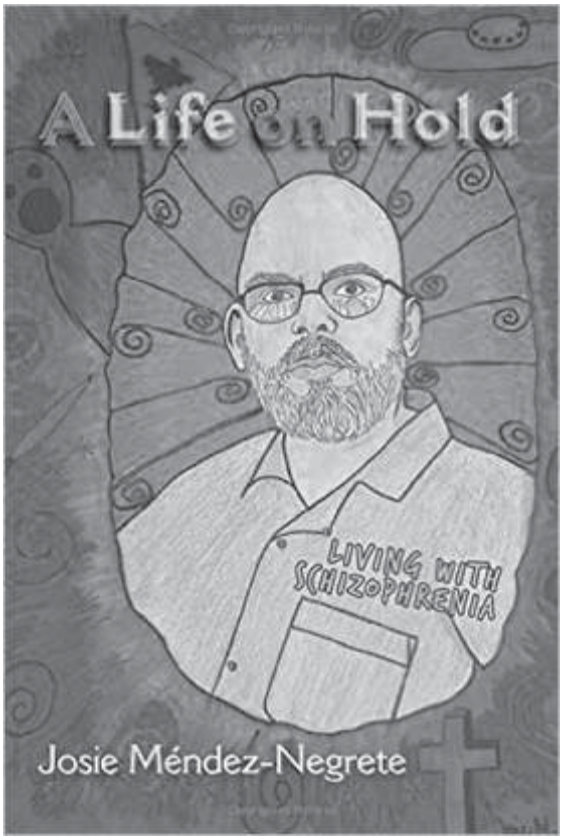


Running Away to Mental Illness

[A] mentally ill Southern man with a history of schizophrenia and depression was unceremoniously dumped by the Nevada facility [and sent to Sacramento, California] . . . . The patient is but one of millions of mentally ill Americans—and especially those with housing insecurity—who find themselves falling through the cracks in the social safety net.

—Sy Mukherjee, "How Mentally Ill Americans Are Falling through the Cracks in the Social Safety Net"

*Editor's note: This excerpt (p. 147-157) from **Life on Hold** is used with permission from the University of New Mexico Press. A reading with the author is scheduled for September 26th at 7 pm at the Esperanza. (see back page)*

Tito has lived in every type of facility there is for mentally ill men: shelters, independent living, group homes, and semilocked homes. I only know what my son copes with from the outside. While I am familiar with the conditions of the facilities in which he has lived and I make sure to know those who are in charge of running those facilities, I cannot imagine what it's like to live in them or to deal with the residents.

"You really don't know that it's like to live my life, do you?" Tito said to me one day. "Seldom talked to you about the details of the revolving doors. All the board-and-care and group homes I've lived in, from 1993 until I got to Casa Olga. God, I'm so sorry for what I've put you all through. With names such as Love's Board and Care and Heaven's Gate, more like cults, not warehouses of broken-down men and a few women who could not or were not able to live at home—these were but two of the places among many. You remember any of the people who passed through my life? Most have moved on. Some are still around, going from one place to the next, and sometimes even sleeping in the park because there is no other place to stay."

Tito recited their names: "Jimmy. Tim. Juan. José. Lala. All these people were either newly ill or middle aged without a place to go, who ended up warehoused in those homes of oblivion. Their families could not or were not able to deal with their illnesses. You remember Jimmy?"

I nodded in response.

"Yeah, Jimmy—he was a Gulf War veteran—lived with the images of war so horrible, some of us nut cases had to hold him down when he had flashbacks of burning flesh flying all over the place. His best buddy was blown to pieces in front of him. Acted like the bits of his buddy, who was a Chicano like me, were being slung at him. When Jimmy had these flashbacks, he got into kicking and flailing fits to avoid the imaginary flesh slung at him. I could always calm Jimmy; he listened to me. Except for those episodes, he was a walking dead—he never talked to anyone, although he sometimes followed me to Taco Bell or to get cigarettes. At the board and care we shared, he went from here to there, from corner to corner of the reception room, and he always looked like he was waiting for someone who seldom came. Jimmy's father, serving in the Middle East, would sometimes pick him up."

