

“She probably doesn’t understand what I’m saying. She’s just staring out into the distance. She most likely cannot comprehend what’s going on anymore, it’s only a matter of time,” the doctor said in a hoarse voice as his eyes locked with my parents’ tearful ones.

I’m here, I can hear them, and I know what’s going on, I just choose not to listen. I’ve come to terms with what will happen because like the doctor said, “it’s only a matter of time.” I no longer have the will to fight and no longer have the energy after every treatment and medication. My body lies numb on the hospital bed while I fade in and out of consciousness waking up to the tears of my mother and the meaningless babbling of the people who come to see me. I have Brain Cancer, and I don’t think I’ll be a survivor. Every day the pain gets worse, the cancer spreads further and every day is one less day that I have to live. It’s been 10 months since I was told. I keep replaying the scene in my head where the doctor told us the results of the MRI.

It started as headaches, what almost every sophomore gets from lack of sleep. Then it was the inability to sleep. Must have been the coffee. Nope. Insomnia. Later migraines, and then fainting. Then came the doctors office. I vividly remember the white walls, the utter silence ,the bright lights piercing your pupils and the MRI machine in the center of the room.

“I’m sure everything is fine, sweetie, things will be okay.” My mother spoke to me but I could feel the doubt in her voice.

I wanted to believe her but the symptoms I was experiencing were the same my older brother faced before when he was diagnosed. From that day onwards it was all medical treatments and chemotherapy. From London, to Mexico, onto any cancer facility with any possible breakthrough, but all gave the same answer, “There’s nothing more we can do.”

March 26, 2014, three months ago from today. We had just finished alternative treatments in Shanghai. My parents left the hospital room to talk but the silence surrounding me let me hear every word.

“I’m sure there is something else we can do, there has to be, we haven’t tried the treatment in Russia yet,” my father said urgently to my mother, “there has to be something we can do!”

“Why is this happening to her, what did she do to deserve this? She’s only 15, she has a life ahead of her, she has her entire world ahead of her...”

My mother fell into my father's arms, sobbing, crying, pleading to God to save her daughter. I could see them through the shades of the room window. I wanted to get up and scream, tell her not to lose hope, not to give up but I couldn't. I physically couldn't. It had been three months since my diagnosis and my cancer was so brutal that I couldn't move, I couldn't speak, I shouldn't have been able to think and there, in that moment, I realized there was no hope for me. There was nothing left for me, and that sliver of hope that remained deep, deep, deep inside my heart no longer existed. I gave up. From there onwards, my mind went numb as did my body, as now my soul.

"Abby! Abby!" I came back to reality. I must have fallen asleep. "It's time for your treatment." The nurse slipped the needle under my skin and everything went black.

I opened my eyes about 8 hours later. I did that often, fade in and out of reality, sometimes for a few minutes, hours, maybe even days. I could barely ever keep track.

"She's awake!"

My head slowly turned to a voice coming from a girl in the corner.

She walked towards me and loudly and slowly, over exaggerating her hand movements spoke, "HELLO, MY NAME IS EMILY, DO YOU REMEMBER ME? WE WENT TO SCHOOL TOGETHER, IN..."

"She has no idea what you're saying," my mother cut her off, "The damage in her brain is so far along she can't process anything, at least we think."

My poor mother, she probably thinks this is her fault, brain cancer is in her family history. Her red nose and wet eyes, she cries herself to sleep every night. She falls asleep on the couch and though she tries to hide it, I know she is sobbing the night away. I wish I could do something for her, take away her pain, sometimes I feel like my death would be less painful because she would know I'm in a better place.

"How is she supposed to get better if you don't believe she will?" Emily spoke back, in a soft voice trying not to offend my mother.

"I don't mean to be rude, but who may I ask you are?"

"I'm Emily, Emily Spence, Abby and I went to elementary school together, until I moved away and we lost contact. I'm so sorry I didn't come see you and her sooner I didn't know. I found out through my mother, if there is anything..."

"It's fine dear, how long are you here for?"

“For now a few days, but I might stay a little while, I’m on break from school. I just really wanted to see her.”

“I’ll give you two some alone time.” My mother left the room.

Emily walked towards me. I barely remembered her. I hadn’t talked to this girl in over five years and she wanted to come see me now? None of my friends came to see me. After I found out about the cancer I didn’t want to let people down anymore. I didn’t want people to feel sorry for me, or upset. So I distanced myself. I dropped off the grid almost. At one point, as my hope slowly diminished, I was so depressed I would lock myself in my room for days trying to come to terms with the fact that I wouldn’t make it out alive by the end of this year.

