

Things I'm Missing Out On (A Few Words About Myalgic Encephalomyelitis and Loss)

By KM Dunn

- 12 singing Santa Baby with my mother:
two socialists and a tangle of lights,
our voices glinting like baubles
- 11 chilly morning air, crisp as an apple
in my lungs and the crunch of
autumn underneath my feet
- 10 singed scent of candleflame
in turnip lanterns and laughter
of the children I can't have
- 9 a rainy afternoon on the sofa,
library books and a mug of tea,
fingers turning page after page
- 8 sheen of sunscreen all summer
long – skin cancer's less of a
risk if you can't go outdoors
- 7 my granny's birthday lunch;
she's gone now and I was too
ill to visit her in the hospital
- 6 marching, a proud bisexual
in the glittering critical mass
clamouring for trans rights
- 5 cherry blossom in the city –
even the drains filled
to spilling with candy pink

- 4 the quick pizzicato gambol-
scramble of lambs, racing
at dusk in the fields
- 3 Tracy Chapman on the radio,
sizzle of leeks in the saucepan
and a pot of soup on the way
- 2 snowdrops and crocuses
and winter branches waiting
to burst into life
- 1 fireworks, the clink of glasses,
a slick of red lipstick and
the chance of a midnight kiss

Scientific Statement

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) 'is a complex, debilitating, multisystem disease that is characterized by profound fatigue and an inability to withstand certain forms of physiological insult (e.g., physical and cognitive exertion) without symptom exacerbation' (Nunes et al., 2023). ME involves 'neuroinflammation, severe fatigue, excessive post-exertional exhaustion, disturbed sleep, flu-like episodes, cognitive problems, sensory hypersensitivity, muscle and joint pain, headache, bowel symptoms, and severe impairment of daily functioning' (Proal & Marshall, 2018).

Nunes et al. (2023) highlight 'platelet hyperactivation, anomalous clotting, a procoagulant phenotype, and endothelial dysfunction' in ME, while van Campen et al. (2020) connect the prevalence of orthostatic intolerance in the disease to 'a clinically significant reduction in cerebral blood flow'. It is estimated that 25% of ME patients are disabled to such a degree that they are housebound or bedbound (Chang et al., 2021) and 'unable to perform basic tasks of work or daily living' (Proal & Marshall, 2018).

Bibliography

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