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POETRY/FICTION

A leaf of knowledgment, keep me from fear, l'chaim

A LEAF OF KNOWLEDGE

I don't know
what the doctor means by "mostly"
within the radiation field
I don't know
for how long I will need this cane
I don't know
what the scan will look like one month,
four months,
four years from now.

All I know is the air that I breathe in this instant–
spring's sweet whisper—
into my lungs,
my friend at my side,
his broad hand between my shoulder-blades,
the living God,
the love of my friends and family,
and the warm skin of her knee,
onto which I lay my cheek, to sleep.

—Brendan Ogg

KEEP ME FROM FEAR

Keep me from fear,
that cold paralysis,
the squirming nausea.
I am sick of these half eaten fingernails. No.
I have my whole life to be afraid.
There! With that declaration, the anvil weight of dread
falls loosely from the chain around my neck.
I have my entire life, however long it is.
I have my own eternity in a hundred years, or in an instant.

—Brendan Ogg

L'CHAIM

("to life")

Feather rug, soft bed of matted grass,
Why did I question this place of endless beauty—
life—

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to my friend, in weakness?
Where was my heart before this time?
Now I feel it in my breast.
Put your hand there, fingers spreading from the palm,
And feel the warm, insistent pulse.

—Brendan Ogg

Editor's Note:
Brendan Ogg was a sophomore at the University of Michigan majoring in English when he was diagnosed with brain cancer. Like many literary minded patients, Brendan turned to his love of poetry and literature to help him deal with his diagnosis, treatment and recovery. Brendan died at the age of 20. These poems first appeared in *Summer Becomes Absurd*, published by Finishing Line Press.

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