A Cat’s Life

So, I guess you’re wondering how I got here, in a dingy, cold, uncomfortable room, filled with people who think they know everything, think they know me. Well they don’t, I’m still here, dying. Yes, that’s right I’m in hell. I used to be a girl with a smile so big it barely fit my face; I used to have a life. My mom always told me that my eyes remind her of crystals, so blue, so pure, so bright. Now they’re yellow and not even a pretty yellow like the sun, but an ugly yellow like mustard. Yuck. My friends, they don’t come around much more, nor my parents, but it’s better this way. I have all the time in the world; correction I have two months, to do whatever it is you can do in a hospital. I read mostly or watch a movie or two whenever I don’t feel like putting too much effort into what I was doing, which is surprisingly often nowadays. I hang out with Dorota whenever she’s working. She’s pretty cool, she’s also my nurse and my only true friend left other than Amy.

I’m Skylar, a 16-year-old girl with pancreatic cancer. You know, you never think it’s *you* that’ll have cancer, it’ll always be everyone, *but* you. You never expect to walk in to see your doctor after having your inside turned into outsides, grasping your tummy so hard trying to compensate for the pain you’re feeling, for her to tell you that it’s completely normal to have lost 15 pounds because you have cancer. That’s right, that moment right there where my world shattered and came crashing down, I. Have. Cancer. I have never had a boyfriend; not even a first kiss; I haven’t graduated; I haven’t gone to university or traveled the world; never had a family of my own or a little mini me; I haven’t gotten the chance to grow old with the love of my life; never had the chance to work so hard I forgot to sleep; I haven’t partied enough; I haven’t lived. This isn’t fair. But this is life, my messed-up life. And I only have 6 months to live.

I had the option of getting treatment and receiving some uncertain extra 3 months to live, but what life would that be? A life in a hospital for 9 months trying not to die? Or I could go to school and pretend I wasn’t sick or dying. My mom wanted me to try, to try to fight, to try to live. Ultimately and thankfully it was my choice, my dad couldn’t look at me anyway, my mom hadn’t stop crying, there was no way I could survive pancreatic cancer. No one ever does. I did not want an extra 3 months of accidental exile from my parents. I refuse to watch my parents fall apart because of me for an extra 3 months. I choose to believe it was a misdiagnosis, a fluke, a mistake, anything except cancer. They had to be wrong, I wasn’t dying, I couldn’t be.

A month later it happened for the first time. The room became fuzzy; something warm and red was on my face; I couldn’t feel my feet; I couldn’t breathe and then I went down. I woke up in a hospital bed after having surgery. They had managed to remove a bit of the tumor. That tumor was the reason I had just coughed up blood because it had cut into an important artery, funny how things work. I had coded on the table, but I was lucky enough to be saved. And trust me, I use the word ‘lucky’ very lightly. That was my first life, yet I still woke up in a hospital bed. It was an abhorrent and unforgettable experience that I pray never happens again. But it did. Repeatedly.

All my friends were confused, my teachers were concerned, I couldn’t say it, I didn’t have it in me to tell them I was dying, I am dying. I refused to tell my family, but my mom yelled at me saying things like: “you already took away your fight to live from me,” “I’m your mom, I should be able to save you, to heal you” and “I can’t watch you die on my own.” What have I done? I am a monster. I let her tell whoever she wanted, my family, her friends, my friends, my teachers, whoever she wanted, her being alone was not going to be on me. I’m already guilty of dying on her.

My dad though, all he did was work, he never spoke anymore. There was no more laughter in the house. I hated it. For god sakes I’m dying, they should help make my last moments happy and memorable.

The day she told everyone was the worst day. Everyone looked at me differently. And then it happened again, a month after the first. My body went from hot too cold in nearly 5 seconds. It was like night and day. My body felt numb. This was my code. My second surgery to remove an incurable tumor. This was my second life.

