

Lunch Break, Brave Face

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Paul Kalanithi Writing Award Genre:

Poetry

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My mother immunocompromised from treatments
began seeing patients only from home when the pandemic began
she was optimistic I was scared about the spots found in her brain
some old, some new

she comes downstairs during her quick
break to eat lunch swallow the vitamins
and tend to her african violets they grow so fast...
flourishing in the may sunlight it beats into the house
from the kitchen window and warms it, making her symptoms flare

she asks us- *rajma for dinner?* while I get her a fresh ice pack and lemon
she soaks the little red beans in water
before walking steadily
back upstairs to respond typing with numb fingers
to the new messages she progresses
one patient at a time one day at a time

her inbox fills and her vigor drains.