

# Cancer

Mama, I'm serious. You are not dying! It's time to stop! I'll heat us up some TV dinners now. Did Ann Mae feed the chickens and load the eggs into the pickup truck? I'm selling the eggs at the Davenport farmers' market tomorrow.

I don't want to hear about no cancer, mama. What do you *mean* there's still cancer in you? Dr. Wilson said you would be *okay*. The surgery got rid of your breast tumor, remember? Don't you, like, feel healthier?

Why would Dr. Wilson lie about you being fine, mama? He's your doctor. We're paying him good money to keep you healthy. Dr. Wilson told you to lay off the cigarettes. You didn't follow his orders, did ya? What's the point of having a doctor if you don't do nothing he says?

I've got it! You and Dr. Wilson are in cahoots! You're just pranking me, right? You're going to slip a note in my pocket saying you really do not have cancer and Anna Mae is gonna film my reaction for Youtube... no, this is life and death; You wouldn't joke about that... Dr. Wilson is the one pranking you. Those sly eyes of his! Never put your trust in someone with a crooked smile. He's always goofing someone; You're absolutely fine!

Actually, it's you who wants the cancer! Remember when we were at Davenport Grocery and you grabbed a thing of milk. A nice lady came up to you and said "Don't take that milk. It's bad." I mean you can see the expiration date on the container! She handed you a carton of good milk, but you turned around, grabbed the good milk and poured it all over the floor. Everyone was staring at us, but you just finished getting your food, business as usual.

What about that time when we were at Josie's 40th birthday party and you wouldn't stop eating the cake? I *told* you to stop 'cause you were just hurting yourself, but you just sent me the heck home! Josie never invited you back, did she? She wanted you to see a head doctor and get yourself some help.

You know what I think, huh? Don't *make* me say it. You are making me say it, mama. You...you did it to us. You drove pa away! It was this *shit* you kept pulling. No one can stand it. That's why he's gone living with that Elsa!

Why are you crying? Stop crying, mama. Stop... I, I'm sorry. I didn't mean that. It's just... this whole thing's really been stressin' on me. I get so angry inside sometimes. I think... this isn't about no breast cancer, mama. This is about me and you, ain't it? I am a no good, lousy, bow-legged, lazy-eyed son. I blame all our problems on you, so you go hurting yourself and push everyone away. *I* am the problem. Really, I've been lookin' past my own shortcomings. Stop crying please, mama. Just like Ann Mae always says, I need to be in control all the time, and I need everything to work just like I imagined. I see it clearly now. It's making so much sense! I'm so sorry, mama. I'm sorry I didn't believe you. I'm sorry I *couldn't* believe you. The cancer isn't a real thing. It was never a *real* thing. It was a head cancer, a what you called...a psychological cancer. *I* am your cancer. I have always *been* the cancer.