’Twas the Night Before Scans

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January 24, 2021 By Lindsay Norris

’Twas the night before scans

And all through the house

Life appears pretty normal

Hanging with my kids and my spouse

But my mind is full of worry

And my heart is full of dread

I find it hard to explain the feeling

It’s as if I’m paralyzed in bed

I tuck my kids in tight

Tell ’em they make my world go ’round

Secretly wishing that tomorrow

Their worlds aren’t again turned upside down

I sit here quietly and wonder

Could I even do it all again

If I had to start over from the beginning

Do I have it in me to “win”

I try and tell myself the aches are nothing

That my mind’s playing tricks on me

But cancer is always whispering in my ear

Why can’t my dark imagination let me be

Tomorrow I’ll go through that tube of fate

Being told to hold my breath and lie flat

I'll try not to think about the first bad news

I remember exactly where I sat

I don't know what the report will show

But I know I'm not alone

I will continue to move onward

It's how I always want to be known

Lindsay Norris 12/8/20

Courtesy of Lindsay Norris

I wrote the little above poem the night before my recent scans. I guess I was in the anxious Christmas spirit, ha. I love to process things by writing and (sometimes) sharing, as I know those of us who have walked the cancer walk really find peace in other’s understanding and similar

experience. I did something a little different this time, thinking after 4 years I could handle having my scans and Oncology visit on the same day. Usually, it's too much for my brain to handle and I prefer getting results pushed to my MyChart from my doc rather than siting in an exam room and hearing it all out loud. If I'm going to get bad news, I'd prefer to read it quietly by myself so I can have a little moment and go from there. BUUT, feeling semi confident—I kept my day as scheduled with the scans and visit all in a row.

Every December since I was diagnosed, I've had CT scans as part of my re-staging at the beginning or surveillance more recently. The first 2 years I had them every 6 months, now just once a year. Having scans in December has always felt like a bit of a whirlwind with all the holiday madness and super busy schedules happening at the same time, plus the extra pressure of getting bad news right before Christmas can really add a layer of dread. I typically start my little freak out in November, because saying "I have scans next month" seems really soon, ha. It feels like scooting up that first part of a roller coaster again bit by bit, feeling the intensity rise each day. Leading up to scans I'm admittedly more irritable and sensitive (sorry, fam). One of the ways I can tell my anxiety is up there is that I can NOT tolerate loud noises, kids rough housing, bright lights, repetitive sounds, etc. I'm guessing because I'm hyperaware and so sensitive to how my body is feeling, looking for any signs of cancer, that the extra stimulus is just too much. Took me some years to realize those connections, but they're pretty predictable now. Add COVID to all of that, and it just amplifies x10.

On scan day, I like to go in early and get them in right away…then go sit and wait for my doc to send me an ok. This time, I had a meeting first thing so had scans mid morning (already off my ritual, ha). Getting the scans went OK, no extra tube rides to make me suspicious or anything like that. Left the radiology department cold (I always get shivers from all the water contrast I have to drink), wanting coffee, and hungry. I went about my day as usual as possible and tried to wait patiently. I surely thought my report would be back before my oncology appointment 2 hours later. Welp, time crept on and no news before my appointment so I was a little flustered heading in. High blood pressure and heart rate to prove it. I sat waiting in the exam room for my doc, reviewing in my head how I feel OK, labs have been good, not losing weigh, etc…all the pep talk I repeat when I need to. But in reality I was sitting there picturing all the areas of cancer they're surely measuring downstairs taking a long time with my report. I realize this isn't rational. One really sweet thing that happened while I was waiting (read: panicking) for results was a cute little pic of sissy making a sun that her preschool sent. Little did they know it was perfect timing.

Courtesy of Lindsay Norris

Doc came in and reviewed everything we could and caught up on how I'm doing- he's seen me bouncing off the walls impatient and crazy before so he was not surprised at my state. He then said "well since the report isn't back, I'll just pull up the images myself and take a peek." WAT! That kinda put me in a tailspin—imagining him pulling my images up on the screen and us both seeing something horrible in real time and having to navigate that made me feel barfy. He very quickly caught my strong reaction and said we don't have to look, we can just wait for the report. But I took a breath and told him to do it (as I sat there covering my eyes like a toddler). He scrolled down while calmly telling me he didn't see anything concerning and that he's pretty sure the report will be great. ANOTHER 2 hours later, that was confirmed. I guess radiology was just busy that day, huh, ha ha HA (facepalm). It all seems so silly afterwards, but until you get that all clear—all thoughts and feelings are just out there waiting to see which one will take over.

I'm so thankful for an oncologist who gets me (although I think next time I'll go back to my original separate scan and appointment schedule). I'm so thankful for that confident feeling I get after good visits that usually lasts at least a few months. I'm so so thankful for a sparkling clean scan (minus a displaced uterus, because why wouldn't it be), and another year cancer free. Now on to the important stuff, holiday break with the kids (and new puppy!).

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