

By Liz Tucker

THE KIND *of* HEARTBREAK *that awakens you*

On October 16, 2014, I was diagnosed with a brain tumor.

In the words of poet Mary Oliver:

I tell you this
to break your heart,
by which I mean only
that it break open and never close again
to the rest of the world.

The fact of the matter is that at this point in our lives, we can sit around and talk about our stories of heartbreak all day long, the kind of heartbreak that country songs go on about, how stars aligned and lovers met, how it all went wrong, and how we have no choice but to turn this lead of betrayal into twenty-four-carat gold.

The kind of heartbreak that lights my fire is the one about how we're all going to die someday and that time's a-wastin'. And how if we haven't suffered the death of someone close to us or felt the fragility of our own bodies, we likely don't think about these things very much. But that when we do, we awaken to the truth that while we all have a death sentence, we still choose to step into the same sinking boat together and row for our lives towards the very thing that brought us here . . . love.

I imagine that no one enjoys hearing the words, "We found a small growth on your brain stem." I certainly didn't. My doctor was really very matter of fact about the whole thing, how it is the best type of tumor to get, likely benign, small and contained, but in a precarious position, and that a neurosurgical consult is in order. A second doctor echoed the prognosis.

“ While we all have a death sentence, we still choose to step into the same sinking boat together and row for our lives towards the very thing that brought us here . . . **LOVE.** ”

In the hours and days that followed, I was fascinated by my organism's innate wisdom on how to be with the news. It's amazing what we do when we feel that our lives are at stake.

Look into eyes of beloved and tell him you're scared. Let him hold you. Check.



Mitigate stress by telling boss and asking for help. Check.

Call blood family. Check.

Call circle-of-heart family. Take in how big it is. Check.

Sit with Zen teacher. Hear him say, "Meditate on how you want it to go." Check.

Research only enough to be informed but not dangerous. Check.

Go to neurosurgical consult. Hear doctor say, "I'm not convinced that you even have a tumor. Let's wait and see in six months." Check.

Cry. Check.

Allow heart to break open and feel the certainty of unpredictability, the vastness of love, the longing to be held by your mother, the fact that there is nothing to do but surrender, and how the only true medicine is to live. Fully. Sacredly. Preciously.

Check.

Liz Tucker is a lover of movement, connection, nature, and creative expression. She believes that her life's work is to share her passion for somatic experience as a potent catalyst for transformation. She holds her master's in transpersonal psychology and is a published writer.