

“I Have Bad News ... You've Got Cancer”

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“I HAVE BAD NEWS ... YOU'VE GOT CANCER”—A death sentence. It sounded fake; it is probably fake; it sounded like a satire, maybe it was. No, it is an illusion, maybe a nightmare, such an unpleasant nightmare. Nothing pointed towards me being asleep. The colors are bright, unusual to my regular dreams, and they got even brighter, hurting my blind eye. My stomach aches, a plodding pleasant pain that grabs me from the deep inside, splitting me in two, three parts or even more. The pain reminded me of those olden times of the toddler I used to be. My breath is heavier. I can feel blood rushing through my ears, like a train whistling through the great dry Sahara ... It has to be real, I must be awake, I have to be sane, and it has to make sense; but does it make any difference? An eternity and a day passed by. I heard the sentence reverberate in my head, like resonating in a compact crystal bell, reiterating an old French Blues melody in a glittery Parisian night of Montmartres. The doctor's lips performed an odious but ironically elegant choreography. My senses were twisted, and my brain was spinning. I can still see the dreadful news twirl around me. I can still hear the despair playing an oppressing requiem tune. I can smell every bit of my sorrow, holding my breath, hostage of the regrets for my life. My life is slipping like a rain pearl running down the graceful face of a virgin. I can taste the bitterness of the doctor's voice, a rusted blade slashing my throat. I can feel it, finally, through the numbness of every end of my body; I can touch the coldness of the solitude, the emptiness of the dead end, wrapped up by the noise of darkness. I felt it; my melting body fills in a mold I happened to deserve. I slowly cool into a solid, slick, shiny sharp nail, whose destiny is ridiculously to be hammered, buried in the deep foundation of something I do not know called destiny. It was my destiny to be buried, my role was over. It is over, but ... I am not ready, I am determined to reshape her, Mrs. Destiny. A deep velvety sound, soft but firm, merciless and determined, burst out, screaming loud inside the temple of my soul, a soul gasping for life, happiness, and joy: “You cannot let it be ... It was written in some book that you will not surrender.”

Come one, it is another nightmare, just an awful nightmare. Wake up; move your leg, pinch your arm, stroke your eyelashes, do something, desperately do something. I cannot help it. Here comes the verdict, for the crime of wanting to live; here comes the judgment, for sins I desired to know. I was alive, still alive; but awake, fully awake this time. I have cancer. Shame, guilt, weakness and fear were pulling me down.

I wanted to cry, but I was too exhausted to be able to scream, too angry that my tears got dry. All that I felt was a sharp burning crystal hanging in the corner of my right eye. The right eye, the one that sees right, the blessed one, the good one; unlike the left one, the evil one, the one that is cursed for what it deserved.

Through my training, my passion for humanities and medicine, I have always flirted with death. I wanted to explore, to seek answers. I am not the first, definitely not the last, I am just another human “aware” of the matters to be clarified, not hoping much of finding “the” answers but determined to reach a satisfying state of mind, to dance my last waltz with “Mrs. Mystery.” It thought I was ready, I read a lot about death, explored it through fiction, novels, documentaries, essays, sciences, theology, philosophy, psychology and neuroscience. Reading the map gets you ready for the trip, but the true experience is once you are on the road. The closer you get, the more confused you feel, and suddenly you reach the enlightenment.

I looked for a compassionate physician, someone who would provide me with what I need to expect. He talked and talked; he verbalized how sorry he was for the bad news and set free the preacher inside him, and you can see him getting drunk off his own words, off his articulate dissertation about the signaling pathway, the angiogenesis, the hottest theories of carcinogenesis and metastasis. He believed I was his perfect audience he desired passionately, a gift from God: a patient who is a physician, what mattered to him was to impress me, what I needed was to be comforted. I wanted someone to listen and not talk, I wanted someone to hear about my anger and fear, and not lecture about cell biology, I wanted someone to hand me a handkerchief so I could

unleash the weak and scared me hiding behind a face of stone. "You are strong, I know you are going to face it with bravery" was the intermission for his ongoing performance in the art of preaching science. It was not long before he carries on with a pledge of his achievements and contributions to science, medicine and what to expect from the treatment plan. It was all about what "he wants to expect" but not "what I feel right now." Yes, I felt betrayed, betrayed by the people of my own. It hurts twice. Here I am, erected like a cactus, whose ingrown spikes are dry and abandoned, longing for a butterfly to ease its lonesome. But I do not deserve it; I could feel it on behalf of all the victims of the last 10,000 years: leprosy, plague, tuberculosis, AIDS and more to follow. I am rejected, untouchable; I have been casted out. My only comfort, hope for immediate comfort, is a physician who is implementing nothing but the execution of a death sentence, and he did it professionally well—too well. Isn't he an expert? I may mumble, but he does not desire to hear me; he stares at me but does not want to perceive my pain; he would hold my hand but fails to feel my hopelessness.

Why this is happening to me? What did I do? Stop it. Just stop it, a voice echoed in my head. I am not going to sink in my lamentations. It's my project; it's my challenge to face it, accept it and to move on. I had no control over what happened, why it happened or when it happened. I know I could not prevent the catastrophe but at least I know I can control the damage. It is my decision to live, it is my choice to honor Life, It is my resolution to bring a smile into life; it is my determination to continue comforting my fellow man, and it is my duty to respect my own life.

Yes, I will continue to live my day as if I would my last one, and I will seek tomorrow as I would live forever.

I will make it ...



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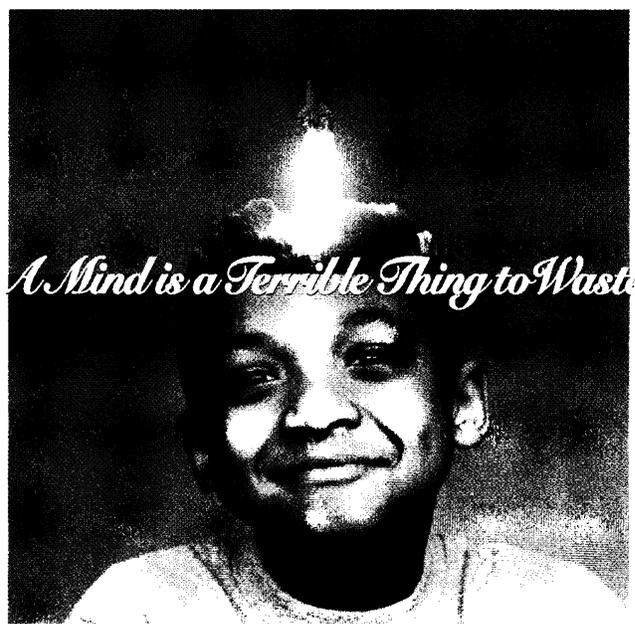
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