



False Pride on the Oncology Ward

One morning, halfway through my first chemo cycle,
the oncology doctors and a gaggle of residents come to visit me in my room.

They ask how I'm feeling, if I have any pain or allergies.
I tell them I'm allergic to work. They all laugh.

I respond, "My body's strong. I feel good enough to run a marathon."
The docs raise their eyebrows. They know what's coming.

I tell them, "my body can take whatever you dish you out.
I'll sail right through, no problem."
A resident raises his hand to stifle a giggle.

"Nope," I say, "these chemo cycles won't affect me one bit."
As they walk away, I hear the doctor's laughing all the way down the hall.

About the author: In the fall of 2022, Dr. John Smelcer was diagnosed with stage 2 B-cell, non-specified, non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, a metastatic cancer of the lymphatic system. He is currently undergoing hospitalization cycles of chemo and immuno-therapy. John Smelcer is the author of 60 books, including a dozen books of poetry. His most recent collection is Raven. For a quarter century, he was Poetry Editor at Rosebud Magazine, where he currently serves as Senior Editor Emeritus. From 2016-2020, he was the Inaugural Writer-in-Residence for the Charter for Compassion, the world's largest compassion movement with over five million members in 45 countries.

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