

From That Day Forward

The day started like any other day. Waking up, taking a shower and trying to get the kids ready for preschool and day care. Then the phone rang and it was Mom.

"You have to come down. You're Dad's not feeling well and I need you to take him to the hospital," Mom said.

"Well, what's wrong with him?" I asked. "Maybe you should call the ambulance if he's that bad."

"Can you just please come? Your Dad wants you to drive him."

"Ok, Mom. I'll be there in a few minutes."

I sigh as I get off the phone and tell my husband he's going to have to take care of the kids so I can get to my parents' house. I'm tired. Dad has been dealing with cancer for the last couple of years with it traveling from his bladder to his right lung. I have two small children. My son is almost 4 and my daughter just turned 1. I work full time and my plate is full.

I arrive at Mom and Dad's to find Dad sitting in their small kitchen in a chair looking pale, almost gray. His skin is clammy and he's resting his head in his hand, his elbow on the table. He doesn't look right. He's talking to me, but not saying much except that he doesn't feel well. I tell Mom to call an ambulance. She argues and says she wants me to drive him to the hospital only about 7 minutes away, but I insist on an ambulance. I have a feeling this is not going to be something minor.

The ambulance arrives with the EMTs in a couple of minutes. Living in a small town has its advantages. I've been sitting with Dad and telling Mom to get her purse and get ready to go. We will follow the ambulance to the hospital. I call my husband on the landline (this is prior to cell phones) and let him know I'm headed to the hospital with Dad.

We arrive at the hospital a few minutes later and the EMTs bring in Dad on a stretcher. The exam room is tight as we are ushered in with Dad, and Mom and I are giving information regarding Dad's condition prior to him being there. All of a sudden Dad begins to seize. I've never seen anything like it. Dad's muscles seem constricted, yet he is howling and convulsing. My Mom is screaming "Oh my God" over and over and I see a nurse grab her and usher both her and I out to the waiting area.

Mom is crying and scared. She is convinced Dad is dying right there. She has no idea what is going on. My heart is pounding, I feel my eyes are wide and I'm trying to hold on as my Mom seems to be slipping from reality. The plastic couch is uncomfortable that I'm sitting on and I notice some scuff marks on the floor. The doctor comes in and I hold my breath.

He tells Mom and I that Dad had a grand mal seizure and he suspects a brain tumor. Just like that. There was no leading into it. No other possibilities. He says he has seen this before and he's fairly certain. He asks if Dad has any history of cancer. Mom can't respond so I start answering questions. And then the doctor is gone.

I can't remember much of what happened after that. I know I was in shock. I know Mom was so upset. And I know from that day forward my life changed dramatically. I moved into an adult role, helping my Mom maneuver through those first few days and beyond as we found out more information about the brain cancer eating at my Dad's brain. I had to call my husband and give him an update. I had to call my sister who lived out of state to tell her what was going on. I was in a daze myself.

My childhood was long over, but I was never in this place before. Mom and Dad had always been there before to handle everything. Dad's previous bouts with cancer were serious, but had been dealt with. This was much more serious and Mom was having difficulty coping. I hadn't even spoken to Dad about it yet.

I didn't want to face any of this. I wanted someone else to do it. But here I was watching our family dynamics shift and change and I couldn't do a damn thing about it, except try to hang on.

Ember

(Cancer has touched so many people. If you need an encouraging word, a shoulder to lean on or want to share a story, please reach out to us. I can be reached by email at topaztap60@gmail.com or private message us through our Facebook page.)