

NONFICTION

THE WORST DAY OF MY LIFE

Amanda Johnson
Seneca Ridge Middle School, 6

It was August 2008, only a few weeks until fourth grade was going to start. I was supposed to be enjoying my summer vacation trip to South Dakota, but instead, I was shifting uncomfortably on a hospital bed. A nurse was talking to me, sounding almost too cheerful.

“So, you drove all the way up here from Virginia?” she asked, smiling.

“Yeah, it was a long drive,” I answered distractedly, wondering what my parents were talking to the other nurse about.

About half an hour before, my parents drove me to the hospital because I was so sick. I didn’t understand why they couldn’t just wait until Monday when the normal doctor’s office would be open. Well, yeah, I was having night sweats and wearing sweaters in ninety-degree weather, complaining about how cold it was. And I guess I was having horrible headaches and fatigue. But I could’ve lasted another day or two. I’d do anything to stay out of that place where they make you wear uncomfortable bands that they call “stylish bracelets,” hoping that you’d think that they’re not so bad with a name that’s not even close to what they really are. I could just picture how it would look in a hospital. Cold, hard beds, dreary rooms, nurses and doctors constantly watching you, and tons of people attached to IV machine thingies.

No matter how hard I tried to convince them that I could last just a few more days, my parents would not change their minds. Before I knew it, my parents were at the front desk checking me in.

“I’m not really that sick,” I told the lady behind the desk, making sure she knew I wasn’t supposed to be hooked up to some machine. “I’m just here ‘cause it’s the weekend.” She nodded, not really paying attention. Another nurse came over, put my “stylish bracelet” on me, and then ushered my parents and me into a room with a hospital bed. I reluctantly sat down on it. She left the room, and a few minutes later, a doctor came in. My parents told her what my symptoms were while I contemplated why I couldn’t convince my parents to wait another day or two. After what seemed like an eternity, the doctor said that I had to get an x-ray.

“Why an x-ray?” I asked. “I just have a cold. No broken bones or anything.”

“Just to be safe,” the doctor said happily. I still couldn’t see why I had to get one. You can’t tell how to cure a cold by looking at someone’s bones!

The x-ray finally ended, and I waited, again on the hospital bed. I

messed with my itchy hospital band, trying to make it a little more comfortable. After a lot more waiting, the doctor came in.

“Can I speak with Mr. and Mrs. Johnson?” she asked.

“Wait a second, what about me?” I asked worriedly as my parents stood up to leave. “I’ll hang out with you,” a nurse said, sweeping into the room.

Now I have finally finished telling what came before, so here is what happened after.

My parents came in, looking very worried.

“What’s wrong?” I asked. “It’s only a cold.”

“Mandy, go to the car with your mother. I’ll check out.”

“What? Why? Aren’t I gonna get some medicine or something?” I asked, bewildered and slightly worried.

“Just do what your dad says,” my mom said, pushing me out of the building and into the car. My dad came a few minutes later and got into the driver’s seat.

“We’re going home tomorrow,” he announced.

“Huh? I thought we were gonna see Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse Memorial!” I said, now extremely worried.

“You see, the X-rays developed and, well, the doctor noticed that you have something in your chest.”

“Wha? That sounds like an alien horror film or something!”

“No, it’s nothing like that,” she answered, laughing. “But the doctor did show us the X-ray and we definitely saw some build-up in there.” I leaned back in my seat and just sat there, terrified.

The next day, we were on our way back home. We took a few pit stops to say hi to family, but never stayed long.

Once we arrived back in Virginia, we went straight to my pediatrician’s office. My parents told her about everything that happened and showed her the X-rays that the doctor gave them. She told us that I should go to Fairfax Hospital to get a CAT scan. I had no idea what that was, but it didn’t sound very good to me, so I tried to convince my parents to wait until tomorrow to go to the hospital as we walked out of the building and into the car.

“I’m so tired!” I complained as my dad drove to the hospital.

