It was only a lump.

The receptionist did not look up when I arrived, 15 minutes early as requested. They ask for that so the waiting time is rounded up to two full hours. I smiled at her as I imagined the bacteria swarming on the smudged glass between us. She did not look up, I cleared my throat. She answered the phone.

There was a seat near the door. No one sits there because you have to adjust your feet every time another person is called. I briefly considered going home, but my legs wouldn’t cooperate. I smiled politely at the 400 pound woman next to me who spilled into the chairs on either side. I wondered, Do they have mammograms in heaven? She’ll be there for sure. Two of mine were a quarter of one on her; one of mine outweighed five of the woman’s to her right, just about the same as the blonde across the room. She had put on makeup for the show, hair perfectly coiffed, probably afraid that mammogram camera would accidentally snap her face and not the Cancer. I hear it happens.

I sat waiting for the persistent robot nurse to call my name, have me undress and hand me off to the next robot. The second one speaks, tells you not to breathe and brings down the wrath of digital imagery on your chest. I imagine it in my mind, comparing breasts, waiting to hear my name. Tug of war ensues, C word downfield, dying scarecrow relative memories sidelined. Two hours later I was still weighing the breasts in the room when I heard my name. Robot one ushered me in and checked for deodorant in my pits. I probably should have shaved.

"I’ll be right outside. Put your purse in the locker. Just pull the curtain back when you’re ready."

She was gone when I stepped out. I clutched my parchment robe across my soon to be putty breasts and I wondered, Do I put this locker key under a breast or an ass cheek? I searched for signs of life and, finding none, slipped my left hand inside the robe and felt my right node, just between that normally vacant space where the tissue ends and the gland hardens. It was still there, too late to run now. Not in...