

## **CLOSER**

### *June*

We always take the furthest spot, eager to walk  
the flat expanse of Sloan Kettering's parking lot.  
On occasion he smiles in these first days  
swollen with hope,  
late June sunshine on his shoulders,  
the Dogwood just in bloom  
browning white petals kiss pavement.

### *August*

Hot, he waves a limp wrist  
motioning me to park nearer.  
The tree is laden with green leaves now,  
people walk, wipe sweat from eyes.  
His clammy hand clenches the bag he still carries  
relentless Jersey humidity further stifles his breath .

### *November*

It spread  
hip, kidney, bone.  
The cane hobbles him from car to front door  
where a lobby is filled with mums and pumpkins.  
His wool cap fits loosely now, his face still beautiful-  
chiseled, sunken. His sweater  
slips off his back, a skinny boy  
in daddy's clothes.

### *February*

The wheels on his chair thin, snow deep.  
His final infusion -  
a mere crucifixion, we  
are met by his Simon of Cyrene, sipping  
coffee, laughing with security as  
I recline the seat and  
writhe him out of our car  
like burnt bread, fallen too deep  
into the toaster.

## LAST FIRST NIGHT

I pose we smoke  
(the pleasure we can  
still partake in)  
but  
7 becomes 8  
8 becomes 9  
and you are still  
on the other side  
of the locked door,  
*ursus* in hibernation.

So I mark time  
mull red wine  
with cardamom  
and lemon peel  
pour the spirit  
into porcelain  
teacups and pass  
to my teenage children  
late popsicles  
on a summer night.

At 11:55 you appear  
your once strong body  
fading with the year  
you hobble a few steps  
in striped pajamas  
that Jew from Treblinka  
watching *Anderson Cooper*.

I graze your shoulder,  
strands of  
your silver hair-  
too weak to inhale  
you peck me instead  
with chapped lips as  
your last year begins.

## GARDEN STATE

Euphoria lives along a New Jersey highway  
kissing Dairy Queens, Burger Kings and Dennys  
Bliss is a stack of Legos, magnolia and  
stucco, green leaf core. The earthiness of  
unsullied soil, strong roots and pine waft over  
asphalt  
cars whiz by, pollinating dragonflies  
At the lobby one is blessed by hippies  
in lab coats and tattooed grannies

Buzzed in  
Heaven is minty, breezy and bright  
glass cabinets line milk-white walls  
housing cerulean glass bowls, little wooden pipes  
papers made of magic Hemp. The Apothecary  
smiles,  
we share a nicety as he arranges three glass jars  
upon a glass counter, flower and shake

man hobbles in, youth juxtaposed against his walker  
hobbles to the display case, knows his strain  
ease pours from his crooked smile as he extracts his wallet

this remedy  
so strange  
not growing along highways and  
back gardens, in public parks and VA Hospitals to  
mollify the  
soldier, to deaden the numb  
just here

## SONNY'S BAGELS

The jar says *tips for girls*  
the girls are old,  
round & Russian  
thick sexy accents  
Borscht with Sour Cream.

Poured into fitted jeans  
gems mounted on rear pockets,  
hunched over worn countertops  
they sweep butter across

bread, fling beads of  
sweat with dingy sleeves.  
August in Jersey,  
both ovens blasting.

Blushing, I drop a dollar,  
she grants me a nod  
as her colleague hands me a present,  
wrapped in parchment.

## **SPARED**

Flat on my back  
I taste your breath  
and track  
your blades  
hover for hours  
I will not sleep  
despite good weed.

The doctor warned my  
nips might tingle, so  
I pull the duvet  
tight and swaddle  
myself, like you did  
when you were alive,  
to our baby girl.

Under the covers  
I use my finger,  
hips  
lips  
clit

nips  
pink and hard,

still mine.

