



Nicole Fairbairn's story of

Colleen



My mom is the best friend, hands down. Even when I was a rebellious teenager and she questioned where she had gone wrong as a mother, she was my best friend. I don't think every kid can say that about a parent. The love I have for her is as vast as the ocean, as expansive as the sky.

I don't think it's always easy for my mom. She worries about her children, especially me. When I was young she always used to say 'Niki, you are a square peg trying to fit into a round hole' and so I was and so I am. I think she admires this trait in me, that I don't necessarily make the conservative, appropriate, or easy choices. There are many times when I am sure she wishes I would just find some nice guy to settle down with or take a respectable job but I know in her heart she is cheering me on and hoping that I grab hold of the dreams I so desperately want to attain.

One day when I was ten years old, I was standing with my brother in the hall in my childhood house in Montrose and my mother told us she had breast cancer and that she had to go away for a while. I didn't really understand what cancer was but somehow I knew it was bad. I started to cry, I was so afraid my mother was going to die. She went away for a month and it seemed endless. Finally she came back and I remember hugging her, feeling her warmth, smelling home on her neck and I knew everything was going to be ok.

At that time, reconstructive surgery was not that viable of an option so my mother opted to be healthy and not risk reconstruction. I imagined that there was just a gigantic, red, open wound where her breast had been and that if I put my hand there I could touch her insides. It was not until years later that I saw a picture of a woman post operation and saw that it's just flat, soft skin with a fine white scar. Nothing terrifying like I had grown up believing.

I didn't talk to my mom about breast cancer until I was nineteen. My dad told my brother and me not to bring it up. I guess he thought it would be better for my mom this way, it wasn't. She told me years later that after everyone had left the house for the day she would sit at home and cry. That tears me up knowing my mother dealt with such an enormous challenge by herself. I wish I could go back to that time and just hold her in my arms and tell her it was going to be alright as she has done so many times for me.

My mom has always kept everything inside. I have only ever seen her cry once in my entire life. ONCE! It's funny that the mother that never shows her emotions has the most emotional daughter in the world. My mom is full of mystery and I wonder what secrets she keeps in her vault. She is a Leo as so many of my dear friends are and I think that sign fits her perfectly. She is beautiful, strong, courageous, noble and would never allow anyone to harm her cubs.

I miss my mom so much. It's hard to live on the other side of the country and not be able to see her as often as I would like but I think about her every day so in many ways I feel like she is always beside me holding my hand, pulling me up when I fall, wiping the tears from my face. I am a very different woman from my mother but one of the traits we have in common is a great sense of humor. She taught me to laugh at myself and the absurdity of life and I mostly do. She is an extraordinary woman. I am so lucky to be her daughter. I love you mommy.