**Four Walls**

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I walk past your room, the room where I met you. The room where your nurses painstakingly cared for you. The room where I told your family you were dying. The room where I listened to your pulseless chest.

I walk past the doorframe where I waited to enter. Where I perched on the handrail and stared at my shoes. It was midnight when your mother placed oil on your feet, when I heard her voice trembling as it lifted desperate prayers.

I walk past the place where dialysis whirred, where the ventilator chimed, where doctors entered then left. No one knew why your organs were failing, why the fevers grew higher, why you were healthy for 34 years, and then not.

It was in this place that I met your wife, as your body bloated and bled. Where I tried to answer the questions that had no available answer.

“That’s not him,” your wife told me. She scrolled through her phone to the photo by the lake. It was the one with your arms around your girls, your feet in the sand, the sun going down. The little one was missing her front teeth.

It was next to your bedside that I met your daughters. The teeth of your youngest had pushed through the gums, but there were no smiles. She held your hand, then pulled the front of her shirt up over her eyes, sobbing into the fabric.

When I walk past your room, I think about your girls. I wonder what life is like without their dad. I think about your wife trying to go on without you, stifling her sorrow so she keep on living. I think of your mother and her unbearable pain.

This space between four walls became the place of goodbye. They would have chosen anything else, but goodbye became the only choice.

I walk past your room, and another soul rests there. A tube breathes for him, quickly, in and out. Yet even as he lies here, the walls hold your memory. They speak of the torrent, the rapid upheaval. This goodbye of unspeakable grief.