

## How To Die in Oregon

unfunny (adj.) 1. dramatic, melancholy, sad, serious, tragic, especially recurring liver cancer at the age of 54; the surprise pregnancy of cirrhosis with two children grown; the lean body and hollow cheeks you once desired now come with yellow skin and yellow eyes. 2. common, standard, normal, usual, i.e. how to die with dignity in Oregon when your acute pain exceeds the chronic dread of bidding the family good-bye; *you'll know when it's time*; you'll mix your Seconal cocktail, drink up, doctor prescribed.

## That Bloomin' Desert

You're hiking in Pontotoc Canyon when your hydration pack rings. You hold the bladder to your ear and speak into the blue drinking tube. It's a guy named Saguaro from the Society of Benevolent Cacti. *The desert's holding a blood drive this weekend. Can we count on you for a pint?* You'd really like to give, you tell him, but you get woozy even thinking about needles. *I understand*, Saguaro says, but his tone says otherwise. You try to tell him about your tiny rolling veins. *O please, you universal donor types are all the same.* He severs the connection. You forget to pay attention and trip on loose scree, spear your finger on a pincushion cactus and the tip flowers -- ocotillo feeds the arid soil until your platelets stem the flow. *Bloody cactus*, you say. *I'm B positive.* It echoes through the canyon. You wear your heart on your sleeve, but you've got blood on your hands. You've been mistyped and misunderstood. Ten minutes later, another call. *Next time, give*, says Saguaro, not bothering to disguise his voice. *Prick*, you say, and turn back toward the trailhead.