

## Stock

Jeanne Kay

Copyright © 2020 Jeanne Kay. All rights reserved.

I was fifteen when I suffered  
my first depression.  
It was just one year after my mother  
drowned herself  
in the river  
but then,  
I didn't know about anniversaries.  
I also didn't know about depression, so that's not what I  
or anyone called it when I started spending my days on the floor, crying for  
What I thought was no reason.  
I still didn't have a name for it  
when, a year later, the 2<sup>nd</sup> depression made me drop out of school.  
All of a sudden there didn't seem to be  
a point in going,  
anymore.  
My father took us to a city where we knew no one  
(He said we only needed each other)  
I cleaned our apartment, and cooked for  
the two of us,  
and every night we'd watch TV  
together.  
When I went to bed, I listened to music and cried, and fantasized  
about someone coming to rescue me in the night.  
Sometimes the pain of that 3<sup>rd</sup> depression was so deep I thought  
it might come  
from my bones.  
A few months before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, I had my 4<sup>th</sup> depression  
when my first boyfriend broke up with me after his parents determined  
my family was unsafe. For weeks  
I remained convinced that life  
would never be bearable again.  
I didn't have anyone to talk to about hopelessness, except for my friend Katarzyna,  
who wrote me letters and sometimes  
poems  
about firewood violins and wounded sparrows,  
"Agony will never be a triumph", she said.  
She killed herself  
Just before she could turn twenty  
I resolved to never again feel despair

to honor her  
so when the 5<sup>th</sup> depression came  
just a few weeks after her death and  
buried me alive, I felt like I was  
letting both of us  
down.

Depression 6 was lonely. My father stopped talking to me  
(I don't remember what I'd done this time)  
I lived alone with him still, so I could only talk to the dog  
(You would think my father's silence would be better than his anger - the anger that made me  
hide in the bathroom and run kitchen knives over the soft skin of my wrists, but it wasn't.)  
It wasn't better.

The 7<sup>th</sup> depression made me leave him.

I was almost 21, and all of a sudden  
it seemed a matter of life  
and death  
to go

I applied to only one college

The only place I felt could handle me

A halfway house for the half-broken

When I was asked 'what will you do if you don't get in?' I didn't answer

Because there was no other possibility for life at that point.

None.

Asylum was granted to me in Ohio and

For a few months, the depression remained at bay, and I thought

I'd made it to safety until,

some time in February

my roommate talked about

Suicide and

it was back. I hid in the abandoned common room on the first floor of North Hall,

Lying in the dark on the moldy couch, paralyzed.

But that was a premature time

To mourn because

In the end it was Matthew who killed himself

in his dorm room

that semester.

When we all slept on makeshift mattresses on the floor of the common room

to grieve together, for the first time

I mourned all my other corpses.

The relief lasted for a little while but

Two months later, it was said my college would close and

Depression number 9 came immediately, alerted by the news

That my only home was burning.

Gravity took me down again, it flattened me like I'd never been whole.

Depression 10 hit me a few months later  
When we'd fought a battle and lost  
When I'd told Alex I loved him but he didn't even like me  
When I'd spent too many nights without sleep to do my work, because then I still thought my  
body was mine  
I spent weeks in bed for that one  
And I finally started to use the word depression  
That might seem late to you  
- we're already in the Winter of 2007, after all -  
But back then the words I'd been taught for myself were  
weak, and  
spoiled  
And they left no place for others.  
It took me so long to get out of Depression 10 that when the relief finally came, it felt like a  
rebirth  
And I convinced myself I'd found my way out for good.  
I sang along  
to Iron and Wine  
"So may the sun-  
-rise bring hope where it once as forgotten"  
And I believed it with all my soul.  
But just a few months later:  
I loved someone who didn't love me back.  
Again.  
I stayed up night after night to finish my work,  
Again.  
My college closed -  
For good.  
And so depression came back for the 11th time. I went to a  
doctor who gave me pills, that  
I took religiously  
Even though they didn't work:  
A communion of chemicals.  
Depression 12 was brief but intense,  
It kept me inside and made me sleep  
on the bathroom floor, after  
throwing up again,  
from the anguish.  
It was Depression 13 that nearly did it.  
I was living in Paris, then, alone in a studio apartment  
Which I trashed, one evening in January  
When the pain got unbearable  
The Christmas tree bobbles and the mugs from my kitchen making different kinds  
of crashing sounds

against the walls as the ambulance was making  
its way to me  
in the winter night.  
When I woke up in the ER,  
24 hours later  
And they sat me down on a wheelchair, I was  
yellow  
But when my liver was done purging my system,  
I was not better.  
It took so long to get out of Depression 13, it took so much: a move to another city, another  
country, a whole new life I'd crafted from my sick bed and pushed myself into to start over like  
a body pushed from a precipice with the injunction to fly  
In London I was happy for a while.  
I rode double decker buses like magic carpets  
I wrote papers and manifestos and got too busy to remember  
I'd ever been sick.  
When the Depression came back, for the fourteenth time,  
I wouldn't believe it, I said "I got this"  
By that time I was an expert.  
I took the bus to the hospital  
instead of the Ambulance  
I got my psychiatrist to change the dosage of the pills  
that didn't work  
I told my therapist I was having a hard time with simple tasks and she helped me  
come up with a Plan.  
None of it worked, but it was all  
Extremely Responsible.  
And when Depression 14 lifted, I fell in love.  
I was done with lithium and clonazepam  
Now that I'd gotten myself something stronger:  
A normal life  
A family  
A home  
Weekends in Dorset  
walking the dog  
on muddy trails  
in wellington boots  
before teatime  
On my way to a Christmas just like that is when I got the phone call, the news  
That my dad had died  
That his body  
had been found on the floor of his bedroom, fallen  
as he'd tried to reach the door when he felt  
his heart stopping

That he was  
blue.  
That his dog hadn't made a noise.  
Depression 15 came after the funeral  
It waited until I'd gone back to London  
and grief  
left space for emptiness.  
When I pulled myself out of that one  
by the skin of my teeth, I  
decided once and for all that  
the dog days were over  
and that's what I sang, like a prophecy on my wedding day  
A promise to everyone who'd ever loved me  
So when Depression 16  
came a few months after  
the honeymoon  
I felt like I had betrayed  
myself and everyone.  
That I might be rotten  
to the core.  
I tried to be normal  
Once more. My spouse said  
I was like a field  
of landmines.  
She became scared of me  
Of my exploding pain of my exposed wounds  
But I kept fighting, fighting, fighting  
I studied for the Bar with Depression 17  
on my back.  
A part of me still thought that if only I could get through *that one*  
There would be no number 18.  
But guess what  
I passed the Bar, and yet  
there was an 18.  
And you know what happened, when I survived my wife leaving me, after she said I was a  
bottomless pit, a basket case, a wild and scary thing, when I recovered from that, two whole  
years steeped in number 18, you know what happened?  
Depression 19 came,  
it did.  
I am turning thirty-five this year, and I am very tired.  
And I know what to do, now, you know. I know how to calm night terrors with hot showers and  
poetry at 4am, how to ride away the pain under the duvet for days, how to feed myself when  
just raising my arm hurts like hell, how to cover my skull with a bike helmet when I feel the urge  
to throw myself against the walls, I know to remember to breathe, and get sunlight – to change

my pajamas every few days; I have a list of friends to call when it gets too dangerous. I know all the tricks to make me not die.

Most importantly,

I know to tell myself,

moment after

moment after

moment:

“this will not last forever. you just have to make it through this pain for another little while.”

And I will do it all, and get out of Depression 19 one day. I know it for sure.

And what do you think will happen after that?