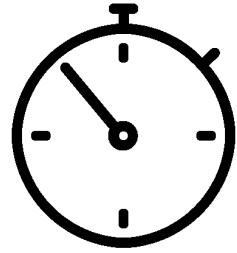


WHEN LIFE COMES TO MOMENTS



The wall clock struck 1 a.m., as the blue cuff tightened its vice grip around my arm and clacked off its slow, steady decompression. The face of the ER doctor was visible through my partially drawn curtain, and his expression was grave as he spoke on the telephone in hushed tones with our family doctor, whose office we'd visited thirteen hours earlier. Mom and I had heard the preliminary diagnosis (based only on crude x-ray and fuzzy CT scan images) moments before, and although the precise name of my mortal enemy had yet to be determined using an MRI and biopsy, the line that rang in my ears was "These things go south fast; we're prepared with specialists to do surgery or necessary procedures at a moment's notice."

Within hours, a team of nine high-powered physicians and surgeons (some with specialties I'd never

DON'T LET THIS THROW YOU!

heard of) was assembled on my behalf. “You must be important,” one doctor said later. “I just stood at the nurses’ station and no fewer than seven specialists were discussing you!”

The next day, a surgeon would say, “We have ways of getting operating rooms anytime.”

“Even on Christmas?” I’d asked, looking at the calendar and realizing that was a definite possibility.

“Anytime!” was the answer.

So in that ER, knowing my reality had changed and my life might well be brought to moments (yes, I know it always could, but this was a more obvious possibility), my mind raced. I looked at Mom and started thinking through a list of all the things she needed to know. If only I’d sensed this coming, I’d have prepared something for her. My mind jolted into high gear and started rattling off instructions.

Passwords, definitely she needed to know my complex and quirky system of passwords for both personal and business-related apps and sites. How to find someone to help with her taxes. How to pump gas. (I’d saved her from that task all these years, but if I weren’t here, she’d need to know.) Which clients still owed me money and which still paid royalties every year, since