

What They Don't Tell You

Category: Poems

written by Meg Lindsay | March 1, 2019

Meg Lindsay ~

After 10 days in a hospital
you regain the ability
to walk albeit with a cane so I put the commode
out in the hall as you are laughing a bit more,
the gleam back, but the chemo starts
and the next morning again pain
in your ribs and sternum
and now it burns
in your chest and again you
can't make it up the stairs.
A spasm and your body folds into itself,
into the sign of the crab.

No one tells us there is a
spray guard to insert in the commode.
No one says do not go off
stool softeners while on pain killers
even if things get loose.
No one tells you so we don't know if what seemed
an upward trend is reversing,
no, no, not the wrong way
back to where you were
at its worst when we didn't know
what it was.

They don't tell you
what to expect, maybe because
seeing so many, they don't have time
or maybe no writers on the medical staff to make inclusive lists
or if they told you the range of options, maybe
they fear the details will break you.
No one is willing to tell you anything firm except
multiple myeloma has 900 gene variations,
multiple myeloma is incurable
although it can be blocked,
although undetected weeds smolder.
Not remission, not as in remit, to cancel or refrain
from exacting or inflicting (a debt or punishment)?
No one tells you that, after 36 years of marriage,
you are about to spend
the most intimate moments of your life

with this man and his body.

About the poet:

Meg Lindsay has had poems published in [Tricycle](#), [Pivot](#), [Salamander](#), [Alimentum](#), [Connecticut River Review](#) and elsewhere. She has an MFA in poetry from Sarah Lawrence College and is also an established painter, showing for decades in galleries and museums. Her chapbook about the process and emotions of painting, [A Painter's Night Journal](#), was published in 2016. Her website is meglindsayartist.com.

About the poem:

"My writing dramatically changed direction in 2016 when my husband, an athlete never ill before, collapsed with bone cancer at age seventy-one. Inspired by the doctor and poet William Carlos Williams, who wrote poetry on his prescription pad when on house calls, this poem originated in waiting rooms and doctors' offices and is part of a book-length manuscript (not yet published)."

Poetry editors:

Johanna Shapiro and Judy Schaefer