

CANCER AND MY DREAMS

Judith Fraser

“You have Cancer,” the doctor in his crisp white coat said.

Stunned and shaken, feeling like I was in the middle of a seven point earthquake, I did what any other self respecting holistic, healing person would do. I stepped out of my body. Stopped breathing. *Did he say the C word? Maybe he has the wrong Judith Fraser. Wrong report. In a second, he ll notice his mistake, and it will all just be another glitch in my past.*

“What’s my next step?” I asked. My voice a far off echo.

“A CAT Scan or an MRI.”

Damn, my dream was right. That dream I had last week. I was on an ocean ship. I tried to save a cat perched on the edge of a railing. And failed. The cat bit me on the back of the neck.

I had many such dreams in the next week as I prepared for surgery. In one, I found a large pool of water with a guitar case submerged in the center. I fretted that the guitar inside would be ruined. The delicate strings and smooth casing would no longer be able to send music into the world.

Over to one side of the pool was a broken pot, filled with small flowers. I worried that the flowers would die. They were no longer safely contained.

“The cancer in your uterus was unusual,” the doctor announced after surgery. “It could have grown anywhere in your body. You were fortunate that it grew in an area that is protected.”

The guitar case in my dream was a perfect image for the protection my body had provided.

“You had another kind of cancer in your cervix that we’ve cauterized.”

That was the second symbol in the dream. The flower pot was broken. My cervix was “deflowered” so to speak.

“We are running tests on some of your lymph nodes to see if you’ll need chemotherapy or radiation,” he said.

The dreams continued. One night, my husband and I were riding bicycles. A large mud hole on our path blocked easy access to the bike rental return. After some difficulty getting off the road, we made our way to the rental shed. The owner told us to take the ocean front route, where we’d have to dodge some scattered gunfire, then return the bicycles safely at the next rental shed.

“You will need six weeks of radiation,” the doctor said on my return visit. “Several lymph nodes came back positive.”

“Is that something like gunfire?” I asked grateful for the angels who forewarned me through my dreams.

As a therapist, I knew most people had a tough time facing their mortality. With cancer placing my own mortality in question, the scale was now tipped in death’s favor, in the daily roundabout of death chasing life. That finely calibrated line between the two sharpened my daily focus. I was keenly aware of exactly what *is* important.

“What alternative treatments have helped in cases like mine?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” he said.

When I got home, I pulled out my colored pencils and drew my illness. Carefully I layered it with the colored rays of the Sun and Earth. I closed my eyes and entered the garden inside my body. The images told me it needed help. I hired a full-time “gardener,” and added herbs and teas to my nutrition list.

I couldn’t help but think if I died who would remind my kids of the most important things in life? And who would walk in my space, hear the wise words of my friends, and celebrate their successes. Who would share the ups and downs of my clients in their journey toward expanded awareness? Who would be there grinning ear to ear when my son opens his new restaurant? Who would be down front and center to applaud my daughter’s next show? Who will rock my grandchildren to sleep and sing them songs my grandmother sang to me? Who will sit with my husband on the front swing and watch the hummingbirds dip their fragile beaks into the sweetness of our bright orange flowers.

Over the weeks, friends visited, sent flowers, mailed charming or funny cards, put me on their prayer lists, sent tapes, shopped, and cooked for my family and me. I thought about finding a surrogate wife for my husband, but he wouldn't have anything to do with it.

There’s a list on my fridge now, next to the magnetic poetry my daughter gave me. It has names and numbers of people willing to drive me to the hospital when the radiation makes me too tired to go on my own.

During my next visit to the doctor, I said, “I’ve learned of one alternative treatment that helps. It’s Love, of life and each other.”