Lies

By: Rebecca Zack
A thick gust of air filled my lungs. The rush of the wind whipped my hair around my head, the small strands coming around and hitting me in the eyes. My weak lungs struggled to breathe in the constant force of the wind. My dad’s yells were whispers in the thick breeze. Up ahead I could see my house sitting in the distance, almost calling me. It had been seven months and two days since I had to be hospitalized due to cancer, seven months since I had been home.

The car came to a sudden stop. My dad stepped out of the car. He bent down and heaved the heavy metal garage door just high enough that he could get in, and let the door drop behind him. Usually he was adamant about keeping the cars in the garage, was something wrong? I sat there for a few moments, almost in disbelief. Then, suddenly, excitement came over me. I shoved the car door open and jumped out, not even bothering to close it. I fell onto the thick new grass, rolling in the lusciousness. The smell of the wet soil filled me. The moisture sunk through my clothes. I hoisted myself onto my feet, and sprinted to the door on wobbly legs.

I opened the heavy wood door and received a gentle pat from the summer air conditioning. I leaped in the doorway, looking up to the vaulted ceilings. I spun around and around until I was so dizzy I couldn’t see. I took in the open space and whirled around quickly to find my brother standing with open arms. I collapsed into him, hugging him for the first time in months. His arms were different now, thicker and more defined than the last time. We stood for a few moments, just wrapped in each other’s arms, tears falling. He released me and looked into my eyes. “I missed you.” He whispered.

I sprinted up the stairs, and across the landing, searching each room for my mom. I reached the end of the hallway with still no sign of her. Puzzled, I wandered down the wooden stairs. I had just reached the bottom when I heard the arguing. I had never heard yelling like this. I could barely tell who was speaking through the raised pitch.

“When the time is right. She just got home; she needs sometime to readjust, to get back into a normal schedule before you drop a bombshell like that!” The women shouted in a highly guarded voice.

“How long do you think we can carry on this charade? She’s going to-” His voice was cut off by the creaking of an opening door. I stepped out and looked at my parents. What had happened to them? I had never even seen either one of them raise their voices at one another.

“What charade?” I asked curiously. My mom looked at me with sad eyes. She glanced at my father and said the words no child ever wants to hear.

“We need to talk.”

She sat me down and told me everything that had happened. Once my dad had started spending more time at the hospital, they had grown apart. My mom was always home and
cleaning or cooking, and my dad was rarely home between work and hospital visits. Some nights he didn’t even come home to sleep. I felt so guilty. I felt like it was my fault. They were so close, they did everything together, they talked for hours like first loves. What happened?

Then, something clicked.

The reason my mom never visited me at the hospital. It wasn’t because she had a house to clean, or a job to go to. She was avoiding dad. It made sense. She would only show up when she knew dad wouldn’t be there, when he would be at work. The few times they had come together, they would sit on opposite sides of the bed. I thought it was just their way of comforting me, or maybe they were disturbed by the needles and wires stuck in me. That was never it.

How would I live my life without one or the other? I didn’t think I could do it.

I ran up the stairs and down the hallway with heavy feet. I wanted them to know how much it hurt. I rounded the corner and closed my eyes, hiding the tears. Then I stumbled on something. I knew my room; that shouldn’t be there. I opened my eyes abruptly to find a neatly kept office. Rage brewed in me.

I marched down the hall, dragging my feet and biting my lip. There were so many things I wanted to say as I turned into the room where he stood.

I screamed. “HOW COULD YOU TAKE THAT? It was the last thing I had. Don’t you think you should have warned me at least? Did you expect that I wasn’t coming home? Did you not want me to? Did you figure if you took the room away, the problem wouldn’t come back? What were you thi-”

He grabbed me forcefully by the chin. He squeezed until my frail bones folded on top of each other. He pulled my hands behind my back, successfully gaining control of me. I kicked and screamed for help, but it was muffled as I gasped for air. Quickly, he secured my feet in his grip and swung me over his shoulder and headed out of the room.

“You ungrateful little twit.” he mumbled and tossed me down the stairs.

~ ~ ~

I woke up confused and dazed. Where was I? Then, I recognized the blinding white walls, the steady hum of the breathing machine.

The doctor suddenly came through the door wearing a synthetic smile. I knew what was coming. My cancer wasn’t gone, and this attack had made me too weak to fight it. It had come back with a vengeance.

My whole life was a lie.