

Stories Beneath the Scars

Category: Scars

written by Andrea Eisenberg | April 6, 2024

I hadn't seen you since I told you of your breast cancer. Because you didn't want to live with the threat of a recurrence, you decided to go for the big surgery, a double mastectomy. We talked a bit about that experience, how you coped during the surgery and recovery, how supportive your husband was, how you felt ready to move on.

You lay down on the table for your exam, and I opened your exam vest. I hope you didn't hear my gasp. Despite having seen many mastectomy scars, I never get used to the them. I could see the devastation left on the battlefield of your chest. Your scarred skin was stretched taut over your chest wall, the scars raised and angry as if they were not ready to stop fighting. I wondered how you felt when you showered, when you felt nothing there. Perhaps relief? Perhaps embarrassment? Perhaps anger?

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A year later, you came in for a checkup with a smile on your face. You were so excited to show me your new breasts. The angry scars had faded, and in their place were symmetrical mounds—implants—encased in skin. The part you were most excited about was the nipples. You'd had a tattoo artist make them, and they looked so real. Amazingly, they looked three-dimensional, almost like a hologram. You made sure my assistant and I looked very closely at them. We "oohed" and "aahed" at these masterpieces.

Your scars no longer ruled you, and you felt beautiful and whole again. I know what it took to get to that moment, and I was happy for you.

In fact, you were always whole, despite the scars. But I'm glad it now feels that way to you, too.

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