

THERE IS A STORY ABOUT A FARMER

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There is a story about a farmer who had an old horse for tilling his fields. One day the horse escaped into the hills and when all the farmer's neighbors sympathized with the old man over his bad luck, the farmer replied, "Good luck, bad luck, who knows?" A week later the horse returned with a herd of wild horses from the hills and this time the neighbors congratulated him on his good luck. His reply was, "good luck, bad luck, who knows?"

When the farmer's son was attempting to tame one of the wild horses, he fell off its back and broke his leg. Everyone thought this was bad luck. Not the farmer, whose only reaction was "Good luck bad luck, who knows?" Some weeks later the army marched into the village and conscripted every able-bodied youth they found there. When they saw the farmer's son with his broken leg, they let him off. Now was that good luck or bad luck? Who knows? Everything that seems on the surface to be evil may be good in disguise. And everything that seems good on the surface may really be an evil. So we are wise when we leave it to God.

I've thought about that story many times over my 8-year battle with breast cancer. I first heard it from a Nun who was going through her own hard times fighting cancer, and this story was her message on how she handled her illness. It was a magnificent gift she gave me. To think that going through all this affliction, pain and weakness, that there could be good luck to it all. And I wonder why I have always misunderstood the meaning of strength. Didn't strength mean you had to be tough and resilient? Well, weakness carries a greater actuality. There is the ability to see the remarkable. There is more beauty, triumph and truth in an infusion room than you

will ever see on a stage, in a stadium, or in song. As patients, we understand God has only given us so many sunsets in our lives, for that our gift is living. It is a disquieting intimacy because our lives are jeopardized.

After surgeries, chemo and radiation for years, you emerge a broken warrior just pushing through each queasy moment, walking with blisters on your feet. I have come to realize and value the full potential of that feeling. Physical weakness is utter powerlessness. Losing power is a tortuous free fall. Pain is discouraging, and illness makes you feel inferior. When you are weak you have no choice but to release all your struggles to God and allow Him to decide what is luck and what is bad and to thank him that all things will turn out good for those who love Him. Then and only then will we see something of that marvelous mystical vision that is most consoling of all – that not a hair on your head moves without God knowing about it, as He controls everything. I realize that when I am struggling in life. I am getting in the way of God's work. I now know enough to step aside, relax and give it all up.

The Komen CNY Affiliate website (www.komencny.org) hosts a survivor testimonial section. It contains survivor stories, writings, poems and photos. We would love to hear from you and share your thoughts and insights. E-mail any materials to education@komencny.org or mail to Komen CNY, 5008 Brittonfield Parkway, Suite 300, E. Syracuse, NY 13057. This is a story adapted from a speech by Komen CNY Board member and survivor, Laurie Mezzalingua.