
POETRY | FALL 2018

Oh, God

By Sanjay Chainani

Franklin Rogers was 63 when he found out that he was going to die.

How immediately "is" becomes "was".

Franklin Rogers is 63 and just found out that he is going to die.

I learned for the first time today that death is not sudden.

Death happens in phases.

Death begins at the first moment when a person learns they are going to die;

In a moment, life becomes the past,

Something to be sorted through, edited into a story.

Color turns to gray.

Franklin Rogers was well until March.

He learned that he was going to die in April.

The tumor in his pancreas grew terribly, fast,

Like a snake coiling around him from the inside,

Choking off his common bile duct, infiltrating through his superior mesenteric vein, and wrapping tightly around his celiac axis.

We put a drain in, but his bilirubin still went up.

We lay him down in a scanner to gaze inside his body,

And found the cancer had moved to his belly wall, where it sat,

Studs scattered like diamonds throughout the peritoneum.

I watched Franklin's face when we sat in his room and told him this.

His mouth opened, his face shaking,

His eyes wide, darting towards us and then upwards as he considered.

Franklin Rogers asked, "How long do I have to live?"

Six months, we answered.

"We're sorry", my senior resident told Franklin.

"Everyone dies at some point", Franklin said.

After the team left, I sat next to Franklin Rogers, gripping his hand tightly in my own.
He told me that when he was a child, his stepfather had cancer.
At first, all the children urged their Poppy to get chemotherapy
But Poppy got sicker until he locked himself up in the closet, "whining and crying until he died."
"I can't have that happen to me", said Franklin.

Blinking back tears, Franklin Rogers told me he was going to be fine.
All he wanted in life was two things:
To have a good wife,
And to have good Christian children.
And he had gotten both, so he was ready to go.

"It seems like your faith keeps you strong", I said.
"Yes", said Franklin Rogers.
"God is always with those who believe", I said to him.
"God is here with us right now", he said.
(Although no God would have ever killed Franklin Rogers).

Both of us sat there in his room,
Hands clasped, tears in our eyes.
I looked at his face and saw for the first time
A telangiectasia, placed delicately on his left temple.

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