

Deante' Baham  
N00184050  
I'm a Fighter  
Word count: 1111

The past few weeks she has been feeling pains all over her body and experiencing hair loss, fever, appetite loss and fatigue. She also woke up with rash on her face in the shape of a butterfly. Apparently, rashes in the shape of a butterfly is common.

She goes to the store to get the medicine her doctor prescribed to help reduce some of the pain. She decides to also pick up a few household groceries.

Finally, while on isle five where the bread is located, she receives a phone call that explains it all.

“Good morning, may I speak to Kala Turner,” a nurse from Dr. Angele Bourg’s office says.

She feels slightly nervous.

“This is she,” Kala says.

“I’m calling in regards to your lab test results. Ms. Kala I am sorry but the results state that you have been diagnosed with Lupus,” she takes a somber toned, deep breath. “Dr. Bourg would like for you to come in and discuss what’s next.”

Kala agrees to set up an appointment.

A moment of silence, but no fear has come over her. This news has no effect on her and she acts as if nothing has happened or changed. She does not know what Lupus is.

Among Americans, 72 percent of those diagnosed have either not heard about Lupus or know little to nothing about the disease, according to the Lupus Foundation of America.

Lupus is a chronic, autoimmune disease that can damage any part of the body including skin, joints and organs inside the body, according to the LFA. Lupus is difficult to diagnose because the symptoms come and go and mimic those of other diseases or sicknesses. In Lupus, the immune system, which is designed to protect against infection instead creates antibodies that attack the body's own tissues and organs, according the Lupus Research Alliance.

Research conducted by the LFA shows that 1.5 million Americans and at least five million people worldwide have a form of lupus. Although lupus can affect men and women of all ages, 90 percent of individuals diagnosed with the disease are women.

Now let's rewind back to Nov. 7, 2008, two days before Kala was diagnosed with Lupus.

"I knew I was sick and that I didn't feel good. I just thought I was struggling with arthritis. I woke up one morning and I couldn't move. My whole body hurt from head-to-toe and I felt like my bones were popping," Kala said, her hands rubbing against each other. "So I made an appointment and told the doctor what was going on with my body."

Signs of lupus include fatigue, fever, joint pain, swelling, shortness of breath, chest pain, memory loss, skin lesions and rash faces, according to the Mayo Clinic research.

Dr. Bourg refers to Kala's thick, medical history folder. After discussing her symptoms that sound familiar to that of arthritis, Dr. Bourg decides to draw blood from Kala's veins just to make sure. The doctor has an inkling that the rash could be linked to Lupus.

Kala is told to expect a call within 48 hours but she thinks nothing of it.

After being diagnosed, Kala went on about her day like nothing ever happened. She continues to get the rest of her household groceries.

Kala is an African American woman and a single mother of two in her late 30s. She never once was afraid of anything. She never once let something weaken her.

Lupus is two to three times more times prevalent among women of color such as African American or Hispanic, according to the LFA.

Instead of letting fear of not knowing what this disease called Lupus take over, she decides to call up her friend who is a nurse.

Now listen, the conversation with her friend changed everything.

“She asked me do I even know what Lupus is and I told her no because I didn’t,” Kala said.

Fear has finally crept into her thoughts.

“I just remember her telling me not to google Lupus and still to this day, this conversation plays over and over again in my head,” Kala said. “Instead of telling me what lupus is, Erica told me to survive. She told me all I want you to do is live.”

This conversation was important. This conversation gave Kala her fight and in this pivotal and significant moment, she started to realize that maybe this word Lupus had more power than she originally thought.

“After countless doctor appointments my life seemed to be taken over by Lupus. I had numerous amounts of doctor visits in order to regulate my levels. I became overwhelmed with the thoughts of it never ending,” Kala said.

Treatments for Lupus can be different for every person. Kala is looked at as the lucky one. She didn’t have to have chemo or any other severe treatment. She strictly took medicine in order to control her symptoms.

Three years after being diagnosed, another phone call.

A familiar sound that now scares Kala.

Usually, Kala would receive the results of her blood test over the phone but this time was different. This time, the doctor wants Kala to come to his office for the results.

Fear has once again crept into her thoughts.

“I walked into the doctor office and I was scared to hell. I paced around the tiny square shaped office and I felt like the walls were closing in on me until the doctor walked in with this huge smile and said congratulations, you’ve been in remission.” Kala said with a smile.

The doctor tells Kala that she has been in remission for three months but she didn’t want to get Kala’s hopes up for nothing.

Kala can finally stop worrying.

While Lupus is a widespread disease, awareness of this disease lags behind many other illnesses that are more dangerous, according to the LFA.

Kala now spends her time making sure people are aware of Lupus and how dangerous and serious Lupus can be. Every October, she participates in wearing the color purple, which is the color symbolizing Lupus, and she does a Lupus march which thousands of others in support.

She also has a tattoo of a butterfly which the rashes are usually shaped but she also got the tattoo as a symbolic representation of Lupus referring to hope.

“I am happy to say that once I was a statistic of having Lupus, but now I am a statistic of beating Lupus in remission,” Kala says with a smile. “I’m a fighter and I’ve always been a fighter.”

No longer does the sound of a phone ringing scare Kala.