Volunteer Art Share November and December 2020

Red=How ME feels
Blue=How I practice feeling
Elizabeth Brooks, Acrylic, 2019
I'm angry I'm sad.
One day I reach out, to live to engage
I say thank you yes, I'm doing pretty good.
And then as if the devil was listening in
it all falls apart. I'm in bed again

A fever, no that only lasted a minute
Actually 96.5 is the reading
I'm swallowing thumbtacks, no wait, there's nothing there
I cough and feel I am hurting myself.
But coughing comes, choking starts

Green gobs come up, oh that's good.
I'm a mensch to ensure others don't see me in pain.
But wait, it's dishonest, a secret. They should know
Only if they have to; I will miss this and that, cancel what needs to be canceled
But I just saw you yesterday and you were doing great.
And...? What shall I say?

Is it true that my bodypunishes me
for wanting to be alive?
Is it true that I am the cause of my suffering?
Surely there is no one else.
Surely it is not random though for decades it appeared to be
Surely so much more is known now, right?
Surely help is coming.
I hate this fucking illness. But so what.

There is much to hate in the pains we all suffer. Why burden you with mine.
I stare. The birds fly. They land, they eat. I stare.
It comes when it chooses and leaves when it's done.
Done taking what I wish for.
I long to rely on myself. It takes that.
Face a challenge; push through an obstacle.
No, it takes that too.
Run, breath, feel power in my veins.
Feel alive. Do, act, make things happen.
No. That is a cruel joke.
Initiative has dire consequences.

prc
February, 2017
Jehan, “The dark and the light”
Paintings, 2019
Jennifer Acker, Short Story, 2019

“Fatigue”

An inspiring true story about the twists of fate that challenge a couple’s expectations of love, marriage, and reliance.

Jennifer Acker and her husband had been married for eleven years when she was blindsided by a mysterious and undiagnosed incapacitation. Accustomed to their independent routines, they will have to reform both their lives to accommodate the enervating illness. As Jennifer’s sense of self falls away, however, the couple is struck again. Her husband’s “frozen shoulder” all but locks one side of his upper body, leaving him in excruciating pain, partially immobilized, and as dependent on Jennifer as she is on him. But their needs are not in competition. In communion and reciprocal caregiving, they learn to love—and to explore—each other anew.

About the Author
Jennifer Acker is the author of the debut novel The Limits of the World, and she is the founder and editor in chief of The Common. Her short stories, essays, translations, and reviews have appeared in the Washington Post, Literary Hub, n+1, Guernica, the Yale Review, Off Assignment, and Ploughshares, among other publications. Acker has an MFA from the Bennington Writing Seminars and teaches writing and editing at Amherst College, where she directs the Literary Publishing Internship and LitFest. She lives in western Massachusetts with her husband. For more information, visit www.jenniferacker.com

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Jehan,
Acrylic on Cardboard,
2019
prc
April, 2017

“Coulda Woulda Shoulda”

Coulda Woulda Shoulda
Let it go
Coulda Woulda Shoulda
once was good
Coulda Woulda Shoulda
when I could
Coulda Woulda Shoulda
not too late
Coulda Woulda Shoulda
learn and change
Coulda Woulda Shoulda
now remain
Coulda Woulda Shoulda
I don’t know