Focused on Jimmy, Tito continued: "Took him horseback riding. Jimmy told me it was the only way he felt alive. Being from Texas, Jimmy believed he was a cowboy. Always slept with his boots and Lone Star buckle on—this made him a target for ridicule by his roommate, who often made fun of Jimmy to get a rise out of him. Didn't work. Jimmy didn't see anything wrong with sleeping buck naked in his lucky charms or 'amulets.' What he called his Lone Start buckle and his boots when he was clear of mind. You know what, Momma? He would always respond to me—must've reminded him of his buddy. How sad, huh? His friend—the one I told you about that he lost—was only nineteen when he died."

Moving on to other people who had passed through his life, Tito said, "Tim was an artist. All his paintings hung at Love's Board and Care. Somber faces with flesh in colors of green, orange, and purples attracted those who visited. Found his work 'interesting though peculiar' as some of the do-gooders would

say. Residents thought his work too weird for contemplation. They already carried enough creepiness in them, so they gave him no mind. Most stayed out of his way when he painted, 'cause he became irate and violent when we told him flesh was not the color of the tones he chose. Though there were times we went to bother him just to get some excitement going. Soon he would ignore us and go back to his painting.

"Remember Juan? He was originally from Tucson, Arizona. He came to Santa Clara when it was known as Santa Claus County, as some people around here still think of it because it was like a horn of plenty, a cornucopia to everyone who needed services. Here, Juan found a home, after roaming all the county's homeless shelters. In San José, he didn't have to roam anymore because there was a place for him. Waiting for those visits that never came, Juan lived hoping someone would take him away. At the board and care, his spot of choice was the porch. Juan would be the first one to spy you when you came to visit. He got me so you wouldn't have to wait. Other times, he opened the car door for me to get in when you picked me up. Remember, he really liked you and appreciated that you came to see me and brought me things."

Is that what happens to you when I waited too long to visit? I wanted to ask him. But he barely paused before going on.

"Often heard him tell those who came to visit that his parents were coming to see him, but he had no parents; they had died when he was nine years old. Other times he tried to impress the visitors by telling them his case manager, who neglected him, would be coming to see him. He was like a little kid who still believed in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny—it was only in those holidays that visits came and gifts arrived. Never told me who sent them, but he must've had someone who cared. To me, it seemed as if Juan would have to wait forever. Wait for something or other that never came. But you know what? Miracles do happen. One day, before I got kicked out for being a druggie and getting into arguments and fistfights with the residents, someone from Juan's mother's side of the family came and took him back to Arizona. The visitor Juan expected finally came. Took him away. And the mail Juan had waited for stopped coming when he left. Don't know what became of him.

"Momma, we are so disposable. Couldn't tell you where most of the people I shared space with ended up, except for Juan, who returned to Tucson, and Bill, whose family took him back to Boston. We move with the wind and become transparent as it is because no one sees us, even when we're right in front of them. You know what I learned? According to the experts, in our later years schizophrenia becomes less severe. We are easier to deal with. So it must've been their time—both Juan and Bill were middle aged and pretty manageable. They had very few personal problems when both returned home. Or, maybe, they just learned to fade into the wall, not making any trouble or questioning their surroundings. Don't know what happened to Lala. One of the few women who lived among us—they were like fleeting ghosts in our lives, as most of us who live in these institutions were men."

In an abrupt break of topic, he asked me, "Momma, you think that may happen to me? Do you think you'll take me home when I'm their age?"

But Tito didn't want a vague response from me. He interrupted me and continued talking, with the hope that he could return to our home. "With families who don't understand or cannot tend to us, we end up housed in these places eating day-old food or mush that takes our appetites away. We find ourselves saving every penny, conning each other or panhandling, to go to Taco Bell to buy fifty-nine-cent tacos—ease the hunger that permanently lives in our bellies."

As he continued talking about his life, Tito became more agitated. Our conversation turned into another one of his efforts to persuade me to bring him home—to San Antonio, where he has never lived. "Discard," he said. "That's what we are. Society's unwanted. There is no place for us. Why can't you see how hard it is for me? When I first got sick, I couldn't stay at our house, and not finding a facility that would take me, I ended up at Julian Street Inn in San José, a homeless shelter. I had two problems: schizophrenia and self-medication with drugs. Most places didn't want to deal with someone as messed up as I was. The facilities either housed the mentally ill or drug users, but not both. At the

shelters, even in the depths of my illness, it was difficult for me to say there. There's a pecking order for who sleeps where, who gets to stand in line first, who gets to shower, who gets to eat. Often got pushed around because I'm short. Made me afraid to stay there, so I bailed. Decided to be on my own.

