

THE DOOR

Behind the door is a woman
who wanted to dance
at more weddings,
travel to sacred places,
make love to her husband again.
She wanted either the privilege
of growing old, or the grace
of a swift demise in her sleep.

But cancer comes as it pleases,
stealthy, secretive.
As the purple, night sky yields
to the cusp of morning,
she thinks about dying.
Is it like suffocating?
Or flying?
Or walking on water?
A thunderclap of exquisite pain?
Or buzzing numbness
ushering you away?

Prayer warriors rehearse their
“Hallelujahs” and “Amens,”
but this is no survivor’s story.
No sanitized, bleached white sickness,
no pastel ribbons to pin,
no charity walks,
no miracles,
no mercy.

Behind the door
her personal apocalypse unravels
in fear and waiting.
She tries the mantra
“I have had a great life,
I have had a great life,”
as if it were sufficient remedy
for the grievous burden of death.

Cinnamon D. Bradley, MD