“Do you know what leukemia is Sam?” asked Dr. Jeffery Lobell. I can remember this day so clearly, like it was yesterday. I had just met the man but 2 days before. 12 at the time, I say in my hospital bed surrounded by doctors, nurses, and even a few students. My mom and brother were next to me. They both looked at me in a way I had never seen before, desperation. “That’s a kind of Cancer, I think. Right?” I said. Hesitant for the answer. “Yes, it is.” He confirms. “And we’re going to start treating you for it. You’ll get your port *(portacath-a small medical appliance that is installed beneath the skin. A catheter connects the port to a vein.)* tomorrow. You’ll start treatment then. Survival rate is 85%, you’ll be okay.” Overwhelming me in every way possible. Tears welling up in my eyes, they shift from him to my mom. By then Mom had ordered everyone out. She came and sat next to me, smoothed my hair, and looked at me silently. “Am I going to die?” are the only words I said to her. She said nothing because I knew she had no answer. I know that she didn’t want to promise me my life, when she didn’t know if I would live it. Only a number of tears ran down my cheeks that day. But when I saw my brother, who I have NEVER seen cry before, with streaks on his face and red eyes. I knew in that moment that I was going to fight like hell, not just for me but for them.

**I am a Survivor.** Soon to printed into my skin forever, Saturday at noon. The pain I’m sure will be amazingly terrible, and I will hate it. But, it’ll be worth it.

I became a Survivor on September 26th, 2013. The day I took the last small yellow chemotherapy pill. No more infections or fevers. I was semi-normal again. Going back to school on a regular basis, getting good grades again, and working through all of the emotional aftermath of my illness. I don’t remember everything about what I survived because part of my involuntary survival method was to block out and forget. But, I do know that A.L.L. (Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia) kills 15% of the innocent people that tit can get its dark claws on. 85% live to have a family, drive a car, get an apartment or a house, 85% get to graduate high school, attend college, have a career, and 85% get to travel the world. 85% get to live again. I am part of that 85%.

I was sitting in the small square room, chairs lined the walls, a tall beam in the middle encased by a connectable train set. A coffee station next to the main counter where Von the receptionist, going on 12 years, sat and said “I’ll let them know you’re here”. ‘Them’ meaning all the pediatric Oncology Nurses that work in the Pediatric Hematology and oncology Clinic, ground floor, near the elevator, right inside the door. It’s in a private little nook of the hospital. Similar to the third floor Pediatric Unit, There walls going into the office were covered in veiling high murals. With children playing, animals running in the grass, picnics, ponds, trees, blue skies.

Those walls got me through some rough times. I would walk around late at night while all the rest of the patients were asleep in their beds and most of the nurses are doing their paperwork or checking patient’s vitals or administering test/ medicines as ordered on their charts. I would look at the walls and try to imagine that I was there in the park, instead of the hospital. Analyzing every paint stroke, the movement of the piece, the contrast and shadows, done perfectly to a child like me.

The nurses always, without fail, told me to go back to bed around 2 A.M., like that was my unspoken bedtime. But we all knew I wasn’t going to bed until I couldn’t keep my eyes open any longer, which was usually around when the sun came up. Most people thought I slept all day, but to their disbelieve I got up around 10:00 A.M. everyday. I played video games, read, listened to music. Anything to pass the time. I don’t remember why I pretended to be asleep whenever my nurse or family came in the room. I don’t know if I ever will now for certain.