THE SURGERY

Description

(Three months before my wife passed away, I faced an unavoidable situation, to place her on operation table; the narration I have presented here, briefly, were those poignant days)

The oncology surgeon had one deep look at my wifeâ??s PET scan report. I could catch a brief hesitation in his eyes.

He was the doctor who operated my wife six years ago for breast cancer. The reassuring manner, with which he spoke then, briefing me that my wife wouldnâ??t see any life-threatening situation was absent today. I felt he was searching for the right words before breaking the foreboding disclosure. My wife was in the adjacent cubicle waiting to have examined by the doctor.

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â??The cancer is eating into her thigh bone; Iâ??m afraid she shouldnâ??t and canâ??t walk anymoreâ?• the words came out as dryly and as slowly as the doctor could cautiously manage. For me, the words meant no hope and forewarned me about the rushing misfortune into my life.

Later, he examined my wife, made her comfortable with a few soothing remarks. He called for a wheelchair and gave tough instructions for both of us never she should make any attempts to walk physically. Her mobility is now confined to a wheelchair â?? forever. And she was forty-eight then.

Before moving out of the doctorâ??s chamber, I saw Mani, my wife, now sitting uneasily in the wheelchair.

I couldnâ??t notice any emotional shock, whatsoever, on my wifeâ??s face as we found our way downstairs towards our car.

Between both of us, Iâ??m the one who is meek and weak. In all our school-related tasks my wife was the boldest and mentally tough enough to confront any dire situations. As always she had been the powerhouse of assurance behind me. Iâ??m the one who would break down the moment I saw any unfavorable situation. In contrast, seen any disruptive case, promptly, she would come up with all the right strategies, ideas to deal with the challenges in its path and wrestle with them head-on.

The doctors predicted for her a shorter â?? less than six months to survive. The cancer was creeping in its advanced stage knocking down one body system after another. She, who possessed a saintly resilience not to fear anything, gifted herself a two year â??extended lifeâ??. Iâ??m surprised whenever I saw her; she seemed never disheartened by the intimidating disease.

Hospital visits, of chemos; frequent ambulance trips, mouth sores, swollen feet, nausea, and weight loss nothing dampened her spirit to stay alive. She was fearless, and no amount of pain could hold her back not to erase the calm smile on her face all the time. That was the amazing personality of my wife. It was this bounty of spiritual strength she had inside her until her last breath. With this remarkable grit, she gave me ample faith and courage to stay as her caretaker. I had been in that role for more than two

excruciating years.

She could manage for more than one and half year in the wheelchair. And she made herself comfortable in the arrangement.

Meanwhile, I along with my brother-in-law, Srinivas, my wifeâ??s older brother would visit the noted orthopedics. Our search was to explore any surgical possibilities, to set right the weakened thigh bone. If I anyway could help my wife walks without any help.

â??The shaft of the femur bone got precariously damagedâ?• an orthopedic tried to explain me. Why it is impossible to repair to restore the normal mobility to my wife surgically. He further pointed out showing me the scanned picture of the thigh bone how itâ??s chewed up and weakened. And itâ??s about to snap at any moment. I could see the black and white version of my wifeâ??s femur bone â?? the longest and the strongest bone in the body eaten away to shredded bits right in the middle by cancerous cells.

The scariest part of the doctorâ??s conversation went like this:

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â??The chances of her survival post-operation were very slim. I give only 10% chance of success rate in patients with this advanced stage of cancer attack. There is every chance she may die on the tableâ?•. â??I may not be even able to revive her from the anaesthetization. â??I fear it as one more fatal possibility.â?•

His voice was nonchalant and face devoid of any sympathy. Perhaps after scrutinizing hundreds of cases like ours, the doctor seemed immune to any emotional subtlety. I inferred to myself. Listening how bluntly he was discussing the possibility of the death of my wife. I became cold sick, I felt nauseous, and I could feel my body trembling with unexplained fear.

â??Anything can happen when once the femur shaft snapsâ?• the doctor spoke, concluding the conversation. I just nodded; there is nothing else to speak. Then I collected myself and walked out. Dark scenarios started gathering in my mind.

When we sat together for lunch, at times, my wife, all of a sudden would ask me, â??will I be able to walk, Iâ??m tired of this total dependence on a wheelchair, I needed to be on my own.â?• For me, the question carried a mix of appeal, agony, and strain. But she doesnâ??t know Iâ??m not ready with any reassuring response. Most of the time, luckily, she allowed us the reprieve by not asking probingly, the details of conversations we had with various doctors regarding her treatment.

I couldnâ??t shake off the harassing nervousness about what the orthopedic had cautioned me, â??Once the femur bone cracks open the pain would be shockingly unbearable.â?•

My wife now sitting across the dining table, with my son Aditya, married two months ago and my daughter Neelima; is not aware of the mighty suffering that is awaiting her. Perhaps itâ??s a matter of hours or days.

