



WRITERS  
GUILD  
INITIATIVE

## **The Me in M.E.**

*By: Jody Shaw*

I remember the fever that did it to me, how it raged through my body with vampiric abandon, how I felt my brain would split in two. I willed myself to call out for help but no sound came. I could only lie there cloaked in the early morning darkness, waiting, enduring. At the mercy of an organism smaller than I could conceive, I observed out of body as it deftly reduced me to rubble. Like a baby, all I wanted was my mother, but she never came, no one did, so I just lay there complicit, pinned to the bed by invisible restraints. I realised quickly I couldn't blink without pain, my throat was a desert and moving my head even a little, hurt beyond anything I had ever experienced. Total submission was my only choice, resistance was punishable, that much was clear as crystal. I shivered from the cold beads of sweat on my skin, yet there was a furnace ablaze under it. It felt to me like the soft matter of my brain was meeting the hard interior of my skull. Primeval panic swelled, 'but there's no more room' I thought helplessly. I worried that at any moment something would give, irreversibly crack open. My head throbbed rhythmically; reminding me to live is to suffer, life is pain. I was fourteen years old and I thought it would pass and I would

get better, just another childhood classroom disease that would soon become history. I would not realise for another thirty six desperate years that in the black haze of that morning I had been infiltrated, changed forever from the inside out.