

**WHITTNEY JONES****Irinotecan**

She traces lazy circles on the soft skin of her scalp, winding the ghost of her curls around her fingertips. This is how she used to soothe herself to sleep. Now she picks at the wisps left behind: a line above her forehead and at the back, just above her neck.

She tugs. I watch the skin stand up. It holds, but stray eyelashes catch on the lessening chub of her cheeks each day. Her brows are thinning. Relapsed, she's losing it all again.

Irinotecan, or Camptosar, from a natural compound found in the Chinese ornamental tree, causes diarrhea, vomiting, hair loss, shortness of breath. I googled it—the tree name. It translates to *happy tree*.

I wonder if the mouse with her tumor lost its fur. If it survived. They told me before that it had experienced some success with this therapy. But I don't know if *some* means it died.

I nudge her hand away to press a kiss above her ear. I could cover each odd shape of light with the end of my pinky over her brain MRI. Five. Or more. Some are *could-bes* waiting to show themselves.

Her hand comes back to touch again, slides from nape to crown.

I should ask of the mouse. Not if it's dead, but if it's been sick, and how sick.

Does it love the same food? Or turn its nose up at all its old favorites? How much weight did it lose? Is the skin see-through thin yet?

I bet the other mice don't recognize him.

He looks like everything else that's sick.

If only we knew the things we'd say that we'd live to regret. When I was carrying her inside, when I said, to an empty room, all I wanted for her was her daddy's hazel eyes? That was it.

She has them, you know. The most perfect blend too. A color of green you've never seen before. So much about her, they've never seen before. ●