

New Poetry by Rochelle Jewell Shapiro: “Each Night My Mother Dies Again”



FALLS ON NIGHT / *image by Amalie Flynn*

EACH NIGHT MY MOTHER DIES AGAIN

Each night the phone rings—

Your mother has passed.

Each night I expect to be relieved, but night falls on night.

Each night she is the mother who makes waffles,

batter bubbling from the sides of the iron, the mother

who squeezes fresh orange juice, and serves soft-boiled eggs

in enchanted egg cups. Each night I squint into her face
as she carries me over the ocean waves, her arms my raft.
Each night she refills Dr. Zucker's prescriptions
for diet pills and valium. Each night she waters her
rosebushes
with Dewar's. Each night I see her hands shake,
her brows twitch. Each night she adds ground glass
to the chopped liver, rubbing alcohol to the chopped herring.
Each night she puts a chicken straight on the lit burner
without a pot. Each 2:00 a.m., Mrs. Finch from 6G phones—
Sorry to say your mother is naked
in the hallway again.
Each night my mother is strapped into her railed bed
at Pilgrim State, curled into a fetal position,
her hands fisted like claws.
Each night she calls to me
from her plain pine coffin, calls me
by the name she gave me, the name
she hasn't forgotten.