Guilt engulfed me as Tito reminded me that I have pushed him out and sent him to places in which he might not have been treated well. It wasn't that I didn't want to take care of you, I thought. It was that I couldn't.

"Stuck in-between. Couldn't stay at your house. Wanted to, but I didn't want to be a burden to you and Dad and I wanted to do it my way, without any expectations from either of you. So I left and ended up in a state park in Aptos, California, near Santa Cruz. Since the weather wasn't that bad, I was able to hang. In the daytime, I could be found at the Metro Center, where all the buses start and end their routes. Fit in really well with all the unkempt hippies who littered the streets of the Pacific Garden Mall. Didn't even have to ask for help, people offered it to me, giving me a quarter here and a dime there. Things got better when I hit upon the idea of reselling bus transfers for hardly anything, to get money. Didn't want to panhandle, though. Then I got used to being sick and liked the easy access to illicit drugs. Those board-and-care homes were drug havens. They were really no help, except for pointing me in the direction of dope. There was the trafficking of drugs that went around—crank, marijuana, PCP, you name it—drugs were everywhere."

My intuition told me this was so. I had protected him from that type of life, and here he was in the middle of it all. I hear you, Tito, I thought.

"At first, they offer drugs without expecting anything. Then, when they hook you, some of the people I lived with even went as far as selling themselves or stealing to buy their drugs. Didn't do that. Instead I begged, asked, and cajoled money from you, my aunts and uncles, and whoever came to see me, so that I could get my stash. With excuses of needing food 'cause the food was awful, I got a bit from some. Feigning to need shoes, I got some from others. With tales that my clothes had been ripped off by some of the residents, one story or another, most of the relatives provided me the money I needed to score. And when I had no money, I just got it on credit. Later, I would bug you to help me pay my debts. Told you residents would beat me up if I didn't pay. If I got you fed up enough, I knew you would give me what I needed to shut me up, so I pushed you to the limit.

"Remember the time you brought Susie Q. López to visit with you? I remember her because we had our last name in common. That was the first time I got kicked out of Love's Board and Care. The dual diagnosis program person, my case manager, found me another place. But the program had no money to pay for yet another first and last month's rent plus deposit for me to move into a new place. So I called you for a hand. It was the second-to-the last place before I went to Casa Olga. Didn't think you would help me, though. Last time this happened, you had said, 'Enough.' But somehow you got the money. This was a place I would share with three other guys. It wasn't a licensed facility; it was a group home run by an expert at scamming the mentally ill out of their county or Social Security checks in exchange for a room and measly meals. Anyway, Susie Q. and you came and brought the money. And you left me twenty dollars for personal needs. What I didn't tell you was that Susie Q. gave me money on the sly. That night I got so high freebasing that I burned off my arm and face hairs. That scared me into quitting drugs. I've been clean and sober for almost fifteen years, except for the bundle of prescription drugs I take."

artwork by Josie Méndez-Negrete

Without hinting that he was moving on to another topic, Tito started talking about the side effects of the medication he takes for his condition. He told me he was beginning to experience some.

"Now, it's not just the mental illness," he said. "It's the high blood pressure. The diabetes and whatever else is fermenting in my body from taking too many chemicals. I am a walking laboratory of one. For me it's 'better living through chemistry,' as my dad says, but not really. Things don't get much better, we just get numbed or somewhat silenced."

Helping me out of my chair, Tito said, "Time for you to go, visiting hours are over. Had enough. Didn't even feel like

talking to you, anyway. Told you more than I care to. 'Bye."

Tito walked me to the garage area where he goes to chain-smoke—the only area that's not off-limits. It was hard to believe my son had so much to say. But I finally got to hear how he survived those early years of his illness. While he talked a lot and told me much, there were things he did not discuss with me—that he will never discuss, even when I ask him. Still, the one-way conversation about how Tito survived gave me insight.

