Christy has cheered for each of us—
for all of us.

Christy needs
a cheerleader right now.
We are all
more than ready to pick up our pom-poms.

It was something to pray about.

No one can visit her—
though everyone wants to.
No one can visit her—
she is all the way down in Houston

Houston
known for its world-famous cancer centers.
Houston
known for performing miracles.
Houston
might as well be a million miles away.

It was something to acknowledge.

One day
our class got to listen to Christy.
One day
our class got to hear how she was doing.
One day
Christy sent the class a cassette tape.
One day
our homeroom teacher played it for us.

She sounded
tired.
She tried to sound
hopeful.
Christy said
she wanted to wish the team luck.

Tiger in a Cage

I keep having this dream. I am a tiger. I am a tiger in a cage. I am surrounded by people in variations of a uniform. Most wear long coats. I can only assume they are safari hunters. Have they just caught me? Why does one hold what looks to be a dart in his hand? Too many unanswered questions—for such a simple tiger—in a cage.

The Nurse: Mr. Williams, you’re going to have to make a decision soon.
The Father: I can’t. Not yet.
The Nurse: Well, at this point in time, the vitals are consistently showing no signs of life. Usually at a time like this, the family chooses—
The Father: I need more time. I just…need more time.

The Tiger: I look at them through the steel bars that restrain me. This is a first for me—being caged. Don’t they know I’m too young to be caged-up like this? Tigers are meant to be free—to roam—to explore. Don’t they know tigers live for their yet-to-be-discovered adventures? These people look at me with such fear. Are they afraid of something? What could they possibly be afraid of? Could it be me? I wish them no harm. I simply want to leave this confined place and live my life! They talk amongst themselves, but of course, I do not understand anything they say.

The Doctor: Mr. Williams? I’m Doctor Reed. I understand what a difficult time this must be for you and your family. I’m here to answer any
questions you might have. Sometimes, knowing certain facts—makes the
decision process—well, it makes things easier.

The Father: How long...? How long can my child live like this?
The Doctor: It depends, of course. Each patient is as unique as the
situation that brought them to this destination in the first place.
The Father: He won’t feel anything, will he?
The Doctor: No, he won’t feel a thing.
The Father: No pain?
The Doctor: No. No pain whatsoever. As I said, he won’t feel a thing.

The Tiger: I know I should feel anger. Tigers are known for their strength
and aggressive behavior, but for some reason unknown to me—strangely—
I feel weak. Perhaps I am just tired from the chase. Honestly, I do not
remember being chased. That I am caged comes as a complete surprise to
me. I do not remember... ever... feeling so... calm.

The Father: What do I do? Tell me, Doctor. What do I do?
The Doctor: You know I can’t tell you that...
The Father: My gut tells me No! This kid is a miracle! A miracle! Did
you know that? We weren’t even supposed to be able to have children,
and then, bam—we were given the most precious child that was ever born.
And he, of course, was followed by his little brother, Jacob, who we—we can’t lose him, too, Doctor. We just can’t lose another child... He’s our
pride and joy.

The Tiger: My pride was small—consisting of my mother, my father, and
my little brother.

The Father: Oh, I’m sorry. I was unaware—
The Father: Jacob was the meanest little fart you’d ever meet. Rebellious
as the day is long. Where we used to live, there was a community pool.
We’d let the kids play in the shallow end of the pool—supervised, of
course. They had to have their little floatation devices on before we’d ever
even let them near the water.

The Tiger: My little brother and I would pounce about in the shallow
waters near the embankment—splashing about with wild abandon.

The Father: One day, we were throwing a party—just a little
neighborhood get-together. My wife and I were busy with all of the
preparations, and we didn’t realize Jacob had somehow snuck outside. He
was at that curious stage when he really wanted to get into everything, but
he had trouble figuring out how to actually do it. We didn’t know he was
able to unlock doors yet. I know we had the backdoor locked. I know we

small towns
are usually the first ones to know these secrets.
Christy Walters
was diagnosed with cancer.
Christy Walters
was starting chemotherapy.

It was something to talk about.

Not every school has a student
diagnosed with cancer.
Not every school has a student
fighting for her life.
Not every school has a student
missed by everyone in her class.

Christy Walters
is our school.
Christy Walters
is everyone’s best friend.
Christy Walters
is and has been a cheerleader
for twelve of her seventeen years of life—
from a little girl in pigtails
standing on the sidelines of a Pee Wee football game
to the co-captain of this year’s varsity squad.

From the picture of perfect health
standing on the sidelines of the brightest future in school
to the negative images shown on an x-ray machine.

It was something to think about.

Christy has cheered for the home team,
when everyone else—including the players—lost hope.
Christy has cheered for the hometown football team
that has not won a game in two-and-a-half seasons.