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My Cross-Legged Monk

Jane Schapiro

“... you are more than your anxiety”
A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook

with incense and flame
i look for you
my affable
logical
good-natured self
eyes closed
hands on lap
i search for
my buddha my imam
my cross-legged monk
are you near
am i warm
i am here
inhaling
exhaling
calling your name
teacher rabbi
master sage
lama rishi
guru seer
quiet



hush
namaste
peace
where are you
my yogi
where are you
my priest

* * *

Had I found my qi
in that kindergarten room
I might not have cried at my mother's goodbyes,
told my teacher that daily lie:
I bumped my head on the jungle gym.
If you, nirvana, had just appeared
I might have been spared—
(hold your breath when a siren goes by)
(close then reclose the closet door).
Each night I'd think of another decree,
add it like a hallowed stone
(make sure all pictures are hanging straight).
I was building a temple inside, an altar
where I could barter and plead—
let my parents be safe
(say *kayn aynhoreh* after every good thought)
safe safe
let us all be safe

* * *

“In every calm and reasonable person there is a hidden
second person scared witless about death.”
Philip Roth

* * *

In this dimly lit waiting room
we sit wearing sunglasses filling out forms.
No music, no books, no words exchanged.

Bent over clipboards, we rank our pain:
How severe? How frequent? How long does each last?
One by one, the nurse calls our names,
takes our weight, blood pressure,
points to a room.
Oh Doctor, Neurologist, Headache Oz
Help ease our relentless throbs.

* * *

Will I be okay?

* * *

“Everybody wants peace, peace of mind
Everybody needs peace, peace of mind
All we need is some peace”
Loggins & Messina

* * *

I shouldn't have taken this garden plot,
I have no idea how to reap or sow.
I wanted reprieve but hear only snarls,
worm-eaten tomatoes hissing.
Even my sunflowers betray,
hang their heads in the afternoon light.
Charred and blistered, their mammoth eyes
shadow me like sockets of night.
Dry-mouth, nauseous,
tangled in a mesh of unease,
I flail like the chipmunk stuck in my fence.
All the while a hawk circles and scolds:
intruder imposter predator prey.

* * *

Will I be okay?

* * *

“The way to stop worrying about death is to watch a lot of
television.”
Don DeLillo

* * *

Seems everyone has an elixir
to help lure my appetite back.
Milkshakes, smoothies, warm pecan pie.
Like witches they offer magical brews:
chia seeds in dumplings and broth.
Each day I down a glass of Boost
as thoughts of food turn into dry heavens.
Look closely friends, you see me now
yet I am vanishing before your eyes.

* * *

Will Lexapro work
Doctor: It works for my family
Husband: It's like gefilte fish for Jews.

Mouth opens—
emits a laugh.

* * *

Google history:
how long does lexapro take to act
how long before lexapro takes effect
how long before lexapro kicks in
how much lexapro can one take
how quickly can lexapro work

* * *

Knit 1
Purl 2
Knit 1
Purl 2
Knit 1
“...the repetitive action of needlework can induce a relaxed
state.”
Dr. Herbert Benson

* * *

Will I be okay?

* * *

Breathe in
I know I'm breathing in.
Breathe out
I know I'm breathing out.

* * *

“Peace is not a thought, not a concept, it is a nonverbal
experience”

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana

and anguish is not
a metaphor
not an altar or garden
or socket of night
not a worm-eaten tomato
or hawk in flight
not a chipmunk
or blistered eye
not a charred sunflower
or jungle gym lie
it is not incense
or flame
it doesn't reside
in a waiting room
it is not nausea dry heaves
a throbbing migraine
not narrative
with beginning and end
not dialogue plot
theme or lesson
it is not fact or fiction
true or false
not rhyme myth

snarl or hiss
not ...

* * *

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* * *

*You
will
be
okay*

* * *

Was it time or trust
that opened a vein,
let in warm merciful,
honey-soaked sleep?

With venetian blinds
half-drawn I awoke in a
sun-streaked room

* * *

hungry

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