

# Pen Strokes

*Christopher T. Martin*

Devastation plowed through his brain, his heart, his soul—  
When a simply uttered phrase took its toll.  
Although he knew this made him a foolish son,  
He had to deny the end would ever come.  
“I’ve got tumors all over my lungs,” she said.  
The day had arrived, that for years he did dread.  
The cancer had spread; it would not relent  
And quickly a strong woman’s health fell into descent.  
To be sedated and intubated was a reluctant choice,  
But she wanted one last time to hear her son’s voice.  
Her son came scrambling to arrive  
Only to find her barely alive.  
She was without faculty, he was told, more tumor than tissue.  
Doctors said no option; allopathic treatment was no longer the issue.  
He wept at her side for days, saying everything for the last time,  
All the while agonizing over to what next he was consigned—  
The most difficult pen strokes he’d ever laid to paper.  
The son will never forget those, he’ll surely always remember.  
He often thinks about what those marks brought to an end,  
And the wounds that would scar but never mend.  
For those strokes of the pen, tremulously scribbled and wrought with tears,  
Were the way a med student had to end his mom’s life in his first year.  
Yes, he knew they would never again speak and he was done hoping,  
But family, friends, and Mom’s dog helped with coping.  
And the next morning he awoke with another deep breath,  
Forever conscious of the frail balance between life and death.  
Exquisitely reminded that blood still runs through his veins  
As he meets new challenges and will someday smile again.  
Time has some way to heal without letting him forget  
Where he has come from and the sorrow he has met,  
All the while still training to help his patients survive.  
Someday he might even be your doc, but he’ll never forget why.

*In memory of Jeanette C. Lorinz*

- **Christopher Martin** is a fourth year medical student originally from Lake Worth, Florida. He plans to go into Emergency Medicine.