Recently, a pattern has emerged. When Tito talks about his living arrangements, about when he first got sick, the issue of going at it alone, renting a room, moving out of institutional settings often comes up—and it feels like he is beginning to experience a break. Like the time he was going to move away with Carol Silverstein, one of the many pearls on the string of women he was going to marry, or when he was going to room with Bryan. It's his way of bailing out of institutional living. He will take anything but living in an institution, even if it's only make-believe. Often, relationship breakups predict an impending change in him, but Tito usually attempts to shield the emotions tied to his losses. However hard times are for him, he is forever searching to have a relationship that gives him the companionship he needs.

Away from all that was familiar, which he imagined as bad and harmful, Tito believed he was in a better place . . .

Telling Tito I would call him when I got home, I left the residence. When I got to San Antonio, I phoned him to let him know I had arrived. He said he had news for me. Sienna, a resident who is younger than Carol but still ten years older than he is, was his new girlfriend. Things had not worked out with Carol. They had broken up after Tito figured out that she only wanted him for the cigarettes and other gifts his family brought him. When no one visited or there was no money, Carol stayed away from Tito.

He was talking marriage again. He wanted a good life with someone—or with anyone who would take him. He warned me that he would be asking me for help to buy Sienna a wedding ring, but I advised him to put it on hold, not to rush into anything. I didn't want him to be disappointed yet again. He insisted that Sienna was the one, the one he had been waiting for all his life. Using a Mexican cultural practice, I told him to test out the relationships with a plazo—a period of waiting. That way they could get to know each other. Then, if they stayed together for a year, I would gladly support him and attend his marriage. I'd even help him to buy the ring.

At first, when I suggested the idea, Tito fought it. So lonely and so desperate to have a family or someone to be physically there for him, he longed to get married. It was the solution for him. After some thought, he decided that a plazo was a good way to test their commitment to each other. "We will wait," he told me. "Both of us will work on our relationship. We will try to make it last so we can get married. Thanks, Momma."

I hung up the telephone, wondering if this relationship would end as the others had. Most of the time I'm with him, I pray that he finds someone to share his life with. Not so that I can be released from the responsibility, but so he can have love and companionship. Oh, how I wish that for him.

Later, Tito called me again. He had more to share. The times we spent on the phone were never sufficient for him—and this time he wanted to hear more about the last time he took a flight into health with our family's assistance. "Last time you came to visit we talked, I didn't tell you everything, Momma," he said. "Forgot to tell you about what brought it to a head. Well, Love's Board and Care evicted me once again. I lost count, but it's somewhere around thirty."

Tito talked as if I had not been the one who made all of the arrangements for his last move: "My Uncle Ricardo turned me on to his former mother-in-law who lived in Hialeah, Florida. She runs a facility for people like me. That was when the idea of moving became like a light bulb attracting bugs. Obsessing on that place as the magic pill to my problems, I asked you to send me there. Then I started begging you, not leaving the issue out of our conversation until you finally gave into my demand. In my deluded mind, I thought this move would get me away from everything I experienced, and everyone that persecuted me. It made perfect sense to me—I was in the middle of one of those paranoid phases—that the distance would take me away from it all and make me less of a burden for you and our relatives. Thought I could run from all I feared, all that bothered me, away to that paradise I imagined Hialeah to be."

Taking me back to that flight into health, Tito said, "When the eviction came, I had finally convinced you to look into that place called Casa de Paz, or House of Peace, in Florida. Even its name called out to me. It turned out to be a legitimate business that checked out with everybody. It was licensed, and having Xiomara—not a Mexican but a Cuban who ran the place and was a retired pharmacist who understood how to work with people like me—made it even sweeter for you. Remember? You made all the arrangements. You reserved a place for me with $1,500. Helped me transfer my case. Jenny Nolan, the case manager who tried to discourage me at first, also did all she could to help. But deep

down inside, I suspected she wanted me out of her caseload. I really made her work for her money.

