

POETRY | SPRING 2019

Neuropathy

By Xanthia Tucker

I only want to hear it if it's good
news, she said once between denying
fever, chills, headache, changes

in vision, chest pain, shortness
of breath. A small woman
with a cancer from her last cancer

treatment, she left her farm for this
hospital, for good and the
untimed unknown rest

of it. I wake her morning after
morning, noting hair on her
pillow and ataxia, improving. How

are your fingers? They're fine, the line
goes to here, she says, I can move this but not
that. Stable's a kind of good I give her

nothing new. I
love you, she
says when I say

goodbye and asks to have
tea at some unnamed
time between cycles, when

it's over. I'm not sure
of the rules but rebuff is
unpardonable. We'll have you

over, she says, you'll be the best
oncologist. She never called and I won't
look her up, my line of numbness still

in my chest and the rest can't
lift the unknown rest
of this memory.

Xanthia Tucker is a third-year medical student at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. Before deciding to become a doctor, she studied comparative literature, theater, and creative writing at Harvard College. She dreams of a humanistic and artistic career in medicine, inspired by her childhood idol, William Carlos Williams, and her grandmother, a painter. She also loves to sing, cook, backpack, and take naps with her cat, Elio.

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