“Abby? Abby?” I stared into her bright blue eyes, full of hope and strength, they reminded me of my own eyes before all this happened. “Hey, I haven’t seen you in a while, and I know that you may not be able to understand me,” She sniffled, tears starting to water, “ But I want you to know that things will work out, I promise. I’ll leave you to rest, but I’ll come back in a couple hours. Remember, things will work out.”

Things will work out. That phrase had gotten old too quickly. I’ve heard every doctor say it in every possible accent and tone, every freaking family member or friend as they apologized and then left. Clearly things aren’t working out. They haven’t worked out.

Emily came back the next day. She talked to me, like actually talked to me. Her favorite books, movies, her life. She told me these outrageous stories about her teenaged life. Going to parties, drinking, dancing, being normal. She told me all the things I had missed out on these past two years.

As a sophomore I was supposed to be doing all the things that Emily was, but I missed out. The only illegal thing I ever used was medical marijuana and that was prescribed. Emily was trying her hardest to fill me in on every possible subject. She read me every gossip tabloid, magazine and review from the past six months. I laughed at her stories and her gossip, I mean, I laughed on the inside. My face remained blank. I couldn’t remember the last time someone came to see me and didn’t say, “Oh, I’m sorry, or It’ll be okay!” But after she finished talking, I could see the hope in her eyes start to fade, I was giving her a blank look, *the* blank look and I knew that she was praying that maybe I would say something, or respond but I didn’t. She stared at me but my face didn’t change, she quickly realized what she was doing and went on to the next subject. I didn’t want to respond, I didn’t even know if I could.

One day, sometime between the flood of cancer treatments I just stopped talking. No one ever really came to talk to me. All my parents did was cry, relatives would flurry in and out of the hospital room alongside the nurses and doctors. So I just stopped. I stopped listening, I stopped caring, I stopped talking because there was nothing and nobody left to talk to. My parents and doctors thought the inflammation worsened so far that I no longer have the ability to process. But I do.

I couldn't sleep that night. The pain that was somewhat bearable had gotten worse. My entire body starting to tense up and shake. Everything went black as the monitors' usual monotonous beeping rapidly escalated. As everything went black I heard the footsteps of the doctors running into the room. I had about five seizures that night. Emily came back the next day, and the next, for about a week. But as her visits became more frequent, my symptoms did too. I now got about 10 seizures in about 24 hours, I used a respirator because my body couldn't breathe on its own. Every day Emily's bright blue eyes became less and less visible as my vision started to blur. Every day more and more injections and treatments started and I could feel the pain get worse and worse.

"What do you mean she only has a few days left, you said a couple weeks!" My mother hysterically cried as she spoke to the doctor.

Though it may seem strange, I was ready to die. I spent so long knowing that it was going to happen that I had to come to terms with it. Anything was better than the constant anguish and everlasting torture of this cancer. I'm tired. I'm tired of all the treatments and the medicines. I'm tired of all the seizures and headaches and the blindness. I'm tired of giving everyone false hope and the belief that things may truly end up okay because they won't. I am ready to let everyone down, one last time, take their pain away.

"Abby? Hey, can you hear me?" Emily asked. Had she not have been here, the last two weeks of my life would have been a waste. At least I was going to die knowing that I had at least one more person, one friend who cared about me enough to stay. "I know that this might be the end," she was sobbing, I might not have been able to see it but I could hear it in her voice. "But you are going to a better place now, all the pain is going away now. I love you and I hope these last two weeks were worthwhile. As much as I wish I could stay, I need to leave. I can't see you like this anymore, I can't see you die in front of my eyes knowing that I couldn't do anything about it. I love you so much." She kissed me on the forehead and I heard her footsteps

leave the room as the door shut behind her.

As much as I wanted to leave this world I wanted to say something to Emily, scream to her, I wanted to yell out and tell her to come back, but every bone in my body wouldn't let me, every muscle would not let me move and no matter how hard I tried I couldn't. My body had let me down. I wanted to tell her I loved her but now I would leave this world without her knowing. If I could run, I would run as fast as I possibly could to tell her, and scream until my voice died.

But I couldn't.

The next day, Emily didn't come. I tried convincing myself that she was so selfish, "Didn't want to see me die?" But I knew that had I been in her position I would have done the same thing. I knew today would be my last day and I wish I didn't have to be alone today, especially when Emily could have been there. With Emily, I felt somewhat worthwhile, I almost felt the little spark of hope inside me light up again and for a brief time in those two weeks, I felt as if there was some meaning left in my already withering life. Now that she was gone, there was now a pain in my heart adding to the one straining on my body. My parents came in and said their last goodbyes. I could barely hear them as my deafness was starting to get worse. My mother and father held me tight and didn't let go, almost as if they thought holding on to my body would allow them to hold onto my life. They held me my last few hours and as I slipped away from life and all the pain I closed my eyes for the last time, and finally felt free.