

How Can I Connect You?

“Caroline, you are so special!”

“Sure Mom. Everyone else is good at sports or is smart. I’m neither!”

“Young lady, don’t talk about yourself like that!”

“But it is true. Why can’t I say things that are true?”

Caroline stormed into her room, slammed the door and flopped down on her pillow crying.

“I will never be special,” she whispered to herself.

“Come on Linie. We are going to be late for your chemotherapy appointment.”

“Mom! Stop calling me that nickname!”

“Fine. But come on,”

“The only thing special about me is my lung cancer,” Caroline said as she stormed out of her room.

20 years later...

“Hello. How can I connect you?”

Caroline was now a telephone operator. She talked to many people every day but most just wanted to be transferred to whomever they were calling, not to her.

“Please connect me to DGR7139,” the woman on the other line said through tears.

“Ma’am, is everything ok? Are you in trouble?”

“I am fine, well not completely.”

“Do you need me to call 911?”

“Oh, no, but please connect me to DGR7139.”

“Yes ma’am,” Caroline said as she plugged the chord into the switchboard and transferred the call.

Caroline was trained to listen to the first few seconds of the call to make sure that it transferred. It did and as she listened, she heard, “Lung cancer... I have Lung cancer.”

Because she needed this job to pay for her medications, Caroline hung up immediately. If she listened any longer, she’d be fired.

Later that night, that call was all Caroline could think about. Having lung cancer was so rare. Two people, in the same town with it was unheard of. The only thing that was special or unique about her was gone.

The next morning, Caroline got dressed and drove work. As always, she got countless calls and made countless transfers. But at the end of her shift, as she was packing her bag, she got a call. She recognized the number but didn't know how. When she picked it up, she recognized the caller as the woman with lung cancer from the day before. For some reason, Caroline was almost excited to answer.

"Hello. How can I connect you?"

"Hi. You connected me yesterday. I was once a telephone operator and well, now you probably know I have lung cancer. You sounded like a nice person, offering to call 911 and all. I owe you an apology for being so snappy."

"Thank you. You are the first person to ever do this. You sound like a nice person as well. I hope you get better as soon as possible and can live your life without that awful disease."

"Thank you so much. I have been needing some encouragement."

"Of course. It is my pleasure."

"Can I call you again tomorrow?"

"Yes, you can call that time every day, except Thursday, that's my off day."

"Thank you. I will need someone like you to cheer me up. And what should I call you?"

"Caroline, or Linie...that was my mom's nickname for me when I was little. I've never told anyone that before."

"Wow. I feel so... honored. I think we will be pretty good friends."

"Me too. Talk to you tomorrow?"

"Of course,"

"Oh, and what do I call you?"

"Julia, just Julia."

The next day, as Caroline transferred calls, all she could think about was Julia. When the time finally came, Caroline sat staring at the phone. When it rang, she picked it up. On the other line she heard, "Hey Linie! How are you?"

"Great! How are you?"

"Life is awful. I went from stage 2 to stage 4 today."

Julia's voice went from happy to crying.

"I wish I could hug you through the phone."

"Me too."

"Just keep fighting. Call me any time. Whenever you need me. I will always try to be here for you."

"Even though I have never seen you face to face, you are the best friend I have ever had. Can I call the same time tomorrow?"

"Of course."

"Bye Linie"

The next day, Caroline waited for the call. It was a normal day until the call didn't come. Caroline told herself many reasons why she didn't call. But there was one reason that kept coming into her head, she was gone. *No that is not true... that is not true.*

The next day, she waited for the call...again. And again, there was no call. She went through the same reasons, even the one she could not imagine to be true. Later that day, she had her doctor's appointment. As she sat on the exam table, she thought about Julia and why she didn't call. When the doctor finally came in, he took some blood and sent it to his lab. And again, she thought and thought. But when he came back, he was at a loss for words.

"I...I have never seen something like this before."

"What haven't you seen? Am I going to die?"

"Oh no! You are completely clear of cancer!"

"What? Oh my goodness!"

"Let me send my nurse in to check it again."

"O...Ok."

After he left, the nurse came in immediately. She had never seen her before. She was frail but looked like she was experiencing joy for the first time. She took her blood and they talked a little but as she walked out, she said "You always thought that you were not special but what makes you special is the kind of friend you are. Kind, sweet and well, the best, my best. Just keep fighting Linie."

"Excuse me?"

The nurse walked out the door and Caroline ran and opened it. There was no one there.
Seconds later, the doctor walked in. Caroline asked about the nurse.

The doctor looked confused and said, “We don’t have a nurse here that looks like that. But you just perfectly described my patient Julia, who passed away yesterday.”

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