

CHAPTER SIX

Diagnosis



A few days passed before the phone call finally came with the biopsy results. The chiropractor asked us both to come to his office to discuss the findings. I told my mom we had another appointment, and she looked at me and said in a flat, distant tone, “I’m not going.” She then said she was not interested in knowing anything more and told me if I felt the need to go, I could go by myself. At that point, I chose not to question her as I knew it would only bring more stress. I drove over to the doctor’s office and felt the now-familiar sense that I had been transported into someone else’s life. I was on autopilot and felt like I was moving in slow motion. I remember pleading and asking God to let the results show a non-malignant tumor. I prayed that my mom would only need surgery, would recover quickly, and be able to resume her life.

I took a seat in the chiropractor's private office, the doctor came in to greet me and asked where my mom was. I told him she did not want to come and did not want to know anything more about the test results. Looking back, I think this was probably better because the results were something I could have never prepared myself for. Not having Mom in the room with us allowed for a more open discussion. I wanted to know the full extent of her diagnosis.

The biopsy revealed that my mom had stage IV metastatic breast cancer. I was so unfamiliar with cancer that I had no idea how breast cancer could be in a bone in her leg. I had no idea what "metastatic" meant either, so I was at a loss as to what the doctor was saying. He continued to read the reports from the MRI scans and the biopsy results that had been sent to him. The MRI showed that my mom had a 6-inch by 5-inch tumor in her chest wall and a large tumor in her left breast. The reason she was considered a stage IV patient was because the cancer had spread throughout her body, including her bone marrow, and was more than likely in her vital organs.

For a moment, my memory went back to the MRI room as I recalled that day when the technicians were huddled around the computer screens. Now I was able to see what those technicians had seen as I leaned in and looked intently at the images on the computer screen. They had been looking at the tumors in my mom's body.

A part of me was relieved that I finally had the necessary information to move forward in caring for my mom. The unknown about her health condition had become known. The doctor then explained that my mom might have anywhere from another three months to another three years to live. It was impossible to determine how much time she had left given the late stage of the cancer.

He went on to encourage me to enjoy my mom while she was here and to make the most of our moments together.

Wait. What? Did I hear him correctly? As my body went completely numb, I had a thought. Maybe my mom's records had gotten mixed up with another patient's. I had just been told my mom had stage IV breast cancer and that she was going to die? I had managed to keep my emotions in check and remain strong during the reading of the biopsy results. But all of a sudden, the strength I had crumbled and my emotions took over. I wept uncontrollably. It felt like a small town engulfed by a tsunami as waves of grief, sadness, and shock overtook me. The chiropractor was so kind. He sat with me as I processed the intensity of the situation and came to grips with the test results and the fact that my mom had a terminal disease.

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