



## Introduction

**Y**OU FOUND A LUMP OR TWO or maybe even several lumps. It is not the end of the world. In fact, for you it is just the beginning of a journey that will eventually bring you to a happier place with yourself and with your life, if you allow it. I personally have had breast cancer twice in the last five years, and now have a 95 percent chance cure rate! At the time of my diagnosis, I was forty-one, single with a boyfriend, Ahmad Jafarbay (my Mongolian Turk), whom I had been dating for one year. We were married two years after my chemo.

When the breast cancer returned in 2004, Ahmad stayed with me through my double mastectomy and implant reconstruction. Some men truly have good hearts. While many men leave their wives or girlfriends

if they find out that they have breast cancer, don't worry. If you do the things necessary to take care of yourself you too will be okay. And, like others, you may just meet your true soul mate through this journey.

Ahmad was actually the one who found the first lump in 2001. It was the most aggressive type of Infiltrating Ductal Carcinoma tumor known. Yet, fortunately, the lymph nodes had not been affected. I had a lumpectomy, chemotherapy and radiation. My cancer was estrogen-positive, which meant it was fed by estrogen. I was instructed by my oncologist to take Tamoxifen for five years because this would ensure my entry into menopause. Stubborn as I am, however, I only took the Tamoxifen for about eight months as I was intent upon trying to have a baby. The first thing to learn is, follow your doctor's instructions. So quite surprisingly my cancer returned in October 2004. Since then I have followed, and continue to follow the instructions of my doctors.

Interestingly, according to the *Los Angeles Times Health* January 7, 2007 issue, eighty percent of breast cancer patients have estrogen-specific breast cancer. That means that their breast cancer is fueled by estrogen. However, according to the article as many as one-third of women stop taking the prescribed aromatase-inhibiting

(estrogen-depleting) drugs before the recommended five-year course of therapy, mostly because of the side effects. As I myself experienced, it is very risky to stop taking the aromatase-inhibiting drugs for *any* reason. It is like playing Russian Roulette with your life. It worries doctors who say that women could be reducing their chance of survival. According to my oncologist, because I stopped taking the Tamoxifen after only eight months of compliance, in December 2004 my cancer returned.

*Being perplexed, I say,  
 "Lord, make it right!  
 Night is as day to  
 Darkness as light.  
 I am afraid to touch  
 Things that involve so much;  
 My trembling hand may shake,  
 My skillless hand may break;  
 Thine can make no mistake."  
 Being in doubt I say,  
 "Lord, make it plain;  
 Which is the true, safe way?  
 Which would be gain?  
 I am not wise to know,  
 Nor sure of foot to go;*

*What is so clear to Thee,  
Lord, make it clear to me!"*

—*STREAMS IN THE DESERT*

BY MRS. CHAS. E. COWMAN

Despite the fact that the doctor had told me I needed only one mastectomy with reconstruction, I decided to have a double mastectomy with reconstructive implants. He said a plastic surgeon could match the breasts. It was quite difficult for me to fathom that a doctor could actually match one breast with the other; however, apparently it is possible. To me, I thought that was something only God could do. I also came to the conclusion that I'd rather not have to worry about the cancer returning in the other breast. And, personally, I wanted to have two perky breasts rather than one that was going north and one that was going south.

I have peace now because I believe, without a doubt that, for whatever reasons, I was not meant to have my own biological baby. So, who knows, maybe one day we will adopt, but not right now. And that is okay, because what happens to us is usually what it was meant to be. Plus, our "baby" is our little Maltese dog, and we are very happy with our little family.

When the cancer returned in 2004, it was on top of my lumpectomy scar. Breast cancer loves to bind onto scars. At the time, I was scared that not only might I have to have a mastectomy, but that the lymph nodes could have been affected. I was really terrified that I would once again lose my hair due to chemo!

Thankfully, the second tumor had not spread to the lymph nodes, so hair loss was not an issue. In 2001, after my lumpectomy, chemo and radiation, I had a 73 percent chance of survival for at least five years. Amazingly, however, after the recurrence in 2004, followed by the decision to have a double mastectomy, my doctor told me that I now have a 95 percent chance of survival—as long as I continue to follow his instructions by taking Arimidex, an estrogen blocker, for at least five years. I also get quarterly manual lymph node checks by my oncologist.

We are also very happy with the reconstruction and with how they can actually make the nipples look so natural! It's truly amazing what they can do these days due to the advances in breast cancer research. And it's also truly amazing what God can do for you through this journey, especially at a time when life can seem to be so difficult.