"Not convinced that this was the best thing for me and with reservations, Jenny transferred my Social Security to Florida. When all was finally arranged and payment reached them, a room was set aside. And Momma, whether you agreed with it or not, you bought me a one-way ticket, warning me that I had to deal with my new environment in the best way I could. But you didn't make it easy for me to leave. You tried to convince me that I was running away from myself. Told me schizophrenia would go with me and unless I left my mind behind—I laughed at your unintended humor—It would all go where I went."

I now better understand the fear that had pushed Tito away. I remembered. He didn't want to hear anyone tell him that all would come to naught. Away from all that was familiar, which he imagined as bad and harmful, Tito believed he was in a better place without acknowledging that he would find himself immersed in the fears that instigated his anxiety.

"In spite of everything, and against everyone's advice, I left the area. Failed to listen when you told me that if I were running away form gangs and drugs, I would likely find them in Florida. My mind was set. I had already decided to get away from it all, and the only viable solution for me became Florida. Only other option I would even contemplate was to live with my family—there was no other recourse. But I had burned all my bridges and no one wanted me in their places—I was trouble and all knew about my manipulative ways. I guess that's what a mentally-ill-in-training-of-twenty-something-years does when he has no explanation for what ails him. None of us had a clue, least of all me."

"So I took my one-way ticket ride. Went to Greyhound. Still can't believe I did it, what with all the paranoia I carried. But I stayed to myself. Didn't talk to anyone. Just minded my own business. When I arrived in Florida, I tried to become part of the new place. But what I didn't count on was the way these people would feel about me, a Mexican cholo-identified retard. That's how I think the Latinos saw me. From the beginning, I had troubles with the caretakers—I think they were undocumented workers from Colombia or Panama. The only thing that saved me was my family-member status of sorts. My relationship to Uncle Ricardo protected me somewhat, but not with those who wanted to keep me in my Mexican place. This was when I learned that some Cubans and Central Americans are just as anti-Mexican as gringos.

"Soon I began burning the telephone wires with calls to you, every chance I had. I called, called, and called. Told you I thought I had made a mistake but I would try to stick it out. Two, three, four, and five weeks passed. It was hard not seeing the family, just like you had told me. If I had been afraid of being lonely with some of you around, I now felt completely isolated, with absolutely no one to visit. I truly was on my own. And here I was on the opposite side of the country, thousands of miles away. Wished I had listened to you and all who warned me."

Things did not get any better for Tito. He was more needy, and just as desperate for attention, but he took on a more acceptable demeanor.

"There, I made some appearance changes," he continued. "Shed my hard-guy, ese-vato-loco image. For fear of being harassed, one thing I did was to drop the red rag. No more colors. No more Dickies. Gave up my Chinese slippers. I got rid of my cholo-ized ways of dressing, fearing that gangs would soon find me, even in the remote corners of Florida. Dressed more in a preppy old-man style, with slacks, suit jackets, and a tie. Florida was good for me. After two months, though, I realized that this was not the place for me. And as you and Jenny had warned, the things I was running away from never left me. Still, filled with ideas about what it means to be a man about it, I tried to make it work.

. . . without acknowledging that he would find himself immersed in the fears that instigated his anxiety.

"One problem I had was with my roommate, who was more depressed than me. One time I found him trying to hang himself. Don't know how, but I talked him out of it. Kept him distracted. Told him about my situation so he would see he wasn't the only one. That he wasn't alone anymore. He listened and was fine for a while, but that only worked once. His pain must've been too great, greater than his fear of dying. He needed to get away. The day came when he killed himself. Good thing I wasn't in the room. But I found him. He succeeded in hanging himself from a beam in the bedroom we shared. Blue-black and lifeless, there was nothing anyone could do. The morgue came and took him."

I never imagined the horrors, but it was at your own insistence that we relocated you, I thought as I listened. You really believed things would change, and I wanted them to change for you.

"Frightened by what I had experienced and without a roommate to distract me," Tito went on, "I became fixated on my fears and started begging to come home. It was then that the urgency to return dominated my mind. Again, I began burning the telephone wires with my calls to you, Momma. The trip to Florida was a hard lesson learned, though. All of you had been right. No matter where I went, I couldn't get away from myself."

