

## DOLDRUM BAY

Hilary Fannin

CHICK: I am depressed. It's nothing I can't handle. It manifests ... It is physical. It is a physical depression.

I shit in white. Little white pellets. I shit like a Chihuahua. I itch. I have patches, eczematic patches on my legs, my feet, my ankles. Apnoea? I have it. I don't sleep at night, I die. My chest is bruised from my partner thumping it to restart my heart.

My heart. I have neglected my heart.

I have knotted veins in my arse, panic attacks, hot flushes, cold sweats. I am lost. My gums bleed.

I was a happy child. They say that matters, they say that counts for something. There were two of us. Me and my brother. Me and Dessie. Our father was a magician. Our mother assisted him. They did kids' parties. They weren't particularly successful, although I don't know how you measure success in that profession. Lack of scarring, maybe.

Our father was diabetic. He wore a hairpiece.

Dessie was older than me, years older. Mostly he sat under the kitchen table ignoring me, reading paperback books about girls in boarding school. I didn't know him very well. He was a seminarian by the time I was nine. I think my mother got to him - the holy pictures glued on to her make-up box, the scapular of Oliver Plunkett sewn into her bra top that glittered and smelt of cats. The rattle of her doves in the box. I think he went to the seminary to finish his book, get a bit of peace. Or maybe he knew more than me. People do.

Sometimes I think I miss all the important bits. I miss the central bit that makes other things make sense.

One day, when I was looking at myself in the bathroom mirror, she left. She got into a blue car parked at the end of our road, or so the butcher said. He was a good butcher, a very good butcher, a family butcher, but we never held that against him. She left the doves, God bless her.

Dessie took over making the tea for us. Until he went into the seminary. He'd heard his name being called, he said, clear as a bell. So we waited a bit longer for my mother and when the summer season came around again and she still hadn't turned up we took the train to the holiday camp without her, my father and I, to

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audition for the summer season. We had her birds in the box. We looked out the windows. Kept ourselves to ourselves. We were the professionals. My mother had told me that animals went to heaven and God was a smoker. I decided on that train that my mother had died, in some glorious blameless way. I sat by that window, saw her in the clouds, chatting with God over a cup of tea and a cigarette, whooshing the cat off the ledge.

We arrived at the holiday camp. I thought I was in Hollywood.

We waited in the restaurant for our audition. You could look up from there into the glass-bottomed swimming pool at a ceiling of independent legs and torsos splashing about.

I thought, a really good magician would reattach those limbs to their owners. A really good magician would bring back the dead.