

# Unwanted Inheritance

Adrian S. Potter

One summer, my father swallows depression. It camps in his throat as an emotional refugee. Family members take turns trying to pluck it out with elongated objects — tweezers, tongs, needle-nosed pliers. We touch it, sometimes, but never remove it, so it persists. Eventually, everyone pretends it doesn't exist, except for me. I hear depression lingering whenever he screams at us about trivial things. Nobody else notices how it slinks around the periphery and rattles inside his esophagus. All day, it sings the blues. Through birthday parties and vacations and graduations. All night, his depression sleeps with barely a peep and survives on menthol loosies and self-loathing. No one can convince me that it isn't real. That it isn't there. That it isn't scheming to crawl out one night, out of his mouth and into mine.

# Meditation During a Mask Mandate

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I wake up and morning suffocates my soul.  
I draw the blinds as dawn's silence grows

deafening. I tentatively ride the commuter train,  
walk past buildings, and remain a CDC-sanctioned

distance from the guys wearing power ties  
and scowls like corporate merit badges.

The flight of pigeons, the sad encampment of tents  
in the park, sidewalk vendors hawking counterfeit

purses, and endless litter all hijack my hopes. A lucky  
man on a street corner gets to sing his blues. This city

is ghosting me, gradually drowning itself in a sea  
of gentrification. There's this dream I have in which

I love the world, and it chooses to love me back,  
sometimes, like a disgruntled spouse. I explore it

from start to finish, like how my fingers touch a new  
library book. There are no limits, only wind. Like you,

I was created out of desperation. Like you, I was baptized  
into the religion of optimism, blindly pledging allegiance

to the vague existence of better days ahead. Head in the  
clouds, hand over my heart. Hand over my foolish heart.

# Covetous

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A weatherman predicted raindrops  
that forgot to fall this morning.

They aren't hanging heavily  
in the sky's swollen belly;

the clouds remain barren mothers,  
pregnant only with possibilities.

And the plants pleading for  
precipitation don't symbolize

anything, despite my tendency  
to give meaning to the meaningless.

Disenchanted by false forecasts  
passed off as sure bets, squirming

under the burgeoning uncertainty  
of the future, I foolishly yearn

for the allure of sketchy promises  
and the makeshift comfort of lies

only to be left empty-handed,  
my soul grinding into nothing.

Outside: it might downpour  
or limp towards drought.

Flowers may bloom or wither  
away. But whether it's a storm

front or a miracle, I will continue  
longing for all that I cannot possess.