

2018

## Five poems about cancer and hospitals

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### Recommended Citation

Brummett, Barry 7992976 (2018) "Five poems about cancer and hospitals," *Survive & Thrive: A Journal for Medical Humanities and Narrative as Medicine*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: [https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/survive\\_thrive/vol4/iss1/5](https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/survive_thrive/vol4/iss1/5)

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*Incubus*

Dawn kisses the windows,  
making curtains blush.  
Coffee whispers through the house.  
I drift down into the bed,  
cool sheets and warm covers,  
and I snuggle, blessing the day.

Then I hear the familiar croak,  
and there it is perched on the foot of the bed,  
heavy lidded eyes slowly blinking.  
It has not gone.  
It has patience.  
It has time.  
Maybe more than do I.

*The Weighting Room*

Such a plain room,  
to be the place  
where life and death  
are foretold.

Shouldn't there be a carved altar?  
Black candles, a stone basin to catch the blood,  
a bright golden trumpet set by the sink,  
a glowing obsidian knife?

We must fashion what sacraments we can  
from the cotton balls, the gloves,  
the paper sheet on the slab,  
the aging magazines.

I hear the voice of The Master through the wall.  
He is bringing tidings to some other supplicant.  
What a hard job, to be the angel of fate.  
I don't hear any weeping.

A poster of Monet gazes at me as I wait.  
If it knows anything, it gives no sign.  
Its light and dark are out of focus.  
The news could go either way.

*The Waiting Room*

There can't be secrets here.  
It's a specialist's office.  
Everyone knows exactly what each has.  
It's all private, and it's all flashing brightly,  
human signboards advertising our conditions.  
The new supplicants at the window whisper their prayer,  
but everyone hears and knows.  
Embarrassments below the waists.  
We grant each other grace.

## *Landing*

You don't need the Captain to tell you,  
you can feel it for yourself:  
"We have begun our initial descent."  
Doesn't seem like long ago at all  
that it quickened and you rose, climbing, soaring, lifting.  
Now the flaps are out and you feel the shudder.  
Soon the wheels will drop, those terrible harbingers,  
and there's no rising up from that.  
There's a twisting and jerking in the frame,  
foretelling the rush to the ground.  
Get your stuff together and in order.  
Put that seatback table up.  
When you land you will want to rush  
out and up the incline,  
to see Who waits there.

*In the hospital*

Prometheus and I went in for procedures on the same day  
and found ourselves splayed, displayed, flayed, on neighboring rocks.  
I'm in to have an organ removed, and he, it turns out,  
will have one of his chewed out every day from here on.  
The Fates, The Minders come and go and sing to the four winds  
your condition, your prospects, your fluids.  
Friends and relatives stand around aghast at what they didn't know,  
and twist their hands with the new knowledge of your guts.  
Except Prometheus's entourage, they've heard it all before.  
Prometheus must not have met his copay.  
He's tired of the food they serve here, but what can you do?  
In another couple of days I can go home.  
Maybe I'll bring him a cheeseburger.







