

## WomenWarriors: Catori (A brave spirit)

By Likitha P.

"Hey, look! It is the BALD EAGLE!", A boy shouted from across the cafeteria in the school. Many other started giggling at the sight of a young, bald girl who was walking straight across the table.

"Oh my gosh!", Another person with a female voice shouted. "That girl has cancer! I heard it is contagious!"

First, cancer is not contagious. It is not even funny to joke about it since anyone could have it, but that person was me. Catori Arrow. I was diagnosed with blood cancer in the summer between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade. At first, I started to cough a lot and I got chest pains sometimes. Then in the summer, I almost fainted and I went to the hospital, and I got diagnosed with blood cancer.

The final bell rang, and we made our way into the crowded corridor. My last class was art, my favorite time of middle school despite the teasing. I walked into the classroom which smelled like fresh car tires, and I walked to my corner in the room and took out my supplies. I was going to enter a painting into the Art Contest that was taking place in a few more days.

"Ok, everyone!", Mrs. Mally our teacher said, silencing the class. "This is seventh grade. I don't want you all to act immature and throw the paint everywhere. This class has now started!"

We all set to work. After about 10 million days, I had finally decided what my painting should be. I wanted to throw in emotions that I wanted to share with the world!

"Looking nice, Catori!", Mrs. Mally says, giving a wink. I smile back at her, and I continue my work. At the end of class, we all packed up and were dismissed to go home. I felt terrible about the incident at the cafeteria. Is that what people called me when I couldn't hear or look at them? I walked back to my marble gray house. I placed the key into the knob and turned it. The door pushed open, and I saw my mom sitting on the couch, solving a sudoku puzzle.

"Hi honey!", My mom replies as she sees me grab an apple to eat. She jumps up. "Are you okay? Did you feel like you were about to faint? And what about your rashes?"

"Mom", I say annoyingly. "I'm fine. I already had enough teasing today. I don't need you to burn it into my brain. And I don't need another lecture. Nothing disturbing, surprising or mind-blowing.

My mom is left speechless because she was just about to give a huge lecture when she starts tearing up, "Oh, I know honey, but you can't be too careful!"

That said, she walks up to me and places her hand on my shoulder.

"You've been through so much; I can't just stand there watching you grow up. I need to keep you safe, and it's only been a few months after your Kimo. Nothing you've been through can compare to anyone else. I love you, Catori. You are one brave spirit", My mom says, giving me a hug.

I just got an idea to make friends at school! I gave my mom a quick hug and rushed upstairs to call it a day.

The next day, I woke up to my alarm. I gave my mom a quick kiss and I got on the bus. I went straight to the art room, and I quickly trashed my old painting to start a new one. The contest was only in a few days, and I had to complete it.

At class, I ignored everyone else. I heard a few comments being thrown at me, but I just kept going because I knew I was going to have friends sooner or later.

The day of the Art Contest came. I hung my painting up next to the label that said Catori Arrow. Next to it looked like a little note scratched into the walls next to the label. It was labeled, 'Bald Eagle' I gulped down what was like sadness and made my way to the auditorium where they were about to introduce the judges who made their choice.

"It has been an honor to look at the wonderful paintings made by those who are here today!", A judge announced as she held the microphone. "But I've selected not one but two which gave me a feeling of emotions being mixed".

"Now presenting, the two PAINTINGS!", The judge exclaimed as she pointed. One of them was mine while the other showed various paintings as if it was a collage. The judges asked the two winners to come on the stage where we had to deliver a speech.

I went up first and took a deep breath, "Hello, my name is Catori Arrow, and I did this painting to show everyone how much I've been through. People sometimes just assume things about me without even thinking about the past of that person. I did this painting to change everyone's mind".

I walked back as the second girl came up. She also looked shy.

"My name is Serenity Astraeus ", The girl announces. "I had the same plan as Catori because people called me names that weren't mine. I painted this painting so people can see the true me".

"That was a wonderful speech!", the judges announced. "We will announce first and second place!"

I went up to Serenity, "Do u have... diabetes? "

Serenity nodded and she asked me if I had blood cancer. I also nodded. This might be my first friend! We gazed at each other for a few minutes before asking at the same time, "Could we be friends?"

"ITS A TIE!", The judges screamed. We looked at each other and smiled because we already knew that we would be friends. Maybe in the future, I'll look back on this and say that cancer is proof on just how strong and brave I am.