“I told you, we want to know what’s wrong!” he answered for the millionth time.

When we finally arrived, I was given another “stylish bracelet,” and I had to wait for the longest time to get a simple scan.

When I was called, I nervously stood up. The nurse brought me into a room with a big doughnut shaped machine in it.

“First, we need to put this butterfly needle in your arm,” she said.

“A needle? No way. I don’t want to be a pincushion. Anyway, I don’t

need a shot for a scan!" I said, devastated that even more bad things were coming.

"Oh, it's not a shot, I'm going to put this little tube in your arm," she said cheerfully. I squirmed. A tube was even worse!

"Fine...just give me a three-count," I said, deciding that I didn't like this lady.

"All right. One...two...three," she said as she stabbed me in the arm. It was all I could do to not scream at the sight of a tube puncturing through my skin, and some blood coming out.

Later, I was all set up with the tube hooked up to some IV type machine, and me lying on a table that was apparently supposed to move into the giant doughnut machine. The nurse walked into another room, and I felt totally freaked out, alone in a creepy room in a hospital. That's when the table moved, totally catching me off guard. I jumped in surprise, but tried to stay as still as possible like the evil nurse told me.

Yeah, I didn't want to do it, but if the scans turned out negative because I was moving, I would be so angry at myself for having to do this a second time.

The table moved me back and forth inside the doughnut hole and all of a sudden, I felt coldness in my arm. I had no idea what that was, then I realized that it was the stuff in that IV thingy. The coldness spread all through my body, then it suddenly became very warm, especially in an area that I'd rather not mention. The warmth there grew so strong, I got the urge to pee.

After the scan ended, I waited for the nurse to take the tube out of my arm, which, by the way, was not a pleasant experience, then stood up. I was still woozy from the warmth of the liquid, and I hobbled out of the door, grateful that it was done.

I reached my parents and we waited for a long time again. Then the doctor came over and said that I probably had a tumor in my chest. I had absolutely no idea what a tumor was so I was very confused and worried. Before I knew it, the doctor put me in a hospital room, and I was going to have a biopsy the next day.

My mom decided to stay with me overnight. Lots of nurses and doctors came in to check on me. At one point, someone came in and told me that I was also going to get a metaport put in my chest. A nice lady came in a while later with a doll that had a metaport so I could learn what it was.

The next day, I woke up with a nurse standing over me, waking me up.

Who is this lady? I thought. I sat up and noticed a guy with a wheelchair standing about two yards away.

Why...? Ohh...I'm in the hospital 'cause I have a tumor and...oh,

no. These people are here to take me to the surgery! ...Or biopsy or whatever it is. It's all the same to me.

They put me in the wheelchair even though I could walk perfectly fine by myself. They took me in a huge room with curtains in front of smaller rooms, one of which I was brought into.

I had to lie down on a hospital bed. A surgeon came in and made sure that I was the right Amanda Johnson and assured me that the biopsy would go fine and that he was the lead surgeon. That made me feel a little better, but I still was worried. I was eventually pushed into another room (I was on a hospital bed with wheels). My mom came in with me to make sure I wouldn't be too freaked out. I don't remember this, but my mom says that they put a gas mask on me, I looked woozy, then fell asleep in three seconds flat.

Before I knew it, I woke up. I was still too tired to sit up, and when I opened my eyes, the room was spinning. I closed my eyes again and made a little whining sound to let the nurse (or whoever was keeping an eye on me) know that I was awake, just in case she didn't realize it.

I think I fell asleep again, and then woke up a few minutes later.

I could hear my mom and dad nearby talking to a nurse or doctor or surgeon or...well, some medical person. I opened my eyes so I would be able to figure out where exactly they were. The room was spinning again, but I was able to see my mom and dad sitting right beside me.

"Look, she's awake," my mom said softly.

"Hi," I weakly mumbled, not sure if even my parents could hear me, only a foot away.

