

ORGAN DONOR

By Deborah Karczewski

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(Christine looks outward as though to an intangible listener.)

I feel a strange mixture of being totally grateful to be alive, to be walking, to be talking, to be actually feeling ...but I'm also drowning in a cesspool of guilt. I've finally returned to school...but *you*...you never will. Honestly, I never would have wished this for you. I never prayed for somebody else to die just so that I could live. Don't be angry with me. I would never, ever have wanted this to happen. Please believe me...my friend. They wouldn't tell me anything about you. I tried everything I could think of to find out about you. I wanted to at least thank your family. I even made a kind of embarrassing scene. I figured, what's the worst they could do to me – tell me to calm down? I cried, I screamed, I thrashed around so violently that the nurses were afraid I'd hurt myself. But it didn't get me anywhere. They just kept repeating that organ donors are anonymous.

Isn't that freaky..."organ donor"? Those words – they make it sound like you knew what you were getting yourself into. (*sarcastically*) No big deal. Like the people who drop pennies into the red buckets for those bell-ringing Santas outside of the super market? Just a little donation: organ donor. I guess you did know in a way. I mean, you did check off the "organ donor" box on your driver's license. I bet you never thought twice when you checked that box. "Organ donation" sounds so...charitable...until you consider that you'd really be giving up a part of yourself...a literal *part* of you. Oh, I'm so, so sorry. Honestly, I'd never have wished for you to give up your heart – not for me. I never, ever want you to think I'd wish this on anyone. (*Pauses and looks outward into the nothingness*) The strangest feeling, though, in my mass of colliding thoughts...is that... I know you. Not like I know you in the sense of having met you before- I feel like I know you now. The doctors told me that my body's been through a huge trauma and that my hormones are all out of whack...but I don't think that's what's going on here. I feel like I *know* you. (*sits*) There's no way I'm sharing this one with that shrink they've assigned me to. He'd probably pull me right back out of school and put me right into a padded room. But I swear...I know you, my friend.

(Christine freezes and shuts her eyes; then, looking downward, she slowly stands, steps to the side of Christine's Chair, slowly raises her focus full-front, and then turns to talk to the empty chair.)

Funny. I'm a tangled mess of feelings, too, Christine. You think you know so much about me? Well, what do you think of this? I think I *do* hate you... No, I don't...I love you. No, I don't. I resent you. I'm jealous of you. I'm envious. I'm...I'm lucky...Oh Christine, I'm so very lucky. Isn't that as weird as it gets? Who would have ever imagined that this soon after I died, I'd be saying, "I'm lucky." Don't get me wrong; I don't feel lucky that I died. I feel lucky that ...if I had to die, if I had to be in my car at that exact moment... if that drunk had to ram into me at that precise spot...well...I feel lucky that you were in the hospital that same day. It's him I hate, not you. I hate him for thinking so little of himself...for thinking so little of anyone in his path. I hate him for his lack of control, for caring more about feeling good at that moment than about the consequences. Me! I'm the consequence – me! There has to be a reason, Christine. These things don't just happen. If life is just an accident, then what was the point of my living at all? No, I can't think like that; I won't. It's so obvious. You are my reason,

Christine. I'm just so lucky that you were right there when they wheeled me in. It can't be a coincidence that you were the very next recipient on the waiting list. It's no mistake that you were in immediate need of a heart, that you had no more time. It's no mistake that I didn't need mine ...anymore. First, I hated you. Sometimes, I still do a little bit. Sometimes I just want to yell, "It's not fair! Why does *she* get to live? Why am *I* the one who had to die? Why couldn't someone have donated life to *me*?" But I know that wasn't meant to be, Christine. My brain was just too...damaged. Too bad someone couldn't have given me a brain, huh? But then...even if that were remotely possible, I wouldn't be *me* anymore. And...I liked me. I was a good person. I wasn't perfect, but I really think you would have liked me. We have a lot in common, you know. I wasn't that much older than you are. I could have been...like...your mentor. I could have been the older friend you'd go to with all of your problems...and I'd have given you really good advice because I would have just experienced the same exact things...just a little earlier. We're so similar. That's why...that's why I'm lucky. Because ...*you're* a good person, Christine. Every time I get the urge to be angry at you, jealous of you, I watch you. I see how much your family loves you. You should have seen your parents. They probably have only had a few nights' sleep between them in the months since your operation...our operation.

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