

The Cancer Dancer!

Cancer is a disease of cells gone rogue.
For centuries, doctors have relied on 3 methods against them:
→ slash (surgery to remove the tissue)
→ burn (radiation with lasers)
→ poison (chemicals "chemo") — to get the job done.

SPOILER ALERT: OUR GIRL ANN MANAGES TO SURVIVE HER CANCER BY HOOK + BY CROOK.

"Cancer is to be endured... The best you can hope for is to fend it off, like a savage dog."

— Brian Doyle
One Long River of Song



THE DIAGNOSIS OF TRIPLE NEGATIVE BREAST
CANCER IS DELIVERED IN APRIL, 2020 -
JUST AS THE PANDEMIC HITS US.



WE'RE GOING TO GO WITH
EVERYTHING IN OUR
ARSENAL BECAUSE LYMPH
NODES ARE INVOLVED.

FIRST CHEMO, THEN
SURGERY, AND FINALLY
RADIATION

ALL THREE?
ISN'T THERE A MORE
MODERN TREATMENT?
I'VE HEARD OF IMMUNO-
THERAPY...

NOPE. WON'T WORK. IT'S
STILL EXPERIMENTAL,
AND WE GO FOR THE
"STANDARD OF CARE."

OH
NO!



I LOVE
LYMPH
NODES!
YUM!

BEFORE CHEMO, THEY MUST GO IN TO PLACE A PORT.



IT LOOKS LIKE A BIG TUMOR ITSELF!



I GET CHEMO EVERY 2 WEEKS ALL SUMMER.



... FOUR MONTHS LATER WHEN I HAVE FINISHED 7 ROUNDS OF CHEMO, AM 20 POUNDS THINNER, CAN ONLY WALK A BLOCK + HAVE A RESTING PULSE OF 100...

NO EYEBROWS OR LASHES



WOO HOO! NOW IT'S TIME FOR MY TASTEBUDS + HAIR TO GROW BACK!

I HAVE MORE GOOD NEWS: YOUR MRI SCAN SHOWED THE CHEMO GOT RID OF ALL THE CANCER!

WE'LL SEND OFF THE TISSUE FROM YOUR LUMPECTOMY TO CONFIRM, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU ARE CANCER-FREE!



UH OH!