Note: Check back page for info on the reading of *A Life On Hold.*

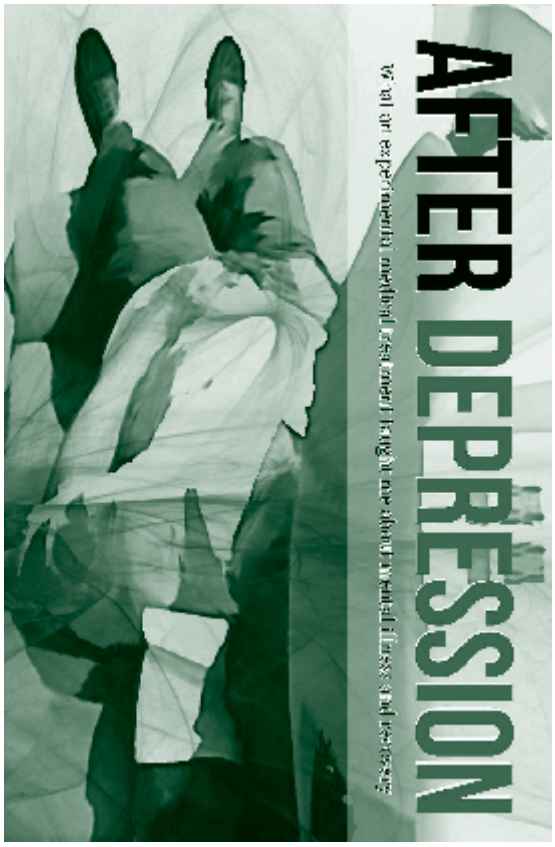
Breathing in the Panic

(From Chapter One: Things As Things Are)

As a columnist and investigative journalist, Greg Harman has long written about issues of environmental justice and public health in Texas. But in 2012, his decades of struggle with depression and panic disorder came to a head, inspiring him to make his own recovery a full-time pursuit. A year later, he began writing about that process, which, for him, included participation in an experimental device trial targeting those with so-called "treatment-resistant depression." He published his first book, "After Depression: What an experimental medical treatment taught me about mental illness and recovery," in July hoping to contribute to the destruction of the "deeply damaging and misguided stigmatization of those who suffer from depression's drag and the broad array of mental intensities trailing along in its billowing cloak." (Introduction quote) —What follows is an excerpt from "After Depression" used with permission from the author. For more information, visit AfterDepression.net.

If you desire healing, let yourself fall ill.
—Rumi

I'm grasping the top of the desk, whorls of white-creased joints trembling behind eight blood-drained fingertips, resisting the impulse to run. My entire biology screams for flight. Instead I freeze in place, oblivious to the blare of the music coming from the designer's desk just outside my door. I'm staring dutifully into an oversized Apple monitor like most of the editorial team scattered around the second floor of the weekly magazine office. I'm staring into stacked lines of text, carved out pecks and scratches running along furrows in a nonsensical rhythm. Somewhere in my core a wild shuttering threatens to surface.



I wheel in long, thin breaths as if from some distant well. The inhalation clamps down on the rising panic, compressing the rebellious tremors in my stomach, bearing down with the weight of desperate intention. Each exhalation softens my grip, allowing these layers of fear to peel away, a weightless moult drifting on the air. In again—rushes fresh terror and another temptation for the will to crumple, to give in to what I assume would be irreparable madness. Another threading breath. Another tightening.

I've got to get the fuck out of here.

Perched at this endpoint of the productivity humming beyond my walls, I force myself to sit with the obligations and expectations of my position. After what feels like a respectable period of panic, I stand uneasily. Stumbling over the streaming cords at my feet, I push forward, walking just fast enough to avoid any interrupting signals from the staff. I have to instruct my legs not to run down the stairs, stairs to the exit sign and into the air. A small kinky-coated dog paces on the other side of the glass and watches me vanish beyond the parking lot and up the street as the Catholic school students meander distractedly to the assortment of trucks and SUVs waiting to carry them home. Terrified of being observed, I move down a set of limestone steps to the shaded path alongside the river. My breaths grow deeper and slower. The air is thick with flower fragrance and the light and shadow dance above and across the winding waters. I hone my focus, hoping to rein in this quaking, these racing thoughts, with outward-directed attention. I'll cry, just a little, once, twice, as I plead with whatever power is beyond me. What is wrong with me? Why am I not getting better? Once or twice I'll retreat to old affirmations of a groundless faith, thanking a God for taking away my anxiety. Speaking things that are not as if they were. There are so many strategies.

