



Swimming with Dolphins

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By Catriona Travers

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Key Themes: manic depression, bi-polar disorder

Description

An interweaving of events threaded around the common theme of vulnerability to manic depression.

About the Author

Catriona Travers was born and grew up in Dublin, Ireland. She went to school and college there, but unfortunately had to drop out of University due to her first episode of manic depression - for which she was hospitalised. She came to London in 1988, where she took a succession of temping jobs leading to switchboard operator jobs in hotels and hospitals. Her last job was as a supervisor and switchboard operator in a North London hospital. Catriona has always enjoyed writing; poetry in the eighties and a children's book in the nineties. Catriona also enjoys reading, tennis, writing and drama

Book Extract

"So I'm afraid the doctor thinks you're a manic depressive." I looked at the junior doctor bewildered. The Americans call it bi-polar disorder. 'Hmm' I replied why couldn't the consultant tell me that himself? The trainee registrar had just come running out of the presence of the great God himself, all flustered. She then proceeded to explain to me that the treatment of manic depression was Lithium Salts. Yes, a dose of the salts was all I needed.

This was all rather perplexing as I had barely seen the great man himself, perhaps once. I had been three weeks waiting to be seen and by the time I got around to seeing him I was rather perturbed, to say the least and oh, horror of all horrors I told him in no uncertain terms to "Fuck off!" .I ranted at him for a bit. "Don't forget I've been waiting in this hospital for weeks, with not a word or even a sedative to help me sleep and I never saw you once." He smiled a superior smile, like those in positions of power are wont to do, and disappeared into a rather anonymous looking room to lord it over his minions.

When said junior doctor appeared bearing the good news she looked rather apologetic. "I'm afraid Dr Constable thinks you are exhibiting signs of hypo -manic behaviour, blah, blah, blah. So we'll try you out on an experimental dose of Lithium." So that was my first diagnosed day of being a manic depressive. Some life sentence that, don't you think? Friern bloody Barnet, a bowel of a hospital in the sanity of the metropolis of London. So what did that entail, - years of going in and out of some anonymous hospital with draughty corridors, cell -like beds (we are talking NHS here) stodgy food, and indifferent nursing staff. Here we digress temporarily as I began my experience in a Dublin hospital, being from Dublin's fair city as I was. St John of God's Hospital, in Stillorgan, in Dublin, to be exact.

And it all began with one terrible all-time low, an abysmal deep depression, a depression from the pits of

hell. God, there was no depression worse than it.

I had just completed a year in college and was looking forward to a working holiday in Nice in the South of France with my two sisters. To tide me over till I got to France I got a job in James's Street Hospital, a nice little earner for a summer job, as hospital jobs tended to be at the time. Everything was well with the world at the time. Blue skies plenty of money at the end of each week, and a happy head and a happy heart. I'd walk up Thomas Street every morning with a spring in my step, up past the James's Street Guinness brewery. The pungent odour of the brewing process used to hit your nostrils as soon as you turned off Christ Church Cathedral into Thomas Street. It would put you off drinking the black stuff for life.

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