

FROM THE BOOK, 'EMOTIONAL SUPPORT THROUGH BREAST CANCER' written by Dr Cordelia Galgut

PLEASE DON'T

Please don't tell me how I should feel
Or what I should think about having breast cancer;
How I should be 'over it' by now;
How I should be more positive;
How I should be grateful that I'm alive.

And please don't say, 'You're over-reacting to your situation.
It's only you who feels like this', or
'It's time you got on with your life.'

How can you know? *You* have never been in my situation.

And please don't ask me what I have contributed to my cancer
Or tell me how brave I've been.
There was no choice is all.
It was just the luck of the draw.

And please don't ask me how my breast cancer journey has been.
There *was* no journey.
There *is* no journey, because there is *no end in sight*.

And for pity's sake, don't say,
'Well, we're all going to die in the end.
I could get run over by a bus tomorrow.'

It's different
You have never stared death head on.
You have never had breast cancer.
We are on different sides of the track now.

Tell me instead
That you cannot know what it is like living through this hell.

Tell me instead that you have an open heart
And an open mind.
That you'll listen,
That you'll try and understand,
Even when what I'm saying sounds preposterous to you.
It is my reality.

And please, please try and look beyond your own fears,
Or if you can't, tell me so.

Having breast cancer *is* terrifying
And the terror does *not* diminish,
Because the fear that it will come back *is* ever present.

So please, please don't tell me that I'm one of the lucky ones,
That I'll be back to normal soon,

Because my *life* and *I* have been changed forever.

CORDELIA GALGUT