

FIRST PLACE

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### Shock Treatment

You're 21, smell like saline and blood  
draws,

a halflife of no-lock bathrooms  
no string clothes  
socks with grippy bottoms. Too many  
in your closet to count how many  
are rubber  
soled ruptured past  
limits of being your younger reflection.

You left an ambulance of nail-bit fingers, left me an ambulance  
for a sedative month  
came back with crooked teeth unbrushed hair  
I had to buzz off

didn't you hear me call for  
*your hairbrush, Nadichka don't forget it.*

I ate the hospital mashed potatoes  
and Thanksgiving green beans one year  
for you.

You couldn't hold *it* in, went around  
a long table. Tell me what you're thankful for.

Nine months free of *it*?  
cut short *it* couldn't wait.

Thankful  
I never had to eat there again.

There are black spots  
in your memories.

Filing cabinet in pilled out head  
with shredded archives.  
Replaced by anesthetic that stings  
your arm and shock treatment  
that doesn't even work.

I'm trying

but you won't remember that  
every breakfast morning and  
our phone calls are too short  
I want to talk face to face to face to face.

Please stop your shaking, darling  
I'll hum Mama's train track song  
make up words  
sound her calloused voice.

Don't forget I have *your* voice, Nadichka.

**Judge's remarks:**

*Rarely, have I been transported into a poem's matter so effectively. The poet uses everything at his/her disposal to get me into the world of electroshock treatment: the fragmentation of lines on the page, the nearly complete absence of punctuation, imagery that is, at once, accurate and disturbing; it is mundane (institutional mashed potatoes and Thanksgiving green beans), apparently ordinary but shocking in context (no string clothes//socks with grippy bottoms), and horror-laden (came back with crooked teeth unbrushed hair). It doesn't matter that I don't know precisely to whom the poem is addressed. It matters only that I, the reader, can know the you's world, know his black spots and shredded archives, through the eyes and heart of the poem's I.*