

*Cancer as a Tool*

We're crossing a huge open meadow under a diffuse pale-blue sky in early May 2011. Chili is casting back and forth ahead of me, nose to the ground, pushing through knee-high grass flashing in the wind. A single huge red oak, its still-tender pale-green leaves partnered with long strands of beaded chartreuse catkins, marks the center of the meadow up ahead on a gentle rise. I decide to break there. Soon after slumping down against its rough serrated bark, Chili circles back and drops down beside me, temporarily content to pick up on the wind, nose twitching. We share a long view of the low rolling hills rippling out in front of us to the east.

I start thinking about how Dianna appeared to be, in most ways of the world, an ordinary human being, but, like each of us, with extraordinary Talents.

Those who knew her marveled at how she routinely flipped the negative energy coming at her into the positive energy she expressed in her life with a stunningly simple grace. Her song was bright and consistent, "Look at me! If I can do this, so can you."

Chili nudges me hard with his nose. "Pay attention to me." While gently passing my hand through his silky hair, I muse about how cancer turned out to be a tool she used for achieving her Purpose. Many more people would pay attention to how she handled life if she had cancer than if she didn't, finding her behavior all the more remarkable. My intuition is she understood this, and it was all part of a game plan she created before birth.

Having cancer benefited *her*, too, keeping her keenly aware her days *were certainly* numbered, motivating her to make the most of every single one—which has nothing to do with working, not working, traveling, not traveling, having things, not having things, or even having love, not having love—but simply being *Present* to whatever is in our lives *now*, in each moment. She somehow understood, this is the only space where joy lives. So as I see it, her having cancer not only enhanced her capacity for being the transformative

teacher she was in her life, but also for transforming herself.

Neither could I miss that an important focus of her attention was toward *me*. Always the gentle teacher, short on words, long on action, she used her way of being—and her cancer—as a way to draw me into what I most needed to learn, to touch my own heart, to practice living the path of the heart, providing me with endless opportunities for expressing it in very practical, “down to earth” ways, whether it was noticing the need for a tiramisu moment, helping her get on and off a portable potty, cleaning her gently with soft wipes, fetching coffee, changing diapers, or the million laughs we shared while extraditing ourselves from the endless predicaments we found ourselves in.

I’m not suggesting Dianna consciously “wanted cancer.” Nobody wants cancer. Only that, in the living out of her Life Purpose, it *would* be useful. Others, wanting to stick with the reality they are comfortable with, may say if anyone could turn lemons into lemonade, it was Dianna. Or, she simply played the cards she drew. We each prefer whatever meaning confirms our own beliefs. All are internally consistent anyway.

Neither would I say her attitude helped stave off cancer. This may or may not be true. Certainly, her way of being is not the only way to live with cancer—or do one’s life, for that matter.

Chili gets up, impatient to move as the sun slides off its zenith.

Okay.

I start walking again, imbued with the single thought that, whatever else may be so, Dianna understood the game at a very deep level and played that way.