

Stairway to Heaven

One day, a man was told by his doctor, "The results of the tests are in." The doctor told him, "We have your test results. You have stage 3 small cell lung cancer. You have eight months to live if nothing is done."

This exchange sounds like a scene out of a medical drama, doesn't it? I am sure that many people cannot easily accept the idea of being told by a doctor that their life is about to end, as if it were a weather forecast.

The man himself probably never thought he would end up like this. He'd been married for many years and had three children, one of whom was a high school student still in uniform and in the midst of her adolescence. And he had just had a young grandson. But, unfortunately, the five-year survival rate for lung cancer in general is less than 20%, and as he was by then a stage 4 patient, he had less than a 5% chance of survival. You know, he was almost 60 years old, and at a turning point in his life, but he had to fight a grueling battle against the disease. Ruthless the situation was, but he had the financial resources to pay the huge costs of treatment, as well as the mental toughness to do so. All of these things were in his favor, but modern medical technology could not cure him. Why did he have to suffer such a terrible fate? And who was the culprit who plunged him into the darkest depths?

First of all, for those who don't know about lung cancer, a brief explanation: cancer is the leading cause of death in Japan, and the biggest cause of lung cancer is cigarettes, which kill many people. I believe what is more serious is passive smoking. In addition to passive smoking, we are also taking tobacco toxins into our bodies simply by smelling the aroma of cigarettes on furniture, hairs, clothes, and walls. What's more, cigarettes have a negative impact not only on our health, but also on society and family finances. The price of cigarettes is mostly made up of taxes.

What did the non-smokers here think when they learned this fact? It is true that there are smokers who enjoy smoking as a hobby, and some people may think that it is up to them how they enjoy spending their time. However, I can assure you that in this 21st century world, cigarettes are not the only form of recreation and they can drain your money and your life span.

Now that you've heard all this, you know the real culprit behind the earlier story. Is it cigarettes? Or is it the disease? I can say NO. It was him! He made the choice to smoke! Yes! There is no excuse, not only for him, but also for you, the smoker! It is you, holding the cigarette in your hand there, lighting it, and dropping it at your feet, not realizing that you are biting off your own future as you take a breath!

And then there was the man, someone close to me, who always had this scent in the air and played Led Zeppelin, which he loved, on his guitar. Yes, he was my beloved father. On a daily basis, I would find a pack of his cigarettes, twist them up and throw them in the trash, stomp his lighter to pieces, and strongly warn him and my mother to stop smoking. After years of telling him, my mother finally gave up and said nothing. My father is no longer with us. He has gone to heaven, leaving us, his family, and his regrets behind in a small, white, hospital room, where the machines were whirring. He was a bit shy and taciturn, but he was also a man of passion, generosity, deep affection, and a big heart that was immeasurable.

While wearing my high school uniform at his funeral, I said goodbye one last time to my father, who lay in peace wearing his best suit, which must have been for my graduation ceremony. My

mother put a white handkerchief soaked with tears to his chest. Those tears should have been shed at the graduation ceremony. And the day I wore that uniform to my own graduation, I hated cigarettes and cancer more than anything else in the world

However, please understand what was going on. I was never able to blame my father, who was suffering at the last moment because I was truly a daddy's girl. In fact, though, he was the one to blame because he wouldn't listen to our advice but kept smoking at his own risk.

Please listen and hear me. What I want to say loudest to smokers is, "I want you to have the courage and the decisiveness to quit smoking for the sake of your loved ones." The people who will be hurt and grieve the most are the people around you. Even if they love you most, they can't stop you from getting sick, and they can only wait for your death. This is the same for doctors. The days leading up to the final moments of a loved one's death are indescribable, heartbreaking, and unimaginable.

When I saw smokers, I come up with the hope I envision in my heart that they could explore more good lives, and I can't help but somehow think about their future, despite the heat from my eyes that I have felt before sometime.

Don't take hold of a cigarette!
Take hold of your future!