

I haven't let myself cry in years, but the feeling of these tears streaming down my face isn't as alien as I was expecting.

It feels like relief.

It feels good.



I remember Dad's fight with lung cancer.

His struggle for air, and for life.

It was sudden, and none of us ever saw it coming, despite his smoking habit.

"The oldest person in the world quit smoking when she was 117," he would say, while jotting down yet another way to rid himself of his protagonist.

And he was right.



But cancer has a way of ignoring life's expectations, of ignoring our prayers and hopes.

And I remember what he wrote in his journal at the end – the last day he was still able to put his treasured Montblanc pen to paper.

"It's my fault and I know it. And now, I have to go with the thought that this could have been prevented. That I could have taken charge of my own life. That I could've been strong for Grace and Olivia. That I could have let myself breathe."

Remembering is harder than I expected, and these emotions, raw and biting, immobilize me.

But strength doesn't come easily, and neither does courage.

I'm ready for it now.

I am in control of my life.

Nobody else.

I knock on his door.
Not the usual, timid knock.

A confident, loud knock that causes the door to vibrate in its place.

And I wait.