I closed my eyes again, feeling dizzy and still sleepy. I listened to my parents and the medical person (or were there more than one medical people? I was too confused to figure it out) and slowly started to regain my senses.

After a long time, I finally didn't feel as tired anymore. I opened my eyes, and the room was still. "Hi," I said to my mom again, this time my voice stronger.

"Your eyes are open again. That's probably a good sign," she said. "The surgeons did a biopsy and confirmed that you have a type of cancer called Hodgkin's Lymphoma." I was too tired to be worried. "Also they put a metaport in your chest, which will help with treatment. Holly showed you what it looked like, remember?" she said. It took me a while to remember who Holly was, but then I realized that she was the nice lady who showed me the metaport doll.

A while later, I was able to sit up, and a man came to push me (in the bed) to my room.

I stayed for maybe a week or two, and then was let out of the hospital. I received a lot of treatment called chemotherapy and radiation. The

doctor announced that I was in remission, also known as cancer free. I also got a cancer relapse, which meant more treatment and something called a stem cell transplant, and then another doctor told me that I was in remission again.

I'm now happy, healthy, and grateful that I don't have to take boatloads of medicine anymore!

95 POUNDS

Ciara Bonner

Mark Twain Middle School, 7

“You’re fat,” “You make an earthquake when you walk,” and “You’re not pretty,” is what they used to say to me. The kids in my old school, I mean. Most people that know me would’ve thought that I would smart mouth them and tell them to go elsewhere with their negativity, but I didn’t. I took what they said to heart and it really hurt me. It felt as if somebody had slapped me and told me that the only reason they said it was because they couldn’t help themselves. That’s how bad it hurt. I think to myself now and say, “Why would somebody tease me because I’m not the size of a super model?” Perhaps it’s because of the fact that I don’t starve myself to look skinny, and they think I may need help with my weight.

My grandma didn’t make feel any better either. She would always tell me that she was the perfect one-oh-nine in college and I was bigger than she was back in the day. She’d say this every time I told her my size, which was definitely over one-oh-nine. The thing is, my grandma was and is, a very petite woman that is around five feet. I’m around five feet, four inches, and her comparison of the two of us, her size in college and my size in elementary school, was kind of mean in my eyes. I always felt self-conscious about myself after that.

Sometimes I would go up to my mom and say that I wanted to be ninety-five pounds. She would look at me cross-eyed and say that my goal weight was unhealthy and too small for my body build, and so on. All I heard were a bunch of words that didn’t mean a thing to me. I really didn’t give a care in the world about what she told me. All I knew was that I wanted to be the perfect size so no one would make fun of me anymore.

One day something clicked in my head and I just got tired of trying to please people. I never stopped to please myself, and in order to do such, I would have to stop worrying about what other people thought of me. Today, I say what’s on my mind and ask people, “What is the problem with my weight? Just because I’m not the size of you doesn’t give you the right to call me or any other living creature in this world fat,” and then I add on a few extra nasty words, just to give them a piece of my mind.

I’ve realized that the people who make fun of others have nothing to do with their lives. It’s either that, or they are jealous of your looks, have troubles in their life, or they just need a friend but they don’t know how to make one. Why should a person just sit there and get teased constantly? Stand up for yourself! Tell the bully to leave you alone and get a life because you are not the person to be picked on.

SILENCE

Benjamin Davenport Mark Twain Middle School, 7

I can feel the cold wind slide across my face as the trees shifted in the breeze. I say to myself, "Why am I here?"

And I stare at the rough red bricks, wondering.

"Is this true?"

"There lie the ashes of Dale Davenport," says the priest in an uneasy tone. My stomach ripples like an ocean wave as it churns, and I feel the barf pressed deep in my throat. Silence. All I can hear is the golden smooth trumpet shouting its notes one by one. Yet it's still silent. I touch my cold rubbery face and I feel wet, cold water. It keeps coming, and coming; it can't stop until my family swarms me like a pack of wolves attacking its prey. I shut my eyes. It goes black, just nothing. A blurry image appears in my eyes.

