

Accompaniment

By April H. Center

I wonder how it feels to have someone, anyone, accompany me to chemo.
In the waiting room I watch other patients, who have someone sitting with them,
Chatting about little or much, trying to get the coffee brewer to perk – rarely does it work –
Waiting their turn to be hooked up, plugged in, to the liquid toxins.
I am alone.

Four months of chemo I'm told – four months of liquid lava that burns my veins as my
loneliness Burns my soul.

I wonder how it feels to have another accompany me through this bleak battle.
Daughter, brother, father, mother, a friend to face the fearsome foe: the angel of death with its
lethal breath.

Dragging myself to the scene of the war, where saboteurs thrust their sabers into
My skin, their thirst unassuaged – week after week, month after month.
I am alone.

No one sees past the sunny smile – oh, she must be fine. A solitary vigil, a wary, weary watch:
My body trying to survive.

I wonder how it feels without my breasts to accompany me through life.
Ravishing no longer, ravished breasts instead - the unintended consequence of cancerous cells.
Prosthetic or reconstructed – the wreckage cannot be repaired:
My female stuff of life cannot be regained.
I am alone.

Once filled with life-sustaining fluid, become now impedimenta to my life, filled with fluids that
Kill the life blood in me intended to save my life.

I wonder how it feels to be dead. Condemned from this earth – unaccompanied and alone?
Watching the toxic waste drip, drip, drip through the line – it sears and scorches my veins
Bruised, battered, collapsed veins – craving the chemicals that kill
Without discrimination, disdainful of life.
I am alone.

Only the afterlife accompanies me here, with its promise of endless being.

Writing Raw

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April H. Center bio: I am a retired attorney and practiced law in Columbus, Ohio for more than 20 years. I was diagnosed at age 53 with breast cancer, which required chemotherapy, bilateral mastectomy, and radiation over 10 months in 2007. I retired to my hometown of Michigan City, IN, where I cared for my parents until their deaths in 2010. I write memoir and poetry, tutor dyslexic children at the Michigan City Public Library, and serve on the Michigan City Public Library Board of Trustees.