

## Stacey Z Lawrence -- Two Poems

### Diagnosis

That first night we sleep side by side  
soft grey couch, television on  
background noise to distract us.  
Sweating, I wake midway through  
a dark night to static and  
panic,  
press bare knees to my chest  
tiptoe to the kitchen, grab a bottle  
uncork and sniff, search for a glass  
and pour, hands shake  
dry floral hues tickle my throat as  
I lean on the cluttered counter  
and try to ignore that he  
suffers in the next room.  
Aimless, I saunter barefoot on linoleum  
reading recipe cards, yank open  
a drawer, stack pens in piles,  
alphabetize the spice rack,  
anise, basil, cloves  
scrub a burnt pot until my fingers are  
raw and take another gulp.  
The room is hazy and quiet, as  
I tune out the fizzle of  
late talking heads  
into dawn.

### 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  
write him out of our car  
like burnt bread, fallen too deep  
into the toaster.

Stacey Z Lawrence teaches Poetry and Creative Writing to high school students in Maplewood, NJ. She has studied at The Frost House and The Millay Colony. She is working on her first book of poems.