

Hindsight

Hayden Lohr

They always say, that everything looks better in hindsight.
I never really understood that.

My name is Hayden Lohr. I was diagnosed when I was three years old with childhood leukemia. Looking back, I realize that this was the best thing that ever happened to me.

When I was younger, there was 'friday medicine' and the 'magic cream' they put on my port so I couldn't feel them removing blood, and I was just sick... A lot. I didn't really understand what it meant at the time. Looking back was kind of a nightmare in the way that I felt, (even though my parents did as much as they could, forever shall I be grateful). Because of this, I always had something to look forwards too.

I don't do it as often now, which is a real shame. It really makes you happy when you can always find something to look forwards too. Maybe it is getting home to watch movies, maybe it is a picnic in the woods, maybe it is just the enjoyment of feeling well enough to move around.

I remember much more than I let on, but that doesn't matter. It doesn't haunt me, it just is me. I remember always going to empty parks, but I never knew why. Now I know that my parents would bleach the whole park before I could play, and that any other kids could get me sick until I died.

I remember spending so much time in the woods that the Douglas firs and the sword ferns raised me as much as my parents. I remember playing with sword ferns in my dad's pack when I was too weak to walk, and being able to recite the names of most of the plants around me, taught by my parents, and all of their uses.

I remember many things that seemed normal then, that are so foreign now. Seeing very few children my age, and being... poor at socializing when entering school (I feel I have improved somewhat). I remember being so clean, and falling.

I remember falling all the time.

I still remember living a childhood that I loved, one I know wouldn't have been possible without cancer. Being raised by the woods and being close to my parents. Making every minute matter because the next weren't so sure as they should have been.

We moved here because the hospitals in Florida were killing me. And I got to live the best childhood I could have ever asked for due to this. Yes I remember pain, I remember sleepless nights and agony that refused to abate. I remember tears, and falling, and not knowing why, I still don't know why. But I also remember being close to my family. I remember loving them and the world itself. I remember how every little thing had its place, the sword ferns and the people and the birds. I still think now how I did then, even if now it is layered with experience and heartbreak,--because I still remember that there is always more to life. Today still, I seek to live every minute as it may be my last, because even now, it might be.

People have asked me if I am afraid of dying, I used to say no, I didn't want to. But fear was never the right word. Now I know that I am not afraid to die. 'I am afraid of not living fully.' I have learned to make every minute of my life count for something.

Cancer taught me to appreciate everything in life. Cancer taught me to love the cuts as much as the stitches, and for that, I am grateful.

For this, cancer made me.

For this, cancer was the best thing to ever happen to me.

It looks better in hindsight.