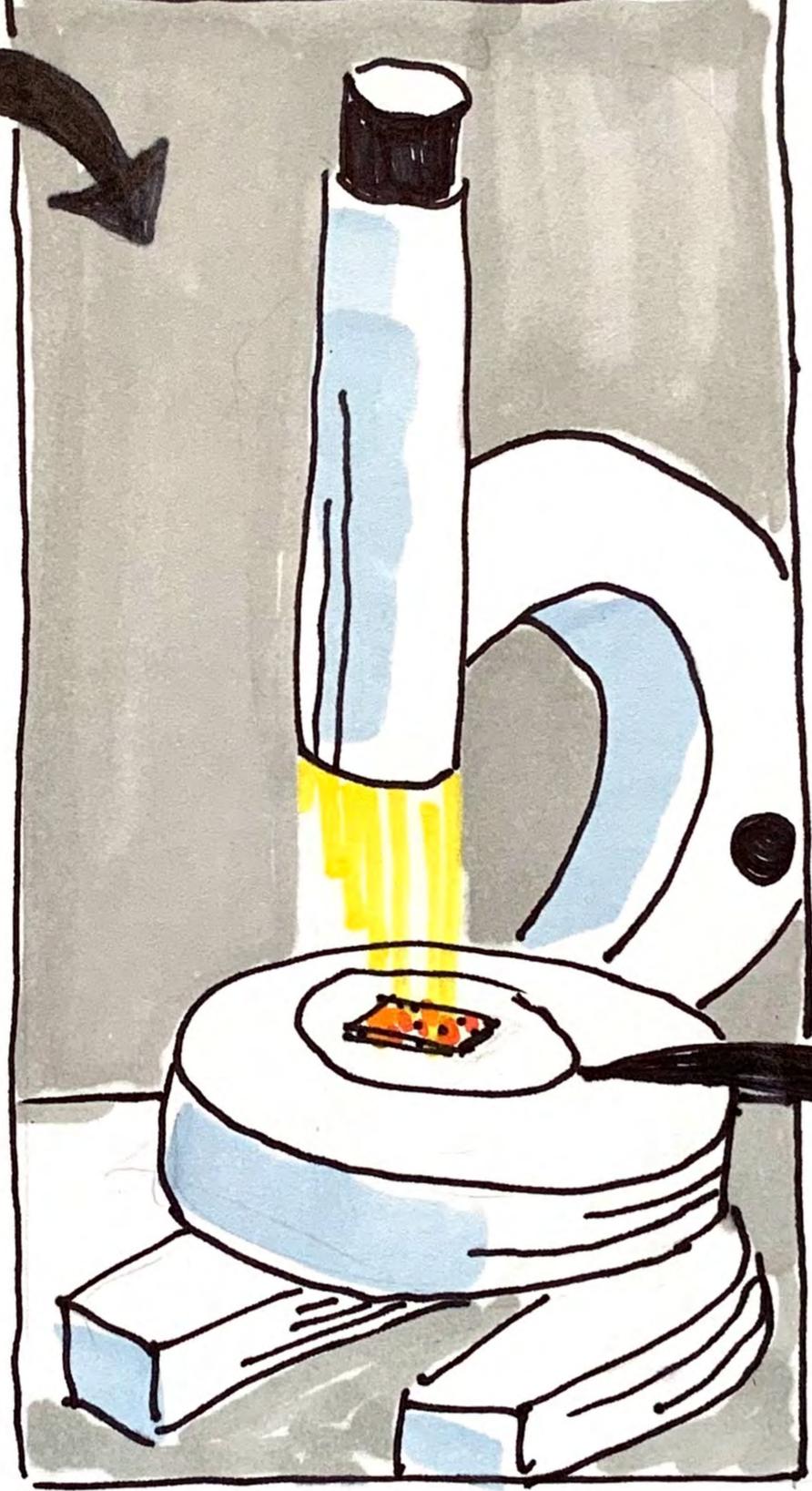


SO THEY WENT IN SURGICALLY (SLASH!),

LET'S SCOOP OUT THE SPOTS WHERE WE FIRST FOUND THE BAD STUFF!



AND SENT WHAT THEY TOOK OUT TO THE LAB...



FOR MICROSCOPIC ANALYSIS.



THE PATHOLOGY REPORT REVEALS BAD NEWS:
CANCER WAS STILL PRESENT — NOT JUST AT A
CELLULAR LEVEL, BUT CHUNKS!

YOUR CHANCES OF RECURRANCE
JUST CLIMBED TO 50%.

