

A Day in the Death of a Hospice Patient

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Unchained lung cancer
does not play well with others in the brain.
Running with scissors it
slices the frontal lobe,
severing inhibitions it
transforms our gentle giant
into a wild man,
a screamer,
a sobber,
a sprinter towards the exits.

“I want to go home”
“I don’t want to die here”
“I want to see my family”
reasonable requests all but
scary to staff when
delivered with frightening force
at the top of his cancer-filled lungs.

What can we do?
Reinforcements from throughout the building
only fan his flames.
We call his family,
at the end of their tolerance,
“Fix him” they implore.
Finally, admitting failure
we call in airstrikes and soon
the hum of the B-52 is heard overhead
preparing to bomb his bad behavior into submission.

He sleeps for now,
finally,
fitfully
but fast asleep for the first time and we march forward
to finish our rounds,
in our world where we all are dying,
but dying more
quietly and compliantly.

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