

# Luca

Category: Poems

written by Richard Weiss | October 25, 2013

## **Richard Weiss**

He waited, sandwiched between an angular  
housewife with a cough and an accountant  
whose clothing draped his skeletal frame.  
When we first met he was much younger,

bearded, heavily tattooed, dressed in black,  
his bulk dwarfing my consultation room,  
a school custodian recovering after a painful  
divorce from a guitar-playing, nose-pierced wife

who vanished with a literary type. He remarried,  
lost her also, from illness, shrank in stature, retired,  
worked as a crossing guard, acquired more tattoos,  
had another relationship but seemed drained of joy.

Today he sat folded into my office chair, white  
sheaves of paper spiking from his pockets,  
the product of many consultations. He thrust  
them toward me. I scanned them, already knowing

their bleakness. *"What do you think?"* he asked.  
*"I'm sorry. You have no choice. Untreated  
you may get worse...rapidly. Chemotherapy  
will give you some extra months."*

*"Months? Not years?"* A barely audible whisper.  
He sank deeper into the refuge of his chair.  
We talked of the bell-shaped curve. The hope  
to be on that skinny end where everything worked.

A heaviness fell between us. He expected more.  
Searched for a flicker of hope as I did years ago,  
as they charted my wife's final months.  
There was no more then, or now.

## **About the poet:**

Richard Weiss is a retired internist and gastroenterologist living in Armonk, NY. "I have written many poems inspired by my patients' lives, which I have been privileged to share." Currently he is studying poetry at the Hudson Valley Writers' Center with B.K. Fischer and compiling his elegiac poems for publication.

## **About the poem:**

“The parallel between Luca’s struggle with cancer and my wife’s long battle with ovarian cancer catalyzed the writing of this poem. To walk the narrow path between compassion and scientific honesty, honoring both, has been a lifelong challenge—one that I believe the poem illustrates.”

**Poetry editors:**

Johanna Shapiro and Judy Schaefer