My breath plants me in the present moment and I observe intensely, intentionally, the shape and rustle of trees, the near imperceptible movement of clouds, the sound of my feet sweeping over the cement path, the press of gravity, my embodied thickness. I repeat the Buddhist blessing, "May all sentient creatures everywhere be happy." I imagine my

respiration as a wind filling not my lungs but my heart. It enters as through a curtain; it passes through in a prayer.

It's still a month before I will quit my job and slide a rope around my neck, seeking to silence the unbearable flashes of lightning-like panic, the terrible current buzzing like a jammed doorbell that rushes from mind to body, scrambling reality and reason. Right now, I am sitting by the water. I am crossing a bridge. I am on a dirt path. I am losing focus. I'm sweating. A barge moves by — I don't remember hearing it — and the water folds back, back upon itself, inverting the wall, the path, the bushes and trees of the opposing bank. I am losing focus. One fold into the next, water always changing hands in light, then hiding another emptiness.

I imagine falling beneath the dancing surface and into its unreflecting fluidity, its meanderings imperceptible beyond the occasional snip of cottonwood leaf or disintegrating plastic. The dance is lifting sediment that shelters and soon buries the homes of river cooters and aluminum cans, engine parts and leaden fishing weights. Sometimes there are fish, their only evidence in the murk a sudden, audible redirection of the shimmering and streaming ripples traveling until they die, this way or another. One less insect sitting on the light.

A convincing teacher once said, "Suffering is the repeated unwillingness to accept things as they are." Internalizing that message, I made lists of everything I regretted, disliked, resented. Then I turned these surveys into chronicles of acceptance.

I accept completely who I am and take full responsibility for all my actions: good, bad, neutral.

I accept that I am prone to panic attacks and suicidal bouts of depression.

I embrace my heart, full to bursting with the desire for love, service, companionship.

I return to a desk of tightly pressed and polished wood dust and glue, an object full of emptiness and poison. I answer a few emails. I watch a video. No one comes to my door. They only watch, warily, uncertain about the changes that have overtaken me these last months. This is how it's been since I gathered them together to tell them of my panic attacks, that I'd be cutting my hours and going into an outpatient mental-health program. A few will approach in the weeks to come to tell me of their secret struggles. There's a law of vulnerability at work here, a tender reminder of the life's indiscriminate hardness and our need for connection.

Perhaps such intimacies could have prevented this confounding obliteration of personal power. Perhaps if they had started years ago before my relationships began falling away in clumps with each job-related move. But there's a momentum behind these forces that can no longer be avoided or redirected. I'd talked about leaving my job at the news magazine for years, dispirited by an accelerating pace of staff dismissals, the ownership's apparent lack of interest in our news mission, and a constant low-level pressure to sell our readers on the hamburgers, nightclubs, and craft beers our advertisers promoted. But now? There was no more debate. I knew I'd have to leave, make way for someone still blessedly unsavaged by stress, one of those fortunates who had so far dodged this colliding symptomology. Nothing is certain, I think. Everything is tenuous. But I've lost focus. I have to focus again.

image by Greg Harmon

—Overcoming depression is a critical challenge for tens of millions of people around the world. Many continue to suffer silently from this global epidemic due to the stigma that still surrounds mental illness. Harman hid his own illness for more than 20 years, despite the difficulties this created in his personal and professional lives. But a convergence of suicidal depression and raging panic attacks finally forced him to make recovery his primary concern.

Quitting his job as a newspaper editor, he joined an experimental device trial promising relief via magnetic waves. This is the story of his involvement with synchronized transcranial magnetic stimulation (sTMS), the evolving world of brain medicine, and the depression epidemic at large. It is also, perhaps more significantly, a story about the human problem of suffering and the challenges and joys of recovery—a story of one person's ongoing effort to live meaningfully with illness and transform his life into one of service.

It is a story of dreams, determination, spiritual conflict, and complicated histories. As the title suggests, it is a passionately recounted quest to discover what comes after depression.

—Check amazon.com.