The worst I imagined to happen came seven days later. Everyone in the house frighteningly jolted out of their beds late one night by an urgent loud scream. In one leap I lunged into my wifeâ??s room expecting the worse. I could see her so much in pain and face had become pale. The night garment

she wore drenched in sweat.

Iâ??m scared to look at her not to know what to do next. She was unable to speak and not allowed anyone to go close to touch her. Any effort to comfort her seemed like aggravating her suffering. The only way she was absorbing her pain was by sharp screaming and twisting her head violently. For the first time, I saw her cheeks running down with tears. We are speechless choking down on our helplessness.

In a half-hour time, the doctor and a couple of nurses arrived and calmed her down with strong sedatives. In the meantime, I felt she was taking in more pain than her body could bear.

Time was running out for me. Once the sedation eases down, she would be awake to more pain and more screaming. I had a quick consultation with her brother and my children. We decided to go ahead with the surgery no matter whatâ??s the consequence. I canâ??t stand to see my wife in so much grief, and shock and doctors are against pumping in large doses of sedatives into her body.

I made desperate requests to my doctor friends and my students who are now doctors to recommend an orthopedic who would put together the broken femur bone. The whole day we are hopping in and hopping out of the best of orthopedic facilities. But none of them seemed ready to take the risk.

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Finally, as luck favored us, we got in touch with a young bone specialist. The moment I met him he appeared to me like a daredevil surgeon. He sounded assured, and his words were promising. But he told me that he would take a final call only when the aesthetician gives him a green signal.

In the meantime, I was to bring in and admit my wife to the hospital to let her examined by the anesthetist to assess her. I was a bit apprehensive about what would be his evaluation after seeing her condition. Earlier I had brief discussions with one or two anesthetists, and feedback I received from them was quite disheartening on various grounds. As I waited in the hospital room my wife lying on the bed fully sedated.

The anesthetist finally arrived almost nearing midnight. Straight he was to check the physical condition of my wife. And he gave a quick nod that she is physically seemed fit for the surgery. The first hurdled cleared. A few minutes later the surgeon doctor called for a meeting. As I entered his chamber along with my brother-in-law, I could find both the surgeon and the anesthetist in serious conversation. My legs shivered with a dreaded heaviness as I entered. In anticipation of what Iâ??m there to listen.

The doctor who would operate her informed me about the risks involved, what Iâ??m already aware of, and the surgery would take about an hour. Later he gave the clinical and technical details of the size of nails that go in and the kind of blade that would hold the broken part of the femur shaft.

The anesthetist added that he could hold her down sedated on the operation table only for forty minutes. Beyond that to bring her back to normal level might become complicated. â??The whole procedure has to get completed well within forty minutes,â?• and he rose and fixed the time for operation the next day morning at nine. And he left.

Exhausted, drained nothing left in me to revive myself I slumped in the hospital room. I saw my wife deep in sleep, after forty-eight hours Iâ??m left alone to take a look at her. I suddenly realized how her life is in danger, uncertainty written all over her face. The hollowness on her cheeks marked how the

disease had made its strong presence.

The next day she got stretchered to the operation theatre before nine followed by a group of nurses in their special surgical garbs. A few minutes later the anesthetist followed them. A little later the surgeon appeared gave an assuring nod to me and disappeared into the operation room.

I along with my brother-in-law, my two children and a couple of my friends stuffed in a small waiting room adjacent to the operating facilities. There was neck deep silence in the room. Even we are hesitating to blink. Iâ??m staring at my watch and marking the minutes.

For every passing minute, my heart was beating faster. No one is speaking; there is nothing to speak. There is nothing else but to wait for the doctor to come out and convey the â??make or breakâ?? news. If itâ??s good, we will all rejoice, or else there would be nothing but a painful uncertainty. We are looking at each other in suspended fear.

An hour and a half later the two doctors emerged with a mild smile on their lips their green surgical clothes plastered to their bodies dripping with sweat. Itâ??s an indication of how tough the operation should have been working against time and many odd risks.

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They spoke to me and said, that they could manage to put together the broken bone but only partially. Time was a complication. But she had miraculously responded well. Later it took her seven days to recover and leave the hospital.

Even though Mani my wife lived only for three months after the surgery I take comfort in one fact. For the next three months, she moved around in her wheelchair with more confidence and less fear. She became aware of the fact her affected bone is in place and stronger than before. No shrieking pain to torment her anymore. Only one struggle disappointed her, â??Iâ??m not on my ownâ?•

Even in her final days she never spent any time in ICUâ??.She was with all her dearest family members when her breath took a final goodbye. And her sweet eyes took in the final glimpse of all of us. For two years she battled valiantly and finally gave up and went down fighting against â??the emperor of all diseases â?? cancer.â?•

Category

1. Uncategorized

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