

# Chemotherapy Poems

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Two weeks before  
the doctor told me  
I had cancer,  
the seven gods of luck appeared  
in my dream. They came  
down the river in a pink boat and docked  
in a bed of reeds.  
Outside the boat  
they had a meeting  
and seemed to decide  
to help me.  
So when the doctor said cancer,  
I thought, this is tough  
love from the gods,  
and did not lose hope.

||

From my chemo chair  
I see the mountains  
capped with snow.  
It occurs to me:  
I am 73 years old  
I have cancer  
I am dying.

The doctor says  
I will live.  
He is young.

They give me a bottle  
with chemo in it.  
It will hang from my neck  
and I must embrace it.

I am afraid  
of the bottle with its tubes  
but it is the water of life.  
The nurse calls it a baby bottle.

I must make my life more worthy.

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If I have a fever  
over 38 degrees, the nurse  
says I must go  
to Emergency,  
immediately.

“But Emergency is crowded,”  
I tell her.  
She smiles and says,  
“Don’t worry.  
You are a chemo patient.  
You can jump the queue.”

I stiffen.  
I cannot imagine myself  
in an ambulance.  
I cannot imagine myself  
jumping over the queue.

A young doctor says,  
“This is a great challenge.  
Probably you’ll be all right.”

IV

I try to listen  
to the movement  
of chemo in my body  
to calm myself.  
It fills my abdomen and heart  
Saaaaaaa....  
A tidal flow of ocean water  
at night, reflecting the moon.

V

I'm losing my hair.  
Every time I touch my head  
white hairs fall to my sweater.  
The nurse says,  
"In a few months,  
it will grow back,  
maybe in a different colour,  
even black."

I look in the mirror  
and see an old face.  
It is hard to believe  
it is me.  
It is hard to believe  
I have cancer.

In my long gaze,  
the person in the mirror  
becomes someone else.

VI

From my living room  
window I watched  
an old cherry tree blossom  
day after day.

One afternoon  
two young girls  
sat under the tree  
and drank and ate.  
They were watching the blossoms  
just like in Japan.

When the wind blew  
flower petals swarmed like insects  
and a cyclist flew down the road like a bird.  
I was quiet and the tree  
stretched out its neck  
to ask how I was doing.