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poems
by
doctors

Strategy

Peter Wells

Love was at a premium –
Jane ran out of supplies.
Father a miner, his life stained by cold dust,
his chest a box of birds,
let go his last persecutory breath.

Mum had three daughters to keep,
all got the message:
love is a ration book.

Jane, the youngest, had least time
for what was left of the crust;
a starveling in love
she sickened for it.
When the strategy was rumbled
she risked the lot
and slit her wrists

In and out of hospital
a lifetime career;
the only way to keep going
and to save Mum.

She hid behind the curtains
when she won the ward prize for a cake.
She could not explain herself.

Paint became her arbiter
picture after picture –
they did not need words.

At long last, she found words:
'I got into hospital by pretending to be sick,
I got home by pretending to be sane'.