



# Cancer Mon Amour

REPEAT Kathrin Schaeppi

STOP

and a runnin' and a skatin'  
and a runnin' and a skatin'

and a runnin' and a skatin'  
a runnin ana skatin a runnin ana skatin  
a runnin ana skatin a runnin ana skatin a run oh i'm scared  
oh i'm scaaaared, oh she's scared, oh she's scaaaared  
scared, oh (s)he's scared, scared oh, oh, oh, oh

— Meredith Monk, Do You Be, 1987

can i come to your home ? —awed · an award? prepare spirits to  
sound edges · before they touch—*not good*, you say · worry-thinned  
face · say a six-letter-word · malignant explosion · then calm of  
shock · four doctors · in the woman's eyes you saw · a then no  
more retractable · hug the body · where probing, checking for  
types, hunting for nodules has begun · where plucked ovaries won't  
appease the ferryman who wants fallopian tubes, womb and  
peritoneum · a displaced friend · here for you · ties then thin · now  
days full · search for insurance payments · cancel work contracts ·  
should you turn to light during surgery · *please take these unpublished  
files* · walk and watch snow-melt flow to Holland · talk of work  
stress · morn they cut away · today an orange prayer shawl rounds  
shoulders · sms before surgery · *please bring eye covers and tissues* ·  
oh i'm scaaaared ·

i hold keys to doors and homes · that are closed · i hold your words ·  
winged and whirling · i hold · i can hold · the material of your words  
in my hands · i can sew pearls onto branches · twist with wire to  
fasten everlasting · lady's mantel · quaking grass · bracts · love-lies-  
bleeding · globe thistle · if four doctors propose surgery would any  
one of them suggest it if there were no hope? · *hope, you see, is not part*  
*of my vocabulary*, you say · postcard from paris · a wave hovers  
overhead · three women hold hands below · meeting po(i)nts on the  
page · beads slipping through fingers · not wanting to know survival  
rates · he holds my gasping hands · cows on the fields with the crows  
· a runnin' and a runnin' · oh, i'm scared · oh (s)he's scared ·

*can anyone survive this · more taken than expected · she is young and strong · unbidden plastic appendage hidden below bedclothes · people asking, calling · tubes leading in at neck and hand · catheter leading out · watch your face flinch · morphine numbing the bladder · utter loss of control · find compassion for a ravaged body · S. massages legs · impatient captive inpatient · holding hands · telling stories of assimilation or not quite · suffering does not end or fade away like smoke, though bodies do · persevere in holding · memories of mothers when we are sick · i at your hospital bed · S. and i in the café · S. at your hospital bed · some friendship will it [a hovel] lend you against the tempest · words pass corner to cornered · triangulate · ah, but what is friendship · peddle—cross bridge—visit · peddle—cross bridge · believe you would do this if i in your stead · scared · scared oh ·*

incrypted lovesongs  
orchestrating  
vulnerable embrace

invoke lyrical  
overture  
voracious echo

inspiring lips  
obsidian  
voice expires

inamorato longing  
open  
volatile amour

in loss  
ovaries  
voiding exiled

irreversible life  
organic  
veldt extinguishing

intimacy lashing  
others  
venerate enduring

irrelevant longevity  
organs'  
varied existences

infernal languishing  
omnipresent  
exhaustion

S. leaves with poohbear · first leaves in the spokes of the wheel in the  
hospital garden · you leave hospital bent below black coat · carrying  
bags back to your home · alone · on the sofa in your bedroom-office ·  
you pat your right side checking · weighing reality · mistletoe therapy  
· immuno-boost / allergic reactions · chemo · yes / no · you say,  
*genetic disposition · genetic responsibility* · rates and percentages · *we will  
see* · then lunch dates to gain weight before chemo can begin · sun  
along the rhine · always checking · not able to go far but in reading,  
reading · but in writing, writing · a sequence · your five sisters are  
dancing, dancing wearing out their shoes · ana runnin ana skatin ·

together we buy Sekula's *Now* June, 1958 · now is 50 years later · now  
is when it started · now is chemo 1 · fainting bodily rebellion ·  
chemicals seeping in · now is frottage for six hours · back and forth ·  
over 24 years · one surface rubbing against another · two surfaces  
touching · memory traces that cannot be grasped · cells held on  
cellulose perish · *a negative is when the figure is absent, separated from* ·  
no torch lit here · what threatens to disintegrate · *i can't see a future* ·  
tea after chemo · moment to moment · next morning your phone busy  
· at noon no answer · imagine endless vomiting · we imagine what we  
don't know by what we know · frenzied cycle · open door · on the  
phone · forgetting · 50 days since cancer diagnosis · letters written in  
circles you may never see · scaaaared ·

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*save energy for the long-haul, you say to an endurance athlete · low  
white blood cells · inflamed gut · prolapse · leaky body · chemo 2  
postponed · while the public questions black holes · chemo 2 · reading  
lapsed insel weary out loud · choose red-black cover together · tea after  
chemo · after three days the effects of cortisone wane · then sensing  
what lies below · then driving to the country to buy hats · making  
faces in mirrors · several · i bought a brown one · mochabittersweet ·  
tear-soaked crystal sharp joy · gift-wrapped lunches · to be part of  
something larger · light perhaps · invisible to the eye · maybe a pine  
will come, maybe a war, maybe death or loss of mind, but today was good.  
today was good · beside you, eeyore with eyes smiling while ears droop  
· love when you talk and forget your body · a frottage friendship ·  
runnin' and a skatin' ·*

you ask what happened in october · les yeux enchantés · chemo 3 ·  
hiroshima mon amour at the klee · in lost paradise artists nail  
moments of destruction · your fourth month corresponding with my  
mom's fourth—and last · anger projecting [            ] · your · mine ·  
book and dinner plans buffer · the party must be gay · kiss and palm  
on a thigh · S. [        ] leaves you · your silent tears · i say, *professional*  
*help* · *help not needed*, you say, *i have other friends* · i converse with  
canvas · daring to dig into repeating patterns with scalpel and razor ·  
fingertips imprint canvas with pumpkin orange and violet · locked in  
cross fencing · slashing a door trimmed with flesh and blood · yet  
open · tears on canvas · blurring · *complex not complicated*, you say ·  
finger hatch marks · care for the carer · *timeout*, i say · rethink porous  
borders · dances in the face of death · skatin' a run ·

slender boughs hang · arches—arcs—aches · clouds wander across  
bracken carp pond · pancreatic pain · memories of mom caring for a  
cancer patient and then dieing of cancer first · chemo 4 · *if caring not  
now, then when?* · absorb blue-black · giving yellow · to touch be  
touched · Michelangelo in the Sistine chapel · neither separate nor  
superior · as if distancing were a possibility · letting go · the first and  
final lesson · split and divide the deck · shuffle · unite · a pendulum  
circles · she pulls a card · the same card pulled night after night after  
night · letting go · it seems the tumour markers are normal · a tiny  
sigh · a promise of of · oh oh ·

i leave on holiday · last chemotherapies · your men come and go too  
· rooms tidy · reflect gaps and silences · five months before a wall ·  
future reduced to 16 years? one year? four months? one? · it is hard  
to believe there can be any god in this · not knowing anything · least  
another · yet we can connect words to words · and when words no  
longer suffice · sit in stillness · the blind man in the heart is a lonely  
hunter · *play children play · so long as you are young · because from  
spring to winter · is merely a cat's jump · O ·*

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