

NAMI NJ Expressive Arts – Poetry Showcase – December 2022

THE DEADLY SILENCE**By Della Brown**

The deadly silence walks among us
No matter time or place, unrecognizable
Hidden behind the face, concealed in the darkest, deepest part of being
An invisible mask to the naked eye
Lives among us every minute of each day
Undetected by the most brilliant of minds.
Drugs confuse, words never soothe, prayer can't remove.
But it is there.
Lurks in silence, waits to appear
Inspired by fear
Rejecting friends, family
Surviving in the fake
Longing for what's real
Panting for hope
But always running from love.
Love that's surrounding, confusing, unknown
This deadly silence
Welcome friend of hurt
Comfortable with harm
Flirts with disaster
How to contain it?
Too long protected it.
Explained and coddled it.
Strongholds surrounded it.
Social media multiplied it.
Lights, camera, action!
Today, there's another debut.
A new role to play.
DESTROYER, BETRAYER, AGENT OF DISBELIEF
CARRIER OF HOPELESSNESS
Spirals out of control
Voices call for more destruction
Applause as the final curtain falls
The deadly silence wins
Another person succumbs.
SUICIDE!

Intervention Concerto
By Fred Shaw

My sister ends her bender
in a detox I once dialed for her,

and when left on hold,
I pressed the earpiece close enough

to dip my head into that canned
loop of notes I hear

as if they're being boiled-down in some muddy
back-room, the once-precise movement

now a symphony of tin cans,
backed by catgut string and licorice stick

with a trickled-out sound only an old
cartoon could love.

So I linger on the line, waiting to find
a finger-hold in this limbo lit with hard-candy

lights from cell towers and office phones,
until my spent sister's chance at redemption

starts to feel like all the helpless moments
I've imagined playing out in the lives of others,

ones that begin with a flashing ambulance,
and her being trucked away

always after midnight,
on a quiet street lit to an urgent red glow.

The Mind of Many are Okay!
By Tameka Bordeaux

In many sectors,
 The health of the mind remains a side-eyed misunderstood thing...
 Because eyes still refuse to stare down the souls of the hurt - with a validation
 That all pain just don't hit the same-
 So let us cast down the stones
 Thrown at those which are seen as black cat, sheep, or a bottomless abyss of stagnancy,
 Eyes like these seem to see only weak and fragile *unstable* mishaps,
 Infested and unpleasant animals
 Because they refuse to see the dichotomy
 Between a pimple full of pus
 And a body and mind full of rust...
 Both enclosing contents in need of being free -
 But the mind of many
 Remix and repeat phrases like:
"you different," "weird," "not normal," all because you don't fit their kernel -

But mental health is crying with an allowance to be unbound,
 Not in fear but rather embracing the warmth of catharsis,
 Because lighter is the soul that grows in reverence of the tears that flow-

Mental health is the allowance to scream out loud that you are not alright,
And it's alright...
 It's alright to admit that the thoughts won't stop,
 That the wear and tear your body has endured feels like a war-

But alongside those tears,
 Some church bells ring
 And the Saints scream and say:
"Just kneel and pray, that which afflicts the mind will dissipate...."

But when you and the shadow been secretly dancing
 With silence placating that union,
 Them shadows climb out and back in-
 And the winds of conditioning
 Awaken that fight, flight, or freeze survival door to begin swinging off the hinges,
 Back and forth -
 And at that point, more than *My GOD* is needed...

We need to be okay to say that the dark done carried all that made sense away -
 That breathing feels like dying,
 And crying at times feels like boulders full of burdens-

The health of the mind begins at that very fine point...
 Admittance...

Without a space to stretch the truth of that expression,
Generations will remain nurturing the falseness of "*I'm okay...*"

Mommy's love
By Tania Hallal-Fabricatore

Mommy, what is "depression"?, he asked.
"You feel broken and tired," I said.
"I am feeling angry at school..." he confessed
And then I thought about what I never say...

The dishes mounting in the sink
The papers falling from the garbage can
The tiny pieces of bread on the floor
The fridge, without space for one more thing
The sheets, that haven't been washed in two months

My tears when I watched him sleep
Because again, I couldn't stay awake
For homework or to read
That feeling of exhaustion like you walked
The whole Earth in a blink

My thoughts, that I can't remember,
The memorable,
My wonder about his memories of me,
Of this, so called childhood
Full of mommy's love

But mommy can't clean
Because the world falls apart inside her
The chair, the sofa, the curtains, scream at her
All of them, at once
Then the bathroom floor says "too many clothes"
And mommy wonders when it is going to stop,
Or if it will ever stop, forever.

My OCD
By Gina Bortolussi

When I was around ten it began,
The obsessive washing of the hands.
I would run them under hot water until they cracked and bled.
There's so much to do in an obsessive compulsive brain.
So much to dissect and figure out,
So much to calm and restrain.
It tells me to switch the light on and off,
And on and off.
It latches on to every thought that pops into my head.
Trying to find that sense of perfection by playing them on a loop over and over again.
It tells me I'm not normal and leaves me spinning until I believe I'm crazy,
But I know I'm not alone.
I know I'm not as unique as I think,
That the same brain that taunts me is lying to me when it tells me those terrible things.
But I'm learning the secret to outsmarting it,
To catch it in the act.
I'm becoming comfortable with being uncomfortable
And letting the thoughts float by and just be,
And remind myself that I'm more than three little letters like OCD.

Where I am
By Janet Larrea

It is not that I don't want to or need to I just cant right now and can only dream of when I will again

Its difficult for me to live hidden from all the sights and sounds I lived to play in but in peace I find a world of discovery and contemplation

I create a place to be in around the ones I love. Being near and close to help with the longing of those days again.

I live quietly but full of interest and imagination and make the things I love come to life.

And that is my role as artist now, always and before to look forward and keep living this life I adore.

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