

## How to Live Properly

I enter the infusion pod. My IV nurse wraps me in a solace hug.  
She's reviewed my chart, the oncologist's latest summary.

Late afternoon, few patients in the ward.  
Curtains, open. Recliners, sunlit.

She brings prep meds, bottles of water.  
Knows infusion makes me hungry—on a tray:  
two chicken sandwiches, egg salad cup, veggie chips, vanilla pudding.  
She angles my pillow—hearing aids won't feedback. She's an angel.

Port accessed. First liter of fluids flows.  
Frequent trips to the potty—dances with rolling pole—follow.

Chemo #1 bag hung. Empties. Halfway through #2, we pause.  
#3 must be pushed gradually from a syringe through the port.

My nurse checks suction before injecting.  
No blood return. Calls the charge nurse.  
Four synchronous hands fail to clear the clot.

Ninety minutes until the clinic closes.  
Insufficient time to TPA the blockage then complete infusion.  
They decide to place an IV line.

Between tasks: banter, laughter.  
I show phone pics of my grandson. They, their kids.  
Photo op's suggested—me, arm around pole, grinning,  
three pumps mounted, port with its tubing peeking from shirt.

Infusion finished, I'm quizzed before leaving.  
Each symptomatic sign reviewed. Each warning repeated.  
The last: my immune system's (again) compromised.  
Quarantine. Mask outside our cottage and with company.

My planned bon voyage bash inside Bocado Tapas Bar—  
too much risk or why avoid risk?  
Epic cacophony, deciding  
how to die properly.

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Poem is from my book *Once I was born to live*