LIFE BEYOND DISORDERS

BY Dang Sulit-Marino

Sa isang tingin, Daniel seems to have everything under his belt. He’s a well sought after bachelor from a wealthy family in the Visayas who loves living in the fast lane and in the limelight . However not everyone knows that behind the charming smile and hunk body, is a lonely guy coping with Bipolar Disorder since his college years. Day in and day out, he’d try to live with roller coaster of emotions kaya madalas ay hindi sya naiintindihan ng mga tao sa paligid niya because of his extreme mood swings. Things turn for the worst nang mamatay ang parents niya sa isang car accident, leaving him all alone to deal with his condition.

In one of his lowest points, muntik na siyang mamatay nang mag-overdose siya with his meds after a night of drinking spree with his new found friends. Fortunately he survived the ordeal but ironically makikita sa mga lab tests and ultrasound results niya na may tumor ito sa kidney. Pakiramdam tuloy ni Daniel ay nagbibiro sa kanya ang tadhana. Hindi nga siya namatay sa drug overdose pero tinaningan naman ang buhay niya dahil sa cancer.

Initially ay ayaw na ni Daniel magpagamot dahil pakiramdam niya ay wala namang magandang mangyayari sa kanya but during one of his high/manic phase, he voluntarily submits himself to a chemotherapy session along with other cancer patients including Shallouh, a fiesty-go getter single mom who’s been battling with Breast cancer for the past two years. Nung simula ay parang aso’t pusa ang dalawa because nagca-clash ang kanilang personalities. Kung gaano ka-determined at positive si Shallouh mabuhay para sa kanyang 7 year old daughter na si Menggay, kabaligtaran naman si Daniel , masungit, negative at minsan ay insensitive sa mga tao sa paligid. But despite their differences, Daniel suddenly finds himself drawn to Shallouh. For the first time there’s someone who treats him like an ordinary human being and helps him deal with his bipolar disorder. Sa lahat, si Shallouh lang ang nagpapakalma sa kanya. Siya rin ang nagbibigay ng direction sa kanyang healing journey and most importantly, keeps him grounded as he slowly wins his battle against cancer. But unfortunately things are not rosy for Shallouh as her cancer metastasizes to other vital organs in her body. Left with no choice, hahanapin ni Shallouh si Bobby, ang ama ng anak niya para maihabalin niya ito bago man lang siya mamatay. Tutulungan ni Daniel si Shallouh mahanap ang dating boyfriend to fulfill her dying wish but in the end, tatalikuran lang ulit ni Bobby silang mag-ina dahil may sarili na itong pamilya and refuses to be a part of their daughter’s life. For the first time makikita ni Daniel na gumuho ang mundo si Shallouh as she fears for her daughter’s future. In her most vulnerable moment dito marerealize ni Daniel how much he has grown to love her sa maikling panahon na nagkasama sila. Daniel realizes that the last thing he’d ever want is to see her crying and hurting while holding her in his arms. So in one of his manic episodes hindi magdadalawang isip si Daniel na mag-alok ng kasal kay Shallouh so he can be Menggay’s father and give her a secured future. Initially Shallouh turns him down because she doesn’t want to burden him with her daughter but Daniel wouldn’t take no for an answer and promises Shallouh to keep her happy for remaining days of her life. He excitedly plans for a grand civil wedding with all the works despite Shallouh’s protest who insists of having simple ceremony. Daniel would be all hyped out with the preparations at pati si Menggay ay tuwang-tuwa dahil matutupad na ang dream niyang magkaroon ng buong pamilya.

Ngunit ilaw araw bago ang kasal, Daniel goes into depression and refuses to see or talk to anyone hanggang sa dumating ang kanilang wedding day and still no sign of him. Masakit para kay Shallouh na ma-indiyan sa harap ng altar, pero mas masakit para sa kanyang makita ang anak na umiiyak at nasasaktan dahil ito ang umasa at kumapit sa pangako ni Daniel na magiging pamilya sila. But despite the anger and pain, Shallouh remained patient with Daniel and waited until he snaps out of his depressive state because she knew exactly what he was going through. And when Daniel finally got back to his feet, siya na mismo ang gumawa ng paraan para matuloy ang simple kasal na inaasam ni Shallouh in her hospital bed bago siya tuluyang namaalam sa kanyang “mag-ama”.

Story ends with Daniel and Menggay living a simple, quiet and happy life, after getting full custody of Menggay. For Daniel, Menggay has become his driving force to remain healthy and responsible so he can prove to everyone that people with Bipolar Disorder deserves to have a happy family despite the challenges this mental disorder brings.