"Pop-Pop!" I shout.

"Yes, Ben?" Pop-Pop replies.

"You got your glove?" I ask.

"Why, yes, I do, Ben," he answers.

"Good. You want to play catch?" I ask.

"Why wouldn't I?" he chuckles.

"Great," I shout with enthusiasm.

"You know you've really improved at baseball," he says.

"Really? Thanks!" I reply.

"You know what makes a good baseball player?" he says.

"What?" I reply.

The warm leather glove pops as the baseball collides into the mitt.

"A good baseball player is one who has heart and loves the game of baseball, not just because you can make money, but because you enjoy the sport no matter what the outcome is. And that describes you!" he says.

"Thanks, Pop-Pop!" I shout back.

"You're welcome and don't you ever forget that now."

That is one reason why I will always remember my Grandpa. I called him Pop-Pop since I was two years old when I gave him the nickname. I was in my crib with my short brown hair just appearing on my head and I shouted "Pop-Pop!" My grandpa's face brightened like the lights at a baseball field, and he knew that was HIS nickname that would stick with him for almost ten years.

I open up my trembling eyes and peek out through my softened eye-

lids as tears roll down my cheeks like an avalanche. I repel my family as a sign that I'm fine and I want my space. But like no other person there, my eyes shut again. Uncontrolled thoughts roll through my eyes as my mind spins in circles.

"Pop-Pop, Pop-Pop!" I scream.

"Yes, Ben?" he replies in a soft, firm tone.

"Why are you retiring?" I cry out.

"Well, Ben, it's a long story, but the main reason is my newspaper is cutting jobs. Since I'm sixty-four years old, and I have been working there for a long time, the newspaper has decided to give me money to retire," Pop-Pop replies.

"But that's stupid! You love your job! Why would you quit?!" I say.

"Well, Ben, I've been working there for a long time... it was just time. Okay?" Pop-Pop explains.

"Alright, but I wish you'd keep working." I say firmly.

Again, I squint open my sealed eyes to find that the lovely music had stopped. I fling my head from side to side glancing at everybody there. I hold a violet red flower, and the white petals are as pale as the clouds in the summer wind. With anger and sadness in my mind, I lay down the soft rose to the hard rough brown bricks. Making little movement except clacking my shoes across the ground, I pause at the black chipped vase holding the flowers placed in there before me. I wonder, if only this hadn't happened, would our lives be different? Again, silence is upon me.

Slam! I hop out of the car, only to find my smile drift into a frown. My stomach drops like a bird with a broken wing. I shuffle my feet slowly across the brown brick pavement. I think, "Wow, it's only been three months since I was last here." I tug at the humongous dark black gate as I swiftly move into the small circle and stare. In light gold bronze letters, a plaque reads: *Dale Allen Davenport, August 2, 1944—May 19, 2010.*

"Oh, look, Dad, they got the plate put up," I say.

"Yes, they did," he replies.

"It's very nice, isn't it?" I say.

"Yes, it is."

Again with the silence as my Dad and I stare at the gold plate.

"Hi, Pop-Pop," my dad yells.

"Hi, Pop-Pop," I shout back.

I feel warmth like the sun has crawled up inside me and pierced my heart. I feel him inside and I know he is still there in my heart. I cry one tiny tear. As it tumbles down my cheek onto my shirt, I say to myself...

"I love you, Pop-Pop."

LOVE [LUHV] 1: LIFE

Tess Megret
Mark Twain Middle School, 7

Everything stopped. The teacher stopped typing, the chattering came to a halt, and not a soul was moving. My mind was racing and I couldn't hear a thing. I felt like I was in one of those movies where everything was in slow motion. I was doing my usual zoning out of class. I was off into my own little world with love and happiness. I was thinking of what to write my English paper about when the bell rang. I grabbed all of my stuff and got up. As I walked to my next class I could feel the wheels in my head turning as I thought about my narrative.

