

Artist Statement for “The Path of the Thyroid Butterfly”

Sydney Chapman

I am Sydney Chapman and this is my story about “The Path of Evil Alfred”. On July 9th, 2018 I was diagnosed with follicular carcinoma. My first hint when something was wrong was during vacation when my mother pointed out a weird lump on my neck. She said, and I quote, “Why is your neck so fat?” Obviously, I was surprised but sure enough there it was, a giant lump on my neck which we had assumed at the time to be swollen lymph nodes. This lump soon became known as Alfred. After getting home, the day of chaos struck. I went from a simple check up to ultrasounds, blood test, and talk of going to the ER for an emergency biopsy. However, the biopsy was deemed pointless and Alfred had been renamed evil Alfred. In the end, it was decided to do a surgery to remove the tangerine sized mass from my right thyroid. Alfred had ended up taking over my entire right thyroid, to the point in which it wasn’t even functioning before, and one parathyroid. Ironically, evil Alfred, even once removed from my throat, caused trouble as he was one of the 1% in which cannot be determined if he was cancerous or not during the first surgery. So, Evil Alfred’s plans slowly fell into place as I had a second surgery a week later to remove the rest of my thyroid. What followed these procedures was a single ionized radiation pill and, what I viewed as the worst thing during my entire journey, a low-iodine diet.

Throughout my entire journey I never really had time to stop and think about what happened. It was one thing to the next, everyone was sad and felt sorry for me and all I could feel is bad for putting THEM through it. I would tell jokes like I normally would at dinner, talk about what my story for my new scar would be (bar fight), and dressing up my tumor (which I explicitly asked my surgeon to take a picture of) in a mustache, monocle, and top hat. I would act

normal to the point in which my sister asked what was wrong with me. She couldn't understand my response, and I really didn't either. All I knew is that there was nothing I could have done to avoid any of it, so I thought, "why should I feel bad?". In my art I try to show my lack of emotions towards my journey, by having my head tilted up towards the sky, almost ignoring the entire situation happening below. Evil Alfred is drawn, as a butterfly with the thyroid cancer ribbon color on its wings, flying away from me and leaving a scar. This is how I felt my story went. I looked away, not thinking about the surgeries or radiation, and by the time I looked back all that was left was a scar.