

A Different Kind of Sister

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"I can't see what's happening," I said to the brunette girl sitting next to me. We had both walked in late to our 4-H meeting and now had the honor of sitting in the doorway at the back of the room.

"Don't worry. We probably didn't miss anything," she replied. We both laughed at the reality that our 4-H club didn't do much at meetings. We introduced ourselves to each other and I learned that she would be enrolling in my school that coming fall. We didn't know it then, but at age 10, we had both just met our best friend. As years would go by, our friendship would turn into a sister-like bond.

Brittany was speechless, and for her that was amazing. It was the summer of 1999 and I had just told her that I was going to have an operation to remove a cancerous tumor from my left leg. I needed her with me. She was my best friend and I could not do this without her support. She told me that she would be there for me, and she was.

Through all of the doctor's visits and surgery, she was by my side. Then her friendship was called to duty again. The cancer was back and this time it required an entire knee replacement. I was horrified and wanted to run away and never come back. Brittany was there with tissues in hand as the reality of another week at the hospital in Columbus hit us like a ton of bricks. She said she would go home and again pack her bag of things to do in the waiting room. She used that same bag three more times, as the cancer kept making its way back into our young lives. Year after year we grew closer together. We had our fights and arguments, but they were nothing major. We did a lot together. She got me to come out of my shell and do crazy things like playing Frisbee at Meijer with pillows. She showed me that my leg couldn't keep me from experiencing life.

"Britt, I have to talk to you." She knew I had recently had a check-up in Columbus earlier that morning and from my tone, that it hadn't gone well. They had found the cancer for the fifth time.

"But you just had an operation three months ago! How can it be back?" She was just as worried as I was.

My parents, Brittany, and I made our way to Columbus to hear the "options." The cancer was coming on strong and needed to be taken care of once and for all. It was sitting on a major nerve. Thankfully the tumor was low grade again, but if it returned, it had the potential of being high grade which could be fatal.

We arrived at the doctor's office, heard what the doctor had to say, and Brittany and I were led to a separate room. Emotionally weary, Brittany gathered her courage as she realized what was going to happen to me, her "sister." She plopped her faithful, worn bag onto the floor and gave me a big hug. All I could see was her brown hair and noticed she was sobbing with me. Brittany pulled back, her green eyes so abundant with tears that she had to reach for the tissues and used several. It was as if she was the one that would be having the amputation.

We made the best of the first week of our senior year. Then we were off to Columbus. Brittany had become my protector. She treated me normally but with respect. She would tell other people why I was upset or crying or angry. She knew my every emotion and was beginning to learn what triggered my emotions.

The surgery came and Brittany stayed with me in my hospital room, as usual. We ordered food. Nurses brought us our own laptop, a second TV/VCR, and a CD player. We had everything. Then it was time to return to reality. Brittany came over to my house almost every day to see me and brought me my homework. She believed I could do anything. She took me out in her red Cavalier to go over to her house or we would go get fast food. She knew that I would recover better and faster if I got out of the house.

I went back to school two months later, after the begging from Brittany and my other friends finally gave me the courage. The year went by quickly. Before long, it was time for graduation.

Brittany looked radiant with her glowing green eyes and dark brown hair. Her white cap and gown made her look beautiful. We could not believe it was finally here. The day we had been waiting for had arrived.

"You gonna make it Hop-along?" Brittany asked and gave me a wink, smiling. It was time to walk down the aisle to receive our diplomas.

"Shut up, Two-legs," I replied with a grin. Only Brittany could make jokes about my leg. She and I would both get offended when anyone else would try to crack a joke. Brittany, on the other hand, had seen it all and knew exactly what I had gone through.

Now we are at college together. We are as close as ever. There is something that we understand about the other. We have been through things that most people will never go through. Most of these people do not have someone like Brittany to help them. I am very lucky to know her. She is unique in everything she does, for me and others.