My sister is on her stomach on the ground. Her blonde hair is in her face and her legs keep crisscrossing behind her back as she reads from one of my history papers. Less than a minute ago we had been fighting about who knows what, and now we are both on the ground in my room studying. I had asked her just a few moments before if she even understood what she was reading to me. She had thrown her head back laughing and replied with a simple answer "No," and I couldn't help but smile. We're close, Maya and I. I mean we're close for being four years apart. I remember playing dolls and school with her as a little kid. I was always the teacher and she was always the student. Tonight reminds me of those days, except that this time she is the teacher and I am the student. I smile to myself, just thinking about it. I love that she can help me and not even understand what she's reading. My sister sits up and smiles at me, a twinkle in her eye, and I'm thinking that just maybe she remembers those times too.

Later that night, I grabbed my writer's notebook and pencil. I had no idea what I was going to write for my personal narrative. I looked up at my wall of pictures, hoping for maybe some kind of inspiration. There was one picture that caught my eye. It was in a hot pink picture frame with a flower on it. It was a picture of Isabel and me. We were both wearing Gap sweaters, only hers was rainbow striped and mine just plain lime green. We were smiling and my head was balanced on her shoulder for support. We were about seven or eight years old. We looked happy and I felt happy just looking at it, remembering all of the good times we had. I smiled looking up at it, knowing that it had definitely given me some inspiration for my narrative.

I lay in my bed. It is pitch black and I can't hear a single thing except

for Isabel's breath and my own. We are both lying there in separate beds, not talking not doing anything. It's the night of my thirteenth birthday and I had made sure to have Isabel over for this day. As I lay there in the dark, I imagine the future: Us on the first day of high school, us taking our first ride with our licenses, us at graduation. The funny thing is that it's always "us." Not just her, not just me, but us. I look over at nothing, but I know she was there. She grabs my hand and says, "Tess, I love you. I don't think that I have actually ever told you that." Those are her exact words. I don't know if anyone has ever been told that they were someone else's best friend, for real, and if you have then you know what it feels like. I remember thinking about how we really are best friends, and I know that it will be that way past the end.

I sat in Mrs. Kochman's classroom and wrote, *three days till my narrative is due* in my planner. Great, I think to myself. "Now, we are going to do some quick writes in our notebooks..." starts Ms. Kochman. I glance down at my choices of writings and notice one of my options—Family. You know, I think to myself, *I could write about my family in my personal narrative too...* I can literally feel the light bulb turn on over my head. The little wheels inside my head start to turn and ideas start to fly away and onto the paper, leaving me far away from class.

I walk down the street laughing and talking, in a black velvet skirt (that I can't believe I ever even wore) with a red sweater that has a lobster in the front. My hair is pulled back in a sloppy bun right on top of my head. I am full from all of the food we had eaten earlier that day. We had been cooking all day for this, this day of family and friends. As we sit around the table my uncle had given a speech about love, family, and life. My uncle is just like that, all inspirational, and this Thanksgiving is surely one that I will never forget. Now my family and I are taking our Thanksgiving night walk. I watch everyone around me huddling for warmth. They are all laughing and smiling in their big coats and scarves. This is what I love about my family and this is what everything in life is about.

I took a deep breath and took my personal narrative from Ms. Kochman's hand. I looked up at her and there was a sparkle in her eye. The first thing I saw was, *Love it!* right next to the title. I giggle not being able to keep in my excitement. My eyes scan the pages and there were a few hints here and there. She said that she wanted to talk and look over it and I was fine with that. I didn't really care that I had made a few mistakes. So what—everyone does, right? What I was especially happy about was the fact that she had read it. Yeah, I know she had to—it was the assignment, but I was happy that she could read my view on what is important

to me. She had read my view on friends and family, my view on life and my view on love.