

By Ashley

Shocking Medical News!

I have been dreading this day, but I knew it would come, the day that my fate would be revealed. I was living with one single question for more than a year, a question that would only be answered by multiple tests and hospital visits. Although the test wasn't painful, it was a moment that will never escape my mind. "Do I need heart surgery?", that was the question. Now, some people might say that this is a question as simple as 1+1; however, the wait, the tests, and the final results took a lot of time and patience.

The soft morning light streamed through my window kissing my face with warmth; my nostrils slowly picked up the aroma of something being cooked in the kitchen. "Ashley, it's time to get out of bed," my mother called gently. I rubbed my eyes and laid in bed as I pondered what the day would bring. I didn't want to go, I felt like a puppy refusing to go on a walk, but I knew I had to. It was as if I was cut in half, one half wanted to know the answer to this life changing question and the other half, well the other half just wanted to bury myself under the cloud of blankets and never come out. I rolled out of bed like a log rolling down a hill. I stood on my feet, and accepted the fact that I would have to face this moment at some point or another. I opened my closet to look for clothes and all I could see was a deep dark dungeon. I stood there for what seemed to be hours until finally I was forced to grab a pair of jeans and a t-shirt. After I had finished getting dressed, I felt my stomach rumble and I knew in my mind I should eat something before we left, I meandered out into the kitchen where a hot breakfast waited for me. Plump sausages, fluffy scrambled eggs, and golden brown toast awaited

my taste buds I sat down in the chair and ate my food and after I finished eating it was time to face the one hour dreadful car ride to Neenah.

The music on the way there made the smooth ride a little less awkward. I'll admit I was extremely nervous; I didn't want to darken the mood, but I wasn't feeling very confident. Thoughts swirled through my mind like a gust of wind. I wanted to make conversation with my mom, but at this point, where was I suppose to start?

After taking a few wrong turns and having to ask for directions, we finally found the hospital. As we parked the car my legs felt like marshmallows; they were solid, but mushy. When the two of us walked through the halls and to the elevator I had one worry that kept sticking out in my mind, at that moment I decided it couldn't get much more nerve wracking. We stood in the elevator alone, so I questioned my mom, "What happens if things don't go well?" We both were thinking it, but she confidently assured me, "Then we deal with the consequences, but we will always be together and that is all that matters." The elevator door slid open and revealed a waiting room, there were toys, books, and other things to do to pass time, but I was the first one there. The young lady at the front desk gave me a welcoming smile as we approached. I accepted my wristband after they had confirmed my information. My mom and I then sat down in the cool, empty waiting room as we waited for the nurse to greet us. As we waited a few more people entered the room and patiently sat down.

I could hear my heartbeat in my ears, BANG, BANG, BANG, the 15 minute wait seemed to take hours. I could feel the knot in my stomach tighten every time a name was called, and I nervously fidgeted with my shaking fingers. My mom and I exchanged nervous glances because we both knew that this could either go well or we could be

sent plummeting into a black hole of fear. My mom was trying to stay strong because she didn't want me to see that she was scared, but I knew she was. Millions of thoughts raced through my brain as if I was in the middle of a sandstorm and each grain of sand was a thought. I wanted to talk to my mom, but the lump in my throat prevented me from sounding the least bit confident. A few minutes later I shakingly asked her, "Mom, what if I need surgery, what are we going to do?"

She breathed a heavy sigh, "Then we will have to fix it, as long as we have our family it will be okay." For a second in that room, part of me thought that things might be actually be okay. After what seemed to be hours, the door creaked open and a lady with a kind smile called my name. My heart sank to the ground like a brick in a pool. My legs trembled and my fingers were shaking, but somehow I was able to stand up and slowly walked over to the young lady, I felt as if a turtle could have walked to the door faster than I did. The door closed behind my mother and I and the nurse gave me a welcoming smile.

"Don't worry, I'll take good care of you," she replied. Coming from someone you don't really know, words of kindness don't really help because she has to do her job whether I like it or not. Her dark hair was curled perfectly and her ocean blue eyes were as bright as stars in the night sky. Her white teeth greeted me when she smiled and she took me into the room that had glow in the dark stars pasted all over the otherwise plain white walls. After I had gotten changed into a thin, cold, and quite uncomfortable gown she put white sticky patches all over me. Then, she hooked up wires to all of them and suddenly my heartbeat showed on the computer monitor. It was amazing, I had never seen such a thing! The kind, young lady got out the probe and gel, "Can you please lay

on your left side?" she asked. Well, let me tell you, after all the rolling on that little table and all the pushing she did on my chest, my chest started to hurt.

"PLEASE, when will this thing stop, I'm sick of laying here and I want to move," I thought to myself, but as a good girl would do, I patiently waited for her to finish her job.

After she had finished, she let me peel off all the sticky patches and wipe off all of the gel and get back into normal clothing. She lead us to a small waiting room where we must have talked to countless nutritionists and other doctors about our previous health. After approximately an hour the doctor finally came in, well, you want nervous? I was shaking so much I could barely keep myself together. He came in and announced, "Well, I have good and bad news..." My mom and I looked at each other sort of confused, "Lets start with the bad news, your powerlifting career is over." I looked at him very confused.

"I don't participate in powerlifting," I revealed.

"Well, then you don't have to worry about that do you?" he said exclaimed. After drawing a few diagrams he looked me in the eyes and assured me "Ashley, you are a lucky girl, 97% of other children with your condition, your age, I would be planning heart surgery with, fortunately, you are part of the other 3%."

At this point I felt a sigh of relief as if an ocean wave had just washed over me. My mom and I hugged and cried together. It was the most nerve wracking thing in my life, and even though I still need checkups, I'll take the checkups over surgery any day. As we were walking out the door of the hospital the doctor squeezed my hand and encouraged me, "Ashley, you have one life, live it to the fullest." I will never forget those

words, ever. Life is never going to be a smooth ride to paradise, so we can only make the best of what is offered to us.