Her heart beats.
She looks up at me,
smiles.
Or maybe it’s a grimace.
She’s in pain, no doubt.
More meds in store today.
Sips of water, bland food. Maybe a treat.
No.
She wants it all to end, she tells me.
But she hasn’t told them.
Them.
The doctors.
She is scared.
Not of dying. But of them.
The doctors.
Her heart beats.
Another day. Still here.
Still in pain.
Still wanting to leave.
She wants it all to end, she tells me.
But she hasn’t told them.
Them.
The doctors.

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Editor’s note: This poem won the 2019 Undergraduate Narrative Award for Palliative Medicine administered by the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians.

Her heart beats.
Start comfort.
Start living.
Start.
Her heart beats.
She looks up at me,
smiles.
It’s not a grimace.
She is not in pain, no doubt.
New meds in store today.
A pump, so she can have some control.
Control, that’s new.
She likes control.
I like control.
Sips of water, soft food. Maybe a treat.
Ice cream.
She laughs.
I smile.
Goodnight.

Another day. Still here.
No pain.
Ready to leave.
She is brave today. Asks to stay right there.
I cry.
She smiles.
We hold hands.
Her heart.

Start.

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