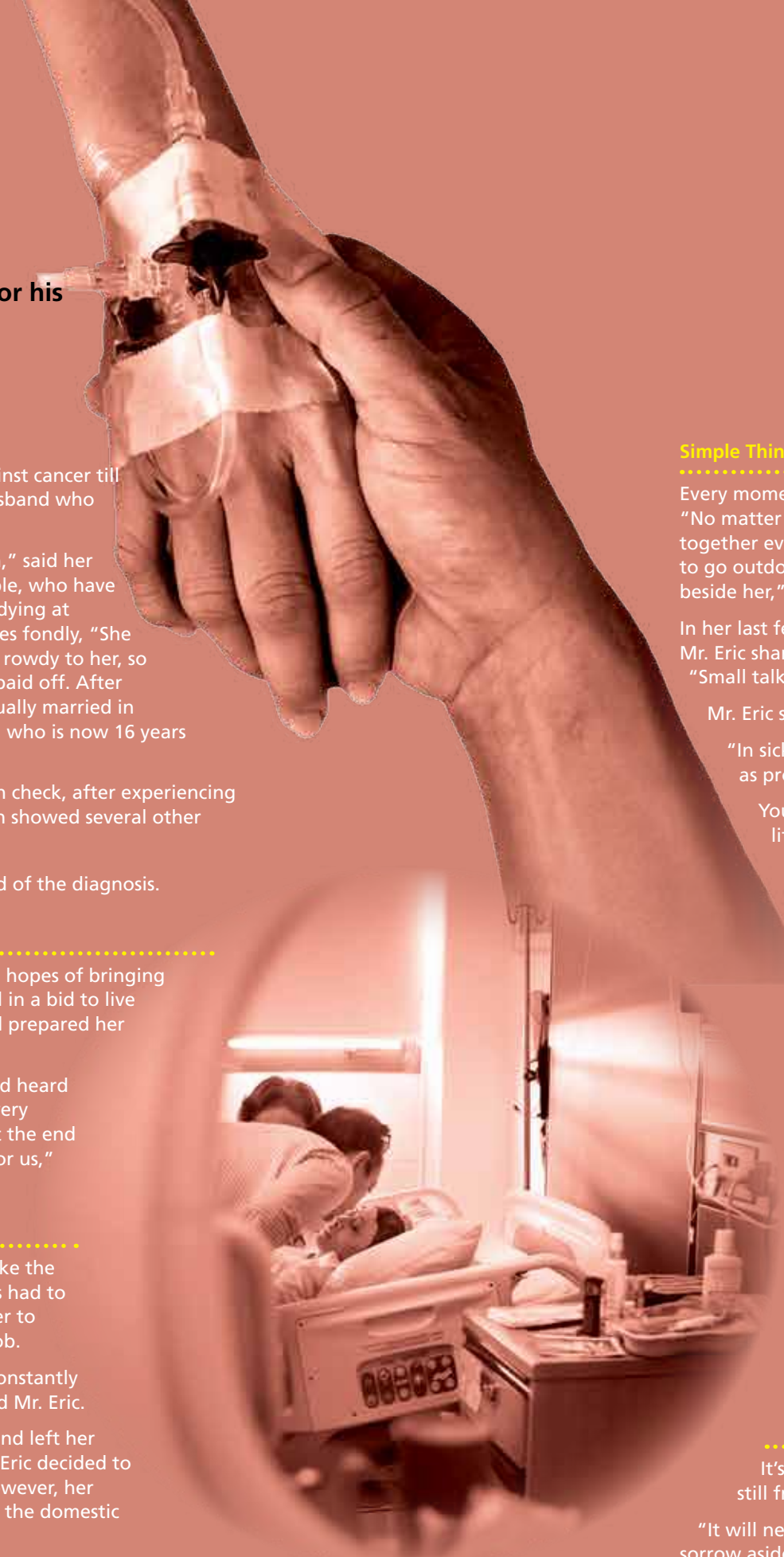
Necessary Changes

Without wasting any time, Mr. Eric buckled down to make the necessary changes to adapt to Mrs. Yeo's condition. Diets had to be adjusted and schedules had to be re-arranged to cater to unpredictable scenarios, all of which took a toll on his job.

Everyday brought with it new uncertainties. "I was on constantly on my feet just in case something happened to her," said Mr. Eric.

The chemotherapy soon took a toll on Mrs. Yeo's body and left her physically weak. Seeing the fragile state of his wife, Mr. Eric decided to hire a second domestic helper solely as her caregiver. However, her increasing mood swings proved to be an arduous task for the domestic helper.

The role of being the primary caregiver fell back on Mr. Eric's shoulders. "I am easy going and took it in my stride. I took it as a chance for me to learn how to care for a patient. Though there was help from others, they would come and go. At the end of the day, I still had to handle everything," Mr. Eric explained.



Simple Things in Life

Every moment together was a gift to be treasured. "No matter how busy I was, we will have dinner together every night. Over the weekends, we would try to go outdoors, but if she feels too weak, I will stay beside her," shares Mr. Eric. "I just wanted to be with her."

In her last few months, some of the happiest memories Mr. Eric shared with his wife were engaging in simple things. "Small talk was the best," he said.

Mr. Eric shared with us a poignant note he wrote for her:

"In sickness and in health, until death do us part, as promised.

You once asked me 'Can we meet in the next life?'

Yes, of course.

'But please don't change your look, I need to recognise you.'

I promise.

In sickness and in health, we promise."

Finding Acceptance and Comfort

Coming to terms with the short prognosis was a great struggle for Mr. Eric.

"I only accepted it when the doctor told me that the blood clot was a bad sign and he told us to prepare for the worst. But still I thought to myself, there must be a way. I wondered what I had done wrong?"

"When she was in a delirious state two days before she passed away, she looked at me all of a sudden. I saw her eyes, filled with love, trying hard to tell me something. I leaned in, and she weakly said, "It's been tough on you." I held back my tears and smiled, "it's not tough, it's not tough at all. Don't say that, it's been tougher on you."

The Pain of Moving On

It's been three months since Mrs. Yeo has passed on and the pain of her absence is still fresh in Mr. Eric's mind.

"It will never heal. I wish I could carry on taking care of her. For now, I will just put the sorrow aside and carry on my duties as a father, a son, a brother, a son-in-law and have faith in myself. After my mission in this world is completed, I'll meet her again."

The undying love Eric and his wife shared is one that transcends above time and death. ♥

About HCA Hospice Care

HCA Hospice Care (HCA) is Singapore's largest home hospice provider and has been a registered charity since 1989. The organisation provides comfort and support to patients with life-limiting illnesses regardless of age, religion, ethnicity, nationality and financial status.

HCA's core service, home hospice care, is provided at no charge to about 3,500 patients annually. Besides medical care for patients, this service also entails psychosocial support for patients and caregivers. A 24/7 hotline ensures help is available round-the-clock.