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## A Cup of Chai

*Grace Ro*

He presented with a new medullary stroke,  
difficulty speaking and swallowing.  
Weeks of nasogastric feeds,  
and now with plans to transition to a PEG tube.  
Indicative of an irreversible condition,  
a date set in stone.

Not a yes, not a no,  
as he was unable to speak,  
per his wife of 45 years.

Walking the path of least resistance—  
passive assent  
rather than active consent.  
But his body begged to differ.

The night before surgery,  
his vitals suddenly plummeted  
and he was rushed to the CT suite.  
Elevated heart rate, sweats, difficulty breathing:  
further signs his body was resisting.

We returned to his room,  
just the two of us  
for the very first time.

He reached out his hand,  
shook his head and mouthed,  
“No surgery. Please.”

His breathing normalized  
and the intensity subsided.  
Color returned to his emaciated cheeks.

*Tell me sir, what would you like?*  
“A cup of chai,” he silently whispered.

Later that night,  
he was moved to the palliative unit,  
transitioned to comfort care.

As tears filled my eyes,  
I found my way to his new room.  
His eyes were bright,  
his smile cheek to cheek.

“Thank you,” he mouthed,  
as he brought to his lips,  
a warm cup of chai.

### **About the Author**

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