

the very same moment they feel the most anxiety about me.

5. I am running out of time and I have only limited energy. There is still so much I want to see, to say, to do.

6. Although I have been told that they “got it all,” I am suspicious that cancer cells are cruising through my body in search of a good place to build.

7. I will be turning 66 this year. I can no longer tell if breathlessness and lack of energy are a result of cancer, chemotherapy, or of aging itself.

8. Cancer is *not* the worst thing that has happened to me in my life.

One night, she is reading in the Vermont house with her cat lying at the foot of her bed. While she has accustomed herself to such solitude, she is aware of the fact that there is only a fragile door between her and the rest of the world. The village nearby is in a state of increasing poverty, dereliction, and hopelessness. There is much drunkenness, drug use, and crime. The local paper reports weekly vandalisms, arson, and home invasions. As an outsider, she feels conspicuous and endangered.


She becomes apprehensive when a bright light shines a circle around the book she is reading. Could someone shine a strong flashlight on her book from the garden two stories below, she wonders. Although it is unlikely, she turns off her light and steps onto the balcony. There is no one in the garden; it is only the moon that has risen over the mountains and is riding high in the clearest of skies.

She stands in the cool night air inhaling the layered view: velvety blackness on the ground level outlines the trees in dark silhouette; a layer of fog rises from the river valley above the tree line and into the

mountains. This fog, shot through with brilliant moonlight, looks three-dimensional. The mountains in black-blues and black-purples have become undulating shapes; the bright moon floats over them in a midnight sky.

In her mind she assembles the materials with which she will render this scene. She can feel her energy returning and she knows it will sustain her in this creation. She comprehends that this felicitous intersection of desire and capacity is the cornerstone of her becoming. She doesn't really know how or why this is happening, but she rejects the kernel of worry forming deep within her: is this creative impulse ephemeral or real? She has learned how to lay aside such questions on her voyage through breathlessness and the many layers of pain in its myriad guises. This moment can form the nucleus of her reminiscence ... of getting there.

Greta Hofmann Nemiroff is a feminist educator, researcher and writer. She has published articles in both English and French in journals and anthologies in Canada and the USA, and she has edited and written several books. Currently she is teaching English, Humanities and Women's Studies at Dawson College where she also coordinates the Creative Arts, Literature and Languages Program.



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JOANNA M. WESTON

The Becoming

she uses lavender oil
on linen

rubs it
on her feet at night

touches the perfume
to her wrists

she wears
quiet mauve dresses
of soft fabrics
that slip
against her skin
whispering sunlight
and June

when evening moves in
she closes her eyes
folds hands
over dried sprigs
and inhales the dusky
full-throated scent

her body melts
to the fragrance
flowing
in her bloodstream
as lavender
she becomes

Joanna M. Weston has published nationally and internationally in journals and anthologies including The Missing Line (Inanna Publications, 2004).