



PRETTY IS WHAT CHANGES

Impossible Choices, the Breast Cancer Gene, and How I Defied My Destiny

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Television writer Queller recalls testing positive at age 35 for the BRCA-1 gene mutation and her subsequent decision to undergo a double mastectomy.

In 2002, the author accepted a job in New York to be closer to her dying mother, who after winning a battle with breast cancer was diagnosed with terminal ovarian cancer. Stephanie spent much of her final months with her two daughters; Queller recalls that her last discernible words were, "This is against my will." In the wake of her mother's death, Queller opted to take the blood test for BRCA; she had to make repeated phone calls before a gruff, harried doctor gave her the results, which meant that she had "up to an 85 or 90 percent chance of getting breast cancer." (Positive test results also signify a 44-percent likelihood of ovarian cancer, which increases after the age of 40.) Upon being advised by multiple physicians that aggressive surgery was her best option, she wrote about her radical choice of a double mastectomy in an op-ed piece for the New York Times and later discussed it on Nightline, personalizing a controversial and relatively new dilemma. Queller writes frankly about everything from overwhelming medical stresses to her desire for children. Scenes from her dating life show one man after another entering and quickly dropping out of the picture. Her decision, viewed by many as unnecessary and even crazy, was validated when the surgeon found pre-cancerous cells in her right breast. This discovery prompted the author's younger sister to reconsider her choice to remain in the dark. Other women who tested positive for the gene are also brought to life in stories that are by turns inspiring, sorrowful and profoundly moving. Queller's

sense of humor and grace transform the most harrowing of situations into a riveting and heartfelt memoir.

Wrenching, but surprisingly lively.