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Five poems about cancer and hospitals

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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.

