

No Sick Pay

By Lisa Millard

I remember the sweat stuck to my top
turning the moss green arms to mud

And the scream behind your laugh,
hysteria beginning to crack your glassy eyes,
hands trembling in the stifling heat

Sat in a tick box; you, me, Doctor, nurse and
the C word.

I don't remember the pointless chat as we tumbled
down the corridor thirsty for more answers

The unspoken questions that were lodged,
ripe for probing as we dissected tasteless small talk.
The walk to the shop as we skirted around the C word,
Christmas!

How you would have to work despite the dangers
because the kids needed those presents and
you don't get 'sick' pay

I asked what your husband would say,
"not much" you suspected as he too would be diagnosed again.
A void appeared between us sucking us in together
pulling pieces from our brains and leaving uncommon nonsense

For the third time the scales tipped toward unfair
as you joked about not needing to dye your hair

"Don't Google" they said, nine times out of ten it's wrong,
but when you long for reassurance and statistics
it's easier said than done

I remember the silence as you stepped from my car
I prayed it would never end.

Welcomed it in as it punctuated every trivial thought, I fought back the tears.
I promised I wouldn't hassle you every day but I just want to make sure you're ok,
as ok as you can be

I remember the silence as we lay in bed, both of us carved of stone
and pondering your future.
I reached over to you, message sent.