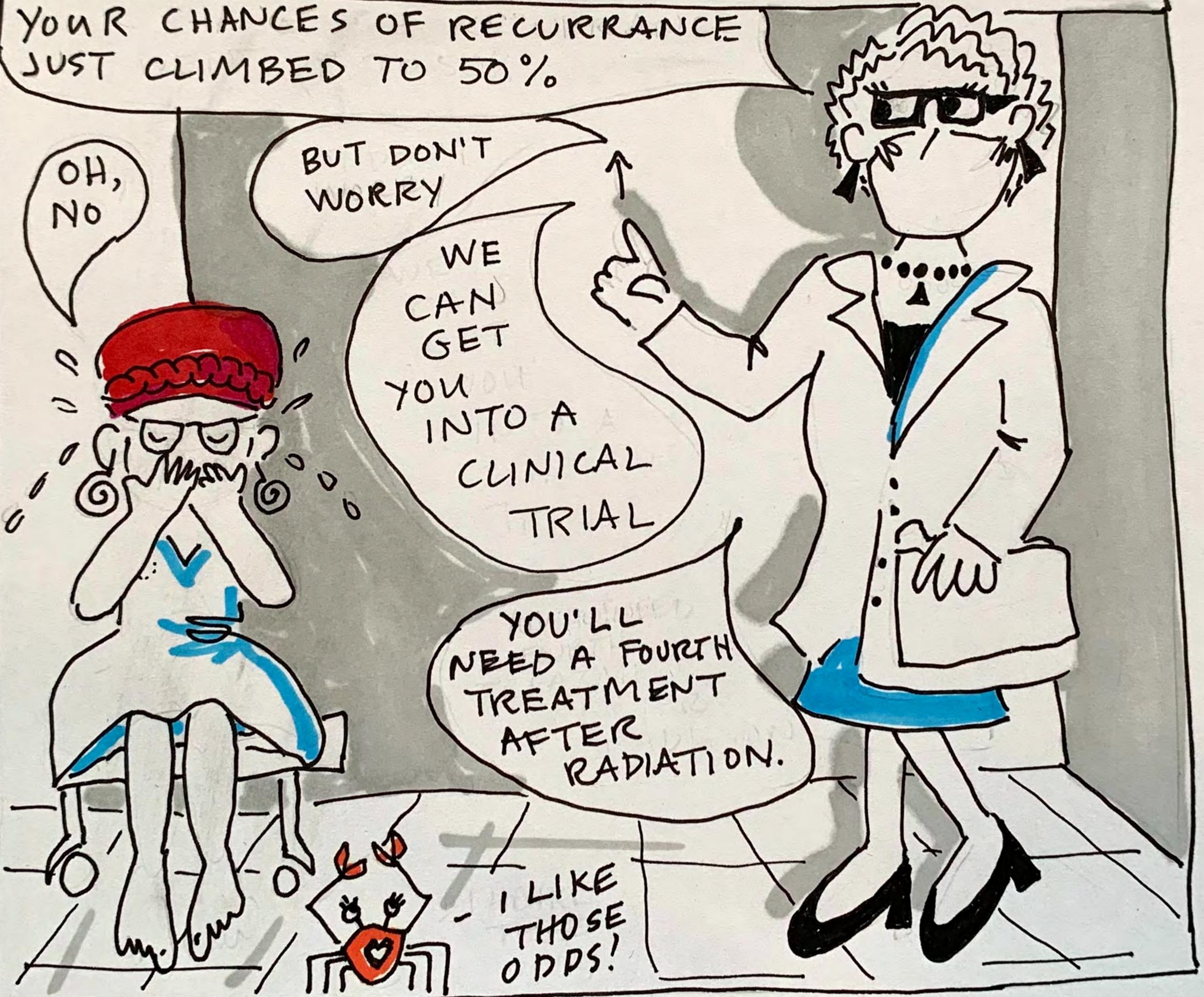
OH,
NO

BUT DON'T
WORRY

WE
CAN
GET
YOU
INTO A
CLINICAL
TRIAL

YOU'LL
NEED A FOURTH
TREATMENT
AFTER
RADIATION.

I LIKE
THOSE
ODDS!



I GO HOME SOMEWHAT COMFORTED THAT THERE ARE 2 CLINICAL TRIAL OPTIONS, BUT DECISIONS NEED TO BE MADE QUICKLY BEFORE RADIATION...WE STUDY.

HONEY, THESE TRIALS LOOK LIKE THEY WILL BE AS HARD ON YOU AS CHEMO WAS.

I KNOW, BUT WHAT ELSE CAN I DO? (SO SCARY.)

