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The Cancer Store

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THE CANCER STORE

A once virile husband takes small mincing steps
on bruised purple legs.

Push the metal walker away then
Stop.

It hurts.

Through tightened blue lips breathe
out slowly.

Dead already and your wife knows it.
Exhausted old man.

A weary young woman wears a pensive frown,
Cancer chic turban.

Push the baby carriage away then
Stop.

It hurts.

Something new and sudden
grows within.

Brave smile for a hopeful family.
Trusting doomed mother.

A quiet little boy wrapped in mother's arms.
Book lays lap unread.

Push Winnie the Pooh away then
Stop.

It hurts.

Stocking cap covers up
lymph node sins.

No eyebrows and a chemo crewcut.
Silent small soldier.

"Only three more treatments.

They think they have it all."

They never have it all!

It lurks in the night like

A multi-celled mugger
wanting your wallet and
your white cells.

Have the good graces to let us
Pull the covers over your heads and let you
Die at home.

Stop reminding us the grim reaper
drives a Porsche these days.

Ninety miles an hour.

Down the expressway.

To your door.

Maybe he'll get lost or
get a flat.

Knock-knock.

Oncology at the cancer store.

Move patients like ashen pawns
over pale blue and white squares

into gray waiting rooms
full of busy medicos and

false hopes.

Checkmate.

Radiation.

Remission.

Chemotherapy.

Oncology.

The cruelest hoax.

— *Gerald Ryan*