**A Girl I knew**

A little girl lived once so brave and so bold,
who treated her horses as did knights of old,
by leaping great ditches and walls on her steed,
a charger for charging cross fields at top speed,
and sometimes exchanging four hooves for four wheels -
the exhaust it sparked and the tyres they squealed
as the feared yellow peril careered on wheels spinning
the radio blasting, and driver just grinning.

Until one day
a rogue cell, or stray
gamma ray,
or whatever;
it matters not now
quite how,
bore not light nor energy
but seed
of the silent assassin,
suddenly shouting and screaming.
Then courage and humour
had to fight to float,
dragged down by leaden slabs of pain
and grey drain numb fatigue.
Fear disdained but always knocking.
Every bone and cell poisoned
to the refrain
"no gain without pain".

We sat in mourning suits
across the road from the
municipal crematorium,
awaiting ashes.
A passing paysan doffs his beret.
"Tout va mourir - mais c'est la repose".
I hope it's true.
Of one thing I am sure.
Courage, humour, echo of beat of heart and hoof remain
long after ashes turn to dust and sky and back again.

A bigger girl lived once so brave and so bold
who battled as fiercely as did knights of old
the slings and the arrows of fortune so rotten;
lived life to the full and will not be forgotten.

Richard Lord – October 2011