MY CUTE HUSBAND

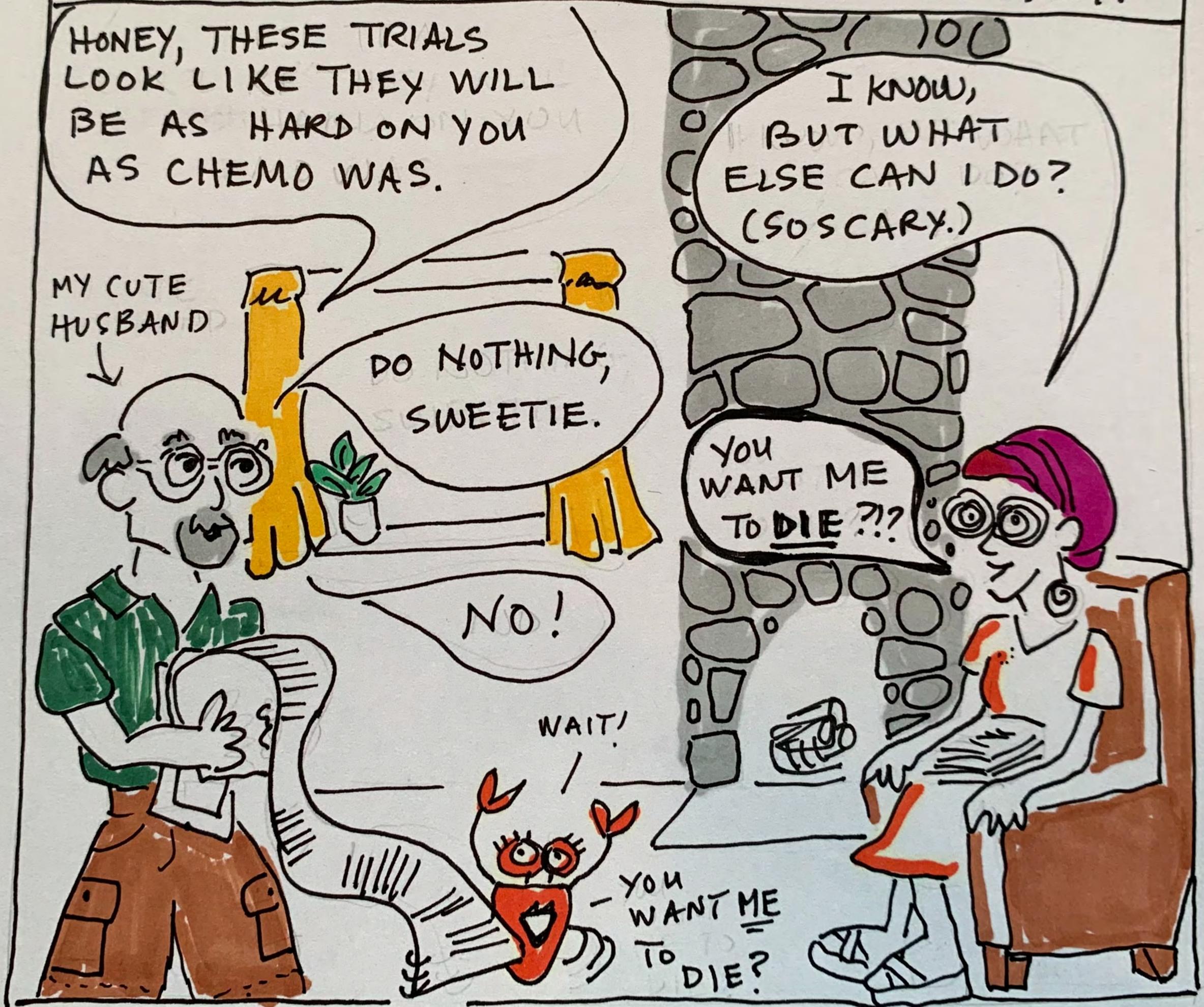
DO NOTHING, SWEETIE.

YOU WANT ME TO DIE???

NO!

WAIT!

YOU WANT ME TO DIE?



I DECIDE TO SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE, BUT WHEN WE GO BACK TO THE DOCTOR, THERE'S MORE BAD NEWS.

OOPS! IT TURNS OUT YOU DON'T QUALIFY FOR EITHER ONE OF THE TWO CLINICAL TRIALS, ANN.



YOUR CANCER CHUNKS ARE TOO BIG, AND YOUR WHITE BLOOD CELL COUNT HAS DIPPED TOO LOW.

WU

WHAT?

WHY NOT?

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN...

JOHN ONLY GETS TO COME INSIDE FOR BAD NEWS.

OH.

YAY ME,



I CRY ALL THE WAY HOME.

IT'S GOING TO  BE OKAY, ANN.

HOW? HOW WILL IT BE OKAY?



BUT I
NEED TO DO
SOMETHING!

I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT I FOR
ONE AM GLAD YOU WON'T HAVE TO
GO THROUGH MORE TREATMENT
AFTER RADIATION. YOUR
POOR BODY!

I SOB, AND THEN I GET TO WORK.

CAN I BE A PART OF THE KEYTRUDA IMMUNOTHERAPY TRIAL?

YOU SOUND LIKE A GOOD FIT!



I FIND 3 CLINICAL TRIALS THAT MATCH.

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PERSONALIZED CANCER VACCINE TRIAL?

ARE YOU OK WITH US SPLICING YOUR GENES?

CAN YOU COME TO ST LOUIS ONCE A MONTH?

YOU ARE PERFECT FOR US!



THEY ALL SAY SUCH POSITIVE THINGS

DO I QUALIFY FOR THE IMMUNOSTIMULANT TRIAL?

YES! DO YOU PREFER TO GO TO TEXAS OR MISSOURI?



THEY SOUND PROMISING...

SORRY,
THE
KEYTRUDA
TRIAL
GOT
CUT

BUT IT
WORKED ON
JIMMY CARTER'S
MELANOMA!



... UNTIL THEY
DON'T.

NOT
ENOUGH
PEOPLE
SIGNED
UP FOR
THE
VACCINE
TRIAL.

BUT I JUST READ
ABOUT THE GREAT
HOPES FOR SPLICING
GENES INTO
VACCINES



I FEEL SHATTERED.

WE'RE
NOT
ABLE TO
ACCEPT
YOU.

