

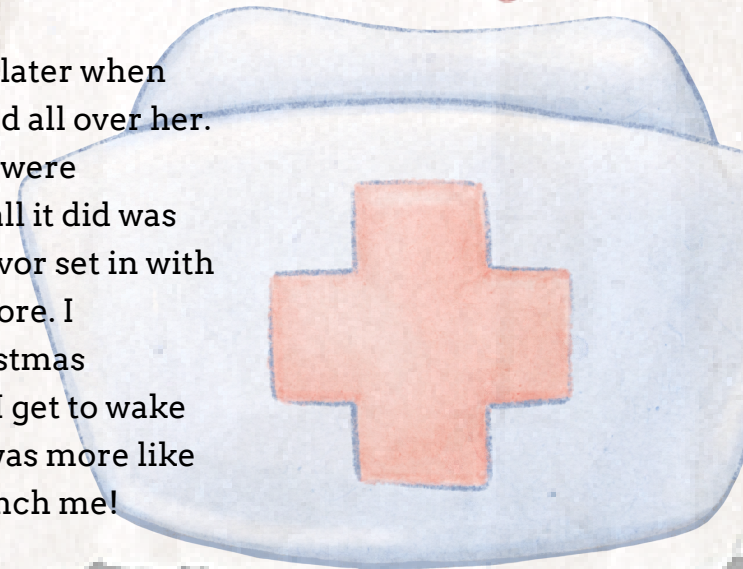
Cancer at Christmas

By Giada Delserro

Cancer. It was almost Christmas and I had cancer. I was thirteen years old, and I was sitting in my hospital bed with leukemia and no hair. It all happened so fast, although I'm still not sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing. If I had known I had leukemia earlier, I would have had much more time to fill my head with worries. On the other hand, with that time I could have been mentally preparing for the terror of getting treatment for my stage four leukemia. Either way, I was getting chemotherapy on Christmas Eve. My cancer was discovered so late, and it was so serious that it couldn't wait until after the holidays. But there I was with that dreaded metal taste lurking on my tastebuds. Yuck!

I just lay there. It was my first treatment, too. I didn't know what to do, nor what to expect. I did know that I missed my friends, especially my best bud, Jake. I missed my community of kids, neighbors, dogs, and cats. I missed my family. My mom, my dad, my little sister, Ellie. No one was allowed to visit me. With stage four cancer and no immunity, as much as a cold could become gravely serious. I couldn't risk getting any 'outside germs.' I hadn't heard the words, 'I love you,' in two weeks since I departed from my family. I told my mom, "Just get me a phone so I can be like everyone else! It's not as expensive as you think. You're just setting me up to get lost in the middle of the woods all alone!" but she refused to listen. Could things have gotten any worse? Why'd I even think to ask such a stupid question? The obvious answer was no, nothing could be worse.

That was a rough day. I had felt nauseous all day, and later when the nurse came in to check on me, I projectile vomited all over her. I had eaten just about six thousand LifeSavers. Those were supposed to get rid of the bad taste in my mouth but all it did was mask it for about eight minutes and then the mint flavor set in with the metal taste, leaving behind a taste worse than before. I wondered if it was meant to be some sort of sick Christmas present. Or maybe it was a dream? If so, when would I get to wake up from it? 'This couldn't be a dream,' I thought, 'it was more like a nightmare.' Either way, I wished someone would pinch me!



I sat there all day feeling pretty miserable. All. Day. Long. Aaaaaahhhhhh! I was just hoping for some sort of cheap toy or two. Why did I have hope? I don't know. But I'm so glad I did. I hit the sack and tried to sleep. At 12:03am I woke up and went back to sleep. At 2:33 I woke up and went back to sleep. At 5:47 I woke up and went back to sleep-that time I slept for a while. At 10: 46 I woke up but this time I saw many nurses, both men and women, walking in.

"Good morning, Isaac," a man with a deep voice greeted me. He wasn't one of my nurses. "Merry Christmas!" another one with short hair said, a little too cheery. "A few people want to say hello," another added. Just then a nurse turned on my TV. On the screen were my mom, dad, Ellie, Jack, our neighbors, my friends, my teachers, my family, and everyone else I knew along with some people I didn't even know. Honestly, I may have cried. Alright, I definitely cried. Then my dad told me everyone who I saw on my screen had given them some money for gifts. At that moment, the nurses came in with seven shopping carts full of presents. And they weren't cheap gifts either. There was a hoverboard, a drone, a Nintendo Switch, a large trampoline, and so much more. And... there was a PHONE!

After I thanked everyone for all the gifts, knowing how expensive everything was, I said, "I won't be able to keep all this." I heard murmurs rise through the speakers. I told them, "I am one hundred percent super thankful for all of this, but I now know how it feels to be in the hospital for Christmas. Because of that, I want others to be as fortunate as I am this Christmas." Then I said, "Nurse Anne, would you mind passing these out to all the other children in the hospital? Oh, everything except the phone. I could use that!" Everyone else on the screen laughed and seemed to love the question. I could tell they felt grateful even though their money wasn't going to the person they thought. Their money would benefit everyone. Nurse Anne took the gifts and left the room to drop them off around the hospital. I knew I would miss all those gifts, but I know I made lots of kids' days. And my day was made too, knowing that after all, people really did care.

A Note from Giada:

"I'm 11 years old and a student at Helen Morgan School in Sparta, New Jersey. When I was given the opportunity to potentially get published in Hutch Magazine, I was immediately inspired to write about cancer considering my mom was recently diagnosed with it. I found Isaac to be the perfect character to live this story of my imagination. Here in New Jersey, you can always find me running around doing something. Whether it's basketball or football, I'm out there doing it. I also love spending time with my three dogs, two birds, family, and friends. I hope you enjoy my story!"