

## Some Poems by Jenn Brewer

These poems deal with my family's ongoing challenges with my 37-year-old husband's failing heart. He was born with a serious genetic defect but has defied the odds for many years. (He wasn't supposed to survive infancy.) When I met him, many years ago, he was "nearly normal" (whatever that means!). We married and have three children. Now, however, his condition has caught up with him. "Narcotics" and "Monitoring the Heart" give glimpses of our usually twice weekly visits to the emergency room for pain control. "Dying Young" is about the way his condition has deteriorated in dizzying fits and spurts rather than the steady decline of (for example) some cancer patients. "Losing Daddy" was written with our youngest son in mind. And "Grief" is, I'm sure, rather self-explanatory.

Bio: Jenn Brewer, formerly an English/French/Spanish teacher and ESL assistant, is currently the owner and editor-in-chief of Dot the I Writing Services <http://www.dot-the-i-writingservice.com>. She has been published previously in Spider Magazine and Common Ties. She lives with her husband and three children in Oregon.

## **Narcotics**

Eager now for the needle,  
the sweet, slow drip that obliterates the pain  
--if only for awhile--

he lays his bones  
against the sterile sheets,  
submits to the sharp mercies of the nurse,  
whose grin barely conceals  
a reality as glaring  
as the florescent lights overhead.

The worst is yet to come.  
But not today.  
Today, the liquid angels whisk him away,  
a practice flight,  
and I am left leaning against the wall,  
the bitter edge of my own dark drug  
searing my tongue.

## Monitoring the Heart

Directed

by the spastic line of yellow light,

I pace—

three steps, three and a half.

I brush

against the futile drapery, its pastel blues

no defense

against the neighboring dementia

Beyond,

a woman cries, her pain too chronic--

too costly—

for hope, while down the hall

a child wails,

bewildered by her perceived abandonment.

Next to me,

he moans beneath his morphine.

His yellow eyes

open just a slit. *I'm tired of this*, he says.

*So tired.*

I can only nod, nod and pace, synchronized

with the beating

of his heart--three steps, three and a half--

hypnotized.

## Grief

The surf lurches toward shore,  
clawing at the shifting sand,  
launching itself against boulders  
planted like bulwarks  
at the edge of the sea.

For a time, it advances.  
Further and further up  
the beach it climbs,  
scaling the rocks, burying  
them in its icy depths.

At last the tide recedes,  
coughs up  
what it has kept inside:  
dead trees and tangled seaweed,  
pieces of shipwrecked lives.

It moans as it curls  
around its bilious belly,  
rocking, rocking ...  
Overhead seagulls cry  
against the fading light.

## **Losing Daddy**

He hasn't traveled far enough  
from the portals of Heaven to go back there yet.  
The memory of angel wings is still fresh in his mind.  
He must have time to forget the other side,  
or it will always chafe against his skin,  
a poorly repaired rift in the fabric of life,  
ready to unravel at any moment.

## **Dying Young of a Defective Heart**

His is not the slow drain  
of lukewarm water from a clawfoot tub,  
not the downing of tepid coffee,  
or a slow evaporation of liquid  
left in a mug on the windowsill.

His is a seesaw,  
jolting between up and down,  
a rubber ball, careening wall to wall,  
a *Get Well Soon* balloon with a leak,  
whirling and twirling into space.