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## Booby Trap

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## Booby Trap

DAWN HACKETT

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

get-up. I grinned, imagining myself bare-chested with only one tit, running in public to show the world a big wicked scar, right arm high into the air and middle finger up. I saw an old poster in my head, huge set of eagle claws inches away from snagging a field mouse who is smiling and flipping the eagle off in his last great act of defiance. I wondered, Do they have separate asylums for one titted women?

Robot one reappeared, a bit of mayo smeared on her chin.

I asked, knotting my brow, "You did call Miss Thirty-Eight Double D's, right?"

She wiped her face, gave me a sneer, giving the baton to robot two with a lean-in, passing on some sacred piece of information my tits apparently couldn't handle.

Thirty minutes later I was still looking down at the Plexiglas pressing my right breast into a perfectly flat diagonal. My nipple was ready to shoot across the room and ricochet, placing a nipples pockmark square on my forehead and I wondered, Did they do this to Lance Armstrong's balls?

Robot two corrected me again. "This time remember to hold your breath, grab the bar with your right hand and lean back away from your breast with your left shoulder. We've got a lobby full today. And for goodness sake, look straight ahead and try to smile. Ready?"

The blonde was right, I should have worn makeup. I wondered, Do they have a pill to fix stupid. I sighed, exposed, miserable.

Robot two came over and put her hand on my shoulder, willing me into proper alignment, speaking calmly.

"Don't worry yet, OK? A lump is always cancer until they tell you it isn't, that's how our minds work."

Deflated, shoulder slumping against her hand, I took a deep breath and steadied my grip.

"Ready when you are."