

# *Dad. Brain Cancer*

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It felt cruel  
To study the pathways that were changing you.  
Astrocytoma, glioblastoma  
Underlined them twice.  
Drew margins full of synapses  
The ones that were failing you in real time.

Meanwhile at home,  
Your balance shifted.  
Your voice blurred into shapes.  
Your personality changed  
Lectures didn't teach that.  
It felt like betrayal.  
Learning to understand your disease,  
While it took you away.

No one taught me how to stay studious while  
Grieving.  
Studying flashcards of mechanisms,  
watching those sequences  
take you away.

I passed the exam. I took my boards.  
By the time I could tell you that,  
You could no longer respond.  
Medicine was never a thought exercise. It was a  
movie in front of me.

They told me it was aphasia,  
that the pathways were gone.  
I knew where this was going.  
It was in the flashcards.

And I answered without asking.  
Nodded when you blinked,  
sat with you in the long pauses  
waiting for  
words that might still arrive.

You were still there.  
Even when stripped of language,  
You could still respond.  
With tears, with smiles.  
With a hug that told me you wished you could stay.

And that was the hardest part.  
Knowing you hadn't left yet,  
only the means to say so.

about | poet

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