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Four Perspectives- Draft 3

“You Have a Solid Mass”

*My Perspective*

“Miss Riggiano, I’m afraid we can’t release you,” the Doctor said. At this point, I was beyond frustrated. What started out as a normal day ended with me wearing an uncomfortable, itchy, oversized hospital gown surrounded by repetitive beeping machines along with multiple IVs in my arm, and a very concerned family by my side. I knew something was wrong by the doctor’s expression. At the beginning of the day the atmosphere was warm and friendly, and convinced me that the dark mysterious shadow on the MRI was just an ovarian cyst. The doctor’s aura was somehow different this time.

The doctor said I had a solid mass on the outside of my uterus; much more than that she didn’t know. I would have to see a specialist. Right away, before another word was spoken I felt the blood slowly drain from my face. My palms were drenched with sweat, my stomach felt as if I swallowed a boulder and my heart was pounding so hard out of my chest I thought for sure it could be heard over our voices. My body began shaking uncontrollably and every time I began to gain composure it began to shake more. I knew from this point on my life was going to change. How drastically and for how long no one would know until surgery. Would I still be able to fulfill my dream of having a family? Is this cancerous? What about school? How would I break this news to my friends and the rest of my family? There is no way I’m missing the Rascal Flatts concert on Friday night. I can’t afford to take the semester off. How is Mom going to handle this? It has to be a mistake. I’m twenty years old. This can’t happen to me.

*Perspective: Mom*

As I sat there in the chair beside her lying in bed, the doctor's words just started to blur together and I saw her lips moving but I couldn't hear any of the words coming out. I felt faint and although I was taking deep breaths I couldn't get enough air to satisfy my lungs. I thought I was going to have an anxiety attack. I managed to utter the words, "I'm sorry, what did you say? I don't think I understand; a tumor?"

This can't be happening to my Jennifer. I watched my own mother battle through cancer and now I have to watch my daughter? Stop thinking the worst. Maybe it will turn out to be benign. How could a tumor be twelve centimeters? Why didn't any of her doctors catch this before now? I hope she isn't in any kind of pain.

Even though Jennifer is my daughter, I look up to her as my role model. She is far braver and calmer than I would ever be in this situation. She sat on the bed so composed, asking the doctor multiple questions and appeared to be taking all of the information so well. I had to try to calm myself down. I'm the mother here and I need to come up with a plan of action. What am I supposed to do next? I feel so helpless. I want to take this away from her and give it to me. I lived a good portion of my life. She's only twenty years old and has the rest of her life to live.

At that moment, the doctor left and Jennifer sat on the bed with a blank stare. I didn't want her to think I was getting upset so I stood up and walked in the hallway searching through my cell phone address book for some kind of an answer. I dialed my husband's number and told him the news but I had to get off the phone. I had no feeling in my legs and didn't know how I was standing on my own. All I knew was that I wanted to hold Jennifer close and tell her it was all going to be okay.

*Perspective: Doctor*

I can't believe how unusual this is. This young woman is twenty and to have a mass this large in her abdomen is rare. We see less than five percent of cases like this. This definitely is not a good sign. There are no symptoms of appendicitis, and the MRI confirmed it is not a cyst; definitely a tumor. Her Ca125 levels are elevated, a sure sign of malignancy. This is the part about the job that I hate. I have a daughter of my own and I'm trying to put myself in the position of that mother.

As I told the woman about her daughter, I could see the look of panic in her eyes. I could sympathize with her but at the same time I have so many other cases to worry about. I got down on eye level with her and smiled as a calm gesture, answering her questions as best to my ability. They both gave me the usual look of puzzlement and worrisome. I walked out of the room and made some phone calls to other doctors on call so that they can find out more information on the young woman's case. I believe her name is Jennifer. No doubt it is terrible, but these things happen unexpectedly. Prior to reading the MRI, I thought it was an ovarian cyst. It is quite unbelievable that it's something more serious.

I thought about the young woman and her mother as I walked down the Emergency Room hallway. I understand their frustration but I am not a specialist. I would have loved to answer their questions, but I am not authorized to give them any information I'm uncertain about. I do hope everything works out for them but I'm off to the next room. This poor four year old girl needs stitches in her arm and keeps ripping out her IV. I'm going to have to distract her with stickers and coloring books. That boy in

room eight needs to have his shoulder set back in place, and the young couple has questions about their son's bronchitis in room five.

*Perspective: Me in 40 years*

I lived most of my life. I've lived through the prime years of my life, and they were truly happy years. I have so many wrinkles, but I read once that the more wrinkles you have the happier life you lead because wrinkles are caused from facial animation-lots of smiles and laughter. My skin is covered in different pigmentations, each spot bringing back a fond memory of my beach house in Long Beach Island. Besides, everything is starting to sag. I came onto this Earth in style, and I most certainly want to leave not only with style, but with my dignity.

I hate the smell of hospitals. I always have. The doctors and nurses run around you like you're non-existent. You're just a number. They look at you like secretaries look at their paper work. You're just another part of their daily routine. I had no one to vent to. The love of my life had just passed away, and I was on the road to giving up. I love my children and grandchildren but maybe this was a sign that I'm supposed to be with him again.

When the doctor entered the room, I knew by her facial expression that my results did not come back the way she would have hoped. She explained to me that I had another tumor. I had dealt with this when I was in my twenties, but I couldn't believe that it came back. I looked at her calmly, and asked some questions. She left the room explaining that she'd come back with a doctor who could refer me to a surgeon.

This was the first time in my life that I felt alone. I sat on the hospital bed by myself with Dr. Phil's talk show blaring in the background. My children are grown up with their own families now so at least if this was going to happen at some time it allowed me to enjoy my family and be the best mother possible. I sat there hoping that it

wouldn't be anything too serious because I want to be there for my grandchildren for years to come.