Palliative and Supportive Care

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The dose divided

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Poetry

Cite this article: Zieneldien T (2026) The dose divided. *Palliative and Supportive Care* **24**, e168, 1. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478951526102946

Received: 24 May 2026 UTC
Revised: 24 May 2026 UTC
Accepted: 26 May 2026 UTC

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Radiation comes in weekdays,
Hope measured out
In calibrated light

Every morning,
The body returns in nervous posture,
To the same unadorned white room,
To the same mask cooled against the face,
To the same machine that knows
How to divide harm
From healing so finely
They nearly share a name

She lies
While the beam is delivered, trespassing
In exactness,
As if the body could be persuaded
One small portion at a time
To remain still,
And still, remain

In the hall,
An old woman folds her appointment card
Into something like a prayer
Outside, deadly nightshade petals gather
In the gutter,
Purple as a bruise
The season refuses to explain

She thinks of Avicenna
Crossing sandstorms by memory and vow,
The road splitting his life
Into days of dust,
Each step a fraction
Of the body's faith
He survives, his companion does not

By Friday, the chart calls it a fraction
The body calls it return
Before the weekend, you visualize the fractals
The possibilities, an elsewhere of health

Competing interests. The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478951526102946 Published online by Cambridge University Press