These chances I keep getting, I feel as if I am wasting them. I have already coded twice now, how many more times does it have to happen before it’s the last time? This time when I woke up in that dreadful bed, I had my best friend Amy squeezing my hand. She’s kind and funny, of course she’s beautiful too with her pearly white smile, shining hazel eyes, long gold locks and her perfectly fit physique. She’s kind of like the perfect combination of athletics and smarts. My parents were talking to the doctor, nodding their heads. I have no clue what they’re talking about, possibly it’s because I’m quite groggy from the anesthesia so the doctor hasn’t told me anything yet. My grandma was there too, she was nervously knitting in the corner. Maybe my life sentence got shorter.

This started happening every so often. In the beginning, it was once a month, then once every two weeks, following with once every week. I had ‘almost’ died eight times. With each time the tumor started growing faster and every time it was somehow bigger than the last. I have three months left to live. I wasn’t allowed to go school anymore, the doctors feared I could go at any minute. I was on bed rest, house arrest. It started to get bad, my skin was yellow, my liver was enlarged and my back was throbbing with pain. I am now a 16-year-old girl that weighs 75 pounds. I’m literally skin and bone.

Amy came around every day. She was the only one that could make me laugh these days.

“Amy, do you think you could do me a favour?”

She grabs my hand and squeezes it tight and says, “Anything for you.”

I give her a light smile, “When I only have a month left to live, do you think you could convince my mom to send us to Hawaii? I’ve never been. I think it would be a good way to go out, happy, with my best friend and my family.” A tear ran down my face, but I wiped it away before she noticed.

“Of course, but you’re not dying on me, I’m not going to let you. I need my best friend,” she said, “I love you. “

I laid my head on her shoulder. For a moment, we just sat there in silence, appreciating our existence, our friendship. I cried a little. How could I have found show a wonderful person?

I couldn’t breathe, grasping for air, I fell off my bed. She was balling her eyes out. Yelling for help, shaking me and asking me to wake up. I couldn’t move.

“Please, please, please… I need you!” Amy’s uncontrollable sobbing caught my mom’s attention.

“Call 911 now!”

I was unconscious for an hour before they got me up to the operational room. They didn’t think I’d make it out of this one. Well at least not with all my neuralgic things still in tack, like speech and memory and other doctor things. But BOOM here I am, still.

“Hey sweetie, how are you feeling?” asked Dorota as she sat beside me.

“I’m fine.”

“Oh, don’t you lie to me,” she laughed. I smiled.

“I just don’t know when it’ll be the last time. Or when all this pain will be gone.” She saw that I was trying to hide the waterworks, but I cannot for the life of me hide anything from Dorota. I’m transparent she says. Ha.

“Oh honey, it hurts that much? I can get you some medication if you would like.”

“Thank you.” As I laid there, I notices that the ceiling was symmetrical, but uneven. Kind of like life. (Yes, here come the cliché life quotes.) It’s like a roller coaster and an adventure. Just because I am struggling doesn’t mean I can’t be kind. I most have courage. I learned that from Cinderella in case you were curious. I am proud of myself. “I’m scared.”

“It’s okay to be scared, it means you care.”

“Do you think it’s time for me to book that trip to Hawaii?”

Dorota cradled my body with tears in her beautiful brown eyes.

“Hey, I’m kind of like a cat,” I laughed, “They have nine lives.”

“But that would mean that this is your last life.”

“No, that would mean I’m almost done suffering.”

There was a pause, a minute of silence: “Actually, I believe it means that it’s time to book that flight.”

I smiled and fell softly asleep in her arms. When I woke up I had been brought to the airport. I looked at Amy, she is ecstatic.

“How are you feeling?” She asked.

“I’m ready for an adventure.”

“Just remember to keep your eyes on the stars, but your feet on the ground. “

Everyone laughed and smiled. It was perfect. I grabbed her hand; we got out of the car and said our goodbyes. It’s time for our adventure.