

A Promise of Hope

Autumn Stringam

EXCERPT

I was diagnosed with postpartum depression. My body was weak, and my vision was blurred off and on, and my legs were dragging sometimes, literally dragging, so the doctor tested for multiple sclerosis. Inconclusive—just like everything else in my life. He put me on Prozac.

The Prozac felt good for the first two weeks, but then the agitation set in.

Week three I was angry.

Week four I was flirty. I had my hair chopped even closer to my skull.

Week five I started moving the family to a new apartment and scrubbing everything in sight and threatening to hit James if he didn't shut up.

Week six I was brutal, delusional, manic, scary. And as Dana was driving me to the doctor, I began flapping.

Flapping. He hasn't seen that one before. I am whipping my hands and arms, hard and fast in front of my face, pounding my face, scratching my face. He holds my seat belt closed with one hand and drives with the other as I scream and try to open the door on the freeway to throw myself out into the traffic. He can't do it. He has to drive off the freeway into a neighbourhood.

There he lets me out. "If that's really what you want." He pulls to the curb and undoes my seat belt. "Go."

Flapping, I fly from the car. I flap and bounce in the shade on the sidewalk. I have to get away. He follows me slowly with the car and watches me knocking my head around and rattling my knees and jumping and talking to myself.

He comes out of the car and holds me. I want him to hold me. But I still can't stop flapping my hands. So he puts me back in the car and drives me to the doctor's office.

The frenzied, raging, angry part is over. I am crying. I beg the doctor to make it stop. My legs shake; my

arms burn. My face stings.

“Oh, Autumn, I didn’t know you were bipolar,” the doctor says. “I thought we were dealing with a simple postpartum depression.”

“Please make this stop.”

I see Dana standing in the corner of the office with his hands deep in his pockets. He is chewing the inside of his cheek.

The doctor goes out and comes back with a needle full of sleep. He sticks it in my bum, and I feel the warmth of it in just seconds.

I’m so-o-o sleepy. He asks me a question.

Wha-a-a-ah?

“Who else in your family is a manic depressive?”

Oh, now I understand. Not only the question. And not only the answer. But also my entire life. *Who else indeed?*

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