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Exercise 3: Memoir

Creative Writing

The Wild Ride

We did the most natural thing you could do when your dad thinks that he is dying. We decided to take a trip to Mexico. I was eighteen years old in my senior year of high school. I was old enough to understand what was going on, but my parents did not make it seem serious enough to care. The thing that I was most concerned with was our trip to Mexico for spring break. My parents told me I could bring three friends to our all-inclusive Mexican resort vacation.

Anytime I questioned my dad about the lump on his shoulder he would constantly tell me “I went to the doctor and they said everything was okay.” My mom would repeat the same statement. Although I knew that there had to be something they weren’t telling me I chose to believe ignorance is bliss. My days continued on as they normally would. I would attend school during the day, play hockey at night with my biggest fan, my dad, in the stands. Every week or so my dad would go to the doctor’s office and I would continue to get more, and more worried. My parents would reassure me by saying “He’s just looking at a simple procedure to get it removed,” or “the doctor said it was nothing.”

A few days before the trip my parents told me that my dad’s condition was a little more serious than suspected\ My dad had been seeing the doctor multiple times for the same baseball sized lump between his shoulder and neck, slightly above his collarbone. The doctor kept sending him home with different medications none of which seemed to work. The lump

continued to grow like a weed until my dad demanded the doctor take a tissue sample of the mass. The results from the doctor were due to come back while we were in the middle of our vacation in Mexico.

In Mexico, my parents, my friends, and I were having the time of our lives. No expenses were spared because, it was clear my dad thought he was going to die. I saw my dad do more adrenaline filled activities in the week and a half we were in Mexico than my entire life. He was falling from the sky, trusting a raggedy old parachute over the ocean, and riding donkeys up the side of the mountain. We were eating at high quality all you could eat buffets, drinking top shelf liquor, and relaxing around the pool. It was like this lump was not even there on my dad's shoulder for the days that we were in Mexico. The weight was lifted and all my family and my friends could think about was what we were going to do next.

Along with all the drinking, eating, and relaxing, we participated in many outside the resort activities as well. Suddenly, we were on a truck climbing the mountainous terrain of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico with trees overhead. We were dropped off at the base of a mountain where we met our next travel guide. Only this time instead of a truck we scaled the side of mountains on donkeys. When we reached our destination, we looked around and all we could see for miles was the tops of trees, the dreamy blue color of the ocean, and a tiny wire from the top of the mountain to a tiny tree in the distance. As quick as you could snap your fingers, my family, my friends, and I were flying through the tree tops at incredible speed like a bird migrating back home for spring. Feeling the wind flow through my hair while tasting the salt of the ocean. It's like the whole world didn't matter because we were like little kids on recess. Before we knew it the adventure in the canopies was over, but the memories will last a life time.

We had one more group adventure planned before it was time to leave and head back the reality that we needed to face at home. The group decided that we needed to go skydiving. Never before had anyone in our group been skydiving before between my friends, my family, and I. It was out of the blue when my dad brought up that we should go. At the time I did not know it but this could have been a sign that his sickness was something serious. Anyways, we took a small golf cart to a field with a concrete, not quite a runway, but a runway concrete slab. We were asked some basic questions, by the guide, like; how much do you weigh? how tall are you? After that we were escorted into an airplane that had no seats. All of a sudden, we were lifting off and looking out an open door staring at the little play piece world below us. The instructors who were jumping with us jumped out with us attached to them with little to no warning. The world around us was spinning falling like a penny off the empire state building. The clouds were getting further and further away. It felt as though we were falling forever until we saw the target on the beach right next to our resort.

It was back to earth. No more falling from the sky, no more frolicking the tree tops, no more top shelf liquor, no more pool time. It was back to the business at hand. What was this lump that was afflicting my dad. My dad had not checked his email since he was on vacation and the results of his test were waiting in his inbox. It was the moment of truth. What was this lump and was it going to change our lives forever? Sitting around the large, dark, rectangular granite slab we call my kitchen table my parents and I were discussing some scenarios if the sickness were serious. Of course, my parents were not going to tell me the results of the tests. My blood was starting to boil but might have been for the best if it turned out to be something serious. Again, my parents came back with the reassuring lines. “Nothing is wrong your dad will be

fine.” To be honest these lines were no longer reassuring me. I was sure there was something wrong but I had no power to figure out what it was.

A few weeks later after spring break my parents decided it was finally time to break the news. My dad told me that he had Stage four Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. I knew that this was not good because stage four was pretty far into the cancer. I was livid because his doctor kept telling him it was nothing, and it could have been stopped in advance. I made the decision that I wasn’t going to be mad at the past and decided to make the best of it. I was told that he was going to go through six months of chemotherapy and a surgery to remove the mass. I thought it was the end and that I should treasure every moment I had left with my dad. Although I knew he would no longer be able to do much because chemotherapy is a rough treatment.

Soon my father began losing his hair on his head, started looking older every day, and also began to hate some of the foods he enjoyed so much. The chemotherapy process had begun. Once every Tuesday he would go to the hospital in Edina and they would administer his radiation and the chemotherapy drugs. The chemo seemed like it was dragging on forever. My dad was no longer the energetic, active man he once was. He was now constantly tired and every day brought up new challenges. Every once and awhile he would get sick and half to go in and get an immune booster shot, the shot cost \$12,600. Luckily all of it was covered by health insurance. You would see a crooked smirk on his face as my dad would joke every time he was getting this shot that he was going to get liquid gold injected into his veins, it really seemed to lighten up the situation. Six months and many golden liquid shots later my biggest fan during my hockey days, also known as my dad, was cancer free.