

## Non-fiction Narrative

A story from not my life, directly, but still impacts my life is how my best friend went through cancer. She battled non-Hodgkins lymphoma (NHL) which is a blood cancer that originates in the white blood cells, lymphocytes, within the immune system. Thankfully, she is alright now and has been cancer free for almost 20 years.

It all started during Cassie's senior, my junior, year of high school. She had this weird lump in her arm pit that would not go away. She was also always feeling tired and just not herself. Her grandma, Nana Widmer, took her to the doctor and they did a ton of tests. It was late April when Nana took Cassie to the doctor. Finally, by the end of June, she had the answers she needed and was starting her journey that would last seven very long months.

Cassie's twin brother, Ryan, was the one that told me the news. Cassie was too weak from the chemo that she had started to tell me what was going on. He had come over to my house which was really weird itself since he would not do so unless Cassie was there and I had planned to hang out with the both of them. Even my dad that had answered the door was confused to see just Ryan there. Ryan told dad that it was important and asked if I could step outside to talk just to us for a moment. My dad, being the protective type, was a little cautious of agreeing to this, but allowed it but was keeping a watchful eye on us from the kitchen window.

"Cassie has cancer. She started chemo and is weak. I'm scared, Katie," is what Ryan started the conversation off with. I am unsure of what else was said because those few sentences hit me like a ton of bricks. I was numb and could not think or feel for a long while. I just sat there and was trying to comprehend what Ryan just told me about my sister from other parents. Cassie and I have been friends since we were 3-years old and in pre-school. We had gone to church together, had been in Girl Scouts together, had gone through so many things together. I was scared I was going to possibly have to say goodbye to my best friend.

Once I finally allowed myself to feel again, I was angry. I was angry that someone so sweet, kind, caring, and made my life so much better by being benign in it was going through this. However, I knew that she was going to knock cancer's butt and fight. I was also going to help her any way I could. I let her rest the rest of that day when Ryan told me of her diagnosis and treatment plan. The next day, I called her and told Cassie that I was sorry she was going through this, but was not going to give up on her or our friendship. She giggled and said, "Girl, please, I know darn well that you and I are going to get through this. I may feel like I have been hit by Daddy (meaning my dad) in the truck as he is hauling a group of elephants right now, but you know me. I am NOT going to give up without a fight. I'm too stubborn for that silliness."

Cassie and I have always used laughter and humor to help each other feel better. That Halloween, Cassie was bald due to the chemo treatments. I had shaved my head to show my support for her. We took this fact and ran with it. We drew a squiggle on our heads and wore yellow shirts with the black zig-zag on them so that we could be Charlie Brown. Everyone that came to trick-or-treat loved it. We had a good laugh as well. This really helped both of us feel better and have an enjoyable time.

Cassie and I have been best friends for 36 years this year and have been through so many things. We survived pre-school, elementary school, middle school, high school, marriage, my divorce, children, and losses. We have had arguments, disagreements, but we know we are forever bonded. Cassie may have been the one that had the diagnosis of cancer, but cancer does not just impact the one person. Cancer impacts family and friends as well. For us, Cassie is my sister by choice and I am blessed to have her here with me and still cancer free.