## ESSAY

**The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?**

A pair of aged beige curtains attempted to block the sunlight from creeping into the room. The sterility of the room overwhelmed my senses, forcing me to confront my discomfort. As the coldness of the gel coated my torso. I felt the pressure of the smooth plastic as it massaged the surface area of my stomach. I hear the clicking of the keys as the doctor took screenshots of the monochromatic screen. He whispered to the nurse as they called my mom in who was waiting outside. I hear the sound of my heart throbbing against the cage of my chest, synchronizing with the ticking of the wall clock, counting my life away. Dazed and confused, not knowing what to expect. I sat with my mom next to me. “Your daughter has an ovarian tumor”.

What was meant to be a quick visit to the gynecologist became a point of inflection in my life.

I grabbed the charm bracelet on my wrist tight. I stared down at it as the charms blurred into one, an abundance of voices overrunning each other as my thoughts zoned out. All my hopes and dreams of having a daughter, starting a family of my own all gone, taken from me in the lengths of minutes. My eyes fill with tears as my head fills with questions. Is my future gone for good? Growing up, I have always loved children, loved the idea of raising some of my own, this bracelet just one out of many things I hope to pass down one day.

However, I didn’t want this to be a defining moment for me, I didn’t want to take this as a time where I gave up on everything. I took this as fuel, I didn’t want to lose any opportunities. If there was the slightest chance that I wasn’t able to have children of my own, I wanted to know that I was living life to the fullest. I have always had the idea and longing to start a business of my own, to create something to share my love and passion for fashion. If there was the slightest chance that I am not able to share this love to my own children, then I hoped to at least have the courage to share it to the world. I decided to invest my savings into growing “Ourdrobe”, my online fashion marketplace. I wanted to use this as a platform where people can make use of old clothes hanging in their closets, giving them new life and new meaning. My thinking is that if I am able to overcome all these adversities then these clothes should also be given a second chance to be valued and loved. My love of fashion which I hoped to share with my own children, I wanted to share with the world in case this tumor meant that I am unable to share it with my own.

Some people say that life happens when you’re busy making plans. My tumor showed me the unexpected nature of life. I never realized the limitations to what I can control. I was so fixated on sticking to one plan that I didn’t look left or right to see what else life had to offer. Neglecting what was right underneath my nose. So, instead of occupying my thoughts planning “what’s next”, I learned to take life bit by bit. Taking risks along the way.

Though physically gone, my tumor left a longing impression on me mentally. It taught me to embrace changes and to be more lenient with myself. When things do not go as planned, I remember that every challenge, every adversity contains within it the seeds of opportunity and growth which allow me to take on life with an open mind. Continuously identifying the silver lining during times of conflict.

I still love to plan but now I have learnt to use a plan not as a set of rules, but as a guide to keep me on track without forgetting to look for other opportunities life has to offer and taking them on even if it means having to take a detour. I now understand that life is about accepting the challenges along the way and choosing to keep moving forward. Savoring the continuing journey as I move forward in the next chapter of my life: university.