BUT
THIS
WAS MY
LAST HOPE!

THE RUG HAS
BEEN PULLED OUT.



I TRY TO PULL MYSELF TOGETHER. I READ + WATCH EVERYTHING I CAN GET MY HANDS ON.



I REACH OUT, AND PEOPLE SURROUND ME WITH LOVE + CARE + HOPE.

we are holding you close!

Prayers galore!

sending cards each week!

storming heaven

Here's some 4-leaf clovers!

abrazos

such determination!

You've got this!

Let's zoom

Wow! People are wonderful to me!

Make room for joy and grief and uncertainty

Blessings!

your spirit is so strong!

you are on my prayer chain

CARING BRIDGE

WELL, I'M STRONG TOO!

I FEEL GRATEFUL.



I DECIDE TO "EAT THE RAINBOW."

IT'S EASIER THAN I THOUGHT
TO EAT 12 SERVINGS OF
FRUIT + VEGGIES A DAY!



GOOD THING
FOOD
CAN'T
HEAL
YOU!

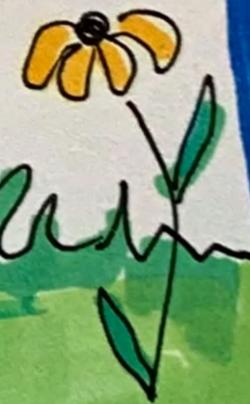


I TAKE A DEEP DIVE INTO QIGONG [CHI-GONG]
MEDITATION AND PRACTICE THE ANCIENT
HEALING ART FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR A DAY.

LIFT
QI UP,
POUR
QI DOWN.

HEAD
TOUCHES
SKY, AND
FEET
GROUND
IN
EARTH

UM...
WHERE THE MIND
GOES, ENERGY
FOLLOWS, SO I
NEED
YOU
TO
THINK
ABOUT
ME
MORE.



I START DRINKING GREEN TEA AND GETTING
PLENTY OF TURKEY TAIL MUSHROOMS INTO ME.

I HAVE A
DELIVERY...

ARE ALL
THESE
SHROOMS
FOR
YOU?

THAT'S
RIGHT.
THANK
YOU!



I HATE THOSE
THINGS!



I RELIGIOUSLY MAKE "MAGIC TEA"
OUT OF GINGER, TURMERIC + CINNAMON

THE
SMELL
ALONE
MAKES
ME
FEEL
BETTER!

THERE'S A
CHAIR
BEHIND
ME
IN
CASE I
NEED
TO SIT

I AM
A FAN
OF THE
SMELL,
BUT I
LOVE
THE
CHAIR!



I SPEND AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE IN NATURE.



I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT... ..THIS.

I TRY TO PICTURE MYSELF GROWING OLD.



I SING MYSELF TO SLEEP WITH TAIZE TUNES.



I SING ON MY WAY TO DAILY RADIATION.



I SING A PSALM DURING RADIATION WITHOUT MOVING A MUSCLE.



I FILL MY HOUSE WITH LIGHT SO THERE
WILL BE NO ROOM FOR ILLNESS.

I THINK WE HAVEN'T SEEN
THE LAST OF THIS CANCER

NOT
MY
TRUTH.

LET'S
TAKE
MY
CHEMO
PORT OUT.
I FEEL
CONFIDENT
THAT
THIS IS
OVER.

DOES SHE
KNOW SOMETHING
I DON'T KNOW?



ONE DAY I WAKE UP + WONDER IF IT WAS A BLESSING
THAT NONE OF THOSE CLINICAL TRIALS CAME THROUGH

NEW
GROWTH

ALL THAT STUFF KIND OF WORKED!
I FEEL HAPPIER + HEALTHIER
THAN EVER!



I ASK MYSELF
WAS IT THE DOCTOR WHO
WAS STUCK IN SAME-OLD-
PROTOCOL WORLD? OR
WAS IT ME?

SO...
IF I HAD TO DO IT OVER,
WOULD I GO THROUGH THE
TOXIC SLASH-BURN-
POISON ROUTE?

WEIGHT
GAIN

FOR WHAT IT'S
WORTH, CHEMO
REALLY SUCKED
FOR ME, TOO.

STILL
ROOTED



I PRACTICE GRATITUDE FOR EVERYTHING!

— EVEN ME?

ESPECIALLY YOU!

YOU ARE MY DANCE PARTNER.

I WOULDN'T HAVE COME DOWN THIS PATH WITHOUT YOU!

FIN.