

To Death's Door and Back

by Liz Gibbons

As I opened my eyes early that morning I realized that I was in a hospital bed in a part of the hospital in view of a nurses' station. I figured that I was just awakening from the effects of the anesthesia from some emergency surgery I had had. I had fallen in my kitchen on a Sunday afternoon in February 2008 and broken the neck on the femur on my left leg. Actually I think the femur broke, and then I fell. I had surgery to replace the ball the next day. I was up and slowly walking the following morning. But several days later I felt lousy, and on Thursday night a CAT scan was done on my abdominal area. The person who read the CAT scan read it incorrectly. The next afternoon when they were still unsure what was going on they prepared me for some tests. The doctor had the sense to go back and look at the CAT scan and returned and said I was going to surgery.

As I lay quietly in the hospital bed I assumed it was just a day later. When the nurse on duty saw that I was awake she came over and told me a little of what was going on. I felt weak and somewhat confused by what she said, but as the day wore on I began to put more and more pieces together. I learned from the nurse that she had been on duty when I first came out of surgery and that she was so concerned about me that she had stayed with me the whole time she was on duty that night. What dedication. I had the utmost appreciation for her.

Shortly my two sons arrived, and I was in for a rude awakening. I learned that I had been in a drug induced coma for the past eight days. My son, Bob, had arrived from California within 24 hours of that second surgery and Dave got off work a few days later, and they had been at my bedside every day since. Later I learned that when they would ask the doctors my prognosis they would be told, "Let's see if she makes it through the night." My husband informed me that he had been told before the surgery that they did not expect me to survive, but they had to try to save my life. Fortunately I had no clue of this while being wheeled to the operating room. It was a shocking revelation when I learned all the details. I often wish I had memories of having traveled to other realms while in the coma, sort of like experiences related to near death experiences, but all I have are memories of some weird dreams.

I also sometimes wonder if it was divine intervention that the CAT scan was read incorrectly. The surgeon on call that next night was a petite extremely skilled woman who I credit with saving my life. I sometimes wonder if the outcome would have been different if the surgeon on call the prior night had operated.