

Bald Eagles and Chemo

Category: Cancer

written by Pam Montgomery | June 6, 2021

I knew it was coming.

After my morning walk, I sat down and ran my fingers through my hair, and ended up with a handful. Right on schedule, Day 14 following my first chemo treatment for stage lll inflammatory breast cancer.

Taking what remained of my shoulder-length hair and cutting off what I could with a pair of scissors, I noticed how much I looked like my dad, now that my features, rather than my hair, took center stage. Then my husband shaved off what remained as I sat on an overturned Home Depot bucket in our backyard.

While shaving my head, my husband said, "Now you know how I felt when my dad cut my hair as a boy, coming at me with all seven of his attachments." The kids used to call him "Bald Eagle" after he got one of his dad-inflicted haircuts. This went on for years until his mother cried one day and begged his dad to let her take him to a real barber. So, it helped to laugh as my hair fell to the grass.

Although I was pleasantly surprised with my head shape—very symmetrical, no bumps or dents—I was surprised, for days, each time I saw my bald self in the mirror. I didn't shed any tears; in some ways it was a relief to have something I'd dreaded just happen and be over with. But my tentative confidence in my new look didn't extend beyond the walls of my home, so I filled a rack with silk scarves and straw hats to wear each time I ventured out into the world.

This morning, many months later, I woke to an unusual sight out my bedroom window. Perched at the top of a very old tree, on branches that were almost dead-looking, sat a large brown bird, much larger than the robins and crows that typically nest nearby. As I squinted to get a better look, I noticed its majestic white head surveying the yard below—a bald eagle!

Somehow, I thought they only lived at the zoo, but here was one, less than one hundred feet away, in all its regal splendor. Mesmerized, I watched for ten full minutes, until it gracefully spread its wings and continued its journey.

I guess it's not such a bad thing to be bald.

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