

Jessica Harman - Two Poems

My Mind on Antipsychotics

For my stepfather

My illness makes me think that you think
I am an incompetent goon. This is true.
Last night the centerpiece on the dinner table
Was an array of Mom's white flowers.

Lilies symbolize something. I don't know. See how
Quickly I get into standard poetic
Territory after mentioning my illness
To rope you in, readers, first off. But now

Let's get back to my brain. I don't know
How it works, and neither do you,
Or anyone else, save to say that drugs
Help me communicate, and stop me from

Falling in love all the time. But still
I have my wings on, and I am keeping
A journal about flying out of the labyrinth.
My mind is on fire in the outer reaches

Of the universe. I bleed all over the stardust,
Sometimes, but that, as they say,
Is for another story some other time, when I can use
That image to capture you, again, then set you free.

Let me tell you all about flying: I always was, whether
You knew it or not. And now for the ending,
Or at least the winding down after going to the ridge
Of the end of the universe:

The part of the poem with wings is still gliding, though and that sets
Us flying out over the edge, and much like life
Has done to me, never brings us back down to earth.

Won't it be quite a day when I can go into outer
Space for real, and watch the magic of Earthrise.

Until then, you have me, and my brain on prescription
Drugs. It's not all it's cracked up to be, but anything
That brings me from good to better works in my books.

Even though we're jealous of one another, dear stepfather
It's never to late, no, never, to open up and heal.

Time

There was a time when all I did was lie
In bed, thinking of Persephone, as the snow fell
Pale as a mirror coating the luminous ground.

The fence blinked with the shadows
Of the neighbor's porch light,
And all of that year, it was November
In my blood, though January fell peaceful
And stormy and two-faced outside my window

Of frost patterns. It was a year of seconds, weirdly:
The second poem of mine in a magazine, second
Time in and out McLean hospital, and second time being
Alone without you in a while. Yet.

It was lonely, and felt old, the way psych
Meds make you feel like a thousand year old
Egg. I watched the blues blossom in fractals
Of frost across my eyelids in my sleep, waking
To find my window covered in prisms.

The steady sun, always climbing, hot and cold
At once in winter. And I waited for the snow
To melt, and for me to get better, as if these
Would never come, and when they did,

It was spring for real, and I waited by the bus
Stop as well as doing other ordinary things.

The murders of crows on the roofs bled
The sky with caterwauling cawing, and tiny sparrows
Hopped patterns among the train tracks,
So small and pure like sparrows always are,

And I felt lucky to have risen from the dead.

That was how it was, one pill, one day at a time.
Nothing else to do but get through, and try to remember
The magic that holds us together, and to each other, like atoms

In covalent bonds. Who knows what the medication
Is made of? But My job is more like myth:
Bring it down to the metaphor, to Persephone
Going to down to Hades all that November
In my blood.

Jessica Harman is a freelance writer living in Maryland. Her poems have appeared in *Nimrod*, *Spillway*, *Bellevue Literary Review* and *Arion: A Journal of Classics*, among others. She has earned a living as a video store clerk, medical research assistant, and a teacher of creative journaling. She teaches in Minnesota during the summers.