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## Poem

### Walking grief

Temitope Ogundare 

You learned of walking pneumonia  
In medical school,  
An indolent invasion of the lungs,  
A kind of slow death.

And now, you acquaint myself with  
Walking grief:  
A slow-cooked, simmering sorrow,  
Reluctant to claim you swiftly.

It makes you gasp for air,  
Choke on a sob, and ache  
With each breath,  
But it won't leave you prostrate.

You wear a mask of normalcy,  
Smile, sleep, eat, and appear healthy;  
Its heat meticulously roasts  
Your heart, layer by singed layer.

Your heart throbs achingly,  
But not overwhelmingly so –  
this strain of grief is not virulent.

At times, you may forget  
That your body is a battleground,  
Until you wake, crying inconsolably,

Or find yourself sobbing  
Midway through an America's Got Talent  
YouTube video,  
Tears cascading like confetti  
On the golden-buzzered contestant.

Your tears lack joy,  
Unlike the man's tears  
Upon the realization of his dreams,  
Urged by the crowd's chant.

Your tears carry death –  
Your father's.  
Yours was not a close bond,  
But his absence opened your body  
To invasion by a different strain of grief;

Your body convalescing from mourning  
Your mother's passing – a near-fatal invasion  
That left you incapacitated, fighting for survival.

This grief is indolent, slow-growing,  
Unhurried in its quest to annihilate you.

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