

It's Not About the Hair



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Debra Jarvis works as a chaplain supporting patients at Seattle's Cancer Care Alliance (the clinic founded by the world-famous Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Institute). In that capacity she meets daily with patients in at many points along the path of living with cancer, from diagnosis to treatment to recovery and facing death. So in one of those ironic twists of fate, Jarvis was diagnosed with breast cancer herself. It's Not About the Hair is the account of her time with cancer. As she says, the first thing people ask when they learn you have cancer is whether you are going to lose your hair. But what they really mean to ask is whether you are going to lose your life. Debra Jarvis is able to write honestly and humorously about her experience with cancer because she has had the unique experience of having witnessed and having guided so many cases of cancer. And she brings all of that perspective and context and wisdom to the story of her own breast cancer. As an ordained minister she considers her voice to be a combination of Mr. Miyagi from The Karate Kid" and Martha Stewart (pre-felon, that is), a persona she labels Mr. Martha Miyagi. It's mystical and practical. Debra Jarvis manages to channel a humor that is reminiscent of Nora Ephron. This is a cancer story that won't give you the creeps, but it will guide you to think deeply about the serious stuff like ingrained views on health and disease, life and death, the time we have and how we want to live it.

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