

Wolves and Butterflies

by Linda Simoni-Wastila

Yang to my yin, you attack my defenses, hard-wired to protect against hepatitis, *Clostridium difficile* and any number of God's afflictions. Vigilant even in your latency, your troops spread from bone and lymph to destroy my soldiers of antibodies and white blood cells. You gnaw on epidermis, feast on capillaries and nerves feeding into larger organs — tendon, kidney, liver, brain. Soon, I am sure, you will swallow my soul.

Every morning brings a new battlefield. Puffed up on prednisone, I drowse, immune to most skirmishes. But now you gather at the border of my heart, Capulets to my Montagues, no mere guerilla tactic -- I know, the x-rays confirm. So I shore up my armamentarium of corticosteroids, ibuprofen, Plaquenil, acupuncture to beat back the cells you've suborned and inflamed.

When you claimed the sun as your friend, you almost won. I admit, I mourn the day warming my face while I sat with my morning coffee, the slant of sun through dappled leaves, the buzz of birds and insects. (I do not miss butterflies.)

Then I found my anger and allied with the night. In dark safety, I shovel my holes and children make fun of me. "Werewolf," they whisper. But I do not dig graves, only cradles, for wolfsbane and moonflower, evening primrose and columbine. When the plants are sunk, I sit on moon-licked grass, swaddled in the earth's loamy must and the flutter of moths, the night noises louder than my howl.

