

Removals

by Daniel Harris

Her mother was worried. Her darling daughter's breasts were not equal in size or shape, not even close. The right one was full and maternal, the size of a grapefruit. The left one was a lemon, with a protuberant nipple. The mother was afraid her daughter's ballet dancing career would be harmed by this asymmetry. After much discussion, the grapefruit was reduced to a lemon. After failing to enter a major ballet school, the daughter's dancing career consisted of pole dancing in bars for drunken cowboys.

—Mom, you should have made the little one bigger, the daughter said.

At thirty-five the daughter found a lump in the former grapefruit. After many tests and consultations it was removed, the former grapefruit was neither lemon nor fruitful, but a raw flat space on her chest. There was chemo and radiation and much illness and pain. There were tears on all sides. The daughter survived. She marched. She wore pink. She volunteered for support groups. The daughter's brother was diagnosed with testicular cancer. His left testicle was removed. There was no chemo or radiation, only pain. Afterward he stopped showering at the gym and showered alone at his office or home.

